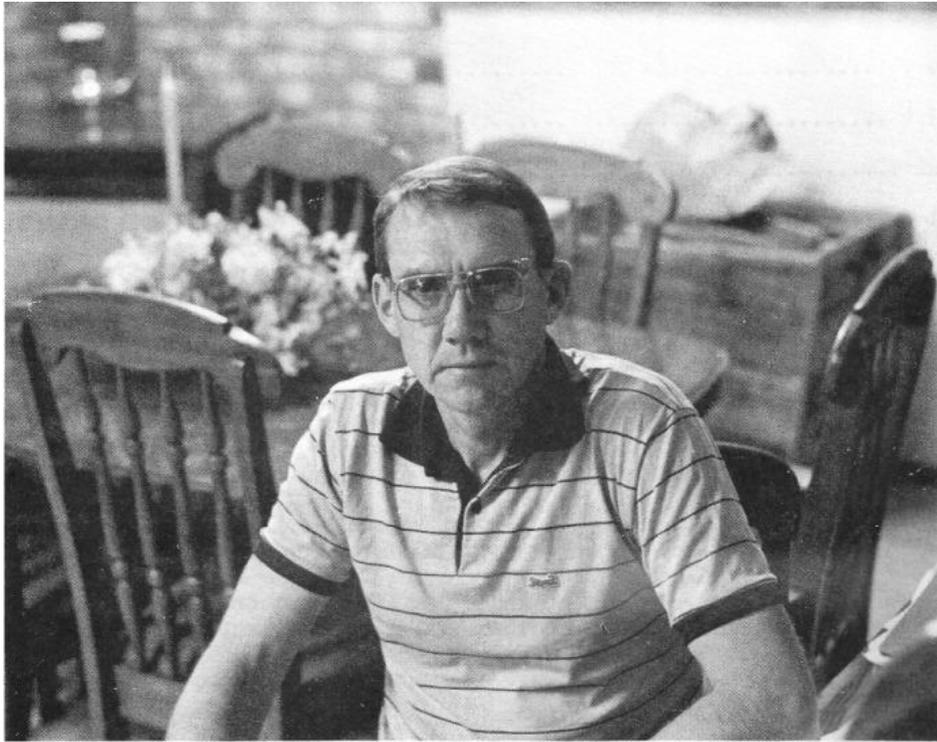


# An Interview With William J. Metscher

An Oral History conducted and edited by  
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
1987

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William J. Metscher  
1987

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

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

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

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--Robert D. McCracken  
Tonopah, Nevada  
June 1990

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

--R.D.M.

Robert D. McCracken interviewing Bill Metscher at his home in Tonopah, Nevada - November 9, 1987

## CHAPTER ONE

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

BM: It's William Joseph Metscher.

RM: And what is your birthdate and place?

BM: I was born January 26, 1941, here in Tonopah.

RM: Could you tell me your father's name and his birthplace and date?

BM: My father's name was William Henry Metscher, and he was born in Columbia, which was, at the time, a suburb of Goldfield, Nevada - right at the foot of Columbia Mountain on the north edge of Goldfield. This was June 26, 1908.

RM: And then what was your mother's name - her maiden name?

BM: It's Alexandria Novick.

RM: When and where was she born?

BM: She was born October 27, 1911 in Brooklyn, New York.

RM: When did your family first come to central Nevada?

BM: My relatives came to Nevada back in the 1800s. My dad's uncle was a mining engineer, and he came into the Mason Valley area - Virginia City area - back in the 1880s or 1890s. My dad's father and his sister came out about the same time. After they arrived, dad's father and uncle went to Alaska during the Alaska gold rush, then came back into this country. From Alaska dad's father went to Brooklyn, married, and returned to Goldfield during the Goldfield rush, where my dad was born in 1908.

RM: Did he meet your grandmother in Goldfield?

BM: No. He met her in Brooklyn, New York. My dad's aunt (his father's sister) still lives in Carson City, where she owns a ranch in Ash Canyon.

RM: What kind of occupation was your grandfather involved in when he came to Goldfield?

BM: He was a miner; that's what he was most of his life, and he came to Goldfield especially for mining. I don't really know too much about All I know is that he was hurt in a mine cave-in in Goldfield when my dad was a little boy, about 1912 or so, and it resulted in him finally dying. He's buried in the Goldfield cemetery.

RM: Was your father raised in Goldfield?

BM: Yes. He spent many years there.

RM: Where did he meet your mother?

BM: In New York. He and his brother always . . . he was quite a character in his day. He ran around a lot; he was a little older when he got married. He always had money during the Depression, so it didn't hurt him. He, his brother and friends from Goldfield he ran around with would go to New York every year to watch the fights at Madison Square Garden. Somehow or another, through some relatives he had back there, he met my mother on one of those trips. They got together and just hit it off, and got married in 1940.

RM: And then she came out here?

BM: She came out here with him.

RM: He had money during the Depression because of the gold mines in Goldfield and the price of gold?

BM: Yes, he did pretty well. As he said, he never even knew there was a depression on. He always had a new car, new clothes, and all the money he could spend. He was a pretty good miner, and he always had a job, and he always drew top pay.

RM: Were the mines pretty active in Goldfield in the '30s?

BM: Not really active like they were in the early days, but they were active enough to keep steady crews working all the time. Also, he'd go from one mine to another; he did a little tramping around in his day. He wound up in Gold Point, Silver Peak, Nivloc, and different places like that.

I think the only place around central Nevada he never worked was Tonopah. He worked down here in the Victor mine for one shift. They were having a strike and needed people, so they brought some Goldfield miners over, and he worked one shift, and he said that was enough for him; it was too hot. He said it was [the] damndest thing you ever saw. They had a big ice plant on the surface, and they'd make big cubes of ice - about 3' by 1' by 1-1/2'. And when they'd send up a carload of waste or ore out of the shaft, they'd put one of those big ice cubes in it, and by the time it got back down to the face, there was only a little thing about 1' square left. They sent it down to cool the miners, and I guess it was really a hot, dirty son-of-a-gun. He said that he didn't want any part of it.

RM: They often worked with more than one crew in the face down there, didn't they? One crew in the face, and another crew cooling off.

BM: Just sitting there - yes. Because it was so tough; a lot of hot water, too.

RM: So he was familiar with many of the mines in the whole central Nevada region?

BM: Yes, he worked in gold mines and silver mines and talc mines - mostly gold mines, because he was a gold miner.

