

An Interview With  
P.M. "Roy" Neighbors

An Oral History conducted and edited  
by Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
1990

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Roy Neighbors  
1990

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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 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 Jodie Hanson, Alice Levine, Mike Green, Cynthia Tremblay, and Jean Stoess. Jared Charney contributed essential word processing skills. Maire Hayes, Michelle Starika, Anita Coryell, Jodie Hanson, Michelle Welsh, Lindsay Schumacher, and Shena Salzmänn shouldered the herculean task of proofreading the oral histories. Gretchen Loeffler and Bambi McCracken assisted in numerous secretarial and clerical duties. Phillip Earl of the Nevada Historical Society contributed valuable support and criticism throughout the project, and Tan King at the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada at Reno served as a consulting oral historian. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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--Robert D. McCracken  
Tonopah, Nevada  
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 1,000 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 Fountain (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 talking with Roy Neighbors at the O.K. Corral Motel in Tonopah, Nevada, July 29 and 30, 1988.

## CHAPTER ONE

RM: Roy could we start by you telling me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

RN: On the birth certificate it's Pomroy Amore Neighbors. You can see why I took Roy.

RM: Pomroy?

RN: Yes. I can live with it a little better now than I could.

RM: Would you state your birthday and birthplace?

RN: July 11, 1923, in Entiat, Washington.

RM: And what was your father's name?

RN: My father's name was Miles Preston Neighbors - Miles P. Neighbors.

RM: Where and when was he born?

RN: He was born in Minden, Missouri, and I don't recall exactly when. He died in about 1948.

RM: What was his occupation?

RN: My dad was in warehousing and things like that in the state of Washington.

RM: He didn't live in Tonopah?

RN: No. He came down with me a couple of times to do some prospecting many, many years ago.

RM: What was your mother's name, and when and where was she born?

RN: Her maiden name was Irene Dodd. She was born in what they call the Methow area of Washington State.

RM: What was her family's background?

RN: Mostly her father was a carpenter. A couple of the things he built up there are now on the list for historical preservation. And he did quite a bit of ranching and trapping.

RM: Where did you go to grade school?

RN: I started school in Entiat and then I spent a little time in Wenatchee, Washington, about 20 miles away, just over the hill from Seattle, up in the Cascades. Then my father and I moved to Los Angeles when I was in about the 4th or 5th grade and I went to school. It was a boy's school - McKinley's School for Bays - outside of Van Nuys. (I might add it was not a reform school, it was a boy's school.) I stayed there up to the 10th grade, then went to Van Nuys High School and then I transferred downtown to Los Angeles Poly and then another high school called Belmont in the Los Angeles area.

RM: So basically, you grew up in L.A.?

RN: Yes, I grew up in L.A. Then about 1941 I met the Jackson family (I always refer to them as the "Jackson family in Los Angeles"). Much over the concern of my uncle, who I was living with at the time, I went with the family to Tonopah. [We came] out here at a place called Golden Arrow to do some mining, and there's a little side story there. Today, Homestake has just completed drilling the very spot that we first came to, and it looks as if they may have a major deposit out there. I have mixed emotions on that - here 40 years later, somebody else has gotten another major deposit right where I was drilling.

RM: Did the Jackson have the mine there?

RN: They had a lease on the mine. Around the turn of the '40s everybody seemed to have mines out there, everywhere. If you wanted to work the mine, in most instances, you'd just go in and make up some kind of a document and you had it for a 10 percent royalty. That was even true in Tonopah at that time. The difference here in Tonopah was that they had a climbing scale. As the ore got richer . . . the ore took off at 10 percent and you could get up to 30 or 40 percent.

RM: Did you stay here when you came out?

RN: We worked there at Golden Arrow for quite a while and did the mining and shipping and then moved in town here for a little while and worked with Allen Douglas, who had recently sold the Ford Garage. He had the old National Coal Company; I worked with Allen for quite awhile. I actually worked underground as a leaser here in Tonopah at the Mizpah. RM: Did you work with Ed Slavin?

RN: No. We had our own lease up there with the Terrell brothers - at that time it was Don and Starle. Don and Starle and I were working underground up there and we had some pretty good ore.

RM: Could you say a little bit about working in the Mizpah? Could you say something about your lease and where you were working and what the conditions were like and so forth?

RN: Actually, [the lease] is rather easy to identify. If you drive up California Street as if you're going to the old park, it's right behind the Arco station. You can see quite an exposed stope right next to the fence; Starle and Don Terrell and I had a block of ground in there. We actually could walk to work. The stope that we were going down was so flat that, as I recall, you could walk all the way down to the first level of the Mizpah and you didn't even need to take the hoist. We didn't have to hoist out at all. And it's still there with the pillars and everything. I've always been surprised that somebody hasn't come by and cleaned it up a little bit - tourists could actually walk underground there.

RM: That's a good idea.

RN: I think Frank Scott talked about that when he first got the Mizpah Hotel. You wouldn't have to go all the way down, but you could actually take a guided walking tour down through the old workings. It's real solid rock.

RM: Was your lease in the old stope?

RN: Actually, we walked down about 50 or 60 feet, and we were off to the right. We were in one of the large stopes down there, but we were on the upper part of it and it was running . . . They were beautiful veins, I might add. You had a nice hanging wall and a nice foot wall. You could see the ore and it was well defined. It might have been running \$40 or \$50, which wasn't that great, but that was at 90-cent silver. Well, \$50, 15 ounces of silver today, is pretty good rock. I think there may be some there - a little spot along the hanging wall there about 4 or 5 inches thick that ran 1500 ounces of silver.

RM: Oh, my gosh.

RN: Of course in those days, it was \$1200 to \$1500 a ton. By today's standards, that was quite good.

RM: Did you have problems with dust?

RN: No. I learned early on, even when I was working out at Golden Arrow, that, number one, if you were going to do any drilling, you have to use water. They made a believer out of me, because the silica content of the ore in Tonopah was so high that if you went down there and drilled dry, and you did it for over a year, you'd probably have miner's consumption.

RM: Yes - silicosis.

RN: It was highly siliceous, so I always used a muzzle, and I know, once in a while, I'd be the only one wearing a muzzle and everybody might think I was a big pansy, but I didn't give a damn. I wasn't going to take any chances.

RM: How long did you work there?

RN: We might have been there 6 or 8 months. We didn't make but one or two shipments. Compared to what some of the other miners have done, we didn't do that much at the Mizpah, but I think the history there was that when the company no longer found it profitable, they would turn it over to the leasers and give them blocks of ground. Some of them did quite well, even at those prices.

RM: When you came up here with the Jacksons, had you ever been around mining before?

RN: No.

RM: You got the mining bug, then?

RN: That's true. I'd always . . . I remember when I was a kid, I used to go up to Big Bear Lake in California. Even then, when I didn't know anything about mining, I always took a pie pan or something and I was always panning the stream. It's been my first love.

I'm getting ahead of myself here, but I was very much aware, when the war was over and I was so anxious to come back here, of the big change [that was coming]. Gold was still at \$35 an ounce, silver was still 90 cents, but everything else had gone skyrocketing. Powder, which we used to get for \$9.75 a box, everything . . . Until they took gold off the market in the '60s or something, whatever, I figured someday I'd retire . . . I took early retirement to get back into it. It's healthy, and I love it. You can't see the all you're breathing out there [In L.A.] most of the time.

RM: What did you do after you had your lease at the Mizpah?

RN: The Mizpah was in about 1941 and I remember [the date] because that was about the time of Pearl Harbor. In fact, I remember I was working for National Coal Company and Allen Douglas, and I was making my rounds up by the K.C. Hall, when Roosevelt made his speech about the dastardly attack and the Day of Infamy and the rest of it. It wasn't long after that that I decided there were some pretty big paying jobs in Alaska, so I took off for Alaska. You were kind of exempt at that point; if you got into one of those areas [of work], you didn't necessarily have to go into the military right away. I didn't have any money at that time, so I did that. Well, Alaska and I lasted about 30 days, and the mosquitoes won.

RM: Where did you go in Alaska?

RN: A place called Ketchikan - a beautiful little island.

RM: Were they mining there?

RN: No, it was a military base up there. I never did get used to the mosquitoes or the fact that it never got dark. The food was good, but I came back to Seattle and decided that I would join the navy and get it on and go win the war for everybody. I was working for Morris Knudsen out of

Idaho - they had one of the major contracts and they are still up there. I probably lasted about 6 weeks in Alaska.

Anyway, then I joined the navy. I went in as an apprentice seaman and I think the only thing lower than an apprentice seaman was probably the linoleum on the floor. I went to Great Lakes and it was kind of funny . . . I was talking to my wife the other day, and when I got out of boot camp at Great Lakes, there was a young singer in downtown Chicago all the girls were screaming at. I went down to see him one day - a skinny little guy called Frank Sinatra. That dates me, but Frank's still active, so what the hell.

From there I went to what they called an armed guard training station and they actually made a few movies there. I think Max Baer, who some people can remember, made a movie called, "The Armed Guard" or something like that, basically about what the job was if you were on merchant ships as navy gunners. The ship that I got was called the Slaughterdike - that should have told you a story right there. It was a merchant ship hauling troops to North Africa and I went over there. As I recall, I landed in North Africa Christmas Eve, 1942. Pearl Harbor was December of 1941, so the following December . . . It didn't take them very long to train us. I'm not sure how trained we were, but we landed in North Africa - Casablanca. It was probably just about the time they were making the movie, too. There was another fellow here in town, who I didn't know at the time. He was a bartender and lived here for a long time, and he was one of the army people (there were only 6 navy people on the ship). Years later we were down at the bar talking and he said, gee, he was with the same group that landed at Casablanca at the same time.

RM: Is that right?

RN: Anyway, other than losing 40 pounds on the way over there, getting seasick . . . we headed back to New York and in between, I had put in for flight school.

RM: But you were in the U.S. Navy even though you were guarding merchant ships?

RN: Yes; they would just assign you to the various ships. This was a Dutch transport, actually - a Dutch ship. And we had a little excitement on the way over. A German sub came up in the middle of the convoy, and having been away from home a short period of time, that makes your hair curl a little bit. I can remember everybody yelling "Don't shoot." He was in the middle; we'd have shot and gotten buck fever and shot each other out of the water.

But prior to going overseas, I had put in for flight service school - as I recall, a B-12 program they called it in those days - never thinking that I would make it. When I got back, I was then assigned to a really small carrier, called the USS Card, which I understand later won quite a few presidential citations for some work they'd done in the North Atlantic. We were getting ready to go to the North Atlantic. The night before they left, I got a call from the captain that if I could get off that ship by midnight, I didn't have to go because I had been approved for flight school. I think I set a world's record in getting off that ship.

The flight school didn't start for 30 days, so I just hitchhiked cross country and met people who would pick me up. Some would only take me about 10 miles, and they'd say, "Well, if you see my son over there . . ." It was kind of neat and I was in no hurry to get home. I went

through flight school. I think the first school I went to was southwestern Louisiana, then at Nackintish. That was good duty, as I recall. There weren't any girls going to school there at the time, but . . . then there was Georgia pre-flight and Pensacola and the whole thing, and then I got my wings.

Because I didn't have 2 years of college, I was what they called an aviation pilot. That was an enlisted pilot, and there were very few of those in the navy. I'm not sure how many; they'd actually had a small squadron of them at one time. You had your navy wings like an officer and the whole thing, but because I didn't have 2 years [of college] even though I had taken the same training, I ended up with what they called aviation pilot [status]. It was good duty, because all we did was test airplanes and take them out after overhauls. Nobody was shooting at you and you never had to stand watches, because you were basically a navy pilot; you weren't commissioned.

