

An Interview with
CLARABELLE
JIM

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2010



Clarabelle Jim
2009

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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

2010

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—RDM
2010

This is Robert McCracken talking to Clarabelle Jim at Marie Wilson's home in Las Vegas, Nevada, November 17, 2009. Marie Wilson, Gloria Shearer, and Leroy Howel, Clarabelle's son, join in.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Clarabelle, when and where you were born?

CJ: I was born and raised in Pahrump and went to school there. There were hardly any white people there except a storekeeper and people from the Pahrump Ranch, the Manse Ranch, up in that area—there were maybe four families, that's about it. Look at it now.

RM: Yes, amazing. What was your birth date?

CJ: I was born 8/10/26. I'm older than the people at the Pahrump Ranch, for sure. More than Harry Ford and Tim Hafen. When you say in the newspaper, "Tim Hafen and Harry Ford are the pioneers of Pahrump," I say to myself, "Oh, what a . . ." [Clarabelle is referring to a newspaper column RM wrote on Nye County history that appeared in the Pahrump Valley Times.]

RM: They're pioneers of the modern white man culture, but not the Indians. Could we talk a little bit about your family? What was your mother's name?

CJ: Ruby Mary Nelly Jim. Her maiden name was Mennem. My mother was a granddaughter of Whispering Ben of Pahrump.

RM: And she married a man named Jim?

CJ: Long Jim—my dad.

RM: Where did you live when you were growing up?

CJ: I hate to tell you this, it was on the papers not too long ago where we lived, where they burned that down. When I went to school, that was my home. And the place is still there.

RM: Where is that place?

CJ: Do you know where the Paiute cemetery is? Across from there, where that motorcycle thing is and the library? Right there.

RM: And where did your mother grow up?

CJ: They moved around. A lot of times they didn't stay in one place.

RM: Do you remember when your mother was born?

CJ: No.

RM: How many children did your mother have?

CJ: A lot of children, they say. I wasn't there so I don't know.

RM: Did she spend her adult life in Pahrump?

CJ: Oh, yes. The daughters went to school in Pahrump; the little school.

RM: Could you name her daughters?

CJ: Well, there was the one who died not too long ago; the elder one was Alice Jim. Then my other sisters Lorraine and Cynthia and Annabelle and Mary and me.

RM: Did you have brothers?

CJ: I only had two brothers, I heard, but I never did see them.

RM: And your mother was Whispering Ben's granddaughter. Did you know him?

CJ: Yes, he was living with us when he lost his wife; he moved over with us. My mother took care of him—she would feed him, bathe him, put him to sleep.

RM: Where were they living at that time?

CJ: Like I told you—the house they burned. The first house, where he died. We lived a little distance away from there. He was with us when I was growing up. Like I said, those white people came around and burned my house when I came to work here in Las Vegas. He [Leroy] was just a teenager then. My daughter Polly Ann had finished high school, I think; she used to go to Rancho High School. She'd take the bus to school each morning.

RM: Do you remember Whispering Ben's wife's name?

CJ: The one I know is Mary.

RM: He had more than one wife?

CJ: Yes.

RM: Whispering Ben was the person who sold the Indian Springs Ranch, wasn't he? Do you know anything about that story—how he happened to sell it, and how he happened to be at Indian Springs?

CJ: He owned that place. First he was living up at Corn Creek. He lost his son—he's buried there—named Sam Benn. And he left the house closed for a while—he couldn't be around there when he lost his son—so he went up in the mountains to Indian Springs. When he returned to Corn Creek, the white people had already jumped in behind his back so he moved to Indian Springs.

RM: Was Corn Creek a better place to live than Indian Springs?

CJ: Well, I like it myself. I go up there often.

RM: What did he do after he sold Indian Springs?

CJ: He went to Pahrump, I guess, or Ash Meadows; I don't know where.

RM: Did he stay at Indian Springs long?

CJ: I believe so. I wasn't there; I wouldn't know for sure.

RM: Could you describe Whispering Ben?

CJ: He was a really, really old man when I knew him.

RM: How old would he have been?

CJ: His grandson Roger Benn said he died at 117. He could hardly see. But he wasn't just sitting like a couch potato; he was still walking around with a cane until he died.

RM: When did he die?

CJ: In 1939, I believe.

RM: And where is he buried?

CJ: In Pahrump. The family's buried in Pahrump. It was an Indian-only cemetery before the white people took over and started burying other people in the ground.

RM: Where is the Indian cemetery?

CJ: Right by Chief Tecopa.

MW: That whole section that doesn't have grass and part of it that has the grass on, next to it.

CJ: Yes, down below. Where the library stands—next to it.

RM: Do they allow whites to be buried there now?

CJ: Yes, they're just below us. We're not taking more white people in our cemetery. We fought it. A county commissioner went with us to the cemetery—they were going to take it over—and said no, that's only for Indians. The commissioner was Gary Hollis—I call him "Turtle Man" because he fights for the tortoise. I'm glad he does. That was my food and now they destroy them.

Like I said, we lived close to the cemetery, behind where that motorcycle thing is now. I told the people up there that they were going to build something on that land. Where the bank stands, the Wells Fargo Bank, a little across . . . that's where my son was born.

RM: Oh really—where the Wells Fargo bank is now?

CJ: Way up in there, where we lived. And it was destroyed in 1967; when I came to Las Vegas to work, he went to the service. That's the time they jumped in and burned everything down.

LH: Let me interject something about Whispering Ben. He had, what, five wives?

CJ: That's what I heard; I don't know.

LH: And the latest wife, the young one, was actually Lora Jim's aunt.

RM: Was he married to some of those women at the same time, or at different times?

CJ: I don't know anything about that.

RM: Because in some places in the world, you can have more than one wife.

MW: Yes, Colorado City. [Laughter]

RM: Let's talk a little bit about your father. What was his name, again?

CJ: Long Jim. He came from Furnace Creek in Death Valley. He was Panamint Shoshone.

RM: And your mom was Paiute. Was she full blood?

CJ: Yes, no white mixing. [Laughter]

RM: Where did your father grow up?

CJ: In the Panamint Range.

RM: Were there a lot of Shoshones living in the Panamint Range at that time?

CJ: Once, yes.

MW: There were Paiutes, too.

CJ: Long Jim's uncles were Panamint Tom and Hungry Bill; they were brothers. And the Hansons. The Shoshones living there, like Grace Goud and Pauline Estevez, are related to us on my dad's side; my mama's side, too, I guess.

RM: Do you remember when your dad was born?

CJ: No. In those days, a long time ago, they didn't have birth certificates or things like that. He said he probably was over 100 years old. He was still riding horses and breaking horses.

RM: When did you start going to school?

CJ: In the '30s—'33 or '35, something like that.

RM: And what school did you go to first?

CJ: The first place I went to school was on the Pahrump Ranch on the right side where the palm trees stand; I don't know if it's still there. I don't remember how many years that was. And the second one was by the entrance of the Pahrump Ranch, on the left side. There used to be pecan trees there. The third one was over by the other Brooks store, behind . . . I don't know if you know Burkettes? The store was built by Paul Ford Brooks on land bought from Pop Buol.

RM: I know the Burkettes by name. They bought Pop Buol's store, didn't they?

CJ: No. Pop Buol had his store and was going to close it down. That is when Brooks purchased land and built his own store in another location. An old building was right behind there and they added a room to it. We went to school there.

