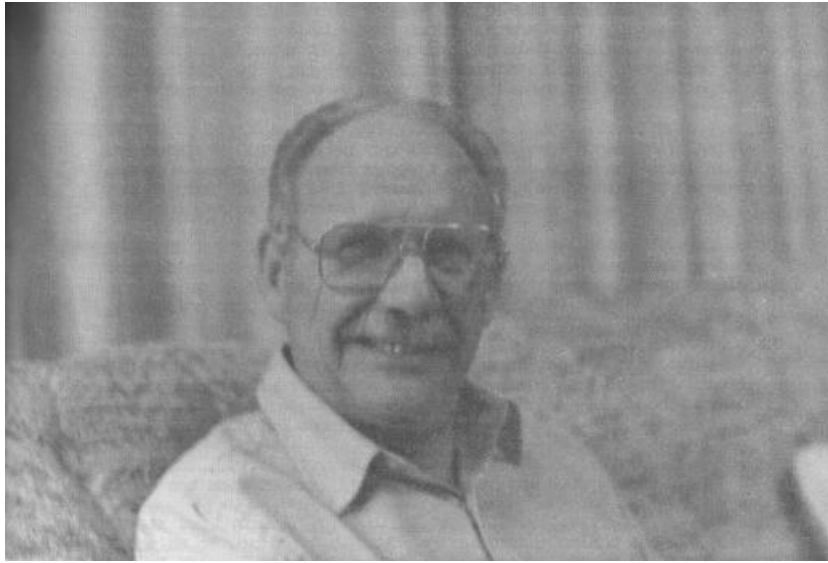


An Interview With  
Don L. Cirac

An Oral History conducted and edited by  
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
1990

COPYRIGHT 1991  
Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County Commissioners  
Tonopah, Nevada  
89049



Don Cirac  
1990

## CONTENTS

### Preface

### Acknowledgments

### Introduction

#### CHAPTER ONE

Cirac family backgrounds, including a scout for Kit Carson and the builder of the Koster wagons; one of the first settlers in Union Canyon; the first woman doctor in the West?; Great-grandfather Cirac's mill at Berlin; Grandfather Cirac - inventor, prospector, etc.; growing up among Paiutes; Grandfather Cirac meets his wife; turquoise mines; Don Cirac's father and his siblings.

#### CHAPTER TWO

The hotel in Grantsville; crossing the Toiyabe Mountains; Charlie Joseph - quite a prospector; gold rushes at Ophir and Orizaba; remembering Sheriff Bill Thomas, including a shooting at Carver's Station; Taxine's brothel and Bobbie Duncan.

#### CHAPTER THREE

Tonopah's red-light district; bootlegging; a professional gambler; growing up in Tonopah - a tough but rewarding experience; people's perception of gamblers; a real promoter.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

Bad experiences with promoters; a lease at the Tonopah Divide Mine; the Ace Club; service in the army, and early experiences in vocational training; the benefits of a Tonopah childhood; work on the R.O. Ranch and memories of Emma Rogers.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

Katie and Emma Rogers; life and work on the R.O. Ranch.

#### CHAPTER SIX

Memories of working for Wah Chang in Northumberland and Timpahute and of the old-time tramp miners there; the opening of the Flamingo Hotel and recollections of Bugsy Siegel; memories of Tom McCullough and of the Ronzonis of Tonopah; work at the R.O. Ranch again, then back to college.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

Managing stores in California; a return to Nevada and work in antimony mining in Manhattan; a tungsten operation; placer mining with Bob Wilson.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

A gold operation in Mexico; becoming involved in the Kingston Ranch; how fish were introduced in Smoky and Monitor valleys; some further background on the Kingston Ranch; a discussion of subdividing, and remarks on the town board system of government in Kingston.

#### CHAPTER NINE

Further remarks on town boards; going to work in Round Mountain; the challenges of running a heavy equipment training program; an excellent safety record; writing a safety manual; remembrances of being snowed in, in Northumberland; memories of the Darrough family; Grandfather Cirac and the Yomba Shoshone Reservation; memories of the O'Toole family; thoughts on Smoky Valley and the future of the area; the pleasures of starting a community; the Acrees' home in Austin; Nancy Cirac's thoughts on Nevada.

#### CHAPTER TEN

The Big Smoky Valley American Legion Post; a good childhood and youth in Tonopah; memories of Fred Volmer; the strengths of Nevada; a brief singing career.

#### 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 incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the NCTHP will, when 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 known and admired since I was a teenager; 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. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed deep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L. Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

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

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

--Robert D. McCracken  
Tonopah, Nevada  
1990

## INTRODUCTION

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the end of the American frontier. By then, most of the western United States had been settled, ranches and farms developed, communities established, and roads and railroads constructed. The mining boomtowns, based on the lure of overnight riches from newly developed lodes, were but a memory.

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that while much of the state was mapped and its geographical features named, a vast region--stretching from Belmont south to the Las Vegas meadows, comprising most of Nye County-- remained largely unsettled and unmapped. In 1890 most of southcentral Nevada remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be for at least another twenty years.

The great mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), and Rhyolite (1904) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, southcentral Nevada, notably Nye County, remains close to the American frontier; closer, perhaps, than any other region of the American West. In a real sense, a significant part of the frontier can still be found in southcentral Nevada. It exists in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area also is visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, most of it essentially untouched by human hands.

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the Round Mountain Nugget, was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper; Beatty's independent paper folded in 1912. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All six communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities after their own papers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, which was published as a supplement to the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

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



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

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Nye County residents. In all, more than 1,000 photos have been collected and carefully identified. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories.

On the basis of the oral interviews as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories also have been archived.

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in 1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Nye County communities that may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

This is Robert McCracken talking to Don Cirac at his home in Smoky Valley, Nevada, April 18 and May 10, 1990. In the May 10 session (Chapters Six through Ten) they are joined by Nancy Cirac.

## CHAPTER ONE

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

DC: The birth certificate reads Donald Louis Cirac.

RM: And when and where were you born?

DC: Fallon, Nevada, February 7, 1932.

RM: And what was your mother's full maiden name?

DC: Alice Pratt.

RM: Do you know when and where she was born?

DC: I'm trying to think of the name of the little town where she was born. It's near Tuolumne, California.

RM: And do you know her birthdate?

DC: She's 82, so it would be 1908 - February 21, I think.

RM: And what was your father's full name and when and where was he born?

DC: My father's name was Louis Victor Cirac. He was actually born in Provo, Utah, but the family lived at Union Canyon, Nevada, at that time. His mother went to Utah where there were doctors and so on to do the birthing. He didn't like anybody to know that he was born in Utah.

RM: What kind of occupation was your mother's family involved in?

DC: My mother's father was, at a fairly young age (probably in his 40s), blinded by being kicked by a mule. The family was pretty poor. An interesting thing about her father is that he was a scout for Kit Carson. He was 50-some years old when she was born.

RM: And what was his name, now?

DC: His name was Llewyn Pratt. I don't know a lot about his history with Kit Carson. One of my aunts had a powder horn engraved to him from Kit Carson as a scout.

RM: Carson came down the Smoky Valley and so on - maybe he was with one of those expeditions?

DC: He probably was. And then her mother's father was a fellow by the name of Koster. He's the guy who built the famous Koster wagons. He'd come to your ranch . . . in fact he built one right down here which I believe Alice Gendron donated to the Nevada Historical Society - one that had never been used; one that had sat in a barn for 50 years.

RM: Is that right? But he would come to the ranch and make the wagon?

DC: Yes - make the wagon on the ranch.

RM: I'll be darned. What did her father do later, when he wasn't with Kit Carson?

DC: So far as I know he worked in the lumber industry around Tuolumne, in that area. But he got blinded and was [essentially] an invalid for, I don't know, 20 years; until he died.

RM: So it was later in life that he got kicked.

DC: Yes. I probably shouldn't say this, but I will. My father, at 18, 20 years old, was already a professional poker player. He used to ride the freight train to the Tuolumne area and catch the loggers coming out of the woods, and that's how he made his living. My mother, at 17, ran off with the terrible gambler from Nevada. [chuckles]

RM: Is that right? It sounds like a song, doesn't it?

DC: You know my mother.

RM: Oh, sure. Well, the Ciracs were involved early in the lone area, weren't they?

DC: Yes.

RM: Could you tell me some of the history on that?

DC: OK. I don't know the dates the way I should, but my great-grandfather was one of the first people in Union Canyon. He came around the Horn in a hide ship, like in 'I Years Before the Mast [by Charles Dana].

RM: I read the comic book. I didn't read the book. [laughs]

DC: [chuckles] Well, they had these hide ships that went from New York and down around the Horn and came up the California coast.

RM: And they would carry hides?

DC: Yes. And the trip took 3 or 4 years or something like that. It took about a year each way to make the trip, and one to two years to gather and process the cattle hides.

Anyhow, my great-grandfather jumped ship in Yerbo Buena, now San Francisco, when there were 50 people there. He wound up going to the California gold rush. He was from France - he immigrated from France. He didn't do too well in the gold rush, so he wound up working in the mines in Virginia City.

Then when Austin was founded, he came to this country and he was one of the first people in Union Canyon - at Berlin. If you drive up there today . . . you know, that's where the ichthyosaur is, at the top of the canyon. And if you watch the signs you can see where his mill was and where he lived and where some of the rest of my family lived.

RM: There are actually signs that say "Cirac Mill" and everything?

DC: Right.

RM: What exactly were his activities in the Berlin area?

DC: He had a custom mill. Of course, the old story is that he had a secret gold mine that he used to go to every summer, but I don't know anything about the veracity of that. And he raised 6 sons, I think.

Incidentally, his wife - my great-grandmother - was probably the first [woman] doctor in the West. In fact, my cousin has her diploma and everything from a Vienna university.

RM: Is that right? As a physician?

DC: Yes. And she spent 20 years going back and forth from Reese River Valley to Austin and to Lone, Berlin, Grantsville and ranches in between as a doctor. She died in Austin - I can't tell you the year. They had a big pneumonia epidemic there and she got pneumonia and died and is buried in Austin.

RM: So she got pneumonia treating her patients?

DC: Right.

RM: What were the circumstances that brought her over to this country?

DC: I don't know.

RM: She didn't come over with your grandfather?

DC: No, they met here - I think in California. I've tried to research some of this and boy, it's hard to do. I would guess this was in the 1870s. She had to be probably the first woman doctor in the West.

RM: Yes, I would think so.

DC: And she raised 6 sons while she was doing all this. [chuckles]

RM: She must have been a very energetic and vital woman.

DC: Must have been. Of course, I don't have any even second-hand knowledge of her - just stories from . .

RM: And your great-grandfather had a custom mill in Berlin Canyon?

DC: Right. As a matter of fact, you know the old line shafts?

RM: Yes - could you describe what a line shaft does?

DC: A line shaft is a long drive shaft with several pulleys on it to run different machinery by means of flat belts. You can still see one at the old Campbell and Kelly foundry in Tonopah. I was up there a couple of years ago, and I saw the end of that old line shaft sticking out of the ground. My great-grandfather's was probably powered by steam.

RM: How long was he in the area there?

DC: Well, they had to have come in the late '60s or early '70s. And my father and his brothers were born there. Of course, as I say, my grandmother went to Utah to have my father, but they lived there. My father was born in 1901 and I would say the family was there in Berlin until 1912, 1915.

RM: So your great-grandfather stayed there most of the rest of his life?

DC: Yes. I think he died there.

RM: And did he always make his living with this custom mill?

DC: Yes, and his "secret gold mine."

RM: Isn't there a town of Cirac over there?

DC: Well, that's out by the Orizaba Mine. You know Curly Coombs's Orizaba Mine?

RM: Yes.

DC: My grandfather found that mine and he's the one who platted that township and everything.

RM: Oh - that's in the San Antonio Mountains, isn't it.

DC: Incidentally, he sold that mine for \$50,000 cash, which was a whole bunch of money in those days He got a cashier's check on the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco. The next day was the San Francisco earthquake [laughs] and the bank failed.

RM: And so his check was no good?

DC: It was worthless.

RM: Wow. Talk about bad luck.

DC: Here's a picture for you. This came from the Historical Society. This is the school at Berlin.

RM: The thing's made of posts stuck on end, isn't it?

DC: Yes. This is my great-uncle, Charlie Joseph. You've probably heard about him in Tonopah.

RM: No, I haven't. Charlie Joseph Cirac?

DC: No, Charlie Joseph. His sister married my grandfather. His sister's my grandmother. That had to be . .

RM: When was this picture taken?

DC: Around the turn of the century - 1902.

RM: Now, apparently your great-grandfather's mill ran for many years.

DC: Yes - for 20 years or so.

RM: Do you know what kind of mill it was?

DC: I would guess it was gravity, but I really don't know. You can't tell anything from it now.

RM: What is it, just a foundation and so forth?

DC: Yes. There are just a few old rocks left. He was accepting ore from the other miners in the area. That's basically what he did.

RM: And then one of the children that they had was your grandfather. And your grandfather grew up in the Berlin area?

DC: Yes.

RM: And what was his name?

DC: His name was Louis Victor Cirac. My father was Junior, but he never used it.

RM: Did he spend his whole life in that area?

DC: There and Fallon and all over the state. He was something like the tenth man in Tonopah. The Historical Society has another picture of Tonopah's Main Street from 1905, I think, and it shows the building that the Pastime Club is in. Well, upstairs there used to be offices, and one of them says Cirac and McCarran Mining Company - Pat McCarran was his mining partner.

RM: Pat McCarran was his partner?

DC: [laughs] Yes.

RM: That's amazing.

DC: I had all those original pictures and in 1965, when we had the centennial celebration, I gave them to the Riverside Hotel to copy to put in a book they were putting out, and I've never got them back yet. RM: I hear that story a lot. People lend their pictures and never see them again. DC: Yes. But the Historical Society's got them too. When my father died, I took them up to have them copied.

RM: Tell me about your grandfather. He grew up in the Berlin area?

DC: Yes. He grew up there and as a young adult he went to Fallon. That's when the Newlands Project was first going. He was one of the people who went broke trying to farm in Fallon. He was an inventor, too. He was quite an old guy. He was mainly a mining man, but he invented this . . . I've got the original patent papers on that.

RM: That's some kind of a certificate . . .

DC: That's a stock certificate. It didn't work out too well. [laughs]

RM: Yes. Very few of them did.

DC: But I've got the original patent papers for that machine and I can't find them.

RM: What did it do?

DC: It was a beet digger and cotton harvester.

RM: That's amazing. So as a young man he went up to the Fallon area, to farm?

DC: Yes.

RM: He didn't go into the mining business?

DC: Well, he was in the mining business, too. He did everything. And of course, he's the one who found the Orizaba Mine.

RM: Could you describe exactly where the Orizaba is?

DC: That's awfully hard to describe.

RM: Well, it's north of Tonopah, isn't it?

DC: Yes. It's north in the San Antonio Mountains about 20 or 25 miles from Tonopah.

RM: What kind of a mine is it?

DC: It's gold. Curly [Coombs] made a lot of money out there.

RM: And Curly still has a mill there, doesn't he?

DC: I think he has.

RM: So your grandfather must have done some prospecting.

DC: Oh, all over. My dad used to tell me stories of their going prospecting on a horse. They had a buckboard, too. [They went] all over the country.

RM: Do you remember any other mines that he found?

DC: I don't know if it's in Nye County or not, but he was one of the original locaters of the Broken Hills area over by Gabbs. In fact, my grandmother used to tell me about spending the whole winter in a tent out there while he was in Tonopah. [laughs]

RM: Oh - that'd be tough. And what other kinds of things was he involved in?

DC: Well, as I say, he was a so-called inventor.

RM: Were any of his inventions really successful?



DC: Not monetarily, no. But his history is really interesting. When he was growing up in Union Canyon, the old man from France [his father] was a mean son of a bitch. He used to whip than with a bullwhip. And when my grandfather was 10 years old he ran away and walked over the mountains to Peavine Ranch and moved into the Indian camp there. (You can still see the old Indian camp.) He lived up there and grew up with the Indians. I think his formal schooling was to about the fourth grade. But while he was at Peavine - until he was, I would guess 22 or 23 - he taught himself. He knew 3 Paiute dialects fluently. Of course, he could already speak French, and he taught himself Spanish and Latin, and all the way up to calculus in mathematics.

RM: He was quite gifted, then, and had a real facility for languages, didn't he?

DC: Yes. My father spoke Paiute fairly well, and Shoshone. I know a few words, but . . . I probably know more than most Indians do now.

RM: Is that right? And you learned it from your father who learned it from your grandfather.

DC: Yes, right. And he carried the mail horseback from San Antone Ranch to Belmont for several years, I understand.

RM: This would have been before the turn of the century?

DC: Yes.

RM: Before Tonopah?

DC: Before Tonopah. And he became . . . you know Seyler Lake at Peavine?

RM: Yes?

DC: We11, the people that was named after - the Seylers - owned the ranch there. They took him in after he lived 2 or 3 years with the Indians (This is all hearsay from the family I'm telling you, so it's not accurate in terms of dates and all, but it really happened.) One day he came back from Belmont and the Seylers were in the pigpen and pigs were eating than. And it was all blamed on the Indians, but he always said it was the heirs. They got ahold of the ranch - the Seylers were getting ready to will it to [my grandfather].

RM: Oh. So they did them in and then let the pigs eat than. A case like that happened in Pahrump, where a man killed a guy and put him in with the pigs and the pigs were eating him.

DC: Yes, the pigs will eat than up. [laughs] So my grandfather went through all of these stages and was very prominent in the mining business around the turn of the century. I can remember him when I was about 4 or 5 years old, lying in bed in Fallon - he finally went back and settled in Fallon. And he died in his 50s from silicosis, probably from the Tonopah mines.

RM: So he died as a young man.

DC: Yes.

RM: Do you know what mines he was associated with in Tonopah?

DC: I really don't. I don't think that he was so much in the Tonopah mines as he was in the outlying areas, like the one we were just talking about - Orizaba. And he still played with Lone and Grantsville and all that.

RM: But he was in the Tonopah mines enough to get silicosis?

DC: Oh yes.

RM: Of course it didn't take much for some guys.

DC: My dad, who was a gambler, got silicosis - a very mild case of silicosis - from licking his thumb, dealing cards to the miners.

RM: Is that a fact? In Tonopah?

DC: Yes.

RM: Wow. Well, where did your Grandfather Cirac meet your grandmother, and who was she? Where did she come from?

DC: She was from Utah. There was a bunch of Mormons who came over from Utah, the Joseph family, that settled in Union Canyon. I'll tell you, there's a good little book - I've got a copy of it and I was looking for it for you and I can't find the damn thing. It's a little booklet that they sell at the ranger's house in Union Canyon now called Some Remembered, Some Forgotten.

RM: Oh, I think I've heard of it.

DC: And that tells a lot about my father, my grandfather and my great-grandfather. I can't think of the name of the old Basco [Basque] who wrote it, but . . .

RM: But your grandmother was from a Mormon family that came out of Utah over to Union Canyon. Why did they come over there?

DC: Oh, I think they came because of the mining boom.

RM: Then they married and . . . was she the one who lived in the tent?

DC: Yes. My grandfather made a ton of money in the mining business, but he was a gambler - an amateur gambler. He lost it all gambling. My father made a fortune in the gambling business and lost it all in the mining business.

RM [laughs] That's a good one. [laughter]

DC: [laughs] It's true. My grandfather also was half-owner with Lee Hand in the Lone Mountain turquoise mine.

RM: Is that right? You mean from the beginning? Hand found that mine, didn't he?