RM: When did the family move to Tonopah?

BM: When I was in 1st grade - 1945, I think.

RM: What initiated the move?

BM: For one thing, lack of work in Goldfield. By then - '44 or '45 - the mines were all closed down. My dad had worked for the power company during the war at Alkali Hot Springs for the Nevada California Power Company. Alkali is located about 10 miles west of Goldfield on the Silver Peak Road. When the war started he went to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Sparks, and they had the earthquake up there. It scared the hell out of him, because he was in the engine house and one of the big engines was hanging up on a crane in there rocking back and forth. He came home and told my mother he was quitting.

Of course it was during the war, and they told him he couldn't quit his job because during the war effort everybody was married to their job. But he told them to hell with it - he'd quit anyway. He happened to know about a guy who was down at Alkali who was quitting the power company, so he took his job, which was another defense-related industry job, so he didn't have any problem.

He worked there until after the war, into late '45, then moved to Goldfield. There weren't any jobs in the mines there, so we moved to Tonopah after that.

RM: Basically they'd shut the mines down in Goldfield because of the war?

BM: Yes. When he went back over there he and his brother and a few other people went into leasing. But the prices were so high after the war, he just couldn't make it anymore.

RM: What did he do here in Tonopah?

BM: He worked with quite a few different jobs here. He did little carpenter jobs for people and things like that and he finally wound up working for the Cavanaugh brothers for years and years. One of his first jobs in Tonopah was working for Bob Campbell moving buildings from the old Tonopah Army Air Field, east of town. I think they hauled them to Las Vegas, mostly.

RM: Was that lumber?

BM: No; whole buildings. They'd load the whole things up and haul them down there. I guess most of north Las Vegas, for a long time, was built out of buildings that came from the base down here.

And then he worked for McGowan, who also was involved in a lot of work at the base wrecking things out, and then at the National Coal Company delivering coal and stove oil. After that he worked for Cavanaugh Brothers for quite a few years. He worked in their Chrysler-Plymouth agency down here, but mostly he delivered oil for their bulk plant. He also worked for Cavanaugh building a house at the Round Mountain Gold Dredge site at Round Mountain in the early 1950s. Then he went to work for Nye County on the road crew, and worked there for quite a few years until he finally - in later years - went to work as a watchman for the highway department. He retired about 15 years ago, then soon after he retired he died.

RM: You spent all of your school career in Tonopah, then, didn't you; in the public schools.

BM: Yes.

RM: When you were a teenager, was there a group that tried to promote the history of the area?

BM: Well, when I was growing up - through grade school and high school - there was a group here that was an historical organization. Ed Slavin and his wife belonged to it. They went around and recorded a lot of people. I don't know where those tapes wound up - probably at the Nevada Historical Society. Ed would probably know where they went if you wanted to ask him.

But anyway, they had a little historical society, and there was a little museum in the Elks' Hall that old Pete Peterson ran.

RM: Pete Peterson. Yes, I remember that.

BM: He was there in the Elks' Hall for awhile, and then he was down the street where the Central Market was, I believe, on Main Street. But it moved around. And then after Peterson died, nobody seemed to keep the museum open. There were no wages or anything; it was all volunteer. He just did it out of the goodness of his heart, and he liked to talk to people. He was a born story-teller, too, you know. When he died, it just kind of went to . . .

RM: Why don't you say a little bit about who Pete was, since he was perhaps the first keeper of the first museum in Tonopah - would that be an accurate statement?

BM: I'd say he was; yes. Well, he was an old miner from around this country. His sister was Leona Trickey, the gal who rode in a couple of wild west shows. She was a great old gal, I guess. I don't know too much about her, but I know she was involved in a lot of that - a bareback rider, roper, sharp-shooter, etc. Pete lived out here at - what was the name of that canyon out by where they had the cinnabar mine?

RM: It was the M&M mine - I don't know what the canyon was.

BM: Anyway, he was basically a miner who came to this country and somehow got involved in the museum and historical society, and he was kind of a local historian. After him, there was another character who was more of a town figure [chuckles] - old Andy Anderson.

RM: Was he Mizpah Andy?

BM: Yes; Mizpah Andy. He was quite a character. A little short man with a great big beard. He always wore red shirts and suspenders, and he'd talk your ear off. The Mizpah Hotel hired him as their promoter. For years he'd pass out their "lucky bucks" to tourists on the street, good for free nickels and a free drink.

RM: Was he fairly knowledgeable on history?

BM: I don't think he knew much about our history; just what he picked up from people - enough to tell the tourists. he was kind of a greeting committee, not an actual historian.

RM: Yes, he was a one-man town greeter, wasn't he?

BM: Yes.

RM: He wasn't connected in any way with any kind of a museum effort like Pete was, was he?

BM: No.

RM: Then was Pete involved in promoting his little museum?

BM: From the mid-50s to the early '60s.

RM: Where did he get his items?

BM: I mentioned that little historical society - they went around and talked to a lot of people and got things from them. In fact, some of the material we have in the museum today was left from that museum. Then they shut it down, they put it all in storage in the old Red Cross building -down there beside the convention center coming up Brougner Avenue. In the early days it was the Tonopah School of Mines building. Anyway, they put it all in storage there, and over a period of years it got broken into and vandalized - things were thrown around . . . The county took it and stored it in a couple of other buildings, and they finally moved it down to the old Hook's Laundromat, which was an old garage down by the firehouse - in the back alley that's Burro Street. That's when we got it, in later years, but there wasn't much left - a few display cases, and a few of the larger items that people couldn't pack off.

And that was a real sore spot with us when we first started, because a lot of people would care to us and say, "Oh, you're going to open a museum. What happened to the thing that my aunt somebody gave to somebody 20 years ago?" They'd say, "Where's it at now? We'd like to see it." They didn't realize that we never had any control over that. It was a bad obstacle we had to overcome, and it got to the point that it took us years for some people to trust us to the point that they'd want to give us anything because of what happened then. It was all, I think, probably the county's fault because they were kind of made the trustees of the stuff, and they didn't have the proper storage facilities for it.

In fact, the county, I believe, owned the old Red Cross building, which somehow or another wound up at Kingston Canyon up in Smoky Valley. That's where they're dividing land up into homesites now. They moved the stuff that was stored in the building from the museum down to another old garage. I don't know if Jim Keilhack bought it from the county or what, but it was moved up to Kingston and made into an old store, and all the stuff from Reischke's store on Main Street here in Tonopah - the old soda fountain and so forth - is in that store up there now.

