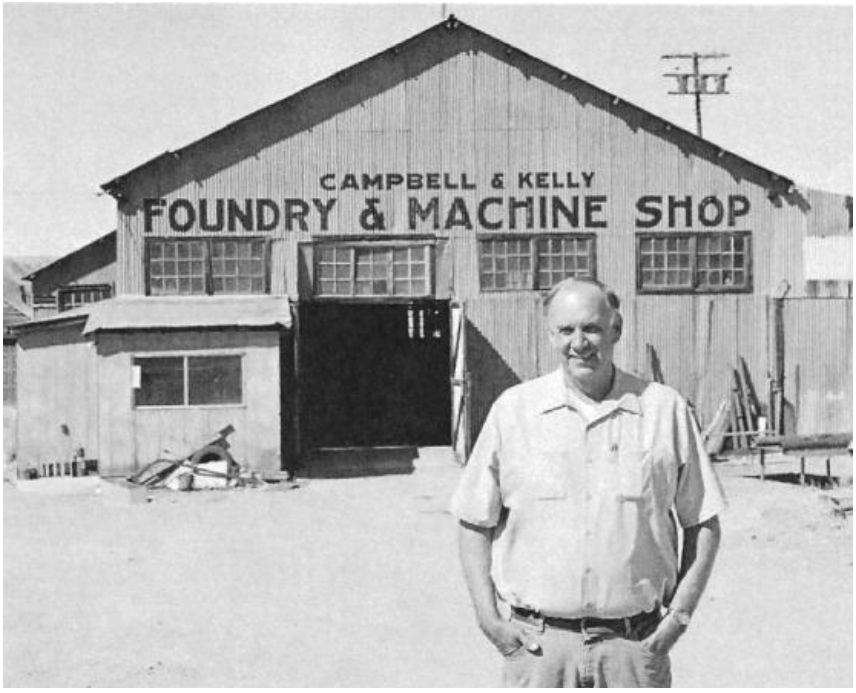
# An Interview with
# JOHN
# CAMPBELL

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2011




John Campbell
2011

CONTENTS

Preface

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Index

# 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, Lorinda Wichman, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Fely Quitevis provided unyielding support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave enthusiastic 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 strong support. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Lacy's office, provided funds for this round of interviews. Thanks are extended to Commissioners Eastley and Hollis and to 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. Valerie A. Brown, Debra Ann MacEachen, Robert B. Clark, Lynn E. Riedesel, Marcella Wilkinson and Jean Charney transcribed a number of interviews, as did Julie Lancaster, who also helped with project coordination. Proofreading, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Joni Eastley, Michael Haldeman, 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. Eva La Rue and Angela Haag of the Central Nevada Museum served as consultants throughout the project; their participation was essential. Much- deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

All material for the NCTHP was prepared with the support of the Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Office, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect the views of Nye County or the U.S. DOE.

—Robert D. McCracken
2011

# 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.

—RDM
2011

This is Robert McCracken talking to John Campbell at his home in Tonopah, Nevada. This interview is conducted in several sessions— May 8, 13, and 22, and June 2 and 5, 2010.

## CHAPTER ONE

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

JC: It's John Walter Campbell, and I was born January 30, 1950, in Tonopah at the old Nye County Hospital, just up the street from the Shell station, back below Green Mountain.

RM: It wasn't called the Miners' Hospital, was it?

JC: No, Miners was over on South Street, cattycorner from the Catholic church. My mother worked there when she came here in 1934.

RM: Oh, really? And what was her maiden name?

JC: Her name was Kathryn Jeanette Horae (later on, it got changed to Horay). She was born August 3, 1912, in Pierre, South Dakota. They moved from there to Kansas City, Missouri, where she was raised and went to school.

RM: Were her family farmers?

JC: Her dad, Walter Horae, was an accountant for a steel company, Sheffield, in Kansas City. She went to nursing school there, then she and one of her girlfriends, a classmate, heard the West was booming so they got on a train and headed west. They got to Reno and heard Tonopah was hiring nurses, so they came to Tonopah.

RM: What year was that?

JC: I think about '34.

RM: So the word was that Tonopah was still booming in '34? Of course, that was the Depression so people were looking for anyplace that had some prosperity, probably. [Laughter] And did she stay here the rest of her life?

JC: Yes. My dad's shop used to do work on cars and he worked on the doctors' cars; he was buddies with them. Every time a new nurse came to town he got the heads-up, so he'd meet the nurses at the train depot. [Laughs]

RM: What was her family's background? What nationality were they?

JC: Canadian. I ought to wait for Theresa to come back—she's been doing genealogy, and she's got that information. I think pretty much all of them came through Quebec. Some of them

ended up in New York and came across from Canada. Pretty near all of them on Mom's side came from Quebec or someplace.

RM: That's interesting. And what was your father's name?

JC: Horace Joseph Campbell. He was born on January 12, 1913, in their home up on University Street next to the house he was raised in.

RM: So he's a true native. What is his family's background, and how did they end up here?

JC: His dad came from the Livermore, California, area, in Alameda County. He went to work through an apprentice program at the railroad yards in Oakland and he moved from Oakland to Carson City, I think in 1904. And Tonopah was booming; they brought the railroad in here about '05, I think. So he came down with the railroad at that time.

RM: Where was his dad born?

JC: I learned this when I put together a Nevada centennial essay in '64 for school when they had the Nevada centennial. He was born in Livermore February 26, 1877.

RM: So he was born pretty early in California history. There was still a lot of gold mining, I think, then.

JC: Yes. I'll have to ask Theresa on that, but his father came from Bradford, Ontario, to New York and then he came across to California. It must have been the gold rush era. And then during the Civil War, he joined up in California with the Massachusetts army or whatever it was called 26 February, 1863, so he went from California to Massachusetts and got in with those guys for under a year and then he was released and went back home. He was mustered out 11 February, 1864, in Muddy Branch, Maryland.
But the genealogy of this Campbell part of this outfit, they're hiding somewhere. They just don't want to be found—we're having an awful time digging for it. [Laughter] They originated in Scotland.

RM: What did your grandfather do after he got here?

JC: In about '05, a group decided that the mining industry needed a machine shop. At that time, the only place they could get foundry work was either in Reno or Frisco and it took too long to get the material back and forth. So this group put together some money and built a foundry and machine shop, the Tonopah Foundry and Machine Works.

January 30th, I think it was—anyway, toward the end of January of '06—they made their first iron pour. My grandfather and this guy, Rube Kelly, went to work with them at that time. The company went broke because according to newspaper articles they were poorly mismanaged so Grandpa and Kelly took it over and ran it for the bank, essentially, for a couple years. Then in '08, they incorporated and made the Campbell and Kelly Corporation.

They bought it in ’11. They were paying off the San Francisco banks and the Tonopah bank that this company owed money to. They got those paid off and then they bought it from the banks on a payment schedule. After they paid the banks off, I think there was a sheriff’s sale and they foreclosed or they picked it up for taxes and sold it.

RM: They bought the outfit for taxes?

JC: I think so, at the end there, yes. It burned down in 1915, and then they separated the buildings so the whole thing wouldn’t all burn at the same time like it had and it’s been like that pretty much since then.

RM: Who was Kelly?

JC: His name was Rube Kelly, and he was a machinist and a mechanic. Partnerships are difficult. The gist I got is that Kelly was helping finance some sideline businesses through the company. Anyway, they dissolved the partnership in ’23; Kelly got out of it then. They kept the name Campbell and Kelly because they had developed what they call a slime pump for pumping ore in the mills and all the castings they made had “Campbell and Kelly” on them.

RM: What exactly is a slime pump?

JC: In the early days, when they ran the ore through a mill, like a stamp mill, they ground it up to a face powder and it went on out. In order to get it back to the start of the mill, they either had to pack it with buckets or put a chain line in. So they built basically a centrifugal water pump, only it had hard liners in it and you could feed it to the pump when it was basically mud, and the pump would pump it back up to the start.

When they poured the iron in to make the liners of the pump and the impeller, they’d pour them on a chill plate, they called it; just another piece of cast iron that was flat. The molten iron would hit that heavy casting and it would chill it quickly and cause it to be hard in those spots. It was hard enough, they couldn’t machine it with the machine tools, but they had to grind the surfaces to make them fit.

RM: Did they invent that process, do you think?

JC: I know they were inventors of the hard liner part of the pump, one that wouldn’t wear out as easily. Of course, they may have made soft iron pumps. I think they may have come across this hard iron pump accidentally—I don’t think there was probably any science put to it, just like most things in the old days. [Laughs]

RM: That makes sense, because that grit, especially if you got a lot of silica in your ore, would really wear it out. Did Kelly stay on in Tonopah?

JC: Yes, he died here, I think in the early ’50s. Years ago they sold Hupmobiles and they had a Nash dealership along with it. They got into the Chevrolet dealership when Chevy came into

play. When they dissolved the partnership, Kelly took the Chevrolet dealership. And they had a store uptown—he took the dealership and a little bit of cash and the store uptown. Over the years, the dealership came back to our family.

RM: What happened to the Nash dealership?

JC: I think it just went away. They said the Hupmobile didn't have a very good engine in it, so that upset Grandpa a little bit and he created his own engine for a Hupmobile.

RM: So he could really build things.

JC: Yes, he was basically an engineer without going to college.

RM: Did he start the engine from scratch or did he start with a block from another motor?

JC: I think he used the crankshaft and cam out of the Hup, but I think the block and everything else was all new.

RM: He cast it? That's incredible. [Laughter] About when was that?

JC: I think it was in '13.

RM: So he was a good enough metal man that he could cast an engine block of his own design.

JC: Yes. I guess the Hupmobile engine wasn't very good. From what I understand, there were several different manufacturers that made engines for Hupmobile but nobody'd come up with a very good one, so he created an overhead valve, a little four-cylinder engine. They stuck it in different cars. And I think once they got something that needed an engine to run a crusher or a pump or something, they'd bolt one or a couple of these engines up to that.

RM: Would they make the block, too?

JC: Yes, they'd pour the block and the head.

RM: That seems like such precision. Did they make the pistons?

JC: I think they may have. There were a lot of oddball patterns here in the shops for different things that they made. Up in the warehouse, there's a pattern for a head but I think the head is for a truck of some sort. The patternmakers could make a new head for you if you needed to or if they couldn't buy one someplace or didn't have the funds for a new one.

They made all the machinery and equipment for the mines in those days from scratch. They built the Belmont Mill, put it together. They went from here down to Arizona and built a mill back in about '16 or '18. I think the mill is under the lake now.

RM: The Belmont Mill is the one you see coming into town, isn't it?

JC: From Ely, yes.

RM: Where did he get his metallurgical skills?

JC: I think a lot of it was just shooting from the hip, just having that ability to understand how things work. I think during that era, a few years after the Industrial Revolution, everybody was still trying to invent the world.

RM: Now, who did your grandfather marry?

JC: He married Margaret Walsh.

RM: Was she a local girl?

JC: Yes, I think she came here in '10.

RM: Did she come with her family?

JC: Yes, there were several of them here at that time. I think they were miners, and her dad died. Her sister was here and she had a boardinghouse. Grandma was a housewife, I think, at the time. In those old days, the women didn't have jobs.

RM: There wasn't much opportunity for them.

JC: It seemed to me a lot of the bookkeepers and secretaries were men, weren't they?

RM: I think so, yes. Basically women could work as schoolteachers and in a boardinghouse. Did you know your grandfather Campbell?

JC: No, he got killed here at the shop. The wind was blowing like heck, and he was up on the back where the power came into the building. We had 480 volts of power. He was nailing the tin back down on the shop from the wind and he fell over into the wires and got electrocuted.

RM: Oh my God. Do you know when that was?

JC: I think it was June 8, 1944.

RM: So the shop was still working during the war; they hadn't shut it down?

JC: No. During the war effort, cars had heavy steel rims with hard rubber tire vulcanized to them. They made them take all the rubber off and they tried to get them to sell all their brass and aluminum to the war effort.

RM: But they didn't shut down the mines in Tonopah during the war?

JC: I don't think they did. I heard they had some leasers still fussing around during that period of time. Somebody was telling me that during the war, gold was a nonessential metal so they closed the gold mines down but they didn't close the silver mines, so that kept things going.

RM: When was the high point for Campbell and Kelly?

JC: I think it was probably the '05 or '06 era up through the Depression. The Depression, I think, started to kill the mining industry. The story is the shop struggled during the Depression but they kept the crew working on a limited basis so at least they could get a paycheck.

And there was an old boy in Silver Peak. His name was Sam Levine; he was kind of a mining promoter. He had some connections down in L.A. and around and he'd come over and talk to Grandpa and say, "How are you guys doing?"

"Well, we're kind of getting short of money." And Sam would get in his car and he'd take off for L.A. and come back with a suitcase full of money. [Laughter]

RM: And that was from investors?

JC: Yes, investing in the mining industry a little bit. He'd get some money and get back to town. [Laughs] I don't know how much of an overall effect he may have had on bringing this area through the Depression but Dad said he used to go down and bring back a suitcase full of money.

RM: So your dad, then, just kind of merged into the business as he grew up.

JC: Yes, he grew up in the thing when he was a kid. He was in the navy when Grandpa got killed. And since he was the only boy, and they had the business, he was allowed some kind of a deferment or whatever to come home.

RM: Was he drafted?

JC: He was on the hit list so he joined up with the navy and he got in the Seabees. He ended up on the Marshall Islands building a runway.

RM: Probably because of his mechanical background?

JC: Yes. He went in as a first class machinist mate. He was a crusher mechanic. He says he never saw a crusher the whole time he was in the navy [laughter] but it was on their list of jobs.

RM: Talk some more about Campbell and Kelly in those early days. They were an essential part of the industry in Tonopah, weren't they?

JC: Yes. They had been working on a shoestring the whole time as far as money went, and when the place burned in '15, they didn't have anything to rebuild with. The mining industry needed parts and equipment, but there was no way of getting them in a reasonable period of time from San Francisco or Reno so the mines all chipped in money so Grandpa could get the machine shop and foundry going again.

And he paid them back. They'd order mine cars, I guess. They might order a couple hundred mine cars, and over the period of a year or so, he'd put together the mine cars and deduct it from what he owed them.

RM: He built mine cars?

JC: They built mine cars, pumps. If a mine broke a five-foot-diameter gear, they could make a new one for it. The foundry had a patternmaker and he had helpers. The patterns were generally made out of redwood. Everything he cast, he had to make out of wood first. It would be just a hair bigger so when you poured it in the mold, it would shrink to the size you wanted. One of the patternmakers that they had, his name was Ruffles, got killed in the pattern shop one day. He was turning a two-piece pattern from what I understand, and they had blocks on the end of it instead of perpendicular to the grain in the wood. It came apart and hit him in the head.

RM: How awful. Was he the chief patternmaker?

JC: Yes. After that, they hired another one. Then they had some machinists—one was a guy by the name of C. F. Farley, I think. They were all great at their professions, and they were all good union guys from around the world. But the shop here wasn't union—the miners were all union.

I guess every couple of years Farley would take off a few days, catch the train, and go to Reno and nose around and see what machinists were making up there. He'd come back, and Grandpa or Dad would say, "How are we doing on our wages?"

"Everything is good." They knew they were paying above union wages so the workers couldn't complain.

RM: What did they pay in those days? Do you have a lot of pictures there?

JC: Yes. This is a contract for an apprenticeship in 1916. A person would come in and say, "I want to be a machinist." I think it was four-year program. This contract says, "The said employee agrees that it will pay to said apprentice the sum of 31¼ cents per hour during the first six months, up to 75 cents an hour during the last six months." So that was a four-year contract. Those were pretty good wages in '16 and the guy would have a profession when he got through with it.

RM: What were some of the machines that they worked on?

JC: They built stamp mills from scratch, and all the components that went with them. And then hoists, compressors . . . if something broke, they'd build a new one because they didn't have welding machines or anything in those days.

RM: Did they build engines, too? Those old—I always called them one-lungers?

JC: No, but they built pieces for them. And if a mine broke one of those big wheels, they'd build a new one. We've got a whole building full of patterns for different things—you can go down and take a look through it one of these days.

RM: You have a lot of pictures, and you have all this knowledge—maybe we should talk about a book. Campbell and Kelly is an interesting segment of our industrial history. To think that they were making all those things right here in Tonopah—even engines for Hupmobiles; that's pretty incredible. What were some of the other machines they were making?

JC: After the mines shut down, when the price of silver went down and gold was on a standard, quicksilver was a popular mineral. I don't know if it was my grandpa or my dad, but they poured a lot of iron trying to make a quicksilver furnace so they could retort it, basically. A simple retort would be a continuous run thing.

Do you remember Clarence Hall? He was one of Grandpa's friends, and he was one of Dad's buddies—he was a mining engineer. He had great big ideas and he always came to Grandpa or my dad to develop them. They'd go through a few bottles of whiskey and argue back and forth about how things could be or couldn't be.

My dad was always up for a challenge. Even when I was a kid, he had this idea that you could take cinnabar ore and run it through a furnace and extract the quicksilver out of it at a lower temperature—he figured about 700. We built a furnace down here when I was in school on the weekends and evenings and ran it a few times. And sure enough, we could do it. We put temperature sensors in there, whatever we could find as a thermostat.

RM: And it worked?

JC: It worked, yes. It was basically just to prove to his buddy that it could be done.

RM: Did it ever go anywhere?

JC: It never went anywhere. Over in Fish Lake there was a mine, the B&B Mine. I think they did more promoting for money than they did actual production of quicksilver. We went over there several times when I was a kid to look at this thing. It was a pretty elaborate deal. There was an old boy over there and he came over and looked at Dad's furnace and one time he brought Mr. Bekins of Bekins Van and Storage over—I think he was promoting him for a few bucks. [Laughs] They stood around the stove and shot the breeze.

Dad would never tell him what was in it. It was about a 20-inch-diameter pipe full of tubes that the propane heat would go up through and he had coils in there with holes in them so as the quicksilver would evaporate from the dirt as it would go up, and then the tubes would catch it and it would go over into a condenser, then down into a Mason jar.

RM: Did it do a pretty good job of catching most of the quicksilver?

JC: Yes, we were running five-pound ore in it. You ground the ore up, and then we put it in there; it was about five pounds to the ton. And when we got through, we had about five, six pounds of quick. So the little bit of dirt we ran through it, I think we were catching probably 90-some percent of it.

RM: I remember a story—this would have been in the ’50s. There was a quicksilver mine, I think called the M&M Mine, as you go over Kawich Range to Warm Springs on Highway 6, off to the north there. And the guys at that mine understood the basic principle. They figured it was like distilling whiskey, so they didn’t have a very long coil. They were catching some quick, but a lot of it was going out and there was quicksilver on the sagebrush and everything and these guys’ teeth were falling out. [Laughter]

JC: Anyway, we sampled the ore from the B&B and brought the bags out. Old Clarence Hall had a ’55 Chevy station wagon. We loaded them in it and he took them off to Mina or someplace to an assayer buddy of his. Every time I went with him to sample a mine, we always ruined it because it never panned out as well as they thought it would. [Laughs]

RM: Sure, the old miner-prospector’s pipe dream. We spent some nights out there. My dad bought a black light, looking for cinnabar that fluoresced at night. We were hoping, but . . .

JC: Never found anything? [Laughter]

RM: Right. I always remember a night with the Terrells. They had a quicksilver mine out in the Grant Range above Railroad Valley and they took us out one night and showed us the cinnabar fluorescing. Oh God, it was neat. [Laughter] So you didn’t have to run that ore through a mill or anything, I guess.

JC: No, we just ground it up, put it in the top, and it ran down through gravity and screwed in at the bottom.

RM: And probably the sagebrush were not sparkling with quicksilver.

JC: No. You could smell a little bit of a sulfur smell in the air. They always said if you had a gold tooth, that was the secret—it would start turning silver. [Laughter]

RM: And you heated the retort with propane?

JC: The furnace we had was propane. The one that Grandpa and Dad had built before, I think they were going to heat it with oil. They never finished it—they cast a bunch of pipe, and they got some refractory cement so it wouldn't burn when they built a fire in it, but they never got past that stage. That went on long before me, but when I was a kid, on weekends and evenings when they'd get through a dinner, Dad and I always came over here and tinkered with some project.

RM: Basically, your dad and your grandfather were inventors, weren't they?

JC: I think so, yes, and Farley, who was a machinist. He lived in this little tent house, still intact, up in the yard and he had a little machine shop in the shed out back. On weekends he'd tinker with different things just for something to do. I think he was also into tanning lizards and snakes—he'd skin them and tan their hides.

RM: Would he do anything with the hides?

JC: Dad said he just rolled them into real thin paper and he'd lay them out in there. He said they were neat. But they all disappeared over time.

RM: What were some other projects they worked on?

JC: When I was a kid, the Summit King Mine—it was out back here on Dynamite Road, off where it turns to go to the county, kind of cattycorner from there about a quarter of a mile. The head frame was there and then they finally tore it down. Leonard "Felix" Traynor was always promoting that. When I was a kid, they were always out there. Jesus Martinez was the hoist man and we'd go out and get her going. We had an old compressor we'd rented and took out every morning because if you left it up to them to get it running, they'd run the batteries dead. Before we'd even come to the shop, we'd go out and fire the compressor up so they had some air to do their tinkering.

RM: What were the batteries for?

JC: They were just to run the starter. It was one of the few things around here that didn't have a crank on it. Everything else had a crank.

RM: Even for the machines in the shop?

JC: We had an electric motor for years, but back then the power company was really unfriendly. Even back in the early days, they'd charge you a dollar a horsepower-connected load. If you had a ten-horse motor running a grinder, they'd charge you $10 a month for that motor to be there. Between the accumulated horsepower they had to put to the thing, it was probably 50, 60 horsepower. So whether you turned the switch on or not, you paid out 50 or 60 bucks. Dad got in an argument with them one time so after that we ran it with generators and we had a crank to start, to run the shop. We did that for ten years. Then I went to work for the

power company. Sierra Pacific had bought it about that time so a little friendship developed and they came down on everything, and we got a better deal on it.

RM: That was very unfair. Did they do that to the mines, too? If they had a big electric hoist, they would charge them by the horsepower whether they were operating it or not? What was the name of that power company?

JC: Cal Electric, California Electric, was the early one, and then California Edison came in and bought Cal Electric out, and then Sierra bought it from Edison. The power came in here, I think, in about '05. Bob Pellissier in Bishop was Dorothy's Beko's uncle. He was a mechanic for the power company, and another guy used to be a lineman. They told me that the reason for the hydroelectric plants up those different creeks in Bishop was that the Tonopah mining industry paid for them to be put in. It was the only place they had any way of getting power; I guess they just chopped the tops off the trees coming over the White Mountains until they could get a power line to Tonopah. So we got our power from Bishop.

RM: What did they do in the winter? I guess the streams ran in the winter?

JC: I think so. I'm not sure, though, because it gets awful cold over there.

RM: Yes, up on those White Mountains. [Laughter]

# CHAPTER TWO

RM: When they were casting these big parts and everything, they had to melt . . . was it iron or steel?

JC: They melted iron. They didn't make steel; with steel, they had to blow oxygen in to burn the carbon off. But they made cast iron, gray iron, and brass and aluminum castings. They had one iron furnace and one each for brass and aluminum.

RM: How did they melt the material?

JC: They melted it with coke. They brought the coke in from Belgium, around Cape Horn and into San Francisco, and then on the railroad. They didn't want to use Utah coke because it had too much sulfur in it. They figured the sulfur would affect the quality of the iron.

RM: Was it a lot more expensive?

JC: I never did hear—it was just probably the going rate. It had to be because I don't know how many tons you could get on one of those sailing ships.

RM: Yes, and to bring it clear over here. Did they heat it in a crucible?

JC: A cupola. It was about three feet in diameter and they fed it from about 12 feet up. They'd put a layer of coke—so many pounds of coke and so many pounds of iron, and then coke and then iron. They'd build a fire in it with wood and get it going like a blacksmith, forging. They'd blow air in it, and it would go up through and melt it.

RM: They'd blow air from the bottom?

JC: Yes, then it'd go up through and they'd get this iron. They could continually feed it, too—if they needed a big pour, they could just keep shoving in coke and iron. They would take it out with their ladles, and they had all the molds out in the foundry floor. The ladles were pretty good size. They had a little bridge crane and they picked these ladles up and would carry them out, then they could pour them in different molds.

With the brass and aluminum, they'd melt those down and do the same thing, but they did those with a hand crucible; it was only about that big around and that high.

RM: About eight inches across?

JC: Yes. They'd pick them up with some tongs, one guy on each end, and then pack them out.

RM: Did they use chunks of raw iron, or melt scrap iron, or how did they do that?

JC: Originally, they melted iron ore; I think they bought it. Once they started having mills—you know, mines come and go—they'd buy them for the iron and scrap them out and bust it up. If it was a big casting, they'd take it up on the hill and dynamite it to get it down to where they could lift it. For the smaller ones, they had a head frame here with a big iron ball. They'd put the pieces in there and drop the ball on them and break them up into smaller pieces to manhandle.

RM: Was their business mainly in Tonopah?

JC: It was kind of all around the area. I think there was a little foundry down in the Beatty area; I'm not sure how long-lived it was. That slime pump that they developed was pretty popular all over. They shipped them to Aurora, west of Hawthorne. The last one they had, back in the '50s they had a guy from, I think it was Brazil, who wanted another couple of pump castings. At that time Nevada City had a foundry running, so they shipped the patterns over to Nevada City and had them cast the parts they needed, then shipped those down to Brazil. That's why they left the Campbell and Kelly name on everything, so that people around the world would know it.

RM: So they were shipping parts all over the world? Particularly these pumps?

JC: Particularly the pumps. They made water and mud pumps, both. They made them from one inch to six inch in size, depending on the application.

RM: How did they line the inside of a pump?

JC: Today, they line them with rubber of a sort, or they have different metals. But in the old days, they found that if they poured it on a big heavy piece of iron, the iron would be cold and when the melting iron would hit, it would cool it quick and make it harder.

RM: So that was the lining.

JC: That was the secret to it, the hard iron liners. Then they'd machine them up in one of the lathes; they could turn about nine feet in diameter. Another lathe was about 30 inches in diameter and 22 feet long.

RM: Twenty-two feet long on a lathe?

JC: Pretty big stuff. [Laughs] When I was young, before they took the gold standard off, there were all these mining promoters running around. There were guys with drill rigs here and there so Dad spent a lot of time doing a lot of drill stem work. That made the 20-foot lathe pretty handy; then he put the 20-foot sticks in there and put threads on the end of them.

RM: How did they arrange payment? Probably some of these miners were not too good at paying their bills, were they?

JC: That's what I noticed when I was a kid—miners and well drillers were terrible payers. [Laughs] They were all betting on the come. "We'll pay you when we get rich." [Laughter]

RM: Did they get cash up front or take it on credit?

JC: I think a lot of it was on credit. Of course, during the whole process, they sold those old Fairbanks Morse engines and other stuff from different manufacturers. And they had the car dealership so they had a couple mechanics that were working on cars all the time.

RM: Did they make car parts?

JC: Other than the Hupmobile engine, they probably made a few simple pieces, but if they could get them they would buy them because it was such a detailed deal to make.

RM: Did they recycle old cars here, motors and transmissions?

JC: Yes, they did. If it had a good engine or a good something, they'd take it out and put it in somebody else's car.

RM: Did they ever melt them down?

JC: Yes, they did that also. They'd melt the brass and aluminum and iron.

RM: What part of the car would be iron that they could melt?

JC: The transmissions and engine blocks. The steel would be the frame.

RM: So basically they could make about any part that a mine needed.

JC: Yes, pretty much anything that was around. Like the ore cars—they had the blacksmith shop before there were welding machines, so they riveted everything. And the same way with tanks—they'd drill the holes in the metal and then form it, then stick a bunch of hot rivets in it and hot-rivet it together.

RM: They didn't weld in those days?

JC: No. And everything that seemed to move in those days was on rollers—timbers and rollers. Of course, there were no cranes around.

RM: What would be the heaviest weights that they would encounter?

JC: According to some of these articles, I think probably about eight or nine tons. Once they'd poured it and turned it out, they'd have to jack it and put it on timbers and back the

whole truck under it somehow. Of course, in a lot of these places they had mines and mills down in canyons, and God only knows how they got all that stuff down there—haul it down on mules, I guess, or drag it.

Going back to Clarence Hall; he was plugged into the world pretty good. Back in about '58, the space program was getting started. When they launch a rocket, until it gains airspeed, it's unstable and wants to fall over. So they had jets of air that would come out up at the top to help stabilize it, and they'd somehow control it. But when you'd blow air out of a jet, it had moisture in it so it would freeze the holes over.

My father and Clarence got into a deal with the Chrysler Missile Corporation to build a freeze-dried high-pressure air machine and they developed a couple of those. They had a test at 11,000 pounds pressure. They used Freon 22. They built this freeze-dried air machine and it blew the air across some refrigerated coils and it would freeze the air. It would be down in the 100-something degrees below zero, and it'd blow across there and the coils would ice up, then it would swap over to another set of coils so one set would thaw out while the other one was freezing.

RM: Oh, so then it didn't freeze when it came out—or, didn't produce ice.

JC: Yes, it would be dry. They made two of them. A lower-pressure one, I think, was about 4,000 pounds, and then they made an 11,000-pound one.

