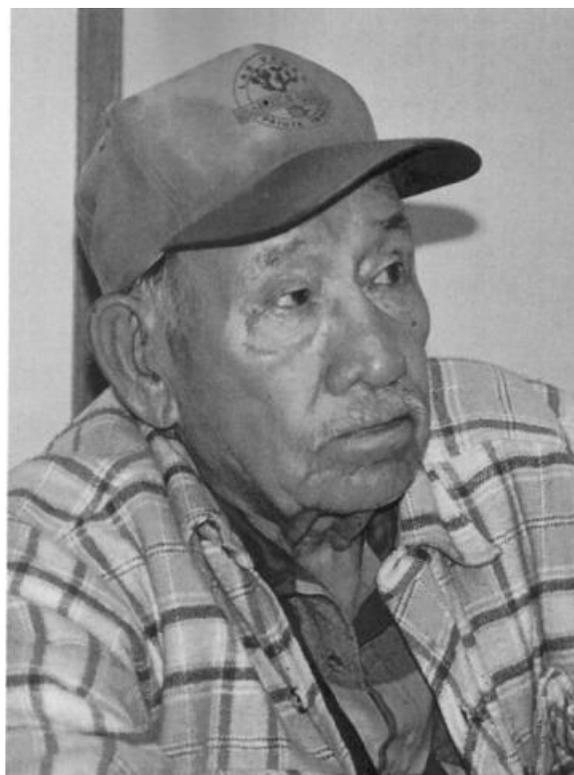


An Interview with
GEORGE ROSS

An Oral History Produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2010



George Ross
2009

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

All material for the NCTHP was prepared with the support of the Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Office, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect the views of Nye County or the U.S. DOE.

—Robert D. McCracken
2010

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—RDM
2010

George Ross, Gloria Shearer, Marie Wilson, Carol Fields Chandler, and Dixie Ross Collins with Robert D. McCracken December 21, 2009; March 22, 2010, with Mr. Ross only.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: I'm going to have you all introduce yourselves. Carol, do you want to start?

CC: My name is Carol Fields Chandler and I live in Las Vegas, Nevada.

RM: And you are a . . . ?

CC: A niece to George Ross.

MW: Marie Wilson, also a niece to George Ross.

GS: This is Gloria Shearer, George Ross's eldest niece. [Laughter]

DC: I am Dixie Ross Collins. I am George Ross's daughter, his favorite daughter. [Laughter]

RM: George, please state your name as it reads on your birth certificate.

GR: I never had a birth certificate. My name is George Ross; I was born in Shoshone in 1925. I will be 84 on the 26th of this month, December 2009.

RM: How did it happen that you don't have a birth certificate, George?

GR: Many years ago, back in the '20s and '30s, people were just born and they didn't have birth certificates. Just like Dad Fairbanks, the Browns, and all those people—they didn't have birth certificates. You take a number of the old-timers; maybe a lot of them were born on the trail, like the Spanish Trail or the Mormon Wagon Trail.

MW: I thought you were a Christmas baby.

GR: I changed it.

RM: What is the real date?

MW: The 25th, Christmas Day.

RM: You've got a birthday coming up?

GR: I used to be Santa Claus.

RM: What was your mother's name?

GR: Julia Weed. My secretary is in Palo Alto now, but she'll be coming down. She researched my dad. He came to this country from Hungary when he was ten years old. I don't recall his sister but his sister hated me; I know that. My dad was killed in Silver Peak in 1942. He was 39 years old.

RM: In a mine? Tell us about that.

GR: Tom Ford (John Roundtree) was a good friend of his; they were running around together. Tom Ford was in World War I but my dad wasn't and they separated and he started looking for him. He went all over the country and he went up to Silver Peak. Tom Ford was supposed to go to work that morning and early that morning was when my dad got killed. The hoist man picks them up, as you probably know.

RM: Yes, I've worked in mines; I know mines.

GR: They took him up in the hoist and he went to jump and he got caught between the skip and a wall plate.

RM: Oh my God!

GR: He was buried in Tonopah and on his stone it said, "Andrews Kovach, commonly known as Joseph Ross."

RM: Were you grown when he died?

GR: I didn't know him. He was just a kid when he met up with Mother, I guess. But then he left, like all the younger generation, because they wanted to roam—you know, the grass is green over yonder. (For more information on George Ross's family, see the Death Valley Natural History Association, Volume 8, 2008, pages 53 to 60. It's for sale at the Shoshone, California, museum, among other places.)

RM: Was he a miner by trade?

GR: Right.

RM: What were some of the mines he worked in?

GR: I couldn't tell you. There were a lot of places—Bisbee, Arizona, and over here at Nelson (Nelson is by Emery Landing), and Silver Peak and all around Goldfield and Tonopah. He had a little cabin in Goldfield; I've got a picture of me standing by it after he was killed. Judy, my secretary, went over there researched him and researched the cabin. He bought that cabin in 1933; I think it went for \$35 for taxes.

RM: How interesting. And talk about your mother.

GR: My mother always said she was born . . . it must have been at Manse; that's where her family was. But we don't know where her mother and father came from.

RM: She was Paiute, right? Was she full blood?

GR: Yes.

RM: What were her parents' names?

GR: Tom Weed was her father's name and he had a son named Tom Bob Weed. Her mother was Nellie Weed.

RM: And you don't know where they were from?

GR: No. I wish we knew.

GS: The only thing I know about them is that Whispering Ben, who's buried over here in the cemetery at Pahrump, was the father of my mother's grandma, so he would have to be Nellie Weed's father but we can't find out who her mother was.

GR: Did you get that information from Gerald's wife?

GS: No. I got this out of Carson City.

RM: So you're descended from Whispering Ben.

GS: Yes, all of us are.

RM: If you remember our interview with Clarabelle, I think there was a discussion about whether Chief Tecopa and Whispering Ben were actually related.

MW: The only living person descended from Chief Tecopa is this lady here, Carol Fields.

RM: So Carol is the last descendant of Chief Tecopa's line?

GS: Right, other than her children.

RM: So you would agree that Whispering Ben and Chief Tecopa were not related?

DC: I don't see how they could be. Because we know Whispering Ben's brother was Tule Ben. Whispering Ben was also known as Las Vegas Ben.

GS: All of us are descendants from Whispering Ben, including Carol. She's descended from him through her mom.

RM: The genealogies are complicated. One of the reasons I am interested in Whispering Ben is because Whispering Ben had the Indian Springs Ranch. And when the Younts, who basically started the Manse Ranch, came through there they were traveling with a family called the Towners, who were headed for Arizona. They stopped at Indian Springs and the Towners bought the Indian Springs ranch from a guy named Andy Laswell, who had been down in Death Valley, and Laswell got Indian Springs from Whispering Ben.

GS: Are you sure Whispering Ben had that place, or was it Tule Ben?

RM: I'm pretty sure, but I'm not really that sure of almost anything.

GS: My real father is a descendant of Tule Ben and my mother is a descendant of Whispering Ben.

RM: And what about Chief Tecopa?

GS: Apparently one of Chief Tecopa's parents was Paiute because he is listed as a Paiute. I think one of his parents had to have been a Shoshone and the other a Paiute.

RM: What do you think, George?

GR: I don't know. I was going to ask you, when was Chief Tecopa born?

GS: I don't know. I would have to go through my paperwork.

GR: Well, 1875 is when the Brown brothers discovered the Gunsight Mine. And around 1888 is when they build that mill down at the married men's camp and put in all new adobe buildings. That place was Tecopa No. 1; it didn't last long. Then they went over to between Resting Springs and China Ranch and moved that mill over there—that was Tecopa No. 2. Now we have Tecopa No. 3.

CC: Tecopa No. 2 is that flat area?

GR: It may be Tecopa No. 1, depending on how you figure it. It's right below the Gunsight Mine between Resting Springs and China Ranch in that canyon. Remember where the old dump used to be? It's right up that wash.

RM: Why did they keep calling it Tecopa? Why didn't they give each settlement a new name?

GR: That's what I asked Ken Lengner (an author). I said, "When was Chief Tecopa born, for that place to be Tecopa No. 1 in 1887?"

GS: It had to have been before that because if he was Nellie Weed's father. . . .

RM: I think it works because the Younts came in here in 1876 and Tecopa had already traded away . . . actually, people say that he had what became the Pahrump Ranch. Other people say that he really had the Raycraft Spring and his son John had the Pahrump Springs, but this would be before 1876. So he had a son, apparently, who was old enough to have his own outfit in 1876. But again, George, you're descended from Whispering Ben?

GR: From what I understand.

RM: Talk some more about your descent and your ancestry with the Paiutes.

GR: Well, we had an aunt named Lily.

