An Interview with DEKE LOWE.

An Oral History conducted and edited by
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Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
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89049

Deke Lowe
circa 1955

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PREFACE

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

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

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

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;

b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and

e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

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 hares--in many cases as a stranger--and was allowed to share in the recollection of local history. In a number of cases I had the opportunity to interview Nye County residents whom I have known and admired since I was a teenager; these experiences were especially gratifying. I thank the residents throughout Nye County and southern Nevada--too numerous to mention by name--who provided assistance, information, and photographs. They helped make the successful completion of this project possible.

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

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

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
June 1990

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing David "Deke" Walker Lowe II at his home in Goodsprings, Nevada - March 29 and April 2, 1987

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Deke, could you fill me in about where your parents came from, and how you happened to end up in the Amargosa area?

DL: Well, my father and nether and their parents were all Texans, and my father was a railroad man. During his career he moved to Oklahoma, and that's where I was born. In Snyder, Kiowa County, Oklahoma. September 4, 1913. My father worked for the Frisco Railroad in Oklahoma, and prior to that he'd worked for a number: Santa Fe, and Katy, and all of those famous old names in Texas.

Then in 1921 he become unemployed, came out to California, and went to work for the Southern Pacific in Imperial Valley during the fruit rush - the cantaloupe rush and so forth. That winter he went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad, and they sent him out on the desert. And so he worked at Dry Lake out of Las Vegas, and Jean, Nevada.

And then he was working at Crucero, where the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad crossed the Union Pacific Railroad, and the T&T needed a chief dispatcher. He applied for the job, and they told him he could have it, but it took him 30 days to get loose from the Union Pacific, and when he went down to Ludlow, where the headquarters was, to go to work, they said they'd hired a chief dispatcher from off the Santa Fe.

And so they opened up the station at Tecopa, California, where the mines are - the Noonday. He was there during the summer of 1922 and then he sent for his family. We came out in November 1922. We arrived at Ludlow in the middle of the night and got off and stayed overnight at the Murphy Brothers' Hotel. The Murphy Brothers had been in Greenwater with Dad Fairbanks and all the rest of those characters, then ended up in Ludlow.

We stayed overnight there, and got on the train early in the morning ¬it must've been around 4:00 or 4:30. Of course, being winter, it was really dark And so we came up through the desert, and as it began to get daylight, we were along about Dumont Dunes. And my mother looked out and saw those dunes, and she almost fainted. She said, "Oh, my God! What are we coming to?" And my brother, who was a teenager, was all shook up with it, too. So then we went down into the Tecopa Canyon - the Amargosa River - and it started to green up and all, and she said, "Well, it might not be too bad." (You know, it was getting better all the time.) Then we came out of the canyon, and here was that god-awful desolate, white Borax Flats out there and [laughs] she went into another tizzy. When the train stopped, she jumped right off and went to my father, and said, "Mt. Lowe, why did you ever bring us to this god-forsaken place?" Those were the first words she spoke.

Be said, "Now, Mother, it isn't all that bad. You'll get used to it." And you know, she never complained, or anything, and it worked out just beautifully. [laughter] But I never will forget the way she just hustled right over there and got on him.

Tecopa was a lot smaller than it is now. There were only probably a half a dozen houses. There was a little store there, and 3 or 4 railroad employees. The Tecopa Railroad had its own

train and crew and they lived at Tecopa. The mines employed about 50 men. They were all single, and lived up at the mine, which was 9 miles away. In those days, you didn't have the transportation and roads you have now. So all of those mines out in Death Valley and around the area - the talc mines, and the various gold and lead mines - had people living right there. They'd come in to Tecopa or Shoshone for their supplies. We lived at Tecopa for 6 years until the price of lead went down and the mine sort of slowly declined. The mines there operated according to the price of lead.

RM: The Tecopa mine was a lead mine?

DL: It was a lead mine. It had a little gold with it, and a little silver, but it was mainly lead. It was an old mine that the Mormons opened up back in Civil War times. First they found the Gunsight and then across the hill, which was the big mine, was the Noonday. They even had a smelter there in the 1870s. Tecopa wasn't located where it is right now. It was 9 miles up at the head of the China Ranch Canyon. They had a smelter and a town with a post office. I think they had the first post office in 1877. So it was a town for 30 or 35 years.

RM: Up the head of the canyon.

DL: Yes. And then when they built the T&T Railroad, they moved it down to where it is now, on the railroad. So Tecopa is really the oldest town in that whole country.

RM: How old were you by then?

DL: I was 9 when we came there and I was almost 15 when we left. (We left in August and my birthday was in September.) My dad went to Ludlow, where he was the second trick dispatcher. We lived there a little over a year.

Ludlow was a fairly good-sized town for the desert. It had a number of Santa Fe employees and it had T&T employees and shops. The Santa Fe ran east and west through there, and the south side of the track was mostly Santa Fe-employees' homes and so forth. The north side was the business part. Then there was a section that was all T&T employees that they called Tonopah Avenue. And on each side of this avenue were the railroad people's houses. And then to the west of town - right on the edge of the town - were the T&T shops, which employed probably 20 or 25 people then.

I had to go away to high school. I had a sister living at Redondo Beach, California, so I went down there. Incidentally, on my birthday I registered [chuckles] as a freshman in high school at Redondo Union High. At that time there wasn't the population [there is now], so Redondo Union High was also for Manhattan Beach and Hermosa Beach students. All 3 towns' students went to Redondo Union High. I went there for about 6 months, and then we moved to Los Angeles, so I became, instead of a freshman, a senior in junior high school at John Muir Junior High.

The following year, they had upgraded Highway 66 from Ludlow to Barstow; well, all through the country. They graded it and put it in good shape. So the school system put on a bus that ran 53 miles from Ludlow to Barstow. You'd get up early in the morning, and it took about

an hour and 45 minutes, I think, to travel the distance. It was a graveled road. We'd leave long before [chuckles] daylight, and get back after dark. That was a pretty difficult way to get a kid educated.

We were in Ludlow until about 1930, and then we were transferred to Death Valley Junction. The Pacific Coast Borax Company had closed their borax mines a long time before, but they still maintained the Death Valley Railroad and ran supplies up to Ryan on it. And also they ran out to Ash Meadows, to the Clay Camp. They picked up the clay and brought it into Death Valley Junction and milled it there at the former borax mill.

RM: How did they get it from the Clay Camp?

DL: They had a narrow-gauge railroad. They had the standard rail going to Beatty and they had a third rail to Bradford, and then a narrow-gauge from Bradford on up into the Clay Camp. They ran right up along the state line there.

RM: Where was Bradford?

DL: Bradford was on the T&T Railroad 8 miles north of Death Valley Junction, right on the edge of Ash Meadows and the Amargosa Farm Area. The narrow gauge went right by the spot where the Stateline Saloon is now - just a stone's throw south of it.

I was 17 years old in September and on January 2, 1931 I went to work for the railroad. They were tearing up the narrow-gauge - the Death Valley Railroad and this third rail out to the Clay Camp - to ship to their potash plant in New Mexico. So I went to work on January 2 as a gandy dancer out there at Ash Meadows, tearing up the railroad. They tore up the third rail, and then they widened to standard gauge into Ash Meadows so they could use the T&T locomotives and cars to go right out to Ash Meadows to the Clay Camp. That made it standard gauge from the Clay Camp to Death Valley Junction. Part of it was over the T&T Railroad, but from Bradford on was where they broadened it out. So we finished that Clay Camp road first, then we went out and tore up the rails on the Death Valley Railroad from Ryan to Death Valley Junction. When it was about half torn up my father suffered some strokes and died. This was in April, 1931. His telegraph operator assumed his position, and they put me in to work as a clerk in the station at Death Valley Junction. Incidentally, that station is now the bawdy house at Lathrop Wells. They built rooms around it, but that is the old Death Valley Junction depot.

Death Valley Junction had that big U-shaped complex. It was built in 1924 to house workers and tourists. They had huge dormitories back in there, and they built a fine restaurant and about 12 first class rooms for tourists. It was a pretty good tourist trap. They had a huge dining room for the tourists, and right back of it was where all the staff ate. The passengers came in on the railroad, in those days. There were no buses or anything. There were no roads, as a matter of fact, that you could travel over comfortably or safely.

RM: You mean, you couldn't go from, for instance, Shoshone to Death Valley Junction very conveniently?

DL: Well, not conveniently. It was a dirt road. When we were at Tecopa, in 1924, Charlie Brown (Celesta's uncle) became the road supervisor. There had never been a piece of equipment on the road over in that part of the valley until that time.

The tourists would come in on the train, and before my father died they'd call me and I'd drive the tour down to Death Valley - to Furnace Creek - and leave them there and bring the car back. Sometimes they'd use our car; we had a Hudson Super-6 - that huge car, you know. Or else they'd use Harry Gower's, who was superintendent of the Borax Company. That Death Valley Junction complex was running full force all during the winter time.

RM: Do you mean the mining complex, or the tourist complex, or both?

DL: Well, the Amargosa Hotel was going full force in those days. The miners worked up at Ryan. Then during the time I'm talking about, they'd closed it down, so there were no miners at all. But there were people who worked in and around the Amargosa Hotel and in the mill. All they were milling then was clay. And there was a daily train that ran out there to pick up the clay and bring it in. They had quite a crew; Mexicans who worked at the mill sacking clay and loading the railroad cars . . . And there were a lot of houses there, too.

In the summer it would get real hot, of course. Death Valley would close down, and they'd also close down the Amargosa Hotel and the staff would leave for the summer. The only people left in Death Valley Junction during the summer would be myself at the railroad, and a man who ran the power plant during the day, and the storekeeper. There'd only be about 4 or 5 of us left at Death Valley Junction for about 3 months, and then they'd open it up again.

RM: What was life like there?

DL: Oh, it was quite interesting. They used to have dances and show movies and things like that in the opera house. It was quite a thing. And right beside the opera house was a hospital

RM: You mean, in that U-shaped thing.

DL: Yes; right where Marta Becket, the ballerina, lives. Her home used to be the hospital. Well, after my father died, my mother worked there as a practical nurse, and we lived in that hospital I worked for the railroad, and she was a nurse. And a doctor would come and go. And in later years - January 1933 - our second son, Lisle, was born in that hospital.

But anyhow, everything was in good shape, but when they moved the Death Valley Railroad out of there and sent it dawn to New Mexico to that mine in 1931 or '32, things died down. They rehabilitated all of that equipment in the shops at Death Valley Junction before they shipped it out.

When I went to work as a clerk there, I had 6 months to learn telegraphy because in the fall the railroad had to have a telegraph operator since there were so many telegrams going to Furnace Creek making reservations, with confirmations coming back.

RM: And they didn't have a telegraph into Furnace Creek.

DL: No - it was a telephone from Death Valley Junction to Furnace Creek. So I studied, and in about 4 or 5 months I was doing all the telegraph work. Then I went down to Ludlow, took the exams and passed, and they put me on as the telegraph operator. It was November 1, 1931. I worked from 1:00 pm to 9:00 pm. I was continually copying reservations and phoning them down, and then they'd phone back confirmation. I'd telegraph back to Los Angeles to the Borax Company headquarters.

RM: Did the Borax Company own the Furnace Creek facilities?

DL: That's right. Katherine Ronan was the manager of Furnace Creek for years. She was the sister-in-law of Jenifer, who was the president of the Borax Company and the head of Furnace Creek Inn. And Mrs. Jenifer was her sister. As I recall, on one of those tours that I told you about, they called me and I went down there and picked up Katherine Ronan and Mrs. Jenifer and hauled them back to Death Valley Junction. I was only about 17. (Well, my father was still alive then.) And on the way up they had to back-seat drive, you know, and they could see my ears get red, I guess, because, you know, when you drive, you're a macho, anyway. They thought it was so funny - they teased me all the way up there. [chuckles] But I was so much in awe of them that I didn't say a word. I just went ahead. [laughs] They were nice people, though.

RM: When was the Clay Camp started?

DL: It was started in the early 1920s by one of those old guys who was in Tonopah, Goldfield, Greenwater, and all over. He was a mining promoter, and his name was Frank Brock. He assumed this name from the famous Brock in Tonopah who built the T&G Railroad. This Brock assumed that name. They had all this clay out in the valley but nothing was being done with it. Then they discovered that it was good for refining gasoline; it was a filtering clay, in other words. Frank Brock went out there and tied up all that country in about 1918 or so.

RM: He staked it out?

DL: He took options, because it was already claimed. He took options and then went out and core-drilled. And the clay is close to the surface . .

RM: When did people start staking that clay out?

DL: Probably 10 years earlier than that. They recognized that there might be some value to the clay. Then Brock sold these huge holdings to Richfield Oil, and Gilmore Gas, and all those old companies. And they started mining that stuff. They shipped out all kinds of that stuff before they . .

RM: Who started the initial mining operation?

DL: I couldn't tell you that. But I know of a lot of people who were involved in the mining of it. George Ishmael and a bunch of people had the hauling contract. The Clay Camp was located

just a little east of, and a little bit to the south of what is the Stateline Saloon right now. When you go on that road through there, it'd be east of there toward Ash Meadows. If you drive through there, you'll see those little side roads. If you drive over you'll see huge pits in there, usually filled with water.

They mined it with drag lines. They'd reach out and drag that stuff in, and it was all wet because the water's right under most of the surface. They'd drag it out up on high ground, and spread it out and let it dry. And then they'd haul it from there and put it in huge bunkers right there at the end of the railroad line. And then they sent the train out from Death Valley Junction to pick it up; about 5 gondolas at a time. The short haul was done with trucks. They might have shoveled it on the trucks by hand. In those days they used a lot of labor. It was all hand labor except for the dragline, as far as I know.

RM: How many workers were there when you were there?

DL: Well, I was there at the tail-end of it. But at the beginning, I would say that there were at least 100 men. Celesta went to school back in Ash Meadows.

Celesta Lowe: I started first grade there.

RM: Were these people Anglos, or . .

DL: They were Anglos.

Celesta Lowe: Anglos; yes.

RM: Did they have their families with them?

Celesta Lowed: Nearly all of than did.

DL: There were quite a few houses scattered all over the Ash Meadows.

Celesta Lowe: Do you know where the big trailer park is by the Stateline
Saloon?

RM: Yes.

Celesta Lowe: Well, if you turn and go in to Ash Meadows, you go up maybe half a mile on that road, and then you turn to the right, and there's still a big pit. Our grandchildren would go over there and go swimming. And that's right where the clay pit was.

Celesta Lowe: You probably know this book: Railroads of Nevada.

RM: Myrick's book?

Celesta Lowe: Yes. As a matter of fact, same of these things are Deke's passes. [chuckles]

DL: He came and talked to me about . .

RM: That's a remarkable book.

Celesta Lowe: Oh, yes.

DL: Oh, and accurate. I learned things about that railroad that . . . When you worked there you heard these rumors. I'd always heard, "Well, this railroad paid for itself in the first 5 years." Well, it never ever paid. [laughs] I was on that railroad half its life. Well, my father worked there 9 years, and then when he died I went to work for 9 years, until it closed. There were people who worked on that railroad - building it - and were still working there when it closed.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: You said that there were people working on the T&T Railroad who started there when it began, and were still working there when it ended.

