

An Interview with
GLORIA WILSON
SHEARER

An Oral History Produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2010



Gloria Wilson Shearer
2009

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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

—Robert D. McCracken

2010

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—RDM
2010

This is Robert McCracken talking to Gloria Wilson Shearer at her sister Marie Wilson's home in Las Vegas, Nevada. Ms. Wilson joins the conversation from time to time. This is the 28th of October, 2009.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Gloria, tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate.

GS: Gloria Jean Wilson.

RM: And when and where were you born?

GS: I was born in Las Vegas on July 20, 1940.

RM: Were you delivered at home or in a hospital?

GS: In the Las Vegas Hospital.

RM: And what was your mother's name?

GS: Juanita Weed Lee.

RM: Do you recall when and where she was born?

GS: She was born in Daggett, California, on the road, off a wagon. I don't know too much about that. I guess they used to live down around the Barstow area sometimes during the summer and then come back up to Shoshone and Pahrump in the winters. Her family originated out of Pahrump.

RM: Was she Native American?

GS: Yes. She was a Paiute.

RM: What do you know about her childhood and her life?

GS: She was an only child and her grandparents raised her. Her grandparents got killed in a fire when she was about seven and then she went to school at Stewart Indian School until she was about 15; she was working in the hospital, wanting to become a nurse. She moved down here, met my father, married him, there we came.

RM: And how many children did she have?

GS: She had 12; I'm the oldest.

RM: And how many lived?

GS: We've lost four.

RM: But all of them lived to grow up?

GS: Yes.

RM: Oh, my. You must really come from healthy stock.

GS: Yes, really healthy.

RM: What can you say about her life after she got married? Where did she live in those years?

GS: When she married my father, I think we moved to Moapa and Dad worked over there. Then he started working for Morrison Knudsen Construction Company and I remember distinctly moving to Baker. I couldn't understand that. I was maybe about six. It was a hellish little town, I would say.

RM: What was going on in Baker at that time?

GS: Absolutely nothing. That's why I couldn't understand why we were there.

RM: What was Morrison Knudsen doing there?

GS: They were building a highway, I believe.

RM: Were they building the LA Highway? That's interesting.

GS: Yes. And then from there we moved to Castleford, Idaho. That was a beautiful place. My father was kind of a womanizer and I guess he was doing his little flings so we moved back and when we did, they split up. That was probably in 1948.

My mom ended up marrying a man by the name of Clyde Lee. He was from Moapa and he kind of lived here as a child. I don't know the exact story but I do know he lived in an old car all by himself. He said he was just a child and in order to eat, he had to go uptown and go behind the bakeries and they would have little doughnuts and cookies and things like that for him. Then he started working selling newspapers. He said he was just a little guy and he had no blankets and froze in the winter. That's why to him, a family was so special. He and Mom got hooked up when I was older and I called him my dad. I was about nine when he and Mom got together. We moved to Moapa for a short while. I had uncles over in Shoshone on the other side of Pahrump and they talked my dad into going over there and trying out mining.

RM: This was in the '50s?

GS: Yes. Before that, my dad decided he wanted to go work for the railroad. He went to work for the Union Pacific in Moapa, then he got transferred up to Elgin, by Caliente. They had all their belongings in a trailer and on the way there, there was a big flood in Caliente and it took everything we had. My sister was in on that one; I wasn't. So they all came back and my uncles told my dad about mining over in Shoshone so he decided to do that. We moved to Shoshone and up to Excelsior.

RM: Where is Excelsior?

GS: Excelsior is on the Kingston Mountains, just on the other side of Goodsprings—down through the valley and then up on the other side. They had two houses there—we got the biggest house because there were more kids and my aunt and uncle got the house down below the hill, which was a smaller one. My dad started mining and oh, it was so much fun up there because we were all by ourselves. My dad used to take us rabbit hunting and we went deer hunting and pine-nut picking and getting vegetables out in the desert and we had a garden.

RM: Was he a Paiute?

GS: Yes.

RM: What were some of the vegetables you collected out in the desert?

GS: We used to get pa'up—it's some kind of berry and it grows on a big tall bush. I didn't like that. And we used to get watercress at Horse Thief Springs. It has to grow where there's water and there was a lot of water there. And we'd pick tamut; we called it "Indian spinach." It grows on little bushes that grow about three feet high. We'd pick the leaves off it and boil them; it's bitter. It took me a long time to really get to like it. You have to keep rinsing it in water and dumping it out and rinsing it again and then it becomes mild. It's very good. We still pick it today. Today we're overloaded with watercress because we have an abundance in Caliente.

RM: Is the watercress good?

GS: Oh, yes. Have you ever had watercress salad? It's got a little hot tang to it. It's much better than the ones you get at the store.

RM: Does it grow pretty much anywhere where water is in the desert?

GS: Where there's cold water. What else did we used to get? Oh, our Indian tea.

RM: Mormon tea, we liked to call it?

GS: Yes. It's that green one.

MW: We introduced it to the Mormons.

RM: I'm sure you did. [Laughter] And how do you prepare the Indian tea?

GS: We used to brew it just like you would a regular tea but today, I put it in my coffee pot—rinse it off really well and break it up and put it in my coffee pot. You just run the water through it and it turns out excellent.

RM: I've heard it's good and that it's very healthful.

GS: It is. The Indians used it as medicine.

RM: What did they treat with it?

GS: I don't know exactly know. It purifies your blood, for one thing. It also, they claim, has some kind of drug, but I don't know about that. We lived there for three or four years and we'd haul our own water from Horse Thief Springs in a great big tanker and we kids would ride on the tanker coming back.

RM: How far from Horse Thief was it?

GS: Maybe 10 or 15 miles or so. Oh, it was fun.

RM: Did you know a guy named Deke Lowe?

GS: Oh, yes.

RM: He wrote a book called Shootout at Horse Thief Springs; I published it for him.

MW: That's where I recognized your name from—Deke and Celesta Lowe.

RM: Yes, I was good friends with them.

MW: Celesta and Mom were really good friends.

RM: Oh, my goodness. I've always wanted to go to Horse Thief Springs.

GS: The story about Horse Thief Springs is my new dad, his family—his grandfather or something like that—originated Horse Thief Springs. He built a home there, and supposedly a shed for the horses and to shoe your cows and that kind of thing.

RM: When was that, do you think?

GS: That was probably in the late 1800s. What the heck was their name?

MW: Cub and Phi Lee.

GS: Yes, one of those was his grandfather; I don't know whether it was Phi Lee or Cub.

RM: What do you remember about them talking about the Lee brothers?

GS: Well, Mom and Dad told us a lot but we were so young, we never really Those Lee brothers also had a place in Pahrump, down by that cottonwood.

MW: Bob Lee—that was his grandfather.

GS: So his grandfather was Bob Lee and he had a place in Pahrump. One of the other ones must have been his great-grandfather.

RM: And who was the original Lee? Or was it Cub and Phi?

MW: The Lee brothers came out together, Cub and Phi.

GS: They originated out of Maine, right?

MW: I don't know about that but one of the Lee brothers married an Indian lady, a Paiute.

RM: Yes, but just one of them.

GS: They have a lot of offspring also. I wouldn't know who in the heck would know any of them now.

