

An Interview with JACQUE RUUD

An Oral History conducted and edited by
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Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
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Jacquie Ruud
1989

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
June 1990

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Jacque Ruud at her office in Pahrump, Nevada May 17, 1988

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Jacque, why don't we start by you telling me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

JR: Jacqueline Louise Woner.

RM: And what was your birthdate and place of birth?

JR: I was born November 22, 1929, in Fullerton, California.

RM: What was your father's name?

JR: Glenn H. Woner.

RM: And where was he from?

JR: He was from Missouri.

RM: When did he come to California?

JR: He came to California shortly before I was born, which was not the first movement towards that way. He'd been to Colorado before that, and then to California.

RM: And what was his occupation?

JR: Mainly agriculture, but he branched out into other enterprises like an ice cream factory and milk deliveries and grocery stores.

RM: Was this all in the Fullerton area?

JR: No, no. That was more in what I call the Ashview, Alamo area, which is just outside of Chowchilla, California.

RM: Why don't you describe where Chowchilla is in California?

JR: It's just between Fresno and Merced. There's Fresno, then Madera, Chowchilla and then Merced.

RM: What was your mother's name and where was she from?

JR: Her name was Mildred Hensley and they were all from Greeley, Colorado. They were in the farming business. My grandfather helped put together the first water district for the farming area in that country.

RM: Did you grow up in Fullerton?

JR: No, we moved on to the Ashview - Alamo area and went into the almond orchard business.

RM: Then they went into the almond business when they moved?

JR: Yes, and vegetable crops.

RM: And where did you go to school?

JR: Well, mainly there - a little country school in that area. And then the high school was in Chowchilla, so we had to travel by bus to Chowchilla. That was about a 50-mile trip one way, and at that time it was a long, long trip.

RM: Where was your husband, Bob, from?

JR: He was from Madera. Actually, he was born in San Francisco.

RM: Do you remember his birthday?

JR: December 18, 1928.

RM: What line of work was his folks in?

JR: His folks were in agriculture also; in the vineyard business in California.

RM: Did you meet him in high school?

JR: No, it was kind of a unique thing. He was going to Fresno State College and majoring in agriculture and geology and because of some financial problems he could not continue college, so he and some friends decided to go to a Fresno State-San Jose football game as a compensation for leaving college, and at that time I was in San Jose taking business courses at business college.

My girlfriend talked me into going to the football game with her because she was going to San Jose College. We walked in to the stadium and we were standing there looking around deciding which side we were going to sit on and one of her old boyfriends walked up, who was going to college in Fresno and was a good friend of Bob's, and Bob. We sat down and went through the football game and invited them over for soup after the game to warm up, and it just started from there. He had been going with my best girlfriend in the dance band that we played in and I had never met him.

RM: You played in a dance band?

JR: Yes; I played trombone, of all things!

RM: In high school?

JR: Yes. We called ourselves the Upbeat Seven.

RM: I'll be darned.

JR: Oh, it was something.

RM: So you made a little extra money doing that?

JR: Yes, but I never learned how to dance, as we were always playing for dances.

RM: Well, how long was it before you and Bob then got married?

JR: It was almost 2 years after that.

RM: Did you stay in the area after you got married?

JR: Yes, we stayed in Madera on the ranch he had there.

RM: He had a ranch?

JR: Yes; it was kind of small; about 60 acres, most of which was vineyard.

RM: Was he running it?

JR: Yes. He was in the process of buying the property from his mom. He was doing farm work and working for International Harvester Equipment Company and I was also working at a Chevrolet Dealership and then on to a bank teller. That's what in essence got us started coming to Pahrump.

RM: Tell me about how you first came to Pahrump.

JR: He knew twin boys in Madera who were out looking for Desert Land Entry property and homesteaded property, and the state of Nevada was about the only one advertising such at that time. They first came over to Pahrump and came back with all these glowing reports of what was here and what could be done. Bob started looking for property in California to expand our operation so that one or the other of us could stay home instead of both of us working away from home. The property around there was a very alkali, desert-type ground and cost

\$1500 an acre. The soils in Pahrump were much the same, with alkali and clay and some sandy areas. We could pay 25 cents an acre for the Desert Land Entry property of 320 acres or live on it for 6 months of the year for a number of years and make the required improvements, then own it outright.

RM: Was there Desert Entry in California in your area?

JR: No.

RM: But you say the soil was alkali there too. Then you could get alkaline soil, but you could get it cheaper here?

JR: Right. Over there it cost you \$1500 an acre and here it cost 25 cents an acre.

RM: When was your first trip over here?

JR: In 1951. And that was the first time we met Tim Hafen. We were driving around the valley checking things out and checking the homestead area out, and at that time it was just dirt roads and you kind of made your own path. Then we went down to see some of the working ranches and at that time they still had cotton growing. They baled it up and stacked it on trucks and hauled it to California. Tim had a very young family at that time. We got out of the car and we were all standing around [talking about] going out in the fields to see what was going on and Tim said, "You'd better watch where you put your feet," and we couldn't figure out what was going on, and here were all these little sidewinder tracks across the field. I really didn't know at that time if I wanted to move where there were snakes or not. But we came back about 1955 to look things over again.

RM: Did it take you 4 years to think it over?

JR: Yes. We'd been looking at other places in California as well as Mexico, and we finally decided on Pahrump.

RM: Were you essentially looking for a cotton area or were you looking for an agricultural area?

JR: Agricultural, mainly.

RM: You didn't have any special crop in mind that you wanted to grow? JR: What we had on the ranch was alfalfa seed, cotton and vineyard at that time. What really got us started over this way was working with the University of Nevada at Reno. They were developing and experimenting with a new variety of alfalfa seed that was supposed to be aphid-resistant and all that, and it started out in Moapa, Nevada. Then they picked it up and started raising it here; they would not allow it out of the state. That was one of the first crops we tried while we were here.

RM: But you were working with the University while you were still living in California?

JR: Yes.

RM: Because they had a seed that you wanted or because they knew about the land?