DL: Yes. They worked from the time of construction right to when they tore it up in 1940. One was the roadmaster, Ben Horton. He was the boss on the construction crew. And then Blackie Mayer was the conductor. He was on the work trains crew. And then there was - I think it was Jack Stalker - who was the roundhouse man, and various others.

RM: The workers at the Clay Camp were housed in the vicinity of the mine, weren't they?

DL: Mostly. I think a lot of them owned homesteads there. And there were some like Celesta's dad who came down there in the wintertine just to work through the winters for a grubstake. They would find whatever housing they could that wasn't too far away, because by then - in the '20s and on - everyone had automobiles.

RM: What sorts of things should I understands about the T&T Railroad?

DL: As I mentioned, I was a telegraph operator, and at the end of that season, which was May 1, they cut me off as a telegraph operator. Then I did all kinds of things; I still worked for the railroad. They put me to work in the shops, and wherever else they needed someone temporarily.

At one point I went out to the T&T Ranch and milked the cows, believe it or not. They had enough dairy cows to furnish some milk for both the Amargosa Hotel and the Furnace Creek Inn and Furnace Creek Ranch. They also raised alfalfa. The T&T Railroad had thousands of acres in the Amargosa Farm Area (as it's called now). Their intent, when they took it up, was to have settlers come in there and become farmers in that area, to enhance the railroad revenues. So they started up the T&T Ranch to show that it would be suitable for raising alfalfa and all that. But actually it didn't turn out that way. No settlers came because it took tremendous amounts of water to irrigate. To this day that land doesn't hold water. It's a fine sand and gravel and it's prohibitive - it costs you more money to raise the hay and so forth. But their excuse was to furnish milk. So they kept a couple of men there - a ranch manager and a milker and a farm hand. So I went up there and worked for 3 or 4 days, I recall, milking cows.

Another time they sent me up to repair the phone lines, because the line was out of service from Death Valley Junction to the ranch. The ranch was 2 miles from the railroad, so I went up and climbed poles and found the trouble, and fixed it. In all of that region where the Farm Area is now, the only thing there, as I said, was the T&T Ranch. The only other people who lived there at all lived at the station of Leeland on the railroad itself.

RM: Where is Leeland?

DL: It's almost to where the sand dunes are. It's on the railroad a little bit to the south of the sand dunes. There are ranches in there now.

RM: Was Leeland a town?

DL: Not at this time. They just had a section house and foreman and 2 or 3 men. It got its name because Phi Lee's 2 sons - Dick Lee and Bob Lee ¬found a gold mine up at Lee Camp and they had quite an operation going there and made thousands of dollars.

RM: How many miles was Lee Camp from the railroad?

DL: About 5, I think. It was right in Death Valley in the Funeral Range, and it was right in sight of Rhyolite - you could look across to Rhyolite. It's only about 15 miles from Lee's camp to right across the descent to Rhyolite. They used to have a stage line run back and forth because there was a lot of activity in there. Besides Lees' mine, there were a number of others in there. They made quite a little fortune there. The Lees played the stock market in Rhyolite, where they used to have ticker tape quoting the market. By the time I'm talking about in the 1930s, the only thing there, as I said, was the section house on the railroad. It was a going town right during the heyday of Rhyolite, about 1907, '08, along in there. The railroad was finished in 1907, so it was going along then. Lee Camp ran until about 1910 or '12, something like that. And when I knew Dick and Bob Lee, of course they were old men, and they were broke. I asked one of them, "Don't you wish you'd saved your money to . . ."

And he said: "Well, I tell you what. I have no regrets. I'd rather be a has-been than a never-was." [laughter]

Celesta Lowe: You can see Lee Camp and Leeland, both, on this map.

DL: Lee Camp is in Death Valley National Monument now.

RM: Yes; it's in California, actually.

DL: My son and I were surveying there about a year or so ago, and you come up to the state line and then it's a different story on the other side. They don't quite - I don't know just how you work that out, but it will split sections. But anyway, that was Death Valley National Monument on that side of it.

RM: What other towns were along the railroad when you were there?

DL: In earlier days the town of Schwab was beyond Lee Camp, but nothing along the railroad until you came up to Carrara.

RM: Was there a station at Carrara?

DL: No. The next station was Beatty. But when I was there I remember there used to be a spur that ran up the China Ranch Canyon to some gypsum mines. And in about 1925 they pulled that up and took it up to Carrara and put a spur into that marble camp. But it didn't go anywhere beyond the mine.

RM: Did you ever get into Beatty during this period?

DL: Well, I went up and relieved the agent, as a matter of fact, in 1932. Of course, that was during Prohibition days, but they had a saloon at Greenwood, which is now the Exchange Club. And then right across the street, where there's a motel now, was another saloon. (And let's see, what was the name?) The Golden Ace. Then there was another one up a little bit out of the business district. I mean, they were wide open; you just walked in. I was only 18, and every night I'd go uptown, and I'd go into the Golden Ace - it was a better one than the one across the street. I'd have a drink there, and visit, and then I'd go across to the other saloon, on the corner, and have a drink there, and I'd spend the evening uptown. As I say, I was 18. I heard some guy say, "You know, that kid's too young to drink. He isn't 21."

"Never you mind. He knows how to handle his liquor." That's what the bartender said. [laughs] He wouldn't let him stop me. [chuckles] No, every night I'd do that.

RM: Who were the important people in Beatty at that time?

DL: Well, there was a Judge Gray; he'd been there since Rhyolite days. In fact, my brother-in-law, Ralph Lisle, lives in his house. And Dave Asplin was the agent I relieved. He'd been the main guy in Goldfield for the railroad for years. And when they knocked off that part of the railroad, they moved Dave Asplin down to Beatty as the agent. There was Johnny Behind-the-Rock. He was a miner.

The train crew always ate right close to the depot there. Some people named Konzos always fed the train crew, and also put them up. And during the time I was off, as I say, I did everything. For a while I was a fireman on the railroad, and we'd run from Ludlow to Beatty. You'd have to get up in the middle of the night, because there was no roundhouse there, and fire up your engine, and get steam up.

RM: Did you have to run it backwards to Ludlow?

DL: No; there was a Y there. And the crew all stayed at Rosie Konzos and her husband's place - right across from the depot.

RM: Where was the depot in Beatty?

DL: Just about where the Burro Inn is - somewhere along in there. And the highway crosses now about where the railroad station was.

RM: Yes. And the railroad came in that gap there, didn't it?

DL: Yes. And then you know where Crewel's place is? Just to the south of him, joining that property, was where the station master lived. It was quite a good-sized house. It must've had 8 rooms. They always furnished the agent with a house. At one time this had been a restaurant or something like that where they fed the passengers.

After a while, I got on steady. I was 19 when I got my first steady job. It was down at Silver Lake, which was 9 miles north of Baker. There were talc mines there. The post office wasn't in Baker then - it was there at Silver Lake. That had been an old town - there'd been several hundred people there at one time, but when I was there, there were about 5 of us. Dad Fairbanks had bought about 25 houses which he'd torn down and moved, and there were still about 25 left. And there was a boarding house there, because they were building the power line from Boulder Dam through at that time, so they were shipping a lot of stuff. And on top of that, all of the domestic water was brought in by the railroad from Razor in tank cars and parked there on the railroad. Dad Fairbanks, and Failings, and all those business people each bought a tank car of water from Razor.

RM: Oh, there wasn't water at Baker.

DL: Bo domestic water; it was spoiled. It was terrible stuff. They used it for radiators and washing, but you couldn't drink it. It cost than About $7 or $8 a car for water from the railroad.

RM: A car!

DL: That's all. [chuckles] Yes, it wasn't much. A couple of cars a month was all that was used. So I'd go down there once a month and collect the money for water. But Dad Fairbanks . . . I remember, we were talking about the Fairbanks being buried down in Santa Paula?

RM: Yes?

DL: Well, I was there one night, and Dad was there, and Grandma Fairbanks was there, and Brooks - that's his older brother. We were talking, and Grandma said, "Bow, when I die, I want to be buried in Utah."

And old Dad Fairbanks said, "Oh, hell. When I die you can throw n out in the wash and let the coyotes have me."

RM: Is that right.

DL: And old Brooks, his brother, says, "Hell, I ain't gonna die." [laughter] And none of than got their wish, you know. Old Brooks died and both Grandma and Grandpa were buried in Santa Paula.

Grandpa Fairbanks was stern. He had all these relatives working there, and they . . . you know how they are. Undisciplined, and all that stuff. And he'd raise hell with them - make than shape up. But the public thought he was great. He had friends everywhere. As I say, I was only 19. Well, I was treated as an equal by him; he spoke to you just as if you were a total grownup, and equal. Of course, at 19 you really weren't. (I thought I was.) When we came to Tecopa, he was still at Shoshone. And Charlie Brown, his partner, was at work fixing cars out under a mesquite tree. They didn't even have a garage. [laughs] But old Dad was there, and Grandma, and all. They had a boarding house that cost you 50 cents per meal.

RM: You mentioned that there were other people in Shoshone with businesses before Dad got there.

DL: Well, there wasn't any town there. Bob Lee had cattle and a rock house at Shoshone. He was a brother of Phi Lee. Then there was this whole family of Lees at Resting Springs. Phi Lee was the father, and he had all of these sons. The 2 I knew were Dick Lee and Bob Lee. Then he had a daughter and her name was Dora Brown - she was married to an Indian, Brown. Phi Lee was white and married to an Indian squaw, and most of the people I'm talking about were half-breed. Lee's Canyon's in Mt. Charleston is named after him. And earlier he was a neighbor of Aaron Winters, up in Ash Meadows.

Lee came into this country way before anything. And way back in, say, the '60s he was traveling over the old Spanish Trail. Bow, his boys were all born in this desert country. It was told to me that Phi Lee was combing over the old Spanish Trail down the Afton Canyon to Crucero. And they'd cut north and go through where Baker is now. In Crucero there are lots of mesquites and the Indians came over from the Colorado River to hunt rabbits and whatnot in the wintertime over in those sand dunes. And old Phi Lee and 2 other men were on horseback going through there, and the Indians shot at them, and an arrow went through one of then. They ran and got about to Baker and stopped. He died, and they buried him right there - somewhere around Baker. This was in the '60s.

And then Phi Lee was in the Panamint City rush in the 1870s. He married an Indian squaw - I think she was a Paiute - and they raised these kids. He was a rancher and he had cattle in Ash Meadows. He and Aaron Winters sold . . . Well, Aaron Winters started it. He sold borax claims down there in Death Valley. Then later on Phi Lee and some of the others ¬I think Aaron Winters might've been with than - found the borax at Ryan and those places up in the mountains So Phi Lee and these men sold out and Phi Lee bought Resting Springs near Tecopa and raised his family there. Aaron Winters bought a ranch in Pahrump.

So they were partners, really, up in Ash Meadows, and also with the borax. He was quite a prominent old guy. Then he traded the Resting Springs ranch to the Noonday Mines for a ranch up in the Charleston Mountains. The mining people wanted the water at Resting Springs, and they had taken up this big spring up in the Charleston Mountains thinking they might pipe that water cross country, you know. Which they did do in Goldfield. Out at Goldfield they piped that water a long way.

Celesta Lowe: They were getting ready to pipe water from Fairbanks Springs to Greenwater when the mines collapsed.

DL: Celesta's dad sold Devil's Hole to some interests up there, and they were thinking about piping it [laughs] up to Greenwater.

But anyway, we're in Silver Lake now, and that's where Celesta and I started going together - in 1934. We got married in 1935 and started having kids and what not, and we went back to Shoshone later. I was the agent for Shoshone until the railroad closed in 1940. We actually left just a little before that, in '39. So that's the story of my railroad career.

RM: Did you leave the Amargosa then?

Celesta Lowe: Yes, we went north of San Francisco. Deke went to work on the . .

DL: Northwestern Pacific. It belonged to the Southern Pacific.

Celesta Lowe: We lived in Santa Rosa for several years.

DL: Yes, we were there about 2 years. And I'm telling you, it was nice country after leaving the desert. But it rained all winter long. Kids were running around in the yard [laughs] in water up to their waist. I was kind of lonely for the desert, and I called Los Angeles on business. When I got done, I said, "Wells, How's the weather?" without even thinking about it, you know.

The guy said, "Oh, the sun's shining . . . " and all that stuff.

And I just felt it - howl the desert and all Southern California was. And I hung up the phone, and I picked it up again and rang Celeste, and said, "Get to packing - we're leaving."

Celesta Lowe: I was glad to go. I was too far away from Mama and Napa and all the family.

RM: Did you ever live in the Amargosa?

DL: No. But then in later years, I went back over to Tecopa, and I bought the store. I had the Tecopa Trading Most from 1964 to '69. We were always shifting around, back and forth, and . . .

Celesta Lowe: And of course our family still lives at Shoshone, and my brother Ralph is in Beatty.

DL: And when we were living in Shoshone, our oldest son was born in a hospital in Las Vegas. And a year or so later, when our second son was due, we went over and the doctor says, "Oh, don't worry about it for a while," so we came back to Shoshone. Couple of nights later, here it came, so we jumped in the car, and buzzed off to Death Valley Junction. Lisle was born in that hospital there. [chuckles] He lives there now, not too far away from it. [chuckles]

RM: And must regally like it.

Celesta Lowe: He does - he loves it. We also have a son who lives in Carson City, and our daughter lives in San Diego, and another son lives in Santa Ana. They like to come to the desert just to visit, but they don't want to live here. Lisle has a nice home in Las Vegas, but he rents it, and lives out there.

RM: Does he live in the Farm Area?

Celesta Lowe: Yes, he does. He lives on the Farms Road, as a matter of fact. Just off where you turn on the Farms Road. He lives about a quarter of a mile off the main highway on the Farm Road. He's got quite a bit of property there. He's got another place somewhere farther back and off the Farm Road.

DL: Frank Tubbs owned ground in Death Valley Junction right across the road from where the Amargosa Hotel is now - to the south of them. He had a restaurant. And when the Borax Company built that complex they didn't want any competition, so they bought him out. He had a ranch in Ash Meadows, and he used to come in about every 10 days. He had an old car, and he'd have a side of beef in the back with a canvas over it. He'd come around from house to house and sell his beef. And then there was a guy out there who delivered whiskey, just like you would milk. He was a bootlegger, and he'd come in about once a week, and he'd go house to house. Some of them would take as much as a gallon. [chuckles]

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Deke, you were telling a couple of interesting stories about some of the famous characters you knew in the Amargosa area. One of the fellows you knew was Shorty Harris. Can you tell us about him?

DL: When I was around 18 years old, I was working on the Inyo County highway, and living at Shoshone in Charlie Brown's boarding house. Shorty Harris's room was next door to mine. He was recovering from a bad accident he'd had - a wall over at Ballarat had collapsed and crushed him, and he was just recovering. Each night, I'd go to bed and I'd hear him groan. It'd get worse and worse and keep me awake for an hour or two. And I felt so sorry I almost got up to go in to see if I could help him. But, after about the third night, I began to hoping he would just [chuckles] get it over width.

RM: [chuckles] So you could get some rest?