CC: And an aunt named Rosie.

GR: Rosie was their grandmother and those were my mother's sisters, and a brother was Tom Bob. Tom Bob is buried in the Pahrump cemetery with Chief Tecopa. Lily is buried in Shoshone and Rosie's buried in Las Vegas, in the cemetery.

DC: How did Rosie die?

GS: She was murdered.

RM: Do you know the story?

GS: Not all of it; I know who murdered her—Raymond Steve.

RM: Of the Steve family?

GR: There is a book over there that Judy and I did at the Furnace Creek History Conference. I've got one story in there about the barefoot Indian boy who became a great musician. All of that Eighth History Conference is in that book and it's in a museum in Shoshone. If you buy that, it will tell you about it better than us sitting here trying to explain the whole thing.

RM: Okay. Where did you grow up, George?

GR: I grew up in Shoshone.

RM: Was Dad Fairbanks there at that time?

GR: Yes, he was. He didn't go to Baker until . . . I can't recall the exact year. Charlie Brown married Dad Fairbanks's daughter out in Tonopah around 1910 and Dad Fairbanks and Charlie

Brown came to Shoshone and started that business together. That was in 1907 because the railroad came in, in 1910. It wasn't very long after that that Fairbanks moved to Baker. Some people can foresee things; I guess he did because he went down and started that store down there and Senator Brown stayed in Shoshone.

RM: But Fairbanks was still in Shoshone after you were born?

GR: I might have been around 10 years old; I remember him. He was an ordinary guy, just like the rest of the old-timers. Compared to the people living here now those old-timers were altogether a different kind of people. They would give you the shirt off their back. And times were rough. I remember when a prospector would come in their store, I've seen Dad Fairbanks and Charlie Brown go in and get a can of corned beef, bread, and whatever and feed him. Nowadays, you look at someone and say, "Hello" and they look at you and try to shy away from you.

RM: So you knew Dad Fairbanks up until the time you were ten years old. What else do you remember about him? Was he a big man?

GR: No. Tall and skinny.

GS: He was probably tall because you were so little. [Laughter]

GR: Maybe.

RM: And they ran the store there associated with the depot?

GR: That's right. That store was brought from Greenwater to Zabriskie. The old town of Zabriskie is right before you take the Tecopa turnoff to go to the hot springs. That's where the train stopped. I don't know how they brought it down; when I'm a tour guide I talk about it a lot. They must have sectioned it off. They said the borax brought it down on a wagon, set it up, and made a store and post office out of it. Then in 1910, they moved it up to Shoshone; probably on the train line. It was a store up to 1949 and now it's a museum.

RM: That is the museum in Shoshone?

GR: Yes. It was the Fairbanks-Brown store.

RM: Dad went down to Baker in the '30s, didn't he?

GR: I would roughly say in '30s or late '20s. He left the store to his daughter and son-in-law.

RM: What do you remember about Dad's wife, Celestia?

GR: I don't. There's a bunch of Celestias and people get them all mixed up.

RM: Celesta was the daughter, I think, and Celestia was the mother.

GR: You're right.

RM: Talk some more about the difference between the old-timers then and the people now.

GR: Well, the old-timers at that time, I think, cared about children. I know when they had a dime—a dime was worth about a dollar at that time—they'd give us all a dime so we could buy pop; you could buy two bars of candy with a dime at that time.

GS: It was like old Eddie Main—remember him? He come from royalty, they said, from England. It didn't matter if there were ten kids or five kids, we each got a dime.

RM: Really? This is when you lived in the area?

MW: Yes, when we were children.

GS: As a little girl. I used to wonder, "Where in the heck does he get his money?" because he never worked. He was an old, old man.

GR: I can tell you all about him, too. Eddie Main was a little short guy. In fact, his picture is in that book, too. He came to Shoshone from Clayton, Idaho. Clayton, Idaho, is on the north side of the Salmon River, up the canyon; the river's on the south side and the other is all mountain. Eddie told Steve Dimmick, a friend of mine, and Steve told me, that he was born in San Francisco and when that big earthquake hit it burned up his birth records. He ended up in Clayton, Idaho, just a little town, a population of 25 people. He told Steve that he had to walk clear to Challis and back down, or go over to Stanley Basin and walk down, or maybe clear down to Boise and walk down. I didn't know about all of this or I would have asked him about it—what time of the year he started and how long it took him. You know how far you can go in one day's walking.

GS: I was told a different story. I was told that Eddie Main came from royalty and that he was born in England and did not like the way they lived there. He wanted to do other things so he took off and started mining wherever he could and he ended up in Shoshone.

GR: Well, his birth certificate burned up in San Francisco in that earthquake.

GS: But he always had money. You've got to figure, that's three dollars, four dollars a day he'd give to us kids.

GR: During World War II he had a sister that lived in New York that sent him money every month and he bought a war bond. And after the war was over with, he cashed that in and took a trip to Japan.

GS: I was told that being as he came from the royalty, he had money coming to him and he got money every month from England. Deke Lowe told me that.

GR: Well, Deke knew Eddie Main just as well as we did.

GS: Yes, so I don't know.

RM: You must have run into Death Valley Scotty.

GR: He'd come to Shoshone with his black hat and white shirt all the time and gas up there. He carried a thousand dollar bill, I hear.

RM: What do you think of Scotty?

GR: Well, let's put it this way—his gold mine was [Albert] Johnson.

GS: Yes, Scotty was a shyster.

RM: When you were growing up, did you get up to Pahrump much?

GR: Yes. The old road went up just about where you cross over the hill going down into Shoshone—you can still see the old road going around. When we'd come to Pahrump to go pine nut picking with Mamie Steve, we'd bring a wagon. I don't know how long it took us but it was a long trip. The road coming up through Chicago Valley was crooked, too. At that time, Pahrump was 2,000 miles away. Now people run to Shoshone and buy a lotto ticket, then back to get another ticket.

That's another thing that I am going to put in the book—all the roads to Shoshone, all the roads to Tecopa, and that one coming through to Stateline. Judy and I are going to do that. I've got a lot to do yet before I die.

RM: Was there a water stop on the trip by wagon from Shoshone to Pahrump,?

GR: Yes. I've got a picture of it; it's right down in just about the middle of Chicago Valley. There was a well there and the old road went right by it.

MW: And Twelve Mile Spring is over to the side as you're going down in Chicago Valley.

GR: Yes, that's the Twelve Mile spring. We've got that documented and a picture taken of it. It's locked up for the next 100 years.

MW: Mom talked about the Twelve Mile Springs. She said that they camped there one night.

RM: How often did your family or you, yourself, get over to Pahrump in your childhood?

GR: Not very much. Even up in the '30s you had to have something special to make that trip to Pahrump.

RM: It was a tough trip?

GR: It was a long trip any way you looked at it.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: When you were growing up, did you know any people in Pahrump?

GR: Yes, all the family. We knew Whispering Bill, we knew the Steves and Long Jims and Annie Beck and those people.

GS: When did the Sharps move here?

GR: I don't know. I remember Sharps way back then—Snake Eye.

RM: His name was Snake Eye Sharp?

MW: Piapowii.

GR: From what I understand, one eye was kind of a little different color from the other one.

CC: Louie Sharp was a half-breed, wasn't he?

GR: Yes.

RM: Talk about the Jims.

GR: I can't recall too much about the Jims.

CC: They kind of stuck to themselves, I think.

MW: I didn't meet Cynthia until I was 19. I remember one time they wanted Mom and Dad to go up to see them because they had papers that they had to have looked at.

GS: Do you remember Cynthia's old man? He was a shyster.

GR: Charlie Lynch.

GS: Yes. Clarabelle and the girls up there were scared because he was trying to take that land. They got Mom and Dad to go up and get all of the paperwork straightened out on that land so he couldn't get it.

RM: What do you remember about Annie Beck?

GR: She was a hunter. Annie Beck used to go up Charleston poaching deer. Mother told me that one time she killed a big animal and she didn't know what it was. I guess it was an elk, but she was scared to death. [Laughs]

GS: She was so little.

MW: When I was a little girl I remember her getting up in the morning before the sun, going up to the mountains, and coming back from the mountains with a deer on the back, on horseback.

GR: Yes, all by herself.

CC: She was a capable woman.

GS: Yes, she was. Very self-sufficient.

GR: One thing I really remember—she wore a red bandanna on her head. She could drink half a bottle of beer and that bandanna would start falling off. [Laughs] It never failed. I can see it right now.

CC: When she'd get to drinking—I was just a little girl then—she would talk with her hands. GR: I can see her right now with that bandanna sitting halfway back on her head.

CC: A lot of the old Indian women covered their heads. They were covered from their neck to their ankles.

GS: In long sleeves.