JR: Well, it kind of went together. Bob came in here to look at some other properties that were for sale and that already had wells on them. In fact we had 3 artesian wells on the place when we first bought it and that was a big plus factor when we first started out.

RM: What was the valley like when you first came here in '51? What sticks out in your memory?

JR: There were about 200 people here then and the road from Shoshone into this area was all gravel and barely maintained. Traveling for long, long distances there was nothing but kind of grey ground and light colored shrubs. And then you'd come to a real green oasis where people lived and there were a lot of springs.

RM: Were the farms well developed at that time here or were they small bootstrap-type operations?

JR: No, the farming that was here was done very professionally at that time. They were small because they were small families, and since there weren't any roads or any type of communication you had to do for yourself and you planned accordingly with what you could handle.

RM: Why didn't you jump in '51? What did you see here that discouraged you?

JR: A lot of it was financing. When we moved in here in 1957 we had 2 partners with us and the financing came out of California because Las Vegas was not oriented for farming as they could make too much 'money and a fast turnover in gambling casinos. One of the main battles that we and a lot of the other farmers had in here was the financing.

RM: Even though you could get land here for 25 cents an acre it still took you a lot of money to get it going?

JR: Yes. We figured by the time we finally got the ground developed so that it would raise a good crop we probably had anywhere from \$3000 to \$4000 an acre invested in it. That's something you never get out of it, no matter how- you sell it.

RM: What did you see when you came in '55?

JR: Bob came in here in '55.

RM: Oh, he came in alone; you didn't come with him?

JR: No; he was looking and I was expecting our second child. At that time he had interests from the 2 people who became his partners. So he was looking for property to buy and making some negotiations over the next year and a half on that.

RM: You had given up on the Desert Entry?

JR: Yes; we bought the 320 acres, but it would just take too much to come in and put all the wells on it.

RM: What property did you buy when you came in, then?

JR: We bought what was known as the Lotterrer and Blagg property, which we call the Basin Ranch.

RM: That's your ranch now?

JR: Yes. At that time it was 800 acres, but about 200 of it was tall sand dunes.

RM: Who were Lotterrer and Blagg?

JR: They were from California too. I really don't know much about than, but they came out of farming areas in California.

RM: Did they develop raw ground here or did they buy it from somebody else?

JR: I really don't know how they acquired it. Our ranch had maybe 15 acres in the grain crop and 50 acres in cotton and that was all that was developed on the place.

RM: Then they might have been going with Desert Entry land?

JR: You might ask Button Ford; he'd probably know more about it. He said that either his dad or someone else used to live in the old railroad tie house where we were that burned.

RM: Did you buy all of their property?

JR: Yes.

RM: Did you buy it on time?

JR: It was shared among the 3 of us.

RM: Could you say what you paid an acre for it if that's not too personal? JR: Well, it was a very small amount; let's put it that way.

RM: Where is the property?

JR: It's a mile directly west of Highway 160 on Basin Road, but at that time it was a very wandering road off Highway 160 that came down into here around the sand dunes and around gullies and a few other things. No one had a straight road in Pahrump, and when you got to the end of one you usually found a residence and that was the end of the road and you turned around and went to the next spot; there were no continuing roads.

RM: What would be at the border now in terms of roads, so that a person in the future could visualize where it's located?

JR: There are no cross section roads where our property begins and where we first moved into, but 1/2 mile west from the beginning of our property to the next cross section roads would be Blagg and Basin. That runs through the middle of the ranch. Basin is on the very edge of it going east and west and Blagg runs through the middle of it going north and south.

RM: Were there buildings and 'wells on the property when you got here?

JR: There were just wells.

RM: Were they naturally-flowing artesian wells?

JR: Three of them were. We didn't have to pump but there were pumps on 2 of and as we got into fanning larger acreages we found out that we had to pump more of the wells. By about 1968 we had electricity in here and we began to put bigger pumps on and expand our farming operation, but before that we had diesel engines and we used Caterpillar [engines] attached to the gear heads and pumps.

RM: Was the tie house on the property?

JR: It was before we got there, but it had apparently burned down. We now have our shop on that area. We made it into a repair shop area because it already had a cement floor.

RM: Was that the only structure on the property?

JR: Yes.

RM: Who were your neighbors at that time?

JR: Harry Ford was our closest and Doby Doc was next. Katie Burkett ran the store and the post office; she was next (I'm going south). And then there was Walt Williams, who had the big Pahrump Ranch. And after that was the Bowmans, the Christensen, the Anderson and then Frehner and then Hafen.

RM: What was to the north of you?

JR: Ted Blosser and the Brady brothers and Dorothy Dorothy.

RM: How well did you know Doby Doc?

JR: No one knew him very well. He was a very private person but a very special person once you got to know him and visit with him.

RM: What stands out in your mind about him?

JR: All I know is that we used to sit there by the house and listen to him talk about the history of Nevada and what he had been involved in –gambling and everything in Vegas. He always wore bib overalls and a sleeveless knit undershirt and a white shirt with the cuffs and front unbuttoned and a diamond stickpin in his bib overalls. And a great big grey or white cowboy hat. I didn't see him in those too often. He mainly had on rubber boots because he was out irrigating his orchards and garden. He had the only civil defense cellar and stored water area in Pahrump. Every Christmas he and Astrid, his housekeeper, would have a party and she would make mulled wine like they do in Sweden - very good and very potent.

RM: How-well did you know Dorothy Dorothy?

JR: Not very well; we didn't see too much of her. She'd moved into Vegas shortly after we moved out here and the ranch was sold to Mr. Wilcox. RM: How well did you know Harry Ford?

JR: We got to know him very well over the years, living next to him and working with him.

RM: How would you describe him?

JR: As a very knowledgeable person and a very concerned person about his community and how it was growing. He doesn't get involved in politics too much; I don't know if it's because of his position or what, but he lets the right people know how he feels on major issues.

RM: And how about his father, Stan Ford?

JR: I guess Stan Ford drilled most of the irrigation wells here in Pahrump in the early days. And I thoroughly enjoyed him. He always had a smile on his face and he was a comical-type person who was always joking with you and would do anything for you just like most of the people in the olden days. They were pioneering type people; whenever there was a need they would help and they expected the same in return.