DL: [chuckles] Yes. But he wasn't all that sick, really. It was just - I guess he was asleep and was doing that unconsciously. Because in the morning he was always out there on the bench beside the store waiting for the breakfast bell. His legs didn't quite reach the ground, but when it rang, he just rocked back and he'd land on his feet, running. He'd beat us all to the breakfast. So then I didn't feel quite so sorry for him. But he was quite a clever little guy, in his way. The fellows all knew him well, and they'd tease him about how quickly he'd get rid of his fortune. And usually what would happen is, he'd get on a big drunk and some woman - usually about a 6-foot, 200-pound woman - would get ahold of Shorty. [laughter] He would blown his fortune in a hurry. They tell one story about him - I think it's been written about him, too, but I'm not sure. He made a strike over there at - Harrisburg, I guess it was, and made quite a few dollars. He went over to Rhyolite and got on a big drunk, and they flung him out. So he went down the street and bought the saloon, went back and opened it up, and said: "Help yourself!" And everybody there drank till there wasn't a drop left.

RM: Was he really short?

DL: Yes. I would say he wasn't over 5-foot tall. Of course, he was old; he'd shrunk some since he was young.

RM: What kind of a guy was he?

DL: Well, he was pleasant. He didn't talk; he wasn't the type that carried a conversation. You carried the conversation - he'd respond. I imagine if you got to know him quite well and you were one-on-one it might be different, but where there was a group of guys they usually would tease him a little bit or something like that.

RM: What would they tease him about?

DL: Mainly about being a good drinker, and getting rid of his money in a hurry, and his girlfriends. He had a bunch of them. Every time he made a strike or had a few bucks it deemed like he'd end up with a lot of girlfriends. [laughter] And he was free with his moneys, so it was kind of easy to come by.

RM: Was he an old man when you knew him?

DL: Yes, he was quite old. He was too old to get out and do anything. He probably lived another 4 or 5 years at the most. When he died, and they had his funeral, I was the agent there on the T&T Railroad at Shoshone. They had it down there in Death Valley and people came from everywhere. But on the railroad you didn't have any relief, so I was stuck. I couldn't go. I'm sorry now that I couldn't.

RM: Was he famous as a character, then, even while he was alive?

DL: Oh, yes. He and Scotty and Dad Fairbanks. Well, of course Dad's not so well known now, but at the time Dad was just about as well known as Shorty and Scotty in that part of the country.

RM: Was he a character, then?

DL: Not nationwide.

RM: Were there any other legendary prospectors that you knew then?

DL: The one who pops in mind right now is Scotty. I remember one experience with Scotty from about the same time that I was talking about Shorty Harris. I was still Dorking on the county road, which now is the state highway, doing maintenance for Inyo County. We worked around Badwater and all this, even up to Scotty's Castle, as a matter of fact. We built the road that you now go over to Scotty's Castle.

RM: What year was that?

DL: That was about 1933 - '32 or '33. You know how railroads are - you're on for awhile, then you get cut off until your seniority builds up. I was off about 6 months - all winter long - so I worked on the roads for about 6 months. And I had other jobs here and there. I was working on the road down at Amargosa Borax Works, which is located about 4 miles south of Shoshone. Scotty came bouncing along over this old graded road in his Franklin, and it sounded like a threshing machine, it was so loud; something was wrong with it. He stopped, and he got out, and he was loud-talking, you know. He was a big, bluff, hearty man. he said, "Hey, Kid!" And he asked me if I knew anything about a car.

I told him, "Well, very little, but . . ."

He said, "OK. I stopped at Baker at Dad Fairbanks' place and Dave Fairbanks put in a new spark plug. And," he said, "it's worse than ever." So I lifted the hood, and evidently Dave had finger-tightened the plug and forgotten to really put a wrench on it, because it had jarred loose

and come out. So that was compression - you could hear Scotty says, "Well, I've got the old plug." I put that in and it sounded like I had just done a tune-up job. [chuckles] he was happy as could be.

And from then on, I'd be working on the road - for instance, the next time I was just this side of the turnoff to Dante's View, going down into Death Valley - and here came Scotty up the hill, and he stopped: kid, How are you." Then he said, "You know, the God-damned Borax Company wouldn't amount to nothin', wasn't for me. I give Death Valley all the publicity." And he gave me this spiel, you know, for about 40 minutes, while he got a little rest, I guess, from driving, and he got in the car and left. Then the next time I saw him was down at Baker, and he recognized me. I was working for the railroad by then - this was 2 or 3 years later. So we passed the time of the day.

And the last time I saw him was at Scotty's Castle. My son and daughter and wife and all of than were up there. That was in the early '50s, just a couple of years before he died. And he was just like a trained bear. They trotted him out, you took pictures of him . . . he didn't recognize me at that time. And for some reason or other I didn't speak up. I should have, but I was a little reluctant. I felt sorry for him because I'd known him when he was so vital

I was down in Hollywood one time, and checked into a motel, and the guy said, "Oh, you're from out on the desert. Well, you're staying right where Scotty always stays when he comes here. He comers and checks in this motel and he gets drunk and he stays drunk for 3 weeks at a time."

RM: So he was a boozer?

DL: Oh, a terrific boozer. . . down there.

RM: Was this a trait of men on the desert?

DL: For Dome of them. The ones who did were alcoholics, really. I don't believe Scotty was an alcoholic. He'd go down there and he was so popular, he'd just go out every night and go into a restaurant or supper club, and they'd start buying him booze. Then when he got so he couldn't stand any more of it, he'd just get in his car and come home. Are then he'd sober up and be OK.

As I said, the last time I saw Scotty he was sort of like a trained bear. My wife was taking a picture of Scotty and myself and my son and my daughter, and so, as usual, she would say, "Do this, do that," and "Nose this way, pose that way," which I always object to.

And old Scotty, he turned around and: "God damn it, take your god-damned picture! I ain't gonna do it now!" [laughs] He hadn't lost his spirit. It tickled the hell out of me, because I always would say that, too, to her, and [laughter] (in a much nicer way, though). I'd say, "Either take that picture or . . ."

And then the next person of any notoriety was Dad Fairbanks, who would be my grandfather-in-law, because my wife is his granddaughter. And he was a great character. Everyone liked Dad. And he had this huge family all working for him in that station down at Baker. Before that, it was up at Shoshone. he had his family there, too. Wherever he was, they were working for him. When he had all those teams, his sons were his teamsters.

So Dad actually was always more of a manager. Tonally uneducated, but he could figure. he had a good mind. And in those days, you didn't have any government to account to, or anything. he had journals. If you charged something, he'd just write it down. Like: "Herman Jones, one bottle of booze, $3." [laughs] Sometimes he'd write, "Paid, so much." That was the extent of his bookkeeping. I ran across one of the journals he'd had at Greenwater when he had the business there. His granddaughter Bernice and I ran across it in a storeroom at Shoshone.

RM: to you have any of those old journals?

Celesta Lowe: No, I think Celesta Gilliam has some in Barstow. She'll probably put them in the Mojave River Museum in Barstow.

DL: Old Dad always made a lot of money. But he loved to play poker and he loved to drink. He wasn't an alcoholic, but he liked his booze. But it was not an unmanly thing, then, you know. Also, we didn't have all this traffic, with automobiles buzzing around. If you fell off your wagon and got run over, that was your fault. [laughs] And you know, it's surprising how many actually did that. If you read same of the history that's published in Northern California - those counties used to do that - they'd charge people, and it was sort of an advertising, but it was history. You'd be surprised. There were dozens of those fellows who'd go to town and then they'd get drunk and their team would run away and run over them, or they'd fall off and get run over. It's unbelievable, how many. They were far more dangerous, in proportion, I believe, than automobiles. Well, animals, and the equipment, both.

When Dad was old, he had left the desert. He was down at Santa Paula for a year or two. Finally he got bed-ridden, and his daughter was looking after him, but she moved to Los Angeles and took him there and put him in a nursing home in Los Angeles. She'd go to visit him regularly, and he'd tell her, "Oh, I don't understand what's the matter. Here I'm old, and I can't die. I just don't known. My heart just keeps right on beating." And, "I want to die, but I can't." Along toward the last, he began having

I guess hallucinations, or something. Because he'd talk about his dog, that he'd had 50-60 years before. He'd say, "Old Big was here." Then he'd say homebody was here - some person who had died. So he was hallucinating, or something. But he didn't seem to be. Because he saw those people. Anyway, he finally did die that way.'

[Earlier, Deke told of howl Grandma Fairbanks said she wanted to be buried in Utah after she died, Dad wanted to be thrown out for the coyotes after he died, and Brooks said, "I ain't gonna die."]

Brooks lived on and on and on.

RM: Did he live to be older than Dad?

DL: Yes, and he was 10 years older than Dad. And when Brooks died, they took him down to the hospital, and he wouldn't stay. he took his clothes, and he got on the bus. The problem was that his kidneys were bad, and he was having prostate trouble, and they had to catheterize him. Oh, he was just furious: "Those queers, messing around." [laughter] So he got his clothes and

he took off back to Baker. He got down into San Bernardino and stayed all night to get the bus the next day, and he died in his sleep in the hotel.

I knew he lived up there in the country where Butch Cassidy lived all his life, until he went to Baker - up in the Utah high country. The outlaws would go in there and nobody could get to than. Brooks had sheep up there, and so he knew them. I wrote to a professor in Utah who researched all these outlaws, and was an authority on them. And (what was his name - Rossi? . . . Something Rossi - not Price.) I asked him if he knew of any record of a Brooks Fairbanks ever riding with Butch Cassidy. "Oh, yes," he wrote back. "e helped hold up the bank in Alta, Colorado." He didn't say Fairbanks, but "a man by the name of Brooks. Held up the bank in Colorado." I forgot where it was - Alta, or somewhere like that. And he said, "Then later on he went to Arizona." Well, it was his son who went to Arizona. Brooks never left the country until he went to Baker. So I believe that he rode with Butch Cassidy. he was the right age, you see. He'd have been even older than Butch Cassidy, as a matter of fact, because he was born in the '50s and Butch Cassidy was born in the '60s, I think, so he'd be 10 or 12 years older.

RM: Deke, would you take us on a tour up the T&T from Shoshone up the road to Gold Center? And tell us of what each one of those stops was like when you were there, and what was going on, and what the stop looked like, and so on?

DL: OK. At Shoshone the activity was the same as at Ash Meadows. They had a big clay deposit there. I think actually they started mining that clay maybe before they did in Ash Meadows, but then they found the Ash Meadows clay, and it was more extensive. However, they mined for clay there at Shoshone for 7 or 8 years, until they mined it all out.

RM: When did the clay mining start at Shoshone?

DL: I think somewhere about 1918. Ash Meadows was within a year or two after that; maybe 1920. Dad Fairbanks made quite a little money off the Shoshone clay. He had one claim in there, or part of it anyway, and sold out to one of the oil companies.

RM: Were they both oil company operations?

DL: Most of them, yes. Up at Ash Meadows there were same independent operators. One of then was a Johnnie Bradford. They named that siding after him, which we'll get to . . .

Shoshone was sort of a trading center. Prior to Shoshone, Zabriskie, just south of there, had been the main point. And Tecopa, a little south of that, was another. But Zabriskie had been the main one for Greenwater. That's where the roads ran from; not Shoshone.

RM: Oh, I see. Zabriskie was on the T&T.

DL: Yes. And it was close to the Amargosa Borax Works, so they ran auto stages - trucks and freight teams and all that - from Zabriskie to Greenwater. There wasn't even a road into Shoshone from there at that time. After Greenwater closed down, Dad Fairbanks went to Shoshone. There was nothing there but one or two old cabins - stone cabins - from when Bob

Lee had run cattle. Quite a bit of that is salt grass and mesquite in there. And then there was a road that went over to Pahrump, so there was Dome business transport from Shoshone.

RM: How many buildings were in Shoshone?

DL: Front 1922 through, say, '28, when we went to Ludlow, they had a store, and a bunkhouse. And they had a really good restaurant. They all belonged to Dad Fairbanks. They served passengers, and they had 2 different dining rooms. One they called the Blue Room, for the first-class passengers, and the other was just miners and whoever'd want the cheaper meals. There were probable 6 dwellings and the railroad depot, which was a converted boxcar.

When I first went there, they didn't have a gas station. They had gasoline, but it come in 5-gallon cans; you bought a 5-gallon can of Red Crown Gasoline. Later on they got a pump where you pumped it up into a bowl. You could see - it was visible. You see, they had to filter that gasoline - get all the impurities and the color out of it. Finally in the mid-'20s they found a process they called cracking gas, and then they didn't have to get the impurities out. And they colored it: blue-green gas, red gas, and yellow gas and all that. That color was because otherwise it looked dirty. And that's why you had colored gas. Then later on they refined it to the point where nowadays . . . Of course, you don't have a visible glass anymore. Bow, you just pump it and wouldn't see it if it was dirty. But when they had those glass bowls you could tell if your gas was going to be dirty. And the bowl was graduated, you know, so you could just pump out as many gallons as you wanted.

Shoshone also had a bunch of caves back in those clay hills. Thee must've been a half a dozen miners who lived in than. They were cool ¬they'd go back far enough, and then they'd put a hole up to the surface like a stovepipe hole, and then you'd have circulation. It was cool in the hot weather and warm in the winter. And there were probably half a dozen houses in the '20s. Bow, of course, they have a lot more. But at that time there weren't too many people who lived there.

Between Shoshone and Death Valley there was a siding named Gerstly Siding. It served a borax mine. The mine is to the north and east of Shoshone about 5 miles. They had a little - it wasn't a narrow-gauge railroad, it was a baby-gauge - with a gas-powered train. They hauled the borax down to Gerstly Siding to a bin, and then loaded it into standard sized cars.

RM: What did they call the mine?

DL: Gerstly. It's been mined off and on. It's still a good mine. And that Ulexite - that's a particular type of borax. It was great for dampening forest fires. They dumped it out of an airplane just like they do now with chemicals, and, boy, it would just snuff those fires out.

The next place up the road was Evelyn. It was just a section house and a section foreman and a few men. It was named after one of the officials' wives, and I can't remember which one. [laughs]

But anyway, then Eagle Mountain - that's a famous mountain. You've seen it, haven't you? Then you look down on Death Valley Junction, it just sticks right up. That's a noted landmark. Everywhere you are - even as far south as Tecopa - you get out on a certain height and you can see that mountain. You can see it when you get up about the sand dunes, looking

south. And when you're going on the Vegas highway, at a certain angle, it looks like the eagle on the dollar. Honest to Pete. I've noticed that, though I never did know why it had that name. But you check it out. I think it's when you're west of Lathrop. If you look, you'll see - you don't see his head, you see his neck and his body, and you can imagine his head. That's what you see - a crouching eagle.

Then the next place is Death Valley Junction.

RM: What was it like, then?

DL: Cell, when I was there was in 1930 it was going well. There was no borax being mined and the mill was milling clay from Ash Meadows. It was a good operation. Of course there were a lot of tourists coming in on the train and staying overnight. The big hotel there was going full force. As I said, they had 2 dining rooms there - one for the tourists and one for the staff and for the people who worked in the mills and places like that. And there were a number of houses that the borax officials lived in to the north of there. And then across the tracks there were a lot of frame houses that the mill workers lived in, and Dome of the railroad people lived over there too. I did, as a matter of fact, part of the time. Part of the time I lived in the hospital where my mother was a nurse. As I said, my father had been the agent there but he died, and my mother then went to work as a practical nurse. There wasn't any mining other than the clay; the borax had all closed down.

