

An Interview with
MARGARITO "SHORTY"
DIAZ FAMILY

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
1987

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Margarita "Shorty" Diaz
circa 1970

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed deep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L. Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

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

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--Robert D. McCracken Tonopah, Nevada
June 1990

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada. The interviews vary in

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

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

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

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

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Millie Miner, Ken Miner, Jovial Diaz, and Les Long at the Diaz home in the Amargosa Valley, Nevada - November 1, 1987

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Millie, could you tell me your name?

MM: It's Mildred Hunt Miner.

RM: And when and where were you born?

MM: In 1945 in Barstow, California.

RM: Where did you grow up?

MM: I was raised in Vegas, originally, and then here - my grandfather raised me here and in Death Valley Junction; my grandfather and grandmother lived in Death Valley.

RM: Your grandfather is a pretty famous person around here. Could you tell me his name?

MM: It's Margrito Diaz

RM: Where was he born?

MM: Houston, Texas.

RM: In Houston? And when was he born?

MM: December 4, 1881. Mom, why don't you get in here?

RM: Why don't you come on over here and jump in? I'm afraid the tape recorder won't pick you up over there □ □ .What did his parents do?

JD: They had a ranch around Houston, Texas.

RM: And how long did he stay there?

JD: I don't know. He was in the army.

RM: When did he go into the army?

JD: Honey, come help me.

LL: Well, he was in the First World War.

RM: And what did he do after the war?

JD: He worked for a railroad back east in Chicago.

RM: When did he come west of Texas?

JD: I don't remember.

MM: Well, he worked for the T&T Railroad before he went to

KM: That paper tells you when he was here at the T&T.

JD: My dad worked for the Pacific Borax Company.

MM: Bob, this is my husband, Ken.

RM: Ken, nice to meet you.

MM: And that's my dad [Les Long].

LL: How do you do.

RM: Nice to meet you.

LL: He used to ride the 20-mule team borax.

RM: Did he drive them?

MM: Yes. He'd go through the valley, to that big mountain.

RM: He must've been quite a teamster.

JD: Yes.

KM: He was an all-around man.

MM: He could do anything.

KM: He could out-walk me, before he died.

JD: He was a healthy man.

RM: So he worked for Pacific Coast Borax. Is that how he got on to the T&T?

JD: No, he worked for the T&T Railroad first. He worked for the T&T Railroad when I was born, and I'm 59 years old.

RM: When were you born?

JD: '29.

RM: Why don't you state your name on the tape recorder.

LL: Jovial Diaz

RM: And why don't you state your name.

LL: I'm Les Long.

RM: Les Long. And you're . .

KM: Ken Miner.

RM: Ken Miner. OK. So Shorty worked for the T&T initially. And was he also a teamster with the mules?

DJ: Yes. That was before he worked for the T&T Railroad. Then after they took the T&T Railroad out he went and worked for the borax company. He used to ship borax to . . . where did he ship borax?

RM: OK, he worked out of Death Valley Junction and shipped borax?

JD: Yes. That's where I was born - Death Valley Junction - on February 15th, 1929. He was working for the T&T Railroad when I was born.

RM: What did he do for the T&T Railroad?

JD: He was a section foreman. We lived in railroad housing.

RM: Did you go to school in Death Valley Junction?

JD: Oh, yes.

RM: Do you remember the Clay Camp?

JD: Oh, yes.

RM: Could you tell me exactly where it was?

JD: It's up that way, toward Ash Meadow Lodge.

RM: How far from your house?

JD: How far, honey, would you say? You drive it every day.

LL: Seven or 8 miles.

RM: Is it under water now?

JD: Yes, there's a lake.

ALL: Yes.

MM: They've got it all closed in, don't they, Ken?

KM: Yes.

RM: Did you go there a lot?

JD: Oh yes - we used to go swimming.

MM: My grandfather used to take us girls swimming up there.

RM: Where did you swim?

JD: Crystal Lake.

RM: It wasn't a lake caused by digging, was it?

JD: No, it was a regular lake.

MM: They used to have a lot of fish in there.

RM: Who was Shorty's wife?

JD: Oh, she's dead, too. Her name was Consan - that was my mother.

