

An Interview With  
LEROY  
SPOTTED EAGLE

An Oral History produced by  
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
2010



Leroy Spotted Eagle

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## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. “Bobby” Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project in 1987. Subsequently, Commissioners Richard L. Carver, Dave Hannigan, and Barbara J. Raper provided support. In this current round of interviews, Nye County Commissioners Andrew Borasky, Lorinda Wichman, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Fely Quitevis provided unyielding support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the program within Nye County in its first years. More recently, Darrell Lacy, Director, Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office, gave his unwavering support. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Lacy’s office, provided funds for this round of interviews. Thanks are extended to Commissioners Eastley and Hollis and to Mr. Lacy for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Lacy.

Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Kimberley Dickey provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Jean Charney, Julie Lancaster, and Darlene Morse also transcribed a number of interviews. Proofreading, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Marilyn Anderson, Joni Eastley, Julie Lancaster, Teri Jurgens Lefever, and Darlene Morse. Joni Eastley proofed all the manuscripts and often double-checked, as best as possible, the spelling of people’s names and the names of their children and other relatives. Jeanne Sharp Howerton provided digital services and consultation. Long-time Pahrump resident Harry Ford, founder and director of the Pahrump Valley Museum, served as a consultant throughout the project; his participation was essential. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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—Robert D. McCracken

2010

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

The spectacular mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), Rhyolite (1904), Manhattan (1905), and Round Mountain (1906) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, southcentral Nevada, notably Nye County, remains close to the American frontier; closer, perhaps, than any other region of the American West. In a real sense, a significant part of the frontier can still be found in southcentral Nevada. It exists in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area also is visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the Round Mountain Nugget, was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. The Rhyolite Herald, longest surviving of Rhyolite/Bullfrog's three newspapers, lasted from 1905 to 1912. The Beatty Bullfrog Miner was in business from 1905 to 1906. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All these communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities once their own newspapers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, published as part of the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 resides in the memories of individuals who are still living.

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

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

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

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

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

—RDM  
2010

Interview with Leroy Spotted Eagle and Robert D. McCracken December 10, 2009,  
Tape 1, Side 1

## CHAPTER ONE

RM: Leroy, please tell me your name and your birth date as they read on your birth certificate.

LS: My birth date is January 30, 1950. I changed my name—I can't remember what date it was in the '80s—when I became a spiritual advisor for my people. The name that was given to me was Leroy Spotted Eagle. My name on my birth certificate was Leroy Anderson, but I no longer go by that because of my spirituality, the path that I'm on now. This name was given to me by a spiritual elder when he gave me the authority to talk on people's behalf when they need help spiritually.

RM: Could you say the elder's name?

LS: His name was Clifford Jake. He was a mile or so from Cedar City, Utah. He's already gone into the spirit world.

RM: As we began this interview you lit a sprig here—could you tell me about it?

LS: That's cedar, which we gather on Mount Charleston; Mount Charleston is a holy mountain to our people. We gather all of the herbs and things that we use when we perform different ceremonies. Cedar is one of the things that we use in prayer and when we need a little boost spiritually or mentally.

RM: Do you gather it from any particular spot on Mount Charleston?

LS: You try to go a spot where there is not so much traffic. You don't want to get it from around a well-traveled road because of the pollutants that the cars give off. You want to get it from a pure place so you try to as be much off the beaten path as you can. We also use pine pitch.

RM: What do you use it for?

LS: Pine pitch is basically used for bad spirits. You burn it the same way. Those are some of the things that we use. And we use Mormon tea for colds and such.

RM: Does it really work?

LS: Yes, it does. And greasewood is kind of a cure-all.

RM: What do you do, boil it?

LS: Yes, the leaves. You make it into a tea. And you can soak your feet in it if you've got athlete's feet or something like that; it'll cure that.

RM: What other kinds of things would it cure? Like if you had a finger that was a little bit bad, or acne?

LS: Yes, you use it for everything. I've known people to even use it to work on cancer.

RM: Does it get some results with cancer?

LS: Evidently it helps you out. My mother used to drink it faithfully all the time and there at the last when she was having a hard time, she used it.

RM: How long do you boil it?

LS: Just long enough so you can make it into a nice tea.

RM: What are some of the other plants that you use?

LS: There's different roots that we use for different things, but most of these things that you gather and use won't work unless you have prayer with it. That's the key to it all, the prayer that goes with it. It's just like the cedar. It's a cleansing for you, and you say a little prayer with it that everything is going to be all right.

RM: And who are you praying to?

LS: The Creator. God, Mohammed, whatever name you want to use.

RM: What are some of the roots that you use?

LS: I really can't think of all the names. They use yucca to make shampoo and soap.

RM: It makes pretty good soap, doesn't it?

LS: Yes, it does. A lot of times you hear things like that the Indians were dirty people, but that's not true. I mean, we were always around water and we had soap and whatever. Paiute used to be pronounced Paa-ute. Paa is "water."

RM: Could you talk a little bit about Mount Charleston and the role that it plays in your spirituality . . . it's a sacred mountain, isn't it?

LS: Yes. We call it Nuvakai, which means "Snow Mountain." The legends say that the woman of the ocean used to come to this mountain so it's a special place. It's a place where we gather the pine nuts, which was the main staple of our people. When I was growing up, I remember going

and picking pine nuts with my grandmothers and my mom and my father. That nut has a lot of rules.

RM: What are some of the rules?

LS: The main rule is not to be stingy with it. If you have it and someone's there with you, you offer it. And when you gather anything from the mountain, you always want to give the mountain something. A lot of times my mom and dad and grandma would feed the mountain bread.

RM: They would just leave the bread in a spot?

LS: Yes, they'd say some words, some prayers, and talk to the mountain and tell it, "We're coming to gather." It's about respect; you give the mountain something. That way, the mountain could be good to you. It's the same thing when you hunt deer, rabbits, or whatever—you want to give to the mountain.

RM: You give bread or something for the rabbit you took, or the deer?

LS: Yes, tobacco or something, anything,

RM: Do you have to ask the mountain's permission at first?

LS: Kind of, yes. That's one of the reasons you give it the bread because you're asking for something.

RM: But you can't just go up there and start taking.

LS: No, you've got to talk to the mountain. You respect the mountain because it's a sacred place, because it feeds us, it puts clothes on our backs because of the animals that are there, the food that is there. So that is a very sacred place. Mount Charleston has been a place for our people forever.

