

An Interview With  
KARL “SKOOK”  
& ARLEEN BERG

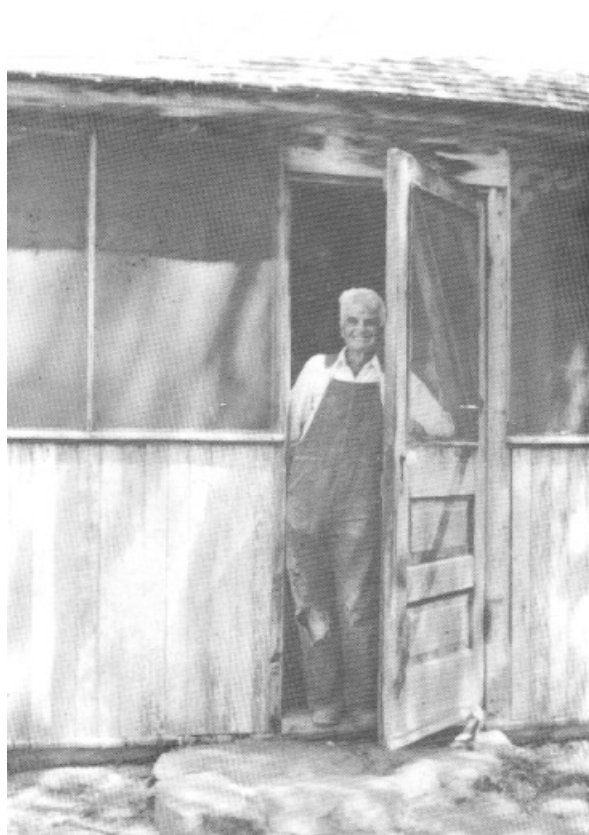
An Oral History conducted and edited by  
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
1990

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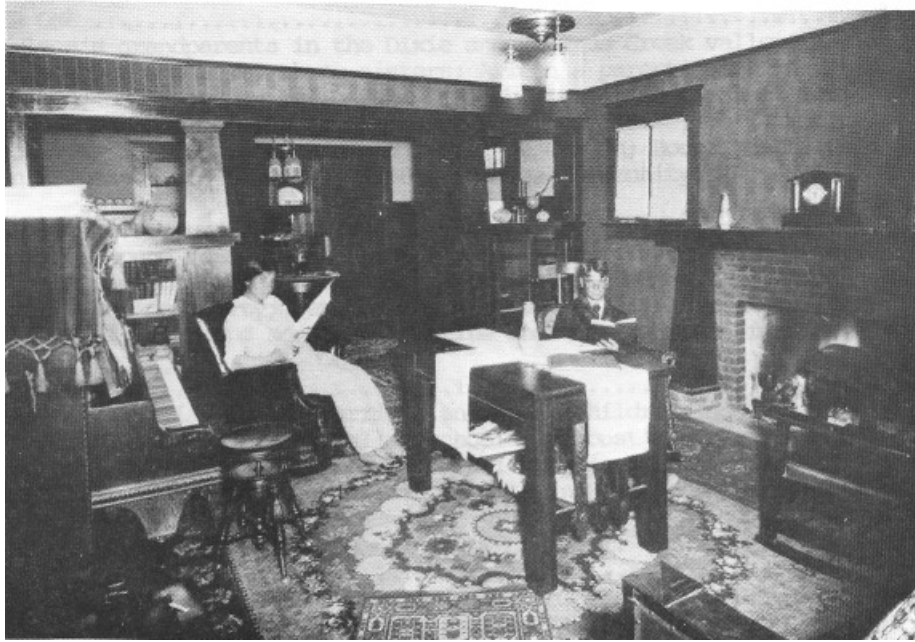
Arleen and Karl "Skook" Berg  
1989



Will Berg at his ranch in Smoky Valley, Nevada, late 1940s.



Lillian Yeager Berg, Round Mountain, Nevada  
c. 1915



Will and Lillian Yeager Berg in the living room of their home in Round Mountain, Nevada  
1915

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## PREFACE

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

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

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

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



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

Jean Charney served as administrative assistant, editor, indexer, and typist throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Louise Terrell provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Barbara Douglass also transcribed a number of interviews. Transcribing, typing, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Jodie Hanson, Alice Levine, Mike Green, Cynthia Tremblay, and Jean Stoss. Jared Charney contributed essential word processing skills. Maire Hayes, Michelle Starika, Anita Coryell, Jodie Hanson, Michelle Welsh, Lindsay Schumacher, and Shena Salzmann shouldered the herculean task of proofreading the oral histories. Gretchen Loeffler and Bambi McCracken assisted in

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--Robert D. McCracken

Tonopah, Nevada

1990

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

which was published as a supplement to the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Nye County's close ties to our nation's frontier past, and recognizing that few written sources on local history are available, especially after about 1920, the Nye County Commissioners initiated the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP). The NCTHP represents an effort to systematically collect and preserve information on the history of Nye County. The centerpiece of the NCTHP is a large set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada. The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite picture of each community's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique--some are large, others are small--yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a composite view of community and county history, revealing the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Nye County residents. In all, more than 1,000 photos have been collected and carefully identified. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories.

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

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in

1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Nye County communities that may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken talking to Arleen and Karl "Skook" Berg at their have in Smoky Valley, Nevada, January 4, 1990.

## CHAPTER ONE

RM: Arleen, could you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

AB: Well, [laughs] it was wrong on my birth certificate. They wrote down "Olive A. Lofthouse," and it was supposed to be Alice A. So I had to have it changed to what it was supposed to be.

RM: What does it read now?

AB: Alice Arleen Lofthouse. Both my grandmother and mother were Alice, so I go by Arleen.

RM: What was your birth date?

AB: September 7th, 1930.

RM: And where were you born?

AB: Taft, California. I was 2 weeks old when [my folks] came back to Fallon.

RM: So your family were residents of Fallon when you were born?

AB: Yes.

RM: What was your father's name?

AB: Albert Lofthouse.

RM: Do you remember when and where he was born?

AB: He was born in Fallon in 1906. He and his 3 brothers were born in the same house in Fallon.

