

Interview with
IMOGENE SHARP

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2010



Imogene Sharp
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.

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—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

This is Robert McCracken talking to Imogene Sharp at her home in Pahrump, Nevada, November 11, 2009. Ms. Sharp's brother Ray and sister Laverne join in from time to time.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Imogene, when and where you were born?

IS: I was born in Beatty, Nevada, October 17, 1941. I was six months old when my dad and my mother came down from Beatty to Pahrump. My mom came from up by Lida, Nevada—Lida Junction.

RM: Was she Paiute?

IS: Full-blood Shoshone. My dad was from Ash Meadows, in that area, and he was Paiute.

RM: And you were born in Beatty. The Shoshones had a community there, didn't they?

IS: Yes. I'm not proud to say it, but it's close to where that prostitute place is—back into the trees. I can't remember the name. I lived close to that.

RM: You probably don't have any recollections of Beatty, do you?

IS: No. My uncle from my mom's side, Gilbert Landis, used to be the sheriff there.

RM: When was that?

IS: It was years ago; I was a teenager.

RS: They made him a U.S. Marshall. He could go anywhere in the United States he wanted.

RM: Where did your family move when they came to Pahrump?

IS: Didn't Dad work at Pahrump Ranch first? I guess that's where we were.

RM: You lived at the Pahrump Ranch? Of course, you were too young. How long were you at the Pahrump Ranch?

IS: I can't remember that.

RM: Button [Harry Ford] told me that your dad also worked for Lois Kellogg. When did he work for her? After the Pahrump Ranch?

IS: I believe so. I was really young and I didn't know too much at that time. But when he worked for her, we had to stay somewhere else—in the mountains, wasn't it?

RS: Yes.

IS: I think my dad had to stay up where you see the mountains from across—the Clay Mountains—I believe we stayed somewhere up in there.

RM: Were there other Paiute people living up there?

IS: I can't remember.

RM: Do you have any stories you would have heard about Lois Kellogg?

IS: No, just that I guess she was a good person. She had the farm up here where Hafen's got his homes—that's where she had her field. She had fruit trees and all kinds of things there because there used to be a spring there.

RM: And where is that in terms of today's roads?

RS: Up on Fox Road. Fox goes right across Hellion halfway down. RM: Do you have any idea how long your dad worked for her?

IS: I was a baby growing up there; I might have been one year old at that time. Then we moved from there to across the road from the Manse Ranch and my dad worked for Charles Sawday. We lived across the road before they put the highway through. We had all that property.

RS: We had a big garden right there before they put the road through.

RM: Do you have any recollections of Dr. Cornell, who owned it? Sawday worked for him, didn't he?

IS: Yes. Dr. Cornell just came out at certain times, I believe. Whenever he came, he brought potatoes, onions, and all kinds of things. That's all I remember about him.

RM: How long did your dad work at the Manse for Sawday?

RS: Quite a while.

DM: Did your mom ever work for them, too?

IS: Yes, she used to haul hay and she'd do some other things, I guess—help clean some of the houses and do some of the odd jobs.

RM: How large was the community across the road from the Manse? How many people were living there?

IS: There was Tom Bob, Annie Beck. They lived across from where we lived, over by where the big wells are now.

RM: Could you talk about Annie Beck? What do you know about her?

IS: Well, we called her "Grandma." She was on my dad's side. She had a daughter named Sarah and there was another lady but I don't know her name. And also Harry and Mary Sackett and their two sons, Eugene and Andy. They lived over where Imogene Andersen lives now.

RM: Were they Indians?

IS: Yes.

RM: And did they work on the ranch, too?

IS: Yes, Harry did. Mary cleaned the house, cleaned the windows and things like that.

RM: Who else was living in that little Indian community there?

IS: There was some other Indian family; I can't think of who they were.

RM: How long did your father work at the Manse, do you think?

IS: Probably a long time; we don't know how long he worked at the Pahrump Ranch before we moved. And from working at the Manse he went everywhere else—like for Perry Bowman, Tim Hafen. . . .

RS: That was after he worked for Elmer Bowman?

IS: Yes, Elmer Bowman bought that place.

RM: Right, Elmer Bowman bought it from Cornell. So your father continued working there for Elmer?

IS: Yes. And he'd work for Frehners. He'd go to different places, wherever they needed him, and he'd go back to Elmer Bowman again.

RM: What kind of work was he doing?

IS: Irrigation, doing hay, fixing leaks, things like that.

