

An Interview with
HELEN L FALLINI

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
1987

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Helen L. Fallini
circa 1940

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

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

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
June 1990

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. 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 interviews as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories also have been archived.

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

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Helen Fallini at the Twin Springs Ranch in Nye County, Nevada - October 25 and 26, 1987

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Helen, could you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

HF: Helen Leona Baird

RM: And your married name is Fallini?

HF: Yes.

RM: Could you tell us your birthdate and place?

HF: The 19th of March, 1919, at Kingston, New Mexico. My folks were snowed in at a mine that they had taken a lease on there, and I was born in a boarded up tent on a mine dump.

RM: Is that right? What was your father's name?

HF: Charlie Baird

RM: Where was he born?

HF: He was born in Topeka, Kansas, and I don't remember the date, but the family moved out here to the Tonopah area and he started school here in Tonopah at the first school that they had - where the high school is now -but then later they moved the school. He went to school there and my grandmother was Dr. Cotton's office nurse. She wasn't a registered nurse, she just kept books for him and things like that. The family left there later and went on various mining interests throughout the western states -Colorado, New Mexico and all around.

RM: And you went with them?

HF: Oh, yes. And then back here to Tonopah in about 1927 or '28, and we've been in this area all the time, except for a period of about a year when Dad took a job with the Platte-Rogers Construction outfit from Colorado. He took the job as a powder monkey, which means blowing holes for these big rock construction jobs, and as soon as that job was over we armed back here and stopped at Warm Springs and have been right in this area ever since.

RM: What was your mother's maiden name?

HF: Anna Baker. Her father was a deputy sheriff in Wickenburg, Arizona, for a good many years.

RM: Was she born and raised in Arizona?

HF: She was born and raised in Cherry, Arizona, before Arizona became a state. There was quite a bit of argument over her actual age because the older folks were all dead, but as closely as they could figure, she was born in 1901.

RM: So probably your father was born slightly before the turn of the century?

HF: I'd say Dad was born approximately in 1894. I know he was seven or eight years older than Mother.

RM: What year did they come to Tonopah?

HF: They moved back to stay in about 1927 or '28.

RM: What was the year when they first came?

HF: It was during the start of the boom.

RM: And your father had always followed mining interests?

HF: Except for the time that he was in the service. He was in the service for quite a while.

RM: So in 1927 or so, you were going to school in Tonopah.

HF: I went to school in Tonopah for awhile and then after we left there and Dad took a job up in Utah as a powder monkey we entered school there at a little place called Thistle. It's all under water now; that all caved in and covered up the little town. Then we moved back to Warm Springs and Dad worked around the area.

RM: What was Warm Springs like when you moved back?

HF: Well, the road came down the back side of the swimming pool from where it is now and made a kind of a big "S" there and there was a real old-time bar there with a big screened porch around it. Then it went on down below the place and made another big S-turn and went on across to Rattlesnake.

RM: Do they call that Rattlesnake Summit or just Rattlesnake?

HF: Just Rattlesnake. There used to be quite a den of rattlers in there. They killed an awful lot of snakes in that little area. You see this place here, Twin Springs . . . when you left Warm Springs this is on an old stage route. The stage route came down and one of the stopping places was Warm Springs. This place here was another stopping place. In fact, the old rock building that's

out there now was the old stage station here. It went on down through the gorge down here and toward Nyala.

RM: Now, where is Nyala?

HF: Nyala is about 27 miles from here. You go down about 5 miles and then the road makes a turn and goes back up the valley.

RM: Oh, back up Railroad Valley? Back north?

HF: Yes

RM: Where did the stage road go after Warm Springs?

HF: It used to come down through from Eureka to Tybo and all down through that country.

RM: And that was before 1900?

HF: Yes it was.

RM: What was happening down here at that time?

HF: There was mining all down through the area. One thing that my father-in-law did when he first came to this country was haul freight for the miners down through the country. Some of them were mining down at the old Reveille. He went in that area and he also hauled freight for the old charcoal kiln fellows who were working in the charcoal kiln country around Tybo and Hot Creek. That's why he came down into this country to haul freight out of Eureka and down through here.

RM: And this was before the Tonopah strike?

HF: Many years before that. In fact, he worked for and with old Jim Butler years before 'Tonopah was discovered.

RM: Where did the stage road go after Nyala?

HF: It went on through to Ely - wormed its way through the hills there. There were little places all along there.

RM: What's the earliest that you know about any activity at the old Reveille Mill area and the Eden Creek area?

HF: When my father-in-law first moved down there, the Reveille Mill wasn't running, but it was still intact. That was in the 1890s.

RM: Where were they getting their ore?

HF: Across from the Gila mine, over the Reveille Range. That was the only water that they could get to run a mill, so they hauled it over there. In fact, those red tailings from the mill - you can't see too many of them left anymore - were hauled out afterwards and shipped in later years.

RM: Were they from the first operations in the '90s?

HF: Yes.

RM: Did they initially build a mill at the mouth of Eden Creek?

HF: At the mouth of Eden Creek there's an old battery frame. I tried all the research that I could on that, to find out who built it, but nobody seemed to know. That was before there was any history much, or anyone who knew any of the history there. My father-in-law didn't know who put it there, and he was there many, many years ago - in the 1890s.

RM: And it was old then?

HF: Yes. It's been that same way as long as anybody can remember.

RM: I wonder what ore they were milling there?

HF: I looked around there. That was another thing that I couldn't figure out; what ore they were milling, because there were no tailings.

RM: What do you make of that?

HF: I think probably it was like it used to be with the old-timers, they probably found a little high-grade stuff and all of a sudden they decide that if they had a mill, they could really make it big, and it probably just didn't work out that way, and they shut her down; had no ore to put through it.

RM: When was that stone house built at Eden Creek?

HF: Old Man Fallini had the stone house built there at Eden Creek. You see, when he moved down to that part of the country with his family he ran a little grocery store there at the Reveille Mill. His wife had died and he had to leave the children alone for a day or so because he had to take off for some reason or other and the older boy went to filling the kerosene lamps and got the wrong bottle and managed to fill the lamp with gasoline and they lit it and of course it blew up and burned the house down. The house that burned down was right in front of that building that your dad and you guys used, where all those ashes and things were, right there by the corral. There are still signs where the old house used to be. Old Man Fallini had hired Abe Arigoni to build that rock house up at Eden Creek. He built that stone house and the

family moved up there, and then the children walked from the house down to the Reveille Mill to school and back every day.

RM: So there was a community at Reveille Mill?

HF: Yes there was.

RM: What period of time are we talking about?

HF: My husband went to school there I'd say about 1909 or so.

RM: I wonder how many houses were there?

HF: That I couldn't tell you. I know that there were other people, and the children all went to school there.

RM: What did they do for a living?

HF: Just like my father-in-law; he teamed and raised a few cows and they had a big garden at all times and so forth. He used to raise lots of potatoes and he sold them to the miners around. People during that time, instead of a 10-pound sack of potatoes, would buy a ton of potatoes to last them.

RM: Were they growing a lot of things right there at the mill area?

HF: Up at Eden Creek and up in the canyon there were little garden areas

RM: When did it all end there?