DC: He and my grandfather found it. Then they made a deal and Lee took the Lone Mountain and my grandfather took the Royston turquoise mine.

RM: Who got the best end of the deal, do you think?

DC: Lee Hand, by 700 or 800 times.

RM: But Royston was no slouch as a mine, was it?

DC: It was pretty good. I dug a little turquoise out there myself, when I was a kid.

RM: Is that mine still in the family?

DC: NO.

RM: The Lone Mountain turquoise mine is a world-class mine, isn't it?

DC: Oh, the best in the world.

RM: Do you }Mad when they found that?

DC: I couldn't tell you within 20 years, but I would guess somewhere while the Tonopah boom was going on.

RM: I wonder if they were looking for turquoise, or how in the heck they knew that they had turquoise?

DC: It's hard to say. Turquoise occurs, as you know, near copper. And gold and silver occur near copper. And the geology in the pre-Cambrian lime and so on is similar, so it's a good place to prospect for all of them. I would guess that's how it happened.

RM: Did they find the Royston Mine, too, or did they buy that?

DC: They were partners in each of them. I don't know what the situation with the Royston Mine was.

RM: But they did find the Lone Mountain Mine?

DC: Yes.

RM: That's something. So he did make some good finds - the Orizaba and the Lone Mountain Mine.

DC: Yes. He left a little notebook. It disappeared when my father died. My dad was great for mining, too - a pretty good amateur geologist and all that . . . a prospector, you know. He had this little notebook that my grandfather kept. And God, all over the state he went with a horse and wagon and the first old cars and all that.

RM: Is that right? How many children did your grandparents have then, besides your dad?

DC: He had 2 brothers and a sister. And their mother outlived them all.

RM: Is that right? What were the children's names and their birth order?

DC: The first was my father - Junior - Louis Victor Cirac. Then there was Marie a couple years later, a sister. Then there was Bill, 10 years younger than my father. Then there was Lee, who was a redhead. (All the rest of them were black-headed; Lee was red-headed.) And he was in the invasion of Normandy and so on. he was the only one who was young enough to get in World War II. he was . . . golly, I don't know, maybe 12, 13 years younger than my dad. he was the kid brother.

RM: Where were they born?

DC: They were all born in Union Canyon. They were living in Union Canyon and my grandfather was everywhere. They had a hotel there, as a matter of fact. No, they had a hotel at Grantsville that my grandmother used to tell me about.

RM: Is that right? Tell me some of the things that you remember [about her].

DC: Really, the only thing I distinctly remember is her opening her cedar chest and showing me one layer of \$20 gold pieces between the sheets that she pilfered from the hotel and saved because she didn't trust the old man, you know. [laughter] I don't know whatever happened to them. When she died they were gone.

## CHAPTER TWO

RM: We were talking about the hotel there. How big a hotel was it?

DC: I don't know - it could have been 20 rooms, it could have been 5. I can just remember my grandmother telling me about it.

RM But it was in Grantsville.

DC: Yes. You know, it's right next door to Union Canyon.

RM: Do you remember anything else that she told you about . . . ?

DC: She told me about coming from Utah in a stagecoach and stopping at the hotel in Hot Creek. Have you been out there?

RM: No.

DC: Oh God, you've got to go out there. The same old hotel has been preserved fairly well and it's still standing It's a 2-story wooden building, and it's still standing It's amazing.

RM: Is that right?

DC: At least it was 10 years ago; that's the last time I was there.

RM: And your Grandmother Joseph remembered staying there?

DC: Well, Grandmother Cirac, who was Joseph before she married my grandfather. The hard part of the trip was from Hot Creek to Darrough's, and they stayed at Darrough's for several days and swam around and got rested up and everything.

RM: Why was it hard from Hot Creek to Darrough's?

DC: It was just a long haul with very little in between. I guess McCann Station was the only other stop there. You know where that is - up at Hunt's Canyon?

RM No. I've never been there.

DC: Wow! You're missing a lot of the history. I just don't know. The only members of the Joseph family that I knew were my grandmother and my great-uncle Charlie Joseph from Tonopah. Somebody should have told you about Charlie Joseph.

RM: No, they never have.

DC: He was the world's greatest prospector. And he lived to be about 82 or 83.

RM: Who was he related to?

DC: His daughter was married to George Robertson in Tonopah, and his sister was my grandmother. And he was a lot younger than his sister. When my grandmother and grandfather got married they kind of raised Uncle Charles up. He was just a kid when they got married.

Anyhow, Uncle Charlie was the cheapest man in the world. I went to Reno with him one time and . . . he chewed cigars. (I never did see him light one.) He stopped in Hawthorne to get a cigar and he couldn't find one for less than a nickel, so he wouldn't buy one. He waited till Reno. He was that bad.

But he was an interesting old guy. He grew up in Union Canyon, ran around . . . he used to be a nightclub singer.

RM: Is that right?

DC: Yes. I got through part of college doing that.

RM: As a singer?

DC: Yes. Oh, half-assed, you know. He made a pretty good pile of money leasing at the Tonopah Divide, and lived 45 years or so on the money he made there, and never spent another dime. But he was a great prospector.

RM: What are some of the things that he found?

DC: He turned us on to a hell of a turquoise mine at the old silver camp at Ray. Have you run into that one yet?

RM: No - where was that?

DC: Oh, 7 or 8 miles north of Tonopah past Laundry Springs. He turned another guy and me on to it. I was instrumental in finding that. That was a great little mine, too. He had turquoise mines and copper mines . . . he told Lee Hand what was going on out at the big deal Anaconda's got now.

RM: You mead that was Hand's mine? I didn't know that.

DC: Yes, Hand and another guy. Anaconda paid Hand for 20 years before they ever did anything out there.

RM: On the big open-pit operation there?

DC: Yes. For copper, not for molybdenum.

RM: And Charlie Joseph was instrumental in guiding Hand to that property?

DC: Yes. he never did do a whole lot with the things he found. He sold a few here and there and so on, but there were no big deals.

RM: He was one of those guys who found it but never really did much with it - kind of a Shorty Harris type guy, maybe?

DC: You could compare the two.

RM: Is that right? That's a fair comparison?

DC: Yes. He was the guy who was the cause of the gold rush at Ophir Canyon in about 1947. He found gold in the creek out there and the first thing you know . . . He came in and told my dad and somebody overheard him. We took off the next morning with a pickup load of stakes and everything, and there were 20 cars trailing us. [laughs] So it turned out to be nothing.

RM: Is that right? But there was a little mini gold rush in 1947 at Ophir?

DC: Yes. We had another one for platinum, too, out by Orizaba one time.

RM: What happened there?

DC: This wasn't Joseph; this was Tom Nicely.

RM: Oh. Was he related to Roger Nicely?

DC: Yes - his father. he got an assay back from some lab in California on some rock that had strange-looking metal in it that you couldn't tell what it was - nobody could. And it came back platinum. We actually had the sheriff out there with a gun guarding our claims because this stuff was lying all over the ground and you could go pick it up. It turned out to be a very rare iron compound that was worth several hundred bucks a pound, except the world market was 20 pounds, you know. [laughter]

RM: And this was out north of Tonopah too?

DC: Yes. Out by Orizaba. And, as a matter of fact, it was in the same canyon.

RM: Is that right? What's the name of the canyon?

DC: It's some spring. I can't remember. Anyhow, Roger Nicely and I took off in the middle of the night with a pickup load of stakes again, and there were 50 cars behind us this time. [laughs]

RM: Word of those finds spreads fast, doesn't it? What year was that?

DC: Oh, it was probably in '47 or '48 - about the same time as the Ophir deal

RM: Is that right? Would the sheriff who was out there guarding it have been Bill Thomas?

DC: Oh yes.

RM: Did you know Bill Thomas very well?

DC: Oh yes.

RM: Could you tell me what you know about him?

DC: He told me . . . I've had a lot of talks with Bill. He came to Austin first.

RM: Where did he come from?

DC: I can't recall. He told me, too. But it wasn't from Nevada. Anyhow, when they found Tonopah, Bill walked from Austin to Tonopah along the top of the Toiyabes.

RM: No kidding. Why didn't he walk the valley?

DC: He wanted to see the mountains. Bill was a tough old son of a bitch.

RM: Wow. That's neat.

DC: Yes. Roger Nicely and I leased a tungsten mine from him right up here at Lone Trail Canyon, as a matter of fact. That was in '54, when I got out of the army.

RM: So Thomas walked down the Toiyabe Range . . .

DC: He walked from Austin to Tonopah, just because he felt like doing it. He was sheriff, you know, for 50 years.

RM: Oh, he is a remarkable figure.

DC: He was in Life Magazine. They did a big story on him.

RM: When was that?

DC: Oh, God. Somewhere around '55, '56, somewhere in there.



RM: Is that right? Tell me some more about what he told you about his life. What happened when he got to Tonopah?

DC: He worked in the mines for a while, as I remember. And then he got elected sheriff, and this was during Prohibition. And he was sheriff some time before that too, as I recall.

RM Yes, he was sheriff in the teens.

DC: And he never carried a gun, ever. And he knocked lots of bootleggers over, including my father. [laughs]

RM: What was his rationalization on not carrying a gun?

DC: I'm trying to remember if he ever told, me, and I can't truthfully say that he did. But I always figured it was for the same reason the London bobbies don't carry a gun: If you haven't got a gun, you don't get shot. He walked up to a lot of guys with guns and just took them away from them.

Do you know the story about him and Pat O'Neal? Pat O'Neal was a half-breed Indian - half-Irish, half-Indian. A mean son of a bitch and a good guy. He lived with me and my first wife (she died many years ago). He lived with us at Twin Rivers while we were building a concrete ditch in an old shack up there, and we were both working on the ditch. And we became pretty good friends.

But Pat had the reputation of having knocked a couple of guys off. He was a big hero in World War II in Europe because he liked to kill those Germans, you know.

RM: Is that right?

DC: Yes. And it would have been about '55 that he got in an argument at Carver's with a guy - a goofy cowboy - whose name I can't remember. It was a pretty bad argument, so Pat went out and got his .30-.30 out of the pickup and came back, and he shot the wrong guy and killed him. The guy he shot was a pimp who had come from Tonopah and needed killing anyway.

RM: How did he make a mistake like that?

DC: He just missed. The pimp was sitting next to the other guy. But he had just beat some whore in Taxine's to death with a bar stool about a week before that. Everybody knew who did it, but he never got arrested for it, so Pat should have gotten a medal for killing that pimp, OK? Anyhow, Pat took off up South Twin on foot with his gun. In '55, Bill Thomas had to be 70 or something.

RM: Oh, at least.

DC: Well, he walked up there after him and came out with him. Everybody else was afraid to go get him.

RM: How the hell did he do it?

DC: I asked Pat about it. He said he was up in the old line shack in the meadows at South Twin. And Bill knew where he went; he just figured it out. He went up there and said, "Pat, you're going to get awful goddamn hungry up here. You might as well care back with me right now." So he did.

RM: Isn't that amazing?

DC: Now, the trial is what's funny. Bill Crowell was the DA. And everybody had it all set to turn Pat loose, but they had to have the murder trial. And you don't have to testify against yourself in a murder trial, as you know. But the trial came up and Pat insisted on testifying. I was there at the trial, and Bill said, "Pat O'Neal, did you shoot and kill [so-and-so] at Carver's on such-and-such a date?"

And Pat said, "You're goddamn right I did, and I'd do it again if I had the chance." So the jury had not; found him guilty of manslaughter, he spent a couple of years breaking horses at the prison. He enjoyed the whole thing.

RM: And then he was released?

DC: Yes - and eventually died of diabetes and so forth. But he was one of our great Nye County characters.

RM: But this pimp had killed a prostitute?

DC: Beat her to death with a bar stool.

RM: Why didn't they arrest him?

DC: Well, Taxine had a little juice at Tonopah. You know about Taxine's.

RM: I know of it, but I don't know much about her. Do you know much about her?

DC: Oh hell, she practically raised all us kids. Taxine was a great old lady; kind of like Bobbie Duncan. Bobbie was her competitor for a few years when she was young. Old Taxine ran a whorehouse, and when you were 15 years old you could go in there and see the girls. You couldn't have a drink, you couldn't play the slot machine, you couldn't swear, but if you had 5 bucks . . .

RM: That's what it was, 5 bucks?

DC: Yes.

RM: This would have been when, in the '40s?

DC: Yes.

RM: That was a steep price, wasn't it?

DC: Well, it went up because of the war. It was \$3 before that.

RM: It was \$3 in New Mexico in the late '50s.

DC: And she was a great old gal .like Bobbie, Taxine would loan you \$5 on your high school ring, you know Gosh, Bobbie died with mine, think. [laughs] Anyhow, Taxine was very well thought of in the town. She did a lot for charity and this, that and the other. And the pimp was her old man, you know. I don't know how she

RM: Where did she come from?

DC: I have no idea. My family moved to Tonopah from Fallon in 1937, and she was there then.

RM: Was she the madam then or was she working on the line?

DC: She was the madam. She was always the madam. She was a smart old girl.

RM: So as long as you knew her she was a madam, the way Bobbie was for me.

DC: Yes.

RM: Did you ever know Bobbie when she was just a working girl?

DC: No. She had that little place down the street from Taxine's and she always held it, as far as I knew. She might have worked for Taxine at one time, but that's when I was too young to be around there.

RM: Describe what Taxine looked like.

DC: She looked like an old madam - brightly painted, with gray hair . . .

RM: Was she heavy?

DC: No, not bad. Not like Bobbie at all. And she was pleasant and well-spoken. The greatest thing I remember about her place was her alcoholic burro.

RM: She had a burro?

DC: Oh yes. After I got old enough to drink, you'd be sitting in there . . . I'd go down and see her just like I always went and visited Bobbie - just to say hello, and have drink. A lot of guys do that,

RM: Sure.

DC: And you'd sit there and have a beer and the donkey would come and lay his head on your shoulder.

RM: No kidding.

DC: He lived in the joint. And he'd con beer out of all the customers. He'd get drunk and go lie down in the corner and pass out. She had him for 10 years.

RM: What was his name?

DC: I don't know that he had a name. We'd just call him a jackass.

RM: And he lived in there?

DC: Well, he went outside at night and all that, but he . .

RM: How did they give the beer to him?

DC: He'd drink it right out of the bottle.

RM: And he didn't slobber it all over?

DC: Oh, yes, he slobbered a little and all that. But he'd probably drink 20 or 30 beers in a night.

RM: Are you kidding me?

DC: Well, he was a big animal. [chuckles] And he never did misbehave - he was polite as hell. And I had pet burros when I was a kid and they were meaner than hell. But this guy wasn't; he was gentle.

RM: Isn't that fascinating! Describe what her joint looked like when you went in.

DC: All I can say is it was a typical whorehouse. It had a bar on the right as you went in, I remember.

RM: How many stools were there?

DC: Oh hell, 20 stools. It was a pretty big bar. And there was a little dance floor and then the rooms were on the other side of the dance floor.

RM: I see. How many rooms did she have?

DC: I don't know. I'd say 4 or 5.

RM: How many girls did she usually have working for her?

DC: Well, when I was growing up here during the war, she had a bunch of them - about 8 or 9 all the time. And then later on she'd have 2 or 3, you know.

RM: Well, when she had 8 or 9 girls she must have had to have some other rooms. If she only had 4 or 5 rooms, then . .

DC: I just don't know. I was younger then, you see. The war was over pretty much before I was . . this is interesting - it was a ritual for kids in Tonopah. The kids used to hang out at the firehouse. They had to play basketball out there and they had a gym and we'd play pinochle up there all the time.

RM: That was up behind the Mizpah, wasn't it?

DC: Yes, up by the old water company office.

RM: Where the water place is.

DC: The older kids were always there, and the guys working as firemen were in their 20s. So when a kid came of age . . .

RM: Which was when?

DC: Oh, 14 or 15 years old . . . well, I'll tell you what happened to me. A lot of times we'd get in somebody's car and ride around town, and that was a big deal then. You'd always go by the cat house and peek in the window and see if you could catch one of the town leaders in there. RM: [laughs] You were peeking in the windows of the . .

DC: I mean just out of the cars.

RM: Oh, OK - in the front door.

DC: Yes. So that was the normal thing to do. So we went down there one night on our ride around town and we slowed down, and I didn't think anything of it. The first thing I knew, the car stopped, the doors were open and 3 guys got me and we were headed for the front door. One of them slapped a \$5 bill in my hand and the other one booted me in the ass and said the

girl was waiting for me. And I was terrified. But 20 minutes later I was downtown trying to borrow another \$5.

RM: [laughs] God, what a story. How old were you?

DC: Fourteen.

RM: Is that right.

DC: A great way to educate a kid. Those girls were like mothers to us kids. And they taught us some good things that really can in handy. It still comes in handy right now. Yes, I liked them. They were good people.

RM: How old was Taxine when you knew her in the '40s?

DC: I'd say her late 50s, maybe early 60s.

RM: And what did her girls look like? I mean, were they attractive or were they kind of beat up or .

DC: Well, you always got a mixture. I flat fell in love with one when I was about 16 who was half French and half Arabian, with blue eyes and black hair She was about 18. But her pimp came to town and beat hell out of her and I ran and hid. They still had them in those days.

RM: I think they still have them.

DC: And there was one named Norma who looked like a movie star. I used to write letters to her mother for her [saying that] she was a traveling nurse. She married a guy from here. He's dead now, but I won't tell you [his name]. Norma was a fine, fine lady. And she looked like a movie star - beautiful. And then, of course, there was everything in between.

RM: Were many of them older women? I mean, getting up in their late 30s or 40s?

DC: NO.

RM: It was a young woman's trade, wasn't it?

DC: Yes.

RM: How was it regulated in Tonopah in those days, do you recall?

DC: They all had to go to the doctor once a week.

RM: Did they have to check in with the police when they came to town?

DC: Oh yes. It's always been a well-regulated industry. And I'll tell you something: In all the time I was in high school, there was never a case of venereal disease among the boys or one pregnant girl among the girls at school.

RM: That was a lot better than ours. [laughs]

DC: No, I think a good old country whorehouse is a great asset to any community.

RM: I agree. So Taxine was greatly loved in the community, wasn't she?

DC: Oh yes. Just like Bobbie was.

RM: I've heard that they would pass around the hat in town for something, you know.

DC: She was always number one. As an example, when I was 10, 11, 12, selling newspapers, the deal was, you paid the Tonopah Times a nickel for the newspaper and you sold it for a dime. But there was a totally organized hierarchy of newspaper boys. The one who could whip all the other ones got the whorehouse route. And I mean, it was tough. I finally got big enough where I could whip all the other bastards, and I got the whorehouse route and held it for about a year until somebody bigger can along and whipped me. You got a buck for every paper down there and you'd sell 7 or 8 papers at Taxine's. That was a lot of money then. That's why we fought for it. And the guy who had it, had it and nobody else went in there. If he did, you whipped his ass.

RM: Was it still a [red-light] district at that time?

DC: Oh, yes. There was Taxine's and then there was Bobbie's and there was one other in behind Bobbie's. It belonged to an old man, but I can't remember his name or anything. He was the one who had the 50-year-old hookers.

### CHAPTER THREE

DC: A month after we first came to town in '37, I can remember my mother [being] shocked, talking about "Safeway." There was one old hooker . . . I remember seeing her with dyed hair and paint all over her and everything. She lived in a house all by herself and she called herself Safeway.

RM: [laughs] You mean she had her own whorehouse?

DC: Yes - a little cottage industry, just her and the house. I remember seeing her walking down the street and my mother would say, "Don't look at her."

RM: How old do you think she was?

DC: She had to be 50.

