

An Interview With
KEN EASON

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2011



Ken Eason
(Melissa, Glenda, Daniel)
1983

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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 enthusiastic support and advocacy of the program within Nye County in its first years. More recently, Darrell Lacy, Director, Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office, gave his strong support. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Lacy’s office, provided funds for this round of interviews. Thanks are extended to Commissioners Eastley and Hollis and to Mr. Lacy for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Lacy.

Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Valerie A. Brown, Debra Ann MacEachen, Robert B. Clark, Lynn E. Riedesel, Marcella Wilkinson and Jean Charney transcribed a number of interviews, as did Julie Lancaster, who also helped with project coordination. Proofreading, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Joni Eastley, Michael Haldeman, Julie Lancaster, Teri Jurgens Lefever, and Darlene Morse. Joni Eastley proofed all the manuscripts and often double-checked, as best as possible, the spelling of people’s names and the names of their children and other relatives. Jeanne Sharp Howerton provided digital services and consultation. Eva La Rue and Angela Haag of the Central Nevada Museum served as consultants throughout the project; their participation was essential. Much-deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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

—Robert D. McCracken

2011

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—RDM
2011

This is Robert McCracken talking to Ken Eason at his home in Tonopah, Nevada. This is Tape 1, Side 1. It's June 19, July 10, and September 26, 2010.

CHAPTER ONE

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

KE: My name is Kenneth Lloyd Eason.

RM: And when and where were you born?

KE: I was born in Tonopah, Nevada, at the Miners' Hospital, November 15, 1941.

RM: Could you tell me your mother's name as it reads on her birth certificate?

KE: Her name was Lois Treloar.

RM: When and where was she born?

KE: She was born in Eureka, Nevada, and I'm not sure of the date, exactly.

RM: Give me some background on her family and how she happened to end up in Tonopah.

KE: I don't have a lot of background on my mother, but I can tell you her family, like so many families in this area, came to the mining areas in Eureka and Tonopah. Her father retired and moved back to California and lived in San Jose, California, up to the time of his death.

RM: Was he a miner?

KE: I'm not sure exactly what he did. When I was a small fry he'd already gone back to California.

RM: So you really didn't get to know him. Did your mother grow up in Eureka?

KE: I guess, when she was a small child. I think the rest of her time was here in Tonopah. Her mother—my grandmother Maude—was a beautician here in Tonopah for many years.

RM: Did your grandfather come here with them?

KE: No, I don't think so.

RM: They got a divorce?

KE: I think so.

RM: So your mother and her mother lived here in Tonopah and she grew up here. Do you know what year they came?

KE: Not right off hand, no.

RM: Did she go to school here?

KE: Yes.

RM: Do you know much more about your grandmother Maude?

KE: Not too much, no. I'm more familiar with the Eason side of the family than I am her side of the family. My father and my mother divorced when I was only five. My mother basically moved from Tonopah and my father did remarry, to Rita Wright (Eason). I remember Maude lived in Bishop for a while. She moved back to California before she passed away.

RM: What's your father's birth name on his birth certificate?

KE: His name was Andrew Melvin Eason. He was born in Tonopah in 1913.

RM: And raised here?

KE: Yes.

RM: What did his family do for a living?

KE: I think his father did some mining—his name was Andrew Brant Eason. He was the fire chief at one time in Tonopah, in the early days. The story my grandmother told me is that they had a bad fire one time and that was kind of the end of his job—the firehouse burned down. [Laughter]

They came down here from Austin in '02 in a covered wagon. My grandmother used to tell us that it would take them several days to travel from Austin to Tonopah. Of course, they were drawn here by the mines. Her husband worked a little bit in the mines in the Austin area but he also worked on some ranches in that area. He came down here with the big strike in Tonopah; they were actually one of the first families in the Tonopah area.

RM: Really? Do you recall any stories of the mines he might have worked in?

KE: I think he worked in the Mizpah for a while. I know when they moved here they lived in a tent for part of the first two years. My grandmother's first name was Winifred. Her maiden name was Marsh. William Marsh, one of the co-discoverers of Goldfield. He and my

grandmother were twins. They first migrated to Tonopah and then William went on with Harry Stimler to discover Goldfield.

RM: How interesting. Did he do pretty well from that discovery?

KE: They were only 20 or 22 years old at the time and they sold their claims, I understand, for \$30,000 apiece. Then Billy, or William, Marsh went on to buy a couple of ranches in the Monitor Valley area.

RM: And spent the rest of his life as a rancher?

KE: Yes.

RM: Do you have stories about how they found the deposit at Goldfield?

KE: It's in some of the historical books, and my grandmother told me stories. She said that her brother was kind of a young toughie and a roustabout type of guy. He was always looking to strike it rich, I guess. He and Stimler got acquainted with an old Indian that actually knew of this area, which is now Goldfield. My grandmother's story is they got him royally intoxicated one day and he showed them the way to the Goldfield strike. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. I have read about the Indian being involved—that he basically knew where the strike was. But Bill Marsh and Harry Stimler were the first ones to stake claims there.

RM: Were Marsh and Stimler pretty good pals?

KE: Oh, yes, they were buddies throughout their lives.

RM: Did they cut the Indian in on their claims, I wonder?

KE: I'm not sure.

RM: So William Marsh, then, bought ranches in Monitor Valley.

KE: Yes. And my grandfather, Andrew, after the fire department fiasco, was disillusioned with Tonopah and took a job in Battle Mountain. He moved the family there and came down with pneumonia and died. My father was only about five years old. My father's mother and brothers ended up staying in Tonopah and working with their uncle at the ranches in Monitor Valley.

RM: Did the ranches have a name?

KE: Hunt's Canyon was the one he originally bought and he had an interest in the Pine Creek Ranch as well.

RM: Did he pioneer those ranches, or buy them from somebody else?

KE: I'm not sure. They were probably somewhat established.

RM: Do you have any good stories they might have told when you were a kid about life at that time?

KE: It was during the Depression years and there weren't a lot of jobs around so my dad and his brothers spent a lot of time on their uncles' ranches. It was pretty hard work from what they were used to from living in Tonopah; my father and his brothers had worked in the mines as well.

RM: Did your dad get any silicosis?

KE: He didn't, but his older brother, Chester, did. Although there's some question about that. Chester really didn't work down in the mines like my dad, as he was an electrician and hoist operator, and one of the older brothers, Elbert, did, but during the Second World War Chester moved down to California to work in the shipyards in the Bay Area. Of course, they had a lot of asbestos in the ships. He claims he got the silicosis there. The California industrial people said no, he must have got it in the mines and never did pay him anything. He lived to be 62 years old and he died of silicosis.

RM: Did your father pass on any stories about his youth in Tonopah and what it was like for a kid?

KE: There were all kinds of stories they used to talk about. There were lots of burros in this area. When they were kids they'd go find a wild burro and try and tame it a little bit to ride. He said they spend more time chasing them than they ever did riding them. They had a lot of fun doing that, I guess.

At the ranch they'd get up real early and go on a roundup or something and they'd camp out during the roundup. My dad's older brother Taskar didn't want to get out of bed too early in the morning so his uncle just picked him up and took him down and threw him in the creek. He said after that, when the uncle said to get up they all got up real quick.

They did a lot of things like that at the ranch. William Marsh went on to become an assemblyman from Nye County, and later a state senator from Nye County. He died in 1938. My grandmother lived to be 86 and lived all the rest of her years here in Tonopah. She's buried here at the cemetery. So are Will Marsh and his wife, Mary.

My great-uncle was quite colorful, I guess. My grandmother used to tell me a few stories. As I told you, she said when he was a young man he was kind of a roustabout. He got in a fight over in Goldfield on the Fourth of July with some guy. She said they fought for two and a half hours up one sidewalk and down the other sidewalk. They finally wore each other out, went into a saloon and had a beer, and called it even.

Bill Marsh didn't have any sons. He did have a daughter named Mildred. We always called her Aunt Mildred although she was a second cousin, I guess, because she was my dad's

age. They told me that she could ride a horse as good, or better, than most men could. She'd even do trick riding sometimes just for kicks.

RM: And Will was the guy that co-discovered Goldfield. What impact did that have on his life, aside from giving him the money to buy the ranches? He must have taken a lot of pride in it.

KE: I'm certain that he did. Like I say, he had actually a couple of ranches. During the Depression, when things got tough, he had to sell, but he kept Hunt's Canyon Ranch.

I was talking with the young Hage, who owns the Pine Creek Ranch now. He didn't realize that our family was related to the Marshes. He said, "You know, in the 1960s, there was some civil water dispute going on and some of these water rights were still in Billy Marsh's name." They had to send certified letters to the state and to him personally, even though he'd been gone for several years, to try and clear up these water claims. Hage ran across his name on some old paperwork that was still on file.

RM: We're working on a book about the United Cattle and Packing Company and one of its owners, O. K. Reed. I wonder if you have any stories about the Reed family. Some of the United Cattle and Packing Company territory went up into Monitor Valley, but it didn't include your uncle's two ranches.

KE: I've heard of him, of course, but I don't really know that much about Reed. I can tell you about another story my uncle told. He'd been to this area that was mostly a cattle area. He had run some sheep and he ran them over to the Stone Cabin Valley area. Apparently, an old fellow named Longstreet had a place up there. He came from Texas, I understand, and he was strictly a cattle man. He didn't want anything to do with sheep. The story was that my uncle had run his sheep over the hill into the Stone Cabin and was camped out there one morning. He woke up and heard a gunshot and heard a bullet whiz over his head.

It was Longstreet. He called out; he knew Longstreet. He said, "Hey, this is Billy Marsh. Don't shoot me, for God's sake."

Longstreet said, "I don't want no damn sheep over on this side of the valley. I don't care who you are, I don't want them around here."

So he said he had a tendency to keep away from the Stone Cabin Valley with those sheep. He had done some studying on that and had found that the sheep and the cattle could graze on the same ground. But the old theory and the thoughts from the old-timers was that they weren't compatible in the same grazing areas. Anyway, that was the story—that he had put a bullet over Billy's head as a warning not to bring those sheep back over there.

RM: That's really interesting. And Jack Longstreet's place was in Stone Cabin Valley?

KE: There's a canyon called Longstreet Canyon. It's been a while since I've been up there, but there used to be an old mill way up at the head of the canyon. Longstreet had a place up there. In fact, he died there.

I can tell you another story about Longstreet. My dad told me this story. My dad was not personally involved, but knew some of the characters who were. Longstreet drove some cattle

into Tonopah to put on the train for shipping. He was pretty much an individual character, and he always packed a gun with him, a six-shooter, which the sheriffs around here were not inclined to take away from him.

He used to be a regulator for mining companies in southern Nevada when he first came to this country from Texas as a young man. He only had half his ear. Supposedly he was caught rustling cattle or something. Instead of hanging him, like they did the rest of them, they just cut off the top of his ear. My dad said he always wore his hair long so you wouldn't see it.

Anyway, he came into town to bring his cattle in. My dad said some young high school kids had an old Model T and saw him and they ran around his herd of cattle with this Model T and he took his pistol out and fired a couple shots over their head. They went back and turned him in to the sheriff and said this guy was trying to kill them. The sheriff come out and talked to him and says, "These boys said you tried to kill them."

He says, "No, if I wanted to kill them they would have been dead."

Dad said that was a pretty good story around Tonopah. He said, "All these young bucks learned to keep away from old Jack Longstreet."

RM: [Laughs] Around when would that have happened, do you think?

KE: I would think probably in the '20s. I remember Dad saying he used to get a kick out of that.

RM: I love stories. They capture the spirit of the times.

KE: Oh, yes. I can remember Dad said during the Depression things were tough. He said there used to be a Chinese fellow here in town who had a big brood of chickens and he'd sell eggs to everybody. Dad and his older brother Taskar sometimes would go down and liberate a couple of chickens at night and try to sell them back to him a couple days later.

RM: And he'd buy them?

KE: And he'd buy them. Dad said he was suspicious, but he wanted the chickens, so . . .

I remember Dad telling me as a kid, he used to deliver milk. He was a young guy and they had a Model T. He said you'd keep the Model T running and deliver the milk to the door, run back and jump on the thing, and keep going.

I said, "Did it ever get away from you?"

And he said, "Oh, not too far."

RM: He'd leave it run in gear?

KE: In gear. He said if two of them were working, it was all right. But sometimes one of them got sick so there was only one of them, and that's how they did it.

RM: So they had milk delivery at that time?

KE: There was a dairy here in the early days. The Pioneer Dairy was right down on Florence Avenue here in Tonopah. It was run by the Quas family, an Italian family. They had it for years.

RM: In your lifetime?

KE: When I was a small boy, they still had it. The mother was still alive; the father had passed away. There were three children—John and Sam and Rena. They would deliver in an old Chevrolet pickup—I can remember them coming out to the house.

RM: How many cows were they milking when you were a kid, do you think?

KE: I think they bought the milk from a dairy farm in Yerington or Fish Lake Valley, I'm not sure which, and processed it here.

RM: Do you think there ever was a dairy here in town that had cows?

KE: Maybe the Lambertuccis; I'm not sure. I know they had some livestock down there, but I'm not sure if they had a dairy. The closest dairies I ever remember hearing about when I was a young guy were, like, Fish Lake Valley.

RM: And there was a packinghouse in Goldfield during the time we're talking about. Was there ever one in Tonopah? I don't recall hearing about it.

KE: There were a lot of various companies here, but I don't think we ever had a packinghouse. There again, Fish Lake Valley, where there was water, had some kind of meat packing plant out at the Cord Ranch, I think. They used to supply the air base.

RM: The Cord Ranch was owned by the guy who had the Cord Automobile, is that right?

KE: Yes. They supplied dairy products for the base out here during the Second World War.

RM: There would have been quite a market there, wouldn't there? Do you have any more stories?

KE: I'm trying to think. You think of them when you're not trying to.

RM: Right. Any stories they might have told of life in the underground mines?

KE: My dad and a schoolmate—they went to school many years together—Bobby Douglas and his brother, Jack, made a move to Reno. Jack became quite wealthy and founded the Home Savings and Loan in Reno. He was from Tonopah originally.

Anyway, the younger brother, Bobby, and my dad were good friends and they took a lease on part of the Mizpah Mine. After the big companies moved out they leased out the properties underground. They found a spot sort of back near the Mizpah Hotel and they found

a big vein down there. They put a lot of dynamite in there, and they weren't too experienced yet, and they blasted that out. It broke the surface of the ground and broke all the windows out of the back side of the Mizpah Hotel. He said with what they made off the deal, they ended up paying for the repairs to the Mizpah. They didn't do too good on that venture.

RM: Those are great stories.

KE: There's a lot of them around here. You think about some of the old-timers and their names—there used to be some characters around here. There was the old guy that lived out at Lone Mountain—they called him Lone Mountain Mike, I think. He was a veteran from the First World War; he had been shell shocked. He used to walk in here 15 miles from Lone Mountain and walk back. I guess he did a little bit of turquoise mining out there. He walked clear to town. He was pretty "teched" from the war. My grandmother always used to tell me to keep away from him. He never hurt anybody, but he wasn't quite rowing with both oars, you know.

RM: Did he just act weird?

KE: Oh, yes. He'd dance around. He was a big, tall bald-headed fellow. He'd try to scare the kids a little bit and stuff, acting up, but he was harmless.

Those characters all had different names. We had old Manhattan Dutch, who used to live around here and lived in Manhattan. He was an old miner. I used to get a kick out of the names they'd hang on people.

RM: What was his background, do you know?

KE: Just a miner. We put an addition on our house when I was a kid and Dad hired a carpenter. I don't know what his name really was, all I remember is Dad used to call him "Benny the Termite." He was a short guy and a character, but he was a carpenter for many years around town. Being a carpenter, the locals nicknamed him Termite. I used to see him work around the house all the time.

RM: Any more characters that come to mind from that era?

KE: I was just trying to think, but you can't think of all of them. When my grandmother Winifred's brother bought these ranches, she went out and worked for him and one time—it wasn't right at the ranch, it was near the ranch, where they were doing some roundups. She was working out there and cooking for the cowboys, just her and the youngest son, my dad's youngest brother, Lloyd. He was just a small boy then.

Anyway, she kind of got stranded up there for a few days. She remembered an old Indian coming through there; his name Iver Jack. He was a medicine man. I'm not sure if he was Shoshone or if he was Paiute, but all the Indians were scared to death of him. And she was, too, when he was there. She was by herself and Iver Jack stopped by and wanted to know where Billy Marsh was. She told him he was supposed to be back to the place that night—she didn't want him to know she'd be alone. She said Old Iver Jack would sprinkle soot and dust in the

footpaths of the Indians and they'd never come back there if he wanted them gone. They were all scared to death of him.

RM: Kind of put a spell there?

KE: Yes. She said he traveled all around, but he had a sign on all Indians in the area.

RM: Where was he originally from, do you know?

KE: I'm not sure. That took place up in the Stone Cabin area. He was probably from Smoky Valley or the Austin area. He scared my grandmother pretty good.

RM: I wonder how old a man he was when this was going on.

KE: She never said how old he was. My grandmother was a pretty good source of historical things. She and Billy Marsh came from Austin originally. She said she remembered when she was a little girl the Indians still had a big camp right near Austin. They lived there in their wickiups. She said they'd sneak out and watch them do their dances and stuff when she was a young girl.

CHAPTER TWO

KE: My grandmother had eight children; two daughters and one son who died before she moved to Tonopah. She nearly lost one child on the way down here—Chester, who was three months old, almost froze traveling between Austin and Tonopah. It was a tough life in those days. They kept their house in Austin for several years, where they would return in winter, and then sold it. They lived two years down here in a tent. She said after there was more lumber, they left the tent but they built the house around it and used the canvas for the insulation.

RM: Where was their house?

KE: The way she described it was over by the Silver Queen Motel, up in that area.

RM: What year did they come here?

KE: 1902.

RM: So Tonopah was a new place.

KE: Yes. When they first came there was nothing but tents.

RM: Did they live in that place a long time?

KE: Yes, for some time. When her husband died she moved back to Austin for a short time and sold everything there, then ended up moving back here. She owned a little house exactly where the Baptist church is now. She lived there for all the years I can remember. It burned in a fire back in the late '50s. It was struck by lightning and caught on fire and burned to the ground. She was visiting relatives in Oregon, luckily, at the time.

RM: Probably with all her keepsakes and everything in it.

KE: Oh, yes. She had some neat things in there. She had her father's revolver, which was an old Army Colt that he got when he first came to the country. He came during the Civil War, in 1864, and brought that across the country with him. He actually went through Salt Lake City before coming to Austin. After a couple of years in Austin they moved to Placerville, California, where they purchased a ranch with 500 goats. After four years in Placerville, they went back to Austin for the silver strike there. Of course, he never made a fortune but he ended up having a nice house and some cattle there at one time.

RM: He sounds like quite a pioneer.

KE: He came across during the war. He got into Salt Lake, he joined up with the LDS, and had a disagreement with the church or something and left there. Brigham Young wasn't too happy

about this group leaving and they actually sent some people out to try and stop them. There was a gun fight involved and his first wife was killed in the ruckus.

RM: Oh, my God. They were going to try and hold them there?

KE: They actually had left Salt Lake. I can't remember where it was that they had some kind of a fight, according to my grandmother. It wasn't her mother; it was his first wife who was killed.