RM: How many kids were you going to school with in those first schools—five? And were they all Indians, or were any of them white?

CJ: My elder sister said that the ones that went to school with her were white people, but someone else said that they were half-breed Indians.

RM: Do you remember any of your teachers' names?

CJ: My first teacher's name was Mrs. Lois Edgar Diamal. There were a lot of teachers besides her.

RM: Was it very far to go to school?

CJ: No, we walked. When you're kids, you run; but you can't run now. [Laughs]

RM: And how many kids were in the second school you went to?

CJ: There were other Indian people besides us that went to school with us, and four whites, so there were about ten kids. The white kids were Winnie Dewitt, John Dewitt, Jack Dewitt, and Mary Buol. The other Native American kids were Gilbert Frank (a cousin) and possibly the Steves.

RM: Was that a different teacher?

CJ: The same teacher; the sub was Alice (Alicia) Wallace.

RM: When did they start the little red schoolhouse?

CJ: In 1944; that was a brand new one.

RM: Were there schools before the red schoolhouse?

CJ: Oh yes, absolutely. There was another school in 1916 that was attended by my older sister as well as Matt Weeds, Tom Weeds, Amy Weeds, and Sarah Holmes.

RM: Who were some of the people that you knew during this period? Who were some of the Indians that were living in the area then?

CJ: The Jim Steve family and the Dora Brown family.

RM: And they were living down by the Manse Ranch, or this was later?

CJ: No, they lived across from us where that . . . I don't know if they've still got a laundromat down there. There's a big tall building there.

LH: Back in those days there were a lot of mesquite groves in this area and that's what they used for their shelters and to build their houses in among. To look at it today, you would never think of that.

RM: A lot of the groves are gone, aren't they? Did you use the mesquites a lot for food and wood?

CJ: Oh, yes. We still do. About a month ago, my sister and I pounded the mesquite beans into flour.

RM: How do you prepare it, then, after you make the flour?

CJ: By cooking it.

MW: Annie Beck put it in water in a pan and then let it dry, and then she would crack it.

CJ: Yes, but I usually eat it dry. People always say, "You might choke on it."

I say, "No, I'll be careful." They usually put it in a little cup or they add a little water to it. I survived on those. We survived the Depression. There was no butter but we had coffee on the table.

RM: What other kinds of wild foods, natural foods, was your family utilizing at this time?

CJ: Turtle, tortoise; chuckwalla; venison, deer meat; jackrabbit, cottontail. And birds—like dove, quail, whatever, and pine nuts from the mountains.

RM: So you were eating native foods in the '30s.

MW: Even in the '40s we were doing that.

RM: I've asked people, what part of the turtle did they eat? Did you just eat the legs?

CJ: Some people would eat the legs; I didn't. I love the liver and I love the eggs.

RM: How did you prepare the eggs?

CJ: Just put them in a bag and put it under the coals, underneath the ashes. It bakes like you bake potatoes.

RM: Is there anything else inside the tortoise shell that you would eat?

CJ: Guts.

RM: Did you eat them?

CJ: No. Some people did. That's what some people survived on.

RM: Where did you get the turtles?

CJ: There were a lot of them in Pahrump.

MW: Now you don't see any.

CJ: The people are destroying them. Like I said, that man, Hollis, is standing for the tortoise; I'm glad he does. He says there's tortoise country up where the BLM is selling those little properties.

RM: The turtle wasn't hard to catch, was it? Could you just walk up and take one?

CJ: In springtime it's easier. When the winter comes, they go in the burrows.

RM: How did you catch jackrabbits? Did you shoot them?

CJ: I never did shoot one, but that's how they did it, or with metal traps.

RM: How did you prepare the jackrabbit?

CJ: You make a stew—skin him, boil him.

RM: Was it good?

GS: Oh, yes; delicious.

RM: What did you cook it with?

CJ: Sometimes we put rice or potatoes in it.

RM: How did you prepare venison?

CJ: Dry it, fry it, stew it.

GS: Most of the time you'd make jerky. We made gravy and stew and stuff like that out of the jerky.

RM: How did you catch a chuckwalla?

CJ: Just dig him from between the rocks.

RM: How do you prepare him?

CJ: My dad took care of that; I don't know.

RM: What wild plants did you collect besides pine nuts?

CJ: Indian spinach, tu-ma-tuh.

RM: [Tries to pronounce the word] I can't say it.

CJ: You sounded like you were saying "barrel cactus." [Laughs]

RM: How did you prepare pine nuts?

CJ: Roast it.

RM: Did you use the deer hides and make moccasins or shoes?

CJ: My mama did that.

RM: What was it like, growing up at this time? How did the children spend their time?

CJ: We'd just play, run around; that's about it.

RM: So the red schoolhouse wasn't built when you were going to school.

CJ: No, that came later. My younger sister went there.

MW: I went to school there.

LH: You've got to remember, some of the Indian kids were sent to Sherman and different schools in those days.

RM: Did you get sent to an Indian school?

CJ: No, my mama wouldn't let me go. I was her helper; she said, "I don't want her to be sent away."

RM: Did any of your brothers or sisters get sent away?

CJ: Yes, my sisters went up to Stewart, Nevada. The boy went to Sherman Institute, Riverside, California, as did Alice. My older sister was a cook. She used to cook the white people way and not the Indian way. I never saw my brothers so I don't know.

RM: Were they treated well, as far as you know, at the Indian schools?

CJ: I've got a cousin who lives up here and she said she was mistreated. And one of my sisters died at Stewart and the parents were not told.

RM: How awful. What would they do to them?

CJ: They punished the boys or whipped them with a whip; that's what she's always telling me; that's what I heard. They'd always tell them, "Your parents are dead; you can't go home." And they were not allowed to speak their native tongue.

RM: Oh, my lord.

CJ: This was in Stewart.

RM: So they just kept them there all the time?

CJ: Oh, yes. Well, my sisters came down one time in the summertime—summer break, I guess.

RM: So you were pretty much alone there with your mother. You were the only child?

CJ: No, I had a sister there.

LH: Actually, there were, what, 13 kids in the family?

RM: Your mother had 13 children?

CJ: That's what they said; I don't know.

RM: Were you working at the Pahrump Ranch in the '40s?

CJ: Yes, I worked as a kitchen helper in 1942 for Fern Lewis, the cook at the time. Later, I used to go housekeeping, like a maid, for a teacher there, Marie Blosser. Once a week I'd go clean her house—she'd pick me up. That was in the '50s.

My elder sister Alice went to work there to cook in 1930. They boarded people there. She later left with Marie Van Cleve to be her housekeeper in Las Vegas, Nevada.

RM: Marie Blosser was Ted Blosser's wife, wasn't she?

CJ: Yes. The daughter's still living here, Janet. She works at the DMV. And the others, Trudy and Patty, live in Vegas.

RM: Where was your dad, Long Jim, working all this time—did he work on the ranches?

CJ: Yes, the Pahrump Ranch. He probably worked at the Manse Ranch, too, when he was younger. He also worked for Lois Kellogg when she owned her ranch.

And I worked for Alan Simkins up north by . . . I can't describe it. There's a little airport there. Right in that area I used to pick bunched onions, carrots, and dry onions. And up north, there used to be Myrtle Dorothy—Dorothy Dorothy's ranch. I used to pick potatoes in the field, dragging a burlap sack. And I used to chop cotton and pick cotton on the Pahrump Ranch and the Manse Ranch.