RM: The commissioned ones then got on the carriers, didn't they?

RN: Yes, they all went in different directions, and I, at that time, was flying single engine stuff.

RM: What were you flying?

RN: Let's see, we were flying Hellcats at the time and a lot of smaller training airplanes and things like that. Then I guess they had quite a shootout in the Pacific and they needed naval officers, so they called us all in and wanted to know if we would take a commission because we'd taken the same training. Some of the guys jumped at it, but there were 3 or 4 of us who didn't want it, because we were having a ball. At that time, it didn't even mean that much difference in pay; we were first class aviation pilots and we were making pretty good money. About a month later, they called us back in and said, "We're serious, we need naval officers." I can remember one little guy by the name of Shallenberger, who decided he wasn't going to go. The last I heard, he was still flying in Alaska.

Anyway, I took it and I was never sorry that I took a commission. I went to Daytona Beach, Florida, which was great. I went to a fighter squadron down there, flying Wildcats at that time - they called them FM-2s - the General Motors version. From there we went to Chicago and they had a carrier out on the lake. It was small, but they would train you prior to going and you'd qualify out there, then you were put into what they called a replacement squadron. That wasn't always too popular - the word "replacement" told the whole story. We were then shipped down to Glenco, Illinois, outside of Detroit and we were in a squadron down there waiting to be called and we were flying Hellcats. Usually you were a 5-man team. All of a sudden it looked as if the war was going to end and I can remember that the only time I got in trouble there was when I borrowed a navy Hellcat to fly across country to the Army-Navy football game. Nobody knew that I had borrowed it, although the guys had also gone on leave. When I came back, the commanding officer said, "You are restricted to your base for the rest of your entire naval career."

In the meantime, I had enough points and got out of the service and headed back to Nevada; I couldn't wait to get back to mining. As I say, everything had changed. There had been a war order that shut down all mining of any gold or silver types at all, and during that period

junkies had gone out and, you might say, almost raped a lot of the mines. The price of gold and silver was still 90 cents and \$35, yet everything else had taken off. But I was still determined to do (some mining) and I waited for one of the Terrell brothers, Don, to get out of the service. We made beans, but that was about it.

RM: Where did you work?

RN: At that time we were working at the Clifford mine. We would get shipments out by the end of the month to McGill, to get paid on the 10th or 15th.

RM: Were you working with Solan Terrell, too?

RN: Most of the time Solan was working here in town. He'd always come out and visit us, but I think the only time I worked with Solan was a little bit at Golden Arrow when I first came to Nevada as a kid. I lived with the Terrells for a while.

RM: With the senior Terrells here in town?

RN: Yes. They were wonderful people. I can remember that they were always reading. We'd sit down to eat supper at night and I couldn't find anybody at the table to talk to; everybody had a book or magazine. They were well-read. I really had a soft spot for them.

RM: Was Mr. Terrell still with the newspaper then?

RN: Yes. I used to think that one of the reasons he got the newspaper was that he liked to write cowboy stories. And he ran some of those stories.

RM: Yes; they say he wrote them on the linotype.

RN: Then he was very much involved in the mine that I'm involved in now, which is Eden Creek.

RM: Roy, could you say a little bit about the Clifford mine?

RN: Yes. It was a real high-grade property. As the story goes, some Indian was running cattle through there and had found the outcropping up there which was really high-grade - horn silver and some gold. But everything out there, as opposed to being in veins, was in chimneys, and you didn't have any hanging or foot walls; just little chimneys. They all went down into the hill about 45 degrees, and most of them never went down over 125 or 150 feet. It was picture rock; it was really high-grade.

RM: How wide was the ore?

RN: The chimney could be 1 foot to 1-1/2 feet wide, but you didn't have any veins or anything, you just kind of kept looking over your shoulder and if you stayed on about 45 degrees, you

could stay right with it. I see the people out there now drilling it and I think that it is going to be really a tough nut because your drills would have to cut a chimney.

RM: What did it run?

RN: Well, we were mining, but in between we could ship the dump. As I recall, by handpicking the dump, throwing out the big pieces of waste, it was running 6-10 ounces of silver and a little bit of gold. The gold paid for the thing. Those were tough times and we were splitting some pretty good checks at that time, but we were also up and down the highway a lot.

RM: Is there a shaft?

RN: Yes. I think it may go 200 or 250 feet, but it got out of ore, as I recall, and got into a lot of rhyolitic . . . whatever you want to call it down there. Today, a lot of mining companies are looking for the non-welded tuff; you can put it in water and it'll soak it up. It is my understanding that it would soak up the solutions of gold, too.

RM: Is there gold in some of that tuff?

RN: Oh, yes. Most of the material up there was a rhyolite, but the rhyolite would intrude right into some of the tuff up there. But most of it wasn't very deep. Down on the far end of the hill, as you'd look north, they got into a sulphide zone. It's been drilled; I have no idea what . . .

RM: How did you find the chimneys?

RN: We did everything like the old-timers did, with a one-egg frying Pan.

RM: Oh; they came to the surface?

RN: They all came to the surface.

RM: Oh, I see. Then you'd just sink on them.

RN: You'd just sink on them. Or, if you went down below, you could run a little drift or crosscut and maybe you'd pick one up that was a real flyer. But most all of them came right to the surface.

RM: Were there a lot of them?

RN: Yes. [Now] they've gone out there with a bulldozer and kind of covered the hill over, which is going to make it kind of tough to drill because, to look at it now, you'd say, "Well, gee, it has been that such working." But in those days, before they disturbed the workings, it was just honeycombed. There were little chimneys that came to the surface all over the place.

RM: Could you tell us just where Clifford is?'

RN: When you leave Tonopah on the way to Ely, [you go] about 40 miles and look over to the right and there are 2 identical looking little hills except one didn't have any ore and the other just came right out of the ground.

RM: Could you talk about Golden Arrow a little bit?

RN: The heyday of Golden Arrow, I think, was around 1920. I believe that there was also a town site out there, but Golden Arrow was a huge mineralized area, a lot of it rather low-grade. Right now there are 2 or 3 major companies out there drilling. As I said, it's my understanding that Homestake has drilled that whole mountain out right at the very mine that I was working, and may have a rather large mine that may go into production before too long. They've spent a lot of money out there drilling. There's always somebody who's going to come by and say, "Well, that ain't quite the way it was . . ."

RM: Well, that's the way you saw it.

RN: That's the way it was with me, anyway.

## CHAPTER TWO

RM: Were there a lot of workings at Golden Arrow?

RN: Oh, yes. There were workings all over - a lot of cuts and a lot of shafts all through the area. I would say that the mineralized zone that they are looking at there now is at least 8 to 10 miles across and a couple of miles wide.

RM: Good lord.

RN: There have been about 4 major companies drilling in that area [recently].

RM: What was the country rock at Golden Arrow?

RN: Most of it was a rhyolitic tuff, which is the host rock.

RM: What did the ore come in? Was it in veins?

RN: Most of it was in veins. In a couple of those areas now they have drilled a little bit deeper than the old-timers had gone, because most of the companies today are not looking for veins. In other words, if you have a series of veins, something like you had in Tonopah, just one after another, that's one thing, but most of them are looking at bedded deposits that don't necessarily have to be high-grade. They have to be probably 2.5 or better, but they're looking at large deposits and mineralized zones. They could probably drill out there and find the high-grade veins or something, and they might be 3 or 4 feet wide, but unless it would make some tonnage, it wouldn't qualify for most of these big companies because it might take \$100 million dollars to put a mill in and roads and everything else. It would take one hell of a vein to carry something like that. In fact, I think most companies today expect at least 100,000 ounces of gold to really get excited about anything.

RM: How deep was the ore?

RN: The Strouds had the original Golden Arrow Mine when I was a kid and some of those family members are still living in Beatty. The mine was on an incline and it seemed to me that they had some ore down on the 300, in a vein, that was running around \$30 or something an ounce. On today's market it would be quite a bit more.

RM: So it didn't go that deep either?

RN: But the big companies out there now are drilling a lot deeper than that. One thing I wasn't aware of at that time (because most of the time we just went in, found a mine and leased it) is that there are quite a few patented mining claims in the Golden Arrow area and the university system owns quite a few of them.

RM: People have donated them to the university?

RN: Yes.

RM: Maybe the university will get some money out of them.

RN: It could be.

RM: What did the ore run there?

RN: Where we were working at \$35 gold at the time, the ore was running anywhere from \$4 to, as I say, the \$30 that they were getting. I don't recall any high-grade out there, but it was an awful lot of lowgrade, and I think that's why a lot of the majors are taking a hard look at it.

RM: Jack Longstreet worked there, didn't he?

RN: Yes.

RM: You weren't here when Jack Longstreet was, were you?

RN: No, but I've been out by his property.

RM: Do you have any stories on Jack Longstreet?

RN: No, I really don't. It seems to me that when he left there, Jack went down to Pahrump.

RM: No, it was the other way around; he went up to Monitor.

RN: Well, he had a place at Ash Meadows.

RM: Yes, but that was before.

RN: That's the little I know about Jack. Somebody said he was a cantankerous old son of a gun.

RM: There's a book out on him.

RN: Is that right?

RM: It's called Jack Longstreet, the Last of the Desert Frontiersmen.

RN: Did he have a finger shot off, or . . . ?

RM: An ear. They cut it off, when he was a kid, for rustling. Did you have any other experiences with mines on the west side of the Kawich that you could discuss?

RN: No. I spent a little time in Silver Bow out there, which is almost an extension of the Golden Arrow. It's really a heavily mineralized area. In fact, I think your dad . . .

RM: Yes, he was out there.

RN: It was almost, to me, an extension of the Golden Arrow, which would mean it would cover almost a 20-mile area along the base of the Kawich. I think that I never heard of any high-grade out there, although I understand that some of them might have had one-ounce stuff. I know I went out there with Starle Terrell, and he and I spent one part of a summer just hauling tailings from an old mill site to Ely. As I recall, those tailings went \$16, which would indicate one of the two things: It was awful rich ore or the mill . . .

RM: Was getting it?

RN: I don't want to think it was the mill. But we made a little money on that at \$16 a ton. In those days the smelter in Ely was looking for ore that had a high silica content. They paid you a little bonus on that, so it took care of our trucking in most instances, because the silica was used to add flux in their copper operation.

RM: Was it a dirt road to Ely at that time?

RN: When I first came to Nevada in 1939, I believe it was, and it was about 1940 that they had the contract out. As I recall, the only dirt road was from Warm Springs to a place called Rattlesnake. The rest of it was oil.

RM: Roy, what do you know about the Reville area and the Reville mill and all that, at that time?

RN: Not too much. All I recall about the Reville is that I've been in the area. I've always been one who likes what you call the free gold. I never worked in a mine where you couldn't pan it and see the gold or the silver. I've had people come up to my mine who had been looking at mines all over the country and say, "My God, it's the first time anybody has shown me any gold." The Reville, I think, was big around the '20s or something like that. The Reville mill was still there when I came in 1939. There hadn't been anything done with it and, as I recall, a lot of it was mostly silver. It was a really red and highly oxidized looking stuff. In fact, there's still a stack of it down there on the flats and again, I think your dad was probably involved in that mill. I don't know whether he built the mill . . .

RM: He was one of several who rebuilt it.

RN: To me, the area was always pretty tight ground in some [spots], tight in the sense that it would be hard drilling for a little miner. I don't think you could pan the stuff, and I always felt I needed that as a guide to prospect it and know where I'd be going.