RM: Your great-grandfather Marsh sounds like a really interesting historical person.

KE: I don't have a lot of information on him. I have some names I could get from some old books that my grandmother had.

RM: Would you happen to have any pictures of him?

KE: I don't. All that stuff was burned in that fire; she had pictures of all of them. My sister might still have a few.

RM: She didn't by any chance keep any diaries or letters or anything that survived?

KE: Whatever there was, was in my grandmother's trunk and it was destroyed in that fire. They didn't even recover the metal part of the pistol, which we'd like to have gotten. I think one of the volunteer firemen must have spotted it. It's gone; it was a cap and ball revolver.

RM: Was he in the Civil War?

KE: He wasn't in the war itself; he emigrated here during the Civil War. He came from England. I think he was a Cousin Jack.

RM: Really? Had he been a miner in Cornwall?

KE: Apparently. I'm not sure. Anyway, he ended up in the Placerville area and had a little farm down there.

RM: Do you know where the farm was? It would be interesting to see what it's like there now.

KE: My grandma told me it was around the Eldorado County area. I think he died in Austin. My great-grandmother Hattie Isaacson Marsh, his wife, was from Jungchiping, Sweden. I spoke to a lady one time who was from Sweden and she told me I was pronouncing it completely wrong. I know my great-grandmother didn't speak English very well and her husband used to always kid her and say, "You're in the United States now, you must speak English. I don't want you teaching my children all this Swedish language, either." But she did anyway. My grandmother Winifred still had some sayings. When I was a little boy she used to call me *liten pojke*. That's "little boy" in Swedish.

Winifred actually ran for the assembly for Nevada back in the '30s; I think her brother gave her the political bug. She wasn't successful, but she was the first woman from Nye County to run for office. She was quite a lady. As I said, she had eight children. I think only five of them lived past the age of eight. When I was young all my uncles, the ones I knew of, were still alive. But she had one that was named after her brother; he died when he was eight years old.

RM: And your dad grew up here? Talk about his youth some more.

KE: He was working on the ranch with his uncle in the early days. Things were difficult; there were not a lot of jobs around. After he and my mother were married he worked for the state highway department for a short time. He was involved in an accident—one of these things where you drive the trucks in and dump the sand in trucks that have a big metal bottom. The bottom fell out and hit my dad in the back and broke his back. He couldn't perform that kind of labor anymore.

In those days, there was no industrial insurance; it was just SOL. He took up different jobs—he had a mail route between Tonopah and Round Mountain and Manhattan. He bought the Rex Bar at one time. Of course, he got drafted into the army and lost the bar.

RM: Even with the bad back?

KE: Even with the bad back. At that time he had three children and he still had to go to the army.

RM: Did he have to go overseas?

KE: No, he lucked out. He trained in California and they shipped him over to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where they had an artillery base. They recruited him because of his mining background; he had worked in the mines here. They had German prisoners at Fort Sill. They put him in charge of the prisoners. They wanted him to show them how to dig tunnels. The idea was they had to blast these tunnels—they were rock and stuff. The army was trying to figure out how to collapse these tunnels with explosive ordnance and what would be effective for the Pacific. They had all this labor to dig elaborate tunnels and then blow them up with artillery ordnance to see what effect it had on them. He got some kind of award for that from the base commander. He got the job because of his knowledge of explosives and so on from the mines.

He came back and worked at the Tonopah Club and ended up being one of the managers there for many years until they sold it. Then he retired and moved to Belmont. He had bought some property at Belmont, had a little place out there with some 80 acres. Dad was a Nye County Commissioner for 22 years.

RM: When did he move out to Belmont?

KE: About 1956 or '57, I think. He more or less retired out there, but he thought the winters were a little bit tough. He spent about half the time out there and came back to Tonopah in the wintertime.

RM: Yes, Belmont is high enough out that it would be much cooler and have more snow.

KE: More snow than we have here. He loved it out there—it was nice and green, and he had a little field out there with a few cattle. He was getting up in his years at that time and he wasn't quite as rambunctious as when he was younger. My brother and sister and I still have 25 acres out there that he left us.

RM: Really? Now, what are your earliest memories of Tonopah?

KE: My earliest memories of Tonopah are that there were hardly any paved roads. Most of the side streets were all just dirt streets, gravel streets. It was fascinating when I was a little guy to watch them start to pave some of these roads. A lot of people had horses then. They weren't as much for transportation as they were for recreation or going hunting. They'd haul their horses and they'd have horse shows here, horse races. There used to be a big livery stable when I was still a little guy, probably under 10 years old, down on Main Street.

RM: Whereabouts was it?

KE: Right about across the street from the Tonopah Garage. It's now an empty lot. A guy by the name of Henderson owned that place for years. I can remember watching a guy doing stuff in the blacksmith shop. I guess the significance of my memory of that livery stable is it probably was in its last years. Back in its heyday, when the stagecoaches ran, I guess they would get repairs there and teams of horses were kept there. When I was there, there were just horses for people that they'd keep for hunting and things like that. Now everybody's got an ATV. The horses are all gone and the ATVs are taking their place.

A lot of people had corrals in their backyards. It was kind of neat. People were always riding around town, taking a ride after work. They'd get home, get on their horse, and take a ride around the mountain or something. There were still a lot of people interested in horses at that time. That's sure gone by the wayside. It's sad.

RM: Yes. I've been interested in talking to people about the amount of feed that was available in the hills of Tonopah, but particularly out in the valley. Apparently there's been a marked reduction in the last 50 or 100 years.

KE: I think so. A lot of times they would keep a couple of horses and they'd turn them loose and round them up periodically. In the winter months they might take them back out to Smoky Valley or out to ranches there, and let them graze. They'd pay the ranchers to let the horses feed in his fields.

RM: If you turned stock loose here now, they'd starve.

KE: Although wild horses still survive somewhat. They eat what's called tuft grass. But it's certainly nowhere near what it used to be in the early days. I remember seeing pictures of

Belmont in the early days and there were trees everywhere. If you see pictures from after the people moved in there, and the mines, all the trees are gone. They either used them for fuel or for building. There aren't a lot of trees around this area, so maybe they had to bring everything in here. And it all had to come, in the earliest days, by wagons. Until they got the railroad in, they used to have a train only as far as Soda Springs by Mina, then they would then put it on freight wagons to get it to Tonopah.

RM: Do you remember the railroad here?

KE: It was still here after the Second World War. I can remember seeing the engines; I can remember hearing the whistles blowing. Across the highway right below town here, right where Lambertucci farm is, the track used to cross the highway. They had a white crossing, or something. I wasn't very old then; I was probably just five or six years old. I can remember hearing the whistles blowing. The old depot was there for many years. It was a huge all-frame depot. I think it burned in the early '50s. It was down about where the Banc Club is now. Trains would come in there and turn around. The rail yard, which was in back of the depot building, was later turned into a trailer park. That's where they used to turn the engines around.

RM: Did they have a roundhouse?

KE: I don't know; all I know is they turned them around.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: What are some other early recollections?

KE: As you know, we had no television in those days. The old Butler Theater—a big frame building on Main Street—was the main entertainment for the community. It would usually fill up pretty readily, especially on the weekends—they'd have a matinee and evening shows. I think they had an evening show every day of the week. And they had old newsreels and so on. In the early days they didn't have any concessions in the building. There used to be a couple of little stores next to the theater where you could go in and buy your candy or get a pop before you went into the theater.

One place was old Charlie Stewart's place. You would go in and buy your candy and stuff like that when you went to the theater. Charlie was a black man, one of the few black men in the area. The young girls would never go in there—it was a male kind of a thing, and all the young guys would go. Charlie was probably about my dad's age; he knew my dad real well. He used to tell some pretty good stories. He had a shoeshine parlor in there and a candy and tobacco counter and he had a little card table room in the very back. When you'd get to be an older young guy you could go back, but if you were really young you couldn't go back. He had a couple of slot machines in there.

Old Charlie was an old bachelor for many years. I think he was married for a short time; he had a wife here. But most of the time I remember him, he was by himself. He had a home down off Knapp Street. You kind of got a street education at Charlie Stewart's place if you were from around here.

RM: Do you recall his wife's name?

KE: I don't. She didn't want to stay here. I remember him telling me, "I bought her a brand new automobile." He said they only had the automobile about a month and she wrecked it. And he said, "That was the end of my marriage. She wouldn't stay."

RM: He probably didn't have any insurance, did he?

KE: In those days . . . He had a picture of the old car. It was a convertible of some type. I can't remember what the make was. Charlie had a couple of dollars. He told me he came from Alabama. He remembered seeing some kind of a poster on the wall wherever he was in Alabama that said, "Go West, Young Man, Go West." He said, "There wasn't much of a future for a black man where I came from so I thought I'd give it a try. I come clear out here." I think he told me he was 17 years old, or 18, when he came to Tonopah.

He said, "I got off the train. I didn't have any job or any inklings of a job and I asked anybody if they knew of any work around town." Someone told him they thought that maybe the Episcopal Church was looking for a janitor. He said, "I got a job the first day I come to Tonopah and I've never been out of work since."

He saved up his money and he bought this little place—I'm not sure if he owned it or leased it—and he made his own business out of it. He saved every dime he had. He never went

to school but he could read and write. He told us one time, “You know how I learned how to read and write?”

We said, “No, Charlie, how’d you learn?”

He said, “I used to go by the school there and I watched that janitor throw those old papers out from the school.” He copied them. He said, “I couldn’t read or write. I got to know the janitor up there and pretty quick he just gave me the papers,” to help him a little bit. That’s how he learned how to read and write.

He was quite a character. My dad owned the Rex Bar at one time, many years ago. He said old Charlie would wrap up his business at night and walk home—he never learned how to drive. The car I told you about, his wife drove it. He never drove. He’d go by the bar and he liked to drink a little bit. But even in our little, small town there was still a segregation atmosphere at that time. My dad let him come in and he could go down and have one drink at the end of the bar before he went home. Dad told Charlie, “You’re all right with me, but, you know, if the rest of the customers saw you in here all the time, they’d quit coming in here.” Charlie said he understood. Charlie told me this himself; my dad never told me.

He said, “Your dad, he would let me have a drink at the bar. None of the rest of the bars would let me even come in.”

RM: What years was your dad running the Rex Bar?

KE: Probably in the early ’40s.

RM: Talk some more about Charlie. I have memories of him myself, but nothing compared to yours.

KE: He used to get about half tipsy sometimes and he’d tell you all this stuff. He told me, “Yeah, I come down there and I got a few dollars in my pocket and I thought I was doing pretty good. I was coming down the sidewalk one day and here come this white kid about my age. He looked like a pretty tough guy. He told me when I saw him I was supposed to get off the sidewalk. I told him, ‘That’s not gonna happen.’ He gave me a sock in the jaw and I gave him one back. He knocked me off the sidewalk and I got up and knocked him off the sidewalk.” He said, “We finally got through with that, and we shook hands. He’s been a good friend of mine ever since. His name was Freck Lydon.”

Freck Lydon later was the chief of police for the town.

RM: Yes, and good with his fists, I’ve heard.

KE: Absolutely. I guess he had respect for Charlie for standing up for himself so they were pretty good friends after that.

RM: That’s a wonderful story. How old was Charlie in about ’55?

KE: He had to have been in his 50s.

RM: Probably born around 1900?

KE: I'd say so.

RM: Did he live all of the rest of his life here?

KE: Yes. He died in his house. It was kind of a strange situation. That was a story in itself. I guess he hadn't been feeling well and he knew he was going to die. He went around town and saw all the people he had become friends with and told them, "I want to say goodbye to you. I'm not going to be around much longer and I wanted to say . . ." He went around to several places and several people and told it to them.

Of course they said, "You're gonna be fine, Charlie. You're fine."

He went home and, I guess, a couple of days later he was dead. He knew he was going to die so he walked around and said goodbye to everybody.

He also always wore a little visor, like the dealers used to wear in the early days. He wore it when he was in the store; when he went home he took it off.

He'd shine your shoes. If kids were going to the prom or something he'd shine all of our shoes and he wouldn't charge us. Any other time, he'd charge you. But if you were going to have your special night out, he wouldn't charge you.

He had an old radio down in his shop in Tonopah. People would go down and listen to the boxing matches, the fights. He was a big boxing fan. He liked Esevett Charles and some of those big black fighters; he listened to every fight. He never missed a one.

RM: What kind of radio was it?

KE: It was a big, wooden kind of top box radio. The station had to have been out of San Francisco. I think he even ran some wires up on top of the store for an antenna. People around town, even the grown men, would go in there and listen.

He was a unique individual. When Dad was a kid, I think Charlie was a young man so he was probably older than my dad. But it's like each generation knew his place. They used to call it the Skunk Dive—I don't know why they called it that. My dad said, "Don't you go around that Skunk Dive. You're not old enough." Of course, I wanted to go in there all the more to see what I was missing. You got a little bit of street education in Charlie's place.

RM: At what age would a kid start going in there?

KE: You could go in there and buy candy and stuff when you were probably just six or seven years old, eight years old—in elementary school. In high school, you'd be in there all the time.

RM: Were there always kids in there?

KE: Oh, yes. Different age groups; the older ones would play cards—they'd play pan back in the back. If you were old enough you'd go back and play pan.

RM: Would they play for money?

KE: Oh, sure. I think the young guys wouldn't play for a lot, but some of the older guys might play for more.

RM: And the kids could go back there and play the slot machine, too, couldn't they? He didn't check your ID or anything.

KE: Well, you weren't supposed to. But especially if he'd got a few drinks we'd play the slot machines when he wasn't looking. Sometimes he'd really get pretty well plastered. We'd be in the back playing the slot machines and he'd be all gassed up, "I told you boys not to be playing those slot machines!" He wouldn't get up; he couldn't get up. [Laughter]

RM: How far was his house from his store?

KE: Probably about five or six blocks. He liked to say he owned his own house.

RM: Was it a big house or a small house?

KE: It wasn't too big of a house. It was two bedrooms, as I recall, and a living room.

RM: How big was his store?

KE: It wasn't very big. I bet it was maybe ten or 12 feet wide and about 60 feet long.

RM: Was it a self-contained building, or was it part of another building?

KE: It was a self-contained building. He had a restroom in there; I remember it was just a male restroom. If you went to the movie theater or whatever, that's where you went to the bathroom.

RM: The theater didn't have a bathroom?

KE: No.

RM: What did the girls do?

KE: I guess they'd go to the Mizpah Hotel.

RM: Describe the storefront.

KE: It was just a little wooden front with a plate glass window. I think it said "Stewart's Shine Parlor and Sundries" or something like that on the front of it.

RM: What kind of door did it have?

KE: A wood door with glass about halfway up. It had narrow metal bars across it so you could grab that. Instead of pushing your hand through the window, those bars would catch your hand. All the old commercial doors were like that.

RM: Did it have a screen door?

KE: I think it did, a wooden screen door.

RM: As you walked in, what did it look like?

KE: As soon as you walked in, on the left side, he had the old wooden-framed glass counters, with the glass top and the glass front. He had two or three of those in a row. He had slot machines on the right. He had tobacco and candy, both, in these counters. Then he had a shoe-shining stand right after that. It was fairly long; you could probably sit four or five guys on the stand.

RM: Was that on the right or the left?

KE: On the right, past the counters. He had the old metal foot braces to put your feet on, three or four sets of those there. A lot of times he'd shine two or three pairs of shoes at the same time. In the middle of the building he had a big oil stove. He had some piping around the stove so you couldn't burn yourself; you'd kind of stand next to that. In the wintertime you'd get warm there. We'd be out on a sleigh ride and we'd go down and get warm. Of course, he had a spittoon. And there was pinball machine next to the stove. The last little room in the back had a card table.

RM: How big was the card room?

KE: Big enough for a poker table-sized round table and chairs.

RM: Where was the bathroom?

KE: Just past the shoeshine stand. Between that and the stove there was a radio and then there was the bathroom. It was quite the place.

RM: He had a back door?

KE: No back door, not that I ever saw. There might have been one back off the card room, but I'm not sure.

RM: You don't whether he owned it or not?

KE: I don't think he did. It looked like a separate building, but it could have been part of the old . . . they called it Polin's soda fountain store, one on the corner next to it. It might have been kind of split off from that.

RM: Polin's would have been where the motel is now, the Jim Butler Motel?

KE: Yes.

RM: And then Charlie's would be . . . ?

KE: It was next to Polin's. From Polin's you had Naismith Insurance, which became Titlow Insurance. That's who I bought the insurance business from, was from Titlow. The insurance business went from a guy by the name of Ward in the earliest days of Tonopah to Naismith, to Titlow, to myself.

RM: How wide was the insurance firm?

KE: It was a little bigger. It was probably 30 or 40 feet across, and probably 40 feet deep. But the street started to turn there, so the buildings were kind of angled. The theater was the next building. That was the first building that was all square.

RM: If you had to guess, how many seats do you think were in the theater?

KE: I'd say probably about 300 seats, 250 to 300. It had a main floor, then it had a balcony.

RM: Did they allow smoking in the balcony?

KE: You couldn't smoke downstairs, but you could smoke in the balcony. They had windows upstairs that would slide open—I guess that was the ventilation. In later years, when I was in high school, they did bring concessions into the theater a bit; they had a Coke machine and the Coke was in a bottle. The theater was sloped like this and if you were a kid, you'd roll your bottle down and see how far it'd go before it hit something.

I mentioned Titlow's, but there was one little place in there beside the theater and it was a barber shop. A guy by the name of Tony Cassier, an Italian barber, was in there for years. The theater bought that from his wife when he died and they turned that into a concession stand. They had popcorn. Stewart had popcorn, too, by the way; he had a popcorn machine. But they had hot dogs and stuff, too. They cut a hole into the side of the theater from that place of Cassier's.

RM: When did Bob Williams take over the barber shop? Or was it even there?

KE: It wasn't. The Butler Theater was by itself and the next building up was Bob Williams. It was a barbershop and beauty salon building. Bob was on one side and his wife was on the other

side. He had a barbershop but I think he was on the side of the theater. The building was split in two; Bob was on the left and his wife had a beauty shop on the other side.

When I bought the insurance business, Titlow had actually had torn down his office thinking they were going to put a casino in there. Bob Williams's wife moved out of the beauty parlor and put hers in the back of Bob's place. Titlow moved into the other half where Bob's wife had been.

RM: I want to go into your insurance business in detail, but let's finish up on Charlie Stewart—you're the first person I've talked to who can give this much detail on him. It was kind of the hangout place for the boys?

KE: Yes, it was the hangout for the young men in town, high school especially.

RM: Do you remember when he died?

KE: No, I don't. I'm thinking it had to have been the early '60s.

RM: Would he be buried in the cemetery, I wonder?

KE: Yes, he's down there.

RM: The new one or the old one, I wonder?

KE: The newer one.

RM: Was he a big man?

KE: He was a pretty good-sized man, a stout man.

RM: How tall would you say he was?

KE: I think Charlie was about six foot; he was probably 185, 190 pounds. The young bucks in there, we'd give him a hard time if he was good and drunk, but if he wasn't drunk we didn't dare. He'd come after you. [Laughter]

RM: Would he ever box anybody's ears or just threaten?