RM: So there was a lot of cooperation among people then?

JR: Yes.

RM: Do you see the same kind of cooperation now?

JR: No; a lot of it is gone.

RM: When you moved here you had children, didn't you?

JR: Yes; we had 2. Rick was 7 and Joyce was almost 3.

RM: What was your housing when you first got here?

JR: We lived in a 48 x 8 house trailer that we tried to put a 6-room house full of furniture in. It was very crowded.

RM: Did you bring the trailer in from California?

JR: Yes we did.

RM: What was it like for you moving into this remote area when there wasn't power or running water or anything. You were probably used to those conveniences, weren't you?

JR: Yes. We had everything in California. Every road we drove on except for a short distance from the house was paved and there was electricity and TV and all the conveniences - all the electrical kitchen items that you could use - and when we moved over here, there was nothing. And the kids really didn't know how to play or entertain themselves and they had to learn how to spend a lot of time reading. [On my] first trip to town I bought a bunch of children's books and building toys and of course a dump truck for Rick because of all the sand dunes we had around us and they learned how to entertain themselves. You could only run the generator light plant at certain times of the day and instead of an automatic dishwasher and automatic washing machine, you had a washing machine that ran either by a motor or ran by generated electricity once a week.

RM: Initially, you didn't have a washing machine, did you? How did you do your laundry before you got the machine?

JR: I just put them in a big tub with soap in it and I took them out by the artesian well and soaked them for awhile and then scrubbed and rinsed them and hung them on bushes. Eventually I got my clothesline put up and then I would hang them on the clothesline. It was back to basics. I just decided that if I was going to live here and enjoy myself, I had to get in an adventurous spirit and pioneering attitude.

RM: What kind of lights did you have at night?

JR: We started with Coleman lanterns and a Coleman stove. But we had to trade all our electrical things to butane and then we had a butane stove, butane heat and butane refrigerators and butane freezers.

RM: What did you do about shopping if you were so far away from a big supermarket?

JR: I made a lot of mistakes when we first moved here - I spoiled food and I got too much or I didn't get enough. I eventually learned and had very good neighbors who were willing to share, and we also had the small store here, but our main source of fresh vegetables was Is Vegas. After living in the California garden bowl it was hard to have to eat canned, not fresh, vegetables.

RM: How often did you go into town?

JR: At least once a week when we first started here; more like 2 or 3 times. We had a lot of parts and things to get to get the equipment going and all of that.

RM: Did you go out over the Johnnie Summit?

JR: No, we went the other way - the road is now called the Pahrump and Blue Diamond Road.

RM: You went over the Spring Mountains Pass? That was a pretty rough road, wasn't it?

JR: Well, it was for about a year and then the state had it paved from there clear out to the end of the cattle guard at the north end of Pahrump, towards Johnnie. Then a couple of years later they paved from the cattle guard on up to Highway 95.

RM: Is that the way you went, or did you go over the other way?

JR: We went over Blue Diamond.

RM: And that was a rough road?

JR: Yes. Like most dirt roads, even some that are in here now, you hit a lot of ruts sometimes; it's mainly washboards. Although a lot of that mountain area is gravelly and holds up pretty well, it gets washboarded and if you drove too fast you're all over the road.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Where did your son go to school, and how did that work out?

JR: He went to school at the main school (what we call the primary school) here. They had all 8 grades in the 3 rooms. I think they had 45 students to start out with.

RM: Was it a pretty good school?

JR: Yes, I think so.

RM: Did the school pick him up, or did you have to drive him?

JR: He had to walk about a mile and a quarter from our house to State Highway 160, as we can it now, and there was some kind of a bus or station wagon that would pick him up and take him to school. If he missed the bus, he had to walk another mile to school. To me, or someone else, it wouldn't have been too far to walk, but I guess for someone with pretty short legs it would be a long way.

RM: How did the kids like it after they got adjusted? Did they adjust pretty well?

JR: It didn't take them very long. And they forget about a lot of things like that. At first it was a real shock, of course. My daughter used to go into the living room the first thing in the morning after breakfast and plop down and turn on the TV and watch Captain Kangaroo and that type of program; it was something she did every day. She'd entertain herself 2 or 3 hours just by watching TV. She got over here and there was nothing for her to sit down and look at. She had to find out how to play and how- to read.

RM: How did people spend their evenings?

JR: We did a lot of reading and had a lot of get-togethers. It was just going from one place to the other and visiting. We'd play cards and horseshoes and the kids had their own area on the highway where they had a drag strip when they got old enough for cars. And of course they went jackrabbit hunting at night and they did some trapping, and at that time they had bobcats and badgers and coyotes and quails and dove - quite a few of the desert animals.

RM: Were there any women's groups in the valley?

JR: They had what they called the Women's Club, and then there was the PTA, which was very active within the school. They helped with all the programs and would help teach when they needed the help, and we put on movies for the community.

RM: What kind of movies - educational or entertainment?

JR: Entertainment. And we had a movie I guess twice a month and they'd go to town and go to bulk candy places and we'd sell that and make money on it to buy more films and things.

RM: Did you show feature films?

JR: Not any really current ones because they cost too much at that time.

RM: Where did you show them?

JR: I don't even know if the building is still up or not; it was right there on the school grounds. They used to have an old shed where they would hold community meetings or any kind of an agricultural meeting that came up. I really don't know the size - I would say it was 30' x 40' or something like that.

RM: What was the women's club involved in?

JR: It was mainly social.

RM: When would they get together?

JR: In the evening at individuals' homes; we'd go from one place to another.

RM: Would you play cards, or what would you do at these gatherings?

JR: Not necessarily cards or anything; it was mainly a Mormon town at that time and so . . .

RM: Were the women in the club all Mormon?

JR: No, it was for both. It didn't make any difference. They mainly worked together on projects to improve the school or to improve the community. If someone was in need, they would get together and have a potluck and raise funds for that.

RM: Were there any other groups in town that the women were the focus of?