RM: What did you do after Golden Arrow?

RN: I spent a little time at what's called Eden Creek, which is right across the valley from the Reveille. It's up at 8500 feet; it's beautiful up there. You're up in the trees with the water and the animals, and it's all free gold. You have 2 hills of it up there. I tell people, "Come out and you can have all the gold you can pan." You can stop right in the middle of the road and pan gold. I think it was referred to in some of the early mining manuals as a huge, low-grade deposit. Right now, I have 2 major companies that are looking at it. One's out there today, as a matter of fact. We have a little group that we put together - we call ourselves the Five Jokers - and it's my tranquilizer, among other things. I worked a little bit in Goldfield, too - underground - when Newmont was over there.

RM: When was that?

RN: That would have been in the '40s somewhere. They had a mill. RM: That was before you went in the service?

RN: Yes, before I got called back the second time. I got called back in during the Korean war. So I spent a little time over there and we were working on the 200- or 300-foot level, and they had some really rich ore. RM: What mine were you working in?

RN: The Florence. From there I left and went to Candelaria. As you go into Candelaria, just as you came into the base of it and see the big operation, if you look hard left you'll see a tunnel. Another miner and I ran that for Newmont. As I recall, we ran 1000 to 1500 feet, under contract. Jesus Martinez picked up the contract. We just didn't feel they were paying enough money.

RM: Were you doing it on a contract basis?

RN: No, we were doing footage. They were supplying everything, but . .

RM: Were you driving on ore?

RN: No. A fellow by the name of Searls, who was big with the company in those days, a geologist type, felt there was really no contract to be made over there, but the 2 of us were making 10 feet a day, doing about 12 hours. We would go up in the morning and muck out our round, put in a round, turn on the blowers and blast, then go up and put in a round. Boy, I couldn't even follow my shadow today, based on that, but we were making . . . To show you how things change, in the late '40s we were getting all of \$10 . . . Today there's a huge mining operation going on out there, but it's a little bit to the west of where we had drilled. RM: Did they find any ore with this long crosscut?

RN: They sure didn't; whether he was just looking at the geology under there or not, I don't know. But we were running the tunnel for \$10 a foot, with the company supplying everything, and I'm sure miners around the country who hear that . . .

RM: That was \$100 a day between the 2 of you, then?

RN: You bet. We were splitting \$100 a day and they were paying for everything, so it was big money for us then.

RM: That was good wages then.

RN: I'm sure some of these companies would love to have somebody run a tunnel . . . actually, it was \$9.75 a foot. That's why we didn't do the back part - they wanted to bring us an electric train, but they wanted to keep their price at \$9.75 and we said, "NO, there are greener fields."

RM: In Colorado at this same time, my dad was driving a tunnel for \$8 a day.

RN: Is that right? Eight bucks a day? One other thing I'd done up there . . . You hear so much about single-jacking. Out where Buddy Perchetti is in the Eden Creek area he's got a mine right over the hill from us; it's a very mineralized zone over there, too. Starle Terrell and I hand-steered a tunnel; you know, that's almost a lost art. We climbed every morning to the top of this mountain. We didn't have horses and we ran this little tunnel. It wasn't very deep, we only ran it 40 or 50 feet. But, God, I was in really good shape then.

RM: Was it machines out at Candelaria?

RN: Oh yes. But there we couldn't get machinery up to it. I can't think of that little guy's name. We were doing his assessment work, but we ran up there and we had to haul powder up there. He and I were double-jacking too, and that's kind of a lost art also. One guy holds the steel and one guy hits it.

RM: I don't know how they do that, because that guy doing the holding has to have confidence.

RN: You take turns, but it's concentration, and you're in good shape.

RM: I wouldn't do that.

RN: I did double-jacking and single-jacking. Once in a while there's a little [problem], but most of the time it goes pretty well, [though] driving the uppers is kind of tricky. But after that I went to Round Mountain. At that time, Round Mountain was Yuba Manufacturing, out of California. They were joint venturing it, as I recall, with somebody. It was about 1950 because after I left there I went back into the military, but I spent quite a bit of time there.

RM: What was happening in Round Mountain at that time?

RN: At that time they had one of the biggest dryland dredges in the world, you might want to say, and they were working the pits that Echo Bay now has expanded on. They had shovels that were raking down the sides of this pit and they had a big electric shovel, a huge electric shovel, one of the biggest on the West Coast, and put [the material] through the crusher and it was taken to belts, stacked and run through a big trommel and through what they considered kind of a dryland dredge. Everything was strictly placer, and the monument to that is that there were 2 huge mountains of muck out there.

RM: Was it making money?

RN: I don't know. They operated there for quite a while. One of the big things they had trouble with was the size of the gravel; it was really cemented. They used to have to take these shovels and they would throw out a great big metal rake and it would go all the way to the bottom, and then the shovels would pull the rake up, and as it was pulling up it would break down the sides, and then the shovel would pick it up. They had a huge electric shovel.

RM: Were they getting big nuggets?

RN: I'm not sure what size screen they were using, but I'd see nuggets there that were . . . the biggest one was an inch across, but I'm not sure what the screen size was. They had 2 or 3 ball mills in there. They had a series of jigs and quite a system, and it ran for quite a while.

RM: And it was all dry?

RN: Yes. And that also was at \$35 gold, so it sent a message to the industry that if gold ever went up, there was something there. I think every geologist would like to find a Round Mountain. I can remember down on bedrock one time, they actually had ore in place down there.

RM: What kind of rock was bedrock?

RN: I think it was kind of a rhyolite, very much like my mine. It's a rhyolitic tuff out there, sometimes referred to as "toof." I think there were some veins, but I think most of the mineralization was right in the fractures, in the rocks.

RM: You mean it was a mineralization in the gravel?

RN: No, I'm talking about today. Then, it was strictly placer. When they got into the hard rock down there, that was as far as they went at that time; they weren't mining then. I can remember some of the prettiest gold rock you'd ever want to see right in the hard rock down there. It was jewelry rock; it was beautiful stuff. They had some awfully rich rock there.

RM: Had the gravel deposit come down off the . . . ?

RN: I think so. I never did get quite all the geology on that, but of course, the indication was there in the early days; you had all kinds of people up there with dry washers, so the values were there. Most of the good values are bedrock, but there was a certain amount of values on the way down there. Historically, I think, most of your placers . . . as the gravels and everything migrate, the values are going . . . once in a while you'll find one that is a little different. You know, I'm kind of a homemade geologist. I figure that what you're running into there is maybe not so much the river placers as eroded vein or ore bodies. As they erode, it's not as though they've been washed. They quickly find the bottom - disseminated through the rock . . . although I don't know what their waste ratio is out there - 5 or 6 to 1.

RM: How many men were they working out there?

RN: At that time there was nowhere near the operation they have today; we might have had 130 people working. They were working round the clock and they had the 3 shifts.

RM: What was your job there?

RN: When I first hired on, I was an oiler on one of the rigs, and I can remember I got the graveyard shift. I started out from scratch. I can remember being in the front of the dragline deal where you just look down into black . . . I often wondered if there were any soft spots in the gravel, because I didn't want to be on the damn thing when it went over.

RM: Was it a deep hole?

RN: Oh, it was a deep hole. They had this thing and the big old dragline would throw it out and it would hit the bottom and then they'd pull it up, and as it was being pulled up, the teeth would make it up and then they'd throw it back out. To do that, the operator was looking right down the thing. Sitting on gravel, looking down there and pulling it up.

RM: And your job was to do the oiling?

RN: I did the oiling on that. Later on I moved into the mill and that was an experience, because at that time they didn't even have the jigs covered with screen. You could just walk along and see the nuggets in the jigs; they were something else. From there I went into the purchasing so I became the purchasing agent. About that time, I got called back into the Korean War.

RM: How did you feel about being called back?

RN: Well, I'd done my tour in World War II, but I was looking forward to it because the flying and all of that was fun. Something I never could afford to do was fly those types of airplanes [privately]. They sent me back to Chicago and I did some retraining, but initially, I wasn't a pilot because I had been out of it for too long. So at first I was with what you called airborne combat information center - where you worked the radars and things like that. I was an officer at that

time; as I recall, I was lieutenant junior grade. It wasn't too long after that that my orders were cut to take a flight refresher, which I did, and I was shipped off to various areas where I requalified as a pilot, and I ended up in Honolulu at Early Warning Squadron I. At that time we were flying Super Constellations and . . .

RM: That's a big aircraft.

RN: Yes. We were working there and out of Japan and working with the fleet and experimenting with airborne radar control and so forth, and the airplanes were fully equipped. They were beautiful airplanes. They'd stay out on station 10 to 15 hours.

RM: And you were a pilot?

RN: Yes. I was known as an airborne controller, too. I was the 43rd or the 45th airborne controller and after that . . .

RM: Would that have been an early AWAC?

RN: Well, I don't know if you ever saw those. When we first went to North Korea . . . we were flying B-17s because the Super Constellations weren't ready. It had all the radar gear in it, but the B-17 left over from World War II was an excellent high-altitude aircraft. They weren't pressurized, but they would sure fly and they were just a big kite; they were wonderful, a fun airplane. A little cold on occasion, but a fun airplane. I think the only reason that nobody ever shot us down is that nobody knew whose side we were on. They couldn't figure out what the hell that thing was up there; we had radar blobs sticking all over the damn thing.

I had been checked out in jets at Glenview, Illinois, and I was flying what they called the Banshee. It was a fun twin jet - a lot of fun. The only trouble with the airplane was that I think if you got to altitude and pushed over, it would go a lot faster, though stressful, so on the way down we always had to use the dive brakes or you just couldn't make a clean . . . and it didn't have much of a range, either. As I recall, without the wing tanks, it was only good for about an hour and 45 minutes. With that spooky weather in Chicago, you didn't get too far from home. Of course, with that jet you could get quite a way.

After I left Korea I went back to Glenview, Illinois, and helped set up the first training squadron; that was a fun deal. We flew up and down the east-west coast of Florida, training airborne controllers. At that time I was the plane commander. When we first set the squadron up, I was probably one of the youngest plane commanders of the Constellations. RM: You weren't even 30 years old.

RN: I wasn't a senior lieutenant, either. When we first started the squadron, I was what you call the operations officer. They were just starting the squadron and new officers were checking in and anytime one checked in, it seemed [it was] my duty to check him out. About 8 months later, I had gone from operations officer to . I think I was the athletic officer. They called it job description, so every time I got a new job, I had to come in . . . I think the billet description was for every goddamn job there. But, that's the way it is.

RM: It's quite a contrast - from jets to mining on the Nevada desert.

RN: Yes, but it was a fun deal. It was a real challenge flying that Connie to some of those Tampa Bay, Florida . . . about 1:00 in the afternoon, Tampa Bay [has] what we called the old thunderstorm build up, and we would always . . .

RM: Did you go into those thunderheads?

RN: We tried not to - we'd try to parallel them or whatever, but sometimes it was tough to get here without [doing so]. We tried not to run into a thunderhead, but once in a while we used to get into some pretty damn rough weather up there. I had lightning hit the nose of the airplane and tear a whole tail one time. That got your attention on the way through.

RM: Did you ever wonder if the plane was going to hold together?

RN: What used to bother me a little bit was that some of the airplanes were not stress-tested. You're flying along and the airplane is stressed this way, but all of a sudden you hit a current . . .

RM: Oh, they are not stressed upwards?