RM: How did Clarence Hall get them connected with this aerospace contract?

JC: Like I said, Clarence was kind of a busybody. He got tangled up with a guy by the name of Stralla, I think. He was the guy that must have been plugged into Chrysler, finding out that they needed it.

RM: So he got them a little contract?

JC: Yes. And they took the machine back on an old '47 Chevy truck. Remember Wellington Rogers? He and Wellington hauled it back to Detroit, Michigan, rather than pay the freight. He asked them at Chrysler, "Why are we building this thing?" The building they had was a mile square.

And the guys at Chrysler said, "If we build this thing here, we'll have 500 people trying to figure out what it is, and nobody will know what the whole plan is. Whereas you guys can figure the whole thing out, and it's all in one person's head." [Laughs]

My dad thought they could start making money with it, but some outfit in Pennsylvania decided to do it. From what I understand, the outfit in Pennsylvania didn't know quite all the secrets of how to clean the air. They blew the air, I guess, when it was dry to help get the particles out. They had some containers, and the best filters they could get were Kotex sanitary napkins, so they bought cases of Kotex and stuck them as tight as they could get them in there.

RM: And that was filtering out the water?

JC: Yes, and a little bit of dust or whatever might be in there.

RM: But your family's air machine didn't go forward because of this outfit in Pennsylvania?

JC: Yes. It seems like it's true with everything—about the time you develop it and then you think you can make a buck at it, somebody else steps in. [Laughs]

RM: What other kinds of innovative things did they come up with?

JC: Right after they got through with that air machine, grain silos in the Midwest were blowing up because they had moisture in the grain. They put the grain in the silo, and then pretty soon they'd blow up because they were fermenting and creating gas. They started working on an air-drying machine to blow in the silos but the farmers were pretty conservative—they'd rather have the silo burn up than pay 1500 bucks for a machine that would keep it cool and dry. [Laughs]

RM: How did they get interested in the silo problem?

JC: I don't know how that came about. I think they may have been watching it on the news. And they thought, "We'll solve your problem for you." They had a solution to it but the farmers were too cheap to invest in the solution. [Laughs]

RM: It seems they were Thomas Edison-type people.

JC: Always thinking. I remember Dad—he'd come home and have a piece of paper alongside his chair and he'd be drawing sketches. He'd drink a highball or two waiting for dinner; he was thinking about something all the time. [Laughs]

RM: How remarkable. So your father was born in 1913; and when did he die?

JC: He died in '99; he was 86.

RM: Was he an inventor clear up to the end?

JC: Probably till he was 65 or 70, when my mother passed away; that was in '76. I think he kind of gave up. Then I came into the picture again and was doing my thing and he kind of helped me out and gave me some advice.

RM: Did you get involved in it as you got older?

JC: I was probably an old man when I was ten years old. [Laughs] I was fortunate—I don't think there was anyplace I couldn't go with my dad. About 10:00 a.m., he and Emerson Titlow would go across to the Tonopah Club and have coffee and sit there in the booth listening to these guys talk the same garbage we're talking today, only the names are changed a little bit. In

the afternoon, they'd do it all over again. And I'd go along with them. Every once in a while, somebody would show up and they'd go have a few cocktails. I'd tag along if I could get away with it.

RM: And this would have been in the summers, right? Because you would have been going to school.

JC: Yes, in the winter it would be Saturday or something like that. In the afternoons, we'd go swimming up at the swimming pool in the summer. Then when I was about 11 or 12 years old, we got the Chevrolet dealership on the corner here and we sold gasoline. We had to keep this thing open on Saturday for the customers to come in so when I was about 11 years old, I'd get stuck over there gassing up cars.

RM: And that was in the days when the service station attendants washed the windows and checked the oil and all that. Did you do that?

JC: Yes, wash the windows, check the oil, check the tires, radiators, everything. [Laughs] It was quite an era. But I got so sick and tired of it. Some of that is great experience for a young person because they get a chance to put up with people and get to feel people out. Some people are wonderful but it depends on how you treat different personalities as to how the reaction comes back from them. Most of the time, pretty near everybody I ran across were decent people. But every once in a while, there'd be one that would come in, and he and the family would be on a vacation for a couple of weeks. By the time they got here, they'd been fighting for two weeks. Maybe they'd drive in from Vegas, and their car would be hotter than a son-of-a-gun. "Check my water." Obviously it's working fine—otherwise you wouldn't . . . "Well, it was running a little bit hot." No kidding—you've been coming uphill for the last 200 miles. [Laughter] You'd finally get their radiator cap off and they had plenty of water. But by then, you'd spray some water out and then they'd say, "You got water in my power steering," or "You got water in this," just anything to bug a kid.

RM: How long did that gas station operate?

JC: Dad gave it back to Chevy in '65 and in '66 we got out of it, giving up the Chevrolets completely, and then we just kind of ran the shop over here. That was about the same time as the start of the MX missile thing.

There was a company by the name of Hubbard Drilling. They drilled a big well out in Monitor Valley that ended up being a geothermal, artesian, and they capped it. They put those atomic bombs underground up at Site C or out by Tybo and Hot Creek, and we got an awful lot of drill rig work from those folks.

RM: That was a huge bore, wasn't it? I think I saw it one time; I couldn't believe you could bore a hole like that.

JC: Yes. Angelo Ciarlantini was hauling fuel, and he said he could drive his fuel truck through the casing on it [Laughs]. I never did go out and see the rig.

RM: And you were supplying them with parts and the foundry work that they needed?

JC: Yes. I'm not sure why they were up in Monitor Valley but it was right after that that the MX thing came to town. I don't know if that big bore was part of the MX or if they were just looking for a place to blast off some more atomic bombs.

RM: I think the MX was a separate program. Did you get work out of that?

JC: Lots of work. We had a little dump truck, and then a backhoe and a loader we'd bought for little to nothing and overhauled. The Corps of Engineers were here doing a lot of testing on the MX and we'd go out and dig water sumps for them so they could drill their holes; we did a lot of drill bit work for them. You couldn't ask for a better group to work for as far as pay. Every time you'd give them a bill, they'd give you a PO. We'd send the PO and the bill in, and they'd send us money.

RM: When did the shop really shut down, for all intents and purposes?

JC: The foundry part, I think, shut down about 1940 or so, when World War II began. That's when the price of minerals went down.

RM: So basically the foundry hasn't operated since World War II.

JC: No, but we still use the machine shop all the time.

RM: What kind of work do you do with it now?

JC: When I got out of school, there was actually not much going on. Dad and I went down to Darwin, California, and we built a tungsten circuit in a mill, spent about six months there, and then came back, and there still wasn't anything going on.

RM: You mean you did the electrical work on it?

JC: We put in some concentrating tables and pumps. It was a lead-silver-zinc thing. The company we were working for leased a small part of it, so we went down and put some equipment in to mill the tungsten ore. When we got home and there was actually nothing going on around here, I did some work contracting, then went to work at the fire department. Over time, I went to work for the power company.

RM: Before we go into that, tell me more about your grandfather and your father. How long was your grandfather actively involved in the foundry and machine shop?

JC: My grandfather was involved in it on a daily basis clear up until he got killed in ’44.

RM: Was your grandfather an inventor, too?

JC: Yes. I think between kind of inventing things and having a bunch of machinists around that would pick up the slack—what one person didn’t know, the other one would. That [laughs] makes it handy.

RM: It seems like there’s a can-do attitude with your father and grandfather: “Hey, we can do this.” It wasn’t, “Oh, you can’t do that kind of thing,” which mostly is what you hear: “That can’t be done.” Can you talk about that?

JC: I think they had a great ability to think through things. Like the Hupmobile—it was one of the first cars that came to town. The automobile got started about 1900. The mechanical things, I think, intrigued everybody—why do things work, and how do they work, and how can we improve on everything? Of course, I think we’re still doing that today a lot, but maybe we’re focused on specific things instead of looking at a whole picture. And those guys didn’t have computers to have to worry about confusing them a bit in the function of things.

I think Grandpa also got tangled up with the mining bug. One thing in this collection of papers told about how they’d grubstake some guy out in back, I think it was, to go out and develop a mine. They’d take him out some bacon and eggs and some pancake mix every once in a while.

RM: Was the mine that he was developing local?

JC: I think it was out past the Summit King. And they had one over in Little Fish Lake, also, because I remember they’d go out there.

Dad said Grandfather had a seven-passenger Hudson sedan, the family car. It was about a ’17 or an ’18. They’d take off and go out to these places. One time they went to Lake Tahoe for a family vacation with the kids. Apparently when they left Hawthorne, they went up over Aurora. It was a steep hill so they had to unload the car. Dad said he was little but he had to carry his sister up the hill. They’d unload the car, pack all the extra gas and all the family stuff up, then drive up the hill and put it back in the car.

They went to Lake Tahoe and they ended up with a boat somehow with an engine on it. The engine wouldn’t work so Grandpa fussed with it. “In order for me to have a boat to take my family fussing around, I’ll keep all your boats running [laughs] for the time I’m here.” So he got a free boat for keeping the guy’s other boats working for him. So even for family vacations . . . I don’t think they took too many. There was always somebody that had to be here to baby-sit the shop so there wasn’t always time to go out and monkey around.

RM: How many employees did they have there at its peak?

JC: I think at its peak, probably about 30, including breaking iron—bringing old scrap iron in and then busting it up.

RM: You mentioned they'd drop a ball on it?

JC: They had a ball that probably weighed 1,000 pounds and they'd hoist it up about 20 to 30 feet, then put a bunch of scrap iron under it, big pieces, and drop the ball on it and it would break up because cast iron was brittle compared to steel.

RM: Do you still have that ball?

JC: It's still buried here, yes. Over the years I put the house here, so I filled in with dirt. I know where it is, but I'd have to dig a hole [Laughs].

RM: I get the feeling of a real spirit of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Part of it is the opportunity—there was opportunity here. And they were smart enough and creative enough to see it and really go after it. From what you heard from your father, what was your grandfather's character like?

JC: I think he was the type of person that everybody liked, just an overall nice guy. As far as the entrepreneurial thing, I was glancing at this article earlier. When they first came, he got into a little machine shop business. They were running mules or horses hauling freight to Manhattan so he got a steam tractor, or maybe it had one of those old oil engines, and tried to run this tractor. I think he went down in the valley by Millers and then across over to Manhattan.

RM: Did it work?

JC: It worked, I guess. But the story I remember getting from Dad was that if they came to a wagon pulled with horses, he'd have to pull off out into the brush and let it sit there and cool because it would scare the animals, then go back, get on the trail, and go on. [Laughs]

RM: Did they use it for long?

JC: I don't think it was too long.

RM: What do you call the old one-cylinder engine that goes [makes a sound] and then it hits?

JC: They call them a hit-and-miss.

RM: We had one on a hoist out at Reveille. [Laughter] What was the advantage of the hit-and-miss?

JC: It's an industrial engine with a low speed; you get a lot of torque out of them. It has a big heavy flywheel that probably weighs 500 or 600 pounds apiece, and you get them in motion and they kind of carry things through.

Fairbanks Morse used to be a popular engine for hit-and-miss engines for running things, I think around here they'd use these Campbell and Kelly engines for a power unit. Bob Revert down in Beatty was telling me years ago that there was a motor out on the Test Site that ran a hoist that had a Campbell and Kelly engine on it. He was always going to try to finagle some way of getting it off there for the museum, but nothing ever happened with it.

RM: Do they have any Campbell and Kelly stuff up at the museum?

JC: Not of the engine, but the mining park has a big display of Campbell and Kelly stuff.

RM: Was your grandfather a big man?

JC: No, he was probably about 5'10" or 11", something like that. About common size for that day, I think.

RM: What about your grandmother Campbell?

JC: She was a housewife. I think I was 13 when she passed away in '61 or '62. She spent the last four years up in the nursing home here; she had what today we call Alzheimer's. They lived across town, right next door to where my dad was born. They'd had a house, and then next door to it was this bigger house. It was owned by a guy by the name of F. T. Highland, and he was a banker here. He got caught robbing the bank somehow so I guess the cops came up there one day—they arrested him, I think, and took the house—"You get a suitcase full of clothes, you and your wife, and we're going." Everything in the house, all the furniture and personal belongings, were left there. Grandpa bought that house, and then my aunt and uncle moved into it after my grandmother moved out. My cousin and family still live in it.

RM: Did you ever have any contact with your mother's parents?

JC: No, they passed away before I come along.

RM: It seems like you and your father were very close.

JC: We were probably as close as any father and kid could get. From, say, June till after deer season, it seemed like every weekend we'd go out in the hills. We'd keep the Chevrolet thing open on Saturday morning. And of course, Saturday morning was the time you kind of gathered up your groceries. Then we'd go out in the hills and fuss around, go fishing, or if it was bird season or something we'd go hunting.

We had a cabin up in Pine Creek—I remember it being way at the top end of the campgrounds when we first started. I don't know if it was a Forest Service cabin in the early days, but our family and Ed Siri ended up getting this cabin. One time when I was little—maybe seven or eight years old—the Forest Service ran us off; we couldn't be on Forest Service property anymore. Arcularius owned the land right up to their sign so they put the cabin on some trees and dragged it down there and we'd go out on weekends; we did that for three or

four years. Another partner, Leo Funk was the assessor for a while. We'd always go out, then finally we dissolved that relationship.

We had a little camp trailer-type thing and we parked it and left it with Albert Hooper, a Shoshone Indian, who used to have the Stonehouse Ranch. We'd go out every weekend in the summer, just go fishing or monkey around. If it was time to brand cows, we'd get involved and do that with Hooper. Albert and his wife, Mamie, a Paiute, would usually bail the hay, and on weekends we'd go out and put it in a hay wagon, and then go put it in a stack someplace.

# CHAPTER THREE

JC: Like I said earlier, I was always allowed to go with my dad damn near anyplace. He and some buddies of his ended up buying the Tonopah Club in about ’58. It was a financial disaster. [Laughs]

RM: Why was it a financial disaster? It was the top place in town, wasn’t it?

JC: Yes. Later on, I found out that Dad had a philosophy that was, “If you don’t know anything about it, don’t get involved with it.” If you’re a mechanic, you don’t need to be in the gambling business because you don’t know anything about it.

RM: How long did he own the Tonopah Club?

JC: I think from ’58 or ’59 to ’60.

RM: And it didn’t work out financially? Was it because the employees were stealing from him?

JC: A lot of that went on.

RM: I’ve heard that you’ve got to keep a close eye on those operations. Bob Perchetti eventually took the Tonopah Club over, didn’t he?

JC: It burned down during late fall of ’74; it was freezing.

RM: Did the Chevrolet dealership take a lot of effort?

JC: Yes. It was under Campbell and Kelly so it was all in the same bank account. You’d make money in the shop, then Chevrolet would come in and look at your financial statement and say, “You made a lot of money last year. Why don’t you give better deals to sell more cars?” Dad said what they were doing was having them take money and give people better trade-ins, then you got stuck with a piece of junk, and the only way you could get your profit out of it was to sell the junked used car. Dad said, “We never made any money the whole time we had the Chevrolet dealership.” He’d just get in the car and head for Tybo or one of these mining camps, peddle the car, then catch a ride home.

RM: The used cars they took in trade?

JC: Used or new, either one. He said sometimes the people would give him a ride back to town, then, “I’d sit down in the Tonopah Club, and we’d have a party, and I’d spend all my profits buying drinks.” [Laughs]

RM: How many cars did they sell in a year?

JC: Towards the end, we were maybe selling a couple a year. In its heyday, I imagine they were selling 20 or 30. Before they brought them in on a truck, they brought them on the railroad to Tonopah. Or after that, they brought them into Mina and they'd have to take a bunch of drivers down, take the cars off the train, take some jacks and jack them from the ramps.

RM: What about other dealers? Red Douglass had the Ford dealership, didn't he?

JC: Yes, Red had Ford, and I think Tom McCullough had Studebaker, and Lee Henderson at the Tonopah Garage had GMC and Buick. Cavanaugh had Chrysler and International, I think.

RM: There was a wide variety of cars available in Tonopah. And this was in the '50s?

JC: Yes, you could buy almost anything you wanted. If you couldn't get a good deal from this guy, you'd get it from the other guy. Dad told me that every once in a while, the county would want to buy some new trucks so he'd go down and bid on them. He said, "I generally bid on them, and then I'd knock off the price of the heater," because the heater was an option in those days; the price of the heater was ten or 15 bucks. He said, "I'd undersell the other guys. Of course, you can't sell that cheap, but the secret is, they have to come to me to buy all the parts to keep the truck running for the rest of its life." [Laughs]

RM: Oh, that's how he was making ends meet. Did he have a large parts inventory?

JC: We probably had, in the '50s, maybe 5,000, something like that. They had a lot of heaters, and radios were an option.

RM: John, I'm probably going to continue to bring the conversation back to your grandfather and your father. Do you have any other stories or anecdotes about their lives?

JC: Pretty much everybody walked to work in those days. Dad said that Grandpa used to walk home at lunch and eat, then take a nap and walk back in the afternoons.

RM: And how far would his house have been from here?

JC: For walking, probably about 15 minutes. It was up by the old school on University, out where the park and swimming pool are now.

RM: What kind of hours did they put in?

JC: It used to be 8:00 to 4:30 with a half-hour lunch. They said that unlike today, when they showed up at 8:00 back then, one old-timer would come in and grease the shop and make sure they're ready to go and at 8:00 everybody was standing at whatever job they had and they

turned the shop on and everybody went to work. At 12:30 to about lunchtime, they'd shut it off.

RM: Would most of the guys bring their lunches?

JC: Yes, and they had a change room with a shower there so they could put on their dirty clothes and work all day, then get cleaned up. I think that, especially on payday, they had a little tough time with getting the help to come back after lunch because they'd walk uptown and there were two or three saloons on the walk. They'd go over to the whorehouse and take care of business [laughs] and lose the paycheck.

RM: How often did they pay?

JC: I think it was twice a month.

RM: Were they working five or six days?

JC: Five and a half, half a day on Saturday.

RM: Maybe they paid on Saturday.

JC: If they paid them on Friday night, they wouldn't show up Saturday. [Laughs]

RM: Right, they'd get there Monday. [Laughs] That was when the red-light district was behind . . . what street is that?

JC: St. Patrick's; by the Elks Hall. The Big Casino and a couple other businesses were on Main Street.

RM: So there was a lot of opportunity to be relieved of your money. [Laughs]

JC: And on the way over, on Water Street, I think, where the old jail is, that old rock building, somebody said at one time that was kind of a lower-class brothel. And there used to be a building behind our building on the corner, the old Chevy garage—I think it was a brothel, also. They moved it over here and made it their office building; it's still down here.

RM: Is it kind of a sacred building? [Laughter] Best way to preserve that building.

JC: Walk under it at night, it gives you good feelings. [Laughter]

RM: So there were brothels in other places besides the red-light street?

JC: Yes. John Connelly had the lumberyard down here and for some reason, one time he ended up with a red light and a bunch of guys kept stopping by; they thought he had a business going. [Laughter] He had to take the bulb out and put a while light in it.

RM: That's funny. Any stories you recall about your grandfather?

JC: I think they were entrenched in getting the business to work. When my dad was young, as I said before, I don't think they took too many vacations. Dad said they used to go out in the hills a lot, but it was with the shop crew more than his dad. They'd go out fishing and hunting and stuff. They had a couple of old cars that they'd use. One of them, he said, was sailing along pretty good and they hit a bump and the timing gear slipped—it was worn out. They had to get out and take the engine apart, retime it, get her going. [Laughs] They didn't get to go fishing.

RM: And they would know how to do that.

JC: They knew how to do that, yes. He mentioned that when times were tough, like around the Depression era, and maybe some times before that, they worked the part crew. If they didn't have any work here, they'd take an old truck and go out to a wood camp to chop wood. They camped out for a couple of weeks and sawed wood and then hauled it back to town. That way, everybody that worked there had a supply of wood for the winter.

RM: And would he pay them while they were out there or they just got their wood?

JC: No, they just got their wood.

RM: Where would they go for that wood?

JC: I think he talked about over by Hunt's Canyon, up in that area. Of course, it was dirt road and it was a hard rubber-tired old truck. He said they were coming up the road one time and the truck started going off the road and started to tip over. They didn't have any doors on the truck so the old-timer that was driving climbed out the door and rolled around with the truck as it went over. They unloaded it and rolled the truck back in its wheels, loaded her up, and came home.

RM: Amazing; he rode it down?

JC: Yes, he just kept on the upper side of it. Some old-timers, they didn't go very fast, so by the time they'd come to an accident, they were moving probably pretty slow.

RM: Would those old trucks haul pretty a good load?

JC: Pretty good for that time. I think they put five or six tons on it. When Tybo was booming, they had a bunch of trucks that ran back and forth—they hauled concentrates. They'd

fill them up and they'd just barely get up the hills, I guess, coming in from Tybo. I'm not sure how they went—if they went down by the Test Site and around or where the road is today.

RM: They must have been doing foundry work for all of these camps around here—Round Mountain, Manhattan, Goldfield. There was no foundry in Goldfield, was there?

JC: No. I was thinking of a story they told about when they went out to Round Mountain and poured some new bearings in the ball mill there. They gave the job to the shop foreman—I think it was Pete Wilson at the time. He spent a couple of weeks gathering up babbitt, a type of bearing surface, and all the tools that he thought they needed, jacks and things to jack the mill up, and poured it.

RM: Is that right? So they poured the bearings on site?

JC: Yes, built the old babbitt out. When they poured it, they'd take the crew out from the shop and melt the babbitt. They had a ramp and they could carry the ladles of molten babbitt up and pour it in.

RM: Would that have been the Sunnyside Mill at Round Mountain?

JC: It probably was that old mill. The mill that's up at the mining park now, we went out 30-some years ago and rolled it out of the old mill building, what was left of it. It could have been that mill.

RM: I think that was the Sunnyside. I know of a guy in Vegas who hauled timbers out of there and built a wonderful house over in Boulder City.

JC: There were some pretty big timbers in those days.

RM: Any more recollections about your grandmother? What was her life like?

JC: I think the women were more homebodies. I don't believe the workers had too many wives and I don't think there were too many wives involved with the miners. It seemed to me the businesspeople were the more affluent and maybe had a wife.

I think the women kind of stayed home and played bridge in the afternoon and had teas and would sit around and gossip and tell each other what their old man told them the night before, [laughs] who's doing what.

My dad talked about old-timers down below here. It snowed one winter pretty deep and they didn't even come down to open up the shop for two weeks. My dad and grandfather walked down one day when it was starting to melt to see what was going on and there were some footprints from down below that went up the street from where the old-timers lived in little old dugouts and caves—they had walked uptown and they lived the winter in the Tonopah Club and the Mizpah.

RM: Really, there were people living in caves?

JC: Just down below here, I think there used to be a couple of dugouts, like cellars. The only tracks in the snow were from those guys walking up to the club. They could get a stack of pancakes and a cup of coffee for a couple of pennies, then they just slept in the back room someplace. I guess that would have been the Tonopah homeless. Some of those old-timers were even around when I was a kid. They lived in shacks down here, in caves.

I remember one time when I was pretty small, the cops went down and pretty soon Bill Logan, the mortician, came down with his pickup and his wicker basket in the back end, loaded the guy up, and hauled him back up the road. He had died in that little cabin. Logan owned the funeral home. He used to have a wicker basket about the size of a casket that had a wooden top on it.

RM: And that's how he transported the bodies?

JC: Yes, he would load you up in the wicker basket. He could kind of wrestle it around by himself, once he got you in there. You'd see the pickup and the basket go up the street.

I remember when I was a kid, the altar boys in the Catholic church would change to church clothes in the sacristy in the back. I don't why, but the priest had the wicker basket leaning up against the wall. That's why I knew so much about it. When we'd go in there to change, it would kind of give you the willies. We'd open it up once in a while to see in. It's at the museum now.

They talked about one guy who pinch-hit for the mortician once in a while—Old Henderson, the guy that had the Tonopah Garage. He went out to Silver Peak once to pick up a guy up that had passed away in an outhouse. He said by the time they got him out and got him in the wicker basket, "He rolled down the hill and he was on top and I was on top." They finally got to the bottom so they could load him up. He told the mortician, "I'm through. Don't ever call me again to go help you." [Laughter]

RM: No more wrestling those corpses? [Laughs] That would be hard moving.

JC: Moving that dead weight by yourself, yes.

RM: Have you got any more stories or recollections about your grandfather's era?

JC: I couldn't think of too much. I went through these old newspaper articles—I'll give you these two. Joni Eastley found some of them and another gal found some for me. Those guys used to know how to write articles. One article tells how they shipped a bunch of castings and pumps to Aurora over by Hawthorne.

And then of course there's the fire in the foundry. Some of this article's kind of hard to read.

RM: And that's from March 6th, 1913, in the Tonopah Bonanza?

JC: Yes, when the foundry burned.

RM: Did it burn it to the ground?

JC: Some of it was still standing; the machines were still usable. [Reading] "New machines the shop constructed. Taxable property, assessable at $112,000. Debt from this investment, or rather from the taxes paid thereon. About the only attention they received from the county board, acting as the town Board of Trustees, is to be arrested for not paying the town's license, which actually occurred a few days ago. And as county record that the road leading to these two establishments. . . ." Which meant the machine shop and the mine over here, the mill—they ended up having to maintain the road themselves, and they had buy their own fire hydrant, which is still up there.

RM: What was the name of that mill?

JC: It was the Midway. It's that mill building on Hooper Way, across from Campbell and Kelly.

RM: So they weren't paying the business license, apparently?

JC: Yes. The West End is what the mill was called. I think they hauled the ore from behind the convention center, where that big dump was. And the mine was right behind Robb's old house on Edwards Street.

RM: Do you remember the name of that mine? And that was where they were getting the ore for the mill? Was it a small mill?

JC: Yes. They said when they used to haul the ore down, they had two guys in the old trucks. The driver was a teamster and they had a guy that rode shotgun and he was a helper. They had a lightning and rainstorm one night. The lightning, they thought, hit pretty close over here. The driver hollered at his partner, and they tried to get out and hook up the dump body. They didn't have hydraulics on the truck. They had a kind of hook up above and they drove out from under it and it raised the dump body up. But the lightning hit the guy inside the truck and killed him.

RM: Oh, my God. I wonder when that was.

JC: I'd guess that had to be back in this same era, maybe '12 or '13.

RM: Where was the mill getting its water?

JC: From the town, which it was getting water from Rye Patch. They had old wooden pipelines. It took a ton of water to a ton of ore for milling; if they milled a couple hundred tons of ore a day, that was pretty good water.

RM: That's a good bunch of water, yes. And the town water came clear out here?

JC: Yes, the water line went right through our yard here.

RM: And where would it cross the mountains from Rye Patch?

JC: Dynamite Road goes straight and the road will turn up at the top of Booker Mountain where the radio antenna is. Just kind of keep left and it goes on over. Albert Hooper used to have a little corral down there.

RM: Talk about your father growing up here.

JC: There was a cute story he used to tell. When it came time for him to start driving, he had what he called a runabout. What it amounted to was a Model T with a seat on the frame folded down. He was going down the street and he had his feet up on the towel on the dashboard and the cop pulled him over, gave him a ticket and chewed him out.

Then he had another Model T his dad gave him. He used to go uptown and get new parts for it all the time to keep it running. One day he went up to town and came back with a brand new top on it—a touring car-type top. And his dad said, "Where did you get that?"

"Well so-and-so up there," the Ford dealer.

Grandpa went up and talked to the Ford dealer. He said, "What are you doing, giving my kid all these parts and this top on the car?"

He said, "As long as you're selling Chevrolets and he's driving a Ford, I'll put on all the parts I can." He said the next day, he had a Chevy. [Laughs] He wasn't about to drive a Ford around when his dad's selling Chevrolets.

RM: Who owned the Ford dealership in those days?

JC: It was Richardson and Lovelock. They moved to Reno from here and had the Ford garage up there. I remember we used to stop up there once in a while. The guy that had it was pretty old and Dad knew him a little bit so he'd go in and chat with him.

# CHAPTER FOUR

JC: One of these articles talks about when Campbell and Kelly went down to Arizona—I think where Boulder Dam is. They were bidding against a bunch of big contractors from around the country to put some ball mills and a bunch of stamp mills in a mine there. They had a reputation of being able to do good work, and do it in a timely manner, and when it came time to award the bid, Grandfather got it. I think that was back in about ’16, ’18, something like that. Dad said he remembered being down there when he was a little kid. That mill is probably under water now.

RM: So that they were bidding on projects in the region?

JC: Yes, all around the state. Wherever there was something that needed to be done, they’d go and bid on it.

RM: Were they pretty successful in getting contracts?

JC: Pretty good, I think. They had a good reputation: “If you bring us something that’s haywire, we’ll fix it for you. And if you got an idea for something, give us the idea and we’ll see if we can help you come up with a solution for it.”

RM: When they built a mill, did they build it from scratch, or did they buy a lot of the equipment?

JC: They built some of it. Down in the pattern shop there are a couple of ends for a ball mill. I think they may have cast the ends of it, then got some steel and formed it around or riveted it to make their own. I think they made their own stamp mills.

And one time they made . . . I’m not sure what the name of the mill was, but they called it the Tetrault Mill. It was a little two-stamp mill; it was more for sampling. They set one up behind the pattern shop—there’s a little tailings pile there. If people wanted to see if the mill would work on their ore, they’d bring in some ore and run it through the mill and see if they could get a recovery. And if they wanted one, “We’ll sell you one of these little mills, and then you can take it out to your property.”