RM: What did his father do?

AB: Well, his great-grandfather came over from England, and his father came into Nevada mining with 3 other brothers. Then they moved into Dixie Valley on some mining and went ahead and were buckarooing out there. My dad's mother's family was named Danielson; they lived on the other side of Dixie Valley, in Edwards Creek Valley. My great-grandfather Danielson built the Clan Alpine Ranch in the Edwards Creek Valley. The 3 Lofthouse boys came over to Edwards Creek to the Clan Alpine Ranch, to a dance, and net the Danielson girls, [chuckles] so 3 Lofthouse boys married 3 Danielson girls. Then there were a lot of double-cousins.

RM: Is that right. And that was your father. Then, what was your mother's name?

AB: Alice Fromk, from Tonopah. She was the daughter of Alice and Johnny Fromk. She was born in Bishop, California. Grandpa was mining just out of Tonopah, so he took my grandma by horse and wagon into Bishop and left her there till my mom was born. That would've been in 1908.

RM: What mine was your grandfather working in?

AB: He was mining out by Lone Mountain some place - I'm not positive where.

RM: Do you know when he came to Tonopah?

AB: He must've come into Tonopah about 1906 - around there - when it was all booming. He had been over at Delamar, and in that area, mining. His wife had died and he had 3 little kids. She died at the birth of one of them, and he married my grandma when she was just 18. She finished raising those kids and had some more.

RM: How did your father, from up in Fallon, happen to meet your mother, from Tonopah?

AB: Well, when Mom graduated from high school she worked for the banks a while in Tonopah, and then she went to Fallon and my Grandma and Grandpa Fromk moved to Fallon. They had a younger son - Uncle Bob Fromk - and he was in high school. Mom went to work in the bank there, and she met Dad there. At that time, Dad was working in the mercantile store. My grandpa had miner's con real bad.

RM: Did your grandpa - John Fromk - have silicosis from the mines in Tonopah?

AB: Well, every place. He was just a miner. Every place he came from, he'd been mining; but he did get silicosis.

RM: What other areas did he mine in?

AB: Well, as I said, Delamar and over around Ely. I'm not sure of the places over there, so . . .

RM: And they were English, and not Cornish?

AB: Well, Grandpa Fromk was German. Absolute German. The Fromks were the miners. The Lofthouses came in as miners, but then they went to riding for ranchers.

RM: Where did you grow up, then?

AB: In Fallon.

RM: Right in Fallon, or outside of Fallon?

AB: No, right in Fallon. And I have a brother - John Lofthouse - who is 2 years older than I am, and he was born in the same house my dad was, in Fallon. [chuckles]

RM: Is that right. Did you go all the way through school in Fallon?

AB: No. I went through the seventh grade and the Second World War was on then. Dad was 35 and they were going to draft him in the summer of '43, so he left Fallon. He owned the Palace Club in Fallon for about 6 years (I was 6 when he bought it, and we left when I was 12) and we sold out and he went out and worked on a ranch at Nyala, right out from Tonopah up Railroad Valley. I finished eighth grade and high school in Tonopah.

RM: So he worked as a rancher . .

AB: Just for a short period of time. Then he went into Tonopah and went to work in the Tonopah Club. He worked for Slim Russell in there, during the war, when they had the base in Tonopah.

RM: What did he do there?

AB: He was the head bartender. He also worked at the Ace Club for a while.

RM: After you graduated, what did you do?

AB: Well, in January of '48 I was still 17, and [chuckles] I got this idea of getting married, so I went and got married (but I finished school). And that summer I got pregnant with my first child. It was a bad marriage, so in September of '48 I came out to Round Mountain. I came out and lived with my mom and dad. I had the child, and then I married my present husband - Skook Berg - Karl W. Berg.

RM: So you took up residence in Round Mountain.

AB: Yes. We bought the house that belonged to Bob Belcher. It had been the Nugget paper in Round Mountain years back. And when he sold it to us it had dishes, pots and pans, the bed, the table - everything. All we had to do was move in. We lived in that house for one year and then we bought a rock house up at the edge of town.

RM: Which edge of town would that have been?

AB: The east end of Round Mountain - towards the Sunnyside Mine. The front roan was huge rocks. The walls were about 3 foot deep. And those rocks were packed down in a wheelbarrow by Blackjack Raymond from the Blackjack Raymond mine up on the east side of town. He built that house in 1905.

RM: And you were telling me that it had adobe mortar. How big was that one room?

AB: Oh, I'd say it was about 12-by-14.

RM: Did it have a high ceiling?



AB: No, just a normal ceiling - about 9 feet. And it has a real peaked roof on it. When my husband cut through to put a chimney in he came across a trap door. They had closed it up and cut the ladder off, right there. Blackjack had slept upstairs in a little attic. It was tongue and-groove flooring and he had nails on the rafters, and there he hung his clothes. And there was an orange crate sitting there, with some medicines still on it.

RM: And you added on to the house?

AB: Yes. There had been a man - Charlie Zuzallo - who had been there for years and years, and he had built onto the back of the house after he bought it. So there were another 3 rooms on the back. And then my husband built, on the east side of it, a big kitchen. When he went to put the archway through, he called my uncle, Bob Fromk, who was a miner, to come out and engineer this for him, because they were huge boulders - just huge.

RM: And just being held by mud, they could've easily. .

AB: Yes. And if he pulled the wrong one, the whole thing might come down. But nobody wanted to tell him what to do, so he engineered it himself. He took half the wall down and blocked it up, and put up some iron sheeting and then poured cement and then took that down, after it had set, and then he took the bottom down and built a brick archway. It's really pretty. And then he built a corner fireplace with the bricks.

RM: What do you know about Blackjack Raymond?

AB: Well, all I actually know about him is that he had that mine and he built that house. And then [I know that] he went to Las Vegas and he gambled. He was just one of those people who gambled all the time. He lived on gambling. His nephew, Jack Raymond, told me that one night Blackjack had won a lot of money. He was about 86 years old, I think, at the time. They found him the next day, down by the railroad tracks - someone had killed him and taken his money. He had actually been murdered!

RM: With robbery as probably the motive?