RM: Did they get that from the whites?

GS: Well yes, because we were naked people.

RM: Yes, and your skin is more protected from the sun than whites.

GS: That is why they called us tudunuwun, "naked Indians."

RM: So did they get that covering up from the whites?

CC: I don't know.

MW: I imagine they were covered up anyway because they had materials that they used, rabbit skin and whatever.

GS: They'd smell like old jerky walking down the street. [Laughs]

MW: We don't know what they smelled like. They smelled like roses.

CC: Dead roses. [Laughter]

RM: What about the Steves? Do you recall anything about them?

GR: To be honest with you, the Steves were just absolutely, what can I say, useless.

MW: Yes.

GR: Drinking, fighting, stealing. Richard Steve was so good at stealing thing that he broke into the post office three times over in Pahrump back in the '60s. They didn't do anything to him.

GS: I don't think any of them worked except Burt Nicholson, when he was married to Louise.

RM: Were there any other Indian families?

GS: The Sharps.

MW: The Browns.

GR: The Sharps were all good people. They still live here.

MW: And they're still good people. And the Browns.

GR: Ernie must be dead now. Steve died and was buried here but Ernie disappeared and nobody knows where he went. I guess his daughters took him up to Utah or wherever.

MW: One sister is in Montana.

CC: Rose and Marge are Steve Brown's daughters. Ernestine and the other one that lives over there are Ernie's daughters.

GR: Where do they live?

CC: In Vegas. I see her once in a while, one of them.

RM: What do you recall about the Manse Ranch from the say the late '20s up till 1946 when Elmer Bowman bought it?

GR: I don't recall too much about the Manse when Bowman had it. But at the Pahrump Ranch, there was a big tall guy named Ed Diamel, I remember him because when we were kids we used to go down and steal watermelons; that is an American tradition, to steal watermelons.

RM: Right. Adjoining the Manse Ranch was Lois Kellogg's property. Do you remember her?

GR: Faintly. She had a ranch way out north of Pahrump.

RM: Yes, next to the Manse.

GR: It was six miles from Pahrump to Manse. Way down where Curly and his wife had that factory making. . . .

DC: Manse Trucks.

GR: Yes, Manse Trucks.

RM: What else do you recall about the Pahrump Ranch during these years?

GR: Not too much. You were talking about Bowman—they brought their cattle over and up around Evelyn, one of the cows got out. Boone Wilson, their dad, worked for Bowman, evidently, over in Moapa. When that cow fell out and broke its leg Bowman told Boone about it and Boone went up and butchered it.

DC: How old were you?

GR: Me? I was an old man then, probably in my teens. [Laughter]

MW: When we were kids we lived over at Manse, at Bowman's.

GR: Yes, you did. Marvin was born. . . .

GS: They lived here only for a short while. Ray Anderson and Belinda and those guys just came here for short while. They worked in the mine a little bit and then they went back home.

CC: Raymond Anderson worked down at Bowman's ranch, too. I remember one day, we went down there and he gave us a little tour of their place. They had milking cows and I remember he had a long pole with a hook and he had a huge bull that had a ring in its nose. That bull would do anything that he wanted—he just kind of dragged it along and that bull followed us. He took us in where they milked the cows and showed us how they did that.

RM: This was at the Manse?

CC: Yes, down in the southern end.

MW: Leroy Spotted Eagle was Raymond's son.

GS: He was never raised here. He was never raised in Tecopa. He was over there while his dad worked in a mine, maybe about two years, and that was it. Then he was gone—went back to Moapa. So they know absolutely nothing about this area.

RM: Did you know Button Ford's father Stanley, and Button's mother, Hattie Ford?

GR: Button and his sister used to go to the picture show in Shoshone all the time with you kids as you were growing up.

RM: Button's wife, Mary's family, lived in Shoshone didn't they?

CC: Yes.

GS: Yes, Mary and. . . .

CC: Lois. They were my schoolmates.

MW: Lois married Alfred Beasley?

GS: Button married Mary Ford when Button was about 25 and Mary Lou was 15, somewhere like that.

CC: I remember Lois Beasley.

GS: First time I ever ate tuna casserole was at Mary Lou's mom's house. What about the Wards; they were their cousins?

GR: You mean Benny Ward?

GS: Right.

GR: He played over there for dances.

GS: So did Button and I don't know who else.

GR: Benny Ward was Dutch Turner's brother. Dutch played the fiddle.

GR: Dutch played the fiddle. She was Bill Turner's wife. We were talking about how the people were in those days. We had a ball field where the Bank of America is now. Bill Turner was a deputy cop and Steve Brown was around there raising Cain and Bill was trying to get him to go home. Nobody won the battle but Steve finally settled down. But now the cops, if they look at you, pick you up and throw the cuffs on you. At that time they didn't bother them; Steve wasn't hurting anybody.

RM: Did you know Pop Buol at all?

GR: I know he ran the store but I don't know too much about him.

RM: How would you describe your childhood growing up?

GR: Me growing up? I didn't grow up. [Laughter] I just went up. I only have an eighth grade education. When I was growing up in Shoshone I dug the cesspool there .

MW: That's where the old schoolhouse was, the old green schoolhouse.

GS: I went to school in that.

GR: Yes. The Rooks lived there and the cesspool was here and I had to dig one and break through. There are a lot of shovels underneath that motel. [Laughter] Then I did all the painting; I was always doing something.

DC: It's because you had getup and drive.

GR: That's it. I am still doing it.

CC: Out there I think you had to be self-sufficient; you had to know how to do everything. I was telling my sons the other day, "You know, out in Tecopa a long time ago. . . ." It wasn't that long, but when I was growing up guys had to know how to work on cars and if somebody didn't know how, they'd find so-and-so down who was good at working on cars. We did it all. Now I pick up the phone and call the plumber for something I need done. And you've got to get building permits for your house and so on.

GR: You couldn't afford to drive clear to Vegas at that time. You had to go clear round to Lathrop Wells, around to Baker in '64 when they put the highway in. And Pahrump was hardly heard of at that time. You couldn't get parts here so you had to make it, makeshift.

MW: And you saved parts.

GS: And every woman knew how to change a tire, knew how to jack up a car. My dad used to tell me, "If you can't do that, you can't drive a car."

CC: I did, too.

GS: Now I don't do it; but I haven't had a flat tire in probably about 30 years.

MW: Knock on wood.

GR: Yes, but those tires back then—in Shoshone they were Atlas tires; every time you went 50 miles on a dirt road you come back with an X on it.

RM: You mean a tear, a break.

GR: Yes. And you had a tube and you would change the tube. I got my tires in Shoshone from Maury. Maury cut me off, he cut Red Johnson off, too. He said, "I can't make money off you guys coming in every day with an X in your tires, with those old tires," We couldn't go to Vegas for parts or any place else to get tires; that was the only place we could get them.

At one time Shoshone had everything. The old store is a museum now but it had everything in it. It had vegetables and canned goods and. . . .

GS: Meat, fresh meat.

GR: And all the mining supplies; there were tires, hard-toed shoes, Levis—just name it; it was all in there. When they moved across the road it was the same way except I laughed at him; I said, "It's more a museum now than it is a grocery store."

GS: And Tecopa used to be booming, there were so many people then. I remember when the mines were going good.

DC: Tecopa was the company store. On payday, Uncle Dan (Danny Field) would be down there paying off his grocery bill for the week and Aunt Stella would be right behind him loading up to start all over again. Then he'd go into the bar and pay off the bar tab for last week and here's Dad in the restaurant ready to start the next week.

GR: When Tim Hafen and Button made that speech at Shoshone at Western Days a year ago. I was remembering that Brown supplied Tim Hafen. I was tending bar for a friend of mine, Fred Harris; Harris and Rusty Hogan had a bar over there, the H&H Bar. When I introduced Tim Hafen, at Western Days, I told about how this guy walked into the bar. His clothes were dirty and he wanted a six-pack to go. I said okay and I gave them the six-pack and I said, "What's your name?" and he said, "Tim Hafen." That was 1956 and he was down here working on his property.

And then he told his Western Days story about how the Browns supplied him with everything he needed. Everything—gasoline, tires, just name it. If it wasn't for Brown, he said, they wouldn't have made it. He choked up a little bit on that, too, because that was the truth.

CC: Yes, that was the truth.

GS: They had everything in Shoshone, even movies and dances. They'd have a new movie every week. In the summertime we'd have it outside—he built the Flower Building in Shoshone. And in the winter we'd have it inside the hall.

RM: What did people think of Pahrump in those days?

MW: That there was nothing here.

GR: We didn't think much of it. But now I wish Pahrump was like it was then. This was a peaceful little place.

RM: Talk about the future of Pahrump.