RM: Who patronized her? The old fellows?

DC: Yes, the old guys.

RM: How long was she around?

DC: I'd say 4 or 5 years after we moved there. I think she got run off when the air base moved in. They shut than all down for a while and then they opened than back up. But I think she left town when they first shut than down. And all anybody ever knew her by was Safeway. She lived out behind the Ramona Hotel in a little house.

RM: What other joints were there?

DC: That was it, I think. Just the 3, and there were a couple that kind of came and went that I have a fuzzy recollection of.

RM: Was there a place called Nigger Dee's?

DC: I remember the name, but it had to be before my time.

RM: What was Bobbie's joint like - Bobbie Duncan's, that is.

DC: Bobbie's joint was a fun place like Taxine's was, but it was a lot smaller. It had 5 or 6 stools at the bar and 2 or 3 girls. And, course, Bobbie was young and slim then and everybody tried to get in Bobbie's britches and nobody did. You know, the big deal is to get in the madam's . . . I don't recall anybody ever . . . Bobbie was always married to a truckdriver, and had a nice home in Vegas and all that. Did you know that?



RM: Oh, really? I knew she had a home in Vegas when I knew her in the '50s, but . . .

DC: Yes. And she was always married to this guy in Vegas. He had his own truck - a cross-country truckdriver. She and my dad were great friends. They used to go hunting, and my mother'd get pissed. They'd go deer hunting together and so forth. My dad and her husband were friends, too. They'd all go together. But nobody ever knew much about him. She never talked about him. But I went to her house in Vegas one time.

RM: What was it like? Was it nice?

DC: Oh, one of the better shacks in Vegas. It was near Lamb Boulevard in northeast Vegas.

RM: Yes, out that way.

DC: Yes, but not way out - in closer to town. I'm trying to think of the name of the subdivision but I can't right now. It was a nice place.

RM: Then the military came in, in '41 or whatever . . .

DC: Yes, '41 or '42. They shut down the brothels; they declared than off limits to the soldiers. That went on a couple of years and then they declared than on limits again because, being off limits, they didn't have enough MPS to enforce that.

RM: But they were still operating? Where did they go when they went off limits?

DC: Beats hell out of me.

RM: Where did Taxine's go?

DC: Oh, they stayed in the same place. They were still in business. "Off limits" means a soldier can't go in there or he'll get in trouble. But there were so many of them who went anyway that they couldn't enforce it.

RM: Oh - I thought they actually closed down the whorehouses.

DC: No, there was no way they could. Tonopah was a great place to grow up in those days. And what it's become now, I don't like at all. I don't even like to go . .

RM: What don't you like about it now?

DC: It's just not the same place it was. The whole town - the whole damn county - is based on nepotism - more so than I can stomach.

RM: You don't think it was that much in the old days?

DC: Hell no. We were all newcomers then. [chuckles]

RM: Going back to the initiation rite that the kids had - that is a fascinating, incredible thing. It was just a ritual with the boys, wasn't it?

DC: Yes, just about everybody went through it.

RM: And they would take a guy by surprise?

DC: You know, when you're 14, 15, you just dream about doing something like that but you're afraid to do it. But many times in my life, I've remembered all the lessons I was taught by those girls - how to make a woman happy, how to keep from getting a girl pregnant and how to keep from getting diseases. They showed us all that.

RM: It was really just a good sex education course, wasn't it?

DC: Right. Super good. And they looked on us as their children - they liked us. Of course, they still got their money in front, but they liked us. And I think it's that way worldwide in that profession. I lived in Mexico for a while, and in Mexico, it's an accepted thing that the upper class (there is no middle class in Mexico, it's lower or upper) . . . the upper class people hire a woman when their son's 15 or 16 to live with him for maybe a year and show him all that stuff. They do the same thing in Europe and . . .

RM: What about the girls? How did they get their sex education?

DC: Well, we tried to help a few of them, but . . . [laughs]

RM: So basically they got it from the boys.

DC: Yes, there were a few of them who could teach us a few things, too. I was a strange kind of kid. I was a kind of a loner in high school. I never did fool with the high school girls. The last 3 years of high school I only went to school a half a day and I ran Tom McCullough's clothing store for the other half. He was in the hospital with a broken neck down in California. So I got into the divorcee end of it while I was in high school.

RM: You mean, consorting with divorcees?

DC: Yes, instead of the high school girls. So I really didn't know a hell of a lot about the high school girls. There were some active ones there - some of whom you know very well. I won't talk about them.

RM: Sure. Well, your family moved to Tonopah when you were . . .

DC: Five years old. I was born in Fallon.

RM: How did your mom and dad meet?

DC: She was a little country girl and he was a gambler who went to the logging towns, as I said. She was 17 when he married her. He said she never had a pair of shoes on till he met her. (Of course, that's not true.)

RM: So she was from a pretty rural area.

DC: Oh yes.

RM: Did he continue on as a gambler at that time? Was he older than she was?

DC: He was 7 years older, I think.

RM: So he was a young gambler, about 25 or so.

DC: Oh hell, from the time he was 15 he was gambling. And he was a bootlegger. He used to haul booze from Fallon to the Big Casino in Tonopah in a Model-T Ford. He had 3 Model-T Fords.

RM: He had a big operation, didn't he?

DC: Well, pretty big. That was once a month, you know. And a Model-T Ford would haul one barrel of whiskey. The road used to go around behind Lone Mountain to Tonopah; it wasn't where it is now. He got ambushed by the sheriff there one time.

RM: Where did your father grow up?

DC: He grew up - until he was about 12 years old, I think - in Union Canyon. Then he went to Fallon, and he went through the eighth grade there. He had an eighth grade education which was like you or me getting a high school education or kids today getting their bachelor's degree.

RM: Right.

DC: And he was a mathematical genius. He could compute all the odds in his head. It was unbelievable. And he just naturally drifted into gambling. I don't know how. And he and Baldy West . . . I don't know if you know Baldy West. He was one of the old-time gamblers. He and Baldy West had a pool hall in Tonopah in the early '30s. And they sold the pool hall and Baldy went to Reno and bought the Palace Club there for \$5000. He wanted the old man to come up and go in the business with him. Baldy made \$20 million in the Palace Club. But the old man went to Winnemucca. Arid times were tough, you know. This was the middle of the Depression. And Prohibition was over so he couldn't be a bootlegger anymore.

RM: Yes. And gambling was legal in Nevada by then.

DC: It had just became legal. I can barely remember being in Winnemucca - I was probably 4 years old or something like that. Then we went back to Fallon - it's all kind of vague in my mind. My mother was a waitress at the Barrel House Cafe at Fallon. Anyhow, the old man got a job in Tonopah for \$10 a day. So in 1937 we moved from Fallon to Tonopah.

RM: Was his job at the Ace Club?

DC: Yes. And he wound up as part owner in the Ace Club and made a ton of money there during the war. He used to bring that money home at night in a sack. We had a big round oak dining room table and it'd cover the whole top of the table. He had 4 safety deposit boxes full of cash and he didn't even know how much in them.

RM: Wow.

DC: But he blew it all in mining deals and died broke.

RM: Is that right? Tell me about his running the liquor to the Big Casino.

DC: He told Mac this story one time. He had 3 Model-Ts, he and my Uncle Bill and Fred Waidly. My Uncle Bill was about 15 years old. And the road to Fallon used to go around behind Lone Mountain and through Paymaster Canyon and down into Tonopah. It's a lot shorter that way than the way the highway goes now.

RM: Which way did it go around Lone Mountain?

DC: It went around the west side of Lone Mountain, like the Silver Peak road does. Do you know where Paymaster Canyon is?

RM: No.

DC: Paymaster Canyon is just north of where the turquoise mine is. Anyhow, he said they crossed the little railroad station at Blair Junction and they were several miles past that . . .

RM: And the railroad was still in operation then?

DC: Yes. And the sheriff was lying in wait for him. Now Bill Thomas wasn't sheriff then. This must have been just before he got elected, because it was another man who was sheriff. And they ambushed him there. The old man said, "There were a dozen guys there. We just slowed the throttles down in those Model-Ts and stepped out and just let them go and took off walking the other way." And the sheriff took over the old man's bootlegging business.

RM: Now, where was he getting his stuff?

DC: He was making it himself, in Fallon. Everybody was doing that in those days, you know.

RM: Yes, it was big business all over Nevada.

DC: Anyhow, he came up and we came to Tonopah in '37. I can remember that the first time I ever saw Tonopah was at night. We had an old Plymouth sedan and we stopped at the Ramona Hotel and Mrs. Trueba was there and made us a nice big dinner and gave me a big piece of apple pie alamode. I'll never forget it. [chuckles] A five-year-old kid. And we lived in a rented house for 2 or 3 years and then we bought old Judge Hatton's house on Prospect. It's where Ernie and Bobby Longdon - she works for the gas company - live now. We bought that house for \$1500 and we spent 10 years fixing it up. We had the nicest house in town, by the time we were through. We did most of the work ourselves. (My grandfather also was a master carpenter; I forgot to mention that.) He did a lot of things and he taught my dad a lot.

RM: How many children did your grandparents have? Were they the ones who had 4, or that was your great-grandparents?

DC: No. My great-grandparents had 6 boys. They're all buried in Fallon right now. My grandparents had 3 sons and one daughter.

RM: And your father was the oldest of them.

DC: Right.

RM: And there was just you and your sister [Jeanne Cirac Potts]?

DC: Yes.

RM: Tell me what it was like growing up in Tonopah at that time.

DC: It was tough. You had to be a tough kid in that place. I'll never forget the first day I went to school. My sister's 5 years older than I, and she used to teach me what she learned in school. And hell, I could read before I started the first grade. That was a big mistake in Tonopah in those days. Plus, I wore short pants to school. I got whipped 20 times the first day.

RM: Is that right? And you were only 5 or 6 years old, right?

DC: Yes, and I had just gotten out of the hospital from a ruptured appendix. I was a skinny, sickly little kid.

RM: Oh! And these kids were giving you a real bad time?

DC: Oh sure. It was tough in those days. I finally got to where I could whip the worst bully, Bobby West (he's still in town), and then it was all right. I ran home from Bobby West one day and my dad was there. And I said, "Boy, I'm lucky I just got away from Bobby West."

He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "He was going to whip me again." So the old man said, "And you ran?" And I said, "I had to run."

"Well," he said, "you shouldn't have done it." And he got the razor strap out and he said, "I don't want you running anymore."

RM: And he whipped you?

DC: Yes. He didn't abuse me, but he . . .

RM: So then the next time . . . ?

DC: The next time I didn't run. Then I found out that Bobby West was just a big bully and all you had to do was whack him one good one in the chops and he was finished.

When we were growing up there was a big influx of Mexicans from Wheatland, Wyoming. The Martinezes are one of the [families who came in then]. They were the best of all of them. Old Jessie Martinez is one my favorite people in the world. They came and they worked cheap and they ran a lot of the other guys out of jobs. It was a real bitter deal there. So we had gangs. And I mean, it was serious business. The Mexicans had a gang and the other guys had a gang. Oh, I've had lots of fights with Mexicans, I'll tell you. We got to the point one time where we all net - about 50 on each side - with .22 rifles with bayonets taped on them. The police had a hell of a time breaking it up.

RM: So it was a serious dispute.

DC: Yes. And it was an economic deal, because the Mexicans coming from Colorado would work cheaper than the people who were working there.

RM: Weren't they working in the Victor [mine]?

DC: The Victor was closed by then.

RM: Curly [Coombs] told me they imported a lot of Mexicans because they could take that heat better down there.

DC: Yes, and they worked cheaper, too. A lot of them wound up leasers. Jessie was a leaser for years and he did pretty well.

RM: They were leasing by this time, weren't they?

DC: Yes.

RM: In fact, the mines were on their last legs.

DC: Right. The mines were dead by then, just about. But the old enmity still existed there. It was a tough place to grow up.

RM: Were the Mexicans there when you came or did they come later?

DC: They were there when we came here.

RM: Did they live in any particular part of town?

DC: No. They were scattered all over. Martinezes lived right down the street from us 2 or 3 houses away. There were no ghettos or anything. The whole town was a ghetto. We had an outhouse and no hot water in the first house we moved into. I can remember putting a hot water heater in that worked off the wood cook stove in the kitchen.

RM: Boy, that was luxury, wasn't it?

DC: You bet. And we never had an indoor toilet till we got Judge Hatton's house.

RM: Is that right? Did you go all the way through school there in Tonopah?

DC: Yes, all the way.

RM: What are some more things that stand out in your mind about growing up in Tonopah?

DC: I would say that in those days, growing up in that town developed the ability to compete and the self-confidence and reliance that you couldn't get in a city or in other places.

RM: Is that right? How did that come about?

DC: Just because it was so goddamned tough. And, nobody had any money. You know, this was during the Depression.

RM: But aside from the economic toughness, why were they so violent?

DC: Well, it was because of the same old economic problem - when immigrants come in and work cheaper than the people who are there and take their jobs away from them . . . even though that wasn't happening then, the same feeling was still there and it lasted a long time.

RM: Do you recall much hostility toward the Yugoslavians?

DC: Not a bit. The bohunks were on our side, because they'd been there a lot longer. The bohunks and Cousin Jacks like Curly and . . . RM: I remember your sister telling me that she

hadn't been in Tonopah too long and she came home from school and asked your mother, "Mom, how can our name can't be Ciracovich?"

DC: Right.

RM: Was your dad involved in the Ace Club all the time you were growing up there?

DC: Oh yes. And it was bad. My sister got kicked out of high school because the principal called her old man a "nasty gambler." It was really a stigma to be a gambler. She hit him over the head with a chair. [laughs]

RM: Is that right? Did you feel a stigma in town because of that?

DC: Yes, I felt it. I reacted to it by getting the best grades and being the best athlete in the goddamn school. And that's part of what I'm talking about [when I say] the struggle of growing up here was good. I'm a firm believer in [the idea that] if you have a tough childhood, your adult life is a lot easier.

RM: There's something to that theory, isn't there? So your father wasn't perceived as a club owner or as a bar owner, he was perceived as a gambler?

DC: Yes. All of them were - Slim Russell, the owner of the Tonopah Club; George Barra; Bob Marker; all of them. And that lasted through the war. And then everybody figured out they were not a bunch of crooks. Before, they thought they were a bunch of crooks. Gambling had just been legalized in the early '30s.

RM: What form did that stigma take for you as a kid?

DC: There wasn't really any reaction from the other kids. They couldn't care less. All they cared is who could whip the other guy. My sister saw it when the principal, Bird, came up with that. My mother was not accepted in the so-called "society life" of Tonopah for 5 or 6 years after we moved there.

RM: Is that right? Was that because she was a newcomer or just because her husband . . . ?

DC: Because of the gambling. And as I said, George Barra began in Tonopah as a gambler. He was part owner of the Ace Club.

RM: But yet, he became sheriff, didn't he?

DC: Yes. Eventually everybody outlived all this, you see. Incidentally, do you know how George came to this area?

RM: No.



DC: He was the head engineer when Scotty's Castle was built.

RM: Is that right? I didn't know that.

DC: He was a civil engineer. But he got into the gambling business and liked it.

RM: Oh, I see. So your father made a lot of money in the Ace Club, then lost it in mining.

DC: Yes.

RM: What were some of the ventures where he lost his money?

DC: Oh, Tonopah Divide was one. The biggest venture was a guy by the name of Frank Burnham who conned him out of a ton of money. Frank Burnham was the world's greatest con man.

RM: How did he operate?

DC: Well, I'll give you an example. Do you know the big lead-silver mine right outside of Death Valley - Darwin?

RM: Darwin? The name of the mine or the town?

DC: It's a town and a mine.

RM: OK.

DC: My dad always had a great interest in Darwin. His dad had had something to do with it (I don't know the details). Anyhow, they got ahold of the mine and Burnham said, 'We'll form a corporation and we'll make this thing go.' You couldn't believe Burnham. You've got to have heard about Frank Burnham - he was unreal.

## CHAPTER FOUR

DC: They formed a corporation of which my father was president and Burnham was the secretary/treasurer. Burnham went to Los Angeles and sold 400 percent of the corporation without my father knowing. Burnham wound up in prison. And my dad, who never got a parking ticket in his life in spite of the bootlegging and stuff, was terrified. I had to go with him down to the SEC offices in L.A. when he testified a couple of years before he died and he was terrified. He was totally innocent. They just wanted his testimony, though.

RM: What year was that?

DC: Oh, it's hard to remember years. That would have been in the early '50s, I think, when I was in the army. Another time in the very early '50s we got Drywash Sulliver's ground in Manhattan - good placer gold. This good old guy named Sulliver made a living for 40 years out there with a little drywasher. He died and then the ground came open and my dad and I went and located it. It was a beautiful place to make a lot of money. In fact, there was a lot of money made there later on. But anyhow, Dad got the banker in Tonopah in on the deal. And my uncle was going to do the running of it. In fact, I remember my uncle and me borrowing the county drag line. The county had a drag line then and we went out and dug a sump for water to get the thing going. They bought a loader and they bought a truck and this, that and the other and I helped put the mill together. I was at college then - that would have been 1950 and '51. I came out every weekend from Reno and helped get the place put together and all that.

We got a mill built and it ran one day and we were cleaning up the sluice boxes - beautiful, solid yellow - and here came Bill Thomas with an attachment. The banker got arrested for embezzling from the bank and half of the checks . . . (He was running the finances, of course, for the deal.) He forged my father's name to [some] checks and half of them were bouncing and all. They had hundreds of thousands of dollars. That's common knowledge. Red O'Leary was running the bank. Red went to prison and the old man got nailed for about 100 grand. That was the end of the placer mine.

RM: Where was that?

DC: It was just below Lone.

RM: Is there a lot of placer at Lone?

DC: No, just that one place. It was an amazing place. It was only about 3 feet deep and all you had to do was muck it up with a grader and put it in a truck and dump it in the sluicebox.

RM: Is that right? But it really wasn't a big deposit?

DC: Not a big deal. It was maybe 40 acres, 3 feet deep.

RM: Do you recall any other properties that your dad was involved in?

DC: Oh yes. We did a lot of work out at Tonopah Divide and realized 98 cents a ton off of the ore. [laughter]

RM: That was your settlement from shipping?

DC: Yes.

RM: Divide had come and gone by that time, hadn't it?

DC: Yes; we got a lease there . . .

RM: What mine was it?

DC: It was right above the main Tonopah Divide shaft and it was right next to the hole - 100 feet away - where they got the big slab of silver with the drill steel in it that's at the museum at the Macky School of Mines. That was my dad and me and my uncle. My Uncle Bill was a super good hard-rock miner. He died when he was 50. Anyhow, he did the mining. We had a 40-foot shaft and then about a 40-foot incline winze. Bill was down there doing the drilling and mucking at the bottom of the winze and I was at the bottom of the shaft - I had to crank the goddamn muck up. I was 15 years old. I had to crank the muck up with a geared winch, a 300-pound bucket, dump it on a slick sheet, muck it into the 1000-pound bucket and all this time Bill was resting down below. My old man was screwing off up there, running the hoist. I never stopped, you know. [chuckles] That was my introduction in the mining business.

RM: Wow.

DC: Anyhow, we got out, I don't know, a couple hundred tons and assayed about \$30 a ton, which was pretty good in those days. We hauled it to Silver City in a 2-ton Chevy truck that you could get 8 tons on. We built a big bin going down the side of the mountain and you could let it run into the truck from the bin, but once we got to Silver City we had to muck it off by hand. The trip took 18 hours.

RM: Now, where's Silver City?

DC: Virginia City.

RM: And it took 18 hours because the truck was so heavy?

