

An Interview With
Harry Ford

*An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken*

COPYRIGHT 2014
Nye County Town History Project
Nye County Commissioners
Tonopah, Nevada
89049

CONTENTS

Preface	iv
Acknowledgments	vi
Introduction	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
CHAPTER TWO	12
CHAPTER THREE	22
CHAPTER FOUR	33
CHAPTER FIVE	43
CHAPTER SIX	55
CHAPTER SEVEN	77
CHAPTER EIGHT	90
CHAPTER NINE	100
CHAPTER TEN	114
CHAPTER ELEVEN	131
CHAPTER TWELVE	149

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 recordings 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 Butch Borasky, Lorinda A. Wichman, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, Fely Quitevis, and Dan Schinhofen 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 subsequent rounds 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. 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
2014

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 discovered mineral deposits, 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 early 1860s through 1900. Austin had a newspaper, the *Reese River Reveille*, starting in 1863 and the Belmont area starting with the *Silver Bend Reporter* in

1867. Ione had a paper, the *Nye County News*, for a few years in the 1860s. More information representing the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915 is available; from local newspapers after about 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 from its first year, starting with the *Tonopah Bonanza*. Goldfield had the *Goldfield News*, which began in 1904. 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. All oral and community histories and photographs collected under the NCTHP are available on the Internet.

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
2014

This is Robert McCracken talking to Harry “Button” Ford at his home in Pahrump, Nevada, October 30, November 8, December 9, December 17, December 30, 2010, and January 17 and February 8, 2011.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: This is the first interview in what we’re going to call the “How Pahrump Grew” project. We’ll begin by having Harry “Button” Ford introduce himself. Tell us a little about who you are, Button.

HF: My name is Harry Ford. My father, who was Stanley Ford, became interested in Pahrump Valley back in 1943. We lived down at Yermo, and he was working at the military bases in the Barstow/Yermo area. He heard about Pahrump and how the water flowed out the ground and the big springs, and all this sort of thing. A fellow by the name of George Fink came to Pahrump and bought a piece of property and Dad made an agreement with him to come up here and farm it.

Well, they sort of got the cart before the horse because they hadn’t drilled a well yet. Water in Pahrump is like gold in the mountains—some parts of the valley have a lot of water and other parts don’t have as much. The well didn’t turn out on the piece of property Dad had moved onto. It only flowed about 125 or 130 gallons, where a good well would flow at least 500 or 600, some 1,000 or more. But that’s why we moved up here in 1944.

RM: Where did you first live?

HF: The property that we first moved to is known as the Basin Ranch today. It’s on Basin Road, about a half to three quarters of a mile west of Highway 160 on the north side.

RM: How many acres were there?

HF: There were only 100 acres in that particular parcel. It was purchased from Ray Van Horn, who was a very interesting person in Pahrump.

RM: Who was living in Pahrump in 1944, and where?

HF: When we came here, the first thing I saw was the Pahrump Ranch. Even though it was wintertime, it had lots and lots of trees. It had the tall Lombardy poplars, and you could see those for miles and miles. It was at the main intersection in Pahrump. This particular intersection had a real nice sign that had been put there by the American Automobile Association of Southern California. They had put signs all over the desert because so many people would get out here and get lost and end up somewhere they weren't supposed to be.

In those days, the road came in from Shoshone and ran east. It actually ran on up the mountain into Wheeler Pass. There was some activity up there in the earlier days; they had a sawmill. So the intersection of Pahrump was right in front of the Pahrump Ranch main gate. If you came from Shoshone, you could go straight ahead and go on around down to the Manse Ranch and Sandy Valley, or you could turn right and go into the Pahrump Ranch, or you could turn left and go back up to Johnnie.

In the early 1900s, the mines were going up at the Johnnie area. That road later became I-15 to Los Angeles; it came right through Sandy Valley and Pahrump and on up to the mines. If you were going to San Bernardino or Los Angeles, you'd come right through Pahrump. All that history is lost, but I'm assuming, from the two ranches that were here, and the buildings and everything they had, that there probably was a substantial amount of traffic through here when the mines were going.

RM: And that intersection was basically where Highway 160 is?

HF: No, it was 372. The road came in on 372. The downtown intersection at Pahrump

was about a quarter of a mile west of what is today 160.

RM: And from that intersection, where was the gateway to the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: When you got to the intersection, if you made a right and went due south, in 100, 200 feet, you went through the main gate of the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: So what was in effect the road going down Pahrump Valley went through the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: A portion of it did, but they didn't use that road much because it went through a real fine, silty material—if you went straight east and then made a turn instead, you were then up on the alluvial fan, which was gravel.

RM: And it was about a quarter of a mile to the east? So there were, basically, two roadways off of 372. One that kind of cut through the Pahrump Ranch, and the other a little further east.

HF: By the time we got here, the Pahrump Ranch was farming the road, so to speak. The road went straight into their main buildings and corrals and everything.

RM: Do you know how many acres, roughly, the Pahrump Ranch consisted of then?

HF: When we first came here, the Pahrump Ranch consisted of 12,000 acres.

RM: And describe what those acres were like.

HF: They had the big slough because of the big springs. The sloughs were a godsend. I mean, you could put 60, 100 head of cattle in there all summer and they had plenty of water, plenty of feed, plenty of everything, just from the water running through the slough.

RM: How many acres would you say the slough consisted of?

HF: It probably wasn't over 100 feet wide but it was about two miles long, going to the west.

RM: And where did it end?

HF: It went outside of their property and ran off in the desert and sort of soaked into the ground.

RM: It didn't go down to the dry lake?

HF: No, at the end of it, there was a big pond. It was kind of nice. We used to go duck hunting there a lot.

RM: I'll be darned. How big was that pond, would you say?

HF: Probably five acres. It was not as much in the summertime because in the summer they used the water to irrigate the fields. In the wintertime they just turned her loose and it ran on down.

RM: And how much acreage was under cultivation, would you say?

HF: Of course, they would grow grain; they grew that a lot. They'd start it in the wintertime and grow the alfalfa in the summertime. I'd say it was 200 to 300 acres of actual land.

RM: So, not a lot?

HF: Well, not a lot, but you have to remember, a large portion of the rest of it was fenced, and it had a lot of mesquites and a lot of growth down in there so they could turn their cattle loose.

RM: So it was kind of pasture? Would you call it high-quality pasture?

HF: It depends. In the fall, when the mesquite beans came off, mesquite beans are like the best grain you can feed your cattle. So in the wintertime it was first-class pasture land. But in the summertime, of course, there was basically nothing.

RM: So was it thick with mesquite trees?

HF: Some of it was. One thing we have to remember is in those days there was more

rainfall here. (Of course, if you go back through the years, they had some drought times also.) But when we came here there was more rainfall.

RM: What else did those 12,000 acres consist of?

HF: A lot of it was outside; some of it ran clear down as far as Mesquite on both sides of 160. It was kind of a broken-up piece, but the big master chunk was right down through the heart of the valley.

RM: Describe the springs that were on the ranch at that time.

HF: There were actually two large springs. By the time we got here, they had gone in with drag lines (the forerunner of the backhoe) and dug them out. They were large ponds, probably close to an acre, and as kids, we'd go swimming in them. They were great swimming holes.

RM: How close were the two springs?

HF: I'd say within a couple hundred feet.

RM: So you had two one-acre ponds a couple hundred feet apart?

HF: Right. Now, of course, they were deep. Where we went swimming, it was deep enough that it put a lot of pressure on your head if you went clear down to the bottom.

RM: Is that right? Like ten feet?

HF: I'd say more than that. Probably 15 feet.

RM: Could you feel the water surging out of the ground?

HF: Oh, yes.

RM: Were they clear?

HF: They were crystal clear.

RM: Were there any fish or frogs in them?

HF: There was carp in there a couple of feet long. They say carp aren't good to eat

because they're so bony. And there were a lot of frogs.

RM: Were they big frogs or little frogs?

HF: If you go to Ash Meadows and compare them with the frogs there, they were small. But some were a foot long when you stretched them out.

RM: Interesting. Now, describe the outbuildings on the Pahrump Ranch at that time.

HF: When you first came in, on the left-hand side there was a small house that had been the school at one time and on the other side were the corrals and the big barn. The big barn was very big. On either side of the open center area were stalls. One side was horses; the other side was cattle because you always had milk cows and so on. The top had a big hay mound. At one time, that had been used for the stage line to run through here. The barn had doors on each end and you could drive right through it. That's where the stagecoaches would come in and be inside, I suppose, if it was bad weather or whatever.

RM: What era do you think that was?

HF: It would be, let's say, from 1900 to 1920 or so. As you kept going on through, on the right-hand side, sort of in front of the barn, was the old Pahrump Store. We have the old store here at the museum now—we moved it here. Then as you went on down, there were houses that had to do with the ranch. They also had a hotel and a bunkhouse. Now, there's some debate on which was the hotel and which was the bunkhouse because they were similar. When we came here in 1944, unfortunately, one of those buildings burned to the ground; I saw the smoke.

The lane went down through there and there was still another house or two that were dwellings on the west side. Going back to the east side, when we got here, they had just built two big, nice homes—one for the foreman and one for the owner. Between

these two houses, probably 1,000 feet, was what we always referred to as the hotel. It was built just like a hotel with a hall down the middle and rooms on each side.

RM: One story?

HF: It had an upper story, but just for storage. Outside it had stairways that went up it. There's some debate on whether that was the bunkhouse or the one that burned was the hotel. When we came here, it was being used as a bunkhouse. It had a large dining room and a good kitchen and some type of a freezer because they butchered their own meat. And there were a number of houses for the employees.

RM: How many rooms do you think the hotel/bunkhouse had?

HF: Probably four on each side, which would have been big for a little community like this in the early 1900s.

RM: They probably weren't fancy, were they?

HF: No, they were nice and comfortable but they weren't fancy.

RM: When you got there, how many people were living on the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: You had the foreman and his wife, and they had two daughters. His name was Heber Wilson. His wife was Norma Wilson and his oldest daughter was Joyce Wilson. She was in high school and the other girl, Carol Jean, was my age, which was about eight. They lived in a brand new house that was two bedrooms and a bathroom and a big living room and a kitchen.

RM: It had indoor plumbing?

HF: Oh, yes.

RM: What is the background of Heber Wilson and his wife?

HF: I know they were Mormons, and it was always thought that they came out of Utah. Other than that, I have nothing.

RM: Was the owner of the Pahrump Ranch at that time a Mormon?

HF: I couldn't tell you. His name was Ray Thomas. He was an engineer and he lived in Los Angeles and had some type of a job there. He had built the other nice, big house to live in when he came.

RM: When did he acquire the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: It would have to have been, probably, in the '30s.

RM: He must have had some money, to be able to afford a property like that.

HF: Yes. It was a nice ranch. I can't say they were purebreds, but they certainly looked good—white-faced Hereford cattle.

RM: Probably the younger Wilson girl went to school with you, right?

HF: That's correct.

RM: What did the older girl do?

HF: She had to live in Las Vegas during high school time. Whether they boarded her out and then get her on weekends or whatever, I don't remember.

RM: How long was Heber there?

HF: He was there when we came, of course, so that would have been in '44. I graduated in '50, so it probably would have been three, maybe four years at the most.

RM: Do you know where he went after he left here?

HF: No, I sure don't.

RM: Who else lived on the Pahrump Ranch in those years?

HF: Okay, there was the big house—we're on the east side of the road now, going south. The next building was the hotel, which was the bunkhouse when we got here.

Down from that was a nice little, smaller house. That's where the cook—in this particular case, a lady—lived. Her husband was a worker on the ranch.

RM: Did they have children?

HF: It seemed like they had one boy who was a friend of mine in school but I don't remember his name.

RM: Do you have any idea how long they were there?

HF: They probably left when the cookery shack burned down.

RM: Who else was living on the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: The bunkhouse had a lot of single men, naturally. Some would stay a while, some would leave pretty quick; there wasn't a whole lot of excitement in Pahrump in those days. There were some Indians. Steve Brown and his brother Ernie lived there. Ernie had a wife and some kids. Steve's wife had died and his mother, Dora Brown, who was a very nice lady, lived with him. He had three children and two of them lived at home with him. The other one was a girl, a little older, and she lived with part of the family down in Los Angeles. I think Steve had another brother down in L.A. It was good for the girl because, of course, she got to go to school.

Steve got married again while he was living in that house to a woman named Irene. They had a baby while they were in the house. They had more kids after that and they all grew up. Steve was kind of the straw boss under Heber Wilson. He was a very sharp person. But when the place sold, they sort of treated Steve like he was nobody so he went to work in the mines over in Shoshone.

RM: Do you remember Ernie's wife's name?

HF: Her name was Grace.

RM: And Steve's wife had been Indian? Was his second wife also Indian?

HF: She was half-Indian.

RM: What happened to the Browns?

HF: As I said, Steve went to work in the mines. In later days, when he got old enough to draw a pension, he came back to Pahrump. He bought a mobile home and lived down behind what was the Pahrump Trading Post in those days; now it's where the school's main offices are.

RM: He lived next door to Rosie Arnold, didn't he? And whatever happened to Ernie?

HF: They moved to Vegas and his family ended up on the reservation out in Moapa. He probably went to work in a mine or something there because he was a very capable person.

RM: Do you remember any other Southern Paiutes working on the Pahrump Ranch when you got there that you remember?

HF: Well, Long Jim. He was a seasonal worker. He was always here during school time and then in the summertime he and the wife and kids went up on the mountain. They had a very nice place up there. Along in September, they'd come back and he'd go back to work on the Pahrump Ranch. He was an irrigator, mostly—there's a lot of irrigating to do on a big place like that.

RM: Who else was working there when you showed up?

HF: That's about all I remember. And you had the bunkhouse, which usually had three or four or five guys.

RM: Did they tend to be Indians, or were they whites?

HF: I know that a lot of them were whites. They had an ad in one of the papers somewhere, "Help Needed in Pahrump" and my dad would bring them in on a Wednesday—he hauled the mail. They would ride the bus to Shoshone and he'd give them a ride in here. A lot of times, the next Wednesday, they were on the bus out.

[Laughs]

RM: So those were the only people that were living on the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: That's all that I remember. We lived three-quarters of a mile from the cookery shack and of course, the air was very, very clear here in those days. They would ring the dinner bell at a quarter to 6:00 and 6:00 in the morning, at a quarter till 12:00 and 12:00 at noon, and at a quarter to 6:00 and 6:00 in the evening. The men could hear it clear down the field and that gave them 15 minutes to get up there. My dad could set his watch by it.

RM: And a quarter to six in the morning, that was probably the signal get up.

HF: Oh, sure. Of course, in the summertime they'd get up at 5:00. But I remember my dad would always pull out his watch and check it.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: I'll be darned. Okay, so that takes care of the Pahrump Ranch. Now, where did your family live when you first got here in 1944?

HF: When we first got here, we lived on a property that had been purchased by a Mr. Fink. My dad had built a house—it wasn't completed yet but it was livable—out of railroad ties. It was fair sized. It was right across the street from where the museum is now but it was about a half a mile west of 160 on Basin, going due north from where you and I are sitting right now.

RM: How far due north?

HF: Two or three hundred feet.

RM: Just across the highway?

HF: Yes. The old concrete slab that he poured by hand is still there.

RM: And how many acres were there?

HF: There were 100 acres, but he only farmed some of it. He broke it out with horses. This was during the Second World War and you couldn't get gas, and of course, he didn't have a tractor. He broke out about ten acres and planted it to some kind of milo maize or soybean or something. Of course, the soil was untested and there was not much water. It was basically a failure. What grew, the rabbits ate up, and that was it. We were only there a short while. We moved here in March, and we moved out in about October.

RM: Did you have any neighbors there?

HF: No. We were the only other family outside of the ranches and a couple of other places. There was the Raycraft place and the two Cayton brothers but other than that, there was nothing.

RM: There was nothing north of you? That's hard to imagine.

HF: Soon after we moved in here, Ray Van Horn had purchased a whole bunch of land in the north end of the valley—hundreds, maybe thousands, of acres. He lived over at Crystal and had a nice little house there.

RM: Now, where's Crystal?

HF: It's this side of Highway 95, where the brothels are. That was out in the middle of nowhere then. He loaded that little old house at Crystal on a truck and moved it over to his property in the north end of Pahrump. So Ray Van Horn was the first dwelling in the north end of Pahrump, in late '44 or early '45.

RM: What do you know about Van Horn?

HF: They were from Bakersfield. There's a town, Pumpkin Center. If you were going out of Bakersfield, and you were south, there's a road that takes off and goes through Taft and Pumpkin Center. It ends up over at the ocean. His father had been quite a farmer. Then he had married Paul Cayton's mother, so that's what brought him to Pahrump.

RM: I wonder what attracted Van Horn to Pahrump. I gather he had an inheritance.

HF: Yes. And I think he probably promoted his son-in-law on his wife's side, Paul Cayton, a little bit. So we had the Cayton brothers here. There was Paul and Helen, and Helen ran the post office. They had moved up here in the '30s; I think they came from Texas or Oklahoma. They lived south of us in a great big tie house. It wasn't finished for years but the structure was there, and you could live in it. It was kind of a southern-style house. It had the four-peaked roof and it was very nice.

Paul Cayton had a brother named Buddy; his wife's name was Lonnie. They were real nice people. They had a nice place in Vegas and to come out here and live under a mesquite tree, it just didn't work. In fact, she worked for years and years at, I think it was

Penney's on Fremont.

Ray Van Horn had married Paul Cayton's mother; her name was Sally. I'm sure Paul, who was kind of a promoter, talked Ray into buying this property. After Ray's father died in the San Joaquin Valley, Ray inherited \$10,000. He brought that money over here, and the county had all this property for a dollar and a quarter an acre. He bought hundreds and hundreds of acres, and he darn near starved to death before he could turn it.

RM: How did the county get hold of that property?

HF: It would have been through taxes. How it got released from the federal government, I have no idea.

RM: But it was thousands of acres?

HF: Yes, it was basically the whole north end of the valley.

RM: Where did the Caytons live?

HF: As I said, they lived over in the big tie house. It was on what is Wilson Road today. Wilson Road's the same place it was when we came here, only it didn't have a name. They lived right at the bottom west end of Pop Buol's place.

RM: How far from Pop Buol?

HF: Their fence lines merged, but there was about a quarter of a mile between their buildings.

RM: How did Van Horn earn a living?

HF: When we knew him, he was still living off of his \$10,000 retirement, which was about gone. He bought that land in at least '43 or earlier. He's the one that sold the property to Mr. Fink so he had owned the property that Dad moved onto up here.

RM: And that was where you laid the slab, and your dad did not own that little parcel?

What was Fink's background?

HF: Fink was very fortunate. The lady who ended up being his wife lived in the San Joaquin Valley and they had a farm there. Her name was Hattie, but I don't know what her last name was. She and her husband had a farm in the San Joaquin Valley and Mr. Fink was their employee. They discovered oil on Mrs. Fink's property in the San Joaquin Valley.

RM: Was it around Bakersfield?

HF: Somewhere around Bakersfield. As I remember, the income was something like \$200 a day, which was very, very good. Mr. Fink was a very helpful person so he married Mrs. Fink after her first husband died. She was left alone with the farm and her oil wells. His wife was very, very well off. They moved to Paradise Valley in later years, and she died. So the poor guy ended up with the oil wells, the farm, and the place in Vegas, the whole shot.

RM: Why did they settle in what I always thought was strangely named Paradise Valley, in the Vegas Valley?

HF: There were some nice places out there. That's where Roy Rogers and all of them lived, in those days. Roy Rogers was a real friend of Doby Doc. He used to come to parties up here at Doby Doc's.

RM: Exactly where is Paradise Valley in Vegas? I'm always confused on that.

HF: South of Sunset. I guess there was artesian water. The singer Wayne Newton lives out there.

RM: How long was Mr. Fink a player here in Pahrump?

HF: He sold the property to Jack Lautterer and Cy Blagg. They purchased his, and more, property and they ended up with what became the Basin Ranch.

RM: In what year, approximately, was that?

HF: It was all after 1950.

RM: Now, Van Horn had sold to Fink. You said he came out of the Bakersfield area, too?

HF: Yes.

RM: Now, who were the Caytons, again?

HF: Originally their family was from, I believe, Texas. He was a very accomplished musician but he had a little drinking problem and that got in the road of him being a great musician. But he actually made his living playing a steel guitar.

RM: No kidding. Where was this?

HF: Locally, around here.

RM: That's how he made some money?

HF: Yes, and at the mines. That's how he put food on the table. As I told you, she was the postmaster and she got paid for that. They lived in a very nice, big house.

RM: The one made of ties. And it's next to Pop Buol's place?

HF: Just west of Pop Buol's.

RM: When did Cayton come here, do you think?

HF: In the '30s.

RM: What do you remember about him?

HF: I knew him very, very well. They had a little artesian well and they grew some alfalfa, and I suppose that's the work he did. Basically, he didn't do anything else except play the guitar on weekends.

RM: At dances and in bars and things like that?

HF: Right, like over at the Copa. He was very, very good. Like I say, booze got in his

way.

RM: As an aside, I noticed you are putting on Chapstick. What did they do here in the pre-Chapstick days for dryness? And what did the Indians do?

HF: I can tell you a little story about the Indians. When I was going to school, one boy, who was a nice fellow, an Indian, had a cold sore on his lip, and he had something on it. I said, "What is that?"

He said, "It's horse manure."

I said, "That's strange. I've never heard of that."

He said an old Indian fellow had told him to put horse manure on the sore.

And he said, "Well, will that cure it?"

And the old guy said, "Well, I don't know about that, but it sure stops you from licking it." [Laughter] I guess that's what they used in those days.

RM: That's a wonderful story. How old was this kid?

HF: He was 14 or 15. Now, back to Van Horn. He had spent all of his money buying up property and basically, it wasn't worth anything. He'd given a dollar and a quarter an acre. His brother Everett Van Horn and this fellow Stringfellow came in here from the San Joaquin Valley. They had some money and they bought this property from Ray Van Horn. Stringfellow built the big, beautiful house that Dorothy Dorothy ended up living in.

RM: Where was that house?

HF: It was way out north. It would be the first place you came to as you were coming into Pahrump. The house was on, today, what is the intersection of Leslie north and 160. The house was built like a horseshoe, and in the middle was sort of a patio or whatever.

Then across the road was, sort of, their labor camp. They had a lady there that did the cookery; spent a lot of years here. Her name was Nadine Garland. They had what they

used to call tent houses. They'd put down a wooden floor and build it up about four feet, then put a tent on top of it. It was a very livable structure. My folks lived in one in 1925 when they came to Fallbrook, California.

Originally, a small portion of that land had been purchased by Elmer Bowman and that's where he was going to farm. Then immediately, he got into the Manse Ranch so he sold it.

RM: Where did Stringfellow get the money to do this?

HF: They were big farmers out of the San Joaquin Valley. They probably grew hay and cotton.

RM: And he switched his operations to out here?

HF: No, he just added it.

RM: But he built a home for his wife, nevertheless.

HF: Right. And they never were very successful. They were potato farmers and they planted potatoes out there because that's a very light soil; potatoes don't grow in rocks very well. The potatoes did very well but they came off late and by the time they were ready to sell in Pahrump, the price was down to two bucks a hundred so it just didn't work.

RM: I see. And what do you recall about Stringfellow?

HF: I knew his son very well. He had enough money that he gave his son a military jeep. That was right after the war and those jeeps were available. He and I ran all over the place in that doggone jeep. It's kind of strange—he was a wild kid at first, and he ended up as a preacher down in Bakersfield.

RM: I'll be darned. Now, how much land did Stringfellow acquire?

HF: I would have to guess 400 or 500 acres.

RM: And tell me about his partner, Everett Van Horn.

HF: He was also a farmer in the San Joaquin Valley. As I said, he purchased Paul Cayton's house. He had a wife who was sort of an uppity lady and he was going to fix that all up and make her happy. Well, she wasn't happy and that was the end of that.

RM: The end of the effort or the end of the marriage?

HF: It actually ended up the end of the marriage and the end of the effort. I don't know if they had any children, but they were out of Bakersfield.

RM: Were Stringfellow and Everett Van Horn here very long?

HF: They went through one season. I don't think the wives were ever here very long.

RM: They couldn't take it?

HF: Well, there was no power. There was nothing. When he purchased the house of Paul and Helen Cayton over here on Wilson that was built out of railroad ties, the Caytons moved out on what is now 160 and build a nice little house. It ended up as the Brady Ranch; it would be before you get to the airport, which is at Simkins. But they were back, let's say one mile, from Simkins, and there's not a crossroad there.

RM: And this is pre-1950?

HF: Yes, sir. They had their well drilled, and it was a pretty good well. Paul was going to farm a little but as I said, he wasn't much of a farmer. They probably didn't live there over a year or so, and then they sold it to the Brady brothers.

RM: How much land did they have?

HF: I'd have to say 200 or 300 acres.

RM: And that was the beginning of the Brady brothers. They grew much bigger, didn't they?

HF: They had a super farm out there. They grew cotton, alfalfa, everything.

RM: And where was their ranch?

HF: It was on 160.

RM: Oh, it was north? How far north of Basin, would you say?

HF: It would be about three and a half miles north of here.

RM: So those were all the people living north of what was the heart of Pahrump at that time.

HF: That was after we came here because there was nobody up there before we arrived.

RM: What did your family think about these people moving in up there?

HF: Oh, the school got bigger. There was another major player up there, the Simkins, Mrs. Shurtliff's brothers. The Shurtliffs came out of Overton. They grew vegetables there so they came to Pahrump and they were going to grow vegetables in Pahrump. Well, the climate's just a little different here and it didn't do very well.

RM: Were the Shurtliffs Mormons?

HF: Oh, yes.

RM: How long did they give it a try?

HF: Probably a couple of years.

RM: Beginning about when?

HF: I know they were there in, probably, 1950, '51.

RM: How many acres did they have, do you think?

HF: I would have to guess. It would be a half a mile wide and a mile long. That would be Highway 160, and then they had some on the other side. It was probably 300 acres, more or less.

RM: And they sold it to the Simkins approximately when?

HF: Van Horn left here in '49 so it had to have been in the '50s.

RM: And who were the Simkins?

HF: They were just two brothers out of the Overton area. They had both been in the army and when they got out they came home and went to work for the family. They were big, strong men.

RM: Is their property mostly on the east or west side of 160?

HF: The farm land was all on the west, and the east side was all their buildings and their well and so on.

RM: The Simkins were here for the long haul; they became fixtures in the community, didn't they?

HF: Yes.

RM: So Van Horn was kind of the founder of a lot of that action out there?

HF: He originally owned most of that land.

RM: And then gradually sold it off to various people.

HF: It's kind of interesting—he bought it for a dollar and a quarter an acre, and the first land he sold, that bailed him out, was for five dollars an acre. That's a pretty good profit.

RM: It sure is. What would you say that land's worth now, if you had to guess—\$25,000 an acre?

HF: If you had to subdivide it, it would be worth more than that. Of course, right now is an off time. Calvada probably sold those for \$10,000 a lot.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: That's really something. Okay, we've discussed the Pahrump Ranch. Was there anything east of the Pahrump Ranch when you got here?

HF: No, that was all the alluvial fan.

RM: And was there anything west of the Pahrump holdings?

HF: Absolutely nothing.

RM: What lay on the south side of the Pahrump holdings, going south?

HF: It would be on the southeast, because all of the southwest was government land from Gamebird Road clear to the dry lake. If you get farther up on the east side, which would be southeast, then they bordered up to the Manse Ranch.

RM: Where did the Pahrump Ranch end on the south?

HF: Their property ended on Gamebird but the farm only went a ways.

RM: Who was living out there when you got here aside from the Manse Ranch?

HF: Nobody. There was the Manse Ranch and then Kellogg's.

RM: Now, discuss the Manse Ranch. Where was the gate to it?