RM: Where did he meet her?

JD: In El Paso, after the war. She died in '41.

RM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JD: Two. One of them lives in Vegas. My oldest brother was in the army, and he went to school here, but he went to high school in Lone Pine - my dad had to board him out.

And then he went to the army and my other brother went in the air force. My little brother lives in Vegas - he's a teamster for . . .

LL: UBH - the Teamsters.

JD: UBH. And my other brother is a doctor back east.

RM: What did he do then? How did he move here from the Junction?

JD: How did Shorty happen to settle here from Death Valley? Well, after we were grown up and married he got this place here.

LL: He'd try to help people out. If people came by with kids and they were hungry he'd have them stay here and he'd feed him and they'd go on their way. Then he'd help somebody else out.

RM: About what year did he acquire this place?

JD: Let's see, my brother Greg was born in '36, so then he had it in about 1938.

MM: And we were babies. I was a baby and I'm 42 now.

RM: So he was past 50 before he came here, wasn't he?

JD: Yes. That's a picture of him right there, when he was younger.

MM: Then I'll show you some more - I've got another one here.

RM: Did his mother and father live to be quite old, too?

JD: Yes. I think my grandfather lived to be 105 years old, but my grandmother died pretty young.

LL: An older brother was about 93 when I first met him - and that was 30 years ago.

RM: So his brothers lived to be old, too?

JD: Yes. His family lived a long time, but not the people on my mother's side.

RM: Why did he move out of the Junction and come over here?

JD: They were getting borax out of here and they wanted my dad to sample the place for clay, because he knew about borax. They went with a bunch of surveyors and surveyed a lot of this borax, so they used to take samples out of here and send them to California.

RM: Did he move here to continue his sampling?

JD: Oh, you know, he . . . □

MM: [He] liked animals, too.

JD: Yes. He wanted to retire.

RM: Oh, he retired when he moved here.

JD: Right; he got his pension from the railroad and he got a pension from social security. He always liked animals: goats and pigs and chickens; he always had them. And he planted watermelons . . .

LL: He was by himself, so . . .

JD: He never remarried. But after he quit the borax, he used to work at the Laundry in Death Valley Junction. It used to be a booming town. He worked at the laundry as a . . . he'd run the machines.

RM.: Oh. While he lived here?

JD: Yes.

RM: So he continued to make a little money.

JD: Yes. Then he retired.

RM.: Yes. And then he just raised his animals?

JD: Yes, he liked them - dogs, and cats . . .

LL: Yes - goats.

RM: Did he make cheese or sell goat milk?

LL: No, he wouldn't sell anything, he'd give it away.

JD Even now, people come over and they think my daughter and my son-in law give things away. They tell them, "Hey, those days are over."

LL: There's no more Shorty.

KM: He would say, "If you want something to eat, go out in the chicken pen and get it."

LL: Or a lot of times they'd come over to get a pig or something - going to take a pig."

'Well, how many kids you got? You got kids? Well, take it. Take it.'

RM: Is that right - he was very generous. That was probably the way his family had lived, wasn't it?

JD: Yes, they always helped. He never sold things to people.

LL: When he died, they said, "He was a saint passing through." God, he helped everybody here.

RM: When did he pass away?

LL About 4 years ago?

KL:'83.

JD: He was 102.

KM: 1881 to 1983.

RM.: Was he in good shape?

ALL- Yes.

RM You said he could out-walk you.

LL: Yes. And when he died, he had [a friend] over here, and he said, "I'm going to go take a bath and a drink of water." This was night-time.

He said, "Why?"

He said, "God . . . God tell me to." He took a shower and drank a glass of water - he rested right there - he [never] woke up in the morning.

RM: Was he a religious man?

JD: Yes; he was really religious.

LL: But before he died, he used to go dancing with her.

MM He used to dance with me; yes.

RM: Where did you go dancing?

MM: Oh, at these bars and places here.

KM The Stateline was about the closest place that he could go.

MM: We used to go eat and so forth.

RM: What kind of health habits did he practice to live so long?

JD: He drank a lot of goat milk. He used to try to give it to us, but [chuckles] . . .

LL: He believed in no medicine - he believed God would take care of him.