RM: And they were making the hammer and the cam and the pulleys. And they made all of that?

JC: Yes. They had big shafts and they could pick it up . . .

RM: They could make big shafts?

JC: They’d buy the shafts. As the cam would come around, it would lift it up about 18 inches and then drop it.

RM: And then they were making crushers and ball mills?

JC: Ball mills, and they made crushers.

RM: They made the jaw crusher? Almost from scratch?

JC: Yes, from melting . . . I'm not sure where they got their redwood. Some of it was for staves in the old wooden water tanks. They'd stand them on edge, 4 x 8s or something like that. They also used redwood for the patterns because it was easier to carve and it wouldn't warp or distort if it got any moisture in it. If you'd make a pattern with pine or something, I think it would probably change shape on you just a hair, where the redwood wouldn't.

RM: What would people use today? Can you get redwood?

JC: I think you can get it but I'm not sure if it would be as dry as it was in those old days. Today they use some plastics and machine them. I went into a foundry back in Maryland years ago, the Bethlehem Steel plant. The guys were making some of their repair equipment and they had a foundry going just for that. I think they were using wooden patterns there, also.

RM: Those guys had to know how to carve, and plane, and shape. That must have been quite a skill in itself, if you had a complex part.

JC: Yes, and to be able to calculate different angles and things. In making a gear, you might end up with 50 teeth all the same shape.

RM: How did they do that?

JC: They'd have to make all the teeth separately; they'd cut them out and shape them, make sure they were all the same, then lay them out on the circle and glue the teeth on with shellac and put a couple of little brads in to hold them on.

RM: If a guy was going to do a gear with 50 teeth in it, do you have any idea how long it would take him to make the pattern?

JC: I'd guess it'd take him a week or so. There's got to be terrible boredom. If you can make a part quick, it's fun. Otherwise, you might set the lathe and stand there for 30 minutes waiting for it to make a cut, then adjust it and stand there for another 30 minutes.

RM: Yes, that would be boring. Let's go through the process. If I've got a mine up here, and I have a gear with 50 teeth on it that's gone bad, what steps would they go through?

JC: I think you'd bring it in and they'd give it to the patternmaker. He had different rulers than the inch ruler—it might be just a hair bigger, say an inch and an eighth per an inch. He'd have to make the pattern out of wood so it would be just that hair bigger. Then he'd take it

over to the molder in the foundry and he'd put it in the molding box and tamp the molding sand around it. Then they'd take the box apart and pull the pattern out and set the top on the box again and that would leave a hole the shape of what it is you want to make.

RM: How would the sand hold its shape?

JC: It was a molding sand, or a clean sand, with a little bit of moisture on it.

RM: And it would hold pretty good? Then what did they do?

JC: They had another calculation as to how much the pattern weighed. A pound would translate into, say, two pounds of iron. They had a scale up on the cupola and they'd figure out how many tons of iron they needed and get the iron all broken up. And so many pounds of coke would melt so many pounds of iron. They'd put a layer of iron and a layer of coke in the cupola and then spread the fire.

RM: And it's blowing air in there?

JC: Yes, getting it fired up and melting. Then they'd take it away, and if they didn't have enough heat in the first one to do a pour, they had some bars of manganese they'd drop in the ladles to create heat before they poured. That way, if they didn't have enough in one, they'd have to make a second pour. The pours would have to be all done at the same time so it wouldn't have a cold joint in it. They'd have to pour enough to heat up enough and keep it melted.

RM: And then you'd pour it all into the sand, right?

JC: Yes, you'd have a hole in the box and pour it in one hole. It would go through and then come up in the other one.

RM: And it fills in all the little nooks and crannies?

JC: Yes. And if you wanted a hole in it, they had another pattern to move through the core, create a core for it in the sand, and then they'd suspend it wherever it needed the hole.

RM: You mean a hole to attach to a drive shaft or something?

JC: Yes, or they'd have a round core that they'd stick in it. That way, when they got through, they could dig the sand out of that hole, and then they'd have a hole in the machine, too. After they'd pour it, they'd come back the next day, or whenever it cooled off enough to handle, and then clean it up and bring it up to the machine shop.

RM: Was it rough where the iron met the sand?

JC: It was a little rough, not too bad.

RM: Was there sand sticking to it and embedded in it?

JC: A little bit, but not too much. When they made the mold they put some parting sand on it like finishing concrete, I guess, where it would be real smooth around.

RM: Oh, I see. And after it cooled, they would take it out, recycle the sand, and then touch it up?

JC: Yes, grind it and buff off the barnacles and different things. They had a little round jitterbug thing that kind of shook. The helper would go and shovel all the sand that was still in kind of chunks. They'd break them up and drag it down the foundry floor and create a little windrow of sand for whatever they wanted to pour the next time. They always had sand alongside the molding boxes. They bought molding sand, or they'd go down to Millers and shovel it out from under the sagebrush. That blow sand was mostly clean, but every once in a while it would have a piece of vegetation in it and it would pop. That's the reason they didn't use it all the time—they needed to burn it first to get rid of the vegetation and other garbage.

RM: What's the biggest pour they could do—how many thousand pounds or whatever?

JC: I think about 5,000 or 6,000 pounds.

RM: And they could melt that much iron in one pour?

JC: That's why they put it in those ladles and kept it hot by putting manganese in it.

RM: Can you describe a ladle?

JC: They're a pot with handles on the sides for lifting and turning. It's got refractory cement inside it. It's made out of steel and they use clay, mud, inside of it. They pour the iron in it and then carry it with a crane.

RM: It's basically a pot to carry the molten iron in?

JC: Yes, like a crucible in an assay office.

RM: So they made their own molds, they did their own pouring, and what about the design? Let's say a guy comes in with an idea, "Here's what I'm thinking about." They would help him?

JC: Yes. Some of the mining companies had engineers that were draftsmen, too, and they'd bring down a good sketch of the thing. Or Grandpa, I think, would sit there and do some drafting on it, or maybe they'd hire a drafter. There were a lot of napkin-type sketches—they'd

do something like that and bring it down and give it to a draftsman, and he'd draw it up a little cleaner with some decent measurements and give that to the patternmaker.

RM: Let's say you had a 5,000-pound pour for a big flywheel or something. How would they handle that after it cooled down? How would they clean it up?

JC: By hand, with a hammer and chisel. Some of the gears that were rough, they were made well enough that the teeth would mesh close enough into the other teeth, like on a pinion versus a ring gear. That way, they wouldn't have to machine the teeth again. With some of them, they'd cast them and take them up to the machine shop and machine the teeth so they'd be a little sharper or cleaner.

RM: If somebody had a big 5,000-pound flywheel and it cracked, would they have to cast a whole new wheel or was there a way of repairing it?

JC: Sometimes they'd repair them—they'd drill and put plates on them. They'd take their tools and pull her back together with some bolts. They made bolts up to an inch and a half—as big as you wanted, actually.

RM: Would a 5,000-pound pour take up the whole operation for a few days?

JC: Yes, once the molder got it done, the whole shop crew would go down. There'd probably be 20 people, between the ones breaking the iron and so on. They'd get pretty much all the iron they could and get it broke, then they'd put it on little ore cars because they didn't have forklifts in those days. They had a trestle that ran from out where they broke the iron and had the coke stored, and they'd roll it up a little incline to the furnace.

RM: And you said they had a furnace?

JC: Yes, for the iron, and then two that would melt bronze or aluminum, but they were oil-fired.

RM: Oh, because they have a lower melting point? What were they making out of aluminum?

JC: They made castings for some different things—I think car parts more than anything.

RM: Oh, they were making small things?

JC: Yes, clear down to little tiny caps, and almost down to a bolt. They'd make from big stuff clear down to something small—whatever needed to be done.

RM: So if it was made out of iron, they could make just about anything that wasn't too big? What other unique things did they do?

JC: They took that contract to build the Belmont Mill; we talked about that last time.

RM: And they built that pretty much from scratch?

JC: Yes. I think they poured the concrete. Of course, I think the concrete was basically mine rock that was they threw some cement at but it's still standing out there today. [Laughs]

RM: And they would have been pouring for the mills. They probably made shaking tables, too.

JC: Probably, yes. I noticed in one of the photographs there was a picture of a railroad crane with Campbell and Kelly on the side. I don't know if they bought one or maybe they rented it, but that made for good photography. It's like today, everybody puts a sign on their trucks when they go out on a construction site.

RM: And you said there's a lot of machines around that have Campbell & Kelly in the iron.

JC: Yes, I think they put their name on everything they made. [Laughs] In the pattern loft, the different shelves are alphabetized but I've never found a book that shows what's what—would the West End be under "W" or would it be under "C" for crusher for West End? I've never figured out their system. [Laughs]

RM: But all of those plans are there.

JC: Yes, those patterns are there. And, of course, there's a lot of blueprints for different things, like the pumps and so on. One or two of them are in almost like a picture frame. I think they would take those out and they could use them to explain to a customer what went on. Or maybe they kept them out so the mechanic who was assembling the pump would know this piece goes there and that piece goes here, and have an exploded view of it.

RM: You said the refining was done by coke and air, and the air was driven by electric motor, with basically a big fan. How about the grinders and other machines and the overhead cranes and all—what was powering them?

JC: The overhead crane was a man-powered thing. It had chains to pull it to travel lengthways in the building and you'd pull the other chain . . . it was the same as the bridge cranes are today, only it was Armstrong. They moved a hook back and forth, then had a hand winch that would rise the hook up and down.

RM: Oh, so it wasn't hooked up to the motors?

JC: No. And the old lathe and those things were hooked up to the line shaft—they had one motor in the rafters. The lathe and everything had an idler pulley and then a drive pulley, and some of them had a clutch on them.

RM: What is an idler pulley?

JC: It was two pulleys side by side. One would be hooked to the machine to drive it and the other would be sitting there spinning. You'd switch the belt from the one that was just spinning to the one that would drive it, and it would drive your machine. When you wanted to shut it off, you slid it back. Otherwise, it would just sit there and rotate. I think the foundry was running on about a ten-horse electric motor.

RM: And you told the story of the power company charging you by the horsepower, and not by how much power you used. [Laughs]

JC: Yes. Sometimes we think we're a generation that's taken the short end in power and the different bills we have to pay. Like when they needed capital to run the business, they'd go to the bank and the bank wasn't afraid to charge them 16, 17 percent interest on the loans. It's not an awful lot different today.

RM: Did they have internal combustion engines powering anything in the place?

JC: Originally, they said they had an old Fairbanks or something that powered the deal and then they went to electricity. Or maybe they had the engine in it prior to the fire, and then went to electric after the fire. Other than buying the fuel for it, the engine was probably the cheapest way of going, instead of fighting the power company for a dollar a horsepower.

They talked one time about some mine over in Goldfield that owed them some money—they had sold them jackhammers and steel and pipe and different things. So they went over on a Saturday and got ahold of the hoist man. There was a code of ethics where if they talked the hoist man into going out to the mine, he can't leave you down in the hole—he's got to stay there until he gets you back up.

They weren't supposed to go down there; once the mine had something, whether they paid for it or not, it was theirs. But they took a truck over and got the hoist man, and he let them down the hole—they give him a bottle of booze or something for doing it—and they pulled all the stuff out that belonged to them that they hadn't been paid for and hauled it back to town and stuck it under the loading dock here. It probably wasn't more than an hour or so later, here came the cops because the hoist man—they took care of him, but they made him walk back to town. [Laughs]

RM: He couldn't tell anybody till he got to town so they got at head start. [Laughter] So what happened?

JC: They come down looking for the stuff, and they couldn't find it. "No, we don't know what you're talking about." The police finally went away.

RM: So they took possession; the seller didn't have any other recourse.

JC: No, it was up to the seller to figure out how to get the money. I think there was a lot of that. And I noticed there's a lot of old mine stocks; the company would get something done and they didn't have any way of paying so they'd give them a couple thousand shares of this 10-cent stock.

RM: So getting paid was a problem.

JC: It was a constant problem. I was looking at an old ledger a while ago—I was kind of curious as to what they were charging per hour for their shop rate. I'm sure it couldn't have been much more than 50 or 60 cents back in the early days. In '28, the shop rate was a dollar and a half an hour.

RM: That's almost a jaw-dropping figure.

JC: Yes it is, compared to today. The employees were getting 40 cents. Now they're charging $100 an hour to get your car fixed.

RM: I wonder what a 1,000-pound flywheel would have cost a buyer in those days.

JC: It seems to me I saw something at one time and it was about 30 cents a pound. I don't know if they charged extra to make the pattern; they might have.

RM: What did they do with the pattern after they had used it? Did they keep it or recycle the wood?

JC: They kept them. They put them in a building down here that is still full of patterns; it's got thousands of them.

RM: So you could, in effect, start making those parts again?

JC: Yes. They had a lot of things—valve handles, a lot of different things. If somebody needed a couple of something like that, they'd make maybe half a dozen and put the other ones out in the little storage area so if the customer came back and wanted one, they'd just go out and pull it off the shelf. And as I told you, they took orders for a couple hundred mine cars over a period of a year or two.

RM: How could they do it?

JC: In slowdown times they'd pour the axles and pour the wheels and then put the little trucks together.

RM: So they poured their own wheels? Were they using sheet iron for the sides and bottom?

JC: Yes, they'd rivet them together.

RM: Do you have any idea what they were getting for a mine car?

JC: I think maybe 100 bucks or something; I wouldn't think much more than that.

RM: Would you say most of the things for the mines were made locally?

JC: I think so. By the time they brought some new stuff in and it ran through its useful life, it would probably have broken and they'd either have it repaired or make a new one.

RM: So if a guy in 1915 is developing a little mine out here in the hills, he'd probably get his stuff here, if he was going to get it new. He wouldn't be ordering it from San Francisco or something.

JC: No, they'd come down here. And they'd sell jackhammers or steel or hammers; it was kind of like a big hardware store. They'd sell a little bit of everything.

RM: Did they make jackhammers?

JC: No. I think they bought those and sold them.

RM: Did they make compressors?

JC: I think they made compressors as well as the engine, and they made compressor parts. A lot of those old engines were Fairbanks.

RM: So they were actually competing with Ingersoll Rand and Fairbanks Morse and all of them, weren't they?

JC: And they were selling Ingersoll stuff and Fairbanks stuff, too.

RM: Were they licensed dealers or just kind of selling it?

JC: I think they were a licensed dealer. I was looking at a paper the other day . . . when they got the Nash dealership in '27, they had a little contract that they had to buy the franchise. I think the franchise for southern Nevada cost a couple hundred bucks. But they would say, "We reserve the right . . . if we want to put anther Nash dealer in someplace like Beatty, we can do that, and you don't have anything to say about it." [Laughs] I think that's way it was with those old engines and mining equipment— "If you want us to sell your stuff, just give us the free rein and we'll peddle your things."

RM: And they would keep stock so if a guy came in, he could take it home with him?

JC: I think so, yes. And if they needed parts, they'd have a lot of odds and ends and pieces to sell. I'm not sure how they kept score on all that, but it had to be quite a challenge.

RM: Did they make picks and shovels?

JC: No, I think they sold those. They had a couple of blacksmiths and a helper, I think, there all the time.

RM: What work were the blacksmiths doing?

JC: In the early days, they were sharpening dull steels and picks. And if you needed your mule or your horse shod, you'd bring it down and they'd put shoes on it for you. That had to be kind of a tough business about August—once you get the fire started, between that and the weather outside being warm . . .

Winter would be kind of tough. I think the trouble with a lot of those old engines is we didn't have any antifreeze in those days. They'd use water to cool them, so they'd freeze and bust once in a while. Somebody would forget to bring them in or something might freeze while it was running. And sometimes they'd end up with their plumbing freezing.

RM: So at best, they would have to drain them every night.

JC: Yes. I'm not sure how that would work the next day—they'd have to go and refill the tank and if it was cold out, you couldn't fill the tank because it was still freezing. They also did the maintenance on those ice plants, the ammonia plants.

RM: Did they have an ice plant here in town?

JC: I think they had one here and there was one in Goldfield, a big one. Dad talked about it years ago—they'd cool it by pumping ammonia through a bunch of pipes. They had this big tank full of water and it would freeze and they'd put the containers down in it to freeze and make block ice, so you could put a load on a wagon and sell it around town. But the darned ammonia was so harsh on things that they'd have to go and drain it and then weld the ammonia pipes. That ammonia, I guess, was a terrible thing, trying to drain it out and warm it up. [Laughs] It was bad enough just getting a little whiff of it once in a while.

Everywhere they went, they went on the train. If they went to California or someplace, they'd pack a lunch for however many days it was going to take them to get where they were going, climb on the train, and away they'd go. They might make it to Reno after eight or ten hours.

RM: Did they do work for the railroad? Because they were probably always having parts breaking.

JC: Yes, they did work for the railroad here and there was a railroad that went into Silver Peak—they did work for them also.

RM: But they didn't work with steel, right?

JC: No, because they couldn't pour steel. They could machine it, but to make it, you have to get the carbon out of it, so they had to blow oxygen into it and in those days they didn't have any way of doing that. And cast iron was strong as long as you didn't, say, hit it with a hammer or something. If you do, it will break, whereas steel won't. But for tensile strength, cast iron is pretty strong.

RM: When did welding come in?

JC: They brought a welding machine—and it's still there—back in the teens or '20s. It was more or less just a transformer with a couple of wires coming out of it and then they used bare rod. They didn't have any flux on it in those days; I don't think they knew what flux was. I remember them talking about it—once you'd get it started, you had to be a pretty good welder to keep your distance. The power is at 60 cycles per second, so the pulsations of the AC electric would be too slow. A few years later the outfit that made the welding machine made another one that went with it, a little attachment that speeded it up—they called it the missing link.

RM: And it made a better weld, right?

JC: Yes, supposedly.

RM: Can you weld iron?

JC: Yes, you can. We use to braze it with a torch.

RM: What's the difference between welding and brazing?

JC: Brazing is using brass to weld. They didn't have material for cast iron that was very good, so they would just reheat the casting and braze it and let it cool. Now they've got some pretty good welding rods that you could use for it.

# CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Do you have any other recollections of your father growing up? He was part of the community; his life was in the community.

JC: Nye County had their own fish and game department before the state took it over. They'd sell fishing and hunting licenses to help fund buying the fish for stocking the area and paying for a game warden and they needed a way to transport the fish from the fish hatchery. It seemed like they were always playing with refrigeration. They built a fish truck with a tank and put some refrigeration in it with pumps and coils and refrigerated the water. They felt that if the water in the tank was too warm for the water in the creek, the difference in temperature would probably kill the fish. They could turn this air compressor on and cool the water and they were the first ones to haul live fish without losing any.

RM: This was Nye County?

JC: Yes. They'd go to Idaho and pick up a load of fish and then come back and take them out to the different creeks and put milk cans full of fish here and there.

RM: When was this?

JC: It started back in the '40s, or maybe the '30s. They came back through by Hawthorne one time, by Walker Lake, and the old truck broke down there. They didn't have any way to worry about the fish, so they dumped them in Walker Lake. That's where they claim the trout in Walker Lake came from. [Laughter]

RM: Are there trout in there today?

JC: Yes, but they're going away now, I guess because the lake is so polluted that the fish can't survive. They said trout wouldn't live in it back in those days, but they dumped this load in because they didn't have anywhere else for it.

When we were kids, like I say, we were out in the hills all the time. When my dad was a kid, he went out in the hills all the time but it was always with somebody besides his father. The fish and game outfit would go out counting deer and go out fishing. It kind of evolved into the Tonopah Sportsman Club or whatever it was. They'd have little barbeques and go out and count deer someplace, just go out in the hills and monkey around for the day once in a while.

RM: Do you think there was more connection in those days with the vast land resources of Nye County than there is now?

JC: I think there was. People were taking care of their own in those days. They'd go out in the hills and plant fish and take care of things on a volunteer basis. Of course, the Forest Service had some guys out in the hills that just kind of lived there—Herman Chappell lived up in Jefferson Canyon and he maintained a road that went over into Monitor Valley. We drove over

there quite a few times pulling a horse trailer. And then all of a sudden, it's down to a motorcycle trail. That's the road Dick Carver and those folks had the argument about a few years ago.

RM: Yes, it ended up on the cover of Time magazine in 1995. [Laughter]

JC: I think they had more of a connection to the land because it was theirs to use freely.

RM: Maybe people are just sitting around watching TV rather than . . . do people go out in the hills and prospect now?

JC: When I was little, we didn't have any TV. We had a radio, and then we finally got TV, a San Francisco channel. I don't think there's prospecting like we used to do. When I was a kid, when the uranium boom was going on and the atomic bombs were being tested, I remember going out with Dad and Leo Funk. We'd do assessment work and drag a road with something—you had to move so much dirt or spend so much money on your claim to keep it. Those were August/September type things. You were always going someplace doing something.

RM: When you were growing up, do you remember a radio program at night called "Lucky Lager Dance Time"? You're probably a little bit too young for it, but in the '50s we used to listen to it out at Reveille. They played popular music and it was sponsored by Lucky Lager beer. I don't even know if they still make Lucky Lager beer.

JC: I think they do.

RM: Bobbie Duncan told me that that was her No. 1 beer up at the Buckeye. This would have been probably the '50s or very early '60s. She said she thought it was because of "Lucky Lager Dance Time."

JC: Like I said before, I used to go with Dad sometimes to the Corner Store, which was owned by Gerald Roberts; it was next to the Mizpah, where the Butler Motel is now. Every once in a while on a Saturday we'd go in there. I, of course, was a young kid and hanging around. Most of the time they drank whiskey, but if they took a beer, it was Lucky Lager. That was popular in those days.

RM: Yes, and we loved the program; it played popular music. I think somebody down at the Ace Club said, "Yes, it's a big seller here," and they thought it was because of the radio program. [Laughs]

JC: We drank some stuff made by Lucky Lager called Lucky Draft beer years ago.

RM: But you think Lucky Lager is still made?

JC: I think so. I haven't heard of it for quite a while. It had a funnier taste to it. We drank Budweiser and Hamms. Mostly we drank Coors, but we got into a Lucky Draft thing one time. Lucky Lager was just a little different taste. But when it was free and you weren't old enough, anything was good. [Laughs]

RM: Right. Do you have any more thoughts about your dad? It sounds like he had a wonderful relationship with his father, that they were pals and your grandfather brought him into the business so he was kind of groomed from day one. My take on it would be that he had the creative gene.

JC: I remember him talking about the old machinists they had down there. People would bring in a job and my dad would grab a phone and say, "Yes, we can take care of it." Then he'd take it over to the machinist and say, "Got a job for you."

He said one day the old mechanic said, "How you going to do that?"

He said, "I told him how I would do it."

And the mechanic said, "You know, one of these days you're going to take on a job around here where I may not be able to do." [Laughs] So far, they hadn't. I think that was a way of life around here—if it wasn't a challenge, it really wasn't fun. Some people might have had the gene of being a borderline engineer and other guys were always just working.

When I was young there were always these promoters or miners coming in with an idea. They'd go in the office and sit down and draw pictures and do this and do that. "Oh, yes, we'll do something with it. I'll go get some money and we'll do something with that." They'd take off and come back in a few months with a whole new idea; they forgot all about that project. [Laughs] I don't know if they were just testing him or what.

RM: I think your dad and grandfather were engineers. You don't have to have all the math and training to be an engineer, really. In my view, engineering is a talent in the head—in the spirit, actually.

JC: It has to be—like an artist, almost. The Tonopah School of Mines used to be up there by where the Convention Center is in that parking lot up towards T Mountain, across the street. Dad said that he went to it when he was in high school because they didn't offer things like drafting in high school. And if you were struggling a little bit with algebra or geometry or whatever, you could go down there. Engineers from the mining companies and different places taught drafting classes and assaying and things like algebra. If the people from the mines wanted to improve themselves academically, they could go there. You could maybe improve your lifestyle instead of digging all the time.

RM: Was it a bunch of local engineers and chemists that got together and did it?

JC: I think so. I think the mining companies funded it themselves. That way, they were the beneficiaries.

RM: That's right, they were cultivating employees.

JC: I thought about that—even at the high school here, some of those classes like shop and drafting end up taking the back burner, especially now that it seems like the dollars are going away. Every year I get kids coming down here for a little field trip. I ask them if they have drafting up there—nah, they don't have that. "How's your shop class?"

"Well, we work on a little engine here and there." With the Test Site and all the engineers they had there, I thought they could create a pretty good evening class. They may have tried it a couple of times but of course people think, "We're already too smart so we wouldn't go to a thing like that. We know too much." [Laughs]

RM: Was that engineering school in a small building?

JC: Yes. Later on they called it the Red Cross building.

RM: Is the building still there?

JC: They moved it to Kingston, I think.

RM: What years did it operate?

JC: It was still going in the mid-'20s when my dad was in high school. Of course, today we call it community college, I guess. And we have the Internet.

RM: It's nice that the mines were providing that. I wonder if it was gone by the Depression.

JC: It could have been; it seems like everything went away about that time. Of course, once the Depression was over, then a war started, so one thing led to the other, didn't it?

RM: Do you think there's still ore in Tonopah or did they pretty much get all they could?

JC: I think they pretty much got all they could. And then being silver, the last years, even when Leroy David sold it to Howard Hughes, they sampled the underground and they sampled the dumps and they sampled everything. I think when they got all through, there wasn't enough left. They said if they did do something, they'd have to do an open pit, but there was never enough to make it worthwhile.

RM: I've heard there was ore in the bottom of the Victor Mine.

JC: I've heard that too, but it's down under the water a ways.

RM: And hotter than hell down there.

JC: Yes. [Laughs] That's that little monument down just past the cemetery down that hole, that pyramid-shaped rock monument, I think that may be where they spread the ashes of the

manager/owner of the Victor Mine. They claimed that monument was right over the ore body, so if they wanted to go for ore, they'd dig there.

In my dad's era they'd say, "Why don't you bring one of those big drill rigs in now?" Like when they were doing that stuff out at Tybo for the atomic bomb—they'd just drill a hole ten feet in diameter. [Laughs]

RM: Any more thoughts on your dad and his growing up and being a central part of the Tonopah community?

JC: I know they were both Rotary members. Grandpa was a charter member back in the '20s and Dad was there. When I was a kid, they used to go to their secret meeting on Tuesday at lunch. I always wondered what that was all about. Now I do it every Tuesday. [Laughs]

But he was always there. They say ten percent of the population or one percent of the population makes all the decisions for the rest, or something like that. You try to get a group together and do town board stuff. I remember going to town board meetings with him when I was a little one and they were arguing about the same stupid things they are today.

RM: What do they talk about today?

JC: They were discussing the museum and they were talking about the water and the fire department. Every time something would burn down, they'd say, "Well, that high pressure valve didn't work up there." "Why didn't it work?" "It should have worked." "They should test it more often." It happens once every ten years—they fix it and it works fine until the next fire. [Laughs]

RM: So your dad worked with Campbell and Kelly right up to the time he passed on?

JC: Yes, the last few years he'd come down and have a beer with us and we'd sit around and shoot the breeze every evening. Some of his old buddies tried to get him to move to Reno. They'd say, "You can take your talent and move to Reno or move anywhere and make twice as much money or ten times more money." But he said he just was a Tonopah person so he stayed here. Of course, I come along and do the same damn thing.

My dad said his mother always dressed him in knickers, short pants of some kind, and would sent him to school wearing knickers because that was supposed to make him a little higher class. He'd take some old junk clothes with him and get out of sight of the house and change his clothes and go to school so he'd be like the rest of his buddies. [Laughter]

He said one time he went to school and he was real young and there was a little black kid with red hair. He said, "I took him home to Mom and asked Mom if I could keep him." He was the cutest little kid.

Over the years around here, people would go delinquent on their taxes and Grandpa would buy things up for taxes. For instance, there was a gas plant up there, Nevada Gas Works. I guess they made a coal gas, I think it was methane, and they pumped it all over town for gas lights and heat in different places. It was where that smokestack is out there.

RM: To the east of you?

JC: Yes. Grandpa bought that for taxes years ago and then scrapped it out. Sierra Pacific came in here ten or 12 years ago and they have a historical preservation program. Two guys showed up and wanted to go look at the gas plant because there was this plant, one in Virginia City, and one in Carson City, and this is the only one that was kind of left. They had some drawings of the foundations where the compressors and the tanks and the buildings were so they went up and took a look.

RM: Was there much left of the plant?

JC: No. I think it started in about ’18 and lasted for three or four years. I think they were financed and they created it and then they just didn’t have enough revenue to keep it going. I think they took coal and put it in the firebox, then they’d spray water in it. And between the hydrogen from the water and the coal, it would separate and make a methane gas that would be flammable. They’d suck the gas off and compress it and put it in compressed storage tanks and then pipe it around town.

RM: So people here had gas piped into their homes?

JC: Yes. That had to be a lot of work, putting water lines around people’s homes and then digging another ditch through the rocks to put a gas line in. Every once in a while, somebody will come up with another gas line. Years ago there used to be a few gas meters people would come up with.

RM: Was that gas venture financially successful?

JC: I don’t think so.

RM: And your grandfather bought it and scrapped it out?