RM: Are there are places on Mount Charleston that are more sacred than others or is it the whole thing?

LS: It's just the whole thing. There is no special spot, no. Not that I was told, anyway.

RM: And how far do you consider Mount Charleston to extend? Does it go down to Mountain Springs or would that be too far south?

LS: No, Mountain Springs is part of it, but Red Rock is different.

RM: Red Rock would not be considered Mount Charleston?

LS: No.

RM: And Mount Potosi would not be considered Mount Charleston? Would it go to Mount Sterling and up toward the Ash Meadows area?

LS: No. It's Snow Mountain and that's usually where the snow is. Right now it's up on the top and it stays up until May, sometimes.

RM: Do people ever go up to the very top for spiritual ceremonies or anything?

LS: Not that I know of. I go up there periodically to gather cedar, but there is no particular place that I go to gather; it's just that I try to get off the beaten path.

RM: How do you select the tree that you're going to get the cedar from, aside from being off the beaten path?

LS: It's just whatever feeling comes over you. You look at the tree and you try to not just gather from one particular tree, cutting it all up. You take a little here and a little there.

RM: How often do you collect the cedar?

LS: I go periodically. I like to go in the springtime, when everything is nice and fresh and growing, but it all depends on how much I use; I try not to gather too much at one time. It's on kind of an as-needed basis. You don't want to be greedy and go up and butcher the place. I keep three or four bundles around because I use it all the time, every day. My wife left for California this morning so I burned some cedar for her trip.

RM: So it's a way of praying for a safe trip and things like that?

LS: Yes, that's what it's basically used for; it's used for prayer. Different tribes use things like sweet grass or sage or different herbs. But our people, the Southern Paiutes, use cedar—that's what I was taught when I was a kid growing up.

RM: Which band were you kind of a part of?

LS: My father was from Moapa and my mother was from Las Vegas; I grew up here in Vegas.

RM: What was your mother's name and when and where she was born?

LS: She was born right here in Las Vegas also; her name was Belinda Lopez. She married my dad—his name was Raymond Anderson.

RM: Was your mother's father a Las Vegas man?

LS: No, I believe he was from the Chemehuevi band in Chemehuevi Valley; it's over by Havasu.

RM: And the Chemehuevi are really Paiutes, aren't they?

LS: Yes, they speak the same language.

RM: Are there any differences at all in the language they would speak and what you would speak?

LS: It's just like anything—people in Boston, New York, New Jersey have a little different accent. It's kind of that way with the Southern Paiute bands. We're all the same but we say things a little bit different.

RM: Did you know your mother's father?

LS: No.

RM: How about your mother's mother? What was her name?

LS: Daisy Mike. She was from Las Vegas.

RM: How did your grandparents meet, him being Chemehuevi from the south and her being from Vegas?

LS: There was really no reservation at the time; everybody moved around and that's how they met each other. They were nomadic; they moved around with the seasons.

RM: And they have to marry out of the group, don't they?

LS: Yes, that's a big problem.

RM: Did your grandparents live a traditional life or were they kind of integrated?

LS: My grandmother was very traditional. I pretty much got my teachings from my grandmothers—they were a big influence on teaching the traditional values to me as a young kid.

RM: Did they live in the colony in Las Vegas?

LS: Yes.

RM: What are some of the things they taught you, and how did they teach you?

LS: It was orally. We didn't have TV or anything back in those days and no books or anything like that, so stories were told during the evening time and that's how you got your teachings. And during the day as a kid growing up you were disciplined, you were told the dos and don'ts, the taboos and whatever of everyday life.

RM: Did you grow up in the colony?

LS: Yes. I went to the little elementary school at the old school right up the road from the colony—Helen J. Stewart. I went there until about the fifth grade and then they were shutting it down because they were going to use it for special education. In sixth grade, I had to go to North 9th Street. I went to JD Smith Junior High School and I graduated from Rancho High School.

RM: What do you recall about going to school? Being a Native American, were there any differences or anything that you recall?

LS: It was kind of strange because I grew up in the '50s and there was no electricity or running water in the colony. I remember having to pack water. The one well that they did have was condemned. I don't know whether they did that on purpose to get us out of the area or what, but they condemned it so we had to pack water from up by the railroad tracks. There was a guy that owned the trailer court there; he had a horse so he had water to his horse and we would go up with buckets and carry the water back down to our houses.

RM: How far did you have to carry them?

LS: Probably three-quarters of a mile.

RM: I've done that; that's hard work. [Laughter] And you're real careful with it at home.

LS: Yes, and you had to heat up the water on the wood stove. It was kind of strange growing up with the city lit up all around you and you lived in a place with no TV, no lights, no running water.

RM: Discuss what that felt like to you.

LS: It was kind of strange. You go from what was almost one world right into another world. There were lights all around us and we were in darkness, using kerosene lamps. In town you had a commode and you came home and you had an outhouse. Everybody at school would talk about what they saw on TV the night before and you couldn't relate.

RM: Did you ever go up to Fremont Street?

LS: Oh, yes. It was a treat to go downtown if you had a little money; maybe you were going to a movie or something.

RM: Did you ever eat out in town?

LS: We very seldom ate out; we couldn't afford it and we never ate candy or anything like that. But we were very fortunate growing up because there was this produce store right in front of the colony on Main Street called Rocky Mountain Produce. They would throw away vegetables and different stuff, so we would go down and collect it and that stuff was good eating. We weren't too proud to go down there and get it. So basically we ate a lot of vegetables.

That's how we ate, basically; and we would go out and hunt rabbits. My grandmother used to live right down here, as matter of fact, at Gilcrease Ranch. Her husband worked for Gilcrease.

RM: I interviewed the Gilcrease brothers about 10 or 15 years ago.

LS: Ted and Bill? I knew those guys. My grandmother's husband's name was Johnson Mike. He and my grandmother had a little home on the ranch because he took care of the farm.

RM: Working in the vegetables and the orchards?

LS: And the hay. He was doing everything; he was a ranch hand there. He worked there until he died—20-some years, I guess, or more.

RM: And when would he have started?

LS: I don't know; he was already there when I was a kid.

RM: And you knew Bill Gilcrease and his brother Ted?