RM: Is that right. You mean, the fixtures.

BM: Yes, they hauled them all up there 20 years ago.

RM: Did the early historical society in Tonopah have a name?

BM: The Silver State Historical Society. They incorporated it and the whole 9 yards.

RM: Do you have any idea when it was incorporated?

BM: I'd say right around 1950, because some of the people who were in it were Ed Slavin and his wife, and old Eudora Murphy who was the county clerk for years and years, and a few people like that. Eleanor Bateman's mother - Jenny Curieux - was in it. Ed Slavin's the only one I know who is still alive who was involved in that. In fact, I think he might even still have the incorporation papers and such.

But all of a sudden the group disappeared. The people in it got too old, they didn't have any young blood coming in, and it just died when they died.

RM: They didn't really have a museum, per se, did they?

BM: No. Just the storefronts here and there where Pete Peterson would sit around.

RM: Was Pete associated with the society?

BM: He was their unofficial curator, because the material was theirs. In fact, among the items from the old museum we found the old guest register. We have it in the museum now - the book everybody signed when they came in. We found a lot of people's signatures who grew up with us; when we were kids we used to go down there and sign the book every time we'd go in

and look at the old things. That was one of the things that I think got me interested in eventually getting into the museum business here in Tonopah.

RM: Then Pete passed on, then the museum folded because the society had folded?

BM: Yes. They kind of folded at the same time.

RM: What was the next phase, then, for the preservation of local history?

BM: Nothing that I know of happened for a long, long time, until 1978, when we organized the Central Nevada Historical Society.

RM: What were the origins of that?

BM: A lot of people had talked about starting a historical society and trying to get a museum here. Bob Perchetti was behind that, and Ken Eason and myself and a few other - my brothers, of course, Allen and Philip. Arid people like Florence Robinson . . . we'd all talked between each other. We finally decided we'd sit down and try to start a historical society in Tonopah with the idea of eventually establishing a museum. We founded our historical society in early 1978, with the idea that we'd try to establish a museum but with another idea in the back of our minds that we probably never really would have a museum, because we didn't know where we'd raise the money for a building, so we came out with a publication - Central Nevada's Glorious Past. We figured that as long as we probably-wouldn't have a museum right away, we'd publish this publication and in it put old pictures and stories. We also send out to our members 3 photos a year accompanied with a little story. (In fact, I was just typing one up here for our Christmas mailing this year.) We send these out the first of the year, the middle of the year, and at Christmas. And we send the 2 publications out, one in April and one in October or November.

We thought that, since we probably would never have a museum, we'd try to record as much of the history as we could this way before it was lost. At the same time, we decided we'd start gathering any artifacts we could, and filing them away. We started taking things people would donate to us - mostly photographs and other small items. We didn't have, really, a storage spot for the big things. We just kept gathering things and putting them away, with the hope that someday we might have a museum.

I was elected president in the beginning, and I've been elected president every year since. I started looking for grants - writing different outfits for grants, and exploring every outlet we could, trying to find money.

RM: Let's back up just a minute now. Was it a small nucleus of people in town who attended these initial meetings, or . . .

BM: Yes, there were about 15 who attended all the time. We tried to set it up so we'd have a monthly meeting, and at each meeting we have a program dealing with the history of the area. That would keep the interest of the people who were involved [and they'll keep] coming to the

meetings - that way they still have something to do. [Our group] had a pretty good cross-section. There were business people and older people and younger people . .

RM: Did you have a legal charter and all of that?

BM: The first thing we did was have a set of by-laws drawn up. I contacted all the different historical societies around the state and got copies of their by-laws. A committee went through them at a couple of our meetings and picked out all the things that suited us the best. We came up with a set of by-laws and then got our non-profit corporation papers from the State of Nevada. After we got those we had to get a tax-exempt status from the Federal Government, which was the damndest thing I ever went through in my life. I filled out pages and pages of paper for that thing, but after about a year and a half, we finally got our tax-exempt status. You wouldn't believe the things you have to go through for something like that. But we are not only a non-profit Nevada corporation, we're federally tax-exempt. People can make donations to us and use them as write-offs - monetary donations or donations of its to the museum.

RM: Initially, did you have dues or something?

BM: Yes, we set up a dues system. We had a supporting membership, a general membership, family, business, life membership and business life; those were the categories which we started out with in order to pay the costs of publishing and so forth. We went to the Tonopah Times and got their subscription list and sent everybody on that a letter with an application form. By the time we were done, we had over 400 members from that one mailing. We've never had to have another mailing. I'd say we've run about 450-500 members from then on. And the biggest portion of our members are out of town; maybe 20 percent of our members are local and the rest are scattered all around the United States. There are even members in foreign countries such as Germany and Spain.

RM: Is that right? The Tonopah Times must have subscriptions all over. BM: Well, yes. They must have them everywhere.

RM: Do you remember what kind of a response rate you got?

BM: We got probably 25 percent.

RM: That's a phenomenal response rate.

BM: A lot of the people were from this area - that's why, I guess, they subscribe to the local paper; they're interested in the history of the area, and as long as you have people who are interested, they want to support it. When we started the historical society one of our main objectives was to make sure we furnished something to our members. I've belonged to a lot of different historical societies here and there, and I was always disillusioned because you'd hear from them once, and often the only time you got a letter was when they wanted their dues paid. We decided we'd make sure that we sent something to our members to make it worth

their while. We'd use the dues to print the publication and send out pictures. That way, we figured if the historical society folded, there'd be that much of a record of the history recorded. That's been our goal.

RM: What kinds of problems did you run into in putting out your publication?

BM: Oh, not many; it's a lot of work. We get good cooperation. Roberts at the Tonopah Times does the printing for us and we don't really have too much of a problem, because I give the stories and photos to him when I'm ready to put the publication together, he goes over it, sets it up, and I look it over and proof it and give it back to him and he prints it. We're fortunate - we don't have to actually set it up and design it ourselves - he does that for us.

RM: What about the text of the articles?

BM: Well, we tried to get everybody who had a story or something to submit it to us. I write stories, and we have a lot of cooperation from people like Phillip Earl at the Nevada Historical Society - he lets us use the stories he writes. A gal by the name of Nan Doughty in Vegas wrote a lot of stories on the Tonopah-Goldfield area - Candelaria - for the Review Journal; she let us use them. And you run into lots of people who write little stories about the area, and we try to use lots of pictures with them, because pictures, I think, are better than, like they say, 1,000 words. So we like to illustrate each of our stories with a lot of pictures. That's why we've got such a good photo file, too, because we've been collecting pictures to go with all these stories over the years.