AB: Yes.

RM: Was he living in Vegas at the time?

AB: Yes.

RM: Do you know when he built that house?

AB: 1905.

RM: That was before the mining really got going there, wasn't it?

AB: Yes. It was 1904 when Laura Darrough - Laura Stebbins, then - discovered the gold. He came there as soon as he heard about it, so he actually was there doing his mine . .

RM: Why don't you give me an account of your understanding of that discovery, and the settlement of Round Mountain'?

AB: Well, Laura Stebbins lived with her family up Jefferson Canyon, right by Healey's Park. They had a little way station there for the stage coming over Jefferson from Monitor Valley.

RM: Was that over at Belmont?

AB: No. Jefferson Canyon goes clear into Meadow Canyon in Monitor Valley, and that's where the stagecoach came over. It could've made the circle to Belmont, and through there - I'm just not sure.

RM: Was it a regular stage?

AB: It was a regular stage. It came into Round Mountain and down through this valley - Smoky Valley - somehow. I'm not sure of its route because at that time you would've had mining going on up Jefferson, too.

RM: OK. But why was there a town at Round Mountain? I mean, the gold hadn't been discovered.

AB: Well, I think most of the town was right there in the canyon of Jefferson. I think actually it came down that way, towards Round Mountain, but it came down through the mining area there. I'm not absolutely positive about the date of Jefferson Canyon, but at that time there was a large number of people living there.

And not only that, many of them were Chinese laborers. They lived down from the Jefferson townsite, because they couldn't live where the white man did. They lived in that whole canyon, clear down past Healey's Park, which was 3 or 4 miles down the canyon. And the Chinese made dugouts in the mountainside. They would just walk up and down, to go to work and come home. And then they would save their money - and the old-timers tell this (if you talk to [Norman] Curly Coombs, ask him). The white man would kill some of those Chinese and take their money because they had big stashes of money. So there are lots of dead Chinese lying in Jefferson Canyon. My husband's mother always was walking the canyons and picking up purple bottles - that was her hobby. She found vial after vial of those little opium bottles. She even found one of the smokers - the pot that you put the pipe down into and smoke. We have them stored up in the bottle cellar.

RM: What year are we talking about?

AB: Well, this was in the late 1800s. If Ophir shut down in 1880, that means that it would have to have been during that period - probably 1880 something - 1886 or so.

Then Laura Stebbins' milk cow got away. She headed towards what is now known as Round Mountain, to get that milk cow. I think at that time she was 14. (And they all looked for gold - everybody was a miner in this area, to some extent.) When she found the milk cow, she picked up a rock and took it home, and it was full of gold.

RM: And then what happened?

AB : You would have to ask the Darrouchs about that.

RM: Was it on what was Round Mountain?

AB: I'm not sure. But [the camp] was really rolling by about 1906. And Louie Gordon came in at that time.

RM: Do you know the site of her original find?

AB: No, I really couldn't tell you.

RM: Was it where they found the Sunnyside Mine?

AB: Yes, on that side someplace, because that was one of the first ones.

RM: Was it sticking out of the ground?

AB: Well, from what I understand, either the cow kicked a rock over or she kicked a rock, and when it came over, she could see that there was gold in it.

RM: But there was nobody living at what we think of as Round Mountain now, was there?

AB: No, that wasn't occupied.

RM: Do you know anything else about Blackjack Raymond?

AB: No. His nephew came and visited us one time, and he did send me an article about him, and I have it someplace; I'll try to get it out. I just don't know any more than that. He was an old miner who did a lot of gambling and drinking - and the card game known as "blackjack" was named after him.

RM: Did you know Laura Stebbins?

AB: Well, that was Grandma Darrough. This account actually came from the Darrouchs brothers. I never thought to ever ask Grandma Darrough about it. But Luther talked about it, years back.

RM: So this account would have come from Grandma Darrough.

AB: It would've been from the Stebbins family down to the Darrough family.

RM: Did Laura Stebbins marry Luther's father?

AB: Yes. And then they went to the hot springs, of course.

RM: Yeah. What was Round Mountain like when you arrived in town?

AB: When I arrived in town in '48 they had started building a mill. That's why my dad was out there - because all the construction workers were there.

RM: Was this mill construction a big operation?

AB: Yes. It was as big, for that time, as this one is right now. Morrison Knudsen came in from Yuba City . .

RM: About how many people were living in Round Mountain when you moved there in '48?

AB: Well, actually, it was mostly construction workers. There were probably 150 working on it at that time, putting it up. My dad had the bar, and I was living with my mom and dad at the bar for a short time. And one of the interesting things, to me, was that those construction workers were all gentlemen. They could be as drunk as lords and just having a good time, but they were not destructive and they were really polite - never out of line.

RM: Did a lot of the workers come from Tonopah?

AB: No. Most of these construction workers came in, actually, from the Yuba City area, where they had worked with Yuba Manufacturing and all. I think they had worked with them for years; I think they actually were their own construction workers.

RM: Where were they building the mill? Was it where the Sunnyside mill had been?

AB: No. It was right over there on the other side. It's right past the security gate. There's a pond up there, and the mill was right in that area. It was on the south side of the mountain, in the same place that the mine is right now. You know where the pit is?

RM: To be honest with you, I can't figure out where the mine is now, because there are so many dumps and everything. I can't even tell where the old mountain used to be. [laughter]

AB: The south side of Round Mountain is where the pit was, and the mill and everything was over there on that side, and the bosses lived over there. Then after it got settled down and the construction workers left, we got the [miners] moving in, and there were a lot of people from Tonopah: Antoniazis and the Lee Darroughs (Lee and Cookie) - Lee was one of the Darrough brothers' sons. And Tony Lamond. There were a lot of them. Armando Fromcisco, who had the Fromcisco ranch at the south end of the valley, was an longtime friend. He'd grown up in

Manhattan, and he was working there too.

And it was really neat with all those people. It didn't matter whether we had any problems during the week or not - on Saturday it was picnic time or dance time. They gathered up everybody and went up Jefferson or Peavine or Twin River or Broad Canyon, Kingston . . . and we had huge picnics! Everybody just had a ball. Everybody'd come. "Come on, anybody that wanted to go."