LS: I knew who they were because I saw them all the time up there. We would go up there and visit my grandmother and run around the whole area. I remember there was an open ditch going down from up at Tule Springs; the water came out of the ground and into an open ditch, a dirt ditch, that fed the Gilcrease Ranch. They had some of the best-tasting water. My grandmother, when she would go down to the colony, would have a big old milk can with the water from up there; she wouldn't drink the water from the colony.

So I grew up around here. I used to run all over this desert as a kid, hunting rabbits and stuff. I've been down to that ditch I don't know how many times. I ran all over this place. I remember going out to Paradise Valley because we had some uncles and relatives who used to work out there for Tom Hassle.

RM: I interviewed him, too.

LS: Did you? Yes, they worked for him out there so they used to live there and we used to ride bikes all the way out there. Paradise Road was just a little old two-lane blacktop going out through there.

RM: But it went all the way out there? It would have to cross over where the . . .

LS: Yes, and went out to the railroad tracks on the other side of Sunset. It was quite a little ride out there.

RM: Especially when it's hot.

LS: Yes. And we used to have another relative who lived off of Craig Road out where that hog farm was. He used to take care of the hogs.

RM: Really? Where exactly was that farm?

LS: The original one was right where the golf course is. I remember there used to be a pond out there and we used to go out there and visit, my dad and so on. We used to go out there to cut wood, mesquite.

RM: There was a lot of mesquite out there?

LS: Yes, there was.

RM: Did you ever collect mesquite beans?

LS: Yes. As a kid growing up, that was one of the main things—in the springtime when they were nice and fat and ripe. We used to go and eat mesquite beans all the time.

RM: Did they taste pretty good?

LS: Yes.

RM: I heard that some trees' beans are sweeter than others.

LS: Yes. As a kid, you would run from tree to tree to find the sweetest ones.

RM: Are the sweet trees very common or are they pretty rare?

LS: You'll find one or two that are pretty sweet and fat. A lot of them, I remember, used to like to get the red mesquite beans; those seemed to be sweeter than the yellow ones.

RM: Can you just pop one in your mouth?

LS: Yes, you just suck all of the juice out of it. You always try to get the fat ones; they have more juice in them. That was during the springtime. During the summer a lot of them are up high and you can't get to them because of the thorns so you have to wait until they fall when they're dry. Then you would grind those up into a powder and add water and make a drink out of it.

RM: And those trees are probably all gone out there by the golf course?

LS: Yes, they're all gone.

RM: That hog farm is still out there and that's where they take the garbage from the restaurants and so forth, isn't it?

LS: Yes. So like I said, I grew up here so I know this area pretty well. I've seen this town grow. Not only that, I went to work for the phone company after I got out of the Marine Corps and I worked there from 1971 until I got hurt; I had back surgery. I was there for 30 some-odd years.

RM: Let's explore your perception of Las Vegas as a kid a little further. Do you have any more thoughts on what it was like for this boy living in the colony to go down on Fremont Street?

LS: Like I said, basically you were going down to go to a movie or something.

RM: Was that the El Cortez Theater?

LS: No, it was the El Portal. And then they had the Fremont and what was that other one?

RM: Montridge?

LS: Montridge. That was a little far because we walked everywhere. Or if we were going up that way, we'd hop in the train.

RM: You would hitch a ride on the train from the colony up to Union Plaza?

LS: Yes, there's a park there.

RM: Did you kids ever play in that park?

LS: Yes, it was nice to go up there and cool off in the shade, on the grass.

RM: Was the train going pretty slow?

LS: Yes, because it was coming into town.

RM: Would you hitch on the boxcars?

LS: Whatever we held on to. We'd run and catch it and get on it and then just jump off when we got there.

RM: Did they ever give you any. . . ?

LS: The bulls did, yes. We'd have to hide from those guys. You had to take your chances.

RM: What would they do if they caught you?

LS: I don't know; I never got caught.

RM: How old were you when you were doing it?

LS: I was probably six, seven, eight years old. I remember still catching trains in junior high school. But going downtown was a special time because you were either going to the movies or else you were going up to buy some clothes or something.

RM: Did you ever walk from the colony?

LS: If there were no trains coming you had to walk.

RM: What were your perceptions of Fremont Street? Was Binion's there then?

LS: Yes, and the Mint, the Horseshoe, the El Cortez, the Golden Nugget.

RM: I was there in '58; I worked a summer out at the Test Site and on my days off I would come and hang out there. It was really interesting. Did you ever check out some of the shows there?

LS: No, I was too young. But going downtown was a treat because you were going down there for a reason—to have some fun or something. I'll tell you what was a good time—everybody used to look forward to Hellsdorado. They had the parades—the kid parade, the old-timer's parade, the beauty parade. . . . And everybody would get involved—all the hotels downtown and on the Strip would have floats in the beauty parade. It went on for, like, four days and they would have a rodeo and a big carnival. Everybody would come and everybody was all jazzed up for that. The Indians from Moapa would come because it was a party time; they were drinking their beer and enjoying themselves. I looked forward to that every year.

RM: Did you kids ever get out to the Strip?

LS: I never did too much out at the Strip. My dad liked boxing and I remember we went out there to watch this one guy train, I think at the Sahara. It was Gene Fullmer; he was a boxer from Utah, a Mormon. He was in a fight with Floyd Patterson, I think.

RM: Was the El Rancho still there?

LS: The buildings were there but it wasn't open for business and then it slowly started deteriorating; they started to tear it down.

## CHAPTER TWO

RM: Now, you told me that your dad worked for Walter Bowman over in Pahrump.

LS: I guess he moved over there because during that time it was kind of hard to find work and he was a laborer and a farmer and a cowboy, kind of a jack-of-all-trades.

RM: What year would this have been?

LS: I wasn't in school yet so it had to be '54, somewhere around there. I remember we used to stay with this old lady named Annie Beck. She was quite a unique lady. She was a loner, you might say. She lived the old traditional way; she lived off the land pretty much. She ate rabbit and turtle—that's the first time I ever ate turtle and turtle eggs.

She would go to the backside of Mount Charleston and hunt deer. I remember one time she was up there and I guess she killed an elk. She said, "Oh man, you won't believe this; I shot the biggest deer." [Laughs] She shot this dang elk and was packing it out so she had to quarter it up. My dad and the rest of us were laughing at her, I remember. We lived in a little shack there.