RM: Did you know Lois Kellogg at all?

CJ: She was a thin old lady; she used to be a truck driver herself.

RM: Did you ever go out to her ranch?

CJ: Yes, when my dad worked for her. Louis Sharp and several other Indians from here also went over there and worked.

RM: What did your dad do for her?

CJ: Irrigation.

RM: What was she growing?

CJ: Wheat, alfalfa, barley, things like that.

RM: Do you recall any stories about her or what people thought of her?

CJ: That's all. I don't know how my dad got the job. He went up to Fish Lake; that's where she lived. She had a lot of dogs, they said, a different kind.

RM: Irish wolfhounds?

CJ: Yes, whatever that is. One of his kin was working up there, too—Billy Beck. That was Richard Arnold's uncle. But he came back and worked for the WPA on the roads. They were gravel roads; there were no paved roads.

RM: Did your dad work for Charles Sawday, or did you, at the Manse?

CJ: No, but we picked cotton, thinned cotton. This was Elmer Bowman, though—Bowman took over.

CHAPTER TWO

CJ: I'll tell you what—at the beginning, before the white people stepped in . . . you know where Raycraft Ranch is—where Button used to live? That was Chief Tecopa's property before Raycraft took over. And John Tecopa owned Pahrump Ranch—Chief Tecopa's son.

RM: That's really interesting. The books say something else, but that's exactly what Button told me; that Chief Tecopa had the Raycraft and his son John owned Pahrump Ranch. At that time, who had the Manse Ranch?

CJ: I don't recall that, but there was an old man just staying there, taking care of the ranch; I don't know his name.

RM: The old documents say there were two or three brothers, the Jordan brothers, who had the Manse Ranch before the Younts moved on there. The Younts were gone before you were born. I wonder, before the whites actually got into the valley . . . I've heard that there was a guy named Indian Charlie who might have been on the Manse Ranch.

CJ: You're talking about Mormon Charlie.

RM: That's it. And he was an Indian, right? And he was at the Manse? Was he related to Chief Tecopa?

CJ: No, I don't think so. One of Chief Tecopa's sons got killed at Manse Ranch. You know where they haul the gravel up there, where the Manse Ranch is? That's where he got shot.

RM: At that time, the Manse Ranch and the Pahrump Ranch were a long ways apart, right? You had to walk six miles to get there, or else ride a horse. They had a building on the Pahrump Ranch they called the bunkhouse. Do you remember that? Was that also the cook shack?

CJ: Yes, after the other one burned down, where my sister used to cook. She cooked in the old house, the kitchen for the boarding people.

RM: Did you used to go over there very much when your sister was working there?

CJ: Yes, I used to go help her pick the eggs from the tree. The chickens made a nest up there and she couldn't get them. We had to go over and help her get the eggs out of the tree.

RM: Could you draw a map of the Pahrump Ranch as it was in the old days, showing where the cook shack was and the boss's house and the barn and so forth?

CJ: Yes, I could do that. I used to tell my sisters, if I make a book myself, my son and I would begin to work and maybe it would take me longer. I told my sister, "I've got to start from the beginning, from where the people were—no white people whatsoever, only one or two

storekeepers and the mailman and the Manse Ranch.” There was a guy down there with red pants. We used to say, “Red Pants coming over there.” We used to call him “Red Pants.”

RM: And who was he?

CJ: I don’t know his name; he was just a guy—he lived by himself way down there. In those days there were no cars, nothing.

RM: So you guys didn’t go up to the Manse very often?

CJ: Except to go get fruit; that’s about it.

RM: What fruits would you get?

CJ: Apricots and other things; they had an orchard.

RM: When you were a kid?

CJ: Not a little kid, but less than a teenager, maybe.

RM: Maybe we could talk about some of the people you might have known.

CJ: Bowman had a dairy at Manse when he moved over there. That was a big dairy because he used to haul the milk to Rancho Grande. One time my sister and I went to catch a ride to Pahrump with him from here and we delivered some milk at Mercury. We didn’t go in; they told us to stay at the gate so we got off at the gate. He delivered the milk—he had a big, huge truck. And when he got done he picked us up again and we came to Pahrump, riding with him.

RM: Who was the oldest white man that you knew?

CJ: There were several—Pop Buol, Herb Rose, George Ishmael, and John B. Hughes. John’s son Leon Hughes and his family were there in 1940. I went to school with the sisters—Beryl and Maxine and Betty Jean. Kenneth, the boy, wasn’t in school when I went to school at Pahrump Ranch. Also there was Byron, a brother. Leon was the oldest one—he could call himself pioneer. I knew Leon Hughes when he was 18 years old.

RM: I interviewed him.

CJ: He knew us pretty well, too. He was just like one of the family.

RM: I also interviewed his daughter, DeAnna.

CJ: She’s the oldest.

RM: What do you recall about Leon Hughes?

CJ: He was nice to me. I used to work for him when he was on the Pahrump Ranch; he was the boss.

RM: So this would have been later. Because his dad had it in the '30s.

CJ: I think he was leasing it. He grew the first cotton in the valley. I, my sister, Willie, Annie Beck, Rosie Weed, and Lynn Ishmael picked the first crop.

RM: And he lost it because all his pigs died.

CJ: Oh yes, all the pigs died because of overfeeding or something.

RM: I heard they got cholera or some pig disease and in a few days, they were all dead.

MW: Swine flu. [Laughter]

CJ: And he used to dump them where the old dump used to be above Pahrump—where that gas station, Terrible Herbst's, is now, at 160 and 372 west. . . .

RM: That was a dump then? That's amazing.

CJ: There were hardly any people. Leon and the brothers and sisters were the only ones there.

LH: Didn't you go to school with the Ishmaels, too? Dewey and all them?

CJ: Oh, I went to school with Dewey Ishmael and with Phyllis Ishmael. Dewey went into the service and went overseas and got married to a Guam woman. He came back in the 1950s to visit Pahrump and he was telling my twin sister, Annabelle, "I'm Dewey." She didn't know who he was till he said he was Dewey.

RM: Was he George Ishmael's son?

CJ: Yes, he was the youngest son.

RM: What do you recall about George Ishmael?

CJ: He was like an Indian man to me. [Chuckles] He used to be at Wheeler Springs, too. I remember we were picking pine nuts up in the mountains at Wheeler Springs and I said to my sisters, "George Ishmael's cattle used to be there, because when we were picking pine nuts, we got scared by that big bull coming down, going to the water with the other cattle and heifers." We got in a tree when the bull went under us like that.

LH: You didn't go to school with Lynn Ishmael, then? Lynn was older?

CJ: He probably didn't want to go to school. I went to school with Dewey's sister Phyllis Ishmael but I didn't go with Mabel.

MW: Were the Bells related to the Ishmaels?

CJ: Phyllis Ishmael is married to Dick Bell.

RM: Were there other Indians living there when you were growing up there?

CJ: Ed Diamal picked Jim Steve up from California and brought him over to work for him.

RM: Was he an Indian?

CJ: He was a Pueblo Indian.

RM: Are the Steves that are over there now related to him?

CJ: No.

RM: The Steves were not Paiutes?

CJ: The wife is Paiute, Pahrump Paiute.

GS: I wanted to ask a question. Were Honuits and Mamie Steve related?

CJ: They were brother and sister.

GS: And how were they related to Bob Lee?