MW: Lalovi Lee or John Lee, who are children of Bob Lee. They are the only ones of the offspring that are living today.

GS: And our brothers and sisters.

RM: Do your brothers and sisters live in the area here?

GS: They all live in Moapa.

RM: So your family lived out in Shoshone and in Pahrump and then up on the Kingstons. Where did you go to school?

GS: I moved over there in the summertime. It seemed like a long time. Then Dad said we had to move because of school so we moved to Tecopa, up at the Anaconda and the mining camp. They had a whole bunch of homes built up there for married men so we moved to Noonday.

RM: That was the town for the Noonday Mine, right?

GS: That was the name of the town, Noonday. We moved up there and I started school in Tecopa.

RM: How old were you?

GS: I was about nine.

MW: It was in the '50s when we went to Noonday.

GS: I would say '49, about '50. I had a good time at school; I liked it. But I liked Overton School better. And during the summer we would come over and stay with my dad in Moapa, and then go back to Mom's when school started. My dad had remarried and he was living in Moapa and he had a family; he had two boys.

RM: Let's talk about your blood father. What was his name?

GS: Boone Wilson.

RM: And when and where was he born?

GS: He was born here in Vegas up at the Sandstone Ranch.

MW: The old Sandstone Ranch.

GS: Now it's Spring Mountain. That's where he was born. His grandfather came from Scotland. We had a 100-year reunion up there about 40 years ago and the people who knew all of them from back then were telling me that you could see my great-grandfather for miles if he was walking or riding because he had bright red hair. Word got out that he needed a cook because he was raising cattle so this Paiute lady answered the ad, came over and started cooking for him, and ended up marrying him.

RM: What was her name?

GS: Kaiyir.

RM: Does the name have a meaning?

GS: I don't know the meaning. She was a Paiute from the Panamints and I don't know how she got over here; it's a long way. They had Jim Wilson and Tweed Wilson. Jim never married and never had any children and Tweed married my grandmother, who was Annie Benn from Moapa, and through her he had two boys—my father, Boone Wilson, and his brother, Russell (but we only knew him as Buster). Buster never married or had any children, so there was just my dad and his kids. Of the original Wilson family, only the two of us are left.

And then our children. . . . I made up for everything. I've got five; she's got two. But my grandfather Tweed Wilson and Annie Benn separated after the kids got a little older, I guess, because Dad went with his mother and Buster stayed with Tweed. They were kind of separated and they never got to know each other real well. They visited but they never got along or anything like that.

I got to meet my grandfather. I walked. My girlfriend and I walked from here clear up to Spring Mountain the old way, through Arden. We walked all the way up there because I wanted to meet my grandpa. It was during the summer and there were fireflies.

MW: You must tell about Jim meeting you when you were a child.

GS: Oh, yes, I met Jim, too. Mom always said that Jim was the one that had all the brains in the family and she said that he was so nice. She said he did get to meet me and he carried me around and everything. She said he was crazy about the kids. I was the first one that they had so I was the one that got to meet him; I was sure glad of that. But I never kept in contact with my grandfather. I never knew him until I walked up there and I got to meet him.

RM: What kind of a person was he?

GS: He was a gentle man. I always thought he was gentle because he lost his leg—his knee, up here. He got caught in a blizzard in Mount Charleston way back when he was herding cattle and his leg got frost-bitten.

RM: And he had to have it amputated?

GS: Way back when. I guess my dad, Boone Wilson, was raised by his mother. Apparently he grew up in Moapa and here.

RM: What was going on in Moapa at that time?

GS: They had a big farm over there and they were leasing it to Anderson Dairy so there was plenty of work for the Indians; they had to hire the Indians to work. They had a big reservation over in Moapa.

RM: And the Indians on the reservation worked for the dairy.

GS: Right. They would grow all the crops and stuff. It was kind of neat in a lot of ways. And when Mom and Dad first got married. . . . I forgot, we lived in Pahrump also, with my dad. I must have been five, six?

RM: About 1945?

GS: Yes, somewhere around that time. I remember going to school in that little red schoolhouse. It was just a tiny one-room school.

RM: It's at the museum over there.

GS: I know. I go by and see it occasionally. I went to school there for a couple years and I remember Button Ford. He's the only one I can remember right offhand.

RM: Where were you living?

GS: We were living at the Manse Ranch.

RM: You were living at the Manse? I've got a book coming out on Manse Ranch, including some old pictures from 1890. Joseph and Margaret Yount settled there in 1876.

GS: Elmer Bowman had it when I was there.

RM: Sure. He bought it in 1946. What was it like, living at the Manse Ranch?

GS: It was nice because we had a house. They just tore it down about ten years ago. It was a little brown house sitting right underneath the biggest tree down there other than where the big house was. That was the first time I met the Sharps.

RM: Tell me about the Sharps.

GS: There was Louie Sharp and he was married to an Indian, Helen Sharp. She was from the place where Chiatovich is—that valley on the other side of Tonopah.

MW: Fish Lake.

GS: Fish Lake Valley. Apparently that's where she was from because she's related to all of my ex-in-laws.

RM: And was Louie Sharp Indian?

GS: I think Louie Sharp was half. He had a slew of kids and they lived right across the highway from where we used to live. We lived on the ranch and right across the highway was their place. And just catty-corner from that, just not a stone's throw away, maybe from here to the administration building down here, is where Richard Arnold's grandmother, Annie Beck, used to live. And right next to her was my mother's . . . was that her uncle?

MW: Tom Bob. Yes, that was Mom's uncle.

GS: Tom Bob, who was Mama's uncle, was married to Annie Beck's daughter, Sarah, so she would have been Richard Arnold's aunt. I remember we used to pick a lot of mushrooms off of the tree at my uncle's when we'd go see Annie Beck. It was just a little ways and we went there

a lot. There were hollowed-out trees and all kinds of stuff. We'd pick mushrooms there and they'd cook them for everybody. I often wondered why we weren't poisoned.

MW: They knew what they were eating.

RM: There's nothing there now, is there? Those houses and trees and everything are gone, aren't they?

GS: Yes. My great-grandparents in the summertime would go to Shoshone. On the east side as you go into the valley to Shoshone from Pahrump over the hill, on this hill down about 12 miles you'll see great big trees and palm trees—that was my mom's place, Chappo Springs.

RM: Is that an Indian name?

GS: I don't know.

MW: It's always been known as Chappo because that's where her grandparents lived and where she lived when she was a child.

GS: And it's a beautiful place. It's got a natural spring that comes out of the mountain. Mama's aunt and her grandparents and her mom, like I said, used to go to from Pahrump to Shoshone and they farmed that spot up on the hill. That's where they did all of their planting; it was nice.

RM: Going to Shoshone it would be on the Nopah Range—on the west side of the Nopahs or the east side?

GS: On the west side.

RM: As you drop down that long valley to go to Shoshone.

GS: Yes, you can look up there and see it. We lived there also—my mom and dad and all of us kids moved there. That's the first time I met Richard Arnold or his mom and father. I remember we were building the road going to Chappo from Shoshone. My uncle George Ross got a grader from the state (he used to work for the state), and my dad got a bulldozer from the mine, where he used to work. Mom and I were both pregnant. This was my first pregnancy. They were plowing the road and making it nice, putting in the pipes so it wouldn't flood, and Mom and I were out there shoveling all the boulders off the road and it took us forever to do that. Richard Arnold and his mom and dad pulled up and Mom knew them really well so we had a good visit with them; we visited for a long time. It took us forever to do that road. My brothers and sisters went to school in Shoshone from there.