There was the Death Valley Railroad that came in there. It was a narrow-gauge railroad that came from Ryan down there. One of the locomotives sits at Furnace Creek now. As I said, they reconditioned all that narrow-gauge equipment in the shops and sent it down to their potash deposits in New Mexico.

RM: Why did they take that railroad out?

DL: They weren't hauling any more borax out of Ryan. All they had there was a watchman. So they dismantled it. And I worked on it when they tore it down .We ripped up the rails, and shipped than, and then loaded the locomotive, loaded the boxcars and flatcars, gondolas, the whole works.

RM: What was the name of the mine at Ryan?

DL: The Widow Mine was one of them. There are some other names, but the Widow was the main one. They called it Ryan, though.

The next stop was where the railroad branched and went out to Ash Meadows to the clay camps at Bradford Siding. I think that was 5 or 6 miles north of Death Valley Junction. Bradford was named after one of the fellows who had a clay mine there, and mired clay.

RM: What was there?

DL: Nothing but a big warehouse. They evidently sacked clay, or stored clay there. It probably belonged to the railroad; I'm not sure about that.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Deke, can a just back up a minute so you can tell us a little bit About the social life and the social scene at Death Valley Junction?

DL: I was 17 when I was first in Death Valley Junction. By the time I left I was probably around 20. While I was there, as I mentioned, I worked on tearing up the Death Valley Railroad that went to Ryan. Then the T&T closed off Ludlow, which was the main headquarters for the T&T Railroad. They closed it down between Ludlow and Crucero, which was about a 25mile jaunt, and moved everything to Death Valley Junction.

RN: Why did they do that?

DL: To save money. They'd cut off from Goldfield to Beatty, you see, and then from Ludlow to Crucero. They still had the Union Pacific connection. Before, a took most everything to Ludlow and on to the Santa Fe. They even moved the superintendent's two-story house to Death Valley Junction on a flatcar. Beautiful. It's still there. It sits right beside the Borax Company's superintendent's house. [laughs] Those superintendents sitting side-by-side.

Ludlow had a T&T section there, and as I mentioned the other day about Tonopah Avenue, most all of the T&T employees lived on this one street in Ludlow. To start with the depot; it was a 2-story building with the superintendent's office, the agent and dispatcher's office and the roadmaster's office. It was a big two-story - oh, I don't know, about 10, 15 room - office building. They didn't move that. They just moved the superintendent's 2-story house down to Death Valley Junction along with other suitable buildings. They moved than 122 miles.

The officials all moved to Death Valley Junction, and I worked there as a telegraph operator. In the office at Death Valley Junction there was a chief dispatcher and the agent and myself - telegraph operator and clerk. I was the low man on the totem pole. And the chief dispatcher, McPhee, had always had a hatred for my father because my father was supposed to have had that job. Then McGhee came along, and my dad hadn't gotten away from the UP in time, so they give it to him, then they made a job for my father. So he always stood to succeed McGhee. In fact, whenever McGhee laid off, my father acted as Chief Dispatcher. Hoover, he died, and they put me to work in the office. And McPhee used to tee off on me every day. I was just a beginner; I was 17 years old. And I put up with it for about 3 or 4 months.

One day he started in on me, and I just started to boiling inwardly. he got up and left, and about 10 minutes later there was a delayed reaction. I got up and I kicked my typewriter over, and I said, "I quit." To the agent, you know. His eyes were big - and boy, I was mad. Oh, I was just fed up to my ears with it. I went over to the superintendent's office in this big U-shaped Amargosa Building, and I walked right in, and I told him, "I quit." I turned around. I was going to go out and find McGhee and just slap the hell out of him. This was the stupid way I was thinking.

He jumped up and ran and grabbed me right by the shoulder, and he just shook me. he said, "Now Deke! You go back over there and go to work!" And he give me a shove out the door. And McGhee came in at the same instant, and he said, "You care in here!" Boy, he took

him in there, and he dressed him down. I heard about it. he knew what that guy was doing to me. And so the next day . . .

RN: This was the superintendent of the whole railroad?

DL: Yes. The next in line is the chief dispatcher. This was superintendent Cahill. Of course, he'd known me ever since I was a kid. And McPhee had been a prominent man in the Western Union and so forth for years, so he was really was stepped down when he came to the T&T. But anyhow, the next day [chuckles] he came to the office and I got up and net him at the door. If he was going to say one word, I was just going to have it out with him. he looked me right in the face, and then he just shut the door and went back. He never even came in the office. And from then on, everybody got along fine in that office. he treated me OK, I treated him all right, the agent treated both of us all right. [laughs] But, Cod, telling you, it's terrible to have a temper like that. When you're young it happens every so often - but I never let that happen again. But anyhow, that's my foolish story. [chuckles]

Celesta Lowe: How about taking the tourists to Death Valley?

DL: Oh, yes. While my dad was alive, he was the agent there and I used to drive tours. A lot of the tourists would come in on the train. I would take our automobile, or else use the superintendent of the Borax Company's, whose name was Harry Gower, and drive these people down to Furnace Creek. I'd leave than off there and come home, and then maybe go back and pick than up. And sometimes when I was down there, a plane would come in and they'd say, "Go down and pick up those passengers." [chuckles] So I'd run down there to the field and pick up those passengers. They had 3 different dining rooms at Furnace Creek. One was really the elite place, and they had one for the staff, and then one for nothing but kitchen help and gardeners and all that.

And the head of that one in the pecking system there was the housekeeper. She ruled over the whole thing. It was terrible caste system there. [laughter] She really was strict. I don't known why, but I always was told to eat in the staff room there, so I thought, 'Well, I'm no better than they are,' I guess. [laughs] All of my friends were down there, though.

RM: Down at the other one.

Dl: Yes. [laughs] It was kind of funny, because friends of mine would tell me about How this old lady would really make everybody stay in line and perform just so, and then at the table and all that. She was really the top lady. Well, actually, the head of the Furnace Creek Inn was a lady - Katherine Rowan - who was the sister-in-law of the president of the Borax Company - Jenifer.

RM: When did Fred Harvey come in there?

DL: Twenty-five years ago. But the Borax Company owned and ran it for 20 or 30 years.

RM: Was it quite a tourist attraction at that time?

DL: Yes.

RM: Did it draw an elite clientele?

DL: Yes. In fact, it was all elite; hardly anyone else. It wasn't just a drive-in place. You made reservations and you paid tremendous prices. In those days you could get fine hotel rooms for $5 or $6. I think these things are on the plan whereby you paid for your room and meals both, and it was something around $20, or something really high. The tourists came from all over the United States and Europe. Lots of them flew in on those old tri motor Fords, but many more of than came by train.

One day the train was just about ready to leave, in the evening. And I cleared it to leave for Ludlow. And this guy came dashing in, and said, "I want you to hold that train. I want to take it, and my baggage isn't here. It's combing up from Furnace Creek."

I'm 17, 18 years old, and I said, "Well, I don't known about that." I mean, to me, it was like, when it's time to go, it had to go, period. I didn't realize the T&T was a little jerkwater railroad. To me, it was just the same as the Santa Fe or the Pennsylvania.

He said, "ell, no, I mean it. I want you to hold that train " he said, "Now, I can do it, because I held the Pennsylvania . . . " And he quoted.

I said, "Cell, maybe you can, then." And so I called the superintendent's office.

He said, "Yes, hold it." [laughs] he didn't care who it was, he said, "Yeah, hold it." And a did. And then in about 30 minutes here came his baggage.

But he said, "I held the Pennsylvania out of Philadelphia or New York City or something like that."

I said, "Well, I believe - I bet you could . . . " [chuckles]

RM: If he could hold that one, he could hold the T&T.

DL: If they could hold that one for 10 minutes, they could hold the T&T for a week. [laughs] Yes. But you always think of something like a Toonerville Trolley - do you remembers those cartoons that showed the little bitty railroads and all that? Well, the T&T actually was manned by a really excellent, professional type of people. They had their weaknesses - some of them are alcoholics - and some of them are this or that or the other - but all of than are all qualified. They'd been Santa Fe Hen, and Union Pacific, and various things like that.

RM: How did they wind up on the T&T?

DL: Well, they'd get busted [chuckles] off some other railroad, and they'd come to the T&T. So I worked there 9 years from 1931 to '39. And when I went to the Southern Pacific I never knew a hard day. I'd learned it all there from those guys.

RM: How long were you with the Southern Pacific?

DL: About 2 years. It was the Northwestern Pacific that ran from Sausalito to Eureka along the coast. The SP operated for, I think, 4 years, and then the Santa Fe - it was a joint thing with the Santa Fe. Then I went to San Bernardino and went to work for the Santa Fe for 4 or 5 years. And then I come out to the desert to Goodsprings. I burned out, during the war, is what happened. And I went from 165 pounds down to 137.

RM: From stress?

Dl: The stress of train dispatching during the war. It was just tremendous. There was just one train after another. There are troop trains . . . I mean, you'd have a regular passenger train and maybe 5 sections of more passenger trains - they were all troop trains. You'd have an ammunition train. You'd have an equipment train. You had your regular passenger trains that you ran fast, and all that. That was all done by train orders before they had the CTC.

RM: What's the CTC?

DL: That's Centralized Traffic Control. You have a big board and you can see the lights and follow the trains. This other was all a mental game. You had train sheets - one east and one west. You had to keep these all in your mind, balanced. And you had to put out train orders, and be sure that everybody had something on the opposite or the overtaking ones and all that. And during the war, you see, you'd come to work and you'd sit down a half hour before you were supposed to start, and the dispatcher would stay with you another half an hour. So it took one hour to get that transferred. And then at night the same way. So you worked 9 hours . . .

But with the CTC, you've got absolute control of than. And it's almost foolproof. The other way, you could have head-end collisions. One day, I relieved the guy [chuckles] who overlooked some trains. When I went to relieve him, I saw he was just sweating like he was in a sauna bath, or something. I said, "What's the matter, you sick?"

He says, "No."

I said, "Well, let me sit down and relieve you, then." I was a little early, anyway.

And then he said, "You don't want this railroad."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Well, I got a guy coming east, out of Atwood. And then I've got 2 guys going fast out of Corona, and they don't have a thing on one another." No train orders, no nothing. They're just running toward one another.

And I said, "ell, get your butt out of there. Let me sit down." Because he was spaced out. he didn't known what he was doing.

So I sat down, and about that time a guy came on the phone at one of the sidings there, just this side of Atwood. He said, "Dispatcher!" Boy, his tone was real rough, and . . . "I'm at such-and-such a place and there's . . . a train coming west and I haven't got a thing on him."

I said, "There's another one right behind him, too. Get your ass into the siding - immediately."

And he: [meek tone of voice] "Oh, OK." [laughs]

If it'd been the other dispatcher, there'd have been a lengthy conversation. But I said, "Get your ass in there. Right now." And so he pulled in the clear and let the other train go. And

he thought he'd overlooked something himself, you see. That's the reason he got so timid. [laughs] But he didn't.

RM: So you burned out from the stress of this. Did you quit the job then?

DL: I quit the job and came to Goodsprings, believe it or not, and bought the Goodsprings Hotel. This was in 1945 - just the end of the war. It took me a year to get over that. I'd go down to Jean, near here, and I'd hear that train whistle, and my stomach just cramped up . . . I was off 4 years, until 1949.

Then I went to work in Las Vegas for the Union Pacific. And it was all CTC. It was just perfect. I could just sit there and play with that. It was no problem at all.

RM: How long did you stay with the UP?

DL: Ten years. I got my 30 years in.

RM: Were you in the union all the time?

DL: No. You see, [chuckles] train dispatchers are officials. You can't be a union man. You have a white pass, and when you get on the train they all pass the word: "There's an official on . . ."

RM: Where does your retirement come from, then?

DL: They all withhold, and it goes into the Railroad Fund.

RM: What did you do after you retired?

DL: Well, I did some mining downs in Mexico for a couple of years - placer mines - in the boonies there in the Sierra Madres .We had a nice beach apartment in Mazatlan right on the ocean. I'd go out for a month, then I'd come back in for R & R, and then go back out. And Celesta came down there and I couldn't get her to come home. [laughter]

Celesta Lowe: That was when a had our aborted attempt to join the Peace Corps.

DL: Yes. [laughs] But anyway, a had a lot of fun. And besides mining, I owned the Tecopa Store, and the whole smear, there: the bar, and the 160 acres, and all the businesses in town, and the post office and everything. This was from '64 to '69.

RM: What did you do then?

DL: Well, I sold that. And then I've been buying and selling real estate. And I bought a ghost town up in Johnnie, Nevada. That was about '77, wasn't it? I went up to Johnnie and stayed there about 6 or 8 months and sold lots. I think I've got 6 of than left; I'm going to hang onto

those. There wasn't a thing there. All the buildings are gone. And now there's a nice supper club. You know, the (what do they call that, The Gold Pan?)

Celesta Lowe: Gold Coast, or Gold Rush . .

DL: And 2 or 3 houses.

RM: How long did that last?

DL: Oh, that lasted a couple of years. I lived in Pahrump most of the time.

RM: And then where did you go from there?

DL: Well, then Las Vegas. he already had property there, and we sold same land in there to the [builders of some] condominiums. The older I get, the more we have, and the less a need it. And the less he can do with it.

RM: Yes; isn't that the way.

DL: Your kids are educated, and you're limited to how far you're going to go, or even want to. If we'd have had this kind of a situation [laughs] when the kids are little it'd have been so great. But now he don't need it.

Celesta Lowe: Four of than in college at once, at one time.

RM: Let's move back, then, to the Bradford Siding. Was it on the Nevada side of the line?

DL: Just over the Nevada side right down from the where the Stateline Saloon is, now. Then Leeland was the next stop. There was nothing there, actually, except a section house.

RM: What's a section house?

DL: That's where the section hands live who work on the track. At that time those places were permanently occupied. Every so many miles they'd have a section - a section of track - and the section gang handled it. The section foreman, plus, say, 4 men. And then overall they had a roadmaster who came and went and oversaw all of them. There were probably 10 sections over the T&T.

RM: Now, could you describe what a section house - say, at Leeland - looked like?

DL: The section fireman had a separate house. It usually was about a 3- or 4-roam frame house. There was no indoor plumbing or electricity. If they had a water tank to supply the trains, then they'd have running water. If not, they'd usually haul their water in barrels. The section fireman usually had a wife, and sometimes children, living there with him. Then the section house was

about 4 rooms in a row, one after the other. If the section hand had a wife with kids, they lived in that one room. It was really bad. They had nothing except the windows and doors and the roof over their head. They'd have a stove and so forth, but they ate, slept, and everything in that one room. Of course, they usually would have it fixed so there was a roof that ran out the front, like a porch would. But it'd be a dirt floor. The back was the same way. So in effect, they could live outdoors in good weather to a great extent.

RM: Were section hands typically married?

DL: Cell, quite a bit. They were nearly all Mexicans. And they are what we call wetbacks, now. Nobody cared, in those days. They just came up, and they'd go to work.

RM: Did they speak English at all?

DL: Some of them, but very broken. Moistly they didn't. And I was agent at various places there, and you are in charge of the express office. So you had money orders to sell. Every payday - twice a month - they'd come in and buy a money order and send it to Mexico. Typically, they'd earn about $60 a month. And I'd send $40 of that, or more, homed. $40, $45 of that to Mexico. And they'd be here a year, and they'd go back there, and they are set up to buy a place, and maybe go into a little business.