MW: It will be part of Vegas.

DC: Years and years ago when we were growing up everybody was saying that at some point Vegas was going to meet Pahrump. I haven't done a study on it and I haven't read any studies but if you look at the statistics of the crime in, say, North Las Vegas per population compared to Pahrump per population, I think you're going to find that Pahrump's crime rate is right up there with Las Vegas.

GR: Not only that. People with those four-wheelers and motorcycle off-dirt bikes don't care. They're just all over the place. That shows respect, doesn't it? Sometimes you feel like just shooting them right off the bikes.

MW: That's disrespect for the land.

GR: Yes, it is.

DC: None of my kids or my grandkids has ridden an ATV. My kids were raised out in Shoshone.

GR: Well, let's go back into the history. What's the next question you're going to ask?

RM: George, what have I failed to ask?

GR: I don't know. You're not talking about us; you are talking about our families and I think we've about covered it on the family part.

MW: Yes. this family goes way back in Pahrump. Our history is here. The cemetery over here—that's a Paiute cemetery. We founded it and that's where we buried all of our people.

GS: Whispering Ben is buried there, too.

MW: Chief Tecopa is buried over there. These are our roots. They can say whatever they want—some guy who's been here over 50 years ago. Well, 50 years is just dust.

GS: It is nothing.

CC: We're older than that.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: That brings me to a question of you having your own reservation here.

MW: We can't because we're all registered somewhere else.

CC: This isn't true. Uncle George, are you a Timuk? He's not registered with you, is he?

DC: No. I'm Death Valley.

MW: Uncle George and Dixie and the Sharps and people up there. There's a few people here that can't register anywhere else. The Jims can't.

GS: At one time I got the registration for tribal status started. Richard Arnold was supposed to take over and he did nothing. They had the land and water and everything.

DC: Was it up by where the race tracks are, over by the community center?

GS: It is right up above that casino.

RM: How many acres was it?

GS: I think 180 acres. It's gone now.

GR: Is that where that artifact is up there?

GS: Yes. Right up the street from Terrible's Casino.

DC: Would this be only Paiutes? That wouldn't do it for me because I'm Paiute Shoshone.

MW: You could go either way.

RM: That's right; it depends on the blood quorum and I think almost all the tribes take a quarter or so.

GS: I am a member of Vegas. Maybe I'd have my kids come over here and register.

CC: It would be good. We are all getting up in age. And like the kids, Dixie's kids and some of our kids—I would like to see the lineage where the percent of blood is even less because some of our kids have fathers or mothers who are non-Indian. Those kids are still Indians. Whether it's just in their little toe, they are proud of who they are and they need a place, too. Now you've got to be this much blood. I would like to see it that if they can prove it's their lineage, that they came from these people, they have a place. The kids need a place to stay. If they're Paiutes then they need. . . .

GR: You know what would have happened there—they'd be fighting. There'd be a big court deal about how can you prove that you are Paiute?

CC: We are proud of whatever Indian they are.

GS: Before all of the old people pass. Which means Uncle George, you, myself, the Sharps, Rosie Benn, Clarabelle and so on. We've got to write down a base roll of people that are from here. You cannot have the young people put one together because they don't know.

MW: Right. We can go back in our lineage to what, 18-something?

GS: 1860 on our dad's side.

RM: I think if you guys would all work on a genealogy it would be very helpful. I want that to be a part of this history project.

GS: Okay, I've got to do a lot of research using my papers.

RM: I think it would be very useful.

DC: I think so, too, because a lot of these younger kids are being denied. They are still Native American even though it's a real small amount.

GS: We need to make a family tree. We have to have the history because if they can't prove that they came from a family, then there is no way they can be registered. You have to get your family tree lineage just as far as you can.

GS: I have nieces. My brother married a lady in a different tribe; she's Navaho. Those kids are getting a lot of benefits from that—their education has been paid through that. The Paiute tribe over here would have paid nothing so their mother registered them through her tribe. But now they're getting older and they're kind of wondering, where do they belong? If there was something like this. . . .

RM: They would have the option.

GS: Yes. And they've been to Tecopa, Shoshone; they spent time there growing up. I always say that when the kids get old enough, let them register where they want to go. If they want to stay with their mother, that's good; if they want to go with their dad, that's good. But give them the choice of where they want to go.

RM: Would there be one parent they would tend to go with? Are the Paiutes more female oriented or male oriented in your descent?

GS: That's not even an option.

RM: Not a sensible question?

GS: No, you go with whatever your family has known the best, I guess.

RM: Does the child trace his heritage through the mother, the father, or both?

MW: They trace it from both.

DC: My situation is a little different. My mom is white and my parents got divorced when I was four. I was with Mom and we moved to Kansas, where we were for four years. I came back out here in 1960 when I was ten to live with Dad. So during this period I was raised and living in Wichita, Kansas, in a totally white world.

I came out here; now I was in an Indian world with all my cousins, my grandma and my dad, living up at Grandma's (his mom's) above Shoshone. And no electricity, no running water, none of what we had in Kansas. I came up here and a totally different world opened up. Immediately I was not a stranger. As I got a little older, I'd say up into my teens, I saw the difference and I wouldn't have traded living here and being raised by this family for anything. I wished I hadn't missed those years when I was in Kansas. I'd seen the white side and I lived the Indian side.

I raised my kids as much the same way as I could. I spent those years exploring the white man's area, which is very prejudicial and very all about "me"; it was a very selfish world. I prefer this one. I am Indian, I was raised Indian, this is my family. Not to say I don't love my aunts and uncles in Kansas, but this is more. If I had been given the choice, I would not have gone with my mother, I would have gone with my dad. I would have stayed right here and grown up here and been able to become a full Indian from the time I was little.

RM: What was it about Indian life that makes it so much better for you?

DC: The close family. You're not an outcast.

MW: You're not an outsider.

DC: I gave a speech at Western Days called Memorials of a Desert Brat. And one of the things that I was stressing is we are family. Towns build businesses, communities build people. We are a community; we build each other. If Carol couldn't soothe my adolescent problem, Gloria could; if Gloria couldn't, Lulu could. If they couldn't, Martha could or Vernon could or Sonny or Steve. It wasn't all about female with female.

GS: And your door is always open.

DC: We are all family.

RM: Even though you are not living next door?

DC: Right. Aunt Stella is my Aunt Stella, Aunt Juanita is my Aunt Juanita, but they are also my mom. And that's Uncle George, but he's also their dad. We're one huge heart.

GS: The way I feel about it, I don't have a father, Carol doesn't have a father. The closest thing I have to a father is Uncle George.

MW: That is like when I was a little girl growing up with Kaku in Shoshone. We'd go sit outside sometimes and Kaku would say [speaking in Paiute]. We would look at the stars and look at the moon and she would say, "Remember, later on you are going to grow up and you will have to live in two different worlds. The hiko world is the newer world. But always remember, you are an Indian person. Above all, you're an Indian." She said that later on a white man was going to go travel to that moon. These people were old and Grandma couldn't speak English.

GS: But they weren't stupid.

MW: They weren't stupid, they were smart.

CC: She was very patient. I remember she lived by herself and she had her dogs.

RM: Now, who was this? What was her name?

GS: My grandma.

CC: Julia.

GS: That is the cleanest woman I have ever seen.

DC: She taught me to tell the time by the sun.

RM: No kidding—do you look at the sun or do you put a stick in the ground?

DC: look at the sun. Just this past weekend I proved it to Dad and the others on the Old Spanish Trail. I come within two minutes of the time. I said, "Is it about 11:30?"

Dad said, "It's 11:32." So when it's cloudy we don't have time. Time has to stop.

[Laughter]

MW: When we were children growing up, we lived in a different world but we were told that it was going to change.

GS: We were all so poor and we never knew it. I never could figure out why I couldn't get some new clothes that I wanted.

MW: That's right.

DC: I remember one time Dad took me to Vegas before school and bought me a dress and I was like, wow. And after I got home I didn't like it. I was still wearing what Aunt Stella made for me.

CC: My mom sewed. All the leftovers were used for quilts and I still have some of those quilts; they are about 50 years old. I was going to redo one because it's kind of tearing but I thought, "God, the flannel on the backing of it is so soft." My little grandson and I sleep under it now and it is so soft. I thought, "Well, I'll wait until it's totally tattered before I turn it around and redo it."

RM: Is making quilts an Indian tradition or is that something more recent?

CC: Probably more something they learned from making clothes. Grandmother couldn't read or write; she had to sign with an X. But she made a blouse for me; she just took another blouse and fitted it up and cut it.

GS: When we were small, they'd make things from the catalog. She would copy the clothes from the catalogue and then we'd have new clothes.