DC: Oh yes. We did that for a month, getting that muck up there, and when the check came the ore was full of aluminum which we were penalized for and we made 98 cents a ton off it. So that was a losing deal.

Then the old man got into a deal with Trevor Sanks, who was the engineer who built the Manhattan dredge; he lived with us while he was building it. He went back to Missouri and had

a brick-making business, I think, and the old man put 30, 40 grand in that and never saw it again. He was a great gambler but not the world's greatest businessman.

RM: How long did he hold the Ace Club after the war?

DC: They were in there . . . it was he who bought [out] Marker.

RM: George Barra and Bob Marker [both operated the club, didn't they]?

DC: It's hard for me to remember. I think [they were there] till about '55 or so. Then he sold out to George Boscovich. George had it till he died - he got killed in a car wreck - and then it went to the Perchettis and they never did much with it.

RM: What did your dad do after he sold the Ace Club?

DC: Well, he played around in the mining business.

RM: Did he come out of the Ace Club in pretty good shape financially?

DC: I don't think too good. He probably had about 50 grand.

RM: That was a lot of money back then.

DC: He kept playing with mines, though, and that eats it up quick. I remember he had to go to work 2 years before he died in Harrah's Club at Lake Tahoe. He had to go to school to learn how to deal 21. And it killed him; it killed him.

RM: To work as a dealer?

DC: Oh yes. He'd had offers from everybody to be the "eye in the sky" or the casino manager. He was one of the guys who started the . . . I couldn't buy a drink in the state of Nevada when I was a kid if they knew who I was, because the house would give it to me; [and] the floor shows and the chorus girls and every . . . But he hated the big corporations when they started moving in. And when he had to go to work for Harrah's it almost killed him. But he was running out of money. He had to go to a 2-week school and learn how to deal 21. Of course, he never said anything, you know. He just . . .

RM: But he'd been doing it half his life, hadn't he. Probably most of his life.

DC: Oh, he'd been doing it almost 50 years - 45 years.

RM: And they had to send him to school. That's amazing.

DC: Oh, it hurt him. He did it for about a year and couldn't take it any longer. And when he died he was still playing with deals. He was trying to hit the big one, and had a heart attack.

RM: How old was he when he died?

DC: Sixty.

RM: Sixty? OK. Now we've got you up to 1950, when you graduated from Tonopah High. What did you do then?

DC: I went to the university at Reno for a year; I had some scholarships. And then I got drafted. There were no student deferments for the Korean War, you know. And I got out in '54.

RM: Did you go to Korea?

DC: No, I fought the battle of Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

RM: [chuckles] And so you were in the army? Are there any highlights of that experience that you want to talk about?

DC: I was in the signal corps. I'm not too proud of my army service. thought about Korea the way the kids thought about Vietnam - I didn't think we had any business there. So I said, "Well, I'll serve my time, but I'm not going to go over there and lie in the goddamn muck for nothing if I can get out of it." So, when I was inducted into the army, the guy who gave you your first assignment to where you were going to go - infantry, signal corps or engineers, whatever - happened to be a guy from Reno. He said, "What do you want to do?"

I said, "I want to go where they send all the dumb bastards because I want to be an instructor." [laughs] (I'd had a little advice from people who had been in the army.)

He said, "OK. We'll put you in the signal corps as a message center clerk," which is as low as you can get. So I got through basic training, went in the message center as a clerk and was in school one week and I was an instructor, and in a month I was senior - running the whole school.

RM: Is that right? In Fort Monmouth?

DC: No, this was in San Luis Obispo. Then they closed the camp. I still had about a year to go and I pulled a couple of strings and got sent to Fort Monmouth to the leadership school there as an instructor in the leadership school, which is where you teach guys . . . it's a prep school for OCS. Also, I taught second lieutenants coming out of ROTC in college. Those are the guys they shot in the back in Korea, you know.

RM: Is that right? I didn't know they had that in Korea.

DC: I was very serious about trying to teach those guys, in 6 weeks, how to survive.

RM: What was their survival problems?

DC: Well, they just didn't know what they were doing, and as college graduates, some of them thought they were a whole lot smarter than the rest of the people. What I told them all to do was, "Get yourself a good first sergeant and let him run the damn company, and keep your mouth shut." The ones who did that got through OK, but the ones who tried to throw their weight around . . . they remind me of a junior mining engineer now.

RM: You look on junior mining engineers as being the same as those guys?

DC: About the same, yes.

RM: You mean, they had some book learning but nothing else.

DC: Yes. They need to find out which end of a shovel works. It was interesting. My moment of glory in the army was when they asked me to teach at West Point.

RM: No kidding

DC: Yes, I was the top man in the signal corps in my military occupational specialty, which was message center clerk. [laughter] Oh, I taught a little cryptography and different things. It was a little better than it sounds, but they needed a guy to teach some communications courses at West Point for one month. It was getting towards when I was getting out and I would have had to stay in the army 3 weeks longer to go do that, so I said no. It was a voluntary deal Now I wish I'd have said yes. I could have said, "I used to be . . ." But you had to take 2 months training in West Point traditions and the way they do things - you had 2 months before you went and taught your one month.

RM: So it just wasn't worth it to you at the time.

DC: Three weeks more in the army? I hated every minute. Now I look back on it with great fondness.

RM: Do you? What makes you feel fond about it now?

DC: The number one thing is that it taught me that a kid from Tonopah - from the way I grew up in Tonopah - has got a big edge on the rest of the world. I did everything I set out to do in the army with no problem, while the other people just stood by and let the army run them.

RM: You set your own course and were able to do it, in other words?

DC: Yes. Tonopah taught me I could really compete with the world. It started there and the army finished it off for me. Oh hell, when I had to leave college . . . I got encephalitis when I was

a junior in college and the doctors wouldn't let me finish. So I was working in a furniture store while I was going to school - this was after I was out of the army and had a family and everything and was doing pretty well and the people liked me - and the word got around, so I got an offer from a small chain in California to go down and manage a store for them in Napa. So I went down; it was a good deal - 800 bucks a month.

RM: That was good money then.

DC: Yes. That's why I was going to college, wanting to make good. And in 2 years I wound up running the chain. You know how I did it? I was the stupid kid from the sticks who didn't know you were not supposed to work your ass off. And the guys who grew up down there grew up with the idea that you get as much as you can for doing as little as you can get by with. I didn't know that. That was the only difference. I was the boy wonder of the retail furniture business in northern California, and not because I'm smart or anything, just because I didn't know any better than to work my ass off.

RM: Do you think that's a characteristic of kids who grew up in Tonopah?

DC: In those days. Now it's the exact opposite, I think. But the world's opposite now, too.

RM: You mean, the kids in Tonopah work less now than the kids from, say, the city.

DC: I'd say from all around this country.

RM: Yes. Nobody'll work.

DC: I tried to find a kid to pull weeds in my yard. They laugh at you. I've got a kid down here who's a junior in high school who works like hell. He's the only one I've found in the last 5 years. And the reason is that his father died when he was a baby and he has 6 brothers and his mother raised them all and they've had to [work] and they know what it's like.

RM: Yes. So when you got out of the army you returned to Reno?

DC: Yes, after working about a year at the R.O. Ranch, where I had worked as a kid in the '40s.

RM: Describe what that old-time ranch looked like in the '40s.

DC: I went out there the first time as a hay hand. There are 5000 acres in natural meadows out there and the first look I got, there were bales of hay all over the sons of bitches and I had to pick them all up. I mean, pick them up and throw them up on a truck and then stack them.

RM: That's nightmare time!

DC: Oh shit, I was the toughest kid in Nye County at the end of that first summer. I did that for 3 summers. It really got to me. Incidentally, Emma Rogers was my grandfather's girlfriend at one time. She was never married, ever, but he used to come over and pick her up at the ranch - this was in the 1800s - and they would ride to Lone to a dance together, which was a 2- or 3-day trip (who the hell knew what they did in between, you know). He never would admit to anything.

RM: What a story. What a date.

DC: Yes. Old Emma used to sit and talk to me about my grandfather and get a dreamy look in her old eyes. Emma was the last of the super-strong women. You never heard her raise her voice, but she could destroy anybody. She was tough. And I'm talking about big city cow buyers and [so on].

RM: What did she look like?

DC: She was just an old maid.

RM: Was she a big Taman or a little . . . ?

DC: Gray headed, 6 feet tall, a very attractive old lady. She looked like she had been beautiful when she was a girl. Of course, she was in her 60s when I first went to work for her. She did all the cooking and in those days the hay crew was 25 guys. She was the best cowman I ever saw in my life. She could look at a calf and tell you the calf's great-grandmother and great-grandfather.

RM: You're kidding

DC: You could run a couple of hundred head of cattle through a gate, and she could tell you right to the head how many head went through there. She used to tell me stories about when she was a girl - driving the cattle from the ranch to Fallon to sell them and things like that.

RM: I'll be darned. It was her father who started the R.O., wasn't it?

DC: Yes. I think his name was Ben, if I'm not mistaken.

RM: I've forgotten it. But he came over from Lone, I believe.

DC: I'm not sure where he came from.

RM: And she had a brother . .

DC: Harry.

RM: But Pete Rogers was the guy who went down with the Wine Glass, wasn't he?



DC: Yes - Rene [Zaval's] brother, Pete.

RM: But I think their father went down to the Wine Glass. Pete and Rene moved down to the Wine Glass with their father and mother, so Rene's father would have been Emma's brother.

DC: And then she had another brother, Harry Rogers. When the old man died . . . Emma's father died of an appendicitis attack very suddenly, and there was no will or anything and Emma was just the strong one of the family. She had a sister Katie who was somewhat of a grouch. In fact, I'll never forget one time when I was working out there, we had supper and she had applesauce cake for desert. We had beans for supper, and I liked to put beans on cake. I put some beans on her applesauce cake and she looked at me and she says, "Mr. Cirac, (she'd always call us all "mister," and never raised her voice) if I ever catch you doing that again, I'm going to fire you and make you ride to Tom with Katie."

RM: [laughs]

DC: And Katie was sitting right there and she didn't like that, either.

## CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Was Katie younger?

DC: About a year or so is all.

RM: Who did Katie marry, or did she?

DC: Katie had been married and it was a big mystery whether her husband died or they were divorced. I never did find out. Harry never married and Emma never did either.

RM: They weren't a marrying bunch, were they?

DC: No, they weren't.

RM: So Emma was a very strong and statuesque woman, then?

DC: Yes, she was a great lady. I loved her.

RM: What happened to her?

DC: She just got old and died. She sold out to Carl Haas - loaned him the money to buy the ranch with, her own ranch - and moved to Round Mountain and lived there for 4 or 5 years and then died. She was in her 80s.

RM: So she was an older woman when she sold out.

DC: Yes.

RM: What else can you tell me about Emma that you recall from your summers there?

DC: Only that she ran the business very efficiently. She only had a 300-head outfit, and you don't get rich on a 300-head outfit. But she lived very well. She always had a nice new car and she lived in that 100-year-old house. It was a nice place to live in, you know. She had the first electric lights - a wind charger - and I think she had the first telephone out there. And had the first traveling baler.

RM: What's a traveling baler?

DC: It used to be that when you baled hay, you hauled it in a wagon and pitch forked it into the baler.

RM: Oh, and hers moved?

DC: Yes. She had a Case baler. It was a big deal when she got that. And then Carl and I talked her into getting the first hay loader, as we call them. You hooked them on a truck and it had a chain conveyer that lifted the bales up on the truck so you didn't have to hoist them up by hand. She was an old-timer with old ways but she was an innovator, too.

RM: In what sense do you mean she had old ways?

DC: Well, you didn't say a swear word around her or you were fired on the spot. You couldn't say "damn." She was also a great poker player. She had poker games every weekend and she'd clean out the crew once in a while.

RM: Was she a prude, would you say?

DC: No, not at all.

RM: She just didn't like cursing?

DC: You just didn't do that. You know, she grew up in the [18]80s.

RM: And you don't think women cussed in those days?

DC: I don't think so. I know my mother .....I'm embarrassed at the mine up here [Round Mountain Gold Corporation] at the way the women talk. In fact I tell them, every once in a while, "Don't talk like that. You embarrass me." And they think it's crazy.

RM: I'll be damned. How did Emma dress?

DC: Long dresses. I never saw her in a pair of pants ever. She wore a long dress on a horse and she rode straddle, not side-saddle.

RM: What did the dress look like?

DC: As I remember it was a button-up coarse gray dress.

RM: Were her arms covered?

DC: Yes. All the time, even when it was hot.

PM: And did she wear a hat?

DC: A bonnet.

RM: Was her skin leathery from her [outdoor life]?

DC: Yes. She was a buckaroo when she was a girl - a good one.

RM: Tell me some more of what she said about this fascinating story of her courtship on the trips between lone and here.

DC: Well, the way she would say it, she'd say, "I knew your grand- father." And then a week later she'd say, "We went to a dance one time in lone." And then another week she'd say, "We went to another dance in lone." So I didn't know'. All I got was innuendo. But she would say, "Boy, it's along ways over Trail Canyon to lone." [chuckles] (Horseback, you know.)

RM: I wonder why they never got married or anything.

DC: She never would talk about it. She never married anybody.

RM: I'll be damned. What more can you say about what the ranch looked like and its operations?

DC: Well, the summer range was the mountains

RM: And which part of the mountains? It wasn't all the mountains, was it?

DC: Twin Rivers to Ophir - she had the range rights in there.

RM: Would they just turn the cattle loose up there?

DC: Oh, we had to take than up Twin River.

RM: Was that tough?

DC: Super tough.

RM: What was tough about it?

DC: You had to go up the side of that mountain - you couldn't get up the creek then. It was tough getting than up there. But they always kept a few old steers and old cows as leaders. They knew the way. And the herd was accustomed to the country. By the time one got old enough to cull, it had had 2 or 3 calves, so they had got used to the country and so on. So every fall you had to go into the mountains and beat the caws out of the mountains, horseback.

RM: I've always wondered how in the hell you found them.

DC: Oh, it's not easy, I'll tell you. I've done it . . . not a whole lot, but enough of it. These were the days after the Taylor Grazing Act first came in and the range was really legally divided. And

John Casey was around. I was never on these roundups because I was in school then, but people actually wore their 6-shooters to the roundups, it was that bad.

RM: What other kinds of activities were there on the ranch that would be of interest? Where did you bunk on the ranch?

DC: We lived in a bunkhouse. It was just an old shack with a bunch of beds in it. Just like the bunkhouses you see on TV, only worse.

RM: Were they bunk beds or just beds?

DC: Just beds - iron cots with a little mattress.

RM: How many guys were working there when you were there?

DC: In the summer there were about 20 hay hands and a half-a-dozen other people - buckaroos and like that.

RM: They didn't all live in this little bunkhouse, did they?

DC: There were about 15 of us in there.

RM: What was life like in the bunkhouse?

DC: There was very little life in the bunkhouse. You got up at daylight and worked till about 11:00, came in and ate lunch, and then you had a little siesta in the heat of the day. That was Harry's great claim to fame. At 1:00 you had to go work. He'd come in the bunkhouse at 1:00 and holler, "One o'clock." I can still hear him. "Time to go work again." And you'd work till dark. Then you came in and ate supper. And then, if you had any money in your pocket, somebody always had an old Model-A, or something and you went down to Carver's - the placer mine was running and Carver's was a going deal - and you could go down there and get drunk and get in a fight and chase the girls.

But of course, that's not the average thing that happened while we were working on the ranch. The average thing that happened was to work from daylight to dark and then eat dinner and go to sleep.

RM: How many days did you work?

DC: Seven. Eighty bucks a month and all you could eat. And then when it rained you couldn't pick the hay up, so you got a day or 2 off until the hay dried out.

RM: You were just haying. And it was 5000 acres, you said?

DC: Yes.

RM: Jesus Christ. And it was native grass, not alfalfa?

DC: Yes. The bales were about 80 pounds. It made a man out of you quick, I'll tell you that.

RM: What were some more characteristics of buckarooing at the R.O.?

DC: The cattle business is the worst business in the world. Everybody thinks it's a glamorous business, but it's just an awful lot of goddamn work. And I'm not going to sit here and talk about getting bucked off of horses and doing this and doing that. That's not really part of the whole experience. It is, but it doesn't mean anything.

RM Was Emma always the cook?

DC: Yes. She'd get a helper - Shirley Ann Berg Lofthouse was a cook there in those days.

RM: What was a typical breakfast at the R.O. for the buckaroos?

DC: Oh hell. Steaks, eggs, hot cakes, bacon, ham, oatmeal, everything. And everybody ate a lot.

RM: And then, what was a typical lunch?

DC: Lunch was the big meal There was always a lot of beef or venison.

RM A lot of venison?

DC: Yes. There's deer all over that place down there. You'd go out at night and the game warden didn't even care in those days. Still doesn't, I don't think. And Emma always had a 3- or 4-acre vegetable garden. She grew her own potatoes, corn, the whole works. But you talk about good old ranch cooking, and the milk was always half-sour and the butter was always half-rancid. There was no refrigeration or anything. The single refrigerator was a well. The biggest treat was a watermelon she'd had in the well all day. We had a regular dug well with a bucket and all that.

RM: No running water?

DC: No.

RM: What else did you have for lunch?

DC: It was just neat and potatoes stuff all the time.

RM: Did she always have a dessert?

DC: Oh yes. And she used to make her own cottage cheese, which was good. She did that on the back of the stove, you know.

RM: And what was a typical dessert?

DC: There was a lot of cottage cheese pie. Did you ever have one of them?

RM: No.

DC: They're pretty good.

RM: I'll be damned.

DC: She made a lot of cakes and applesauce and 'things like that

RM: And then were there snacks in between the meals?

DC: Nothing.

RM: The farmers back in Minnesota bring you a snack in the field mid- morning and mid- afternoon. They didn't do that on the ranches, did they?

DC: No. We'd go buy candy bars and so forth and take them out with us.

RM: And then what was the evening meal like?

DC: It was light supper - cold cuts and things like that. If you wanted more you could have it, but that was all anybody ever really wanted.

RM: You never went hungry there.

DC: Oh god, no. But still the milk was off and the butter was half- rancid. That's the way it is on the good old . . .

RM: Did the meat spoil?

DC: The goddamn meat was fresh killed. That's why I can't eat a rare steak even today. There was no time to age meat - no place to put it to age it. The buckaroos always liked canned milk better than fresh milk.

RM: They did? I'll be darned.

DC: We had a guy from Silver Peak who was a half-assed poet. He had a poem about canned milk. It says:

No tits to pull, no tail to switch  
Just poke 2 holes in the son of a bitch

RM: [chuckles] That's good. So they liked canned milk? Why was that?

DC: That's a throwback. My father's favorite dessert was a piece of bread with canned milk and sugar on it.

RM: My dad liked canned milk, too.

DC: That's all they had.

RM: I can't stand the stuff.

DC: I can't either. But when you're out in the desert prospecting, you don't take a quart of fresh milk with you, you take canned milk. The guy who wrote that poem, Jack Chiatovich, was the black sheep of an old, rich, sheep family from Silver Peak - a famous old family. He was always making up poems like that.

RM: Were there any other food preferences that you recall?

DC: No. Biscuits were a big deal - who could make the best biscuits - especially among the buckaroos.

RM: The buckaroos sometimes made their own biscuits?

DC: Well, when you're out chasing cows . .

RM: Did they have a lot of beans?

DC: Oh yes. There were always a lot of beans.

RM: Pinto beans?

DC: Yes, or kidney beans.

RM: When you were running cattle up into the hills, did they have a chuckwagon come along or did you go back to the ranch?