KE: He used to have a saying that he'd tie a knot in your butt for you. We were always asking, "What is he talking about?" We had a couple of young kids that said, "You'll find out if he does." I guess he'd grab you by the buttocks like that and pinch and twist and turn.

RM: That's how he enforced discipline.

KE: Yes, that's how he enforced discipline. "I'll tie a knot in your backside."

RM: What were the hours he kept, do you think?

KE: I think he was probably open at 9:00 or 10:00 and it was probably 10:00 at night before he closed down. After the theater closed he'd usually close.

RM: So people would come in there to go to the bathroom and probably stay to chat or buy something. Did you kids buy cigarettes, was that part of the . . . ?

KE: He wouldn't sell cigarettes if you weren't old enough. He used to smoke a cigarette all the time. He had a big, long cigarette holder. I never saw him smoking a cigar, I only saw that holder.

RM: How would he usually be dressed?

KE: He always dressed pretty good; he always had a sports jacket-type thing and a pair of slacks. I never saw him in Levi's. He would have a nice shirt on.

RM: And he was always long accepted by the community as kind of an institution, wasn't he?

KE: Especially after about the second generation. I think on the window it said, "C. L. Stewart." Charles L. Stewart.

RM: What year do you think he opened that? Do you have any guess?

KE: That I'm not sure. It was open when my dad was in high school.

RM: And he started off as a janitor? Did he work as a janitor in other places besides the Episcopal church?

KE: I'm thinking he did, until he got enough money to buy this little store.

RM: And you're not sure whether he owned the property or just leased it?

KE: I think he just leased it. The more I think about it, it was part of Polin's building that they had divided. He was a character. He'd bring some relatives here and they'd stay for a while and they'd leave town and pretty quick Charlie'd be the only black guy in town. The only other black guy I can remember was a porter at the Mizpah Hotel, a black bellman they had there. His last name was Porter, George Porter.

RM: What years would he have been there?

KE: About the same time as Charlie. He was a small man; he wasn't big like Charlie. He never had a wife I knew of, but he had a mother. She was a piano teacher and had a little studio in a house up on Brougher Avenue. The house is still there.

That's the only black people I can remember when I was a young man around here, until I was about in high school when a fellow moved in here that had a junk yard, Bob Campbell. When the army air force left here, people would go out there and scavenge lumber and stuff.. My dad and I were out there, and that's the first time I ever saw Bob Campbell.

RM: That would have been after the war.

KE: Yes. He was doing some salvage on that old base out there and he ended up with a junkyard here in town. It's kind of interesting—he was kind of proud, because he said, "I'm not a West African, I'm an Ethiopian." And he did look different. He still was a black person, but his face was different—East African.

RM: He made it on his junk business, didn't he? What would he do, junk cars?

KE: He started out selling stuff and salvaging out at the base. He started bringing in cars and junk.

RM: I wonder how he landed here.

KE: I have no idea.

RM: One of the things I remember about Bob Campbell is that he had a lion in his car, didn't he?

KE: He had a mountain lion in a cage right there on his place. He'd go out on the highway in the nighttime or in the mornings, whenever, and get road kill and take it and feed to the lion.

RM: That's a good idea, actually. Did he have just one lion?

KE: It seems to me he also had a bobcat or something. I remember when we were kids we'd get in the car and go up there. You had to go get your own parts. He'd just say, "Well, there's a part on that car over there." You'd get it and then see him before you leave and he'd see what you had and charge you.

RM: And take it off the junked car yourself. Did he have a lot of cars down there at the lower end of town, when he was there?

KE: He had quite a few.

RM: Then he moved up to the upper end.

KE: Oh, yes. Where the high school is now—you couldn't have believed that was a junkyard.

RM: What about some other people? Do you remember much about the Reischkes?

KE: Yes. I can't remember the mother's name—she always was "Mrs. Reischke" to me. That was quite a little establishment. They had a soda fountain and kind of a whole convenience store and candy shop. Then upstairs, Erma had a photography business and a studio. In fact, I've got a picture of my brother and sister and me and that was taken by Erma Reischke in her studio. I might have been five or six and my sister might have been ten or 11 years old. Someone told me Erma ended up being bag lady in Las Vegas. I don't know if that's true or not. I guess you couldn't make it here in a small town in a photography business by itself.

RM: It'd be hard, yes. Did the kids typically go to their store?

KE: A lot of kids went in there. They stayed open in the evenings, too. The other stores were closed but they'd stay open in the evenings and get a little late trade or whatever. It was a small grocery store and soda fountain. It was a pretty good soda fountain business: they always had ice cream and things like that. It was a plain-looking little place with screen doors in front, in a little foyer, then the wooden glass doors. When I was a kid, I can remember having to stand on a wooden box because I couldn't see up in the counter enough to see the candy.

RM: Exactly where was Reischkes' located in terms of today's Tonopah?

KE: There's an empty lot there now. It was right down from the veterans' hall, on the same side of the street. There was a motel there at one time—the Silver Queen, the one they tore down there.

RM: Reischkes' was kind of run-down, right? That's my recollection.

KE: Yes.

RM: Was there a place in town that was comparable for the young girls to go to like Charlie's?

KE: There used to be an old soda fountain place. I'm trying to think where it is now—where Perchetti has that furniture store. Kind of around that area there used to be a little place called the Block T, and it was kind of a hangout for the kids, primarily for the young girls and boys. It was oriented towards the high school. They had a soda fountain in there and sold some Cokes and ice cream and that kind of stuff. I don't know how long that lasted.

Of course, they had ladies' dress shops and women's stores. Mrs. Lyons had a place and Leona Barbarich had a store. There were two or three places like that where the women would just go and not the men. It wasn't a social club, as such, but . . .

RM: It sounds like there wasn't a place really comparable to Charlie's for the girls.

KE: No, not that I ever knew of. Of course, when I was in high school we had a roller rink here. There was an old gal, Toni Buffum, who used to work on the line down here, and as she got older she took a lease on the building and turned it into a roller rink. I guess the county had the building. That was the place to go when I was a young kid in high school. That had a roller rink and a ping pong room and things like that. All the young people could go there, both boys and girls. It was kind of a neat place.

RM: Was it pretty successful, do you think?

KE: I think it was only there four or five years. There was probably not enough money in it.

RM: Where was it located? I've been told it was by where the convention center is now.

KE: It's exactly where the convention center was. It's the same building. It's been remodeled over the years; the old configuration used to be called the civic center. It used to be the whole inside was one big open wooden floor area. I think there were two smaller rooms off it where you could play ping pong and stuff.

RM: Did Toni put her own money in that?

KE: I'm sure she did.

RM: Do you think she invested quite a bit?

KE: I don't know what something like that would even cost. The building was already there, the wooden floor was already there. It used to be a big dance floor; that's what it was designed for originally. She obviously didn't make enough money at it. I think she was getting up in years even then.

RM: But it was a pretty big deal for the kids?

KE: Oh, we thought that was the best thing that happened here.

RM: Would you go down once or twice a week?

KE: Yes, two or three times a week. On the weekends you'd go, of course, in the daytime; and evenings sometimes. I think that was open in the early late '50s and early '60s. The air force had their radar station here then and I remember the air force boys would come there.

RM: Did everybody have their own skates?

KE: No, you rented them.

RM: Talk a little bit about the Lambertuccis. Do you know anything about them?

KE: Not too much. Victor and Dominic were two brothers, two bachelors. They never married that I knew of. When we were kids sometimes we'd go down that way. They had the farm and we'd go down to go shooting birds or something—they'd try to run you off. They didn't want you on the property, they were afraid you were going to shoot their animals. Sometimes, especially later in high school, we'd just go down and talk to them. Of course, they used to grow stuff down there and sell it to the grocery stores. I think that, as time went on, the health department got a little more stringent. During the Second World War I understand that they sold a lot of stuff to the base out there. They had a hog farm and they would sell them their pork and stuff.

RM: Would they butcher there?

KE: Yes. They had a regular slaughterhouse down there and would butcher the pigs and everything.

RM: Where were their fields located? Was it about at the turnoff to go out to Anaconda?

KE: A little above there. Bell Telephone has their little office down there, kind of right in back. I think they had big metal vats where they used to boil the animals.

RM: To cook them?

KE: Either that, or they'd do that to scald them so they could scrape them off to butcher them. They had hooks kind of like a little assembly line. One building burned down years ago. There used to be houses down there. They used to hire people to come stay there and help them to run the place.

RM: So it was a going enterprise.

KE: Oh, yes. It was the only place around in the early days where you could get fresh fruit and vegetables.

RM: They had fruit trees there?

KE: Oh, yes. When I was a young guy we used to go down and we used to laugh because Dominic put mouse traps in the apple trees. We'd say, "Did you get mice?"
He'd laugh and say, "No, that's for the birds."

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Ken, you've given me the transcript of an interview that Helen Slavin did with your grandmother, apparently in 1950 or 1951. We thought we would use it as a stand-alone oral history and publish it with our other documents. I thought it would be appropriate if we had a paragraph from you as an introduction to that volume. Maybe you could say a few words about your grandmother—kind of refresh my memory since the last time we talked.

KE: Of course. As I told you, Winifred Eason was my grandmother on my father's side of the family. And in 1950 or '51, this interview was conducted by Helen Slavin, who was active in the historical aspects of our community. I think Helen kind of took it by the horns, and got things started back in the '50s. She interviewed several elderly people. My grandmother was probably around 80 years old at the time this was taped.

In the interview she recalls things about her life, and her parents coming to this country from Europe and getting started here. It's an interesting review of her life and her family, which leads to our family. Of course she was Winifred Marsh, later married to Andrew. I'm sure it would be a great historical interview for all those people who are interested in this area, and the people in this area.

She was born in 1878 and spent most of her early life in Austin, Nevada, and Placerville, California. She married my grandfather, Andrew Brant Eason, in 1898. They started off in Austin and ended up in Tonopah. They had eight children. I think only five of them lived to adulthood. In those days the doctors were few and far between. There were a lot of problems of health.

She was basically one of the pioneer ladies that come to Tonopah in 1902. She had other half-brothers and sisters that she refers to in her interview with the Silver State's Historical Society conducted by Helen Slavin. She does touch a bit on her brothers and sisters, who moved up more into the Oregon area.

When my father was only five, her husband died of pneumonia. So she basically was a single-parent mother for the rest of her life. She had opportunities to remarry and chose not to. She had one prominent fellow . . . I have to kind of laugh, because my dad and his brothers always gave her a bad time. This man would come around, and he had a lot of sheep in Nevada; he was a shepherd. I guess he'd asked her to marry him, and she turned him down. She said later, "I don't want my sons to be raised to be a bunch of shepherders." [Laughter]

RM: And she was living with her husband in Tonopah when her husband died? How did she support the family?

KE: As I said in our last meeting, her brother, Will Marsh, had a couple ranches out in Monitor Valley. She would go out to the ranch and cook and help out there. And the sons would work. When my father was only five, the older brother, Chester, was 18. He worked and helped support the family. She never really had a formal occupation.

RM: So her children were widely spaced?

KE: Oh, yes. One son, Chester, was 18 and then I think the other son, Albert, was 16. They all worked around this area and worked out on the Marsh ranches.

RM: Did most of the children spend their life in Tonopah?

KE: Yes, most of them. Albert moved to California in the '40s. He lived there the rest of his life, in the Bay Area. Chester moved down there during the Second World War, but ended up returning to Tonopah. His final years were in Tonopah as well.

RM: I think Helen Slavin's interview with your grandmother will make a wonderful addition to our archives. Why don't we pick up now from the last interview? Do you have any other recollections of people here in town that you would like to talk about? Did you know Bill Thomas at all or were you too young?

KE: I knew Sheriff Thomas. Our house was on Booker Street and the Thomases were two blocks north of us on Booker Street as well. When I was a young boy I remember him walking to work. Down the road he would come—he'd walk from his house to the courthouse almost every day unless there was something exciting going on. They only had one sheriff's vehicle.

And he never wore a sidearm. He always took care of things without a gun, it seemed like. I had heard a story that there was kind of a renegade down near Pahrump one time. Thomas did have a gun, and I guess he did take it with him. But when he arrested this man, they say he never drew his gun. He was an elderly man when I knew him.

RM: This would have been about what years?

KE: Oh, probably around the early '50s.

RM: To me he's really interesting, the last of the great sheriffs of the West.

KE: Oh, yes. And especially in the West, to walk around without a gun was almost unheard of. I've never known one sheriff since that didn't pack a firearm all the time. That's just the way he was. People respected him. He was a big man.

RM: You talked about the skating rink last time. Did you get to know its owner, Toni Buffum?

KE: Oh yes, all the teenagers got to know Toni well.

RM: What are your recollections of her?

KE: Just that she was always there, and always had a smile on her face. She was always concerned about the welfare of the children. Of course, her life was a little risqué in her early years, but she always was concerned about the community and the youth in the community. They had a bunch of young air force boys at the radar station at that time and, of course, they would come down there as well. She treated them just like she would a kid from town. I heard

that every year, any young man or young woman in the service, if they were overseas serving their country, she would send them some money—five dollars or ten dollars or something—at Christmas. That's just something that she did, and hardly anybody knew about it. I can't recall how I found out about it. Clear up until the time of the Vietnam War, she would still be sending these gifts at Christmastime. She was a doll.

RM: Yes, she was. That's a good story, that she would send them money from her own pocket. She helped get me through school. I don't think I would have made it through college without her. She was the union representative here in town and she used to get me summer jobs so I'd make enough money to go back to school.

KE: Something I do remember about Toni. It seemed like every year, or every couple years, you'd see her all dressed up to the nines, with a big fancy hat on and stuff, and she'd go to Paris, to Europe.

RM: Oh, my gosh. For a vacation? This was when you were growing up?

KE: Yes, I was just a kid around then. In the summertime she'd be going to France.

RM: Did her mother live here in town for a time?

KE: Yes, she and her mother lived together, I thought, in the house in back of the Shell service station. Most of the time that I knew Toni, the mother was still alive. I think the mother was quite elderly when she died.

RM: Do you have any recollections of Bobbie Duncan? She was kind of a beloved figure, too.

KE: Yes, somewhat. She ran the house up here off of the highway. She was the same way. She always would give money to the kids locally, or to anyone in need. Some of the more snooty people would take offense at her, but any young kid that needed some help, financial or something, she was right there. She was kind of a jovial type of person.

RM: Did you know Red Douglass at all?

KE: I knew Red quite well. He had a son that was about my age, young Alan; we went to school together. We got into high school and we were interested in chemistry and physics and that type of thing. Of course, that was about the same time that we were seeing a lot on the television about the Russians sending Sputnik into space, rocketry. We got into trying to see if we could build some rockets. We were figuring it out. We'd get the encyclopedias out and see if we could find out how to make the fuel for these rockets. We had all kinds of little experiments and I think we drove the chemistry teacher crazy, but we did figure out how to make some of the stuff.

I remember one day in school, I had a fellow in my class, a very smart man—a young boy at that time—that was ahead of his time in physics and chemistry. His name was Ralph

Dahlquist. Ralph was a good straight-A student, but he was very outgoing. Anyway, we got mixing this powder, and he knew a lot more about it than I did. We were mixing what they called flash powder and we put some together. The chemistry teacher let us work in the lab when no one was back there. Well, Ralph had nothing better to do back there, monkeying around with it, but he grabbed the wrong stuff up and it exploded in the lab. It burned a hole in his shirt and burned all his eyelashes off. And he got all excited. And the teacher come running in, "What happened?" he said, "What happened?"

Dahlquist said, "Eason dropped a match in my powder over there." [Laughter]

RM: He blamed it on you?

KE: Yes. Really, it was just the friction of the zinc and . . . but anyway, we finally figured out that if you mix it with glycerin and different things, you can form it into a solid fuel. We made a couple of rockets. Alan's dad, Red, had the Midland Motors, the Ford place down here, and had a lathe in there. He got some aluminum tubing off of an old wrecked aircraft and we made the aluminum tube for the rocket out of that. We used the lathe to make the nose cone. We got a launching pad. We were trying to do it secretly because we were not too sure what we were doing.

But the principal of the high school found out about it—that we were going to make this launch. He closed the whole school down and had them come down to watch us launch this thing. [Laughter] It was very embarrassing because it fizzled. It wasn't the rocket as much as it was the launch pad. We tried to get it to go vertical but we had to kind of shoot them off at an angle. And we all got an A in physics that year. But the chemistry teacher got in trouble, and we couldn't use the lab anymore unless he was there to supervise us. [Laughter]

RM: Did you ever get one to fly?

KE: Oh, yes.

RM: How high would they go?

KE: They weren't really great, but they were metal; they weren't made out of cardboard. We got one up about a couple hundred feet.

RM: That is amazing. At that time, the U.S. was having a hard time getting their rockets to fly.

KE: Yes. We spent all this time at Red Douglass' garage making this real fancy nose cone. And it fizzled up, of course. It burned the whole thing up, the nose cone and everything. So the next time, we just put an easy wooden one in there and screwed it in and it flew like a charm. The fancy one didn't fly too good.

Ralph Dahlquist, young Al Douglass, and myself, and I think maybe one of the Metschers, either Bill or Philip, were involved. We had a lot of fun doing it. It was a wonder we didn't blow each other up. [Laughter]

RM: That was around '57?

KE: Yes, '57, '58, somewhere in there.

RM: That was about the same time that the Vanguard rocket, after Sputnik, blew up on the pad down at Cape Canaveral.

KE: Ours didn't blow up, they just burned up. They get locked up in the launch pad and then burned up. We were embarrassed because the principal had the school and everybody down.

RM: What did the kids say?

KE: Oh, they're all, "Oh, yeah." I guess they were kind of impressed. But when it didn't fly too good . . . when it flew, then they were very impressed. [Laughter] We had a lot of fun. They had an old cellar in Alan's house and we worked in there. And pretty quick, the mother ran us off because she thought we were going to blow her house up.

RM: [Laughs] What other things do you recall about school?

KE: Oh, Tonopah was still just a small town. When I was about a freshman, they decided to introduce football back; Tonopah hadn't had a football team since the late 19-teens. We had the school colors, red and white, and the theme song was "Come On, You Muckers." They were based after the old college colors and songs from Wisconsin. I guess the first football coach from Tonopah was from Wisconsin.

They went for 30 or 40 years without a football team. The town was so small that they just had basketball, minimal sports. When I was about a freshman, a new coach came to Tonopah and revitalized football. We still didn't have enough players so they started in a six-man football league. It was kind of a hybrid of real football. You had the same gear and all that type of thing but it was a smaller football field. I think you had 80 yards, instead of 100 yards.

Of course, all the young boys were enthused about that. I only weighed about 105 pounds so I didn't play when I was a freshman. Tonopah was notorious because we didn't have a grass field. We had a dirt field. Everybody hated to come play here. [Laughter] You'd get ground up pretty good sometimes. I don't recall that we ever had a grass field until after I got out of high school. But we had several games; we played six-man football.

RM: Where was the field at that time?

KE: It was up where the junior high field is—that was the high school field at the time. It's still there; the junior high still uses it. We enjoyed going to other fields because everybody else had nice grass fields.

RM: What teams did you play, in those years?

KE: We played the smaller schools all over the state. We played Fernley and we'd play up in Wells, Nevada. We played a couple of the schools down south—Moapa Valley, I think. We were all over the place.

RM: So you were taking some long bus rides?