RM: Do you remember Leon Hughes?

IS: Yes.

RM: What do you recall about Leon and his family?

IS: They were just like us; they were working everywhere.

RM: Did you by any chance go to school with Leon's daughter DeAnna [Hughes Brown]?

IS: Yes, and the brother, Larry, and Button Ford.

RM: Were there any other Indian men that you recall who worked on the ranches like your dad did?

IS: There were some other people. Harry Sackett and Mutt and Jeff [John] Weed worked there, too.

RM: What do you recall about them?

IS: They just kept to themselves.

RM: How many Paiute men do you think were working on the ranch through this period?

IS: I don't know because some people would stop by and do some work and then move on.

RM: You don't remember what your dad's pay was, do you?

IS: No. I know sometimes he'd bring home potatoes and fruit and sometimes meat, things like that.

RM: What do you think now when you see the area where the Manse Ranch was? What goes through your mind?

IS: Oh, it's heartbreaking.

RM: What do you think of the growth in Pahrump that has happened in your lifetime?

IS: I didn't like it at first but it's something you have to live with.

RM: So the ranch is all gone. It's just pools of water there now.

IS: Yes, a golf course and there's all that housing up in there.

RM: Did you start school here in Pahrump, then?

IS: Oh, yes.

RM: Tell about your first day in school. Can you remember that?

IS: I was scared, I guess because some of the bigger boys used to tease us little kids. They'd grab our jackets, do this and that to us, just like kids do today.

RM: How many children were going to school at the little red schoolhouse? Did you go to school there, too, Ray and Laverne? So four of you Sharps were going to school at the little red schoolhouse.

IS: Fred was the older brother who was going. He told me the other day about all the people who were here, like Pop Buol, when he had the store.

RM: What was it like going to school in the little red schoolhouse?

IS: I liked going to school after I quit being scared. [Laughter] I think I was six years old when I started school.

RM: Who was your teacher when you started?

IS: Mrs. Sturman. She taught all the grades right here; there were eight grades.

RM: Did you like her?

IS: Yes.

RS: On Friday we'd get apples. We couldn't wait to get to Friday; they were delicious apples.

RM: Did you go down to Pop Buol's store much?

IS: Oh, sometimes, and sometimes we had to stay home when Dad and Mom had to make a fast trip to the store. The store wasn't too big and he didn't want us kids knocking down anything that was in there. [Laughter]

RM: Did your family buy a lot of things at Pop Buol's?

IS: Groceries, yes.

RM: What do you recall about Pop Buol?

RS: He had the fruit orchard.

IS: Yes, that's the only thing I remember good about him. [Laughs] We'd get to go in there; he let us pick the grapes and peaches and apricots. He had cherries but we couldn't do them; he would get the cherries for us.

RM: And he made wine, too, didn't he?

IS: Yes, he had a cellar full of that stuff. Pop let us look at it and we saw all the bottles and the big barrels. Outside of that I didn't remember anything else.

RM: Did your family ever go into Vegas?

IS: Oh, yes, every other month or so, or every two weeks, whatever it was.

RM: What did you think about going into Vegas?

IS: Well, it was scary. We had to go way around. We drove like up to Johnnie on Highway 95 because there were no roads this way until later on. We were teenagers when the highway came through. When they built that highway it separated our field. Our field was like this and where the highway is now, it's cut in half like this.

That reminds me—my grandma Libby Scott and Annie Beck used to harvest pinto beans and take them to Bowman. They'd use burlap sacks and fill them up. He let us have all that property irrigated by the spring water. So that whole thing was a bean field here and a bean field here and we could put whatever we want over here—squash or whatever. He took the beans into Vegas to sell.

RM: Did he keep the money or did he give it to you?

IS: I guess he gave some to my dad and he let us keep some of the beans.

RM: How big was your garden?

IS: It was really long. But it was really long because I was young. [Laughs]

RM: Did you kids work in the garden?

IS: Yes, we had to. We even picked cotton and dragged the sacks of cotton. We had to help. Our older sister, Angie, would take us and tell us what to do and so forth. Grandma and everyone would get in there also.

RM: Sawday wasn't growing cotton, was he? That was Elmer Bowman.

IS: That was Elmer Bowman.

RM: So the whole family would get out there and pick cotton.

IS: We all helped.

RM: Was it hard work? What did you think of it?

IS: Well, we knew we had to do it so I don't think it really bothered us. We had to pick the beans the same way.