RM: That was after you went to school in Pahrump?

MW: You were 19 at that time. You were pregnant.

GS: Yes, I was out of school then. But I did go to school in Shoshone. I went to high school there and to grade school in Tecopa. Tecopa was such a busy, busy town. There would be cars lined up in front of the Snake Room and that store clear down parked on the other side.

RM: What was the Snake Room?

GS: It was a bar. This doctor bought it and changed it to the Schooner Room and we said, "What in the world is he doing with a Schooner Room?" They've made it into apartments now and there's no store or anything there. But oh, that was a booming town with a lot of people.

RM: What else went on there?

GS: We would have dances every weekend. The boys in Pahrump that knew how to play music would go over there and play—Button Ford was one of them. We'd go over there and have dances and oh, my goodness. We just did everything.

RM: How many people would be at one of those dances?

GS: I would say, when the mine was going, maybe about 75. It was so much fun.

MW: That's where we learned how to dance.

GS: Yes, we learned how to dance down at the Snake Room. We were little kids.

MW: We'd fox-trot . . . you name it and we learned how to dance.

GS: The miners taught us how to dance. The Snake Room used to have a big patio connected to it and the door was always open. They had the jukebox set up so the music could be heard outside and all of us kids would be outside waiting on our parents, but everybody watched over us so nothing would happen. Some of those miners would come out and say, "Gloria, would you dance with me? I'll give you two dollars if you'll dance with me." So we'd get up there and they taught all of us kids how to dance.

RM: Was there a shortage of women in a camp like that?

GS: I don't think so because most of the people had wives and they had young ladies.

MW: The Noonday was a married man's camp. The single men's was up on the hill and the married men's camp was down at the bottom. But anyway, they taught us how to dance. We did crazy things. I remember there was an old miner, his name was "Horse Thief," and he was my buddy. He used to come in and sell rocks to tourists. He would take a big rock and boil it in acid, then he's take gold leaf or melted gold or something and put a little bit down in there and he'd sell it to the tourists.

GS: Oh, he was awful. We knew he was lying but we couldn't say anything. He always told me I was one of his favorite girls. One day it was raining over there and it was raining so hard and Horse Thief must have gotten off work or something but he was walking down in front of the bar and he found a ring, a diamond. It was called a princess style; it was when they first came out. He found one and gave it to me. He told me it was for me. I still have it.

RM: Is that right?

GS: Oh yes. One or two of the stones are missing but I still have it.

RM: What else do you recall about Tecopa at that time?

GS: Oh, gosh. All I can say is it was a bustling town. My cousin Gerald Haskins lives over at that little space between Tecopa and Pahrump—Stump Springs—that little town where Roland Wiley was. He and I are the same age. His dad used to be the mechanic for the Morgan Trucking Company so he had a big garage in Tecopa. He gave Gerald a car and it was an old beat-up thing, about a 1932 car. We wanted a convertible so we chopped the top off of that old thing and we used to have so much fun—we would drive it all over the place.

We had baseball games in Shoshone between the mines, Darwin, Pahrump, Shoshone, and Tecopa. And Baker would come up and play. It was a lot of fun.

I really liked going to school there in Shoshone. I remember I had a schoolteacher by the name of Mrs. Insley. I met her again when they had a reunion the year before last—I got to see her and her daughter. She was a single parent and she was my teacher. When I was in grade school, my grandmother (my mom's aunt, but my grandmother) Julia Ross could draw like you can't believe. You'd show her a picture of a deer or anything . . . so we would get these old books and Mrs. Insley would help us hunt for the pictures, and then we'd send them up to her. She had no art paper so we'd get a paper sack or something like that and smooth it out on a piece of cardboard and she would draw, and draw pictures for the school all the time. She was really a great artist. She was George Ross's and Stella Fields' mother.

And she was so clean. We called her "Grandma." I remember I had a little girlfriend, her name was Ethel Rook and I call her "Bangy." Her family lived there for I don't know how long. Mr. And Mrs. Rook lived in a boxcar when they first came to Shoshone.

RM: Where were the boxcars located?

GS: I heard there used to be a railroad going through.

RM: Sure. The T&T.

GS: They lived in a boxcar, Mrs. Rook and Mr. Rook. We lost Mrs. Rook last year. I'd go down sometimes for lunch with Bangy. Bangy would say, "Come on down. Let's have lunch at my house." We'd go down to her house and every time we went it was tomato soup and crackers. I never had tomato soup and crackers at my house so I loved to eat at her house. Then she would

say, "Let's go to your house and eat tomorrow," and we would go up to my grandma's. We had a little table and she would put a dish towel on it and she'd make fresh lemonade every time and all kinds of sandwiches, crazy sandwiches. That's where I got to like peanut butter and bacon sandwiches. She'd make tuna sandwiches, bologna, cheese, whatever.

Ethel loved coming up there but she couldn't understand the way my grandma was because my grandma was super clean. Really a clean, clean freak. Before we ate, you had to wash your hands; you had to wash your face; you had to comb your hair. And then you sat down and ate and as soon as you got done eating, you had to wash all over again. You had to wash your mouth, wash your hands, wash your face.

We used to haul water. Mama had another aunt who lived beside Julia in Shoshone and apparently she never had any children. She was married to an Alaskan Indian and she had a heart attack or a stroke or something because she had one hand that was always like this.

RM: Cramped up.

GS: Yes, and she had to haul water. We all had to haul water from the spring. It was right in front of our grandma's house and this aunt lived just a little teeny ways over. She would fill up a lard bucket and she held the big bucket in this hand and the little lard bucket in this and she'd pull her finger down.

RM: How many students were there in the Shoshone school when you were going there?

GS: Grade school? The very first time I went to grade school down there, it was in a green house right next to where the motel is in Shoshone now. The way I knew it was a school was because it had swings and things out in front. Everybody went to school there. I don't think there were very many of us—I would say about eight.

RM: Mostly Indians?

GS: No, my sister, myself, and Gerald were the only Indians.

MW: We were the only Indian family living there.

GS: And the rest of them were Anglo.

RM: In your living in that area did you get to know Dad Fairbanks? Was he still alive?

GS: Dad Fairbanks? No, he wasn't. Our Mom's history goes way back with Bernice, Celesta—all of Dad Fairbank's daughters. They were all young ladies together with my mom. Bernice and Mom and Celesta all grew up together. And then their children, which would be myself and Susie and Charles and all of us, with Bangy, all grew up together. We still keep in touch with Charles today and with Susie, whenever we see her. Charles wants to do a big barbeque one of these days and invite all the family over. That would be a good thing if it ever happens.

RM: What do you recall about Baker?

GS: I was too small. I don't remember hardly anything. All I remember is living in this little house and Dad going to and from work for Morrison Knudsen.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Talk some more about Pahrump. Tell about living at the Manse Ranch.

GS: All that I remember about that distinctly is that my dad had to listen to the news 24/7. He couldn't listen to anything else and my mom and I would get the radio and we'd change it to Stella Dallas or something like that. Or The Shadow.