HF: It started when people just didn't have anything to make a living on, so they started leaving. A few of them had mining claims up there that they worked, like the Terrell family who had a mine up in Eden Creek. There was another fellow up there by the name of George Chubey. And then up in the main canyon of Eden Creek there was a fellow by the name of Sorensen and there were several who had mining claims. Then later on Mark Bradshaw's mining company came in and leased the mining claims from Old Man Fallini where the big tunnel is up there. They call it the Bradshaw tunnel. Mark Bradshaw ran that tunnel back in there but they didn't get into anything much in the ore.

RM: Was there any other mining activity in the vicinity during this period?

HF: Well, most all of it was little mines that . . . For instance, George Chubey would mine and go broke, then he'd leave awhile and go get a job someplace to earn enough money to come back and put it into the mine again. He was always thinking that he was going to find the big thing, but he died and, of course, never made it.

RM: What was happening up in Bellehelen?

HF: My husband's aunt and uncle had the mine and the ranch up there.

RM: What were their names?

HF: Gus and Minnie Peterson. She was a sister of Mrs. Peterson.

RM: Who had passed away?

HF: Yes. And, after Gus Peterson was murdered, they didn't know who did it. He was shot in Tonopah and they have no idea who did it. And then his wife had no way to stay out there and run the ranch or anything, so she sold it to the three Fallini brothers.

RM: Oh, that's how they acquired it. How did the Cliffords get hold of the Bellehelen mine?

HF: They got it through locating it. Gus Peterson didn't own the same mine that the Cliffords had.

RM: Oh, he had a different one.

HF: Yes.

BM: There was some mining activity up there, wasn't there?

BF: Yes. In fact, where Cliffords have the mine now was the old Merger mine. And this other mine is right there just about a mile from the ranch. There's a long tunnel that goes in there.

RM: Was it a pretty good mine?

HF: Yes, they had real good ore there. Some of that ore they shipped when gold was \$20 an ounce. They shipped it by parcel post.

RM: So it was pretty good.

HF: Beautiful ore.

RM: I'll be darned. Did Gus Peterson homestead the ranch up there?

HF: He bought it from an old fellow, and I can't remember the man's name.

RM: Did that fellow homestead it?

HF: As far as I know, yes.

RM: About what year would Gus Peterson have acquired it?

HF: Gosh, he was in there in the early '20s, I know. In fact, he was there in the teens because the kids used to ride back and forth and visit their aunt and uncle all the time.

RM: When did his widow sell out to the Fallini brothers?

HF: She leased it for a long time and finally about 1933 or '34, they bought it from their Aunt Minnie.

RM: Had she been a Fallini?

HF: She had been a Scarmella.

RM: Did you know Jack Longstreet?

HF: As a child I knew of him and who he was and everything, but I didn't know him well. Jack loved kids; he was always good to them.

RM: I've read that he had a homestead for awhile on the east side of the Kawich. I think it's called Red Rock or something.

HF: He had a place up above, as you go on up the valley from Stone Cabin up on that side.

RM: OK, but that was later, I think. Before that, I think he had a place somewhere in the Kawich there, on the south side of the highway.

HF: If he did, I sure don't know where it was, and I don't know where it would be. Because I know that they had the one ranch way down on the Stone Cabin side. There was the Breen Ranch . . . an old man by the name of Breen.

RM: Now, where would that be?

HF: Down close to Silver Bow. Then coming on up this way, why, there was Has Canyon where there were quite a number of people. There was a large Indian camp in there, and O.K. Reed and those people had their headquarters there.

RM: And who was O.K. Reed?

HF: He was one of the head guys from United Cattle Packing Company.

RM: So the United Cattle Packing Company was a big outfit in there.

HF: They were, in the whole area.

RM: What happened to them?

HF: They went broke through the big Depression in 1935 or so. There was a big drought and cattle depression and everything. They went broke and that's why the Fallinis started ranching and buying a little of the extra range that originally was part of the United Cattle Company.

RM: When was that mill up at Bellehelen functioning?

HF: That was the old Merger Mill; that was in the '20s.

RM: Did the Cliffords own that?

HF: They didn't own it at the time, no.

RM: Was that a successful place?

HF: The story as far as I have heard it told is that the fellows who ran the mine got a little heavy on dipping in the pot. Whether that's true or not I don't know, but I do know that it didn't turn out to be profitable.

RM: What was it called?

HF: The Bellehelen Merger. You see, there used to be a little town down at the mouth of Bellehelen Canyon on the west side of the Kawich.

RM: What was it called?

HF: Bellehelen. It was there in the teens. There were quite a few people around those hills who were doing a little mining, plus the Merger Mine itself. I've got pictures of that.

RM: You do? I'd love to see them. Could you tell me a little about how Mr. Fallini came into the area, and where he came from?

HF: He was born in the part of Italy where they were having a long war between Italy and Switzerland. They called it Italy where he was born, and yet when they got the border dispute settled, where he was born turned out to be Switzerland. His mother had passed away, and his twin brother passed away, and his father had already left for somewhere; he was going to try to get out of Italy, and when he did, the family never heard from him anymore. So the older Mr. Fallini, Giovanni Fallini, worked his way down to the waterfront and worked his way across on the ship. They had some relatives - I don't know exactly who the relative was - out in Eureka, so [Giovanni Fallini] caught a train in New York and managed to get out to Eureka.

RM: When would this have been?

HF: Well, he was 20 years old when he came to this country and he was born in 1854. He stayed there a long time, doing anything that he could get, working mostly in the mining area. Then he finally started hauling freight. His wife had been married before to a fellow there and he passed away and she went back to Italy. In a couple or three years he got money together and sent it to her to come over here and marry him. And that's what she did; she came back and married the older Mr. Fallini in Eureka in the early days. In fact, did you know Lee Henderson?

RM: I don't think so.

HF: Well, Lee Henderson's father stood up at the wedding in the early days in Eureka.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Helen, you were talking about Giovanni Fallini. He had just gotten married when you left off.

HF: He got married in Eureka and he and his family stayed there for a long while and then he moved them down to Tybo, which was going big. A big mining operation was going there and the 4 boys were born there. There were 3 sisters; one sister was born at Hot Creek, the youngest one was born later in Tonopah, and the other was born in Danville, a mining can above Hot Creek . . . I can't think of the name of it now, but the 4 boys were all born at Tybo.

RM: What did he do at Tybo?

HF: The same thing, hauling wood and freighting, and just whatever he could do to make a living.

RM: The following is an insert:

The children of Mt. J. B. Fallini and Mary Fallini are as follows: Marie Fallini was born in Eureka on October 21, 1895; Willie Fallini was born in Tybo on July 11, 1897; Mildred Fallini was born in Hot Creek on March 4, 1900; Raymond Fallini was born in Tybo on October 15, 1902; Joseph Fallini was born on August 17, 1904; Ethel Fallini was born in Tonopah on September 28, 1906.

Mr. Giovanni Fallini would have come into the Tybo area when?

HF: He was there before the children were born, so you could tell by the birthdates.

RM: And he worked as a freighter and so on, and then what?

HF: He got working at just anything that he could. He loved ranching and was never able to afford to go into it in a big way, so when he finally ran onto Eden Creek there was quite a lot of water down through the hills at that time, and he moved down there and took up that homestead. It was quite awhile before he got the homestead approved but he lived down there on and off as much as he could. He'd buy a cow, work for somebody and buy a heifer calf and work for somebody else and buy a calf.

RM: About when did he go down there?

HF: I don't know for sure. Willie was born in '94 and it was about the time that Willie was born that he finally moved down there. He was trying to build a house and get things going.

RM: Meanwhile his wife passed away?

HF: His wife passed away in 1908.