RM: So there weren't that many really long-term permanent section hands.

DL: Same of than are, but lots of than weren't. They came and went. But a lot of than stayed and raised families. There at Tecopa the Frances had 5 kids. They grew up and all become miners.

RM: Was the section foreman himself usually a Mexican?

DL: he was an Anglo. And I never saw 2 section foremen who got along. [Men from] adjoining sections would say, "That so-and-so down there doesn't know his business. he's got rough spots on the track; now, I've got 'an perfect." A lot of them were Irish, and they are fun.

RM: And then the roadmaster was over the section foremen?

DL: Yes. And he'd travel on the train. He was up and down that all the time. And he'd stay over here or there.

RM: Where would he stay?

DL: ell, at Shoshone he'd go to the Snake Room. he usually would stay at places like Death Valley Junction or Beatty or Ludlow. He had a home in Ludlow. He'd also tour up and down on a rail car. He'd get the section foreman to take him from place to place.

RM: You mean one of those little hand car things?

DL: No, they were motor cars. I was at Death Valley Junction one time when the agent at Silver Lake - which is just north of Baker a little way - got sick, and they sent me in a hurry. There was no train running, so they had the section foreman at Death Valley take me to Evelyn. That was the next section house. And then the guy at Evelyn took me to Tecopa, which was the next section house. That section foreman took me to Sperry. From Sperry to Riggs, and then from Riggs to Silver Lake. I rode with each one of those foremen.

RM: OK. So Leeland was just a section at that time.

DL: Yes. At one time, when they had the mines running up at Lee Camp, they had a store and a few things in there. By the time I was there, there was nothing but the section foreman and his 4 men. And from there to Beatty the next place along was Carrara. The only thing in that Amargosa farm area was the AT&T Ranch.

RM: What was happening at Carrara?

DL: Over the years - a time or two - they had a flurry of activity at Carrara because there's beautiful marble there. Evidently it costs too much money to mine, or something, and they couldn't make a go of it. But they put a siding in there, and they had a town there and everything. It was really a nice little town with a lot of employees. There wasn't a tree in it. [laughs] It was too new. When you go along the highway now, if you will look, you'll see the old foundations. There were store buildings, and dormitory buildings and office buildings for the company. And then you'll see a straight road that goes right up into that Carrara marble. In Italy, Carrara is where they quarry [the famous marble]. On each side of the road . . . actually, I think they made those things out of cement or cement blocks - they weren't frame houses at all. And they were there for years. Now they're all gone; they tore than down and used the bricks for something. It didn't last long, but everybody was hopeful it would work out. If something like that had really gone over, there's an unlimited supply of it there. They could've mined on forever.

After that, the next place was Gold Center. There was nothing there except on the siding. Just beyond Gold Center, before you get into Beatty, right on that mountain there was always a mill.

RM: Where you can see the old foundation?

DL: Yes. There'd be a mill there for 3 or 4 years, and it'd disappear, and another one would be built there in a couple of years, because there was water. That was the Amargosa River.

RM: Where exactly was Gold Center, Deke?

DK: This side of Beatty. The reason they established Gold Center in there, I think, is that the T&T Railroad ran around to Rhyolite from Gold Center. And then there was water right on the river. They could have mills, and so forth. It didn't exist very long.

RM: Was there anything to water the train with at Gold Center?

DL: Not that I know of. At Beatty there was.

RM: Where did the T&T go, then? It didn't go into Beatty, did it?

DL: No. It went to Rhyolite until it took over operating the Bullfrog Goldfield Railroad.

CHAPTER FIVE

RN: OK, Deke, he were talking about Gold Center. And you were saying that there wasn't anything there by the time you were on the scene.

DL: Not a thing.

RM: Where did the railroad go after it got to Gold Center?

DL: The T&T originally ran around the mountain there from Gold Center to Rhyolite. But in a few years the T&T took over the Bullfrog Goldfield - the part that ran from Beatty to Goldfield. And they were able to connect there with the LV&T, so they could run on to Goldfield.

RN: Did the LV&T run their own tracks to Goldfield?

DL: Yes.

RM: There were 2 lines going into Goldfields, then.

DL: The LV&T and BG from the south, and the Tonopah & Goldfield from the north.

RM: Did the LV&T go through the gap that the highway goes through?

DL: It went that way, but the tracks and everything were gone by World War I. I known they used to come in to Beatty, and then back into Rhyolite -there was 2 or 3 miles that I think was the LV&T then.

RM: Well, when you were on the scene, where did the T&T go?

DL: It went straight through Beatty and straight up the canyon. But of course the LV&T was gone, and so they went right on . .

RM: So it used the LV&T roadway in there?

DL: Probable that little section. And then from north of there they had the BG, and there was a number of stations north of there.

RM: were they still going to Goldfield when you were there?

DL: Yes. They did that up until the mid '20s. And then they stopped going to Goldfield. They tore that up when Scotty built his castle, then he bought the ties and took them.

RM: The railroad wasn't going to Rhyolite, then, by the time you were there.

DL: No. Rhyolite was dead. It didn't last long. The panic of 1907 was really when they started going down. By 1910 there was no reason for a railroad to go in there.

RM: Could you describe what Beatty looked like then? That was an important stop for the LV&T, wasn't it?

DL: Yes. It was a neat little town. You know, it doesn't matter what the times are, good or bad or indifferent, people always seem to do OK in Beatty. Because it's nice. There's a lot of water there and it's a center. For miles around, people would come in there for their shopping. And being in Nevada, they always had gambling and liquor openly. And so that helped a little bit, too.

RM: Well, you were there during Prohibition, weren't you.

DL: Yes. I was there in 1932 when I relieved Dave Asplin, who was the agent. But I just relieved him for a couple of weeks. And the old hotel - the one on the corner there - Greenwood, now named the Exchange Club . .

RM: About where Revert's gas station is now?

DL: That's where it was - right in there. The railroad station was right where the Burro Inn is now. And then the roundhouse was just a little bit to the east and south of the station. And then a little north of the track - on the same side as the depot - was the agent's house. It was nice - about a 10-room house. It had been, I think, offices or something like that. When I was relieving there, there was a guy [chuckles] a newspaper man from Goldfield in there - a friend of Dave Asplin's. He lived there. This guy was an old friend from Goldfield. It was Depression times and he had just a few bucks coming in, so he lived there. And, God, he did the cooking for us. And I'm [laughs] 18. He'd make a can of corned beef last three meals. And I could eat one in one meal. So I'd go about 2 days, then I'd just get so hungry . . . I'd go across the street to the Konzos', where the trainmen ate. They boarded people. And she'd cook a great big, juicy, greasy steak and I'm telling you, I'd eat 'till I was foundered. And then I could go 2 more days. [laughter]

RM: On his food?

DL: Yes, he was so proud of it. He said, "You know, I can make a can of corned beef last 3 days." ell, he didn't eat much. But he'd been a newspaper man in Goldfield, and there were 3 or 4 newspapers there, and they kept dwindling and dwindling and dwindling. And he'd invested all of his money in stock in those newspapers. And so all he had left was $15 a month coming in from same kind of mining stock he had, and that's what he lived on. His name was Harry Moon. he was a fine fellow; really a fine fellow.

RM: Beatty didn't have a newspaper then, did they?

DL: No.

RM: Was the town pretty much like it is now?

DL: Yes, it was a whole lot like it is now. It's a lot bigger on the outskirts. But right downtown it was a hell of a lot like it is. There was another saloon right across from Greenwood's.

RM: OK - where that motel is now?

DL: Yes. It was called the Golden Ace. And I used to stop in there and have a drink. One guy got to raising cain and they called the constable, and he ejected the guy. And of course in those days there were no street lights or anything like that. And this guy was standing down - there was a couple of steps to the ground, you see - out of that saloon. He was hollering at that town constable and raising hell. And he reached in his hip pocket like that, and the constable shot him deader than . . .

And so they had an inquest and they said, "ell, it was his fault. He had no business reaching for his hip pocket." You know, now-a-days, why, just because the guy reached . . . wouldn't work. But anyway, he shot him. I think it was reasonable. Even to this day. Of course, they'd make a big flap about it. But I still think that's reasonable.

RM: were the section hands at Leeland responsible for the track clear to Beatty?

DL: Let's see. I don't recall a section crew in Beatty. There was none in Carrara. There had to be one in Beatty, but I don't remember who it was, or anything about it. But from Leeland there would be another one in Beatty, and then farther on up.

RM: What was the next stop north of Beatty?

DL: Springdale. That's where the ranch is now. And then on beyond there's Bonnie Clair and a bunch of others. But I wasn't that familiar with it because they'd cut that part of it off when I still was a kid - before I worked for it. Beatty was the end of the line.

I was well familiar with Beatty, because sometimes in the course of these jobs I told you about - the various ones on the railroad - sometimes I'd be a fireman on the locomotive out there and I'd stay all night with Konzos. And so over the years I kept pretty well in touch. with Beatty. Celesta and I were in Shoshone and those places. And the roads were better then and we had better cars. So we used to go as far as Beatty to dances, even, and baseball games.

RM: How often did the railroad run when you were there?

DL: Well, when I first went there were 2 trains a day - one north and one south. All the way from Goldfield to Ludlow, and from Ludlow to Goldfield. Then they cut it off from Beatty to Goldfield and it ran 3 times a week from Beatty to Ludlow. And then later on they cut it off from Ludlow to Crucero so it ran once a week from Death Valley to Beatty and back. And 3 times a week to Crucero. They didn't go to Ludlow anymore - just to Crucero. They'd go down there and

stay overnight and come back. And they bought a gas-electric car that was a combination baggage and coach. It was strong enough that they'd attach a Pullman to it. They'd bring a Pullman out from L.A. to Crucero, and then they'd pick it up and take it to Beatty or back. In later years, they quit running the Pullman even. But they ran that thing twice a week, and the freight just once.

There just wasn't that much business. And the pitiful part of it was, they closed it in '40, and immediately World War II came along. They'd have ran a spur up to the Indian Springs, you know, and to the Test Site, and all that. That railroad would be operating to this day.

RM: Yes; it really would. And it would've made a difference in the development of the Amargosa Valley, wouldn't it?

Celesta Lowe: It's a tragedy; yes.

DL: But it was just a year short.

RM: That's an interesting point.

RM: Well, you know, there's talk that if they go with the repository, they're going to put a railroad in. You would think that they would bring it across from Caliente. But DOE are saying it's going to have to come up, they think, from the south. You may see a railroad on that old roadbed yet.

DL: You ought to see the maps from when they first projected the Union Pacific. It didn't come the way it did. It came down through that 40mile canyon country, you know, and the Test Site, and went through Ash Meadows, and down through Shoshone to Tecopa, and then across into Death Valley, and over to Barstow. There are beautiful maps . .

RM: Instead of coming - which way?

DL: Caliente. You're talking about bringing that railroad from Caliente over. Well, that's what was projected originally - just where you're talking about. That's the way it was to go. But they didn't; they brought it down that cussed river, and they had nothing but trouble for years and years.

Celesta Lowe: Meadow Valley Wash.

RM: Yes. It washed them out several times.

DL: Yes, I'll say. But anyway, that's the way it was projected originally. And it's a good way to go, really. I don't know why it couldn't come across from there. However, it depends on where this stuff is coming from.

RM: Well, they can't put it across the Test Site.

Celesta Lowe: No.

DL: Oh, that's what you're talking about.

RM: I think so.

[tape is turned off]

DL: At Tecopa I owned 160 acres. It was a motel and trailer park, and the whole . . . you know how little towns are - you have everything - the post office and everything. And that included the T&T roadbed.

RM: Oh - you owned the roadbed.

DL: Well, in a sense. But you see, when they got their patents on - those lands - those grounds - that exempted those roadbeds. They got them after the railroad was in there.

RM: So the roadbed had kind of a right-of way through there. Legally, does the Borax Company still own the roadbed?

DL: Bo, they abandoned it. When these people got those deeds, though, they didn't get the deed to the right-of-way of the railroad. Actually, it reverted back to the federal government. That's the way they got it, to start with, was from the government. So that piece of lands in there, as long as nobody cares, they can have it.

RM: Deke, for the record, let's quickly trace back to Ludlow.

DL: OK. We'll start at Ludlow coming north.

RM: I've never been clear where Ludlow is.

DL: You know where Barstow is. Ludlow is on old Highway 66, 52 miles east of Barstow. Then it'd be another 80 miles or so to Needles on the same highway, which is 1-40 now. If you go directly north from Ludlow 25 miles, you came to the UP crossing at Crucero, and then you cross Soda Lake to Baker.

There's a big dry lake at Soda Lake. In the early, early days, the government road ran through there going to Needles. And they had forts at Camp Cady. Or, rather, they had camps, at least: Camp Cady and Fort Soda (e called it Fort Soda). Now this is 'way back in the 1850s. And then you go on over to a spring up in the mountains - what did they call that one?

Celesta Lowe: Paiute?

DL: No, that's farther on over.

RM: We're still going north.

DL: Well, this was the old government road. But anyway, we know where Ludlow is, now. It was sort of a 3-part town. One part was the Santa Fe, with their main line going right through there. They didn't have a whole lot of things there. They had an agent, and a section foreman, and the section crew, and signal maintainers, and brakemen; because going over Ash Hill (as they called it) they had to have extra brakemen.

And then there was a whole row of houses, an old hotel, and so forth, on the south side of the Santa Fe track. There must've been 10 or 12 over there. And then as you come to the north side, the old Highway 66 came right through town. It was lined with service stations and Murphy Brothers had a store, restaurant, and a hotel - an old tin-type hotel. And 2 or 3 others - Chinamen had the same thing. And there was a garage, and a couple of more service stations.

Then to the west was the T&T property. They really were the biggest entity there because they had their major shops and did all their repair works. They must've had at least 20 men working in there. And then they had this huge 2-story office building that housed the agent and the train dispatchers, superintendent, roadmaster, and the superintendent's clerk, and a few other things like that. And then there was a row of houses - Tonopah Avenue - on both sides. And it was T&T employees. It belonged to the railroad, and they furnished these houses to their employees. Then there was a schoolhouse at the far end, but no high school.

RM: Was Highway 66 there when you were there in the '30s?

DL: The year that we went there - which would be 1928 - it was just sort of a 2-track road, and it wasn't much of a road. And they went in there with teams - mules - and created that road and made a fine graveled highway through there, going east. It went from L.A. clear to Needles and on east. They just built that thing clear through; it become a major artery.

I had been going to high school in Los Angeles, in the beach towns there, and boarding out. And so then in the fall of 1929 they started running the school bus to high school from Ludlow 53 miles to Barstow. It took us almost 2 hours each way. we could only do 25, 30 miles an hour because it was just corduroy. But then too many years after that, they paved it. Of course there was a tremendous amount of traffic going through there. Same way at Baker, when they paved the road there.

RM: Coming north from Ludlow, then, what was your first stop on the T&T?

DL: There wasn't anything much until you got to Crucero. That was the crossing of the T&T and the Union Pacific, and they had a tower there, and 3 telegraph operators around the clock, one for each shift, because they had to throw the switches for the trains to cross. And of course there were train orders in those days, so they needed than anyway. Crucero, incidentally, is a Spanish word for 'crossing'.