## CHAPTER TWO

RM: We've gone up through the formative days of the historical society, and I had interrupted you when you had, early in this process, begun filling out applications and trying to raise money for . . . was it a building, or an actual museum?

BM: An actual museum. We were trying to get grant money and we thought maybe we'd luck out, and we finally did. I submitted a grant to Fleischmann Foundation in 1978. Of course they went out of business in 1979. There were numerous other places I'd sent grant application to and we never heard anything from them. I hadn't heard anything from Fleischmann, either, so we thought maybe we had lost out, but then they were going out of business, and apparently they considered a lot of the small grants like ours, and all of a sudden we got word that they'd granted us \$215,000 for a museum.

RM: How much had you asked for?

EM: I think it was about \$200,000; right around [that figure]. Then they gave us the grant, since they were going out of business, they gave it to the historical society through Nye County. They made Nye County responsible for it. The county was supposed to administer the grant, and the way they set the grant up, Nye County would be responsible for the upkeep of the building, the salary of the curators, the gal we have working at the museum, and the utilities and things like that. The Central Nevada Historical Society would be responsible for the material and the displays and everything in the building. The county then decided to try and get some land for the museum, but we'd already been working on that with the BLM. We had the property out there all ready to go; they just had to go through Nye County. It's some kind of a lease to Nye County for \$1 for 99 years, I think.

RM: How much land did you get?

BM: I don't know exactly how big that was; it was half of the land we have now. It [included] the museum building and the parking lot and the back yard. When the county took this land from the ELM they took some land for the hospital, too, plus the land between the hospital and the power company building. Later we went to the county and had the other piece of land from the parking lot on down to the highway on the east side of Logan Field Road set aside for the museum. That doubled the size of our property, which is the fenced part we have up there now.

RM: What kind of reaction did you encounter from the county when it was suddenly involved in this and in effect had to make a commitment on it?

BM: It was a good reaction. They were kind of hesitant when they found out that they would be obligated as far as the salary and the utilities and things like that went, but Roy Neighbors, who was the county administrator at the time, was quite helpful in this, and I think we had some other local politicians and people who had a little influence help us get the grant, although I

could never swear to it. But the way it was set up, the county commissioners were kind of hesitant at first, but when they saw that we were going ahead and there weren't going to be any administrative problems, they said, OK, they'll back it all the way.

RM: Do you remember who the commissioners were at that time?

BM: Andy Eason was one of them. His son, Ken, was involved in the historical society. Jane Logan was in there, and Bob Ruud was the other one. he was good; he supported it all the way. Eason and Jane were good, too. We never had any problem with any of them once we got going. They basically got the grant and turned it over to the historical society, which ended up being, I guess you'd say, me, to take care of.

RM: So you were kind of the administrator of the grant?

BM: Well, of course, Neighbors kept an eye on things, but they just told me what we had, and what we had to do. The first thing I did was draw up floor plans for a building. This was in '79. They had an architect from Salt Lake draw up some plans, and I took a look at them and if we would have had a million dollars we might have been able to build [with them], so I just threw them out and drew up my own floor plan. And then took it up to - I think Terry Sotak had something to do with it then, too. he was under Neighbors as an administrative aide or something and Neighbors threw it to him to keep an eye on us, so I went to Sotak and told him I didn't like those plans, and he said, "Well, go ahead and do what you want to do, then."

Anyway, I drew up a floor plan and we submitted it to some different architects and asked them what they could care up with that had the most floor space we could get at the most reasonable price. I told them I wanted a steel-type building - just a concrete floor - with just a few rooms in it. They put it out to bid to a bunch of different outfits and Casey Jones, in Carson City, got the bid as the architect on the deal. He and I sat down and I showed him just exactly what I wanted. I wanted the best building, as far as insulation, low upkeep, with the most floor space we could get. We wound up with 6,000 square feet of floor space for only \$200,000, so we did pretty well on the deal. We had quite a bit left over for furnishings and getting the parking lot paved and things like that that were done, too. I think we did very well for our \$215,000.

RM: What other things went into your thinking in terms of designing a building?

BM: Maintenance, size, and access. We wanted to make sure you had access for the handicapped, because if you have a building that people can't get into, there's no sense having it. And then security. We wanted a building with absolutely no windows in it. We have a couple of doors - the door in front, one at each end, and one big roll-up door on the back. We wanted it as secure as we could make it. Then I wanted to make sure we had plenty of display space, but I wanted to make sure we had storage and a conference room and an office, too. I set aside enough room in the drawings for a decent conference room, a decent storage room, a decent work room, and then our office space. We also wanted a concrete vault, which we had built in, to keep the rare items just in case of fire or anything.

And we wanted a good security system, which I think we got. We have, of course, a fire system. And there's a burglar alarm system - the old type you see with the little strips around the glass that activates when they break the windows. We have got that set up on the front doors and we have sensors on all the other doors, so if they're open it breaks the circuit. We also have ultraviolet beams, which are motion detectors. We have them in the conference room, in the office, and in the main display area. If there's any motion in there, they'll sense it and set off the alarm. It's a silent alarm system; it's hooked to the fire department. We hooked it to the fire department because at that time the sheriff's department people were kind of caning and going all the time. The fire house was more stable, and when it goes off, you get a response - they call the sheriff's office - and they come up there, too. We thought this was better because if you've got a burglar in there and the fire trucks and everything else [arrive], you've got a better chance of keeping him in there.

RM: What kinds of precautions have you taken about fire?

BM: Not really much, except making the sure the building was fireproof under the type of construction we had, with drywall and metal That's About all we could really do within reason.

RM: You really wouldn't want sprinklers, would you? Because they could come on accidentally and ruin more than they'd save.

BM: Yes, that's one thing we were advised. That's another thing - when we designed the building, my brothers and I went to a number of classes on the subject and I got hold of all the different museums I could in the state, and asked them what their problems were, so when we built ours we could stay away from them. Like windows, and access to the building, and things like that. I tried to make sure that everything they told me they had trouble with was eliminated in our museum, so we wouldn't have the same problem. And it worked out pretty well. There are a few little things up there that we had to correct, but most of it came out really well.

RM: Then you began actual, physical construction of the building, were there any notable problems or challenges that you had to overcome?