RM: Was it on the other side of the road?

LS: You know the ditch line that runs across the road there? Right up at the end of that ditch line there was a little shack where we used to live.

RM: There were a bunch of other houses.

LS: No, this was the only one there because I remember there was nobody else living over there. But on the other side over there was an Indian guy, Harry Sackett. He used to live across there and his boys lived over there. We used to go over there all the time because they were our relatives.

RM: How long did you live in Pahrump?

LS: I think we stayed there a whole year because I remember Fourth of July there. During Fourth of July they'd have this big softball game and I remember this one guy named, I think, Louie Sharp. He had one arm and he was the pitcher.

RM: He was Paiute, wasn't he, of the Sharp family there?

LS: Yes. You've also got the Jims and like I said, the Sacketts lived over by Bowman. Right around '55, right before that school year, I remember living out in a place in Death Valley; my dad was out there hard-rock mining in a place called Western Mining Company. It's up by Noonday, right across from Tecopa. The mine was way out in the middle of nowhere. We were living in tin shacks out there and we used to run around those mine shafts. I remember my uncle used to watch over me and my brothers.

RM: What are your brothers' names, just for the record?

LS: One is Lamar and my other brother's name is Greg. I had two other brothers that passed away—Donald and Manuel.

RM: Did you go to school in Tecopa when your dad was working at the Noonday Mine?

LS: No. I remember I had to go to school so we had to move back to town. We stayed with my grandmother on the colony so I could start school.

RM: How were you related to them?

LS: On my mom's side; I think he was her uncle or something. I'm closely related to a lot of guys from Moapa, too, because my dad's from Moapa. My dad moved to Vegas looking for work and that's how he met my mom; he was doing some labor work here on the colony. I remember they had wagons and things yet.

RM: Let's talk about your dad. What was his name again, and when and where was he born?

LS: My dad's name was Raymond Anderson, the son of Billy Anderson from Moapa, and his mom was Topsy Swaine. He was a real hard worker. He was small, but he was like a little big man. He was strong; he was a rancher, a farmer, and a cowboy.

He was also a sheet metal worker and he worked in the neon sign business in Las Vegas. He used to work for Western Neon and then he worked for Branson Neon, then Young Electric. As a matter of fact, he had a part in the Las Vegas sign, "Entering Las Vegas." And another one that's still standing is Jerry's Nugget. You know that big sign that goes up like that? My dad built that, he and my uncle.

RM: He helped build the "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign on the south end of the Strip? That is really interesting. When was he born?

LS: I don't remember. He was a World War II veteran; he was in the Marine Corps, so probably 1920 or something like that. After he got out of the farm work he went into the sheet metal business.

RM: How did he make that transition?

LS: I don't quite know. My dad was pretty, you might say, influential. He was a really likeable guy; everybody got along with him. I never heard anyone say any bad words about my dad; he was that kind of guy. He knew Senator Reid. My dad was on the equal rights commission for the state of Nevada for a number of years. He was the first chairman of the colony here. He was pretty well known here in Vegas. He was a big part of the colony getting water and power and getting their government stable.

RM: And going to school, you were living in a colony but going to a regular school.

LS: Yes, and that was one of the things that my father really pushed, education. He really stressed that you would get your education and work hard. He was a big stickler on that.

RM: Talk some more about your dad's transition from ranch work to sheet metal work.

LS: My dad was a guy that could fix anything, make anything. I remember his hands were so rough . . . when he'd get mad he'd put his hands down your back and scratch your back. [Laughs] He worked for the sign company for a long time. He was probably the only one there on the colony that had a decent job. When they brought the water in, my father paid for the water for them for years.

RM: Tell me more about the signs he helped build. Signs are a major part of the history of the town; they helped make Las Vegas.

LS: The Showboat had a tower like Jerry's Nugget; they built the Showboat tower and they built Jerry's Nugget after that. I had two uncles that my dad brought in to the trade and one uncle worked on the Circus Circus sign. I remember he said he was welding the base plate for that and I guess he had to fill a gap like that.

RM: About four inches wide?

LS: I worked on the signs, too.

RM: What signs did you work on it? Any ones that we would know?

LS: There's one out here that I did, I wired the whole thing. They used to call it Honest John's on Sahara and Las Vegas Boulevard. It's now a curio shop with souvenirs and so on. I punched all of those holes for the light sockets and wired the whole dang thing and then helped hang it.

RM: Is that what you did after you graduated from high school?

LS: No, I went to an Indian college in Lawrence, Kansas—Haskell. [Laughs] That was a mistake; I wasn't ready for furthering my education. I was into partying and I was young. That lasted one semester and I was back home. I went to work with my dad in the sign business and then I got my draft notice.

RM: What year was that?

LS: In '68, '69.

RM: You got drafted in the Vietnam War. What did you think when you got your draft notice?

LS: It was just something that you had to do. It was your calling; you were drafted and you had to serve your country. So I volunteered. They were drafting me anyway so I volunteered for the Marine Corps for two years.

RM: Where did you train?

LS: In San Diego, California, at Camp Pendleton, up at Oceanside in San Onofre. Then I went to Jacksonville, North Carolina, to Camp Lejeune. Then I got orders to West Pac, Western Pacific, which meant going overseas to Vietnam.

RM: So you ended up in Vietnam?

LS: Eventually I did, yes. I was in communications in Okinawa and in communications you move around a little bit with different outfits, different units. I got into naval gunfire as a radio operator so that's how I got to Vietnam—on a gun mission. Then I'd go back to Okinawa, my home base, and to a couple of islands—Philippines. Sometimes I was called in from the boat, communications. They direct-fired from the ship.

RM: Did you like your experience in the Marine Corps?

LS: They say once a marine, always a marine. You're the only one who can talk bad about it. I had some good experiences and I had some bad experiences. It took a little while for me to adjust when I got out of the Marine Corps and into regular life because you'd been trained to kill.

RM: Was that contrary to the Paiute way of thinking?

LS: No. When you're Indian and male, you're a warrior at birth. At a very young age you're taught how to hunt, basically how to take care of yourself, to fight and whatever. That's what your uncles were there for, to teach you these things.

RM: Not just your dad?