KE: Oh, yes. Those were good ones, I tell you. We were going to Wells one time. We had a small bus—the school finally bought a small bus. We got to Ely Summit and the bus quit. We figured we had to get the bus over the hill so we could at least get down to a service station. So the whole team got out and we pushed the bus over the Ely Summit.

RM: Oh, my God. It was a small bus? Did you get it fixed?

KE: We got down to the Ford dealer in Ely and he fixed it for us. We got up to Wells, and just this side of Wells, it quit again. I think that the coach called the principal and told him we were having bus trouble and the principal of Tonopah called the Wells principal and told him that we might be a little bit late because we were having problems, and to keep an eye out for us. Well, I guess when we didn't show up on time, they did send a car out to look on the highway, and there we were. They towed us into Wells and we played the game late that afternoon. And they beat the hell out of us, just to add insult to injury. That was quite a trip.

RM: Were you on the team at that time?

KE: Yes.

RM: How many kids were in your graduating class?

KE: I think we only had 16 when I was a senior. The whole high school might have been 85 or 90 kids.

RM: And that was the old high school, wasn't it?

KE: That was the old high school that was up on Bryan Avenue—a three-story building. It was the only school in Tonopah. It was first grade through the twelfth grade.

RM: And you went to all the grades there?

KE: All 12 grades in the same school. It was kind of ironic because my father went to school there and so did most of his brothers, and we even had some of the same teachers. They were young teachers when my dad was there, of course. Mrs. Curieux was a first grade teacher for over 35 years, I think. She taught my father and I think the year I was in first grade might have been the last, or close to the last, class that she taught.

The old high school was on one side of the building and the grade school was on the other side. It was a three-story building with fire escapes. For fire drills, you came off those fire escapes and the firemen would be at the bottom waiting for you to fall on your head, I guess.

Today, that wouldn't pass any kind of code at all. I don't think they put you on the upper floors until you were older, like the fifth or sixth grade, at least, so if you had to climb off the fire escapes, it wasn't quite the danger.

In the summertime, that was a great place for us to go hiking, on top of the building; you'd climb up the fire escapes and all. We weren't supposed to be on there, of course. Once in a while the principal or somebody would see us and turn us in and run us off of there.

I can remember, when I was in eighth grade, I went to a basketball tournament in Bishop, California. It was the wintertime and there was lots of snow. The principal, at that time, was also an eighth grade teacher, Mr. Arthur Lepore. Art taught here for quite a few years and he later became the principal of the high school as well. Anyway, he was very good to all the young guys, and always had a basketball team. There were no buses in those days so he would take his car and he tried to recruit a parent or two to bring their cars. We all went in cars.

On this particular trip to Bishop, we were in Art Lepore's car—an old Plymouth, as I recall. And we were coming over Montgomery Pass, all I can remember was looking over, and I saw the steering wheel drop into Art's lap. At first I thought the steering wheel came off. We slide off the side of the road—panicked, you know—and I guess the steering column came loose, or something. It flopped down like this. So we get off to the side of the road, and of course, now it's half slushy and he can't get back on the road. Out we go, all of us young guys, pushing this car back on the pavement. We had lots of mud on us from the tires by the time we got through. We got back on the road and got home all right.

RM: So you guys were prone to use student power?

KE: Oh, yes, always pushing something. It's like the old cars we had as kids. You didn't have a lot of cars around Tonopah, especially if you were in high school. You didn't have any money to have a car, so you would put old jalopies together. I think we pushed them more than rode in them. [Laughter]

RM: I lived in Ely in that period, and I spent all my spare time working on an old piece of junk.

KE: You were always working on them or pushing them or towing them or something. Even if you weren't too mechanically prone, if you had a car, you learned how to do all that stuff.

RM: Yes, because you didn't have the money to take it to a garage.

KE: And if you had to go get a part, like I said, you'd just go to the junkyard and get it and work on it. I can remember an old Ford I had my sister gave me; she got married. I think it was a '47. It wasn't much of a car. It always had carburetor problems. I can remember even putting tin foil down in the carburetor so the little armature would open and shut the valve. [Laughs]

RM: It worked?

KE: It worked. But today you couldn't do anything like that.

RM: The cars are in a different category now with electronics and computers.

KE: You have to have a degree to run them now. But we had lots of fun with the old cars. We had a good time in high school. We had the roller rink and we had the old Block T, which was a hangout for the kids on Main Street, a soda fountain-type place. We had two soda fountains—the Corner Store and the Wardles store was where Otteson's Turquoise is now. With Reischkes' there were three fountains.

RM: Which was the most popular?

KE: Probably the Corner Store and the Wardles. Reischkes' was smaller, and it couldn't hold as many people. The Block T didn't last too long. I think it was a kind of a sandwich shop and had soft drinks. It was further up the street. We had a bowling alley later, and there was the skating rink, and then in a side room they had ping-pong tables and things like that. It was a good place for young people to go to.

RM: Any other thoughts about school and kid's lives in those days?

KE: Well, you had that group that was always pulling pranks on people.

RM: What were some pranks you guys pulled?

KE: I know we did some good ones but I can't remember all of them. One of them I do remember—we were talking about Bobbie Duncan, and the brothel was called Bobbie's Buckeye.

RM: The one up on the hill?

KE: Yes. I don't know whose bright idea it was, but we thought we'd go out there and steal the sign—she had a big sign on the road—and put it on the high school. [Laughter] And we did. At night we got some guys up on the front part of the high school with some ropes and we hauled it up and put it right above the entrance.

RM: Oh my God, what a prank! Did it make the papers?

KE: I can't recall, but it certainly got the attention of the principal.

RM: Did they ever find out who did it?

KE: I think they knew who did it but could never prove it. The principal would always tell us, "Don't you guys pull something like that again." [Laughter] I can't remember how, but the sign got back to Bobbie's place.

RM: Did Bobbie say anything?

KE: I can't remember if she did or not.

RM: [Laughs] Any other pranks?

KE: I didn't do it, but I can remember, I think it was young Alan Douglass; he was a pretty good prankster, too. He and Philip Metscher were big friends, and somehow they got into a bunch of ping pong balls from someplace. Maybe it was after the roller skating rink closed down. I don't know how they ever got this notion in their head, but they ground them up and put them in the furnace at the school. Of course it smoked the whole place out; closed it down for a day or so. I can remember that. It smelled the whole place up. [Laughter]

RM: Did they get in trouble? Or did they know who did it?

KE: I can't remember. All the kids knew who did it but I don't know if the teachers did. I can't remember if we were in high school or junior high school. We had a teacher by the name of Mr. Lundgren. I'm not sure what university he came from, but he was on their boxing team. If you were a wise guy in high school, if you got out of line, your punishment was you'd have to go down and put the boxing gloves on with Mr. Lundgren after school. Instead of detention and so forth, you went down and got a boxing lesson.

RM: Did you ever have to have a lesson?

KE: I don't think I did. I remember in P.E., he actually taught a little boxing to us. We did box each other for P.E.

RM: Would he work a kid over pretty good?

KE: I think he was pretty easy on them, compared to what he could do. If he'd get a wise guy who thought he was tough guy, he'd take them down and show them how. Of course, that would be a real "no-no" today. But he got a lot of respect. If you were around his classes, or around him, you had to watch what you were doing.

RM: Young boys would really respect that kind of thing, wouldn't they?

KE: Yes. And I mentioned Mr. Lepore. He'd come from Idaho State University and he was on a boxing team, too. We finally goaded the two of them into a boxing match, and they did put on an exhibition one time. It was kind of interesting. Mr. Lundgren was more of a somber person. If he got mad at you, you'd better go put the boxing gloves on . . .

RM: And you had to do it, didn't you? The parents would probably back him up.

KE: I'm sure they did. Guys like him stick in my mind, you know? Speaking of teachers who stick in my mind, I remember I had a teacher when I was in the seventh grade, Mrs. Nellie Burke. She was there a long time. She was a very good teacher. You think back on people who you learned something from. There were good ones like her that were very emphatic about how to write—script writing and so on. If you didn't pay attention, especially if you were a boy, she had a nice little way to torture you. She'd bring you up in front of the class, take the chair out in front of her desk, and you'd have to sit on her lap until the class was over with. She'd put her arm around you, hug you . . .

RM: And the kids would be hooting?

KE: Oh, yes. She'd say, "Let's read together." She treated you like you were still in the second grade. But she was a good teacher. I think she was originally from Goldfield. I know she's buried in Goldfield.

There was Mrs. Curieux and a second grade teacher, Mrs. Falvey. Mrs. Falvey was a very disciplinarian-type teacher, a very good teacher. Even in second grade, that long back, I can still remember, as an old dumb kid, I'd be talking too much and she'd say, "Kenneth, I want you to put your hands flat on your desk." I thought this was some kind of an exercise. Well, it was. She laid a big, long ruler across both of my hands. "Next time I tell you to be quiet, you be quiet."

RM: And that certainly stayed in your mind. Was Halloween a big holiday in Tonopah?

KE: It was. When you think back about it now, it's a wonder we didn't burn the town down or get put in jail. We used to think it was a good time to go out and just raise Cain on Halloween. Once you got past the trick or treat age, this is kind of the age of turning over outhouses and so on. There were people that still had outhouses.

RM: Did you guys do that?

KE: Oh, yes. I can remember, we tipped one over someplace. One of the guys with us, I can't remember exactly which one, his coat sleeve caught on a nail or something just as it was turning over and he went down in the hole.

RM: Oh, that's a good one. [Laughs]

KE: We found an old wrecked car one time, just the body of it. It seems like we dragged it down the middle of Main Street and left it out in the middle of the street. It's a wonder we didn't get put in jail for that one.

RM: Were you with those boys that moved the Buckeye sign?

KE: Yes.

RM: How many were doing that?

KE: There were probably a half a dozen of us.

RM: How big was the sign?

KE: It was pretty good size, probably four or five by eight. I remember putting it on top of one of the kids' car and holding on to it so it wouldn't blow off. Of course, he was going back down towards town and the wind was catching it, and it was raising me out of the car seat.

Yes, Halloween was always a challenge. But one year we got carried away—it really got us in trouble. We poured gasoline across one road and lit it on fire. That didn't go over too good with the community.

RM: What road was it that you poured it on?

KE: Booker or Bryan Avenue or something. Of course, we'd get near people's houses that we knew we could get their goat, and I guess those are the ones we used to pick on more.

[Laughter]

RM: Were a lot of people still using outhouses then?

KE: Not too many, but there were still a few of them around. You think back on the price, and they couldn't afford indoor plumbing. And these mean kids were tipping their toilets over. You never thought about that when you were in high school.

RM: No, kids don't think about things like that.

KE: If the cops caught you, you had to put them all back up.

RM: And the cops were probably out on Halloween expecting trouble?

KE: Oh, yes. And we used to always watch out for them when we'd do stuff. You don't think how mean some of that stuff was, when you're that age.

RM: No. Did the girls get involved in that kind of devilment?

KE: A few of them, but mainly it was the guys.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: What did you do when you graduated from high school?

KE: I'd planned to go to the university, but when I first got out of school, I didn't have quite enough money so I thought I'd work a couple years and save up for it. I went to work different places. I worked for a construction company when I first got out of school up at the radar site near Tonopah.

RM: You mean the one here in town or the one out north?

KE: The one out north. I worked out there for a few months; we built that. Jobs kind of got scarce after that. I went to work for the bank down here as a bank teller.

RM: What year did you graduate?

KE: In 1959. In about '60 or '61, I was about ready to go to college, and in fact young Alan Douglass's dad bought a trailer house and put it up someplace in Reno. I had it all set—I was going to rent a room in the trailer. About that time the Vietnam War started to heat up pretty good. You know, in those days you had the draft and I was on the draft list. I'm looking down the list at the guys ahead of me and I thought, "Wow, these are all big athletes ahead of me. They'll pick them." Well, they picked me. All these big athletes and so on came up 4-F for one reason or another. I think in February you had to register for the spring semester, and at Christmas I get a nice little greeting from Uncle Sam. So I put my college ideas on hold for a couple years.

RM: Did you get drafted into the army?

KE: I got drafted, yes.

RM: Did you have to go to Vietnam?

KE: I lucked out. My brother Andy had just been discharged from the army and had served a few months in Vietnam before I got drafted. At first I was stationed at Fort Ord, California. Outside of being in the army, it was a beautiful area to be in. So on the weekends it was nice. I had a nice clerical job in the finance center there on the post and the war started heating up, and they had to get more troops on the ground over there so all of the clerical jobs went to civilians and to the WACs, women in the army. And all the rest of us, they reassigned to combat units.

Most of the guys in the outfit got sent up to Fort Lewis, Washington, the 4th Infantry Division. They were trying to build that unit up to go to Vietnam. I was supposed to go to an artillery unit, and somehow I got reassigned to a medical unit instead as a company clerk, a finance clerk. I was a finance company clerk that took care of all the payroll in what they called a MASH unit, like you see on television—a mobile army surgical hospital unit—the 27th MASH.

We were assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. They build these divisions up until they were at full strength, then they sent them over. They'd be half strength when they first got there.

In those days, they had enough manpower, I guess, that if you were down under a certain number of weeks or months before your two years was up, you didn't have to go. So in my last month or two, I got reassigned to a different unit. Our job was to take supplies and trucks to the port of Tacoma and put them on cargo ships for Vietnam. So I never had to really go into combat.

While I was in Fort Lewis, in the MASH unit there, our function was to build up other medical units and get them ready to go to Vietnam. We were kind of a cadre unit, to build up the units. They'd bring all the young doctors and dentists and medical personnel in right out of college. Most of them had never even seen a uniform before. A lot of our jobs as cadre units were to show them how to dress properly and the etiquettes of the military. Of course, we all had been there a while, so we all had different gadgets on our uniforms. These young lieutenants and captains that were just medical officers would be saluting us and we'd say, "No, no, it's the other way around. We're supposed to salute you."

We had a major in charge of our unit there. He'd get after us and say, "You've got to be stern with them. They're still officers, but you've got to be stern with them anyway." Well, a young doctor would come in from medical school and he'd automatically have a captain's rank. A dentist would come in as a first lieutenant.

But it was a tough time. You never knew if you had to go to Vietnam or not. The casualties were so high there that you didn't know if you'd ever come back if you went. I knew a lot of guys that went and didn't come back. Fort Lewis was kind of like a debarkation place for a lot of the units going and coming. There's a big hospital right there between Fort Lewis and Madigan, Madigan General Hospital, a combined air force/army hospital. There's an air force base right next to it, McCord Air Force Base. They brought a lot of the injured guys back that had to have rehabilitation. That was a tough hospital to be in.

A lot of the units at Fort Lewis, like the 4th Division, were what they call STRACT units. They were units that they put on aircraft and sent real quick to someplace if they had to. But when Vietnam got real hot and heavy, they wanted to change the mission for the 4th to just sending them as regular infantry in Vietnam so they had to bolster the size of the units. It took a while.

It was an interesting couple of years. And of course, I couldn't wait to get out. My wife, at that time, was my girlfriend, Glenda Jeffery. I was planning to go to the university to be with her; she was just going in as a freshman. That didn't quite work out, thanks to the army. We got engaged while I was in the service but we decided not to marry until after I got out. You know, your mortality rate, at that time, for Vietnam, was not good. I could've gone to Vietnam any time, and I didn't want to . . .

RM: Leave her a widow at such a young age.

KE: Yes, but it worked out.

RM: Was she from Tonopah?

KE: Yes. She was born here, just like I was. Her mother and dad were both from Tonopah as well. Her mother was Irene Petrovich, and she married Harold Jeffery; Glenda was the oldest of four children. Irene is 87 now, I think. And she just is so spry. She's unbelievable. She still lives in her own house; she's been in the same house for 65 years or so.

RM: That's remarkable. What did Irene's husband do?

KE: He and his brother ran the Y Service Station here for many, many years.

RM: What was the brand?

KE: It was a Mobil station, the red horse. They ran that for many years. It was actually part of Cavanaugh brothers. They ran that part for Charles and John Cavanaugh. Then when they closed that service station down, Cavanaugh's had a propane business, and Glenda's father went to work for the propane company. He was the maintenance man for the propane business, installing stoves and that type of thing.

RM: When did Irene's father and mother come here?

KE: I'm not sure about the date, but it was around the turn of the century. Irene's father was from Serbia, and the mother was from Montenegro, so they were Yugoslavian. I think they actually came to Alaska first, then came down to Nevada.

RM: Were they married before they came here?

KE: I'm not sure if they were married then or not. And her father lived in the house right below the Mizpah Mine—that's where Irene was raised. She wasn't born there; she was actually born in Mason, Nevada, up by Yerington. I guess her father was down there for a short time.

RM: And then came here at a young age?

KE: Yes, three years old or so.

RM: So Glenda, like you, had deep roots in Tonopah.

KE: Oh, yes. Now on her father's side of the family, they were English and German.

RM: Was Irene's father's father a miner when they came here?

KE: Yes.

RM: Did he get silicosis?

KE: I think the father died of silicosis.

RM: And then what about her father's family?

KE: I'm not sure how they got to Wisconsin. They were in Wisconsin first. They had several sons and the one son came to Round Mountain and worked at the mine there.

RM: And how did her father's family wind up in Tonopah?

KE: I think the mine at Round Mountain closed and they moved into Tonopah. I think the father actually worked in a mine here as a hoist man. I guess he passed away pretty young also.

RM: From silicosis?

KE: I think so. I can remember Glenda's father, Harold, telling me a story. He lived at Round Mountain and he said things were tough out there. There was a bootlegger at Round Mountain and somehow his father got a deal. The revenuers were kind of watching this guy so he hired Harold's father to transport the stuff into Tonopah so they wouldn't suspect him. Harold said, "I was just a small boy; I didn't think too much about it. All I remember is after we got it here, and my dad paid a visit to the Antler Lodge, we had plenty of money to buy stuff. We got new clothes and everything." Someone in the Antlers Lodge had a contact man.

RM: So Glenda's mother and father grew up in Tonopah?

KE: Yes, they both went to high school here. They were childhood sweethearts, married right out of high school. I guess the parents of one of them weren't too hot on them getting married that young and so they eloped and got married by a J.P. in Ely.

RM: And then they had how many children?

KE: Four children.

RM: Can you give me their names, in order?

KE: Glenda was the oldest. Her sister Beverly was next. There's kind of a gap, about ten or 12 years, and then they had another sister, Cynthia, and then the brother. His name is Sam. Sam was named after Irene's brother, Samuel Petrovich. He was killed in Okinawa, in the Second World War.

RM: Do you recall Glenda telling stories about growing up in Tonopah?

KE: Oh, yes, it was a lot of the same stuff we did. They were a little more conservative. Her mother always had her and her sister dressed to the nines. She made a lot of their clothes and they were always prim and proper.

I remember her dad used to really like horses and he had a corral on the hill in back of his house. Glenda, of course, knew how to ride real well. When we got married, I was probably going to get a horse and she wasn't too crazy about it. I said, "Well, your dad always had horses."

She said, "Yeah, but I always had to take care of all the corrals. I don't want any more horses." Her dad was a big horseman. He used to like to hunt and would take the horses hunting.