RN: Yes; what you call negative stress. I used to think a wing would fold up around my ears like those aircraft carriers. But I wound up my navy career there and I was kind of disappointed because I would have really liked to get to 20 years and get the retirement. I could probably have got back to mining a lot earlier.

RM: Why didn't you stay in?

RN: Because at that time the war was over and the peacetime mission of the navy then, and probably now, is training. They figured they were all on tight budgets and I was a reserve officer. I'd had a chance earlier on in my career to go out to California and take some extra training to what is called U.S. Navy T (Temporary) as opposed to U.S. Navy R (Reserve), but I wanted to get back to Nevada early on, and later, when I was called back into the Korean War, some of the guys I had been with during the navy, when I came back as a lieutenant junior grade, were captains. The ones who had stayed in during the hiatus between wars made out a lot better than the others. I would have liked to stay in 20 years, but there was a budget crunch. It was true in the air force too; they called it RIFT. If you were a reserve officer, your chance of staying in . . .

RM: Did you consider going to piloting for airlines or anything like that?

RN: Yes. When I first got out, I think they called it Bonanza at that time. They were still flying, but they weren't flying jets. I had flown jets, and Super Connies. I was highly trained and I had a

high intensive rating - called a Green Card - which you could get in the navy. I went down and put my application in there and times were tough then, and you had to wait on the list.

### CHAPTER THREE

RN: I got out of the navy and came back to Tonopah and I was around here for a little while and I ran into Solan Terrell. I think at that time he was a county commissioner.

RM: What year did you get back?

RN: It was 1958 when I got back. Judge Beko was the district attorney, and I had known [him and Terrell]. Things were really tight around town, so they indicated there was an opening at the Nevada Test Site for a deputy sheriff. I went down there and I worked for 2 or 3 years, and between [times] I had also worked a little bit for the county assessor licensing vehicles on the Test Site.

RM: Nye County was very poor then, wasn't it?

RN: Yes. As I recall, the total assessed valuation of the county at that time was only about \$20 million dollars. When I say assessed valuation, very basically, you multiply your assessed valuation by 3 and you'll come up with what is the depreciating cash value of all the property in the county. The depreciating cash value of the property in the county was about \$60 million. I think that when I went to work at the Test Site the assessed valuation was around \$18 million in the county. That would be for property tax purposes; there was other revenue. During that period I was setting up road blocks, to make sure that people licensed their cars. In the county at that time, it wasn't called privilege tax, it was called property tax; that meant more money for the county and I was kind of doing it on the side.

RM: Was that because they were living at Area 12?

RN: What happened - and I've still got the article in the Las Vegas paper - is that it was making it convenient for people who were caning in from Las Vegas because they didn't want to stand in a line down there and get their plates. I can remember being attacked in the Las Vegas paper because Nye County was doing this and that, and I can remember Judge Beko writing an article in answer to that, that yes, we were guilty of servicing the people of Nye County, or something along that line.

RM: But it was a chance for Nye County to get some money because the guys' homes were in Clark County but they were living in Nye County?

RN: You're darned right. Every Friday night they would take their paychecks and head into Clark County. But during that period I had the total support of the DA and the county commissioners who at that time, were Nick Banovich and Ralph Lisle and Andy Eason, as I recall. Judge Beko was DA. I had the support of a lot people in what I was doing.

RM: Whose idea was it, Roy?

RN: Initially it was mine, but I had to bounce it off them for their approval.

RM: And you saw it as an opportunity to bring revenue into the county?

RN: That's right. And the judge and [other people] certainly supported the effort there, because we weren't getting that much money at that time.

RM: Was Bob Revert a deputy at the Test Site then?

RN: Bob Revert came in later.

RM: Were you in charge of law enforcement at the Test Site?

RN: No, it was an Irish fellow; Moran was his name, as I recall. He was out of Las Vegas. There were only 4 of us for the whole site. We'd work 3-1/2 days on and off, and one guy would work 12 hours graveyard shift and the other one [would work] days.

RM: Could you say a little bit about the kind of law enforcement problems you faced in the early days on the Test Site?

RN: Oh, it was really not bad. It was mostly traffic control, and once in awhile you'd have to wrestle a few drunks off to bed or something like that. I was very reluctant to arrest anybody for being drunk or disorderly, because they were working on the Test Site. They'd have to do it to me 2 or 3 times, because most of those guys had families back home and they needed their jobs, and hell, they were unwinding and they weren't hurting themselves or somebody else. But if they kept doing it, then it was a little different; we'd have to ship them off to Beatty.

We'd have strikes once in a while, the same as they do today, except we didn't have protesters. I can never forget the time we had a big strike out there and everybody was out at the main gate - it was out on the highway at that time - and some little old lady came by with her husband and got out of the car. The guards were on strike and they were all out there in their uniforms and they had a fire and they had picket signs and they were wandering around, and she said, "John, get a picture of this; the U.S. Army's on strike."

But most of [the work] was in the area of traffic control. Once in a while, they would let us got out on the main highway and we could act like little police officers and pick up a few speeders or things like that, but most of the time, I didn't even carry a gun. If I went out on the highway, I'd carry a gun, but most of the time on the Test Site I didn't carry a gun. It was good duty. I don't think I was ever cut out to be a deputy sheriff.

RM: A lot of the guys went down there as miners; my dad and I went down there twice in the summer of '58.

RN: Well, you were making a lot more money than I was.

RM: We were making \$3 an hour, which was big money.

RN: As I say, there was an opening just about the time I got back to Nevada from the navy. I was there 2-1/2 or 3 years, and they passed a law that had to do with the Michigan Statute (and I think the law still reads in about this language) [stating that] whenever exempt property is made available and used in a business conducted for profit, it becomes taxable and assessable in the same manner as other profit; it becomes taxable and assessable in the same manner as other property. What we are saying here, basically, is that if the government has got a big building out there and they turn it over to a private contractor, that private contractor has to pay the tax on it.

RM: Turn it over by means of a lease

RN: A lease, or part of the contract, or whatever. There's always been a possessory tax in California but it wasn't quite what you call on a fee value; it didn't cover quite the way ours did. I think there was somebody, I can't think of his name right now but Judge Beko can probably tell you, who was in the assembly or senate. He was unhappy, as I recall, because whenever the federal government would have these big operations, they would bring 200 or 300 passenger cars in there . . .

RM: Government cars?

RN: Private cars - and make them available, but they weren't paying any taxes or anything. Basically he was after the sales tax, but the way the law read . . . I'd gotten together with Judge Beko and then-County Assessor Leo Funk, and the way the law reads . . . (I remember the day we were in his office) it said that all property at the Test Site made available to REECO [Reynolds Electric] or to Westinghouse or Aero Jet General or some of the many contractors that we had been after, became assessable.

That was kind of the start, and I can remember there was a grand jury investigation during that period. Nye County used to have a grand jury every couple of years. All the grand jury wanted from me was to find out if there was . . . maybe I'm not supposed to say what they wanted, but I think it came out in the paper later. Actually, that grand jury had recommended early on, even then, that I might be their county manager. As I recall, it was later said that they couldn't do things like that, but all I did was explain to the grand jury what I felt was allowable, taxable interest out there at the Test Site. As I say, all during this time, I had the total support of Judge Beko. So when the law became effective . . .

RM: Do you remember what the law was called?

RN: It's NRS 361.057, as I recall, and NRS 361.045. I want to think that 045, just shooting from the hip, had to do with personal property that's exempt and the other had to do with real property that's exempt. Anyway, I can remember that the law had been signed in the early '60s. We decided that, by gosh, with Judge Beko's blessing he had to do most of the legal work on it) we'd give it a test.

That fall we sat down and they gave me the permission to go ahead and make an assessment on the Test Site. I can remember sending down notices to the, various companies - there might have been 15 or 20 at that time - to report the property they were using. And at that time the Department of Energy totally opposed it. Later on, one of the reasons they were totally opposed and did not challenge it any farther than the Nevada Supreme Court when we finally won the case, was because they have so much exempt property around the world that if it went to the [United States] Supreme Court, everybody would get part of the pie.

In the meantime (I'm probably getting my dates mixed up a little bit), the county wanted to know if I would go ahead and open an office there and I would no longer be deputy sheriff. [I said] that would be fine, so we opened up an office right outside the main gate. Most of [the assessing] was on motor vehicles at the time. I remember that the county was so poor that I had to go buy an Olivetti calculator and we had to charge it and pay it off on time. We got a used little 10-by-35 trailer. We had to make payments on that, and we always called it the "oil well." It sat right outside the Test Site.

RM: And you were selling license plates? What else were you doing?

RN: Believe it or not, when I first went down and got involved with the tax thing, we had what they called a poll tax in Nevada. Do you remember the poll tax?

RM: Yes; I didn't know Nevada had one.

RN: They had a poll tax and I can remember on 2 different occasions collecting \$10,000 to \$15,000 dollars poll tax from REECO. Then, of course, the legislature came by, and for all their employees, everybody that had employees had to pay poll tax. And that was strictly by area. I smiled about it because even at the time I said, "That poll tax can't be constitutional." Paying the poll tax was from the heydays of mining; I don't think you could go to work underground unless you paid it.

Anyway, I had the blessings of everybody and I can remember Beko was so patient with me. One time he said, "Jesus, you need your own DA," because I was feeling my way along every step of the way. What a hell of a job he did.

RM: Now, were you still on the county payroll at this time?

RN: I was on the county payroll as a deputy sheriff, but the federal government reimbursed too. They'd given me the blessings to go ahead and it was the fall of the year, about the time the assessment roll would close. I sent all the major companies a notice that I needed a report on their property by a certain time. Judge Beko and Leo Funk, who was the county assessor, said, "Yeah, you can go ahead and do that."

So I sent these notices out and nobody answered them; they started stalling along. The deadline for assessment was getting near, and I can remember meeting with the judge and telling him that I would like to make an arbitrary assessment, because since they didn't want to tell the value of the property that they were using, my position was that we would put an arbitrary assessment on it and see what the board of equalization would do. I sent out an

assessment to REECO; I think it was a \$12 million tax bill. I can remember later on that the project manager for REECO said, "You know, I framed that tax bill." That was the biggest tax bill he'd ever seen. But it got their attention. They wouldn't tell me how much property they had down there and I'd done a little snooping around. I knew the dollar amount, but I didn't know how much was involved - the land and the rest of it. To some degree, I knew the dollar amount, but I knew it wouldn't all qualify for tax purposes because I couldn't [list] some of it, if it was used by the government. But if it was being used by a private concern . .

RM: What are some of the things we're talking about, Roy?

RN: Well, I made up what I called assessment schedules, and I can remember Judge Beko and the board of county commissioners approving them. I made an appreciation assessment schedule on 10 or 15 different types of things, including the rocket ship to the moon; we even had a schedule for that because they were working on it at the time. [It included] everything from pens and pencils to the big chow hall down there, drill rigs . . . I can remember Judge Beko later on during our long, lengthy court trial, saying that the values, because we had worked them out, were never challenged, which could have been a big, big issue. The values were never challenged. So we had agreed on a lot of things. There was a lot of paperwork involved in that.

When I didn't get any answer to the notice, I sent every company, based on what I estimated (and I wanted to make sure it was a little high), a tax bill. Because of Nevada law, it meant administratively they were going to have to do something because if they didn't, the state could say, "You've exhausted all your administrative remedies; you pay Nye County." Of course, that would mean we would probably go to court. I remember I sent those bills out on Friday and it seemed to me it was just before a holiday - maybe Christmas - and [the following] Monday morning we got a call from the Chief Counsel of the Atomic Energy Commission. He was a real nice fellow; Judge Beko and I worked with him for many years. He has since died. I can't think of his name, but he was a gentleman. We did a lot of things on a handshake till we got the paperwork done. Anyway, he called and it got his attention and I just said, "Well, you have made no effort to cooperate with us and to the best of my knowledge, that's what I figure the tax bill should be."