BM: No, not really. Except the fighting with the contractor that you usually have to go through because you don't think he's going fast enough.

RM: When did you start construction?

BM: Construction started in January, 1980, but we'd had the ground leveled before that. Right after we got the grant we started in on the ground leveling. Jim Larsen and Raymond Jensen did the ground work for us. In early 1980 - January - the contractor started laying the concrete, and the building went up pretty fast. It was finished in '81 - we had our grand opening in July, 1981 - so it took about a year and a half to build.

RM: Where did you get your display cases and so on?

BM: The glass display cases are items that were donated to us. Some of them, in fact, are loaned to us, and belong to Milt Kevershan. Some of them were the only things left from the old museum because, as I said, they were too big to carry off. Most had broken glass, which we replaced. And other people around town . . . Horace Campbell gave us some that he used to have down at the foundry or down at the old Campbell and Kelly Garage here in town. And there were a couple of other people around town who gave us display cases. But the big ones we had built when we had the museum built. I saw some like them in Carson City, found out who built theirs, and had the architect get hold of the guy who built them, thus he built us the way we wanted them.

RM: Now you've got a building, and display cases. How did you then fill up the museum?

BM: That was kind of a long, slow process. We took what we had up there and did the best we could, organizing our displays. And then we just hoped things would start coming in. A museum director in Elko told me, "Then you first start out you'll be taking everything you can get. And after a while you'll be wondering how you can tell people to quit bringing stuff up to you." [chuckles] And that's about what's happened now. We've got an unbelievable amount of stuff. It seems that when one person saw something he'd remember something, or she would, and they'd bring in items associated with the history of the area.

Then we set the thing up, we set it up in a joint deal with Nye County. The museum is governed by the Central Nevada Museum Advisory Board and the advisory board is answerable to the Nye County Commissioners. The advisory board consists of myself and 6 other members, and we've got them scattered around so it isn't just Tonopah. We wanted it to be a central Nevada museum, not a 'Tonopah museum. We've got members from Beatty, Pahrump, Gabbs, Manhattan, and, of course, Tonopah.

RM: How are the members chosen?

BM: The first ones were appointed by the commissioners. And then we keep asking them over again and most of them have stayed with us since we were first organized, with a couple of changes. If we need another member we'll put a notice in the newspaper, and we'll submit the name of anybody who's interested to the commissioners, they OK it, and that's . . .

I'm the chairman of the board, and we set it up so that the director of the museum is also the chairman of the board. So actually I'm the director of the museum, which puts me on the county payroll as running the museum, but I'm also the chairman of the board, and also we put in our job description that we wanted the person who was the director and the chairman to be a member of the Central Nevada Historical Society, and preferably an officer, because in this joint thing, the way it's set up now, the historical society owns all material in the museum. The items aren't donated to the county - they're donated to the historical society. We did that to keep an even balance so that one arm didn't own everything. The county couldn't come up and say, "Oh, we don't like the way you're doing this; change it all around. Leave this stuff here and

there." It isn't their stuff to move. It's up to the board of directors to say where the material is going to be, and how we're going to handle it.

Just as a backup, we got hold of a tunnel up on the side of Butler Mountain - old Butler Cave - and we got a lease on it from the BLM, cleaned it out, put the old vault door from the old Tonopah and Goldfield Railroad Depot on it, and use it as a storage facility, so that if we ever get kicked out of the museum, we can move everything up there.

RM: Then the county owns the museum building?

BM: The county owns the building, the BLM owns the land, and the historical society owns the displays; it's a 3-way thing, so that no one person owns the whole thing, or has complete control over it.

RM: Does the county, according to the original Fleischmann grant, have to use the building for a museum?

BM: Yes, it was set aside as a museum. Although I guess that would be a not subject, because the Fleischmann Foundation is gone, and the guys who were overseeing this for the 5 years or whatever their setup was have dissolved the foundation. So now I guess you can say they could do whatever they wanted with it. Although I'd hate to see changes . . .

RM: Are the advisory board members appointed for a set term?

BM: It's yearly. Each year we send the list back to the commissioners and have them OK it for the next year

RM: Who were the members of first board?

BM: Terry Sotak, myself, my brother Philip, Chloe Lisle from Beatty, Art Yates in Manhattan, Millie Cornell in Gabbs, and Florence Provenza from Pahrump. Bob Ruud was our advisor on the commissioners. Florence Provenza is a realtor down in Pahrump. She was on the board for about 3 years and then her business was getting a little involved and she couldn't handle it anymore. She said she didn't really have the time for it. So Chuck Gallivan was just appointed in her place last year.

RM: What is the status of the historical society? Is it growing, or is it kind of stabilized, or . . .?

BM: It's actually stabilized. We don't send out our mailing soliciting membership anymore. Each year when we send out our membership we lose, I'd say, 10 percent, but we leave membership forms up at the museum for people to pick up, and by word of mouth it keeps stable. I really would hate to see it get any bigger, because it's hard enough to handle as it is, when you're doing all the mailings and thing that have to be done, all on a volunteer basis. If it got too big you couldn't handle it. I would say it grows by about 4 or 5 percent every year. We're up to 500

now. Then we first started out, we didn't think we'd ever have any life members, and now we've got over 80 of them.

RM: What is the overriding philosophy of the museum, and what do you see as its goals?

EM: I guess I'd say it's divided up into thirds: display is about a third of our goal; a reference library is another third - where people can come in and use our reference materials and such; and the other third would be preserving the items. And it's not the type of museum where people only come in and look at old stuff.

In fact, I think more and more we're becoming a reference museum through our photo file and our library and the paper material we've been filing away for years and years. That's what we're trying to do, because more and more people are looking for material for researching history, maps, writing books, and so forth. And that's the type of place we are: more of an educational thing.

And we've always got school tours coming in anymore. We get 5, 6 school tours a year in there now just from Tonopah, and then, of course, Goldfield, Round Mountain, and Silver Peak schools bring in tours. So it's kind of an education facility.

We're also putting slide programs together on the history of the area, and I'm going around videotaping all the old ghost towns as well as towns such as Tonopah and Goldfield as they are today, and we're putting those in the files.

Another thing we tried to do when we set the museum up is make it a museum of the central Nevada area; you couldn't really make it Tonopah, or Nye County, because there's too much history all interrelated. And you get more support from the people that way. What the museum covers, in our displays, our library, and our research material is Nye County, Esmeralda County, and the related parts of Mineral and Lander Counties.