DC: You don't get chuck wagons up there - you can't get one up there. We took along a side of bacon and a bunch of canned milk and some flour and then we'd kill a deer and shoot birds and catch fish.



## CHAPTER SIX

RM: Don, the last time we talked we left off in the late '40s and you were talking about what it was like working on the R.O. Ranch with the cowboys and the various characters you had met and so on.

DC: We about exhausted that, I think, Bob, if I remember right.

RM: OK. Then what did you do after you got out of high school?

DC: I went to the university. But that was when the Korean War came along, and there were no student exemptions then.

RM: What year did you graduate from high school?

DC: 1950. What I did was join the navy, and when I went to take my final physical I got turned down for a broken foot. Then I went to work for the Wah Chang Corporation. This is one of the things I wanted to tell you about: They were moving the mill from Northumberland to Timpahute. Those were the days of the tramp miners, and I had the great privilege of working with some of the old tramp miners who were still left. A tramp miner is not just a miner. He's a guy who could do anything in the mining business from drilling a round to building a mill. They were a great bunch of guys. Of course, they're extinct now. In fact, when I went back to college later I wrote a novel about them.

RM: Was it published?

DC: No. I never was satisfied with it. I've got a little bit of it left, I think. But the main rewrite got burned up in a fire so I gave it up.

RM: Why don't you describe the character of the tramp miner.

DC: A lot of them were 90-day people or 30-day people - [they were gone after the] first paycheck. But a lot of them weren't. They were absolute, totally independent-spirited people. And they were good at what they did. When I say what they did, I mean they could do everything. Curly Coombs is one of the last of them.

And I'll tell you a story about Northumberland. We had a couple of ball mills to move and they had a crane that they brought all the way from Los Angeles to help move this stuff. But because of the terrain it was tremendously expensive to build a road to get the crane in to move the ball mills out where they could be loaded. These were big - probably 8-foot ball mills. They probably weighed 20 tons. So the engineers were all trying to figure it out. Well, an old Cousin Jack named Henry Stackpool, who was, I would guess, in his 60s and had the miner's con so bad that he couldn't walk 100 yards without being doubled over coughing, said, "Give me that kid and I'll get those things out there for you in 2 days."

RM: "That kid" meaning you?

DC: I was the kid. We cut a bunch of 4-inch pipe and got a bunch of old timbers and then he got the double jack out and I got to hold the steel - we had to blast the foundations to get the ball mills off of them. And I got to hold the steel. And mind you, this guy couldn't walk 100 yards, but he could stand there all day and swing that double jack. And it would break in that far every time.

RM: An inch every time.

DC: And you've got to turn that steel every time.

RM: And you're going into cement, right?

DC: Yes. It really isn't tough drilling, but . . . I'll never forget that. We had them out of there and on the truck in 2 days with rope blocks and pieces of pipe for rollers and a few old 2-by-12s and a double jack and piece of steel.

RM: So you blasted the foundation . . .

DC: Yes, just popped it.

RM: And then at those timbers down and then rolled the ball mills on the pipe?

DC: Yes, on the pipe. There were 3 or 4 engineers, and none of them could figure out how to move those mills. That's just an illustration of what those old guys could do. Another thing they taught me is, whenever the boss comes around you sat down and rolled a cigarette. You never let the boss catch you working. [laughs] They did it religiously. But that doesn't mean they didn't work - they worked.

RM: Do you know anything about the circuit they were on?

DC: Well, at that time, in 1950, there was damn little going on. The tungsten boom was just starting off. That's when the Wah Chang Corporation from Korea came in. They bought the Timpahute operation and bought this mill and moved it down there.

And those guys told me stories . . . they'd go all the way through Montana, Colorado, California - anywhere there was something going on. And if they liked the place they'd stay there. If there was somebody there they didn't like, they'd just leave. They didn't care.

Now, we got snowed in the winter of '50 and '51. It snowed 4 feet on the level in Monitor Valley in the bottom of the valley. We were snowed in up there for about 8 weeks.

RM: Up at Northumberland?

DC: Yes. That's when we were moving the mill from there to Timpahute.

RM: What had been going on at Northumberland?

DC: That's where Jim Perkins, Sr., the man who got Weepah really going with an open-pit mine, [was operating]. He's the guy who made his money by cleaning up the big Goldfield Consolidated mill when they tore it down.

RM: Oh, yes - and then he went down to Millers.

DC: Yes. Well, he had an open-pit gold mine in Northumberland in the late '30s, and a pretty big mill. He made some money there.

RM: Did he build the mill there?

DC: Yes. And this is where Western States is operating now. They've got a giant deal up there.

RM: And Cyprus was in there, weren't they?

DC: Yes. You ought to go up and look at that. It's worth looking at. Anyway, World War II shut Perkins down. My brother-in-law, Jimmy Lee, used to work driving a truck up there. So our job was to move the mill from Northumberland to Timpahute. I started out there as a candy wagon driver and I wound up in Timpahute as the head rigger on the job. RM: Is that right? Now, the rigger is the guy who hooks things onto the crane when they're hoisting, isn't he?

DC: Right. You're also the boss of the crane operator and everybody involved; and when you're 18 years old that's hard to do unless you've got a big crowbar and know how to use it. The boss in those days was the guy who could whip everybody else.

RM: Is that right?

DC: That's about it. That's over-stated, but . . .

RM: So Wah Chang was over there in Timpahute in the really early '50s?

DC: Yes. Maybe I can find what's left of that book [I wrote] if you want it.

RM: That would be interesting, yes.

DC: There are only about 30, 40 pages of the first draft that happened to survive. I think I've got it out there. It's bad, but it tells about the tramp miners.

RM: How long were you over there at Timpahute?

DC: Between Northumberland and Timpahute it was probably 8 or 9 months. Then I got drafted and away I went. I was just waiting to get drafted instead of going back to school.

RM: Did you ever meet Wah Chang or anything like that?

DC: Yeah, but not to . . . I was a kid working there; we just shook hands.

RM: Why don't you describe him?

DC: Well, he was a little short Korean. He got started picking tungsten crystals up out of the rice fields in Korea. They still do it over there.

RM: Is that right? Scheelite, you mean?

DC: Yes.

RM: They must have had a deposit if it was in the fields there.

DC: Yes. And he was a giant in that industry in those days. He came into Timpahute one time and stayed a couple of days. He was a nice little guy - smiling.

RM: Was he an older man?

DC: I'd say he was 60.

RM: It must have been tough getting that machinery over there. That was a horrible road from Warm Springs to Timpahute, wasn't it?

DC: Oh yes. My first trip . . . I think I worked at Northumberland until the navy called me for induction. That's when I flunked the physical and then I got rehired and went to Timpahute to start putting it together again.

Here's a story: The first day I went to Timpahute - you go from Warm Springs all the way out there to the Lincoln Mine (we didn't call it Timpahute), and there was a boardinghouse. Everybody lived in a bunkhouse and ate in the boardinghouse. So I showed up and I got the job. Old Dave Winger was the superintendent, and he was the same guy I worked for at Northumberland; he told me I had a job as a laborer. I showed up in the bunkhouse to get a bed and it was quitting time and everybody was sitting in there getting washed up to eat and all that and they said, "Where's the jug?"

I said, "I haven't got any jug."

They said, "Then you don't get any bed." I mean, those were the rules. And I had to drive 60 or 70 miles on that dirt road back to Warm Springs and get a bottle. And it had to be Old Yellowstone. I had to get a bottle of Yellowstone before I could get in the bunkhouse. And that was it. There were no exceptions.

RM: What was it, all these old tramp miners?

DC: Yes. And it was a great experience because that was the beginning of the end of than right there. They were all old guys. Of course, I was 18; anybody 40 was an old guy. But most of than were in their 50s and 60s.

RM: Do you remember any stories or anything they used to tell? I know they used to sit around and talk, didn't they?

DC: They told so many stories that they all . . . Stackpool used to tell me about when he was a kid in Wales in the coal mines drilling uppers with a double jack. And you worked in the dim until you could blow the candle out and do it in the dark And he wasn't lying. He had a million old stories like that - half of than lies, half of than the truth, you know.

RM: When we were down in Reveille in '54 they used to show up down there. I remember my dad talking to than - sitting around the table bullshitting.

DC: Yes, the same bunch. Curly Coombs is one of than, and Danny Murnane's grandfather was one of than. I just can't remember their names, it's been so long. I can see a bunch of than right now, but I can't think of their names. Most of than were Cousin Jacks, too.

RM: They were really from the old country?

DC: I'd say 75 percent of than were.

RM: Heavy drinkers, weren't they?

DC: Well, what's a heavy drinker? You bring a bottle of Yellowstone into the bunkhouse and it got passed around and everybody got one swallow out of it.

RM: But did they tend to drink up their pay?

DC: Oh sure. They'd gamble and fool around with us and all that. We were on a strange schedule out there. We used to work maybe 6 weeks without a day off and work 14, 16 hours a day - they really wanted to get that place put together. And they paid us . . . there was no such thing as the union. But still, Wah Chang paid us time-and-a-half over 40 hours and double time over 60 hours. And when I got to be the head rigger I was making \$3.65 an hour. That was a lot of money.

RM: That was big money.

DC: And they would give us, like, 10 days off after working 6 weeks and the whole place would empty out, rather than a few guys going at a time. And hell, I'd have a couple-thousand-dollar

paycheck by that time. And boy, did I have some fun. One time we all wound up in jail in Pioche. We got in a fight with the Pioche miners. I got hit right there with a full bottle of whiskey.

RM: Right on the bridge of the nose.

DC: And I woke up in jail and I couldn't open my eyes. There must have been 50 of us in one cell. And we had to pay them \$60, \$70, \$80 apiece to pay for the damages to the saloon. But other times . . . I had an old 1939 or '40 Plymouth and I'd get in that thing and with my big \$2000 paycheck (that was a lot of money in those days) I'd go to Vegas and hide that son of a bitch and go rent me a Cadillac convertible, check in at the D.I. [Desert Inn] and chase chorus girls. That was when I was 18. It was a lot of fun. [laughs] And, you know, the 2 grand would disappear. One night I won \$6800 on the wheel at one time. I was afraid to cash it in, because I was only 18. As long as you behaved in those days and acted like a mature individual, nobody questioned you. The good old days. Gone now. I was there when Bugsy opened the Flamingo. I was there and shook his hand with my dad.

RM: Is that right? Tell me about that.

DC: I can't remember the year for sure. It would have been '42 . . . it was during the war, I think.

RM: No, I think the Flamingo was [opened] right after the war.

DC: I was maybe 13. And I told you my dad was a gambler, and those guys all knew each other in those days. He got an invitation to go to the opening and I went with him and shook Bugsy Siegel's hand.

RM: What was the opening like?

DC: Just a giant party. But, of course, I didn't know that was going on. I was just a kid wandering around. There were people in tuxedos all over and all you wanted to eat and all you wanted to drink.

RM: How well did your dad know Siegel?

DC: The way he really knew him was through Virginia, Siegel's girlfriend who got murdered in L.A. She worked for my dad in the Ace Club. He taught her how to deal the wheel.

RM: You're kidding.

DC: She worked there about a year. She used to come to our house for dinner. She was a nice gal. And my dad taught her the business.

RM: How did he meet her?

DC: She just came wandering through town looking for a job, I guess. I don't really know.

RM: Had she been a hooker or anything?

DC: I really don't know. As I remember, she was a nice lady. She came and had dinner at our house a few times. She was one of the first lady dealers in Nevada; and my dad taught her how to deal the wheel and the crap table and all that.

RM: Then she left Tonopah and then eventually hooked up with Siegel?

DC: Yes. But I don't know the whole story at all.

RM: She hadn't been with the mob before that probably, then?

DC: I really don't know.

RM: So anyway, that was how your dad knew Siegel?

DC: I'm guessing. Maybe he knew him before and Siegel sent her up there to go to work. I don't know.

RM: So when Siegel opened the Flamingo he sent your dad an invite?

DC: Yes.

RM: It was a really big deal, wasn't it?

DC: Oh hell, it was . . . well, you know where the Flamingo was - all the way from Fremont Street it was almost all sagebrush.

RM: Did you guys stay down there all night?

DC: Yes. They gave us a roan and all that stuff. It was a big deal for a kid.

RM: It was a classy place.

DC: It was the only place.

RM: Well, there was the El Rancho and the Frontier. It was the third place on the Strip.

DC: I don't think the Frontier was there.

RM: Well, the Frontier was built in '42 or something.

DC: I remember the El Rancho when I was in college. Carl Haas and I and Johnny what's-his-name's son who ran the El Rancho used to go from Reno to Vegas on the weekend, down to the El Rancho.

RM: Tell me what you remember about the El Rancho.

DC: Not really a whole lot. Johnny owned part of it and ran it. His son was a classmate of ours at the university, and we'd go down there. We'd leave Reno on Friday afternoon and get back on Monday morning. That's where I first learned how to chase chorus girls.

RM: When you shook hands with Bugsy Siegel, was his girlfriend there?

DC: I can't remember if she was or not. I imagine she was. And it was just - it seems to me - 2 or 3 years after that opening that she got bumped off in L.A.

RM: Is that right?

DC: Or did she get sent to prison?

RM: I can't remember.

DC: No. She was involved in killing Siegel and she got sent to prison for it.

RM: Oh, is that how it went? I can't remember.

DC: I could be wrong but that seems to me how . .

RM: So you went into the army?

DC: Yes.

RM: Then how long were you in the army?

DC: Two years.

RM: Did you see any action?

DC: I fought the battle of Fort Monmouth, as I told you about, and Joe McCarthy. [laughs]

RM: Oh, that's right. So you were in 2 years?

DC: A year at San Luis Obispo, California, and a year at Fort Monmouth. They shut the camp down at San Luis Obispo and I wound up teaching in a leadership school at Fort Monmouth.



RM: What year did you get out?

DC: Fifty-four. I married while I was in the army.

RM: Who did you marry?

DC: A girl from Glendale, California, who I ran into in Tonopah on a leave one time. I got out in '54 and had a couple thousand bucks mustering-out money. I had worked on the side and everything back there, and had some deals going. I came home and lost every dime I had in a low-ball game with Judge Bowler and Tom McCullough and a couple of other guys. [laughs]

RM: Wow. Judge Bowler was a Tonopah judge, wasn't he?

DC: Yes. He was [from] an old pioneer family.

RM: Who was Tom McCullough?

DC: Tom McCullough was a guy from Louisiana who first showed up in Round Mountain with a men's store in the early days and then moved to Tonopah. He had the men's store in Tonopah for 30 or 40 years. I worked for Tom when I was in high school in that store. In fact, I ran the store for 2 years.

RM: Where was the store in Tonopah?

DC: Right next to the Ace Club, on the north side was county commissioner for a while. He was the guy who got 8-A paved - the guy who opened Smoky Valley up. A great old friend. He's been dead for years. RM: You mentioned Ronzoni earlier. Why don't you briefly discuss than? DC: I don't know where they came from, but the Ronzonis had a department store type deal in Round Fountain in the early, early days. And then when it faded they moved to Tonopah and had a store where the Pastime Club is now. They sold out in the early '40s to J. C. Penneys. (We had a J. C. Penneys in Tonopah.) And Jones, who was a state legislator for years, was the manager of the J. C. Penney store in Tonopah. This is 50 years ago I'm talking about.

RM: Who was the Jones who was lieutenant governor?

DC: No relation. Anyhow, Ronzonis moved to Vegas. I guess they've still got big stores down there now.

RM: Yes. So what did you do when you got out of the army?

DC: I lost all my money in a poker game. And while I was in the army is when Haas bought the R.O. from Emma Rogers. So I wound up out there helping him get that going for a year, and then went back to school and put another 2-1/2 years in and I got encephalitis and the doctors made me quit school. You told me you had that too, didn't you?

RM: Yes. Did you get it following the measles or something?

DC: An Asian flu epidemic.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: So you got Asian flu. I'll tell you when you got Asian flu - it was in 1957. I had it and it was a son of a bitch.

DC: Right. And I was going to school and working full time and had a family and I was sleeping about 4 hours at night, and it just . . .

RM: And then you got encephalitis following the flu.

DC: Yes. So they made me quit school. I'd been working in the furniture store while I was going to school and had done pretty well, and I got an offer of a job in Napa, California, to manage a store. So that's where I went - for 800 bucks a month. I wound up as general manager of a little 4-store chain the guy had there and made a lot of money. But I couldn't stand it down there, and I sold out and came back.

RM: When did you came back?

DC: Oh, this would have been 1960 or '61. The first thing I did was get in a mining deal with Pony Selig again.

RM: What kind of a deal was it?

DC: This was a hell of a deal, except it didn't work. It was called Pacific Antimony Metals Company. We had the White Caps Mine in Manhattan, and the antimony in there is unbelievable.

RM: Oh, they have antimony in the White Caps?

DC: That's what made it so tough [to extract] the gold. And then we had a mine in Bernice, which is in Dixie Valley. We bought the mill - an old tungsten mill - from I. J. McCullough in Gabbs. I. J. McCullough of McCullough Chain Saws owned it. We called him up one day and said,  
"We want to buy your mill but we're broke."  
He said, "Fifty grand, pay me when you can."

RM: No kidding. That was McCullough himself?

DC: The same guy, yes.

RM: Was he making chain saws at that time?

DC: Yes. In Texas, I think.

RM: Where was the mill located in Gabbs?

DC: It's west of town - down below town. We had the old McCullough mill. There were 2 mills down there.

RM: Where were they getting their tungsten ore, do you know?

DC: Back up towards lone.

RM: Was there a pretty good deposit up there?

DC: Oh yes. They made a ton of money there.

RM: What was the mine called, do you know?

DC: Bay. Why do you ask me all these questions I can't answer? It was right next to the Smith brothers' mine. That's where they made their money.

RM: That's where they made their money to build the store in Gabbs?

DC: Yes. They had the El Crappy Can (as we called the El Capitan).

RM: Oh. They went on from Gabbs and their stores there to Hawthorne, didn't they?

DC: They were great guys - Lindsay Smith and his brother Gordon. Anyhow, we got a contract - it took us 1-1/2 years to get it - with the Goshu Company in Tokyo to supply 100 percent of the Japanese antimony market. They were the biggest import/export company in Japan at that time. We had the finance minister of Japan at Gabbs looking at our mill. And everything was great except, after hiring Albert Silver . . . did you ever hear of Albert Silver?

RM: I don't think so.

DC: He's the metallurgist who figured out the leaf filter that made the Tonopah mines work - one of the top 10 metallurgists in the world. We hired him to do a flow sheet to remodel this mill to get the arsenic out of the antimony. (Antimony's full of arsenic.) I went to the university [at Reno] and spent a month at the university lab working with Albert Silver and boy, everything worked beautifully on those old lab tables. By the time we got the first ore run through the mill - we had to haul it from Manhattan to Gabbs - we had the bin full of concentrate and our upper limit was 1/2 of one percent arsenic. In other words . . .

RM: That's what they would tolerate?

DC: Well, that's all they could stand because otherwise you poison everybody at the smelter. And it ran 20 percent arsenic.

RM: Oh!

DC: So we were out of money. I walked into that thing with \$80,000 cash that I made in the furniture business and came out of it \$60,000 in debt RM: Where were you getting the antimony in the White Caps? Did it come in a vein or a lense or what?

DC: All of the big old stopes had walls that were solid antimony 2 feet thick - I mean, stuff that ran 60 percent. (The 300 level was the best one.) But running through that were nice yellow and orange streaks of arsenic that were 8 inches wide.

RM: Well, where was the ore then? The gold ore had been next to the antimony?