RM: How much cotton did you pick in a day?

IS: I don't know. They let us bring those little sacks and we'd drag them all up to the trailer. I don't know who would put it on the back of the trailer.

RM: And then would you get paid?

IS: Yes, my dad would.

RM: It must have been hot, working in those fields.

IS: Sometimes. He would let us kids work sometimes in the morning; I just remember being there in the morning, not in the afternoon.

RM: What all did you grow in your fields, in your garden? You grew beans, and what else?

IS: Like I said, probably some melons or squash, but not too many of them; they were just for us.

RM: Were there any fruit trees in that garden?

IS: No, but there were fruit trees on the ranch. They had different kinds—apricots, peaches, pears, plums.

RS: Figs.

RM: What happened to all of the trees and the vines on the Manse?

IS: I don't know. They cut them down or whatever. Some of them were still alive when I was there.

RM: So after Bowman bought it they didn't keep them up?

IS: Yes, that's how it went.

RS: His boys tore it all up and his daughters were married to different guys, like Andersen and others.

RM: Would you be able to go to the highway and show me where your house was?

IS: Yes.

RM: Is there still a foundation or anything there? No? How many houses were in that little area when you lived there?

IS: We had an army tent-type of thing for a cook house—we cooked dinners and ate in there. When we first started out we had a circus tent. My dad, I guess, got it from somewhere in Las Vegas, and we all slept there, had our beds all around in there. That's how we started before we had any little houses put on there.

RM: And the little houses were made out of wood, right?

IS: Yes. My dad and, I guess, some of his relatives fixed up the house so it could have a bedroom made out of tin and boards. We had a wood stove to keep warm.

RM: In your first year or two at the little red schoolhouse, who all was going to school there? Button Ford was there, wasn't he?

IS: Button Ford and his sister, Helen Ford.

RM: Did the Sawdays have a child named Mary Sue or something like that?

IS: Yes, I think that's what my brother said yesterday—Mary Sue. He said she was the cutest thing. I could just see those kids. Norma Steve, Richard Steve—those were Indian kids. The white kids were, well, Oneta Hughes.

RM: That would be Leon's child?

IS: Yes. I don't know who were there—Pam Hughes and Larry Hughes. And Helen Cayton. I can't remember the boys' names besides Harry [Ford].

RM: How did you get there? You were living pretty far from the school, weren't you?

IS: My brother Fred would take us to school in our dad's car.

RM: And then he would pick you up?

IS: Yes, along with some other kids; probably even Harry, I don't know.

RM: So, he was kind of a school bus driver. Did he get paid for that, I wonder?

RS: No.

RM: Did you like school?

IS: Yes. I did pretty good in school. I guess that's why I wanted to go to school every day.

RM: And you went there for eight years; where did you go on to high school?

IS: In Las Vegas, at Rancho High School. We had a school bus to Las Vegas. Some of the boys that went to high school drove the bus—Billy Hathaway and Jimmy Haulman.

RS: And Dwayne McCowan.

IS: Margie Brown was my cousin and this other gal, a white gal. She rode there with us, too. I couldn't remember her name, though.

RM: And it was 65 miles in? Was that tough?

RS: It was 75 miles from where the bank is over here, where the stoplight is, to Rancho High School—75 miles one way.

RM: How long did it take you?

RS: About two hours, I think.

RM: You went over the Mountain Springs road? Was it paved by then?

IS: Yes.

RM: And you were still living on the property where they had put the highway in?

IS: Yes.

RM: What did you think of going to high school in Vegas? I mean, it was a big switch from Pahrump, wasn't it?

IS: Yes. I was a little afraid but I knew I had to do it.

RM: That drive made a long day, didn't it? What time would you leave here?

RS: They'd pick us up at 5:00 and go make the rounds of picking up other people.

RM: And then coming back it was the same thing. What time would you get home?

IS: School let out at 3:00 and we got home anywhere about 5:00 to 6:00.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Let's talk some more about your mother. Was there an Indian community at Lida Junction then?

IS: I can't remember. There had to have been some people who lived around there because she talked about some people.

RM: And she was Shoshone. Where were her people from?

IS: Up toward Reno I guess because we have some cousins up that way and that's where they came from.

RM: How did her family wind up at Lida?

IS: I don't know that. Like I said, they were always traveling through; they'd go around and come back.

RS: Wherever there was work, they'd work.

RM: What was her name?