RM: And did he pretty much stay in the Eden Creek area, aside from going somewhere to work, from then on?

HF: Yes, he did. In fact, he stayed there and finally leased the cattle and things to the boys, the 3 brothers. He always told us that when he passed away he wanted to be buried . . . he picked a little cedar tree on a little knoll there just above the main house, above the rock house there. He said that when he was buried, that was to be the spot. It is. The oldest daughter, Marie, is buried there by him. And George Chubey is also buried there. And then Sue's mother, my daughter-in-law's mother, is buried there. There are 5 graves there. And just across the canyon there were some old people years ago who had a little girl die, and her name was Jo Hardy. She's buried just across the creek from the other graves.

RM: Was this period when he set up his store at the Reveille Mill?

HF: Yes. It was set up by at least 1900 and I know he had it until it caught fire and then there was not enough business left in the area to rebuild.

RM: And then what people were living there just kind of . .

HF: Drifted off as they did in most mining camps.

RM: Was there ever a little town, kind of a flash in the pan, up on the east side of the Kawich, between Reveille Mill and Warm Springs?

HF: Not that I know of. On the Stone Cabin side there was a mining camp that they called Clifford Mine that's on over the Warm Springs Summit.

RM: Did Mr. Fallini then move down to Twin Springs?

HF: The older Mr. Fallini never did move down here. We'd get him down here once in a while. You see, after our outfit started getting more cattle and building up more, we had to move down more in the center of the range because we were being picked off right and left. We had to move down in the middle of the range and we had bought . . .

RM: What do you mean, picked off?

HF: People were stealing our cows.

RM: Why were they stealing them?

HF: Well, because there was nobody around to watch and they could get away with it easily.

RM: So it was harder for them to steal if you moved the cattle north?

HF: If you moved yourself down more in the middle of the cattle where you could keep a better lookout, was what it amounted to. This place here belonged to a fellow named Moore. He owned a part of it, and then the Lorigans had a part of it. Through the Lorigan's selling out, why, the one Lorigan brother was married to Mildred Fallini, and when he died she fell heir to what he had and we bought her out.

RM: When did you buy her out?

HF: Well, we had the range leased, part of it for . . . in the '30s. And then Hernan Reischke - did you know of him?

RM: I'm familiar with the name; the Reischkes of Tonopah.

HF: They had the store there in Tonopah. They had quite a section of land over here, just straight down this way; part of this ranch. So we bought their interest out, and then we bought the United Cattle Company and finally wound up buying all of the other partners out. My husband and his brothers, Willie and Raymond, bought it. Later on, as the brothers passed on, why, we bought them out. That's how the Fallinis wound up with the whole of Twin Springs.

This place here, the corner over here, is how Railroad Valley got its name. For awhile they thought that they were going to put that railroad down through here and it would have come right through and gone through over on this corner over here. It would have taken a pretty good piece of that land, and they figured that they would make pretty good money off the railroad company by selling them the piece of land where they would have to go through. As it turned out, they didn't put the railroad down through here. It got the name of Railroad Valley, but the railroad never came in.

RM: The railroad was going to come down from Eureka?

HF: It was going to come down through from the Ely way, as I understand it.

RM: Was that after Tonopah, or before?

HF: Before.

RM: Did they have a destination for it, down through this country?

HF: I guess they did, but it was more at the talking stage. I don't think they ever got into any real down-and-out planning. They did do some surveying and so forth on it.

RM: By World War II was the ranch pretty much as it is now?

HF: Well, we've improved it through the years. Places on the range where we saw we could put down a well and improve some water, we got our permits from the state engineers and put in the wells for the cattle. That's why a lot of the wells are in - we put them in ourselves.

RM: Is the water generally pretty deep?

HF: The water in this country right here is not too deep; about 150 feet, I guess. Just above here a little ways the water will raise right to the surface, but it won't flow out. And then we have one well right down Railroad Valley that's 465 feet to the water.

RM: Why did they call it Twin Springs?

HF: Because up in back here for about 3 miles or so there are springs all along that come to the surface, but they don't flow.

RM: Were there any notable things that happened in terms of ranching and land in the 1940s here?

HF: Other than raising cattle, no.

RM: Then the bombing range during World War II didn't care up this far. Did it affect you at all?

HF: It affected us in that it took part of the lower range which was down in the Cedar Pipeline area - the Kawich area - and for awhile they were going to come on up the valley there; then they backed off. We of course moved out of Cedar Pipeline and moved up here. We did live there at Cedar Pipeline for awhile. They came and said that we had to leave there because they were going to make that part of the bombing range. It went on for quite awhile and then finally they released it, and we were able to go back if we wanted to. We'd already dug in here and there was no sense of . .

RM: So you had your headquarters down at the Cedar Pipeline?

HF: Well, when we moved the cattle, we moved them down to the Cedar Pipeline area in the winter and we'd move down there with them and stay. Then in the summer time, why, we'd move them back up this way and we'd come up here and be with them up here.

RM: The Cedar Pipeline is at the south end of the Kawich?

HF: It's where Railroad and Reveille Valleys come together at the south end.

RM: What happened in 1950 and '51, when they started nuclear testing?

HF: They just went ahead and were doing their testing; that's all.

RM: It didn't affect you in terms of your land?

HF: No.

RM: How did it affect you in other ways?

HF: Well, my nephew was the one who died of leukemia, and we'll always feel that that was what killed him. The boy was never sick a day in his life and 11 months from the day that he came down with that leukemia, he was dead.

RM: Did he live here at Twin Springs?

HF: He went to school here, yes. They lived up on the Bertoli ranch.

RM: Where is that?

HF: Above Nyala about ten miles or so. They came down here and stayed through the week and went home on weekends, so he was right in all that heavy fog that we fell into here.

RM: What year did he pass away?

HF: Let's see . . . he was 8 years old when he died. I forget the year. So much has happened since then.

RM: I can remember how radioactive everything was. All the prospectors were out locating everything because everything was giving a reading, because of the fallout. Do you have any anecdotes about how the nuclear testing affected you, and your feelings toward it?

HF: My feelings toward it are that we were nothing, that we were played for guinea pigs. It wasn't supposed to hurt us in any way, shape, or form and yet we got that fallout so heavily that it was unbelievable. And then my nephew got sick and died, and we had dogs that went blind and cattle that were burned.

RM: Radiation burns?

HF: Yes.

RM: Do you remember what year that was?

HF: Along in the early '50s. I don't remember definitely the year because so much stuff came up since then.

RM: What other effects did you see?

HF: Just the fact that when we started squawking about letting so much of that fallout come up over us this way, they kept saying it wasn't hurting us. Finally, why, they went ahead and started putting monitors out after my nephew passed away, but before that they didn't have any.

RM: They didn't have monitors, so they didn't really know how much was coming down.

HF: They had no idea.

RM: Did they give you the little film badges to wear?

HF: Later on, yes. I've got one of them out there on the wall.

RM: As a souvenir?

HF: No, they asked me to keep one here and they come and change it every once in awhile. I'll always say that that's what killed Martin, because he was never sick. He didn't know what it was to be sick, and yet all of a sudden the poor little guy got that leukemia and in just 11 months, he was gone.

RM: Did you see any other illness in people?

HF: Mrs. Sharp over here at Nyala lost all the hair on her head; went completely bald. Madison Locke up here from Locke's Station was burned with beta burns. Different ones had the burns.

RM: Was it one "dirty" shot?