DC: Yes. And when the antimony got too much they had to quit mining gold. There was probably an ounce of gold a ton in that stuff, too. But in those days that didn't mean that much.

RM So you were just slabbing this antimony off the walls?

DC: Yes.

RM: And then, is antimony heavy? I don't know a damn thing about antimony.

DC: The specific gravity is, I think, just under lead - it's heavy. It's a real interesting metal. The White Caps Mine is the world's greatest known source of stibnite crystals.

RM: Stibnite is ore and antimony?

DC: Yes. The crystals look like pick-up sticks. You've seen samples of them, I'm sure. They've got one in the Mizpah still - in that case -from the White Caps. The one thing that Fred Warner, who we leased the mine from, insisted on was that he got all the stibnite crystals I'll bet we got 3 washtubs full of those things. They're valuable as hell.

RM: How big around are they?

DC: Oh hell, they'll go anywhere from a match to as big as your finger. They're 6-sided, long, beautiful things.

RM: A foot long?

DC: Yes. I don't even have one specimen.

RM: Did you get any ore out of the Dixie Valley mine?

DC: No, it was all caning out of the White Caps.

RM: And basically off of the 300-foot level?

DC: The 3[00] and the 5[00], as I remember, had 2 good stopes and all kinds of material.

RM: There's one hell of a lot of antimony in the White Caps?

DC: Oh yes, still.

RM: I'll be damned.

DC: It's amazing.

RM: You mentioned that antimony is an interesting metal. What is most interesting about it?

DC: Well, the uses that it has. Nobody knows what antimony is, but everybody's car battery is 20 percent antimony. It's an alloy you use to make lead harder. It's also used to make medicine with. It's also a deadly poison. It's used in fireworks and in fireproofing.

RM: I'll be darned.

DC: It's got more uses than any metal in the world and nobody know about it.

RM: So you were going to supply the whole Japanese market?

DC: We had the contract. They put \$1 million in the Sumitomo Bank in Los Angeles and all we had to have to get it out was warehouse receipts for drums of concentrate.

RM: So close but so far away . .

DC: We never got quite to it.

RM: There was no way that you could clean that arsenic out of there?

DC: Well, the way that we chose didn't work. And if you think I'm not crazy, I did it again about 10 years later in Mina with the same ore on a flotation deal, and it didn't work again. It worked, but the reagents I had to use in the flotation cost more than the antimony was worth.

RM: Oh. You were getting the ore out of the White Caps again?

DC: Yes. That's just before it burned up.

RM: The White Caps burned up? When did it burn up?

DC: Oh God, right after my wife died. It'd be '74.

RM: In '74? So it was about 1960 or so when you made your Gabbs mill, and then it was about '72 when you gave it another try at Mina?

DC: Yes.

RM: What mill did you use at Mina?

DC: John Sienke's.

RM: And you could produce the antimony, but it was . .

DC: Antimony floats at a very high pH and arsenic floats at a very low pH. So you've got to buy tons of soda ash for one end of it and acid for the other end of it, and it didn't work out too well.

RM: What did you do after the Gabbs project?

DC: I spent 3 or 4 years "hard time" working at different things to get back on my feet. Then I joined Bob Wilson on a gold lease in the old Round Mountain placer pit.

RM: OK, yes. Give me the details on that, now.

DC: Well, it's not a big deal. We built a machine out of junk.

RM: Where did you meet Bob?

DC: He married my mother. He worked for my dad years before at the Ophir Canyon tungsten mine.

RM: Oh, your dad had the Ophir Canyon mine?

DC: Yes. George Barra made the first find up there and my dad went out and they went together on it and they sold it to Newmont. Newmont built that road up there and drilled that tunnel, 400 feet, and finally gave it back before I went in the army in '49 or '50.

My dad and I were driving up the road at night. We were going to go up there and prospect around where the tunnel was after Newmont gave it back to him. We had an open jeep, an army jeep, and I had the [black] light shining - just playing around - and the whole road lit up. Newmont cut the road through the best part of the whole mine and didn't even know it.

RM: What a story. How far was that below the other tunnel that they had drilled?

DC: Half a mile. We were going to work it, but then I got drafted and everything. He leased it out to the Early brothers. They were there about 1-1/2 years and took \$300,000 out of there and did it all, pretty much, by hand.

RM: Out of the one you and your dad found?

DC: Yes - the cut in the road. I still have 1/3 of that. Wilson and my mother have got the other 2/3. Incidentally, [Wilson] just got an assay . . . there's a place up there we always thought had silver in it. And he took, he says, a pretty good, wide cut and it assayed an ounce of gold, a month ago. We're going to go drilling now.

RM: Wow. OK, George Barra and your father found the initial deposit . . .

DC: George found it first. He found a float down in the canyon when he was up there fishing.

RM: How in the world would he have found it? I mean, he wasn't fishing with a black light, was he?

DC: Everybody had a black light then. That's when the government started the strategic stockpile of tungsten and they raised the price to \$65 a unit, which would be like \$400 a unit today. Everybody was looking for tungsten, so everybody had his black light. Barra would go out at night and walk around.

RM: Is that deposit on a lime-granite contact?

DC: It is and it isn't. That deposit is an amazing thing. It's a basin of sediment that got moved up on the side of the mountain. If you go up there at night and walk around with a light you can actually see where the solution ran over the side of the basin - just like water running over a pot. And you can still see it today.

RM: Wow. OK, so then they leased it to Newmont and Newmont turned it back and then they leased it to the Early brothers. When did the Early brothers come into the picture?

DC: That'd be around '50, '51.

RM: And how long did they hold it?

DC: Oh, a couple of years. Eisenhower vetoed the renewal of the stock-pile and the price of tungsten collapsed. He probably vetoed it in '54. It was just before I got out of the army.

RM: So the Earlys took out a good bunch of ore and made some money.

DC: Three hundred thousand bucks, yes. They stayed there until the price support was taken away. And that's where Wilson worked for my dad - on another part of the property that wasn't leased to them.

RM: Oh, on the tungsten property.



DC: Most of it's pretty good out there, too.

RM: Did the Earlys build a mill?

DC: Yes. They had a little ball mill with a screen on the end of it and it discharged on a concentrate table. That was the whole mill. And they had a crusher. That was great ore. There was no iron in it, there were no impurities at all.

RM: How big of a working did they wind up with - a tunnel or a pit or what?

DC: I couldn't believe what they had. I went and looked at it when I was home on leave one time from the army and they had like an underhand stope that started on the surface and the timber was quaking aspen. And there were big rolls of . . . treacherous lime rolls on there. I could never believe they never killed themselves.

RM: Could you define a "lime roll?"

DC: A lime roll is a sedimentary formation, formed by settling of material at water level, then pushed into "rolls" by pressure created by epyrogenic diastrophism. The resulting unsupported slabs of rock are unpredictable, and can be dangerous to miners.

RM: Where did the Earlys go after the price supports were knocked out?

DC: Bishop, California. They had a tungsten mill over there in the Alabama Hills for years. They'd had that, I think, before they ever came out here. I don't know whatever happened to than. Roger Nicely and I sold than same tungsten one time.

RM: What happened to the mine after the Earlys left?

DC: It just sat there till this day. Wilson's mined a little bit of it, but

RM: He ran some ore up there that somebody left, didn't he?

DC: Yes. He ran some old dumps and stuff.

RM: They're not patented claims, are they?

DC: No.

RM: When did Wilson come in?

DC: He was up there working for my dad.

RM: Was he doing mechanical work?

DC: No, he was mining right up above the Earlys.

RM: Your dad mined too, didn't he?

DC: Yes.

RM: Did he ever go underground?

DC: Oh yes. He worked in the Tonopah mines when he was a kid.

RM Did he have any silica dust,

DC: No. The only dust he got, I think I told you, was from dealing cards.

RM: Oh, right. That's a good story. OK, so you had known Wilson previously because of his relationship with your mother and everything. Did your father die, or . . .?

DC: Yes, he died in 1960.

RM: And then your mother married Bob?

DC: Yes, 4 or 5 years later.

RM: And then you and Bob went down to Round Mountain?

DC: Well, they were living in Round Mountain He had this operation going and I joined him. I put up some money and we spent the winter building that monster placer machine.

RM: [chuckles] It was down in the bottom of the pit, wasn't it?

DC: Well, we built it in Round Mountain and put it on wheels and moved it over there. It covered the whole highway. [laughs] My mother's got some great pictures of it.

RM: Why don't you describe what that mill consisted of.

DC: Well, it was just a gravel-washing plant. We had an upside-down grizzly, where you sat 40 feet in the air with a slusher and pulled the muck up a chute over a grizzly going uphill - pulled the big rocks off the top of the grizzly. They fell on a conveyor that we built out of old drill chain and we got rid of the big rocks [that way]. The fines went into a bin and we had an apron feeder under there which fed it into a trammel screen.

RM: Now, what's an apron feeder?

DC: An apron feeder is a steel conveyor belt that looks almost like a track on a Cat.

RM: And you took the boulders off with a chain?

DC: Well . . . like, you'll see a chain on a drill rig that moves the steel up and down. We got some of that chain and welded some old rail on it and made a conveyor out of it and it carried rocks. The fines went through the grizzly, down into the bin and then into the trammel screen, which had a blank section in it to try and break the clay up - a 1/4-inch screen and then a 3/8-inch screen and then a 1/2-inch screen - and sluice boxes under that. And we used to make 4, 5, 6 ounces a day. But at \$35, you don't get rich. One guy could run 300 yards a day through it.

RM: Good lord. Did you help him build it?

DC: Yes. It took us about 6 months, and we used all junk material from the old placer operation mill there. It had a Model-A engine, an old Ford flathead engine and 5 little air-cooled engines on it. It took about 1/2 hour to get it started.

RM: [laughs]

DC: But it worked. He's still got part of it running at the mill at Ophir.

RM: He later took it up to Ophir?

DC: Yes, part of it.

RM: OK. So you guys built that in Round Mountain and then towed it down into the pit?

DC: Well, it wasn't into the pit, it was around the edge of the pit and then we hauled all the muck up out of the pit and then slushed it up. You've got to go see my mother. She's got some great pictures of that.

RM: Now, what year was this?

DC: That would have been about '66, as I remember. And Wilson is a great guy, but we got in an argument one day and I said, "Bob, it's all yours." I gave him my half.

RM: So this thing would run 300 yards a day. What did you do, have one guy down in the pit loading the truck and then the other guy running the machine up there?

DC: Yes.

RM: Where did you get your water?

DC: From the pipeline that comes across from Jett Canyon. And we had a 25 percent royalty.

RM: Is that right? Were you giving that to [Lou] Gordon?

DC: Yes.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: So you could run 300 yards [of placer] a day through this thing? Was that top capacity or was that a typical day?

DC: A typical day.

RM: And you were getting 6 ounces of gold a day?

DC: Five, 6, 7 - we never really knew until we cleaned up.

RM: That was good money for 2 guys, wasn't it?

DC: Oh hell, no. It just paid the expenses, and maybe wages - bad wages. [That was about] \$200 a day gold value.

RM: How long did you guys do that?

DC: Oh, I stuck around 6 or 7 months and then we had the argument and I left and went to Mexico. Bob ran another year or so. One guy could make a pretty good living at it.

RM: And why did you go to Mexico?

DC: It was a gold mining deal.

RM: How did you learn about it?

DC: Oh boy, this is really a long story. A kid from Gabbs had been down to a place called the Tombour, which was a super, super rich gold mine way back in the jungle. It ran in the 1930s.

RM: Whereabouts in Mexico was it?

DC: You know where Culiacan is? It's about 100 miles north of Mazatlan, and back in the Sierra Madres about 40, 50 miles. It took 3 days to get in there on a mule the first time I went there.

RM: Wow.

DC: Anyhow, there's a very steep canyon below this old mining camp of Tombour and about 3 miles below that, there's a waterfall about 150 feet high. It falls into a big pool and swirls around and it's a perfect gold trap. It goes about just close to where it comes in and swirls around and then goes back out. And you could pan gold anywhere around it. But it's a very treacherous place. There have been several people killed trying to get that gold out of there, because the cliffs are about, I'd say, 200 feet high; straight up-and-down cliffs for about 4 miles down that canyon. And in the dry season there's just a nice little creek running in there and a

nice pond, but in the rainy season it's 50 Truckee Rivers caning down there. Several people have been drowned by not getting out before the rain started. We just made it, ourselves.

RM: Is that right? And you heard about it from a guy from Gabbs?

DC: Yes. And then he took Haas down there and they went back and looked at it. They did some diving in there with an underwater dredge, and everything looked good. So Haas came back and he got what he called his "expedition" together. He made a big glamorous deal out of it. And everybody put up some money and we hired an engineer - geologist. He went and looked it over and he said bedrock couldn't be anymore than 70, 80 feet below the bottom of the pond, because that's where all the gold has got to be - on bedrock. Even though the mud on the way down to it is . . . you could get a string that long [1 to 1-1/2 inches] out of the pan. But you'd better get pure quill to really get in there and get out with it.

Now, Haas's father was married to a Mexican woman down there, so we had a legal mining claim. But we were illegal workers in there. And what we had to do was get down to bedrock, get the gold out and get it the hell out or we'd have had partners all over the place - you know, the general and . . . [laughs]

RM: Sure, right.

DC: So we put a down payment on a Citobrian airplane in Vegas. It looks kind of like a Super Cub, but it's a fully aerobatic super, Super Cub. And the fuel tanks are in the wings. And they were in this, too, except one of them was a gold tank and one of them was a fuel tank. But we never did buy it, because the thing never worked out. But we hauled the . . . in fact, Wilson hauled the Blusher down to the Mexican border and we smuggled that in on a train. (That's a whole 'nother story right there.) It cost us more to bribe the officials than the duty would have cost. The whole thing was just a comedy. But we went back there and we had . . . John Isabelle. Do you remember Isabelle Construction Company?

RM: Yes.

DC: Well, the kid, John, and I went in there first and we got 3 Mexican kids and spent about 3 weeks hacking a road 27 miles up that river with machetes and shovels. We were supervising and the kids were working. And we got a 4-wheel-drive pickup where absolutely none had ever been before in the history of the world. That was the best part of the whole thing. We crossed the river, I think, 37 times in 27 miles. I could talk to you about it for . . .

Anyhow, we lived in the jungle and we got the slusher set up and we dug as far as we could right through the pond with the slusher, and then the angle got too steep and couldn't dig anymore. And we were down about 60 feet, I guess. So then we went back to Mazatlan and got some pumps and some pipe and some engines and got than in there and we pumped the damn pond out. You see, it was just a trickle caning in there, because it was the dry season. We started a shaft and got it down about 40 feet and it caved in - damn near killed a Mexican. We were getting into tramp iron from the old workings up above.

RM: What do you mean by "tramp iron"?

DC: Oh, just old rail spikes and scrap iron that had washed downriver from the old mine upstream. We were getting that close to bedrock and here came the rain, and we had to get the hell out of there. And of course, when you get out, the rain fills everything up that you dug out.

RM: Right. You've got to start all over again.

DC: And so we never got back. I don't know whatever happened to it. With the price of gold, somebody has to have dug it up.

RM: Were there good values going down?

DC: Oh hell, towards the bottom I would say this stuff would run \$150 a yard. But it was still not good enough for the way we had to do it. We had to get to the pure stuff, you see.

RM: Yes, because you didn't have a plant to wash it or anything there, did you?

DC: We didn't dare. Our cover was that we were testing out scuba diving gear. Of course, everybody knew we were lying, but you had to make it kind of feasible so the general didn't take too big a bite out of you.

RM: How long did all this take?

DC: Oh, 8 or 9 months.

RM: And that was what year, '67? What did you do then?

DC: I was at loose ends. I was living in Round Mountain. I left the family in Round Mountain when I went to Mexico. I came back from Mexico and Jim Kielhack had an option on this place and he needed \$20,000 to exercise it.

RM: And "this place" is the Kingston Ranch [where we are now], which was the old Schmidlein Ranch?

DC: Right. I took him to L.A. and got the money to exercise the option and so we all of a sudden were in the land business.

RM: How did you get the money?

DC: Oh, I knew the ex-mayor of Glendale, California, and Kielhack hocked his ranch to the guy for \$20,000. And that's how we made the down payment on this place.

RM: He had the ranch free and clear, so he could mortgage it?

DC: Well, his place down by Round Mountain. That's a whole 'nother story, too.

RM: Oh, you're not talking about this ranch here, the Kingston Ranch.

DC: No. Kielhack came from California and he bought the old Woods Ranch by Round Mountain, down the other side - by Carver's. Manley lives there; he sold it to Manley. And that was used as collateral to get the money to buy this place. I just happened to know who had the money. So, we got in the land business. And I actually went to Tonopah before we got this thing going and worked at Coleman's store for 4 or 5 months, because I ran out of money. [chuckles] I worked for Johnny . . .

RM: So to get this place going, what was involved? He bought it with the idea of subdividing it?

DC: Yes. Well, we had to survey it, we had to build some roads and so forth.

RM: Even though it's not in Nye County, why don't you give a brief overview of the ranch's history? It does tie into Round Mountain through the Schmidtleins.

DC: Oh, this ranch goes back to . . . the old original deed was signed by President Grant.

RM: I'll be darned.

DC: It was in the 1860s. And it was Schmidtlein family all the way. Then they sold out to the Rusk Foundation in the '50s or something.

RM: What do you know about the Schmidtleins?

DC: All I know is that they were here when my great-grandfather was here; they knew each other. And I don't know where they came from. There wound up [to be] a bunch of them, but I don't know who the original settlers were.

RM: Did you ever know any of them?

DC: Oh yes. Old Charlie used to tell me about when Mark Twain spent a month at the ranch in Kingston.

RM: Is that right?

DC: Charlie was known to stretch the truth a bit, so I'm not sure, you know. In the original brochure that I made . . . there's a ruins of a rock house beside the creek up here and it's called Mark Twain's cabin because Charlie told me it was. That's all I know. I don't know if it's true.



RM: Well, one of the Schmidtleins was involved in early Round Mountain. Curly told me that Schmidtlein was involved in the initial dealings on the original mine.

DC: Could have been. The Schmidtleins' great claim to fame is that they're the ones who got the fish on this side of the Toiyabes. There were no fish in these streams on this side.

RM: I'll be darned.

DC: The fish all came from the Humboldt River up the Reese River and populated all the streams on the Reese River side of the mountains But the fish couldn't jump over the mountain and the Indians didn't plant them. So the Schmidtleins, in the '60s, went with mules and leather water bags over to Big Creek and hauled a bunch of fish over and planted them in Kingston Creek. And then from Kingston, all of the streams in Smoky Valley and Monitor Valley and all around were originally planted with fish.

RM: I'll be darned. There were no fish in these streams originally?

DC: No.

RM: But the ones in Monitor would have had to been . . . did they have to do each stream separately?

DC: Oh yes.

RM: Yes; they don't interconnect, do they?

DC: From Kingston they hauled them all over - Monitor Valley, Hot Creek, everywhere.

RM: And now Kingston's a good fishing site, isn't it?

DC: Kingston is recognized by biologists to be the most prolific trout stream in the United States.

RM: Really? Why is that?

DC: It's because of the big watercress beds and places where the minnows can get away from the big fish. And there are freshwater shrimp that are in the stream that the fish feed on - little shrimp as big as a match head.

RM: Is that right? And the beds and everything were all there, but there just weren't any fish originally?

DC: Yes. And of course, I told you [off the tape] that the ranger you saw in the movie was Don Schmidtlein. He's one of the family.

RM: We're talking about the promotional movie for central Nevada, which Joel McCrae narrated. Was this ranch comparable to the R.O. in terms of size and productivity in the early years?