IS: Her name was Helen Ella Stewart.

RM: Do you know when she was born?

IS: On January 15, 1912, I think, or somewhere around that.

RM: Do you know her mother and father's names?

IS: Ruth was her mother and Tom Stewart was her dad.

RM: And they were both Shoshone?

IS: Yes.

RM: Can you talk some about your father?

IS: His name was Louie Jefferson Sharp and he was born January 15, 1908, I think.

RM: And where was he born?

IS: They said Ash Meadows, but I don't know if that's the truth or not.

RM: Do you know his mother and father's names?

IS: His mother's name is Libby Bay Scott and his father was John Scott.

RM: And they were both Paiutes.

IS: Yes.

RM: Do you know where they were from?

IS: I don't know that. He had relatives in Las Vegas. They're all spread around. We've got cousins and uncles and so on who lived in Las Vegas and Moapa.

RM: When you were growing up, did the family practice the Paiute way of life and the religion?

IS: We did the medicines from the bushes and things like that.

RM: Can you talk about any of those or would that be confidential?

IS: I just know the bushes, that's all. There were some for colds. There was one with little flat leaves. I don't know what they're called but you boil them and make a little tea.

RM: And that was good for a cold? Did your mother or your father ever use this plant for colds?

IS: Yes, they used it on us and it worked.

RM: What other plants did they use on you kids or themselves?

IS: That same plant that made a tea, if you'd burn it on a wood stove it'd fill the room just like a vaporizer and it would have the same effect—it would open up your lungs. I know she used to let the leaves dry. We'd find them out in the desert and she'd hang them up and then let them dry.

RM: Did you ever pick the native foods like pine nuts?

IS: Oh, yes.

RM: Did you go out into the hills and pick pine nuts every year?

IS: Yes, we used to all camp up there and pick pine nuts.

RM: Where would you go?

IS: Up to Lida because the trees there are short.

RM: You take the turn-off to Lida Junction. Would it be up Mount Magruder?

IS: It is. All I remember is some sites of old mines. You go past that—somewhere up there. I couldn't tell you exactly where.

RM: But the trees were shorter.

IS: They were not too tall. But they might be tall now.

RM: You didn't go up into the Spring Mountains to pick pine nuts? Why was that? There are pine nuts in the Spring Mountains, aren't there, up Mount Charleston?

IS: Yes, but we never did. My mom and my grandma used to go up there on horseback. They'd go up and pick the pine nuts and seed them and bring them back tied on a horse.

RM: What do you mean by seeding?

IS: That's to take them out of the pine cone.

RM: Did the family pick a lot of pine nuts?

IS: Just enough for us. The belief was to take what you need. Nowadays, they take them down and sell them, but you're not supposed to sell them. You're supposed to keep them for yourself. That's the Indian's belief—you just take what you need for your family.

RM: So a real Indian wouldn't be up there getting as many as he could to sell.

IS: No, but I don't know about nowadays. Everything has changed and everything's different. Everybody's greedy.

RM: Did your father or any of the people in your community ever go hunting?

IS: Oh, yes. My dad and my brothers would go hunting. They would get the does; they wouldn't get the bucks.

RM: Was the doe considered better food or more tasty or something like that?

IS: I don't know; I just remember that they said you would never shoot a buck because they had to make more deer.

RM: Did they ever get mountain sheep?

IS: We knew some people that did.

RM: What other game did they take?

IS: Rabbits and ducks.

RM: Did they ever get squirrels or snakes or anything like that?

IS: The older people did.

RM: They did? Do you remember if they had any special ways of preparing these foods?

IS: I don't really know.

RM: What did a family meal consist of when your dad was working at the ranch? Like, what would breakfast be?

IS: Eggs and potatoes, pancakes, and sometimes gravy and biscuits.

RM: So breakfast was a big meal. Did you have lunch then?

IS: Yes, sometimes.

RM: But sometimes not?

IS: We'd eat at, like, 5:00.

RM: And what would supper consist of?

IS: I really don't remember that. I just remember breakfast.

RS: I do remember biscuits and corned beef.

RM: Okay, biscuits, corned beef and beans for supper?

IS: Yes, they're cooked together, potatoes and corned beef. And we'd have rabbits sometimes. My grandmother would cook them.

RM: Rabbit leg?

IS: It's like chicken legs. Back then, there were a lot of rabbits. Probably you could go and grab one if you were a fast runner. [Laughs]

LS: Then they got boils.