CJ: By marriage, with [speaks in Paiute] Minnie Steve. Old Man Bob Lee's wife, Wiposta. Minnie Steve, Mamie's sister, was married to Old Man Bob Lee.

GS: Oh, okay. Then Bob Lee Junior was related to Mamie.

CJ: Yes, Mamie Steve was his auntie. That comes from Holmes.

RM: Tell me about Bob Lee.

LH: Can I interject a little bit here on the family tree you're referring to? She mentioned Hungry Bill and Panamint Tom—they were brothers. Long Jim comes from the sisters of Hungry Bill and Panamint Tom. This is also where the Bob Lees come in. They're all related because of the sisters. I think there were three or four sisters in that family. I know the names are confusing

because they didn't go by the same name. Hungry Bill was a huge man and Panamint Tom was slighter.

RM: But are Hungry Bill and Panamint Tom related to the Lees? Do they come down from the Lees?

CJ: No, one of the sisters of Panamint Tom and Hungry Bill is Bob Lee's mother.

RM: Hungry Bill's sisters were married to the Lees?

CJ: Yes.

RM: Bob Lee is related to Phi Lee, right?

CJ: Just hold on. Let me explain this to you. My dad's auntie was married to Phi Lee, a hiko, a white man. My dad's auntie Sally was married to him and he raised four boys and two girls.

RM: What were their names?

CJ: Phi Lee and Sally had four boys and two girls—Dick Lee, Bob Lee, Gus Lee, Burt Lee, Dora Lee Brown, and Clara Lee. Do you know Lalovi Miller from Moapa?

RM: I've talked to her on the phone.

CJ: She's Old Man Bob Lee's granddaughter.

RM: The one who was married to your dad's auntie. Now how is Bob Lee related to Phi Lee?

CJ: That's the son.

RM: Okay, Phi Lee is Bob Lee's father.

GS: Bob Lee the first.

LH: Let me confuse you a little farther. Aren't there three Bob Lees involved in this?

CJ: Yes, there's the one, the hiko—hiko Bob Lee. I think that was after he married Mamie Steve's sister. He is the youngest Bob Lee.

RM: How are the three Bob Lees related?

LH: Two are brothers.

CJ: There's Bob Lee, Old Man Senior. Bob Lee Junior, and another Bob Lee. He had to name two of his sons Bob Lee.

RM: And not all the Bob Lees are white men; Phi Lee was a Caucasian.

LH: Yes, and one of the sons was also Caucasian from a different wife.

RM: But two of the sons were Indian.

CJ: Half-Indian.

RM: And one of them was your auntie. Now, what is her name?

LH: It's confusing, isn't it? Do you have a piece of paper?

RM: I think writing it down would be great. While we're thinking about that, are you related to Chief Tecopa?

CJ: When they dedicated that cemetery they said I was a great-niece.

GS: I don't understand how that works or how Carol Lee Fields fits in.

CJ: Who is Carol Lee Fields?

GS: Carol Lee Fields is Danny Fields's daughter. His mother was possibly married to one of Chief Tecopa's sons.

LH: They're also related to us, right? Everybody's interrelated here. [Laughter]

RM: How do the Paiutes define incest?

GS: That would be our first cousins. Our cousins are like our brothers and sisters.

CJ: Indian people don't say "cousins"; they always say sisters/brothers; they don't say what the white people words say.

RM: And of course you can't marry your brothers and sisters and you treat your cousins like brothers and sisters.

GS: Oh, yes. You'd say my kids are like her kids. And her kids are all like my kids and we're all that way.

RM: If the cousins are all considered brothers and sisters, are the aunts all considered mothers?

CJ: No.

RM: And your father's brother would not be considered your father.

CJ: No.

RM: So it only applies to the children. And you're obligated to help your brothers and sisters, aren't you?

CJ: Oh, yes. Always.

RM: And if you don't, you're not a good person. Right?

GS: Right. It's just automatic—when something happens to somebody in the family, we're there. That's why it's so hard for me to understand why when something happens in the outside world to a particular family that the rest of the family isn't there to help.

RM: Now one step farther. Do your children consider, for instance, Marie's children to be cousins?

CJ: Well, they were raised in the new world. But they know about that. For instance with my grandson, Matt—her [Gloria Shearer's] daughter considers Matt her nephew.

RM: But your cousins are like your brothers and sisters.

GS: I can't get my husband to understand that, either. If something happens over here to a relative of ours, we have to go. He says, "Well, how can that person be related?"

I say, "In a white man's world, you wouldn't be related. In my world, we are." But you're there to help.

RM: And you feel about your cousins the way whites would their brothers and sisters.

MW: Yes. It's like with my cousins, her daughters—they come to me and talk to me about family problems they have because I'm an elder. And they all call me "Auntie."

LH: How many sisters did Hungry Bill have?

CJ: I think four sisters; I don't know, recall. Four or five.

RM: It looks like you're doing a genealogy, Leroy.

LH: Not really, just kind of an abbreviated version. I went to Death Valley High School so my handwriting is not the best. [Laughter]

RM: Okay, let's go over your chart. Hungry Bill had several sisters.

LH: There is a Wilson in there somewhere; I'm kind of confused about that.

RM: Yes, because Marie and Gloria are related to Wilson from the Wilson Ranch, right? That's part of your roots.

CJ: Yes, I'm going to be talking about the Shoshone Wilsons.

RM: Okay, now Phi Lee married one of Hungry Bill's sisters. Do you agree?

CJ: Yes.

RM: And Dora Brown was Bob Lee's sister. Now, who was Bob Lee? He was Phi Lee's son? CJ: Which Bob Lee? The first, second, or third?

LH: Which Bob Lee—that's the Indian one. Which one is it?

CJ: Between Old Bob Lee and the younger Bob Lee—the first son, probably, from Old Bob Lee.

LH: You got me confused now.

RM: It is confusing.

GS: The first Bob Lee was a hiko.

CJ: No, a half-breed.

GS: You said he was a hiko and then the second one was a half-breed. And then comes Bob Lee, Junior, the young one. He was the Indian. Robert Lee was white and then he married an Indian.

CJ: I don't know if he was married or not. Phi Lee and Sally Lee had a son named Bob Lee—that would make him half-Caucasian and half-Shoshone. Bob Lee, Sr., had just the two boys, the first being Bob Lee, Jr. This was with his first wife, Minnie (Holmes) Lee. She was full Paiute, making him half-Paiute, one quarter-Shoshone, and one quarter-white.

Bob Lee, Sr. had his second son, Robert Lee, with a Caucasian woman, making him three quarters-white and one quarter-Shoshone. His whereabouts are unknown to us, or whether he is still alive. So the first son was Bob Lee and the second son was Robert Lee, "Hiko."

GS: Oh, I thought the oldest Bob Lee was white.

LH: No, half-breed—because Phi Lee was Caucasian and Sally Lee was Shoshone. That made the senior half-breed.

CJ: That's where Lalovi and John Lee come from.

LH: From the second Bob Lee.

RM: That is complicated. Now Clarabelle, tell us how you're related to Chief Tecopa.

CJ: He probably was related to Whispering Ben and certainly we were related to Whispering Ben from my mother's side.

RM: Was Whispering Ben Chief Tecopa's son?

CJ: No, maybe they were brothers; I don't know. That was far back and I wasn't around.

RM: Whispering Ben and Chief Tecopa certainly wound up being two very important people in this area's history. Do you know anything about who their parents were?