He came home from work one day and he had caught a little rabbit and it was just a baby. And I had to have field boots. I would not wear girlie shoes—she [Marie] had to have girlie shoes. I wanted field boots. The rabbit used to sleep in my field boots but we had a cat and the cat eventually got the little rabbit and that just broke my heart.

When we used to go to school I remember Button [Ford] and I remember Darlene Cayton; her father was a musician. She and I ended up being pretty good friends.

There was nobody in Pahrump. Where the old store used to be, the Burkette family had that after Pop Buol and they had a son by the name of Richard Burkette. He was about my age, I would say. That little store was so neat because they would let anybody have credit if they knew you. The post office was in the same little room as the little tiny grocery store and they had one pump outside. People could go there to cash checks. There weren't a lot of people in Pahrump. In fact, from the store up towards Beatty, I don't think there was maybe one ranch.

RM: Do you recall who was living there?

GS: No I don't. All I remember is Bert Nickelsen worked for him; I don't know who it was. And then down south, down by the Pahrump Ranch . . . I can't remember who had that, either. But I know Elmer Bowman had the Manse Ranch. There were two little ranches, I think, further down from there and I don't know who owned those.

RM: Do you remember Perry Bowman?

GS: I didn't know him.

MW: We don't know Perry Bowman but my mother knew Perry Bowman and Loretta and Lola—all of them. And our real father did because Mrs. Bowman and her people used to can fruit and things and Mama would go there and help them—they'd do that together. And she'd bring some over. And I was a headache. [Laughs]

RM: Were there other Indians living on the Manse Ranch besides yourselves?

GS: We're the only ones I can remember.

MW: I remember when we lived up there with Annie Beck when we were little in the summertime—Annie Beck lived near the Manse Ranch.

GS: The rest of the Indians lived near the old store. The Jims lived up there and the Browns lived up there—Ernie Brown and then Steve Brown. From the store you're heading east, and they all lived up on that little knoll. Mamie Steve lived behind the store, down a little ways in the little sand dunes.

RM: Were there Indians living on the Pahrump Ranch?

GS: I don't know about the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Did you guys ever go to the Pahrump Ranch?

GS: No. The one who would know about that would be Clarabelle.

RM: How many people were living on the Manse Ranch when you were there? Did you know any of the Bowmans?

GS: The only one that I even talked to in those days was Murton because he was the youngest one. Today, if I saw him, I wouldn't know him.

RM: How about Digger Anderson? Do you remember him? Imogene Anderson was his wife, and she was a Bowman.

GS: Yes, I knew them pretty well.

RM: Were you the only Indian family on the Manse?

GS: As far as I know, yes. Now, that's not saying other Indians didn't work there but we lived there.

RM: Did you guys get up into the hills and do much?

GS: Yes, we went up and got wood. Annie Beck used to go kill a deer. Any time our supplies were running short, she'd hop on her little horse and go up on the mountains and kill a deer and bring it back. And she used to get desert turtles and cook them. I don't know how she did it but she did. And mesquite beans—she'd make candy. That was our candy and it was so good.

RM: How do you make mesquite candy?

GS: She would grind it and make it into powder.

MW: First of all, she always knew where the sweetest trees were.

RM: How would she know?

GS: You'd have to taste it. The sweetest mesquite tree that I know of today is in Shoshone. And all of the Browns would eat it. [Laughs] You'd see us walking around with no shoes on, rolled up pants, eating mesquite beans.

RM: What does a mesquite bean taste like? I've never even tried it.

GS: I couldn't describe it to you, but it is delicious. Annie Beck used to grind it and powder the mesquite bean. She had a big basket and she'd flip the powder up in the air and all of the shell would fly away; then she'd take that and mix it with water and put it in a hard pan and let it dry. She'd cut it up and make little squares out of it and it was like candy.

RM: So you don't have to cook mesquite beans? You can eat it just like an apple or something.

GS: Yes, just don't mix it up with a screw bean.

RM: Where does a screw bean grow?

GS: It looks just like a mesquite tree but it has are little curlicues

RM: But otherwise they look like a mesquite bean.

GS: The trees look the same but the fruit is quite different.

RM: You've got to have that knowledge. I was talking to Richard Arnold about Indian ways and I said, "In the middle of the summer, I drive across this desert and I think how in the world could anybody survive there?"

And Richard said, "I look at it and wonder how in the world could anyone not survive there?" It's like your knowledge with the mesquite beans and so on. It's great.

GS: But Richard Arnold was raised in the city, down in LA. He didn't come up here until he was. .

MW: About 25 or 26. He's a newcomer.

GS: He was raised in L. A. but his mom was raised in Pahrump.

MW: All of the knowledge that he's got he's learned.

GS: And that's a good thing.

RM: Absolutely. Tell me more about the mesquite beans. What season do you pick them?

GS: In the summertime.

RM: It's too late now?

MW: If you ever see the mesquite trees when they're in blossom with the yellow flowers on them, all those yellow flowers, all of a sudden it comes out hard—it looks like a string bean. That string bean is nice and juicy when it's first there. You can see when it's turning kind of yellow. You can eat it then.

GS: Or you can eat it when it's green.

MW: We used to suck on that, chew on it, when we were kids.

RM: How sweet is it?

GS: It's real sweet. And then it makes the muscles in your jaw kind of go. . . . It's so good. Annie Beck would make the flour and put it in a coffee can or something and stick it in the ground. She would take the candy and bury it in the ground, and also the turtles. She cooked the legs or the arms or whatever they cooked, and then she would bury it in the ground in the coffee can so it would stay cool.

RM: That was her refrigerator. And it worked, I'm sure.

GS: Yes. When we'd go over to visit her she always would dig out her little mesquite bean candy for Marie and myself. She was such a nice woman—a little dinky woman. How she could take a deer and throw it up on the back of that horse, I could never understand. She was Richard Arnold's grandmother.

RM: Who were her relatives?

GS: That I can't tell you. But when Mama had her first son, Annie Beck delivered her baby. They did it the old Indian way. They'd burn a fire and put a bunch of rocks on the ground—not great big huge ones but good-sized. After the fire's gone they take the sand and put it over that and then put a blanket on there and the heat helps with the delivery.

MW: A long time ago, this is the way they used to do it.

RM: So she helped guide them out and would cut the umbilical cord?

GS: Yes. And if it's a boy, when the navel falls off, you take that navel and go up in the mountains and find a big deer track and take the dried-up navel and push it down in there and cover it up. That means that he's going to be a good provider. For a girl, they find a packrat's nest and put it in the nest and that means she'll keep your house in order. We still do that.

MW: I did my grandson's here.

RM: Oh, how wonderful. How long after the delivery would you do that?

GS: As soon as it falls off, maybe a week or two. As soon as it is dry.

RM: How do you decide, traditionally, who you marry and all of that?

GS: There were never any set-up marriages.

RM: Did most of the Paiute women marry Indian men or white men, or how did that work?

GS: Most of them married Indians. Very few married whites because it was a no-no on the Indian side. You've got to keep your blood pure. That's why I couldn't understand why my great-grandma from Panamint came over here and married my grandpa. And my mom's father was a Spaniard—Seraphino Esteves. He's the one that did all the rock work at Death Valley. Do you know where the Death Valley Inn is? He did all the rock work there.