JR: Well, the Mormon Church had their own . . . For instance, the men had Boy Scouts that they handled in the LOS Church, and the women had what they called the Relief Society, that met every Wednesday.

RM: You said it was a Mormon town. Were there mostly Mormons in the community?

JR: I would say it was mainly Mormon.

RM: Were there any kinds of activities for non-Mormons?

JR: They all commingled in what they were doing, at least to start out, with. Later on, Mrs. Burson and her husband moved to Pahrump and she started up what she called the Good News Club and she had kind of a nondenominational church area of her own. And some of the kids used to go to her Wednesday Good News Club meetings.

RM: Was that a second church in the valley?

JR: Yes. And after that came the Community Church. I think that was the third church.

RM: Where did Burson hold her meetings?

JR: At her house on Homestead, and later in the community building.

RM: Does she still live in the valley?

JR: I think she does, off and on. She goes to Colorado off and on; that's where they were originally from. Her husband passed away some years ago and she spends a lot of her time with her kids, mainly.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about how a cotton gin started and about your role in it?

JR: They finished building the cotton gin in August of 1959 and they ginned part of the cotton in the latter part of the year after they finished building it. Before that, some of it was baled and hauled over to Weedpatch Gin in Bakersfield, California and some of it went out by truck and trailerload lots (a loose cotton haul) to a gin in Blythe, California.

RM: Did you go to work for the gin right away?

JR: No. I started September or October of 1960.

RM: What were your duties?

JR: Mainly weighmaster and secretary, and I helped put together their budgets.

RM: What does the weighmaster do exactly? Do you weigh the cotton?

JR: Yes. They used to be able to put 2 trailerloads of cotton on the scales at one time. When they'd get a heavy weight of loads of cotton, they'd pull the tow vehicle completely off the scale and weigh just the trailer of cotton itself. After it was all ginned off, the yard tractor would bring it across empty, and then you'd have the empty weight and a tag that would tell you how many bales were ginned off this one trailer load or two trailer loads.

RM: So then they would gin out of the wagons?

JR: Yes. And you'd have a certain percentage of what they called lint, which was the cotton, and a certain percent was seed, and the balance was called gin trash, which consisted of leaves, sticks, dirt clods, cracked seed and so forth. They sold the seed to either the dairies or they sold it to go into cottonseed meal. The cottonseed meal processing plant was in Arizona.

RM: It would then be shipped to Arizona?

JR: Yes, and the baled cotton would go on to Bakersfield, to the Calcot Limited warehouse, which was a grower-owned type enterprise that sold cotton nationwide.

RM: Did everybody grow the some variety of cotton here?

JR: Yes. It was mainly California strains. There really isn't all that much difference in California and Nevada elevation in some areas

RM: How many years did you work at the gin?

JR: I worked till the spring of 1983. I worked full time. They had a gin manager who handled a lot of the financing and some of the marketing and contract sales until about 1965 or '66, and then they lost him when he went back to school to earn further degrees. I then had the whole thing, and since they decided I could handle it, they left me with it, with the stipulation to call them if there were major problems.

RM: Then you were the total management of the gin? Were you the only office employee?

JR: Yes. I had seasonal help, but the main decisions came out of Arizona from the owners.

RM: How many bales a year were they shipping out of the valley?

JR: I think the most that they ever shipped out of here was in 1964, and that year they had almost 6,500 bales.

RM: Did it go down after that?

JR: Well, the acreage went down as well as the production.

RM: Did the acreage go down because of allotment or were people growing cotton?

JR: It's because they had to start rotating the crops in order to keep the ground the way it should be.

RM: The Pahrump Ranch was the big producer, wasn't it?

JR: Yes. He had about 1,300 acres in cotton.

RM: Who were the big growers in the valley?

JR: Let's see. I would say that in about 1970 if you combined the Bowman boys, they were second, Walt Williams, who had the Pahrump Ranch is first, and Tim [Hafen) would be third. At that time Bob took over the Pahrump Ranch operation as well as our own.

RM: Oh, I didn't know that. Was that after they sold to Cal -Vada?

JR: Yes. Cal-Vada was leasing it out, so he and Hafen went into partnership on it and Bob was doing the managing of the ranch.

RM: How many acres of cotton did you grow?

JR: At one time, I think we had about 200 acres in our Basin Ranch, and with the Pahrump Ranch about 700 acres. That was about the most we ever had.

RM: Who was growing cotton north of you?

JR: Blosser, the Brady brothers, the Wilcox Ranch, Hollis Harris, Willis Garlin and the Simkins brothers.

RM: What was Harris' place?

JR: That was the former Fowler and Blagg property which he bought. And then there's Willis Garland, which is now Al Bell's place. I had 12 to 13 growers: Wilcox, Harris, Garland, the Brady brothers, Simkins, ourselves, Walt Williams, Melvin Murton, Perry Bowman, Arlen Frehner, Tim Hafen, L. O. Anderson and Lyle Christensen.

RM: When did you see cotton begin to really decline here?

JR: Soon after Cal-Vada bought Walt Williams' property.

RM: That was the beginning of the end?

JR: Yes.

RM: Did you recognize it as such at the time?

JR: Well, they said there would be 5 to 7 years before they would have to start building roads and all that within the area, but they were ahead of schedule on almost everything that they did. It was 1975, I think, by the time we finished down there.

RM: Is that right. They sold it in '70 and by '75 they were through with agriculture?

JR: They were building roads. They tried farming one or two years after that, but it was just too hard in between the roadways.

RM: When did you stop growing cotton on your property?

JR: 1982.

RM: Were you among the Last to quit?

JR: Yes. But it got just too expensive. The gentlemen who owned the cotton gin had to have a certain amount of funds in each year in order to maintain the gin and personnel. You either had to have enough cotton on hand to warrant doing that, or he would have to charge 2 or 3 times the going ginning rate in order to generate enough funds to keep going.

RM: Who else was growing cotton when you quit?

JR: There were 7 of them - my husband Bob and Digger Anderson, Lyle Christensen, Perry Bowman, Tim Hafen, Ted Blosser and Hollis Harris.