RM: Oh, really? Maybe that was tularemia? You very seldom see a rabbit now.

LS: No, they're all over the grass here when you wake up, when we mow the lawn.

RS: We saw cottontails more often than we'd see a jackrabbit.

RM: Did you kids ever go out and get rabbits and bring them home?

IS: Just catching them, yes.

RM: Did you save their hides at all?

IS: Not us, but other people made little purses or little satchels with them.

RM: How did you keep warm in the winter?

IS: A wood stove.

RM: And how did you deal with the heat in the summer? Because there wasn't air conditioning, was there?

IS: No, our house was underneath some big cottonwood trees. If you go there now, the trees are not there; not even stumps. A stream came down through them. That's how we got water.

RM: Was the water from a well or a spring up there?

IS: It was a spring and then they put a well on the other side of it.

RM: But the spring doesn't flow any more.

IS: No more. There was quite a bit of water because it watered the fields and all of that.

RM: They didn't use the water flowing off of the Manse Springs, the big springs right at the ranch?

IS: I don't know. Those were just there. First there was about one and a half, and then they added to it and it got bigger and bigger as the years went by.

RM: Which one?

IS: On the ranch. Because it has quicksand in it.

RM: Did they make them bigger, or what?

IS: I think that they just did it themselves.

LS: They tried to cement it off when they were building those homes up there to cool it down.

IS: Yes, they did something to try to stop it. You know the spring's underneath there when they added that on because when you look in you can see all the things were bubbling.

RM: Did you ever swim in those big pools?

IS: My brother Fred and my sister Angeline did. I don't know if Ray swam in there or not.

RS: No.

RM: Were you too young?

RS: No. I didn't like it because of the quicksand.

LS: Where it is right now, your sons swam in there.

IS: Eddie [Sharp] swam in there.

RM: Is that right?

LS: He passed away.

RM: Oh, I'm sorry. Now, what did you do after you got out of high school?

IS: Nothing.

RM: Did you come back here or did you live in Vegas?

IS: No, when we were going to high school we had to move onto our own property, my dad's property.

RM: Oh, he homesteaded.

IS: Yes, down over on Turner Boulevard. Hafen Ranch Road goes this way and Turner Boulevard goes that way.

RM: Okay, Hafen and Turner cross.

IS: Yes, and there's a little dirt road that goes over to our property. We went to high school from there.

RM: What year did you start high school?

IS: I don't remember; I was 15, so that would be about '56.

RM: How did your father get that homestead?

IS: Elmer Bowman helped him.

RM: What did Elmer help him with?

IS: Paperwork, I guess. And there was another man named Perl Ward.

RM: So the whole family moved down there. Was there water on the property?

IS: Yes, they had to drill a well before we moved on it.

LS: The Bowmans helped them drill a well.

RM: Do you remember how deep they had to go to find water?

RS: It was 250 feet.

RM: Was it a good well?

IS: Yes. I think he had to put the well on it before he could move. It was a long ways. Now there are homes all the way down but it never used to be that way. There was a winding road all the way from the ranch because of the washouts and stuff.

RM: Did your dad continue working for Bowman then?

IS: Yes. Then he started going to Frehners and all the way down to Tim Hafen's.

RM: Did you like it down there?

IS: Yes; we were away from people.

RM: How many acres did your father homestead?

IS: One hundred sixty acres.

RM: Now, you got out of high school and were living down on the homestead. Is there anything you'd like to talk about from this period of your life?

IS: We all lived together. We all took care of one another like that.

RM: That's so nice. It's much better that way. I think.

IS: When you hear people talk about, "Oh, I don't like my brother; I don't like my sister. I don't like my mother," we weren't like that.

RM: That's not the Paiute way?

IS: Well, some people are like that; they're distant from their family.

RS: They're like that right now, today.

IS: Today it is worse.

RM: Did you know Johnny Herald?

IS: Yes.

RM: What could you say about him?

LS: He owned a big ranch right down the road.

IS: On Lakeside.

RM: Was he white or Indian?

IS: He was white. He came from Las Vegas and had a two-seater airplane. That's how he'd get here from Las Vegas.

RS: An Apache plane. He landed where the stop light is now; he had a little airport.

IS: There used to be a gas station there.

RM: What street would the airport be on now?

RS: Highway 160 and 372.

RM: Do you ever go down to the museum here? They have the little red schoolhouse there.

IS: No.