LS: Not just your dad; your uncles had a big part of your life growing up. My uncles were actually the ones that were telling me about different things. They were teaching me basically how to hunt, how to make things—bows, arrows, slingshots—and how to shoot. And they'd talk about women.

RM: Was this pretty typical for most Paiutes, that the uncles were doing a lot of the instruction?

LS: Pretty much, because your dad is usually out working and providing, so he doesn't have a lot of time for individual teaching unless you're right with him; like I said, we'd go deer hunting. Deer hunting was always a family thing. Your dad, your uncles, you'd all hunt together. If your

dad was with you, he would teach you how to track, how to look for different signs, how to act in the mountains, what to be aware of, and whatever. You're brought up to be a warrior first.

RM: Was it your father's brothers or your mother's brothers?

LS: It was my mother's brothers and my father's brothers, too.

RM: So it's both sides' brothers that are teaching you; is that part of their responsibility?

LS: I don't know, I think it was just the way it was. As a young kid growing up you'd always be hanging with your uncles; you looked up to them.

RM: And they're living nearby?

LS: Right.

RM: And if a boy didn't have that instruction then he kind of didn't get it? He had to get it somewhere else and probably not as well.

LS: Yes. I am not stereotyping people, but I am thinking that's probably why there are a lot of gays. In my time growing up as a kid I think there were only two Indian men I knew of that were openly gay. There was none of this closet thing. But now it seems that every household has a gay in the family. Before, that wasn't the way it was. I mean, you were a man, you were a warrior.

RM: So maybe it's because there is not the instruction going on?

LS: I think so; that's my point. There is a void there. I know all the guys that are my age are all warriors. Now, that's my own personal feelings. I don't know what brings it on.

RM: I don't think the experts really know. Now, what happened when you got out of the service?

LS: When I got out of the service in August of '71, I had a little rough time adjusting because of the Marine Corps. They psychologically brainwash you. It's like one of the first things that came out of your mouth is kill. You never really got that out of your head; you had actually no respect for life at all—I mean, you were reckless with your own life. I had that attitude, where I didn't care if I died or not. It was kind of tough.

But I went to work for the phone company as an apprentice cable splicer as soon as I got back—I got home on a Friday and I went to work on Monday. I didn't have any time to kind of cool off so I was just ripping and tearing, working hard and playing hard. I ripped and tore like that for maybe about 10 years, drinking a lot and partying. And I had a young boy—my wife and I got married in '70.

RM: That was before you got discharged?

LS: Yes, I got married before I got out of the service. I knew I had to keep a job; I knew that I had to provide for my son. I wanted my boy to have things, and not grow up like I did because I didn't have a whole lot of anything as a kid. So I would go to work regardless of how I felt.

I ripped and tore for 10 years or so and then all of sudden, I'm guessing the '80s, I just said, enough. I quit the partying and everything and started to clean up my act, basically. Ever since then it's a whole different life for me.

RM: What is it that made you make that turnaround?

LS: I got sick of being sick.

RM: Always having a hangover?

LS: A hangover, and then also I got diabetes, and you can't really drink and party when you've got diabetes. I was on the pill, which wasn't too bad, but I was like that. I got into bodybuilding then for about five years.

RM: You lifted weights?

LS: Yes. I was also a football coach. I coached Pop Warner football for 27 years.

RM: Did you play football in high school?

LS: I did.

RM: Were you pretty good?

LS: I was all right.

RM: What position did you play?

LS: I played right guard and on defense I played right corner, cornerback, outside linebacker.

RM: You must have gotten a lot of pleasure out of coaching if you did it for so many years.

LS: That was probably some of the greatest times of my life. I started coaching in '77 because my boy, when he turned seven, started playing football. I just quit about three years ago because it got too much for me—I had the back surgery and the amputation.

RM: You had an amputation?

LS: Yes. I had an abscess form on my spine in '99 and it landed me in the hospital. I caught a staph infection and got pneumonia. I was in a coma for 20-some odd days; they didn't know whether I was going to live or not. When I woke up, I had no feelings from my knees down. I had to learn how to walk all over again. I was in the hospital for six months or so.

### CHAPTER THREE

RM: Was that the beginning of your spiritual journey?

LS: No, the '80s is when I had this calling or whatever. Something was missing in my life. I wasn't drinking or partying and I had a nice car and a nice home; had everything going for me. But there was something that was missing in my life; I didn't know what it was. I talked to my wife about it and she said, "Well, what do you think?"

I said, "I've got to find out what's doing it," so I went to a spiritual man.

RM: A Paiute? A medicine man?

LS: A medicine man, my uncle Clifford Jake. It was kind of strange because I get there and he says, "Hey, how you doing, Leroy? I've been expecting you." I am telling him about what is going on in my life and so on and he goes, "Leroy, you don't know it but I've been watching you for a long time, my wife and I. When you were a cop. . . ." I quit the phone company and moved back to Moapa and become a federal officer; I went to the federal law enforcement training center to become a police officer. He said, "When you were a cop out there, I told my wife that he's going to be the next guy to take my spot when I am gone."

RM: The next spiritual leader—he knew that you were going to be that? How do you think he knew?

LS: Those old guys, they just have the feeling. He just said he knew. He knew I cared about people and I believe in what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong. I guess that's what he based it on. Not only that, years later I found out that my grandfather Billy Anderson, my dad's dad, was a spiritual leader, a healer. It's kind of strange because all through my life, I guess I've been kind of watched over, looked after. Doors would open for me. Certain things in my life would help me out when I was having some hard times. Something would just fall out of the sky and I'd be helped that way, kind of protected. I never realized the spirituality of the whole thing. I felt something was different about me but I couldn't put my finger on it until I went to my uncle.

RM: What happened after you went to your uncle?

LS: I had to make a decision—I was looking for something so I found it,

RM: What happened then?

LS: He invited me to a Native American Church ceremony, a peyote ceremony. He was a roadman. It's an all-night ceremony and when I got out of there the next morning, I knew that was my calling.

RM: What was your experience that first time?

LS: It was in a tepee so it was like stepping back in time to the way our people were a long time ago. It made me more aware, you might say, of life itself—to cherish life, to respect life. It was a good feeling, a really rewarding feeling. And to have these teachings passed on to you is a special thing; you might say it's a gift from the Creator. So I choose to live my life this way, the traditional way. That's why you see a lot of eagle feathers in here. I live in both worlds, you might say—I live in the white man's world and I live a traditional way of life, too. That's the way my path is laid out for me.