JC: Yes, he just scrapped it out, the easy part. I don’t know if he used the compressors or maybe broke them up and put them through the foundry and made something else out of them. I was reading an article on an Internet site I follow about old engines and old machinery and old this and that. This guy was having trouble machining a piece and he’s buying Chinese castings and one of them had a Schick razor blade in it. He said, “The reason I know that is because the name was still on it. I couldn’t machine it because it was so darn hard.”

RM: You mean, they hadn’t fully melted it?

JC: Right. I thought, “Well, that’s kind of the same way the old-timers were—they’d scrap it out and hopefully they’d melt her down enough to where it would all be fluid together [laughs] and pour it in.

RM: Were there other things they bought for taxes?

JC: They bought a couple of houses. One house . . . a piece of it's kind of burned but the guy that lived in it had TB or smallpox or something, one of those diseases where the bug never really goes away. I remember Dad said they went up and Wellington took a five-gallon bucket of gas in and poured it all over and set it on the front porch and threw a match in, grabbed the bucket and it blew him across the yard. They wanted to burn it down, and I guess the fire department showed up and put it out for them. They must have gotten rid of the bug, anyway. [Laughs]

RM: Was that Wellington Rogers? Tell me about him.

JC: When he was in the service he was in the Seabees; he was a diver in Pearl Harbor, reclaiming the bodies out of those old ships. When he was here, he worked for my dad. He was a carpenter and a cement man by profession. But he really loved kids. I got along great with him. We had a couple of tow trucks and, of course, we had the Chevrolet dealership. If somebody broke down or got in a car wreck, I'd go out with him to pick up the remains of the car in the middle of the night on the highway.

RM: My dad bought his shack on Bryan Avenue from Wellington. Did Wellington live there when you knew him?

JC: He lived up here all the time, but I remember he had a house up there. I think he had several different wives over time, so he had different houses.

RM: Oh, where he kept different wives?

JC: I think so, or he had a wife and they'd have a house and then he'd go away from her.

RM: Maybe he had one of his wives living in the shack up there.

JC: I think he probably did. His sister was here, Bea Murphy. Big Ed Murphy—she was related to that family somehow. I can't remember how that all worked.

RM: Wellington married a girl from up at the Buckeye, didn't he? She was a nice woman.

JC: Yes. Terrie. She had a boy prior to him and then he had a daughter with her. They lived in that little tent shack up here in the yard. It's still got a tent in it. We put a roof on it, trying to save it a little bit.

RM: What happened to the kids?

JC: The daughter, I think, lives in Elko and the boy's down in New Mexico or somewhere. He raises horses of some sort.

RM: They'd be getting up in years now, wouldn't they?

JC: Yes, they'd be, oh, bumping 60.

RM: Did they grow up here in Tonopah?

JC: Yes. They went to school here and I can't remember when he and she got divorced. She married Mike De Carbonel, I think, and Mike just died a couple weeks ago over in Ely; she died several years ago.

RM: It was not unusual in Tonopah for men to marry girls off of the line, was it? And they were perfectly well accepted.

JC: Yes. Like one time years ago when I was down here fussing around—I probably was eight or nine years old—Wellington said, "Come on, let's go up here. I got to fix a water leak." In the old days, up at Bobbie's Buckeye they had a water tank up on the hill. What I would call the "big boys," the young guys in town, would get this little army water tank on a trailer. Bill Hines had a little Jeep and they'd pull up to the firehouse and fill the army tank full of water and tow it up to the whorehouse and pour the water in Bobbie's tank. The water line was rusted though coming out of the tank, going down to the building. We patched it up a little bit and put some tape around it.

RM: Did you patch it with inner tubes? That's the way we used to do it—you'd wrap a strip of inner tube around it and then cinch it up with bailing wire. [Laughs]

JC: I remember there was a dead mouse floating around in the tank so we reached in and threw it out.

RM: And that was Bobbie's water supply.

JC: That was her water supply. [Laughter] I didn't have a clue what was going on in the whorehouse, but I knew there was something neat up there when I was a kid. [Laughs] After we fixed the pipe, Wellington had to go down and have a couple drinks—take a little break and get paid for his patch. Of course, I was just hanging around.

RM: He didn't let you go in with him?

JC: I don't think so. I think I had to wait in the car.

RM: That would have been, what, in '60?

JC: Yes, '57, '58.

# CHAPTER SIX

RM: What do you know about Bobbie? Did you know her very well?

JC: She was always a sweetheart when I was up there. Of course, it's one of those places, it didn't make any difference how young you were. If you were 14 or 15 years old and you could get up there, you were going to get serviced.

RM: Did she have a discount for the real young fellows?

JC: No, it was ten bucks for ten minutes in a straight lay, and 20 bucks for 20 minutes and a half and half. [Laughs]

RM: And kids 14 would start going?

JC: Yes, she'd take your money. And of course, those old dolls just loved having a new, young virgin. When I first went up there, there were three or four of us. One guy was 15 and I think three of us were about 16. We walked in like we knew what was going on and sat down at the end of the bar. We weren't sure what was going to happen.

RM: What did happen? She wouldn't serve you a drink, but maybe a Coke?

JC: Yes, she give us a Coke and then the old ladies of the night came over and chatted with us. We had about ten bucks between us, so we divvied up our funds, and one guy went to the room and the rest of us headed back to town so we could dig up some more money so we could go back. [Laughter]

RM: Did you make it back?

JC: Yes, we were back. If you were too young, you had to sit at a little table in front of the windows and the cops and everybody would drive by. Of course, that was a turnaround place for all the kids anyway, a place to go when you're cruising, take a look in the front window and see what all the bad guys are doing. [Laughs]

RM: One time in Ely, we were living up by the railroad tracks, and my dad was getting all dressed up. I said, "Where you going, Dad?"

He said, "I'm going to see a man about at dog." We thought, oh man he's going to get us a dog and so we followed him. He went down to the Big Four.

And we said, "God, what's he getting a dog in there for? Do they sell dogs?" We didn't have the vaguest idea what was going on. [Laughs] We got home, "Dad, did you get the dog?"

"No, I couldn't get it." [Laughs]

JC: Those whorehouses—I don't know, I had an awful lot of fun. [Laughs]

RM: Oh yes, that was a vital part of my life.

JC: One time we were up there fussing around and a bunch of air force guys were kind of getting loud. They'd ordered up some food from downtown. We'd had a couple of beers and we said, "Well, we'll see you guys later, we're going to go."

Bobbie said, "Oh no, we'll buy you all a beer. You guys stay here just in case something happens." So they bought us beer and we waited until those guys got through with their partying and went off. They didn't want to have to call the cops for anything because I think they felt it would give them a black eye in the public. If there was anything that you ever needed donations for, Bobbie was Johnnie on the spot to cough up the bucks.

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

JC: She was in the army and she was MacArthur's driver. She was a nice lady, and she ran the union hall up here. I got along fine with her, but I didn't have too much to do with her. One day when I was working at the firehouse I went up to the union hall. I thought, "Well, all my buddies are going to the labor union," and they were making big bucks, supposedly. I went up there, and they were building the hospital at the time. I told Toni, "I'd like to join the laborers."

She said, "Why?"

I said, "Well, maybe I can go up there and work on the hospital to make some bigger money."

She said, "John, you might not like it." For ten or 15 bucks or 20 bucks, she said, "I'll give you a work permit and then I'll send you out on a job."

I paid her for a work permit to join the labor union and I went up and worked there for about a week, maybe ten days. I wasn't there much longer because you show up and pretty soon the job started. There wasn't much work for a laborer to do at that point; you ended up packing boards back and forth. Finally the guy said, "I don't have much else for you." and laid us off. I went back to the firehouse. And I thought, the heck with that because at least at the firehouse I know a paycheck shows up every two weeks.

RM: So she understood your situation and was looking out for you?

JC: She was looking out for me when I wasn't looking out for myself. Yes, she took care of everybody around here.

RM: I wouldn't have made it through college if it hadn't been for Toni—I would come out in the summers and she would get me a job and I'd make enough money to go back to school, bless her heart. [Laughs]

JC: Yes, she was a sweetheart. When she was up at the old hospital, she knew who you were. I'd walk in and she'd say, "Hi, John" and we'd kind of chat for a while. Gosh, she had to be in her 90s then.

RM: You mean she was in the hospital before she died?

JC: Yes, she was in the extended care part up there.

RM: Was she in there a long time?

JC: A year or maybe two, not very long. When she was home a lot of people would look after her. I don't know if they were looking after her in hopes that, if she passed away, they'd be heirs to Toni's fortune or whatever. Then pretty soon, they'd give up on it and somebody else would be over there all the time for months. Then somebody else would be in there. I thought, "Gosh, Toni's going to outlive all these characters." [Laughs]

RM: She did live a long time, didn't she? I tried to get her to do an interview, and she wouldn't do it. Bobbie wouldn't, either. The old working girls don't talk on the record. [Laughter] But she used to tell me stories. I used to go into the union hall and just shoot the breeze with her. She'd tell me how she worked calls down at Hearst Castle with William Randolph Hearst. Somebody told me the other day that somebody asked her, "What was your most memorable experience in World War II?"

And she said, "The night I had sex with General McArthur." [Laughter]

JC: I always heard that was part of her claim to fame with him, but maybe not.

RM: I don't know if it was just once or what was really going on. But she was a lovely person. You were too young to remember Bill Thomas, weren't you? Or do you have any memories of him?

JC: I just remember seeing him on the street. I remember his wife. I think I used to sell her newspapers. When I was about 12, 13 years old I sold the Las Vegas Review-Journal and she was one of my customers up on the hill.

RM: What was her name?

JC: I can't remember that. One time she wanted to go buy a new car and one afternoon I thought, "Well, I'm getting old enough. Maybe I ought to try to sell her new a car." My dad didn't quite get the gist of what I was angling for so he went up and chatted with her for a while. He never did sell her a new car. She never bought a new car anyway, and maybe I kind of knew that she wasn't going to, so I went through the motions with her.

RM: Was Bill gone by then?

JC: Yes.

RM: To me, he's a giant figure in Nye County history. He was sheriff for almost 50 years. I see him as the last of the old sheriffs of the West.

JC: He was a sheriff and an assessor. Ed Slavin's dad was an assessor or sheriff, Ed told me. One time Ed told me he had a girl up on the line, too. He was a kid in school and his dad was the assessor or the sheriff. Ed got this gal and she was pretty fond of him. He'd come home wearing brand new shirts and stuff. She even bought a car and he was her driver, I guess. [Laughter]

RM: And he was just a kid?

JC: He was just a kid, yes. His dad finally told him, "You don't need to be showing up with new shirts, new clothes, and a new car and going to school and everybody else is wearing old wore out clothes and stuff."

RM: That's a wonderful story. That's one Ed didn't tell me when I did an oral history with him. [Laughter]

JC: Ed was a character. I really liked him.

RM: I did, too. It seems like the brothels were an important institution in town, weren't they?

JC: They were, yes. I think all the rich people showed up with their own wives and women and the poor guy, all he could do was take his paycheck and stop by—they had the two bits, four bits and a dollar, I think.

RM: For the price?

JC: Yes, my dad told me that. On Main Street they had . . . I don't know, I think it was a buck on St. Patrick's Street and then it was 50 cents, four bits, back off Main Street. You'd go out—I think it was one way or the other—and it went from two bits to four bits.

RM: This would be in the real early days of Tonopah.

JC: In the old days when my dad was fussing around, doctors used to bring their cars over and get them fixed, and he was a young kid. Of course, the kids were all mucking around with the young girls and there was venereal disease, clap and all, and they didn't have a cure for it then. He told me he asked this one doctor buddy of his, "How do you tell if a woman has the clap?"

He said, "Well if you put your finger in it and it comes back cold and clammy, take her home." [Laughs]

He said that happened with one gal. "It come out cold and clammy, so I took her home, and went down to the service station and washed my hands in gasoline."

RM: Oh, in other words, she would have the clap?

JC: Yes. And he said, “Damned if she didn’t.” He said about a week later, the other guys that were playing around with her came down with the clap. He said, “I was lucky. I went to the station and washed my hands.”

RM: That’s a great story. Yes, it was a real problem if you got it. I guess you could get rid of it?

JC: I think so. They had, I guess, all kinds of weird ways—they’d stick a wire thing up in there and then pull the trigger on it and some little blades of something would come out, kind of draining the little puss pockets in there. They said that none of it was very pleasant. I don’t know how early the condoms came out.

RM: Now, you’re showing me something in a little tin.

JC: It’s a little tin packet with condoms from the olden days.

RM: Oh my lord. They’re called Napoleons. And then it has a little sheet inside—directions and what the characteristics of it are.

JC: There’s only one of them missing

RM: I guess they’re rubber? That’s where the term “rubber” comes from, I guess. How old is this?

JC: It would probably be back in the ’20s. There’s a patent on it. I can’t read the darn thing.

RM: It says “Registered U.S. Pat Off. Manufactured for J.D. Drug Company, Chicago, Illinois, by the Killian Manufacturing Company, Akron, Ohio.” [Laughs] Interesting that it’s from Akron, because wasn’t that where they used to make the tires?

JC: Yes. In our diggings around in some of the stuff the last few years, we opened a few boxes and we found a bunch of books and a lot of them were on sex. I don’t know what the big curiosity was.

RM: What were the books?

JC: They were brand new. I think they were down in the pattern shop. I think my father or grandfather were storing them for one of the old machinists or something. One of them was in the Elks and he decided he was going to go off and live in the Elks nursing home in Florida or somewhere. It might have been him. He had padlocks on all his stuff and stuck it down in the pattern shop.

RM: What did you do with the books?

JC: We've still got them in here.

RM: How old were they?

JC: I'd have to dig them out and see what date they were. I guess they were probably up to the late '30s or so.

RM: I wonder, what was the young girls' attitude toward the young guys going up to the brothels?

JC: Back in my dad's era?

RM: Yes, or even when you were growing up.

JC: I don't know. I think they kind of liked it.

RM: They probably knew that the guys were doing that, right? It probably took the pressure off of them?

JC: The darn air force guys were here—they had a radar station here when I was a kid. They were older guys and a lot of the young girls went with them.

RM: Did many of those girls marry airmen?

JC: My sister and quite a few of them did.

RM: In your experience, who did the local guys marry? Did people tend to marry locally in your time?

JC: Some seemed to, yes. And some of them left here and went up to Reno to college or got a job up there because they figured the pasture is greener and they wanted to get out on their own so they'd find some girl up there.

RM: My daughter, Bambi, went to junior high and high school here, and she married a local guy, Bill Metscher.

JC: Yes. After the air force left, things were a little more fluid . . . I don't think there was that big of a market. [Laughs]

RM: Did most of the kids in your generation leave town, or did most of them stay?

JC: Most of them left and some of them kind of came back over time. But they went off and went to school and got a job someplace else.

RM: Where did they tend to go?

JC: Mostly Reno, for a start.

RM: Did many go to Vegas?

JC: I think a few, but the ones that went to Vegas were probably kids that came from Vegas to start with—the dad worked at the Test Site as maybe an engineer. Sandia used to have the housing up behind the middle school and a lot of those people worked for Sandia, and there was the air force. A lot of those families had kids in our class but when their dads got transferred, the kids went with them. Of course, a lot of them had been all over the world. By the time they got here, they'd been a lot of places.

RM: Were there a lot of air force kids going to school?

JC: It seemed to me like there were. There might have been 20 or so in high school.

RM: How big was your high school class, do you remember?

JC: Twenty-three, I think. That was in '68. The class ahead of me was up in the 40s and the class behind us was in the 40s.

RM: Yours just happened to be low.

JC: Yes, and a lot of the kids were deficient on something or another, so they caught up and graduated the following year.

RM: Is there anything else that you can tell me about your grandfather and your father?

JC: I remember one time Dad said down at the Victor they had a great big hoist. It was kind of like the one at the Mizpah, I think—it had an eight or ten-foot drum on it and it weighed tons and tons. But in the old days everything was done by hand, like we talked about before, with rollers and timbers. They rolled it out of the hoist house onto a flatcar, I think, to ship it off someplace or bring it up here and they busted it up.

And Dad said one time he had an old Chevy truck—it's still over here, about a '28 Chevy. He said, "I got tired of lifting everything and trying to jack it up and put rollers under it." So he made a little A frame with it and put a chain block on it so he could go over and pick it up and carry it around where he needed to.

RM: Would it have been able to lift that hoist out of the Victor?

JC: No. They pulled it with a team of horses or something, used cable blocks to get enough horsepower.

RM: How would that work? They would put it on roller-like logs or something, skids?

JC: Yes, then they'd have a six-part cable block using a rope block. They'd put six pulleys on it and tie a team of horses on one end of it. That way, they could pull it easier. It'd multiply their horse with parts of the thing. The ropes weren't strong enough, so they had cable blocks that were similar. Those blocks had to be God-awful heavy to try to drag around, too.

RM: Yes. And a team would do it, or one horse?

JC: I think they put a team of four on it or maybe a couple would be enough.

RM: There must have been a humongous amount of cable on that Victor hoist.

JC: Yes, because it's 1,200 feet deep or something.

RM: Yes, and it probably was pretty thick, wasn't it? What would they have done with that?

JC: It had to be inch-and-a-half cable or so. I think they'd have taken it off and stretched it across the yard. They probably pulled it off with a horse.

RM: And then what would they do with the cable? Could they melt it down? That would be steel, wouldn't it?

JC: Yes, I don't know if they'd put it in the yard and maybe years later shipped it for scrap or something.

RM: And they probably cut it into sections.

JC: I don't know, it had to be inch and a half cable or so down there.

RM: Can you get in the Victor shaft now?

JC: No, I think they have a plug in it now.

Here are some other memories. My dad talked about years ago there were a lot of jackasses around. The kids would go out behind the hill and catch a jackass and go for a ride and maybe take it home and feed it and keep it for a few days.

Dad said one time he was up by T Mountain, fussing around and building a fire. He probably was seven years old. He built a fire and all of a sudden the whistle blew. This was in 1918, and the Armistice had just happened. He said, "I ran home because I knew the fire department was going to come up and chew me out for building a fire." He got home and at lunchtime his dad came home and said that they ended World War I—it was over with. I don't think he really understood what World War I was but he thought he was in trouble. [Laughs]

He said he had a pet goat one time. They had it in the yard and he and the sisters and everybody kind of fed it and took care of it. One day he went home at recess—the school was

just down the street about 100 yards—and they butchered the goat and his mom cooked it up for dinner. The sisters went out back looking for the goat to feed it—no goat. They called and called and called, and finally came in and realized that that was dinner. That was the end of their appetite. [Laugher]

RM: You were living over below T Mountain? When did your family start living here on the property of the foundry?

JC: I did that.

RM: They didn't live here before that?

JC: No. I had a trailer up on Magnolia. There were three houses that the school district brought from Babbitt, over by Hawthorne. This one was a warehouse for the school district and there was a school district office. And up on the football field there was another, the one that they used for a restroom concession thing. The school wanted to get rid of them and they had an auction, so I bid 600 bucks on the house. The school board, of course, thought it should be worth thousands, but two of us showed up. Finally I said, "You know, I don't have any idea how I'm going to move these houses."

One guy said, "I want to get off the board. I want to bid on one of them, too." We decided there were three of us and three houses, so we'd take them. I had to pay 850 bucks for it, which wasn't too bad. It's a 1,500-and-some square foot house.

RM: So this home is a remodeled house from Babbitt.

JC: Yes, that's what this part is. I had some house-moving dollies and I borrowed a couple of house-moving timbers from Jimmy Boni. And Fred Ketten had a truck, so we put all the things together and hooked it up and dragged it down here.

RM: Through the streets of Tonopah?

JC: Yes. We went down and backed it in. I'd been pouring dirt in here, trying to make a level spot.

RM: What year was that, about?

JC: It was '75, something like that. We got it remodeled enough to move into it in about '78.

RM: And then you added on to it? Did you start from scratch on the add-on? It's a beautiful home.

JC: Thanks.

RM: It's wonderful how those houses have come down through the generations, isn't it?

JC: Every place on the West Coast, I think, has a bunch of Babbitt houses—every town.

RM: Yes. Did the guys that bought the other two do pretty well with them?

JC: Yes. They moved them up by the middle school; I was the only one that had to bring it down Main Street. I was working at the firehouse—I was the fire chief then, come to think about it. The highway patrol was here and we had a public motor carrier cop here and a public service cop; we had all kinds of cops. I went up to the state highway department to see about getting a permit and these cops happened to be in there fussing around. They said, "You need a permit and you've got to be a licensed house mover, and you've got to do this and do that." Finally one of the cops said, "John, when you going to move it?"

I said, "Monday morning early."

"Okay, I'm going to be way on this end of town."

And the other guy said, "I'm going to be way on the other side of town."

And I said, "Well, the county cops are going to give us an escort down the streets."

He said, "Don't hit anything. Whatever you do, don't get in an accident." So away we came. [Laughs]

RM: It must have been huge. I mean, those Babbitt houses are big. It must have filled all of Main Street?

JC: Yes, and coming up these back streets, it was kind of tight in a couple of spots. We brought it over and backed it in and set it down.

RM: I don't know why your family didn't move over here before.

JC: Wellington lived up there when I was a kid till he passed away.

RM: When did Wellington pass on?

JC: I'd have to guess about '70, '71, or a little later than that.

RM: As I told you, my dad bought his shack from Wellington. When I moved out here in '82, I said, "Dad, did you ever get the paperwork on the place here?" He said no. I said, "Well, I might want to build something here. You'd better get it," and he did. I don't know whether he contacted his heirs but that's the way it was in those days. People carried deeds around in their pocket for years and a handshake was better than a contract in some places.

JC: Even today, there's some people you can shake hands with and you know you're clean forever. And then there's other people, you look at them and you'd better go home and wash your hands because you know something's up. [Laughs]

RM: I interviewed a guy who lived in Beatty a long time; he had moved there from L.A. He said when he got to Beatty he found out that a handshake in Beatty was worth more than a contract in L.A. [Laughter]

JC: I'll bet it was.

RM: I think it was that way in Tonopah, wasn't it?

JC: I think so. I was reading a thing the other day that talks about the old-timers. One of the best tools they had was their brain; they'd just put it to work for them. Of course, they had to invent damn near everything. They weren't too far ahead of the horse and buggy. Then Grandpa shows up on a train and then he had horses and buggies to pack him around. And we're not that far away from that era, today.

RM: Yes, we're closer than we think.

JC: A lot of people think, back in the '50s is old. To me, it isn't. [Laughs] We were kids then, so it's not very old.

RM: Yes. Talk more about your grandfather, if you can—what kind of a guy he was and his character, because he was obviously a real inventor.

JC: Yes, I think he was one of those guys that you could bring in any kind of a project or idea and he'd try to invent a way around it, fix it, or solve your problems for you. From what I gather, he was well-loved; everybody in town liked him. And the same way with my dad—everybody seemed to like him.

RM: Was your grandfather a big man, or what did he look like?

JC: I think he was about like my dad, 5'10" and 180 pounds or so.

RM: Fair complected and light eyes?

JC: Yes.

RM: Your grandfather probably really liked solving problems, didn't he? He probably got a real kick out of it.

JC: I think he did. Of course, I think my dad was a product of his dad. Like we talked before, Grandpa would walk home for lunch and take a little power nap. I think a lot of that was probably solving problems for something going on, and he had to go home.

RM: How long would that power nap last?

JC: Dad said about 15, 20 minutes. I can see how those power naps would help—you're trying to sell cars and different kinds of machinery and keep a 30-people crew working. He was busy, and people were bringing jobs in. They had a bookkeeper; his name was Hans Jensen. From what I understand, Paula Douglass was working here as a secretary the day he got killed. I was going to ask her about things but I haven't yet.

RM: Is she related to Red Douglass?

JC: She's related to the Bob Douglass that was in Reno. He was from Tonopah. He went up there and did well for himself.

RM: Who were some of the other long-term employees from the early days?

JC: There was a Wilson and a Harcourt and a Seth Upright. Seth was a molder and I think Pete Wilson was a foundry foreman of some sort. I think the guy that got killed in the pattern shop with the patternmaker was named Ruffles.

RM: Were they all family men or were they single guys?

JC: Three of them lived together over here in what used to be Albert Hooper's old house. I think they had problems in those days, similar to what you do today when you hire some of this great help we have—they go get drunk and then they may not show up for work. [Laughs] You have to go over and shake them out of bed. When you get the whole crew together, if somebody doesn't show up, it fouls the project up.

RM: But at a peak they had 30 employees?

JC: Yes. They probably had one or two auto mechanics and a couple or three machinists.

RM: What exactly does a machinist do? Work the lathe and things like that?

JC: Yes, they took the castings from the foundry and did the machine work on the bearings. And they'd have part of a crew that would pour the babbitt in the bearings and then give the bearing to the machinist, and he'd machine them out to fit the shaft.

RM: They didn't use roller bearings?

JC: No; it was all babbitt bearings in those days.

RM: Did they hold up pretty good?

JC: Pretty fair, yes. If they kept them oiled, they'd last for a long time.

RM: What exactly was the babbitt made out of?

JC: I think it was lead and tin or lead and a little bit of zinc.

RM: Would they make that mixture here?

JC: I think they bought it.

RM: Oh, they would buy it and then melt it and pour it? They would pour it themselves, but they bought it already formulized.

JC: Yes. They could buy, I think, different grades, too.

RM: What difference would a grade make?

JC: I think one of them would be harder than another one. If there was too much lead, I think it would be a softer babbitt.

RM: Why would you want one versus another?

JC: I don't know for sure, I guess it would depend on how much weight was on the shaft.

RM: Oh, if you have a lot of weight, you'd want a harder one? Why not just put a hard one on all of them?

JC: I don't know. I was looking at one their old letters that go back years. They were pouring brass and Grandpa wrote a letter to a foundry or a foundry supply company back East. He was having pinholes and porosity in those brass castings and he asked the guy what the problem was. The guy wrote him a letter back saying that, "Your brass is too hot." There must be a fine line between good enough and hot. [Laughs]

RM: Did they have a thermometer or did they go by color?

JC: I think they probably went with color. And they probably had sticks of some sort. And they had something like an old 50-gallon wooden barrel with a water faucet on it. I asked one day what that was all about. That was in case one of the guys, when they were pouring, got a little iron or something in their shoe. They ran over and jumped in this barrel to put the fire out. I don't know how many guys ever jumped in the barrel, but I'm sure it had to be a few, sooner or later. [Laughs]

RM: Yes. Is there one metal that is harder to work with or are they all about the same?

JC: I think for pouring, they're probably pretty much about the same. But the iron would take a higher heat to melt, by a lot.

RM: Which one would have the low temperature melt point?

JC: I think the aluminum probably would be the lowest one. Of course, when they poured those, they'd pour it over there. The crucible held two-and-a-half or three gallons, and if it was brass it would be pretty heavy. Aluminum would even be kind of heavy for two guys to carry around without spilling. Whereas the iron, you pour that by the ton. Sometimes you'd make several tons into a casting.

RM: Did they ever pour any art sculpture or anything like that?

JC: I don't know; I've never seen any.

RM: The principles would be the same, wouldn't they? If somebody brought you an order and they wanted to pour something, would you be able to do that?

JC: No. Back in the late '70s, early '80s, there wasn't an awful lot going on around here for business. My dad and I cleaned out the foundry and we were going to go down and get something going, maybe fire up one of the furnaces. Then I got tangled up building fire trucks, and then mining started around here a little bit, so we started getting some work from them. We never did get back to the foundry part of the project.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: You've mentioned a number of really innovative projects that your father and grandfather were involved in. Are there other problems they solved that would be worth noting?

JC: Well, there was the slime pump for the mines that we talked about, and the Tetrault mill was a stamp mill. (Tetrault was a guy's name.) I think they made it back in the '13s or the '18s. Some of that literature I gave you the last time we talked covers it a little bit. They made the stamp mill and then they made a small crusher and used a little Fairbanks Morse gas engine to run it all and grind up the ore for the sample.

RM: When they made a stamp mill or a part for a hoist or something, did they help install it at all or go out on the job and see that it was installed right? Was that part of their service?

JC: Yes, they'd send a crew out. They'd give them a week or so to pick up all the tools that they would need and let them think about things, then they'd load up and head out.

RM: Where were some of the places they would go?

JC: Like up here at the Belmont Mill and the one just this side of the Mizpah. I remember they talked about the old-timers. They'd say, "Well, we got to go up and babbitt a bearing," and they'd gather up some tools and stick them in their tool box and set it on their shoulder and walk up there.

RM: And they would babbitt it on site?

JC: Yes, and take care of the project. Then they'd bring the crew up to help melt her down out in the yard and pack it up in ladles and build some ramps so they could pack it without having to spill any or go up stairways. An awful lot of thought went into whatever they were doing in those days.

Of course, an awful lot of bottles of booze went through the system. [Laughs] I can't remember the name of the gangster, but some of these gangsters came out of the East and somehow they ended up over in Hawthorne. Then they came down; there were several carloads of them. And the big boy's car had broken down. They took the car down to the shop and the old mechanics got the car going. The gangsters sat up here with their machine guns and guarded whoever it was—call him "Ice Pick Willie." When they got all done, they paid their bill and gave Grandpa a case of whiskey and away they went.

RM: That would have been during Prohibition?

JC: I think so. It sounded like there were about three cars. One of them was broke down and maybe one of the cars would keep running and they could make the deliveries and take care of whatever business they were in.