CJ: No, that's too far back.

GS: Now if Whispering Ben was related to Chief Tecopa, that would have made Danny Fields and Stella cousins.

CJ: I know they're cousins. Absolutely.

GS: Danny Fields was Chief Tecopa's grandson.

LH: How is Dan Fields Chief Tecopa's grandson? By a son or daughter of Chief Tecopa?

GS: Danny Fields was Anna Sia-venz, Annie Tecopa's, son. Annie Tecopa was Chief Tecopa's sister.

RM: Now, what's her name, again?

GS: Annie Tecopa.

MW: Sia-venz is her Indian name.

CJ: Oh, I thought she was married to one of the brothers; that's what I was thinking.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Well, we'll have a transcript of this conversation and we'll try and draw a kinship chart of how these folks are related. Let's talk some more about the Indians who were in Pahrump when you were a kid.

CJ: I can recall that there were a lot of Indians ahead of me a long time ago; that's what Mama and Daddy used to tell us but I don't know their names.

RM: How about some of them whose names you knew when you were growing up?

CJ: All I remember is Mamie Steve's family; that's all.

RM: Where did Mamie Steve come from, again?

CJ: She came from Holmes [her maiden name].

RM: Did she have a husband?

CJ: Yes, Jim Steve. She had a lot of children—ten children.

RM: And what were their children's names?

CJ: Clifford Steve, Raymond Steve, Ina Steve, Esther Steve, Louise Steve, Jimmy Steve, Glen Steve, Richard Steve, and Norma Steve.

RM: Did Jim Steve work at the ranches? Did most of the Indian men work at the ranches at that time?

CJ: Yes, if they were hiring.

RM: Were there any Indians, when you were growing up, who tried to live the traditional life?

CJ: All the Indians.

RM: So all of you lived it to some degree, but they were also getting money from working so you could buy things at the store?

GS: Oh, yes. They had to live in two worlds.

CJ: My dad used to say that Levi's pants were 75 cents a pair.

RM: Is that right? So people were living in two worlds. You had not given up the traditional Paiute life.

CJ: No way, Jose.

RM: That's really interesting. And when there wasn't work, you could survive. Like you said, during the Depression, you could survive off of the traditional foods.

LH: We also had two different locations—Indian people lived down in the valley and up in the mountains.

CJ: I'm talking about the old times, but that's new, the mountain place.

LH: Well, before 1900.

CJ: When I went to school, I'd go down. When the summertime came, we'd go up.

GS: They went up where it was cool.

RM: How did that home in the mountains get started in 1900?

CJ: Homestead.

RM: And that's still your home, right? Can you talk any about the traditional Paiute religion as it was practiced by the people you grew up with?

CJ: I don't have a religion; we don't have a religion.

GS: No, we don't have a religion. I don't know about anybody else, but the way I see it is what created us and what kept us sustained all these years is the earth. So we call it Mother Earth. This is where I have an argument with some of the Mormon people. I'll say, "The earth is what I believe in. That's the reason why we keep it clean. That's what feeds us all through our life. Where are you going to get all of this if it wasn't from the earth? And then when you die, you go back to the earth." That's my belief.

I have yet to shake hands, or have anybody shake hands, with God, whoever he is. I don't say they're wrong because I don't know; if it's something that will help them, that's what they need.

RM: When I talk about "religion," we're really talking about everything, right? That's a wonderful way you just described it, Gloria. Clarabelle, can you describe the traditional way of thinking, of looking at the earth, that you saw as a young woman among the Paiutes?

CJ: At the beginning of the earth, there were no white people whatsoever, no foreign people in here. Coyote is the one I would like to think created us people on this earth. Before there were people, the beasts were the people; there were no human beings. That's what my mama said.

After that, we were put on the earth and this is our country. That's what they have always said. It's not white people's country, but they claim it's theirs. We were already here, on these United States, on the globe.

RM: Can you talk about any of the sacred places in the Pahrump area and in the nearby mountains—places that are very special and spiritual?

CJ: I don't use that "spiritual," either.

RM: I'm probably using the wrong words. I don't want to get into anything confidential here, I'm not trying to pry, but are there places in the Pahrump Valley and in the mountains that would be very special to the Paiutes?

GS: It's like that cave that they've got up here on Sunrise where our dad and some others went and got their special songs. That is a sacred place, or a special place.

MW: That is the place where they went to get their song, and the power to heal and the power to talk for the people, like Dad used to do.

CJ: I never heard it talked about like that before.

MW: Well, I say this because that was our doctor; that was the healing doctor for all the people in this area and up around there. That's what Willy used to tell me and that's what my dad told me—that when they were very young men, three of them went to that place over here. Dad said that his yukapi'a—his power—came in a ball of fire and he swallowed it. That's why he could talk.

CJ: I never heard it described like that.

MW: Well, that's what they told me. That's what Willy, Wi'a, and those folks used to tell me. I used to sit and talk to Willy Fisher a lot; he used to tell me about the places not to go because I was always wandering the tops of the mountains and looking for things. He told me, in Paiute, "Don't go down here. That's not a place for you to go because the doctors and so on were buried on that site. Don't go down there because," he said, "you're going to get sick."

GS: But that's the only place I've heard of around here. That Anderson guy said, "All of this is all sacred, the bottom parts of Mount Charleston are all sacred."

I said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Tell me about it."

He said, "Oh, it's all sacred; don't you know? It's all sacred."

I said, "Baloney sauce. I never heard of anything happening up that way," because we've been to Mount Charleston on this side.

RM: I was talking to a Chemehuevi down in Parker and he was telling me when they come up to Mount Charleston, they feel a spiritualism or whatever you want to call it.

GS: You know why they call Mount Charleston sacred? Because they're given food on that mountain—there is sheep, deer, elk, pine nuts. That's probably why.

RM: Let's go back to other Indians that were living in Pahrump at this time. You mentioned the Steves, and. . . .

LH: Oscar Bruce, Dora Bruce.

GS: What about the ones that lived out at Ash Meadows?

MW: Bishops.

LH: How about Annie Beck?

CJ: And Sarah Weed, also known as Sarah Button.

RM: Yes, talk about the Weed family.

CJ: They [Gloria and Marie] will tell you.

RM: Yes, you're Weeds, aren't you?

GS: Yes, but tell him about what you know about the Weeds.

CJ: I don't know where the Weeds came from way back.

LH: You know who they were and who they worked for when you were there.

MW: You knew that they lived there at that period of time. Mama said that when she was a little girl, there was a great big cottonwood tree down where the shooting range is and that's where she lived when she was a little girl, she and Tom Weed.

CJ: Hidden Hills?

MW: Yes, back down Hidden Hills. Mama took me down there and you could see the remnants of an old cottonwood tree. She said, "This is where I used to live." There was a small little shack. I saw old buttons and things like that.

LH: Didn't Grandpa and Mutt or John Weed or somebody build Trout Springs up there? Who made Trout Springs with Grandpa? You used to tell me it was Grandpa and somebody else—Mutt Weed and John Weed.

CJ: Oh, yes, but that's way back in the 1930s—'35, I guess. Mutt or John Weed—I don't remember them being up there but that was before my day. George Ishmael was the one who

fixed that water line. Is that what you're talking about at Trout Springs? I don't know who made that wooden pine thing.

RM: What do you recall about Pop Buol?

CJ: Piumunsit—Pop Buol.