RM: This was after the mill was completed?

AB: Yes, and we got settled in as people working there.

RM: When the workers were there, was there a housing shortage?

AB: Well, there were a lot of empty houses there. And people didn't have to have everything they need now. They could go into what they'd call a cabin now and make it living quarters for when they were going to be there. And the mine also set up a trailer park where Golden Heights is now. A lot of them had single-wide trailers they pulled in and they lived in.

RM: Where is Golden Heights?

AB: That's on the north side of Round Mountain, towards Jefferson. It's actually BLM "trespass," there.

RM: What kinds of shops and so forth were available in Round Mountain at that time?

AB: We had the store and the bar and the town hall.

RM: What was the town hall used for?

AB: Dances. And Gerald and Jean Carver had started Carver's Station about that time. He put a dance hall in, and we had a ball. They would have huge free meals at 12:00, when we'd have intermission. My husband and my brother, John Lofthouse, and Louie Rivera and Tony Rodela and Bob Warren would come out from Tonopah and play with them part of the time. They had the music going and we all danced; we had a ball. We danced with everybody. Of course, we had the broom dance and the rye waltz and . .

RM: What's the broom dance?

AB: One person dances with a broom, and when they drop it, you change partners. And we danced the Vesuvienne. Skook played the piano and . .

RM: Skook played the piano?

AB: His mom taught him to play the piano. In fact, all of his sisters and brothers learned to play the piano.

RM: It sounds as if it was a very close-knit community.

AB: Oh, yes, it was. And everybody was there to help other people. And as I say, even if we had problems, when the weekend came - forget it. A lot of times Millie and Bert Acree from Austin would care down and play, or we'd go to the dances in Austin. It was always good fun - we had fun, and everybody helped everybody.

## CHAPTER TWO

AB: I just loved the picnics. Everybody'd bake something, and bring a lot of other food besides. We'd put everything on a huge table and . . .

RM: Was this every weekend in good weather?

AB: Yes.

RM: How many people would go?

AB: Twenty, 30, 40; it just all depended. Some would come and go, and part of us would stay overnight. We'd pitch some tents and just stay out for the weekend.

RM: Were most of the men employed at the mine?

AB: Well, part of them were ranchers. There were all the old-timers from the ranches here and the mine employees. Of course, there were people who stayed on after the mine went down in '50 [besides] all the old-timers [who] stayed.

One of the things that always happens when the mine comes in and they start up is that they're always going to care in and change the whole community. A lot of these people are from different environments, and they come in, and our kids are all in school - their kids are going to change everything: "Oh, these hicks from the sticks. Man, we've got to show them how to do things." By the time they leave, they're just exactly like the hicks from the sticks. A lot of the people from Yuba City were shovel operators and so forth, and they hated it. I mean, Round Mountain was the most desolate, terrible place! But when they left, they were in tears - they just did not want to leave. Because it was something different. Their kids could go up in the mountains and fish and go walking, and [the parents did] not have to worry about them being picked up by anybody or hurt or anything. We lost a lot of friends when they left.

The [new people] also always have a project - they come in and want more than what is here. We actually are used to [the down times]. If the mine isn't going, it doesn't bother us. I bake all my own bread, and put things up and I also had chickens at that time, and I had a milk cow

RM: You had all this in town?

AB: In Round Mountain - yes. We'd go to Fallon or Ely and shop for a month and bring home \$200 worth of groceries, which was a month's worth of staples.

RM: You didn't shop in Tonopah?

AB: No. For one thing, we had to go out and get other things and do other things. And the groceries were actually cheaper in Fallon or Ely. And a lot of the time they'd have a discount if

you bought a case. We also had a man who used to come in from Utah - John Fromcis. He had a big truck, and he brought groceries in. And we got so we'd shop from him, and he'd bring us in case stuff, too. You just learned to do it that way.

And we took care of a lot of the doctoring ourselves. We learned to take care of things. For instance, if the kids were sick with colds we just doctored them - we'd rub them up with Ben-Gay or Musterol or something and put a humidifier in the room and stay up, with than at night. We wouldn't give them a bunch of medicines; we'd just take care of than till they got well - keep than in the house and give than soup and . . .

RM: What other kinds of ailments did you treat yourself?

AB: Well, at certain times there would be things that happened. [chuckles] One time when our 2 oldest boys were about 4 and 5, they were running around the house, playing, and there was a railroad tie that Granddaddy Berg had it up to keep a fence up at his house. Larry turned to look at Punker, and when he turned back, he ran right square into the tie and split his lip wide open clear up into his nose. I just cleaned him up and got a cold wash rag, got in the car and Skook and I [took him] into Tonopah and he had 21 stitches. Dr. Joy was there - he was one fine doctor.

RM: Oh, yes - old Doc Joy.

AB: Dr. Joy delivered all 5 of our kids in Tonopah. When the fifth one was born, Dr. Joy said, "You don't have much time to get into town, so when you go into labor, get here."

So when I finally said, "Well, dear, I think we'd better go." Skook said [very slow, controlled speech], "How long have you been in labor?"

I said, "Oh, for awhile."

And he said, "Let's go!"

And I said, "Well, don't you think you'd better shave? You look like you need a shave."

He said, "I'm not shaving."

He got the car - we had a '59 station wagon - and we headed for Tonopah. And right at Maggie Blue's we had a flat tire, and that tire was changed in one minute! I'll tell you, he was out there - jacked it up - changed it. When I got in the hospital, they had called Dr. Joy and he said,

"Who is it?"

"Arleen Berg."

He said, "I'll be there."

I went down the hall, he came down the hall, and 5 minutes later our daughter Karla was



born. [laughs]

RM: Now, where's Maggie Blue's?

AB: Right there at that curve past Belmont - going into Tonopah.

RM: Why do they call it Maggie Blue's?

AB: She's the woman who owned it at one time. She had the house there that burned down.

RM: Did you have any other serious medical incidents that would almost throw you into a panic from being so isolated?