She and her friends had a lot of stories of when they were younger; I can't remember all of them. I can remember her cousin John Maslach was a big stout kid. He was a big football player and stuff. The air force boys came to town and of course, they were always looking for a girlfriend. Johnny told his sister Sylvia and Glenda (they were in the same class together), "You better not ever let me catch you out with those air force boys." One night, I guess, one of the air force guys gives them a ride someplace, and Johnny stopped the car. He pulled both those girls out and took them home.

He said, "Now I'm going to go back and beat that kid to a pulp."

And they said, "You better not, or we'll turn you in to the cops" or something. Anyway, he didn't really do it; he just threatened that to them.

She said, "We couldn't do anything without him watching us," you know.

I was just a young guy. Before I got into high school, like the eighth grade or something, we built ourselves carts, sort of like the soapbox derby carts—our own version of them. You'd go around these big steep hills and you'd be going like crazy. We finally wised up, and did start wearing some helmets because of a couple of crashes. One time I was up on the hill—there's a corner right there, and I came around the corner in this little cart we'd fixed up. Glenda's dad had a nice picket fence around the house. I ran right into the picket fence. He was not too happy. He told her, "You stay away from hoodlums like that."

RM: He told her that? [Laughter] Were you and Glenda the same age?

KE: She was four years younger than I was. She told me, "My dad says you're a hoodlum."

RM: [Laughs] Did you fall for her pretty young?

KE: It was a little bit different than that, Bob. We knew each other in high school and we never dated then. A year or two out of high school, I'd worked around a little bit and she had started in with the first year of college. We went to a big dance at the Elk's Lodge every year—a charity ball, they called it. I hadn't seen her for quite a while, and her mother had made her a nice-looking dress, and we kind of started dancing that night, and got together. When she was younger, or when I was in high school, I guess I was too busy playing sports and being crazy to get serious about a girlfriend.

RM: Plus, four years is a lot at that age.

KE: Yes. And through the army and everything else, she waited for me, just like a fairy tale or something. When I got out of the army, I went to college at Reno.

RM: What did you study there?

KE: Finance and accounting.

RM: And when did you and Glenda get married?

KE: We got married in 1966, about six months after I got out of the army, and we lived in Reno. I was still going to school and she got a job teaching. She finished that year, when I got out of the army.

RM: Where was she teaching?

KE: She taught at Verdi Elementary in Reno, to start with. And she taught at another school later on. She and her cousin Sylvia Maslach were in the same class in high school. I think Sylvia was the valedictorian and Glenda was the salutatorian. They went to college, and they roomed at Manzanita, a dormitory there. For all four years, they were in the same room together. Sylvia still lives in Reno. She was also a teacher. She's retired. They were best friends—and relatives, besides. They helped each other through school and they had a good time.

Then, a couple years after that, along came our son, Daniel. We stayed in Reno for about three years after that.

RM: Danny was born when?

KE: In '67. Our daughter, Melissa, was born after we moved back to Tonopah. We moved back here in 1970 and we had our daughter about a year later, after my army discharge. I went to work for a bank in Reno, and I had a good job there. A fellow here, Emerson Titlow, had the insurance business. Glenda and I were both kind of homesick, for whatever reason, and he wanted to sell it. So we made a deal, and I moved back here in the insurance business. It was an agency that had been in different hands for years but it's been here ever since the early days of Tonopah. As far as I could see, there was a fellow back in 1934 by the name of Cable Ward that owned the insurance agency.

RM: Did he start it, or did he buy it from somebody?

KE: I think Cable Ward started it. And I think he sold it to a fellow by the name of Naismith. Naismith had it for many, many years and sold it to Titlow. And then from Titlow to me.

RM: Do you know the background of the original fellow?

KE: Not too much. The only thing I know about Cable Ward is he had a couple of businesses. He was an insurance broker and he was a title insurance man as well. I think when Naismith came into it, Naismith did insurance and accounting. Emerson took it from Naismith, for many years, and he did the same thing.

RM: When did Naismith take it over?

KE: I'm not sure. The only paperwork I can find on it is 1934. Some insurance policies I found were issued in 1934.

RM: What kind of insurance was he selling at that time?

KE: Basically, it was a property, casualty—liability and property insurance. I'm thinking that Ward might have been in that business for 30 years. I think he was here in the early days.

RM: So it went way back.

KE: I don't see his name on it, but I have a policy that was lying around in the office from about 1910. It was a policy from Hartford Insurance that insured the Tonopah Mining Company. The premium was, like, \$3,000 a year, for the whole mining company.

RM: And what were they insured for?

KE: Their buildings, and fire and liability. Back in those days, they didn't have worker's compensation insurance. What I understood is if they'd had, like, a mine accident, the miners could hold the company liable under the old liability terms. Until worker's comp came in, if they could find negligence on the behalf of the mines, they could go after liability. Today, that's prohibited by worker's comp laws, but I know that when the miners were killed in the Belmont in the big disaster here in 1917, they all sued the company.

RM: Did they collect?

KE: They did. I remember reading about it. They weren't big settlements, but they were like \$3,000 or something like that. That was negligence on the mine's part because they were dumping timbers down at the bottom of the shaft. Instead of taking the expense of hauling them up and disposing of the broken timbers, they'd just throw them down the bottom of the shaft. And the fire ended up in that shaft. They had some warnings and didn't do anything about it so they were held liable for that, all right.

RM: Did they have insurance?

KE: It wasn't our policy, but I'm sure they probably did.

RM: So the prosperous mines had insurance in those days?

KE: Oh, yes. I'm sure in the early days that's how people like Cable Ward made their living. Because personal policies weren't much in those days.

RM: They didn't sell that many personal policies?

KE: No, it was commercial insurance.

RM: What about the miners that died of silicosis?

KE: I don't recall anybody ever really being able to collect on silicosis. If it was an injury, or something like that, or negligence on behalf of the mine, they'd have to pay.

RM: Was it hard to demonstrate negligence?

KE: Oh, I'm sure it was. In those days, if you have the money to go hire a lawyer . . . and if you didn't, then too bad.

RM: And most of those guys didn't have any money?

KE: No. Today they have lawyers that the state will put up for you. In the early days, safety wasn't a big issue. Over the years what's triggered a lot of the safety issues were some of these claims, I think. The government started paying more attention to some of the safety issues and industrial insurance commissions were formed to protect workers. When you look at old museum stuff, you can see some of the old miner's hats. They weren't even helmets. They were just hats, a thing to wear the light on. So if something caved in on you, it was too bad.

RM: Right. And then Cable Ward's sold it to . . . ?

KE: To Naismith. Walter Naismith. I knew Walter, and his son was involved in the business. They moved to Reno. The son moved first. He went to college and I think he found a better location. I think that's when Emerson went to work for Naismith; he took the son's job.

RM: And what do you know about Naismith?

KE: Not much. All I know is that he was an accountant, and an insurance man.

RM: And what did the insurance business consist of, by that time? In the '30s?

KE: I think it was still pretty much commercial; the main source of income would be from commercial insurance. Private home insurance and auto insurance was not very prevalent until, probably, after the Second World War.

RM: So if your house burned down, you were out of luck?

KE: Yes. In the early days—not too much here, but back in the eastern states, where a lot of insurance was started in this country—insurance really was part of an arrangement with the fire department. A lot of volunteer fire departments charged you to insure your house. They

basically said, "Well, if you pay us so much a year, we'll come put your fire out if your house starts on fire." And they'd put a placard on your house. If you had a fire, they'd come running down and if you had a placard on your house, they'd put the fire out. If you didn't have a placard on your house . . .

RM: Too bad? Now, when was this?

KE: The turn of the century. A lot of companies came in, for some reason, to Hartford, Connecticut, and New York, and other eastern states. A lot of them were holdovers from English companies. Hartford Insurance was actually a homegrown company, but I think, still probably influenced by some backers from England. A lot of your big companies were started by English conglomerates.

RM: But before the insurance companies came in, you would send your payment to the fire department?

KE: To the fire department, instead of to a company. Over the years, it evolved into a company.

RM: When did the idea of a fire department as something for the whole community take hold?

KE: The late 1800s. Before that, if you didn't pay them, they didn't put your fire out whether you had a commercial building or a private house. It got to be like a regular business, I understand. The insurance companies replaced the fire departments and the fire departments became municipal fire departments instead of volunteer departments.

RM: When did the idea of life insurance come in?

KE: Insuring stuff started way back in England. Lloyd's of London is probably the oldest insurance underwriters. Lloyd's of London aren't truly insurance companies, they are conglomerates of investors. Insurance companies will sell them contracts, what they call reinsurance. A company will set up an insurance policy, and they've only got so much capital. They'll invest half of it, and they'll go to places like Lloyd's of London and buy reinsurance. The actuarial study will say, "Chances are, this isn't going to happen. And you can make some money on this." Lloyd's of London made fortunes doing this. Lloyd's got started doing a lot of insuring shipping, cargo, from around the world. That's how they made their fortunes, off of cargo insurance.

RM: So in the history of Tonopah, it starts out as commercial insurance. And what happens next?

KE: Well, it just evolves, like it has throughout the rest of the country. Private people started buying insurance on their house, and the car, and on their lives. That expanded insurance nationwide and Tonopah went right along.

RM: Was the early fire insurance in Tonopah through the fire department?

KE: No. By the time it reached here, by the turn of the century, they had evolved into insurance companies and away from the private fire departments.

RM: And when did people get the idea of starting insuring their lives here in Tonopah?

KE: I'm not sure, Bob. Our agency's best thing today remains property and liability, not so much life. I don't have a lot of background in life insurance. The concept of life insurance has evolved into many crazy things, and part of our financial problems today are some of the investing part of this business, getting away from the insurance into the investing part of it.

Basically, the idea of what they call a term life policy is to invest for a period of time into premiums, that, in the event of your death, will pay off your debts, send the kid to college, and whatever. Some of these sharpies, these banks and such, got involved in the insurance side of it. They turned a lot of it into what they call whole life policies. That's where they take portions of your premiums and invest that money into the stock market and different investments. They still have this little part, the term life policy, but you're paying a lot more money. The theory is, over ten years or 20 years, this investment part would then have a big cash value, sort of like a savings account.

I've never been a big fan of that type of insurance. What's happened in the last couple years is a prime example. They have so many ways of investing that are not secure that it makes me very nervous. In my business I do sell life insurance, but I never pushed the whole life, or the variable annuity. I don't push those types of programs at all because I won't sell something that I don't believe in myself. If you want life insurance . . . maybe they should call it death insurance instead of life insurance. They can't sell death insurance, but the benefit should go to someone else, not yourself. The idea of the whole life and variable annuity stuff is that it's something you'll get back if you don't die. But with the stock market crashing, those kinds of programs are so volatile that I'd hate to have a big portfolio that I sold to people and have to face them and say, "Well, you just lost half of what you invested." And hope they don't shoot you. So I kind of stay away from that part of the insurance business.

RM: That's interesting. And when did Naismith sell it?

KE: I think Naismith sold out to Titlow probably in the early '50s.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: What do you know about Titlow?

KE: Emerson was a native of Tonopah. He went to high school here and I think he worked for Naismith. I know that he went in the service in the Marine Corps in World War II. And he bought that business from Naismith after the Second World War.

RM: And by then, had it grown?

KE: Oh, yes. It had grown quite a bit. They used to have an office on the Main Street next to the Butler Theatre, going north.

RM: And I assume he prospered in the business? Why did he sell it?

KE: He became a state senator. Emerson was a state senator for several years. He got involved in a lot of politics and he helped a lot of people. He became associated with people in the northern part of the state. He then decided to open an insurance agency up there, which he did, and he wanted to sell this one.

RM: Why didn't he keep them both?

KE: I think he did for a while, but he got the one going a little better up there. I'm not sure if that worked out too well, but he'd bought a home up there and he moved there. He was only up there four, or five, or six years and he started having health problems.

RM: Is his business in Reno still in existence?

KE: No, his business went under or he sold it or left it to someone else. I recall he was ill for several years before he died.

RM: Tell me about the work you did in Reno.

KE: I was what they call an operations officer. You're not a lending officer, but you're more in charge of the personnel. It was one of the bigger branches of the First National Bank up in Reno, the Second Street and Virginia Street branch, which is no longer there. It's part of Harrah's Club now, I think. It had big stone pillars. They serviced a lot of the casinos so they had big vaults. I worked in the vault there.

RM: And it was on Harrah's property?

KE: No, it was right down the street from Harrah's. It had been there for years; it was one of the older banks in Reno.

RM: Did you enjoy that?

KE: I did. I liked it. I started off working in the vaults with the big casinos. They used to bring their money in, in mailbags and it was just mind boggling, at first. It was quite a bit to handle. We used to count the money. I had never really handled that much money before—we're talking millions of dollars. They had the casinos trained to strap the money into bundles, much like the bank would do, ahead of time. Instead of actually counting every one, we used to weigh the money.

RM: You can weigh it?

KE: Yes, paper money. I thought the same thing. You'd run them under a blue light, like you do for finding ore, and if there was a counterfeit in there, it would show up white. You could pick it right out of there.

RM: And there was no way to make the bundle heavier than it really was and fool the bank?

KE: Yes, they weigh a certain amount if you strap them in, 500 to a bundle or 100 to a bundle. Because of the weight of the paper and ink, they weigh within a certain amount, in grams. You fan them to make sure they are all the same denominations. You wouldn't count each one of them out.

RM: So you probably got really good at fanning and weighing and so forth?

KE: Oh yes. Great big metal table three feet wide—you'd throw them out on there.

RM: You would empty these bags on there? And it would be in bundles?

KE: It would be in bundles. They'd separate each denomination into bundles. And then of course they did a lot of coins, because at that time they were using coins in their slot machines. You'd do the same thing with the coins—weigh them. It was a simple way of handling them.

When I first started off at the bank, in Tonopah, I was just a regular teller, before I got drafted. At that time, when you got drafted, they had to give you a job back. When I got back, I said, "I want to go to school, and my fiancé's up here. I want to work in Reno." So I got a job right off the bat.

RM: Which bank did you work for in Tonopah?

KE: The same bank, First National Bank. I worked there for about a year.

RM: Did you get really good at counting?

KE: Oh, yes.

RM: If I was a teller, I would be off by thousands of dollars at the end of the day.

KE: There's certain ways you count . . . I remember a couple of old guys in Reno, when I was up there counting something. The manager said, "You count that money so fast, you'll never have to worry about having a job in this world." But of course, now, they've got the machines that count by themselves.

RM: Talk more about handling money from the casinos.

KE: You had the old Harold's Club, and Fitzgerald's. Fitzgerald was an old gangster from Cincinnati. The story is that he stole some money from the mob back there, and he come out to Reno and built the Nevada Club. I'm sure there was truth to it, because he used to live above the club. You'd go upstairs, and there was a guard at the top of the stairway. Then the hallway went down and turned and there was another guard in front of a door to his apartment. The story was that he lived in a house in Reno and the mob had sent a hit man out to get him one time. I guess he come out of his house one morning and took a shotgun blast in the legs and ruined his legs. All the time I knew the old man, he always had to walk with crutches.

RM: But they didn't kill him?

KE: They didn't kill him. But he had armed guards with him all the time after that.

RM: Did you get to know him at all?

KE: Oh, yes. It was just, you know, business. He'd come in there with his guards and deposit the money. I got to know him, doing that. I remember all the guards wore suits. And they all wore shoulder holsters, pistols.

RM: What year was this?

KE: Probably about '66, '67.

RM: And how much would he bring in?

KE: Most casinos depend on the weekends to bring a lot of money in. They might bring in several hundred thousand, a couple hundred thousand.

RM: That was a lot more money, then.

KE: They had a special thing they call a vault teller. That's where I started off. You went into the actual vault, and they'd close the gates behind you until you were through with the deposits, to prevent anybody from trying to break in and rob you.

RM: Was it an enclosed room? No windows or anything? Probably concrete walls?

KE: Oh, yes. It was a big vault we walked in through metal gates.

RM: How much would you count in a day?

KE: A million or two.

RM: Coming in from the casinos? And they're depending on you to count it right.

KE: Well, of course, they'd have it already counted. We were just checking if the deposit was correct.

RM: Were they always on target?

KE: Oh, yes, but we'd get those counterfeit dollars once in a while, and you confiscate those, by federal law. They don't get reimbursed; you deduct it off their deposit.

RM: Did you get much counterfeit?

KE: There's always some. When I got out of the army, I was in that part of the bank. I did that for about a year, and then I got promoted to the assistant operations officer. I oversaw that and the personnel.

RM: So you oversaw the counting and the personnel?

KE: Plus the regular tellers.

RM: What were the challenges of the higher position?

KE: You had to make sure that you always had people there, do their scheduling—the times they'd be there, and their times off, and make sure that everything was balanced at night, with the vaults.

RM: Was it a challenge to get everything balanced? KE: It was. But you know, once you get the pattern down, it's a timeframe thing. I used to enjoy it. I used to lock the vaults at night and make sure to secure the building before I left. And you had alarm systems that you had to make sure were in place.

RM: What was it like, working in the bank Tonopah, the town that you had grown up in?

KE: I enjoyed the work. Even when I was in high school, I took some commercial classes. In those days, they used to have what they called bookkeeping. And I took typing. I was one of the few guys that took typing. I think, at the time, I was at that age where, you know, that was a good place to be around all the girls.

Actually, I did learn to type pretty well. It came in pretty handy, because really, tell you the truth, that probably kept me from stopping bullets in Vietnam. They gave me a typing test, and I could type 50 or 60 words a minute. Then, as I told you, I got assigned to an artillery unit in Fort Lewis, and since they found out I could type and do a few things like that, I went to a medical unit as a clerk.

RM: Was the First National Bank in Tonopah in the same place it is now?

KE: Yes, same building.

RM: How long did you work here in Tonopah at the bank before you got drafted?

KE: About a year.

RM: And then you worked how long in Reno at the bank?

KE: I worked up there about ten years. I worked in Reno and I worked out in Sparks. In Reno, I was an Assistant Operations Officer. Then I was the Operations Officer for the Sparks office.

RM: In Sparks, were you getting the casino money, too?

KE: Some, but not much; the one downtown is designated to do those big casinos.

RM: Did you meet any other casino figures besides Fitzgerald?

KE: A couple of family members from Harold's Club.

RM: What were they like?

KE: They were nice enough people. I kind of got to know the one younger guy of the family because I used to go to take accounting classes at college at night. I found out that the professor who taught the accounting at night was also their head accountant for the family.

RM: Harold's Club was an interesting place. It's gone now, isn't it?

KE: I think it is.

RM: I'm always shocked that it's not there anymore. What happened?

KE: I'm not sure; I thought they did something up at Tahoe for a while. After I left the bank, I lost track of a lot of that. Downtown they used to have Harold's Club, Harrah's Club. Harrah's Club was always private, the big money one.

RM: It was?

KE: Oh, yes. They were a bigger club.

RM: Did you ever meet Harrah?

KE: I never met the old man. I met some of the people who worked over there. Their top execs would always give us free tokes for drinks and to go to their shows and stuff. I thought that was pretty good at the time. My wife didn't think that was very good, getting all those free drink tokes all the time. I came home late a few times, and I finally figured out that it wasn't worth taking the free drink tokes.

RM: So you and Glenda were up there for ten years and then you start getting homesick?

KE: Yes, I guess. We'd come back for different local events all the time. We spent a lot of time going back and forth.