GS: That was the name the Indians gave Pop Buol.

RM: What does it mean?

GS: We don't know what it means; that's just the name they gave him.

RM: Before the whites came in, what did the Indians call the Manse Springs?

CJ: It's mahanset. The white people didn't pronounce it right—they called it "Manse" Ranch.

RM: And what does it mean?

CJ: It's just the name of the spring, I believe. Whenever you're trying to say something in the Paiute language, the white people who come around to say it, their tongues are tied up [laughter] and they don't pronounce the word right.

RM: That's right. My tongue is tied. What about "Pahrump." Where does that word come from, do you think, Clarabelle?

CJ: I'll tell you what—Coyote was just god-like; he'd tell us what to do. He's the one that named this place, its springs. Parumba is the name of the little spring. [The "u" is really more like the "uh" sound in "the"] I think it's dried up now; it was still there, where a lot of arrow weed and mesquite trees used to be. We call it parumba in Paiute language. And the hikos don't pronounce the words right so they say, "Pahrump," or "rock." The white people just went to "rump." That's got nothing to do with the spring where we used to go in swimming at one time, it's just the name of that other spring.

RM: Does Pahrump mean anything in Paiute?

CJ: No, it's just the name of the spring.

GS: "Water" is paa.

LH: Yes, "water" is paa, but in this particular case, it's just the name of the spring. So parumba doesn't mean anything; it's just the name of the spring.

CJ: Peges is the Indian word for Las Vegas. Moapa, they say, means something like “mud spring” or something. I don’t know; they’ve got words for it.

LH: They’ve got mooapatsu.

CJ: Yes, they call the Indian people from Moapa mooapatsu. [Speaks in Paiute]

RM: What was the Indian name for Mount Charleston?

CJ: See-ya-coov.

RM: Does it mean anything?

CJ: It doesn’t mean anything; it’s just the name of that mountain.

RM: I’ve heard it meant “snow mountain.” That’s not true?

CJ: There’s a different name—Nuva’ai. You’re talking about “snow mountain.” The colony from here used that word, Nuva’ai. But on the Pahrump side, we call it Siaku.

RM: That’s really interesting. Are there any other places that we should mention here?

CJ: Ash Meadows. Koi’oits.

RM: And what does that mean—anything?

CJ: That’s the name of that place. That’s what everybody asks me and Cynthia and I say, “There’s no such meaning. It’s just the name of that place.”

LH: They’ve got a name for Stump Springs, don’t they?

CJ: I don’t know the name of that one, but I know Hidden Hills—mahava, “bush,”

RM: Is that related to the word “Mojave?”

CJ: No. mahava is just a bush; any kind of bush.

RM: When you were growing up, what kind of use was made of the Hidden Hills area?

CJ: There was a hiko man with an Indian wife who lived there for many years. He was a newcomer over there. Tuesday we went down there with Kay Fowler from Reno. She’s interviewing me to learn Indian names.

RM: That’s interesting. Did people live at Hidden Hills when you were a kid?

CJ: They probably did; I wasn't there except one time for a powwow. We went down there I believe in 1933. It was for a woman with an Indian name. Her name was on the paper—Susan Yount (Wu-side-ites).

RM: Did she die after John Yount?

CJ: No, she died before him.

RM: That's interesting. When John Yount died, his wife went to Roland Wiley and asked him about the inheritance of the ranch because they weren't really married. That's when Roland Wiley bought the ranch.

CJ: You're talking about a white lady.

RM: Do you remember her name?

CJ: I think it was Bonnie; I'm not sure.

RM: But John Yount had a Paiute wife before that?

CJ: Yes. Let me tell you—the white people men, the hiko men, didn't have white women around so they had to marry the Indian people. A lot of Indians had a white husband. But Dick Lee married a white lady, Dixie.

LH: Dick Lee was a Native American.

CJ: He was Bob Lee, Senior's, brother.

RM: How did the Indians feel about Indian women marrying white guys?

CJ: I don't know.

GS: I think a lot of times it depended on the person. My dad always told me that you wanted to keep your blood pure. I'd say, "Yeah, right, keep your blood pure. And you married somebody that's half-Basque?" [Laughs]

RM: Was your Basque grandfather a sheepherder here?

GS: No, he's the one that did all of the mason work down at Death Valley Inn.

RM: Oh right, you told me about him when I interviewed you. Do you remember Rosie Beck?

CJ: Richard Arnold's mother? That's one of my dad's cousins. Annie Beck was the mother. She was married to a white man, too, so Rosie Beck's a half-breed. You know that mountain point north of Pahrump, Mount Sterling? That's where she lived when she was married to Bill Beck.

GS: Annie Beck was a sweetie; I liked her.

MW: I can see Annie Beck's face; I remember her so well.

RM: What do you recall about her, Clarabelle?

CJ: She lived above Manse Ranch at one of those springs. We went there other day, too, with Kay Fowler. She wanted me to name the waters. She wants to put it all in a book, I guess. She kind of understands the language and she pronounces the words right because she was raised with Vivian Jake somewhere when she was young; that's the one who taught her how to speak the Paiute language. That's the reason she's got the hang of the words.

RM: Is the Paiute language hard to learn, for a white person?

GS: I don't think so.

LH: Several white people have learned it.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: We were talking about Pop Buol. Do you have any other thoughts on him?

CJ: He was a storekeeper.

RM: What did the Indians think of him?

CJ: Nothing—you'd just go down there and buy groceries, that's about it.

RM: Did you like to go down to the store?

CJ: Oh, yes.

RM: Did he sell candy and things like that?

CJ: Candy, coffee, flour, and potatoes—you name it—cheese, baloney, home-made wine, a little gas. My dad used to go down there and fill up his old Ford. The gas was in a glass thing—they called one gallon every time he put one in the car.

GS: That's how they measured it?

CJ: Yes. He had the gas pump standing there—an old-fashioned gas pump.

RM: And you pumped the gas up into the glass thing.

CJ: Yes, and you could hear the gas go up. Bob Lee used to make the wine for him.

RM: Bob Lee made Pop Buol's wine? I didn't know that.

CJ: Bob Lee used to drink a lot of his wine.

LH: Ruby [Jim] used to make her own wine, too, and put it up.

CJ: Yes, my mama.

RM: Where did she get the grapes?

CJ: She picked from our ranch.

RM: And you had your own vines?

CJ: Yes. My dad planted them.

RM: Pop Buol had two daughters, didn't he?

CJ: Not old Pop Buol, no. That was his son.

RM: What do you recall about those girls?

CJ: They were nice little girls to go to school with.

RM: Returning to what the whites call sacred sites, are there special places up in the Charlestons that could be noted in this history?

GS: All I know about that is going up to Trout Canyon, my grandson and I, we've walked and looked and there are spots up there where people used to live years ago. Wherever there was a spring, wherever there was water—and the water used to flow down the canyon at one time—there's spots all over. And that's where the Indians lived.

LH: That place we call Grapevine Canyon—they've got another name for it.

GS: Santa Cruz.

LH: Santa Cruz, yes. That whole area is full of petroglyphs. And the people from Pahrump, I think, are destroying them. That is a sacred area.

GS: Yes, that's historical.

CJ: My sister said they have destroyed petroglyphs, the writing on the rocks, and run away with them.