DC: Oh, it was the biggest ranch in central Nevada. It used to [include] not only where you're sitting now, but also up where the lake is now, up Kingston Canyon. And [it included] the Daniels' hay ranch, which has dried up since the Youngs took the water from it.

RM: Where is that ranch?

DC: Six or 7000 acres of meadow right down here in the valley.

RM: Kingston Creek ran into it?

DC: Yea, and they had it all.

RM: Why does so much water come out of Kingston as opposed to the other canyons on this side of the Toiyabes?

DC: It's because of the geology. High water here doesn't come until the end of June, where it's the first of May for all the other creeks where the mountains are just granite. Here they're limestone, and the water percolates and comes up in springs all the way down the canyon. So there's a big reservoir in the mountains as well as in the valley. RM: I imagine the water's richer in lime, too. It's probably more healthful, isn't it?

DC: Well, it's hell for plugging pipes up, I'll tell you that. It's full of calcium from the lime.

RM: And so this water ran out into the valley and they had a huge hay ranch out there?

DC: Yes.

RM: But then who took the water?

DC: The Young brothers. They took the water from the Rusk Foundation and diverted the creek. They're still after our water. They'll never quit. I really don't want to get into talking about them.

RM: So the Schmidtleins had a huge ranch here that was probably bigger than anything on south of here in the Smoky Valley?

DC: Yes. Where the R.O. is now used to be a collection of smaller ranches.

RM: And it stayed in the Schmidtlein family from the 1860s all the way down the line?

DC: The Daniels family had it in the '20s. You've heard of Gene Daniels?

RM: I think I have.

DC: They lost it in the stockmarket crash in '29 and that notorious banker from Tonopah, George Wingfield, wound up with it. He was at Nevada National Bank (he started it). Anyhow, he wound up with it and Schmidtleins got it back, as I understand it.

RM: Oh, I see. And then they sold it?

DC: Yes, to the Rusk Foundation.

RM: Approximately when did they sell it, again?

DC: I couldn't tell you within 10 years - I'd guess in the '50s. And then Kielhack had an option on it in '65 or '66. When I got back from Mexico he was about to lose his option. As I said, we went down and got the money and that's how I got part ownership in Kingston.

RM: I see. And you've kind of been doing that ever since?

DC: Yes, pretty much. There's some other stuff, but . . . we sold this thing to Haas. We sold 100 lots here the first 90 days that we had it for sale. But it was all on time and there was no market for the paper then and we ran out of money. Haas had had his big note from the R.O. sale and all that, so we sold it to him for \$100,000. So I left and went to Reno and started a couple more businesses and never came back for a lot of years.

RM: You left the valley when?

DC: Oh, probably 1970.

RM: So you were in this a couple of years and then you left?

DC: Yes.

RM: Did you have bigger lots at first?

DC: Well, no. Lots down here average 2 acres. This is the first area we developed, down here where we are now. But up the canyon there they'll average one-third acre. That's too small for this country.

RM: How many lots altogether are . . . ?

DC: A thousand.

NC: I think there are 1200. I did a study on this at one time.

RM: What were the problems of subdividing? Was it tough to subdivide through the county and all that?

DC: If we had to conform with all the regulations that exist today we'd never, ever, have got it on to start with. We started selling this thing on a preliminary survey map, and it was legal. And the rest of the subdivisions got done when it was still easy to do a subdivision. A lot that's worth \$10,000 today costs more than that just for the damn bureaucratic paperwork. If we'd just hung on there'd be 1000 people and a nice town here today.

RM: So you got an immediate response in terms of sales?

DC: Well, yes. We did an awful lot of publicity. I was the star television guest in Las Vegas. I was on TV shows in Vegas for a year. moved down to Vegas and had an office down there. We did a lot of advertising.

RM: Was that where your main market was - Vegas?

DC: Yes. It was pretty good in Reno, too, but mostly Vegas.

RM: People'd get out of that heat down there in the summer.

DC: And we just ground them out. I never sold a piece of land to anybody in my life who hadn't been standing in the middle of it before he bought it. And that meant spending the week in Vegas answering responses to ads and roaring up here on the weekend and meeting the people.

RM: You had to deal a lot with Lander County, didn't you, in terms of the legal part? And then eventually getting a town board here.

DC: Oh yes. But we had no trouble with the subdivisions and all that. We did everything aboveboard and according to the law.

RM: What was involved in getting a town board form of government here?

DC: Well, the whole law came about because we had to bail out the land owners' association, which was about to lose . . . there are about 300 acres of common ground that will never be developed along the stream and everything. And that was in jeopardy because of mismanagement of the land owners' association. (I won't mention any names.) And a way out of that was to have somebody to give the land to. We didn't want to give it to the county - nobody wants to give anything to the county. Emerson Titlow was our senator then and we got together with him and invented Chapter 269 towns He got it through in one year.

RM: What does 269 involve?

DC: That means that we have a legal political subdivision, just like an incorporated city; except, it doesn't have quite all the powers of an incorporated city and it doesn't have the expenses of an incorporated city. And it works out fine for small towns.

RM: What does it do?

DC: It's a governing body for a subdivision or a small entity. For instance, Tonopah has a town advisory board, and they get to advise the county commissioners, but they don't have any power at all. This is like the town advisory board, except it does what it wants to do - it has its own powers. It can spend money and it gets money from ad valorem taxes. Not special taxes, part of the regular county taxes. Of course, the town works closely with the county, just because it works best that way. For example, the county finally accepted all of our roads. We battled over that for years - whether or not they really accepted them when they approved the subdivisions (they did but they wouldn't admit it). But finally we're getting our roads paved now, as you can see. It's taken years.

RM: You don't have a school here, do you?

DC: No. But we have a municipal water system, and we have, of course, the fire department and all that.

RM: You don't have a sewer system - it's a septic system, isn't it?

DC: Yes, it's all septic. And we have something to say about the building inspector and the zoning and so forth.

RM: Oh, you have your own zoning laws?

NC: Unless the county is more restrictive than the home owner's association.

DC: When I say zoning, it's really covenants - deed restrictions.

RM: Yes.

## CHAPTER NINE

DC: If the sheriff doesn't provide it, the town has the power to effect a special tax on the county to pay deputies.

RM: Why don't more towns do this?

DC: Because they don't know about it. Pahrump has it and Round Mountain has it and . . . does anybody else have it? It seems to me there was one more town out there. Austin's thinking about it. It just gives you a little more self-government than the town advisory board system like Tonopah has. I don't know why Tonopah doesn't do it.

RM: What's your population here now?

DC: I'd guess between 200 and 300.

RM: And all the lots are sold?

DC: They're all in private ownership now, but some people own a couple hundred of them.

RM: OK. When did you go to work for Round Mountain Gold Corporation?

DC: 1978.

RM: Was it called Round Mountain Gold Corporation then?

DC: No. It was Copper Range Company.

RM: How did you happen to go back there?

DC: Well, that's when the Carter "boom" came along and the real estate business fell apart. And I'd been kind of partners with Kielhack and wanted to get the hell out of it, and I needed some income. So I decided to go up there and work for 6 months while we got the real estate business straightened around. And it never did straighten around. It still isn't. It's as good as it was before he got in there. I just got fascinated with the mine and the money was good, and it was nice for once in my life to have a paycheck coming in.

RM: Really Did you just go down there and get a job?

DC: Yes.

RM: What kind of a job did they give you?

DC: Driving a truck.

RM: One of those big ones?

DC: Yes. I started at 48 years old; started all new. As much as I fooled around mines in my life I never was near an open-pit operation. didn't know anything about it. And it's been a lot of fun.

RM: So you started driving a truck and then what happened?

DC: Oh, from trucks to dozers to the electric shovel to . . . I learned how to run all that equipment. And they needed a training program and I kept moaning about it, so finally I got my bluff called and they gave me the job.

RM: And what does the training program involve?

DC: I'm in charge of the heavy equipment training for 200 people out there.

RM: Oh - you do the training on the heavy equipment?

DC: I supervise it. I've got 16 guys who work under me.

RM: Do they actually do the training?

DC: I do some of it, you know. I wrote a book about it, and . . .

RM: Basically, guys don't know how to operate that equipment when they came there?

DC: Some of them do and some of them don't. It's all different degrees.

RM: So you don't need experience to get on?

DC: Now you do, because things have calmed down. But [back then] they'd hire anybody, because they had a high turnover. It was about 50 percent [a year], and now it's around 5 percent.

RM: Is it hard to teach a person to drive one of those huge trucks?

DC: Those huge trucks are no harder to drive than your car.

RM: Is that right?

DC: They really aren't.

RM: I would think it would be scary.

DC: You just put it in drive and step on the gas and go. But it is scary. That first 50-ton Euclid looked like a house to me when I first got there. Now a 150-ton truck is like a pickup. But there's a lot of . . . I'll give you a copy of my book if you want to read all the safety stuff.

RM: I would like it - that would be very helpful.

DC: And we're pretty proud of our record there. Next week the mine department - 200 people running heavy equipment - will mark 2 years without one lost-time accident.

RM: Wow !

DC: And we're getting national recognition again this year for 1.4 million hours. In the whole mine 600 people have been going a year without a lost-time accident. And when I first went to work there we had 15 to 20 of them a year, with 200 people working instead of 600. And I had something to do with that - not everything, but a lot of it. I'm pretty proud of that.

RM: So it's really a safe place to work?

DC: Well, any mine is a hazardous place to work. But it's probably the safest mine to work in the world. There's not one mine of our size anywhere that's even come close to our accident record.

RM: No kidding. What do you attribute that to?

DC: I'll tell you what it is. That thing's been going almost 14 years now, and we weeded out all the nuts. We've really got a good, solid, professional bunch of people working there now. That's why we're able to do that. Of course, when new people come in . . . now I train maybe 20 or 30 new hires a year, is all. But when they come in, they're just steeped in this philosophy of "Do the damn thing right," and be careful and safe. We also are the biggest heap leach gold mine in the world. We move about 7 million tons of rock every month.

RM: That's incredible.

DC: We move a quarter of a million tons a day, so that's 1 million tons every 4 days. That's 7 million tons a month.

RM: That counts moving it twice, doesn't it?

DC: Oh yes. That counts the re-handles and everything. We dig about 125,000 tons a day out of the pit.

RM: That's waste and ore?

DC: Yes.



RM: And what's the ore-to waste ratio?

DC: Two-to-one. We have 6 million tons leaching all the time.

RM: Oh god.

DC: Yes, it's mind boggling. We make 1100 to 1200 ounces of gold every day.

RM: Now, is that dore or pure gold?

DC: That's gold. The dore is more than that. Let's see, one-third of it's silver, so that'd be 400 or 500 ounces of silver every day along with it.

RM: Tell me some more about your safety manual.

DC: The amazing thing is that I started getting calls from all over the world - from mines and from companies like Newmont and Homestake and the big . . . they didn't have anything like it.

RM: How did you put it together? Was it from your experience in mining or . . . ?

DC: Yes.

RM: And did you hold meetings with people and kind of brainstorm it with them?

DC: I got a lot of ideas from the operators. If you read the introduction it'll tell you something about that. But everything in there is something I can run. Now I'm writing a book about something I don't know anything about. That's really hard: That's the ore processing part of it.

RM: You mean for the safety part of the ore processing work?

DC: For the whole operation and everything, just like this is. This isn't just safety. This is operation and everything. And all I know about the ore processing is that rock goes in one end and gold comes out the other end. [laughs] So I'm having a tough time. I've been working on it a year already.

RM: Well, the way to learn something is to write a book on it. You can't write anything intelligently unless you know it.

DC: That's right. I've learned a lot so far. But there are parts of that operation that I can't know about - that only 2 or 3 people in the company know about.

RM: You mean the gold part?

DC: Yes.

RM: Has anybody ever tried to make a hit on the system? I mean a major hit. Not sate zinc shavings or something, but a major theft of gold bars.

DC: No. You'd have to do a Rambo deal to do it.

RM: You've spent a lot of time up in the Toiyabes, haven't you?

DC: Oh yes.

RM: Is there anything up there that would be worth noting here -characters that you net up in the hills or . . . ?

NC: How about Berlin?

DC: We talked all about Berlin and all that. The Toiyabes are a beautiful place. But a whole lot of what I remember about being in than is chasing cows and cussing horses and hard work. I also remember a lot of good old times with my father, fishing and hunting and this, that and the other. But nothing that's unique or . . .

RM: How about over in the Toquimas? We mentioned Northumberland when we first started tonight.

DC: Oh yes. I never did finish telling you the story about when we got snowed in. We were snowed in for, I guess, about 90 days. And I mean nothing could get to us. They were dropping us food from an airplane. There were 70 to 80 of us up there. And they wouldn't drop us any booze. So we got rocks in the snow and we wrote out "whiskey" for the airplane. They still wouldn't drop any. So the old guy I was telling you about with the dust, Stackpool, and another guy whose name I forget who was in the same condition he was, built themselves snowshoes and they walked to Carver's through the snow.

RM: How far would that be?

DC: Oh, I would guess it's 25 miles.

RM: Good lord.

DC: Just to get a drink. We knew they were dead when they left. They made it in a day, silicosis and all.

RM: Is that right? Silicosis didn't stop them? That's a good story.

DC: We had a great boardinghouse there. Dewey LeFevre's wife was the cook.

RM: I remember that name, Dewey LeFevre.

DC: Yes, he was around Tonopah for years. Frank LeFevre was his brother.

RM: Did you know Laura Stebbins Darrough?

DC: Yes. The Darrough family and my family go clear back to the 1860s. Whenever we'd come out here we'd always go to Darrough's and go swimming, and my dad was great friends and he knew . . . this was old Grandma Darrough you were talking about.

RM: Right.

DC: I remember seeing her a couple of times but I didn't really know her. I remember Dewey . . . they had a Mongoloid brother that they raised. He had a head about that big. [A large head.] In fact, we used to kind of play together. He was maybe 20 years old when I was a little kid. And, of course, I knew all the Darrough brothers.

RM: Did you know any of the O'Tooles over in Reese River?

DC: Oh yes. My dad and I used to go out to lone, where old Bart O'Toole [Senior] had a bar. And all the Indians . . . my grandfather was very instrumental in getting that Yomba Reservation for the Indians. He had an Indian name and everything. The Indians just loved him. And my dad could speak the language well. I can still go out there, even today, with some of them and mention my name and boy, nothing's good enough. We used to go out there a lot.

And old Modesto [Beranka] - a Basco [Basque] - was a great character there. He was in his 70s when I knew him. He and the old man used to play cribbage whenever we'd go out there, and holler at each other. Modesto came in from Spain when he was 16 years old. He went to lone as a sheepherder and went to Fallon twice in his life since then, and died in lone. [laughs]

RM: Man, that is rural, isn't it.

DC: He was a great old men.

RM: I talked to the O'Tooles last week and I found that area to be almost frontier.

DC: Oh yes. One time I was selling some pipe to Bart's uncle - this was on the ranch closest to Austin. Not where Bart lives now, but on the one up close to Austin. [This was when] his uncle [and the uncle's] sister still lived on the ranch. They were in their 80s, and his sister would come out with a Mother Hubbard bonnet and her long dress. And they had these dogs. I mean, they had over 100 dogs and they were all inbred. And then they had these little skinny pigs running around the place. I was out there trying to survey the place and design an irrigation system for

them. The first time I went out there, I got out of the car and here came all these goddamn dogs. And the old man came out with a big, long stick and he started whacking dogs. [laughter]

And I said, "Jesus Christ, where'd you get all the dogs?"

And he said, "Well, they kind of breed a little."

I said, "What do you feed them?"

And he said, "Well, they catch one of them pigs once in a while and sometimes they eat each other." He said, "Don't fall down, they might eat you, too." And I believed him. [laughter]  
Nancy saw them.

NC: I wouldn't get out of the car.

DC: That was like stepping 100 years back in time, to go out and see those old people.

RM: That would have been Bart's aunt and uncle?

DC: Yes. I think they're both dead now.

RM: I think they are. Apparently Bart is the last white rancher over there.

DC: He is. There were some great old ranchers: Derringers, Bowlers . .

NC: I think his sister died a few years ago, didn't she?

DC: They sent her to a rest home and I think she died there and I think the old man died, too. But that was the last of the old-timers. The O'Tooles came over here during the potato famine. I've talked to Bart about it. And they had so many cows, they didn't know how many cows they had in the old days. Bart's a good guy. I like Bart.

RM: I really have enjoyed talking to him. I've learned a lot.

DC: Our families were all intertwined back in the beginnings of the whole thing.

RM: Are there any other areas, Don, that you feel you want to talk about?

DC: I think we've talked about everything that I know anything about

NC: I doubt that, but I'm sure you've covered a lot of ground. I've heard a lot of it.

RM: A person can never think of some of their best stories.

NC: I know. He will after you leave.

DC: Smoky Valley is changed in some ways and in other ways it really has hardly changed at all.

RM: How has it changed?

DC: Well, there are 1000 jobs out here now for people and there never used to be 40. If you could scratch a living out of this goddamn country you could get rich anywhere else in the world. That part has changed, but on the old ranches - on a few of them - things haven't changed that much.

RM: Which ranches would you say?

DC: Oh, Jimmy Berg, Darroughs . . . there was a guy across the highway up here in Simpson Park, and his is still the same. If you really want to see 100 years ago, go to Dry Creek.

RM: Where's Dry Creek?

DC: Just on the other side of Hickison Summit over here on the way to Eureka.

RM: Oh, OK. And that's really stepping back in time?

DC: Oh god, yes.

RM: That'd be in Lander County?

DC: They still make their own lariats and bridles. It's amazing.

NC: Do you remember the redheaded lady who used to live here . . . their parents had the store in Austin?

DC: Yes.

NC: Her son-in-law's the one who makes the lariats out of horsehair.

DC: Yes. Their name is Damele. The same family's been there over 100 years. They built their own telephone line from the ranch to Austin, about 40, 50 miles of it. It's still there.

RM: They put it on telephone poles?

DC: Well, kind of like telephone poles, and some of it's on fence posts. It's still working.

RM: How do you see the future of the valley?

DC: For my children and grandchildren it's very bright right here, because the population squeeze is going to hit here. Fallon's filling up. Minden and Yerington are all filling up. And right here happens to be the cheapest developed land in the West with a trout stream running through it, you know.

RM: Oh, you mean right here at Kingston?

DC: Well, the whole valley, really.

RM: So you see the valley as being developed?

DC: Oh sure. I'll never live to enjoy it, but I'm sure my grandchildren will, and maybe my children.

RM: What's going to support it economically?

DC: It's going to be a combination of retired people and light industry. We've got electric power here now, which we never had till a year ago.

RM: You didn't have power here a year ago? What did you have, generators?

DC: Yes. The power company lied to us for 22 years here. We had our own community power cooperative.

RM: Did it work pretty well?

DC: Oh yes. It started out as hydroelectric. We had free power here for years, but we could only generate enough for about 30 houses and we outgrew that. We went from nothing to 18 cents a kilowatt hour for the diesel. But we had a registered power cooperative. We sold it to Sierra Pacific when they came in. I was secretary of it for years. We built all the transmission lines and everything. It cost \$1000 to join the co-op.

RM: So you've really pioneered the development of the community.

DC: Oh yes. We built a town here. If I ever did anything in my life, I was part of building a town. I feel pretty good about that.

NC: I came here 13 years ago. I said it was like moving 20 years back in time. We were here for 2 years with no telephone, no TV, no anything, but I enjoyed it. I didn't need it that much. But I can remember coming back when I first drove back across country by myself. From Tonopah to Kingston I saw one light, Bob, and that was at Carver's. That was the only activity you saw.