HF: No, it was numerous shots.

RM: What other kinds of problems did you encounter since the '50s? Not necessarily with nuclear testing, but the challenges of ranching in rural Nevada.

HF: Well, there was the wild horse situation. Wild Horse Annie got that bill passed. We had 171 head of horses on our whole range, and they wouldn't let them take any off, or anything. We finally had to go to court with the government over it - several times, in fact - and we finally won a big suit against them. It cost us a hell of a piece of money, but we won the suit and they had to come in and take off a bunch of horses. They took off 500 head one time, and they took off about 1200 or 1400 head another time.

We had gotten to the point that we were going to lose everything we had anyway if we didn't fight them. We were having to do all the water pumping and everything else and our cattle couldn't drink unless we stayed right there and watched them. The horses would herd them away and drink the water faster than we could pump it. The government wasn't putting up one lousy dime for that. So it was either go to court with them and take a chance of getting it settled, or go broke anyway. We were broke whichever way we went.

RM: When did you file your lawsuit?

HF: I don't remember for sure. It was Joe and Helen Fallini vs. the U.S. Government.

RM: Vs. Donald P. Hodell. He was Secretary of the Interior. Did it take you a long time to win the case?

HF: Yes, it did; we kept having to go higher and higher.

RM: How high did you eventually go?

HF: The Supreme Court.

RM: Did they hear the case or uphold the lower court's decision?

HF: We went through the whole darn deal and finally at the last deal we didn't have to appear. They went ahead and read it.

RM: What did the court order?

HF: They ordered them to get those horses out of there and take them down to 150 head and maintain them at that.

RM: Is that a reasonable number, do you think?

HF: Well, I thought they should have taken them down more, especially after the way we had suffered through the years with the abuse from the horses, because you couldn't keep a horse yourself. They'd come down and fight the fences and tear them down and all that, and on top of that you couldn't water anything - the horses would lead the other livestock away from the water. It was very, very miserable, because you'd have to go out and stay right with the cattle to see that they got a drink for that day, and come back the next day and go through the same thing again.

RM: How often do they cull them out now?

HF: We don't know, yet.

RM: Oh, it was just ordered recently?

HF: Yes.

RM: And there's no way the Department of the Interior can challenge that?

HF: Not as I understand it.

RM: Could you say a little more about the hardships that the horses inflicted on you, aside from the costs of the court case?

HF: The range really took a beating because there were so many horses out there. We kept having to cut our cattle down, but they wouldn't cut any of the horses down, and it really beat the hell out of the range. There was no feed left. There are places there where I doubt the range ever will come back like it should, because the horses beat it down and nothing came back in its place but that cheat grass, if you get any moisture. It will take a number of years for it to come back.

RM: Now, that decision affects only you, doesn't it?

HF: That's right. Unless they get their hineys in gear and get up there and start fighting it, they are going to have to do what we did.

RM: I don't know if you know Hank Records down in the Amargosa Valley. He raises alfalfa and has a terrible problem with the wild horses eating his alfalfa.

HF: He can't even chase them off himself.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Helen, I had a chance to review the first tape that we did and I have some questions. We took the Reveille Mill site up to 1910 or the 1920s. Could you briefly describe what happened after that, up say through Belleville, when he had the mill there?

HF: Well, different ones had leases on the mines around the country there, and they all more or less were in the Eden Creek-Reveille Mill area. For instance, over in the one canyon, as I said, George Chubey had his own mining claims, and then there were people up Eden Creek Canyon by the name of Henley who had their own place. There were some people by the name of Stingley who had a place up there, and we used to have a mail line that came from Warm Springs up over the mountain to Bellehelen, from Bellehelen to Eden Creek, from Eden Creek back over this range of mountains down through Golden Arrow and then back up here and back to Warm Springs. That was a stage line. It was finally abolished in the '30s.

RM: It was run by the U.S. Post Office?

HF: Yes it was. It came once a week. Eden Creek was the gathering place for everyone in that area who came to get mail, because it was brought there and it wasn't taken up into the canyons; it was just brought to Eden Creek.

RM: So anyone in the canyon then picked it up at the Fallini Ranch?

HF: Yes.

RM: There was enough activity there to justify that run?

HF: Yes there was; and there were quite a number of Indians at what we called the Indian camp. They'd go out and work through different seasons of the year and leave their families at this Indian camp.

RM: That's the camp that's right west of the Reveille Mill where the water comes out. About how many families were living at the Indian camp in the '20s and '30s?

HF: There were Pigeon Pedro and his family, and Pedro Sam. The young Pete family. There were 4 or 5 families. Johnny Charles and his family. They were the Shoshonis.

RM: What eventually happened to them?

HF: When they opened the Indian reservation up at Duckwater, a lot of them moved up there. Some of them died off and some moved on into Tonopah. There was one old Indian who was down there, old Indian George; somewhere in my possessions I have a picture of him and me. He was supposed to have been 110 when he died.

RM: What did they do for a living?

HF: Well, it didn't take an awful lot for them to live. They'd go out in the fall of the year and gather lots of pine nuts and wood and things like that, and also work for the ranchers. They'd go out, for instance, when the United Cattle Company was in business. And when we needed hired help, we'd go over and get some of the Indians to come and work for us.

RM: Did they live in cabins or wikiups?

HF: Kind of wikiup affairs.

RM: Oh, are they still there?

HF: Yes, part of them are still there.

RM: Yesterday when we were looking at the pictures you mentioned Bautista Vener, who had a little cabin or small home right west of the Reveille Mill. How far was he from the Indian camp?

HF: Oh, right straight across; I would say about a mile and a half.

RM: The Indian Camp was a well-watered site, then?

HF: Yes, there was quite a bit of water there.

RM: It must have been a longtime Indian occupation site.

HF: Yes, it was.

RM: Well, they pulled the mail route out sometime in the early '30s. Then what happened?

HF: After that, why, people started leaving the country; they had nothing else to stay for. They had no way of getting their mail or anything. Some of the older folks stayed back in the hills until they died. Everybody moved on out and then, of course, there was nothing to bring anybody else in, so it just . . .

RM: Was anything happening at the Reveille Mill site itself?

HF: Nothing other than the water for the cattle.

RM: In the early '50s, what buildings were there?

HF: There were several little cabins.

RM: Did they get hauled off or did they burn down?

HF: Most of them got torn down for the old lumber. A lot of the people who came through would see that aged lumber, and they wanted it to put on their walls and make their walls look fancy.

RM: When did Belleville come in there?

HF: He came in before your father was there. He came up from Mina. think his first name was Frank, but I'm not positive.

RM: Did he build the mill then?

HF: No. There was quite a lot of the building there, and he started building up on it again. He was going to get the mill to run and work the lead mine again.

RM: Do you remember about when he came in and then when he pulled out of there?

HF: It was in the '40s. He wasn't in there awfully long.

RM: He wasn't successful?

HF: No.

RM: And the next person in there was my dad, who came there in 1954. Has there been anybody since?

HF: Not to do any mining there or to live there either. The people who got the lead mine there for awhile, Bill Gurgen and (I can't think of the other fellow's name) built that house there that has the cement foundation. They were going to try to put a mill there and do big things, but they went broke.

RM: That's since my dad was in there?

HF: Yes. They tried to form a big company and it didn't work out.

RM: Who built the mill building? Solan Terrell has a picture from 1926 and there's no building there.