HF: If you took this road we're talking about, that goes from the Pahrump Ranch up on the alluvial fan, 160 parallels it right before it goes up the hill and to Vegas. But if you stayed on that road, then you got up and right through the gate on the Manse Ranch or you could go out around their fence and on down to Sandy Valley.

The Manse Ranch was a very, very nice ranch, also. When the Yount people had it, and then later on, they didn't have a hotel, but they had a bunch of bungalows, small cabins. You could stay all night there if you were coming through. What looked like their store wasn't a store at all, it was the blacksmith's shop. And the blacksmith's shop, of

course, got more business than a store would. They had a big set of corrals. They ran their cattle up in the Charleston Mountains in the summertime and down in the valley in the wintertime.

RM: Why did they do that?

HF: They just didn't have the water that the Pahrump Ranch had.

RM: Were there a lot of mesquites on the Manse Ranch?

HF: There weren't many on the Manse Ranch, but outside of it, where they ran the cattle, they ran them clear into California and there were big, massive mesquite groves down in there.

RM: Do you recall the rough size of the Manse when you got here—how much land, total?

HF: I drew you a map one time and it must have been a couple of thousand acres, or more. They ended up buying most of Lois Kellogg's place.

RM: Oh, right. And when you got here, who was living on the Manse Ranch?

HF: The man's name was Dr. Cornell. He was a medical doctor and he lived down in the San Diego area—Escondido, I think. He had some daughters and one daughter's name was Ruth. She had married a guy by the name of Charles Sawday and they were up here running the ranch. They were very, very nice people.

They had a cookhouse. It had a couple of rooms in it and they used to let the schoolteacher live in one of them and they also had a man and his wife—she cooked and he worked on the ranch. And then they had those outbuildings, as I was saying, that were like bungalows. That's where their workers would live. And they also used Indian workers.

RM: But they did work whites, too?

HF: Oh, sure. Just like the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Did they have a bigger crew than the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: No, the Pahrump Ranch was a bigger ranch than the Manse Ranch. The Manse Ranch wasn't as big until Elmer Bowman came. He really went in there and opened the place up.

RM: Sawday and his wife lived there, and who else?

HF: The cook and her husband and some employees who lived out back in the little cabins. And there was the Indian camp right across the street.

RM: Just to the east of the ranch?

HF: Right. Quite a few Indians lived there at the time.

RM: Annie Beck lived there, for one.

HF: Right. And the Sharps.

RM: How many people were living at the camp, do you think?

HF: They would kind of come and go. I suppose part of the time there'd be 15 or 20. A lot of them were old ladies and wives and kids.

RM: Talk a little bit about the Manse operation when the Sawdays were there.

HF: They grew hay and grain. Now, Lois Kellogg died in the fall. We came here in the spring of '44 and she died in the fall. Soon after that, Dr. Cornell bought her operation and she had some farmland. Of course, she had the big grain mill that never was finished. So you could say that the Manse Ranch under Sawday farmed her property, too, which may have been 100 acres or so. Then they had their own, which probably was a couple hundred acres or so. They probably farmed 200 or 300 acres.

RM: And was the hay and grain to support their cattle operation?

HF: Right.

RM: How many head do you think they were running?

HF: It's hard to say. Probably 200 or 300 head.

RM: And who else was living in that area? Was there anybody out west from there?

HF: No, there was nothing.

RM: And nobody south of Kellogg?

HF: Well, not till you got down to Hidden Hills. And then, of course, that was a whole new ball game.

RM: Yes, that was Roland Wiley. He came there in '37 or something.

HF: Right. And I think Dora Brown lived there for a time.

HF: Yes. They had the Brown Ranch and they ran some cattle out there.

RM: Did you ever meet Dr. Cornell?

HF: I was just a boy, probably eight, nine years old at the most. I saw him, but that was about it.

RM: Did he spend a lot of time here?

HF: No. My dad almost made a deal with him but Charlie Sawday was against it because my dad was a dairy farmer and Cornell had some interest in putting dairy cows on the Manse Ranch. Charlie Sawday was totally against it.

RM: I wonder why.

HF: I have no idea. A cattleman's a cattleman, you know?

RM: Was it a good decision, in retrospect, in your opinion?

HF: Well, of course, my folks would have put dairy cows in if they could have, and that's what Elmer Bowman did—he put in a dairy and he did very, very well.

RM: Right. And Dr. Cornell sold out two years after you got here, didn't he?

HF: Yes, in 1946—to Elmer Bowman.

RM: What do you recall about Elmer?

HF: Elmer Bowman was a cut above. He knew what he was doing, he knew how to do it, and he knew the whole thing. When he came in here, he brought a number of family members and he also brought the Hafens in, so they broke that place all up, especially the Kellogg Ranch. What had been Kellogg's ended up with his daughter and son-in-law, the Frehners, his son Perry Bowman, and Hafen—he took the Kellogg place and broke it up into three different ranches.

RM: Did that set well with people?

HF: Oh, sure, because things got better. We got a better school, we eventually got roads, and so forth.

RM: Do you know why they broke it up?

HF: Well, in Perry's oral history, he talks about how he didn't agree with how his dad did things. And that's normal. Perry did very, very well, and of course, Elmer ended up splitting the property up among the kids. Then they sort of sold it and hit the road.

RM: But there are still Bowman descendants here, aren't there?

HF: Yes, Perry has Gary Bowman. One of Elmer's younger sons, Murton, was kind of a business guy. He took care of his business and he kept some of the property. In fact, he's got the old original parcel where the house was and he's got some water. Gary Bowman is a hardworking fellow, and he's farming the property for his uncle and growing alfalfa. So they're still here.

And Perry's daughter Laraine Crawther, the one who was a schoolteacher forever, and the fellow she married, Brent, who worked at Valley Electric and was on the Valley Electric board, still spend some time here. They have a place up in Oregon. They're nice people. And you interviewed Elmer's daughter Imogene Christiansen; she still lives here.

Elmer Bowman just worked his head off trying to make Pahrump a better place. And of course, everything he did for Pahrump was good for him as well.

RM: Were there any other people living in the Pahrump Valley during this period? Some old prospector living in a shack somewhere?

HF: Yes, but they were up at Johnnie.

RM: They weren't down in the valley in the Pahrump area, per se.

HF: Right. You either had to live on the Manse property, the Pahrump property, or Pop Buol's property because there was nowhere else that you could live.

RM: We haven't talked about Pop Buol. Could you talk about him and his set-up there?

HF: Pop Buol, of course, was a fascinating person. He came here in the early 1900s, and boy, there was nothing when Pop Buol came here. They brought in an old steam-powered well rig—it was on the Raycraft place when we came here, and Doby Doc ended up with it. I don't know where it went from there. They drilled a bunch of the wells, like on Pop Buol's place and on Raycraft's place and God knows where else, and they got artesian water. Not great big ones, but good artesian water.

Frank Buol, who we all called Pop Buol, planted grapes and pears and peaches and apples—every kind of fruit and vegetable that you could imagine. Then he put in a winery and he made wine, which was known all over. He sold wine to the big hotels in Los Angeles. He was such an interesting fellow. He always hired an Indian or two and they would help him keep the farm going. He even was an assemblyman for a few years.

He also had this little grocery store and he supplied all the needed products. For instance, in those days, you had to have kerosene for your lights, and some people had kerosene stoves; we had a little kerosene stove. You'd go over to Pop's and take your

little gallon can—which I still have—and I think it was 30 cents or something and you'd get a gallon of kerosene. You could get the basics from the grocery store; you couldn't buy fresh chicken and that sort of thing.

RM: But you could buy canned beans and things like that?

HF: Yes, you could buy the staples to stay alive. He did very well because there was no other store around after the one on the Pahrump Ranch closed, and I have no idea when that closed. He said he used to get paid by the miners up at Johnnie in gold.

He had probably a 1931 Model A Ford station wagon, the one with the wood on the sides. Those things are worth a fortune today. He always kept it in a garage. When we came here in 1944, his 1931 Model A was just like brand-spanking new. He would pull it out of the garage probably every two weeks, drive into Las Vegas, get the supplies he needed for his grocery store, and drive back home. And that's all that thing went. He had it for years and years and years. In fact, he bought a brand new 1948 Ford pickup so that's how many years he drove that '31.

RM: When did he come into Pahrump?

HF: In the early 1900s. His brother Peter Buol was the mayor of Las Vegas. He came from Las Vegas, and he told me this himself—he was paid to go up on Mount Charleston and survey the area for logs for timber. And you walked. Everywhere you went, you walked. He spent some time doing that and I guess he looked down in here, and thought, "I wonder what's down there." So he came on down into the valley and said, "This is the place for me." He still owned some property in Las Vegas when he died.

RM: Do you recall when he passed on?

HF: No. I always thought he was buried in Tonopah, but I found out he was in a mausoleum in Las Vegas.

RM: Who else was living on Pop Buol's property?

HF: There would sometimes be an old prospector or something, but basically nobody. He was kind of a cranky old guy.

RM: Were there any brothels in the area in those days?

HF: Not in Pahrump; there were in Beatty.

RM: Do you recall the names of those at Beatty? The Red Rooster was one of them, wasn't it?

HF: Yes. There were two of them—one was green, and one was red. They wouldn't let you go till you were 21 and I never went.

RM: Unless you had a connection. I know a guy whose dad took him there when he was 14.

HF: My dad never did that. My mother would have killed him.

RM: [Laughs] There were no brothels south of here, either, was there?

HF: There was one in Las Vegas; I think it was out at Four Mile on the Boulder Highway. They closed it in about the '40s. That's one of the things that got Glenn Jones being a sheriff. They showed him riding a bicycle, pedaling . . . [Laughter]

RM: And, of course, Las Vegas had a red light district downtown in the early days.

HF: Well, that goes way back. And they had them in Searchlight. Harry Reid tells about his mother doing their laundry; that's how she made a living.

RM: There weren't any in Shoshone or Tecopa or any of those places?

HF: Oh, no. Not in California.

RM: And Crystal didn't exist in those days, did it?

HF: No, there was nothing at Crystal.

RM: What got Crystal going?

HF: There was a guy by the name of Jim Daniels, and he was a big cattle rancher—he had a cow ranch that went from Goldfield clear to Johnnie. He had all that Lida country and he sold it to some movie star or something.

RM: Oh, I know who you mean. Art Linkletter.

HF: Yes. They said it was funny because Jim Daniels was a cow man, but he let his cows do whatever they wanted; he never bothered them. When Art Linkletter gathered the cattle, there were enough cattle over what he had guaranteed to pay for the ranch. Anyway, he came down and purchased that and they farmed it. There's a big well there. The water tastes nasty, but the well is really something.

RM: Like Vegas water? I've drunk the water out of the tap in my place twice in all these years, by mistake. It'll gag you.

HF: It's pretty bad. We've got a little house in Vegas and I like to take a good, hot bath and that darn chlorine will burn your eyes.

RM: Yes, if you're not used to it. I don't even notice it but you're living out here with good water. Okay, so there was nothing going on at Crystal. Just for the sake of clarification, who was living at Johnnie?

HF: There was an old guy by the name of Matt Kusic. He was kind of the mayor up there. He was a character. He was Armenian or something, and you could barely understand him. He just ran the town of Johnnie—not the mine, but the town—and he'd go out and do a little prospecting. He was a fascinating guy; he had his bed built up right on the road. I mean, you could almost reach out and touch him as you went by. When he would hear a car coming, whether it was in the middle of the night or whenever, old Matt was out there waving his arms. People were good to him. If you went to town one day, you'd naturally come back that night and he'd have you pick him up something. He'd

give you money and the whole shot.

But usually in the wintertime, there'd be old prospectors in and out of Johnnie and then there was a guard, a watchman, who watched the Johnnie Mine, and the other mine there. His name was A. Z. Hall. You didn't get past A. Z. Hall. He was up the canyon going towards Johnnie Mine—his house was right there. You almost had to go through his front door to get there.

When he died, it was very interesting. My brother-in-law worked for the county road department. They had a trailer house and they would stay at Johnnie, park their trailer there, and then blade the roads. One Friday night he come in and said, "Hey, the watchman died. Why don't we go up there and take a look?" We did, and it was amazing. The houses were all intact; they had mattresses on the beds. You could've taken a sleeping bag up there and rolled it out. And there were dishes in the cupboard. There was everything.

RM: And this would've been when?

HF: In '53 or '54.

RM: What was happening at Tecopa and Shoshone?

HF: They were going full speed ahead when we got here.

RM: What were they mining down there?

HF: Talc was the main thing, but Anaconda had that big lead mine at Noonday. There were talc mines all over Death Valley and up in the hills; everywhere there was a talc mine. They had a trucking company stationed right in Shoshone, and then later in Tecopa, and they probably had three or four trucks going back and forth. They were taking the talc down to the railroad at a place called Dunn this side of Yermo by ten, 12 miles.

RM: Did Shoshone and Tecopa ever interact much with people here in the valley? Was there much social exchange?

HF: That was our shopping area. You couldn't run into Vegas every time you needed some groceries. And when we came here, the store at Death Valley Junction was a good store for us.

RM: How would you get there?

HF: You'd go out to the state line, and then up. It was the same, whether you went to Shoshone or to Death Valley Junction, except Shoshone was better in the wintertime. If you had a good rain, you didn't even make an attempt to go to Death Valley Junction because of the mud if you went through Ash Meadows.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: So were there any other people living in Pahrump at this time?

HF: We need to start at what we know as the beginning. Prior to 1874 or '75, there was nobody here but Indians. Then in the winter of 1876–1877, the Yount family moved in on the Manse Ranch. At that time, at the Manse Ranch, there were just a couple of guys chasing a few cows, and that was it. And about the same time, Pahrump Ranch basically got started. We know that in 1936, the Pahrump Ranch, for a while, had been turned into a dude ranch and it was quite well known. People of prominence would stay at the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: And Leon Hughes's father, John Hughes, I think, had the Pahrump Ranch for a time in the '30s and bad luck got him.

HF: Yes, between trying to grow cotton, and the pigs getting cholera, they went down the tubes.

RM: Okay Button, let's get back to Van Horn.

HF: As I was saying, Ray Van Horn inherited \$10,000 from his father in '43, maybe '42. That was a lot of money in those days. He purchased hundreds and hundreds of acres from the County of Nye. I understood that was tax land, and he paid a dollar and a quarter an acre. Through '44 and '45, this property wasn't making him any money because it was very slow in Pahrump then—there were no roads, no power, no phone; there wasn't much of anything. As I remember Ray, he was kind of hungry. That's an exaggerated statement but he really was kind of hungry.

Elmer Bowman was from the Overton/Logandale area. One of the things Elmer did, and I guess he enjoyed doing it because he always had a truck and he did trucking,

was to haul hay out of the Pahrump Valley to Las Vegas and the dairies over around Overton and Logandale. He somehow became acquainted with Ray Van Horn and he decided to purchase some land. I have no idea how many acres he purchased. The land was out on what today is Highway 160; in those days it was just a gravel road. It was right in the general area where Leslie comes into 160, which would be the farthest property north at the time.

He drilled a well and he was trying to start a little farm out there, and about that time the Manse Ranch came up for sale. Elmer was a good friend with a banker with the First National Bank of Nevada and Elmer purchased the Manse Ranch, which is another whole story that goes on and on.

I don't know whether he gave the property back to Van Horn or whatever, but he gave up that property. There are some good pictures—I just saw them the other day—of the little camp they had set up out there when Ray Van Horn sold the property Elmer had had and a larger piece of land to his brother, Everett Van Horn. Everett Van Horn had a partner, and his name was Stringfellow.

As I said earlier, they built a camp out there that had what we call tent houses. They built a wood floor and it was wood up about four feet, then they would put a tent on top of it and it was actually livable. My parents lived in one of those when they first came to California back in 1925.

So Stringfellow and Van Horn developed that ranch, and Stringfellow built a very, very nice house out there. It was right at the southwest corner where Leslie comes into 160. For Pahrump it was just a beautiful house. It was built in a horseshoe shape and he had hopes of his wife moving here. He had a young son who was probably 13, 14 years old. The son became a real friend of mine and, as I told you, he had an army jeep.

All kinds of military equipment came back from the Second World War and you could buy these things for very cheap.

RM: What was that boy's name?

HF: Burt Stringfellow. He became a preacher down in Bakersfield. Stringfellow built this big beautiful house and on the east side of what's 160 they had their camp and they actually had a cookery shack. Nadine, who ended up Nadine Garland, cooked there for the single young men they hired. We had met a young fellow back in Wisconsin in '47 and he sort of liked my sister so he came out here to get a job and make some money because there's a lot of difference between Wisconsin and Pahrump.

They had quite an operation. As I told you before, they were potato farmers in Bakersfield. They planted a lot of potatoes and the potatoes did very, very well but they came off late. The San Joaquin Valley's growing season starts way earlier than ours so if potatoes had been \$5.00 a hundred in Bakersfield, by the time it got to us it was \$3.00 a hundred.

So that was a problem. I remember Stringfellow had two trucks. Of course, being a boy, a truck was a truck; I liked trucks. He had two real new Federal trucks, and both of them were the same color; one was just a little bigger than the other one. I was so fascinated by those two trucks.

RM: What else were they growing there, Button?

HF: I think that's all they tried to do.

RM: How many acres do you think they had?

HF: I would just have to say roughly 80, and that's a big potato farm.

RM: That's a lot of potatoes. And they were using pumped water, right?

HF: Yes, they had drilled a big good well.

RM: And pumped it out with diesel, probably.

HF: Right; diesel was 3 or 4 cents a gallon. And Everett Van Horn had purchased the Cayton place, which was over on what today is Wilson. It was a beautiful place. It had great big trees and this big Southern-type house built out of railroad ties, which had never been finished, but portions of it were livable.

RM: Approximately what year did that happen, do you think?

HF: In '47 or '48. I know this because we were back East in 1947 and the next summer is when this fellow from Wisconsin came back, and that was in 1948.

RM: What was his name?

HF: His name was Ruben Larson. He did very well—he became a dentist and moved down to Southern California. His brother was either drafted or joined the army, and the army put him through dental school because he had had some college. Ruben, who was like me, had to take his lumps. Then he went into the army and when he got out, he took the GI Bill. He became a dentist, too, but his brother had already set up business in Southern California because he was stationed down there in the army. When Ruben got out of school, which he finished somewhere around Minneapolis/St. Paul, he moved straight out to the Los Angeles area. Ruben and his brother are both still alive, to my knowledge.

Anyway, Van Horn bought the Cayton place, and Paul Cayton—Paul, Helen, and their daughter, Darlene—ended up with some property somehow through Ray Van Horn. It was out on 160 south of what's today Simkins Road and north of Bell Vista. They had a well drilled and it turned out pretty good; it was a little artesian well. They tilled some soil and had a nice little cabin house.

RM: Which side of 160 was it on?

HF: The well was on the east and they lived on the west, 500 to 1000 feet from the highway.

RM: And what were they growing?

HF: Well, Paul Cayton was a heck of a musician but as I said, he wasn't much of a farmer. At first he planted some alfalfa, and by this time, into 1949, property in Pahrump was being looked at by farmers from over in the San Joaquin Valley. Two brothers by the name of Brady purchased the Cayton property and about that time Ray Van Horn and the Caytons both moved to Las Vegas. Ray Van Horn bought some apartments. This was back in the '40s and he probably had four or five rentals. He had an income from the rentals and he still had property in Pahrump so he did very well for the rest of his life.

Paul Cayton went out to Pittman or East Las Vegas, I think East Las Vegas, and he purchased a little bar. It was the strangest built thing—it looked like it would have been in the South Pacific or something. It was sort of rounded and concave-looking, then it was stuccoed, and you would really notice it. You'd think, "Boy, what a strange-looking building." That's the last thing he should have ever done because the man had a drinking problem.

Later on he went over and bought the Goodsprings Hotel and he ran that for a number of years. Of course, it had a bar. Paul Cayton sold it to somebody and he would have made a profit, I suppose. Later, the darned thing burned to the ground. It was my understanding that it was the hotel that Clark Gable had lived in. It burned to the ground probably in the '60s or '70s or somewhere back there.

So anyway, the Caytons and the Van Horns were gone. Ray Van Horn always liked to say that he went to Vegas, probably in late '49 or the early '50s, and he bought James Cashman's wife's Cadillac. As you know, a 1949 Cadillac was a pretty decent car.

RM: A pretty cool car, yes.

HF: We always got a kick out that; he did well. Ray had had a jeep that had been purchased fairly new, I think. Or if not he got a better one than everybody else. But his transportation was a jeep, so he went from a jeep to a 1949 Cadillac. Ray Van Horn was a real down-to-earth hard-working decent sort of a fellow. Anyway, about that time the Bradys moved into Pahrump.

RM: Now, who were they?

HF: They were a couple of fellows that came out of the Los Angeles area. They were very quiet and very hardworking. Until later years, neither one of them ever married. All they did was get up every morning and go out and farm. Their house didn't look like much; it was not painted or anything. But inside they had every piece of power equipment money could buy. And their farming was unreal. They kept daily records of the temperatures, the temperature of the soil, everything; they were meticulous farmers. All of that material is still around somewhere.

RM: How many acres did they acquire when they bought Paul Cayton's place?

HF: At a wild shot, I'd say 200 to 300 acres.

RM: And what were they growing?

HF: Everything. When they came in here in the late '40s they were growing alfalfa and grain, and when cotton became king, they planted cotton. These guys grew more cotton per acre than anybody else, they grew more hay than anybody else, they were just meticulous farmers. After they had farmed and farmed and farmed and done very well, Calvada ended up purchasing their property and basically plowing it under and putting streets on it, and now it's tumbleweeds.

Also about that time, the late '40s, two brothers from the Logandale/Overton area,

a Mormon area, came here and bought some of the Van Horn property on Simkins Road. Their names were Norman and Lester Shurtliff. They couldn't expand in the Overton/Logandale area. I suppose if you had 40 or 80 acres there you had a big farm. Most of what they grew was what we used to call truck gardening—vegetables and that sort of thing.

RM: To sell in Vegas?

HF: Yes, to sell in Vegas. There was a railroad that went from Overton to Vegas. It was a little spur; I don't whether it still runs or not. But you'd load your produce on the train and away it went. Anyway, they came over here and they must have bought 300 or 400 acres. They drilled a very good well that had to be pumped. So these folks were getting wells that had to be pumped while all the water in this part of the valley was artesian.

RM: How deep were they going?

HF: I'd say probably 600 or 800 feet.

RM: Was your dad drilling any of those wells?

HF: No, he hadn't got into the well-drilling business at this time. He was the 47th person in the state of Nevada to get a well driller's license; he got it in 1947. His license was No. 47 and mine was 1300. They grew vegetables—I remember asparagus—and a nice little orchard.

RM: What kind of fruit were they growing?

HF: Everybody grew peaches and apricots and apples. They all did very well in Pahrump. They also grew a lot of vegetables, including asparagus.

RM: I thought you had to have a lot of moisture for asparagus.

HF: Well, they irrigated it. But what was so darn funny is for years and years and

years after they had given up that idea, asparagus grew along the ditch banks; it was everywhere. People would go out and cut that stuff off and eat the soup out of it.

But anyway, growing vegetables didn't work out for them here. One of their wives had two brothers, and their name was Simkins. They came to Pahrump with the Shurtliffs and worked on the farm; they ran the place for the Shurtliffs. Then they started growing hay and grain and gave up on the fruit and vegetables; they let the orchard die. And they grew cotton—they were very good farmers. Their farm went right down the Simkins Road as far as Blagg on both sides of the road.

RM: Is that the same land that the Shurtliffs had?

HF: Yes, the same farm. The Simkins Brothers—Paul and Alan Simkins—bought their sister's property. So they farmed, and it was kind of interesting because we had two brothers here, neither one of them married. Hard workers, farmers, just unbelievable. And right beside them with just a fence between them were the Brady Brothers and they were unmarried. They tilled their soil and did very well.

Then there was the old original property where Van Horn had his little cabin and that became the Dollar Ranch. In later years Bob Ruud came in there and grew seed alfalfa and Leon Hughes farmed it some.

RM: Who started the Dollar Ranch?

HF: Van Horn had tried to farm it a little bit, but I can't remember—it was one of those things where this guy had it and then this guy had it and this guy had it.

RM: How did it get its name?

HF: I think it was a joke. I think Bob Ruud named it the Dollar Ranch because it took every dollar he could make to pay bills. It never was a real profitable farm. It could have been; it's just that it never had the right owner.

But going back, in the '40s, when Van Horn and Stringfellow's potatoes didn't go, they sold it to Dale Dorothy and he and a partner came in and farmed that ranch. They grew a lot of cotton. Dale Dorothy's partner was somewhere else.

It was kind of interesting because Dorothy Dorothy had been sort of a Hollywood, Palm Springs socialite. I remember she had a great big old Cadillac, a '47 or '48. When she wore that out she bought a 1955 or '56 Lincoln. She was very nice, but she was different. She wrote articles in the *Tonopah Times Bonanza*, I think the name of her column was "Pahrump Pumpings," and she worked hard to promote Pahrump. Of course Tim Hafen did, but she worked harder than everybody else. She was in Democratic politics—she knew every senator and every congressman that was a Democrat in the state of Nevada.

RM: How old was she when she came here, do you think?

HF: I would have to guess 55 or 60. She had white hair but it was platinum blonde that she had made that way. She was a busy, busy woman. She would help give a party for the kids at Christmas and she was just always into something.

RM: What do you recall about her husband?

HF: When you're a kid, you sort people out in your own mind. He was a very brilliant man. We didn't have television here at that time and he had a shortwave radio and when he needed a load of diesel or some parts, he would get on the radio and talk to his partner down in Southern California. Then his partner would call whoever it was and get the parts and stuff out here.

RM: Did he have a big tower on the property?

HF: Oh, yes. And since we didn't have TV, he naturally went to work on that.

Somehow or the other there was a helicopter in here with the government doing a survey

and he got them to take him up on Charleston Peak. He went up and put a reflector up there. I don't think it worked too well but he was trying to get television down in here. Television was really something new back then.

He was a very bright fellow, and yet he worked like a field hand—he got on his tractor and went out and plowed the fields. He and Dorothy Dorothy lived on the ranch, and down the road a piece was where the workers lived, down by a big well, and his parents lived there.

RM: Were they working up at the ranch or were they staying there?

HF: The dad worked there; he was an older man. Dale also was a pilot. He had an airplane out there and a little airstrip. That's kind of how he and Dorothy Dorothy met—they were both pilots. She had been close friends with Amelia Earhart.

Anyway, Dale was a hard-working fellow, and you had so much respect for him because he was kind of a cut above. You couldn't just walk up and just say "Hi Dale, how you doing; how's the farming?" because he just was thinking down a different path.

They were very decent, hard-working, nice people. Now she ran into a lot—I don't know if you would call it jealousy, but she seemed to take a lot of credit for stuff that people like Tim Hafen and Elmer Bowman had been working on at the same time. So there was some little squabbling going on; but probably nobody noticed that but me.

RM: How long did the Dorothys stay in Pahrump?

HF: It seems like forever. My wife and I got married in 1958 and they were still here then so it would have been probably the '60s.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Now talk a little bit about the Brady Brothers.

HF: There were actually three brothers and they were all partners. One of them was an engineer. He had a good job down in the Los Angeles area and I can't remember his name at all; Wes and Glen were the Brady brothers that were here. It was tough back then—you had to buy a tractor, you had to buy fuel, you had to fix the pump if it broke down.

They were kind of quiet, on their own. As I've told you, my dad had the contract to haul mail between Shoshone and Pahrump. After I became 18, which was in 1955, I would haul the mail, too. One day I went over and here was the quietest Brady brother; he was really quiet. He was sitting with his truck and he was broke down. He asked me, "Will you give me a ride back to Pahrump?"

I said, "Yeah, sure." I think I had to wait 30 minutes for the mail; you had a time schedule you had to meet. He got in with me and we drove back to Pahrump and I don't think he said two words. Now, he was still five or six miles from home down this gravel road. I said, "Let me drop the mail off and I'll run you home."