RM: How many acres were they growing the last year?

JR: I think there were about 600 acres all told at the last. But by that time their alfalfa market had grown. We had gone into the cubing operation and they had a very good market with the Japanese people, because of the quality of the hay and not using an additive called bentonite, but just using water instead as an adhesive, and not having bug problems or a bunch of chemical spray on the alfalfa.

RM: You mean that sometimes when they cube they use bentonite to make it cube?

JR: Utah does all the time, and I guess in the areas of California they do it too. It puts weight back in. So when they bought a product out of Pahrump they bought a high-quality product with no added weight, additives or anything.

RM: Looking back on your life on the farm, would you say it was pretty successful economically, or was it always kind of marginal?

JR: Very marginal.

RM: Why was that? What were the problems you faced?

JR: The weather is one thing. If you didn't get your crop in within a certain time, or if it didn't stay warm, you would lose your first whole planting and you'd have to go back in and replant. Weather has a lot to do with it. That's why we got out of the alfalfa seed business. We tried it

about 3 years and it was very good. The alfalfa seed was very hard, very high-quality seed, high in quality like a lot of the products in Pahrump, but in July and August when you are supposed to be harvesting the seed we were getting a lot of rainstorms and thunderstorms and they damaged a lot of it. So we finally gave up on it.

RM: Were you one of those who grew lettuce?

JR: No, we were among those who sat back and waited to see.

RM: When did Bob go into politics?

JR: About 1967.

RM: He ran for county commissioner. He was quite popular, wasn't he? JR: Yes. But the first 2 campaigns that he had, he was a Republican in a Democratic county and he was a young "kid," as they called him. At that time he was 40 years old. He was not known up at Tonopah at all, so he spent a lot of time knocking on doors, talking and listening, and he won. He also showed people county-wide that he was concerned about what was going on, and the growth of the county, and what we could do to further it and help our kids out as well as the whole county.

RM: What made him want to take the job on?

JR: I really don't know. I think it all started with the road situation here and not having access to people coming down and helping maintain the roads. And then [he was interested in] our school systems. We just felt that we were a growing community and we needed some help and we needed some representation up there.

RM: And you felt you hadn't been getting it before?

JR: Yes. So he and Hafen and the gin manager at that time were talking about running someone from here for the assembly and someone for county commissioner, and they tossed a coin to see who was going to do what. So Tim went up to the assembly position and the legislature in Carson and Bob went up to the commissioners of District 3 in Tonopah, but they worked hard at campaigning.

RM: He was in for several terms, wasn't he?

JR: Yes, he put in about 12 1/2 years.

RM: Was that continuous, or was there a break in there?

JR: Oh, there was a break in there. Bob was in office from 1967 to 1976, then from 1981 to '83. He decided he wanted out of it for a short while, then he found out that he was spending more

time helping people and answering questions then when he was in office, so he might just as well go back.

RM: Then he passed away in '83, and you . . .

JR: He had a year and a half to go; I filled out the term.

RM: How did you like that?

JR: Well, it wasn't really anything different. Whenever he'd care from commissioner business and all that, I used to sit down and read all the minutes and see what was going on and talk to him a lot about what was going on. I kept abreast of a lot of things within the county as well as the community.

RM: So you were prepared in some ways to take it on. What do you think Bob was proudest of, in terms of his accomplishments as commissioner? Did he ever say?

JR: I think he was proudest of having total empathy between one end of the county and the other. There was no division between Tonopah and Pahrump or Tonopah and Beatty or whatever; everybody was working for everybody else. And all areas of the county were beginning to grow, with paved roads, more and better schools, city water and sewage systems, recreational areas and so on.

RM: And what were you proudest of in your year and a half?

JR: I really don't know. When I stepped in his office they had the big hospital fight going on and that took up most of the first year of meetings. We really didn't set out to accomplish a lot of anything, just maintaining what we had and solving some of the bad problems that were happening. At that time, we had a new planner in the office, Steve Bradhurst. He had new ideas that differed from what the people had been used to, and we had that type of fight on our hands, too. I don't know; I guess just being able to resolve, on a daily basis, the problems; that was a lot of it, plus being in on the start of the Pahrump Valley Amargosa Valley Road.

RM: What did you find were some of the significant problems that the county faced during the year and a half that you were there, as well as during Bob's time there?

JR: Mainly trying to keep up, with the growing areas and roads, schools and any kind of emergency needs, and bringing in businesses and maintaining what people had there - maintaining a living for a lot of people. Of course the town of Tonopah had a lot of water problems, and fire department needs. They had mines coming in and opening up and closing up that were supposed to have been there on a 20-year setup which had expended monies to help set them up, and then they closed up before their time. I would say constant growing is a lot of the problem for people, because there are always needs for more roads, schools and emergency personnel and vehicles as well as recreational areas. You have to get that all

resolved and you have to help build them. Schooling is always a major problem, and of course the sheriff's department has their area, too.

In order to grow, you have to raise taxes and lower taxes as needs arise, and you have to get people to go along with you. It's constant politicking and meetings, and you're not just meeting with your constituents over minor things, you've got state people involved and federal people involved, and there are trips to Washington and so forth. You're constantly on the go and constantly at meetings with EPA, the Health Department, the Road Department, Federal Transportation, U.S. Forestry Service, B.L.M., Extension Service, and the colleges, and a lot of [other entities].

RM: It's a big job. And it doesn't pay very much, does it?

JR: No. I guess they've raised the wage to around \$1000 a month now. Pat [Mankins] says that you can spend \$10,000 a year of your own money in this job.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Jackie, what other kinds of things was Bob involved in when he was commissioner?

JR: As far as the growth in the community is concerned, he was involved in the Soil Conservation Service here, doing a lot of capability studies within the area on flood control and all that. And he was the chef for the Harvest Festival for about 11 years. That all started out when Walt Williams, who was from Texas, put on what they called a pit barbecue. At that time they used to put all the meat in burlap bags and then put mud all over it and of course, you can't do that when you're feeding the public. RM: Even though they did it in Texas?