RM: Are you a roadman now?

LS: No.

RM: What exactly does a roadman do?

LS: He conducts the peyote ceremonies. He takes care of everything in the tepee; he takes care of the people. A lot of people think it's a cult. Even a lot of Indians are scared of it; they think you're practicing black magic or witchcraft. It's not that way at all. If anything, it's just the complete opposite of that. Life is a precious gift that the Creator gave us and when you go in the tepee that's what you're there for. If somebody needs some help in a certain way—they're sick or they're having some hard times in life—that's where they will come and they will ask the roadman to conduct a meeting for them. All of the friends and everybody come together and you pray all night for the person that's having a hard time. That's basically what it's about.

RM: Are there quite a few Paiutes in the Native American Church?

LS: Not down here; in Utah, there are.

RM: Are you still involved in the Paiute spirituality?

LS: Oh yes, I always will be. I am called on all the time to do different things.

RM: What kind of people would call for help?

LS: Indians from other tribes, if they're sick or having problems—any adversities. I help them out with prayer. I'll conduct a prayer ceremony with my cedar and my eagle feathers.

RM: Is the cedar ceremony Native American Church or is that Paiute or both?

LS: Both; they both use cedar for prayer.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about what the role of the spiritual leader is like?

LS: Like I was telling you, it was like I was kind of looked after all through my life, growing up. Then finally in the '80s I realized that this was my calling. But all during that time, I went through a lot of stuff. I dealt with the alcohol, the drugs, the marital problems, working, playing, went to jail multiple times for different things; and getting sick. You know, everything that happens to you is for a reason.

The reason why the Creator does these things—it's a learning thing. So I am able to talk to people—if you come to me with a problem about drugs, I can talk to you about it. You can't help someone if you haven't experienced it. One time this social worker was talking to one of my cousins and he said, "I can help you with your problems."

My cousin, he's kind of a crazy guy, and he said, "Well, have you ever done sherm?"

And the social worker looked at him and said, "Well, no."

He says, "Well then, how can you help me?"

RM: What's sherm?

LS: It's a hallucinogenic drug. He was all hooked up on it there. But he was straight up with the guy—he said, "How can you help me if you've never been there?"

When you talk about spirituality, sometimes you question your spirituality. I got sick in '99. I was living good and after I got out of the hospital I asked the Creator, why? When I got out of the hospital, I was using a walker. I wanted to throw that walker away and use a cane, and I did. One day I got a call from a lady who wanted to know if I'd conduct a cedar ceremony for her dad. I told her, "Yes, I can do that, I'm glad to do that." So I go there and I have my cedar and my eagle feathers out, and this older guy comes out of the back room and he's walking with a walker. I could look in his face and I could see how he was feeling because I was there. I know what's going on in his mind because I've been there.

He didn't speak English and when I was doing the ceremony I told his daughter, "Tell your dad that I know how he feels; I know exactly how he feels because I was just like that, I was right there with that walker and everything. Tell him to be patient and soon he'll walk with a cane, too, just like me. That's what we'll talk to the Creator about, to give him strength so that he's able to throw that walker away and be able to walk again."

I left there and I told my wife, "You know, how could I have helped that old man if I didn't know how he felt?" So there is a reason why I am like this, so I can help people that have this problem. In Indian country, diabetes is a big problem. People are having problems with neuropathy, which I had from my knees down. I understand it so I can help my people. And I have helped different people. So I don't feel bad about my situation. Sure, I have experienced a little pain and a little bit of this and that, but it's for a reason. I have no regrets. I don't blame anybody for my situation, it's just part of life that I'm going through. It's all part of my path, my journey that I am on so I accept it.

We're all not perfect people and we all make mistakes; the thing is that we have to learn from our mistakes. If you sit there and put your hand to the fire and burn yourself, you need to learn to stop doing that; there are consequences. I don't have any regrets about my life at all.

RM: Do you participate in the Salt Sings and the Bird Sings?

LS: No, I don't. I can't carry a tune in a bowl, to be true with you. [Laughs] But I attend all of the ceremonies out of respect. I'm there to help the family if they need some help with prayer or whatever.

RM: Do they have a sing every time a person dies?

LS: It's up to the family whether they have a traditional sing. If the person is a traditional person brought up traditionally, then yes. But there are times where they haven't had them. Most of the time when they have a traditional sing it will be for a half a night or a full night. They used to be four nights and there were a lot of singers. Most of the men were singers; everybody knew the songs. You always had one lead singer and everybody else would follow him. As a matter of fact, at the ceremony we went to this past weekend, Friday, there were a lot of men there. I was proud of my two brothers because they were on the line. They don't know the whole song but they were there supporting it and the songs that they did know, they were singing along.

RM: Do you think the Salt Singing is growing in strength now?

LS: I think so. There was also a young boy there; he must have been 12 years old, and he was singing. As a matter of fact, he's been doing it for two or three years now. He's just a little guy.

RM: You mentioned you were told stories and so on. Do you know any stories that you could tell? I love stories.

LS: You can tell stories like this during the winter; you're not supposed to tell legends during the summer months. I can tell you one story about the creation, about the Coyote and the Wolf. Coyote, he's the mischievous guy; you've heard that about him. That's why we are the way we are, because of Coyote. One day Coyote is up on this ledge and he is looking down on this big river and he sees this beautiful woman down on the bank of this river so he goes, "Oh man, I'd like to get next to that." He comes off the ledge, goes down there and tries to get next to the woman, but the woman stays in front of him all of the time; he can't get close to her. The woman keeps going ahead of him and the river ends and turns into a big water. The woman walks right across the water and Coyote can't walk across the water so he tells Wolf, "Help me out here. I want to get next to that woman over there," So Wolf froze the big water.

Now Coyote can walk across the water. So he walks across and he comes to this beautiful place. The only thing I can think about is maybe the Hawaiian Islands, somewhere over there. He gets there and this woman is there but he still can't get next to her. He's sitting there and thinking how the heck can he get to this woman because this woman sitting down here has teeth down there.

RM: Oh, her vagina has teeth?

LS: Yes, so he can't get next to her. This old lady is there and tells him, "Hey, I'll tell you how you can get to her, but you have to do something for me."

He says, "All right, all right; I'll do whatever."