There was hardly anybody there; just 3 telegraph operators and the section crews. So there might be 8 or 9 people in there and a family or two. Before my father came to the T&T he was stationed right there. we weren't living with him there; we were still in Oklahoma. he told

me there were the 3 of than and the first trick man had been there for years. And being out on the desert you get a little nutty. Every mealtime, this old guy'd come out on his porch. And he'd just yell out loud: "Breakfast is ready!" And he'd turn around and go in and eat. [laughter] he'd do the same thing at lunch and at night.

And so my dad told the second trick guy, "I think I'll go over and eat with him.

"He said, "You better not; he'd shoot you." [laughs] he says, "e does it all the time, but nobody ever . . . " answered the call, you know. [laughs] And oh, gee, there are lots of old stories about guys like that. And Crucero was like being sent to Siberia. [laughter]

After you left there, the next place up was a section house and a crew at Razor. It had good water there. They hauled that water from Razor to Ludlow, supplied the town of Ludlow, and hauled it to Baker, supplied the town of Baker. Razor's not far from Soda Lake. They had a soda works there at one time years and years ago.

In later years they had that old famous place called Zzyzx, with Dr. Springer. Did you ever hear of Zzyzx? And Dr. Springer?

RM: No.

DL: He was one of those guys who was a healer. Be was down on the border. Remember that Mexican place where they broadcast from?

RM: Oh - XELO. Was it XELO?

Celesta Lowe: Yes.

DL: XELO, Cahuilla, Mexico. That's where he came from. And he'd been down there, selling those elixirs, then he came up to there and he settled on that land at Zzyzx. he made that name up. The last words in the dictionary: Z-Z-Y-Z-X. he was a very intelligent Man.

RM: Did you know him?

DL: I knew him well. He was a doctor of - I don't known whether it was divinity or sociology - something like that. And he had been a college administrator or president or something before he went into that other.

RM: Well, why did he settle there?

DL: He needed a huge place for his next operation. Because he'd broadcast from Los Angeles, and all of those winos and people on skid row would turn over their welfare, or their pension checks, to him, and then he'd bring them out. And there was no bar, there was nothing close to it. And he had 2 things going for him. One of them was religion. The second was health foods and all that stuff. And these old, old people, you see, all they're concerned with is the hereafter and health. So he had it going there. And he grew alfalfa and ground it up with same other stuff, and he sold that for $1 a package. And he broadcast over the radio from L.A. But he

brought those people out there. And he was there moist of the time. He had several hundred people there.

It made Baker a hell of a post office. Celesta's sister was the postmistress there, and she had 2 or 3 employees. In that little town of Baker.

RM: How far is Zzyzx from Baker?

Celesta Lowe: Twelve miles.

DL: It was the closest place. They were getting their mail at Baker and he was shipping all this health food out.

RM: When was this, now?

DL: Well, this was in the '50s, '40s, '30s.

Celesta Lowe: Moistly in the '40s.

DL: he was shipping all this stuff out, and getting letters in ordering health food. And this guy who'd worked for him told me that they'd take those letters and they'd put boxes like beer cases down on the floor, and they'd open those letters and throw dollar bills into those boxes that people had sent ordering that stuff. he said, "God darn it, every day you'd fill 2 or 3 beer boxes full of dollar bills."

RM: That was a lot of money then.

DL: It was a non-profit organization because it was religious, and all that. They used to transplant monkey glands into men down at his Mexican operation - things like that. he had his broadcasting office in the Hotel Alexander, Main Street, Los Angeles.

RM: Well, he must've had a powerful station.

DL: He did. And he was just as smart as a whip. The government closed him out of there and took that away from him and he moved to Vegas. he called me at Tecopa when I was living there and said, "I want to start up an operation over in that country, and you know it. So I'll come over, and you take me around, and he'll take pictures." So I did. he spent the whole day, and I took him down to Saratoga Springs, and I took him out to Resting Springs on the old Spanish Trail - a beautiful spot. Then I took him clear up to Ash Meadows to the bawdy house, and it was vacant. It would've been perfect for him, because there are no bars, and he had buildings for housing them. Then he had that whole raw of cribs the girls were in for the people to live in. It was ideal for him; he was all fired up. And I took all those pictures, had them developed, and mailed then to him. You know, I never even got a thank-you from him, and he never [laughs] picked up on it.

Celesta Lowe: He was way up in the 80s.

DL: And his mind was just as sharp - a lot sharper than mine is. He was a very intelligent man.

RM: Well, did the railroad make a stop on Zzyzx?

DL: The railroad was torn up before he came out there. There was water there, but the railroad never had a section house there or anything. It was at Razor, which is only 2 miles from there anyway.

And then you went to Baker - there's another section house at Baker. And when I first went there, in 1922, there was nothing in Baker. There was no highway, nothing.

RM: Dad Fairbanks hadn't gone there by then, had he?

DL: No. There was a section house there, but there were no residences. You went beyond there to Silver Lake, 9 more miles. That's where the Arrowhead Trail - the highway - went through Silver Lake.

RM: And that was the old Salt Lake to L.A. road.

DL: Yes. And the store there had a great big map painted on the side of it that shoed the Arrowhead Trail from L.A. to Salt Lake City. You only saw one car a week. Then finally, maybe, 2 or 3 cars a day, but I'm telling you . . . That was in the early '20s. My brother was the agent there in 1923, '4, '5, and I used to go down there. Then later years, I was the agent there. But when I went to Silver Lake, everyone had left, except for a power line camp - where the crew that built the L.A. power line lived - a big camp with 50, 60 men.

CHAPTER SIX

DL: As I mentioned, my brother was the agent in Silver Lake in 1923 and '4 and '5.

RM: When was that road abandoned?

DL: Well, they built that highway through Baker in '26, wasn't it - 1926.

Celesta Lowe: Yes.

DL: Everything was ended then. It wasn't anything anyhow. It was just a 2-track - like a wagon road - anyhow. The best you could do over that old Arrowhead Trail would be about 15 miles an hour, and it twisted. In a good spot, if you could kick it up to 30 miles an hour, you were gearing along. Then people would break down out there, and there wouldn't be any traffic, they'd almost die from lack of water. It was a terrible thing. [chuckles] Even after I was there - 1934 to 1936 - at least once a month, somebody's stop there - some fellow - and he'd come in and say, "You know, I was the first man that ever come over the old Arrowhead Trail through here. And I did it in such-and-such a year."

And I'd say, "Oh, I'm . . ." But there was more than one that said that. I told my older brother about it. Of course, he'd been there before me. And he said, "You know, it used to happen then, too." [laughter] When I first went there, there was a boarding house run by an old lady named Ma Palmer - and I boarded with her. And when she closed up for lack of business I was the only one left in town.

RM: How long did you live there alone?

DL: Until I married Celesta. [laughs]

RM: And you moved out there with him.

DL: From Baker.

Celesta Lowe: In 1935.

RM: How far was it from Baker?

DL: It's about 9 miles. There was a power line camp up above there. But, of course, we hardly ever had any contact with them.

RM: So you lived alone there as newly-wed?

DL: Yes. There were about 15, 20 vacant houses there. And if somebody came along and wanted to rent a house, I didn't own them, but I'd go rent it to than and collect the rent. If the guy who owned it came along, I'd give him the money. If not, why . . . It was just . . . they didn't

care, and I didn't care. [laughs] So I was in business as ell running the railroad station. There was a talc mine out of there. There was quite a little bit of mining out of there. Silver Lake had been a center of trade. At one time there must've been 2- or 300 people living there. I've seen a picture - a panorama, you know, where they stood up on a boxcar on the railroad, and shot a photo, turned and shot another, until they made a full circle, then spliced than together. Beautiful shot. And then there was a mining camp up in the Avawats, which is to the north and east, called Crackerjack. The T&T was going to build a spur up there, and . .

RM: That was in the early days.

DL: When I was there, one time a couple of army airplanes lit on that dry lake, which is 8 or 9 miles long. They taxied up pretty close to the depot, and got out, and came over and said to me, We want you to take us back over the road where one of our buddies had to make an emergency landing." Three of them were coming from March Field going to Vegas.

I said, "OK." I took than in my car and he went back about 15 miles, and here was that guy right in the middle of the God-darndest bunch of rocks you ever saw. he never even broke a wheel. we just pancaked it down there with no disturbance. So we brought him back and then they took off and the army sent a big airplane out from March Field, and trucks, and they brought the plane in there, and repaired it on that dry lake, and took off.

But, you know, that lake was a perfect place to learn to drive a car. You could go out there and do 50 miles an hour the first time you ever touched the wheel.

RM: What was the next stop north of Silver Lake, then?

DL: The next stop was Riggs. There was a section house there. Riggs was named after an old couple who were there 30 years before the railroad in the early, early days, back in the 1880s. They had a rich silver mine. Their names were Ma and Pa Riggs and their mine was the Riggs Nine. They would have to go to Daggett, which is just this side of Barstow. That was their shopping center; it was 50 miles away. The only other [transport] going would be the 20-mule borax team. They used to haul borax from Death Valley into Daggett at the time that I'm talking about.

Old Pa Riggs and Ma Riggs had a black man who worked for than there at Riggs. They mined out this buckboard load of rich silver ore and Pa Riggs took it in, and he shipped it to San Francisco and went with it. he got about $8,000, $10,000 out of it. And boy, he went on a tear! He went to New York. He went to the Follies. He went to Paris. He had the God-damndest time you ever saw.

RM: Did he take Ma with him?

DL: Hell, no. He didn't. [laughter] She was sitting out there at the mine. he was gone 2 years, and he spent every damn penny. And then he came back. he was walking, and he hitched a ride out with the 20-mule borax team. When they got as close as they could to his mine, he got off, and he walked. When he walked in to his mine there, old Ma was sitting there in the chair, and

the black had stayed with her. So Pa came in, and his head was hanging low, and he says, "Hello, Ma."

And she says, "Welcome home, Pa." [laughter]

That's all that happened. She never did anything to him.

RM: That's a funny story.

Celesta Lowe: You'd think she'd have starved to death.

DL: Oh, she had that black guy. They were mining. She carried right on.

RM: She might've had a whole fortune salted away.

DL: Yes, she was doing all right. [laughter] And that black man went down out of Baker to the Paymaster Mine. You know where that is down there - the gold mines down there? he and a Mexican hit it rich down there. They were mining a bunch of it, and they got it all mined - the pocket mined out - and the Mexican killed the Negro. He killed the black, and he want in and sold that ore. And he told them, 'Well, he's out there," you know. Still working, and all that. Then he disappeared to Mexico or somewhere. In later years - when I was at Tecopa - [chuckles] a guy who was mining down there at the same nines told me this story.

RM: Is that where you first heard the story?

DL: Yes. And he said, "You know, I found their mine, and on this dump was still some gold ore in some sacks." That this Negro and Mexican had mined. he said it was good ore, too. He said, "That guy just took nothing but jewelry rock when he killed that Negro."

RM: Did they ever punish him for it?

DL: Disappeared. They don't even know who he was, where he went, or anything.

RM: Did they find the remains of the black fellow?

DL: Yes. Where he'd been killed. Well, there were other prospectors and miners in that country.

RM: Where did that happen?

DL: He call it Old Dad Mountain It's south and east of Baker about 8, 9 miles. The Paymaster Mine, the Orofino, all those old gold mines are in there. But anyway, Riggs was the next stop. And beyond there were 2 or 3 side tracks, but no stations. Then you went down to Acmes. That's in the Tecopa Canyon. There was a spur - when I first went there - that ran up that canyon past China Ranch. And then into the Gyp (Gypsum) Canyon. It was commercial gypsum. They mined it all out and shipped it out on the T&T And then they tore up that spur and put it in at Carrara. They used to run cars up that branch all the time. When I came to the country, I

remember, it was real early in the morning and we sat there for 30 minutes while they ran a car up there into Gyp Canyon. It was gone for an hour or so.

From there, the next stop is Tecopa. There was quite a little activity in there, because there was a private railroad - the Tecopa Consolidated Railroad - which ran from there up to the Noonday and Gunsight Mines. And there were about 50, 60 men working at the mines. They shipped one or two 50-ton cars a day out of there.

RM: That was a lead mine, wasn't it?

DL: Yes, but it also carried some silver, as most lead does. And it also carried $2 - $3 in gold. They always said that the gold would pay for the transportation and smelting of that ore.

RM: Where did they ship it to? Salt Lake?

DL: Yes. There was a smelter at Selby, California, up near San Francisco on the bay there. And there were about 3 up at Salt Lake. But now there's no such thing. You have to have a contract; you have to be a big operator nowadays - thousands of tons a day - to contract.

But anyway, we're up to Tecopa. And there were famous hot springs near there. At that time there wasn't a building at the springs; not a soul. But what would happen is, a miner would get leaded - crippled from the lead.

RM: It was lead, not silicosis?

DL: It was the lead, and their joints would be bad. Or else they'd just have rheumatism. So they'd come in, they'd pitch a tent, and they'd boil out, as they call it. It was also our bathtub. he didn't have a bathtub in our house. But every night he'd go up there and he'd take our nightclothes, and he'd take a hot bath, and get in our car, and drive back, and go to bed.

People would come . . . Well, while we were there, I remember a woman who was brought in there by 2 men in a car from Goodsprings. She was a cook in the hotel. And she absolutely couldn't move. She couldn't walk, she was just bedridden - from rheumatism. And at first they took her to the springs and they'd dip her in there. And then after about a week of that, she got so she could walk a little bit, and then she could get in and out. In 30 days she was walking 2 miles; she'd walk a mile up and back.

RM: Was that a common cure there?

DL: Yes. It is to this day. It's mainly good for your circulation, and for your muscles and sores - rheumatism or arthritis and all that. But it's not good for your heart, and it's not good for your lungs or anything like that. Though they claim it's good for everything: even bunions. They've had analyses made of it, and there's all kinds of minerals in it. There's quite a bit of borax in it. You just - [sound of hands rubbing] you know. It feels a little bit like soap whenever you get in there and rub your hands. But it is good water. Tastes terrible - you can't drink it. Oh, you can drink it, but it's . .

RM: Did you own the springs at one time?

DL: No, that's a hot springs, and no one can own them. It belongs to the federal government. But so many people finally started coming there and camping that it got to be a sanitary hazard because there'd be 50 people there, and no toilets, and so forth. So the federal government told the state of California to do something about it, or else. And so the state of California said, "OK, Inyo County, you do something about it, or else." So the county runs it. It belongs to the federal government but it's administered by the state of California. But run by the . . .

There's an old tale there. All of them tell this, but there isn't a word of truth to it. They say old Chief Tecopa willed this to the white people. You can never charge to take those baths. But old Chief Tecopa died in 1904. He never owned anything in the first place. It was in his territory, but . . .he was a Paiute.

RM: He was Paiute?

Celesta Lowe: He was born at Indian Springs.