RM: Was it also bad for an Indian man to marry a white woman?

GS: You just never did. They didn't like that because you're mixing your blood. Your blood has got to be pure.

RM: But some people did do it. Were they then ostracized from the Indians?

GS: No.

RM: And the kids were treated the same?

GS: Oh, yes. My dad Boone Wilson's Aunt Lily in Hawthorne was from Moapa but this guy, Slim Brown, and his group had a ranch house up at Cactus Springs and they needed a cook. My dad's aunt went over and got the job and she ended up marrying the guy, then they moved to Hawthorne. He was a tall, tall, skinny dude, and I guess they must have gotten married real young because she taught him to speak our language—he could speak Paiute fluently. She was a little tiny woman and it looked like Mutt and Jeff walking around. They never had any children.

RM: How about divorce, or splitting up marriage? Was that common?

GS: Yes, it was common.

MW: It was quite common with the Indians.

GS: The Indians, the ladies . . . I'm going by how I was raised. My mom, with us girls, told us always be strong. Don't ever be abused by any man. You're not a second-class citizen. You don't start any fights, but if something comes up where you cannot get out of it, then you've got the right to punch somebody or something like that. But don't ever start trouble.

Don't ever fight over your kids because the kids will end up being friends and then the parents will be mad at each other forever. We were taught to be very independent. All of these Indians in the colony around here say we're different, she and I, because of the way we were raised.

RM: And how are you different?

GS: Some of these women here, their husbands will mess around on them or they'll get beat up by their husbands. The husbands drink and all of this kind of stuff. Where in my house, huh uh—it don't go.

RM: So you and your sister won't put up with that kind of behavior.

MW: We were raised not to put up with anything. Don't start trouble and trouble won't come looking for you. Mind your own business and treat people like you'd like to be treated. That's the way it was in our house.

RM: Are Indian women as a group. . . .

GS: They're passive.

RM: Are they more frequently abused by men? Or men take advantage of them more?

GS: That's the word—take advantage. They're taken advantage of quite a bit.

RM: And how did they feel about that?

GS: That's why they say we're different—because we won't put up with that. You have to be proud of yourself.

RM: Absolutely. And you probably raised your children like that.

GS: Yes.

RM: So to talk more about Pahrump, where was your house in relation to the big pool of water at the Manse Ranch?

GS: That was right down below Bowmans'.

RM: And where was your house?

GS: Right off the road. We were in quite a ways, maybe from here to the clinic up there.

RM: Were there trees around your place?

GS: Oh, yes, trees, flowers, roses.

MW: Annie Beck and those folks used to live around those great big huge cottonwood trees. She had tomatoes and fruit trees up there.

RM: But that was on the east side of the highway.

GS: Right. We had our own garden. My mom had a green thumb, I guess you'd say, because she always had things going, brewing away.

RM: And your dad worked on the ranch. What would he do? What were his duties?

GS: I know he did a lot of irrigating.

MW: A lot of hay. I can remember down there on that side where the Bowmans were, that great big garden that we had. We had all kinds of melons and everything there.

GS: Yes, it was pretty neat.

RM: What kinds of get-togethers did you have in Pahrump?

GS: The only time people got together was when there was a funeral, it seemed like. Oh, and then there was Mamie Steve. She lived. . . .

MW: She lived right on back of Burkettes', the store.

GS: I know, but before then she lived right where the road to Shoshone and the road to the store meet up on the main highway.

MW: And you forgot about Mutt and Jeff.

GS: Jeff and John.

MW: Mutt and Jeff and John.

GS: I think they lived down by where Mamie used to live.

RM: Jeff and John Weed and Mutt Weed.

GS: Yes, they were my mother's true uncles. None of them had children, either. I think it was after they passed that Mamie moved from there down behind the store down at Burkettes'.

RM: Did Indians, when you were growing up, tend to have a shorter life expectancy than maybe they should have because of accidents and things like that?

GS: No. They never had accidents because they never had any cars.

RM: So they lived as long as anybody else.

GS: Yes, I would say so. In fact, there was an old lady who lived here. They traced her back to 123 years old. And the way that she died, she slipped off the porch and they said when she fell she snapped a vessel, one of her main arteries. We lived here also with my dad in this very spot where Marie lives now.

MW: There was a different house here but I live right where my dad lived.

GS: Talking about Pahrump, there used to be a big swimming hole right off the main highway where there's a service station and a store on the left-hand side, that big wooden one. There used to be running water going into that and they had a big, huge swimming hole. We kids used to go swimming there all the time. It was so neat.

MW: If we had a ride up there.

RM: I'll bet it was the big water hole at the Pahrump Springs.

GS: I'll bet it was. But as kids it was so funny. [Chuckles] You'd see someone like Darlene Cayton; she's a little Anglo girl. She would come swimming and she'd have on her bathing suit. We were all embarrassed. There's no way in hell we'd put on a bathing suit. Gosh, it used to embarrass me. I'd peek at her like this. She was my friend.

RM: What would you guys wear swimming?

GS: We'd wear our long pants and a T-shirt or something like that.

MW: We weren't allowed to show our legs.

RM: So you were pretty modest growing up.

MW: That's the way we were raised.

RM: Would you say that Paiutes are like that generally, pretty modest?

GS: I would think so. Not today, but in our day.

RM: One didn't show one's body.

GS: Right. I don't think any of us that did that, even in Moapa. They have that Muddy River going through Moapa and we'd all go swimming but nobody wore a bathing suit.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: About what age did people tend to get married back in these, in this time period?

GS: Let's see, Betty Bow was probably about 17 when she first got married. Lavinia was maybe 18, 17. So probably about 16, 17.

RM: For the women. And then the guys about the same?

GS: No, it's like it is today. The older men like younger women. My real dad was about 30 years older than my mom and then he went and had a second family after he left her. He was handsome. They said he looked just like Frank Sinatra when he was young.

RM: And he was the one who had the eye for the women.

GS: Yes. And he used to party up here and he used to know all the big wigs in town.

MW: He knew all those people. He worked as a shill.

GS: He was quite the rounder, that guy. I remember he used to take me to boxing matches sometimes and that used to make me so mad. I didn't really like boxing because I thought it was so brutal but as I got a little older, like 14, 15, I got to where I liked it. He was a rounder. He did all kinds of stuff.

RM: When you were living in Shoshone and Tecopa and Pahrump and so forth, did the Paiutes get together for a powwow or have ceremonies or anything?

GS: No, the powwow is a new thing. This thing that they do now, that's the show thing. What we called a powwow in those days was a memorial for somebody. Moapa's going to have a memorial next week for Flora Simmons, and it's honoring her life. They sing and dance and all of this kind of stuff. That's the kind of powwows I remember.

RM: What would happen at a memorial and who all would come?

MW: The first funeral I ever went to was at Ash Meadows—one of the Bishops died. That had a sing and it didn't last just one night.

GS: It was three days.

RM: What went on in that three-day sing?

GS: In the three days they have the funeral and they build a great big long, kind of like a roof thing out of willows and trees, and they cover it all. It's pretty wide, probably about as wide as the trailer here.

RM: Probably about 15, 18, 20 feet?

GS: Yes, and probably 60 feet long. They've got benches on both sides to sit on. It's divided down the middle but there are no walls, just posts. And then they have a cook shack.