CC: And an artist. She was the most beautiful artist.

RM: That was George's mother?

GS, CFC & MW: Yes.

GS: I remember Mrs. Ensley—I always took Grandmother's pictures to her.

CC: You saw a lot that I didn't see until now.

RM: You have to be older to see?

GR: She had that deer jumping with a white dog behind it.

CC: A beautiful picture.

MW: She was a good artist.

RM: Well, thank you all for this interview.

This is Robert McCracken talking to George Ross at his home in Tecopa, California, March 22, 2010.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: George, you just told me an interesting story.

GR: My partner Judy—my secretary, I guess you'd call her—had 14 of her hiking group down here the third of this month. We were all having dinner at the Crowbar and someone evidently told one of them that I was half Hungarian. She came over to me and said, "You're half Hungarian?"

I said, "Yeah."

And she said, "I am, too."

We talked a little bit and I said, "My last name is Kovach."

"Well," she said, "mine is, too. But it's spelled a little bit different than that."

RM: What a coincidence.

GR: Yes. Everybody just looked and stared and said, "What, are you guys sister and brother?"

RM: George, we have a couple of pictures of yours. This is No. 1. What is this a picture of?

GR: You ever been up at Noonday?

RM: No, I haven't.

GR: Well, the road now . . . I ran up against a stone wall [in my research about old trails around here] and I didn't know where to go because I ran out of trails and wagon roads. My ex-wife Edith (she's deceased now) used to write for the California Travelers and she got this picture someplace out of Los Angeles and handed it to me. I didn't pay any attention then but I brought it down and got looking at it through a magnifying glass. When Ken Lengner and I made that book, we didn't have this picture.

RM: And what is the picture of?

GR: This is a picture of the married man's camp at Noonday back in 1888.

RM: It's in ruins now, right?

GR: It's gone. It only lasted one year. This mill only lasted one year and then they moved it. This is actually Tecopa No. 1—either 1 or 2; I say it's 1. This road wasn't in. This is a wagon road going up—I don't know if it's the old Mormon wagon road I'm working on or not. I know there were no buildings there in '43 and in 1945 and '46, when I came back from the service, they rebuilt that same camp out of wood at the same site.

RM: Oh, but it was built out of wood this time.

GR: Yes, it was modern. Anaconda put it in for the Noonday Mine when the men were living up there. It's flat again now, but I knew back then where people lived. Judy and I went up there and made a DVD out of it, where people lived back when there were buildings. I got to thinking about it. I said, "You know what, on that DVD, let's put in the song 'Take Me Back and Try Me One More Time.'" So it's in that tape.

RM: Do you have that DVD? Why don't you get it and we'll make a copy for the museum in Pahrump. Okay, now I am going to put a number 2 on this picture. What is photo No. 2?

GR: This is the mill of the Gunsight Mine. Tecopa No. 1 was down the hill where the married men lived. Right here you can see a little buggy and the horses.

RM: Right, on No. 2 you can see the horses. But that's the mill for the Gunsight?

GR: That's the mill before Noonday was actually started.

RM: Where were they getting the ore?

GR: At Gunsight. It was the Brown brothers. It's in the book.

RM: When was this photo taken?

GR: All the mines around up there opened up around 1875. The Brown brothers, at the Gunsight, were the first ones and they took the lead and galena; it had very little copper and very little gold so they went down to the Noonday Mill. There's a well up there yet, but it's dry. We don't know who drilled that well. They put this mill way down at the married men's camp before there was anything up at the single men's camp.

I'm sure that's Tecopa No. 1. Then they moved back over here; it only lasted about a year. No. 2 is way down below from the Gunsight Mine, but some people say Resting Spring was No. 1 and this is 2. I don't know; it's confusing. But this is supposed to be No. 3 or 4, right there in Tecopa.

RM: And how far was the married men's camp from the Noonday Mine?

GR: It was about a mile.

RM: And how far is it from where your house is in Tecopa, would you say?

GR: From here? About nine miles.

RM: To the east?

GR: Yes.

RM: So basically it's on the west side, at the end of the Resting Springs Range.

GR: Yes, we're on the end of it.

RM: Okay. Now, you wanted to talk about some other things.

GR: [The interview we did in December] was good except that you didn't ask enough questions about how we lived and how we grew up.

RM: Great, let's talk about that.

GR: Well, I was born in 1925, the day after Christmas. As I grew up, it was pretty rough going sometimes. I was born in Shoshone, California, right across from the swimming pool, which is now the trailer court. When I was about ten years old, we moved down to where the high school is at now. And from there, in 1935, we moved up on top of the hill, to the first house built in Shoshone—by Cub Lee. We lived there and our mother lived there until she passed away. It's an historical building now.

RM: Discuss your mother. What do you recall about her?

GR: She was a nice little old lady—sweet and kind and never, never caused any problems compared to my two aunts, Lily and Rosie. They were always causing trouble over there but Mother was nice and sweet. Anybody that remembers her, like Susie Sorrell, can tell you the same thing, how nice and sweet she was.

During the Depression (I'm talking about Tecopa now) the talc mines were southeast of here and the only one that was running was the Western Talc Mine. Miners were getting \$5 a day and muckers were getting \$4 a day. Mother took in washing; she washed by hand on a washboard the old-fashioned way. And that's the way she fed us kids.

My sister Stella is gone now—she passed away in '93 and she's buried in Shoshone. In fact, the east side of the Shoshone Cemetery has practically all of the Rosses and the Fields, outside of the Rooks and the Browns.

RM: So your mother took in laundry from the miners and would scrub on the board and then do all that hard work of rinsing and then hanging it out to dry.

GR: And then heat the iron on a wood stove.

RM: With those old heavy irons. That was really hard work.

GR: Yes. A lot of the men wore khaki and they wanted creases in them. But they didn't care about the Levis.

RM: Do you remember what she was paid for doing laundry?

GR: Not very much—a dollar and a half, two dollars.

RM: For a whole laundry bunch?

GR: It wasn't too much; it would just be for an individual man.

RM: Did she do women's laundry?

GR: She did some. When we were tearing up the railroad in 1942, the superintendent on the T&T [Tonopah & Tidewater] and his wife had their little grandchild with him and Mother washed for all three of them; the grandchild was about four or five years old.

RM: What else did she do to make a living? Any other things to help make ends meet?

GR: No, not in money ways. She used to take the horse and go over to Chappo Springs; we had a little garden over there that would grow mostly vegetables.

RM: Where is Chappo Springs?

GR: When you leave Shoshone going towards Pahrump, take the second road, the one that goes right straight across to the foot of the hill. When it's summertime, you can see the green trees up there.

RM: Oh, it would be on the mountain there?

GR: Yes. I don't know what range it is.

RM: I think that's the Nopah.

GR: No, not the first one. The second one is Nopah. Chappo Springs belongs to Vernon Lee now.

RM: What else can you say about your mother? She was Native American, wasn't she?

GR: True.

RM: Which tribe?

GR: The Paiutes.

RM: Did she grow up in this area?

GR: No, she was born in Manse. I'm sure that's where she was born but nobody seems to know what her Indian name was. And later on, she came to Shoshone. In fact, she and her sister and brother and my grandparents all came to Shoshone. According to Judy's research, they were the first ones in Shoshone before Shoshone ever got started.

RM: Did she stay at the Manse a long time after she was born?

GR: Yes, she grew up there.

RM: You don't recall any tales or stories she would have told about at the Manse, do you?

GR: No, but she told me one time she and her sister, Lilly—they didn't know why they did it—went from Manse up to the top of the Nopah Range, Nopah Peak; just walked up there. They stayed overnight and came back the next day.

RM: Wow. Did she say anything else about that trip?

GR: She said it was kind of flat up on top.

RM: I would love to go up there but I don't think I could walk up.

GR: I don't think I could, either.

RM: But the two girls walked up there. They must have been in good shape.

GR: Well, when you're a kid you can do that.

RM: Right. Did she work at the Manse as she got older?

GR: No, she didn't work at the Manse.

RM: Did her dad or mother work there?

GR: I imagine so.

RM: Did you know her parents at all?

GR: No, I was just a little kid when they got burned up in Shoshone in a house fire. They're buried in Shoshone, too.

RM: How awful. Do you have any idea when your mother was born?

GR: No, all we did was estimate it. She was born around when Stella Brown was born, which would be 18-something. I forgot when Mrs. Brown was born but they estimated that they were pretty close together in age.

RM: When did they move to Shoshone?

GR: I really couldn't say. That was before I was born. The railroad came through in 1907 or 1910 and they were there before that.

RM: And it was just Indians living there, not miners or anything?

GR: Evidently not. They were the first ones.

RM: Did any of them work for the railroad?