DL: The way I understand it, he was born up near here in Mountain Springs. Because when Powell was here he had a list of all of the Indians in the area and the closest thing to Chief Tecopa was a guy - the chief - right there at Mountain Springs. You know that pass going through there. he would come here to Goodsprings and places that had springs of water. And Powell called him Tokopar. But Powell was from Boston, anyway, so it's just like the Kennedys - he puts an r on Cuber (Cuba). I think that was Chief Tecopa. He was the chief of that area, but there was a band of Paiutes at Indian Springs, there was another one in Ash Meadows, and there was a large one in Pahrump. And also at Tecopa, and Shoshone, and Kingston Fountains. A lot of than would float back and forth over the area. But they were just family groups, except the Pahrump ones - they were more than a family. They were several families in that group because Pahrump could support a lot of Indians. But Tecopa and Shoshone couldn't. Or the Kingston, or up there at Mountain Springs. They'd just float from Goodsprings to Mountain Springs, Kingston Springs, and around like that.

RM: Was Shoshone the next stop up, then, from Tecopa?

DL: Zabriskie. And that was quite a little town at one time. When I came there it was a ghost town. There were about 6 or 7 buildings left - also a store building and a railroad warehouse. There had been an agent there at one time, but not since I knew it. And the road ran from there out to Greenwater, into Death Valley - Zabriskie was the center for that area. Amargosa Borax Works is about a mile to the southwest of it. That's the last place they operated the 20mule team. They wares building the railroad, and they'd just about exhausted borax at Calico. Daggett was where they were shipping their borax from the Calico Mine in those days. They hauled Borax from the Lila C Mine near Death Valley Junction to meet the railroad near Amargosa Borax Works.

They built this railroad primarily to bring the borax out of Death Valley, you see. So they started up the Lila C, which was amine right out of Death Valley Junction about 8 or 10 miles.

But not Ryan - this is the Lila C. And so they started mining there. And they hauled it down to Zabriskie on 20mule teams. And the railroad was that far, and they'd load it on the T&T. So that was the last place they operated the 20mule team out of the Amargosa Borax Works. And that be in 1907.

It took the railroad a year to get through Tecopa Canyon. They did finally get up there. And then the town of Tecopa on the railroad was established in 1907. And they actually got all the way to Rhyolite in 1907. But they never got through the canyon 'till early 1907.

RM: Are Tecopa Canyon and Amargosa Canyon the same?

DL: They're the same. Amargosa Canyon's a better name for it, really.

RM: You were going to say a few Fords about the T&T Ranch.

DL: They established that about the time they did the Furnace Creek Inn and the Amargosa Hotel. They were going to promote and develop an agricultural community in Amargosa Valley - what they call the Farm Area now. The Pacific Coast Borax, which is the parent company of the T&T Railroad, took up - acquired - 5,000 acres or so from the federal government. And they established this ranch as a model to induce people to come in and start agriculture. In order to make it pay for itself, they furnished Furnace Creek Inn and the Amargosa Hotel with milk. They raised about 40 acres of alfalfa which they fed to the cows. And they raised turkeys for the Thanksgiving and Christmas market.

However, in my opinion that area is not agricultural. There might be a particular crop that would be good there, but that's a sandy - more gravelly - type of soil. It doesn't hold water. And it's hot. And the wind blows so it sucks that moisture right out of the ground. It's prohibitive to pump water there. There are some places that are ranching there, though, right now. But for every one that is, there are about 10 that you see all the equipment where they tried it, and failed. But it might be good for something like, say, a vineyard or something that requires a hot climate and well-drained, sandy soil. But they never made it go in those days. And right to this day, when you go up there, people say, 'Well, I'm on the old T&T Ranch." They really are. But not on the main one. There's only one and I know right where it is. But there's 5,000 acres or so right in there. And many people now own part of the old T&T holdings.

Well, of course, there was a lot happened in Ash Meadows on account of the filtering clay. But as far as the Amargosa Farm Area, nothing happened until the Test Site come in and people began locating in there just for a home. There are quite a few people in there, and they all love it.

RM: And they have a very spirited community there.

DL: It is outstanding. When I was at Tecopa we had a Lions Club. And it took in Tecopa, Shoshone, Death Valley Junction, and the Farm Area and Furnace Creek. we met in Death Valley Junction at the Amargosa Hotel, but sometimes we would go to the Farm Area. They had the Mecca Club there, and they catered our meals. So he'd meet there every 2 or 3 months, or else we'd go to Furnace Creek and do the same thing there. And we got to know all those people,

and they were really fine people. And, as you say, there was a spirit there that was just unbeatable.

RM: Well, Deke, is there anything else you'd like to add? Any kind of closing remarks, or summary or anything?

DL: Well, yes - the only thing I can say, in closing: If they put that railroad back in there, they're going to have to hire me. [laughter] I'm going to work for than - period! [laughter]

RM: What job do you want: Roadmaster, agent, or . .

Celesta Lowe: Chief dispatcher.

DL: I'll do anything they've got. When I was there before I did. I was a gandy-dancer. One day I was there at Death Valley Junction, dancing up and down on the shovel. And there were only a couple of other guys on the crew, and the foreman. And there was the superintendent, the roadmaster, the master mechanic - there was about 4 officials there and I thought, 'Jesus Christ. One of than gets paid more than all of us - and we're doing the work.' I was kind of downhearted, and about an hour later, they came and said to me, "Go to Beatty. Relieve the agent at Beatty." And I go and change my clothes, and get on the train, and go to Beatty, and I have a title: I'm the agent for the T&T Railroad - I'm a Resident Agent of the Leeland Land & Water Company. I'm Resident Agent of some other god-danged thing. And I have a car furnished to drive. And a house. And this old Harry Moon that I was telling you about? About twice a week we'd jump in that company car and he'd tear out up to the hot springs. And he'd take a hot bath and come back. [chuckles] we didn't have any bathtub, you know. So we'd go up about twice a week for a hot bath. And when I'd get done with that, and I'd come back, and they'd say, "Go down and work at the shops." Or, "Go out and fix the telephone line." So I did everything there. So if they put that back in, they can just tell me "do something." I'll do it.

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SUPPLEMENT

Robert McCracken interviewing Deke Lowe at his home in Las Vegas, Nevada May 24, 1988.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Deke, what is your earliest recollection of Pahrump Valley?

DL: My earliest recollection would be about 1922, when we came to the desert. Actually there was very little contact with Pahrump in those days because there were no automobile roads to speak of - they were really wagon roads - and there were so few people there. There might have been 3 or 4 ranches and they mainly employed Indians. They lived a kind of closed life out there, and you hardly ever saw then. But they did ship their cattle out of Shoshone. You can still see the corral in Shoshone - what's left of it. That was there before 1922, so that's a long time - 75 years old - so they did haul their supplies from, say, Shoshone.

There was a road, the present road, that went over Mountain Springs, but it was very difficult. The early, early immigrant road that went through there was established about 1846. They came that way when they were released from the army in California. They went back to Utah and drove some wagons over that; it had been nothing but a pack trail for about 20 to 25 years. Then there was another way you could come in . . . At one time the LV & T stopped at Johnnie Siding and there was a railroad there, so that's where they got their mail.

RM: They got their mail out of the Johnnie Siding?

DL: Yes. There was a bus line that ran from Las Vegas through to Reno and they dropped off the mail at the Johnnie Siding, and this old . .

RM: But at this time the LV & T was done?

DL: It was gone. It was motorized and that was one of their little lifelines.

RM: But by the time you got to the desert their main orientation was probably toward Shoshone, wasn't it, because of the T & T?

DL: Yes it was; and as I say, there wasn't too much of that, even. Of course the T & T still operated. And one of the officials of the Southern Pacific Railroad owned one of those ranches. Do you remember that family, Celesta?

Celesta [Mrs. Deke] Lowe: No.

DL: They used to come out from California on the train, and the Johnnie mines were operating in the '20s. One of the healthy men who owned the Johnnie mines was a business man in L.A. On Main Street same of the buildings were built from [lumber from] the Johnnie mines. I used to see him. I can't recall his name right now, but he used to get off the train.

RM: How many mines were working in Johnnie?

DL: The main one was the Johnnie Mine and then behind the old Johnnie town is another gold mine.

RM: t the west?

DL: Yes. Behind the town itself. That was the main one, there, and then up . . . the old Johnnie mine, which is north a mile-and-a-half or 2 miles . . . there was another one and the fellow who owns it now lives there. His father had it back about 1905, '6, or '7.

RM: There's an old fellow who lives at the mine now?

DL: Yes. His farther mined that mine, he was from Goldfield and so forth; but he still lives on the property. Then, of course, over the years the Johnnie Mine closed and opened and when they hit a spot, it was rich and you could make quite a little . . .

RM: So it was feast or famine there?

DL: Yes. I think both of the mines that I mentioned are owned by the same outfit now.

RM: Did you ever go over to any of the ranches in Pahrump in the '20s?

DL: Yes, the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Could you describe what you remember about it?

DL: Let's see, what was the name of the old guy who had all the fruit orchards?

RM: Buol?

DL: Yes, Buol.

RM: You were at the Buol place?

DL: Yes, Buol's place was opposite of where the ranch is.

RM: North of the Pahrump Ranch?

DL: Yes, north of the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Did you know Pop Buol at all?

DL: Slightly.

RM: Would you describe what you remember? When did you first see him?

DL: In the 1920s. I think he was there until sometime in the late 1950s, but he was quite old when I first saw him. he was a tall, thin man. He was well organized, actually, and he had a big fruit orchard and a little store on the place where he sold a few odds and ends. In those days all they needed was bacon and beans and flour and things like that. And, of course, plenty of tobacco. No alcohol, legally anyway, but he made wine, because he had a big lot of grapes and things like that. He also was the postmaster and went after the mail for years. He had the mail contract to go meet the stage at Johnnie Siding, and so forth. And, he had a son . . did he have a daughter?

CL: I don't know of any children except the son.

DL: When I first knew about him, his son was working in the Johnnie mines and he had quite a little stake of money and later on, when Word War II came on, he came over to Henderson and was working in construction and got killed, so he didn't live to be very old.

RM: Was Buol's place pretty lush?

DL: It was kind of an oasis because there was so much water. There's plenty of water to raise things in that valley. And then the Manse Ranch, which was a little south of there, had running water. Well, I think all the ranches had same running water at the time; now, they don't.

RM: What was happening at the Pahrump Ranch then?

DL: It was huge.

RM: It was huge by that time?

DL: It always was a huge ranch. I forgot how many thousand acres it was.

RM: It eventually got up to 12,000.

DL: Yes. And the president of the Southern Pacific Railroad owned it with his son. He used to come out there and stay for a month or two at a time. It was a huge ranch.

RM: Was it mainly a cattle and alfalfa operation?

DL: Yes, because there was no way to really get anything out of there. For instance, in the '30s they raised cotton in there; the first cotton was raised by Hughes.

RM: Yes, I talked to Leon Hughes.

DL: Well, I knew his father because I was the agent at Shoshone and they used to come in there; and it was a big ranch. There was just no ready market for anything, so it had to be used internally and there was feuding all the time.

RM: What were they feuding about?

DL: ell, somebody would shoot somebody and then pretty soon the someone would get even and they'd get shot . . . When I first went to Tecopa, a guy came loping over on horseback to what they called the Davis Ranch, close to the Resting Springs Ranch. God, he stayed all winter long because he'd killed somebody. I think his name was Hudson. he killed an Indian and he was just . . . after about 4 or 5 months everything seemed to be OK and he went back to his ranch, which was somewhere in the area of the Manse Ranch down in the south end [of the valley]. There were lots of mesquites. It was isolated, and still is. It was OK for about 3 months, and one night somebody shot him right through the window and got him.

I remember one time an Indian came over and got a package from Sears, Roebuck. he opened it up and it was a nice .22 rifle and he was real pleased with it. I mentioned it [to him and he said] "Oh, yeah, (he's) going to get so and so," so he got the right tool for it. Then after awhile it happened, but the law hardly ever, really came in there . . .

[The county seat] was Tonopah, and so if it was something to do with Indian against Indian, the easiest way to get out of it was to say, "Oh, they take care of their own affairs. That's Indian justice, from one to the other and they'd forget about it, and . . ."

There was a fellow, George Ishmael, who was raised there. His father came up from Pioche about 1898. Jimmy Date, the teamster who died in Death Valley and is buried there . . . Ishmael's father came down and took Date's place around the Furnace Creek Ranch. Then in later years they moved aver to Pahrump. George was then a kid of around 5 years old. Chief Tecopa died in 1904; George Ishmael remembered that. But anyway, George Ishmael sat one time and told me, in detail, who killed whom and when. If I had a recorder and could have gotten it down . . . he actually told it to me so I would pass it on, because he was quite an old man. Of course, I didn't know all those people.

RM:: Was it mainly among whites or Indians, Deke?

DL: It would be white to white sometime and Indian to Indian, but everybody would just clam up and wouldn't tell who did what to whom. They took care of their own.

For instance, Dick Lee was working at the Manse Ranch and an old guy ¬I don't Mow what his nationality was, his name was Kazarang - owned the Manse Ranch. He was quite a Wealthy man and he had a beautiful white wife. I knew him; I had seen him lots of times when he'd come to Shoshone. He was so dog-goned tight that he'd come over in his Model-T Ford. It only cost 50 cents to eat all you could eat, but when the dinner bell would ring he'd go to his tool box and open it up and unwrap a piece of cheese or a piece of baloney (usually it was a piece of cheese), open a box of crackers and sit there, and have his lunch.

RM: Rather than pay four bits?

DL: Yes. He had thousands and thousands of dollars. Well, he shortchanged everybody who ever worked for him. Dick Lee was bottling the wine. It was time to come off and the ranch's foreman was a Mexican. He'd ridden horseback overseeing things that one day, but he was mad at Kazarang because Kazarang had cheated him on his wages. he would slip off his horse and come in and tell Dick his troubles and drink same of that wine. That night, Kazarang never showed up. The fellows started looking for him and they found him down in the hog pasture and the hogs had been chewing on him. It turned out that the foreman had shot him and roped his leg and dragged him down into the hog pasture and left him there. They arrested him for murder and tried him in Tonopah. They checked out records and all that on Kazarang, and he had cheated him about 25 cents on his wages. RM: When was that, Deke?

DL: It would have been in the '30s, because I knew Kazarang; I saw him several times in the '30s.

CL: My cousin Ralph sent me a picture of Kazarang.

DL: He was so stingy. And I guess his beautiful wife lived down there.

RM: Then this type of feuding and violence was going on even in the '30s?

DL: Oh, it went on until they built the road in there. You known how people are always telling about how tough Pioche was? Well, in that little place right there, up to the '30s, there was never a year went by that there weren't 2 to 3 ambushes, or something like that.

And of course there's a famous story about the mines. Bob Lee told me this one. Back in the 1890s Bob had discovered this Johnnie Mine, and Mormons out of Salt Lake were working it, and making a little money on it, too, but it was kind of distant, so they weren't getting paid and they were raising holy hell. The boss would say, "I'll go get the money," and he would disappear; he wouldn't even come back.

One particular time they got disgusted and they drew straws and the one who got the short straw did the job. They had a big breakfast table where they all sat family-style and ate, and when the superintendent finished, he would always lean back and roll a cigarette. The guy with the short straw told everybody, "Then he leans back, you guys lean forward," and he was outside and he shot him right out of his chair.

RM: Is that right? Was that in the 1890s?

DL: Yes. Then they took over the mine and they were operating it. They had to send a posse down from Pioche. They had a pitched battle and one guy got killed again. It's in the records of course; it would be easy to check.

RM: Bob Montgomery was involved in that, wasn't he?

DL: ell, he got the mine in later years. Yes, that's an old mine - older than people realize.