RM: You've gone from nothing to a 6,000 square foot museum and historical society in a period of eight years. What are the challenges in keeping all this going?

BM: The real challenge is trying to find enough time for it (I do a lot of it myself), and trying to find help with the mailings and so forth - it's hard to do.

And as far as the museum part goes, another challenge is trying to keep it fresh. And keep adding new things all the time, and changing things in the displays themselves. Right now we're adding a desert interpretation area to the museum grounds; there will be rocks and plants and things like that. We also have been adding outside displays dealing with mining in the area.

And one of the main goals of the museum is to try to get an addition. Hopefully in the next 5 or 6 years we'll be able to find a coalition of mining companies or someone that will go in and . . . we'd like to double the size of our display forum. We have the area behind the building and I have the architect's plans and everything drawn up for it already, it's just finding the money to do it with - probably another \$100,000. And of course, as I say, keeping everything updated.

RM: You have another dimension outside the museum - a lot of old mining equipment.

EM: Well, basically it's a mining museum, because central Nevada was a mining area during the period that we deal with. We've got prehistoric items but mainly mining things, because that was what brought the people who are around here now to the area. We've got a lot of mining equipment. We put together the mine on the corner where you turn to come to the museum from the highway. The headframe came from Manhattan, from the Mustang mine. What we tried to do there is set up a replica of a mine the way it was in, probably, 1910. So we put the head frame, hoist, compressor . . . we just moved a little tool shed in and put all the old mining tools in it, and then up along the fence we've got a few other things associated with the mining.

We have a blacksmith shop we built that's probably from 1910 or 1912, completely equipped. We've got a miner's tent house up on the hill. We got that at Manhattan, and if you look at it closely, you'll see a miner's tent that was set up there, and the miner, after he was there for awhile, built a cabin right over the top of the tent. The whole tent is still inside the house. And we have got the old water company pump house which was on Bryan Avenue with the pumps that used to pump up to the tanks on Mount Brougner. We've got that all set up the way it was when it was originally on the street up here.

And we've got a few other little buildings we've moved in. About 4 little outhouses that came from different places. There's an outhouse from Manhattan, one from Rye Patch, and one from Tonopah. They're kind of unique, because each one of them is a little different when you start looking at them. They all have their own personalities, too.

And then of course we've got a lot of mining equipment out in front of the museum. We have an old hoist, and a 10-stamp mill which we brought in from Manhattan. It's amazing how much of this stuff came from Manhattan. That 10-stamp mill was the old War Eagle mill - we hauled it in and had it set up. We've got the Victor mine cages set up - the 2 double-deck mine cages that they used to hoist ore and men in out of the Victor mine here in Tonopah.

And then in the yard we've got a lot of smaller mining equipment. All kinds of little hoists, and compressors, and blowers, and a lot of things associated with mining.

RM: Then you made a dedication this last Jim Butler's Day, didn't you?

BM: Yes. One section of our grounds is dedicated to the guys who lost their lives in the Second World War here, when they were training at the old army air force base. We found a bomber that had crashed and was buried down there and dug it up and got the parts and incorporated them into our monument. My brother Allen looked up all the names of the guys that he could find who were killed down here. There were over 100 of them - 111, I believe - that he found through newspaper articles, death certificates, and other ways he researched these things. We engraved them all in a plaque and set it in a monument that we'd made out of the parts from the wrecked B-24 aircraft and dedicated that in memory of these servicemen who died here in 1942-1945.

### CHAPTER THREE

RM: Bill, besides expansion of the facility, how do you see the future of the museum?

BM: The way tourism is improving around this country, and the way they're trying to promote tourism in Nevada and central Nevada, I see the museum as a very important part of that. People come to this area and want to see and learn about central Nevada - Tonopah, Goldfield, the other towns - and without the museum they couldn't do it. I see more and more . . . In the last few years I can tell by the way the visitor count has picked up in the museum, and the comments we get from people, and the number of his tours that are starting to stop at the museum that it's really important. I think it's going to be a very important part of the tourism of central Nevada - one of the attractions when people get here, and to bring people here.

And I see the day, probably, when we'll even be running tours out of the museum. Probably to the Goldfield area, and maybe the Belmont -Manhattan-Round Mountain area. In fact, right now we have a guide service. We have the Tonopah slide program, and a Goldfield slide program, that the historical society put together out of our funds.

We use the extra money from the historical society dues, after supplying the membership with our publications and their membership material, to add books to the library, buy display cases . . . Anything that needs to be done for the museum that we can't do out of the museum budget, we've been doing with historical society funds. In fact, we just put \$1,800 toward the retaining wall around the parking lot to help with that. The way-we have our tour set up now, with those slide programs . I have another one coming up this month where I'm going to ride to Goldfield. They care to the museum, look around, we show-them the slide program, and then either my brother or I ride [with them] on the bus to Goldfield, pointing out all the interesting things in between, and then back to the museum again. It's going to work real well, I think. Bob Perchetti at the convention center lines up a lot of this. We work hand in hand, and I think between the 2 of us (the museum and convention center) we're going to be even more of an asset to Nye County and Tonopah. RM: What about the future of the Central Nevada Historical Society? BM: Hopefully it'll keep going. I've been president ever since its inception, and I do the biggest part of the work. I'm the editor of the publication and many other things. I'm just hoping that in the years down the road when I can't do it anymore, somebody else will take over. With the interest we have locally now, I don't think that will be any problem. I would just like to see some young people get interested in it - it's hard to get young people interested in history - and have a few young people who could step in when we leave it behind. But even if nobody does, at least we have a bit left behind, and everything that we've got will go to the museum, so it's not lost.

RM: You and your brothers really are dedicated, and put a lot of work and effort into it. What is it in your lives or your backgrounds that made you all so interested in history, and all so dedicated to this effort?

BM: I don't know. I tell you, it's one of those things that I think is born into you; it was just something that clicked in all 3 of us. But I think what really brought it out was our dad. Years ago, when we were little kids, there wasn't a weekend that went by that we didn't go out to

some old ghost town or some old mining camp or something. We'd always say, "Gee, this is the old camp of Cactus. And there used to be this and that here."

And we'd look around and try to figure out, "Gee, how could all this have been here?" I can remember at a real early age starting to get interested, trying to figure out: Well, if all these places were there, what did they look like? What were they? And I started trying to read as much as I could about it. This is when I was a little kid, too. I was in grade school.