Do you remember Fred Jackson? He was pretty old when I was a kid; he was a carpenter by trade. He came up to the house and I remember he put a floor in the kitchen; he took the old floor up and put linoleum in.

But he had a big seven-passenger Packard and they took the back seats off. It was a touring car and it had great big tires. I remember seeing the car over in Fred's garage. He was a bootlegger in the old days. And this Packard, I guess, would do around 100 miles an hour down the dirt roads. [Laughs]

RM: And carried a pretty good load.

JC: Carried a pretty good load in it, yes. Jackson had it and I can't remember the other guy's name—he had an airplane over in Silver Peak. He took the guy over to Silver Peak and dumped him off with the airplane and then picked him up in the airport in Reno. He showed him that he could damn near go to Reno in this Packard as fast as this guy could go with his plane.

RM: Wow, and Fred Jackson was bootlegging here in town, delivering with his Packard?

JC: Yes, he'd go down someplace and pick it up from some bootlegger, then he had a distribution center going.

RM: What year would the Packard have been?

JC: I'd guess it would have to be early '20s probably, about the time the Model A would have been out.

RM: And the Packard would just blow the socks off the Model A, wouldn't it?

JC: Yes, Dad said of course it was all dirt roads but those big old tires . . .

RM: It would go 100?

JC: He had it over 100, yes. Dad said, "You guys don't even know how fast 120 is."

"Why's that, Dad?"

"Until you go down to Millers at 120, and the pole line looks like a picket fence, that's when you're at 120." [Laughter]

RM: And they would go 120 on a dirt road?

JC: It must have been paved when Dad was doing it. But when Fred was doing it, it was probably all dirt in those days.

RM: Do you know what happened to that Packard?

JC: No, I don't know where it ever went to. I remember being in Fred's garage several times. He lived on what's Edwards Street, in about the middle of it. You know where Marshal Robb's old house was, Deloris and Marshal's? It was right across the street from there. Right next door to Art Sorensen's house there's a garage and the big old car was in there. Of course, I was pretty young; I think somebody came and bought it. It would be kind of neat today to have that car.

RM: Oh yes, a real bootlegger's car, and a Packard. I had a '51 Packard convertible. I smashed its fender in '62 and paid somebody 10 bucks to haul it to the junkyard. That thing would probably be worth at least $30,000 today.

JC: Oh gosh, yes. I remember Dad took a trade-in, I think it was from Paula Douglass—it was a big old Packard from the '50s. It was a beautiful car. They were classic. I remember sitting on the back end of it. It had an automatic leveling thing so you could push down on the back and it would go zzzzz and raise it up; and it had an electric antenna.

JC: Of course, people had their little cars. My wife and I wander around the yard once in a while and it almost chokes you up because you're wondering what happened to the people who were running those little cars in those days, what kind of a life they had. You see the rear ends are apart and sometimes you see the fenders kind of mangled up or whatever—just lifetimes of people that went away. You wonder what ever happened to them or what they were doing when they were here.

RM: That's the great thing about what we're doing; we're preserving some of this history. Did your dealership sell just Chevrolets, or did they sell other General Motors cars?

JC: When they were Chevy, I think they were just strictly Chevrolet. I think Lee Henderson sold GMCs and Buicks at the Mizpah Garage.

RM: Do you know the story of how your family got the dealership?

JC: No. I think it was back in '31 or '32. They had the Nash thing, and then they got the Hupmobiles before the Chevy thing.

RM: What happened to the Nashes?

JC: I think they gave up on those. I don't think they could sell too many.

RM: About when did they let it go, do you think?

JC: I'd guess probably in the teens.

RM: And when did they let the Hupmobile go, or maybe it folded?

JC: I don't know if you remember looking at the old $10 bills, at the picture of the Capitol Building. Anyway, on the old $10 bill, there's a little tiny car, and that was a '28 Hupmobile. I was looking Hupmobile up on the Internet one evening, and some guy was talking about the picture on the $10 bill. I got an old $10 bill out and sure enough, there's a little tiny car there.

RM: Was the Hupmobile a good car?

JC: I don't think so. From what I understand, they used several different engines in them, and then, of course, Grandpa and the crew made their own engine to satisfy what they wanted the Hupmobile to be. They put it in a race. They used to have a car race from Reno to Ely to Tonopah and then back to Reno. They claim they were winning the race and they pulled a guy in a Buick out of a mud hole or something.

RM: And about what year were they making Hupmobile engines?

JC: I'd guess about '14, '15. There's a piece of one up here on the hill in an old Hupmobile touring car. Years ago, a guy said there was one over in California in a Hup roadster and it belonged to somebody's estate and he wanted $3,000 for it or something like that. He sent us some pictures of it but we didn't have $3,000 to buy it. I would kind of like to have had it.

RM: Basically with the Hupmobile, they could do anything Detroit did, couldn't they?

JC: Yes, and they kind of had to because we're so far away from the world. It's almost like a doctor in the hospital—if you get somebody that's sick, you can't just take them off to Reno to get treated, you've got to take care of it. Of course, things were booming so good that the mining companies and the businesses around couldn't afford not to be working.

RM: Tell me about your brother and sister—did they come by this mechanical inventive genius?

JC: No. My brother, Joe (Joseph), had a heart problem when he was born and my mother was a nurse so she took care of him and fought him through strokes and heart problems and all kinds of things. Today they'd have fixed the heart problem with some minor surgery, but in those days . . . He was 21 or 22 when he died. And my sister, Mary, passed away in '03. She had moved to Minnesota.

RM: Did she have that inventive talent?

JC: No. I think it was one of those things, you kind of have to be raised around it. She didn't get involved with coming down here too much. I was here fussing around and we had the dealership on Main Street and the service station. Like I told you, by 11, 12 years old, I was working at the service station. Of course, I was always a big kid for my age. At 12, 13 years old I'd drive customers' new cars in at the dealership and grease them.

RM: Was most of your gas station business local or was it travelers coming through?

JC: Most of it was travelers. There was some local, like the county and the water company and the phone company and some of those; they'd rotate through from one station to another.

RM: Any more thoughts on your father and his problem-solving abilities and mechanical genius?

JC: He'd go home in the evening and sit there—I do the same thing. I sit with a piece of scratch paper and try to solve my problem on paper. It's probably the same way with your being able to write—if I can't put it on paper, even in a story form, it probably isn't going to work. And that's the way they were, too. If they couldn't put it together in a sketch or a drawing, it probably wasn't going to work. They'd solve their problem on paper first.

I remember in our old change room down here, when they were designing that air-drying machine for the Chrysler missile, they had it fixed up, had a heater in it, and they had their drawing board and stuff. They'd go down there in the evenings and do their drawings and their thinking and arguing and have a bottle of booze and solve their problems. Then they'd go back across the road to the shop and put it together and see if it would work. Like they say, the biggest, best tool you've got, even today, is your mind.

RM: Did they ever make models of their machines or inventions or did they go from paper to actually making it?

JC: I think they'd go from paper to making it. They had some books with designs of things that wouldn't work, and it would tell why they wouldn't work. I'm sure they'd look at it, I don't know how often, but Dad always would bring it up. People would come up with some hare-brained idea and he'd get this book out and say, "Take a look in here. You'll find your whatever it is you're trying to invent—it's there and this is the reason why it's no good," [laughs] rather than trying to explain the thing to someone.

People would come in and sit down with an idea and get all fired up on it. And then, "See you later, I'll be back." And then they'd show back up in about a month or so with a completely new idea.

RM: So pretty soon they probably wouldn't put a lot of effort into it.

JC: Yes, they just kind of thought, "I'll do it while he's sitting here." I've done the same thing—I get those hand-me-down traits. Pretty soon you say, "There's no sense in getting too excited about it because he's not going to be back."

RM: Because you know he's not going to follow through. If you had to list your grandfather's proudest moment, in terms of the expression of these abilities that he had, what would it be?

JC: I think it'd have to be that he had a son that took over and filled his shoes. I don't think Dad got too involved in pouring iron other than he'd go down and help. But he'd go down to

fuss with the patterns and the old patternmakers when he was a kid and they'd help him make a baseball bat, or make a pattern for different things. And I think he spent a lot of time up in the machine shop tying to solve problems for people. Maybe he was taking over one aspect of the business and doing it more than another, and maybe Grandpa was kind of an umbrella over it all.

RM: What do you think would have been your dad's proudest moment in the business in terms of solving a problem or inventing something or making a machine of some kind?

JC: I think probably just being a problem-solver.

RM: So it was his overall skills that he was proud of, not any one thing.

JC: I think so. And coming from a machinist from the railroad where you'd just be working on whatever the railroad had, and then you got into this kind of a business. And you've got to get along with people. When they had the ice plant, they had to deal with compressors and welding a bunch of pipes together and ammonia and they'd invent some of those things so they'd be a little bit better. The same way with the pumps and different things.

I think a couple of old boys that were machinists that worked here were big thinkers also. One of them had a little machine shop in a shed up here and on weekends he'd go tinker with different things and invent things on his own.

RM: Do you remember his name?

JC: I think it was C. F. Farley.

RM: Did you see that creativity in other aspects of your father and grandfather's lives? Did they tend to have their own take on politics or religion or what was happening in town?

JC: When they built Boulder Dam, they had a meeting down in the basement of the Exchange Club in Beatty to decide where the power from the power plant at Boulder Dam was going to go. Of course, that's when Las Vegas wasn't that big and they were producing way more power than Vegas could ever use so they ended up selling it to L.A. There was a period that had a sunset on that clause and I think a few years ago, they came back and said, "Do we want to keep our part of that power?" Something in the back of my mind says that they went back to the table and did some renegotiations about who's going to get that power again.

RM: Nevada doesn't get that much of it. California's got the big wire in it. [Laughs]

JC: And he was one of the founders of the Rotary Club. Of course, he was in Elks also. I think it was anyplace there was a good time to be had. Those old-timers all wore suits. They might wear work clothes but as soon as they went home, they put a suit on to go to a function.

RM: So they enjoyed having a good time? And it sounds like they enjoyed a drink. Talk about the Rotary Club and how that came about.

JC: The Rotary Club was started in ’26, something like that. The Reno Rotary Club came down and chartered Tonopah and later Tonopah sponsored Ely.

Dad said when he was a kid a bunch of them traveled from here to Ely in a big old car to start the Ely Rotary Club. He befriended some kid there and they went up on the hill and there was some kind of little cave. They crawled over in this cave and he said it went back in and there were stalactites and stalagmites all over. He said it had to be someplace pretty close to downtown Ely and he thought it may have caved in.

RM: John, since we met last week, have you had any further thoughts on the history of Campbell and Kelly, and anything you would like to include? It doesn’t matter how small—it’s better to have too much than too little.

JC: When I was young, I had some weird ideas about boats and steam and different things. I would look in the old machine books and I think that’s where they got a lot of their technology. They had little machinist books back in the 1890s and 1900s and if they needed a little bit of technological help, the book would give it to them—things like how much horsepower 100 pounds of steam give you. Of course, today it’s old technology, but in the old days it was at the forefront of everything.

RM: So they would go through those books?

JC: I think so, once in a while. And as I told you last time, they had an old book—I think it’s still there—of inventions that weren’t any good and it explained in there why they weren’t any good. People would come through and they had an idea and Dad would just hand them the book and say, “That’s already in here and it tells you why it’s not good, rather than me trying to explain it to you and you not believing me. [Laughs] I think that’s the way the old-timers were. I don’t think there was any problem too big or too small for them, they just were problem-solvers. And if they had to reinvent the wheel, they did.

When I was young, they always had little projects going on in the evening or weekends when we weren’t going out in the hills, just kind of tinkering with different ideas rather than doing it during the day when you should be working for the bucks.

RM: Did they have to hustle business at all or did business come to them?

JC: I think a lot of the business came to Campbell and Kelly. With the dealership thing, I’m not too sure, other than doing mechanical work on cars. I kind of think their time would have been better spent doing something else because there were so many dealerships around town, and everybody was pushing for the same sale. By the time you’d get through trying to peddle your wares to the different people, they weren’t really interested in the Chevrolet if they could take a Ford or a Chrysler; they’d probably just take the low bid.

RM: So you think the Chevy dealership wasn't that productive in terms of the time invested?

JC: I don't think so, but it gave them the opportunity to go around to the different mining camps, like Tybo and Hannapah and different places, and try to peddle a car to people. And while you're there you're trying to sell jackhammers and hose and mining equipment and your services. Of course, once a mine or a mill was up and running, they always had mechanical problems because things would wear out, and they'd go out and peddle their services.

RM: Did they realize that the car dealership worked as a marketing tool for them?

JC: I think so. I don't think they left too many stones unturned. You know, it's kind of neat that a person could come here from . . . I don't know what kind of education Grandfather had, but I would be surprised if he had a high school diploma. But people in those days I think just had a curiosity about why things are the way they are and they weren't afraid of sticking their nose in something else.

RM: Do you think people nowadays have that attitude? Of course, not everybody had it then.

JC: I think there's less of the curiosity part. Like here in town, even when I was fussing around, there were one or two people out of a town of a couple thousand that were mechanically curious about why things were the way they were. Philip Metscher was like that. We always kind of chuckled about it, but if we didn't know why things were, why lightening worked or how it worked, if you asked Philip and he wasn't quite sure, give him about a week and he'd come back and tell you why. He was one of those guys that didn't want to be left in the dark.

RM: Who were some of the others in town like that?

JC: Fred Ketten was one. He was kind of one of those wonder guys. And then, of course, my dad and some of those old-timers. Old Sidney Pickles from across the street, who brought TV to town back in the '50s, he was one of those big thinkers, too. But he was an engineer, so he knew how things worked and he had a direction he was going.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: How were you able to keep this property together? Usually, something like this would have been sold off or salami-sliced away, but you've kept it all intact. How did you do that, and what has been your thinking over the years on that?

JC: When I was a kid, things started tapering off as far as the shop work. Back in the '60s Dad had a couple of mechanics off and on, like the Chevrolet mechanic for service work on the cars. And the mining was kind of petering along a little bit. Of course, the price of gold was nothing and silver wasn't much so then it was left up to the quicksilver, or, back in the uranium days the uranium and setting off atomic bombs, and the drill rigs would be around. But the miners and well-drillers were always terrible customers.

RM: In what sense?

JC: They didn't have any money. The reason I kind of kept things going is when I got out of high school I worked at the fire department because there were no other jobs around. Then I worked at the power company for a few years and then got in the construction company business with Richie Logan and Glen Stinson; we got a general contractor's license. That worked for about a year and then we petered out. I was probably 25 and Glen Stinson was my dad's age; at that time he was probably 50. Rich was late 30s, 40s, something like that, so there was quite a life span through there. We kind of tinkered with that, and it was an experience.

RM: Were you building here in town or out in other areas?

JC: We did a little concrete job out in Smoky Valley and a little work for the post office and poured a little slab here and there. Of course, Rich and I didn't know anything about construction. We left it all up to Glenn; he was the kingpin of the thing. We did that for a while and then I worked at the firehouse again as fire chief.

But we had a dump truck and a little wore-out backhoe and loader. Then the Anaconda mine came to town and I think there were only three backhoes in town, so we were busier than heck. They were building motels and just trying to keep up with the general . . .

RM: Which motels were they building then?

JC: The Silver Queen and the Jim Butler. We did some work on the Silver Queen and the swimming pool area up there. And Houston Oil was here—they bought the property from Leroy David of Tonopah Mining.

RM: Houston Oil was Howard Hughes, wasn't it?

JC: Yes. Hughes Tool bought it from him and then it ended up being Houston Oil. Houston Oil went out to Manhattan and started a gold mine so we got a ton of work for those guys

making mill parts. We did anything—we also went out and did a lot of dynamite work, blasting some of the faces for the crusher and power poles.

RM: About what year was that?

JC: I think it was about ’78 or ’79. Then in ’79 or ’80 I got in the fire truck business. The county wanted to buy a couple of fire trucks. Nye County built firehouses in Currant Creek, Manhattan, and Round Mountain and they needed fire trucks to put in them. Well, the county road department needed some new dump trucks so they ordered three new chassis. We took the dump bodies off the old trucks and put them on the new chassis and the older trucks were still pretty good.

One of the commissioners was from Amargosa. His name was Don Barnett, really a nice guy. He got me up at the courthouse one day at a commissioner meeting and asked me about building fire trucks. I said, “Well, I don’t really know how to go about it. Do you want compartments on it or how much water do you want?”

He said, “You know what they look like; just come up with something.”

I said, “I don’t know how to price it because I don’t know how long it’s going to take to make.”

He said, “Don’t worry about it. Just make one and we’ll worry about the other ones when we get through with the first one.” So we started working on the first one. We had a metal brake that Dad had started making to bend the sheet metal. We had to improve on it a lot because it wasn’t quite big enough for what we were doing. But in any event, we built three fire engines.

RM: So you were bending the metal for fenders and so on?

JC: Yes, and for compartment doors and pump panels.

RM: Had you known how to do that before?

JC: No, that was all invented by me, also. [Laughs]

RM: So you were learning as you went along? It looks to me like the epitome of the can-do approach. A commissioner asks, “Well, why don’t you build a fire truck?” And you said, “Okay.” I would think you'd need a big factory to build a fire truck but you don’t, do you?

JC: Right, we built a few. We got into the bigger trucks, the real fire trucks, about ’81 or ’82. Instead of being a brush truck like the county bought, they were regular fire trucks that a town or a small city would use. We got into building regular fire engines with I’d say a thousand-gallon pump. They’re usually behind the cab and ahead of the body, and they’re drive-line driven.

RM: You mean, the pump is on a line from the motor?

JC: Yes, the motor transmission goes through the pump transfer case and into the rear end of the truck so you can shift it out of gear and run the pump. It takes a lot of horsepower to run it. And the plumbing gets pretty big and it gets confined inside a small space. Being a big guy, I had a heck of a time getting into those small holes so I invented a stainless steel pump panel that would slide over the outlets and have all the gauges and the relief valve on it. You could slide it out and then swing it open and work on your pump and then slide it back over like a door. I made all my pumpers that way and I patented it, finally. That was my first and only trip to the patent office, and after $5,000 and a piece of paper, I found out it really wasn't worth a great deal. [Laughs]

RM: It wasn't a totally positive experience, the patenting?

JC: No. I showed it to a lot of other manufacturers, and I couldn't get any of them to bite off on it. And still today, they haven't figured out a simple way of getting in there to work on their pumps. They start from the ground and screw it all together and then hope it won't leak when you get through with it.

RM: And you solved that problem?

JC: I solved most of it. I don't know if it's because they can't train their help to make something or how it goes. I even drew one guy a sketch on how to do it—W. S. Darley Company in Wisconsin. He bid a truck with a swinging pump panel—that's what I called it. Finally he had to call me and ask me how it worked because he couldn't figure it out. They had a whole fleet of engineers there, too.

RM: Oh my God. Now to back up, what was going through your mind when the county commissioner said, "Why don't you build a fire truck?"

JC: It made me a little nervous, but I really felt good about it, that somebody would say, in this day and age, "You build it for us." Generally they have a die-hard, "It's going to cost you X amount of dollars," attitude. I thought, there are still some nice people. And this was all on a handshake.

RM: It was a Nye County handshake.

JC: A Nye County handshake, right. [Laughter] An awful lot of this fire truck work, and even any work I do today, I do a handshake deal. I've got a truck down there now that I'm working on a handshake.

RM: Barnett must have had a lot of confidence in you to suggest you build a fire truck. Why wouldn't they just buy one? Was he trying to save money?

JC: I don't know if he was trying to save money or if he just liked me. I think the other two commissioners were Andy Eason from Tonopah and Bob Cornell from Gabbs. I think the gist of

it was they had those firehouses, and maybe they were a vote-getter. These people wanted fire protection—they needed it, and they deserved it. So we built the fire trucks. [Laughs]

RM: So you started with the old chassis, and you figured the chassis was good enough to do the job—it was big enough and had enough miles left in it. What were the things you had to do to turn that chassis into a fire engine?

JC: That's one of those times you sit down at home with your piece of paper or scratch pad and make some sketches. I'd been in the fire department a long time and I knew I wanted to get as much water on it as I could. Some people want to carry hose and people, but I like carrying water, myself. We ended up with about 1,600 gallons of water on it and a 350-gallon-a-minute pump. I knew how many gallons I wanted, and I wanted to be able to haul some hose.

We kind of welded it together, then ground the welds off and made it pretty and then bent up some light, cheap metal and made some compartments so they could store their fire extinguisher and a few tools. Over the years we improved different kinds of compartment doors and other things. Some of them had hydraulic ladder racks on them after a while.

RM: That would raise the ladder hydraulically?

JC: Yes, for the extension ladder and roof ladder. You store them up on top, then you can flip a switch and they swing out to the side and you can take them off—because most of the time you don't use them. If they're hanging on the side of the truck they take up compartment space and they're always in your way. So we put them so they swung out of the way. They'd sit up on top of the truck when you were just traveling, and then they'd swing to the side when you wanted to get the ladder off.

RM: And it was your experience in the fire department that gave you the insight to know what to do. A person who hadn't had that hands-on fire experience wouldn't have had the vaguest idea of what was required.

JC: No. And then through working with the fire department—I can't say anything other than great things about it—that put me in contact with different little fire conventions. You'd go to the conventions and network with different people and get acquainted with this one and that one. I got involved with a guy up in Winnemucca one time. He said, "We get these people who come and want some inexpensive trucks made and different things." Well, it took about two years before I finally got that work to materialize.

They were out of Boise, and we made probably 15 trucks for them. They sold them up in Missoula and Oregon and Washington and Idaho. They sold Pierce trucks for the regular pumper but somebody would want a big water tender or some kind of an oddball little miniature inexpensive pumper of some kind so we'd put together a drawing for them and they'd take it to their customers. I was strictly dealing with Starline Equipment and then Starline was dealing with the customer. I just had to put the truck into primer condition and they took them to Boise and painted them and put the shiny stuff on them up there.

So I'd go around and get acquainted with different fire departments and different fire chiefs and pretty soon, I'd make one for here and there. We made four fire trucks for Bishop, California.

I had an ad in a fire magazine for a couple of years; I think it was costing me about $300 a month. And I was getting thousands of these card circulars—if someone circles my name they send it off and then the magazine sends me the name and so I send off information to the people that sent in the card.

Aurora, Colorado, had rescue trucks with paramedics in them and fire trucks with firemen in them, and they wanted to consolidate the rescue and the fire trucks so they'd only have to run one rig. But they needed to have more compartment space to haul all the stuff the paramedic needed along with the firemen. This captain called me up once and was asking me about it. He had three older trucks that he wanted to take the old bodies off of and put new ones on. So we made some sketches for him for . . . I think two were on Macks, and one was a Seagrave. We sent the design in and I bid them. Then he bid them again. We were bidding against other people across the nation and I guess I was low bid.

So he said, "Okay, John, we'll go with you on this. But we've got a chief that wants to come out and visit your place." So the deputy chief showed up one day and he looked around. I had a truck that I was working on that I had painted white, and I had it outside. Of course, it was too shiny. He said, "Back it in the shop so I can see the paint." And so I did. And he said, "Oh, okay that's good." We were wandering around the yard a little bit. He said, "Well, we don't really know you, and we have never been asked for a performance bond before. We'll pay for it but we'd like to have you get a performance bond on the first truck."

I said, "That's fine."

He said, "Because we're not sure what's going to happen to us if something happens to you."

I said, "Well, I'm not planning on dying here in the near future." [Laughs] But anyway, I got . . . I think a $5,000 bond was all he wanted; maybe that was the difference between me and the other guy. I think we bid them at $35,000 apiece.

RM: And what were the other outfits charging?

JC: I don't know. I was guessing probably $50,000. I was leaving quite a bit of money on the table. They were really nice trucks when we were done with them, nice compartments. And they had stainless steel pump panels and all that. We just bought the sheet iron and bent everything up from that.

RM: Where did you get the handles? Did you make those?

JC: No, I had a company I bought the door handles from and the hinges.

RM: And you took raw sheet metal and bent it so you would construct a fender precisely and it would bolt onto the chassis.

JC: Yes. I didn't quite know how to make a nice smooth arc for the fender and I wanted to use aluminum for an insert and I didn't know how to do this. We had a metal roller down in the foundry yard that was made for rolling the steel wheel on wagon wheels and there were different widths. We took a piece of 1x2 box tubing and stuck it in there. We'd go down and wind it through the rolls and it would roll this thing around on a nice arc. [Laughs] This is still the same roller I still use today if I have to make a fender.

On those first three fire trucks, they paid me for the first one after I got it done and then the second one, they thought they were pretty but they said, "We don't want you to buff a shine into it. We want to just put the paint on the way it is." I was having trouble with this paint; I was trying to get it to shine. We were using DuPont paint at the time, so I called them up in San Francisco and I got ahold of a guy and I told him my problem. He said, "Oh, you're doing this and doing that." He said, "Call this other guy up down in L.A."

I called him and told him my problem. He said, "How warm do you have your paint booth?"

And of course this was winter. I said, "I don't know, I think I got up to 25, 30 degrees" or something like that. [Laughter]

He says, "That's your problem. You have to have it up to 70 to make it work."

I thought, "How do you get this old tin building to warm up to 70 to make the paint flow?" We finally got enough heat in there and then it flowed out okay.

RM: And you were spraying it on with a gun?

JC: A paint gun, yes. But we were painting in the same spot where we made it. We had a fire chiefs' meeting here one time and I had a chief from Clark County and a couple of them from Reno. I was showing them the old shop with a big old oil stove in the middle of the shop. The chief from Vegas said, "Where's your paint booth, John?"

I said, "Right there."

He said, "Do you mean you paint in the same room you have your oil fire?"

I said, "Sure. How many paint body shop fires have you ever been to in your life?" He didn't have much to say to me about that. They always figured if you filled a room full of paint fumes it will explode and I was disproving their theories. I said, "We painted an awful lot of stuff in here and none of it's ever exploded so far." [Laughter]

RM: How long did it take you to build a fire truck from beginning to end?

JC: Months-wise, it took me about six months by myself; the first one took 600 hours. And then I had one helper and it would take us still about six months and about 650 hours—it took me a little bit longer with a helper. So then I had two helpers and it took me about five or six months in calendar time and it took me 1,000 hours. And I thought, "Well, somebody's got to go."

RM: Why was that?

JC: I think I was spending too much time babysitting.

RM: It was easier to do it yourself?

JC: Yes. I had one really good guy, Bryan. He'd come down here at 2:00 in the morning and work till they went to work over at the road department and he'd come back after work. I never had to ask him or even show him what to do; he already knew what to do.

RM: He knew how to run all those machines and everything?

JC: Yes, he knew what needed to be done. I'm pretty picky. I'm a perfectionist and he was almost worse that I am. Because the darn fire truck, if you got a weld and you kind of grind it out a little bit and you put somebody putty in it and then you sand it, it's got to be so darn perfect when you're through, versus a dump truck where it's just going to get beat up. Everything's got to be perfect on the fire trucks.

RM: Did you build dump trucks, too?

JC: I've put them together. I bought dump bodies from a company out of Oklahoma.

RM: Did you build the cab, too?

JC: No.

RM: But with the fire engine, you're starting with the wheels and the motor and the drive line and steering wheel?

JC: I get the cab, too. You just get a regular truck and everything that's drivable, then we put the body, the back end, on it.

RM: What did you have to pay for the chassis? You were using new ones sometimes, right?

JC: Yes, I get the departments to cough up that money. It would vary from about $40,000 to $70,000. That was for the truck, like a Ford or a Peterbilt or International or something.

RM: They were that expensive? And what were you charging for the fire engine?

JC: Sometimes up to $60,000 or so.

RM: So you were only making maybe 20 grand?

JC: Yes, we weren't making a great deal. But I felt pretty good when I'd go and bid against the big boys. I felt that we were all in the same ballpark. A couple of times I'd leave $10,000 or $15,000 on the table and kind of think, "Well, I must have shorted myself. I could have put that money in my pocket."

RM: In other words, you under-bid it?

JC: Yes. But then I'd think, "Well, these guys are paying the salesman, so he's got to get his 10 percent out of the thing, or whatever it is."

RM: How far east did you go?

JC: Aurora, Colorado.

RM: How did you get them back to Aurora?

JC: They'd send a guy out to pick them up. When I did the first one, they paid me afterwards. The second one was really close afterwards because we were in the same budget year but we were about a year late. The third one on that bunch, they paid me before I even got the truck just so they could spend the money. I thought, "This is pretty good. I'm working on their nickel now." They had one additional one after all that was done and they paid me for it on the come-out, also.

RM: So you built a total of four for Aurora. How many did you build for Nye County?

JC: There were quite a few. We did several for Tonopah.

RM: And the fire engines you see in Tonopah are built by you?

JC: A couple of them still are, yes.

RM: So your first fire engines were essentially a pumper with water?

JC: Yes, just a small pump with water.

RM: Because in Nye County, you might have a brush fire or something outside of town, so you take the pumper out?

JC: Yes. They had quite a bit of water; they had about all the water they could really haul. They were a pretty heavy chassis but they were full when I got through with them.

RM: Did all of them that you built carry water?

JC: Yes. Now all fire trucks have water tanks on them. It's a requirement by the insurance service office. They have to carry so much water. We did some for Winnemucca and up in that area.

RM: Do you still do them?

JC: We haven't for a couple of years. The last one we did was a rescue truck for Schurz.