JR: Not when you charge for it, you can't. You'd get reported to the

health department So we had to work out a different way of doing that. We used to have a gal named Norine Rooker prepare the barbecue sauce. She used to put tabasco sauce in it, and depending on how much she had to drink, it was too hot or wasn't hot enough. But we wrapped it in foil wrap and burlap bags, dumped the bags in water so they wouldn't burn, and then put them in the pit, which was 1/3 full of mesquite coals, and put metal tops over the pits and then packed them with dirt to seal it. It grew from a fun event day for the kids and for anyone who wanted to peel garlic, to wrap and tie meat packages, or to tie a ribbon on a goat tail, into what it is today - a major celebration in the valley.

Betty Bolling and I used to make all the posters and spend weeks painting and drawing pictures and they used to be 16" x 25" instead of these little 9" x 10"s or whatever they are nowadays. Everyone used to converge on the cotton gin up there and we'd all get together and put everything together and get it going, and we got it down to a system where maybe it would take us 3 or 4 weeks at the most to get things all organized for the Queen contest, Miley Horse trial, ticket sales, advertisements, barbecue and gymkhana, and other fun events done and successfully put across. As it got bigger and more people were involved it would take more time. But between that and trail rides and fishing, and all those events, there are a lot of things you could do within Pahrump.

RM: What was the trail ride with the kids that you have the picture of here?

JR: That's the old El Riatas Club annual trail ride.

RM: What exactly was that and how did it get started?

JR: This started out with a lot of the little kids here, some of them even riding horses to school instead of going by bus. We were going to teach them how to ride and how to compete in outside gymkhanas and all that. They started a small gymkhana practice and from there we would have a trail ride as an annual event, so they asked Bob to be their chef. He'd feed them beer pancakes and they all thought they were really being bad, you know, eating something with beer in it.

RM: Where did you ride?

JR: Up to Wheeler Pass and through Sawmill Canyon and up to Les Adam's place. He bought that little canyon up there and he let us come and stay overnight.

RM: Was it a one-night campout?

JR: Yes. The riding group would start out shortly after 6:30 in the morning from the cotton gin and it would take them almost until 5:00 or 6:00 at night to get up there; it was quite a distance. The little kids would start out pretty well and then it would get to be too much for them, so the people who came along later taking supplies up, would pick them up and go on. They'd have steaks and hamburgers and hot dogs and fried potatoes and of course beans or corn-on-the-cob and all those good things and stay overnight with Tom Duke and his guitar and have sing-alongs. The kids would go out and climb the mountains and have their own parties, I guess.

RM: How many people would be involved in that?

JR: I'd say at least 50 or 60.

RM: When did it begin?

JR: About '66 or '67.

RM: Is it still going?

JR: No. I think the club lasted until about 6 years ago. Then it changed over to Rough Riders and something else that they have now. They have 2 different sets of riding clubs from here now.

RM: What are they?

JR: There are parents and children in one, and mainly high school kids and older people in the other.

RM: Do they ever camp out?

JR: If they do, I haven't heard of it. They go to the other events statewide, and so forth.

RM: What other things was Bob involved in?

JR: His one love was fishing. We did quite a bit of that in Utah and on the lake, and in Mexico. [He also loved] race-car driving, which he started at Craig Road in Las Vegas, mainly because a guy owed him quite a bit of money and one of the things he turned in was a racecar. He took

that as part of the debt and got involved in racing at Craig Road in Las Vegas. We'd been involved in racing events ever since we started going together. Some of the first events we went to were little midget car races in California, and then from Craig Road they got him interested in starting something in Tonopah.

RM: What is Craig Road? I'm not familiar with that.

JR: Craig Road is on the outskirts of Las Vegas going toward Salt Lake City.

RM: Is there a racetrack there?

JR: Not anymore, but there was a 1/4-mile oval asphalt track.

RM: What kind of cars did he drive?

JR: Most of the time he drove a jalopy; he was the only one who had a Ford.

RM: Did he do his own mechanic work?

JR: No. Even though he knew how, his time was too limited. We had a ranch mechanic and, as I said before, the tractors kind of went to the wayside on repairs when it was racetime, but he enjoyed it immensely. He said he'd get out on the racetrack and no one could talk to him and he could just light up his cigar and go away. There are about 11 cars from Pahrump that used to go to Vegas.

RM: And you say he was involved in the formation of the track at Tonopah?

JR: Yes. He helped them through the county and the road department and road equipment to build the track on county property and get it started. He was pretty proud of that, because it was something that Tonopah really needed. They didn't have anything for entertainment up there. Pahrump is fairly close to Las Vegas and they can go entertain themselves if they run out of things to do here, but in Tonopah, there's nothing.

RM: Did he help start the one here?

JR: No.

RM: That was after he passed away. But they named it after him, didn't they?

JR: Yes. They had tried to talk him into having one here, but he said, "Well, the boys up there are building one and we really need to support them. If you get separated out, neither one of you are going to do any good." And it's about care to pass in that way, because both of them are struggling to maintain themselves right now. We have Las Vegas, again, as competition.

He loved to collect beer cans and every time we'd go to any of the old mining town areas he'd go antique shopping or go through all the old beer can piles and that, and oyster cans. I can't believe he . .

RM: He'd collect old oyster cans?

JR: No. I told him beer cans were enough; all right. But he just had a love of history and antiques and was interested in a lot of things. It made things interesting.

RM: How-many children did you have?

JR: We had the 3. The first one was Rick, then the girl Joyce and then the last boy, Robin.

RM: What years were they born?

JR: Rick was born on Father's Day, June 19th, 1951, Joyce was born on August 31, 1955 and Robin was born July 13, 1959.

RM: One of them was born here?

JR: Yes, Robin was.

RM: When you first came here, it was a long way to town. What did you do for health care for the children?

JR: We read a lot of health books. And if anything major happened, you took care of it yourself until you were able to get to a hospital in Vegas. My main concern was that the children [might be] bitten by snakes or something poisonous.

RM: Did that happen quite a bit in the valley, or was it just a fear?