And we always had a camera and we'd take pictures. None of our pictures were really that good, when I started looking back on them. I wish I would've had a lot better camera. But anyway, we'd go out and take pictures, and my dad would tell us about all the mines that produced there. And the real old camps, like Montezuma. We'd go up places like that. He knew a lot about it; he spent his whole life around here. And when the bottle-digging craze came in we did a lot of bottle digging.

I think the first thing that started me on my collecting, because I'm quite a collector, too, was . . . I was interested in all the old mining camps and it used to be that you could go in all the old houses and shacks around here, and there was paper material lying around - stock certificates, things like that. Then I was a little kid, I picked up a couple of old mining stock certificates and brought them home. And I thought, "Gee, this is the same name as one of those old towns" - I think the first one was Bellehelen - that my dad had told us about. Well, that made me even more interested, so I started picking up everything like that I could find - all kinds of old paper material - anything from the 1900s, 1910s. And all of a sudden, I had a stock certificate collection. The next thing I knew, I was picking up these little trade tokens that they used to use in the saloons around here, and pretty soon I had a bunch of those.

Of course, then I was probably in the 8th grade; just getting into high school. In my high school years I dropped off on it a little bit, although I would say that a month didn't go by that my brothers and I didn't visit one of these old towns. And then we started getting interested in mines, because my dad always used to tell us how it was to work in the mines. The next thing we knew, we had carbide lamps and we were crawling in and out of all the old mines we could find.

I think we went through every mine in Tonopah and Goldfield and Divide that you can get into. Even when I was in grade school, I was getting interested in going down the mines. We did a lot of things that the other kids we were running around with never did. We played with dynamite. I remember the first time we set off dynamite, I was only, probably, in 6th grade. My dad had told me about how you crimped the caps on the fuse and stuff, and naturally because we were prowling around, we knew where the dynamite and the caps and the fuses were, so we . . . Of course, my dad would've killed us if he'd known about it. We'd go out in the hills, set off dynamite - I often wonder how the hell I didn't get blown up with some of the things I did. Or how I didn't get caved in, in some of the mines that we crawled around in. I'd never advise any kids to do the things I did. In fact, I never told my kids about them when they were growing up. [laughter] Neither did Philip or Allen tell their kids any of the stuff we did, because we didn't want them doing it. You know, you look back and . . . somebody was watching over you.

But at the same time I was starting to collect all this old paper material and so forth Allen got interested in the stock certificates, so he started collecting them, and the next thing you know we both had some pretty good collections. That went hand in hand later on when the

museum and historical society got going, because we had a good knowledge of these things I'd been reading up on it ever since I can remember, and so did Philip and Allen, so I guess it came natural for us to get involved in the historical society; we knew the history already. Or as much as you could know. But that's kind of how we got involved in it.

I'd say it was in our bones to begin with, but my dad brought it out by taking us all those places when we were kids, and got us started on the path of wanting to explore. And once we got the idea of wanting to explore, you explore these places, and all of a sudden you try to find things that are tied to them, like the pictures, and the stock certificates, and tokens, and anything written about them. And pretty soon you start collecting, then the next thing you know you're a historian.

RM: You probably know as much or more than anybody about the history of Tonopah. I wonder if you could give an overview of your view of Tonopah history. Not necessarily the facts, but your view of Tonopah and the central Nevada area from a historian's perspective. Does my question make any sense?

BM: Well, it's kind of hard to answer.

RM: Let me give you an example. This research that I've been doing - interviewing some of the old-timers and so forth - has sensitized me to some issues in the area. I think a lot of people tend to think of the glory days of Tonopah and the great boom, and the excitement, and the drama of it. But I'm finding that it took a terrible human toll in silicosis and a lot of poverty and there was a lot of just plain old back-breaking hard work. Another thing I have become a little more sensitive to is that the money they took out of the ground didn't stay here; it went somewhere else.

BM: Oh, no; it left the country.

RM: So that's a view that I have at this time. And I wonder, since you've been so involved in it for so long, what kind of a view you have?

BM: Well, it's kind of hard to put in words. I've got a view of all the different aspects of it. You can go for hours and hours and hours on my view of the different aspects of it. I divide it into periods. There was the boom period, from 1900 to 1910 - 1908, probably; after the Panic of 1907. Then there was the steady mining period which brought it up through the '20s, and then the leasing period, when the town started to die. And then you have the dead period, right before the war - it wasn't really dead. Then the Second World War - the rebirth of Tonopah, so to speak, during the army air force years. And then the dead period up until the '50s, when Sandia and those outfits came out at the Test Site and started picking the economy up again. And of course now it - I would judge - is in a boom again, due to the mining in the area and the government installations.

But there are so many aspects you can go into with this thing. For instance, what you mentioned, plus one of the aspects that was always interesting to me in Tonopah and Goldfield was the stock certificates, and the stock swindles that went on here. And the way they sold

stock in the mining companies in Tonopah - Divide especially - and Goldfield. And another thing that's always been interesting to me is the red light districts of these places. I've always had a kind of a fascination with that, for some reason.

RM: Of course, the district was gone by the time you were born, wasn't it?

BM: Oh, no, they always had a red light district. The big ones were gone, but they always had a lot of prostitution here. I remember when we were little kids, down on St. Patrick Street, on the other side of Oddie, between Oddie and Knapp, they had 3 or 4 bars in there. Taxine's was down there, and there were probably 3 or 4 of them. So it had a pretty good red light district.

RM: And they were brothels?

BM: Oh, yes.

RM: Did they really close the whole thing down with the war?

BM: No. The military forced the county to close it down, but it opened back up again. They ran them out of town after the first year the base was here - 1943. The first year or so, it was wide open down there. Then they had some problems. A couple of soldiers from the base burned up in one of the joints and they had some other problems with fighting and such, so they ran them out of town. It was still here but it was not here; it was under cover.

After the war they came back in again. Taxine's was down there for years; probably in the late '50s they told her to shut down, and that's when . . . I guess Bobbi Duncan had taken it over by then. Allen knows the whole story on it - I'm not too up on it, but he's done a lot of research in it. And there were a couple of little places around town. There was a place up behind our house. So many people went zipping by our house heading up there - it was behind Jim Jensen's house, in a house later owned by Bob Campbell - that my old man went to the commissioners and had them close it down. They moved to the northwest edge of town across behind the Shell Oil bulk plant for awhile, and then the commissioners closed them down, finally, too, and ran them out of town. But by then Bobbi had opened up the Buckeye bar up here off Highway 6, on the east edge of town, and she, of course, has been there ever since. That was in probably the late '50s; that in itself is a history.