JD: When he was about 90 years old, he had an implant in his eye. And the doctor said he was in good shape. They checked him out and they said he could take the operation - there would be no problem. He [had] it and he could see well. He was pretty strong. He had Aztec blood in him.

LL: He cut his hand real deep, and he burned a rag and then rubbed the ashes in there and it stopped.

JD: He never had a scar, either.

My son-in-law and my daughter lived here with my dad.

RM: What was it like growing up in Death Valley Junction?

JD: A lot better than it is in Vegas. [laughs] Things don't happen up there like they do in town. I have daughters who were raised in . . . and there are a lot of things going on over here. You go in a school and they teach you; they don't just put you through one door and out the other because you know your ABCs They make you learn.

RM: Did you live there you whole childhood?

JD: I lived there 'til I was about 16 years old. Then I got married and went to Vegas. And I had my daughter - she's my first daughter. And then . . . it seemed like something always happened and we always came back to Daddy to help us. So I lived with my girls, because I've been married twice. And my dad raised my girls.

RM: So you grew up out here.

MM: Yes.

RM: And you said you were born in '45. What was it like growing up out here from 1945.

MM: A lot of fun. It's a lot different than Vegas. I went to school in Vegas, but it's a lot different out here. We used to go rabbit hunting and I used to be the driver. [laughs] And my uncle and my grandfather used to shoot rabbits . . . we had a good time.

RM: Were there a lot of other kids in the area then?

MM: Oh, I have 2 other sisters. We used to be out here. We used to have fun and garden and go irrigate with my grandfather, and do a lot of things. I loved it out here.

RM: Did he always keep a big garden?

MM: Oh, yes. He had this whole side, from here all the way out. It was watermelons, tomatoes . . .

LL: The biggest watermelon you ever saw grow.

JD: Yes; he had some big ones. He'd give than away to people. I'd care over, he'd load me up with tomatoes, and take than back home and give than to somebody . .

LL: He got some of the oldest stoves you could ever see around here.

RM: [Millie, do you want to] say anymore about what it was like here after you got a little older; through the '50s?

MM: I miss my grandfather.

RM: Were there many people living in Death Valley Junction in the '50s?

MM: I was little then. There were a lot of people down there. They had the little cafeteria

LL: There used to be a restaurant open, too.

MM: The post office . .

LL: A service station right across the street.

MM: They had the grocery store and they had the motel, and the laundry was open then.

LL: Yes; I think they closed that in about '68 - the store down here didn't he?

MM: The post office still has the boxes, but . .

RM: Was there a school there in the '50s?

MM: I didn't go to school here - I wasn't old enough. I went to school in Vegas. My brother Fred went to school there.

RM: Who were some of the people living in this part of the valley in the '50s?

MM: Hank Records lived here. Norine Rooker and Pete Peterson. He and Grandpa must've been friends for years.

LL: Buddies; like brothers.

JD: Hank Records hasn't been here quite as long as Norine. Norine's got him beat. Pete's been here longer than Norine. Jack White used to be an old . . . But he doesn't live here; he used to.

LL: He's in Vegas now.

RM: Could you tell me some more about your father and grandfather?

LL: He used to work up there at Beatty.

MM: I wish somebody would've really got with him and written a book and let him tell it. He could've told a lot of things. That would've been really nice.

JD: He worked at Carrara.

RM: What did he do there?

JD: He was a laborer. I went to school there, too, at Beatty. That's where my mother died.

RM: What was Beatty like then?

JD: It was booming more than it is now.

RM: Was that in the early '40s?

JD: Yes, the '40s. Because my mother died in '41.

RM: And he worked at Carrara and you lived in Beatty?

JD: Yes; he drove back and forth. He was a laborer; put cement mixers - in those days, they shoveled that . . .

LL: What about the pipeline he ran?

JD: Oh, yes, that's right - he did work on the pipeline.

RM: Oh, the water pipeline? From the Narrows up to . . .

LL: Yes. Because in Vegas in '62, I think, or '63, they had an article in the paper about him showing him laying the first pipeline.

KM: The one to see is Hank Records, because he's got books of the old-time people here and he's got books of all that.