So we did and when we got out there his brother was there and oh my goodness they almost hugged, they were so glad to see each other. Because he had been gone for a while down in Los Angeles, like probably a week, and the truck had broken down and everything. As nice as those guys were, they never thanked me for bringing him back. But some years later I was working for Nye County on a road crew. Now, a lot of the local single men would go out to Ash Meadows on Friday night, and Ash Meadows had a real good place to eat. I mean, the Ash Meadows Lodge had a restaurant that would

knock your eyes out.

RM: Was the brothel there then?

HF: It probably was. Anyway, I was coming back and it was the end of the day on Friday close to 4:00, which is late in the afternoon in the wintertime. My truck broke an axle and I was stranded. I had my tools so I carried them straight out in the desert and hid them behind a bush. I was just ready to start walking and here come the Bradys. They said, “What’s your problem?”

I said, “Well, I’m broke down.”

They said, “Well, get in and we’ll take you back,” and they took me clear back to Pahrump.

I thought, isn’t that strange. Because I had done the same thing for him in ’55 and this was probably in the ’60s, after I was married. They returned the favor and I thought, “You know, what goes around comes around.” And I was hurting—I would have had to walk.

RM: Had the Bradys been farmers before they came to Pahrump?

HF: Those guys all got out of the army when they came here; what they had done when they were young I have no idea. The Simkins brothers had just got out of the army.

RM: What do you recall about the Simkins?

HF: They were big strong men. Now the Bradys, one was about my size and the other one was a little taller so they weren’t big men. But the Simkins were big strong men and they had a lot of work that they could do; they grew their hay and everything. Of course, in those days you had to buck the hay out of the field by hand. They were hard-working people.

So you had two sets of brothers, and in each set one of them was more active than

the other and the other was very, very quiet. With the Brady brothers, if you would go out there to talk to them, the guy that was about my size would be talking, telling you things. The other one, the tall one, would be behind him saying every word he said—identical. It was so interesting; I had never known anyone like that before.

RM: With the same exact words?

HF: It was word for word, verbatim. With the Simkins, Paul was kind of the quiet one. Later on, probably in 1953 or maybe early '54, the more outgoing Simkins, Alan, met a lady over at Cactus Springs. Her name was Zula, and they got married. They were probably both in their 30s and they wanted some children and they couldn't have children so they adopted two boys. If you're going to have a farm you're going to adopt boys, right?

RM: Right.

HF: So they adopted two baby boys—not the same day, but close. You talk about having it made, those boys had two dads. If they ever needed a babysitter, there's no problem—there was Paul. He took them with him on the tractor, he took them with him everywhere.

Alan Simkins was on the town board and I think he was on the Valley Electric Board—he was more of an active voice in the community. Unfortunately, he got cancer and he died.

RM: When did he pass on, approximately?

HF: Power didn't come in until '64 so it would have been after '64. We were all just sick inside about it. Here's a big strong guy and he passed on from cancer.

RM: That is sad. Did any of the other three brothers ever marry?

HF: The Bradys were the same story. In their sale to Calvada, after they were done

farming, they ended up with a lot and built themselves a real nice house and lived down there. Then the outgoing one, Glen, got cancer and died. The other fellow, Wes, became more outgoing after his brother died. I got to know him and I knew him real well for years. In fact, he and I had prostate cancer at the same time and he was older than me. Of course, he's passed on now, but a Filipino lady sort of took care of him and she moved in; it's a beautiful house. She did a great job of taking care of him when he was ill.

These two sets of brothers always had good cars. Every few years the Bradys would buy a brand new car. This Filipino lady drove Wes around, she did everything, and somehow or another she married him. She did a very good job. She took care of the man until the day he died.

But going back to the early '50s, down below, west of the Dollar Ranch, two other brothers, the Fowler brothers, came in and bought some land. I don't know how much, but they had a section of land and they farmed about half of it. They were real farmers—they grew hay and so on. They didn't have a road. It was sand and on the right-hand side was the Dollar Ranch. They were growing seed alfalfa at that time and I was working for the county so we went out there and put in a little gravel road for them that went to their farm.

RM: The county would do things like that in those days, wouldn't they?

HF: Near election time we'd do a lot of it.

RM: [Laughs]

HF: It was a section line road. We tried to stay on section lines and quarter section lines. The Fowler brother that lived out there was a big man but he was all humped over in the back. They were older people, Mr. Fowler and his wife; I knew him very well. He had apparently been injured or he had arthritis or something and he always walked bent

over, but he would buck hay all day long in that position. They were hard-working people.

His brother, who was his partner, was from over in the San Joaquin Valley, I think north of Bakersfield a little ways—there's umpteen little towns around there. He would come down real often but he didn't work on the farm in a regular way. The first Fowlers didn't have any children and the second ones did. I think the brother that lived in California had a boy that used to come down in the summertime and work on the ranch. Those people worked. In those days, if you survived in Pahrump and you did well, you put your nose to the grindstone. Of course, the Fowlers always hired some help.

RM: And who were they hiring?

HF: Sometimes it would be a single guy; they had little trailer houses out there. One time they had a family in there, and they were kind of different. I remember they had a pretty girl. That's when I was building the road out there and I worked a little extra hard to keep that road nice. It was a dad and a mother, and of course the dad worked there. Then there was a brother and a sister. I would say the boy was probably of age and the girl was probably 18.

RM: And these would be hired hands?

HF: They were hired hands, but they had their own trailer house.

RM: What were they paying people in those days, do you have any idea?

HF: Boy, I haven't got a clue. I know when I went to work for the county I must have been making \$2.00 an hour. I worked nine months and I got my first raise, which was \$2.50 an hour. The joke is I worked nine months and got my first raise; I worked nine years and got my second.

RM: What year did you start?

HF: November 1955.

RM: As I recall, \$2.00 an hour was pretty good wages then; that's what I made in the Laborers' Union out of Vegas in '57, '58, making maybe \$2.10 an hour and feeling very lucky to make that.

HF: I had grown up on the farm so I knew how to drive a truck and that gave me a heads up. I was very fortunate and learned the equipment real fast. I went to work when I was 18 in '55, and in '61 they put me in charge of this area after six years' experience. It was kind of funny—they had sent me around and I learned the asphalt trade and here was this boy [chuckles] running an asphalt job, and the truck drivers would come in and look at me and say "Oh boy, this guy don't know what to do."

RM: That must have been amusing. Button, let's talk a little bit about the role of the women who were coming into the valley then. It must have been tough for them. The guys are out in the field all day long; they've got their hands full. And the women were working hard, too, but they are living in this isolation.

HF: It must have been tough. For instance, I moved my wife, Mary, here when she was very young. She was born in Paso Robles but she grew up in the Death Valley—Shoshone area.

That's where she went to high school and grade school.

RM: What did her father do?

HF: He had the same job I did, only he worked for the state of California. He worked on the state roads through Death Valley and Shoshone. He worked there for years and years and years.

But anyway, when we moved here, of course she was young, which was a real disadvantage because all the other ladies were older. My mother took her right under her

arm. In those days they had what was called the Pahrump Women's Club with people like Tim Hafen's wife and the Bowman girls and Mrs. Blosser and all, and they would meet in different places. And before I got married, this house was brand spanking new so my mother would have them come in and of course, they would look at the new house and it was very nice.

RM: Your mom lived here in the house you're in now.

HF: She moved here in 1953 and we got married in '58. So she lived here five years.

RM: Your parents gave you the house? Or you bought it from them?

HF: I bought it. What happened was I had worked for and with my dad all my life and then I worked for the county. I went to work in '55 and got married in '58, so that was three years. And I poured every penny into this place. I played in a little western band. I made all my gas money and my fun money on Saturday night. I'd work all day for the county for 20 bucks and then go play in the band once a week for 50.

RM: I'll be darned. What instrument did you play?

HF: I played the rhythm guitar. It was very fortunate for us and for people because there was nothing to do in this part of the area. We didn't play in Pahrump much, it was basically over in Shoshone or Tecopa, in the mining area, because those miners would come in with a paycheck and a bottle of booze and they were ready to go. So we provided a service, so to speak.

RM: How many were in your band?

HF: There were three—a lead guitar and basically I was the rhythm guitar and the other guy did a little of each.

RM: How long did you do that?

HF: I started playing by myself in the bars in Pahrump when I was 15 years old. That

was sort of a problem for the bars, but I would wear a hat and nobody could tell the difference. My brother-in-law got out of the navy when I was 18, and he was very, very good. The guy that I played with in the bars, there were just two of us, and he moved away and my brother-in-law and I decided “Hey, let’s start a little band.” So we did, and we’d go over to Shoshone and Tecopa and play music. In those days in Pahrump we just played for the kitty—you’d have a can there.

RM: Oh, the bar didn’t kick in?

HF: The bar gave us five bucks and then the kitty. You’d probably make 10 bucks a night. But I was 15 years old and this was in the early ’50s. Once we started playing in Shoshone, I think we made them guarantee us \$20 apiece. We’d get over there probably 8:00 or so and we’d have to play until 2:00 in the morning.

RM: What would you play? Was it 45-minute sets, or how did you work that?

HF: You’d just kind of watch the crowd. Of course you get tired—you’re standing up, you know—and you’d take a break and then come back.

RM: Did you sing, too?

HF: I was the lead singer in the bar but when my brother-in-law came back, he was very, very good. We used to go as far as Baker. Boy, you talk about a wild bunch. They had a VFW hall and again, I wasn’t 21 years old. We’d go in there and those people in Baker—that’s a long ways from nowhere—flat enjoyed their nights. I mean, here’s a bar and here’s a dance hall and here’s three guys playing music. And we’d play at the Ash Meadows Rancho, the lodge, which was going well.

RM: And this was all done on the same basis? You would work for basically the kitty?

HF: Right. Then the H & H Bar hired my brother-in-law and me kind of permanently and we played every Saturday night. When my wife and I decided we were going to get

married, I knew right away that playing the guitar and being married just didn't go together.

RM: So you had to toss in the towel.

HF: I tossed it in and my colleagues were kind of unhappy about it. My brother-in-law moved to Vegas and went to work for Post Trucking and he played a lot; he used to play down at Searchlight. Had I not got married and stayed with him, I could have been pretty well known.

RM: Where did you learn to play?

HF: My brother-in-law started when he was young. Then he went into the navy and for some reason I decided I wanted to play the guitar. I was 15 years old and I got a job on the Pahrump Ranch; they were harvesting cotton and they needed help. Everything with cotton is handled with a big vacuum cleaner, eight inches in diameter. You had to feed the nozzle on this vacuum cleaner and then it would go into the conveyor. I got a job there, and I don't know what I worked at—75 cents an hour—and I made \$36.00.

About that time my brother-in-law came back from the navy on leave, and he wasn't married to my sister yet. I said, "I'd like to have a guitar."

He said, "Well, let me see what I can do." He went into Vegas and bought me a Regal, a beautiful guitar. He got it for 36 bucks, and out of the goodness of his heart he paid \$3 more and got a case.

RM: And you learned on that?

HF: Yes. Later I electrified it; you could buy a kit for that. It was a good little guitar. I've still got it, but unfortunately I left it in my car on a July day and the sun did some damage to it.

RM: Too bad. What are the names of the places where you played in Pahrump?

HF: I originally started out at Jim Cruice's bar. That was about a mile this side of the California line; there was kind of a large spot in the road. Then my brother-in-law and I played in the bar here in Pahrump every Saturday night—H&H, Harris and Horgan.

RM: Is it still there?

HF: No, it got burned down accidentally when they built a new one. It went up in smoke after they built the Cotton Pickin'. After that, we got more ambitious or something and we started going out to the lodge in Ash Meadows and to Shoshone.

RM: And what was the name of the place in Shoshone?

HF: They've got a big community building. It's still there; they call it the Flower Building.

RM: And in Baker?

HF: In Baker we played at the VFW Hall. And Tecopa had their own little community center.

RM: Were you playing pretty much every weekend?

HF: Every Saturday night.

RM: What were the crowds like in Tecopa? Were there fights?

HF: No. Of course, there were a lot of kids, high school kids and that sort of thing, and couples would bring their family. They didn't allow any booze in the place; there was no bar in the community center then.

RM: Sure, but guys would stash their booze outdoors wouldn't they?

HF: Oh sure, and take us outside and get lots of swigs. Down in Baker, the bar was right in the place. There were never any fights but boy, they sure whooped it up. When we played down there for Halloween, I'd never seen adults put on costumes in my life and those people would all come dressed like cats and so on. I remember this one woman,

she was pretty sharp, and she had a tail on and everything. There was one couple, he worked for the propane company, and they come as bottles of propane; his was taller and hers was shorter. We went down there for the New Year's Party. Oh my God, they really were serious then. They'd dance all night.

RM: It was just a three-person group?

HF: Right, and occasionally we'd have a drummer.

RM: And you knew probably the lyrics to all the country songs?

HF: Yes. I was always in charge. I had a little tablet in my pocket and I was the one that said, "Okay, we'll now do this song and that song."

RM: What are some of the songs you recall playing frequently?

HF: "Sally Was a Good Ole Girl"

RM: That's a good song.

HF: And then [singing] "In the middle of an island." I don't know what the name of that was, but we would do that one. We never touched the Elvis material; his stuff was too hard. Some of it was the upbeat Western music and some of it was the old Western music.

RM: And from what years to what years did you play professionally?

HF: I started playing in the bar when I was 15, so in '52—and I played on my birthday, which was January the 12th of 1958. When you were my age it seemed like half your life. Until I met Mary I really enjoyed it, but then I decided I had enough of this stuff and I quit.

RM: That was an important part of the social life of Pahrump. How many people would show up at one of the Pahrump places when you guys would play on a Saturday night?

HF: It's hard to tell. I mean, that was the only thing to do. Even Tim Hafen and his wife and some of the other Mormons would come. They didn't stay until 2:00 in the morning, of course.

RM: Was it like 50 or 100 people?

HF: In Shoshone it would be between 50 and 100, I'm sure, because that place would get to jumping.

RM: And you were using amps?

HF: Oh, yes; electric guitars. My brother-in-law bought a big body Fender. That guitar is worth a fortune today because they only made a few of them.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: That's really interesting. Now, we were talking about the Fowler brothers.

HF: Right, I'm trying to bring us down from the north end. Al Bell is a character. Al just loved Pahrump. He bought a fair amount of land way over on the west side in the mesquites. His father had passed on; he had had a business in Pasadena. I guess his dad was a brilliant person. I mean, Al told me some of the patents his dad had. He had a patent on special carburetors and racing equipment and things like that. When his dad passed on, Al and his sister ended up with the place in Pasadena—I guess it was right on the corner somewhere and no place down there. It was a very valuable piece of property. They had a gas station and a tire shop and their big thing was straightening frames. That's quite a project when a car comes in wrecked. I guess he had a very lucrative business, but he said he always had to wear a necktie, and Al was a rounder. I mean, this guy had to be doing something all the time.

So he came up to Pahrump and bought a piece of property and built a real nice house. He had a partner somewhere down the line, a doctor somebody. And Al and his wife moved her dad to Pahrump. He sort of had a drinking problem and they moved him up here to get him away from booze, so he took care of the place and ran the ranch. He did a lot of hard work out there. Al would come up here from California and take off his necktie and throw it away and go to work.

Al also was a good pilot. He had an airplane and a little airstrip right on the ranch. He'd come flying in from California and stay a few days and go back. He did this for a number of years and then finally he decided well heck, I'm just going to move to Pahrump. He did, and he did a lot of farming although he never got rich on farming. But

he and his doctor partner ended up buying a whole bunch of land out there. They bought the Garland Ranch (and we'll go right back to that; it's below Simkins).

He did farm the Garland Ranch some, but he ended up like everybody else and subdivided everything and they made a lot of money because he had hundreds, if not thousands, of plots. So Al did very, very well in Pahrump. But you just liked the guy. I mean, he was big and tough and he was mean and he was ugly and I remember he said one time, "You know, Ford, I may be a rotten SOB but I have never cheated on my wife." I thought, that's really something to pat yourself on the back about because there's a lot of people that have had six wives.

RM: Right. As you know, I interviewed him one time and really enjoyed it.

HF: Anyway, that was due west. Now let's jump back. On the corner bordering the Fowler Ranch, which was on the north, the Simkins Ranch, which was on the east, and the Brady Ranch, which was on the south, was the Garland Ranch. Now, it didn't belong to Garland; it's a long story that I won't even try to get into.

RM: Why not get into it?

HF: Because I don't know the whole story. It ended up it had belonged to a preacher down in California and the preacher had a girlfriend, and the girlfriend's boyfriend killed him.

RM: Oh, my gosh.

HF: It went on and went on. So Garland ended up with the ranch. When they finally settled up the preacher's estate, Al Bell bought it.

RM: How big was the Garland Ranch?

HF: Probably close to a section.

RM: And it was surrounded by these other properties?

HF: Yes; it probably was a half a mile wide. Their well was up by Highway 160 and that's where their living quarters and everything were. They had a complete pipeline that took their water down.

RM: What were they growing?

HF: Everything—hay, alfalfa, cotton. I have a lot of pictures of their farm.

RM: When was the Garland Ranch started?

HF: It was in the '50s. They were there for a number of years.

RM: When did they leave?

HF: I couldn't even take a shot at it. I know they were there in 1957 because I bought their station wagon that they bought in 1957. That would have gone into the '60s, and it just seemed like they were gone forever.

RM: And Al Bell bought their place?

HF: Yes. It was a considerable-sized piece of property and a good farm.

RM: Whatever happened to those lots that were sold?

HF: There's people living on a lot of them. Anything Calvada didn't get their hands on, people moved on it. Calvada was supposed to set it up with sewer and/or water but they never built the system. Calvada made millions of dollars.

RM: So Calvada welshed on their promise?

HF: Yes, they ended up going bankrupt and going down the toilet, actually.

RM: Were the Calvada lots smaller than the other lots?

HF: They were all sizes. Some of them the half-acre lots—they were going to provide water and you'd put in your own septic tank. And then they had the ranchettes, and they were the full acre, and you had to put in your own well and septic tank. Then the lots got smaller and smaller till some of them were 30 feet wide and 100 feet long.

RM: And you can't drill on a piece of property like that. Not legally.

HF: No, they were just a grand mess.

RM: How did the Garland Ranch and the Van Horn Ranch and all that get transferred from public land to private land?

HF: The only thing I know is that, as I said earlier, the land that Ray Van Horn bought was tax land. Years ago, apparently, that land had been withdrawn and was no longer federal property, and for years nobody paid the taxes on it so the county sold it. Pop Buol bought some of it.

RM: When did that land get transferred out of public ownership? Was that during some growth period earlier or in the Manse Ranch era, or what?

HF: It's sort of lost to me. I know Lois Kellogg, back in the '30s, got some of it. I am sure that this stuff happened way before the '30s. I have no idea, but it was thousands and thousands of acres, all the west side.

Anyway, as you come up past the Fowler Ranch and the Brady Ranch, you come to what ended up belonging to Lou Hathaway. He was a farmer that came in here from the Imperial Valley; he lived in Redlands. One thing he was very good at was growing lettuce, and later on he came in here and managed the lettuce farm, but the frost and flood got them. He had a farm out there, not a whole lot of acres, but he grew cotton. And it sort of went sour; he and his wife split up. The McCowans ended up with half-ownership of it and then the court said they had to sell the thing and split it up and it ended up as part of Calvada.

RM: Who were the McCowans?

HF: They were a family that homesteaded in here originally. To my knowledge, they were the first homestead down on Homestead Road. McCowan got the one where the S

curve is as you go down Homestead. He had 160 acres, and that could have been a good little farm. He had a good well, he had everything. But he just sort of did what was the easiest. He even had the Basin Ranch before Bob Ruud bought it. The McCowans were from, I think, Tulare—somewhere around Porterville, in that area.

RM: What do you recall about them?

HF: I knew them real well because they had a son about my age and we ran around forever. They did things a little different than everybody else, but they were just hard-working farmers.

RM: The Central Valley provided a lot of the population for the growth of this era of Pahrump, didn't it?

HF: That's what turned Pahrump Valley loose. But anyway, then there was the Basin Ranch.

RM: Who owned the Basin Ranch?

HF: It ended up being Bob Ruud's. It had belonged to two men, Jack Lautterer and Cy Blagg. Cy had a little money and he and Jack were real friends. Cy had a furniture store just north of San Diego—one of those little towns close to the ocean. Apparently he had done very well; he sold used furniture. They came up here and purchased a lot of land out there and built some great wells. Cy Blagg, who was a little older fellow, had a heart problem. Well, back in the '50s when you had a heart problem . . .

RM: Yes, you had a problem.

HF: In fact, he died on the operating table. But he was a super guy, real quiet. He'd married a little lady here, and she was a realtor. They sold it to Bob Ruud.

RM: Okay, and talk a little bit about Bob Ruud.

HF: Well, Bob Ruud was a different person. He was a wheeler dealer. I mean, he came

in here like a storm and bought some property. It wasn't homestead land, I think it was some Desert Land Entry property down on the south end of Pahrump, I think 320 acres or something. Ronnie Floyd was in on it and Ronnie subdivided it and sold it in one-acre lots. But Bob bought the Basin Ranch, and the Basin Ranch was a good ranch because it had some good wells; McCowen had been farming it.

RM: Tell me where it was located.

HF: You could say it starts, naturally, on Basin Road. If you come a half-mile west on 160, it would be on the north side. It went for maybe a mile and a half. A lot of that was sand hills and this sort of thing, but that's where the water was. They drilled all the wells on the alluvial fan and they were good wells. Then they farmed the property from a half mile down and right along Basin Road. He must have had close to a section, maybe more. He probably farmed half of that in cotton and later he grew alfalfa. Bob Ruud made hay cubes. As I said, he was a wheeler dealer. I mean, he was going, going, going. He liked to drive race cars and drink tequila with beer chasers. He always had an old race car—it wasn't junk, it was the best-built race car you could make.

He was up in Tonopah one time and they raced and he came back. They were staying in the big motel right on top of the hill, the Station House. Somehow or the other in the middle of the night he got up and was going to go down to the bar or something, and he dropped dead in the hall. His wife, Jacque, was still in bed; she didn't know where in hell he was. At that particular time he was my boss.

RM: Oh right, he was a county commissioner.

HF: Yes. He was my neighbor, he was my friend, and he was my boss.

RM: How sad. Now, how did people know where to drill their wells in those days? Your dad was involved in well drilling—did he witch them?

HF: He did, but as a joke. Some of the wells that were witched turned out great and others didn't. There were the big springs at the Manse and the Pahrump Ranch so originally they drilled around those big springs and they got some whopping good artesian wells. Then people like Hafen started drilling out from them. Down where Hafen is, he had a little smaller one, but that was probably the last big well. That thing flowed 800 gallons a minute. That was, let's say, two miles from the Manse Spring. As you come closer to the spring, Perry Bowman had a well that flowed 1,800 gallons a minute and they just got bigger and bigger.

As you leave the Manse Ranch and come to the Pahrump Ranch, you've got two separate alluvial fans, the Manse fan and the Pahrump fan, and they are totally separate. On the Manse side they got all these big artesian wells. You can't say the Pahrump side is bigger because the Manse fan runs halfway to Vegas. But on the Pahrump side, the first wells were artesian; one of them went 1,000 feet; they pumped enormous amounts of water. When they originally farmed that it was called the Mizpah Farms—some of Chauncey Dickey's friends came up and leased this portion of land and they broke it out.

RM: How did they know where to drill up at the north end?

HF: I'll work my way back there. The first wells coming from the Manse and the Pahrump alluvial fan were not artesian but they were big pump wells. Right at the Pahrump Springs, they had two or three wells that were good big artesian, but the spring flowed so much water that it just added to it. Then as you headed on north, like the Raycraft Place, they were artesian but they were not very big; if they flowed 200 or 300 gallons, that was a lot.

By the time you got to us, they were high-pressured wells. I mean, you could just screw your house right to the well and you'd have pressure in your house. Ours flowed

125 gallons a minute, but it's almost 700 feet deep. You kind of have a dry area here—or, not as strong. Then when you get to the Basin Ranch, their first well was like ours. The second well flowed about 300 gallons, which is a fair amount. The next one was considerably better—it flowed 600 or 700 gallons—the next one was very, very good; it probably flowed 800 or 900. Then as you got on down, the Pechstein well, on the corner of Mesquite Road and 160, flowed 1,800 gallons a minute.

RM: Was this pumping or did it flow naturally?

HF: It was naturally artesian. It's clear in the north end of the Pahrump fan. So why the section out here in the middle is what it is, maybe we didn't go deep enough; maybe we had to go 2,000 feet. Nobody's ever tried it. But anyway, when we got to Blosser's, he had a decent well that probably flowed 500 or 600 gallons. And it just ran out from there. You had good big wells, but you had to pump them.

RM: And it was cotton that made the development of the valley, wasn't it? Before that it was kind of limping along—would that be fair to say?

HF: Yes. Except for the two big ranches, the Manse and the Pahrump, the rest of it was nothing. I got to the Basin Ranch too quickly. Blosser had the ranch next to Bradys on the south. It was a very nice ranch and he was a very good farmer. He grew hay and alfalfa, cotton, whatever. He probably farmed 300 or 400 acres.

As you came from Blosser's, you got to the Pechstein Ranch, and it was enormous but it never really amounted to a whole lot for farming. They grew some alfalfa, they grew some cotton, but it was a different soil, more heavy clay. As I said, it was a good well—it flowed 1,800 gallons a minute. Maybe they didn't have the right farmers on it; Pechstein was an engineer out of Southern California and he didn't spend a whole lot of money on his ranch.

RM: Did he live here?

HF: He would come up but he never lived here. Blosser and Pechstein were between Lou Hathaway's place and Basin Ranch.

RM: And Hathaway's was on the south or the north?

HF: Hathaway's was north of Bell Vista. Blosser was south of Bell Vista and Basin is north. So that pretty well covers the farming up to Basin Road.

Since we last met I've been thinking about the grocery store, a store where you could get supplies, which was a very important thing. When we came here in 1944, Pop Buol had a little store where you could get the supplies you needed to survive. And at that time there were still some miners up at Johnnie and of course, Pop sold the wine that he made and he had that store.

RM: Button, could you mention anybody living up at Johnnie by name?

HF: As I told you the other day, the old gentlemen that had been there forever and ever was Matt Kusic. The old town was a couple of miles back this way from the mines. The mines were basically shut down, although Charles Labbe still had a mine up there. His mill was still in perfect shape. He just shut down and that was the end of it. The Johnnie Mine had a watchman and his name was A. Z. Hall, and he watched the place. His little cabin was basically right in the middle of the road and you had to drive around it. He did a great job of protecting that area. At that time, the Johnnie Mine still had a number of livable houses and the houses had mattresses, beds, dishes in the cupboard; they still had water. In the wintertime, and in the summertime also, there were certain miners who would come back.

There was one guy who drove a nice old Model T. Probably once a week he'd come down and get his supplies and his groceries and bring old Matt Kusic with him.

They would go out in the hills out there and placer mine, and they did pretty doggone good.

RM: They were getting some gold?

HF: Of course, they had to work hard at it. That was about all there was at Johnnie—maybe there'd be two or three guys there one week and then a month later they'd be gone and there wouldn't be anybody else there for a while. But there still was placer mining going on out in the desert.

RM: Were they dry placer mining or were they using water?

HF: I would assume it was a panning operation. My dad hauled the mail up to Johnnie every Wednesday, and sometimes old Matt would hitch a ride with him and he'd have a couple of jugs of water. He'd go out into the desert with his water and do a little panning. He had a real nice old Dodge back in one of the buildings with the doors closed. He tried to save it but the problem was the chickens were in there, too. So the chickens roosted on the old Dodge and that wasn't a good thing.