HF: Well, different ones who went in there added to it. There was part of it there and part of it had been torn down. Different ones were going to try to build it up and get it going again, and one of them was Belleville. RM: So a lot of people had the dream of running the Reveille lead mine?

HF: Quite a few.

RM: Could you tell me a little bit about the people who lived in the hills?

HF: They were all very good people; very nice, friendly people. It was kind of funny, they were more like one whole big family through the area there. The Stingleys had come from back east and they worked there until she finally took a job in Tonopah and worked in town. He didn't work after they moved into Tonopah. They had that mine up Eden Creek.

And then George Chubey was the one who's buried at Eden Creek. He was born in Moravia, and he came to this country when he was a young man. When war broke out he went into the army for the U.S. In fact, I have pictures of him in that album in his World War I uniform. And when he came back to this country he started working his mine there. He had so much faith in it; he just knew that he was going to strike it rich. He would go out and work for different ones, maybe sometimes for a year, enough to get a stake so he could get powder and food and come back and work that mine again. But he never did make anything out of it.

Then there was an old fellow right back up in the hills here named Victor Stancher. He was just kind of more or less an old moocher, in a way. He'd work a little. He'd come over to the ranch and stay for awhile and he'd do a little of this, that and the other thing, not an awful lot. When he left, why, he always took a little grubstake with him.

RM: These people must have been individualists.

HF: They were, very much so.

RM: Did they live in simple cabins?

HF: Victor Stancher's place up here where he had his mine was a hole in the ground, dug back and then it was boarded up in front with a window. It had a post right in the very center of it to hold up the roof. What always amazed me about him was right around that post, where it came up out of the ground there was a dirt floor. He chewed an awful lot of tobacco and you didn't dare get too close to that post, because if you did, it was kind of like being in a syrup pitcher.

RM: You mentioned yesterday the Indian camp and O.K. Reed's spread up in Hawes Canyon.

HF: That was right on over the mountain.

RM: When would that have been?

HF: O.K. Reed's outfit was up there in 1909 and 1910, something like that.

RM: When did they finally fade out of there?

HF: It was part of the United Cattle Company, and at the last they finally sold out. Later on, why, the canyon caught fire. There was an awful lot of brush in there, and it burned the buildings out.

RM: Was Hawes Canyon a traditional Indian campsite, do you think?

HF: Yes, I do, because there were several Indians who had little ranching spots up there. They weren't very big, but they were a place where they all stayed along this one creek. They all raised little gardens. It's a beautiful site.

RM: When were the Bradshaws in Eden Creek?

HF: In the '20s.

RM: Another question from yesterday is what economic losses, if any, do you see from the land withdrawal of the Test Site?

HF: The thing I see about the whole thing is that if they would leave us alone, go ahead like they are now and let us run our own business, it would be fine. The Bureau of Land Management stepped in and they have made it so damn miserable for a person to try to run stock of any kind, or do anything anymore. One time we went to one of their meetings, and we hadn't been able to keep Eden Creek up because of lack of water. They had a big meeting and they were going to do this, that, and the other thing, and they were showing how they were going to take that country and make it a park area. They had all of these inlays that they were showing. Finally they rolled this one over and here they had the Eden Creek ranch. They were going to take that, too. We jumped up and told them, "Like hell they

They said, "Oh, we are going to give you some other land in return." That land on Eden Creek is patented, they are not going to get it. We had quite a battle over that that night, and they were telling all the other people around who were sitting in there how they were going to take it over and it was going to be a historical site and all that.

RM: Were there a lot of cattle run on the Test Site prior to the development of the [bombing] range down there?

HF: There have been cattle ever since the ranchers came into this country; there have always been cattle run on the range down there.

RM: When they withdrew that land it forced those people out?

HF: At one time we were running cattle down in the Kawich area and when they finally moved that line, they took the Kawich Valley. People weren't allowed to go in there anymore. The line right now is up to about a mile and a half or 2 miles south of Cedar Pipeline.

RM: And you're not allowed to cross that line?

HF: We can't go down in there at all.

RM: Compared to when you first came in to this country, is it drier now than it was?

HF: Oh, yes, much drier. It used to be that in the hills, why, you'd get 2 or 3 feet of snow at least in the winter, and at least a foot in the flats. But the last few years it's the same whether it's in the mountains or the flats, and it's not too much, really, at all.

RM: And the feed is not as good as it used to be.

HF: No, it isn't. A lot of that has to do with the overgrazing of the horses.

RM: Another thing I have noticed since the early '50s, is that there doesn't seem to be as many rabbits as there used to be.

HF: Rabbits in this country are kind of funny; they come in cycles. There were 2 years here when rabbits were so bad that you couldn't go anywhere without almost falling over them. We finally had to shoot them away from the place, they were so bad. My husband and I went out for 2 nights in the pickup, one of us driving and the other one standing up in the back of the pickup. We'd shoot them and right around here we killed 198. That was before the '50s.

RM: It seems they haven't cycled back.

HF: They did, and in that winter of 1948 and '49, which was such a terrible winter, a lot of them died from the cold weather.

RM: Could you tell me a little bit About the problems you have with educating your children on the ranch here? Also, problems with health care being so far . .

HF: One thing that helped a lot with the children not catching everything that cares along is that we are so far from anywhere, diseases don't get in here. However, we do have the cars and we keep the kids all vaccinated up on everything that we can and all.

For education, we have had the school here and the people from around the valley, like Hot Creek, and people from the mine over here, brought their children here. This was more the center of things, and that's how the school has been run. Through the school year, why, when it was bad weather I would keep some of the children from the other ranches around right here so that they didn't have to care or go back and forth every morning. The mothers would bring them on Monday morning and come and get them on Friday. We did that for quite awhile, through bad weather. We always were pretty lucky to have good teachers and so forth. It has really worked out great.

RM: The teachers lived here?

HF: Right here at the ranch. The fact is, several of them have boarded. Other than one religious fanatic that we got ahold of, we have really great luck with teachers.

RM: How do you recruit them?

HF: There are teachers' agencies and they will write and send the pictures of the teachers who want jobs to places like Tonopah. Then we go and ask Tonopah for their file and they let us have it. We pick out who we want and get in touch with them and see if they would be interested in teaching out here.

RM: Is there a yearly cycle to ranching - like, this month you do this, and next month, that. Could you briefly review that cycle?

HF: In the spring of the year, after the cows are all born, along about the middle of May till in July, we round up cattle and brand the calves. Then after they are all branded up we gather the shipping cattle, which are the steers and the culls, and sell them; usually in July. Then we turn the cattle out and let them graze through summer. Of course, you have to go around and keep those water holes working at all times. Then in the fall you wean quite a bit; in October and November.

RM: If you don't wean they'll keep nursing?

HF: Yes, most of them will.

RM: How do you wean them?

HF: We gather them up in the corral, and the ones that are too small, why, we leave with the cow. The ones that are older we separate from the cow.

RM: And you take the cow somewhere else?

HF: Yes. Through doing that, when you've got them weaned, we go ahead and wean a lot of our young steers and cull heifers and things like that. We sell in the fall. Then of course you go through the winter and you have to go around and break ice, throw the ice out every day and pump water and see to it that there is water for the cattle to drink at all times. If the pipeline freezes up you have to go thaw it out.

RM: Do you have a real problem with freezing water?