RM: Yes, I've talked to Hank. I wanted to get some first-hand information on Shorty, though. That's the reason I wanted to talk to you.

LL: I hope you tell them that he was, as I say, the saint going through here. He helped everybody and nobody had any fault.

KM: He was well-liked; everybody liked him.

JD: He was better-natured than I am.

RM: He must've really known the area well.

MM: Oh, he did. It's just a shame that Grandpa didn't live a little longer, to have somebody come and write whatever he said, because it was all true.

JD: People in this valley enjoyed talking to him, because he could tell you things that nobody else knew.

LL: He could tell if you were driving a car or not driving a car through the desert. One time a goat got loose - we were in looking for him. It was raining. I said, "I think I can go through here."

He said, "Son, don't go through there - you'll sink."

"Oh, Papa, now, you don't out here - too dry." I'm in about 10 feet, and down I went - right down to my - leg of my car. I sank in that sand.

KM: That's what he told me but I wouldn't listen - I knew more than he did. But I got stuck. Yes, he knew everything out here in this valley.

LL: He was an all-around man, that's all.

ALL: Yes.

LL: He could speak about 3 languages, couldn't he?

RM: Which languages did he speak?

JD: He spoke French.

RM: Where did he learn French?

JD: When he went in the army.

RM: And did he speak Spanish?

ALL: Oh, yes.

RM: Yes; Spanish, English, and French.

LL: And Aztec Indian - that's 4.

RM: He spoke Aztec? Where did he learn that?

JD: I think my grandfather was Aztec. He wasn't dark he had a red beard.

LL: He was a proud man. He wouldn't ask anybody for anything.

ALL: Yes.

KM: If you turned the air conditioner on when it was real hot here - about 110 - he'd run out there and lie under the trees.

LL: I'd come out here, [and I'd say], "Papa, it's hot in here."
"Ah, bullshit. It ain't hot in here."
Turn the cooler on - pshhhoo.

JD: That's where he died - right there.

KM: Right out there. I guess some men stole his guns and stuff.

LL: Shot his hogs.

KM: They thought he was sleeping; they shot his hogs and . .

RM: They shot his hogs? Why?

KM: I don't know. Somebody got in and cut both of the ears halfway off with a knife instead of cutting their throat. They didn't know what they were doing, and they were cutting their ears so they was just hanging.

LL: And a pig we have out here was shot in the hip and is still living.

KM: They shot his old goat out there through the neck, but it . . .

RM: Why would somebody do that?

KM: I don't know.

JD: People just trying - I think - for meat.

KM: I think for meat or something, and didn't know how to do it. That's what I think happened; I don't know.

LL: Or maybe they were jealous of what he had.

RM: Did he build this house?

ALL: Yes.

LL: He had an old outhouse, and a shower.

KM: The shower's still here now.

RM: Did he build this in the '40s?

JD: Yes, little by little. We lived in the Valley, but then he'd care out and work on this. He had it all fixed.

LL: [The wood he used is] harder than brick - it's hard. He laid the sheetrock in here and

KM: It's hard.

LL: It's been nailed all over.

RM: What did he do for water?

KM: He's got a spring up here that is on all the time.

LL: And he piped it in. [He'd] turn a faucet and have free-flowing water.

KM: A steady flow down there. The stream used to run down in front of the house. He kept it going and there are a lot of trees there. He'd just let it run and it was nice clear water - the best water you can get.

JD: People used to come over here with big jugs and get water from the kids because it was so good.

RM: How do you folks feel the government taking the land in Ash Meadows?

MM: [Ken] works for the Fish and Wildlife. [laughs]

KM: They're buying a bunch of that up out there, but the people don't have to . . . Like Pete Peterson. They told him that they'd buy it, but he could live there till he died. That's the way with a lot of the old ones out here. Some of them move out and some stay.

RM: You're not in that part of the area, are you?

ALL: No.

LL: The bad thing about it is, they're taking the best part of the land. All these ponds that we used to go swimming at over there . .

LL: You can't go to Crystal Pool or Devil's Hole anymore. Have you been over to Devil's Hole?

RM: Yes, Pete Peterson took me over there.

LL: It's been fenced off.