RM: Had you ever thought of going into the insurance business while you were doing banking?

KE: I think after I got to a certain level in the banking, I could see where, if you wanted to get higher in that organization, you had to be in a certain clique, and I could see that I was going to have a hard time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: Can you tell me some of your recollections of your beautiful wife, Glenda?

KE: Of course, I knew Glenda most all of our lives. We were born and raised near each other by about two blocks. It's kind of strange. As I said before, she was three years behind me in school. When we got into high school she was still kind of this little skinny girl, and she didn't catch my attention and I didn't catch hers. I moved on and by the time she was a senior in high school, she certainly looked a lot different than when she was a freshman in high school. I got to know her a little bit better as far as having an interest in her when she had gone to go to college.

RM: When was Glenda born?

KE: She was born in December of 1944. She was a war baby. Her father had gone into the service, and she and her mother lived with his mother, Mrs. Greenwell, while Harold was in the service.

He finished his training in Texas and ended up back at the Tonopah Army Airfield. So things worked out a little better for them in being close to home. He could stay here and still put his duty in at the base. He never had to go overseas. He was an airplane mechanic on the B24s while he was out there. He used to laugh and kid around. He said when he was so young, he thought that was pretty serious business. Of course, it was. He said, "When I got older, I used to think back. We were all just a bunch of kids and didn't realize it. I was, like, 18 years old or 19. And we were putting these nuts and bolts together out on these big aircraft. And some young pilots, about 25 or 26, were flying those things." He said, "I think back about it now, and I wouldn't get on any aircraft that had some kid like that putting it together." [Laughs] He was a great guy.

Anyway, Glenda and I didn't really get together until after she was out of high school for a year or so. I told you how she came home her first year in college, and we went to a charity ball. And boy, she just . . . her mother had made her a dress and she looked like a million dollars. And so we got together after that. She finished up her first year and she came back, and we started going together that summer and it kind of went from there. I was, of course, planning on enrolling at the university myself. Uncle Sam had other ideas so I got drafted into the Army; I told you about that last time.

RM: Did you and Glenda correspond while you were in the army?

KE: Oh yes. And so many guys I knew that went in service, they all had a sweetheart and we all said, "Well, who's going to get the Dear John letter first?" And a lot of them got them, I'll tell you. But she waited.

RM: Were you writing love letters back and forth?

KE: Oh, yes.

RM: You don't have any of them, do you?

KE: I probably do, Bob, but I'm not sure where they're at.

RM: The reason I asked is when Bill Beko was going to law school in Reno, he and his wife, Dorothy, wrote love letters that got saved. We're considering publishing a volume of Bill's letters back home.

KE: I'll try and see if I can find them. They might be in an old cedar chest. My daughter got ahold of them one time and was razzing us about them. A lot of them aren't exactly love letters. I complained a lot about my feet, always having to march and stuff, especially in basic training time.

RM: Did you save any of hers?

KE: Oh yes, and she had all of mine, I think.

RM: That might make a really interesting collection.

KE: Glenda and I corresponded two or three, four times a week sometimes. By the time I got out, she was about out of school; I think she had a year left. Because I had worked for a bank a little bit before I left Tonopah, I got a job with the bank's branch in Reno.

I worked there and then kind of started going to school myself on the G.I. Bill—I went to school and worked at the same time. I worked up to when I was a junior officer with the bank. It was an interesting time for us because Glenda started teaching. She had a sister that worked up there and another lady and another girlfriend and we only had one car. In the morning it was always a riot for us, like the Keystone Cops. We'd pick her sister up and drop her off at another lady's house, then Glenda dropped me off and she'd take the car to the school. And then in reverse coming back. Mainly I went to school at night, to the University of Nevada.

RM: Are there any highlights of things you guys did together that come to mind?

KE: We had a great life. Glenda was a very good planner so we always had nice vacations every year. We didn't really do anything extravagant, but we managed to have a nice vacation every year for a lot of years. We went to the Caribbean on a cruise, and we went to Mexico, we went to Canada, and we went to Florida. We had some real, real nice vacations.

RM: Did you get married here in Tonopah?

KE: We got married in Tonopah at the Catholic Church. Glenda was Catholic and I wasn't at the time. It was kind of a strange thing because the Catholic Church had burned down. The rectory and the church both burned down because they were right next to each other. They rebuilt the rectory first but not the church. So we were actually married in the rectory.

RM: Was it a big wedding?

KE: Yes, we had a big wedding. All of our friends and family were there. Her cousin John Maslach got ahold of me the night before and wouldn't let me go home. He kept wanting me to have more drinks. I said, "John, I got to go home. I got to get up because I got mass at 9:00 and the wedding's an hour later and all that."

I remember getting home; I think I might have had an hour of sleep. My stepmother was after me. She said, "Oh my God, your eyes look like two burned holes in a blanket." So she was putting tea bags on my eyes.

RM: That will take out the red?

KE: Take out the swelling, I guess. I didn't know if I was going to make it to the wedding or not. I just barely got there in time. I thought for sure I was going to be in trouble.

RM: Where is the Catholic Church?

KE: It's over on St. Patrick Street. It's still there. Of course, they've got a nice church there now. I wasn't a Catholic. And if you're not Catholic, you've got to take certain Catholic instructions. It was kind of a new thing for me. But we ran into an old priest in Reno—he was the priest for the UNR campus. His name was Father McFadden. He later became Monsignor McFadden. He used to write an article for the Reno Journal in Reno; he had sort of a journalistic background in addition to being a priest.

I think about 30 years later we had a priest here that retired. Father McFadden knew him and came up here for the dinner for the priest. We met Father McFadden there and Glenda asked him if he remembered us. And he said, "Oh my Lord, Glenda. All these years." He said, "A lot of students and a lot of time. I'm just amazed that the two of you are still married after all these years." [Laughs] He said so many people just don't stay married. So he said, "You guys were an exception, I guess." He was quite an old priest then. From what I understand, he still lives in Reno, he's still alive. I think he's about 90 years old now.

RM: When did you move back to Tonopah?

KE: We moved back here about 1970. While we were in Reno we had, as I told you, our first child, Dan. He was three years old when we moved back here. We both missed our families and so forth. I think, in hindsight, we might have been better off career-wise to stay there but we decided we were going to come back. Mr. Emerson Titlow owned an insurance agency and wanted to sell it. I had a little background in finance and we got talking, and he wanted to move to Reno. So we made a deal and I bought the agency and I moved back. Glenda was staying at home taking care of Dan and putting the house together and so forth. We went along that way for a while and then another child came along after a couple of years, Melissa.

Glenda was always very active in the community. She was a member of the Beta Sigma Phi and very active with the ladies in town and the church guild and that type of thing. But she was a teacher at heart and she wanted to do something besides just stay at home. She believed in taking care of the children when they were small and then worrying about going back to her

career later. And so she did that. Later on, she and Judy Metscher here started a preschool and they ran it for several years.

RM: What was it called?

KE: I think it was called Tonopah Preschool.

RM: So Glenda and Judy were pals going way back.

KE: Oh yes, they were friends for many years.

RM: Where was the school located?

KE: Well, they have the old air force cantonment area up here—they had some buildings. When the air force left, they turned them over to the county and the county let them use one of those buildings for the preschool. They had it for several years. By the time our kids were in school, the preschool kind of faded out for whatever reason. They sold it to somebody; I can't remember exactly what happened to it.

I had some people working at the office, and our business was growing a little bit. Glenda became interested in the business and she wound up working in the business instead of going back to teaching. Of course, that was a real plus for me. She basically became our office manager for about 14 years.

RM: When did you move up to the warehouse market area?

KE: We moved up there about 1984 or '85. We had an office downtown. When I bought the agency, I bought the building from Mr. Titlow and I paid that off. There was the old theater next to us, the Butler Theater and a guy by the name of Dan Robb owned it and had some property in there. The theater was defunct, and the old buildings next to it were all ramshackle and run down. We got talking about maybe building a new motel in Tonopah. There was a need for a motel here. The air force was starting to do some more activity out on the test range and had a lot of personnel in here with no place to stay, basically. So we got our heads together and formed a partnership. We tore down the theater and moved our insurance office next door in the Williams Building.

RM: Oh, and your office was . . . ?

KE: In the bottom floor of the motel facing the main street. The town was kind of booming then and things were still growing and the office wasn't really big enough. The bank had this little facility up at the Station House area and they decided that they were going to have a drive-in bank up there, and their main bank was still downtown. The building next to them became vacant, and they bought that building and tore it out and put the drive-in right next to their main building. And they wanted to vacate that property up there. I made a deal with them and we got a long-term lease on that and made the move in about '85.

RM: And been up there ever since? How has the business evolved over the years, from when you bought it to now? Has it stayed pretty consistent or grown?

KE: I've been at it about 40 years, but the first 20 years it grew quite a bit—three or four, five times the size it was when we first bought it. In the last ten years, it's kind of stayed about even; it really hasn't grown that much. But over the last ten to 12 years, we did open another office in Ely, Nevada. I had an insurance partner over there. And as things leveled off here and the air force eventually built barracks out there We got out of the motel business.

RM: Oh, you sold the Jim Butler Motel?

KE: Yes. The Robbs moved to Reno and I could see that it was going to be too much of a burden for us to do it full time, so we sold our interest to them. We expanded our insurance into Ely a little bit, and we also opened an office a few years later in Sparks, Nevada. Actually we opened in Reno to start with. I started an office from scratch up there in a small shopping center over on Moana Lane. Then another agency came for sale in Sparks so I consolidated that and bought the one in Sparks. We have run that up to the current time. As this one kind of leveled off, we had to do something more, and that's what we did. We had some good partners in the other offices and it worked out real well at the time. As time goes on, with the recession and so forth today, it's a little bit tougher for us.

RM: Is it what you would describe as really bad or just tough?

KE: It's not really bad, but it's certainly not as profitable as it was. I don't think any service business right now is too profitable.

RM: And Glenda was the office manager, you said, for many years.

KE: Yes, she was. She kept all the books and did all the payroll. And when she got ill, we had to replace her. Why, it's almost like you had to have two people to do the job she was doing. She was a very outgoing person, a very intelligent lady. She loved her family and loved the community.

We thought that we'd probably end up back in Reno when the kids went to college. It turned out that we ended up staying here most of the time. Both of our children grew up and graduated from Tonopah High School and went to the university in Reno. We always thought, "Well, we're going to move up there, especially when we're both that age." And we did buy a condo up there. The long and the short of it, we never actually moved up there full time, but we almost had a dual citizenship. We were there about half the time and in Tonopah half the time. We did that for several years.

RM: So you would commute together? What is the route that you prefer to take to Reno? I always wonder.

KE: We used to go through Yerington because it was a little bit shorter, it seemed like. Now that they built that four-lane road between Fallon and Reno, it's easier to go down to Fallon and go all the way on the four-lane.

We had both kids in college at the same time a lot of times, so we spent some time down there. We had an office there so we'd kind of commute, use both places. We actually did purchase a house down there and lived there for a while. That's when we found out Glenda had cancer, so we spent more and more time down there.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: How long did Glenda live after the cancer was discovered?

KE: She lived five years. When she first got the diagnosis, the doctors only gave her two years. We went to one oncologist there. He basically said that's all he could do for her. We found another doctor by the name of Dr. Forsythe, a medical oncologist, who was a little more progressive and did a lot of homeopathic treatments. I think through his treatments and so forth, she lived another three years.

RM: You think it was the homeopathic approach that did it?

KE: Yes, because he combined the two of them together. And of course, other doctors are pooh-poohing it. A lot of them told us it would take all our money. And I said, "Well, what have you got money for?" And then two years after Glenda got diagnosed, my daughter Melissa got diagnosed. I lost them both in 2006, nine months apart.

 Melissa worked in the office for a while, too. She graduated from the University of Nevada. She was very, very active at the university as a student, just like she was in high school; she was always in the student body government. And she loved her sports. Melissa was an avid baseball player for the girls and a volleyball player. When she was a freshman, or a sophomore, they had a championship volleyball team from Tonopah, and she was on that team. And when she got into college, she was the same way—just loved life and was always active. She joined the Pi Beta Phi sorority, which was an active sorority at the University of Nevada at Reno. In her junior year she became the president of the sorority. She was a journalism major.

RM: So she had a lot of leadership qualities.

KE: Oh, very much. All the rest of the students always respected her and followed her.

RM: Why did the doctors think that she got the disease so young?

KE: They didn't really know. I think that's the mystery of cancer. In our country, one out of three people has some form of cancer by the time they're 60 years old; that's the statistic that they give. They both had breast cancer and both metastasized. So are there genes in the family that have something to do with it? Some doctors say yes, some say they don't know for sure. There are so many different kinds of cancer. Glenda's metastasized eventually to her soft organs, where Melissa's metastasized to her spine. It was very debilitating for her towards the end.

 But she loved her sports. She was an outdoor-type girl. She wasn't too much into hunting; she liked to go out and fish and camp. When she was at the university, she met a couple of girls that had a similar-type background. She had one good friend up there, Jen, and she and Jen used to go camping all the time, she and Jen's family. They were big into camping.

 When she got out of the university, she had a job with United Blood Services. Her degree was in journalism and public relations so the public relations side more was what she

did with United Blood Services. She would organize community blood drives and that kind of thing. She would have to go communities in the Reno area and in the outlying areas as well. She was very good at that. They sent her to a corporate leadership school in Florida. She probably would have gone up the ladder pretty well in that organization.

By the time she started not feeling well, she quit doing the travel as much. She became really despondent with everything. I said, "Well, how about coming to work for us? You know, your mother's having a hard time and she basically can't be doing this." So Melissa came to work for us and she became the office manager for all three offices, and she just was very good at that. Everything she did, she was good at. She had always said, "I don't want to just go back and work with my family." But at that point she had a different point of view about it, and was glad to come back. She had her own house here in Tonopah. She insisted on living in her own place; she had a place she rented here until things got too bad for her.

She used to go out and fish and it used to drive her brother crazy because she could usually out-fish him. The whole family used to go to Idaho almost every year and visit Glenda's sister Beverly at Idaho Falls, up near Yellowstone. It has all kind of beautiful lakes and so on. We had a lot of good experiences and good times staying up there. One particular time, we were up on Henry's Lake just outside of Yellowstone on the Henry's Fork River. We'd rented a house on the lake. It was an older place and everybody was complaining how it smelled so terrible. The girls all spent a day cleaning it up. But we had the best time there of all the places. It had a dock right on the lake.

But one day was kind of an anxious day. All the young kids there, Melissa and all of her cousins, decided they would go out fishing early in the morning. And we were, okay. Missy could run the boat pretty well; she had a good command of everything. We weren't thinking about a storm coming in. And about halfway out in the lake, this storm hit the lake—it was like a flash rainstorm. She was on the cell phone to us. And they were getting worried . . . the motor stopped out in the middle of the lake and the waves were starting to come up. Missy and their two older cousins and two younger cousins were in this damn boat and all they could see were these waves. We were looking out there with binoculars and these waves were just splashing up. We were all getting kind of panicked. I was trying to instruct her how to push the motor up on one end to look and see if there was something caught in the propeller. And it was raining like cats and dogs. They were all getting panicky. Finally she said, "Yeah, Dad, there's a bunch of fish line wrapped around the propeller."

I said, "Take the knife out and start cutting that fish line off of there and get that off." The fog was so I could hardly see out there. I could hear her talking, that's all. Her Uncle Sam was up there. He went right around the other side of the lake and got a place that rent boats and got a bigger boat out there and tried to go get them.

About this time, she got the boat going again. But I couldn't see a thing. I was just panicked. She said, "I've got it going and I can't hardly see where we're going."

I said, "You just keep heading toward the land, that spot where the dock was. Just go till you run into land over there." And she did. They got out, pulled the boat on the shore, and walked down to the boat rental place on the other side of the lake. That was an anxious day for all of us.

They got back and she said, "I'll never go on a boat again. I damn near killed all my cousins." They all remember that little excursion up in Idaho. But they all had a great time.

And when she and Dan were young, we used to go out in the hills here quite a bit with Glenda's mother, Irene, and Harold, her father. We used to go out and get wood.

RM: Where did you go?

KE: We used to go out up by Hunt's Canyon and out that way. The white sage area still had lots of wood. We'd go out and make a day of it. Missy and Dan both loved the outdoors. Dan still does, and now his children . . . they're out today, matter of fact, getting wood.

RM: Oh really, at Hunt's Canyon?

KE: They went to a place called McCann, which is going out to Stone Cabin Valley.

RM: And what is Dan up to? He lives here in town, right?

KE: He lives in town now. When Dan got through at the university he worked for another insurance agency for a while and he didn't do too well with them so he came back and worked for us here. He's been here working now for the family business for 17 years and he's pretty much taken over. Yes, he's hoping to get me out the door eventually. He's got three beautiful children. He's got a daughter, Ashley, and then Brendan and Derrick is the youngest.

RM: And how old are they?

KE: In order, I think they're 15 and 11 and 9.

RM: It seems like there's a mistake there with their being that old, doesn't it? [Laughs]

KE: I think next month Brendan will be 12 and Ashley will be 16 at her next birthday. Doesn't seem possible. To me, Ashley looks a lot like her grandmother, Glenda. She's got a lot of Glenda's features and she's a very assertive and a leadership-type person just like Glenda was.

RM: And the kids go to school here in Tonopah?

KE: Yes, all of them.

RM: I've got a question for you, as a long-term native of Tonopah. So many of Tonopah's children that grow up here do well in life. Why is that?

KE: I don't know that they all do that well. But we grew up here and I don't think any of us had too much when we were younger; our families didn't have a lot as far as finances. I think we all thought that's just the way life is until you get a little older and you see other things. I think a lot of the families encourage their children to try to get a better education and go out into the world. I guess that's what it is—to go out and see the rest of the world. It's ironic how a lot of

them come back here. I guess I'm one of them. Glenda was one of them. But so many of them leave here and do rather well and don't come back.

RM: I don't have any facts and figures to back this up, but an awful lot of Tonopah's children do pretty darn well in life. Not all of them, but a lot of them—more so than, say, in Las Vegas or maybe Reno. I've wondered about what it is.

KE: I don't know, Bob. I do know, thinking back when we were kids, we all had to pitch in and do something in our young life. You just didn't sit around your house watching television and that type of thing. Of course, we didn't have television in those days. But I mean, you always had to do something. We all had jobs at the house—help keep the house up or go out and sell papers or something. Everybody did that, it seems like, that I associated with. No one was going to hand you nothing. You just thought you had to go out and do this if you wanted to get ahead. And that kind of stuck with a lot of us. There's nothing free in this world; you've got to work for whatever you get. That's just kind of the way a lot of us were raised out here.

RM: I always was thankful that my daughter, Bambi, grew up here because there's an underlying decency that you don't have in a lot of neighborhoods in a big city. I feel sorry for many of the kids in Las Vegas because it's not a quality world they live in.

KE: And the young kids here get together so much and respect each other. They have a good time, by and large. When our kids were growing up we'd tell them, "Okay, you can have your friends up here and you can watch a movie or something on TV or the VCR, whatever." And they kind of made a deal out of that. They cooked popcorn, and they weren't on the streets running around. They knew they were welcome here. I think a lot of families open their home up to all different kids. And kids that don't have a nice home can see that and it sticks with them, I think—that there really is a decency in life. You don't have to go out and drink and smoke and take dope to be a big deal.