Within 3 days there were 2 or 3 vans sitting outside the courthouse with all kinds of records in them. There was no way anybody could go through all those records, but they shipped them up there. Within 2 or 3 days after that, we were all sitting up in the courtroom with their attorneys and everybody else and saying, "What are we going to do about this year?" That arbitrary assessment went to court, but as I recall, by the time we got there I think the final tax bill was more like about \$6 million dollars.

RM: They owed Nye County \$6 million dollars?

RN: Yes, but that was based on my estimation of the value, and as I recall, the statute of limitations had run out. We weren't pushing them because we knew at the time that they would come through, and they did. I can remember years later one of the head people with Reynolds Electric said, "Well, Roy if nothing else, we now have a bookkeeping system." Because they

really didn't have good records at all. At the end, we used to have big computer runoffs showing every item. We would show when it was purchased, the serial number on the item, what depreciation schedule we had applied to it, and what the tax would be for that year.

RM: What did they do when you hit them with a \$6 million dollar tax bill?

RN: When we finally decided that, it was agreed that we test the darn thing in court, and we were in and out of court quite a few years. I can remember that the school [system] was the beneficiary of a bundle of that money, and during that lengthy trial nobody from the schools ever came to the trial to speak up. It was very technical and there were hundreds of exhibits, and so many witnesses you can't remember. In fact, they had so many witnesses for the government that they had a payroll set up out there in the hall and they would pay their witnesses right out in the hall. I can remember Judge Boko got special permission for me to sit right alongside of him. We had a lot of fun.

What they wanted to do was prove that to some degree, besides not being constitutional, we were discriminating because we were picking them out. In the meantime, I had assessed everything including radar sites - anything in Nye County that even looked like . . . As I recall, the assessor from Reno was called in as one of the witnesses because people were parking under the freeway going into Reno, and some of the casinos owned it and weren't

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paying on it. I can remember that assessor saying, "It's too bad I had to come down to Nye County to find out I'm assessing wrong." Most assessors had [situations such as] a doctor using a private hospital, or a building where one big area was convention halls, and when you rent the convention hall out . . . it's an exempt building, but when you let somebody else come in and use it . . . What we finally proved in court was what we called a diminutive use; nobody was there long enough. We even defined that, too, because if something came on the Test Site and was only there so long, we could take care of it. We never did assess the land at the Test Site; we put a zero value on that.

RM: Because it was desert?

RN: Because most of it was contaminated. We were trying to really be fair with the darn thing. I remember that when we were in and out of the courts not too many people ever sat in on the [proceedings] because I don't think anybody figured that we had a chance. After those long trials, we'd always go down to Judge Beko's house and the attorneys for the government, and they had a bunch of 'em . .

RM: They were throwing their best at you, weren't they?

RN: Oh, yes. They had a group of attorneys there and Beko was taking them on all by himself.

RM: I've talked to Bob Revert - not Bobbie, but his uncle - and he said they were taking their best lawyers and they had about 20 of them lined up against Beko and you. He said it was truly David and Goliath.

RN: Well, what we'd do was, when they'd call a witness, as soon as they identified who the witness was . . . for instance, if he was a hospital administrator, they'd have a bunch of hospital administrators talking about doctors coming in and using the hospital, and things like that. As soon as those questions came up, I'd just pass them back and forth to Judge Beko. But as I say, they had a battery of attorneys there and it went on and on.

RM: Where was the first trial?

RN: All the trials were in Tonopah.

RM: Who did it go before first?

RN: Judge Mann. The trial on the initial assessment of \$6 million dollars . . . as I say, the statute of limitations had run out on that. (I'm really foggy on that one.) The other one went on for a long, long time. We were in and out of court . . .

RM: You mean the next one?

RN: The one that we won.

RM: So you never got your \$6 million?

RN: No; that was that arbitrary assessment, and the only ruling there was that we just didn't . . . and I didn't get everything together. I can't remember whether the statute of limitations or whatever had run out on that darn thing by the time we got everything put together or not. It was tough, because after they finally said, "All right, we'll submit this stuff to you," it took a long time to go through millions and millions of dollars worth of property and evaluate it and classify it and [sort out] who owned what. For instance, we'd have a building out there and Westinghouse might have a part of it, Aerojet may have a part of it and the government might have a part of it. We had to allocate it in that manner; all of those things were very time-consuming.

RM: What did Mann first rule on it?

RN: When Mann finally ruled on it seemed like a long time, because we were waiting. I must admit that over the years it seems time went by [when] I figured that we were taking on a giant, and then the whole system was such . . . I can remember that after some of the trials we'd go down to Judge Beko's house and the little court reporter would always come dawn and have a drink with us, then he'd go down to the motel where all the government attorneys were and have a drink with them. I remember one night he came dawn and said, "Well, I've got to go have a drink with the government attorneys."

The judge said, "Yeah, you tell them we're up here having a victory celebration." (We were still in court, you know.) I guess I can tell one little story about Judge Beko in there, because he's high on my list. During this long, lengthy trial, one of the witnesses happened to be a hospital administrator (there were a lot of hospital administrators) and we had a set of questions for them, too. Judge Beko knew this hospital administrator quite well. In fact I remember during the recesses that one of the young attorneys out of Los Angeles who was on this thing on a contingency, I think, said, "You know, every time we call a witness, when he leaves the witness stand, he always goes by Beko on the way out and shakes hands and it's old home week."

I said, "Well, the state's still small and Mr. Beko knows a lot of people." This hospital administrator was called and I think her name might have been Merlino. She was an administrator of the Hawthorne hospital at that time, and they called her in as their witness and asked a series of questions and then, of course, I'd give the judge the questions we asked administrators, so he asked a few questions and then she was excused and on the way out, she stopped by and shook hands, and he gave her a little kiss, because he grew up with her, and she left. I can remember that during the recess the young attorney came over, and said, "For Christ's sake, he's kissing our witnesses."

## CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Why were they calling witnesses from a hospital in Hawthorne?

RN: You see, hospitals are made available to doctors and things like that. This is an exempt building, and private doctors are making money, so it was an example [of a building where they] aren't paying taxes. They were trying to point out that we were really discriminating.

RM: What did Judge Mann rule?

RN: He just ruled that Nye County had the right to assess that property. I might add that during that period, if any of the contractors paid me, I'd just send the money back because we'd pretty well agreed to consolidate all those accounts, and if we'd accepted the money, and then lost the case, we might have had . .

RM: Yes, and to pay it back with interest.

RN: So if somebody made a mistake and paid us, and we are talking about major companies like Westinghouse and Aerojet . .

RM: You didn't put it in escrow accounts?

RN: No, I didn't. Because if we lost . . [After that], I had left the county. I was offered a good job in Las Vegas and I worked for the county assessor down there. I can remember that after we won the lawsuit, they got in a big hurry to pay us. It seems to me I've still got a copy of the check somewhere. The initial check was for about \$5 million dollars - of course that would have gone back over the last 4 or 5 years - and I can remember that everybody said, "What happened to the \$5 million dollars?" What happened to the \$5 million dollars is that Pahrump got a high school built, paid for in cash - unheard of with no bond issue. There was a school built for cash outside of Beatty at Lathrop Wells. That school also was paid for by cash; there was never a bond issue. And the state got a lot of that money. Anybody that had a tax rate at that time got a share of the money.

RM: They appealed it though, didn't they, Roy?

RN: Well, they appealed it to the State of Nevada Supreme Court.

RM: What was their ruling?

RN: They upheld Judge Mann's decision. We'd won the case here, but I don't think any money had changed hands when I left.

RM: During that appeal, then, you went to work for Vegas?

RN: I went to work for las Vegas. Then, as I recall, then-Assistant DA Pete Knight had come in with Beko and Beko and Knight pretty well put the appeal together. During this period, we got very little if any help from the state, which, I might add, was the beneficiary, because there was a state tax. Anybody who had a tax rate during the period of the assessment that had been building up, got money. I think the state got \$300,000 out of it.

RM: Why didn't the state help?

RN: I don't know. When we had won in the lower court, as I recall the state came in with \$2000 or \$3000 to help pay for Pete Knight. I can remember Judge Beko calling me in Las Vegas, and saying, "Gee, Roy, would you like to come on up?" and I was tied up at the time and couldn't. I didn't get to go to the supreme court, but it wasn't long after that the supreme court concurred with Judge Mann and we won. As I recall, in 3 days a check for 5 million bucks was on its way to Nye County.

When it came in, of course, the auditors had to take the tax rate and apply it against that \$4.5 million dollars; those were the rates that were in effect during those periods. You had to go back, because tax rates change. Whatever the school tax rate was for those years, they would take that and apply it against the \$4 million. I recall that the schools got over a million-some dollars out of that - they got a big share. The state got money, and the hospital got money, and the indigent fund.

RM: Now what did this mean to the future of Nye County?

RN: We also set up what we called a capital projects fund in the county. In all the years I was with the county, at no time did the county as an entity, as opposed to the schools separately, ever have a bond issue. We paid cash for everything all the way.

RM: Up to that point, you mean?

RN: Even after that. With the surplus money that we got, the county, after paying the bills and everything, set up what we called a capital projects fund.

RM: Before that the county was basically poverty stricken?

RN: May and June were really tight. I can remember times during June, prior to the new assessment year, when the county would almost have trouble paying its bills. A lot of things have happened during that period. The fact that all of a sudden we were financially solvent . . . I can remember everybody saying, well the rest of the counties, if you need money, maybe Nye County would loan it to you. The county commissioners immediately cut the county tax rate from about \$4.90, which was bumping up against the constitutional limit of \$5.00, back to about \$3.90 which is a 20 to 25 percent cut in the taxes, county wide, so everybody was the beneficiary of that.

We set up the capital projects fund in Nye County so that if we needed things we could pay for them, and the capital projects fund and the others were all generating interest.

Pahrump and some of the other areas were starting to grow, so it was a good time. All of a sudden the assessment valuation in Nye County had gone from \$18 million to maybe \$150 to \$200 million. I think today it sits around \$300 to \$400 million. A lot of good things dovetailed and started to work out at that time. RM: And it did set up an income stream for the county.

RN: Oh, you bet. And that was when interest rates were really high. As I recall, the prime [interest rate] was up around 12 to 14 percent. A lot of people never quite understood it, but the fact that we were getting interest off the money wasn't surplus; we would budget for the interest off that money. It means that during that period you could set your tax rate depending on your needs; it wasn't tapped at that time. If you anticipated x number of dollars with the interest off your investments, that meant x number of dollars in taxes you didn't have to tax people. I can remember for years after, everybody said, "Where did the money go?" I don't know how many times I've explained where the money went: schools, state, hospitals . . . even Clark County got a little money for some property they had assessed. And Lincoln County got some money.

RM: Then it helped other counties, too?

RN: Yes, if they had anything to do with the Test Site at all.

RM: Nye County wasn't that atypical in terms of being broke - especially the rural counties - is that right?