He had this doggone little screen—it was up off the ground a few feet—and it was cool and that's where he would sleep. Any time a car would come by, of course he could hear it coming for a mile or two down the road. He'd usually wave it down and a lot of times if you would go to Vegas of a morning, he would give you some money and ask you to get him a few supplies, then you'd come back at night and you'd leave them. And it went the other way—he would give some money and you'd pick his stuff up in Pahrump and then next Wednesday you'd take it back up and give it him. You wouldn't carry milk and butter but you definitely had some canned goods.

RM: Thanks. Now, coming back to the store in Pahrump.

HF: Pop Buol was a very interesting fellow. He was very bright—he had served in the

legislature and he had his winery here in Pahrump. He started getting older and he got cranky and he got so the store would only be open one day a week. He had a great big nice wooden ranch gate out on the front of his place, and if it was swung open that meant he was open; if it was swung closed that meant stay out, he wasn't running today.

There were some folks that came in here, Brooks; they were cousins to the Caytons (the Caytons had been here for a number of years). They decided they were going to build a store here and that was interesting for us because there really weren't that many people, just a few big ranches. Cayton sold them ten acres on the east portion of his property. The man's name was George Brooks, his wife's name was Johnnie, and they had a couple of boys.

And by golly, this guy went to work. The property had a well on it and one little house, which in the past had been used for a school. So they had a place to live and they had water and a kerosene lamp. He had an old Model A truck and he would go over into the Death Valley area and up at Rhyolite and haul in truckload after truckload of railroad ties and bridge timbers and all this lumber, and he built a pretty doggone nice store. One end had the post office in the corner and the rest of that particular portion of the building was a grocery store. He went to town more often than old Pop did and he had a bigger truck so they did a pretty doggone good job.

This was 1945, 1946, so the Second World War was over and the army put all kinds of stuff on the market. One of the things that he picked up—and this was a packaged unit—was a generator. He built a nice generator house for it and put it in and he would run it probably 12 or 14 hours a day. He'd shut her off at night and go out and wind the thing up. So he was able to have cold pop in Pahrump; at that time they only had Coke and 7-Up. My mother would give me 20 cents, I'd walk all the way over there, and

I'd get a couple bottles of pop and bring it back and oh my goodness, what a treat.

He put in a bar on the other end of the building and the bar did very, very well. In 1945 and '46 there was a federal law against selling Indians alcohol. But when you're as far away as Pahrump was from the rest of the world and you were an Indian and you had a dollar, you could have yourself a six-pack. Of course, in those days they had a fight now and then. The Brookses built the place in '45, '46, and they ran it until about 1948. When I was a boy, that was forever.

Then they sold it to some folks. There was a man by the name of Guy Pennell; he had owned some property over in Ash Meadows and had some cows and all. He was friends with a family here, the Ward family, and they had one son, Vernon Ward. Guy and Vernon were partners and they added another sister and brother-in-law, then they added the mom and dad. They added and added to where there were too many folks living off of the store. Finally it ended up that Guy Pennell owned the store all by himself and he ran it for a number of years. There was a little counter with stools to it and you could get a hamburger. Guy was an old cowboy and he was a pretty good cook; he made a heck of a bean pot. If you came to Pahrump that was the only place where you could get something to eat.

RM: So that was really Pahrump's first restaurant?

HF: Well, you could call it that. It was called the Pahrump Trading Post.

RM: What was happening to Pop Buol at this time?

HF: He still did a lot of his farming—his fruit and vegetables and all that sort of thing. He was getting older; he made his wine and he drank his wine.

RM: Was he still working his store?

HF: Oh, no. The minute he sold the property to the Brookses he shut his store down.

Because that's what he wanted to do; he wanted to get rid of that.

RM: His store was on his property though; it wasn't on the one he sold the Brookses.

HF: Right.

RM: Why don't you give the coordinates of where Pop's store was?

HF: If you go to the corner of Wilson and what's today called West Street, Pop Buol owned 160 acres in the northwest corner. That 160 acres included the sand hills out in front, and he had his orchard and his grape vines and all that sort of thing. He was back off of the corner, and out in front of his place to the east there was property that he was able to sell that did not interfere with his place at all. I mean, 160 acres is a lot of property and if you just pull ten acres off of one corner you don't even miss it.

RM: What corner did he pull it off of?

HF: The southeast corner; that's what he sold to the Brookses.

RM: Did his store have a name?

HF: We just called it Buol's store, Buol's place.

RM: He didn't have a sign there but everybody knew where it was?

HF: Oh, sure.

RM: And again, what did Brookses call theirs?

HF: They called it the Pahrump Trading Post. She was kind of an artist and she made a big sign. To my knowledge nobody ever got a picture of it, but it was a frontiersman with his shaggy leather coat on and he was standing up there and it said Pahrump Trading Post. As I said, it was built out of railroad ties. The roof was these massive bridge timbers—they were 3-by-12 redwoods that had come off of the old T & T Railroad. And some of the stuff came from up at Rhyolite.

RM: What was Pop's place made out of?

HF: It was adobe. Now, a lot of his old buildings were railroad ties, but he was an adobe man.

RM: Did he build that himself, do you know?

HF: Yes, because he worked the Indians.

RM: Do you know how he got his property?

HF: I have absolutely no idea. But I do know they brought in this great big old monstrosity, a steam-powered well rig; it was still here when we moved here. Doby Doc, who was a collector of antiques, ended up with it and I have no idea where it went; I'm sure they didn't cut it up for junk iron. When we came here it was on the Raycraft place and it drilled a number of the wells—Pop's wells, the Raycraft wells—and it possibly drilled some on the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: How deep was Pop going, do you know?

HF: They didn't have to go very deep in those days; probably a couple of hundred feet and then they'd get a nice little artesian well. He had about three wells and the one up where Brookses were, all within a small area. Those wells took care of his needs for years and years and years, until the big farmers came in and started digging big wells and pulling lots of water out of here, and then the little wells went down.

RM: Are Pop's buildings still there?

HF: That's an interesting thing. Doby Doc bought the place; it was an antique. The old adobe winery was still there and everything was just like it was and he went and encapsulated that thing. Today it's all inside a building. I've been in it in the past and it's all still there. It has bars on the windows to keep the wine thieves out.

RM: Did Pop live in the store?

HF: No, he had two or three little houses. I think he kind of slept where he wanted to

but he had a house down below that his son, Frankie Buol, had built out of railroad ties. It was kind of a nice house; it had a fireplace and a number of things. His son was killed out at the BMI plant and his wife, Pop's daughter-in-law, moved to Tonopah and lived the rest of her life there.

RM: And what was her name?

HF: They called her Gertie, I think it was Gertrude.

RM: Gertrude Buol?

HF: Her last name was Buol. I don't know whether she ever remarried or not.

RM: Is the Brookses' building that they constructed still there?

HF: No, they sold that all to the school. I went up there and did the best I could to get things for the museum. I got the old power house, every piece of it, and I came down here and put it back up. So I have a duplicate of the old power house made out of the same material and I'm kind of proud of that. But other than, they just bulldozed it and that was the end of it.

RM: And you say you don't know where Pop had gotten the land?

HF: I have no idea. He owned a number of parcels of land here in the Pahrump Valley. He was well known in Tonopah and he was a very brilliant man; I am sure he bought a lot of tax land.

RM: Did Doby Doc buy the Brookses' place, too?

HF: No.

RM: So he bought 150 acres.

HF: It was actually minus 20 so it would be 140 acres. Pop had sold the ten to the Brookses and then later on he sold ten more to another fellow. To my knowledge it still belongs to the family because it's just up there and hobos kind of camp on it.

RM: And that's still in the family, as far as you know?

HF: It probably is because I know people that have tried to buy it. It's a very valuable piece of property now—ten acres right behind Wal-Mart.

RM: What is on the Brookses' property now?

HF: That was purchased by the Nye County School District. A fellow by the name of Dodge had gone in there and built a more modern store building and the school district took that building and turned it into their main office in Pahrump.

RM: And it still functions as that?

HF: Oh, every day.

RM: When did Dodge build that building, roughly?

HF: I would just have to take a guess. It was probably in the late '80s, early '90s.

RM: And he had a store there?

HF: Oh yes, it was called Dodge's Market. Then Smith's came in and that put him right out of business.

RM: What do you know about the Brookses' background?

HF: The Brookses were from San Diego and I guess they had lived here in early years.

Let me go back just a minute on Buol. Buol's son, Frankie Buol, went up and made an attempt to mine the Johnnie Mine in the '30s and he was up there for a while. He's got three daughters and they're still alive and I've talked to one of them. She remembered living up there as a little girl, which would have been the late '30s, early '40s. Apparently he was the last person to actually mine that as the Johnnie Mine.

RM: Are there big workings at the Johnnie Mine?

HF: There's one big shaft and I've heard it's 1,100 feet deep and of course it has drifts all over the place. It's quite a hole in the ground—you'd never catch me down there.

RM: I guess it was a pretty good producer, wasn't it?

HF: You know, you just can't tell. They used to say for every dollar they took out they spent a dollar or two to get it. There were a lot of stock deals. They did have a big mill up there and the Johnnie Siding on the railroad. And the place did operate—I mean, there's a Jim dandy of a hole in the ground and a big mine dump.

RM: So the Johnnie Mine was the boss mine of the camp?

HF: Yes, and then down by the Johnnie town there was another one that was fair sized; I can't think of the name of it. I would have to say that the Johnnie Mine was the granddaddy.

To get back to the Pahrump Trading Post, Guy Pennell ended up with it and he ran it for some years, and then he got sick and died. His brother Roy Pennell from Seligman, Arizona, came out here and he ran the place, trying to sell it. In those days, who'd want to buy it?

RM: What year would that have been, roughly?

HF: In '51, '52. The reason I know that is because in '52 I worked in the store. I pumped gas out of the one gas pump and worked behind the counter.

RM: Do you want to describe the store?

HF: It was kind of an interesting place. When the Wards had it, they were a real musical family and they played instruments—a fiddle and a guitar and all that sort of thing. Of course, there was nothing going on in Pahrump so once a month or every two weeks or so, they would push all the potato bins and everything back and have a dance in there. The old store would just hum for that particular night. And there was no booze involved; the bar was long gone.

RM: This was the Wards?

HF: That was the Wards; the Pennells had purchased it from the Brookses. Roy Pennell and his wife, Leona, ran the thing until they could finally sell it and they sold it to Frank and Katie Burkett. Frank's brother owned a meat shop in Las Vegas and Frank was a butcher and his wife had also worked in the meat shop.

They came out here and about that time the state let a contract to pave the road through the center of Pahrump. Well, Frank and Katie had just bought this place and all of a sudden there were 20 trailer houses and they had a number of people buying from them. So Frank went to town and bought a brand new diesel-powered generator from Clark County Wholesale. (I think it was called the Cantalist at that time, but it was Clark County, that operation.) He bought this brand new diesel light plant because he had to provide power for all these trailers. They were called trailer houses in those days because they went from job to job.

So all of a sudden Frank and Katie did very well. The paving job probably lasted a year or so. That was in 1953 and that was the beginning of the growth of Pahrump. Also, Leon Hughes had planted cotton and the farmers out of the San Joaquin Valley started coming in here and growing cotton and the place was picking up.

Frank and Katie ran that store for a number of years. The little red schoolhouse had been up on the Pahrump Ranch since 1944. In the school year of '51 and '52, the school district purchased barracks buildings from Boulder City and moved them in here. (I guess they weren't barracks but they looked like barracks to me.) They were used for housing over at Boulder City, where they were building the dam. The school district bought two of those and moved them in because the school was getting more kids and they needed more room. They set them up right across the street, so to speak, from the store.

Then in January of 1952, they moved the school there. Now you had the kids, the schoolteacher, the buses, so it was quite active. And besides that, kids may not have much, but if each of them has a dime and they walk over and buy a candy bar, that's something. Frank and Katie even provided a little meal there. Of course, some of the kids would come in and eat their meal, whether it was a sandwich or what it was.

RM: Do you remember what it cost?

HF: When I was working there in 1951 or '52, gasoline was 25 cents a gallon and a loaf of bread was 25 cents. I remember that as plain as day—bread and gas cost the same.

RM: Do you remember what gas was in Vegas, as a frame of reference?

HF: Gosh, we always had Terrible Herbst's in Las Vegas, and he was a bandit; he would sell it for 17 or 18 cents a gallon. You put that stuff in your car and you could smell it—I don't know what was in it. It didn't spit and sputter but my goodness sakes, that was the stinkiest stuff. In those days you had regular gas and ethyl. I used to put ethyl in my car from Terrible's and pay the same price that I had to pay for regular down the street. I was under the impression that I had more power, and I probably did.

RM: And you had a cool car then, as I recall. What was it?

HF: In those days I had a '46 Ford convertible.

RM: It would be worth a fortune now.

HF: Oh yes, I wish I had that thing now.

RM: My dad had one, too; that's what I learned to drive on.

HF: I would sing and cry for that car.

RM: I know what you mean. So the Brookses bought out Buol in about what year?

HF: It would have been '47, '48.

RM: And Pennell bought it from the Brookses; when did he do that?

HF: Probably '48, '49.

RM: So they only had it a couple of years.

HF: It seemed like forever but they didn't have it a long time.

RM: How long did Pennell have it?

HF: He had it till he died in 1951, and then his brother took over. I worked for Roy; he paid me \$5 a day.

RM: That's good money.

HF: It's pretty darn good. I was 15 years old. If they had to go back to Arizona or something, he would just give me the bag of money and I'd stay there and take care of the place. He knew when he got back that everything would be exactly the way it was when he left.

RM: That's a lot of responsibility for 15. (Incidentally, in 1953 I made 5 bucks a day working at the Modern Cleaners in Ely.)

HF: I saved a lot of money. I didn't buy anything. If I got \$5 I'd save \$4.90 of it.

RM: That's really wise. How long did Roy Pennell have it?

HF: They were only here about a year or so because he had a good job. He worked for the railroad back in Seligman and he wanted to get back to that. He sold the store to Frank and Katy Burkett.

RM: And how long did they have it?

HF: They had it forever. I have nothing to nail it to till they sold it to Fred Harris and his wife, but when power came in the Harrises had it, so the Burketts had it till about probably '62. Let me tell you a little story here; it's very interesting. Now, the Burkett store was nothing to really look at—it was made out of railroad ties and they had put a little stucco on the outside. But it provided a need and you could get ice cream at that

time because they had that generator going; it was only a couple of days a week, but they had ice cream.

But some folks came in—I'm just going to take a shot at their name—Grikos or Grekos. They went a little further up town, up on E Street, and built a very modern grocery store building out of cement blocks. They put in a very nice grocery store, but Pahrump was different then. This was a farming community and if you went into Burkett's, you got a loaf of bread, you got a can of beans, you get whatever, you signed for it, and you walked out. When you got your paycheck you went down and laid your paycheck on the counter, they subtracted your bill, and gave you what you had left. Well, Grekos or Grikos didn't do that and they were here just a very short while and they were gone.

RM: What is that building today?

HF: Today it's what they call Irene's. It's on E Street, which is just west of the cemetery. The building was a lot of things—it ended up the second Cotton Pickin' Saloon, it was a little restaurant for a while. But those people actually couldn't make it here.

RM: The community didn't want cash and carry; how interesting.

HF: It is kind of interesting. My wife and I had kind of an arrangement. She was very young when we got married and moved to Pahrump. I had a bill with the store and before we were married I'd take my check in, get it cashed, and all that sort of thing. She had been in a family that had done that all their life and she said, "We are not going to do that anymore."

"Okay, how are we going to get our check cashed?"

"We're going to deposit it in the bank and we're going to pay our bills with a

checking account.” And she put a stop to me having an account at the grocery store.

[Laughs]

RM: The bank was in Vegas, right? What bank was it?

HF: I don't know; it's out here now and they've changed their name a number of times.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: You said a few minutes ago that the beginning of modern Pahrump, or when it was taking off, was connected with building the highway.

HF: Oh, sure. If you remember, last time we met I was talking about how Dorothy Dorothy had written an article about how all Pahrump needed was roads and power.

RM: Oh, right. And she wrote that when?

HF: About 1950, '51.

RM: So she was a couple of years ahead of the paving; interesting.

HF: Of course, you had the ranches. Prior to 1953, you had just a gravel dirt road that ran across the top of the valley. By this time, the Bradys and the Blossers and the Simkins and Dorothy Dorothy and all of them had moved in here. Some of the ranches were back a ways, but they were all basically along the road. It was kind of strange—Nye County had the money to do this; and Clark County, and of course, California didn't have much of an interest in the road. Nye County put in, I think it was 17 miles, which went from one end of the valley to the other—from Pahrump south to Pahrump north.

RM: Where was the north end of Pahrump?

HF: This side of the cattle guard, where the last ranch is.

RM: And 17 miles south was down to where?

HF: To the Nye County line, which was right at the Bowman Ranch. Of course as kids, we'd take our cars up and run up and down the thing. You'd drive into Pahrump from either Highway 95 or Shoshone and all of a sudden you'd pull onto this beautiful modern paved road, so the people that got here thought "Well, we're here." They didn't know that the road didn't go anywhere to the south and if you went to the north you'd

have to get back on the gravel road and go on the rest of the way.

RM: Was it gravel to Shoshone?

HF: In 1950, Shoshone had done sort of a chip seal. It was a blacktop road so it was not dusty—that's all you could say about it; it wasn't dusty. It sure beat the heck out of running in the dirt with busted tires and potholes and all that sort of thing.

RM: Now, refresh my memory—when did Leon Hughes demonstrate that you could grow cotton in Pahrump?

HF: In 1948.

RM: So '48 was another watershed year?

HF: Yes, but it took a couple of years to catch on.

RM: Okay. But he demonstrated that cotton could be grown here and people started moving in?

HF: That's correct. Diesel was less than 10 cents a gallon so they brought in big diesel engines. Water was abundant here; they could put in a big pump with a diesel engine to run it and they'd just water the devil out of the place.

So by '53 all these farmers were here but we were still driving on an old gravel road. Then we put in the paved road, so now all these ranches were on a nice paved roadway.

RM: But it didn't go anywhere.

HF: Well, you could go to the grocery store and the post office. You could run 80 miles an hour to the post office, and a lot of them did.

RM: Did you kids do drag racing on that road?

HF: Yes, we did. I'll never forget one particular time we all had '49 or '50 Chevrolet cars and this one kid had a real nice-looking one; he had done a lot of body work and it

was really fancy. We were always racing. One time you'd win, the other time I'd win. He had been in Vegas for a while and he came out here and we were up along the road and he said "Hey, Ford, how about a race."

I said, "Sure, man, let's go." And he just nailed me. I mean, he left me in the smoke and I said, "WOW!" He pulled the hood and he had put twin carburetors on it.

RM: What kind of car?

HF: It was a 1950 Chevrolet. That's six cylinders, and he put twin carburetors on it. Oh, would that thing go.

RM: I'll bet that was a lot of fun. So we have covered who was in the valley up to '53, or do we need to fill in some gaps?

HF: No. Next, in 1955 they put in the road going the other direction, and also in 1955 the Revert brothers went down to L.A. and bought an old used Union Oil Gas Station.

RM: A whole station?

HF: Yes, they built a modern painted Union Oil Gas Station. They brought it up here and I worked on it in 1955. I was 18 years old and some of the other kids and I worked on the doggone thing. It was up what's today the corner of 372 and 160, right where the Bank of America is on the northeast corner.

Revert brothers already had a fuel distribution business here in Pahrump. They sold bulk gas, probably sold bulk oil, and had a little shop here in Pahrump—they filled the tanks of the farmers—and my brother-in-law, Leroy Vaughn, worked for them doing that. When they put the gas station in they wanted to know if he wanted to run that and he said sure. So my brother-in-law ran the gas station and on the same corner, a little ways from the gas station, he built a real nice little coffee shop and my mother worked in there. Her pies—Hattie's pies—were known all over the southwest. The truck drivers would

come in here they'd say, "Where's Hattie's pies?"

They ran that for a number of years and during that time folks built the cotton gin. So we got a cotton gin, we got employees, we got work going.

RM: Was the cotton gin across the street?

HF: Right straight across. On a map, that's 160 and this is 372.

RM: Let's talk about what was on each corner then. The northwest corner was Reverts' gas station and a little restaurant, a little coffee shop. Then on the northeast corner was the cotton gin. What year did they build the cotton gin?

HF: In about '58, '59, '60.

RM: Okay, what was on the southeast corner where Terrible's is now?

HF: There was nothing.

RM: And what was on the southwest corner?

HF: That was all Pahrump Ranch on 372.

RM: Where was the gate to the Pahrump Ranch? How far down off 160?

HF: Oh, a good quarter of a mile.

RM: Who donated the land for the cotton gin?

HF: Walter Williams. His Pahrump Ranch owned all this land.

RM: Did they own the Reverts' property?

HF: Yes they did; they owned down as far as E Street. The Reverts leased it from the Pahrump Ranch. They had a 20-year lease with a 20-year extension.

RM: Now, Pat Mankins was on that same corner. When did they come in here?

HF: My brother-in-law sold them that land after we were married; probably in 1960.

RM: Where was the first motel—was it on that property?

HF: Right along the road here—my brother-in-law had gone to Boulder City and

picked up two double-size cabins, so there were four rooms right here, fronting on 372. It was two buildings with two units each.

RM: Was that a big undertaking for him?

HF: No, it was just something he didn't have before. Now there was a little place if a truck driver came in—he could stay all night and eat up here.

RM: And the Pennells had a kind of little coffee shop in their store. Did the Mankins take it over?

HF: Right. The whole place was called Mankins' Corner after they came in.

RM: And they bought it from your brother-in-law?

HF: Right, Leroy Vaughn. You did an oral history with him.

RM: Right. And for the record, who did Leroy acquire it from?

HF: From the Revert Brothers. He bought their lease, which was 20 plus 20, or it may have been ten plus ten. The property was ten plus ten.

RM: Do you know what Leroy paid for the whole thing?

HF: I think he sold it to Mankins for, like, \$6,000 in the '60s.

RM: So that corner was the real beginnings of the city of Pahrump.

HF: That was downtown Pahrump.

RM: How long was the motel there?

HF: Mankins decided to move so he bought some property down across the street from what is now Saddle West, on 160. He moved his gas station and he had a little grocery store. You could buy booze, Coke, a loaf of bread. He moved that down there and the property all reverted back to the Pahrump Ranch, who then sold it and it went to Preferred Equities.

RM: Was Mankins successful in the new location?

HF: He was successful anywhere and everywhere he went.

RM: He had a knack?

HF: He had a knack.

RM: Were there any other gas stations in Pahrump at that time?

HF: I don't believe so. Later on the Floyds put a Union Station kind of beside Mankins across from Saddle West. There may have been a gas station down on Mesquite and 160 or something, a gas pump and a Coke machine.

RM: Now, who else is moving into the valley at this time? Let's go to '51, say.

HF: They were starting to grow cotton and it was something new and it was busy, busy, busy. Then the government released a bunch of homestead property down on Homestead and that brought some new families in. That would have happened in '52.

RM: Could you list some of the families who came in then?

HF: There was a family by the name of McCowen and they had a son-in-law named Horliss Wall and he had a cousin named Moorehead.

RM: Where were they from?

HF: They were all from the San Joaquin Valley. Then there was another fellow—I can't nail his name down right now. He'd been in the Navy and he had the next place on down the road. As you got down further you had the Wards. Charles and Pearl Ward were his sons; Pearl was a man. In fact, Pearl worked with me for 23 years. Pearl had a 160-acre homestead and Charles also had a 160-acre homestead. On up the road apiece the government let some land go and the Turners had a homestead up on Turner Road, and the Sharps, the Paiute family, had one up there, too. So that sort of opened up another part of the valley.

That land was kind of kept on the QT—my family never knew a thing about it. I

suppose it was advertised in the *Wall Street Journal* but in Pahrump you had no phone, no television, you had no nothing. There was actually some good property down there.

RM: Did it go fast?

HF: It was all gone before we ever knew anything about it.

RM: Can you think of any other family names?

HF: That's about all that moved down in that direction. Then they started drilling some wells out on the west side in a couple of places. The west side of the valley is a real heavy clay and it's not farm land, but they got some good big wells so they pumped their water and tried to grow something out there and it didn't do too well. Farther out, almost to the mountains, there was a family by the name of Erwin and they farmed. And there was some fellow who had a mine back East somewhere; he had a lot of money. He came out here and bought the property and just spent money like crazy on it. He had a big well but it wouldn't grow anything; he spent a lot of money for nothing. But drilling those wells opened up that side a little bit.

A fellow by the name of Rusty Horgan had moved in here, it could have been in the late '40s, and he bought the property right on the west end of the Pahrump Ranch. He was just kind of an investor and he had a partner. His partner's name was Goforth—Horgan and Goforth. They bought a number of acres out there so that also started opening up the west a little bit.

What I've sort of left out is that back in probably '51, '52, there was no bar here because the Pennells and the Wards had shut the bar down. A fellow by the name of Dan Murphy and another fellow—I can't think of his name to save my soul—went out this side of the California line about a mile and built Murphy's Bar. Murphy picked up right where Brooks had been because you have to remember, the Indians didn't have to drive

as far—Murphy's was about six or eight miles closer. So that was the second liquor establishment in Pahrump.

RM: Was it well patronized?

HF: Well, it was all you had. Everybody that drank, that's where they went to drink.

RM: Did people drink a lot, do you think?

HF: The regular farmers didn't drink that much, but they all drank a little.

RM: What was happening in terms of church services and religion in the early '50s?

HF: There would be a lady or two that would have a Sunday School. Generally it was up in the schoolhouse on Sunday and usually it was in the summertime. The first church was a little Church of Christ place that was built down here on Basin and Linda Street. It was a nice little building but it was just ahead of its time and it sort of dried up.

RM: Did it have a steeple?

HF: Yes, it was a nice little building and my wife and I took our daughter down there some but there were four or five people and that was about the congregation. Now, Elmer Bowman always had a Mormon service on his ranch and that started in 1948. Along in 1968, the Pahrump Community Church and the Mormon Church, the LDS Church, both started building their churches up on West Street and Wilson. And both of them, of course, became very, very large churches. So from then on there was a church here and a church there.

The Pahrump Community Church was non-denominational. I mean, you could be a Catholic; you could be anything you wanted. We were there for a number of years. In fact, my daughter was married there; we were all baptized there. It was just the Pahrump church unless you were a Mormon. As to what the next church was I couldn't even take a guess because one would open up in a little building here and there.

RM: Did they open and then fade quick?

HF: I suppose they faded out pretty quick; the preacher would move or something.

RM: A lot of the communities in Nevada were not known as church-going. Would that description fit Pahrump in those years?

HF: That's a tough thing to say because farmers are hard-working people and they spend a lot of time working. But after the two churches opened a lot of folks went to them. And before, there was nowhere to go, nowhere to get married, or you could get married in the Community Building. A lot of times there were services held in the Community Building. In fact, the Pahrump Community Church and the Mormon Church used to share the Community Building on Sunday and that didn't work too well. Church No. 1 didn't get out in time for church No. 2 to come in. So they already had a congregation that was meeting up here in the Community Building.

RM: You just showed me a quote from Dorothy Dorothy, Button.

HF: Right. As I told you, Dorothy Dorothy and her husband moved here in the late '40s, early '50s, and they had a partner; I haven't been able to come up with his name yet. They developed the Dorothy Dorothy Ranch—I think they called it the Lazy 88 or something. It was the farthest ranch to the north and it was very, very good.

Dorothy Dorothy was a different kind of a person. She was an endless worker for the good of Pahrump Valley, for the good of the state, for the good of the kids in the world, and everything else. She helped get a lot of things done in Pahrump. One of them was the paving of the gravel road that went through Pahrump and ended up in Las Vegas. She knew everybody in the chamber of commerce in Las Vegas and she and a group of other people put together a wedding to wed Pahrump to civilization. There were hundreds and hundreds of people down at the state line where Nye and Clark County come

together. She was quite a visionary and she used to write articles in the *Review Journal* and in the *Tonopah Times-Bonanza*.