MW: That's just like on this side of the canyon, what I call the lower ranch and the upper ranch. On the lower ranch that my grandparents first had, there's a spring and there used to be a house sitting there; you walk up toward the seepage of the water. There are petroglyphs on all sides, but they're slowly being destroyed. Now the Park Service is in there and they've got it all blocked off but people were hacking pieces off.

RM: And those sites are really special to Paiute people.

GS: Yes, they are; they're historical.

MW: They're a reminder of who we are from the past.

RM: What about the Nopah Mountains on the west? We always talk about the Charleston Mountains or the Spring Mountains, but what was the Paiute use of the Nopahs on the west side of the Pahrump Valley? Did you ever go up in there?

CJ: No, I haven't.

LH: Grandpa used to talk about Chico Ridge. You haven't been up there but Native Americans have.

CJ: Oh, yes, the older people, a long time ago.

RM: Are there springs up there?

CJ: No; that's why it's called Nopah, "no water."

RM: If there are sheep up there, how are they getting water?

CJ: There's water at the end of that mountain when you go to Tecopa, California, that way.

GS: Coyote Springs. You come along the Nopah, then over to the side, there's a spring. Whether it's there now or not, I don't know.

CJ: Or maybe the sheep went down into Chicago Valley to drink water.

MW: Mama used to say there was a spring over there. When she was small and their grandparents were coming from Pahrump, they would stop off and spend the night at the spring.

CJ: There used to be a spring in the rocks over there, too, by Stewart Valley on the other side of Pahrump. It dried up, too, I think.

RM: Oh, really? Was that the spring where you and Marie lived, Gloria?

GS: No, Chappo is not a spring; it comes right out of the mountain. It's artesian. But the mountain sheep could do very well without water because the succulent plants hold water.

RM: Clarabelle, when you look out at the Pahrump Valley now, what do you think?

CJ: It's driving me crazy.

GS: Yes [laughs]. I can understand that, little woman.

CJ: Too much population, according to me. Pretty soon that water's going to be dry.

GS: Yes, some of the springs are dry there.

MW: Going up to the upper ranch—and lower ranch, too—we had all the springs on that side of the mountain. From the road you could see a little cave the water used to come out of, but no

more. And as you're going down further, towards Sandy Valley, they had a trough where a spring was; the water would go into the trough for the cattle. But there's no more water there.

RM: So they're drying up all along there?

MW: Oh, yes. I went out looking at all those springs about 30 years ago with Santini, Woosters, and all of them when they were on the board. I had to go with them because Gloria was living up in Oregon at that time.

RM: Who were they?

MW: Roy Woosters and Santini were politicians in this valley years ago.

RM: Well, Clarabelle, what have we left out? Have you got any other thoughts? I feel like you know so much and I haven't even scratched the surface. Do any of you have questions?

GS: I can't think of anything right offhand; I'll probably think about it tomorrow. I'll go, "Oh, I should have told him this, or asked her that." When Clarabelle was a young lady, they hardly left the Pahump Valley. They'd come over to Vegas occasionally but when they were children they were just like my mother—when she was a child, she didn't know what a city was; they never ventured far. They would travel from the valley up to the Test Site.

MW: It's like we were telling you, when Mom and my grandparents and those folks would go out there on buckboard, old George Ishmael was right alongside them. George Ishmael lived there a long time. In fact, was it the Phi Lees that had Resting Springs?

GS: I know they had Horse Thief Springs.

RM: Phi Lee had Horse Thief?

GS: Oh, yes, and they had Resting Springs. Resting Springs still has their name carved on one of the rocks up there, I think Elaine told me. That's where Elaine Ishmael grew up part of her life.

RM: Whenever you did come into Vegas during these early years, say up into the 1940s, Clarabelle, what did you think of Vegas?

CJ: I used to come to Helldorado Village. Lorraine came here first in 1935; we used to come to the rodeo at the Cashman Field.

MS: Her family were horse people—her father had horses. Half the horses that roam the valley now are from his stock.

RM: How many head of horses did your dad have, Clarabelle?

CJ: In the early days when he was young, he had two mares and one stud up in the mountains, and they accumulated from there. He'd break them and we'd ride them.

RM: How many did he end up with?

LH: You told me he had a hundred head at one time.

CJ: Yes, probably. But after the BLM took over, they took a lot of them. It's the pintos I care for.

RM: So a lot of those wild horses are descended from your horses?

CJ: Yes, but they're not wild horses; they are more pets, in other words.

RM: Were you a pretty good horsewoman?

CJ: Oh, yes, I was riding since I was a little girl.

RM: Did you ride bareback?

CJ: Yes; so did he [Leroy].

GS: I'm deathly afraid of horses.

CJ: Oh, come on—why?

GS: They've got no steering wheel and no brakes.

CJ: Oh, you've got the bridle to hang onto and the reins and saddle.

GS: The only horse I want's a new Mustang. [Laughter]

MW: I was out at the BLM when they were talking with Ray (I go up there occasionally), There's a palomino over on that range up by Goodsprings. There's a beautiful palomino; I've seen it. They let him go; they never take him. I saw him about six months ago.

LH: Talking about the Hughes family, what was Old Man Hughes's name, the guy with one arm, Leon's dad? What was his name?

CJ: John Hughes.

LH: They used to buy horses from us. One of the horses they bought was a palomino stallion, wasn't it?

CJ: Yes.

RM: What would a horse go for?

CJ: I don't know in those days. You know, those Indians wouldn't say big money; they'd always go for a little money.

LH: Didn't he used to sell horses—what's that black gentleman's name down in Pahrump that you were talking about?

CJ: Walter Stinnett?

LH: Yes; what year was that?

CJ: Way back; I don't know when. It was the 1800s, right? It was on the paper; I told you to copy it down. You haven't done that.

LH: He used to sell a lot of horses to people in the area. You weren't familiar with his name from Pahrump, but there used to be a Tex Gates here in Las Vegas—Twin Lakes? I think the last 30 or so he ever sold, he sold to Tex Gates. Grandpa sold a lot of them to Ash Meadow ranchers.

RM: Let's review once more Chief Tecopa's descendants. I don't think we finished that. So Chief Tecopa is your great-grandfather and you're related to him through your mother? And then she's related to him through who?

CJ: Her mother.

LH: I thought it was Whispering Ben.

CJ: Yes, Mama's mother was a granddaughter of Whispering Ben.

GS: So that means that our mother's grandmother and your mother were sisters.

CJ: No. My mama didn't have a sister, I don't think. They called them sister but it was just a woman.

GS: By a different woman.

CJ: I don't know.

GS: It had to have been; because if Whispering Ben was Mama's grandfather and your mother was his daughter also, then that made them half-sisters, probably from two different women.

CJ: Well, it's all on the census roll.

LH: Did you get that? Ruby Jim was her mother. Her Indian name was "Wamoots;" she was the daughter of Whispering Ben.

GS: And then my mom's grandmother, whose name was Nellie Benn, was Whispering Ben's daughter, also.

RM: Oh, so you're both coming down from Whispering Ben, who was related to Tecopa, you think.

MW: The Indians in Moapa come from Whispering Ben.

GS: And Tule Ben. Tule Ben was also known as Las Vegas Ben.

MW: Tule was Las Vegas Ben. That's what they have in the archives, I think.

RM: And do the people in Moapa mainly come from Pahrump?

MW: Most of them originated in Pahrump, came over here to Las Vegas, and then over to Moapa. And then a lot of them left, just like Mabel Tobin—Mike Tobin's daughter. She was from Parker down there and she said that she was originally from Pahrump. She's deceased now and so is her father.