AB: Nothing did. So what if you had the child before you got to Tonopah? In fact, our nephew's wife had a baby on that bridge just before Tonopah. And [laughs] Jim just reached down, picked up the little boy and sat it on her lap and went on into the hospital. [laughs] But you just don't really think . . . nobody ever died from a broken arm or a broken leg or anything, and we just never had anything that panicked us like that. You just cope with it, because you are out a long ways.

RM: I'm interested in diet - what people eat, and things like that. What was breakfast for the family?

AB: We had bacon, eggs, toast, hot cakes, cereal - but not sugar cereal. It would be kinds like 40 Percent Bran Flakes, Shredded Wheat and Raisin Bran - things like that. And I bake - my bread is mostly whole wheat. When Skook and I got married, he said, "One of the things that I am going to ask you to do is bake bread."

And I said, "Great! I want to learn." So I started baking bread when we got married, and I've baked it for 40 years.

RM: How often did you bake?

AB: I used to bake about once a week, and I'd bake 6 or 7 loaves. Then I finally got so I baked 14 loaves and froze part of them.

RM: When did you get a freezer?

AB: We got a freezer in 1950 - a year after we were married. I married Skook in August of '49, and at that time I started baking my own bread. And that next summer, the summer of 1950, we bought a large chest freezer from Montgomery Ward, and we still use it.

RM: It still works?

AB: Yes, sir. It's up in the bottle cellar, uptown, and that's what we keep our meat in.

RM: Have you had to have it repaired?

AB: No, Skook just put one little starter thing in it.

RM: I've never heard of a freezer lasting that long.

AB: I know. Nobody can even believe it. But I have the papers - I can verify when we bought it.

RM: So they had electricity in Round Mountain?

AB: Oh, yes - they had electricity. And you butchered a beef, if you had it, or you got a beef. We would get a half a beef and put it in the deep freeze. We'd have Hecks Market in Fallon cut and wrap it for us. Then we'd get a couple of lambs from Skook's brother Dan Berg down in the valley and we'd get a pork from somebody and have it cut and wrapped and we'd fill our deep freeze. We had our own meat, that way.

RM: Did you do any canning?

AB: I made my own jellies, and I canned tomatoes or whatever I had in the garden. I had a small one - mostly tomatoes and corn or potatoes. Skook's dad was the one who raised a garden. Granddaddy Berg had a garden and an orchard down on the ranch. During the Second World War he lived off of that garden by selling [produce] in Tonopah and Austin . . He was a wonderful gardener.

RM: What are some of the things he grew?

AB: Everything. Cabbage and beets and carrots and lettuce and onions and tomatoes . . . In his orchard he had beautiful golden delicious apples and crabapples and a cherry tree.

RM: What is that ranch called now?

AB: It's the Berg ranch. Dan and Rene Berg ran it for a few years after Granddaddy's death. Their son Jim has it now, and he's married to a girl from one of the old families - the Manley family. They've lived there quite a while now - 32 years or so. Dan died early; he died when he was 42.

RM: Where did you get the fruit that you canned?

AB: Well, they have an orchard up at Pablo Canyon, and there were apple orchards on the side of the hills where Ken Thompson lives - up above the Mcleod ranch. And up Kingston there was a ranch that had apples. We'd go pick them and then put up applesauce and apple butter. And we have a grapevine on the side of our house uptown that was loaded with huge Concord grapes some years. Granddaddy must've planted that vine when he put the house in, in 1914.

RM: Now, all through this period you were living in the old Blackjack house?

AB: Well, we did up till about 1964. Grandma Berg had arthritis real bad, so we moved into the old family home 3 years, then we moved back up into the rock house. In '73 we moved back down to the family home. That was Grandma Berg's home and she didn't want to move up to our house. We moved down there with the kids and took care of her till November 1974.

RM: When she passed away?

AB: Yes.

RM: What about Grandpa Berg? When did he . . . ?

AB: He died in 1950. Skook and I had just been married that short a time. He died in April of '50.

RM: Could you tell me about him?

AB: Well, Granddaddy Berg, first of all, was about 5'5-1/2", and he weighed about 135 pounds soaking wet. He was a little man. He was little in his build, but he was a big man in heart and determination. He came down off the Yukon, where he'd been mining, and up there they took baths in the rivers.

RM: That's cold. [laughs]

AB: [laughs] Right. When Granddaddy heard of the strike in Round Mountain, he and his 3 brothers came down to Round Mountain right off the Yukon.

RM: Do you know where in the Yukon they were?

AB: Whitehorse was one of the places; I can't tell you the other one.

RM: Where had those boys come from?

AB: They were Pennsylvania Dutch, and they came out of Ohio. They came West because they wanted to come out to the gold strike. The West was exciting, so they headed West. They must've come into the Yukon about 1904 - I think that was about the time they had the big strike up there. And then the 4 boys came on down here in 1906.

Granddaddy Berg put in the water system in Round Mountain; he brought it down from Jefferson Creek and from Shoshone, over 3 miles. He dug that by hand and blasting. When we sold it to the mine in 1980 or so, they couldn't even move some of those boulders and stuff with their big old equipment from the mine. He built 2 underground tanks in town -the reservoirs - that were made out of cement, with shingle roofs on them. He also made every block in the family hare - cement block - out of a machine. He made 24 blocks a day. He started building it in 1914 and finished it about March of 1915.

RM: How did he get the money to build the house and to put in the water line and everything?

AB: Well, Granddaddy just worked on what he had, and what he could earn; he didn't have a big bunch of money when he came. But he worked at everything, and he gathered things. He didn't need a million dollars to put in things. He took a wheelbarrow and made that cellar up there. It's got over 22,000 beer bottles in it. They're double-walled, neck to neck.

KB: And he never drank a bottle of beer in his life.

AB: Yes, he never drank. He gathered them from the 10 bars that were there in Round Mountain.

RM: There were 10 bars in town?

AB: I think it was Norman ["Curly"] Coombs who told me that there were at least 10 bars there at that time.

RM: Did he mine in Round Mountain himself, or was he involved in other enterprises?

AB: He did a little bit of mining, but actually, he got his assayer's license. And he was a pharmacist - he got his pharmacist's license. They had an assayer's office and a drug counter at his brother's store.