RM: And that was 13 years ago?

NC: Yes.

DC: Nancy's a remarkable person, you know. She spent, back east, 20 years in the garment business including being a model and designer and so forth in New York City. I didn't know if she could take it out here. But she really took to it. She loves it out here.

NC: I started a new career, too.

RM: Nancy, you were from South Carolina, and then your folks came out here because your father was prospecting?

NC: Yes. They had 3 bars down in the L.A. area and to get out of town once in a while they went out prospecting and they came through Austin and stopped to have lunch. And they liked the Austin Hotel, away from the L.A. traffic, so they bought the place. And they're still there.

RM: And what did they buy?

NC: The old Austin Hotel. It burned down about a year before I moved here. They had just sold it when it was burned - it was always suspected to have been arson. It's right beside the Golden Club in Austin.

RM: And you said they bought the house that belonged to Bert and Millie Acree's father. Is that right?

NC: I think so.

RM: But it was for sure Bert and Millie's.

NC: Yes. They still have a lot of the Acres' old pictures and a lot of his awards and things that he had gotten before - stuff that the kids just left in the house. It's a neat house. It's got a lot of cubby holes, a lot of storage rooms. There's one that goes back up under the road that you drive over. It's a cellar, and it stays cool under there all the time. They keep a lot of fruit and vegetables and things in there. It's a neat old house with a lot of little angles. And it's got all the little curly works, and a white picket fence, and the yellow roses.

RM: The yellow roses are there that Millie's father brought from Texas, I guess.

NC: And the admiral married Millie's sister, didn't he?

DC: Yes. Jack Howell was a kid from Tonopah who retired as an admiral out of the navy. He lives in Reno now. His father was the guy who had the first bank in Tonopah. He can tell you some good stories for it. And he canes, every year, to the Austin cemetery to put flowers on his wife's grave. And he used to court her in the house that Nancy's mother and step-father live in now.

RM: Is that right? Whereabouts did they own bars in L.A.?

NC: They had one in Sherman Oaks and one in Lancersham Boulevard out on the . .

DC: Yes, right by the Budweiser place.

NC: No, that was in Sepulveda again, right across from the Budweiser brewery. And one on Lancersham in North Hollywood and then they had one in . . . I still have 2 sisters down there. They live in Downey.

DC: A good place to stay away from.



## CHAPTER TEN

RM: Don, you were telling me that you were state commander of the American Legion. Why don't you say a few words about that?

DC: There's really not a lot to tell; it's really not a matter of historical significance. It's just that I spent a lot of years in the American Legion, the only organization I ever belonged to in my life. I don't believe in organizations, but I got involved with the state offices and I was the first state commander (department commander, they call us, not state commander) to ever come from central Nevada.

RM: Is that right? When were you department commander?

DC: Two years ago - in '87 and '88, I think it was.

RM: And what local branch were you in?

DC: Post 18, Big Smoky Valley, which we've kept going here for the past 30 years. We've got about 100 neuters. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons I got elected commander is because we were chosen "post of the month" from all the American Legion posts in the world in the American Legion Magazine one month.

RM: Why was that?

DC: Because we've done some remarkable things in the valley here for as small a post as we are. For instance, day after tomorrow we're going to feed 400 mothers at our Mother's Day breakfast in Round Mountain And we've done a lot for the children.

RM: What kind of a building do you have? Where do you have your meetings?

DC: We don't have one. We don't have meetings, either.

RM: You don't have meetings?

DC: Because of the shift work most of the members are on it's almost impossible to have meetings. We have 2 or 3 meetings a year.

RM: Is that right? How do you communicate, then?

DC: By direct mail.

RM: Who handles that?

DC: I do. I write all the letters and Kielhack mails them all.

NC: The second month after he was elected state commander I mailed out over 5000 letters.

DC: That's how many members there were in the state then. There are 6000 now, and I wrote a letter to every one of them.

RM: Saying what?

DC: Our goals for the year and what we were going to do and . . . We worked hard on it and did a lot of traveling and spent a lot of money, but it's been worth it. We've been to national conventions in New Orleans, San Antonio, Salt Lake, Louisville, Kentucky - all over.

[Tape is turned off for a while.]

RM: You were talking about growing up in Tonopah in the '30s.

DC: We were about twice removed from the great old pioneer promoters like George Wingfield and Pat McCarran and people like that.

RM: [Billy] Douglas was one.

DC: Douglas was one, yes. And of course, Douglas's sons are still going, you know. And then there were people like Fred Volmer, who we knew personally and had a chance to really associate with. All of this rubs off on a guy; it makes him do things that maybe he shouldn't do, and for sure that he wouldn't do growing up in a different environment.

RM: Because those guys were kind of role models for you, weren't they, in terms of achievements?

DC: Yes. When you go down to Hollywood and see Volmer .

RM: Could you fill us in on him?

DC: Fred Volmer was the guy who started Silver Peak, the White Caps and Manhattan and all that. He was the man who raised the money to put the mines in major production, built the mills, etc. He was a half-breed Indian who grew up in the area. Volmer was the great mining stock promoter of his day. They wanted to make a movie about him and he never would let than do it, because it would have ruined his business.

I went down to his office one time in Hollywood - Hollywood and Vine. He was involved in a big uranium stock program in Austin at that time. They made a million dollars off of it and there wasn't any uranium there to speak of. And in his office was an old guy with Levi's and a red shirt and his Levi's tucked into cowboy boots playing cribbage with Volmer. The guy was an actor he hired to stay in there all the time who looked like an old miner. And right across the

hall were the regional offices of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Now, that's an experience. [laughs]

RM: Wow. So he hired this old guy to look like a miner to stay in the office.

DC: Oh, he had him there for 30 years. He used to sit around and play cribbage with him and talk about his gold mines in Nevada. But the fact that he would do this right across the hall from the SEC offices when he was in kind of gray areas with all of the [regulatory agencies] . .

RM: Right. Did you know a promoter out of South Dakota named Les Emigh? He was raising a lot of money on our mine out in Reveille Valley and of course, we didn't see any of it - he snookered my dad.

DC: I never ran into him. The greatest [promoter like that] I ever saw was Frank Burnham. But he wound up in prison. These other guys didn't. RM: Emigh didn't. The last we heard, back in the late '50s, the FBI was looking for him; but they say that about a lot of people.

NC: Oh, I know a few of them now that the FBI is looking for.

DC: Yes, we run into a few of them yet. But they're not like the old-timers. For instance, McCarron was unreal - this young lawyer in Tonopah. He and my grandfather were partners in the mining business. have a picture of Main Street in Tonopah and on one of the windows you can see "Cirac & McCarran Mining Company." And Wingfield was unreal. And so other many people were . . . most of the leading politicians in Nevada.....the Pittmans came from there.

RM: And what's his name - Tasker Oddie - came out of there.

DC: Yes. And to grow up right after all that happened was quite an experience. A lot of it probably bad, but . . .

RM: But you felt that presence when you were growing up as a kid there?

DC: Oh yes, tremendously. If they could do it, we could do it. And a lot of us did. There are guys like Dougie Douglas, the man who invented the solid fuel for the rockets.

RM: Is that right? He came out of Tonopah?

DC: Yes. His mother named him Douglas Douglas Douglas. Do you know Paula Douglas?

RM: No, I don't. I know Red Douglas. But I'm familiar with [her father], the promoter Billy Douglas, because Curly has told me about him. It must have been interesting, growing up in the wake of all of these famous people. Tonopah was really the birthplace of a whole generation of Nevada politicians, wasn't it?

DC: Yes. The reason I can get our little American Legion Post in the national magazine is because of the things I learned growing up that way. (That's what kind of brought it to mind.)

RM: What would be some of those things that you applied or that you've learned?

DC: I don't know how to express it. I guess it's just audacity. And knowing that if you want to do something, all you really have to do is go ahead and do it. That's what those guys did.

RM: One of the things I've said for a long time is that I like Nevada because in Nevada you can do anything you're big enough to do - if you're not stepping on somebody else's toes - and sometimes even when you are.

DC: Yes, if you're good enough.

NC: That's one of the things I learned in coming to Nevada. I was a very timid person when I first came here. I kept my mouth shut on a lot of areas, but now it's hard to keep my mouth shut. I mean, here you can find your independence. You can be your own person.

DC: It's like when I went to California as a 23- or -4-year-old kid in the furniture business, as a hick kid from Tonopah. I was the boy wonder of northern California, just because I didn't know I couldn't be. I just did a lot of stuff without ever dreaming that I shouldn't.

RM: Yes. Nobody told you, you couldn't do this, so you went out and did it.

DC: That's right. And in my travels around the world I've noticed that people from other areas don't have that same thing.

NC: They don't. Where I grew up you grew up and you got married and you had children and you lived within 5 miles of where you were born and you never got any further than that.

RM: You kept your position where you were supposed to be.

NC: That's right. I lived my whole life doing what I thought other people wanted me to do.

DC: It's like when we wanted a guy to narrate our movie. I just called Joel McCrea. Who would think you could even get his phone number; well, information had it.

RM: And then who would think he'd do it for nothing.

DC: And all it took was saying we wanted to do this. "It's a noncommercial deal. We don't have any money."

RM: Isn't that great?

NC: Where I come from, you scraped for every penny you could get and you counted your pennies from week to week, and now I do business with the millionaires.

DC: I saw Robert Mitchum one time in Harrah's Club. The way it started, we were just beginning Kingston. And at that time we were thinking how nice it would be to have a big name to front the development. So I saw him sitting over there drinking with his friend and I just walked over and I said, "Nice to meet you. Are you staying in town?" And he said,

"Yes." And I said, "I want to hustle you."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "I've got a business proposition."

He said, "Come see me at the Holiday Hotel in the morning."

And he looked at it. He decided not to do it. But he was a nice guy. And where the hell do I get guts enough to do this? From growing up in Tonopah.

RM: That's interesting.

NC: Did you mention your singing career, too? [giggles]

DC: [Just in passing.]

RM: You were a singer?

DC: Yes, a little bit.

RM: Is that right? Where, in Reno?

DC: Yes. At the Mapes Hotel and other places.

RM: I'll be darned.

NC: He's done a little bit of everything.

RM: You've had a varied life, haven't you?

DC: Yes, I got through a year of college singing.

RM: Did you sing with bands?

DC: Sometimes, and just a piano other times.

RM: Did you play yourself?

DC: No, I never could play anything. I sang pretty well, though.

RM: Is that right? And you made money at it?

DC: Yes. No big money, but money.

## INDEX

Ace Club  
Acree, Bert & Milly,  
Acree, Mr  
Alabama Hills, CA,  
American Legion,  
American Legion Magazine,  
Anaconda Copper Co.,  
antimony  
arsenic,  
Austin, NV  
Austin Hotel,  
Barra, George,  
Barrel House Café  
Basque people,  
Belmont, NV,  
Beranka, Modesto,  
Berg, Jimmy,  
Berlin, NV  
Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park,  
Bernice, NV  
Big Casino,  
Big Creek, NV,  
Bird, Mr  
Bishop, CA,  
Blair Junction, NV,  
boardinghouses  
Bobbie's Buckeye Bar,  
bootlegging  
Boscovich, George,  
Bowler, Judge  
Bowler family,  
Broken Hills, NV  
brothels,  
Burnham, Frank,  
burro,  
California,  
California gold rush,  
Campbell & Kelly Foundry,  
Cape Horn  
Carson, Kit,  
Carver's Station,  
Casey, John,

cattle  
Chapter 269 towns,  
Chiatovich, Jack,  
Cirac, Bill,  
Cirac, Grandmother Joseph  
Cirac, Great-Grandfather,  
Cirac, Great-Grandmother  
Cirac, Joy Jones,  
Cirac, Lee,  
Cirac, Louis Victor  
Cirac, Louis Victor Jr  
Cirac, Marie,  
Cirac, Nancy,  
Cirac family  
Cirac, NV,  
Cirac & McCarran Mining Co.,  
Cirac mill  
clothes  
Coleman's Grocery Store  
Coombs, Norman "Curly,"  
copper,  
Copper Range Co  
Cornish people,  
Crowell, Dist. Attorney Bill,  
Cyprus Mining Co.,  
Damele family  
dances,  
Daniels, Gene,  
Daniels family  
Daniels' hay ranch,  
Darrough, Laura Stebbins,  
Darrough family  
Darrough's Hot Springs,  
Darwin, CA,  
deed restrictions  
Depression  
Derringer family,  
Desert Inn Hotel & Casino,  
Dixie Valley, NV,  
Douglas, Billy,  
Douglas, Douglas Douglas  
Douglas, Paula  
Douglas, Red  
Douglas family,



Downey, CA,  
Dry Creek, NV,  
Duncan, Bobbie  
Duncan, Mt.,  
Early brothers  
Eisenhower, Pres. Dwight D.,  
Hot Creek, NV,  
El Capitan Mine  
El Rancho Hotel & Casino  
electricity  
Howell, Mr  
Emigh, Les,  
Humboldt River  
Equipment Training Manual  
hunting,  
Hunt's Canyon,  
Fallon, NV  
Indians  
inventions  
fights,  
lone, NV,  
fire department,  
fish,  
lone Trail Canyon, NV,  
fishing  
Isabelle, John  
(The) Flamingo Hotel & Casino,  
Isabelle Construction Co  
flu epidemic  
J.C. Penneys  
food,  
Japan,  
Fort Monmouth, NJ,  
Jett Canyon, NV,  
France,  
Jones, State Rep  
Frontier Club,  
Joseph, Charlie  
Gabbs, NV,  
Joseph family  
gambling, professional  
Kielhack, Jim  
Kingston Canyon, NV,  
gambling, legalized

Kingston Creek  
garden,  
Kingston Management Assoc  
garment business  
Kingston Ranch subdivisions,  
Gendron, Alice,  
Glendale, CA,  
gold  
Korea,  
Korean War  
gold (price of  
Koster, Great-Grandfather  
gold (values  
Koster wagon  
Golden Club  
Lake Tahoe,  
Goldfield Consolidated mill,  
Lander County, NV,  
Gordon, Lou  
Gosho Co.,  
LAS Vegas, NV  
Grant, Pres. Ulysses S  
Grantsville, NV  
lead,  
Haas, Carl  
leadership school,  
Haas, Mr. & Mrs  
leasing  
Hand, Lee  
Lee, Jimmy  
Harrah's Club  
LeFevre, Mr. & Mrs. Dewey,  
Harris, Shorty,  
LeFevre, Frank  
Hatton, Judge,  
Life Magazine,  
Hawthorne, NV,  
lime roll,  
hay balers,  
Lincoln Mine  
hayings,  
line shafts  
health care  
Lofthouse, Shirley Ann Berg

heavy equipment training,  
Lone Mountain, NV,  
Hickison Summit,  
Lone Mountain Mine  
Longdon, Bobby,  
Los Angeles, CA,  
lumber business, 2  
Macky School of Mines  
Maggie Blue's, NV,  
mail,  
male-female relationships  
Manhattan, NV,  
Manhattan dredge,  
Marker, Bob  
Martinez, Jessie,  
Martinez family,  
Mazatlan, Mexico  
McCann Station, NV,  
McCann Summit, NV,  
McCarran, Senator Pat,  
McCracken, Robert G.,  
McCrae, Joel  
McCullough, I. J.,  
McCullough, Tom,  
McCullough Chain Saws  
Mexican people,  
Mexico,  
Millers, NV  
mills  
Mina, NV  
Minden, NV,  
mining,  
mining scams,  
Missouri,  
Mitchum, Robert,  
Mizpah Hotel,  
molybdenum,  
Monitor Valley, NV,  
Mormons  
movie (about central Nevada),  
murder,  
Murnane, Mr  
Napa, CA,  
native grass

Nevada,  
Nevada Historical Society  
Nevada National Bank,  
Nevada state prison  
Newmont Mining Corp  
New York City, NY,  
Nicely, Roger,  
Nicely, Tom,  
Northumberland, NV  
Nye County, NV,  
Nye County Commissioners  
Nye County drag line  
Nye County sheriff,  
Oddie, Sen. Tasker  
O'Leary, Red,  
O'Neal, Pat,  
Ophir Canyon, NV,  
Orizaba, NV,  
Orizaba Mine,  
O'Toole, Alice,  
O'Toole, Bart & Lilly,  
O'Toole, Bartley Augusta,  
O'Toole, Lawrence William,  
O'Toole family,  
Pacific Metal Co.,  
Pahrump, NV,  
Paiute language  
Park Canyon, NV,  
Paymaster Canyon, NV,  
Peavine Ranch  
Perkins, Jim Sr.,  
pigs  
Pioche, NV  
Pittman, Sen. Key & Gov. Vail,  
placer mining,  
platinum,  
plumbing  
Potts, Jeanne Cirac,  
Pratt, Llewyn,  
Prohibition  
promoters,  
prospecting,  
Provo, UT  
R.O. Ranch,

railroads,  
Ramona Hotel,  
Ray, NV,  
Reese River, NV,  
Reese River Valley, NV  
Reno, NV,  
Reveille Valley, NV,  
Riverside Hotel, 7  
roads,  
Robertson, Mr. & Mrs. George,  
Rogers, Ben,  
Rogers, Emma,  
Rogers, Harry,  
Rogers, Katie,  
Rogers, Pete,  
Ronzoni family,  
Round Mountain, NV,  
Round Mountain Gold Corp  
roundups  
Royston Mine,  
Rusk Foundation,  
Russell, Slim  
"Safeway" (prostitute),  
San Antone Ranch  
San Antonio Mountains,  
San Francisco, CA,  
San Luis Obispo, CA,  
Sanks, Trevor, 45  
scheelite (see tungsten)  
Schmidtlein, Charlie  
Schmidtlein, Don  
Schmidtlein family  
Schmidtlein ranch,  
schools  
Tonopah, NV  
Tonopah (childhood  
Scotty's Castle  
Selig, Tony  
sewer system,  
Seyler Lake, NV,  
shooting,  
Shoshone language,  
Tonopah Benjamin "Toquima Mountains  
Sienke, John,

Sierra Pacific Power Co.,  
signal corps,  
silicosis,  
silver,  
Silver, Albert,  
Silver Peak, NV,  
Simpson Park, NV,  
singer, nightclub  
Tonopah Army Air Base,  
Tonopah Club,  
Tonopah Divide Mine,  
Tonopah firehouse,  
Tonopah Times,  
Toquima Mountains, NV  
town board form of government,  
trains,  
-64, 67-69  
Trueba, Mrs.,  
tungsten,  
Tuolumne, CA,  
turquoise,  
Twain, Mark  
Twin Rivers Canyon, NV  
Two Years Before the Mast,  
Union Canyon, NV,  
U.S. Army,  
U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
U.S. Navy  
U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission,  
University of Nevada at Reno  
uranium stock,  
venereal disease,  
Victor Mine,  
Vienna, Austria,  
Virginia City, NV,  
Volmer, Fred,  
wages  
Wah Chang, Mr  
Wah Chang Trading Co.,  
Waidly, Fred,  
Wales, England,  
Warm Springs, NV,  
water,  
Weepah, NV

Wells Fargo Bank  
West, Baldy,  
West, Bobby,  
West Point, NY,  
Western States Mining Co  
Wheatland, WY  
White Caps Mine,  
Wilson, Alice Pratt Cirac  
Wilson, Robert "Bob  
Wine Glass Ranch,  
Winger, Dave,  
Wingfield, George,  
Winnemucca, NV,  
Woods Ranch,  
work ethic,  
World War II  
writing,  
yellow roses,  
Yerington, NV,