KM: Well, they had to. There were so many people [who were] not coming back from the hole. Weren't there some drivers in there they couldn't find?

ALL: Yes.

LL: Grandpa told me a long time ago that an Indian jumped in Devil's Hole and came out in Crystal Pool.

JD: Yes - the body.

LL: It's an underground river.

KM: They said he came through there.

CHAPTER TWO

KM: We're on the Amargosa River. It runs from Beatty all the way through here, underground.

RM: Yes. But that's a different river . .

KM: That's different from here; yes.

LL: I don't know, but there's water flowing all over here - everywhere.

RM: How long have you been in the valley, Les?

LL: I've been here since 1962, when I first met her.

RM: And how long have you been here, Ken?

KM: I've been around here about 20 years.

RM: What do you do for the Fish and Game?

KM: Everything. We watch the hunters and we build everything, and the pupfish . . . we just do everything out here. There are only 2 of us out here. We're trying to get an office set up.

LL: We'd sit at the table and have coffee and donuts and Shorty would tell me all of his stuff.

RM: Did he basically live on goat milk?

MM: That's what he drank mostly. He never liked cow milk.

JD: He ate nothing but pork. Any other kind of meat . . . Pork, rice, beans, and the chicken.

MM: And chile.

LL: And beans, and pork.

MM: He loved pork.

LL: A lot of goat milk.

MM: I think that's what made him healthy.

RM: That's what I was trying to figure out; [laughs] what he did.

JD: A lot of people say that you shouldn't eat steak or too much pork . . . and my dad loved pork.

LL: Maybe that Coors made him do it. He drank Coors beer; that's the only thing he would drink.

RM: How much did he drink?

LL: When he got a little older, a few beers now and then.

JD: He had a Coors. When he got a little older he'd drink it a little bit. If we'd come and visit him he'd have a little little can - warm. He wouldn't drink it cold. He'd put it in his hot pan and warm it up. He could make tortillas - he could make anything.

LL: Rolled his own tortillas.

RM: He probably made - grew and made - all . . . Did he grow corn here? Did he grow his own corn?

JD: Not too much; not too much. He could make some good beans over there on the stove - he could cook . .

RM: Did he use lard in his tortillas?

JD: He never put lard in his dough.

RM: What did he put in it?

JD: Flour, baking powder, and water.

RM: Oh, he didn't use any fat?

JD: Oh, no. He never liked salt in than, either.

RM: Did he make his beans any special way?

JD: Oh, he always put bacon in, or something - onions, and

LL: Whatever come to his mind he put in.

RM: Where is he buried?

ALL: Beatty.

JD: They're both buried in Beatty.

LL: We couldn't find her.

JD: The year she was born, they didn't have a record of her like they do in Vegas.

JD: We couldn't find her, so we just got a big stone with his name and hers, and put it on his.

LL: For both of them. We've got a green turf over his grave.

KM: Astro turf; it looks nice.

JD: We got a beautiful stone for him.

LL: He wanted to be buried in the mountain right here.

RM: But they wouldn't let him?

JD: No - they wouldn't let us. He didn't want a funeral like we had for him. He wanted us to put him in a canvas, load him up, put him in the mountain - that's what he said. Pieces of land.

RM: Is that right - and they wouldn't let him?

ALL: No.

RM: That's too bad.

JD: No, that's the law.

LL: Like your rodeos - cruelty to animals - they've been doing it for years and years in Vegas and all that. Somebody comes in and says you can't do this and you can't do that. He always said, "You can't tell me what to do." Well, [he'd get] his horse [and] go [into] the mountains.

RM: That's probably one of the reasons why he lived out here, wasn't it?

JD: That's not exactly what he said. He'd say, "Don't bullshit to me." [laughs] That's what he'd always say.

LL: He'd always said - just like I'm talking to you, and you turn your head - "Don't bullshit me. You can't look me in the eye - don't bullshit me." [He'd] look [you] right straight in the eye . . .

KM: They wouldn't let him do that, but right over here there were a whole bunch of graves. These graveyards out there don't even have markers. All they have are piles of dirt. There are a lot of them with no headstones and some of them just got a piece of pipe or a 2x4.