RN: Oh, all the rural counties were hurting. This is the thing today with the mining; ironically, your big counties like Washoe and Clark have very little net proceeds from mining, so mining to the rural counties is like gaming is to the big counties. Although there are certain legislators who tried to make a comparison, you can't. Among other things, you're looking at the head count, which is a hell of a lot different, but it's a very high-paying profession. They're working with a finite product - maybe they are going to be in and maybe out, but during the last few years, it's been a boon to the county. You have the casinos and everything else, but by the same token, the casinos with their thousands of workers are creating some of the needs for services. A lot of the mining companies will come in to a small area and plunk down money to help with your water systems and sewer systems and things like that. They pay their taxes and the net proceeds of course are not a capped item, so it's really a shot in the arm for some of the rural areas.

RM: How do you see the future of mining?

RN: To me it's like the fossil fuels - sooner or later it would disappear, unless we've got absolutely oceans of it. I look at it as a finite product; there's never been any discovery anywhere that's so damn rich that the value of gold would go to zero. Gold, way back in the Bible . . . I think that it could be in and out over the next few years, but I think it's going to be harder and harder [to find]. You used to go out in the hills and it seemed there was a geologist behind every sagebrush. They are looking for another Round Fountain or something like that,

and there aren't that many Round Mountains. As I say, most companies need, at this point, 100,000 ounces of gold for the majors to consider putting in a big investment.

RM: What happens to the rural counties when the mines close?

RN: Well, all the time you are working with new techniques and things like that. The big thing you hear once in a while is that somebody just found a gold deposit and it's running .05 and then you'll see a bunch of other numbers or something, but the bottom line is how much per ounce is it costing? Is it stuff they can leach, is it stuff they have to grind, is it very complex ore? Do they have water, do they have to haul it - a whole bunch of things - but the bottom line is, how much per ounce is that cut off? At Round Mountain, I think (and I'm sure there will be all kinds of geologists and owners out there who would argue with me), sooner or later they can rerun all those big piles they've got out there. I think they may have to bring them, but I think that sooner or later . . . RM: But technology is continually entering to make lower and lower grades available, so there really won't be an end to mining.

RN: I think one of the big breakthroughs, even in the leaching process, is that as you get gold, if it's a real fine gold, most of it will leach if you're not too fouled up with clay and other materials. I think you can get around that a little bit too, but for a lot of the coarser gold, all the cyanide does is polish it. I think it's just a matter of time until they find some way to get that coarser gold which will maybe double the amount of gold that they can get.

RM: Do you think continual new discoveries of gold will impact the price of gold by increasing the supply so much that it will bring the price down?

RN: No, I don't see it that way, because if you took all the gold that's ever been discovered, it would hardly be a base for the Washington Monument. And what is value? Something that's scarce; and it's certainly scarce. I could see that in the next couple of years, the next 18 months, gold could drop to maybe around \$250 only because you've got so many companies out there. But historically if something like that happens, then a lot of them will fold and all of a sudden they'll have a strike in South Africa and the price will start hark up.

RM: That's another thing - how much longer can they operate those mines in South Africa?

RN: I think the reason they've done so well down there now is probably labor costs.

RM: If they ever have to pay international rates . . . most of the mines are so damn deep, and they are not exactly working on high-grade.

RN: I think that you are going to see one thing, though. In Nevada, most of the early mines were outcrops. Now if you find an out-cropping . . . if there's been a cloudburst it might have exposed one, but most of them are underground. You've still got the little miner out there with a gold pan who finds a lot of these things, but it's getting very sophisticated, as you say. Over the next

maybe 10 years I look for a lot of mines to go back underground, because I think they are going to be deep.

RM: Oh, where they find new deposits?

RN: Deeper deposits; yes. If I'm not mistaken, Echo Bay has gone underground up in Alaska very successfully, so with new techniques and innovations and everything, I look for a lot of the mines to go . . . the open pit is the way to go, but it's just a matter of time before a lot of them will be underground.

## CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Roy, when we left off [yesterday] Nye County had won the lawsuit against the Test Site in the Nevada Supreme Court, and at that time you were working in Las Vegas.

RN: At that time I was working for the Las Vegas Assessor's Office and I also had an insurance business there that I was working on the side. I recall reading about the decision that the Supreme Court confirmed the lower court's decision that Nye County should get the money. In the meantime, the feds had immediately, because of the interest drawing on that \$4.5 to \$5 million dollars, forwarded the money to the county. Judge Beko had come down to Las Vegas, after a discussion with the county commissioners, who were then Bob Cornell, Bob Ruud and Andy Eason, to see if I would be the county's first county manager, and, as he laughingly said, help spend the money.

I had met with the board and decided that it was quite a challenge, and since I liked the area, the mining and the hills and everything, I left Las Vegas and came back here to set up the first county manager system of government. A lot of people don't understand the county manager's position; you basically carry out the policies of the board of county commissioners, or at least 2 out of 3 of them - the majority. You don't make the policy, that's a real no-no, but you make recommendations, you make studies and feasibility studies and things like that and report to the county commissioners. Of course, the final decision always rests with them. As county manager you are the budget officer, you handle all those departments that are not elected (with the exception in Nye County, for some reason, of the road department). (In most counties where they have a county managerial system, the road department also cares under the county manager, but in Nye it doesn't.) But welfare, purchasing and buildings and grounds, to name a few, are departments that are always under the county manager, who is responsible to the board of county commissioners. I never had a contract; I worked all those years without one. I always felt that if they didn't want you, what the hell were you doing there. It's surprising to a lot of people that as county manager you don't have a say over any of the other departments except in the area of budgets, and even then, as a county manager all you can do is make a recommendation.

It's the same thing with the county commissioners - their control of other elected officials is usually just in the area of budgets. I don't mean to say control of elected officials; departments may be a better way of putting it. I know a lot of times people don't understand. I had people, early on, who would call me and say they were having a school problem or something. I know the county commissioners lots of times got blamed for problems at the hospital; it always seemed the buck stopped with the county commissioners.

RM: Even though they didn't necessarily have any . . .

RN: Yes, they wouldn't have any control over the situation, and they do not run around with a checkbook in their pockets. Everything has to be cleared with the board and approved for payment. There are a lot of misconceptions. I've worked with a lot of county commissioners and I find that almost without exception, although I didn't probably get along too well with some of them administratively, most of them were very dedicated people and really cared for

the county. Many times they took a lot of heat for things they basically had no control over. I'm not so sure that isn't true with county managers, too. It's like a football game - if the team loses, they are liable to get rid of the coach. But it's a challenge; it's fun. I never wrote letters to the editor. I know there were times people would say things, and I'd say, "That isn't true," but if you get into letter writing . . . It goes with the job; try to do the best you can.

One of the first things I set up here was to agendize the commissioners' meetings. Prior to that, it was done through the county clerk's office. That was prior to when the county clerk and the treasurer were one and the same, and Rena Bailey did an excellent job there. But that was one of the first things I did . . . try to get control of the budget, be responsible for the numbers, and [create an] agenda so that the commissioners and the public knew what to say. I think early on one of my primary functions was almost like a PR man, because there were so many people who didn't understand what was going on or didn't know about the county, so I worked very closely with the newspapers as far as telling them what was going on and keeping them updated in that respect.

RM: What was county government like before they had a county manager? Did each department report directly to the commissioners?

RN: I don't recall; I didn't really go to that many meetings. I know the commissioners would have their meeting and I remember it was very time-consuming because they would sit alongside each other and go through every claim in the county. Can you imagine a county like Clark, or some of those, sitting there going through thousands of claims? It wasn't long after that, that it changed. We worked with Rena Bailey and changed the investment system in the county. Sometimes it was a little like pulling teeth, because there were people who would say, "Gee, that isn't the way we've been doing it."

RM: Then it wasn't universally accepted right away?

RN: In some small counties the county administrator is still not accepted very well. Mineral County has them come and go. Whether there's just a difference between some of the elected officials and the authority of the manager, being a manager, but not under contract, probably making more money too than some of the elected officials, the manager is also working at the pleasure of the board of county commissioners. One of the biggest jobs for any manager, I think, is grantsmanship - especially in the small counties. I've always felt that if you get a good county manager, he ought to be worth about 50 times his salary.

RM: He ought to bring in 50 times his salary?

RN: Or better - on grants alone. Grants now have dried up a little bit, but during those periods, we were able to get great grants for various projects. As I say, that is one of the biggest functions of the county manager.

RM: Looking back, what are some of the specific challenges you faced initially?

RN: As I say, other than trying to explain to people what your function was as far as being administratively responsible to the county commissioners . . . I know we set up a building program and put some of the Test Site money into it, which was an interest-drawing account, so that over the years the county could draw on it for various buildings, fire and safety equipment, and not have to go to voters for a bond issue. That worked very well; we maintained about a million-dollar level in it. When the hospital had all those problems, it was fortunate we had it. RM: Why don't you say a little bit about these problems?

RN: We currently have a multi-million dollar lawsuit pending with Advance Health Systems, which walked off and left Nye County holding the bag on a lot of money that was involved. We're suing under the RICO Act, which is the Racketeering Act, and this thing has been going on for almost 3 years now, against Petrolane and their subsidiary, Advance Health Systems. I think we have a real good case there, and I think that within the next few months it will probably go to court. That was one of the things, and then when they left, it was necessary for the county, again, to go in. I don't think a lot of people really appreciate that part of the reason the hospital is still there is that the county, at that time, did have the money to punch over there, which was a lot of money. Paying off the clinic was over half a million dollars.

RM: What did you pay - the bills that the clinic owed?

RN: Yes. They borrowed the money from the bank and the management group was going to pay it back on a noncancellable contract. The way you cancel a noncancellable contract is to leave in the middle of the night. I think a lot of it was that the county commissioners and the hospital board felt that when you're dealing with an outfit as big and blue chip as Petrolane, you can't lose. That's the sales pitch they had given us and unfortunately it didn't work. So that's a case all by itself. Bob, if you want some information on that sometime, I can tell it to you. I've got 400 pounds of material. I'll be one of the key witnesses on that, too.

RM: When did you become county manager?

RN: I think it was about 1972.

RM: And then you were there until - what?

RN: June of 1986. I left there and then I did some lobbying. That's another thing - as a county manager you lobby for the county on various issues [at the state capitol] and that's a big, important function. I think, with a lot of the little counties, if they reapportion again, Clark County can damn near stay home and take care of the legislature over the telephone. A lot of the little counties don't have the money to send somebody up there. Of course, they do have a NACCO group.

RM: What's NACCO?

RN: NACCO is the Nevada Association of County Commissioners, but you want to remember that the big counties are also in that. I think the NACCO director gets into a position where he almost has to be neutral, because maybe a big county wants something and a little county doesn't. Nye County is one of the small counties that has always had a lobbyist up there and we've done well. I know in the last legislature we were able to push through the bill that came out of Nye County, taking the net proceeds out of the cap, which meant a lot of money to this county.

RM: And what is the cap?

RN: The cap is where the tax amount you can get in the county is capped; you can't go over that amount. So if you've got something that's outside the cap, you can receive as much as you can. The rural counties depend on mining - it brings a lot of technicians and geologists and people here, and it gives us a little money to provide services and pay for those services when you get that influx of people.

RM: How do you see the future of the rural counties becoming so dominated by Clark County, and to a lesser extent, Washoe County?

RN: I don't know. I'm personally disenchanted with the whole system right now. I think the small counties may have to have their own organization some day. As you now have the Nevada Association of Counties, small counties will just have to have their own small county association because they are going to have to make sure they are represented up there. I think the attitude with some of them has been that, "Oh hell, somebody will take care of us."