KB: Granddaddy had his pharmacy in the store of Uncle Karl's, and the assay office was right across the street from where the house is. Of course, I don't remember it; that was before my time. But that's where Norman [Coombs] says his assay office was.

AB: We have a little bottle that still has the label on it that says, "Berg Brothers Pharmacy." And Granddaddy built an ice house next to the family home. He took cans up Shoshone, filled them from the creek, let them freeze in the winter, stored them in that ice house and sold ice all summer. He had a dairy in town. They had 13 cows that they milked.

RM : So he was a very enterprising person.

AB: He worked at everything. And that's the way we all survive, to stay in the valley and in Round Mountain.

KB: And he was a self-educated man.

RM: I see. Basically you have to be kind of a jack-of-all-trades to survive here?

KB: True.

RM: Was he the one who laid out the town?

AB: No, Louie Gordon did that. We have the map that was recorded in Tonopah. In 1909, Louie Gordon gave up those claims to Nye County, and he had the town all surveyed and laid

out.

RM: And that was the town of Round Mountain as we know it today.

AB: You bet - as we know it today.

RM: Did Gordon sell lots?

AB: No, they went to Nye County. Nye County sold . .

RM: The whole townsite was given to Nye County.

AB: Right. And they started collecting taxes from people who already had lots there. If there was anybody who had a house on a lot, at that time they picked it up.

RM: Oh, I see. But it all started with Gordon's claims.

AB: That's the way the town was made into a townsite.

RM : I remember a few years ago that there was a dispute about who owned the townsite.

AB: We are still disputing; that's the whole thing with the mine.

RM: What is the crux of that problem?

AB: When the BLM came into existence, they never withdrew the townsite from BLM land.

RM: OK - Gordon didn't do that?

AB: He didn't have to. The BLM [didn't exist then]; it wasn't BLM land.

RM: But it was government land, wasn't it? How does that work, Skook?

KB: They were mining claims. Gordon had 8 claims and a fraction or two that covered the townsite. It was 160 acres, total He gave that to Nye County, and dedicated it for use as a townsite from then on.

RM: Were they patented claims?

KB: No, they were not patented. They were regular claims; but still, it was recognized.

RM: And the county accepted it.

AB: And recorded it.

KB: My family has paid taxes for 80 years.

AB: Granddaddy Berg bought that lot in 1909.

RM: Did other people move onto the lots that people weren't occupying when he did this?

AB: Before that there were some people who were on lots who had set up residence, like Blackjack Raymond. So when the townsite went in, his house was on such and such a lot, and from that time on Nye County started charging him for that lot. They had a quit-claim deed saying. . .

RM: Oh, the county gave quit-claim?

KB: Well, I don't know what the original people did. They must've given them quit-claim deeds; that's all we've ever had in the town, and they used to suffice. But later on, it changed.

AB: This is the first mine that ever challenged it; ever came in and caused a problem.

KB: Yes, they still claim they own it.

RM And they staked it out over the town, and now they say the town is on their claims - is that what happened?

KB: Yes.

AB: We could've actually staked it, if we had had any idea that this was going to happen. But we'd never, ever had a mining company come in and even want the town; they just wanted the gold over on the other side of the hill.

RM : And now you feel that the mine wants the townsite for a dump?

KB : They always have. But we've been a bit of a problem to them, so . . . I don't know whether this goes on record or not, but I tell everybody that they're going to kill the town. They tell everybody - the post office, whoever - the town is going to be abandoned. They're killing the town, in that sense. They've annexed Hadley to Round Mountain so that all the tax benefits will be switched to Hadley. Everything else - their store, their restaurant. .

RM : Now, where is Hadley?

KB: Right in the flat.

RM: Oh, where they built all the houses. That's called Hadley.

AB: Yes.

KB: That's their own private town. There's no deeded land; that is all company property.

RM: It's a company town?

AB: Right; yes. They've spent lots of money there. It's like Kimberly, over by Ely, and that kind of thing.

KB: Or McGill. McGill was a good instance of that. But they should've done this when they first came here; then there wouldn't be this problem. They claim they're going to move all their people out of town, and all of their businesses, and other businesses will have to follow.

RM: How much land do they have down in the valley?

KB: There was a section, as I understand.

RM: What did they buy - an old ranch?

AB: Yes.

KB: An alfalfa ranch. [It was owned by] Ingvar Christiansen out of Reno.

AB: It wasn't an old ranch; it was one of those Desert Entry things. Some people came out of California, and then started the action.

RM: Yes. We saw a lot of that down in the Amargosa Valley.

KB: Sure.

AB: Yes. But we've fought . . . we've had all kinds of applications in, to BLM, and in '65 we started trying to straighten out the townsite thing - before Round Mountain came in. But, for instance, the surveyor didn't do the right job, and we had to wait for that. And then when the papers were put before the judge, he didn't sign them - it just kept lapsing on and on. And when he did sign them, then the BLM had changed some of their policies. But we were still fighting for it, and then the mine came in and they said, "We're taking the town." Legally we've been onto it all the time, trying to get this straightened out.

KB: Well, when the mine came in, the mine filed claims and the BLM recognized them. They located mineral rights there, and the BLM gave them to them. That's what I tell the BLM. We had a man out from Washington this summer - they had a meeting right up here. I told him, "You gave my rights away."

He agreed. When he gave those mineral rights he gave my rights away. But he says, "We can't reverse it."

They say they don't have the authority. Through legislation they can, but he said, "With the way we're bound now, we can't reverse it."

AB: The old Nevada mining laws.

KB: Yes; old Nevada mining laws.

AB: Well, that's a matter of changing them.

RM: The claims that they filed are not patented, are they?

KB: No.

KB: They've done what they call triple-staking, which is a new thing. The old mining laws never allowed it; because they contradict each other.

RM: What is triple-staking?

KB: They located mill sites, placer claims and lode claims, all over the same land. That's

contradictory - always was. A millsite can't be located where there's ore. They located lode claims because there is ore there, they state. They located placer claims because it's over the lode claims. They did it because they were afraid somebody - maybe us; anybody - would locate one of the other types. They were protecting themselves, but they are contradictory. But the BLM allowed it. They broke practically every law in the book.