GR: My uncle worked for the railroad after it went in. We were still living across from the swimming pool that my grandfather helped dig.

RM: What was it like in Shoshone in those days?

GR: Well, let's say peaceful. [Chuckles] You ought to see it now. There must have been a thousand motorcycles there at the same time yesterday. They're a nuisance.

RM: I agree. [Laughter] How many people would you say were living there when you were growing up?

GR: We discussed that on our tour yesterday—Susie and I took some people out. I don't know, 25 to 50 people were around about that time.

RM: Were there quite a few Indians living there then?

GR: There were quite a few Indians; there were more Indians, I think, than whites.

RM: And where did you do your shopping?

GR: In Shoshone.

RM: And the miners around the area would probably shop there, too. Did they have parties and dances in Shoshone?

GR: They did in the '30s.

RM: But you don't recall them in the '20s.

GR: No, I don't recall anything. My book Remembering Shoshone only goes back to the '30s because I don't recall things from the '20s. I'll tell you another little story. When they built the Flower building, they just poured the form, the flooring. And there was a band with Bill Kingsinger on the guitar and Andy Andrews on the banjo. Janette at that time was a Bisby. She used to be an entertainer in the Mizpah Hotel in Tonopah back in the early '30s and I guess late '20s. That gal could really sing and play that piano.

RM: Did you kids listen to the radio?

GR: Yes, later. Pop Bray, Faben Bray, Mother's boyfriend, had a battery radio.

RM: Was it a big deal?

GR: Oh, it was a big deal . . . Del Rio, Texas.

RM: Oh, you listened to Del Rio, Texas. I used to do that, too. Did you get over to Pahrump much?

GR: Not unless you had to because it was about 2000 miles to Pahrump at that time. [Laughter]

RM: What kind of a road was it over to Pahrump?

GR: It was a crooked dirt road. They couldn't do any real cutting for the road—they had no heavy equipment—so they had to stay down on the flat and zigzag around. The next thing we do, Judy and I are going to put in information about these roads around here.

RM: Good idea. When did they make a better road?

GR: The county took over. I don't know who put the original road in. I guess it must have been just the ruts because we left Shoshone one time in a wagon and went up to Charleston to pick pine nuts. I was just a little kid then but I do remember a dirt road. I don't remember when they paved it. Carl Rook told me one time that was a county road to the state line and a county road up to the top of Salisbury and a county road to the top of Ibex Pass. They had a little blade, a little metal tow blade and a Cat, and Herman Jones pulling the tow blade. That was back in the '30s.

RM: Where is Ibex Pass?

GR: That's the first pass going towards Baker.

RM: Okay. And where is Salisbury?

GR: Salisbury Pass is the first hill northwest of Shoshone, the first turnoff leaving Shoshone. It's the first hill going down into Death Valley. Instead of going to Death Valley Junction. The next pass on that road into Death Valley is Jubilee Pass.

RM: Did you like going to Pahrump in those days?

GR: I don't know. I guess I didn't pay any attention.

RM: How long did it take to get over there? You went by wagon, right?

GR: Yes, we went by wagon. I couldn't tell you how long it took.

RM: It's about 30 miles over there isn't it?

GR: Now it's 27 so probably 30, 31 at that time.

RM: In a wagon it must have taken a long day.

GR: Maybe two days.

RM: Did you stop for water or camp along the way?

GR: I've got a picture someplace. I don't know who give it to me, maybe Button Ford. Right in the middle of Chicago Valley was a road that went around this way and right in here there was a well. I've been wanting to go over there and see if I can find it.

RM: So you could water the horses. You used horses, not mules, right?

GR: Yes.

RM: What would you do in Pahrump, then?

GR: Probably pick watercress. Watercress was wild in Pahrump at that time.

RM: Was there a lot of it?

GR: Oh, yes, right at the spring, right behind . . . you go down Buol Road to the right and it's that great big vacant place there, right behind the donut shop and discount store. I don't know who owned it but there used to be a nice cottonwood tree and an artesian well and a lot of watercress.

RM: Was it good?

GR: Oh, yes.

RM: Do you still pick it?

GR: Where are you going to pick it? Come to think of it, where can you get it now?

RM: You can't get it?

GR: Oh, you can buy it. But it doesn't grow wild like it did then.

RM: Do you still buy it?

GR: I haven't bought any for a long time. Do they sell it?

RM: I don't know. How do you prepare it?

GR: I never did prepare it; Mother always did. And we'd eat it raw; we'd pull it right out and eat it. There was nothing wrong with it.

RM: And that was part of your reason for going over to Pahrump?

GR: Yes, but, mostly we'd probably go up to pick pine nuts. As I can remember, we went right up towards Wheeler Springs, Wheeler Pass.

RM: How long would you be there picking pine nuts?

GR: Maybe a week.

RM: How much would you get in a week?

GR: It would depend how much of a crop there was. In the past few years there hasn't been any crop, but at that time there used to be a lot of crops. They say it changes every four years or something like that. I know a guy living in Fallon who went up there a couple of years ago. They went all over the place on Charleston and couldn't find any pine nuts. And other years, it's just loaded with pine nuts. So it depends on how much harvest was there.

RM: How did you pick them?

GR: You could either bump them or let them drop on the ground and you'd get on your knees and pick them up.

RM: The individual nuts or the pine cones?

GR: No, the nuts, after the cones open. But if it's green . . . we used to build a great big bonfire, pick a lot of the green ones, throw them in the fire and wait a while, and the nuts would come out. It's hot; you can break into it and that's good eating.

RM: So you would pick them off the ground—did you pick them off of the trees, too?

GR: No, but we used to bump the trees and see how many would fall.

RM: You would hit them with a stick?

GR: Yes. Then you'd pick the nuts up from the ground.

RM: That's time-consuming work, isn't it? You have to pay attention.

GR: Yes. Nowadays, I guess people lay canvas around the tree and then bump the tree.

RM: But you didn't do that.

GR: No. I didn't know what canvas was.

RM: And if you did, you probably couldn't afford it.

GR: That's right; money was rough back in the '30s.

RM: How many pine nuts would you have when you left, would you say? What would be a good harvest?

GR: Maybe half a gunny sack full. It depended on how many people were picking.

RM: How did your mom prepare them?

GR: There's a number of ways you can do it. You can roast the nuts in a skillet. When they get through popping, you can shell them and put them in with pinto beans. That would give those pinto beans a different flavor.

RM: That sounds good.

GR: Or you can make it into a gravy or just eat them out of the shell. I remember I did that with Susie Sorrell one time. She and her brother Charles happened to be visiting us when we had beans with pine nuts in it and we sat down and ate it. Susie and Charles are all together different. They grew up in the desert and they're just like one of us. They weren't born with a silver spoon in their mouths.

The white man, I think, right now is only allowed five pounds of pine nuts and Indians can have all they can pick.

RM: That sounds so tasty. Now, how did you survive during the Depression? What were some of the challenges that you had to face living out here on the desert?

GR: It really wasn't a desert, not like it is now. There was a lot of water here yet.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Is it dryer than it used to be?

GR: I don't think so. There's still water around. It's going to be dry if people keep drilling wells. At Shoshone, the spring runs all the time. The hot springs at Tecopa run all the time. And Tecopa is drying up too; there used to be water there.

When I was a kid, I lived in Tecopa, too. That's why I knew all about the Spanish Trail and the wagon road, but I didn't know what it was until I started working on it—then I got to thinking about it. My aunt lived down where the schoolhouse is and we lived across the track when I was a little kid. There used to be streams that ran into Tecopa from the hillsides. My aunt's husband, an Italian called Dago Joe, and I would go down and collect big bullfrogs all along there, right down in Tecopa. They were good eating. There was more water back then; that was in the early '30s.

RM: And you'd eat the bullfrogs.

GR: Yes. But you don't see that any more. There's no water; the only water is just the well down there—mossy-tasting water, at that.

RM: During the Depression, you said one mine was working here?

GR: Yes, Western Talc.

RM: How many men were they working?

GR: I really couldn't say. I don't think there were too many.

RM: So when you went to Pahrump, you went usually to pick pine nuts and watercress.

GR: Or we just went over there. Maybe we went for watermelon seeds, cantaloupe, and fruit. Some of the Indians, like the Sharps and Annie Beck, grew fruit. You can't raise anything in Shoshone or in Tecopa.

RM: Because it's too hot?

GR: No. Too much alkali. The only place that's good is where Susan Sorrell lives. Wherever you see black dirt, that's good soil. We used to pick up a lot of arrowheads there. A lot of times we went to Pahrump to get some vegetables, which I hated when I was a kid.

RM: Sure. How often did you go to Pahrump, do you think?