RM: I wonder what you'd think if you saw the school that you went to as a kid.

IS: Oh. I don't know. I can't imagine how small it was when all the kids were in there and all the different grades. Back then they didn't have a kindergarten, they just had first grade.

LS: One through eight.

RM: Do you think a kid gets a good education that way?

IS: Well, I seemed to come out all right. If you go to learn something when you go to school, you will. If you don't do your work and you goof off, then you stand in the corner. You stand in the corner for maybe a couple of minutes or so and you think about it. I never got to do that because I wanted to keep my nose to the grindstone.

RM: Sure. Did you have the same teacher all the way through?

IS: I don't remember too much toward the end, but it seemed to me there was another lady there.

RM: When you went to high school in Las Vegas, did you ever sense any discrimination because you were not white?

IS: Nobody really seemed to care except for a few people who knew I was Indian. I only had trouble like that in art class. My drawings and everything were up to par but I couldn't do the face part. I'd draw everything. The teacher would say, "This is an excellent job but you need to do this." I couldn't get the face on it. I don't care what it was, a deer, cat, a person—I couldn't do the face. Everything else was just right. So some of the kids would get mad, but you have to pay attention in order to do what you're supposed to do. But they'd do things; they'd try to mess up my drawings. We had to do it in pencil; nowadays they've got charcoal and stuff like that. But you had to do it in pencil and the kids tried to erase some stuff. One time I did a deer, a mountain like this and a few bushes and two deer. I got the deer on there but I couldn't get the faces.

RM: What did the teacher say?

IS: That I had some kind of problem. I could do the rest of it but I couldn't do the face. [Laughs] That's the only problem I had. Outside of that, it was good. I did pretty good in math. Science, I had a problem with. English was fine.

RM: Did you speak Paiute in your home?

IS: My parents did, and my grandma. We've tried to save some of it. Part of the memories are the bad words. [Laughter]

RM: Do you speak Paiute now?

IS: Oh, still, the bad words. I can say some of the other words but I can't think of them right now. Our mom spoke Shoshone and she talked some Paiute.

RM: So she would talk to your dad in Paiute. Now, your grandmother who was living with you was your dad's mother. What was her name again?

IS: Libby Scott.

RM: And you're not sure what part of the Paiute country she was originally from.

IS: I don't know.

RM: I've talked to some Paiutes who think it would be a good idea for the Pahrump area Paiutes to receive federal recognition so you could have your own reservation.

IS: A long time ago, we thought about that it was a good thing. But now it's changed for us; we like living right where we are.

RM: But if you had a reservation, you could receive benefits, couldn't you, such as the Indian Health Service?

IS: Yes. They tell us in Las Vegas that you can go there because you're Indian, but when you go there you can't get in so it's a waste of time.

RM: How many Paiute families are in the Pahrump—Mount Charleston area now? There's your family, the Sharps, and what other families are still in the area?

IS: There's the Lynches and Jims. There are some other Indians; I don't really know them all.

RM: Did you ever get down to Shoshone much while you were growing up?

IS: Oh, yes. My younger sister went to high school there. It was the same thing—they had to drive the kids over to go to school.

RM: Did you ever go to dances at Shoshone?

IS: No.

RM: Did you ever go to dances here? Did they ever have dances here? You did, Ray?

LS: Yes, once in awhile.

RM: Did you know Gloria Shearer and her sister, Marie Wilson? They lived here for a time.

IS: Yes, those are our cousins.

RM: They are your cousins? How are they related to you?

IS: I don't know.

RM: Did you know them at all when you were growing up?

IS: Yes, but I can't remember much. They were kind of mean, but kids will be kids. They turned out pretty good. We had a nice visit with them later in life.

RM: Did you kids ever get into horseback riding?

IS: There were some people that did horseback riding; I never did. Grandma had two or three horses. She had one horse but then they had a baby from one of the stray horses that came around and jumped over the fence so we had an extra horse and it was a girl, too. Then we had three horses. Leona got to ride Grandma's horses with her friends.

RM: Imogene, could you tell me who your brothers and sisters are, from oldest to youngest?

IS: My oldest brother is Fred Sharp. I'm next to Fred, and then Ray and Ruth and then Laverne and Josephine—Josephine lives in Arizona, too—and then Leona. Leona's the baby of the family.

RM: And several of you live together here in Pahrump.

IS: Yes, there are five of us here.

RM: That's so nice. Well, thank you for talking to me.

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