RM: Where's that?

KM: To the right of Rookers'. There's a big graveyard over there - but older . . . 2x4s and pipes and some rocks stacked up.

LL: Are they going to tear it up?

KM: No, they aren't going to tear that up.

RM: Was it from the Clay Camp?

KM: I don't know. The reverends don't even know about it. There are a lot of them out there and some have names that you can just barely read on them.

MM: Didn't they say the history said that they had Indians live up there?

KM: Well, there are some Jones and all that. I don't know who they were.

RM: So there wouldn't be all Indians with names like Jones.

MM: No. But there were Indians up there in the hills, too, because they had tipis and so forth up there, too.

JD: Shoshoni Indians.

KM: It's not that pointed rock out there, but it's up by Pointed Rock - off to the left.

RM: I'll be darned. How many graves are there?

KM: Oh, I'd say 15, 20. They haven't been marked since the people died, I think.

LL: The Japanese Ranch out there . . .

RM: What about the Jap Ranch? Do you know anything about it?

JD: Can't Pete tell you? He should know.

RM: Pete won't let me tape-record him. He'll take me all around, and talk to me, but he won't let me tape-record him.

JD: I know that my dad wouldn't either. There are a lot of people who wanted to . . .

LL: He was funny like that.

RM: What was the Jap Ranch?

JD: I don't know too much about it; I was pretty young. But there was nothing but Japanese over there.

RM: Were there a lot of Japanese?

JD: Oh, yes.

RM: What did they do there?

JD: They had vegetables of all kinds - you know, Japanese - and that's all they lived on.

RM: I wonder why they were there and when they came in?

ALL: I don't know.

RM: Where is the Jap Ranch?

JD: Just go towards Crystal

JD: And there's a whole bunch of pretty trees and going down, it'd be on your left-hand side. A whole bunch of pretty trees - they lived right there. They had a house there.

RM: Was this in the '20s or the '30s or . . . ?

JD: Probably the '30s. I know about the Jap Ranch because when we were little we used to go through there, and my dad always told us that that was the Japanese Ranch. He used to have a little Ford that you pushed the clutch. And we used to go by there.

KM: The other one Grandpa used to be a friend of was Bob Tubbs - he's dead now.

RM: Yes, I'm going to talk to his daughter, Virginia Goodson.

MM Oh, that's all in this paper. But this tells you all about the T&T Railroad parade they had. It was in most of the papers out there.

RM: Are there any other thoughts or remembrances or anything about life here?

JD: There were a lot of Indians who lived over there, too - Joe Bishop and all them - they lived over toward Crystal There used to be Indians who had the houses out here - [under the] trees .

RM: What did they live on?

JD: They sold a lot of pinons. They used to go get pinons from Mount Charleston.

LL: [On the] radio he'd like W.W. Armstrong. That's the one he listened to all the time.

KM: Yes. And he'd listen to Spanish music all the time. He'd get it on the radio all the time here.

JD: We had one radio that used to get Japan . .

KM: It was real old.

LL: It's a short-wave radio. I bought it in Henderson for him.

KM: He'd sit here and listen to that. He always slept in a chair

RM: Did he ever experience any kind of discrimination or anything?

KM: No.

LL: I don't know if he did or not, but if he did he would just laugh it off.

JD: When he was about like that, or a little younger than he is [in that picture], people never insulted him because he'd whip them. He was good to a certain point, but you'd get him mad . . . But the older you get, the more you mellow out.

KM: Hank Records told me that he had him build a shed for him once down there, and Shorty was like this, and he built a real short one, and he was in there working, and Hank said, "Hey. What happened, Shorty?"

And he said, "Don't bullshit to me." He said, "I can get in here." [laughter]

LL: All those date trees.

JD: Oh, yes. He planted all the date trees in Furnace Creek. That was when Fred was little. He was born in '31, so about 1935 or somewhere in there.

LL: He planted most of the trees over here in the valley, too - didn't he?

JD: I don't believe - did he plant some trees out here - for somebody?

RM: What originally brought him into the area? Do you know? I mean, here he was working on the railroad in Chicago after the war, and what brought him clear out here? Because this was a pretty out of the way place.