RM: Did it have water, too?

JC: Yes, it had a little slip-in unit. But it was an all-aluminum body, aluminum floor plate. It was nice and shiny.

RM: So you would bend the aluminum and everything here?

JC: Yes, weld the aluminum, make an aluminum body out of it instead of a steel body. That way, I didn't have to paint it. I just had to bend it up and then polish the corners—wherever it wasn't shiny from welding or something, you had to buff them out. And the whole time, we were always doing shop work, too. People would bring in projects.

Then we got involved with a company in Reno that sold power company-type equipment and they sold snow cats. I sold them a couple of trailers to haul the snow cat on. Then one of the guys went to work for a company up in Medford, Oregon, Tucker Sno-Cat, so we started building some trailers for them. We made probably 50 or 75 trailers for them. They'd order up half a dozen and we'd make them and then they'd order up another half a dozen.

RM: So that's how you've survived here all these years?

JC: Yes, just kind of moving from one thing to another.

RM: Where do you buy your metal and things like that?

JC: We get it out of Reno or Vegas. For Vegas, I have to go get it; with Reno, they bring it every two weeks on a route—they send a truck down. But a lot of times they're a little more expensive than Vegas. Sometimes you can go down there and save 1,000 bucks.

RM: When that commissioner asked you for a fire engine the first time, did you sit at home and draw it out and design it and everything? How did you plan it?

JC: Usually on those we had a drawing board down in the office and we'd start to draw the chassis out. And then you'd start drawing the body to fit the chassis to scale. And then you'd buy the materials. Most of the time I tried to get it already cut because they'd shear it for me for 50 bucks, where I'd have to spend a couple of days cutting it. I'd have a good idea what all the pieces were, the sizes I needed to bend and form them to what I wanted, and they'd send down these pieces. Sometimes they were square. Sometimes I couldn't use them but most of the time they were good enough and usable.

The doors took some time. You'd have an opening 30 inches wide and a hinge that was 7/16 so you had to subtract that from your 30 inches. When you made your metal to fit inside of it, you had to subtract the thickness of the metal, so then you had another 1/8 of an inch on

each side. You kind of kept adding and subtracting all these little pieces and when you got the size you wanted, you could have them shear it up and they would ship the pieces down and then you'd bend them up and stick them together.

RM: By "sheared" what does that mean?

JC: They use a big machine like a guillotine that comes down and chops it off.

RM: How do you do it when you have to cut something here?

JC: I cut it with a plasma torch now. It's a torch that uses an electric arc to melt the metal and then it uses compressed air to blow the metal out.

RM: So it makes a clean cut?

JC: It's real clean, yes. And it will cut anything that will conduct electricity so if it's brass or aluminum or steel . . .

RM: How thick will it cut it?

JC: The one I've got only cuts about 1/8 inch or so.

# CHAPTER NINE

RM: How did you learn to do all of this?

JC: Just hanging around here at five or six years old, watching this guy and that guy.

RM: Did you develop a love for it?

JC: I think so. It gets you. As far as the lathes go, when I was young, I could play with a real little one and I could play with the great big one but I couldn't play with the middle one. That was Dad's; he didn't want me breaking it for him.

RM: Oh, because you can break a lathe?

JC: Yes, or he felt we could. Then every once in a while I'd have a job for it, so he'd come over and make sure that I wasn't fouling things up.

RM: Is running a lathe dangerous at all?

JC: No. Every once in a while something will fly out but it's got a shield.

RM: So you didn't go to like trade school; you learned everything right here.

JC: Yes, you'd just kind of watch them. When they had a job, they'd shift gears on the lathe or a different machine and you'd go watch and see what they did. It's just like cutting a thread in a lathe—you kind of watch and see which gear they put it in and how they take one gear out and put the other gear in and different things.

RM: So you can cut threads on a lathe?

JC: Yes. Metric's kind of difficult; we haven't figured that one out yet. [Laughs] But as far as the old American system, it's got an index on it that has different speeds and what speed it runs at depends on what thread you have.

I've got an old machine there called a planer. It's what we made our metal brake on for bending the tin for the fire truck bodies. We had to cut a V block. A blade will make a cut 11 feet long. When I was young I saw it run twice, once when I was really young and then a little later on when we put the brake together. My dad did pretty much all of that. A few years ago I had another little job for it and I just went back through all the motions we did 20 years prior and everything seemed to work out fine. I don't know why you end up with those things stuck in the back of your head.

RM: You saw it once and you learned it.

JC: Yes, you remember it. You can make a machine to make a machine to do a certain job.

RM: So you've been able to preserve this whole operation because you've been using it. It wasn't a deliberate act of preservation to save it for the future; it was because you were using it all the time.

JC: Yes. I was too afraid to leave town when I had the opportunities, I think, so I had to stay and fight [laughs] and hang onto it and keep work coming in. When the Anaconda thing was going on, we were so darn busy, and of course Manhattan had a good mining operation; Houston Oil was out there working at the time. We had almost more work than we could do between everything.

RM: How many men were you working then?

JC: Just my dad and I. We started early in the morning and would go through the day and then work Saturday and Sunday.

RM: And Manhattan and Anaconda were bringing in casting jobs?

JC: No, they bought most of it already made by somebody. They'd bring in oddball fabricating projects, different things, and we were putting together different things at the mill. In Manhattan, we'd make launders. That's a steel trough the watery dirt and mud would run down in. It's tapered, kind of like a big funnel, and it might be a foot wide and 20 feet long. We made things like that and we made anchor bolts—we did hundreds of those, it seemed like, in different sizes; anything from probably a half-inch up to 2-1/2 inch.

And we went out there and did some blasting. They wanted to blast a few rocks from a face, trying to put in a headwall for a crusher. We went out and took our jackhammer and drilled a hole, blasted the rock away.

RM: They didn't know how?

JC: That, or they didn't want to be bothered with it. Of course, we were pretty good friends with them. And they were building power lines so we'd go out and drill holes and blast the power pole holes for them up over a rocky hill. That was a lot of fun; I really enjoyed that. Then all of a sudden, you can't buy dynamite anymore so you can't have any fun. [Laughs]

RM: You can't buy dynamite now, even if you need it?

JC: Not unless you're licensed. In those days you'd just go to the hardware store and tell them you needed a case of powder and some caps.

RM: What if you've got a job or you've got to dig a hole in the rock now?

JC: I guess you'd have to hire a licensed blaster to do it.

RM: So if you've got a little diggings out in the hills and you're putting in a round once a week, you can't have dynamite?

JC: I think you'd have to get a permit. They probably do a background check and make sure you're not going to be a terrorist or something.

RM: I remember in the '50s we would come into this neighborhood of Tonopah somewhere and pick up our dynamite—I think my dad was getting it from Wolfe. We'd take a couple of boxes of dynamite out to Reveille Valley and thought nothing of it. In fact, one Fourth of July, my brother and I and this other guy were bitching, "Hey, we want to see some fireworks."

And the old man said, "Oh, you want to see some fireworks?" So he set off some dynamite. He couldn't do that now. [Laughter]

JC: Oh gosh, no. They'd be all over you.

RM: Tell more about your career with making things. What was the total number of fire engines you sold?

JC: Around 100.

RM: So you built 100 fire engines here?

JC: Yes. Most were complete, and we built compartments for some of them. About once a month I'd go on a little ride up to Reno and stop at every fire department I'd come to. I was friends with everybody so I'd just stop in and have a cup of coffee and shoot the breeze. One time Reno had a truck that hit a light pole and it was wrinkled it up pretty good. John Birch was the master mechanic at the shop in Reno then and they wanted to put a tilt cab on it.

RM: A cab that would tilt forward?

JC: Yes. It was an old LaFrance, a regular cab. I was bidding against Pierce back in Wisconsin and I got some drawings from a company called Spartan—they build fire truck chassis and motor home chassis and different things. I figured things out a little bit and I thought, "Oh, I can do that." So at first I gave them a price of $35,000 or something like that and somebody bellyached so they re-bid it. Then I bid $50,000, putting a new Spartan cab on this truck, and I wasn't sure I could do it. But it would kind of fit. It was like putting a Ford cab on a Toyota pickup; it wasn't really made to fit the thing.

Anyway, I ended up getting the job. I left about $5,000 on the table, which didn't make me feel too bad because Reno would have had to haul this truck to Wisconsin to have them do it. They brought it down here and I bought this cab—it was painted red and white. The seats and the gauges were already in it.

There was about a two-inch diameter gob of wires that went from inside the cab to the back to run to the pump and the lights and everything. So, what do you do with a cab that's got all these wires? You're going to take it off, so you get a hacksaw and saw the suckers in two.

You've got a hundred different colors of wires. Of course, the new cab comes with the same kind of a gob of wires, but they're different colors. So we built some brackets and we ended up putting this cab on it and got it to tilt. We made some big pans with some electrical connections in it, [laughs] hooked up all these wires, and got everything working.

RM: Why did they want a cab that tilted?

JC: They wanted to be able to work on it easier. And they were just getting into the tilt cab phase. Most of them are tilts now. But that was quite a challenge, putting that sucker on because it weighed so much.

RM: How did you handle it?

JC: We had a boom truck and crane. We picked it up finally and set it on the chassis and got it bolted down. I had to do that out in the yard, and then I shoved it in the shop and made some brackets and hooked up the steering gear. Of course, that was all different, too—it had to be able to tilt and the new cab came with a steering wheel but it didn't go back. You had to make some different things to go back to turn the tires. That was one of the bigger challenges I think I had, putting that sucker together. But it was fun.

RM: You like challenges?

JC: I'd rather have the challenge than the routine. If you've got a hundred of something to do, by the time you're done with ten of them, you're tired of them and for the rest of them, it's like punishment.

When I got out of high school, I thought it would be kind of neat to get a degree in mechanical engineering and go to work for General Motors or somebody designing cars or trucks or something. But school and I didn't see eye-to-eye very good; I went to the university for a few days and found out that wasn't a good plan. [Laughs] So I came back. Anyway, what it all boiled down to, working here and fussing with those fire trucks and trailers and different jobs that come though, you're as good or better than a mechanical engineer is, I think. At least you have the hands-on experience. You might not know mathematically why it doesn't work but you know it won't. [Laughs]

RM: My guess is that if you were working at General Motors, you would have been frustrated. I think they're pretty stuck in the mud in many ways, and it takes them a long time to change an idea.

JC: I think so, too. And maybe you're going to design doors today. For the next year, you're going to design a door for that car. Gosh, that wouldn't be fun. Then you've got to baby-sit everybody that's a boss above you.

RM: And you've been your own man through the whole thing here. When did you build your last truck?

JC: It was about 2005, 2006.

RM: Do you anticipate getting orders for any more?

JC: No.

RM: What happened to the market?

JC: I kind of got tired, and then, the big boys got into it, like Pierce and LaFrance. You've got to compete with them and they've got salesmen running around the world.

RM: And you didn't have that problem in the '80s?

JC: Yes, but I could kind of compete against the salesmen.

RM: And now you can't?

JC: You have to go out and beat the bush and get reacquainted with the different people. You've got to run around and be a salesman and suck up to everybody and then you've got to come home and design it for them. It would take me eight to ten hours to draw a fire truck up on a drawing board just to show them what we could do for them. Then they'd take it and you'd be showing the spotlights, the turn signals, the clearance lights, the compartments and the pump, where the outlets were, and the different hoses. It was an awful time-consuming thing. And while you're doing that, you're trying to run the shop and build something. So you go in and take your sketch for a half hour or so, then you go out and do something else. Or if you had a helper, you wanted to make sure everything was going good.

On the job making the trucks for Starline, we had about three or four brand new chassis and a couple of chassis for dump trucks out here in the yard. I had a mountain of work ahead of me—you give these guys 180 days after you receive the purchase order. Well, 180 days comes and goes, and their customer's hollering at them, and they're hollering at me, "Where's my truck at?" Of course, they've got a performance bond tied to their contract. I didn't have one tied to me, so you're trying not to screw them, but I got overwhelmed too often.

You get uncomfortable when you've got a mountain of money out in work and no money coming in in the foreseeable future. You're robbing from Peter to pay Paul. You think, "Well, I'll finish this one so I can get some money out of it. Then I'll have some money to buy the material for this other one. Maybe by at the end of the year, when all these are done, I'll have a couple of bucks in my pocket." But by the time you do that, another one comes along. The whole time, you're still eating so I guess I didn't lose any weight over it.

But you've got to become a people person and shoot the breeze with everybody. A few times I'd go to Reno and my wife would want to go with me. I'd say, "You're not going to like it." It would take me eight hours to go to Reno. [Laughs] I'd stop off here and there and shoot the breeze, and have lunch here or there.

RM: Did you like that part of it?

JC: I kind of enjoyed that, yes. I ended up with some really good friends out of the deal. Some of them have passed away by now and some of them have retired over the last ten or 15 years.

RM: What was a typical week? Did you work five days, six days, seven days when you're self-directed like that?

JC: About seven days. Monday through Friday, the help was here so you'd get up in the morning and you knew kind of what you needed to do. Sometimes you'd make a sketch of something they needed to make and let them know, "These are the sizes and you cut your metal this big." That sucks up a couple of hours. And in those days, we'd go up and have a cup of coffee at 10:00.

RM: Where would you go?

JC: We were going up to Jerry's Restaurant across from the firehouse. There'd be half dozen or more people there drinking coffee.

RM: Who were the regulars, just out of curiosity?

JC: It was me and my dad and Fred Anderson. Fred Ketten would come in, Mike Brawley and sometimes Gary Downs. Just an oddball group of different people. And a couple of the morticians that were here in those days—I was digging graves for them.

RM: Because you had the backhoe, you were digging the graves.

JC: Yes, that was a pretty good thing I had going on. I'd get 50 bucks for digging the hole and 50 bucks for closing it. It'd take me an hour or under an hour. I would drive down, dig the hole, then drive back after the service.

RM: Did you work Saturdays and Sundays, too?

JC: Yes, I'd work a little bit on Saturday on my different projects or sometimes on the shop's stuff. Then somebody would show up with a beer so we'd have to have a beer. People say, "It doesn't affect me." Well, it does. I could not have any beer and mark out a piece of tin. If I had one beer, occasionally I'd make a mistake. If I had two beers, my mistakes were becoming more prevalent. And if I had three beers, I'd better just put my project down—I'd screw it up and have to throw it away and start over. And you don't feel it. So finally, after a few stints of that, if somebody showed up with a beer, you'd just put the project aside and go shoot the breeze.

RM: Now, you said it took 600 hours to build a brush wagon?

JC: Pretty much any of them. By myself, I could do it in 600.

RM: So that's roughly three a year.

JC: Yes, if I'd work pretty steady. When I was by myself, if I'd get about five hours a day into a project, I'd be doing a pretty good job. Between somebody calling you up and wanting to shoot the breeze or going off here and there . . . so six months or 600 hours, about two a year. One time I had two brush trucks for Golconda east of Winnemucca. International up in Reno bid them. I told them, "I'll give you 180 days after I receive the chassis to put each truck together."

They brought the chassis down and then about a month later, "Where's my trucks at, John? Where's my trucks?"

I said, "I told you, 180 days after this." Anyway, he pressured me.

Bryan, my nephew, was here. He worked for me for a while when he was younger. And I had this other Bryan that was really good; I didn't have to lead him too much. Then I had a couple of others you had to lead pretty good. One time, I was putting together some dump trucks and this one guy said, "I'm a welder."

I said, "Oh, that's fine." (A friend of his had talked me into hiring him.) I said, "Well, go put that on that truck."

"I'm a welder, John."

"Here" I drew a sketch and I said, "You cut this out of the metal and go make this box," or do this or that.

He said, "You cut it out of there and I'll weld it. I'm a welder."

I said, "No, it doesn't work that way. You think you're a welder, you ought to be able to do all these things, too." Well, he wasn't capable of doing anything.

RM: He just knew how to weld.

JC: And he wasn't very good at that. So I thought, "I'm wasting my time and money on him."

RM: Was it hard to find people here in Tonopah?

JC: Once in a while. One time I was looking for a helper. That was the only time I ever put an ad in the paper and half a dozen applied. One of them had been in the navy and he'd been an engine room mechanic. He turned out to be really good, too. He knew plumbing, and a lot of this fire truck work is plumbing. I taught him a little bit of the sheet metal work and body work, then he took it and ran with it pretty good.

Much of the body work is you put Bondo on and sand it off, put it on and take it off, put it on and take it off until you get it the way you want it; you get it perfect. And sometimes you put it on and you take off too much, so then you've got to put a little bit more on and fill up the hole you created.

But the labor market around here is terrible, especially for small business. I was competing against Pierce and those guys. I think they were paying probably pretty good wages, but their factories were streamlined and mine was a little more labor intensive. If you paid Test

Site wages you couldn't make it. And you couldn't really get help unless you paid some decent wages, so you were in kind of a Catch-22. Even today, I think that would be hard.

RM: If somebody came to you and wanted you to build a fire engine today, would you do it now?

JC: Probably not. I got involved with a company in Salt Lake several years ago. The county bought a bunch of new Pierce trucks and I got acquainted with the guy that delivered them. He came out and did service work on them and he and I got to be good friends and I started doing a little bit of service work for them. Then I did some work on the county trucks. Then we went to Hawthorne and the Hawthorne town bought one, and then the base bought one. Then I went up to Reno and spent a couple of weeks there, and then we did some other service work in Carson and Dayton and here and there.

RM: What would you do for them?

JC: Some of it was just chasing electrical problems or working on air compressors for breathing air, and then routine maintenance. If they had a leak someplace and it was under warranty, we'd take it apart and fix it, tighten up a fitting or fix a leak.

We also went down to Lake Mojave down by Searchlight. When you pull into Searchlight, you turn south and go over to the Colorado River. I went down there a couple of times, and then my wife and I went down to work on this truck that had a leak. When the tank filled up, it went in out the back. It was about 120 degrees; hotter than heck in July. We pulled it out of their little shed; it had a four-inch hose on it and that hose is about five or six inches wide. It's heavy when it's flat and it's got big fittings on it. We pulled this hose off the truck and then had to get the floor out of the hose bed. I got the fitting out that was leaking and took it over and put just a speck of weld on it.

By then, it was getting about 2:00 in the afternoon, hotter than a son of a gun out in that sun. We had to put this hose back on. We should have just left it, but it was part of the deal. I got up on the truck and Theresa was pushing the hose up to me, and I was pulling, trying to load it back on. We get about one length on there, and I turned bright red, and was trying to get down. She poured some cold water on me and fussed around. Pretty soon, she's up on the top of the truck and I'm feeding her hose, trying to get this crap back on. I didn't think we were going to get out of there without killing either one of us or both of us. [Laughs] The park rangers that were in charge of the truck came by, rolled their window down a little bit and turned the air conditioner up. "How are you doing? Everything okay?" Don't come around and ask if you're not going to help put that hose back on. [Laughs]

RM: Wow, what a struggle.

# CHAPTER TEN

RM: Talk about how you got involved with the fire department here.

JC: I got into it in 1965 when the Catholic church burned down. I had some friends in it, and they had a gym there and when we were young we'd go up in the evenings—we would be six, seven, eight years old, maybe nine or ten. They had us divided up into the Bears and the Tigers and the Wolves and different teams and we had little t-shirts made up and we'd go up and play basketball games against each other.

A friend of mine was a nephew of the fire chief—the chief was Harry Ferguson at the time. He could drive and I couldn't: I wasn't old enough yet (I was 15). A lot of the high school kids didn't have a very good home life, and they slept at the firehouse. And if they had an ambulance call, they'd go out on the ambulance or fire or whatever. In the evening we'd go up and watch TV and shoot the breeze because it was kind of a hangout more than anything. We figured out a system—we'd take 55 cents with us, and you could get a quart of beer for 55 cents. One of the guys would go down to the local corner store and he would bring back a paper bag full of quarts of beer. When you're 15, 16 years old, this is a pretty good gig. So it kind of went from we'd go up and hang out there, to every once in a while we'd go on a fire call with a truck.

You became a volunteer because you'd show up at the fires. They paid $2 a call. They didn't have a pager or radios or anything; they'd blow this fire whistle and you'd go out and you could hear if the truck went up or down the street. You'd go down on Main Street and see which way the little water puddle went. If it was a good fire, you could usually see the smoke or the flames and you'd go help put the fire out. That's how I got into that.

Then when I graduated from high school, Harry Ferguson was quitting; that was in 1968, and a friend of mine, Tom Boni, took over as the fire chief. That left an open slot and they needed another fireman. I was 18 then, so I went up and went to work. I worked there about a week as a paid man. Then my dad got a job rebuilding a mill down in Darwin, California. I quit and went down there with him until Christmas and then came back. There was a relief position open so I went back up there and went to work. We worked three days on and three days off.

RM: What was a relief position?

JC: It was if a guy wanted a vacation. And we ran the ambulance at that time. We had a bigger box of body bags than we did first aid kit. [Laughs]

RM: Were they needed?

JC: We never used any of the bags, but they were there. And we had a resuscitator and a bunch of spare oxygen bottles.

RM: Where was the firehouse then?

JC: It was up behind the Mizpah, right by the water company.

RM: And Tonopah was big enough to have full-time firemen?

JC: Yes, they had four, and when Tom came back from the army they had to give him his job back so that created a fifth. Then Harry left and Tom took his job.

RM: So they would always have two men on?

JC: Yes, and it was 72 hours on and 72 hours off.

RM: Did you get called out much?

JC: We ran about 100 ambulance calls a year and maybe 30 fires. It was more of a beer-drinking place—guys would come up in the evening and they'd bring some beer so we'd sit around.

RM: Even if you were on duty?

JC: Oh, yes.

RM: So, if you got a fire call, you might have a couple of beers under your belt.

JC: Oh, at least. [Laughs] Even for an ambulance call, you'd show up with a belly full of beer.

RM: Were the ambulance calls grisly—a lot of car wrecks and things like that?

JC: Some of them were. Some of them were just somebody had a heart attack or somebody'd been sick for a week and needed some help.

RM: Were they still hitting cows in those days?

JC: Yes, you had a lot of cows.

RM: Did you get many cars on fire from the heat and all that?

JC: Not too much. We'd go to a car fire locally, but if it was out of town we wouldn't.

RM: What area did you cover with the ambulance?

JC: We'd go east to Currant Creek and north almost to Kingston. And we'd go to Fish Lake Valley because we were the only ambulance—there weren't any in Silver Peak or Goldfield or Round Mountain.

RM: Did a physician travel with you on ambulance calls?

JC: No, it was just us.

RM: So if a person was having some kind of medical distress, he wasn't going to get too much doctoring till he got to the hospital?

JC: [Laughs] We had a medic here that worked at the Test Site. God bless him, he tried to get us to go to a first aid class. Finally, a couple of us did go but for a long time it was, "Well, we run an ambulance so we already know." Knock on wood, I don't think we ever lost anybody.

RM: If there was a really bad accident on the road somewhere, would the ambulance go to it?

JC: Yes, the two of us would go. Today they've got these great big box ambulances—they put one patient in it and they have a half a dozen people in there to baby-sit them. Where we had our Pontiac, it was on kind of a hearse chassis, and a couple of times we put four people in there. There was not enough room for four people and an attendant. I enjoyed that ambulance work sometimes but it leaves you with the heebie-jeebies.

RM: The carnage?

JC: Yes. Some people say, "It don't bother me" and I think they're crazy. And over time, we had a few fires where people lost their lives. We lost four kids in house fires. Those things give you the willies.

RM: And you'd have to go in and recover the bodies? That would be awful.

JC: Yes. It's one thing with adults because you kind of figure, they lived a pretty good life already. One afternoon they had a trailer house fire down at Rhines Trailer Court. It was daylight in the summer, probably about 5:30. We thought it was just another a trailer house fire because we had a lot of them in those days. One of the guys looked in the back window and said, "Heck, there's two people in there on the bed." I was surprised they had a fire going. Somehow when they got up, apparently they knocked over something that plugged up the hole to get out. They were still alive but some of their skin was burned off their face and their hands. We dug them out of the fire and loaded them up and they hauled them off to Reno.

RM: Were they badly disfigured?

JC: I don't think too bad. Another time, one of the guys at the firehouse was watching the Belvada with binoculars. He said, "She's getting ready to jump. She's getting ready to jump. Ahh, she jumped." She jumped onto Downs's store roof. She was banged up a little bit. [Laughs]

RM: So you went back to the fire department after going down to Darwin with your dad. How long did you stay with them as a paid employee?

JC: I was there till about ’72. Then I went to work at the power company, Sierra Pacific, as an apprentice lineman for a couple of years.

RM: Why did you leave the fire department?

JC: More money and more of a career. The firehouse paid $475 a month when I left. Then things didn't work out with the power company so I kind of got fired. I fought to get my job back and I got it back and then I quit because you can’t work when somebody’s gunning for you. You’re not going to win. [Laughs] After that, I got involved with Logan and Stinson on that construction company.

RM: Were you working on power lines all over or just in town?

JC: All around our district here. It was a great job because we were on a line crew, and you couldn’t have asked for better people to work with, except for that one I had problems with. I was single. When you’re single, you’re chasing around. That and a real job don’t go together. You spend half the night out. [Laughter]

RM: Were there a lot of girls in Tonopah at that time for a single fellow to chase?

JC: There were a few, yes, but some of them were young and some of them were other people’s wives and different things.

RM: Is there anything you want to say about the life of a single fellow in Tonopah?

JC: It was just one of those things you do when you’re young. Of course, we still went to the whorehouse and would have a few beers. We'd go around the Cottontail and to Janie’s over towards Bishop.

RM: That was on Montgomery Pass, wasn’t it?

JC: Yes, just this side for a while and then they moved it to the other side.

RM: What was the one in Mina?

JC: The Lucky Strike. Then they put in the ones that are there now and the Lucky Strike burned down.

RM: What was the one in Mina called in the ’50s?

JC: I think it was probably the Lucky Strike. I think there were a couple of them, though. In Hawthorne they had a place called the Green Front, the Green Door, something like that. It was

kind of in town and I think it burned down, too. That's when they moved it to this side of Hawthorne—just before you get to Kincaid up on the south side.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

RM: John, what do you remember about Connelly? They used to do headstones and work with marble, didn't they?

JC: When I was a kid John Connelly was the dad, and he had the lumberyard—it was Verdi Lumber back in the early days—and he made his big money when the mines were going because they ordered lumber from him. The lumber came in on the railroad cars and Connelly got $100 a car. Each mine used a car of lumber a day so he made several hundred dollars a day. He was a pretty wealthy man when he passed away.

RM: So it was Verdi Lumber and he was the middle man?

JC: I think he was the middle man. If they needed mining timber and stuff, he ordered it and it came in in carload lots. He'd take 100 bucks a car, then the railroad would deliver the car up to the mine and he'd just take his money.

RM: I believe Verdi Lumber was owned by Bobby Revert's grandfather, Albert Revert.

JC: Was it the Verdi up there by Reno?

RM: Yes.

JC: That's where they cut the timber, then.

RM: Yes, I think so. They had their own little railroad and everything. I think there was a fire of suspicious origin. Between that and the Depression, it sort of did them in. But they had yards around the state and I know Bobby told me they had one in Tonopah. So Connelly was involved with the Tonopah branch?

JC: Yes, maybe he was franchised with them. I think he was here from the early, early days. And he had sons. His son John I think ended up with a farm over in Yerington. Then there was a Tom. I think he ended up being a Catholic bishop. Robert was down here for a while, but I think he had a little farm up in Idaho.

Eddie was the one that helped John out down here at the lumber yard and he got into the rock-cutting business. When I was a kid, we'd go down there once in a while. Eddie's daughter, Kathy, was in my class in school and they moved to Reno in fifth grade, sixth grade; Eddie went up there and bought a house. He started putting their little shop together over on McCarran and Virginia, kind of on the west side—there's a bunch of transformers and power lines that come in there. Dad and a couple of the machinists helped Eddie build one of the first wire saws, as they call them, for cutting rock. It was a piece of cable over some wheels and they'd pour some grit of some kind on it and it would grind the rock away, cut the rock.

Eddie had a mine out at Orizaba. The rock was called aragonite. It looked like wood when it was polished up, beautiful. When I was a kid, Eddie was down there making headstones

and all kinds of oddball stuff. And he bought a big circular diamond saw for cutting things. Then he ended up moving to Reno. I don't think Eddie had a sense of time. He just would start today and he may go to bed tomorrow sometime. Because that cutting . . . I think once you got it set up it wasn't a hard job, but you had to be there in case something fouled up. He'd sit there and let it run for hours and hours and days.

RM: He had a big table that he polished with, didn't he?

JC: Yes. He'd grind on it and then he'd polish on it with different grits—it would come out like a mirror. When he was in Reno, we used to go by and visit him all the time. He was quite an artist. He was making some lamps out of this aragonite. He cut long columns and had them in a jig somehow and he used a saw and then a grinder and he'd grind these things into a big corkscrew. Two of them were floor lamps and two of them were table lamps. The floor lamps were probably five feet high and maybe six inches in diameter; beautiful. I think he made a couple of table lamps and one floor lamp. He said he had two of them to make but he didn't have time to do it because he was making all kinds of stuff. I think it was kind of like what I do—if you've got half a dozen of something to make, you do one or two of them and the fun's gone. I remember he had a big piece of jade out in his yard and he was going to make a full-size elk out of it for the Elk's hall in Reno. I don't think he ever finished that.