RM: Do you think the Spanish were working there, Deke?

DL: I don't really know, but it's quite a ways earlier than Goldfield. Celesta's father [John Quincy Lisle], who was a well-known mining man and a prospector, led a lot of expeditions looking for the lost Breyfogle Nine when Rhyolite was going, and all that. You could buy the maps, and all that stuff, and he always said that Johnnie is the lost Breyfogle mine.

Bob Lee and his family lived in Ash Meadows next to Winters, the guy who found the borax, when Breyfogle was coming and going. They were just kids, and Breyfogle would always take off toward Indian Pass, which is right back of Amargosa Farms . . . comes in there . . . Bob told me when Rhyolite was discovered they lived at Tecopa up on the Resting Springs Ranch because his father and Winters had sold borax to the Borax Company, and one bought the ranch over in Pahrump and old Lee bought his at Resting Springs.

RM: Oh; Lee was partners with Winters?

DL: Phi Lee was . . . later. Not the original ranch, but a short time thereafter.

RM: And that's how he bought the Resting Springs Ranch?

DL: But this is prior to that time. They were living with neighbors and when Rhyolite was discovered they were living on Resting Springs, so Bob Lee and Dick lee, who were Phi's sons, were close to 30 years old at that time. They were miners and ranchers - cowmen. They said, "By God, we'll just go look for it," you know, for the lost Breyfogle. They hitched up their outfit and went up to Ash Meadows and then over . . . there's a pass in there called Indian Pass and they camped in there and prospected for several days all over that country and they didn't find nothing. They were sitting at the campfire that night, deciding where to go from there and the evening star was hanging up over this mountain and kind of blinking - you know how a star does - it looked like it was sort of . . . Bob Lee said, "We never went up on that mountain, we didn't check that out."

"Oh, hell, that's barren, you can tell by looking at it."

That star kept plaguing him, so he talked [his brother] into staying another day or two. It was an hour after breakfast that he hit a helluva rich streak, and that became Lee Camp. And they made . . . you see, you can look right across from Lee Camp to Rhyolite; it's not over 18 to 20 miles away.

I heard another guy telling about Bob and Dick. They made a good patch of money and they played the stock market. They'd go to Rhyolite but they'd dress up in a formal suit with one of those stovepipe hats and get on a burro and ride across. And they spent all their money. I asked old Bob because he was sitting there on his ranch out in Pahrump Valley and I'm telling you, it was just a pile of junk - tin cans, old car bodies - it was as if he'd moved into a junk camp. That was where he lived for the rest of his life.

RM: Was that the place where Roland Wiley . . .?

DL: This was just north of Roland Wiley's; this was Bob Lee's place. I looked around and I said, "Bob, don't you wish you had put away some of that money?"

And he looked at me and said, "Well, you know, I'd rather be a has-been than a never-was."

RM: That is a great story.

CHAPTER TWO

DL: I wanted to mention something about Bob Lee's older brother, Dick. Of course they were partners in the mines and all that, but he told me when he got married Phi Lee had traded Resting Springs with [Chief] Tecopa for a place in the Charleston Mountains. So all of than moved up there . .

RM: You mean Phi Lee didn't own the place?

DL: Bo, Phi owned Resting Springs, but this mining company, the Consolidated Mining Company, which is a Philadelphia stock corporation, had bought a place in the Charleston's with a big flow of water because they were thinking they would pipe it over to the mine in Tecopa, but Resting Springs had a good patch of water, so instead they just traded.

Phi Lee was a pioneer. Good Lord, Phi Lee came in this country in the 1860s, so it wasn't primitive to him up there and he traded for it and they were living up there, running cattle, and that's where they made their living.

Dick Lee got married and he told me they went on their honeymoon on horseback, he and his wife, and they went up into the Charleston's and found a huge cave and they stayed up there several days, and then they went up on top, clear to the peak of Nt. Charleston. he said it was a beautiful day, and there was a big, flat rock on the very crest and they laid down and went to sleep on it, on the Charleston Mountain. I think she was a native wife, because the wife we knew, who was quite pretty, was named Dixie. I always thought; I wish I knew where that cave was! Wouldn't you just love to get in there?

RM: Couldn't that be fun.

DL: I don't know how far back it went. he said it was quite a way.

RM: When did the Southern Pacific own the Pahrump Ranch?

DL: They must have had the ranch for 12 years. They must have had it from sometime in the late '20s until about 1940; about 10 to 12 years.

RM: Hughes' father would have been leasing from them, or buying it from them then. he had a deal . . .

DL: I think he bought it from somebody. There were a number of different people in there as I recall after these other and maybe . . . I remember other than the Hughes who were down there. Maybe they were running the place; I don't know.

RM: Do you recall any of their names?

DL: I can't right now. It's so long ago, and they weren't there that long. One in particular . . . I can think him of but I don't know his name. He'd been ranching down in Sinaloa, Mexico; they

had some big farms down there. Bow that whole country is just full of huge farms, but at that time . .

RM: What was happening at the Manse Ranch when you first came into the country? Was there anything that sticks out in your mind? Do you remembers who owned it or who was on it?

DL: No. Kazarang was the owner a little later on, but when I first came there he wasn't there. Someone else was, I'm sure.

RM: Was the guy who killed him convicted up in Tonopah?

DL: Well, yes. I think he spent a year or two in jail. Because he had some rights, you know; he was cheated about 25 cents' worth. he proved that he was cheated.

But the Manse was always . . . Indians lived on that property and worked there. You ask the Indians, "Where were you born?" And one right after the other, they say, "The Manse Ranch." Because it was a good place to work. They'd come and go all over the country and maybe work in the mines and work on the ranches, but the Manse Ranch was sort of an informal headquarters and they had a regular village there. They are not there now, but I remember seeing them as I went by - a whole bunch of old shacks and things like that. There was a flowing stream right there where they lived that ran down off the ranch.

RM: They were headquartered there, as opposed to more down toward the Pahrump Ranch? There was a flowing stream there, too, wasn't there?

DL: ell, they were down there too, but they were all born on the Manse and 'way back in the 1880s there was a man by the name of Marsha White on the Manse Ranch.

RM: How much do you know about Marsha White?

DL: He came in there back in the late 1870s and he was related to the Younts, I think by marriage.

RM: Did he marry Yount's daughter?

DL: Something like that; because he was on the ranch itself. Way back in the 1940s I worked for the Santa Fe Railroad in San Bernardino and Celesta and I met Marsha White's daughter. er name was Della White, and she had all kinds of pictures and she told us that when she was a girl she had the most wonderful time of her life living on the Manse Ranch. They had a store and all that, and she said that in the fall her folks would load up their wagons and have a big bunch of livestock - horses, cows, pigs - and they would bring than into San Bernardino and sell them. They would go over the Old Spanish Trail, the Mormons Trail, clear to San Bernardino and sell all those things and leave her there. She'd go to school all winter and they would come in the spring and pick her up and bring her back. One spring coming back through along about Saratoga Springs (there's sandy country through there) she said, "e killed 100 and sate-odd

sidewinders in one day. And," she said, "We came across a man who had died and he was lying there so lifelike, he hadn't deteriorated one bit, he was cured by the sun. He hadn't bloated up or anything."

RM: Where is Saratoga Springs?

DL: When you go from Shoshone to Baker, you go to Salt Creek. When you go close to Salt Creek, there's a road that turns right and goes into Death Valley, and then you can go right on up Death Valley all the way. Then you turn and go to the right there, it's only a matter of 15 miles until you come to Saratoga Springs. It was a famous old camping place for pioneers and is a wonderful spot.

But she had all these wonderful pictures and told us these stories. And her father and the Younts went down into Sandy Valley close to Goodsprings and they had some mines in there. One of than was a mine that turned out to be gold and copper and platinum, and I saw the platinum nuggets that were in that ore. Yes, they were in there in the '90s, long before any railroads went through here. There was the Santa Fe Railroad that run through Needles, but . . .

RM: I think it was John Yount who also had or discovered the Ninety-Nine Nine up on Potosi?

DL: I don't know whether he did or not. The Ninety-Nine belonged to Box Robinson and I knew the old Robinson found it in 1899.

RM: Is that the reason it's called the Ninety-Nine?

DL: Yes, because it was found in 1899.Maybe it was know before that too, but there were other mines that belonged to the Younts. I'm trying to recall the [names of] gold mines at Goodsprings.

RM: I don't know their names.

DL: Well, I know then as well as my own name. Well, the Younts and all those guys were involved in that; they were real high grade. I knew a fellow who worked in there in the 1890s named Eddie Miles. he lived at Shoshone with Senator Brown until he died - he was way up in his 90s. The first time I heard of him, a train came from Goldfield and someone said, "Oh, poor old Eddie Miles, he's gone, he's done for."

"What's happened?"

"Well, he's in the hospital, he's got bleeding ulcers." This was 1924 and in another week, here comes Eddie again, and he said, Well, by God, Eddie got out of the hospital "

"What? I thought he was dying."

e said, "e was, and the doctor got it stopped and he told Eddie, 'If you ever take another drink you are a dead man.'"

Eddie got mad and got up and got his clothes on and left the hospital and said, "I'll dance on your grave." By God, he lived to be 90. he went and got a big streak . . .

But when we knew him there in Tecopa, he had quit drinking and he was in his 70s and he lived another 20 years. Anyway, he was working in those mines at Goodsprings and he told me that it paid $3 a day wages, but he had a little high graded streak that was wire gold in a talc seam. we would take it and put it in his mouth and wash it and spit out the talc and then he would have pure wire gold - not one thing but gold. we had a Bull Durham sack and he spat that in there and made $10 a day washing gold in his mouth. Single jacking . . . Everybody made money on this little high-grade streak.

RM: Dick Lee was born in 1875 in Indian Springs and Bob Lee was born in 1877 in Tecopa.

CL: I did a story for the Las Vegas Review Journal on Dick and Bob Lee at Old Tecopa. The cabin is still there.

RM: Is that right? At Tecopa?

DL: ell, it's Old Tecopa; that's clear up at the mines. One time Bob Lee went in with Celesta's brother and kicked the corner and said, "I was born right here in 1877."

[INTERRUPTION]

RM: And Celesta's father thought that the Johnnie Mine was the lost Breyfogle mine?

DL: Yes, definitely.

RM: What was happening in Pahrump in the '30s?

DL: Hardly anything was happening anywhere but they made a living. It seemed as though everybody bootlegged. In Ash Meadows, in every house you went to there was booze.

RM: Did you know Lois Kellogg?

DL: I just knew of her and saw her go by. She had the Kellogg Ranch there in Pahrump. What the heck did she get; tularemia, wasn't it?

RM: Yes, I think so. From her dogs eating rabbits.

DL: She wasn't an old woman at all.

RM: How would you describe her?

DL: She was a very independent type. I don't think she was odd at all. I believe she was just one of those self-sufficient type of women. She had a beautiful place down in California.

RM: Whereabouts in California?

DL: There is a hill going in to . . . do you know the Pasadena country? It's called Kellogg Hill, and right to the left there's a Kellogg Ranch.

RM: Did she have a ranch in Pasadena?

DL: Her folks did. In those days, the '20s and '30s, it was all grapevines and other kinds of ranches.

RM: What was the source of the Kellogg fortune?

DL: I never did know, but they were wealthy. But she had that ranch and she came and went. You could buy a big piece of ground in Pahrump for practically nothing.

RM: Deke, here's a question I've been wrestling with. There's an awful lot of land that is in private hands in Pahrump; how in the world did it get into private hands over the years?

DL: Well, you know, I've puzzled and puzzled and puzzled. Wiley got his, for instance, by buying that Southern Pacific land; the sections of land that the government give than when they built the railroad. You could buy that from Southern Pacific. They used to run ads in the magazines all the time - $5 an acre or sometimes less, but $5 was commons. You'd buy a piece of land in Oregon or somewhere, of good timber land, for $5 an acre and turn around and trade it; that's how Wiley got 17,000 acres. How others got it, I don't know, but you see in California, when they formed the state, in every township there was a section that was a school section . . .

RM: Yes; what they called the State Select Land.

DL: And Nevada, in order to raise a bunch of money quickly, made a deal with the federal government; they took money and let than take the land. In other words, they took a big piece of land in the valleys and turned right around and sold that, so there were no school sections. The federal government didn't give than cash . . . I don't know if Pahrump is one of than or not.

RM: I think it was.

DL: I've puzzled and puzzled, because I would have loved to get hold of sate of that land at different times. And of course, there's Desert Entry land. Now you can't [get Desert Entry land] because they've got a grip on the water.

RM: What do you know about the Carey Act?

DL: I don't know.

RM: That was another way that you could go out and prove water on land.

DL: Was that the one where the guy took his boat with wheels on it and drove all over the country, up around Reno there? There were marshlands and there's water all over and he had his boat . . . he was going all over Nevada. I guess that was the Carey Act. But that was 'way back. I don't think that's been applicable for years. They stopped the homestead rights when I was a kid; I never got to use than for myself. In fact, I don't think my father did either, because he was a railroad man. But that was a wonderful thing for the country.

RM: Were there little ranches over in Pahrump in the early years when you came here, or were they just the big ones?

DL: Mainly the big ones. There were a few people like Ishmael who squatted here; he had a cabin. And the Bells; Randy Bell and . . .

RM: Are they related to Bob Bell?

DL: No, this is an older family. They were cattlemen from Texas and Randy and some of than are in Beatty right now. What's the name of the old man?

CL: That was Randy. he was the oldest man in the United States. I think his brother was Dick, wasn't it? And then he had a son, Dick.

DL: They were expert horsemen and cattlemen. They could ride and brand cattle all day.

RM: And they lived in Pahrump?

DL: Yes. One would catch the head and one would catch the heels . . .

RM: Where was their ranch?

DL: I never did know, but I think it's on that new road into Ash Meadows. But if you see Brown, ask him; of course, he grew up there. You know, Brown was a fine-looking man. he had a beautiful horse and rigging, and he had a beautiful hat and all that. Then we had the hotel in Goodsprings we used to have divorcees come there and get their divorces. One time we had a whole bunch of riders there for a riders' convention. he took them up to Wiley's Hidden Valley Ranch. Nobody was there, but he had Steve Brown meet us there and he took us for a ride and all that. he was a magnificent looking guy. But he got to fighting with his wife, getting drunk, and she took a shotgun and blew half of his head off. he was scarred to beat hell. Then he become kind of simple; it really broke his face up.

RM: Who was it who took you aside and told you about these early incidents?

DL: George Ishmael.

RM: Do you recall anything else he told you?

DL: His father and mother went off somewhere, and left him there with the Indians he said that at night he'd just go jump in between them and they didn't have beds or blankets or anything . . . hell, they lived in those shacks and ate whatever they could get hold of and all that.

RM: Could you talk about Della White?

DL: In later years she and her husband were in Silver Lake. he was a mining man and had a little money, so he bought out a grocery store in Silver Lake. The guy took the money and went right across the street and opened another grocery store. He kept his customers and she said it put them in an awful binds, and then a flood came on and flooded the railroad out. You've seen pictures of it; they moved all the buildings to high ground and they had to build a roadbed on high ground. er husband got the contract to build the road. he was a prominent man; I can't recall his name right row, but you run across it every once in awhile in the histories. any years ago. In the '40s she'd have been in her 70s.

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