When she first came here, as you know, it was a gravel road. We were sort of the end of the road; the end of nowhere. But she had a vision and this is what she wrote. You have to remember, there was no power, no telephone, no roads, no anything. She wrote: “All this valley [the Pahrump Valley] needs is a chance to progress. Take off the shackles, the hobbles, the stranglehold, and give it the freedom through paved roads, electricity, and watch a bonanza of the West such as you thought only a gold rush could create. This vein will never run out.”

RM: That’s a wonderful quote, Button.

HF: And before she left here, she got to see a lot of this materialize.

RM: How did the Dorothis earn a living before they came here?

HF: I have absolutely no idea. I just know that one day they showed up in Pahrump and they bought that ranch. And they were excellent farmers, they worked hard. They grew alfalfa, they grew cotton, they grew everything imaginable out there.

RM: How big was their ranch?

HF: It was quite large, about 200 or 300 acres.

RM: Who did they purchase it from?

HF: I think they purchased it from the first developers, Everett Van Horn and Stringfellow. The house that they moved into fit her to a T. It was a beautiful house. It was built in a horseshoe shape with a patio in the middle. It was basically brand new because Stringfellow had built it for his wife and she never cared much for Pahrump.

RM: Do you think Dorothy Dorothy was involved in the film industry at all?

HF: It’s hard to tell. She knew a lot of people—I guess she was kind of a hostess.

They'd have parties and stuff and she was an attractive woman in her day.

RM: Did they live here only or did they go back and forth to Palm Springs?

HF: Once they moved here, they were here.

RM: And they became really involved in the community after they were here?

HF: Well, she did, and they had their friends. He was a quiet sort of a fellow. But they didn't go down to the bar and in those days there was nowhere to eat in Pahrump; there was no restaurant. But she was involved in everything. She worked with the Democratic Party and she knew all the senators and congressmen and the chamber of commerce—she liked to go and be among them, you'd have to say.

RM: How long did they live here?

HF: Time goes by so fast. My wife and I got married in 1958 and they were still here; they probably were here up until the '60s.

RM: And then they moved?

HF: Well, they sold their property and it kind of bounced back and forth—one farmer would buy it and another farmer would buy it. They moved into Las Vegas. As you go over the hill to Las Vegas, if you look towards the old road that used to go to Searchlight back on the right-hand side as you went over Mountain Pass, right around the corner there there's a big gravel pit. He went in there with a partner and they opened up that gravel pit. In those days there was a lot of growth in Vegas (nothing like later years, but there was a lot of growth). I guess he did very well with that.

RM: Did you hear about them after they moved to Vegas?

HF: Not really. She was a real friend of Rusty Horgan and she kind of took care of him when he got old so she was back and forth. In fact, I think she ended up with all of his property.

RM: Tell me more about Rusty.

HF: He'd been a hard-rock miner in Randsburg, California, and as I said before, he had a partner named Goforth—Horgan and Goforth. They bought some property out on the west end of the Pahrump Ranch. It wasn't farmland, it wasn't much of anything, but they had quite a few acres. Eventually, as land went up, they sold it and they did well.

RM: Did you know him well?

HF: Oh, yeah. He was a real character—old Rusty Horgan. He was an Irish Catholic and he was a partner in the H&H Bar—it was Horgan and Harris. And they had a little bar up here on E Street that later burned down—you could say accidentally, but it was sort of on purpose. They rebuilt what was then the Cotton Pickin' Saloon and the Cotton Pickin' Saloon was really something and the other one burned down, but not when he owned it. They were both owned by the same person.

RM: Did he have a wife or family?

HF: No, he never married.

RM: How did he earn a living?

HF: He worked. He worked on the ranch, he worked over in Shoshone, he worked for the county in the road department. He was always willing to work but he probably had a few bucks; I don't know what he did in Randsburg to make money but he probably had a few dollars.

RM: When did he finally pass away or move out?

HF: It was after Nancy was born; she was born in '59. I remember he'd take a paper dollar and twist it up and tie a knot in it and give that to Nancy for Christmas. So we're probably talking about in the early '60s.

RM: How old a man was he when he passed away?

HF: To me he was an old man even when he came here. He used to help Pop Buol make wine. I would say he was at least in his 70s when he finally died.

RM: Did he get his land from the Pahrump Ranch or did it just abut up to the ranch?

HF: I have absolutely no idea. I think he gave \$5 an acre for it. My dad drilled some wells for him and Dad traded him at \$15 an acre.

RM: How much land did your dad get down there?

HF: He had 160 acres.

RM: How much did Rusty have?

HF: He and his partner probably had maybe 300 or 400 acres. As I said, it wasn't the greatest farmland. Dad in later years tried to grow stuff there. He grew some fair grain, but it was just heavy red clay.

RM: Was it a long ways to water down there?

HF: No, it's real shallow. In fact, Rusty hand-dug his first well. It was probably 20 feet deep.

RM: He hand-dug a well? People were industrious then, weren't they?

HF: Well, they had all the time in the world.

RM: You've talked about Dorothy Dorothy's husband and Al Bell flying airplanes.

Who else did that?

HF: Christiansen, down at the Bowman Ranch, had one, but he had a crop-spraying business—Christiansen's Aerial Application.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: What would you like to cover next in our overview of Pahrump?

HF: Well, we can run through the schools. When we first came it was the spring of '44 so it was the '43-'44 school season. Old Pop Buol had a little two-room building probably 1,000 feet east of where his store was. In fact, that was the property he sold to the Brooks when they opened up another store. The backside had the teacher's living quarters and the front side was the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse would probably handle up to a dozen kids, if you were careful.

The teacher's name at that time was Helsia Bower. In the fall of 1944, they moved the little red schoolhouse in and put it up on the Pahrump Ranch. The first teacher to teach there was Ruth Dewey. And she's still alive; she lives up in Caliente.

RM: I'll be darned. Talk about where they got the little red schoolhouse.

HF: Over in Ash Meadows, which is Amargosa, they had the Clay Camp and at that time it was owned by Richfield Oil Company. They had quite an establishment over there—a little pit mine. They would dig the pits and get the clay, which was used for filtering oil and a lot of things. At one time there had been a little settlement there and they had apparently built, or moved in, this little red schoolhouse. It was very nice—a one-room schoolhouse. In fact, we have it down at the museum here.

At that time Pahrump had its own school district, called the Rose School District; it was not a part of Nye County. There were two or three reasons why. I suppose the best one is because one of the people back in the '30s was on the school board here in Pahrump and their last name was Rose.

So the farmers went over to Ash Meadows. They had a big old hay truck—hay

trucks had big long beds—and they jacked up the schoolhouse and backed the hay truck under it and hauled it over here. It was quite a job. They set it down on the Pahrump Ranch. So in the fall of 1944, '44-'45, we had school in the little red schoolhouse. And they paid my dad to build flush toilets. The flush toilets were in a separate little building outside. Those were the first flush toilets the school had had in Pahrump.

RM: Did they have one for the girls and one for the boys?

HF: Oh, yes. It was as modern as modern could be.

RM: How far from the school was the little restroom facility?

HF: I'm guessing 100 feet; something like that.

RM: Was it a problem with the water freezing in the winter at all? Did they have a heater in there?

HF: No, it was built out of railroad ties, which is a real good insulation. I don't remember it ever being a big problem. Dad built it from the ground up. He poured the slab and put up the railroad ties.

RM: Where did he get the ties?

HF: They came from over on the T&T Railroad just south of Death Valley Junction.

RM: What was it like to go to school at Pop Buol's and then the little red schoolhouse?

HF: Well, it was not very big, that's for sure. I know there was myself and two of my sisters, so that's three. And Darlene Cayton, who was our neighbor, and Carol Jean Wilson, from the Pahrump Ranch, and possibly a boy whose parents worked on the Pahrump Ranch. Then they drove students down from the Manse Ranch. I can't remember his name now, but there was a boy that could drive the pickup. He was a man-sized boy, probably 12 or 13. He brought the Sharp family—Angie, or Angeline, and Freddy and Johnnie Frank and the two Long Jim girls. So that's 11. I remember my sister

and I had to sit side by side right at the back door. In fact, when it was recess we'd have to get up and slide our chairs forward. The fire marshal wouldn't have cared much for that. So 11 kids filled the place up.

RM: What was the curriculum like?

HF: It was one room, so No. 1, you had discipline. The kids sat there and kept their mouths shut. Of course, in those days kids did. I came from Yermo and you had to do it in Yermo, too, or you got hit with a yardstick. In fact, one time down in Yermo—I'll never forget it. I was kind of a timid little boy. We had the desks that lifted up straight up from your stomach so the lid was between you and the teacher. This friend and I were carrying on a little conversation with our lids up. The teacher came down and she put me in the cloakroom and closed the door. I remember I cried—I thought I was going to be there forever, and I was there for a good time. But I'll tell you one thing, I never did that again.

RM: That's a good story. Do you have any more recollections about the school at Pop Buol's? What was the building made out of?

HF: It was made out of railroad ties. I don't know how he did the roof, but it had dirt on top—he probably put tin up there and then dirt, I guess for insulation. I guess when it rained it just ran off the side.

RM: What became of the building?

HF: Eventually they just bulldozed it, like everything else.

RM: So then the next fall would be the fall of '44 and you started in the little red school?

HF: That's right. It was up by the Pahrump Ranch, kind of in behind Walgreen's now. I went there eight years and it was open for one more year afterwards.

RM: Talk about the life of a student in the little red schoolhouse.

HF: It was really nice. It had good windows all the way around and it was well painted. The kids' job was to keep the floor clean. And boy, we did; I mean, we kept that place shining.

We had a number of teachers. The first teacher in '44-'45 was Ruth Dewey. Then '45-'46 was a lady by the name of Norma Snyder. She was very interesting because you liked to hear them tell where they were from and she was from back East someplace.

RM: How did she wind up here?

HF: I guess it was advertised. They didn't pay them hardly anything. I remember one year, for Ruth Dewey, the Rose School District ran out of money so they had a party at the Pahrump Ranch. They had the old bunkhouse and it had a dining room. They had a bingo party and every mother brought a cake and a pie and the kids would go crazy. They raised probably \$50 or something and that was enough money to pay the teacher's salary for the rest of the year.

RM: What do you suppose they were paying the teachers a year?

HF: I've actually got the books from that time—they'd probably tell you exactly what they paid them. It was probably \$125 a month or something like that but they also gave them their board and room. They stayed at one ranch or another.

RM: I thought you said they lived in the schoolhouse.

HF: The first one did. Then the next teachers lived with people in the community.

RM: Did Dewey live behind the school?

HF: No, Ruth Dewey lived on the Manse Ranch. Helsia Bower was the first teacher and she lived behind the school.

RM: Do you know where did she come from or anything about her background?

HF: No. She was a very strange lady. Most of them were, in those days.

RM: What do you know about Ruth Dewey?

HF: Ruth Dewey came from Caliente, Nevada, and she had this little girl, Elizabeth. When she left Pahrump, she went to Vegas and she had a great job with the school district in Las Vegas. She probably worked for the state; she had a good job in there.

The next one was Norma Snyder and as I said, she came from back East somewhere—a very, very nice lady. Then this lady named Mrs. Rowcroft came in for '46, '47, and she stayed at our house '46–'47 but she didn't stay very long. She had to bunk with my sister and it just didn't work.

RM: In the same bed?

HF: Yes. She left before Christmas and we didn't have any school for a few months. Then after the first of the year, there was a lady over at Tecopa—a daughter of the fellow that had the grocery store there—named Bobbie McQuerrie. She came over here and taught us and she was a real nice lady; she did a great job and finished out that season.

RM: Did she live here?

HF: She lived on the Pahrump Ranch. And the Pahrump Ranch was sort of a cut above. The first ones lived in the bunkhouse down at the Manse Ranch—I think the first and second one did. When Bobbie McQuerrie came she lived on the Pahrump Ranch with the foreman and his wife. They had a brand-new house; they had everything—indoor bathroom and shower.

RM: Did that work out pretty well—the schoolteacher living with a family?

HF: Some it did, some it didn't. The one that lived at our house didn't work out at all. My folks were dairy farmers, they were up early in the morning milking cows and it just didn't work well.

And then after that, a lady by the name of Mrs. Sterman came, and she was there for several years. I went three years to her, in '47, '48, '49. They moved her into a little trailer house. She was a very interesting lady. First of all, she was from back in the old Virginia area; she grew up there. She was old enough that they still had darkies. They weren't slaves but they were the blacks that had chosen to stay there. She said that when they freed the blacks, they wouldn't leave their place because her family had given them decent homes, decent jobs, decent everything. She would tell some real interesting stories how on a school morning she'd get up and a black lady would comb her hair. Then she would go out and get in the wagon and a black driver drove them to school. She had some very, very, very interesting stories.

RM: How old of a woman was she, would you think?

HF: She was up there. I'd say when she got here, she probably was close to 60.

RM: How did she wind up here from so far away?

HF: At the time she came here, she lived up near Downeyville, California. Her son did sluice gold-mining up in there. She'd leave here of a summer and they'd go to a little town near Downeyville, where he had his mine. She had taught over in the Tecopa area some time in the past and her husband had arthritis real bad and he liked the hot baths so she'd teach there. He was a tinsmith—he could make anything. He'd come down here and stay for maybe a month or so and take the baths and then go back up there.

She had actually taught in Mexico City. She could speak Spanish, she could speak German, she could speak a little of everything. When she got the job here, her husband was close to the hot springs again, and she just kind of liked it out here. She had, like, a master's degree, and that was a lot of education in the '40s.

Anyway, she taught there for a number of years and then they had a lady by the

name of Blanche Wright. She lived with the Frehners. The school district had bought two of those barracks-type buildings from Boulder City and they moved them in. They were in the process of getting them put together because the school had grown. She taught in the red schoolhouse and lived at the Frehners' until the Christmas break. After the Christmas break, they had remodeled one of those buildings and did a great job. The back half was a nice living quarters—it had a kitchen, a bathroom, a living room, and a bedroom. So when school started back up after Christmas, the whole school was moved down. It was where Manse School is today.

RM: And the little red schoolhouse was just abandoned?

HF: Yes. They actually gave it to the Pahrump Ranch—I think they sold it to them for \$100 or something. My dad almost got that. He would have moved it out on our property and we'd have lived in the darned thing. But they felt the fact they had furnished the water for nothing and it was on their property, and they could use it for housing their help—it had the bathrooms.

RM: So they used it for worker housing.

HF: Yes, their help lived in it. So they moved down here and they had the one schoolteacher. I don't have any teachers' names after that, but later we used the building beside it, which was fixed up, as a community center. You know how big barracks were—it was a barracks-sized building.

Then the school grew and they had to hire another teacher and then they had two teachers and two buildings. We got married in 1958 and in about 1959, they built two or three brand-new school rooms. They built them out of cement block and they were modern as could be. They had bathrooms right in the building.

RM: Was it still the Rose School District at that time?

HF: No, it had become the Nye County School District.

RM: The barracks were still Rose?

HF: Yes.

RM: Talk about the curriculum, and what kind of an education you think you got there. And the social life of the kids.

HF: There wasn't much social life; it was all work. As for the curriculum, I'd have to look and see what they have today. In those days, you had to learn your times tables, you had to learn to read, to write. Nowadays, they use a calculator and that sort of thing. I think I got a good foundation in the one-room schoolhouse because I got it all. I mean, there was no monkey business. I knew math when I got out. I could read, I could write. And the teacher introduced us to literature—she'd read good books to us.

RM: I went to a school where they had four grades in one room and they had them in rows, and each row was a grade. Was that the way they did it at yours?

HF: I think they put the little ones up front and then the older ones in the back.

RM: One of the memories I have about mine was that I would finish my work—I'd be in the second grade—and then I was listening to what they were doing in the third grade and in the fourth grade and I was picking up some of that.

HF: I did exactly the same thing. I learned to diagram a sentence in the second grade. I'll never forget that. The teacher had one student up there and she was just hammering it and hammering it and this kid wasn't getting anything out of it. Finally she looked back and saw me, and she said, "Harry, come up here." It was "See John run" or something. She said, "Okay, what's the subject? What's the verb?" I diagrammed it and then she chewed this other kid out. Well, when we got out in recess, the kid chewed me out—so it was kind of a losing thing. But I learned the basic of diagramming of sentences—that

there's a noun and there's a verb.

RM: How old would the other kid have been?

HF: Probably fourth grade.

RM: So you were diagramming sentences in the fourth grade? We didn't get that till junior high. What were some of the other subjects that they taught?

HF: Well, of course, English. I hated English but I always carried good grades in it. And then you had math, and that's the basic two I really remember. And geography—it was kind of neat; you'd turn around and look at the map and everything. I don't remember science. Probably reading was its own class.

RM: Did you go to the barracks school and the cement block school?

HF: I started going to the red schoolhouse in the third grade and went through the eighth grade there. There was no high school. My parents purchased a high school class from a place in Chicago called American Schools. I kind of sputtered along for a while but later on, I finished it. You had to do it and you had to do it right and there was nobody to teach you; you had to read it all.

RM: You weren't interfacing with a teacher in the school or anything; you were just on your own? And you did that in four years?

HF: I did it in five years and I came out with straight As.

RM: Great. Looking back on it, what's your overall reaction to that kind of education?

HF: Well, of course, I missed high school—if I'd been there I'm sure there'd have been a lot more. I missed a lot of high school.

RM: Were other kids going down to Shoshone or to Vegas to live?

HF: For the Indian kids, school was usually over by eighth grade. Darlene Cayton went to Vegas and Carol Jean moved away. The Palmers had a house in Vegas and their

daughter worked for the county so the Palmer kids went to high school there. My sister Betty was older. She finished her second year and for her third year, they sent her to Needles. For her fourth year, they sent her to Death Valley Junction and rented a little cabin and another girl lived with her most of the time. She graduated from Death Valley Junction.

Our daughter Nancy started first grade here and went 12 years; and Heather started kindergarten or preschool and went through the twelfth grade.

RM: They didn't have electric power when you started, did they? So there would be no central air or anything like that.

HF: After they built the little block room, they put a pump in the well. They bought a little generator so they had power. They were still in the barracks buildings and across the street, which was pretty far, but within a distance, they had a light plant that ran at least a portion of the day. So even though the teacher's stove and refrigerator were propane, we ran poles, just like farmers would, and ran two wires over, and that gave her lights at night. The person that owned the Pahrump store at that time allowed that. Every time a truckload of hay went through, it'd knock the wires down. [Chuckles] Anyway, she did better than we did because she had electricity.

RM: What did your family do?

HF: We had our own generator.

RM: Did the teacher have electricity 24/7?

HF: No, they'd crank it up in the morning about sunup, and it would run till probably 8:00 or 9:00 at night. Then you'd use a kerosene lamp.

CHAPTER NINE

HF: Moving on to the Pahrump Ranch—when we came here in 1944, the Pahrump Ranch was owned by a man named Lay Thomas. He was an engineer. If you remember—and you certainly do—engineers back in those days would wear knee-high boots and put their pants down in them and lace them up. You could always tell an engineer from a mile away because of his boots. He was a nice person. He built those two brand-new houses. One was for the foreman and one was his living quarters even though he never came up but once a month or so. At that time, the Pahrump Ranch was hay, grain, and cattle.

RM: And what was his background?

HF: He was from down in Southern California. I have no idea what kind of an engineer he was; I just know he was.

RM: I wonder how he got the money to buy it; it was a big operation to buy.

HF: He spent money up here. He drilled some of the first big wells on the ranch and that sort of thing.

RM: Do you remember when he acquired it?

HF: That's before we came here.

RM: What kind of a guy was he?

HF: You have to remember I was six or seven years old. Everybody liked him and when he came up, I remember Dad used to go up and talk with him.

RM: How old a man was he?

HF: Forties, probably. Anyway, then he sold the place.

RM: How many acres was it when he had it?

HF: It was 12,000. They were probably farming a couple hundred.

RM: How many head do you think they were running?

HF: I have to stick with a figure somewhere around 600 because this was an in-pasture thing. They raised cows and the big trucks would come in and haul the calves out. So if you had 500 or 600 head of calves, that'd be a truckload or two.

RM: And they did not graze on public land off the ranch; is that right?

HF: Right. Anyway, before 1950, so it would have still been in the '40s, a guy by the name of Pete Mulhall came in here from Bakersfield. He was young and handsome; he was really something. It would have been somewhere around '47 or '48 because he had a black '47 or '48 Buick convertible. He'd park that thing in front of the house and you'd walk round and round and round it just to look at it. Pete Mulhall liked speed. And he had a brand new International truck and trailer, about a '47 or '8, and he'd drive it over here. Sometimes the trailer brakes will lock up. I remember one time he got here and he had locked up the brakes and his back tires were just flat. But that's what he did; he drove and drove. So he bought the place. I remember it was all planted in wheat. Then they harvested the wheat, and he used his big truck and hauled the wheat to Los Angeles or wherever.

RM: Was he a farmer?

HF: Yes.

RM: Was he the first of the farmers from Bakersfield to come into the valley?

HF: The first to us, yes. He purchased the ranch at probably \$1,000 down and \$500 a month.

RM: What do you think he paid for it, Button?

HF: A couple hundred thousand. I remember in 1950 my dad could have bought it for

\$100,000. And of course, he didn't have that much money. But anyway, this guy liked speed. And it's a long way to Pahrump so he decided to become a pilot. He was taking pilot's lessons down in Bakersfield and he was with his instructor, and by golly, they wrecked the darn plane and it killed him.

RM: What year would that have been, roughly?

HF: Before 1950.

RM: Did he have a family with him?

HF: Well, no. He had a mother and a sister. He didn't live here. He just would up drive in his Buick or come up and get a load of something and take it south.

RM: What was the route one would take to go over to Bakersfield at that time?

HF: Same way as you go today—Shoshone, Baker, Barstow, Tehachapi, and then north. His foreman was an interesting fellow. He was married to a Spanish lady named Carmen. She came over to the school one time—the teacher talked her into it—and brought her castanets and did her castanet thing for the kids. She said that when she was a little girl, she went with her mother and her sisters before the king and queen of Spain and they danced for them. And of course, for us, that was really something.

The foreman and his wife lived in the big house. Heber Wilson was the foreman of the Pahrump Ranch when we came here and he worked for Ray Tennant. When Ray Tennant sold it to Pete Mulhall, the Wilsons moved on. We think possibly they were from Utah and they were Mormons. He was a nice person. He had two daughters—one of them went to high school in Vegas and one of them was my age; she went to school with me in Pahrump and was smarter than me, and I didn't like that. [RM laughs] All the girls were smarter than me. But anyway, they moved on when Pete bought the place.

After Pete died, his mother and the daughter had the responsibility of that place

and they sold it to C. B. Dickey. Dickey really played a part in this valley. He had about four partners and for a few years they did the hay, grain, and cows thing. In 1950, they'd gotten tired of it or something and my dad leased the place. He put up the hay fields and he did very well. It was bloody hard work. I had just got out of the eighth grade and I worked for him. They had 100 acres of alfalfa. What Dad did—and I was a part of it—was to harvest the alfalfa. They irrigated the fields and he had to cut it, bale it, and get it out.

RM: I'll bet 100 acres in those days was a lot of alfalfa.

HF: Oh, you'd better believe it. If you get started right and the weather's right, you'll get five or six cuttings here.

RM: No kidding. About what time would you get your first cutting?

HF: Probably somewhere around the first of May because you cut the last one just before the freeze.

RM: Which would be when?

HF: Oh, the last of September.

RM: And were you baling it or stacking it?

HF: Baling it.

RM: And you were involved in that.

HF: It was all work and no play—daylight till dark, sometimes in the dark—seven days a week. But you're making hay while the sun shines.

RM: Yes, literally. What did your dad do with his hay?

HF: Half of it stayed on the ranch and half of it, we hauled off.

RM: Where did he sell it?

HF: There was a market in Vegas. When he would take the cream in, he'd also take a

load of hay.

RM: So he just did that one year? Why was it just one year?

HF: Because they plowed all the fields under and planted the cotton the next year, the winter of '51 or '52. A man by the name of Garland Embry was their foreman and he was a hay and cattle man. After the hay season was over in 1950, my brother-in-law, who worked for my dad, went right to work for them and started plowing the fields—at night. He saw the first atomic bomb go off.

RM: Oh, my God. You could see them from here?

HF: It'd light up the whole sky because they'd let them off when it was still dark.

RM: What was your brother-in-law's response? Did he know what it was?

HF: Oh, no. He came in and he was telling us, "You know, I was out there on the tractor, and all of a sudden, the whole world was light, lighter than sunlight." He could see the mountains, he could see the field, he could see everything. We thought, "That's a strange thing."

I had a room on the front porch of the house and I slept facing that way. One morning soon after that, I woke up and the whole place was lit up and you could feel a little rattle; the house would rattle.

RM: Did you know what it was by that time?

HF: Not for a while. Bobby Revert's uncle Bob Revert, who was a deputy sheriff in Beatty, used to come down to where my dad picked up the mail out on 95. One day not too long after those first two shots, Dad was out there picking up mail and met Bob at the traffic sign and he told Dad the whole story.

RM: What did you think?

HF: Oh, it was exciting.

RM: Yes. You'd been primed, hadn't you, by Hiroshima and Nagasaki? We knew what those bombs were. And to actually see one go off was really something. Now, going back to Dickey, do you know what he paid for the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: Haven't got a clue.

RM: What was his background?

HF: They were big farmers over in the San Joaquin Valley. They even owned a cotton gin.

RM: So they were wealthy.

HF: Well, they were well off. I remember he had two new Lincolns.

RM: That was rich when I was growing up. [Laughs] So you're beginning to see an influx from the Central Valley—people who see the potential here.

HF: They were big cotton farmers down in Bakersfield (actually, Arvin) and they owned a cotton gin. In 1950 people had kind of shut the place down. Soon after 1950 is when they really busted open with cotton. Dickey sent his crew over here and they plowed up all the hay fields and planted cotton on the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: As I remember, cotton would grow where alfalfa was growing but it wouldn't where alfalfa hadn't been grown.

HF: Yes. Anyway, it took a little while to catch on. But in 1950, they had just kind of shut the ranch down.

RM: Why did they shut it down?

HF: I guess cows and hay weren't making them a lot of money; and they probably didn't have anybody that wanted to come over here and work because everybody wanted to stay in Bakersfield. Starting in 1951, they decided, "Let's just plow up all the fields and plant cotton," and they did, and it did very, very well. They're the ones that sold it to

Walt Williams; I think he bought it in about 1958.

RM: Dickey wasn't here all the time, was he? He was an absentee owner like the others.

HF: Yes. He had the other big house down there; it was like brand new. They'd come up and stay a few days.

RM: Would it be the whole family?

HF: Occasionally he'd bring somebody up with him. Normally he'd come himself or with one of his partners. As I said, his foreman's name was named Garland Embry.

RM: What do you know about him?

HF: I don't know much about him. He came here, he ran the Pahrump Ranch; he was just a super nice guy.

RM: How old was he?

HF: Probably in his 40s. He wasn't married at that time and he liked cattle and was a cow man. He took care of their 600 head of cattle; that was all he did. When it became cotton, he wasn't a cotton man and he left and went up to northern Nevada or something like that. So Dickey then had another guy and his son. He had a little trouble keeping good help running the place. Leon Hughes ran it for a while.

Finally, I guess Dickey realized that he needed to get somebody up here that knew what the heck they were doing who could run it on a day-to-day basis—a foreman or something. So he moved his son-in-law up here (they actually bought a house in Vegas). It was his daughter and son-in-law, and they had a couple of girls. The son-in-law's name was Curt Meacham and he drove out here every day and ran the place and ran it really very well.

RM: What was his background?

HF: He was from Bakersfield. He grew potatoes and he'd probably worked for Dickey when he married his daughter.

RM: But he knew cotton.

HF: Oh, he knew cotton. He was kind of a tough sort of guy. I mean, he didn't put up with any B.S.; he got 105 percent out of all his workers. They grew cotton from '51 to 1958. That's when Walt Williams bought the place. Walt Williams paid him \$400,000 for the ranch.