RM: But he could do that kind of sculpture?

JC: Yes, just cutting things out of rocks, time-consuming stuff. He was an artist.

RM: Did his dad keep up with the lumber business? When did that end?

JC: When Eddie moved the family up to Reno, he'd go to Reno every weekend and haul some stuff up, then he'd come back here. He had about a '50 Chevy truck and he'd haul back a couple of tons of lumber and his dad would sell that during the week. Eddie bought a new truck back in about '64 or '65, a GMC. So he hauled with it for a few years.

And I think about '70, John passed away or maybe one of his kids took him. But I remember he sold his business to another hardware company. It might have been in the '70s because the town was starting to boom a little bit. I think John passed away then and Eddie moved his whole thing up to Reno, but I think he didn't want anything to do with the lumber deal.

RM: What became of his operation in Reno?

JC: I think the two boys, Tom and John, ran it themselves for a while. Then I think they got in one of those family arguments and one of them went off on his own, and the other one is part of a company called Sierra Granite or something like that. They do rock work.

RM: Mr. Connelly was Irish, wasn't he? Did he have an Irish brogue?

JC: Yes, he did. I remember he had an old ’49 or ’50 Ford car. He’d get it out of the garage every day after lunch and drive up to the post office and get his mail and drive home. [Laughs] He had a set of scales at the lumberyard and he sold coal and different things. You’d go in and get a board and he’d sell you the board for a couple of bucks, and then you’d go out in the pile and climb up some stairs and open some doors. It looked to me like a labor of love. Even if you brought a new, say, pallet of 2x4s, you ended up having to back up to the thing, then you’d shove all these 2x4s up on a second story in a loft until they were sold. Then you’d go up and pull them out and shove them down off the side into somebody’s pickup. Today you just scoop them up with a forklift. I think in those days you just didn’t spend any more money than you had to so you could put it in your pocket.

RM: Do you remember Roy Wolfe?

JC: Not a lot. I remember he had that hardware store and a men’s store right next door to it. And the men’s store—if you were going to go to a school dance or something, you went down there and got a pair of shoes and socks, a sport coat, and a tie. He’d dress you up pretty good, had some nice clothes to go to church with. And if you were in Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts, you bought your scouting uniforms and different things from the store. The store had a smell to it that was clean and new. It was different than going into a hardware or service station.

RM: Was Wolfe the founder of that store?

JC: I’m not sure. There used to be a car dealership there, Jimmy Wolfe told me, years before that. When Jimmy got to digging around in the basement, he said there were some old head gaskets and other car parts and other old things. Gerald Roberts had the Corner Store.

RM: That was the corner of what?

JC: Brougher and Main, right next to the Mizpah. Then the drug store was right across the street below the Masonic Hall. My dad would go into the Corner Store on Saturday afternoon to have a beer with one of his friends and I’d play with the toys a little bit or have a soda. Even years later, I could look at Gerald Roberts and smell that store by just seeing him—it left kind of an imagination in your mind. Next door to him was Charlie Stewart. He was a black guy that had a little cigar store and all the big boys went in there.

RM: Did you used to hang out there?

JC: I went in there a couple of times. I was a little younger and gun-shy and I’d heard these horror stories about other kids sticking your head in the toilet. [Laughter] A lot of the high school kids that were there in the ’50s were kind of a Fonzie type. You could play the slot machine—as long as the machine was winning, you could play it. But if you won, you had to get out of there. [Laughs] I remember going in and buying a yo-yo a couple of times, and a couple of other things you couldn’t get anywhere else. You'd sneak in with a friend and look in the back and see a couple of the older kids sitting there.

RM: Was the Butler Theater an important part of your life growing up?

JC: We'd go down there on Sunday afternoon, sometimes. I don't remember what it cost, a quarter or something. In those days, unlike today, three or four of you would leave home and walk down to the movie theater and go to the show and walk home. Today, the parents are scared to death the kids will get lost before they get home.

RM: Do you remember the Reischkes? Did you ever go in their store?

JC: I remember Erma—I think she was the daughter—and Mrs. Reischke. I went in there quite a few times, actually. It always seemed old and kind of cluttered.

RM: That's my memory of it. I was almost like afraid to go in there; I don't know why.

JC: I remember Erma was the one that used to come to school and take pictures. She had a camera that would take a panoramic view. We'd get the class up in front of the old school and she could crank and it would go across and make a little long narrow picture of everybody. They closed up the store about the same time I think Lola Peed bought it.

Lola Peed built that Silver Queen Motel and then later on she bought Reischkes' and the property where the Kelly Hotel was. Cox had a little hardware store on the corner; he was an electrical contractor there.

RM: Where would that be now?

JC: It would be where that junk trailer is, Dr. Dees's; I think Reischkes' was next door. Then there was a parking lot for the Kelly Hotel. And they moved the Kelly Hotel down next to El Marques. They just cleaned up the lot, scooped all that stuff up, and Lola built the second addition for the Silver Queen Motel.

RM: Did you know Red Douglass at all? What do you recall about him?

JC: Oh, he was a nice guy. He's one of those guys that was always down at his garage, his store, working. You'd go by there late at night and he'd be in there going from one side to the other working on something.

RM: Was he a good mechanic?

JC: Yes. We had a job here one time back when the MX missile thing was going on. We worked all day Saturday and all night Saturday night. Sunday morning, we finally had this drill rig piece apart and we needed a ring and pinion out of what we thought was a Ford rear end. So Dad called Red up. Red came down and looked at it, and said, "Yes." He asked me, "How many teeth are on that ring gear?"

I said, "About 41, something like that."

He said, “John, there’s no ‘about’ about it, there either is 41 or there isn’t.” [Laughter] So I had to go back a couple of more times to make sure. Old Red went up and said, “I’ll be back.” It took him about an hour and he came back with a brand new ring and pinion. It would have gone on a ’40s-type truck, and this is in the ’70s. He had a brand new part sitting there.

I liked Red. He was a nice guy. I went up to buy one of my first cars from him. It was a Ford Grenada and it didn’t have an alternator on it. I should have knew better, but it was in the show room and it was really a nice car. I said, “I’d like to buy this, Red.”

“Okay, yes.” He was a hard guy to pin down. You couldn’t get him to stand still long enough to sell you something; he was always wandering off. Finally we got him to sell us the car and then he had to go dig up an alternator to put on it so we could drive it.

RM: It was brand new but it didn’t have an alternator?

JC: He’d used the alternator on somebody else’s car out in the shop. [Laughs] The poor old car was plagued with electrical problems anyway. We had a hell of a time with it; there was always something haywire with it.

RM: What year would that have been?

JC: That was about ’79 or ’80.

RM: Your dealership was gone by then? I was wondering why you would buy a Ford rather than a Chevy.

JC: Yes, after Dad got out of the dealership in ’65, they gave the franchise to Woody Lofton in Hawthorne; he had Woody’s Chevrolet there. Dad was going to sell cars under Woody—if somebody wanted one, he’d give it to them at his cost plus 100 bucks at that time. Of course, we never sold any more cars.

But in ’72 I wanted a new pickup so I called Woody and asked him about the price. He give me a price of whatever it cost him, plus 100 bucks, so I bought a brand new Chevy pickup for, I think, $3800. I think we bought another car from him after that. It was a piece of junk; I think it was a Chevette. I couldn’t hardly get in the darn thing. [Laughs] I think their idea was good but they weren’t made for big fat people.

RM: Did you know Solan Terrell or his brother Starle? We first met him when he worked for Red Douglass back in the ’50s.

JC: I didn’t know Starle much. I think he worked as a deputy down in Mercury for a while. Solan was a carpenter here forever and ever. He was always a nice guy, every time I had anything to do with him.

RM: So what was it like growing up here? What was your childhood like?

JC: I think I had way more things to do when I was young than worry about going to school. School wasn't one of my priorities—I'd screw off too much. In our neighborhood—the street behind our house and our street and maybe the one in front—there had to be 20-some kids. They were all pretty much in the same age group so we'd always be out playing together or fussing around. If it was lunchtime, whoever's house you were closest to, that's who fed you lunch. Pretty much everybody's mother was home.

I'd go to school during the week and on Saturday I'd come down to the shop with Dad and we'd fuss around here. In the summertime or nice weather, we'd go out in the hills on Saturday after lunch. We had to keep the car dealership open on Saturday mornings in case somebody wanted to look at something, then we'd go fishing or hunting.

RM: Where would you go on a typical Saturday afternoon?

JC: Most of the time we went to Monitor Valley and we'd fuss around and spend the night. Sometimes we'd go over Jefferson down to Smoky Valley or up through Northumberland and around and maybe go down to Darrough's and go swimming. Of course, Dad was selling Chevrolets all the time so every place there was a bar or something, we had to stop and have a cocktail or two.

RM: Would he try to sell them or just make an appearance?

JC: Just make an appearance. And I told you that when I got to be about ten years old, I started working over at the service station selling gas to people. I think that was good because it gives you the opportunity to get a little experience in how to get along with people. And 99 percent of them are nice people and then there'd be one that for some reason would just irritate you. You'd kind of have to get over that on your own. That was just the nature of people, I think.

My dad and some other guys bought the Tonopah Club Casino when I was about eight or nine years old, in '58, '59. I'd go down there with him and hang out. Back in the cage (you never could do anything like this today) there'd be a nine-year-old kid rolling change, putting quarters in the machine and making the rolls of coins or wandering through the casino and helping his dad take the money out of the bags. [Laughs]

RM: Was that fun?

JC: Yes, it was something to do. I should have been home studying instead of being down in the casino rolling quarters. [Laughs]

RM: Who were your dad's partners in the Tonopah Club?

JC: It was he and Emerson Titlow and Felix Traynor, Leonard Traynor, Dick and Delbert Trueba, Danny Skanovsky. I think Bill Beko was in there and another one or two, but I can't remember.

RM: What was your dad's thinking in terms of doing that?

JC: I don't think he was thinking. He told me later that people told him years ago, '"Don't get involved in anything that you don't know anything about."

He said, "The only thing I knew about a bar was sitting on the outside drinking from it." [Laughs] I think he got hyped up with the idea. I don't remember who owned it, but he probably wanted to get out of it and these other guys said, "Oh yes, we'll all throw a bunch of money into it and we'll get into this thing." They should have kept their money in their pockets.

RM: Did they lose money?

JC: Yes.

RM: Was it a legitimate loss or were the employees stealing from them?

JC: The employees stole a little bit and I think it was a legitimate loss; they didn't know what they were doing. He said that a bartender would come in and steal 20 bucks at the first of the shift, and there wouldn't be 20 bucks made the whole time the guy had the shift—nobody had come in during the day to make up the difference. The same way with the gamblers—they'd come in and steal a bunch of silver dollars. He said some of those tables wouldn't have a soul come in and put any money down so they were always about 20 bucks short. Then they'd take their silver down the street and peddle it.

RM: What were some of the things they were doing wrong?

JC: Les Short owned the Mizpah and one time they got into doing a gambler's special; the Tonopah Club and the Mizpah would fly a plane from L.A. to Tonopah. They'd load a DC-3 or something full of people that wanted to come to Tonopah and gamble for the day in and fly them up here. They'd get here about noon, and they had an old bus they bought from the Las Vegas-Tonopah-Reno Stage Line; I rode it quite a bit. We'd ride out to the airport and pick up these passengers and haul them to town. They'd gamble for the afternoon and maybe into the evening. Dave Banovich was the highway patrolman here, and sometimes he'd drive the bus to the airport. I'd get on the bus with him and we'd drive out to the airport and drop off these people and get back about 11:00, go home, go to bed and wake up. [Laughs] They did that three or four times a week. I don't think they ever got their money's worth out of that.

RM: And that would be on a weekend, right?

JC: Yes. During the week, every morning we'd go for coffee about 10:00. We'd go up and get Emerson Titlow; he had the insurance company. We'd walk across the street and have coffee, listen to the political gossip that a bunch of guys could come up with, same as we do today. Then in the afternoon, about 3:00, we'd do the same darn thing again.

I remember old Amry Sorensen—I think she was Bob Sorensen's mother—and Millie Maslach was Joe Maslach's mother. They were both waitresses there when I was young. Amory

was a waitress for 100 years, I think, in there. Sweet gal—she was even waitressing, I think, when she was in her 70s. They seemed like old people when I was a kid, and they were there for years and years.

And another lady—her name was Dorothy Casner; she was Dorothy Beko's mother and she married Myron Evans. People would come in and for some reason they would leave a $2 bill for a tip and she'd save those for me. When I'd come through, she'd give me the $2 bills and I'd take them home and put them in my can. I still have them in the can. It's funny how some people take a liking to you.

RM: Two bucks was an hour's pay in those days. That was a union job. [Laughs]

JC: Yes, she was a sweetheart. Later on I think she went to work down in Mercury for the sheriff's office for a while. I got to know her brother really well over in Bishop. He was in the fire department. He was instrumental in getting me to build quite a few fire trucks for them. We got four or five trucks over there.

In the early years that was kind of fun, but I should have spent more time studying instead of so much time monkeying around. In the summertime I'd come over to the shop in the mornings and fuss around, find an old transmission or something and take it apart just to see how it worked. I had a go-cart that Dad put together for me so for some reason, I'd have to take it apart all the time. And every once in a while, I couldn't get the thing started. We had a couple of mechanics over here that were always pretty good so the mechanics would come over and twist something and it would fire right up and go for them. [Laughs]

RM: Well, I think that's what led you to the skills you have now—that's the way you learn.

JC: Yes, the tinkering. It was kind of like being a farm kid. Instead of being on the farm so you couldn't go to town, I had a farm that I could go to here and play around.

RM: And learning mechanics, how things work and how to build things.

JC: And just sitting there watching. Dad would be doing some kind of machine job for somebody and I'd just watch him for hours and hours and hours, whittling on it. Even to this day, those things kind of come back—I remember him doing this or that.

RM: And so you solve problems now based on those old memories?

JC: Yes, I remember some of them. Those things must be lodged in a place in my mind that wasn't cluttered already. [Laughs]

RM: Talk some more about the Tonopah Club.

JC: It had the main bar and another bar that they called the Pink Elephant Room. Part of it was a three-story building and upstairs were little bedrooms; I think it was probably part of a hotel deal at one time. When they were in it, I think they were renting the rooms out to some

of the workers. Every once in a while something would go haywire with the plumbing or the refrigeration. They had a slide that went down the stairs, and we'd slide CO2 bottles down there for the bar. This was when I was eight, nine years old.

They dropped the beer cans out through the sinks where they mixed the drinks and washed the glasses off—they had a chute. It smelled like stale beer and old booze down in the basement. The cans were in garbage containers, basically, and they'd haul them out. I never got into hauling that stuff; I think they always had a swamper that took care of those projects.

RM: They just took them out to the dump, didn't they? They didn't recycle things.

JC: Right.

RM: When did your dad and his partners get out of it?

JC: They were only there a couple of years, so maybe '60. They'd lost their shirt by then.
RM: Who'd they sell it to?

JC: I think Dad and Emerson just walked away from it and it reverted back to Leroy David.

RM: And when did it burn down?

JC: Fall of '74.

RM: And was that a real tragedy for Tonopah?

JC: I thought it was.

RM: I thought it was, too.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

RM: Joni Eastley has just joined us. Joni, do you have any stories or questions you want to add?

JE: No, I came to watch the interview.

RM: Okay. John, were you on the fire department when the Tonopah Club burned?

JC: Yes, I was a volunteer and I became fire chief a couple months after that. It was probably November—I can't remember. It was cold, icy. It was maybe 7:00, 8:00 in the evening, pretty early. We got called and went in. It started where the cage was and went up though from there.

RM: Was it a short or what?

JC: It was arson.

RM: Why would somebody do that?

JC: I don't know, but I knew the guy that did it. He told a friend of mine that a guy gave him 500 bucks to do it.

RM: Was anybody ever prosecuted for it?

JC: No, that information didn't come out until several years later. Behind the bar there were some beautiful paintings; they were probably three feet high and two feet wide.

RM: I remember them. God, they were fantastic.

JC: Beautiful—and they weren't touched with the fire. They got a little bit of heat but the fire was all in the center in the back. And we put it out, somehow.

RM: Why did they tear it all down?

JC: The fire went right up through the middle of it. We had guys on the Masonic roof squirting water. Dean Stockwell and I were the incident commanders. The bowling alley was open across the street at the time so we'd go up and squirt a little water, then we'd have to think about it a little bit so we'd walk over to the bowling alley and have a shot and a beer and walk back to the club, squirt some more water. [Laughs] Once we got it somewhat under control, the guys were slipping and sliding. You'd see other guys running around and somebody loaded up the pickup, putting the whamboozle on them. We ended up spending all night there but we did put the darn thing out.

RM: Some time in the era before the fire, somebody did a survey on what the top nightspots in Tonopah were. I can't remember if the Tonopah Club or the Mizpah was first, then the other one was second, and the Buckeye was third. So in that fire, Tonopah lost one of its top nightspots, which I always thought was kind of a tragedy.

JC: Yes, it was neat when it and the Mizpah and the other ones were open. It was a good time; you could go from one place to the other. They all had music and you'd have a pretty good evening.

RM: They had live music at the Tonopah Club, didn't they?

JC: That's where the Pink Elephant Room was. When I was a kid, Wellington Rogers was a carpenter. I think he and Clarence Hubble went down and cut a hole in the wall and put a stage there so people could dance in the Pink Elephant Room and the music would also be heard in the casino room.

RM: What ever happened to those paintings?

JC: I think they got turned in for cash someplace with somebody.

RM: They were new, weren't they? Classic barroom nudes.

JC: Yes. And there had to be 15, 20 of them in there; it was a hell of a collection. Back when Dad had it, a group come up to him and wanted to buy the club, but they wanted to scoop the club up and clear the land down to the Ramona Hotel, tear all that stuff down and build a resort. The story was that everybody that owned property there were willing to sell except one person, and he held up the project.

RM: Do you think it would have worked?

JC: No. I think they would have just scooped it up and it would be like today, a big empty lot.

JE: Or it would have been just another pink motel.

JC: I'm kind of glad they didn't because it was a neat old building.

RM: Then after the fire, somebody came in and took out what was left?

JC: Yes. And about a year later, Frank Scott bought the Mizpah and they sold that lot to Scott. I don't know if that may have had something to do with the fire, to get rid of competition for the Mizpah.

RM: That would be one possible motive. I wonder what would be another possibility—a grudge?

JC: I thought it probably was a grudge thing. When I become fire chief, Les Short owned the Mizpah. Frank Scott owned the Union Plaza in Vegas and he wanted to buy the Mizpah. There was supposedly an anonymous committee of ten that wrote a letter to the state fire marshal—the fire marshal then was Dan Quinnen—saying the Mizpah was in violation of the life safety code. To have a gaming license, you couldn't be in violation of any state, local, or federal laws. The Mizpah was in violation of the life safety code because it didn't have a sprinkler system, it didn't have an exit stairwell and some other things, so that put the fire marshal in a hot seat and it kind of warmed mine up a little bit, too.

So Short couldn't sell it to Scott and Scott couldn't buy it. We had a meeting with the gaming commission. I think it was a newly formed thing; O'Callaghan started it. There was the gaming control board—I think they're the ones that go around and inspect. The commission, I think, is the one that gives licenses out. And we had a meeting up in the courtroom. I felt like just a wart on a cow, sitting there. I didn't have a reason why I was there. [Laughs] The state fire marshal and I were sitting there and they were talking about these violations.

They wouldn't give Scott a license, period, unless he took care of these life safety violations, and the committee members didn't sign the letter with their names, they said "anonymous committee of ten," which I don't think made a heck of a lot of difference. They just made sure that they brought this violation.

Anyway, we haggled that over. Scott finally bought it but he ended up having to make it structurally sound and he had to put a sprinkler system completely through it and put a stairwell and exits out the back—he spent an awful lot of money just framing it up—so he could get a gaming license.

I thought, as powerful as this man is around the state, I admire this gaming commission for having the ability to say "No, you can't do it." Because you'd think that those casino owners at that time, and even today, would have enough horsepower to say, "Well, you got to give this guy a license, period."

It ended up that they got mad at the fire marshal. The legislature was meeting about 1:00 in the morning on Mother's Day; it was one of their last days. They de-funded the fire marshal's office down to 1,000 bucks or something just to get rid of the fire marshal, so Dan quit. Then they conveniently found a whole bunch of money. None of the other hotels in the state of Nevada had to live up to these rules.

RM: What year was that?

JC: In '75 or '76.

RM: The MGM fire was in '80, I think, and that was the whole thing—there weren't any sprinklers.

JC: Tonopah was the first casino that ever had to have a fire sprinkler system in the state.

RM: And meanwhile they're building giant casinos in Vegas that were not up to that code. It seems like blatant discrimination.

JC: That's what I thought of the whole thing. The MGM, when it burned, killed 90-some people. And five years prior to that, they said you couldn't be in violation of these codes. They knew darn good and well what the rules were. [Laughs]

RM: What do you make of that? I think that's amazing.

JC: I thought maybe Vegas had the ability to say "We're governing ourselves; we're big enough." And Reno was the same way. Even to this day, they do the same thing. They say, "We've got two million people so we're going to be our own . . ." And it backfired on them. Now all of a sudden, they have to sprinkler everything and create all these new rules, when the rules were already created in Tonopah.

RM: The rules were there on the books?

JC: Yes. During construction we had a fire on the fifth floor in one of the bedrooms in the middle of the night. We had bought our first ladder truck, a 1944 American LaFrance 65-foot ladder. The fire was going pretty good, but we managed to reach the window and we stuck our ladder through the window, went up, and put the fire out. We didn't have any problem putting the fire out because we had some really, really good firemen. We drank a little bit but we were good. [Laughs]

And the powers over me had had a meeting. I was the only one who could write a letter saying that the place was safe for occupancy while it was under construction. I was really uncomfortable with that, but what do you do when you've got somebody basically holding a gun against you? One Saturday afternoon, I ended up in Pete Knight's office and we authored a letter saying it was safe for occupancy while under construction. I think it was completed up to about the third floor and they were still building on the top two stories. But that made me really nervous for the next six or eight months. [Laughs]

RM: Scott spent a lot of money remodeling that, didn't he?

JC: Lots of money; he did a great job. I liked the guy. Every time I went down looking around, just being nosey, they were always showing me what they were trying to do.

RM: How long did he have it?

JC: I'd say he got it about '76 . . . probably the '80s.

RM: I remember, along about '83 and '84, it was a jumping place. They had live music and there was a lot of action there.

JC: They had that Dempsey Room about when the Anaconda mine was going on and they wanted you to wear a jacket and a tie to come into it, then they settled on slacks and a sports shirt but you couldn't wear Levis. But they finally realized that if they were going to cater to the payroll around here, the payroll was Levis and work shirts. [Laughs]

JE: John, that's where I first met you—in the Dempsey Room at the Station House when Rich Yule brought me in from Round Mountain for Rotary.

JC: That was 15, 20 years ago. Gosh, time flies when you're having fun. [Laughs]

RM: Who were some of your childhood friends? Did you pretty much confine your activities to your folks' business, or who were kids you palled around?

JC: Well, we ran around with my cousins the Jeffreys, Jimmy and Tom, that were about my age. Their brother Charlie was a little older; we ran around together. And there were the Murphys and Robertsons and there was a Playford group that used to live next door to us that were related to the Titlows. The Merlinos lived next door. We'd go home and have lunch and then about 1:00, we'd climb in the back of Bobbie Merlino's old Chevy pickup and she'd give us a ride to the swimming pool. We'd jump out and go swimming for a couple, three hours and walk home.

RM: That was when the swimming pool was . . . ?

JC: Out by the Butler Park. I was never very good at swimming but I enjoyed it.

RM: Who were some of the girls you remember from that era of your childhood?

JC: Debbie Merlino—she lived next door—and the Lofthouses. They lived down the street a couple of doors. Diane Lofthouse and I were in the same grade. Shirley Lofthouse—boy, she used to make some good bread. [Laughs] Actually, it was the Vinson family who lived there. And the Murphy family were in the neighborhood, and me and my sister, Mary; she was a year behind me. She ran around with the Easons and some other kids.

RM: Were those Ken Eason's kids?

JC: No, Jack and Jay Eason's. It was Mary Eason and I think it was Maggie, wasn't it?

JE: Yes. She married Mark Zane.

JC: Mark Zane, yes. I'm sure we had some other ones there.

RM: What kinds of games did you play, and was there devilment? There must have been some kind of devilment going on; any time you've got a bunch of boys, that's what happens.

JC: Oh yes, we had rock fights. Everybody would kind of build a fort in their yard. We always had a bunch of old wood and doors and stuff so you'd nail a bunch of them together. And for some reason, you'd get mad at somebody, then you'd get in a rock fight and you'd throw rocks at each other until somebody had to go get sewn up.

RM: Somebody would actually get cut or hurt?

JC: Yes, you'd hit them with a rock—and you tried to. [Laughter] We were living on a hillside and we had coaster carts. They were made of 2 x 4s with a little piece of an axle with some kind of old baby carriage wheels that you'd put on a board in the front. We put a bolt through it with a rope tied to both sides of the board and you coasted off a hill until you wrecked it or tore it up.

RM: Were there any burros in town at that time?

JC: We had a horse. Wellington had a couple of burros that we'd go over there and ride. Kim Rogers, Wellington's stepson, and his daughter, Heidi, had the burros that we'd go out and ride around. Or Kim and I would take these old jackasses and try to go for a ride someplace with them, but it was a bigger challenge pulling them. Every once in a while you could ride them, but not very often. [Laughs]

RM: What about, as they say, when the sap begins to run? What was it like in that era—when the boys and girls started to notice each other?

JC: We used to have a sweetheart dance on Valentine's Day when we were in about the sixth, seventh grade. They'd have it down at the Convention Center—of course, then it was just a big auditorium. Speaking of the old Convention Center, Toni Buffum had her skating rink in there, too. You'd rent skates for two bits or something and skate around all afternoon if you wanted to.

RM: Was that an ongoing thing? Was it successful?

JC: I don't think she ever made any money at it but it went on for a year or so.

RM: But it was in the present-day Convention Center.

JC: Before they remodeled it, yes. It was just kind of an open building with a hardwood floor and a stage. Then up by where the gas works is is that old smokestack. There used to be that Tonopah Athletic Club and it burned down long ago. It was supposed to hold 10,000 people or something like that. They had fights, boxing, in there.

JE: Don't you have a blueprint for it or is that up at the mining park?

JC: I think it's up at the mining park.

JE: Yes, the blueprint showed seating for the boxing matches up at the athletic club.

RM: I wonder when they tore down the airdrome. It was an amazing building. It was up Bryan Avenue.

JC: It might have been where that parking lot is across the street from the church.

RM: It covered a block or much of a block. It shows the capacity Tonopah had in those days for handling large events.

JC: When the air force was here, there were a lot of single people with no place to go and probably they had to create some kind of entertainment for them.

RM: In your time, did a 16-year-old boy have to have a car?

JC: Yes.

RM: And did you guys cruise Main Street in your cars?

JC: Yes, I was fortunate. Because we had a gas pump, I could fill up. That was part of my pay. [Laughs]

RM: All the gas you could use.

JC: That, and I had a little access to a couple of bucks in the till to buy some beer on Friday and Saturday night.

RM: In the ’50s in Ely, the boys would try to get a car. And when they had a car, they would cruise up and down Main Street. The ritual was the girls would walk along the street. And “Hey, you want a ride?” Sure, they’d jump in, and then you’d go for a ride and maybe go out to lover’s lane and neck a little bit. Did that go on here?

JC: There was a lot of cruising, yes. Some people would cruise all day long, early in the morning till the middle of the night—they’d just trot up and down, turn around—it was nothing to put 100 miles on a car and never leave Main Street.

JE: Ernie Longdon never stopped till the day he died, did he?

JC: No, he just kept going. He was doing it when it when he was a baby, I think.

RM: What was the route? Where did you turn around?

JC: We turned around up there by the hospital or sometimes we'd make it to the top of the summit. We'd go down to anywhere from the Tonopah Garage to where that little mall is down here. We had the DMV building. We'd turn around there and go back up.

RM: Did you pick girls up like we did in Ely or did you have a date that you were going to go cruising?

JC: It was kind of an unofficially scheduled event.

RM: You didn't pick them up as they were walking down the street?

JC: Sometimes, or meet them out back. Sometimes we wouldn't want to be seen with whoever.

RM: Because she was low status?

JC: Not so much that, maybe married or something.

RM: Oh, you mean kids were going with married girls?

JC: Young ones, yes, sometimes. [Laughs] As I said before, the air force was here then and a lot of the girls seemed to like the older air force guys. Of course, when your neck got to swelling too much, then you took the ten bucks and went up to Bobbie's and got a few minutes of education. [Laughs] That happened on Saturday usually, or once a week, anyway, or at least the group I ran with did. If nothing else, we'd just go up and have a Coke.

RM: And that was the Buckeye before she remodeled it in '63, but it was the new one; they had the nice bar there and the nice jukebox.

JC: Yes. The old one was when I was helping Wellington fix the water line. They used to haul the water up in that little trailer. It's a wonder we turned out as well as we did.

RM: That's probably why you did turn out well.

JC: The whole place was pleasant. The cowboy movies and so forth make it look like it would be a place where you're not too sure you're going to get in trouble or thumped or in a fight or something.