LL: He probably wanted to be away from the city.

JD: He never liked a big town.

LL: He lived like he wanted to live.

JD: I know he could go anywhere in the world. He [could] go to Vegas and get on any of those trains for free.

RM: Oh, because he worked on the railroad.

KM: Yes. So maybe that was the reason. Nobody knows.

LL: He told me if he'd live in a city he'd die. So he came out here where there'd be fresh air so he could get it out of his lungs.

JD: That's what he used to tell me. He said, "I can't live here." Because he had a chance to buy homes in Vegas. My brother wanted him to get rid of this place, and he'd buy him a place in Vegas. He said, "No. If I go down there I won't live 3, 4 years and I'll die, just because of that air over there."

KM: He just liked it out here where nobody bothered him. He said he'd stay. . .

LL: And he told me one time he had a turquoise mine over here. But you have to go through the big something on horseback - I never did get over to see it.

KM: We don't know where . . . It's over in California, but right across from the Stateline bar - up in those hills.

RM: In the Funerals there?

KM: He had something over there, but nobody knows where it is.

RM: Was it good turquoise?

LL: Well, he said it was, but I didn't go see it.

KM: You had to have a good 4-wheel drive or something like that.

LL: Or horseback, part ways.

KM: I think he went up with horses. He kept telling us about that.

RM: Did he dabble in mining at all?

JD: He worked for Crowell.

RM: Oh, really. Up at the Crowell fluorspar mine?

JD: Yes. In fact, his mining - isn't his little mask here, Ken, somewhere?

KM: He had all kinds of miner's equipment here.

RM: When did he work for Crowell?

JD: That's before my mother passed away, in the 30's.

RM: Did he do much prospecting himself?

JD: Oh, yes - he loved it. That's how he found that turquoise mine.

RM: Did he find any other mines?

JD: Not that I know of.

RM: But he'd go out into the rugged hills . . .

JD: Oh, yes. He loved it. When he'd lose his animals, he'd walk.

LL: He had a brother - I don't know whether he's still living or not - in Tucumcari, New Mexico, someplace - that area - Santa Rosa. He just wanted to have his own place [and] live his own life.

KM: That's what he did, too.

JD: Yes, he loved it. He never liked to come to Vegas. If he did, he'd just stay a few hours and . . . for instance, for Thanksgiving he'd care over and he wanted me to bring him right back.

LL: We'd go down and have some of the kids and go out and see him: "Hey, how you doing in Vegas?"

"Oh, pretty good."

"Oh, here's fifty."

"No, Grandpa.

"You need it, take it. You got kids - take it."

KM: Most of the people here will tell you that any time they went to the store, he'd always give them money for candy or buy them candy or a coke or something.

RM: Really a generous person, wasn't he?

LL: He'd get the mail at Lathrop Wells, they'd make out money orders for him or just give him mail, and he'd give them a dollar extra.

KM: He always tipped . . .

LL: And in church. On his radio he sent somebody down in Texas \$10. He'd go down and cash his check every month and I'd go down with him. I'd hide that. I said, "You know you pay \$10 to the church every time. You don't go down . . ."

"Son!"

I said, "What?"

"Les, [get] in here. Don't bullshit to me." Whatever it is - "\$10 for the church."
[laughter]

KM: He sent that every month - \$10 for the church.

LL: You couldn't hide it from that old man.

JD: I said, "What do you do that for, Dad?"

"Oh," he said . .

LL: None of my business.

JD: Yes. He'd say, "It's for the needy people. For the kids that don't have no mother, or old people that don't have no money - they're in homes." He was very kind.

LL: I like religion, but nowadays, they're making a mockery out of it. They're making more money . . . I know one guy - a sheetmetal worker - who made \$200 a week. He went to church and he got a Cadillac, a Rolls Royce, a big house - by becoming a preacher. I'll believe in God; I don't believe in that donating stuff.

JD: [Shorty] did. Every month. People used to ask him, "Well, why do you send money to them for, Shorty?"

And he'd say, "It's none of your business. That's my business."

LL: Because they needed it.

JD: Maybe that's why God made him live so long.

RM: Did he go to church in Beatty?