She says, "I want you to go out and gather food for me."

So Coyote grabs all of this food and stuff and brings it to her and he's sitting there and he's patiently waiting, watching the old lady eat and enjoying all of the stuff he brought her.

He's sitting there and he says, "Hey, I thought you were going to help me out."

And she says, "Yeah, I am, I'm going to help you." So she hands him a neck bone and tells him to throw that neck bone between the woman's legs. He throws the neck bone between her legs and all of the teeth are gone; it breaks them. So now he can get to the woman and now he's busy. He's there many years and he has many, many children.

Now it's time for him to come back here to the Americas, time to come back home. He grabs all his children up and puts them in these two big bags, ties them up, and asks Wolf to freeze the ocean again so he can walk across.

So Wolf freezes the ocean and he is walking back and he's got all his children in these two bags and he has to go to the bathroom. He puts the bags down and he doesn't realize that one of the bags is partially open and his children are going all over the world. He reaches back over, grabs the bag and ties it back up and brings all his children back to the Americas. But in the meantime his children got out of that bag and went all over the world.

RM: And they are us, the people of the world?

LS: Yes.

RM: That's a good story. Where did you learn it?

LS: My uncle told me that story.

RM: Did he tell you any others?

LS: That was the main one that I remember. He told me other stories.

RM: Do you have any stories for Mount Charleston?

LS: Just that the woman of the ocean was there. That's why it's a holy mountain.

RM: And she was the creator of. . . .

LS: Water, the ocean.

## CHAPTER FOUR

RM: You mentioned [off tape] that your uncles worked in the movies. Could you talk about that?

LS: Yes, my mother's brothers and my dad's brothers. A lot of times they had cowboy movies and they'd come down to the res [reservation] and grab a bunch of Indians to be extras.

RM: When they were shooting in Utah?

LS: Yes, they would need extras.

RM: What were some of the movies they were in?

LS: They were in *The Conqueror*, which was a John Wayne movie, and *They Came to Cordura*, and *Jeremiah Johnson*. My uncle was in that one and a couple of those other Indians from over in Utah were in it.

As a matter of fact, even I was in a movie. [Laughs] It was not one of your main movies; it was one of these Saturday matinee things. It was a biker movie produced by Dick Clark. They filmed it out at Nipton. I was about 17 or 18. They come down to the colony one day and got a bunch of us. It was kind of funny—we got out there and they had these Indians from Needles, California, and they were older people. They were telling us, "Man, these guys are pretty rough and they're really roughing us up," because they had a lot of fight scenes. They said, "You guys better be careful; these guys are pretty rough," We said, okay.

They say, "We need four guys out here," so a couple of guys and I go out there. And these biker guys come out and they are pretty rough-looking dudes; big guys, too. They have beards, long hair, biker jackets on and stuff. One guys goes, "Well, I got him," and another guy goes, "I'll take him."

I was looking around and I go, "Since you want me, you got me." So it was on.

RM: So you are fighting on camera?

LS: We're fighting on camera with plastic sticks and whatever and wrestling and doing some real punching; we were getting into fights. And they said, "Cut! Cut! Cut!" and we were still fighting. [Laughter] It was hilarious. We had a good time doing that. That was fun.

RM: What was the name of the movie?

LS: *Savage Seven*, I think. I had a crazy cousin named Lee and he was always clean and so on. The second day we went out there he said, "I'm going out there and get discovered." So he comes out there and we all have on blue jeans and tennis shoes and t-shirts and he has on a nice blue sweater. So we get this one scene where everybody has got to run to the barricades and the guy says, "Action!"

We're all running to the barricades and here's my cousin, he's got on his blue sweater and he's running like this [laughter]. They go "Cut! Cut! Cut! Get that guy down in the blue sweater! Get him out of there!"

RM: What were they paying you guys, do you remember?

LS: Oh gosh, we got a little upset about that because they were hardly paying us anything. We had a little dispute on that because the guys who'd been in other movies knew when you are doing close-ups and stuff like that, and you do a lot of action, you get paid extra. We thought we could get paid a little more so we had a little dispute over that. Dick Clark was a little guy.

RM: This is the Dick Clark on TV?

LS: Yes. So we kind of told him where to get off.

RM: What do you think when you see what has happened to Las Vegas since the time of your childhood?

LS: It's progress, you might say; you can't get in the way of progress. I don't know, it's kind of unfortunate. When I grew up in the '60s, it was a pretty nice little town. We had Fremont Street where everybody would go on Friday and Saturday night to cruise. There were only five high schools in town and it was kind of like you knew everybody; it was a big town but yet it was still close. I remember on homecoming days they used to have a snake dance down on Fremont—all the kids would join hands and they'd go in and out of the casinos, having a good time at homecoming.

RM: Would you say it's better or worse—I mean, "I hunted rabbits here and now it's wall-to-wall city."

LS: I choose to live in Las Vegas. It's my home and I have roots here so I've just got to deal with it, with the traffic and everything else. I saw it coming, though. My dad told me . . . we used to come over Apex and there was just the lights downtown and on the Strip. He said, "Son, one day there'll be lights from mountain to mountain."

RM: Is there anything that you would like to add about Paiute and Indian spirituality here?

LS: The main thing about our teachings from a very young age is respect, respect for everything in the world. It's better to give than it is to receive. Treat your fellow human being good and always have good words for them, don't say bad words to them. Don't make fun of anybody if they're crippled or whatever. They say if you make fun of something, that could turn around and be you. The main thing about the spirituality of most Indians is a respect for everything, to treat everything as holy.

The water we drink—that's one of the most precious gifts the Creator gave us. And it is to be used that way. Because it's a medicine; it goes into your body and gives you everything

that you need to live. Water is very important. I get upset every time I see another golf course get put up. That's such a waste because that's water that just goes into the air, it's gone. You don't retrieve that anymore. I'm quite an advocate of conserving water. I believe deeply in water, and that we're wasting a lot of water. And power plants—they're a big user of water. They could do them other ways where they can cut down on the water, but they choose not to. They turn down the scrubbers or whatever so they don't clean up the air. And the water from the power plants is just gone, too. That's water that doesn't go back into the system, like farming does. With farming, it goes back into the ground and it's used again, but water for industrial use, that's just gone.