HF: Not lately, because we have the equipment and everything now to go ahead and put lines down deep enough so that if we keep pretty close watch on it, it isn't the problem that it used to be. Years ago, if Cedar Pipeline was down a foot and a half, you felt you were lucky, because that's about all you'd get with the equipment we had at the time. There was a lot of it that froze up. Now we've had to put in a lot of new plastic pipe which replaced a lot of the old pipe, and

most of our pipelines are down 2-1/2 feet or better, which . . . and then they are flowing, which keeps them from freezing.

RM: How would you describe the relationship of your ranch to Tonopah?

HF: Well, it's our center where we go to pay our taxes, to get our food . . . things like that.

RM: Do you also go up to Tonopah for recreation or anything like that?

HF: It would have to be something very special. You don't go in unless it is something really special.

RM: Do you tend to go to town more or less often than in the old days? HF: In the old days they used to start out from Eden Creek to go to Tonopah and they would have to take a team of horses and go up over the Bellehelen-Eden Creek Summit and go in. It would take probably 8 or 9 days to go and get the groceries and other supplies and come back. Actually they never made that trip until exactly when they had to go, which was usually twice a year.

RM: And they were getting their mail delivered locally, weren't they? And that explains why Mr. Fallini had the store at Reveille.

HF: Yes. Years ago there used to be grocery firms who dealt in wholesale stuff; Perkins' outfit was one of them.

RM: Were they out of Tonopah?

HF: They were out of San Francisco. They would send and make out your order of the stuff that you wanted, and they would send it up by mail. You got a lot of food that way; by mail. You never could have fresh fruit or anything like that, but they would get the dried fruit in 25-pound boxes through the mail. And also coffee and things like that.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Do you have any more thoughts on what it was like to get supplies before we had such good transportation?

HF: Everyone was so used to having to rough it to get their supplies that they never let them run too low. They always, like the Fallinis, raised quite a lot of their vegetables. They corned their own beef and made jerky and things like that. Everybody would pretty much lay in a supply of stuff whenever they got a chance, usually in the spring and the fall; especially the fall.

RM: Enough to really last them if they had a hard winter?

HF: Yes.

RM: Now, I'd like to focus more on your life, and your memories of Tonopah, and so on. You initially went to school in Tonopah?

HF: No, I started school in Arizona when Dad was leasing down there at a mine. Then we later moved up here.

RM: Do you remember about what year that was?

HF: No, I don't remember for sure.

RM: How long did you live in Tonopah?

HF: Off and on for a number of years. Dad would go out sometimes. He worked out at Tybo and then when Tybo shut down, why, he would move back to Tonopah or out to Weepah.

RM: And you lived in all these places?

HF: Yes.

RM: What are some of your memories of Tonopah?

HF: None of us had very much. It was during the Depression and a lot of the time we were in there none of the kids had very much, but they were a real good friendly bunch - more like a big family than anything else. We used to really enjoy things. We'd go out around and watch the mills working and when the mills started shutting down, naturally we didn't go around much. There were quite a few bootleggers in there and we used to enjoy going out to the dump to gather bottles because we could get a nickel apiece for them from the bootleggers. We had real good friends, still do have. Some of them were the best friends you'd ever want to have.

RM: Did you graduate from school in Tonopah?

HF: I'll show you the deal I have. It was during the Depression and Mom had to quit and go to work to support the kids because Dad was real bad. I quit just before graduation and went to work and worked around Tonopah an awful lot. However, the kids all claimed me as their . .

RM: So you were with the class of 1937?

HF: Yes.

RM: What was Weepah like?

HF: Weepah was just like any other mining camp. They had a boarding house there for the men and little cabins for the people who lived out there, and had what they called a "candy wagon" that came from Tonopah every day and brought the mail and gathered different items of food and stuff, just like any other errand boy. I got married when the folks were out there, but they stayed until Weepah closed. After it closed they moved the mill up to Northumberland, and the folks moved up there and were there until it closed.

RM: What did they do then?

HF: By that time my dad was quite ill and they had to move him to the Veteran's Hospital in Reno.

RM: What was Tybo like when were you there in the '30s?

HF: Tybo was a nice camp. They had quite a number of people there and a good sized school. In fact, the old school teacher who taught up there for quite a long while is still alive - Natalie Arigoni. She taught school there until it shut down there for awhile, and then later on when Mrs. Barntz . . . the school was still there, but Mrs. Barntz taught her own children there. They had 7 or 8 children and she taught them herself there.

RM: Tybo must have been a huge operation. It was going in the '90s? HF: Tybo was a big operation and it ran for . . . it was Louisiana Consolidated, and the last was Treadwell Yukon; there were several outfits that worked Tybo. When they finally shut down altogether, I think that outfit from Ely, the Silver King, has it now. They have a watchman there. RM: It's supposed to be a huge underground workings.

HF: Oh, yes; huge.

RM: Was it mainly lead?

HF: Lead and silver, mostly lead and a little zinc.

RM: Did you live in any other of the old mining camps?

HF: No, but Dad worked out at Divide, which is going out toward Goldfield. He had a lease on some property out there but we didn't live out there. RM: Was there a pretty big camp out there?

HF: There used to be at one time. But most of the miners lived in Tonopah and drove back and forth.

RM: Where did you meet your husband, Joe?

HF: His father wanted some assessment work done on those mining claims up Eden Creek, and my dad did the job. That's where I met Joe. That was after I graduated from the 8th grade over here at Warm Springs.

RM: What about Warm Springs? One of the questions I had is, what kept Warm Springs going?

HF: It was a hub of this whole area.

RM: About how many people were living there when you lived there?

HF: When we lived there there was our family, Fred Wilson and his wife and daughter, a school teacher and 2 children, and 2 Indian families. And then in the wintertime, why, there were trappers who used to come down there, and for several years there were sheepherders who would come down from the hills with their sheep. They also used Warm Springs as a gathering place. They would come in and get gasoline and a bottle of booze once in awhile. Old Fred had quite a bootleg operation there.

RM: This would have been in the '20s.

HF: Yes.

RM: How many children were in the school?

HF: The year that I graduated from the 8th grade - about 1930 - there were 9 of us.

RM: When did Warm Springs start falling back?

HF: It never has completely fallen back. There's always some little thing that will revive it, and yet it never gets very big. The time that they were going to put the road in was the biggest that it ever got. I imagine 35 or 40 people were there then.

RM: Did they ever have a school after they closed it down?

HF: Yes, they did. Chloe Colvin from Beatty taught there and there were different ones who taught there.

RM: When did they finally close it down for good?

HF: It would be in the '40s.

RM: Different people have had the bar there over the years.

HF: We bought the place and leased it out, and we tried to keep the bar and station open because it was a gathering place for everybody in the country. But the way it turned out, with the laws like they are now, you can't do much with the place.

RM: The liquor license?

HF: Yes, and your insurance. They don't want to lease it and insure a place way out in the country like that because of the liquor license. And they won't let you lease it to someone. For instance, if I wanted to lease to you, and you were kind of a bad character, I couldn't do it because if I leased it to you, I'd have to sign on the lease too, and then if you did something that was real wrong there, I would be as liable as you would be and it would be putting our cow outfit in jeopardy.

RM: So it's not that there is a lack of business.

HF: Oh, no, there's plenty of business there. It's just like with the swimming pool there. You don't dare allow someone to go in that swimming pool and swim because if you do, why then you are liable if they get hurt. So we put a steel fence around there, and people go ahead and tear the fence down; they use bullcutters on it and all kinds of stuff. If they do they're in trouble because they are trespassing.