GR: It wasn't very much. Now you go over there just to buy a pack of cigarettes or ice cream.

RM: Sure. Or just to get out of town. Who are some of the people that you remember from Pahrump?

GR: Mamie Steve and the Sharps. I don't remember the Browns real well, like Ernie Brown and Steve Brown. That's about all the Indians that were there at that time. Whispering Ben, I remember him.

RM: Talk about Whispering Ben.

GR: I didn't know him that well.

RM: Was he a tall man or a short man?

GR: If I remember right, he was kind of short and chunky.

RM: Was he a highly respected man?

GR: Well, evidently.

RM: Some people say that he was a brother of Chief Tecopa and others say no. Do you know?

GR: I really couldn't say. Gloria [Shearer] and Lulu [Marie Wilson] are the ones that were arguing about that. I never heard of Tule Ben so I can't say anything about him.

RM: Did you know Chief Tecopa's sons?

GR: No. I didn't know how Chief Tecopa got started and why the town was named Tecopa and all of that. That has never been documented and nobody's ever come up with a straight answer for that.

RM: Is that right? Talk about some more about your childhood—what was it like being a kid here?

GR: Well, sometimes you were alone as a kid. Joe Rogers's mother had more children than Mother did and we all played around together back in the late '20s and '30s. The place got more population in the '30s. It wasn't very long ago. Doesn't seem like it anyway.

RM: Yes, like yesterday. [Laughter] Did you know the Fairbanks at all?

GR: Yes, I knew Fairbanks but I really didn't know them that well.

RM: How would you describe Dad?

GR: He was a tall, skinny guy. According to Joe Rogers and a few others, Dad would feed hungry people passing through. I've seen Senator Brown do the same thing. Nowadays, people turn their back on you. Senator Brown was from Georgia and he came to this country afoot, I guess. From what I understand, he ran away when he was about 11 years old and went to work in the mines back in Kentucky or some place through there, then he wandered out this way. Dad Fairbanks had come down from Utah; he was Mormon. He went to Greenwater because it was booming then. There was the name "Greenwater" but there was no green ore, from what I understand. He hauled water from Ash Meadows to Greenwater with a couple of horses and probably a wagon.

And that's when Senator Brown showed up over there and he worked in the mines. (We'll call him "Senator"; he wasn't a Senator then but he was later.) The old man, Dad Fairbanks, also worked in the mines and Senator Brown and all the sons did also. In the 1950s and early '60s, people down in Los Angeles said the miners were dirty people, that they were low-down lower class, you know. Back then, they wouldn't talk about them. But you take Susie Sorrell and Charles Sorrell, they don't think that way because their ancestors were miners. They lived life different; they're just ordinary people. A lot of people say, oh, the Sorrells have got all that money—that doesn't bother Susie a bit.

RM: When did Dad come into Shoshone?

GR: In 1907, I think.

RM: When did he leave Shoshone? Were you here then?

GR: Yes, I was here then. It must have been in the '30s when he left.

RM: He went on down to Baker, and Baker wasn't even a spot in the road. He founded Baker, right?

GR: I guess, evidently.

RM: Did you ever go to Baker in those early days?

GR: No, I never did go down in the early days.

RM: Talk about when they shut the railroad down. What impact did that have here?

GR: That was late in the '30s—'38 or '39. They shut the railroad down because the trucks were coming in. The tie house in Tecopa was built . . . Jim Frances owned that property and Mutt and Jeff Weed built that tie house. It's burned down now. That's when Charlie Reno had a place in Tecopa. He had a little store on the west side of the road and he sold it to Jim Frances and he moved down between Baker and Tecopa; he named the place Renoville. Why would anybody go down and build a place way out in the boondocks? I think he saw that the highway was going to go through there.

RM: Exactly where was Renoville?

GR: It's between Tecopa and Baker. There's nothing but a few cans out there now. There's a picture of it in the Shoshone museum which I took before Renoville burned down.

RM: Was that a pretty going place?

GR: Yes, in '46 it was going pretty good because all of us were driving trucks there; we'd stop and eat there. He had a little gas station and garage.

RM: You worked on removing the railroad tracks, didn't you?

GR: Yes, in 1942—clear from Carrara to Riggs and almost into Baker. I was 16 years old. I had a lot of fun on it.

RM: How did that work?

GR: A lot of times, we'd be on a spike-pulling machine—there'd be one machine here and one here. It's hard to explain; they had an arm that went up and down. You'd hook the spike and it pulled the spikes out; there were two different machines.

RM: On each side of the tracks.

GR: Yes. We'd leave some spikes. We'd be ahead of the train and we'd leave some because a guy with a spike-puller would come along after the train went by and yank them out. They had a ramp that went down and there were two Mexicans down there who put a hook onto the rails and the hoist pulled them up. After a rail was pulled up, it was loaded on a flat car. They would lay one flat across, then the second one would go upside down on a slant to fit down perfect and make a flat load.

I had a lot of fun. I'd run on the flat car and hand the hooks to one guy and he'd run down the ramp, give it to the Mexicans, and they'd hook it and then signal me and I signaled my partner on the hoist, or whatever you want to call it, and he'd pull it up. I'd just walk along and when the rail got up there, the two Mexicans would unhook it and give me the hook and I'd run back down across the flat car. I was 16 years old, just a kid.

RM: What were they paying you?

GR: Eighty-five cents an hour.

RM: That was pretty good money, wasn't it, for a kid, or even for a man at that time.

GR: Yes, it was.

RM: What did you think about tearing up the railroad? Did it bother you at all?

GR: No, it didn't bother me. I didn't have sense enough, I guess.

RM: Do you wish the railroad was still there now?

GR: Yes. They should have left it in Shoshone and in Tecopa. There's a picture of it in Shoshone where the ticket agent had his office in the boxcar, and you can see the switch going in there and the main track.

RM: Did you know Deke Lowe pretty well?

GR: Yes.

RM: I knew him pretty well, too.

GR: I practically grew up with him. Let's see, what was he, 18 years old? David—do you know his son?

RM: No, I don't.

GR: He's the one drank that kerosene. I'm a little bit older than David.

RM: Did you know Deke's wife, Celesta, very well?

GR: Oh, yes.

RM: Did you ever get up to Clay Camp in Ash Meadows?

GR: Not at the time. My dad worked up there—and I heard about it from Johnny Domingo, a friend of my dad's. He lived in Vegas and we got to talking about it one time. He knew my dad; they worked at the clay pits and so did John Roundtree, whose nickname was Tom Ford.

RM: What do you recall them saying about Clay Camp?

GR: I really don't recall. I know that Doctor Wallace lived up there. He said that the water up there that filtered through the clay was pure enough to put in your battery.

RM: That's remarkable. What do you recall about Ash Meadows? Did you ever get up there?

GR: Not much. There were quite a few Indians, Paiutes, living there at that time.

RM: Were they kind of living off the land there?

GR: I guess so; I think there's good soil up there.

RM: When you were growing up, because your father was Hungarian and your mother was Native American, did you feel like you were Native American or did you feel like you were white? Or did you even think about it?

GR: I never even thought about it. I don't think about it now. I don't think a lot of these white women I go with think about it, either. I've dated a few Indians but I've dated mostly whites. I married two white women so I guess they don't think about it either.

RM: How did your mother happen to meet your father?

GR: That I couldn't tell you. I met Judy in 1999 when we made that cassette tape. She asked me that same question and I said, "I don't know, I wasn't born." [Laughs]

RM: Do you have a copy of that tape? Would it be worth adding that tape to this interview?

GR: It could be. You've never met Judy Palmer, have you?

RM: No, I haven't.

GR: She's my secretary on our many activities involving historical research. Brad Mastin is an outdoor recreation planner for the BLM; he's been with BLM for years. I got friendly with him down at the China Ranch; he was down there with Cynthia Kienitz. I told him, "I'd like to go with you. What do I have to do—get insurance, or what?"

He said, "Nothing." So we went out and started looking at wagon tracks. We walked way up on a hillside trying to find that lost section of the Spanish Trail but we couldn't find it. So I'd go out there by myself and if I'd find something, I'd call him and he'd say, "I'll be there in the morning." He lived in Barstow. Or he'd call me and say, "I'll be there in the morning, tomorrow morning" whenever, and then we'd go out.

We went all over this country trying to figure out where you can take a crew in and not come back and just keep going to make a complete circle, you see. Then we'd look at this trail and we'd look at the Spanish Trail and then at some of the maps on the Spanish Trail. Ila, Judy, Amy, and myself were out and there's a cave way up on the hillside, way up on the mountain. I said, "I'm going to go up and see about that cave because at one time, somebody did camp there behind the mountain. For what reason? There was no indication of any kind of mineral up there. Why were they camping there? It's quite a ways up on the hill there." Before they made it a wilderness area we'd take a four-wheel drive up there, right up through the boondocks. We can't do it anymore so we started walking. On the way up I saw the trail and I hollered, "Judy, I'm standing on the trail."