JR: Not till later, when there were more people here. They started going off on their own and doing crazy things like putting their arms down gopher holes and getting bit.

RM: What happened when a child got bitten?

JR: Well, by that time they had the antivenom here and volunteer ambulance crews to administer the shot. We used to give antivenom shots ourselves, as well. If we had to, we could administer it, and then get to town as fast as possible. We had that and the snakebite kits. The first year we were here, Bob killed about 20 sidewinders and you didn't know how many you hit going in and out to Las Vegas - they used to be all over the highway.

RM: Sidewinders?

JR: That and rattlesnakes You don't see so many of them anymore. We are seeing more Green Mojaves now then we do the others.

RM: Are they poisonous?

JR: Deadly I guess the first place we ever saw them was down on Hafens' Ranch. They are green colored; they are not brownish black.

RM: Do they rattle?

JR: Yes; they are a rattler. But they don't have any antivenom for them. In most cases it's the end if you get bitten by than. They started coming in here in the late 1970s.

RM: I wonder why?

JR: I don't know. It's just a change. They say they have a rattlesnake that doesn't have a rattle on it, too. Some of them have shown up here. Then they have the little coral snakes and Red Racers and gopher snakes . . . Then there's another black kind of snake called a blow snake that we had here for awhile that was nonpoisonous. But after I killed the first sidewinder in the front yard and found out how to do it, I lost all my fear of them, because I found out how they act and how I should react to them.

RM: How did you kill than?

JR: I killed it with a hoe; chapped it to pieces and buried it. Rick and Joyce came in one day. They were going to make a tree house and had been out getting lumber and they said, "Bay, Mom, there's the funniest looking worm out there, we want you to come see it." So I went out there and it was a sidewinder. You just learn their habits and you can teach your kids how to avoid those areas.

RM: What do you tell the kids?

JR: Don't go near shady places that have any kind of covering during the main warm parts of the day, because that's where they go first. And that's where they cm up from first. But we used to go down into the cotton fields and if we had left a water jug out there the night before, we'd pick it up and there would be a snake underneath it, and that type of thing. We had to be careful. Or you'd be chopping weeds out in portions of the field and there would be little sidewinders in there.

RM: Did any of your hands ever get bit?

JR: On their rubber boots, yes. But it never penetrated deeply enough to really count.

RM: Did you work a lot in the fields?

JR: Quite a bit when we first moved here.

RM: Was that a shock for you?

JR: No, I'm used to it. I've been farming all my life, you know. I always swore up and down I'd never marry a farmer, but I did.

RM: What did you do for help besides yourself and Bob? Did you have to hire a hand?

JR: Yes. We had what they call the Bracero Program, which was Mexican people who'd come in and the government would pay them a certain percentage of their wages and you'd pay the other and they would work.

RM: What did you do after they eliminated the Bracero Program? Did you go to undocumented workers?

JR: Yes. They'd come in April or May of every year and work through June and July, and by that time the cotton was big enough that it didn't need any more cultivation or field work and then they'd leave. [They worked] About 3 months.

RM: What did you do for machinery? Did you have your own pickers?

JR: Yes; it was all brought out of California - there was no such thing as a farm machinery place in Las Vegas. Every time we needed a piece of equipment or any kind of repairs, we had to go to Bakersfield or to Lancaster. That's a long way, but it was the only spot.

RM: How did you get parts? Hank Records told me that they used to fly parts in to him sometimes. Did they ever do that for you?

JR: Yes, if there was that much of a need. Either that or you'd start out right after your piece of equipment broke down, go to Bakersfield (it's a 4 1/2 hour drive) and pick up the part and be back . . . In other words, you'd spend a 24-hour day. When we first moved over here and Bob would need parts or he would need to have something sent over here, he'd spend all day over in Shoshone making phone calls and waiting for calls back. It was a lot slower.

RM: How do you see the future of Pahrump Valley?

JR: I don't know if we'll ever get any kind of industry in here. Going over that mountain is a pretty heavy feat for any type of trucking. We found that out when the cotton trucks used to come in here all the time. It will either be small industry that doesn't need that type of transportation, or it will just stay as it is - mainly a bedroom city to Las Vegas and for people who want to get out of that type of situation; children as well as the adults [who want to] live in the cleaner environment at a slower pace of life. Because even today people don't get in a

hurry about things as they do in other areas like living in the city. You've got to have this done right now, and you know exactly where to go to get it done, and so forth. Out here you say, "I'll make a list and I'll go to town and I'll get this done when I get there."

RM: How dependent is the valley now, in terms of the economy, on the Test Site?

JR: One time they figured that about 25 percent [of the people] worked there; now, I don't know. I think that there's more of a percentage who work in Vegas - either that or locally. As the population grows, there's more of a work force needed to maintain it.

RM: How do you think the people in the valley feel about the repository? Or do they even think about it?

JR: I think most of them are in favor of it because of all the testing that's been done all these years. They found that radiation doesn't show up here in the water or on the people or in the animals. There's no outrageous type of growth on people or anything like that. It's just about proved that it's not contaminating our way of life or our people here. I really don't know. I have no fears about it. They say that the people who come home with the radiation badges and have their radiation checked all the time, pick up more radiation within their homes than they do on the Test Site. They bring them home and leave them on top of the microwave or top of the TV or something like that and pick up more than in a whole month or whatever it is out there on the Test Site. I would say it's a healthy environment out there. As healthy as it can be.

RM: How do you see the future of agriculture in the valley?

JR: I imagine that it will stay pretty much the way it is right now, until it gets to a point where land prices are [so high that] they can't afford to keep the ground in agriculture anymore, but that'll be a few years down the road yet.

RM: The main focus is growing alfalfa?

JR: Yes. That's about all they really can grow. They are trying to get them to grow some Sudan grass, which would be another export item to Japan, but I don't know how that's going to go.

RM: What is Sudan grass used for?

JR: Mainly dairy products. It's a no-bloat type feed.

RM: Does alfalfa cause bloat?

JR: Sometimes. It all depends on how much they gorge themselves on it. Sudan grass is more of a fiber . . .