MW: The body lies in the middle of those benches and for three days and two nights they sing every night—Salt Songs. They call it Salt Songs now but it was originally called the Silver Songs. So for three nights, they'd sing over that body. The cook shack over there would feed the people and to wet their throat they'd have maybe bottles of wine or whiskey or something so that they could wet their throats.

GS: Just the singers.

MW: Women on one side, men on the other side of the body. Men held the rattles as they sang and the women sang with the men.

GS: And danced.

RM: How many singers would there be?

GS: It all depended on how many showed up.

RM: Would more show up for an important person than somebody who wasn't?

GS: I would think so; it's just like we do now. If it's somebody that has been singing at our funerals and somebody who's been important like some of the singers from Parker who come here and sing for the families, we will make an effort; we will go down to theirs when they pass.

MW: It doesn't matter who the person is. Sometimes the news wouldn't get out 100 miles away that a person had died but whoever heard it over here or in Moapa would all go to the funeral and sing. After that, they burned the man's house and everything he owned. Even his animals were killed. That's what happened at that funeral that I went to.

RM: That you went to up in Ash Meadows.

MW: Yes, but we weren't allowed to go to the funeral. We had to sit on the outside a ways away and watch because as children, we're not supposed to go.

RM: But you could kind of see from the distance?

MW: Yes. They had to bring us because they didn't have anybody to leave us with.

GS: They'd do that sing for two nights and on the morning of the third day they piled up all the clothes and everything and burned them in front of everybody on a big bonfire.

RM: And they burned everything.

GS: Yes. The house burns, everything.

RM: So nothing is passed down.

GS: Right. They never gave anything away. And I can remember people used to cook beans in a big washtub and have fire going underneath it all night so it'd get done. Coffee was the same way—big coffee pots. Everybody had to make cookies, doughnuts, cakes, or whatever because 10:00 p.m., 12:00 midnight, and 2:00 a.m. were times for the singers.

MW: That's the way they do it now.

GS: Well, we used to do that over in Moapa then. At 10:00, you brought coffee around to all the people that were under this hut—the young people had to bring coffee, sugar, milk, cups and spoons and so forth, and serve everybody. And the one that followed them would bring a piece of cake or something and offer it. That happened at 10:00 at night and at 2:00 in the morning. And they all buy the singers little jugs of whiskey so they would be able to clear their throats when they were singing because they sing continuously.

RM: They would sing continuously from when to when?

GS: From, say, Monday to Tuesday, and the morning of Wednesday was when it ended. Three days.

MW: They would only sing at night because during the daytime they have to have time to rest to get ready for night again.

RM: What time would they start singing? About sundown?

MW: Right as soon as that sun went down. And then when the sun came up, they would stop.

RM: How could somebody sing that long?

MW: It's a story they're telling. I don't really understand the story because I was never really told it. Mom tried to tell us a long time ago when I was younger but I didn't pay any attention.

RM: But it was called the Silver Song and now it's called the Salt?

GS: Now it's the Salt Song.

RM: And they changed the name of it?

GS: As the years went by, things are not like they were. Like the women now sing with the men singers. They sit with them and they've got the rattle.

RM: And they're not on separate sides.

GS: Right, but you're supposed to be separate. We were talking about maybe writing a small book for the young people to understand what they can and cannot do. I don't think any of them understand because they haven't been raised that way. Now you get kids sleeping at funerals, which in the old days you couldn't do because the person who died might come after your baby's soul. And you don't walk in front of the singers, and they do it now all the time. You've got kids running around all over the place.

RM: At a typical funeral, how many singers would there be?

MW: There is no typical. Whoever comes to sing wants to sing.

RM: What would a range be? From five to 20 singers?

GS: I would say maybe five to ten of the men singers and the same amount of the women singers.

RM: It must be exhausting for them, but very spiritual.

GS: They take a break, like I said, at 10:00 and at 2:00.

RM: Do they sing the same songs over and over all night or do they have different songs?

GS: It's one long story that's told through the entire funeral.

MW: And each part of the story is told between a certain time and then they go to a different time and then to another segment. And right about 2:00 comes the crescendo. The music gets stronger and stronger and stronger because at that time, you're sending that person on his third day of life over to the other side.

GS: And the last song is so loud.

MW: So loud. We're sending that person off.

RM: Is there weeping?

GS: Oh, yes.

MW: Well, of course. That's what it is.

GS: At a funeral, they quit singing and then the family goes up to the casket and everybody goes up and pays their respects, and people do it as they come in. And you always have to eat. It's a good thing.

MW: Because when you're eating, you're eating with that person.

RM: Would each person get a funeral or do some get a funeral and some don't?

GS: They all do but it's changed—now, some of them don't want a funeral. Our sister, for one. She died and she was cremated and never had a sing. It upset the old people around here very highly because she was part of them, and they didn't appreciate that. But that happens a lot.

MW: A lot of the Indians are Christians so they go to church and the belief isn't there, you know. They're not Indian; I call them topa hikos—a black/white faith—that's kind of making fun of them. That's like with our mother. She knew the language fluently, knew the tradition fluently, knew what you had to do to protect the land. When we went pine nut-picking or deer-hunting or something like that we always gave back to the land.

GS: I'll tell you a story about this. My aunt is my blood father's first cousin so in the Indian way she's my aunt. She had a daughter my age and they lived in Needles, California. They really did not have any money. (It's hard because my dad always worked and we always had something. We never were without food.) But we left here and were going to Parker, Arizona. We jumped in the car and I was starving and the daughter was starving. We got just past Needles where there's a peak—it's supposed to be a sacred place—and they stopped the car and fed what they had to the mountain.

RM: How do you feed it to the mountain?

GS: You talk Indian to it and break it up and throw it out.

MW: What you're doing is giving thanks for a safe trip.

GS: And we do that when we go pine nut-picking up in the mountains—giving thanks for things.

RM: Do you throw pine nuts if you've been pine nut-picking back to the mountain?

GS: No, you give something of yours. If I go up there with, say, a Twinkie. I'm giving from me. You don't want to pick up pine nuts to give back to them because she might think that you're a bad person.

RM: I've heard that each family kind of has ownership of a mountain in the territory. Is that true?

GS: Not that I know of.

MW: That's like with Clarabelle Jim. She was telling me, "The Indian people would go over there to that side of the mountain and ask them if they could go up in the mountains." Because that's our mountain.

GS: We're the Mountain Sheep Clan.

RM: Would you consider yourself a member of the Las Vegas band or the Pahrump band?

GS: I'm registered here because of my dad. From my mother, I'm from the Mountain Sheep Clan from Pahrump.

RM: Does that include Shoshone and Tecopa?

GS: Yes, because they're all one family.

RM: All Mountain Sheep. And what is this clan here in Las Vegas called?

MW: I don't know.

GS: They've lost their identity. They don't know what clan they belong to here and the people in Moapa don't know what clan they belong to.

RM: And you have that spiritual tie to the mountains, don't you? Does that include all of the Spring Mountains or the west side of the Spring Mountains or what?

MW: No, the Wilsons have all of the springs on this side of the mountain and on the other side of the mountain. But the Indian part of us, we all come from over there. Just like with all the Moapa band of Paiutes. Most of those people came from the Benns on that side out of Pahrump. They came here, stopped here, and then migrated over to Moapa.