RM: When did it finally become impossible for you to keep it open?

HF: About 4 years ago. The problems just started getting worse and worse. RM: They had slot machines in the '50s, didn't they?

HF: Yes.

RM: Now you'd have all those gambling license problems, too.

HF: I think those new licenses on gambling machines are more to protect the bigger places like Harold's Club. They could go ahead and get their licenses because there are so many of them, and so many people, but out here, you can't go ahead and pay the licenses that they can pay. So it just leaves you out on . .

RM: The whole system is really designed for the big guys.

HF: It certainly is. I know we ran the place ourselves for awhile, but after my health broke there was no way that I could go in there and run it. I've had a lot of people say, "Why don't you run it now?" Well, I wouldn't run it now if I could for the simple reason that if somebody came in there and slipped on the floor and broke a leg or got drunk and fell down or whatever I would be responsible, and I can't do it. So it's easier to keep the place shut down.

RM: The building that was here in the '50s burned, didn't it?

HF: Yes it did. We built this building here, new.

RM: Do you remember when the fire was?

HF: Gosh, I don't remember for sure. It was in the '50s, I think.

RM: I wonder when the original building was built?

HF: Warm Springs has been changed numerous times. The road used to come behind and come around and make the "S" there, and there was a big old yellow building there. Then that was the bar, the cafe and the whole bit there. Then they changed it and brought the highway down in front of the swimming pool and put the bar there in front, so that bar has been moved at least 3 or 4 times.

RM: Were the rock corrals built in the '90s?

HF: No one seems to know just for sure how old the corral is, but it goes way, way back.

RM: Probably to the same era as the rock corral at the Reveille Mill?

HF: I would imagine, and it was a stage stop; that may have had something to do with it. They didn't have accommodations or anything there, but they did have a rest area for their horses.

RM: Then when did you and Joe get married?

HF: In 1936. We first lived at Eden Creek and Bellehelen.

RM: What was life like there as a newlywed?

HF: I enjoyed it because I was used to hills and everything. We were happy there; then we moved on up to the Bellehelen ranch and we had a little house there, in fact it's one of the houses that is there at Warm Springs now, across the street.

RM: Where did that house sit?

HF: At first it was over at the Merger Mine, and when the Merger Mine went down and they sold everything out, we bought that house and of course it wasn't lined or anything. We moved it over to the ranch and fixed it up from there; that's where we lived.

RM: When did they =Are it down to Warm Springs?

HF: That would be in the '50s, I guess.

RM: How would you compare life at Eden Creek to life at Bellehelen?

HF: It was just more of the sane, really. Of course the older Fallinis were all moving away, except the older man Fallini never left the ranch. In fact, he died there in the rock house, but there was just no difference to me, it was just all living in the country, which I liked far better than ever living in town. I never did like living in town.

RM: How many houses were at the Eden Creek Ranch besides the old stone house?

HF: There was a big frame building and there were 2 smaller frame buildings. They've fallen down or been torn down. People are after this rustic looking lumber to decorate their houses, so if you aren't there to watch it, why, away goes your lumber. Joe and I tried to keep the old rock building in shape at Eden Creek and we'd put windows in it. One time we went down there and there were 32 bullet holes through one window, and they'd tear the doors off, so we finally got to the point where we couldn't keep it up. You'd put those windows and doors back on, and inside of a week they'd be torn up and gone.

RM: Well, one thing about it; the walls are stone.

HF: No, they can't very well . . . there are a lot of bullet holes around it, though.

RM: Could you describe what kind of a man Giovanni Fallini was?

HF: He was a very good, honest old man. If he liked you, he would do anything in the world for you and he was very good about sharing whatever he had. If he had a loaf of bread and you came in there hungry, you got part of that loaf of bread; he was just that type of person. Quite a lot of people took advantage of his generosity. He was a good person; a good honest person. One thing that used to amuse me was that he used to tell his kids if he ever caught them stealing or cheating, he would shoot them. I believe he would have. He put a very high value on honesty.

RM: When did he pass away?

HF: 1940, I believe. He was 87. He was born on New Year's Day and died on New Year's Day on his 87th birthday.

RM: How would you describe your father? What kind of a man was he?

HF: My dad could be the nicest guy in God's green earth, until he got a bottle.

RM: He was a miner most of his life?

HF: Yes, mining and carpentry work.

RM: How would you describe your mother?

HF: I had always thought that she had the patience of an angel, to put up with his damn nonsense. She was a very steady person, and it was a good thing she was, because she kept the family together. Dad was a good person, and when he wasn't drinking you couldn't have wanted to be around a nicer person. But if he was drinking, we kids kept clear of him.

RM: How would you describe your husband, Joe?

HF: He was very much like his dad; a very good honest person. I don't know of anyone I know who didn't like him.

RM: When did he pass away?

HF: In 1979. He was about 71.

RM: What about the other Fallini men, Ray and Bill?

HF: Well, Willie passed away. He had that hardening of the arteries very badly and he passed away from that; heart. And then Raymond passed away from cancer of the pancreas. They were very, very good men. Everybody liked them.

RM: And you have one child, Joe?

HF: Yes.

RM: And who did Joe marry?

HF: He married a girl from Lockinyatta, California. When Joe first went to the university, he roomed with her brother. Susan Chapman was her name. They have 3 children.

RM: Do you hire ranchmen for the ranch?

HF: Oh yes, we have hired help all the time.

RM: Do they just come here, or are they here for a long time?

HF: Well, for instance, this one Indian fellow who works for me, now . . . his uncle worked here for us 25 years and his brothers have all worked here. We try to be as careful as we can about who we hire, because if you don't you can sure get into some messes. We have hired strangers in a pinch, and have certainly got ourselves in some messes by doing it.

RM: What was it like when you were just cattle ranching here?

HF: When there was just cattle ranching here it was always real nice, because everyone worked together and all. Later on, why, it got to where you couldn't hire very many people locally, and there again we got into quite a lot of problems trying to hire somebody, because the government moved in with their big deals like Sandia over here. The government can pay far, far more than the rancher can pay. Right now, we are paying \$40 a day to the hired guys, plus their house and lights and water, and then of course we have to pay their Nevada Industrial Insurance and things like that, and we have to pay half of their social security, so they are really getting a good wage. In fact, I think we pay some of the highest wages paid on ranches around here. In doing that, we've been able to keep a pretty good type of hired help.

RM: Are most of them family men?

HF: Yes. The one fellow that we have now has 2 little children. They go to school here. Do you know Bob Perchetti from Tonopah?

RM: Sure

HF: His boy works here for Joe. It works out pretty well because we try to keep people we know instead of getting into some of the messes we have in the past.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Helen, could you compare the hardships of ranch life in this part of Nevada at present, with when you first married Joe Fallini and came out here?

HF: Other than the problems that were created by the Bureau of Land Management, I can't see that there has been any big drastic change. The Bureau of Land Management has been nothing but a pain in the butt. No matter what you do, it's wrong to them. For instance, we have water holes that we have to keep up and pump and everything, and in order to preserve our range and take care of it, we shut off certain wells through the different parts of the year and by doing that the livestock has to move from one place to another. That preserves part of the range. Well, the Bureau of Land Management, all of a sudden, got the bright idea that we should move our cattle out; however, we should keep that well open and everything to the wildlife, and they classed the wild horse as wildlife. In other words, we were to pump water and everything for the wild horse, but we weren't to have any of our cattle out there. In doing that, there was no way that you could preserve that range at all. We had quite a lot of argument over such things. They didn't want us to shut parts of the water off, just like we have the pipelines in. When we want to protect that area of the range, we shut the water off at the pipeline and nothing can drink at it. However, we have water above or not terribly far from it, right around one certain area we are trying to preserve. They have been very stinking about it at different times.