A lot of people are ignorant right now about the value of water. The people like in Las Vegas Valley Water District know the value of water but they don't want to put a price on it because they want to take it, take everybody's well and so on. Pat Mulroy and I don't get along. Then they're trying to grab the water out of northeastern Nevada—they want to steal that water, actually.

RM: To me, it's criminal.

LS: It's criminal! And if they take the water away from the area, they're taking away a way of life. These guys have been ranching for over 100 years and now all of a sudden they can't farm and they can't ranch.

RM: They can't have towns there or anything; it's ridiculous.

LS: It's ridiculous, and then to bring it here to Las Vegas? Just cut the growth down [in Las Vegas instead]. Look what they've done to Tucson. At one time everybody was moving to Tucson because of the weather and everything. Everybody came from back East and they brought all of their shrubs, plants, and everything and started buying up all of the water around there. Now they're in a water crisis. What are they going to do, get water from Lake Mead? They've got to aqueduct it down there.

RM: I agree. Tell me about the principle of the eagle in Native American thought.

LS: The eagle is a holy bird because of all the birds that fly in the sky, he's the one that flies the highest so he is the one that is next to the Creator. We use his feathers to pray with. That eagle at one time was a living thing so his feathers represent life and when you use them, that's representing life itself. A lot of the feathers we use in prayer are elaborate, pretty fans, like I've got over there.

RM: Is that Paiute belief or is it Native American Church?

LS: Pretty much Native American.

RM: It's both?

LS: Yes, we use the feathers. The warriors use the wet feathers. Nowadays you see women carrying eagle feathers but at one time, only the men carried them. It's kind of an intertribal thing now—everybody's using everybody's traditional ways, you might say.

RM: It's a blend.

LS: Yes. It's good. There is a story with the eagle feathers. Two tribes were warring with each other and one warrior dropped his eagle feather out of his hair. He gets back to camp and he realizes he's dropped his eagle feather. In the meantime the guys they were warring with found that eagle feather. They said, "Oh, the guy who dropped this eagle feather, he'll be back for this eagle feather if he's any kind of warrior. He'll come back and get his eagle feather so we'll wait."

Sure enough, here comes that Indian after his feather. They capture him and take him back to the camp, and they're fixing to burn him at the stake or whatever, and the chief goes, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute now. We can't do that. Why do you want to do that to somebody that has respect for that eagle feather the way we do? Why are we going to do this to him when he is just like us? He has the same respect for that eagle feather." That's the story; they let him go with the eagle feather.

RM: That's a nice story. Do the Paiutes ever have much contact with the Ute?

LS: Yes. The Paiutes go and Sun Dance up there with them and we go to their Bear Dances. There is a close relationship. A lot of Paiute have married them.

RM: And of course you say that the Chemehuevi are just another name for Paiute.

LS: Yes, pretty much.

RM: I've been told the "Southern" doesn't need to be used; that Paiutes are Paiutes. Do you agree with that?

LS: No, there is a difference with the Northern Paiutes. They speak a little different too.

RM: And how about the Paiutes over around Owens Valley and around Bishop? Are they different?

LS: Yes, they're different.

RM: And then Death Valley, are they . . . ?

LS: Those are Shoshone over in Death Valley.

RM: And they are really different?

LS: Yes. The Shoshone are our cousins; they speak similarly to us, too.

RM: Are you closer to the Shoshone or Utes?

LS: I guess we're closer to the Utes than the Shoshones.

RM: Do you feel a brotherhood with the Shoshone?

LS: Oh yes. As a matter of fact, I believe my grandmother from Moapa had relatives that were Shoshone and she spoke Shoshone.

RM: And you can understand Shoshone?

LS: I haven't been around that many Shoshones so I really couldn't tell you.

RM: Leroy, just to add on here, you mentioned that you think Pahrump should have official designation as an officially recognized tribe by the Federal Government. Could you talk about that?

LS: I think they should, because right now it's like they have no identity as a race of people. Without being a tribe they are just like you or anybody else.

RM: But yet they are Native Americans.

LS: They are Native Americans, but they're not recognized as so officially. Of course, when we Native Americans look at them, we know they're Indians; they don't have to have a card to say that they're Indians.

It's just like me; I'm like a man with no country. I am not officially a member of the Moapa tribe because I chose to move my rights to Las Vegas, where I was born and raised. But I got over here and they denied me so consequently my sons are the same way. It all comes down to greed.

RM: Why is that?

LS: They have a little money with their smoke shop and their golf course. They don't want more members because they'd have to share with everybody else. They don't realize that if they keep that up, they won't exist as a tribe any longer. Already there are only, like, 50 members. And the thing about it is that their kids don't fit the blood quantum.

RM: What is the quantum?

LS: One quarter. So they're practicing genocide on their own people. When we were growing up as kids, nobody had anything. We were all the same. Everybody got along together; everybody shared their food. When they went hunting, they'd bring the meat back and share it with the

rest of the tribe. If they went pine-nut picking, they'd share it with everybody. Everybody got along together, but now all of a sudden this comes in.

RM: The greenbacks, yes.

LS: It comes into play; it's a whole different thing now. The greed comes in, the enviousness comes in, all these things come into play because some have and some don't have. But when nobody has anything, it's cool. They sit there and they have the nerve to call me "cuz"—"Hey cousin." I am their relative and I am dark; I am almost full blood.

RM: What is your quantum?

LS: It's 13/16ths.

RM: But yet you've got no affiliation. That doesn't seem fair.

LS: It's not fair at all. It's not fair to my kids. I've told them many a time, "If you think it's about the money you're terribly wrong because I don't need your money. I'm a hard-working man and I've worked all of my life, I don't need your money. I just want membership; you can keep your money." I said, "What else is it?" You know what else it is?

RM: What?

LS: It's because of my spirituality, my traditions. I believe in the traditional way of life. They wouldn't have a golf course up there if I was a member of this tribe. There's no way I'd let them waste the water like that, let alone sell the water off like they did.

RM: They sold water?

LS: Yes, they had the senior water rights up here, but they sold the water out. Now they buy it back from the water district. These are things that I believe in—the more traditional way of life. And I would not be giving money out to anybody. I wouldn't be ever giving money out.

RM: They get checks?

LS: Yes, they get a check every month, a bonus at Christmas time and two or three bonuses a year.

RM: That's interesting. Well, thanks so much for talking with me.

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