She said, "I am, too."

I said, "Well, I'm going to go back this way. I'm going to see where it goes. If it heads right for that obelisk. . . . As I was on the trail I saw where there was a little drop-off and I saw where they had moved boulders out of the way. I said, "Now, even the prospectors and Indians

are not going to move boulders out of the way. They are going to go around them. This must be the Spanish Trail.” So I kept following it and sure enough, it went right up through that Emigrant Pass.

Cynthia was the president then, or . . . I don’t think we even had titles then. I told her about it—I didn’t know whether she was going to laugh or cry. Then I called up Brad and he went berserk. And he called Jim Shears, the big-shot. In the meantime, Cynthia called Stan Wolfe and Susan Rowe in Vegas. They turned around and called an archeologist and they all got together on Emigrant Pass and spent half a day looking at the site and digging up artifacts, documenting everything they could find, and they said that’s the Spanish Trail—and I found that section of it. From then on, I’ve been working that trail and my rating’s going up and up.

RM: Where is Emigrant Pass? Is that where you go over to Pahrump Valley?

GR: Yes, the first one up here. The switch-back.

RM: Oh, where the switch-back is going toward Pahrump Valley.

GR: Yes, Emigrant Pass over to Charleston View.

RM: Speaking of Charleston View, did you know Roland Wiley?

GR: He was a nice guy. I didn’t know him too well but one day I was going to Vegas. I stopped at Highway 160 to wait for the traffic to go by. It was a two-lane road. He was coming from Vegas and he stopped. We sat there and shot the breeze for about 30 minutes—the heck with the cars, let them go around him. That’s the kind of guy he was.

RM: Right. He was a nice guy.

GR: He really was. He was the district attorney in Las Vegas. You wouldn’t have believed it though—driving that old white Cadillac.

RM: Talk a little about your mining experience. You worked for years as a miner, didn’t you?

GR: I worked underground. People think that because you go underground, you’re a miner. But you’re not.

RM: That’s true.

GR: Miners know what they’re doing, you know, and they travel around.

RM: What did you do?

GR: Mostly mucking, tramming, and timbering, things like that.

RM: Did you like mucking? [Laughter] I hated mucking! I worked in a mine in New Mexico where you couldn't find a shovel underground that had a handle on it. If you brought a shovel down there, the miners would break the handle. If they couldn't do it with a mucking machine, it wasn't going to get done. Did you like working underground?

GR: I'm not crazy about it. But like I've always said, it's as safe underground as it is in some homes.

RM: That's right—if you know what you're doing. And how did you wind up in the army?

GR: I got drafted when I turned 18.

RM: What year was that?

GR: December of '44; I was headed for basic training.

RM: You mentioned Camp Roberts; where is that?

GR: That's north of Bakersfield—Paso Robles. It's nice and hot in July. It didn't bother me but it bothered the boys from back east.

RM: Sure, you were used to it. How did you feel about being drafted?

GR: I didn't mind being drafted but I hated the army. [Chuckles]

RM: Why did you hate it?

GR: All the crap you had to go through—get up early in the morning, the reveille and the bed check. But once we got overseas, we didn't have any of that and after the war was over, we didn't have it; this was just the basic training.

RM: But first you went to Europe, didn't you? What did you think of Europe? As a guy from Death Valley, what did you think?

GR: I saw just one spot in Europe that looked like a desert. It reminded me of home.

RM: Where was it?

GR: I don't know. I couldn't tell you where we were half of the time. But I know the war ended when we were in the Ruhr Pocket.

RM: You didn't go to the Pacific?

GR: No, the war ended. We had a 30-day delay en route in the United States—never got furloughed, just delayed en route. We were headed for Japan and we were two hours out of Atlanta, Georgia, when old Truman dropped that atomic bomb over there. And Atlanta, Georgia—talk about a town being wild. They couldn't find anything to drink; every drink was gone. The women were all over you. Oh, man!

RM: And I'll bet you were damn glad because you were headed for Japan.

GR: You bet we were.

RM: What division were you in?

GR: The 97th Infantry Division.

RM: How do you look back on your military experience?

GR: I don't know, they didn't teach me too much. But I'm glad I was in it and I'm glad I got an honorable discharge because I'm under VA medical care now. It costs me \$8 a month for my medication, which we're talking about maybe \$100 a bottle.

RM: Where do you go to the VA, living here?

GR: Pahrump—they've got that clinic there on Calvada Boulevard. They're going to rebuild that VA clinic there, I guess. In fact, I've got to go over there Wednesday to get a belly shot for cancer of the prostate.

RM: Oh, you've got cancer of the prostate?

GR: Like all men.

RM: Now, when did you retire, or did you? It seems you're busier than ever now.

GR: Yes, I am. So, what do you call retired?

RM: That's right. I don't believe in retirement.

GR: I don't either. [Laughter] I retired at 62. It was fine for a while and then I went to work again. I'm doing everything now.

RM: When did you move to Tecopa, where you are now?

GR: I was in Kellogg, Idaho, for five years working construction summertime and underground in the wintertime. My son got hurt so I came down here and I was here for a couple of months. I met Lois Ross—her first husband was named Clyde Ross. She was from La Puente. She'd been

coming up here all these years and I didn't know it until one day I was in the Snake Room. She come in there and I met her and we got to talking.

She was Ila's grandmother—Ila was only 13 years old then—and Ila's dad and she were there and they were going to Scotty's Castle and they asked me if I wanted to go. I was a young buck kid. I said sure. From then on we started getting together, together, together. Pretty soon we fell in love, I guess, and got married.

RM: And that was your first wife?

GR: No, I had one before that.

RM: And when was this?

GR: That was 1971. We got together and decided to get married and she was the best companion I ever had. We stayed together 26 years. We had disagreements but no divorce was ever mentioned. She passed away and I had one girlfriend.

RM: How is it you got the name Ross? Did you take her name?

GR: No, I had Ross for a long time ago. When my father got killed, they said, "Andrew Kovach (which was his real name), commonly known as Joseph Ross."

RM: Oh, I see—he adopted that name.

GR: Well, it was a nickname I guess. So I could have been a Kovach, too, instead of Ross.

RM: How do you see the future of this area, including Pahrump?

GR: If I would have known Pahrump was going to grow, I'd have owned the whole thing for \$35 an acre.

RM: You'd be a millionaire now. [Laughter]

GR: I can't see the future at all but I know it keeps growing and growing. I think Susie said it was 40,000, 50,000 people now. She's got the propane business there so she knows. But the future is hard to say. What's the industry there? There isn't any, it's just casinos and restaurants and grocery stores. They really can't get too many people in there; there's not that many jobs. If there's mining going on, if there's farming going on. . . . At one time it was farming but now there's nothing but casinos and restaurants. They can't improve the population very much more because there wouldn't be jobs.

RM: Do you get to Vegas much?

GR: No, not if I can help it.

RM: What do you think of Vegas? I mean, you've seen huge changes there.

GR: Oh, yes. I knew Vegas when there was nothing there. But now, it's going crazy.

RM: What was your first trip to Vegas?

GR: When I was a little kid, I went with my aunt and her husband to Fremont Street, I think. That was the only street down there.

RM: And now look at it. So what do you see as the future of Vegas?

GR: I can't visualize it—no way.

RM: What about the future of Shoshone and Tecopa?

GR: They wanted me to restore Tecopa. I said, "I can't do it. The only way you're going to restore Tecopa is take all those trees—those trees in front, that water pond and all this—you're going to take all that out, level it all off, and haul in some gravel. That's the only way you're going to restore it."

Shoshone is not going to grow, not in my time, because Susie doesn't want to. She told me one time, "I could sell it right now for a good price but first thing they would do, they'd make a city out of it," and she doesn't want a city.

RM: Shoshone is owned by one person?

GR: Yes. Susie Sorrell.

RM: So there's no other private land there.

GR: No. That's why I say she's just like we are. You know who run the café, and run the museum and run the store? The employees. Go in there, "Where Susie at?"

"I don't know. Haven't seen her in months." She's always gone somewhere and will come back laughing. The employees take care of Shoshone. She's got good employees, I'll tell you.

RM: Is there anything else we should touch on, George, that you haven't talked about in your other books?

GR: The Paiute name for Shoshone is ishígomb; it means "hazy," like alkali blowing off the hill.

RM: Okay, that does sound sort of like Shoshone, doesn't it? Can you think of anything else?

GR: No, not right offhand.

RM: Well, thanks so much for talking to me.

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