### CHAPTER THREE

AB: Granddaddy Berg's name was William Henry, and he was born February 24th in 1873. He never got married till he was 42, and he married Lillian Gladys Yeager, who was born April 3rd, 1895, in Leavenworth, Kansas. They got married in Round Mountain and they had 6 children.

RM: Actually, his whole family came out here, didn't they?

KB: Yes, all the brothers came West.

AB: After the boys came, Grandma Berg came, and then her daughters, Georgetta and Fannie and Jessie.

RM: How did the Yeagers come to Round mountain?

AB: Skook's Grandmother Yeager just brought her 2 kids and came West. And then she married another man . .

RM: Oh, she'd been married previously.

AB: Yes. She was Yeager, and then when she got to Round Mountain she married Oscar Williams. Grandma Berg was 18 when her mother died in Round Mountain. So, because Mr. Williams was a stepdad, Granddaddy Berg took her and sent her to a Catholic convent in California till she was 20, I guess. Now, I'm not positive whether they got married in California before he brought her back or after she got to Round Mountain KB: I never knew that either; I think it was Round Mountain.

RM: So he was about 20 years older.

AB: Twenty-two years older. And then they had 6 children after that.

RM: Could you name the children in order of birth?

AB: OK. The oldest is Daniel Sanford, May 5th, 1915; Georgetta, October 5th, 1917; William Eugene, December 6th, 1918; Karl Ward, September 17th, 1923; Betty Jane Berg, April 12th, 1931 (deceased - as a baby; she was only 18 months old); Shirley Ann, July 7th, 1932. And as I was telling you [chuckles], for a man to get married at 42 and to have these 6 kids, besides all the projects Granddaddy had, he was a big man, even though he was small physically.

RM: Yes, he sounds like a very vigorous man.

AB: Oh! And the day that he died, he'd been digging a cesspool and he evidently had had the flu - he was 77 years old - and he just said . . (did he tell you or Shirley Ann to take him to the hospital?)

KB: Uncle John took him. That was when I was at work. He said, "I'm sick - take me to the hospital " And he went to the hospital and died. Just like that.

RM: Was he a very stoic individual? How would you describe him?

AB: Well, he was pretty stern, and full of energy.

RM: Did he show his emotions much?

KB: No.

AB: He never could really show emotions. He was always doing something for somebody, but he never showed great emotions. A strong little person.

RM: And how would you describe Grandma [Lillian] Berg?

AB: [laughs] Grandma Berg. She was a happy-go-lucky person who loved to play cards and dance.

RM: Lighter in spirit, if you would?

AB: Oh, yes - absolutely. She was probably what you'd call almost the opposite. She could show her emotions, and her love for her grandkids and her kids, and she wasn't really serious about much of anything. She loved to ride horseback and she was just the type of person who loved to be around people all the time. She always wanted a bunch of people around, playing the piano or singing or playing cards or whatever.

The Berg bays have always deer hunted up Twin River - Grandpa Berg and his boys and all his grandsons. And there was a ranger's camp up there called Wordendorf. They used to pack up there all the time. They took Little Kelsay - the man who worked for Granddaddy and was partners with him on the ranch . . . Little Kelsay trained horses and broke them to pack and ride and they'd take people up camping. And they'd stay up there for deer hunting. Well, the water up there is ice cold. It's coming down that creek - snow has fallen. And it was cold, then, when Granddaddy Berg was alive; he would strip and get in the creek and take a bath! You could tell he came off the Yukon. [laughs] Now, try and get anybody else to do that - "No way! I'll come home stinky before I'll take a bath in the creek." [laughs] But that's the kind of a person he was - strong. Strong willed . . . just a strong person.

RM: Did you say that the Berg brothers' parents followed them West, then?

AB: Grandma Berg came after the boys got here.

KB: After they came out of Alaska.

AB: The sisters and the mother came out here to the West.

RM: Did they come to Round Mountain?

AB: Grandma Berg came to stay with her son [William Henry]; he had a house for her, across from his house.

RM: OK. So his mother came there and lived. Did you know her, Skook? KB: I can't remember her. I get her and Grandma Kelsay confused.

AB: Yes. I'm not even sure which one that picture is of. But she was a short and chunky little lady.

RM: Now, Grandma Berg lived with you all those years?

AB: Actually, we lived in her house.

RM: But when you moved in there, essentially you just stayed in the house. That's really the most famous house in Round Mountain - actually, in the valley - isn't it?

AB: Yes, that's the old family home, and that's where we stayed. Of course, there are 2 bedrooms in the house and we have 5 kids.

RM: What did you do?

AB: Well, we just moved our boys into the building next door that was the ice house and then the grocery store. They had a pool table, they had tracks for their train, they had the . . .

RM: Is that right. Almost their dormitory, then?

AB: Really Their stove - everything. They could play in there and do what they wanted. And even the rock house had a real small bedroom and then a bigger bedroom, and we always put the baby in the middle room. But as the boys grew up, we put them in an adobe house next door that we had bought and they had their own house there, too. They had a stove and a lounge and their race tracks and just everything. And they could just do what they wanted in there, and their friends would come to stay, their cousins would come and stay and . .

RM: Arleen, tell me some more about social life in Round Mountain in the early days. You mentioned the picnics. What other kinds of things were there in a young mother's life?

AB: Well, we were so busy with the kids. We would go sleigh riding with them, or we would take them up the canyons and go camping. Shirley Ann Berg, Skook's sister, married my brother and they had 5 children, and we were really close. We'd all get together and go down to the ranch and have a meal down there. Or different people would say, "Come on to my house - we'll have fried chicken." It wasn't a thing that you said, "Oh, I'm going to do this, and on this day, we have to do this. We're going to eat with somebody." We'd just call up somebody and say, "Oh, come

on over and we'll all have . . . " It wasn't a thing that you had to plan and think about, and, "Do I want this person to come or do . . . ?" We just called people.

KB: Card games were another [activity].

RM: Card games?

KB: Sure; there wasn't any TV.

AB: We'd play panguingue and poker and Jean and Gerald Carver were always there, or we'd go down to their place and play cards.

RM: How did you spend your evenings?