We encourage a lot of these small things—we always encouraged our kids in sports programs. Sometimes it seemed like that's all they were doing. I remember Glenda would be taking Missy to some ball field and I'd be taking Dan to another one; it seemed like an endless race sometimes. But I know that stuck in their minds and I know that Dan tries to do that with his children, and a lot of his friends do the same thing. They take a lot of pride in their sports and their camaraderie with the other children. I think that a smaller community is pretty tough to beat because the people are just closer. I've seen a lot of people leave Tonopah and not come back, but they've been very successful with the things that they've done.

RM: Yes, they take the skills and the attitudes that they've learned here somewhere else and it works.

KE: That's true. Yes, the ones that are fortunate enough to get the education—it seems if they get the education that helps them quite a bit.

RM: But even the ones who don't really pursue education often do really well and are real contributors.

KE: They do well. They make a living. It seems like our schools have changed a lot, Bob. I'm thinking back and our schools had a lot more of the crafts that they taught for students that weren't looking to go on to higher education. They had woodworking and mechanics and stuff like that. Today, you're lucky if they have one program like that. Vocational-type training, I think, is lacking in their high schools. If you talk to an educator they say, "Oh, it's the budgets. We don't have the money for it," and this and that. I don't know what the answer is, but I do know a lot of the kids that learned vocations in school did real well when they got out.

RM: Yes, I worry about kids and what's happening with the schools. I think we're all going to be losers because of it.

KE: My son, Dan, loved that type of thing when he was in school. I really didn't think of him going in the insurance business when he was that age. But he went to the university and he studied engineering or something that he liked better. But as it worked out, it ended up that this is what he likes to do. But when Dan was at the university, he stayed there for one or two years in the summer and worked for a cabinetmaker, making cabinets and things professionally for casinos and restaurants and things like that. He enjoyed that type of work but he didn't make a lot of money at it, just minimum wage. Then the last couple of years he'd come home and work. During the summertime he worked for Perchetti in roofing, remodeling. He's pretty handy at all that stuff. He basically took this house that was pretty run down when we first bought it many years ago and remodeled it.

RM: This house right here? He's done an excellent job.

KE: Yes, every room in the house. He likes to do that type of thing. But there's not enough money in it in a small community, I guess, to make a living doing it. So he's happy with what he's doing.

CHAPTER NINE

RM: What have been some of the challenges in running a business in a town like Tonopah over the years, and how has it changed?

KE: When it first started, the insurance business was basically a service-type business. Basically everybody who was concerned about protecting their life or their property, whatever, looked for a local insurance person to guide them and issue policies to them, to give them that security.

The big change I've seen is from the computer age. The Internet, and television, to an extent, have changed everything. When I first started the business everybody bought their insurance policy from an insurance agent. Now you can buy a lot of insurance, especially auto insurance, almost anywhere. And a lot of big companies will market direct to their employees and they'll take payroll deductions and bypass the agencies.

RM: You mean like health insurance?

KE: And auto insurance. And the Internet, of course, is changing things a lot—people take the time to go on line and learn a lot about insurance where before they didn't have the time to do it. Today, a large majority go online to get insurance quotes for their house and their car and their life. They end up going to an insurance agency to buy it a lot of times, but that's diminishing as time goes on. The big companies are being more sophisticated. And a lot of these companies can sell it right on line to you.

A lot of the companies, like Geico and some of these that advertise, didn't exist, or were very unknown, many years ago. Geico is an example of a major change in what they call personal insurance, mainly for auto insurance. They spend more advertising dollars, I think, than all the other insurance companies combined. They're on television 24/7. "Call this number and we'll sell you a policy that's bigger and better." And you know the old adage in advertising, if you hear it long enough and loud enough, you're going to believe it.

RM: And they pay for the advertising by increased business.

KE: Yes, so there's an example of over-the-top advertising that works with their type of insurance. It has changed the dynamics of insurance. Other companies have tried to follow that, and some have had some success. You can learn so much on the Internet at your leisure, where before a guy didn't have time to worry about the insurance—he hired somebody to do that for him. And now when they're home relaxing, instead of watching television all the time, they're going on the Internet and learning a little bit more about it. That has changed the dynamics of the business.

RM: So the small and local insurance company is facing that stiffer competition.

KE: Oh, absolutely. And the cities are facing it. The neighborhood agencies are facing the same thing. Is it going to destroy that business? Not entirely, but it presents another form of competition that they never thought about or heard of 20 years ago.

RM: Is the insurance business moving toward being dominated by a few big companies and the little guys squeezed out or reduced to a smaller share?

KE: Yes. They're forced to merge together and form co-ops and stuff. As long as you change with it, you survive. If you don't change, you won't survive. You've got to become very savvy with the computers and the Internet and Web sites. Quite frankly, even seven, ten years ago I wasn't too crazy about all this stuff. Between my daughter and my son, they brought me kicking and screaming into the modern age so at least I can run the computer. But if you're in business, any business, you have to look at the Internet.

RM: Right. Now, how do you see the future of Tonopah?

KE: Oh, Tonopah is changing and it doesn't change. I mean it changes, but we're still remote. There are pluses and minuses. Like you say, for children you can't beat the thing. I don't want to see it become too big, but I'd like to see some type of a stable payroll in the area. But to entice a business or a company to come in here—because of our remoteness, that's very difficult to do. You have to have rails in here and that type of thing.

So the town basically . . . sometimes I wonder how it even stays the size it is. They have to grow. They need something dramatic to happen. Other places are growing and there's a lot of problems in the large areas. People like to get out of those areas, but you still have to have a job. So for the future—how do you generate jobs here? There might be a certain level of jobs here, state and county, that type thing, but how do you entice a private business payroll in here?

There's some solar energy projects coming up. Something like the solar energy could change the dynamics of this area. I think that would be a tremendous boom for us here. I mean, the only real natural resource for that calls for water. And our good airfield is out here to be expanded on. But cheaper power could draw business in here.

RM: How would you feel about a nuclear power plant somewhere in the area?

KE: I wouldn't have a problem with it at all, Bob. I mentioned to you earlier that I have a sister-in-law who lives up in Idaho Falls. Her husband is a nuclear engineer and we talk quite a bit. He works at the Arco facility near Idaho Falls. He's described generally to me some of the new dynamics of some nuclear plants they've been working on that they've developed in conjunction with some French firms. They call them pebble plants. They could be put out in deserts—they're smaller plants and they don't require much water. And the exposure for any danger is lessened by their size. Their theory is more of the smaller ones would be more feasible in the future. Those French firms have really moved some big money into those projects at Arco, is my understanding.

RM: I'd like to see a movement get going in Nye County to bring in some nuclear power because those are really good jobs. A thousand-megawatt plant will produce about 800 or 900 direct jobs that are good pay—\$70,000, \$80,000-a-year jobs. I don't want to see rural Nevada and Nye County get urbanized, but . . .

KE: Well no, but if you could have a thousand jobs, that would be perfect for an area like this.

RM: It would be wonderful. I would like to see little communities in Nye County where people's kids don't have to leave town if they don't want to.

KE: If they got an education, basically it's a place they could come back to and make a decent salary.

RM: Yes, and for somebody who likes rural living, it has the amenities of . . .

KE: Yes, you wouldn't want to become another Las Vegas or another Reno.

RM: No, God forbid.

KE: But if we could double our size, we'd still be a nice town.

RM: With good jobs, secure jobs, yes. And I think there's water deep here. They just used to pump all kinds of water out of the Victor Mine, didn't they? Why hasn't anybody ever talked about that water?

KE: It's down there 600 feet. It's not that deep but it's hot water; it may even be thermal.

RM: The Lambertuccis used that water, I believe, for their gardens.

KE: By the time they put it on the surface, it was cool enough to use for agriculture. I'd like to see that happen. I think some of these solar projects are part of some of the stimulus money we're hearing about. Once they get approved, that's where the money is coming from for that.

RM: Yes, but the problem with the solar jobs is that they don't produce that many jobs once the plant is constructed. And I don't think they pay that much, either.

KE: I think 40 or 50 jobs. Yes, nuclear is definitely . . . why this country doesn't look down that road more closely, I don't know.

RM: I'd like to start a movement in Nye County to get some nuclear power plants in here. I would like to see this part of Nevada, in particular Nye County, become the power generator for much of California.

KE: I think we're remote enough that you don't have the big populations worrying about an accident happening. And the record of nuclear accidents actually injuring anybody is so minimal—it's a lot better than the standard power plants.

RM: That's right.

KE: My brother-in-law was telling me about these newer plants, that the design is to build them just about anywhere. They're not sitting on top of a river; they're not going to contaminate the rivers.

RM: And they don't need much water?

KE: No, just enough to create the steam. The cooling process is what they tend to spend a lot of time on, figuring out different ways to cool that down and not use water so much. He described it to me in general terms, and some of that stuff was a little over my head. But they use these pebbles, and there's some type of chemical way of cooling that instead of using water.

RM: And he's a nuclear engineer up there?

KE: Yes. He's not a physicist, he's an engineer. He helps run the plants and so on. They've got several reactors up at Arco. He works on the reactors; I guess he works on some of the disposal. He used to get a kick out of all the worries we had down here having stuff stored at Yucca Mountain. He went down there with a group, and his team removed it when the government here got all bent out shape. He said, "No one even knew it was down there for seven years. It gave us time to analyze everything. It's the perfect place for it."

RM: I think Yucca Mountain's got a good chance of coming back.

KE: I would hope so. I think we missed the boat on that about by not promoting it.

RM: I agree.

KE: I agree with Harry Reid on a lot of things but I totally disagree with him on that issue. Arco was storing that stuff down there for seven years before the government . . .

RM: Was it at Yucca Mountain or was on the Test Site?

KE: I think it might have been Yucca Mountain. I think they had a test hole when they first started. It was underground in cylinders in these tunnels. They had to come down; the governor got all bent out of shape and they had to go down and remove it. He said he was on the team that removed it.

RM: What kind of ignorance is that, you know?

KE: Yes, he couldn't believe it. He said, "They don't want to listen to it." The political side won't listen to the scientific side of it.

RM: Do you think the issue has been demagogued by the politicians?

KE: Absolutely; it's terrible. I mentioned, why not take advantage of the project? I mean out there where it's at, what's it going to harm? We were talking about these casks and things they've developed and he said you drop them and run a train into them and everything else, it doesn't expose them.

RM: They ship the spent fuel from across land in Japan, put it on a ship, send it to France, take in off at France, and send it cross country in France to a processing plant.

KE: Seems like I heard when they get through with it, they reprocess it and it's diminished by 90 percent or something by the time they get through with it the second time. And they take the 10 percent up to Sweden someplace and bury it in a facility like Yucca Mountain that's under a big granite formation.

RM: It's crazy, isn't it? I think we need some political action here in Nevada to do this. I would be happy to participate in it if we could get something like that going. I'm for Nye County. Nevada's a big state, but my real heart is Nye County.

KE: And our county has a valley that has some water. If you could pump it you could handle a smaller nuclear plant, I'm sure. They're not completely waterless, but they don't need the rivers and stuff to run them.

RM: I'm told there are massive amounts of water underground in what they call the deep carbonate (or something) aquifer. It's in the Stonewall Mountain area. I've been told that it's coming from Canada, underground. It's that gap between Stonewall that goes over to Cactus Peak.

KE: I've been down there a couple of times. I'm always amazed by that little waterfall out in the desert.

RM: I've never seen that waterfall, and I've always wanted to.

KE: I've got a picture of it somewhere. I took the kids out there. In the middle of the summertime, you see that damn waterfall out in the middle of the desert. It's not very big but still . . .

RM: I love Stonewall Mountain. I'm fascinated by it every time I drive by it. Well, do you have any final remarks?

KE: I know that my wife and my daughter both have been an inspiration to my son and myself and to a lot of other people that they touched. In my life Glenda was such a dynamic person—we did wonderfully together.

RM: I admire your strength.

KE: I appreciate that. You've just got to do what you've got to do.

RM: And you wanted to add some material about you brother and sister.

KE: I wasn't too sure if we mentioned them previously. Of course, they were a big part of my life. My sister, Carol Eason Cox, is the oldest and my brother, Andrew Joseph Eason, was the middle child. We were all born in Tonopah and raised here. Ironically, all three of us at different times have moved away and today we're all back in Tonopah.

It's kind of ironic that we've survived all these years. Each of us lost our spouse so the three of us are widows and widowers. We are very close and stay together and visit each other almost daily. It helps a lot with our losses to still have each other. They each have their own stories of life. But basically, we're all natives of the Tonopah and central Nevada.

And some of our relatives are still in this area. Most of them are gone by now, either deceased or in other communities. Carol had three children and my brother had three stepsons. One stepson now lives back here in Tonopah. His stepchildren went to school here and lived mainly in the Reno area and one of them in the Bay Area. One of them moved back to his home in Tonopah just recently. Something about the old town—you wear out a couple of pair of shoes here, you want to come back.

RM: Is your brother named after your father?

KE: Yes he is. My grandfather was Andrew Brant Eason, and my father was Andrew Melvin Eason, and then Andrew Joseph Eason.

RM: Which one was the commissioner? It was your father, wasn't it?

KE: Yes, that's right, Andrew Melvin. He served 22 years. He was the longest-serving commissioner in the county, I think. He started back in the '50s and he was still a commissioner in the '70s. I have to just tell a little quick story before we close here. My father was a county commissioner in the old courthouse up here. We had moved back to Tonopah and we had had our two children and Grandpa Andrew was the chairman of the commission. My wife had to go into the courthouse, I think to see her mother—Irene used to work for the assessor's office. She was going in; and as they passed by the commissioner's chambers my father saw my daughter, Melissa. Of course, he yelled out for Glenda to come in and bring Melissa into the commissioner's chambers. So she went over to see her grandpa. She sat up at the head table with her grandpa, and they finished the meeting with her on my father's lap.

RM: Oh, isn't that wonderful? Only in a town like Tonopah would that happen.

KE: He just adored her.

KE: But anything she wanted, she got from Grandpa.

RM: She had his number, then?

KE: Oh yes. My sister Carol used to get mad at him. He had these little antique things out at Belmont, a couple of old chairs. My sister always wanted them, and my dad never gave them to her. The first time Melissa asked him for them, he gave her both of them. Oh, my sister was furious. I still have the chairs. They're sitting right over there.

RM: Is that right? They're beautiful chairs.

KE: My daughter had them restored; they were in pieces. I'll end with that.

RM: That's another great story. Thanks so much for talking with me.

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Addendum

Silver State Historical Society, Tonopah, Nevada
Interview with Winifred Eason
Recorded by Helen Slavin circa 1950

During the 1950s, Tonopah-area native Helen Reed Slavin conducted a number of oral history interviews with long-time central Nevada residents. Among those she interviewed was Winifred Eason, Ken Eason's grandmother. Mr. Eason suggested we include the transcript of that interview with his oral history. – Robert McCracken

Tape 4a and 4b / Reels 5 and 6

Winnie Eason: My father, Joseph Marsh, is . . . Is it going?

Helen Reed Slavin: Uh-huh.

WE: Born . . .

Lottie Nay: Start over, Winnie.

WE: All right. My father, Joseph Marsh, born 1836, November the 5th in Whitting . . . Whigham, Lancashire, England. M . . . Stop this. [tape recorder off] My father, Joseph Marsh, born 1836, November 5th in Whitting, Lancashire, England. Married in 1855 Martha Garland, a girl . . . and . . . a girl and boy was born to them in England. Sailed for America [in] 1860 and it took a month to reach New York Harbor. About . . . They stayed in New York two weeks, traveled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by train. When they . . . When he . . . where he went to work in the coal mines. Stayed and worked and finally bought wagon and horses, a mule and a cow after landing without an object. [tape recorder off]

They started for Missouri and arrived in St. Joseph's, where most of the immigrants collected to join the big train of immigrants going to the West. After many hardships, troubles, and tribulations, they arrived in Salt Lake City. Many of the travelers decided to stay. In fact, one _____ acquired of the long road and the lake at fall, so they all stayed . . . all stayed. [pause] Here in . . . Now, then I want to change this a little because I had left out this.

[tape recorder off]

. . . belonged to the Mormon Church, had joined them in England. But his wife hadn't joined them but came to this country with him and their . . . their two children. After being in Salt Lake a while, another baby was born to them, a girl named Martha Al . . . Martha Alan. Here it was my father's wife died.

Now, I must tell you about this, because they had decided . . . the Mormons had decided that my father and all the men that came at that time must take more wives than one. Some of them would . . . Some of them were young men without wives. Others were young men with

wives. And those with wives didn't want to take any more. So there was a rift in the . . . between them and the Mormons, officers and heads of the church. And they decided that they would leave the church. And at that, they moved up to a camp, what the camp now is Fort Douglas, but it . . . at that time it was . . . there was not [a] camp there. So they built a stockade and was . . . to fix a place for them to stay away from animals and such things. But they had no roof on it. But they were hurrying to get a roof on it before the winter set in. Well, at that time, the Brigham Young soldiers came to that place and . . . came and laid siege to them. For three days and three nights. Well, this . . . these campers had neither food enough nor ammunition enough to hold out any longer, so they had to surrender. But during the siege, my father's wife was killed by [a] cannonball that was fired in among them. She had her baby in her arms and it fell to one side. And she . . . she had . . .

Another one picked it up and she was shot by a rifle bullet and the baby fell again. Then through this awful night, they buried my father's wife, but they had to do it in the dark, because they couldn't [have] any lights to see by as they would shoot at them . . . at any light they saw. So by morning, they all had to surrender. And they marched out. My father had lost . . . couldn't find his oldest daughter. So he didn't know where to look for her, even. But he [had] this boy and his baby and they marched out. And they were told that they would have to come back into the church, that they weren't going to let them go take things in their own hands. Well, they stayed there that winter. They stayed there that winter, but those people who had decided to leave and made up their mind that they would leave and would go to this new camp, which at that time was called Pony Canyon, where they had . . . [tape recorder off]

I must tell you before I go further that he found his daughter. He . . . A lady came to him one day and said, "Mr. Marsh, I have your little girl." And she said, "I would like to keep her, but I know you would like to know that she is living." She said, "When her mother was killed, I took her because she was scared and had no one to take care of her." And she said, "And if you will let me have her, I will adopt her, my husband and I." But my father said, "No, I can let her . . . I can't let you adopt her. I know you'd be good to her, but I can't give my children away." So he kept his own children and other friends of his took care of the children while he worked with the . . . with the different men. And they all saved all they could toward getting out in the spring. They had made their mind up to go to this Pony Canyon, which was later named Austin, Nevada.

Now, they finally got [out] in the spring. And they were . . . They were afraid they would be caught and brought back. But after they crossed over the Nevada border, they . . . they never worried again. They thought they were safe and they were. And they traveled on after many hardships.

[tape recorder off]

Lottie Nay: Okay.