RM: So Dickey did okay.

HF: Oh, sure.

RM: And he was probably making money on the cotton, wasn't he?

HF: Oh, you bet you—because they owned their own cotton gin.

RM: And he was trucking it to Bakersfield. I wonder why he sold out. Do you have any idea?

HF: Probably got twice what he paid for it. And like I said, his kids didn't like it up here. They were born and raised in Bakersfield; they just didn't like it.

RM: And then Walt Williams came in. He was kind of the kingpin of the cotton-growing here, wasn't he?

HF: That's right. The Pahrump Ranch had a 1,000-acre cotton allotment and they had never really put the whole thing in. So Walt Williams came in here, redid a lot of the wells, and he didn't monkey around. Walt was a wheeler-dealer. In one year he planted the whole 1,000 acres.

RM: What were they doing with the other 11,000 acres? Were they still growing cows and hay?

HF: Well, his foreman had a friend and they ran a few cows down there, but it was

nothing to do with Walt Williams. Walt Williams was a farmer, not a cow man.

RM: Were they growing anything like hay?

HF: Well, they switched over and Walt brought the hay-cubing business into this town. The cotton fields, needless to say, sort of get weak after a while.

RM: That's right; they exhaust the soil, don't they?

HF: That's right. After some years, he would take the cotton field out and plant alfalfa, and they cubed the alfalfa. He had his own cubing mill, he had his own trucks, and he hauled cubes out of here like crazy.

RM: Was he doing only alfalfa and cubes or was he also doing cotton?

HF: Both.

RM: Okay. He was probably planting alfalfa for a bit, and then put the cotton back on it—rotating.

HF: Yes. He did that for a number of years. Frank Warner was his foreman and Frank was very good; he was a good worker. Walt's the one who brought the Bracero program in. So he had all Mexicans, and that saved him some money. Frank Warner picked up Spanish—he could talk Spanish as well as they could.

RM: So Walt was using strictly Mexican labor.

HF: Oh, yes. The only white guys I know he had were his foreman and his mechanic. The mechanic's name was Virgil Bateman. He was a hard-working guy. He was smaller than me, I think, but boy, was he a worker. He could crawl right down underneath a piece of equipment and go to work on it.

RM: Who did Dickey employ? I mean, what was his source of workers?

HF: He would bring a lot of workers up from Arvin and Bakersfield. Some of them were good and some of them were worthless.

RM: Where did the workers live under Dickey and Walt Williams?

HF: Somewhere down the line, Dickey built a big bunkhouse; the old bunkhouse had burned down when Ray Thomas had it. Dickey got a couple of barracks and put them together. All the workers had rooms—like a little motel—and it had a cooking area, a big dining room and a kitchen. And the cook had her own bathroom and everything. Of course, if she had a husband, her husband would be with her.

RM: What were they paying? Do you have any idea?

HF: I haven't got a clue. When I worked there in about '51 or '52, I got 75 cents an hour.

RM: Actually not that bad, Button.

HF: It was good.

RM: I sacked groceries about that time for 42 cents an hour in Denver.

HF: And there were still some houses on the place. There was the big house the foreman lived in and another little house on down that a man and his wife and a child could live in. Then there was the other big house, which they finally moved everybody into. The big beautiful house just turned into a dump.

RM: What do you mean, everybody? Each family that would come there?

HF: Yes, like Leon and his kids; he had six or eight of them. Then across the street was another little house, and then the big bunkhouse; Williams had single Mexicans who lived in that. Down farther, there was a house at each well and the mechanic lived in one of those. And they could put a few Mexicans in the little red schoolhouse.

RM: Did any of these people who came here as workers under Dickey and Williams become permanent people in the community?

HF: Frank Warner did, but of course, he wasn't a worker, he was a boss. And the

mechanic did, and some of the Mexicans did; they turned out to be real nice people. Their kids went to school, they played sports, and so on.

RM: Are their descendants still in the area?

HF: Oh, yes.

RM: Do you have any other thoughts on the Pahrump Ranch under Dickey and Williams?

HF: Well, under Dickey it was run more like a ranch would be run, the way my dad would have run the place. I mean, it was families and they worked hard. The Ward families worked there—Tom and Sandy Ward—and they had one boy the same age as me.

RM: What was the Wards' background?

HF: They were hard-working people. They were from Arizona but they'd worked a lot on cow ranches. They used them a lot with the cows on the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: When did they come in?

HF: About 1947. They had little trucks and tractors and they came in here and did a land-clearing job on the Pahrump Ranch and they just went ahead and hired them on the ranch.

RM: Oh, so they came in for a job and just stayed.

HF: Yes. They'd leave and go back to Arizona and chase cows for a while and come back. They had the one daughter and son-in-law—the Turners. I'm sure you knew Dutch Turner.

RM: Yes, I interviewed her.

HF: She was the postmistress and he worked at the Test Site. He was a roofer by trade, floor and roofing.

RM: Speaking of the Test Site, were there Test Site people living here after 1951?

HF: They never really came in here en masse until the road went in in '63 or '64.

RM: Who were the Test Site workers here before that?

HF: Bill Mankins was hearty; he drove it every day. Some of them would drive it and stay; the Test Site had living quarters, as you know. A lot of the Utah workers and northern Nevada workers would stay there a week and then go back home. But there were a few hearty ones. There was a guy here by the name of Bill Harris, and he was a truck driver, and he'd drive it every day. But it was tough. It was rough because those tires got expensive. It would beat the hell out of your car and the tires. I know—it was my job to try to keep it smooth. Back in the early '50s they had a little thing they called an Adams road maintainer; it was a drag pulled behind a piece of equipment. They'd pay my dad \$200 to drag the road out to 95 and down to Ash Meadows and back into Pahrump. It had two blades and he pulled it with a truck. It would help but it didn't really do the greatest job.

The county would come in in the wintertime, when they couldn't work up in Tonopah, and blade that road once a year. Then along about 1952 or '53, they had a crew that would come down here. My brother-in-law, Leroy Vaughn, worked on that, and they would blade all the roads here and at Amargosa and Beatty, so they did a little better job. But even though you'd just graded the thing, tomorrow it would be as bad because it had so many big rocks in it. It was either dirt or rocks.

Now getting back to Walt Williams, he came in here and he really, really turned that ranch into a ranch. He farmed the soup out of it and he used mostly Mexican labor. He had two sons—Mark and Rick. Mark loved the ranch and he worked on it; he'd run all the tractors and everything when he was probably 12 years old. Rick was older and he

was in high school. He graduated from Gorman in Las Vegas. Walt and his wife were kind of high society around Las Vegas. Rick got appointed to the Naval Academy and was there for four years and his goal was to become an astronaut. But when he got out of the Naval Academy, they put him right in the engine room of a ship. [Laughs] So here was Rick, down learning about the engine in the engine room. Well, he did get into the air force part of the navy and he was around Corpus Christi, Texas, and he was making takeoffs and landing and he sucked a bird up and it killed him.

RM: Oh, my God.

HF: When that happened, Walt just kind of gave up. He sold the ranch to Preferred Equities.

RM: And you think that was why Walt let the ranch go?

HF: I think it was the end of it. At that time the price of cotton hadn't gone up and he wasn't making as much money on cotton, and fuel and everything else had gone up.

RM: And what year was that?

HF: It was 1969.

RM: And that was the beginning of the end for cotton in Pahrump, wasn't it?

HF: It was the beginning of the end of Pahrump as a farming area; it just took a few years.

RM: I know this was before your time, but what do you know about Leon Hughes's father's tenure at the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: All I know is what I heard. I heard that he had nothing but hard luck. He put in a bunch of hogs and they all got cholera and died. He planted cotton way down in the heavy soil and it didn't do nothing, where if he'd planted it up in his good hayfield it would have been a different story. Hard luck and bad business took him out.

RM: What if he had planted his cotton up in a hayfield? Would Pahrump's history have been speeded up or been altered?

HF: I have no idea whether cotton was a good price then.

RM: So there's the luck of the draw. Do you have any other thoughts here?

HF: Next time I'd like to do a segment on my dad and mother.

RM: Oh, absolutely.

CHAPTER TEN

RM: Okay, Button, where would you like to begin?

HF: We had considered talking about my family. My family date back quite a ways in America, and of course, my dad and mother ended up in Pahrump. On my father's mother's side, they came over from Ireland and homesteaded in Richland County, Wisconsin, which was a dairy land, in the 1800s. My great-grandfather was named Boston Borland and he was a very good businessman. He taught school, he was a surveyor, and he was a farmer. He collected a lot of land and a lot of farms. He had a large family and he ended up giving each one of the kids a farm. That got them all started and I know two of those farms that are still in the family back in Wisconsin.

My grandmother married Harry Ford. I don't have a whole lot on the Fords, but he was a different sort of a fellow. He had traveled around a little bit when he was young—he'd been out to Southern California and he'd been around. They chose not to take the farm because he didn't want to sit down in Wisconsin where the snow gets to be five feet deep and you've got to milk the cows. That just didn't fit his way of life.

RM: Do you know what year they got married, roughly?

HF: My father was born in 1902 so it'd probably have been 1901. Anyway, they chose to take money, not a farm. Even though it wasn't much money by today's standards, there was enough that Grandma had a little income and my grandfather didn't have to worry a whole lot about working.

So they traveled around. They left Wisconsin and came out to Southern California. They went down to the Lanfair Valley and he homesteaded a piece of property, which was just about like going down into Sandy Valley and homesteading a

piece of property. He did a lot of work—he built a house, a barn, he built everything, and he tilled the soil. Of course, the rains didn't come. Now, even though that property is still owned by members of my family, the government wants to get us out of there because they want to turn it into a wilderness area.

My grandfather was always looking for a place similar to Wisconsin where the grass grew green and the trees were nice but you didn't have those cold, cold winters. One time when he had four or five kids, he took a covered wagon and a team of horses and drove from Los Angeles clear up into Oregon, looking for the land of his dreams.

Well, somewhere down the line in northern California they had to stop because my grandmother was going to have a baby. My grandfather was a carpenter and he never had a problem getting a job. So my grandfather and my father and his brother, who were young boys, worked for a spell until Grandmother had the baby and the baby was big enough to travel. Then they got back in the wagon and went on up to Oregon.

When he got somewhere, I guess he looked over the mountain and he said, "Nah, this isn't what I'm looking for." So he turned around and drove the wagon all the way back home. This went on until later in his life. My dad's next younger brother went up into the foothills up out of Fresno in California, and it's just beautiful up there—it's trees, it's grass, it's everything; gets a little snow in the wintertime, rains a lot. So my grandfather found what he had been looking for all of his life. My uncle helped him and I think he ended up with 40 acres. He built his little house and he loved horses; he always had a couple of beautiful horses out back that he rode.

He had a mining claim farther up in the mountains so in the summertime when it would warm up a little, they'd get on their horses and ride up there; they had a little cabin back at the mine and they'd spend the summer up there. He ended up spending the rest of

his life happy, after spending the bulk of his life running around looking for something.

RM: What was his name?

HF: He was Harry Truman Ford and they named my dad Stanley, so they named me Harry Stanley Ford. That pretty well takes care of my grandfather's side.

Then back to my mother's side. She was a Todd and the Todds were German. Her grandfather had somehow migrated out to Southern California in about 1870. He homesteaded a piece of property in what would have been the very center of Long Beach, California—160 acres. Of course, that was God's country. But he had a fair-sized family and a plague of some kind hit Southern California and it killed his wife and most of his kids and all he had left were two boys, who I'm assuming were probably 10 or 12 years old. One was my grandfather, David Todd, and the other one was Jerry Todd, who was his brother.

My great-grandfather took his two boys and went clear up to Montana. They lived in Montana for a while and from there they migrated down into Wisconsin and he homesteaded 160 acres, which was a large farm. That's where the two boys were raised, and my grandfather, David Todd, ended up with the property and he raised his nine children on the place. The property is still in the Todd family.

My dad was born in a farmhouse in Richland County, Wisconsin, in Bloom City Township in 1902. My mother was born at home in 1904 in Richland County, in Bloom City Township. That's where she grew up, on this beautiful farm. The Todds were sort of a cut above. They were hard workers, they were good farmers, and my grandfather had sheep and he grew tobacco and pigs and everything imaginable and he did very, very well.

When my mother got out of school, she was going to be a schoolteacher; she

graduated from the Richland Center or something normal school. She was ready to start teaching school and when father came galloping by, they got married. In those days, you could rent a farm. My dad milked cows and made cheese and everything but had some of his dad's blood in him and after a couple of years of milking cows in the wintertime and hauling milk with bobsleds to the cheese factories and all, he decided he'd had enough of that. In 1925, on July 4, my mother and dad and one little girl, who was probably about a year and a half old, got in a Model T Ford and took off for Southern California. They drove clear across the country; they said most of the roads were gravel. It took them a while; he'd have to stop and work a little here and there.

They ended up down on the coast in Southern California between Los Angeles and San Diego in the little town of Fallbrook; they grow a lot of avocados and that sort of thing there. They lived there for a while and there was plenty of work. He got a truck because my dad always liked to work for himself and he started hauling around Los Angeles. And there was a lot of hauling; there were a lot of orchards and he hauled in and out of the orchards and he hauled hay and he hauled out of Bakersfield; he hauled everywhere. He had three trucks and a pretty doggone good business. He was doing very well with his hauling, and then came the Depression and he lost everything. So he didn't have trucks, he didn't have anything; he did a lot of piecework here and there.

RM: What do you mean by piecework—anything he could get?

HF: Just odd jobs, anything that came up. Well, he always wanted to have a little place of his own so he went out by Needles, California, back up in the mountains—in those days, it was sort of squatter's rights; you could do what you wanted. He found a place he liked and he built a little house. It was a livable building and he ran some cattle up there. He was up in the mountains and he had built a little house down in Needles and my

mother and the kids lived down there because that's where the schools were. And she worked some; she worked in the motels.

They were sort of fixed up and then the Second World War broke out. When the Second World War broke out, the whole world changed. He had five kids and he had a choice—he could go into the military or go to work on one of the government bases. In the Yermo-Barstow area, they had three places—an army, navy, and marine base. So we moved to Yermo and he bought a decent little place there.

RM: He couldn't make it with the cattle anymore?

HF: No, the government said he had to either go to work for the military or he had to go in the army. Anyway, while we were in Yermo he made good money. Do you remember the old kitchen matchboxes? They were about so big. They had that thing just full of money—that was their bank.

So he did that for a while and he found out that if he would farm, he didn't have to work on the bases anymore. And by this time he had a truck. Of course, gas was rationed, but if you had something you wanted to haul, you would give him a few ration stamps for gasoline. And he picked up some work with his truck, which he loved to do. The man would break his back working, but he didn't necessarily like to have somebody telling him what to do.

RM: Do you remember what kind of truck it was?

HF: It was a 1931 Chevrolet. He bought the first six-cylinder Chevrolet to come into the Los Angeles area because they were all four-cylinder before that.

RM: So he bought that right before the Depression got bad, when he was still up in the hills?

HF: Yes. And he lost that truck. It had three axles—it was a big truck. So he had a

pocketful of money and he had the little place and the kids were all going to school. In my opinion, he should have never, ever have left down there. There was work because all of the young men were in the service and all that was left was guys like him.

But he decided that Pahrump looked pretty doggone good because the water just flowed out of the ground and land was cheap. And during the Second World War, if people found out you were a German, they kind of stuck their nose up about it so I guess my mother had had a few insults along the way. She always had a cow and chickens and wherever we lived, she would sell milk, cream, butter, eggs, and so forth. Now, this was all bootleg black market. You've got to remember, you had to have stamps. She did this around Yermo, and here's this German woman out there bootlegging—like selling bad whiskey. [Chuckles] Anyway, they decided to move up here. So my dad and another fellow partnered up and they came up and bought 100 acres on what's today the Basin Ranch.

RM: Describe the location of the Basin Ranch.

HF: It's Basin Road; it would be a half-mile west of what's today Highway 160. It was on the north side. It was a nice piece of property. Later, Bob Ruud farmed it and farmed it and farmed it. But they drilled a well and the well didn't produce adequately to farm the property so that was sort of a failure. My dad had already started building a house out of railroad ties and he had moved his family up here and relocated, dislocated them.

At that particular time the son and daughter-in-law of the people who had the Raycraft place—they had a baby girl—decided they didn't want to live in Pahrump anymore. So Dad worked out a deal with the Raycrafts and we moved over there. That was a godsend because here was this big, beautiful white house and a going place—it had some cows and horses and Dad always had his cows and his horses. So we moved there.

Also, the Raycrafts' son had the contract to haul the mail. He told Dad, "I'll give you that." [Laughs] It wasn't quite that simple, but Dad ended up with that, too. We moved onto the Raycraft place and he had the mail contract, which put food on the table. So we were pretty well fixed up.

The only thing was, my sister was in high school and of course, there's no high school for miles around. So they sent her down to live with my other sister at Needles and she finished up her third year and then came back. My sister's husband down at Needles was in the army. About that time he got out of the army and my sister in high school just didn't fit in down there. She was a senior; she was going to be 17. So my dad said, "I'll rent you a little cabin over in Death Valley Junction." He did that and she finished her senior year at Death Valley Junction, as I told you before.

RM: Who did he purchase the Basin Ranch property from?

HF: I think that was part of the Van Horn property.

RM: Do you recall what he paid for it?

HF: I think very little.

RM: Can you describe what the property looked like when you guys moved off it?

HF: It was just brush and there were a few little sand hills up in the corner. It was desert land.

RM: Was there any water on it?

HF: No. They drilled and got a little well that flowed about 100 gallons a minute. That would irrigate about ten acres and you could never make a living out of ten acres.

RM: What became of that property?

HF: It sold and somebody else had it for a while and did nothing with it. Finally Jack Water and Cy Blagg bought it and a bunch of property around it—probably 500 or 600

acres. Now they had a big ranch and they drilled and got some good wells farther to the north. So they turned it into a real ranch. Bob Ruud bought the thing in about '59, and he paid \$100 an acre for it.

RM: Was that a lot of money then?

HF: It was a good price for the guy that sold it.

RM: What do you think your dad got for it when he sold it?

HF: I think he was a working partner and the other guy put the money up.

RM: Who was the other guy?

HF: His name was George Fink. He was older and his wife had lots of money; she had oil wells down around Bakersfield some place.

RM: What's the history of the Raycraft Ranch?

HF: The Raycraft property originally was right in the middle of what became the Pahrump Ranch. There was this little place which had been Chief Tecopa's old place and it had a lot of trees and springs and grass and everything. Not a lot of water, but it had water. Brougner, who was the sheriff of Nye County and also the assessor, made a deal with the owners of the Pahrump Ranch to make a trade. He traded the 640 acres he had in the middle of the Pahrump Ranch for the 640 acres that ended up the Raycraft.

RM: On which side of the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: It bordered it on the north. Everybody was happy as could be because it was a real nice little place. Ida, who was Brougner's daughter, married a man by the name of Jim Raycraft. They came down here and that was when the Johnnie Mine had sort of folded up. Jim went up to Johnnie Town with a team and wagons and hauled down loads and loads and loads of lumber and built the big white house under all the trees.

RM: And then your dad acquired that from him?

HF: Yes, he leased it from him and paid him so much. Dad milked cows and he had pigs and so any profit from the place, he'd have to divide it up with the owner. It worked very well; we were there seven years.

RM: But your dad did not own it?

HF: He never owned the property. After we left they sold it, I think, for \$60,000, and that was a fortune.

RM: And when did you leave?

HF: We left in 1952. The Raycrafts came down and they were going to farm it. Well, they were city people and farming sounded good but they were probably here a year or two; they sold it to Larry and Betty Bolling.

RM: And what was the Bollings' story?

HF: They came out of Southern California. Larry's dad had a lot of money and Betty's parents had some money, and they helped them buy the place. Larry was not much of a farmer but they had a lot of fun.

RM: Raycraft—what was his story?

HF: The Raycraft family came by wagon from St. Louis, Missouri, or somewhere like that, up the Carson Valley to Genoa, and they did very well there. They were in communications. They brought the first telegraph wires into the state of Nevada. Then they had a hotel and a bar. If you go to the museum up there, they've given a whole room to the Raycraft family. Then the Raycrafts migrated south. I can't remember the name, but Joni Eastley's house in Tonopah was built by Raycraft. In fact, Jim Raycraft, I think, helped his uncle build the place. The Raycraft up there was a banker. Joni ended up with it and it's quite a house—it's on the national registry. As you know, Joni is a Nye County Commissioner.

Jim Raycraft came here in probably the '20s or '30s; he was here in the '30s. He had two girls and a boy. When his kids got to the point that they should move on and go to school somewhere else, they moved to Oakland, California, and he got a job with probably AT&T, whatever the phone company was in those days. He started out as a lineman and when he retired, he was one of the office people; so he did very well.

RM: And your parents acquired the Raycraft Ranch.

HF: Well, they leased it; they leased the entire ranch. We moved on there in 1944, in the fall, and moved off in December of 1952.

RM: And meanwhile, your sister was going to school in Death Valley Junction. How did that work?

HF: There was a girl who was actually a junior, but she was a big girl, and she lived down in Death Valley. Even though Death Valley is only 35 miles away, she would have to ride the bus every morning and that sort of thing. So she and my sister Betty worked out some kind of a deal. The two girls lived there and went to school and made out very, very well. They graduated in 1946 and they were the first graduates in the Death Valley Unified High School. They honored them some years back for being the first.

RM: How interesting. But in 1952 your father and mother moved out of the Raycraft place. What was their thinking?

HF: Well, so many times a good thing comes to an end. The Raycrafts were retiring and they kind of wanted to move down on the place and my dad knew that it would never work with them sitting up on the hill watching him work; it just never would have worked.

RM: You'd have to give up the house, right?

HF: No, he had built them a little tie house, which is at the museum now. They liked

to come down every fall—they loved it down here in October.

RM: Oh, I didn't realize there was another house on the Raycraft property.

HF: Yes. He built it in 1947; it was there for 50 years. By 1997, the place was falling down; they'd let it go. With the help of my wife, we took that building down, brought it over here, and put it back up. In the rafters up on the top I wrote, "Built by Stanley Ford in 1947. Moved and built by Harry Ford in 1997."

RM: How nice. Where was the house located in relation to the white house?

HF: Try to visualize the main road from the Pahrump Ranch that went down to Pop Buol's place, which was the store and the post office and all that sort of thing in years gone by. The road went right down in front of the house back up 100 feet or so, then went on down to Pop Buol's. The Raycraft place was all sub-irrigated and there were ponds and springs and everything. The big house sat under the trees and it had grass all around it—it was just beautiful. There was a pond in front and up on the hill they built this little tie house. That was bad because this was all sub-irrigated—underneath, it was all water. When they put the concrete slab down with the house made out of railroad ties, over the years it started settling. That's why it was falling down.

RM: How far apart were the houses?

HF: A couple of hundred feet.

RM: And how far was it to Pop Buol's?

HF: You had to go down the hill and then into his place—probably half as far as from here to the highway. From here to Basin. Maybe a short quarter mile.

RM: How far was it to the headquarters, or whatever, of the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: We called it a mile; it was probably closer to three-quarters of a mile. We walked it every day.

RM: Just to orient ourselves, where was the tie house in relation to the white house?

HF: It was due north.

RM: And then where was Pop Buol's in relation to the Raycraft house?

HF: Where the Raycraft house was, there was a little hill. The tie house was up on the little hill and the road was out here. You'd go down the hill and come to Pop's gate and go through his gate.

RM: How far was it to the Pahrump gate from the Raycraft?

HF: I'd say about three quarters of a mile. When we moved here and the Pahrump Ranch was going full swing, the bunkhouse was a big two-story building and the men slept in it and ate in it and the whole shot. Every morning at 6:00 they rang the bell; every noon at 12:00 they rang the bell—they'd ring it at 15 minutes till and on the hour. And we could hear that bell; my dad would set his watch by it.

In 1952 we had planted cotton on the Raycraft place and it was a first for the place. It was old, black, sub-irrigated soil that had been planted in everything in the world. We plowed it up, turned it upside-down, and planted cotton. Well, this cotton went through the ceiling. In those days they didn't use defoliant and they had to wait till the freezes. After the frost, they came in and picked the cotton and my dad probably made more money that year than he did the other seven years he was there because the crop was so good.

But by this time Jim and Ida Raycraft had moved down there and they watched the cotton get picked. Then my dad decided, "Well, I'm out of there." The Raycrafts were kind of happy because they looked at that cotton crop and said, "Hey, we could do that ourselves." They didn't realize how much work went into it.

So we moved; Dad had bought some property out on the west side. You've got to

sort of understand my dad—he could do a little bit of anything and not a whole lot of everything. But he had acquired a drill rig and he drilled wells. And of course, he hauled the mail and did farming and helped his neighbors too much; he did a little bit of everything. We had a little cabin temporarily because he had already made a deal with the man who owned the place, and he was building this house brand spanking new.

RM: The house you're living in now.

HF: Right. He told my dad and mother, "If you folks will move over there and take care of the place," because the well here didn't turn out very well. We could farm up to 20 acres if we really tried. With my dad drilling a few wells and hauling the mail and farming, he could make a living. The house wouldn't be done until in the spring, so in December we moved out to this little old cabin. Actually, we had the best time out there because we were living in a little box. Instead of milking 20 cows, all we had was one milk cow to take care of. We lived there till March of 1953 and we moved into this place, which was brand spanking new. My mother thought she had died and gone to heaven.

RM: Where was the cabin?

HF: It was on the corner of Charleston Park Avenue, which is about two or three miles west of here, and David Street. And my dad owned the property clear down to Leslie. He had 80 acres there and another 80 acres that went over Leslie and on down to . . . I can't remember the name of that street.

RM: Did he keep those acres or did he sell them off?

HF: He kept the bulk of the main place forever because when he died he had five kids and each one got ten acres, and we sold one. He had 60 acres of that particular property left. He had divided the other 80 acres into five-acre lots and the Test Site workers had bought them. That put food on the table. He did very well.

RM: What has become of that property now?

HF: The bottom piece is subdivided. Nothing been done with the piece that I have, and there's a piece or two that kind of have nothing—a couple of businesses and that's it.

RM: What should we call this place—for the sake of discussion?

HF: The man who owned it was Emerson Root, and he was from McFarland, California. It was always the Root place, but the minute we got here it was the Ford place

RM: Why was Root building a nice house here if he was going to leave?

HF: It's the same story that happened to my dad. He went 600 feet deep and spent a lot of money on a well, and he intended to get a good irrigation well and farm 80 acres (he actually had 160). But the well never came back so he basically had a dead horse.

RM: And he was building that nice house, betting on the outcome? Does that happen a lot in the valley—people had big ideas but the water didn't prove up?

HF: I would say it happened some, but later on you got to know where the water was. As you went farther out, the wells started getting better. They had a dead hole right in the middle of the valley, right where we're sitting. Then the farther you go north, the bigger the wells get.

RM: How about to the west—do they get better?

HF: West is just mediocre. South is the heart of the water and there is no east; that's up on the alluvial fan. Anything on the other side of 160 is where the main wells came from. From here to the south, that's where the big wells came from.

RM: If you went due east from here, what would you get?

HF: Well, the town went due east of here a half a mile and drilled their well and they've got a nice well.

RM: So you're in a weak zone here. Can you explain that?

HF: The water comes down like this and we happen to be here.

RM: You've showing me the fingers of a hand. Well, when the Roots didn't get the well they wanted, did they drill another well?

HF: They had probably exhausted their finances by then.

RM: What did it cost to drill a well per foot in those days, do you think?

HF: My dad used to drill the little wells for a buck a foot, and then he did it for \$1.25 a foot. Now it probably costs you \$20, \$30, maybe more.

RM: Oh, my lord. How many feet can you drill a day?

HF: It all depended. After he got down a little deeper, if he could make 10 or 20 feet a day, that was good. With today's rigs, they're drilling wells, say, 150 feet deep, and they can drill it and pack up and be gone by Sunday. They auger them out in a day.