RM: I was told, down in Parker, that originally the Paiutes down there came from here.

MW: Yes, they did; from Pahrump.

RM: And the whites started coming in and they said, "Hey, we're getting out of here," so they headed south.

MW: Yes. Why do you think the Parker group has Chief Tecopa as their chief?

RM: They claim that he's their chief?

GS: Yes; they'll tell you to your face that Chief Tecopa is their chief.

CJ: I never heard that.

MW: Like these caverns that are down by Ivanpah. I went to the caverns and I said, "My God, that's Chief Tecopa. He's from Pahrump." Well, to the people from Parker, that's their chief. I said, "No, he's originally from up there."

RM: The people in Parker I talked to say that they were living just west of the Mojaves and they got into a conflict with the Mojaves and headed farther south to Parker.

MW: A long time ago, before they had the dams built out—I've had quite a few people tell me this and I've had people from the Havasupai Reservation say the same thing—there used to be a land bridge across the Colorado River in the summertime. The Mojaves would come up here and take women from here and take them back down there.

RM: Yes. I'll tell you another interesting thing. I asked some people in Parker, living right next to the Colorado River, "Do you consider the Colorado River sacred?" And they said no, they consider Mount Charleston sacred, which shows, to me, that their real roots are up here. If they'd been living there for a thousand years, they would likely have more feeling about the Colorado River.

MW: That's just like Gertrude Hanks down in Chemehuevi Valley. She was an old lady—she died four or five years ago—but she said that she came from up this way. She knew all of the old Indians, but only by their Indian names.

GS: Right, Marie and I were questioning her about different people but she would use the Indian name and I didn't know who she was talking about.

MW: But this is where she came from.

RM: By "this," do you mean the Pahrump side or the Vegas side?

MW: Well, from up in this area here.

RM: Okay, the Mount Charleston area. Do you, in your mind, make a distinction between the Las Vegas-side and the Pahrump-side people? Is that an important distinction to you?

GS: To me it is.

RM: You're from the Pahrump side.

GS: Yes, because we belong to one clan. That's our people.

LH: But they're all interrelated—Moapa and Vegas and clear over to Shoshone, which is at the edge of Death Valley.

RM: Yes. But your identity is over there.

MW: In Pahrump, yes. And I'm proud to say it because that's where my family's from.

LH: We even have relatives in Beatty.

RM: How far north does your identity go from Pahrump—to Johnny, Ash Meadows, Beatty, Amargosa—what?

GS: I don't have any relatives up that way. Mine goes as far as Ash Meadows.

RM: And how about you, Clarabelle? Does your identity as a Paiute person pretty much mean Pahrump? And if so, how far north does it go?

LH: Clear to the Test Site, is that right? That's where Grandpa and all of them would go.

CJ: Yes.

MW: All the Indians went to the Test Site. They were migratory people. They went where the food was plentiful. That's just the same with Dad and those folks. For instance, they've got the Petes down in Palm Springs. Mom and Dad went down there for a funeral—one of Dad's relatives—down in Palm Springs. And this lady right down here, Melba Norte, was related to Clyde Lee and the Lees somehow, and they're as far as up to Shivwits, Utah. That's just like with us—we have family clear up to Fort Duchesne.

RM: So you consider that part of your identity?

GS: No, not part of our identity. Our identity is Pahrump, Shoshone, Tecopa, Vegas, and Moapa because that's where most of our family is located.

MW: That's always been home.

RM: I'm afraid I don't always know the right questions to ask. What have I left out, Clarabelle?

CJ: My great-grandfather, Whispering Ben of Pahrump, said, before he died, "The Mountain Charleston is my mountain. When I die, the Mountain Charleston will kick over." It's still sitting there. That's what his mountain is because he's from Pahrump; that's what he said.

RM: I've been told each family "owns" a mountain and that different families have different mountains. Is that right?

MW: Like she said, Whispering Ben said that was his mountain. If we wanted to go pine nut-picking or hunting in that mountain, we would ask permission.

RM: And he would always give it, right?

CJ: Yes. You two [Gloria and Marie] can go over there and help yourselves but if different tribes from Moapa, Cedar, and so on come around, that's different. That's like the man from Caliente or somewhere—I don't know where he was from. He went picking pine nuts up in the mountains and he turned around and asked my mother if it was okay for him to go to pick pine

nuts. Mama said yes. The old Indians were strict about this a long time ago, and they said that mountain belongs to them and you cannot go help yourself to pine nuts or Indian berries, mesquite beans, and things like that because it was the Paiutes' territory. The other ones from Utah are Ute people so that's why it makes a difference. That's what it used to be—you could not go hunting deer on the mountain without permission. They had to have permission from the Paiute people that own the mountain. That's how it used to be a long time ago.

MW: Yes, that's what Mama used to say.

GS: Anymore, it's not like that.

RM: Back then, could a Paiute from somewhere a long ways off—I understand there were Paiutes clear as far as the Black Mesa in Arizona—come over here and go on Mount Charleston? They'd have to get permission?

CJ: Yes.

RM: And if someone went over there, he or she would have to get permission?

CJ: I don't go over there. I like to stay in my Nevada territory. Pahrump territory. But yes, because one time they asked me if I could go over there and interview for the Boy Scouts from Moapa. They wanted me to name the bushes over in Utah territory, Shivwits or Cedar or somewhere. Juanita Bow at the class talked to me and I said, "That bush over there is not like Nevada bush; it's not the same. It's different." Vicky Simmons was the one that asked me if I could go with the Boy Scouts to explain what the bushes are used for. I said, "I can't because I don't know those bushes over there." I mostly stayed in Pahrump except I came to Vegas and worked; that's about it.

MW: That's what I was telling McCracken; you stayed in your own area. But boy, that Helldorado used to be nice. I remember they had the Boots and Beauty Parade.

GS: I remember when Lili St. Cyr sat up in that great big plastic martini glass, and she was, like, in bubble bath. Donald Tom about went crazy when he saw that. [Laughs]

LH: Did you know Donald real well?

GS: Oh, that was another thing. Did you know Lupe's mom; did you ever hear of her?

CJ: She's related to Mamie Steve. Mamie's niece was Lupe.

MW: Lupe—was she part. . . ?

CJ: Half-hiko.

GS: Lupe's at Santa Cruz. And everybody thought I was her daughter.

RM: [Describes how to do a kinship chart] If we did that with the people in Pahrump, I think it would be good to know.

GS: But the thing of it is, with Whispering Ben, Clarabelle doesn't know who his first wife was.

MW: You know, Clarabelle, you can't really go by the census roll because that's just what the hiko put down.

RM: If you don't know the name of somebody's wife or husband, then just leave it "unknown" on the chart. But you know who the children were. Let's say Whispering Ben had three wives—here's how you would write that. [Demonstrating]

MW: The old Indians were quite the lotharios, you know. They had a woman in each town.

GS: They thought they were Kokopelli. [Laughs]

RM: Do you think the women were the same way?

MW: Heavens, no.

GS: Heavens, yes. Because my grandma, Annie Benn, had been married I don't know how many times. Her children, Harley, Iona, Andna, Dad (Boone Wilson), and Russell Wilson all had different fathers.

RM: When we get this interview transcribed, maybe we can work on a kinship chart. Thank you all for talking with me today.

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