RM: So the people who are in Moapa now really came from the Pahrump area?

GS: Absolutely. Part of them.

MW: The biggest portion of them came from Pahranaagat Valley. When they took a head count of the Indians, half of them were settled in Moapa so that's where they registered them.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Would you like to see a tribal recognition for the Pahrump Paiutes?

GS: Oh, yes. Before I moved to Montana in 1976, I was sitting on the council here and making trips to Washington, D.C., and raising Cain back there about the Indians in Pahrump that don't have a home.

MW: I want to give recognition of my sister and her work on the old council. She went to Washington, D.C., and got the piece of land that we have where the golf course is. She and six other people did that.

RM: Gloria, can you elaborate on what you did?

GS: On the Snow Mountain, there was Billy Frye—he was our chairman. Margaret Henry, and Carmen Patrick—they're all deceased now—and myself and a guy from here, one of the Andersons, were on the council. We got in front of the Senate. And that's a scary thing. All of these guys are sitting up there and we're all sitting down here. It was very belittling to me and it scared me.

RM: When was this?

GS: I think in 1982. They were asking us, "Why did you want this land? Why this? Why that?" And I told them, "Well, we've got 10 acres here. It didn't come from the government. Helen J. Stewart gave it to us."

MW: For \$500.

GS: I said that's how we got our land where we're at. I said, "The Las Vegas Indians have nothing." Then a man who was on the council at the time started telling them all kinds of stories, going clear off the wall. I told him, "Sit down." So I'm telling them that we got just this 10 acres and at that time there were maybe 60 members of the group. I said, "We have no place to live. We've got elders here that need a place," and all this kind of stuff. They were hem-hawing around about it. Finally I got up and said, "Listen. I'm going to make you a deal. We'll buy the land up there."

He said, "Well how much do you propose to pay for it?"

I said, "Let's see. You'll make a profit, believe me. You got it from us for what, 2 cents an acre? I'll give you 2-1/2." [Laughter]

They sat there and kind of chuckled a little bit and said, "Well, if you come before the House tomorrow," so we had to go before the House the next day. They talked over what was said at the first hearing and I explained everything again. Then the meeting was over and we left. We got back here and maybe about a month later, if it was that long, President Reagan signed the paper, giving me a parchment, and we were invited to come out to have dinner with him.

RM: So you had dinner with the President? Do you have any pictures of that?

GS: No, I sure don't.

RM: I'll bet there are some in an archive somewhere. That's an amazing story. How long did it take from the time you started to when you finally got the piece of paper?

MW: Oh, that was a long process.

RM: Do you remember any of the senators' names?

GS: Paul Laxalt helped us a lot. There was Paul Laxalt and that guy from Hawaii, Inouye. And I'm sure Ted Kennedy was in there at that time. It was so much fun. We even got personal, President Reagan and I. He's sitting there talking and he said, "What do you think about getting that parchment?"

I said, "Boy, you're a damn good President. You're quick and on the ball." He started laughing and I said, "You know, I'm going to have to tell you something. I don't really want to say it but I'm going to say it anyway. You make a better President than you did an actor." [Laughter] And he laughed—he thought that was funny.

RM: How many people were at this gathering?

GS: There were quite a few—the bigwigs here in town. We had it in a hangar out at McCarran, out at the little one.

RM: How many people do you think were there?

GS: I would say maybe 50, maybe 100.

RM: That is such a lovely story.

GS: He was really a nice man.

RM: That's really interesting. To change the subject, I've wondered how the Paiutes figure kinship. For many people, their cousins are considered their brothers and sisters.

GS: That's the way we are. For instance, Julia and my grandmother were sisters. Julia had Uncle George and Stella and my grandmother only had my mom, but you're from the same blood so you're brothers and sisters.

RM: So she considered what we would call her cousins her brothers and sisters.

GS: And your cousins come after that.

MW: Just like with my brother's children, they're like our children.

RM: So you consider your nieces and nephews your children.

GS: Yes. They're all treated the same. It makes it so much better. My mom used to tell me, "There is nothing more important than your family. Always take care of your family." My second dad was the same way. He used to say, "The family is the closest thing you can have." We were his stepchildren but he never called us stepchildren. "That is my daughter. Those are my grandchildren."

RM: Is that the Paiute way?

GS: No, that was Dad's way.

RM: The stepchildren among most Paiutes would not be their children.

GS: No.

MW: That's the way Dad looked at it and that's the way he talked toward us.

RM: Are there rules about who you can marry in this kinship system?

MW: You can't marry your cousin.

RM: Which would be your. . . .

GS: First or second cousin. It's marrying your own blood. They used to tell us, "That person is your cousin," and if an elder told you that person is your cousin, all thoughts should go away. They used to say, "If you mess with your cousin, you're a dog. You are acting like a dog."

MW: And you might have a child by your first or second cousin and that baby might be a little bit less.

GS: But we had crazy beliefs, too. I'm born with a double cowlick—I've got two of them, right up here. The old Indians used to call it "horns." They'd say, "Gloria's got horns." Another belief was that you could not go outside and play when it's storming. You had to have a scarf on your head. It could not be white or red because you would get struck on the head. And if you didn't have one, lightning would strike you for sure. I would run around and play with a bandanna on my head, usually a blue one. We had all kinds of beliefs.

RM: What are some other taboos you had?

GS: Don't whistle at night—a ghost will come and twist your mouth. Your mouth will be twisted. I can't remember that many right now.

RM: Let's see, a little off the subject of what we talked about—there was a guy named Whispering Ben who was at Indian Springs. He was the original owner and he traded it to a guy—Andy Laswell.

GS: Whispering Ben was my mother's great-great-grandfather.

RM: What do you know about him?

GS: I don't know all that much, not about him. Have you heard any stories about Whispering Ben?

MW: No, other than that's where our bloodline comes from. We are related to Clarabelle Jim through Whispering Ben. Whispering Ben was her mother's father. And he's buried over in Pahrump. All of our family is buried in Pahrump in the Tecopa Cemetery. It used to originally be an Indian cemetery.

GS: Yes, most of our family is buried over there. When my mother passed, about 10 years ago, we handled her funeral through Palm Mortuary. They wanted to know where we were going to bury her and I said over in Pahrump. They got ahold of Pahrump and they came back and said, "You're going to have to pay for a plot."

I said, "No I'm not. That is an Indian cemetery." We did let a few of white people get buried there who were friends of the Indians. I said "You cannot tell me that I have to pay for a piece of ground." I called a county commissioner in Tonopah and I said, "They're going to charge me for ground down here for burying my mom. You know it's an Indian cemetery, don't you?"

He said, "Yes, I do."

I said, "I need you to get in touch with some people because we're not paying it." So sure enough, we didn't have to pay.

Oh, that just ticked me off. It's just like Chief Tecopa. We've got Chief Tecopa's great granddaughter living right here in town. She's our first cousin.

RM: Oh really? So you're related to Chief Tecopa, too.

GS: No, it's through her grandma. Originally, they came out of Ash Meadows and Annie Tecopa was his sister. Annie Tecopa had a son by the name of Daniel Fields and Danny Fields married my mom's sister Stella. So Caralee is an offspring of Danny and Stella.