RM: Did your dad work on augers?

HF: His was a sputter; now they're all augers. I don't think there's a sputter left in the country; everything is what they call rotary rigs.

RM: Where did he learn the drilling game?

HF: When they drilled the well over here on the first piece of property he and Mr. Fink had ordered together, my dad would go over and help the guy—you always can use help on a well rig. He just took a liking to it. I never cared that much for it. I never got into the drilling much, although I did end up with a license. But he did a lot of pump work. Boy, you talk about back-breaking, chilling work. You're pulling, say, a six- or eight-inch pump. You've got a piece of pipe on the end of your wrench that's ten or 12 feet long, and you're pushing that thing as hard as you can and beating on the pipe with a hammer to get it to break loose so that you can unscrew it to get the pump out of the ground. Then, of course, you have to put it back in. Everything is heavy lifting.

Nowadays they don't do it like that; their rig lifts everything.

RM: That does sound tough. Okay, so they moved onto this place.

HF: When Dad moved here, and when Mr. Root bought the property and moved here, people weren't pumping yet. You either got a nice artesian well or you got nothing because they hadn't yet brought in the big diesel engines. They started bringing the big pumps in in the '50s. Walter Williams was probably one of the first, and he had good artesian wells. He would pump water out of those things like you wouldn't believe.

RM: And of course, the artesian water was a declining situation. It didn't last forever.

HF: Yes, that was sort of the end. But there's still a lot of water in this valley because they haven't been pumping for 20 years.

RM: Is the water table coming back?

HF: Well, they lie to you. They say with the domestic wells you're pumping just as much, but that's a joke. If you own a piece of land in the state of Nevada it's your God-given right to have a well. Now, that well entitles you to 1,800 gallons per day to run your household, have a little garden, feed and water the horse and cow. That's what everything is calculated on so there could be 1,000 houses, all using 1,800 gallons. Well, my wife and I don't use 1,800 gallons a week. Of course, the more kids you have, the more water you use. But they use that 1,800 gallons figure and oh, this valley's really getting drafty. It's all a bunch of baloney.

RM: Interesting. So in practice, the water table is not dropping—is that what you're saying?

HF: Down in the south end of the valley, they had these big, good artesian wells and they had pumped and pumped and pumped them so they didn't flow anymore by the '70s, roughly—a little longer than that. But 30 years later, these artesian wells are coming

back. So does that tell you the water table's coming on?

RM: Sure. Just as an aside, do you think the Pahrump Spring will flow again?

HF: They've covered it up but some of their wells might. In fact, the water's coming up in some of their lower wells.

RM: Very interesting. Now, your family moved into this house when?

HF: March of 1953.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RM: Okay, let's talk about the other people who were coming in and moving around in the valley during this period.

HF: The Hafens had moved here in 1951, and that was sort of when people started coming in. The Bradys had moved here, the Simkins, the Shurtliffs, the Blossers. People were starting to come in and have family farms; they didn't hire half-a-dozen laborers who were Mexicans, they would maybe hire a man if they needed one, basically. In 1953, they were starting to grow more cotton and you could say that's when farming really started picking up.

RM: Who else was moving in besides them—any laborers or people we should mention for the growth of the valley?

HF: There was always a well-driller or two that would come and go and I can't begin to think of the names of some of the workers that came and then left. As I told you, when Walt Williams came in 1958, '59, he brought in the Bracero labor and then basically everybody went to Mexican laborers. A lot of them, like the Pallans, are still here; their kids married and had kids. They were good people and good athletes in school.

RM: Let's go up to '58—the point where Walt Williams moved here. Who were the people who moved in and the businesses and so on?

HF: I've told you about the Pahrump Trading Post, Frank and Katie's store, which then was turned into the Dodge's Market—that was your shopping. You had a number of bars. The first bar that was built after they shut the one down in the Pahrump Trading Post belonged to a man by the name of Dan Murphy. He had a partner—his name was Liam and I can't come up with another name. They built a little bar about a mile in from

the California line. That was good because it was out of the valley. It was illegal to sell Indians liquor so they could come over from Shoshone in California and didn't have to come in and booze up at Murphy's Bar. Then it was sold to a man by the name of Jim Cruice. That bar was good to me. As I told you, I played my guitar and made good money. As bars go, it was a good little bar—I mean, there weren't a lot of fights and everything; he kept good control.

A fellow named Rusty Horgan was quite a patron of the bar. He owned some property right in the heart of town—on what is today 372 and East Street. He got a partner and this partner was a great, big hard-working guy and he could go out and hustle everything. He tore down army barracks from somewhere and hauled them in—they go up pretty fast. They built a little bar called H&H for Harris and Horgan. It was run as well as you could run a bar. I mean, there were no monkey shines in that bar. And they were good for us—we played in that and made good money.

RM: Where would that bar be today?

HF: It was right on East Street—if you looked out the window, you'd look right into the cemetery—back off of 372. So you had two bars, the Jim Cruice bar and the H&H Bar. Well, Jim Cruice had a son who'd been a fireman up in Seattle or somewhere. He retired down here and he'd saved a few dollars and he ended up with his dad's bar, which he sold. He decided he'd build a first class bar up here right on the corner of 372 and East Street so he bought the H&H Bar, which gave him a business and a liquor license. He ran it and then he built the Cotton Pickin' Saloon and he did a super job. Doby Doc had a bar that had come around the Horn into San Francisco—they loaded it on a wagon and hauled it from San Francisco up into northern Nevada. It was just beautiful.

Cruice's son opened that up and it was going to be very good. But he owned the

bar beside it so he had two bars—the Cotton Pickin’ was brand new and the H&H, which was an old piece of junk. Well, one night the H&H bar went up in flames so that was a bit suspicious; he drew the insurance on it and everything. The sheriff’s office went to work on it because Larry and Betty Bolling were spending the night in the Cotton Pickin’ Saloon the night of the fire and they looked out the window and saw two guys take a can of gas onto the front porch and throw it. Rather than keep their mouth shut and write it up as something that happened, they told the sheriff. Well, actually I think Larry Bolling was the sheriff.

So the owner had a problem. Well, he played a lot of golf with Bill Beko and by the time they got it straightened, they told him he could no longer run the bar, which was a sad thing because he built that bar. [Laughter] They worked out some kind of a deal that he didn’t go to jail and I doubt if he paid a fine. They didn’t want a guy who would burn one bar down to be running another bar. Because a liquor license is a business license.

Anyway, there was a fellow here named Joe Heileger who had worked with Doby Doc. Jim Cruice made a deal with Joe Heileger to come and operate the Cotton Pickin’ Saloon. They did, and they ran it as a decent business establishment. By then I was married and had a daughter so I never spent much time in the Cotton Pickin’ Saloon.

They ran it for a number of years and somewhere down the line, I guess everybody forgot about Jim burning the place down, so they decided that he could run the bar. Joe Heileger, who I guess had originally named it the Cotton Pickin’ Saloon, owned some property just down the street, which today is Irene’s—it was a nice building. He moved down the street about three houses and opened up the Cotton Pickin’ Saloon there because it was his name. Jim Cruice tried to run his bar that had been the original Cotton Pickin’ Saloon; it was called Cruice’s Bar. And of course, Joe and his wife had been such

good people that all the customers followed them wherever they went. So Jim had a nice little building and no customers. He ended up selling it and it became a restaurant and things.

RM: What year would this have been, do you think?

HF: My daughter and I would go up and get the paper and watch them build the thing, and she was probably about three years old. That would have been in about '61 or '62.

RM: Okay, let's go back to when Walt Williams came in 1958.

HF: Pahrump at that time would've been a community made up of families and family farms. There were probably a dozen family farms. That meant that the family basically did all the work and would pick up a hired hand during harvest time and whenever they needed some help. They all had kids and the kids went to school. Of course, we had a good road to Las Vegas. We didn't have one out the other direction until '64.

RM: You mean up to Highway 95?

HF: Yes. And the Test Site workers hadn't moved in here yet because the road was so bad. So the families would shop at Frank and Katie's and then later Dodge's Market. And of course everybody had to have a good car. Generally every one or two weeks, you'd go to Vegas and load up with everything. In Vegas at that time all you had was the big Safeway store, which was out on about 15th and Charleston. That was really the only place to shop in Vegas unless you wanted to go to some little Joe's Market or something. I remember there was a place in there called E Lites Meats. It was cheap and they would cut a steak like this.

RM: An inch thick and ten inches across?

HF: People would go to E Lites and my goodness, they'd bring home 20, 30 pounds of meat. It was good meat, but it was kind of funny—I always accused them of putting

formaldehyde in it—everybody could eat that meat but me; I'd eat it and it was just like I had ptomaine poisoning.

RM: How strange. And other meat didn't bother you?

HF: No, just the meat from that market. It was all beautiful red meat. It was right on Main Street, just north of Charleston maybe a half a mile. We'd go into Vegas for our shopping on a Friday night, God Save the Queen. The place would be buzzing and we were buzzing right alongside it. Of course they'd take our checks. You could buy just about everything. The Safeway was right by the Country Steer and Rogers Theater was just across the street.

RM: Was it at Maryland Parkway and Charleston?

HF: Yes, and right beside Safeway there was a big chain drug store so we could get everything we needed.

RM: And Maryland Parkway was the south end of Vegas in those days, wasn't it?

HF: Right. Anyway, that's what Pahrump was—a family community with family farms and the kids all went to school.

RM: Talk about some of the families we haven't mentioned yet.

HF: About the time we got married, in '58, Bob and Jacque Ruud had just moved in. They had two kids, Rick and Joyce. As I told you, they lived out at the Dollar Ranch for a while and then they moved over here and lived in a trailer just across Basin. He had his shop out back and his corrals. They were good people. They were our neighbors and we didn't bother them, they didn't bother us.

RM: Talk about the Dollar Ranch.

HF: It was Dawson and Mike Stever, and that's where the dollar sign came from.

RM: You're drawing an S over a D and it looks like a dollar.

HF: Right; my sister told me that. I always thought it was a joke because actually the farm was a dead horse.

RM: Where did Dawson and Stever come from?

HF: Oh, everybody came from over in the San Joaquin Valley. Anyway, Ruud leased the place when he first moved in here and he grew seed alfalfa. He had some of the most beautiful seed alfalfa but apparently it wasn't very productive.

RM: Where was the Dollar Ranch?

HF: If you went by Simkins (that's where the airport is) and kept going out 160 and you'd come to Harris Farm Road. That was actually the south border of the Dollar Ranch.

RM: Was it big?

HF: It was a big ranch. I don't know how many acres. Probably 1,000. Maybe 600, 800.

RM: Do you know anything else about the people who started the Dollar?

HF: No, other than they had a good well and they had good land. But apparently they didn't have a good heart to come in and work the darn thing and spend some money on it. They had a number of leases on it and they never did get it off the ground.

RM: Who did they acquire it from?

HF: That was Ray Van Horn's personal property. It's kind of interesting because there are a couple of great big old athel trees up there that were planted by Ray Van Horn back in the early, early '40s. I hate athel trees, but they're out there.

RM: And what's there now?

HF: It's all been subdivided. Calvada tried but nothing ever happened, just like the Brady farm.

RM: Now, where was the Brady Ranch?

HF: Everything was on 160. They were back this way about a half a mile from Simkins; they bordered Simkins. When you get to Simkins Road, that was Simkins Ranch.

RM: Going north on 160, where was Brady's ranch? What would be the first street you would hit it?

HF: You would hit Bell Vista and then go on out another half a mile or so and it would be Brady's. Their well was on the east side of 160, and their houses and all their farming operations.

RM: And these were all family operations? What other family operations were there in the valley?

HF: You had Blosser as you were coming back in. He came in here and built a little house. He had a wife and four kids, I think. He was a super farmer. He was a hard-working man and he grew hay and cotton, whatever needed to be grown at that time. He had a good well. It flowed probably 500, 600 gallons and then he put a pump in it and it pumped like crazy.

RM: Where was Blosser if you're going out 160?

HF: Right on Blosser Ranch Road. He ran from 160 clear down to Leslie and from Leslie on down another half a mile or so.

RM: What was his land part of?

HF: I'm sure that was all originally part of Van Horn's property.

RM: So all of these ranches are coming out of Van Horn?

HF: I would say the vast majority of them.

RM: Where were they getting the money to do this? Did they have backers or family help?

HF: I think sometimes they wondered about that. There were loans available to farmers, and that's what actually destroyed them—there was too much money available. Guys like Hafen and the Ruuds borrowed their ears off and then when they were able to sell, they had to pay back all those loans. There were 30- or 40-year loans.

RM: Is it fair to talk about an era of family farms?

HF: I would say that it was an era of family farms, probably starting after 1950, because basically everything started after 1950 when Leon Hughes discovered cotton could grow in Pahrump. It ran till 1958 and it became a whole new ball game when Walt Williams came.

RM: What happened to the family farms after Walt Williams came in and got established?

HF: They were still family farms, but they hired Mexicans instead of families.

RM: Why?

HF: No. 1, they worked hard. No. 2, they didn't require much housing.

RM: But why would they go to Mexican labor when they had the families?

HF: They all were getting bigger, expanding and growing more cotton and more of this and more of that. And of course you've got to remember, if you're doing pretty well, pretty soon you decide, "Why should I get out here and work my head off when I can hire Mexicans and be able to do it for a buck and a half an hour?" And that happened to a lot of them, I'm sure; I heard talk around the school.

RM: Can you think of other family farms during this period?

HF: As I said, to start out, they were all family farms. Dorothy Dorothy was a family farm. And then you come on up and you've got the Simkins and the Bradys. Then you get down below and the Fowlers were back off the road about a mile or so. They had a

nice big ranch down there; it was a family farm. And then as you came on up, there was Pechstein. Pechstein had all the opportunity in the world but nobody ever got in there—you've got to have somebody doing the work that can manage the place. Pechstein leased it another time but on a lease, you know, they just pick the fruit and run; I mean, they don't give a hoot about it.

RM: So you've got owners and you've got leasers.

HF: Right. The Dollar Ranch and the Pechstein Ranch were leasers and they didn't do real well. Then you come on up and you have the Ruuds and that was basically a family operation; later on he hired a bunch of Mexicans. And then ours. Ours could never have been called much of a farm. We farmed, but we all worked out doing something else. But when you head on south, you really get into the family farms, because when Elmer Bowman came out here, his idea was to set up kind of a little family colony.

RM: All basically Mormons, right?

HF: Yes. He had two sons, Melvin and Murton, on the big farm and they worked on the place. When they got married they built houses and still worked on the farm—it was part of the family. He had a daughter named Mary and her husband was Lyle Christiansen. He had an airplane and he did crop dusting on the side but he also farmed. His daughter Imogene was married to Len Andersen and they were a super family farm because Len just worked hard. So that gives you Elmer, two boys, and two daughters—basically five families running the big farm.

RM: The big Manse Ranch?

HF: Right. Next to that you had another one of Elmer Bowman's daughters, Kenna Lee Frehner. Her husband had the next place and it was a good farm; he farmed it and his dad was kind of his partner. They grew watermelons. Oh, dear God in heaven, they grew

truckloads of watermelons and they were very, very good. After you left Arlen Frehner's, you went to Perry Bowman and that was a good family farm, too. He ran the thing and he got some help when he needed it and then his two boys got older and the one, Gary, still runs the farm. He's running it now for his uncle.

From Perry on down, you've got Tim Hafen—it was Hafen and then Hafen's wife's sister. They'd come out and they were partners and so you had two families running that place. They worked there forever. They finally sold out and Tim bought out Arlen Frehner's place, so Tim had two farms with Perry in the middle. That was all family run.

And they all lived the same way—they sent their kids to school, they bought what groceries they needed at a local little market and they all got in their nice big cars and drove to Vegas and went shopping. The wives usually did that in the daytime. The men had parts and stuff to get so they'd sometimes go, too.

RM: Part of my sense of Pahrump history and its modern outcome is that the people who came in during that era and stuck it out did pretty well because of land values. Is that fair to say?

HF: They did great on that but it took a number of years—clear till the '70s. So you're talking a good 20-year span.

RM: If they hung in 20 years, then the land started going up. Did the land values go up during those 20 years?

HF: They went up some. Like the land out here in the flats—it started out at \$495 an acre and then it went up \$500, \$600, \$700. When it got to \$1,000 I thought, "Oh, my God, \$1,000 an acre for this stuff." It kind of hung there for a while and then it went on up to \$3,000, \$4,000, \$5,000. But now, property has gone back down.

RM: When did it get up to \$1,000?

HF: When we got married in '58 it was \$995, so I'd say ten years. We subdivided in the '90s. To give you an example, in 1994, I donated a top-notch piece of property on Basin to the museum and I had to have it appraised so I could take it off my income tax. It was appraised at \$30,000 for 1.8 acres and that was a good price. The next one that I donated, in say 2000, was on the same lot only it wasn't up on the pavement. I had it appraised and it was \$180,000 for two acres.

RM: Was that typical or was it higher because of the special location?

HF: It was a special location; it was considered commercial. But all land went crazy.

RM: I recall in about '85 or maybe even as late as '90, you could get 35 acres in Pahrump for \$30,000, \$35,000?

HF: I believe so. You could do that today, darn near. Land is way cheaper today. You can buy a whole house for under \$100,000. My brother-in-law and his wife just bought a one-bedroom duplex right on Calvada, so to speak, for \$68,000.

RM: Did that go up to over \$100,000, \$200,000? Or have I got a faulty memory?

HF: The highest I know of was around \$90,000 and that was over in Calvada. Now, I bought some land from my sister. I had to have it because we had this subdivision down here and we got shafted by the sewer and water and so they stopped our subdivision. When you've got a lot of money invested in something you can't just stop it so I went and bought some property from my sister. I paid her about \$40,000 per one-acre lot because I needed them to build some houses on it for the people who had been promised that they could come into this one.

I raised the price to \$60,000 for a lot and that was a bargain because everybody else was getting \$80,000. I was trying to put together something that people who didn't

have that much money could afford to buy, and I did that. But the investors come in and bought them all so the poor people got nothing.

RM: What a shame. What are those lots going for now?

HF: You can buy a house and home now for about what I sold it for.

RM: Why is it that 35 acres is worth \$100,000 but a lot is worth \$80,000 or \$40,000?

HF: It's just that way. When my wife and I bought this in 1958 we paid \$50 an acre. We bought a lot up by the Cotton Pickin' Saloon at the same time and paid \$125 and we made a lot of money on that.

RM: That's interesting. So Pahrump, for about a ten-year period, went through a family farm period.

HF: That is correct. And it was a nice community. Everybody knew their neighbor. "Hello, how are you today? How's the wife and kids?" My wife and I were real active in the PTA and our PTA meetings would have a lot of folks that were interested. She and I would put on carnivals and this sort of thing for Halloween and so on and a lot of people would come in and help—you know, peel and sort and bag. It was just a darn nice community.

Okay, now let's go back—we went through the Ruuds. Jacque Ruud had a brother named Frank Warner and Frank Warner had three little girls and he moved to Pahrump. He went to work out at Blosser's and he sort of was the ramrod; then Walt Williams offered him the foreman job at the Pahrump Ranch so he went to work there. Williams really treated him well. All during the Williams era where he developed and enlarged the ranch and everything, Frank was actually at the steering wheel when Walt wasn't there.

RM: Frank lived with his family on the Pahrump Ranch, didn't he?

HF: Oh sure. Carol and Frank had three girls and then they had two boys.

RM: And again, they came out of the San Joaquin Valley. Talk about the kin connections moving in here. There was a Moapa Valley connection and it was kinship based and there were kin coming out of the San Joaquin Valley.

HF: It's just like us. About the time we were going to move from the Raycraft place in 1952, my sister Mary and her husband Leroy Vaughn lived down in Colton, California; he was an electrician for the railroad. When he got out of the service he had bought one of those G.I. houses and he had a good job, he had everything in the world, and he decided that he didn't like it. So he talked to my dad. He said, "I want to come out and farm your piece of property down there." Well, we knew that was a joke because you couldn't make a living in a small operation.

Dad said, "Sure." They came out here and built a nice house, which my dad ended up living in later. Leroy tried to farm for a while, but he was an electrician. He got a job right away down at Elmer Bowman's—they were building their dairy farm and he did all the electrical work there. About that time a job came up with the Nye County Road Department so he took that and it was a good job.

About that time he met up with a guy named Bill Harris who ran the business that distributed fuel in Pahrump and Ash Meadows and Shoshone and so on for the Reverts. Harris wanted to move; they wanted to go back to the San Joaquin. My brother-in-law said, "Sure;" he always was a "sure" guy. So he went to work for the Reverts distributing oil and it was a great job. He would go to work in the morning, fill his truck, drive to Shoshone, drive to one of the ranches in Pahrump, wherever. All he did was deliver fuel.

Then the Reverts came to him in 1955 and said, "We want to build a gas station up here on the corner if you want the gas station."

"Sure. I'll do it. My wife will run it."

They went down to L.A. and bought a used station and brought it up. They were with Union Oil Company. So he and his wife and all of us kids, teenage boys, would go up and help him run the gas station. Well, in 1955 the road didn't really go to anywhere—it went to Vegas and back. He said one day he never sold a drop of gasoline. It just wasn't a busy place. Anyway, about that time they started paving the road to Shoshone from the corner up here at 160 out to the state line; the state line had a little old asphalt road. That gave his business a shot in the arm so he decided, "Well, I'll put in a little coffee shop." He didn't have anything else to do—he was distributing oil and running the gas station. So they put in a coffee shop and it was real clean, real nice.

My mother made pies—Hattie's pies. Hattie's pies were known for miles and miles around. A truck driver would pull his truck in and say, "Where's Hattie's pies?" And about that time they started building the cotton gin so his coffee shop became the little nose bag for all the workers at the gin. What happened—and I understand that this happens to many, many small businesses—it got to the point that they just couldn't handle it anymore and they were going to have to hire help. Well, any time you hire help, there goes your profit. The help's making the money and you're running the show.

Then he had an opportunity to go to Vegas and partner up with another guy. Their kids were having to ride a station wagon to Vegas every day to go to Rancho High School so they went into Vegas and bought a nice little house and ran gas stations for the next few years. They sold the gas station to Bill Mankins for nothing, \$6,500—that was just the lease, of course.

RM: And when did the Mankins come into the valley?

HF: The Mankins came in here real early, soon after 1950 because they homesteaded on Homestead, on Vicki Ann and Manson.

RM: Way out there?

HF: Oh, yes. We built the road in and out of their home—it was fluff dirt boot deep. Pat and Bill were not farmers and Bill would be the first to admit that. She finished her education and became a schoolteacher. He was an iron worker—he always worked out at the Test Site—and they made good money. They ended up buying this little gas station, but they did the same thing. He worked, she worked, and they hired somebody to run it. The first thing you know, the cafe had a red line on it because it wasn't being kept up. She kept teaching school and he finally came back and ran the place. Then he became a distributor for probably Union Oil and he had three trucks running all over the western United States. He made a fortune selling oil.

 Their lease was starting to run out on the gas station. And it's kind of funny—I said, "Why don't you just go down the road and buy a piece of property and move your operation down there?" He looked at me like, God, I never thought of that. And that's what he did. They went down across from Saddle West and bought a piece of property and put the whole shebang down there.

RM: And the other station closed down? Did Reverts still own it?

HF: They still owned the lease, but the lease was about out and the property belonged to Walt Williams.

RM: Oh, they had leased it from Walt Williams.

HF: From the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Who built a hotel across the street?

HF: Leroy and Mary brought two of those little cabins out from Boulder City and put in a little four-room motel. They could have made a million dollars up there, but it just worked them to death. They'd have been better off if they'd hired me because I was a

working fool. If they'd hired me, I'd have run the gas station 24 hours a day.

RM: But you would never have quit the county for that, would you?

HF: This was before I went to work for the county. I'd have been happy to have the job.

RM: So the gas station was one of the early businesses in Pahrump?

HF: Yes, it was 1955.

RM: And it was a gas station and a coffee shop and a little motel?

HF: Plus he had a little trailer park. There was always somebody in here that needed a place to park a trailer.

RM: And there was no paved road up to 95 at that time?

HF: Right. I'll tell you an interesting story. They lived right there; they had a trailer right behind the coffee shop and they lived on the property. You had to or somebody'd steal you blind. And so anyway, there was a knock on the door before sunup, probably 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. He went to the door and a guy said, "Hey, can you help us? We're down the road a ways and we're out of gas. And we need somebody to take us some gas and take us out to the car." Now, Leroy had spent five years in the war zone in the Second World War.

He said, "Sure." You know, he was going to get up pretty soon anyway. So he got up, got dressed, got a five-gallon can of gas, and took off. Didn't even take a coat, and it was wintertime. He took off out 160 and drove like somebody was chasing him and he went till he ran out of pavement. He asked the guy, "Where is your car?"

The guy shoved a gun right in his ribs and said, "Just keep on driving, partner, and we'll have no problems here."

And so he did. He said he had both hands on the wheel and first of all the guy

said, “Slow this thing down” because he was only hitting the road every once in a while. He let his hand drop and he said the guy darn near shoved the gun right through his rib and told him, “Get your hand back on the wheel.”

He got up just about to Johnnie town—there was nothing up that road. They stopped and the guys told him to get out and they said, “Keep your back to us.” He said he could just feel it. They said, “Give us your wallet.” So he gave them his wallet.

Then he said, “Listen, it’s got my driver’s license. Will you just take the money and give me my wallet back?” So they did. He was at about Johnnie and they drove off in his car and he was standing there in the wintertime with no coat. He said worst of all he’d never had a cigarette and he thought, “Damn.”

He didn’t know whether to walk toward Johnnie or turn around and head for home. He was about to make up his mind and by golly, he looked and saw a car coming way down the line—saw lights coming. I guess he stood out in the middle of the road and they were going to run over him or something, and it was Bill Harris, a guy who drove a truck out at the Test Site.

Bill Harris said, “I’ve got to get on to work. Let me take you with me and you can bring my car and come back.”

So he said, “Okay.”

So they get in his car and Bill gave him a cigarette. They drove down the little hill from Johnnie and there was his pickup with the keys in it. He got out and told Bill Harris, “Well, I appreciate your help here.” So he crawled in his pickup and headed back home. And somehow he called Reverts—Bob Revert was a deputy sheriff.

RM: What had those guys been doing?

HF: They were out of gas.

RM: Oh, they were really out of gas. Why did they rob him?

HF: Well, easy come easy go, you know? You're going to go to jail anyway, you might as well do it for 20 bucks. No honor among thieves, I guess.

RM: It seems like kind of a dumb move on the thieves' part. They had what they wanted. They never found them?

HF: No, never found them.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RM: Well, Button, we were going to talk a little about the subdivisions.

HF: When we moved here in 1944, everything in Pahrump was in large parcels—a small parcel would've been 40 acres.

RM: If somebody took a chunk of his land and sold it, did he have to go through the county and all the red tape they do now?

HF: They went through the county, but it was so simple. They could sell it by what they call "metes and bounds." Metes and bounds is a section, 640 acres, and then you go down to half sections, 320. Then you go down to 80 acres and then to 40. You can go clear down to five or two and a half. But it all has a description, like the southwest quarter of section so and so. It was really simple.

RM: Did a person typically go to a lawyer or a surveyor?

HF: You always had to go to a surveyor. There was a county surveyor and unfortunately, I can't come up with his name. He was an old gentleman; he wore high-topped boots and a teepee hat like a Boy Scout hat.

RM: Was he from Tonopah?

HF: He was from Tonopah.

RM: So if you wanted to break out a parcel you had to get the surveyor to survey it.

HF: You didn't have to because you could sell it by metes and bounds, but if you wanted it to be more accurate and somebody was planning on putting a fence around it, you would hire the county surveyor and he'd come and draw you a very nice map; his penmanship was unreal.

RM: He charged for that, didn't he?

HF: Oh, certainly. It was a lot of money for then, but it was a minimal amount.