One thing about Nye County, and it is official, is that they don't have any trouble speaking up. You know, when that Bullfrog County was pushed down our throat, we lobbied heavily against it. When Governor Bryan approved the Bullfrog County, he was sending a message to Washington that they wanted the repository. We're on record up there, with Nye County lobbying during the last session, saying exactly that what you're doing is setting up a fictitious county within a county. I always refer to it as the "bagman county." What you're basically doing is sending a message to Washington that you want it. I have some mixed emotions there, because on one hand, here we've got all of these politicians fighting the hell out of spent fuel rods coming into an area where they are going to bury it. And maybe nobody wants them - I'm not saying I necessarily want it - but they are going to bury these spent fuel rods in cemented tuff, 1200 to 1500 feet from water, and just fighting the hell out of that. I think it's inevitable that if we are going to get it we need more land and we need all kinds of things. At this point we should be in a bargaining position with the federal government, but no, we're going to put our heads in the sand, but the irony of the whole thing is that all these people are fighting it and about 12 miles away, as the crow flies, atom bombs are going off.

RM: That's true.

RN: Now, you can quote me on that. Atom bombs are going off. Come on, get off my back. All those atom bombs on occasion leak a little bit, but, let's face it, there are 10,000 to 15,000 or

more employees down there. I'm not saying that we need to close the Test Site down, but I want to put this thing in some kind of perspective and be consistent. I think that our politicians are back there fighting to keep the Test Site open, but politically . . . And there's another thing that a lot of people are not aware of. If you draw a circle around the Yucca Mountain, you'll find out that downtown Los Angeles is closer than Reno, and some of our other areas. I'm surprised they are not in here picketing too. RM: And it's 20 or 30 air miles to the California border, and to Death Valley, and there has been no effort to check out that.

RN: Again, inconsistency is the thing. Basically, and having worked at the Test Site for all those years, I think we've created a monster in that the radioactive . .

RM: You mean the Test Site itself?

RN: With the atomic materials. We've got areas out there that will be contaminated for thousands of years, but we've got to do something with those spent fuel rods. I think to some degree you can probably blame the old Atomic Energy Commission, now the Department of Energy, for their cloak-and-dagger approach to a lot of this stuff. I think if they had come out at that time and explained more [clearly] to the people exactly what was going on, it might have helped a lot. Now there's almost a voodoo type of [attitude] out there. God!

RM: I think the interesting thing about the repository is how Nevada has put itself in a position to virtually get nothing.

RN: That's the point I'm trying to make; right. We need more land.

There's a discussion of water, and we could maybe get some, and we could get some up-front money for many, many years to care. We could design this so that the railheads wouldn't come near Reno or Las Vegas or some of those areas, and at the same time those railheads could be used for freeport, if they went through some of the rural counties with a low tax rate that wanted to warehouse them.

RM: I think there would be possibilities of even getting things like the supercollider.

RN: Yes, we just blew it. The end result, and politically you don't like to say it, is that we are not very big people back in Washington, when you're going up against states like Texas, New York and California and some of the others.

RM: I hate to say it too, Roy, but we are not skilled politically, by the likes of Bennett Johnson. We are like a bunch of bumpkins.

RN: But, you know, these I guess are the things that are very . . . They actually held up the legislature; the bill was passed through the strong efforts of Clark County about 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, the last night of the legislature. I know; I was there.

RM: Were you there?

RN: Oh, you bet. I spent many a night up there.

RM: How did the Bullfrog bill manage to get through?

RN: Sometimes you can get a bill going the wrong way and this bill got over the assembly and they gutted it in the assembly and sent it back over and they'd even messed up the format so that Nye County wasn't going to get anything out of the issue. I was really critical of the legislature because prior to the legislature there had been a lot of pretty responsible people studying ways of handling that very situation qualified to . . .

RM: Do you see that attitude as increasing?

RN: It depends. We've had some good, important bills that we got through the legislature but unfortunately, it's getting very competitive between Washoe and Clark County now. They've really got the power down there, you know, when Sedway comes out and wants a per-ounce price on gold and he's got the votes to get something like that on. If you destroy mining, you've basically destroyed the income of most of the rural counties.

RM: Ranching doesn't amount to much.

RN: No. Right now, mining is the second . . . There's so much spent for mining, in all the work that's done in the area - salaries that are paid, the equipment and everything that is bought . . . you spin all that off and you are looking at a lot of money.

RM: One of the things I noticed when I worked on the history of Tonopah was that out-of-state people, largely from Pennsylvania, came in and took the wealth out of the town, and the same was true of Goldfield, only it was Wingfield who took it somewhere else. When the deposits are down, they walk out and basically leave the town destitute.

RN: Minerals are a finite product, and depending on the price of it, that's unfortunately the way it goes. I think there's a check and balance there. I notice most of the big companies now go in with a major operation. But if it's a pit and they have to move the waste to one side, it's organic enough to grow something, and after the pit is done, they move it back in; I think that's very positive. When you talk about the money leaving the state, look at your casinos. You've got the Showboat, Caesar's and the Golden Nugget on the New York Stock Exchange. In fact, I've owned stock in Golden Nugget; but you've got those big casinos doing the same thing.

RM: So it's almost a fact of life.

RN: That's right. But I agree; I think there's a happy balance somewhere between the mining and the conservation people. I have a little problem [in that] they take big areas and designate

them wilderness, but unfortunately, in most instances, if you are not about 25 years old, strong, and have a backpack, how are you ever going to get in to see those areas?

RM: Yes, I agree. What all is involved in being a lobbyist?

RN: I think you probably have to be there 2 or 3 times. The more you go, the better it is, because you get to know some of the senators and assemblymen who have been there. You know the ones who are conservative and after a while you get to almost know the ones you can talk to about particular bills and the ones you can't. Credibility, with a capital C, is the important thing, because a lot of them are attorneys and they can ask some tough questions. If you get up there and lose your credibility, you are going to have trouble. I thought both with Bullfrog and SB463, which is the Pahrump Town Board Bill, which has since been ruled unconstitutional, that we were just screaming at the dark there.

Because at no time, and I think that was important, did the county ever say, "Gee, Pahrump you can't incorporate," or anything like that. I think all the county was saying is that if you want that level of government, the tool is there. You could incorporate because you will pay for those services. About 4 years ago, the county and Pahrump thought that Pahrump had a highly assessed valuation, and that the tax money was going to keep the rest of the county going, so the county commissioners and Pahrump decided to come up with enough money to get an independent review, or audit, of Pahrump taxes. The report was done by none other than the Nevada Legislative Audit, Legislative Council Bureau, Audit Department and the State of Nevada. I guess I was the only one who ever had much to say about that report; most of the newspapers didn't have too much to say about it. The report is on file up there, and it basically says that [although some] people in Pahrump thought they were paying more taxes than anyone else, for every dollar they paid in taxes, that they got \$3 back in services.

When I look at what it costs to incorporate I just can't believe that they are anywhere big enough to be a county. They have a very attractive tax rate now, but with a county you are talking about who's going to be the new DA and who's going to pay that salary for the clerk, auditor and recorder, the road department, cost of equipment . . . Sure, you are going to get a certain amount of money, but unless you are big you are probably also going to be batting right up against that tax rate. As an example, a lot of people are not aware that Winchester is an unincorporated town right in the middle of the Strip. Did anybody ever wonder why they didn't incorporate?

RM: And Paradise?

RN: That's right; Paradise. They are unincorporated towns with assessed valuation not in the millions; but I think Winchester may be over a billion.

## CHAPTER SIX

RN: I've always contended that you could have as much government as you can afford. If that's desired then it would appear at this time that this is a handful of people down there who for some reason don't want to incorporate, they want to spilt the county or whatever. That's fine, but I think it is incumbent upon them to make sure that those people on a fixed income, the seniors and the rest, are made aware that you're not just going to have your mayor and have all these little controls - somebody is going to have to pay the bill. Ironically, I think if they put splitting the county on the ballot, a lot of them would be very surprised because if they spilt the county, let's say at Beatty, the people from Beatty north are going to vote yes, spilt the county. Unfortunately the county is so big and it's been Pahrump, the north-south, which . . . having lived in Pahrump on two different occasions . .

RM: You've lived in Pahrump?

RN: And I've lived in Round Mountain, so I've seen a lot of these areas, and they are all nice people, there are just some misunderstandings. RM: Do you think the spilt is inevitable?

RN: Not necessarily. I think that they could incorporate down there and accomplish whatever they want to do. If there is a lot of growth, maybe someday they [will] want to spilt the county. When you talk about splitting the county, why doesn't Las Vegas, say, "Gee, come on over. We'll just annex you. You can join Las Vegas 'cause you are only 60 miles from the downtown courthouse." That would really get their attention, I'll tell you. But from Beatty north it would do real well, because most of the mineralization and the net proceeds . . .

RM: Would Pahrump want to take the Test Site with them?

RN: They may. But when you think about it, why should they get the Test Site more than anybody else? Even taking the Test Site wouldn't be that big a deal. I don't know how the repository is all going to end up, but every . . .

RM: The Test Site isn't worth that much financially anymore?

RN: I think that's being tested in the courts.

RM: You mean the tax bill that you guys passed is being tested again?

RN: That's my understanding.

RM: So that may mean a lot less money for . .

RN: Property tax loss. But I would personally like to see . . . I always thought, gee, it would be nice to get a bumper sticker out for Nye County, with the whole county being proud and getting

along, whether you are from north or south. I've been at meetings where I've said, "Gee, I would like to see it come to the point where the only battle is on the basketball court."

RM: Nye County is such a huge county - the second or third biggest in the country. What kinds of problems and challenges did you find as manager due to the size and distances involved?

RN: It wasn't really that bad, because with the town board system I think we have damn near as many unincorporated towns with town boards as any county . . . But as county manager, you and your staff work with the town boards and you make sure they all have a spot on the agenda so they can talk to the county commissioners. In most instances the commissioners have the final say, with the exception of the town board form of government. It is very involved to get into, but even then, the county commissioners have worked with all those town boards and have helped them financially with grants. That's continuous, so you and your staff are trying to work out any problems. As an example, since the county manager is responsible for the agenda, you are looking for administrative things, that you can't do. Somebody calls up and there is a pothole, or the dogs are barking - [these are] things that we handle at the administrative level; they never come before the commissioners. Usually the manager will have a spot on the agenda and he'll briefly tell the commissioners the things that might have happened, just to keep them advised of it, but not things of a policy nature that they would have to get involved in. The day-to-day operation of the county should be with the county manager and they should delegate that authority. I felt they did.

RM: You felt it was adequate . . .

RN: Oh yes. And the commissioners don't always agree on things, but they have a tough job.

RM: So distance didn't provide that many problems because of the town boards?

RN: As often as possible you'd go to the areas and work with them on landfill problems, or any kind of problems that they had, so by the time you were ready to go to the board meeting the homework, you might say, had been done, and you exposed the commissioners to what might or might not be a problem and let them resolve it or study it or whatever.

RM: This question relates to the size of the county. The more I learn about the history of Ash Meadows and Pahrump, the more I find that in the early days, and even into the 1930s, they were very lawless areas, where no lawman would enter if he knew what he was doing. What can you say about law enforcement in terms of your perspective of county manager and in your life in Nye County?

RN: When I first went to work at the Test Site, Pahrump, as I recall, had one sheriff on duty. I think at that time it was Ed Siri, but Ed was, you might say, a 24-hour cop. He was allowed to run his ranch and farm and if there was an emergency or something that required a sheriff, he was there. That was true for many, many years. I recall in Beatty there was an Indian who was a deputy sheriff. Of course, with the growth they came to me for more deputies. I know that

when I came here, the dispatcher was just somebody calling on the telephone. But all these things cost money and it's a huge department now. I think what a lot of people don't realize is that in Nye County we have more substations, I can assure you, than any other county. By substations I mean that we have sheriffs in Gabbs, and at one time you had a roving sheriff out in Currant Creek; I know you did about 3 years ago. He came up and got me off the mountain one time, when I got hurt. You have a substation in Beatty, you have one in Amargosa, you've got one at the Nevada Test Site, one in Pahrump . . .