LL: He used to, but when he got buried, you couldn't get in that church.

KM: What's the name of that bar - the one where he used to go and have a drink? That older man - a real old guy over there in Beatty - knew him, too.

LL: [The] Exchange Club.

KM: Yes, that little bar there. That older fellow in there knew him for a long time, too.

LL: And the guy at the hardware store.

JD: Oh, he used to be around there when he was younger. He'd go and have drinks with his friends. If he'd get off work he'd go have a drink with the boys. But his family came first. He might spend \$10 or \$20, but the check went to my mother; it was for groceries. I can remember in the Depression people had a hard time, but we did plenty well. We lived in Beatty. We had shoes; a lot of kids had old, beat-up shoes because you had to have to have stamps for them.

LL: I used to come down here and kick the bums out of here. He got mad at me. He said, "You think your land is my land. My house."

KM: He used to let them in here and they kept taking his guns . . .

LL: Hocking his guns, and . . . I kicked than out one time, and he said,
"Son, you shouldn't do that. They're my friends."
I said, "Dad, they're bums."
"Oh, bullshit. Nobody's bums."

RM: Is that right; he just didn't think badly of people, did he?

MM: He thought everybody was nice.

JD: But he wanted us kids to be perfect. We couldn't wear fingernail polish; my dad never liked things like that.

LL: And he didn't like long-haired people. He called them chippies.

JD: Yes. He had his ways.

RM: When was this picture right here taken?

JD: Does it say on the back, Mildred?

MM: No, she didn't put the dates on the back, Mom.

KM: One of those cars is out here - approximately what year was that?

LL: That was in the '60s.

RM: He must be past 80 here, then?

LL: He was 81, I think. That was about 23 years ago.

MM: And the cars were out here then.

JD: He had a whole bunch of cars there then.

RM: Do you have any other things about him you might want to say?

MM: If I'd have know you were coming we'd have stocked up on them. [chuckles]

LL: You can talk all day and you can say nothing, and then you're gone.

KM: But most of it, you don't really know what he was; what he did do or what he liked or . . .

JD: He was a real good man. He came from a good family, too.

RM: I'm sure he had to, to be like that.

LL: I'll tell you - when I met him, he treated me better than my dad did. I was his Number One, and I was his son-in-law. I loved that man. He said, "He's my son-in-law, boss - forget it."

JD: Yes, he liked him a lot.

LL: She used to say, "Oh, he's no good; he's no good."
"Don't bullshit me - get out!"

JD: She'd try and tease him, you know - see what he'd say. And he'd tell her, "Don't talk that way. He's a good man."

RM: Did you speak English or Spanish in the home?

JD: We spoke a lot of Spanish. But when we went to school we had to learn English. And my brothers and I don't have any accent.

RM: No, you don't.

JD: There are a lot of people who do, but we don't. We were raised among a lot of American people. But when you're with Spanish people you talk, too. In fact, I've been an interpreter for people in the courthouses. I had to go for something one day - for you, [Les] wasn't it? Be had a ticket and I had to go and pay it . .

LL: No, no. An old man was there - a Mexican man - and he couldn't talk

JD: Oh, yes. This guy was a prisoner, and he couldn't speak English, so the judge says, "Anybody know Spanish?" This guy stands up and says me. [laughs] So I went up there and interpreted for him.

LL: So the next time, I said, "You owe me a break, Judge." [laughter]

JD: Yes, but he wasn't raised around here.

RM: When they had the Spring Meadows Ranch were there a lot of Mexican hands there?

JD: Oh, yes; nothing but Mexicans.

LL: A lot of them are out here now.

JD: Of course, now they can stay, I guess. After they passed this law where . .

MM: You have to have a yellow card - it just passed in June or July.

KM: IMV is full of them over there. That's all they've been hiring, because that's cheap.

RM: So that a lot of the people who worked here on the ranch just stayed when they shut the ranch down?

JD: Oh, yes. Like Joe Manley and all of them. They had a ranch over here, too. But they're dead. My dad used to be good friends with Joe Manley and all of them. My dad and he used to work at Crowell's mine together. And he had a ranch out here. Then they left and went to Round Mountain, and then Joe died. His wife's still alive.

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