RM: It wasn't like that at all. I never saw any misbehavior on the part of the guys or the girls.

JC: I remember there was one gal up there, she could put both feet behind her head and sit on the bar stool.

RM: Was there a high turnover of girls?

JC: They'd change one every couple of months, maybe. I'm not sure, but I think Bobbie got hers through Joe Conforte at the Mustang Ranch; he may have been the broker for it.

RM: I always heard that after '63, Bobbie's was known as the finest brothel between Vegas and Reno.

JC: My mother was a nurse in the hospital and the firemen working at the firehouse would go up there on Tuesdays when the girls had their exams to see if there was any new talent in town. My mother knew what I was up to all the time. These old dolls would come down the hall and put their arms around me, "Hey John, how you doing?" I'd look around and see who was watching. [Laughs]

I remember Dr. Joy was the doctor who'd check on them. Rick Blakemore would fly him to Ash Meadows and Beatty once a week to do the exams there. I don't know if he maybe also held a little short clinic there so the citizens of the town could take care of some things.

RM: Yes. Because during the era we're talking about, there were two brothels in Beatty, and wasn't Fran's Ranch about three or four miles north of Beatty up Oasis Valley?

JC: Yes. It's still there, isn't it?

JE: Yes, it's Angel's Ladies now. They just reopened a couple of months ago.

RM: And 30 years ago or so, Fran's burned down and they had a whole fundraising thing in Beatty. It showed you the role that they played in the community.

JC: They were just like Bobbie, I'm sure—any time you ever wanted any money for anything . . . When Bobbie passed away, we had a fire chiefs' meeting that weekend. We were down in the Copper Lounge and one of the old gals who used to be a girl was down there, sitting in the booth with us and a couple of pretty powerful fire chiefs from Vegas and Reno. I hoped nobody came in taking pictures; somebody could get blackmailed. [Laughs] It made those other guys a little nervous.

JE: I've always said that one way to get a lot of people to turn out for a Nye County Commission meeting is to discuss prostitution.

RM: Did you have element in town that was really against it?

JC: Yes. About the time they closed the Buckeye and wanted to reopen it, they had a religious group that were trying to shut it down in Tonopah.

RM: What other people in town you recall growing up?

JC: I remember old Bob Campbell. He was a black man. He had a brother named John. I used to get John's mail when I was little; there were people looking to get their bills paid. Bob Campbell was married to Essie Mae and then they got divorced. I think Essie May had a brothel thing too. It was just north of the NDOT yard, where Jensen's trailer court is. You'd have to ask Philip Metscher about that one but seems to me like it was.

Bob had a junkyard up across from the hospital originally, and then they put the new highway through. They took part of his place with the right-of-way so they moved him down below town. Bob always had a couple of lions in cages.

RM: That's right, and he would drive around with a lion in his car, wouldn't he?

JC: Something, yes. And he had a bunch of dogs. When people would run over a cow or horse out on the highway, he'd go out with his old boom truck A-frame and wrap a cable around it and pick up the cow or whatever it was and down Main Street he'd go with this old dead stiff cow hanging on his truck to the yard and drop it out so the dogs and the lion could all have dinner. [Laughs] I liked Bob. He was a nice guy.

RM: How old was he?

JC: He must have been in the 80s when he passed away. He was married to a white woman by the name of Dorothy Campbell. She was a heavy-set gal, but she was running all over the country, working. He'd buy batteries and copper and brass and stuff and she'd load them up and take them someplace and peddle them. Bob had an old junk bus down there. He had it fixed up and he'd sit in there, and you'd go down and ask him for things. One time I went down looking for a transmission for a '57 Dodge car pushbutton automatic. "Yes, there's one back over there in the corner."

I'd go over and see a DeSoto. "What do you want for it, Bob?"

"Oh, just take it." I took my A-frame boom truck, picked the car up, brought it up here, and took the transmission out of it. That's the way he was. He knew where everything was in the yard.

JE: Like you.

JC: [Laughs] And people that didn't have anything that were going through would stop and he'd give them a job, scrapping out parts of a car or something like that, in exchange for maybe an engine or an alternator or a starter or whatever they needed.

RM: When did he come here, do you know?

JC: I'd guess he came during World War II, in that time. I think he was older than my dad by maybe ten or 15 years.

RM: I remember one summer I worked with him out on the flats pouring concrete or something. I guess he had to supplement his earnings; he had to feed those lions.

JC: His brother, John, I think was a pretty good alcoholic; he passed away when I was young. Then Bob Williams was a barber and he was always into horse racing and had a bunch of race horses and a little stable up there. I think that was where Quas's or the Tonopah Dairy or something was. That was a little before my time.

RM: Up where they keep the horses now?

JC: Right across from the hospital. It all went away when the highway went through, also.

RM: Talk a little bit about Bob Williams.

JC: He was a good guy, a good barber. And we always went down to the barber shop. That was another thing. [Laughs] (You can't get away from sex.) You'd go in there when you were young and the young guys would be in there reading comic books and the big boys would be reading Playboy magazines. The Playboys were in a little cabinet down below. It was one of those things—you had to know about it and you had to have enough guts to graduate to that area. He never said anything to you about looking at them—but you just had to get enough guts to go open the cabinet and take one out.

RM: Did you put it back before you got in the chair?

JC: Yes, and if somebody else was coming in that might yell at you, you made sure it was back in the cabinet. [Laughs] It was one of those things in life that you graduate to, or from. It seemed like he knew everybody that was going fishing and where all the fishing places and the hunting places were. And, of course, I think a barber shop is one of the biggest gossip sections in the world.

RM: Yes, it's a clearinghouse. He was from here, wasn't he?

JC: I think he was a native from over in the Currant Creek area. I think he had a brother; I can't remember what his name was. I met him a few times. I think he was selling insurance or something.

RM: All through your childhood and youth, did he have that barber shop next to Charlie Stewart?

JC: Yes, there was the Corner Store, Charlie's, and then Titlow's Insurance. And then there was the Butler Pantry and the Butler Theater and the barber shop was just right next to it.

RM: Oh, on the uphill side of the Butler Theater?

JC: And then next to it was old Prudhome; he used to be a shoemaker. I think the hardware store was next. Bob's wife was Gloria. She had a hairdressing shop right behind the barber shop. She was a nice lady, too.

RM: What else do you know about Doc Joy? He was a fixture here for years.

JC: Yes, he was the doctor that brought me into the world. I don't know what I did with it, but I had a list of all the babies that he delivered. When we had the ambulance, we'd take people up to the hospital. You'd pull in, then you go through a little ramp into the emergency room directly off the back. Old Joy would come in, check them over and sew them up or put them in the hospital or whatever.

Sometimes when we were kids, he'd do house calls. He didn't drink but he liked gambling. Once in a while Mom would call up and tell him one of us was sick. It might take him till 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening and he'd show up. Dad would pay him his five bucks and he'd give you a shot and away he'd go. A couple of times I needed to get some stitches. They'd drive down to the Mizpah and go in, roust him out, and we'd go over to the hospital and he'd sew me up. They'd give him five bucks and he'd beat us back down the street. [Laughs]

RM: Was he the only doctor in town for a long period of time?

JC: For a long, long time, yes. And then a doctor by the name of Dave Lamure came here back in the '60s—'63 or '64, something like that. I remember them saying they were both seeing about 100 patients a day. They didn't spend much time with you, but of course most people I don't think needed much anyway. Joy would be there in the morning and till late in the evening, holding office hours. But every once in a while when he got bored with things, he'd just go out the back door and down to the Mizpah. And if you were sitting in the waiting room you just had to wait.

RM: Till he got it out of his system.

JC: Yes. There might be 20 people in this little room just sitting there waiting. You just kind of went in and sat down and kept your mouth shut. I remember Helen Cecchini—she was his secretary when we were little. I ran around with her two boys, Charlie and Frank, a lot. I'm still good friends with them.

RM: Did he have a family?

JC: Yes he had one boy that was here, Mike, and he had a daughter that was in my grade and a couple of younger daughters. I think he had also a family by a previous marriage.

RM: So he wasn't spending much time with them?

JC: No, he was always working.

RM: Where did he come from?

JC: New York, I think. I'm not sure how he came about being here.

RM: And he spent his whole career here, didn't he? Did he finally die here?

JC: He died in New York. He got in a car wreck over by Goldfield in the early '70s. We went and picked him up and hauled him to Reno in the ambulance.

RM: Was he badly injured?

JC: Pretty good, yes. They brought in a couple of temporary docs and then they finally got some better ones and then back and forth. Of course, it's been like that forever now. He was always here. I think he had a lot of skills; the skills were a given. And if you needed some better medicine, it's like today—I think sometimes you need to have a family that's watching over you to say, "We need to take you someplace better."

RM: But he was good for the town.

JC: Yes, for a general family physician.

JE: Is his widow living here now?

JC: Shirley; I haven't seen her for a while. She was married to Bob Wardle after Dr. Joy.

JE: John, I want to hear about your grandma.

JC: I don't know an awful lot about her. I think I was ten years old when she went into the nursing home up here. Today, they call it Alzheimer's. In those days, I think they just thought you were crazy. She'd be downtown wandering around and they'd take her home and the next day she'd be someplace else wandering and not know how to get where she was going.

RM: That would be your grandfather's Campbell's wife?

JC: Yes. Dad talked about her. Her in-laws were all from down in San Jose. They'd get on the train when they were little and pack a basket full of chicken and picnic stuff and head off for California and take her to Reno. I think they had enough stuff in those picnic baskets to make it clear to California. She'd spend the summer down there fussing around and then come back.

The Campbell side of this outfit, they're the ones that are hiding. Theresa's been doing a little genealogy, and she can find everybody else in the outfit but those Campbells; they're just not to be found. You can get them when you go back to Canada and the old country, but she can't get them once they moved to California and became a family. Dad said they quit talking to each other, anyway.

Everybody ought to keep a journal, even when you're little. Theresa bought me a journal a couple of years ago. I looked in it the other day and I got writer's cramp after two days and a page and three quarters. [Laughs] But some day, sooner or later, somebody's going to be curious about what was going on. If you put it on a computer disc, I don't think that's a good plan because they're going to change; you'll never see it again.

RM: You've got to put it on paper, acid-free paper. [Laughter]

RM: We're just about at the end of this tape; do you want to call it quits?

JC: Yes, why don't we just call it a day. I'm kind of running out of thoughts.

RM: Okay. Thanks so much for talking to me.

INDEX

A
Ace Club,
air force men,
airdrome,
air-drying machines,
aluminum casting
Amargosa, Nevada,
ambulance calls,
American LaFrance ladder truck
ammonia for ice plants
Anaconda Mine,
Anderson, Fred,
Angel's Ladies (brothel),
apprentice contracts,
aragonite,
Arcularius
Armistice Day,
Armstrong overhead cranes
Army Corps of Engineers
Ash Meadows, Nevada,
atomic bomb tests
Aurora, Colorado, fire department,

B
B & B Mine,
babbitt bearings
Babbitt houses,
ball mills
Banovich, Dave,
barber shop,
Barnett, Don,
Beatty, Nevada,
beer brands,
Bekins Van and Storage,
Beko, Bill,
Beko, Dorothy,
Belgian coke for melting iron,
Belmont Mill
Belvada Hotel
Bethlehem Steel plant,
Big Casino,
Birch, John,
Bishop, California,

blacksmithing,
Blakemore, Rick
Bobbie's Buckeye Bar
*3rd best Tonopah nightspot,*
*girls married from,*
*John Campbell at*
*rates*
*water supply,*
Boni, Jimmy,
Boni, Tom, fire chief,
Booker Mountain,
bootlegging,
Boulder Dam (Hoover Dam)
*Campbell and Kelly Corporation job,*
*sale of power,*
brass, working with,
Brawley, Mike,
brazing vs. welding,
breaking iron,
brothels
Bobbie's Buckeye Bar,
*John Campbell at,*
*locations in Tonopah,*
*marrying girls from,*
*as part of town history,*
Brougher Street,
Bryan (employee),
Bryan (nephew),
Bryan Avenue,
Buffum, Toni
*hospital stay,*
*labor unions and,*
*as MacArthur's driver/lover,*
*skating rink,*
Buick dealership,
burros, riding,
Butler Pantry,
Butler Theater,

C
California Edison power company
California Electric power company
Campbell, Bob, caged lions and,
Campbell, Dorothy,

Campbell, Essie Mae,
Campbell, Horace Joseph (John Campbell's father)
*Armistice Day,*
*at Big Four brothel,*
*birth in Tonopah,*
*at Campbell and Kelly until death,*
*can-do attitude,*
*coffee at Jerry's Restaurant,*
*as creative engineer,*
*death at age eighty-six,*
*Elks Club,*
*family vacations as child,*
*learning to drive,*
*navy service, World War II,*
*1928 Chevy truck with A frame*
*proudest moments in business,*
*rock-cutting equipment,*
*Rotary Club,*
*school clothes,*
*Tonopah Club purchase,*
*town board member,*
*working claims*
Campbell, Horace P. (John Campbell's grandfather)
*buying properties for taxes,*
*can-do attitude*
*character/personality,*
*as creative engineer, 4*
*electrocuted in shop, 7*
*gangsters and,*
*Hudson family sedan,*
*physical stature/description,*
*proudest moments in business,*
*Rotary Club,*
Campbell, John (no relation),
Campbell, John Walter
*alcohol and,*
*Babbitt house and,*
*birth in Tonopah,*
*building fire trucks,*
*casino work at age nine,*
*challenges welcomed,*
*childhood friends,*
*closeness to father,*
*construction business,*

*cruising Main Street,*
*Ford Grenada,*
*gas station attendant at age eleven,*
*go-cart,*
*horses,*
*Las Vegas Review-Journal,*
*learning business as child,*
*patented pump panel,*
*as salesman for business,*
*Saturday activities,*
*school,*
*Sierra Pacific power company,*
*as single man in Tonopah,*
*spending time with father,*
*tinkering in shop in youth,*
*tool memory,*
*$2 bills,*
*See also fire trucks*
Campbell, John Walter, fire department career
*ambulance calls,*
*beer drinking at,*
*as fire chief,*
*fire department and,*
*as fireman,*
*occupancy permit for Mizpah remodel,*
*quit in 1972,*
*in relief position,*
*Tonopah Club burned,*
*as volunteer fireman,*
Campbell, Joseph (John Campbell's brother),
Campbell, Margaret (Walsh) (John Campbell's grandmother)
*Alzheimer's and,*
*early life*
*social life,*
Campbell, Mary (John Campbell's sister),
Campbell, Theresa,
Campbell and Kelly Corporation
*air-drying machines,*
*aluminum casting,*
*Arizona job,*
*Armstrong overhead cranes,*
*Beatty museum and,*
*beginnings*
*Belgian coke for melting iron,*

*blacksmithing services,*
*Brazilian, business with,*
*breaking iron,*
*building fire trucks,*
*Campbell and Kelly engines,*
*casting metal,*
*Chevrolet dealership*
*competition for truck building business,*
*destroyed by fire,*
*drill stems,*
*dump truck construction,*
*employees,*
*foundry closed,*
*gear teeth,*
*grandfather electrocuted in shop,*
*grave digging service,*
*hours of business,*
*idler pulleys,*
*iron casting process,*
*iron ladles,*
*John Campbell lived at,*
*John Campbell's grandfather started,*
*job bids,*
*mill parts for Houston Oil,*
*mine cars,*
*MX missile project,*
*outstanding accounts, collecting,*
*power company and,*
*products,*
*property preservation,*
*proudest moments in business,*
*railroad work,*
*redwood patterns*
*and Sam Levine*
*seller of mining equipment*
*sex books in pattern shop,*
*slime pump invention,*
*trailers for snow cats,*
*wages and hourly fees,*
*welding work,*
*working conditions,*
Campbell family, Scottish origins
"can-do" attitude,
car dealerships. See individual dealerships

car races,
car repair and remanufacture,
Carson City, Nevada,
Carver, Dick,
Casner, Dorothy,
casting and pump article,
casting metal,
Catholic church,
Cavanaugh (car dealer
Cecchini, Charlie,
Cecchini, Frank,
Cecchini, Helen,
Chappell, Herman
Charlie Stewart's
Chevrolet dealership
John Campbell as gas station attendant at age eleven,
*Kelly took over,*
*as marketing tool,*
*owned from 1931,*
*towing cars,*
*unprofitability of,*
Chrysler dealership,
Chrysler Missile Corporation, 20
Ciarlantini, Angelo,
cigar store,
cinnabar ore,
Civil War, John Campbell's great-grandfather in
clap (STD),
coaster carts,
community college,
condoms,
Conforte, Joe,
Connelly, Eddie,
Connelly, John,
Connelly, John (son),
Connelly, Kathy,
Connelly, Robert,
Connelly, Tom,
contaminated house destruction,
Convention Center
Copper Lounge,
Cornell, Bob,
Corner Store,
corpse pick-up,

Cottontail whorehouse,
Cox hardware store,
cruising Main Street,
cupola for melting iron,
Currant Creek, Nevada,
cutting threads with lathe

D
Darrough's Hot Springs, Nevada,
Darwin, California
David, Leroy,
Dayton, Nevada,
De Carbonel, Mike,
Dempsey Room,
Depression. See Great Depression
disputed road
Douglass, Bob,
Douglass, Paula,
Douglass, Red,
Downs, Gary,
Dr. Dees,
drill stems,
Duncan, Bobbie
*Bobbie's Buckeye Bar*
*generosity of,*
*Lucky Lager beer,*
dynamite,
Dynamite Road,

E
Eason, Andy,
Eason, Jack,
Eason, Ken,
Eason, Maggie,
Eason, Mary,
Eastley, Joni,
Edwards Street, Tonopah,
Elks Club nursing home,
Ely, Nevada
employee theft,
engines and cold weather
Evans, Myron

F

failed inventions book,
Fairbanks Morse engines,
Farley, C.F.,
Ferguson, Harry, fire chief,
fire department. See Campbell, John Walter, fire department career
fire marshal-legislature problems,
fire station
*beer and,*
*EMT service, lack of,*
*first aid supplies,*
*location,*
*range of service*
*teens sleeping at,*
*fire trucks*
*American LaFrance ladder truck,*
*business expansion,*
*costs and prices,*
*design by John Campbell,*
*first commission to build,*
*LaFrance fire engine,*
*paint issues with,*
*rewiring problems,*
*Starline Equipment and,*
*tilt cabs,*
fires
*Campbell and Kelly Corporation,*
*MGM fire,*
*Rhines Trailer Court fire,*
*Tonopah Club,*
fish hauling trucks,
Fish Lake, Nevada,
Ford dealership,
Forest Service,
Fran's Ranch (brothel),
freeze-dried high-pressure air machine,
Freon 22 for air machine,
funeral home,
Funk, Leo,

G
Gabbs, Nevada,
gambling. See Tonopah Club
gaming commission,
gaming control board,

gangsters,
gear teeth,
generators vs. power company,
GMC dealership,
goats, pets for dinner,
Golconda Mine,
gold teeth and quicksilver,
Goldfield, Nevada,
grain silo explosions,
grave digging,
Great Depression,
Green Front/Door whorehouse,

H
hairdressing shop,
Hall, Clarence,
handshake contracts,
Hannapah, Nevada,
Harcourt (employee),
hardware store,
Hawthorne, Nevada,
headstone business,
Hearst, William Randolph,
Hearst Castle,
Henderson, Lee,
Highland, F. T.,
Hines, Bill,
hit-and-miss engines,
homeless cave dwellers,
Hooper, Albert,
Hooper, Mamie
Hooper Way, Tonopah,
Horae, Kathryn Jeanette (John Campbell's mother),
Horae, Walter (John Campbell's grandfather),
horse teams and roller logs,
horses/horseracing,
Hot Creek
house built from mining timbers,
Houston Oil,
Hubbard Drilling,
Hubble, Clarence,
Hughes, Howard,
hunting / fishing,
Hunt's Canyon, Nevada,

Hupmobiles
*on $10 bills,*
*dealership,*
*engines, 5*

I
ice plants,
ideas to products path,
idler pulleys,
Ingersoll Rand,
International dealership,
iron casting process,
iron in the shoe,
iron ladles,

J
jackasses, wild,
Jackson, Fred,
jade elk,
Janie's whorehouse,
jaw crushers,
Jefferson Canyon, Nevada,
Jeffrey, Charlie (John Campbell's cousin),
Jeffrey, Jimmy (John Campbell's cousin),
Jeffrey, Tom (John Campbell's cousin),
Jensen, Hans,
Jerry's Restaurant,
Jim Butler Motel,
Joy, Doc,
Joy, Mike,
Joy, Shirley,
junkyard,

K
Kansas City, Missouri, John Campbell's mother from,
Kelly Hotel,
Ketten, Fred,
Kingston, Nevada,
Knight, Pete,
Kotex and the space program,

L
labor unions,
Lake Mojave, Nevada,

Lake Tahoe, Nevada,
Lamure, Dave,
Las Vegas, Nevada, power in state,
Las Vegas Review-Journal,
Las Vegas-Tonopah-Reno Stage Line bus
lathes,
launders,
Levine, Sam,
lightning strike, fatal,
Little Fish, mine at,
Livermore, California, John Campbell's father from
Lofthouse, Diane,
Lofthouse, Shirley,
Lofton, Woody,
Logan, Bill,
Logan, Richie,
Longdon, Ernie,
Lucky Draft beer,
Lucky Lager beer,
"Lucky Lager Dance Time" radio show,
Lucky Strike whorehouse,
lumber business,
lumberyard red light,

M
M & M Mine,
MacArthur, General Douglas,
machinist books (1890s-1900s),
machinist job description,
Main Street brothels,
Manhattan, Nevada,
Manhattan Mine,
Martinez, Jesus,
Maslach, Joe,
Maslach, Millie,
Masonic Hall
McCracken, Bambi,
McCullough, Tom,
Medford, Oregon, Tucker Sno-Cat,
men's store,
Mercury, Nevada,
Merlino, Bobbie,
Merlino, Debbie,
Merlino children,

metals, differences in,
methane gas production,
Metscher, Bambi (McCracken),
Metscher, Bill
Metscher, Philip,
MGM fire,
Midway Mill,
Mina, Nevada,
mine cars, building
Miners' Hospital,
mines / mining
*Anaconda Mine,*
*B & B Mine,*
*building mine cars,*
*Campbell and Kelly Corporation did work for,*
*Golconda Mine,*
*Great Depression and, 8*
*grubstaking,*
*M & M Mine,*
*miners' union,*
*Orizaba, Nevada mine,*
*prospecting, present day,*
*Summit King Mine,*
*Sunnyside Mill,*
*Tetrault Mill,*
*Victor Mine,*
Mizpah Garage,
Mizpah Hotel
*Dempsey Room,*
*Doc Joy and,*
*remodeling and occupancy permit,*
*safety code violations,*
*Tonopah Club and,*
*as top Tonopah nightspot,*
*winter survival for homeless,*
Mizpah Mine,
Model Ts,
Monitor Valley, Nevada,
Montgomery Pass,
moving houses,
Murphy, Bea
Murphy, Big Ed,
Murphy children
Mustang Ranch,

MX missile project,

N
Napoleon condoms,
Nash dealership,
Nevada centennial,
Nevada City, Nevada,
Nevada Gaming Control Board,
Nevada Gas Works,
Nevada Test Site,
Nye County
*assessors,*
*County Commission meetings,*
*fire truck purchases,*
*fire trucks built for,*
*Fish and Game Department fish hauling trucks,*
*in John Campbell's youth,*
*sheriffs,*
Nye County handshake,
Nye County Hospital,

O
O'Callaghan, Governor Mike,
Orizaba, Nevada mine,
outstanding accounts, collecting,

P
Packard touring cars
painting fire trucks,
Paiute Indians,
patented pump panel,
patterns, redwood
*for 50-tooth gear,*
*made to order,*
*redwood as best wood,*
*Ruffles killed making patterns,*
*for slime pump,*
*thousands accumulated over years,*
Peed, Lola,
Pellissier, Bob,
Perchetti, Bob,
Pickles, Sidney
Pierce trucks,
Pine Creek, Nevada,

Pink Elephant Room,
planer,
plasma torches,
Playboy magazine's at barber shop
Playford children,
power company vs. generators,
power naps,
Prohibition,
promoters, mining,
prospecting, present day,
prostitutes,
See also brothels
Prudhome, shoemaker,

Q
Quas's dairy,
quicksilver,
Quinnen, Dan,

R
Railroad Valley,
Ramona Hotel,
Red Cross building,
red-light district,
redwood patterns for Campbell and Kelly Corp. See patterns, redwood
Reischke, Erma,
Reischke, Mrs.,
Reno, Nevada,
Reveille, Nevada,
Reveille Valley, Nevada,
Revert, Albert,
Revert, Bob,
Revert, Bobby,
Rhines Trailer Court fire,
Richardson and Lovelock Ford dealership,
Robb, Deloris,
Robb, Marshal,
Roberts, Gerald,
Robertson children,
rock fights,
rock-cutting business,
Rogers, Heidi,
Rogers, Kim
Rogers, Terrie,

Rogers, Wellington
*Bobbie's Buckeye Bar and,*
*burros,*
*Chrysler Missile Corporation project*
*death,*
*Mizpah Hotel and,*
*multiple wives,*
*worked for H.J. Campbell,*
*World War II service,*
Rotary Club,
Round Mountain, Nevada,
Ruffles (patternmaker),
Rye Patch, Nevada,

S
safety code violations for casinos,
sand for iron molds
Sandia, housing in Tonopah,
school
*air force kids in,*
*high school kids at fire station,*
*as John Campbell's low priority,*
*school pictures,*
Schurz, Nevada,
Scott, Frank,
Scout uniforms,
Searchlight, Nevada,
shearing metal,
Short, Les,
Shoshone Indians,
Sierra Granite,
Sierra Pacific power company,
silver mining,
Silver Peak, Nevada,
Silver Queen Motel,
Siri, Ed,
Site C,
Skanovsky, Danny
skating rink,
Slavin, Ed,
slime pumps,
slot machines,
Smokey Valley, Nevada,
Sorensen, Amry,

Sorensen, Art,
Sorensen, Bob,
space program,
speeding on roads,
St. Patrick's Street,
stamp mills,
Starline Equipment
steel, working with,
Stewart, Charlie,
Stinson, Glen,
Stockwell, Dean,
Stonehouse Ranch,
Stralla (Chrysler Missile Corp
Studebaker dealership,
Summit King Mine,
Sunnyside Mill
swimming

T
T Mountain,
tanning hides,
television, in John Campbell's youth,
Terrell, Solan,
Terrell, Starle,
Terrells,
Tetrault Mill,
Thomas, Bill,
tilt cabs,
Time magazine, disputed road,
Titlow, Emerson,
Titlow's Insurance,
Tonopah, Nevada
*airdrome,*
*barber shop,*
*Belvada Hotel,*
*Bobbie's Buckeye Bar,*
*Brougher Street,*
*Bryan Avenue,*
*businesses in,*
*Butler Park,*
*Campbell's junkyard*
*Catholic church,*
*cigar store,*
*community college,*

*Convention Center,*
*Corner Store,*
*Cox hardware store,*
*fire department*
*fire trucks built for,*
*funeral home,*
*high school, 1968,*
*ice plant,*
*John Campbell's birthplace*
*Jerry's Restaurant*
*junkyard,*
*Kelly Hotel,*
*Masonic Hall,*
*Mizpah Hotel,*
*night spots,*
*nightspots,*
*present day ore in,*
*Ramona Hotel,*
*red-light district,*
*Rhines Trailer Court fire,*
*Rotary Club*
*Sandia housing in,*
*schools*
*Silver Queen Motel,*
*St. Patrick's Street,*
*swimming,*
*television in,*
Tonopah Athletic Club,
Tonopah School of Mines
*Valentine's Day dances,*
*young people leaving,*
Tonopah Athletic Club,
Tonopah Bonanza
Tonopah Club
*destroyed by fire,*
*employee theft,*
*father's partnership in,*
*harsh winter survival*
*John Campbell at coffee with father,*
*nude paintings behind bar,*
*Pink Elephant Room,*
Tonopah community college,
Tonopah Dairy,
Tonopah Foundry and Machine Works,

Tonopah Garage,
Tonopah Mining,
Tonopah School of Mines,
Tonopah Sportsman Club,
train travel
Traynor, Leonard “Felix,”
truck rollover,
Trueba, Delbert,
Trueba, Dick,
Tucker Sno-Cat,
tungsten milling project
$2 bills,
Tybo, Nevada

U
Upright, Seth,

V
Valentine’s Day dances
venereal diseases,
Verdi Lumberyard,
Victor Mine,
Vinson family
Virginia City, Nevada,

W
Walker Lake fish stocking,
Walsh, Margaret. See Campbell, Margaret (Walsh)
Wardle, Bob,
Water Street brothel
welding vs. brazing,
West End Mill,
White Mountains, California
whorehouses. See brothels
wicker basket for bodies,
Williams, Bob,
Williams, Gloria,
Wilson, Pete,
Winnemucca, Nevada,
winter survival for homeless,
Wolfe, Jimmy,
Wolfe, Roy,
Woody’s Chevrolet,
workers’ unions,

working in heat,
World War I,
World War II,
W. S. Darley Company,

Y
Yerington, Nevada,
Yule, Rich,

Z
Zane, Mark,