RM: Yes. And there aren't that many written sources on it, are there?

BM: No, there are not. You should go up and record Allen some time, and what he knows about the red light district and prostitution in this area. Because he's done a lot of research into it.

But there are all kinds of little things that are interesting. You can go into many different aspects of it - just trace and talk about it for hours and hours and hours.

Then I first started, because my dad was born in Goldfield, in Columbia, and we'd lived in Goldfield when we were little kids, and my dad always used to talk about the mines in Goldfield, I used to be more interested in the history of Goldfield. I still always try to trace the history of Goldfield and the surrounding little camps like Gold Point and Lida, Cactus, all those

places. And Divide was always very interesting to me, for same reason. It was as if I had something drawing me back there all the time. Then I slowly got interested in the history of 'Tonopah because it was so related, and now I guess I'm more of a source of information on Tonopah than I am Goldfield. But I've done a lot of research on Goldfield, too, so I know practically all the history on it.

RM: Do you have a pretty good library collection of the books and everything, or are they all over at the museum?

BM: Yes; and photographs. I have my own collection that I started years ago. After we organized the historical society, I tried to buy duplicates of everything I've got for the historical society library. Because that was one of the historical society's goals, too - to set up a decent library, so even if we never got a museum to put it in, we'd have a reference library. We'd take money out of the funds and keep buying books for that library. I tried to get copies of everything I've got, and the same with photographs. I went through my photo collection and had them all copied for the historical society's photo files. All the photos are on file at the museum now. And with all my stock certificates and things I have duplicates of, I've donated a duplicate to the museum.

RM: Do you have a pretty extensive stock collection?

BM: Oh, yes. In fact, I just did some trading the other night. I've got probably 500 or 600 different stock certificates from Tonopah, Goldfield, - Nye and Esmeralda County. I was just looking at the ones I have from Divide. As I say, that was a boom in the 1919s, and it was really fascinating to me for some reason, because of all the mines that were incorporated out there, only a half dozen of them shipped any ore.

RM: The rest were promos?

BM: Well - most of them. Some sank shafts and, etc. - I guess a lot of them had a chance. A lot of them never did anything but issue stock. But I was looking at my stock certificates, and I have 80 different ones from Divide mines alone. And my brother has another 80 or 90, and probably half of his are different than mine.

And I have probably 300 tokens from Tonopah and Goldfield. I've traded for a lot with duplicates I have. I used to go out here with a screening outfit and screen the old dumps. You used to be able to find lots of tokens. I'd figure I'd find about one an hour. You could go for days without finding . . . you know, you'd find coins and stuff like that, but you'd go for days and only find a couple of tokens, then you'd find spots where you'd find dozens of them - that people just threw out, I guess when the businesses closed.

RM: How did you assemble your stock certificates collection?

BM: When I first started, as I mentioned awhile ago, I found a couple in old sheds and took them home. I liked them because they were pretty. And they had names of mines that I'd heard

my dad talking about, or [had] seen written up in articles or something. So I started looking for them. You could find them anywhere in those days. There were old sheds, and you'd find them in old trunks . . . most of the ones I got in my earlier years, I just picked up here and there. People would give them to you. You'd say, "Gee, do you know where there's any old mining stocks?"

And: "Yes, my grandpa had some. Here, here - you can have them.' They'd hand me a handful of them. Then in the last 20 years there are other people around the state and we've gotten to know that we're interested in this stuff, and we trade a lot. My brother Allen and I both trade a lot; same with the tokens. Philip's not too interested in those kind of things. He's kind of the railroad guy. He specializes in the history of the railroads around here. He's really interested in the Tonopah and Goldfield Railroad, and he's got lots of pictures, paper materials, everything associated with the railroads. He is kind of a railroad buff.

RM: Are there some artifacts that you think are better than others in terms of being worth saving? Aside from personal taste, is there something that the museum should focus on?

BM: I think anything that has town names. Photographs, of course, and anything dealing with businesses; things like that. In fact, at the museum we catalog everything we get from the present - menus, business cards, calendars, anything. Because someday that's going to be history.

Another thing we do for the museum is take photos for the photo collection. The historical society pays for having the photos reproduced and they go into the museum photo collection. We've bought 2 cameras - one for copying people's collections, and another that I carry with me all the time. Every time something changes downtown, I take a picture of it and we put it in the file. It's probably not worth anything now, but 50 years from now . . . Chat made me start doing that was a bunch of pictures of Goldfield that were taken by the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1906 or 1907 they had a problem with mining claim - a guy located a mining claim right in the middle of Goldfield and then said he owned everything that was on that claim. And that was right at the height of the boom. The BLM took a picture of every building up and down all the streets in a 2-block area - everything. Then they took pictures down the streets from every corner. I started looking at those and I thought, "Man, if they'd have done that to every place, just imagine the history you could . . ." That's what we've been trying to do ever since. Every time there's a new business in Tonopah, Goldfield, Round Mountain, anyplace - I take a picture of it. Any time something changes we try to take a picture of it. And now we have a video camera that the historical society bought, and I'm taking videos of everything and we're putting them in the museum library. In the road 50 or 60 years everything that we see now will be there. I don't know if people will keep it up after I'm done - I hope they will. But if they don't, we'll still have one era here that's going to be recorded for the future.

That was another thing we hoped to do through our publications. Even if the historical society dissolved and the people who were members threw them away, we have enough libraries on our list that maybe somebody will keep a file of them. The Library of Congress is on our mailing list, and you know people like that are going to keep this material. The state library in Carson City, libraries in Las Vegas - the special collections -all of them. They'll keep those

volumes intact. At least that much history will still be there when we're gone. If nobody else carries it on any further than we've carried it, at least we've got that much.

RM: Bill, are there any other things that you'd like to say?

BM: I just hope that we can keep on going with the museum. The thing that I'm kind of worried about right now is where we're going to establish our funding starting with next year, because right now we're working on revenue sharing. We try to keep our budget down the best we can, but still, that's money that has to come from the county. I just hope the heck that after this fiscal year is used up they see fit to be able to fund us for the next time, because I'm afraid that . . . As established as we are now, I'd hate to see it all go down the drain because of lack of funds. As far as the museum goes, that's the only worry I have now: getting some kind of setup of funding - like County General or something - where it gets established and will be all right from then on. It's just getting that first year established, and whether we're going to get it set up.

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