RM: It gets complicated.

GS: It sure does. But what upsets me is that Clarabelle says she's the only living relative of Chief Tecopa. She is not.

RM: Who were Chief Tecopa's parents? Do you know?

GS: I don't know.

MW: We can't go back that far.

RM: Did you know Roland Wiley, who had Cathedral Canyon? He bought the property from a guy named John Yount, who was from the Yount family who started the Manse Ranch. And John Yount was married to an Indian woman. Do you know who she was?

GS: No, I don't. I don't think Clarabelle even knows.

RM: Let me bounce a story off of you and see what you think of it. The Younts and their family had some horses and covered wagons and they were headed for Tombstone, Arizona, in 1867. They were camped at Ash Meadows and they had a herd of cattle. They stayed there a few days and they let the horses go up into the mountains east of Johnnie. Well, they went up there and the Indians had killed all their draft horses.

So they're stranded in the middle of nowhere and they had a small baby. They traded some cows to two brothers named Jordan who had squatter's rights to the Manse Springs, and that's how the Younts moved on to what became the Manse Ranch. People have wondered, "Why did the Indians kill the horses?" I was wondering if any of that has ever been passed down through your family.

GS: I've never heard of it.

MW: Speaking about Younts, Gladys Lopez was always talking about Younts because she and Daisy used to go down there all the time when she was a little girl.

RM: When would this have been?

MW: Gladys would be about 90 years old.

RM: We found family members and descendants of the Younts who had pictures from between 1890 and 1910. We have done a history book of the Yount Ranch, mainly from old newspapers and sources like that, and using the pictures. The book is at the printer now. Some of the pictures have Indians in them because they were involved in the ranch, working in the kitchen and the fields and so on.

GS: Didn't Clarabelle say she worked down there?

MW: She used to work there as a young girl as a cook.

RM: The Younts sold it in 1910 and it went through a couple of owners before Elmer Bowman bought it in 1946.

GS: Oh, you're talking about the lower one. I get confused on that because the Manse Ranch is in Manse. Pahrump Ranch is in Pahrump.

RM: That's right. They were originally considered two different towns. They are about six miles apart and they each had their own post office. This is way before you were born, in the early 1900s. Now, of course, both ranches are considered part of Pahrump.

RM: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? You guys are just a fountain of knowledge.

GS: We probably won't think of anything right now but tonight . . . we'll jot it down.

RM: How about food stories? Surviving off the land, for instance.

GS: That's the way we ate when we were in Excelsior and in Pahrump. The only things we bought were flour and salt.

MW: And sugar.

GS: Salt for seasoning, and I don't think in the old days they even used that.

RM: And you lived off of the land otherwise? Did you do a lot of hunting? What game did you find in the Kingstons?

GS: Mostly rabbits—jackrabbits, cottontails. . . .

MW: Quail, chukars, mountain sheep. . . .

RM: Are mountain sheep hard to get?

GS: It all depends upon who you're with. My grandpa, my new dad's father, would go hunting mountain sheep with a .22 and he would always bring one home.

RM: How did he do it?

GS: I don't know.

MW: He knew how to hunt. These people that they call hunters nowadays, I don't understand that. I don't call them hunters.

GS: Yes, right. And they're out cruising in cars. [Laughter] When we lived up in Idaho, I remember my dad getting geese, ducks, pheasants, all kinds of stuff like that.

MW: We ate good fresh meat.

RM: What did you make out of flour and sugar?

GS: Bread was the main thing, bread and gravy.

RM: And what about the wild plants?

GS: A long time ago, especially over in Moapa, I can remember my mom getting all these crazy looking things—it was asparagus. And there was wild asparagus all over along the river. She'd go pick them all up and we'd have fresh asparagus damn near every other day.

MW: With my mother, that's how we learned to eat a lot of foods. The mesquite bean, when it's young; is just like string beans. Mama would get them and we'd cook them up like fresh spring beans. Then there was one plant I call quail bush, and it grows about ten inches tall. It's just like the Mexican spinach that they eat that I see in grocery stores. So we used to eat that, and tamut. Like Clarabelle used to say about my mom and my brother, "They're just like us. They eat like us." My mother and Clarabelle and all of her children and grandchildren can speak Paiute beautifully.

GS: And her daughter-in-law is white and her daughter-in-law also speaks Indian.

MW: Her daughter-in-law works for McCarran. She's a trouble-shooter and she goes all over.

RM: Does Clarabelle live here in the colony?

MW: No, she lives here in town. She goes to Pahrump every weekend, Friday, and comes back Monday.

RM: I'm interested in native plants; are there any native uses of rice grass?

GS: Never heard of rice grass.

RM: Piñon?

GS: Oh, in fact we just got back from pine nut picking. There's a spot between Ely and Caliente. We had to go out and find it and tell everybody where it was so they could go up and get some.

MW: In the olden days, way back during Clarabelle's time and my mother's time, when they were children, there used to be little caterpillars that would get up in the piñon trees. They used to eat those (inaudible). And the wild grass that grew out there—I don't know what that's called. My mother used to say that's what they used to get when she was little—her

grandparents would get that. Because back in the day there wasn't a grocery store where they could get certain things. Mama used to tell me that; I would listen to her.

She would take my youngest son, Chris, and we could go out into the desert quite a bit to different spots, where the old Indian cemeteries used to be, where the old Indian people used to go, like Coyote Springs, and she'd tell us things like that. Chris is pretty knowledgeable about the desert thanks to my mother and my dad because they would take him with them everywhere and tell him about the places.

But they used to harvest all those kinds of things. There was another plant up in the mountains. It grew like asparagus and it had a lot of water in it. Clarabelle said that they used to eat that. I don't know what it was; I've only seen it the one time. That's like with the teas—there were two different kinds of teas that you'd drink; one tastes like mint.

RM: What's the mint-tasting one called?

GS: I don't know.

MW: She has a name for it, but it's in Indian. I can't remember it. But those ladies could tell you.

GS: About the food.

MW: About the food and about the history of Pahrump. Some people talk awful fast; their Paiute language is really fast. Just like our parents, Grandpa and Grandma.

RM: Do most Paiute speakers speak fast?

GS: No. The ones in Moapa and here are slow. There isn't a soul here that speaks Indian now.

RM: In the colony? Do you guys speak it?

GS: We do a little. I can understand it.

RM: Was there anything else you'd like to add?

GS: When I was a young lady, already married, and my brothers and sisters were going to school in Shoshone, Pahrump did not have a school. The students from Pahrump came to Vegas to go to high school because they didn't have a school. They tried to go to school, say, in Beatty and in places like that. I guess Vegas wouldn't take them anymore and they couldn't find a place to go to school so Shoshone said, "Come on; you can go to our high school." Many kids from Pahrump went to school there and graduated from there.

About 15 years ago all of the people moved away from Shoshone and Tecopa and they had just a few kids going to high school that lived there. They went to Pahrump and asked if they could bus their kids over here; there were only about four or five. Pahrump said no. They had to be bused all the way from Shoshone to Death Valley up to Beatty every day because

Pahrump said no. And Shoshone had been big enough to open their heart and let them in over there. A guy and I got into one hellacious argument over that. But like I told him, he's a newcomer, he doesn't know. That really upsets me.

RM: Thanks so much for this interview.

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