WE: One . . . one day, at the noon hour, they had . . . they stopped to eat. And here comes 13 Indians _____ on horseback with rifles. But they weren't very good rifles, I guess. My father said they were those old Kentucky rifles and they have to be . . . they have to [be] primed before they were shot. [laughs] But they . . . And he said, and he said that they . . . And he said come,

they have knives, too, besides these rifles. And they stop the whole . . . They just . . . right in front of the horses. And my father kept hollering to the men, "Drive over them. Drive over them." Because you knew they could drive . . . get over them before they could really get those rifles [loaded] because he had seen those rifles. They . . . they have a little can under the . . . under the . . . where they . . . you know, they pop, something like that. And then . . . and have a little . . . a tin to put powder in. They like that. And then . . . then they pulled the trigger. And that . . . that time, the shot goes off like that. [inaudible] So those were Kentucky rifles.

HS: Uh-huh.

WE: And though he knew they could get a little ways away from them, but he couldn't get one of the . . . some of the men to come. They all started anyhow. And they . . . My father said, "Get out of here, you black devils. Get out of here or I'll shoot every one of you." He had these . . . these . . . a big . . . big revolver. One of those big revolvers. And he also had a rifle. But this big revolver, if it shots [shoots], why, six times, you know, it's a repeater. And he said he started firing that off and that's what scared the Indians when he started firing that off. And they said . . . The Indians said, "No good. Shoot all time. Shoot all time." And away they went to get away from there.

And then they drove over and the Indians came back at them and grabbed the head of the lead horses by the . . . by the bridles and was dragging them along. And my father whipped up. He was in the lead. And he whipped his . . . the horses and the Indians let go and they drove on to . . . But they . . . they . . . Of course, all the men had guns and rifles. And they were shooting at them. They didn't really want to kill them if they didn't have to. But they scared them away. But they . . . If they had killed them, I guess one of them . . . I don't know whether they killed any of them or not, but my father said they sure scared them away. And that was the last they saw of the Indians. And that was after they got over the Nevada line.

[tape recorder off]

After much . . . many trials and much . . . many hardships, they finally arrived in Austin in 18 . . . in the spring of 1862. See, I cannot remember . . . '62. With 13 wagons . . . wagonload . . . a 13-wagon train. Well, after that, as soon as he could get things straightened out and get someone to take care of his children so he knew they would be all right, he went back with other men and helped to dig wells on the Overland road. Well, he finally came back to Austin and settled down, built himself a house . . . an adobe house. And to care of his children, hired a woman to take [care] of them, to cook for them, and everything like that. And he went to work in the mines.

He was . . . As time went on, he knew that he had to do something with his children because they were getting older and someone had to take care of them all the time, watch them. So there was a woman by the name of Mrs. Roberts that took the children to her house and took care of them. And he paid her, of course for it. Kept her very busy working all the time. And the baby that was born in Salt Lake, she wasn't very well. She was kind of a sickly child, which worried him and worried him so much. But later however, she finally got better and this Mrs. Roberts wanted to move to San Francisco. And she told my father if he would let

her, she would take the children with her and would take good care of them. So he had no other choice. He had to let it go that way. And so . . . so the children were taken to San Francisco.

Well, as time went on and he was still working and people were rushing into Austin and more houses were being built and all kind of things. So they decided to organize the Lander Guards, which he became a member. This Lander . . . These Lander Guards was to protect the town because in a case like this there were all kinds of people coming in. Some were good people; most of them were. But some of them weren't. They were thieves and all sorts of people coming to the town. Besides, there were Indians that weren't very friendly. So he . . . that's what the Lander Guards was organized for, to keep peace. It was too much for the police and the sheriff to do. They did have a sheriff at that time and some police, I guess, not many. So after a year, or so long more, he met a young woman by the name of Miss . . . Miss Hettie Bob . . . Say it.

HS: Isenberg.

WE: I . . . Issacson.

HS: Issacson.

WE: Miss Hettie Issacson. And they were married some time after that. She came from Sweden. So you see there were people of all countries that came to this little town of Austin and the far reaches of North America.

Then after they were married, my father decided to just . . . to go and bring his children back. So he wrote to this Mrs. Roberts who had his children, and he didn't hear from her. No . . . The letter came back unanswered. Well, then he got very worried. And finally after writing to the police in San Francisco and to one person or another that he thought might help him, he found out that Mrs. Roberts had moved to Seattle, Washington, with his children without asking him. So after their . . . He couldn't go right away, but he wrote to her and let her know that he knew where she was and told her that she was being watched, so she better not go any farther. So then after their first baby was born was a girl named Emily Josephine. Then he went after his children, his other children, and brought them back to Austin. They had a long trip to go. He brought them back to Austin. So my mother, with one child of her own, had three other children to take care of, which she was very good to and which loved her and she loved them.

[tape recorder off]

My mother, Mrs. Hattie Issacson Marsh, was born in Jungchiping, near Stockholm, Sweden, on the 18th of October, 1841. She was next to the youngest of eight sisters and one brother, he being the oldest in the family. My mother and a cousin of her . . . a girl cousin of hers sailed for . . . for Liverpool, England, with a family they knew. After arriving in Liverpool, they set sail with many others for the new continent of North America. After a month, they arrived at Castle Gardens, and soon were on the way to the western part of the United States.

After arriving [in] Missouri, they laid over for a while until a train of wagons was ready to go during that . . . And during that time . . . [tape recorder off] And her cousin went to the Missouri River to wash some . . . their clothes and also to take bath. During that short time they were in the river, the cousin stepped into a whirlpool and was swished away, having tried to catch her but couldn't. She . . . she grabbed some clothes and put on and ran down to . . . by the river to where some men were working to get them to go in after her. They did and went a way down. But she was never seen again.

Now, this left Hattie in a very bad way. Not only had she lost her dear cousin, but now she was . . . she had no one near or dear to her, only the friends who came with her. They finally got started for the West . . .

[tape recorder off]

With much trouble and hardship and grief, not mentioning the many . . . the months it took to travel the long miles of bad roads and some places where there were no roads to speak of. They finally stopped in Salt Lake City. Many of them did not go any further. And mother was one of them. They were welcomed by the Latter Day Saints who were known as the Mormons. Mother went to work for a family of Danish people, but before long got a better . . . got a better job which paid better and went to work in a hotel. It was there while waiting tables that she met a man who only stayed between Salt Lake City and Austin, a rich silver mining camp in Nevada. He was a Mr. Wise and offered my . . . my mother a job working for his family. And so after a good deal of thought, she decided to go out to Austin the next week. [tape recorder off]

On the advice [of] Mrs. Little for whom she worked, she decided that it would be better to go to Austin. And so she left on the stage the following week. It was cold. Winter had set in. And there were three men beside the driver on the stage. They were all very nice to her and made her comfortable, but it was very cold. And although they had hot rocks for . . . to put their feet on and as much clothes as they could stand on them, they traveled many miles before they came to a station. And during this traveling, my mother felt as though she had to get out. But this being a young woman and no one but men in the stage, she didn't get out until they did come to a station which was a good many hours later. When she got there, she was almost sick from . . . from holding herself when she should have got out. But this woman at the station was very nice and very helpful to her and everything turned out for the best. They stayed there that night.

And the next morning, early, in the bitter cold, they got out and got into the stage again and onto the road. I think they had to stop two nights or maybe more before they got to Austin. They only traveled during the daytime. And so when they got to Austin, Mother said she began to worry a little about going to work for this man because she had no idea whether he had a family or not, only just his word for it. But he had seemed like a very nice man. So, she felt she would stay with it till the end.

They . . . When they arrived in Austin, first to the post office they went and he delivered the mail and then he had several other packages to deliver. And that . . . just stay in the stage, lady, and I will take you up to my house. So she did. And finally he took her up to his house. And she said the house was lit up when she got there, so she knew there was somebody there. So when she went in, she found out that he had wife and two children and a mother-in-law living

with him. So she said she never had felt so safe since she had left . . . since she came to Salt Lake City. And she did _____. [laughs]

[tape recorder off]

She worked for the people for over a year and got along real nice with them. And . . . But the wife and children and mother-in-law were supposed to go back . . . go to San Francisco on a vacation. So she got another job with the superintendent of the mine, Jack Frost and his wife and I think they had two children. And then she worked for them and . . . more than a year. And at a party that was given at their house, she met my father . . . met Joseph Marsh, I would say, which . . . And married him.

[tape recorder off]

I have told all about my folks moving to Tonopah in 1901 and arriving at six o'clock in the morning on the 24th of July.

HS: Talk as loud as you can.

WE: We did that . . . We did that on account of the terrific heat. We crossed the desert between the . . . between San Antone and Tonopah in the night. I will now proceed to tell you about my sister whom I have mentioned before.

Mertle H. Marsh was born in Eagle Point, Jackson County, Oregon, on May 4, 1882. Being five years and four months younger than Will and I and baby in the family, we all thought she was just the nicest baby in the world. She . . . she was so sweet and beautiful with red curly hair. Josie, our older sister, was about 13 years old, of course, was a big help to Mother in taking care of the two . . . us two as well we were pretty lively.

Father got everything ready to start for . . . on another long trip, for they had decided to go to California near Placerville in El Dorado County. He had an old friend there he had known for more . . . for many years from Austin who had been writing many letters of this glorious country. So after suppling [?] . . . After selling the farm, we started for California. We arrived there . . . there in the early fall and were delighted with everything. Father bought a ranch there including 400 head of goats. We lived there about four years and then again while he decided to go to Austin to do assessment work on some mining claims he was interested in. Mother decided that we . . . we . . . I lost my track. Mother decided that we ought to go.

So once again, we were on the road and back to Austin. We sold the ranch and took the 500 head of goats we had with us. And after much delay over the roads and not being able to go more than 20 miles a day because of the goats, they . . . they . . . many of them got sick and we lost them. They had some sort of a disease that they called the "blind staggers."

And we finally landed in Austin a month after leaving California. We bought a home in town and settled our livestock out on Moss's ranch. But then the winter began to set in and my father decided to sell our goats to a man by the name of John Lawes who lived at Big Creek. He really traded them for cattle and came out with about 75 head. We did very well with our cattle for the first winter. But the next winter, 1888, we lost most of them. '88 and '89 were the most

terrible winters we ever spent. And we came out in the spring with 13 head. Will and I, also Josie, went to school in Austin. Mertle too started when she was old enough.

Josie died of typhoid pneumonia, for God had seen fit to call her to her heavenly home. And it was a terrible shock to all of us, especially my darling mother and father. I was very ill at the same time with the same disease, typhoid pneumonia, which took so many young people that winter of '88 and the spring of '89. And it took about two years for us to get over the effects of it. Well, Mertle received her education in Austin public school and soon as time . . . and soon, as time passed on, my baby sister grew to womanhood and in 1901 when the big rush to Tonopah came, everyone who could get away to go, went, of course. Our whole family rushed to focal point [Tonopah?] as other people did from all parts of the United States. When we arrived in Tonopah, after a long hot trip, Mertle was so unhappy about it, like Mother and I were, and very disappointed. But we all got used to it as time wore on. We all left here in November 1901, as it was too cold and uncomfortable to live through the winter. So the next day after Harry Stimler and Queen Winifred of Bishop were married, we left for Austin. Mertle was bridesmaid and Emmet Johnson was best man. I believe Lottie May has a picture of that wedding. I had it but all my pictures . . . or most of them . . . were burned a few years ago in my house.

Lottie Nay: Clay Peters was the first Justice of the Peace, one that _____.

WE: My father, mother, Mertle, and also Will and Mary Marsh moved to Goldfield a few years later. There, my sister met Alan Benson at Butte City, Montana. They were married November 25, 1905, in Goldfield at Will's and Mary's house. I could not attend the wedding as I was living in Austin that winter. The weather was very cold and a great deal of snow. So it was impossible for me and my husband and three little children to go on such a long trip in the conveyances we had at that time. We went the next summer to visit them, but almost lost our baby girl, Loreva, with a terrible fever and did not expect her to live. But a very good doctor from Goldfield and a nurse, whose name was Clara Burton and who was . . . had served as a nurse in the Cu . . . in Cuba during the Spanish American War, saved her life only to lose her a year later in Austin with spinal meningitis. Clara Burton was the matron of all the army nurses during the Spanish American War.

Mertle and Al lived in Goldfield until the Big Strike, when everyone who possibly could got out. A big labor strike, I mean. Al and Mertle came to my brother's ranch at Pine Creek and there their baby, a little girl, was born prematurely, but only lived five hours. They called her Berl. All this took place in 1909. Mertle was very ill and almost lost her life. As soon as the weather permitted, Al brought her home to Austin. But she only lived a week and passed away in my father's and mother's home in April, 1909. It was a terrific shock to all of us. She was only 27 years old. It was so very hard for my father and mother. In fact, on all of us. She was the baby of the family and we grieved very much. Now, they are all gone but me of my family. I am all that is left.

[tape recorder off]

Lottie Nay: Okay.

WE: This is my second trip to Tonopah in 1902 on the 4th day of March. After spending the winter in Austin as it was so cold in Tonopah that we . . . we couldn't stay there and live in a tent. So we had come back to Austin to spend the winter. We stayed there until the early spring. And my husband and my brother had taken our house down in sections to move to Tonopah and they . . . they took it in two big wagons. They took it in sections in two big, four horse wagons. And they were . . . They started out in January. I didn't go then. They started out in January and took it down and they had an awful time getting it there. Well, I couldn't go with them. So I now start going on the stage. The stage was a double seated carriage. Looks something like a stage coach. And when I went to get into the stage, here was two men . . . two big men sitting in the front seat. They happened to be men that had come all the way from . . . from . . .

HS: Alaska?

WE: No. Up here. A . .

HS: Alaska.

WE: Alaska. Now, see, I couldn't remember that. [laughter] They came all the way from Alaska where they had been for a couple of years, the big gold rush. So they decided that T . . . that this was a big gold rush. They'd heard so much about, so they came down. And they were . . . They were dressed like they came from the Arctics. There was . . . They had these great, heavy fur coats on down to their boots . . . below their boot tops. And they had fur caps on and big gloves. So they were warm and nice. Well, my mother and father didn't like to see me go that day because it was kind of . . . looked like it might storm. But I was all ready and so we went.

Everything was fine until we got past the Meyers's Black Bird Ranch. And then it began raining, a grizzly nasty cold rain. And it rained all' the way down the valley. But we weren't cold. And that night about six o'clock, we reached the Moore's Ranch. That's where we stopped overnight. And there was . . . Tom Tate was there to receive us. He was the owner of the stage line. And Mrs. Gramma Moore, she was so glad to see me. I knew her pretty well. And she come and pick my . . . pick my baby. He was ten months old. But she didn't know. She thought he was a baby. So she took him in with her, and before I could get in there, he had got down and he was walking around. He was . . . He was only ten months old and he was. . . He could walk before that. And the other . . . That was Willy. That was the baby. And then the other boy was Chester and he was three years old. [pause]

George Steiner was driving . . . was the driver of this stage and he drove from Austin to Moore's Ranch. His . . . After we had . . . Did I say . . . Did I say . . . [tape recorder off] But the next morning we got there just in time for di . . . for supper. That's what they called it in those days. We got there in time for supper at six o'clock. Is it going on? And so after we had all had our supper and everybody was . . . had decided to go to bed, we slept . . . We all slept well and there was no trouble or anything. So we didn't worry about tomorrow.

But when we woke up the next day . . . the next morning, it had frozen so hard that . . . all over everything. I hated to see that frost, but I didn't say anything much about it until Mr.

Tate came in and he said, "Mrs. Eason, I don't think you should go this morning." He said, "It's so cold outside." He said, "I say, I say, Mrs. Eason, you better stay," he said, "and go to . . . next day." And I said, "Oh, I can't do that, Mr. Tate. I'm not prepared to stay anywhere and I have these children. I must go." And Gramma Moore sided in with me and she said, "Oh, yes. She . . . she must go. They'll be all right. She's used to being out in the cold." Well, Mr. Tate says, "I know, but," he said, "those children aren't. And those children, I wouldn't have anything happen to them." "Oh," I said, "I think, Mr. Tate, those children will be all right. And I think I'll go." "Well," he said, "I can't make you stay, but," he said, "I wish you would." Well, we went. And after we got outside . . . It was pretty cold. But we were . . . had lots of clothes on and we were dressed warm. And then Granma Moore had decided to put hot rocks in the . . . in the bottom of the stage so we could keep warm. So she sent Eldred and Jack out to heat these rocks, and they did. And everything seemed very comfortable when we got in the stage.

And so we started on our trip and everything seemed to go all right until we got . . . way down, oh, maybe ten miles from San Antone. And then Chester began [to] get so cold. Oh, he got so cold. And I made him stand up and I wanted him to settle close to me and everything. But, no, he was so cold. And so George Bonner turned around and said, "Winnie, what's the matter with him?" And I said, "Well, he's so cold George and I can't hold him on my lap because I have Willy here." And I said, "If I can't keep him warm no matter what I do." And I said, "I think it's because that he can't get his feet on the floor. He either has to stand up and then he throws the blankets off of us." And I said, "So, I don't know what." I said, "If somebody would hold him." "Oh, yes!" George said. "One of these men are doing nothing. They'll hold him." And I said, "Well, it'd be awful nice if they did." So he . . . they took him. And this man, he just took him in his arms and wrapped that big fur coat around him and he was warm in no time.

And we all went along fine then until we got to San Antone. And I had been so worried over Chester that I didn't know I was cold myself. And when I got out of the stage, gracious, I fell down on the ground. My legs just went out from under me. And, oh, Mrs. Pendry . . . that's Elsie . . . Elsie Humphrey's mother, she came out and she took the baby . . . She picked the baby up and with one of the men, picked me up and we finally got into the house. And they had a nice, big dinner there waiting for us, a midday dinner. And we had everything to eat, but she said to me, "Mrs. Eason, look in the glass." And I looked in the mirror and I scared myself. My face just looked like a piece of wax. And my tongue was white. It was, I tell you. And . . . anyhow I felt better that I was inside the house. And after we got to eating everything, we all were feeling pretty good again. I guess we were there maybe an hour.

And then we started out across the desert and we wrapped ourselves up. And Mrs. Pendry had warmed all the rocks again and put them in the stage. And so we started out. But the biggest surprise was we hadn't gone more than a mile from Pendry's when we all began to get so hot that it was just . . . we were just as warm as we could be. And we soon discarded our coats and we never put them on again until we were . . . until we were almost to the main highway going up to Tonopah.

And . . . and finally we arrived in Tonopah at six o'clock. And my husband was there to meet us at the stage station. And he was hurrying up to open this door. We had a door and a window on this place. And he was . . . Andrew was hurrying up to open and George Monter said, "Don't tear my door down." "Do you know," he said, "you . . . that . . . you forget . . . you'll see her soon enough. You don't have to take and tear this door down." [laughter] So finally . . .

We finally got on. We got to . . . We got home and had . . . And there was dinner already waiting for me. And . . . I guess I got most of . .

[tape recorder off]

. . . he, to me, is a wonderful driver. I've . . . I'd known him for many years,

[tape recorder off]

. . . Tonopah all that summer. And again in the winter, we went back. Although we had a house, but we went back to Austin and spent the winter. And I can't tell you how many different times I went back to Austin and then came back to Tonopah again. But it seemed that I . . that it was my fate to live in Tonopah. Although when I first arrived there, I thought it was an awful-looking place and I didn't think I'd stay very long.[laughter] And I guess I'll spend 63 years . . . Yes, after 63 years, I'm still in Tonopah. So I guess that's the sum and sub . . .

[tape recorder off]