RM: And one in Round Mountain.

RN: Yes, and for a while they even had a deputy stationed at Manhattan, during its heyday. All of these are administrative functions that have to be funded.

RM: And each one of these is under the jurisdiction of the sheriff?

RN: Right.

RM: Roy, you've traveled around the world and seen a lot of different types of people. Is there anything that stands out in your mind as a rural Nevada character - one who maybe isn't as prevalent now as it was then? How would you describe rural Nevadans?

RN: Probably the key word would be independence. I feel most of them live in areas like this because they certainly qualify as rural, but a lot of them say, "Gee, you get up in the morning and you have got good drinking water and you can't see the air you're breathing and things like that, because you're not involved in the smog." It's a "don't fence me in" attitude for darn sure.

A lot of people were talking about the repository and about how much money Nye County was going to get out of it - a certain amount of greed and all that came out. People are quick to forget that when the MX came, there was no way the rural counties wanted that MX. It meant millions but it also meant that there was going to be cement silos in most of the valley where there was water. The damn thing would probably not have been functional by the time they got done - it would have been obsolete. But who was going to clean up the mess? I used to tell people, "The next time you drive by Hawthorne, just before you go into town on your way to Reno, look left and right at all those cement bunkers. Is that what we want for Nevada?" As I recall, Nye County was one of the only counties that put it on the ballot as an advisory, and even though there was a lot of money involved, it was soundly defeated 3 to 1. I still see signs, "MX go home." They're very jealous of their . .

Where else but in an area like this can you get out away from people in 5 minutes? I grew up in the Los Angeles area and spent some time down there, and it's wall-to-wall people. You get out and want to drive from L.A. to Santa Barbara and it's wall-to-wall people and there's no way you can get out. I think a lot of people who drive through the area are not aware that most of the residents know where they've got beautiful spots up in the hills - for instance, fishing. I've heard people say, "What, there's fishing out there?" There's hunting and fishing and mining . . People are very jealous of the concept of living and don't want to give it up. To answer your question, I think it does take a different type of person [to live] out here. I find

most of them are very trusting. In Las Vegas and even in Reno, when I leave to go somewhere, I lock my house and so does everybody else. Hell, here . . . when I end up in Las Vegas, I say, "Oh Hell, I forgot to lock my house." I'm not too worried about it.

RM: Administratively, when you were county manager, what was involved in the connection with the Test Site?

RN: Well, most of the work as county manager was monitoring the taxes that came in there. I was also involved in a lot of the county contracts with the Department of Energy.

RM: What kinds of contracts did they have with them?

RN: They changed over the years, but most of them were for services. I can't remember because there've been so many of them, but for a long time they would provide the building and the uniforms for the sheriff's contract and things like that. Actually, I think Nye County had a terrific relationship with the Department of Energy. You know, when people said, during the Bullfrog-Nye County episode, that the county was too small to be able to work with the DOE on this huge project . . . Hell, where have they been? We've been working with the Nevada Test Site from the minute they started the damn thing. I felt that was a poor argument.

RM: How do you see the future of the Test Site?

RN: That I don't know. It's had feast and famine. I can remember when I first went to work down there, at times they'd have some operations with between 5000 and 7000 people buzzing all over the Test Site. Then at other times there would be huge cutbacks. You go to areas out there that are going to be contaminated for 10,000 years, but I don't think we can stop testing as long as other people are. Bunches of people might say, "Gee, stop the testing." Well, that's fine if the other people are going to stop, but I don't think we can sit around with our heads in the sand. Hell, look around us. Wars are going on all over the damn place. Who needs it? Having been in the Korean War and World War II, I don't want more wars. But I also think that certainly, as I say, you can't sit around with your head in the sand. But what the future will hold, I don't know. It's become quite a political issue. Isn't there something before the feds now on another moratorium on testing?

RM: Yes.

RN: I think that if the moratorium is passed and everybody adheres to it, it could be very positive. But it seems the big thing with agreements between us and other foreign powers is that they are continually being broken. A lot of time is spent making agreements, but not too much time is spent making sure that they are carried out.

RM: When you were manager, did you ever come into contact with the protestors?

RN: No, that was always through the sheriff. I know that I have met with the DOE trying to work out ways of paying the cost of all that, which was quite a burden to Nye County. And I always felt that to some degree maybe we were making martyrs out of some of those people. Not we, but the newspapers, because they would play all that stuff up and it just made it more difficult for Nye County. Hell, it was on] national news and everything else. That was another area where we got no help from the state at the last legislature. Little Nye County was down there handling the protestors even while they were in session. We tried to work out a bill to get some money. I had to agree with Bob Revert - maybe what we should do is take a busload of those protestors and take them right into downtown Las Vegas and dump them on the federal courthouse steps. Why is little Nye County getting stuck . .

RM: For the whole national policy.

RN: Right - for the whole national policy. But most of the time, as I say, I did not get involved with protestors other than trying to work behind the scenes to see how we could fund it. Incidentally, we got no help from the legislature at all. We did have a bill in and it got out of the senate. Again, we get a lot of letters from those people, but not a hell of a lot of help on some of that stuff.

RM: In your dealings with the Test Site people, who were the people you interfaced with?

RN: Most of my dealings were with the contracting division, and then during the Test Site tax case, with the various lawyers for the then-Atomic Energy Commission, lawyers for Westinghouse and all the various people that we had dealings with.

RM: When you were county manager and there was a change in commissioners, was that a smooth transition or was there a period of adjustment?

RN: That was one area that I didn't really look forward to. You'd get to working with the commissioners and if they would resign or not run again, it was always a bit of a problem. I would try to brief them on all the county projects and the county funding. I'd usually have 8 hours of briefings or more with the new commissioner, and I think I was probably . . . county managers are always targets because I know some people who supposedly campaigned on the issue that, "If I win, Roy Neighbors will go," or whatever. I smilingly remember back one time that I had 2 of the 3 commissioners that I got along great with, who had all campaigned to can me. As you know, it takes 2 to get you out of there. And you can't say anything. You just sit there. I think a lot of that comes from the fact that they think that you make the policy. You don't. The commissioners may care up with some policy that's not very appealing to the people, and then they say, "Manager, you carry it out."

RM: Were there wide policy shifts from one commissioner regime to another?

RN: Not really. I think a lot of them go in there initially with [certain ideas] because they care from a particular area, and after they get in there, they find that the overall county business is

so big that, although they can still represent their area, they think, "Jesus, there's a lot more going on here than just my area." So then you almost get swallowed up in the administrative [work].

RM: What do you think about going to 5 commissioners?

RN: I can't see that right now, for 2 reasons. Number one, it's going to cost somebody some money. You're going to have 3 extra commissioners and you are going to have to have extra travel. I think the most important thing, [second], (and I'm not sure that it's been explained to everybody), is that it doesn't work quite the way a lot of people think. In other words, when you have 5 commissioners, it don't mean that you are going to cut the county up into 5 segments geographically. I think the way the law reads, the last I read it, is that when you have your commissioner districts, it's based on population and on being contiguous. What would eventually happen there, and I think it's important for at least the people from Beatty north to understand this, is that with the growth in Pahrump, they would probably end up with 2 or 3 of the commissioners because of the way the formula works. So that 5 commissioners is just going to basically insure that if one area outgrows the others, they are going to dominate. I know there were people during the last campaign who were telling people, "Gee, if we got to 5 commissioners, you'll have better representation." It's not necessarily true.

RM: They might have less?

RN: You could have less, because with 5 commissioners, again, if one area outgrows the other when you put being contiguous [as a criterion]. For instance, you could have an area of Pahrump which would be too big to put with another area, so you'd reach out and pick up Lothrop Wells, you might reach out and pick up Beatty, but then when you run on a county-wide election, you've got somebody running from Beatty or from Lothrop Wells and when it's now time to vote county-wide, all the people from Pahrump or all the people from Tonopah, whichever happens to have the most growth at that time, are going to vote for their particular candidate, so some of the people from the smaller towns are going to get less representation. I think someday that would be good, but right now, it's going to cost more money and I don't think it's going to achieve what they have in mind. I think it's important that the people understand what happens county-wide when you do that. I think that with the north-south power struggle, right now most of the struggle is in the south.

RM: Was that true when you first came on board as manager?

RN: Well, they hadn't grown that much; Preferred Equities hadn't come in. They didn't have that much assessed valuation, but when I look back at the total picture, I don't recall, in all the years I was here, the county commissioners (when they had the money) ever refusing any valid request for assistance. Whether it was Pahrump or Round Mountain or Manhattan, or where in the hell it was. That's always bothered me, because one area says, "I'm getting less," yet a legislative study comes by and says, "For every dollar you are paying in taxes, you are getting \$3 back in services."

RM: Does that mean that other people in the county are getting less than a dollar?

RN: Not necessarily; maybe they all are. Because we are talking not only tax revenue but other revenue, too. There's a lot of other revenues - gaming, privilege tax, sales tax and the rest of it. But when you put the total package together, that's what it ends up with.

RM: Does this in any way suggest that the rural counties are getting more than a dollar for a dollar of taxes?

RN: A lot of the revenue to run the . . . when they had the tax shift they went from property tax to the sales tax. That's why they called it the shift, because basically all you did was increase the sales tax. As an example, one cent of sales tax in the state today probably generates 90 million dollars, and part of the sales tax goes to the schools, part of it comes back to the county; there are various places that the sales tax is used, but the big percentage of the county operations comes from sales tax generated throughout the state. To some degree it's a good deal, because being a tourist state, the tourists are paying a big chunk of it.

RM: Yes, right. But the argument on the other side is that the sales tax is a regressive tax.

RN: That's exactly right; because when you've got to go in and buy a pair of shoes for the kids, the rich guy is buying a pair and you are buying the same pair, probably. We're currently paying a 5.75 percent sales tax - or 6 percent, because we've got an extra quarter in Nye County just for roads. That was one of the last functions I had - to go county-wide and pursue that one, and it was a good one, because the Test Site paid the major part of it. Boy, what a headache that was. And because of the formula, Pahrump got the lion's share. The Test Site paid the lion's share of that tax and it was a real good thing.

RM: Was that a sales tax?

RN: That was a quarter-cent sales tax.

RM: How did the Test Site pay the lion's share?

RN: Because we get sales tax on all those big purchases at the Test Site. When the contractors buy all that equipment, they pay sales tax - sales and use [taxes]. Reynolds Electric, for example. I won't get into it, but I audited Reynolds Electric and Engineering. It took me over a year to do it, and I got special permission from the governor of the state, because I didn't think we were getting a fair count in Nye County. The end result of the audit was that we weren't getting a fair count. The commissioners supported that audit and I think the county can get as much as \$250,000 in back sales tax. In the meantime, they are going forward now, and we'll get the extra money. Right now, I think of the 6 percent sales tax, a quarter percent is your road tax, 1.75 is what they call the CCRT, the County-City Relief Tax, which comes back to the county, and

you've got 1.5 percent, as I recall, that goes to the schools. I don't know, but it adds up to the 6 percent sales tax.

RM: Will the law that's being challenged in court now erase all that?

RN: If that was upheld, it would certainly erase . . . that's property tax, you see. We are looking at 2 different things - that would erase the property tax, not the sales tax.

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