Anyway, in the late '40s, '48 or '49, a fellow named Ben Spencer (he changed it to C. Ben Spencer) and his wife Marie came in here; she ended up being the postmaster. He was kind of a used car salesman sort of guy and he purchased some property this side of the California line on the west side of the valley. He had the surveyor come in and he did it sort of like you would've done it back in the old mining days. The lots were probably 6,500 for a big lot. He divided it all up and called it Pahrump City.

And once he got it all laid out—just on paper, no streets, no lot corners, no nothing—then he decided to try to sell it. He would go into Las Vegas and whether jokingly or truthfully, he would stand on a box on Fremont Street and hawk his land out in Pahrump. He was ahead of himself. I don't know how many lots he sold—they probably went for \$75, \$85, maybe \$100 for a corner lot or something. It really was a flop.

RM: But he was selling some?

HF: If he was, it was one or two or three. It was a flop because people would come out here and it was a long way from Las Vegas to Pahrump in 1949. You had to come up over the Johnnie road, which was 30 miles of gravel, to come into Pahrump. When you got here there was no bar, no gas station, no motel, no nothing. So that sort of went down the pipe. They split up and he went his own way and she was the postmaster so she had a way to make a living. They had a little house and some property here. She stayed here till about '53.

RM: How did she get a postmistress job, being a newcomer?

HF: There weren't enough people here that were interested and they darn near give that job away. The wives all had families and the men had jobs. There was one girl who

was about 18 years old, and they were real happy to have her. She had a high school education and she was very bright. Then of course, she met a boy and she was gone.

Later, when Dutch Turner came, she probably held the job longer than anybody.

RM: What else do you know about the Spencers?

HF: I assume they came from the oilfield country back in Oklahoma. He had worked on oil rigs.

RM: How did they wind up here, I wonder?

HF: I have absolutely no idea. Probably heard about some cheap property or something.

RM: About how old were they?

HF: You've got to remember, I was a kid, 10 or 12. He was an older guy to me, older than his wife. He probably was 50 and she probably was 35 or 40. They had two kids, a girl that was barely a teenager and a boy that was 10 or 11.

RM: Did you go to school with them?

HF: Yes. The girl's name was Okemah; she was named after Okemah, Oklahoma, the town they lived in. And the boy's name was Ben, like his dad.

RM: How long was it from when he began his efforts with the subdivision until the project was dead?

HF: I would say a good year or so was all it took because nobody was interested and you still have to pay the bills. So that subdivision sort of went down the pipe. That would've probably been in early 1950.

RM: What became of that piece of land?

HF: It sat there for years and years and now, of course, people have bought those lots. They're so darn small they have to buy a couple of them, but folks live out there now. It's

not the highest-rated community in Pahrump.

RM: Where do they get their water? Do they have to drill wells?

HF: Yes. I don't think he even had a plan. I think he thought he was still in the old mining district and he just sold town lots and townsites.

RM: Do you know who he bought it from?

HF: No, I don't. He straddled what today is 372, so that was the road to Shoshone at that time. It was just a gravel road. He had Main Street running right through the middle of town. Now, Main Street had one dusty car a week; that was about it. But anyway, that one sort of went down the tube.

After the Raycrafts moved back here in 1952 and took their place back, we moved off, as I told you. My dad had farmed it for seven years or so. They grew some cotton and some hay. They had 640 acres so they went up on the easterly side of their property, which ran almost up to the cemetery between East Street and West Street—they named those streets. They took 80 acres, I think—it was a quarter of a mile long and a half a mile wide—and divided that up the same way; they had the county surveyor come in but they had no streets, no nothing. They divided it up into one-acre lots.

Well, this was a different story. No. 1, it was a different time and No. 2, it was good property. And No. 3, location, location, location. It was in what turned out to be the downtown part of Pahrump. They started selling those lots for about \$100, \$125 apiece. And by golly, they sold some. They didn't sell them all right away, but people actually were buying. My dad had a well rig and he'd go up there and punch a well for them. Of course, they had have to have their own generators for electricity and then everything else was propane—their refrigerator was propane, their stove was propane. They didn't build any big houses up there at the time but they did build the H&H Bar. As I told you, it was

very, very popular. Before, you were six miles from a bar and now you had a bar in downtown Pahrump.

Raycraft sold those lots and they did pretty darned well. After we were married, in about '59, my brother-in-law Scottie was in the army and he was just wasting his money. He was having a good time. He was over in Korea and he came home on a furlough one time. He always came to our house and stayed with us.

I said, "Let's buy a piece of land up on the hill up there, some of the Raycraft property.

He said, "All right. What's it going to cost?"

I said, "Well, it's \$250. It'll cost us \$125 apiece. I don't have any money." But I had taken his money and I had it in a bank account. I said, "You loan me the money and I'll put up \$125, you put up \$125 and I'll pay you back and pay you interest."

And he said, "Fine. Let's do it." So we bought that doggone piece of property. It was an inside lot; the corner lots were \$300 and the inside lots were \$250. We just bought it as an investment. We were two young guys in our early 20s.

RM: Did Raycraft have a name for the property?

HF: Raycraft Subdivision. It's still called that today. We hung onto that piece of property—the taxes were probably less than \$20 a year. Well, as I told you, Joe Heileger had had a squabble with Jim Cruice and he moved his bar down right in front of our lot. He said, "Will you sell me your lot?"

I said, "Well, we bought this as an investment. We have no feelings for the property, but we bought it for an investment."

He said, "I'd sure like to have it." About that time the Bollings had divided up some property just on the west side of West Street, and they were one-acre lots.

I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." Joe and I were real good friends. "You go down there and buy us a lot; I'll pick it." I picked the closest one I could to the highway—it wasn't on the highway, it was back a ways. I said, "You buy that and I'll trade you straight across."

And he said, "Great." So he did. He paid \$1,000 for that piece of property and on a handshake he went up and made two deeds out. He deeded the Bolling property to us and we deeded our property to him so now we had a better lot. It wasn't an inside lot and it was one that you could more than put a house on, so to speak. So we were both happy. We kept that lot for years and years. The property now has Win Realty on it. In the '90s Roy Bowditch, who had Win Realty with his wife, Winnie, said, "Hey, I'd like to buy a piece of property from you down here by where the museum is."

I said, "Well, I'm not breaking those up," because I had 33 lots there and as long as you didn't sell one, your taxes remained pretty decent.

He said, "I've got to build me a real estate place." I came home and I was having dinner and I thought heck, maybe we could hang a big price on that piece of land. He'd buy that one because it's uptown. I dialed him up and said, "Hey Roy, I'll sell you a piece of land on Bolling."

He said, "Let me go take a look at it." I'm still eating supper, and pretty soon the darn phone rings. He said, "I'll take it. What do you want for it?"

I said, "Well, that's a pretty good piece of land. We'll take \$40,000 for it."

And he said, "Okay."

RM: Oh, my God. It had gone up that much?

HF: We had paid \$125 and probably 20 or 30 years of taxes and we got \$40,000.

RM: So the two of you split it?

HF: We got \$20,000 apiece.

RM: Where exactly is it?

HF: If you went down 372 and you came to West Street, the old feed store was called Tomkin's Feed. If you make a right-hand turn there and go north, you go right by Tomkin's and then the next lot is Win Realty. Gary Hollis's dad owned five or six lots in there and when he found out I sold that and what I sold it for, he almost cried. He said, "Oh, I've wanted that lot forever. I'd have bought it from you." So I had a lot everybody wanted.

RM: Were all the lots there worth that kind of money?

HF: Oh, I brought them up to that price. Before, they were probably selling for \$10,000 or \$12,000. When I sold that one for \$40,000, all of them, especially the outside lots, went up.

Anyway, getting back to the Raycraft Subdivision, it was very, very successful. It took them some years and they still had a lot of land eight or nine years later. You've got to remember, they had probably 75 lots. Of course today, that's sort of downtown Pahrump. The community church is there and a couple of bars and a restaurant and the library (actually, the library's on the other side).

RM: Why did that become the heart of Pahrump?

HF: It was the crossroads—372 and 160. All the upper land and the land around that intersection was part of the Pahrump Ranch but the land behind it, west and a bit north, was Raycraft property—that was the only available property in Pahrump in the general area of the crossroads.

RM: What about the land where Pop Buol was?

HF: Pop had 160 acres and they still have 80 with all the mesquites on it.

RM: You're pointing across from where you are.

HF: Right. They had sold 20 acres off the original place, so they had 80 acres and 60 acres.

RM: So that land hasn't been subdivided?

HF: No. I understand they divided it up at one time on paper because they were going to put in apartments or something, but then Ted died and that just didn't happen.

RM: So the Raycraft place became the heart of Pahrump because it was the only land available in the area?

HF: That's right.

RM: Did the Raycrafts do a second subdivision?

HF: No, they sold it to Bolling and then Bolling did a second and a third. Bolling made a lot of money because they divided that portion and they went down here off of Blagg and divided both sides of Blagg. Then they just kept going. They kept almost every piece of property on the state highway and they still own that.

RM: Were they acre lots or were they smaller?

HF: Bolling's first were one acre and then two-and-a-half acres.

RM: And then Bolling kind of stuck with that.

HF: He stuck with that on his first subdivision sometimes, which was west of West Street in front of his house. Then he came down on Blagg and those were all two-and-a-halves.

RM: How many acres did Raycraft subdivide?

HF: It was an 80-acre parcel so he probably had 75 lots.

RM: And how many did Bolling have in that area?

HF: He didn't do a full 80, so he probably had 30 or 40 lots.

RM: And that has become the heart of Pahrump.

HF: Yes, sir. That's where both churches are.

RM: If you had to point to downtown Pahrump, that would be it?

HF: Well, of course you have Saddle West and all the casinos. I mean, that's Main Street.

RM: And what about further real estate development?

HF: Pahrump was always fairly well isolated from a location where a person could work and make a living. Even though we had the road to Las Vegas in 1954, there weren't that many people who moved in here—and of course, power came a little later on. So Pahrump was kind of isolated. The Nevada Test Site opened up in 1950, but as I've said, the road from here to the Test Site was just horrible. I know because I worked for the road department and I used to maintain it. They used to call it the Tire-bustin' Road and they had all kinds of names for it. It was really, really bad.

That was kind of sad if you wanted development into Pahrump. We were only 30 miles or so from the front gate to the Test Site at Mercury and a lot of people would have preferred to live in Pahrump rather than make the drive from Las Vegas. As some old-timers remember, the road from Las Vegas to Mercury was called the Widomaker. It was a two-lane highway and you had all the trucks and all the traffic.

So we had a real opportunity that we couldn't touch because we didn't have a road. Well, power came in in 1963 or '64 and they paved the Johnnie Road in 1966 and that basically opened the floodgates. You had Test Site folks that were living in Indian Springs, living in any trailer park they could find around the area, and a lot of them had kids and horses and they did gymkhanas; they were really active.

The minute the road was paved, these folks started moving in here from the trailer

parks in Indian Springs and even from Las Vegas. At that time my dad had just opened up some property and those folks were buying five-acre lots so they would have plenty of room to drill a well, put in a septic tank, build a horse corral, a barn, whatever they wanted, and put on their house. Most everything was mobile homes because to get a house built in Pahrump was just impossible. No. 1, you couldn't get financed. No. 2, who are you going to get to come out here and build it for you? So they'd move these trailers in and in a week or two they had a beautiful home all set up and ready to live in.

RM: Were they single-wide mobile homes?

HF: They were starting to have double-wides. My dad had some really good property out on the west side of the valley, on Wesley and Charleston Park. He subdivided that property and sold it for I think \$250 an acre—he took \$25 a month—and if they wanted him to, he would go in and drill their well and put in their pump and add that on to the cost.

RM: What did it cost to drill a well?

HF: In those days it probably was a couple of bucks a foot, so at 125 feet you're talking about \$250 and the pump setup probably cost you \$250. So for \$500 you'd have water and in those days we were under the REA system, which we still are, but it was way different then. They wanted to build lines to people and sell them electricity. So if you lived three miles out in the desert, they would run your line out and it probably cost you a membership fee of \$35, and you had power. And all the rules and regulations didn't exist yet. My dad sold these properties and these folks moved out here and they would drive to the Test Site every day and they were just thrilled.

That sort of started the first development in Pahrump where you had families coming in. They had kids and they participated in the school, in the sports, and that's

when Pahrump really started to grow a little bit. And others did the exact same thing—Al Bell, Perry Bowman, and so on.

There was still a lot of farming here in the valley but the price of fuel, the price of tractors, the price of equipment all went up and it really got tough for the farmers. I guess you could say their savior—and people will debate me on that all day long—was that Preferred Equities came in here and purchased the Pahrump Ranch. At that time the Pahrump Ranch was 10,000 acres and it had lots of water. It had potential that you just wouldn't believe.

Preferred Equities had started in land development in Florida and they did very, very well down there. The one thing that Leonard Rosen and his brother learned was that if you would select a different clientele, people in their 40s or so, in the next 15 or 20 years they were going to retire. They would sell them a piece of property but they would sell it to them for what that property was going to be worth ten or 15 years down the road. In Florida they sold it at a reasonable price and some of those people made a lot of money. They'd buy a nice property and it was developed and it had roads, water channels, places to park a boat right in your front yard; they really did well.

Well, Preferred said, "Hey, if five or ten years down the road this place is going to be worth this much money, we'll just sell it for that today." And they really set up a promotion. They sold Pahrump all over the world. They sold it in Hawaii, Germany, all over the United States—they really moved this property.

There were a lot of bad things about it because they didn't put in sewer and water. The agreement when you bought it was by the time you retire, all this sewer and water will be in and you'll be in fine shape. That was over 30 years ago and a lot of that property today is what is called nonbuildable—it doesn't have sewer and water.

The one thing Preferred Equities did, and they did it for me, for Tim Hafen, and everybody else, was they took the price of property, which was about \$1,000 an acre lot, and some of the land values went up to \$8,000, \$10,000, \$12,000, so everybody was able to raise the price of their land. They didn't raise it to equal Preferred Equities, but that was really what changed the face of this valley. And of course, Preferred Equities was so successful in moving this property that they would go down the street and buy another farm, then go on down the street and buy another farm. Pretty soon they had most of the big, good farms purchased and subdivided and basically sold.

RM: Could you list the farms they bought in addition to the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: They went out north and bought what had originally been the old Dorothy Dorothy Ranch (it wasn't by then). And they bought a number of other properties along the way there, coming in towards Pahrump—the Brady Ranch and the Hathaway Ranch. They eventually went down and start buying the Bowmans' ranches. They purchased Melvin Bowman's property, which bordered theirs on Gamebird, and they subdivided that thing, but it's the same story—there's nothing there today. They graveled the roads. You can drive all over the place but there's no sewer, no water, and no plan for them. Nowadays if you bought a lot out there and you wanted sewer and water, they'd put it in for you, but the price is prohibitive.

RM: Is Preferred Equities still in business?

HF: No, Preferred Equities scraped millions out of this valley and finally went bankrupt. They sold the sewer and water company and the people that bought it just can't go and put in 100 miles of water line and sewer line and pay for it out of their own pocket.

RM: So the people that paid top dollar for those lots didn't get their money's worth?

HF: Well, right in the heart of the development they did. They put in the sewer and water where the high school is and up on the highway, which was the cream of the crop, down 160 and down 372. So those people did very well. For instance, the lot where Walgreen's is is probably worth a half a million bucks today. You would have to say, with all respect, that Preferred Equities is what really got Pahrump to moving. And some of it moved in the wrong direction.

RM: What year did they come in here?

HF: They purchased it in 1970.

RM: And when were they finished?

HF: I couldn't guess; probably ten or 12 years ago.

RM: Could you talk a little more about your father's subdivision?

HF: My dad had purchased property in this valley for \$15 an acre back in the '40s. It was sitting out on the west side and it wasn't prime farmland so he did some horse trading on it. He dug wells—he would dig a well for a fellow that had a property and the guy traded him property for drilling him a well. So he didn't have a lot of big money put into it. He had 160 acres—80 acres east of Leslie and 80 acres west of Leslie, right on the corner of Leslie and Charleston Park. He took the property that was west of Leslie and divided it up into five-acre lots.

RM: Did he put in streets and everything?

HF: No, he sold it metes and bounds. He didn't even have to advertise. One person from the Test Site bought a piece of land and he told everybody he worked with that you can go to Pahrump and this stuff is \$250 an acre, \$25 a month. I mean, they were walking all over him trying to buy the property. In fact, he sort of ran out of property before he ran out of customers.

RM: What a story. And then he later subdivided the property on the east side of Leslie?

HF: Yes, he did. He lived on that first subdivision and still drilled some wells and he did very well—he had a good living out of it. When he got a little older and needed a little more money, he did the same thing in five-acre lots on the bottom 20 of the other 80 acres. But he still had 60 acres that he farmed. He had his house and he still grew some grain and he had some cows. He did divide four lots across the bottom and by this time they were worth \$3,000 or something. It just went up as the time went by.

RM: Did he do any other subdivisions?

HF: No, that was about all he had.

RM: But it was a smash hit?

HF: Yes, with people from the Test Site. There was this beautiful blacktop road. It was as good as the road to Reno—they did a first-class job. So these folks could be at work in, 30, 45 minutes. And the road was no widow-maker.

RM: What year was your dad's subdivision, again?

HF: Right after 1966.

RM: Which part of the Bowman ranches did Preferred Equities buy?

HF: They bought the Melvin Bowman property and then the Len Andersen property, and by this time the county had tightened the screws on subdividing. They would have to put in the streets and sewer and water. One thing that happened when Preferred Equities came in here was they donated property for a high school in a very good location. There was some other property in the general vicinity and I guess you would have called it kind of a middle school/ grade school. We didn't have a high school here. And with the extra people and the extra property, we needed one. Well, the contractors at the Nevada Test Site hadn't been paying their taxes on the equipment they were using so Nye County,

with Bill Beko at the lead, sued them. The lawsuit went on for a while, but when it finally was settled Nye County ended up with \$1,000,000, which they used to build a brand new high school.

We had a daughter that was high school age. As you know, back when I was ready for high school you either had to travel to Vegas or live with relatives or something. Later they bought a little station wagon and they would haul the kids into Rancho High School in Las Vegas. That was a long haul—Rancho's clear on the other side of Las Vegas. They tried letting the kids drive. Well, you take a brand new Ford station wagon with a 312 V8 engine and they had that thing touching the ground only two or three times.

Later, some of the mothers drove. One lady went to college in Las Vegas during the day and she'd drive the kids home at night. Then they started busing them over to Shoshone. Well, we didn't look forward to our daughter riding the bus to Shoshone. And so lo and behold, when she got ready to go to high school, the high school was almost built. They had high school in the evenings in the grade school and they also used the community center.

So in her freshman year my daughter just went back and forth from school to community center and when she did her second, third, and fourth year the new school was built. That would've been '73 because she graduated in '77. She and Hans Christiansen were the first two kids to ever go to school in Pahrump for 12 years.

The high school was just unreal. They started trying to do sports—and that was almost pitiful but everybody in Pahrump, which weren't that many folks at the time, would go to the ball games and root and cheer and holler. They really supported the kids. There was something going on all the time for the high school.

RM: How many kids were in the high school then?

HF: When she graduated I'd say there were maybe a dozen in the senior class. If you run that back down, there were maybe 50 or 60 kids.

RM: What happened when Preferred Equities went belly up? Who took over all their assets in the valley?

HF: They really didn't have any. They had sold everything.

RM: All the lots had been sold?

HF: Yes. That's why they went out and bought more property. There was a fellow here, Warren Lewis, and he and his brother Eddie had bought hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands, of acres out on the west side and subdivided by metes and bounds. It sat there for all those years and towards the end of Preferred Equities, they needed more lots. So they had an agreement that if you bought a piece of property that was not buildable and you were ready to move, they would trade you—for a fee, they would trade you a buildable lot.

RM: Who did they buy their land from?

HF: I have no idea. This was back in the early, early '50s. Then they had a bunch right on the bottom of the west side of Calvada and that was right what Calvada wanted.

RM: You mean down by the Pahrump Ranch?

HF: Yes, on the far west end. If you went down Calvada Boulevard and kept going to the end, I think it's Winchester Street. Hundreds of acres below that was part of the Lewis property. Preferred Equities bought it in 1970 and then immediately they started subdividing it.

RM: When did the brothers buy the land?

HF: Oh, they just bought it as an investment; they didn't want to sell it. Warren Lewis

was such an interesting person. He was a writer for the Desilu Playhouse. If he told you some of the names that he dealt with in Hollywood, you wouldn't believe it. He even tangled one time with Howard Hughes. He was a member of the Screenwriter's Guild. He was a fascinating person and he made a lot of money. I don't remember what his brother did but they bought it as an investment and they were in absolutely no hurry to sell this property. They probably had it for 20 years.

RM: And then Preferred Equities bought it?

HF: Oh, yes. And they paid dearly for it. The brothers probably gave \$50 or \$60 an acre for it and they ended up selling it for \$4,000 or \$5,000.

RM: And they had a lot of land?

HF: Oh, yes. I would guess 300 or 400 acres, so 300 or 400 one-acre lots.

RM: Was that the usual size?

HF: That's the smallest you could divide it without putting in sewer and water. In the state of Nevada if you have one acre of property you are entitled to a well. That's why everybody did one acre.

RM: Spencer got in before that law, didn't he?

HF: He got in before there were any laws in Nye County. [Laughs] But anyway, Preferred Equities came in and put in good streets and they built the complex and did all this to bring people out. They even had an airplane and they flew people in here. They had vans and buses and they would haul them in here from Vegas. They'd give them a night in a hotel in Las Vegas and the deal was they had to come to Pahrump the next day. And booze was as free as you could get it. But when they got out here, there was the complex Preferred had built and they had a little grocery store and a nice restaurant and good food. Then they had all these little trips. They would take the folks out and give

them their spiel on buying the land, then they'd put them in a van, take them out and drive them around on the property, and tell them how good it was going to be.

RM: Are those buildings still on the property?

HF: Nye County bought the property and some of them are still there; the county used them for offices. But they basically bulldozed the inn.

RM: Is that over on Walt Williams Street where the park is?

HF: Yes, it was right there. And the duck pond was part of Preferred's property. They really knew what they were doing.

RM: Leonard Rosen had honed his skills in Florida, hadn't he?

HF: Oh, yes. It's kind of funny because he went to Arizona before he came to Pahrump and tried to do the same thing there and the story is that Arizona ran him out. They said, "You're not going to do that here."

RM: Did he show up much here, himself? Or was it just his people?

HF: Later on his son showed up here some. Jack Soles was their manager. In fact, Jack built a nice big house. He loved the golf course. Jack was really good for Pahrump but he had a heart attack and died.

RM: And that was the end of it. Any more thoughts about Preferred Equities?

HF: Well, to continue on with what they did for us, you started having other businesses come out, like the bank; we'd never had a bank in Pahrump before. Then you started having more gas stations on 372. They owned the property where the bank and McDonald's and all that are. So businesses started coming in there and that was good. They raised the price of land and they brought a lot of people out here.

RM: What did a Preferred Equities lot go for?

HF: You could get the lesser ones for \$3,500 and you could pay up to \$10,000 or

\$12,000.

RM: Were they selling acre lots at all?

HF: Yes, they had what they called ranchettes, basically on their south side. You could buy one of those and drill your own well and put in your own septic tank and make it go.

RM: You said you graded the road over Johnnie and up to 95.

HF: When we first moved here the roads in Pahrump and Ash Meadows and the surrounding area only got graded in the wintertime. The reason was that up in Tonopah in the wintertime they had so much snow that they couldn't do much on the roads up there so they would come down here and blade through Pahrump. They had their own living quarters, a little sheep shed doghouse thing that they pulled behind a truck. The truck would have their fuel and everything. So wherever they were at night, that's where they stayed. They would start out at 95 and they might blade five or ten miles and stay, then the next day they would blade on a little farther.

It was a two-man operation. One was running the road grader and one followed behind in the truck. Any time they needed supplies, the guy in the truck would go get fuel, groceries, whatever. We're talking about in the '40s, very early '50s. As time went by, they split it up and they had a crew that worked from Beatty clear to Pahrump.

You would go up and stay in Beatty for a week or so and do their roads. Then you'd come down to Amargosa and do their roads and then do the ones in Ash Meadows and then work on into Pahrump. So instead of once a year we probably got it three or four times a year, and that was because of the number of people that lived in Pahrump at that time. I mean, it demanded that.

In 1955, when I went to work, there was a two-man crew and we still had Beatty and Amargosa and the whole thing but it had become a better job. They didn't camp out

along the road anymore. You'd drive into Pahrump each night. When you had to work in Beatty, after I was married, my wife and I would rent a little motel room up in Beatty and we would work ten days on and off four so that was pretty good.

In 1961 we had a two-man crew and they split us up. They put me in charge of the southern area, which was Pahrump and Ash Meadows, and the other fellow was in charge of the Beatty-Amargosa area. That worked great. No longer did you have to worry much about going up and staying in Beatty. Now we went up there one summer, oiled the road into Rhyolite, and spent probably a couple months up there and got that job done.

But talking about grading that road from here to 95, it was terrible because it's so rocky as you go up through the hills and it's just dirt when you get out of the hills. From 95 this way for probably five miles it's dirt and then it starts getting a little gravel. But we graded them. We had lots of rain in the summer in those days and in the summertime you'd have the roads in pretty good shape and thunderstorms would come in and just wipe them out so you would have to get out there and work your tail off weekends, evenings, whatever and get the roads opened back up. I'm telling you, where water runs across the road, sometimes you can't drive a car through there.

Anyway, that was interesting and we were very happy when in '66 they paved that road because that took 30 miles out of my district that had been a royal pain in the neck.

RM: And then you focused on the roads in Pahrump and Ash Meadows.

HF: Pahrump and Ash Meadows, and at that time Pahrump had really started growing. Some of the time we had a three-man crew and we had equipment, trucks and loaders and stuff. When I retired—I worked there 38 years—we had built, rebuilt, or I had been the inspector on every foot of road in the Pahrump Valley.

RM: So you know those roads.

HF: I knew every rock. I loved the job, but when a valley grows like it did here, of course people want every road. When I quit I'd finally just had enough.

RM: When did you quit?

HF: In '94. We finished the road from here to Death Valley Junction and that was my last job. When you drive out Bell Vista and over that, that was the last road where I was in charge of the day-to-day operations. We had engineers, but I was in charge of the day-to-day operations.

RM: You know every road that is and every road that was, don't you?

HF: Yes. Like I say, I knew them all. Highway 160, which was Highway 16, came from Johnnie along the upper edge of Pahrump. When it got down to the Bowman Ranch it veered off south and went to Sandy Valley, and that was Highway 16. It didn't go to Vegas. Once you got to the Bowman Ranch it ran straight through Hidden Hills and from Hidden Hills on down to Sandy. That was the I-15 of the 1800s. I mean, it was the road from the mines and Pahrump and everywhere into San Bernardino.

RM: Is that road still there?

HF: Bits and pieces of it. They put that shooting range down there now and tore everything up.

RM: Did you maintain that road?

HF: No, I didn't go past Hafen's farm.

RM: Speaking of Hafen, did he do subdivisions?

HF: Oh, yes. He did a lot of little stuff. He'd buy 40 or 80 acres and divide it up into lots. Later on, he took his ranches like Artesia and those, and he went first class. He put in all these streets and that really developed well for him.

Now, everything we've talked about in the number of recordings you've done didn't all happen in a year. It took years to get to when Preferred Equities got here. And as we continued on, we hit a higher speed because we had McDonald's come in and Burger King. We had Smith's and what was called PJ's; everything started moving at a higher speed after Preferred Equities.

RM: It's quite a story. Thanks, Button, for this tour of Pahrump and its development. I have really enjoyed talking with you and learning from you.

The index has been removed for the digital format. Digitization by Suzy McCoy - Beatty Graphics SM Productions - Beatty, Nevada.