A good example is the one spring down there. There's quite a lot of water there, and we wanted to put the water from that spring down to the big, deep well that's down there - it's 465 feet deep. We wanted to put that pipeline down to that well so it would save all the pumping and wearing out the motors and everything. They told us we could do it if we brought the water down to the outside of the corral and put a water trough there for the horses to drink, outside of the corral, and then we could use the water to come on into the corral, otherwise we could just forget it. If you're going to do that, you're leaving it open to run the range down; that's not taking care of the range. We told them to go to hell on it. I don't know how it's going to come out yet on that part of it, but they insist that the horses be watered. As far as the deer and antelope and all, they just move right along with the cows. It doesn't make any difference to them.

RM: Plus they know where the water is anyway. The real wild animals. HF: Yes. So we've had quite a lot of problems. There's always something. They come up with some little piddling thing all the time. Nit-picking, I call it. You can get everything to where you think you're pretty well settled, and all of a sudden, here they core with some other daggone thing. Just like this one woman up Eden Creek. There is one little place up there that has a little patch of a kind of wild grass, but it isn't very big, maybe twice or three times the size of this room, and all of a sudden this woman they had there decided that it should be taken away from the cows and no cow should be able to eat on it, or this, that, or the other thing, because they were killing it out. Well, that grass has been the same since God knows when. She's bound and determined that

it's an exotic type of grass or something, just making a boob out of herself, because everybody knew that that grass . .

RM: How does she propose to keep the cattle off of it?

HF: You're supposed to keep them out of there, fence them off or whatever. It's just a constant harassment of all kinds of nit-picky little things. I know one grader man . . . you know when they go along blading the road, one person told him that when they bladed the road they could only get so far off the road; they didn't want them to mess up the ground. Then they could camp there; however, they had to dig a little hole about like that for the garbage, and when they left they had to stomp it in, and they couldn't do this and they couldn't do that. Why, it was mighty miserable for them. The people who were on the grader were mighty miffed too, because they were being harassed along with everybody else.

RM: Do you see a change in the state politically over the years aside from the Bureau of Land Management?

HF: Well, like everybody, we always have our own feelings about the politicians. Some of them have been pretty good and we feel that they have done a good job, others of them we feel would sell you down the road for a nickel. Some of them actually have. This Wilderness Area, and all that kind of stuff has been a big pain in the rear.

RM: Will the Wilderness Bill affect you?

HF: It will affect everyone, to a certain extent.

RM: What about the price of beef? It's relatively lower than it was years ago.

HF: That's another thing that we got into with the government when Joe died. That was the year when cattle was the highest it's ever been and we were getting \$1.10 a pound for good weaner steers. Well, after they got to settling his estate, we had to pay the inheritance tax on the estate at \$1.10 per pound, even though the cattle had dropped down to 60 and 62 cents. We've had to pay through the nose, really, for that. We have to come up with a good sized payment for them in February We've been paying interest on that right along and they really socked it to us. And there's another thing . . . one part of the government says that you don't own this range here, yet the other says you own it, and you've got to pay that big inheritance tax on it.

RM: It looks like they have it their way.

HF: Yes, they've got it their way, whichever way they want to put it.

RM: How many head of cattle do you typically run?

HF: We run about 1,500.

RM: Over vast areas.

HF: Yes, it is.

RM: How far does it go down . . . Reveille Valley and then part of Railroad Valley?

HF: Yes. We try to keep right on the numbers because we don't want any trouble. Joe and I own the place together, and then of course the kids have a few head of cattle of their own.

RM: How many hands do you typically have?

HF: In the spring of the year when we have our roundups we have to have extra help. And then in the winter time we have to have 2 or 3 extras to go around and break the ice. People don't realize how much time you have to put on to something like the ice breaking.

RM: Especially when you have to go cover this vast territory.

HF: Yes, and so many water holes. It makes a big difference.

HF: How do you see the future of ranching in this area?

HF: I may be wrong, but up here at the air base just 9 miles from here, they are extending the runway. The air base is just north of Warm Springs.

RM: Is it a big operation?

HF: Pretty good size. They are extending that air strip and I have the feeling that they are slowly but surely going to absorb us and take us.

RM: What kinds of planes do they bring in there?

HF: Different kinds.

RM: Is it the Air Force?

HF: Yes.

RM: So you feel it's a gradual encroachment onto this land.

HF: That's just my own personal feelings; it isn't Joe's or anyone else's. I feel that they are slowly but surely smothering us out. You see, that one atomic bomb that they set off was right up there above Warm Springs, up twin Hot Creek there. They call it base camp. That's where

they are enlarging the runways. I don't know, I just have the feeling that the time of running cattle out like we are is on its way out.

RM: Joe doesn't feel that way?

HF: He's hoping against hope that it isn't.

RM: How would they ease you out?

HF: For one thing, if they would ever get hold of the water rights in the state of Nevada, we're through. That's what we are based on here.

RM: I don't know if you have had geologists look at it, but apparently there are 2 water systems in this state. There's a really deep one that comes to the surface here and there, and then there's another one that's more shallow.

HF: They've had people in from different places to study the water situation. They started to let a bunch of the next valley, Stone Cabin Valley, go out into homesteaders and all of a sudden they stopped the homesteading because they said it was a water dry basin. That was 20 years ago; within the past 20 years. They wouldn't let them go ahead and do any more drilling or anything because of it. But some of them got the land, and after they got it, why, they couldn't .

RM: So they own the land with no water?

HF: Yes, and they can't drill for water to irrigate it.

RM: In talking to some of the people in the Amargosa Valley I learned that they are trying to shut off their water.

HF: Yes, I know they are. In fact they are trying to shut off one ranch down there because of the pupfish.

RM: They already shut that big cattle ranch down; they shut the whole Ash Meadows down because of the pupfish. I mean over in what they call the farm area.

HF: Oh, are they going to do that, too?

RM: They're trying to shut their water down there, too. They've been to Carson City and everything.

HF: There are a lot of people in there who have got a lot of money sunk into that place.

RM: That's right. They got their land in the '50s on Desert Entry and now the state is trying to say that their water rights are not valid.

HF: Well, that's what they did over here. I don't know. You just never know from one minute to the next exactly what's going to happen when it comes to the government.

RM: I remember back in the '50s it was all Herefords that you ran. Have you bred in any other strains?

HF: We try to keep it straight Hereford, but we do get a few cows . . . Our neighbors brought some freakish bulls in, and they get with our cattle and we get a freakish animal every once in awhile, but we try to keep it straight whiteface.

RM: What do you see as the great pleasures of the life you have led here in rural Nevada?

HF: When Joe and I were first married, the outfit wasn't very large, and it is a pleasure knowing that you have been a big part of building up something that is a large outfit. It gives you a good feeling. As far as being in town, living in a town situation, I never was . . . I'm very much a country person. I'm very much an outside person. I don't like anything where you are confined to a house. I think that's one of the main reasons that this illness of mine has been so hard to take.

RM: Being confined, you mean?

HF: Yes; it's very hard to take. Well, just knowing that you've been a part of the outfit really makes a big difference.

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