RM: Is it high in protein?

JR: Not too high in protein. What they do is to feed them a high energy food and then they [add fiber].

RM: Do they cube it like alfalfa?

JR: No, they bale it. They are in the process now . . . they've done this with cotton and other products that they ship overseas; they compress them. They take a 130-pound bale and compress it down about this size . . .

RM: About 18 inches by one foot.

JR: They do that to baled hay and they do it to Sudan grass and a lot of the other products.

RM: So it's kind of a giant cube?

JR: Yes. I haven't seem them try to compress down one of those big rolls of alfalfa. But, you know, everyone hates to see agriculture leave.

RM: It's been a whole era; really the history of the valley till 1970.

JR: Yes.

RM: Jackie, is there anything that you feel like you'd like to say or that I've forgotten to ask you?

JR: No, not really. It was a shocking change of life to come over here, but it's been a very rewarding life and I know that if we had stayed where we were we never would have gotten involved in what we're doing or grown as much as we have in our own thinking and involvement in government as well as community growth or anything like that.

RM: One thing about Nevada - it offers a lot of opportunities like that, doesn't it?

JR: Yes. If you are willing to take the position and do a good job at it, [you can] help make its history. Nevada is still growing; it has a long way to go. There are so many things that it has; minerals and wells and gasses and . . . one phase comes in and the other goes out; it's constantly changing.

Bob and I were involved with the university up there in Reno for years. He was on one of the advisory boards for the agriculture department and you learn a lot from the university and all the researching they do for a lot of the different businesses and everything else that comes in the state.

RM: What was Bob doing with them?

JR: They had a lot of extension services on cattle and other things - dairy and beef products . . . he was on the board up there, helping them decide where to go to improve the state in what they were doing and what they needed to be looking for; economical growth as well as all that.

RM: He was very involved, wasn't he?

JR: Yes, he was. Not only that, he involved everybody else. Mainly me. When he was away, I ran the ranch, especially in the spring. During the first of the year, the board of taxation or whatever it is that makes all the taxation and budget decisions went over everything and he would spend a month and a half or 2 months up there in Tonopah and that's when you really have to do the most fieldwork and get all the products and seed and fertilizers ordered and all that.

RM: So you were doing all of that?

JR: Jackie Hafen was doing that at her house and I was doing it at my house. We used to compare notes. Bob and I also got involved in the seed and fertilizer business. We figured that the price of the seed that we had to buy through Clark County was out of this world, so we started selling seed.

RM: Are you still doing that?

JR: No. I have too many things to do. I just couldn't keep up with them all, so I had to let some go.

RM: Do your children live here in the area?

JR: So far. I don't know if they are going to stay here or not. My oldest son now works out at the Test Site as a mechanic-welder, I guess you would call it. He decided he couldn't raise a family on what he was making on the ranch so he's out there making \$17 an hour instead of \$6. My daughter is still working on the ranch and my youngest son is working for Ron Floyd in the construction business.

RM: Is Ron Floyd your brother?

JR: He's my brother-in-law. He married one of my sisters.

RM: Did they care over here because you and Bob came here?

JR: From the letters I wrote home.

RM: Were they glowing letters?

JR: No, not all of them, just about all the fun things that happened. Like all the snakes and all the breakdowns, and all this and that. Ronny's dad was in the pump business and he'd been raised helping do that so he knew that there would be a good opportunity for a pump business as soon as power came on and changed the way of irrigation here.

CHAPTER FOUR

JR: Ronny's love was the hardware business and up until a few years ago he had been doing everything and anything but that, but he'd always had a little bit of hardware business in one form or another until he got into the Ace Hardware and now he's in it full scale.

RM: Is that his primary focus now?

JR: No, I would say that his primary focus is buying and selling property.

RM: And construction too?

JR: Yes. But what kept him in business was his land sales; buying property and then subdividing it and selling it. He's one of these self-made people, and he says he stays in business and out of politics. He backs people like Hafen and Bob who would really have a pride in and concern for the community. But he's always helped a lot in a lot of different areas - schools and the community itself. [He's always] willing to loan his equipment and his men and time to help build something. He planted all the trees in the community park over there, or he went over there and got them and used his backhoe to dig all the holes and so forth. A lot of things like that went on when we first started out with anything. The whole community would be involved and the women would bring potluck and they'd cook a big pot of beans or something as well and everybody would work at it and have fun, play basketball and have water fights and things like that later on. You don't see so much of that anymore; everything has to be paid for. That's the sad thing about it, but there are still a few.

RM: I think it's an inevitable part of growth.

JR: But it's sad. I'm awfully glad that my children grew up with that type of an attitude because you could leave your children . . . if you had to make an emergency trip to town, no matter where they were someone would take care of them, and they would mind them just like they would mind their own parents and never have any fears about being left.

RM: It's almost like being left with a relative.

JR: Yes. I see a real change in my granddaughters. They won't walk any place unless a parent is with them, or some other person they know. That's after watching shows in school as well as on TV.

Written Supplement

We worked extensively with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service through the University of Nevada, Reno, Agricultural Department, both on cattle and on raw crops of alfalfa seed, cotton, grains and alfalfa. Our ranch had at least 3 to 4 experimental varieties of cotton that we raised every year for the University of Nevada, Reno. We found California varieties best suited for this area, and found that, due to the dust and dry climate in Pahrump, it was best to raise Black Aberdeen Angus Cattle to keep pink eye and other problems of lighter-colored animals from developing in the herd.

The largest head count on animals on our ranch was a little over 300 and our children, as well as other children in the community and around Las Vegas, raised and trained steers from our herd for 4-H projects. It was a very good project for families, as raising animals takes diligence, constant care and unlimited patience, as well as very accurate gain records. We had field days of judging and handling of animals for the 4-H children (what Bob called fun days) that were supervised by Bob and the university veterinarian and the local U.S. Extension agent. We had many calls day and night about, "What do I do now?" whenever problems came up. The hardest part [of the experience for the children] was selling their animal friends and projects at the end of the year. Many tears were shed by all.

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