AB: Cards, or play the piano and sing, or play games with the kids, or read and so on. There are all those things to do . .

KB: Make fudge . . .

AB: Yes; and popcorn. When it snowed we had [good] snowpack; sometimes there was 3 feet of snow on Round Mountain. The kids and I and everybody in town was sleigh riding.

RM: What kind of sleds?

AB: Those little flyer sleds. We'd go up on the summit above town, and go clear down on the highway.

RM: Is that right - you'd go clear to the highway?

AB: Not clear down to the main highway, but down there where you go into Round Mountain. The road used to go up behind that rock house and up on the summit. We'd start up there and we'd tear down through town. And then we'd all walk back. When we got so cold we couldn't move, we'd run in the house, and the fireplace was going, and we'd have hot chocolate and marshmallows roasted - get all warm - and then we'd run back out.

RM: There was an integration, socially, between the town and the ranchers, wasn't there?

AB: They were just part of each other.

KB: Yes.

AB: Yes. We never even thought of it not being that way, because a lot of us were related, and whenever there were dances . . . the ranchers loved the same kind of thing. They loved playing cards and dancing and having big picnics. And everybody was a good cook.

RM: Jean Carver told me that when she came here in, I think '43, there were only same 13 people living in Round Mountain. And then when they built the mill, it really had kind of a population explosion.

AB: We went up to what, Sweetie - about 200? 250?

KB: Well, they had employed about 125 men during the operation. There were a few more than that during the construction of the mill. But during the operation there were about 125 men.

KB: So with 125 employees . .

AB: Right - there'd have to be [about 250].

KB: Well, you'd have to look it up in your water [company record] book.

RM: And then when did the mine close down?

KB: The winter of '52. We started in December of '49 and it ran for 3 years - for '50, '51, '52. It shut down right in the middle of the winter of '52. And that was a tough winter, I remember.

RM: What happened to the town then? Were there suddenly no people?

KB: Well, sure.

AB: Oh! That trailer court was empty . . . in a week, you wouldn't even have known there was anybody there. They were gone.

RM: Were the houses vacated, too? I mean, you were back to 13 people?

AB: We had 35. I have a water book going back to 1951 that has everybody's names in it.

RM: Is that right!

KB: Yes, [you can] use that for a reference.

RM: How many connections were there in '50? You've got a book here of the records of the water company, right?

AB: Right. And here's where I have got the names. [sound of pages turning]

RM: Arleen, you've just looked in your book, and there were 115 water hookups for 1951?

AB: Yes. So you count the rest of the family and go with that. And then in 1953 there were 27.

RM: So we have some really good data here on what happened when the mine closed, don't we?

AB: [laughs] Right. And on top of all that, whenever the mining comes in they have big ideas about, "We have to have this," and, "We have to have that." "We have to have a gym and we have to have a library. We have to have a community hall, we have to have . . ." And then the mine goes down and we're paying off all these things that they needed. And there's no way we can get out from under it, because it's on the county's taxes.

RM: Yes. That happened in the Amargosa Valley.

AB: And now you see how many things we're going to have if this mine shuts down, and when it does. Because mining does shut down. We've got schools, a swimming pool, gyms . . .

RM: What was the school like during the peak period when the mine was going in, say, 1950? Did you have your own school here then?

AB: Yes. We had high school students going on buses to either Austin or Tonopah, and we had the grade school in the old school building that's still in use up where the school units are now. That was built in 1931, and Jack Berg, Ed Michels and Ben Moren were on the school board. That's when that school was built.

RM: Why were some of the children sent to Austin for high school?

AB: Because it was easier for the valley people, like the people at the other end, to take their high school kids to Austin than to Tonopah, since we didn't have a high school out here.

RM: You must've had a pretty good number of kids in school in 1950, right?

AB: The highest that I can remember (but maybe at the time there were more) was 125 children in that school at that time.

RM: Really. And then suddenly, in '53, there were . .

AB: I think there were 7. Because there was ours and Osterhoudts . .

KB: Probably a few more than that.

AB: Bill Manley, Kenny and Roger . . .

KB: Well, we hauled them, so we ought to know.

AB: Yes. But there weren't very many. Ten or 12, at the very most.

RM: And Mr. Carver drove the bus? Or, the station wagon, which was the school bus?

AB: Gerald. Yes.

AB: He did, and then Dan Berg did. And then Lillian Darrough was driving bus for the county.

KB: Well, let's see - I bought a '69 van. Of course, we ran a couple of years before that with the old Pontiac.

AB: We had 2 boys who started high school in '63. We started out with a Dodge sedan, and then a '48 Pontiac station wagon, and later bought a '69 van. The county didn't furnish the buses; we furnished the buses, and we took a contract from the county. When the mine started, we had to get a bigger bus because I was driving one to the trailer court and there were 26 students and the van was full with valley kids.

RM: Now, was this the Copper Range mine?

AB: That's when it started this time.

KB: And then there was a bust.

RM: OK, let me see if I can get this sequence of boom and bust straight, here.

KB: OK.

AB: [laughs] Well, you could actually start back in '47.

RM: Ok, let's pick up at '48 and move forward.

AB: But the construction started in '47.

KB: Well, the winter of '47 and '48.

AB: Construction started and [they were] out on the beams, freezing.

RM: Was that South African Gold and Morrison Knudsen?

KB: No. Yuba Manufacturing. Yuba furnished the machinery and South African Gold furnished some of the management and money. Yuba did a lot of gold dredging in California. They manufactured a lot of machinery, too. They furnished the machinery, and South African Gold put up the money.

RM: Now, when did they start production?

KB: January 1950.

RM: Oh. It took them that long to build it?

KB: Well, there was a lot of sampling and one thing and another . .

AB: And overburden.

KB: No; remember, I went to work in July of '49, and that was construction. We never went into production till January of '50.

AB: Dad had the bar going in '49, and there were all those construction guys - Pappy and Jimmy Stanton and so forth.

KB: Yes, but that was '49.

RM: And Morrison Knudsen was doing their hauling, right?

AB: Stripping.

KB: Well, Morrison Knudsen had a contract with them for the pit end, yes - the mining.

RM: And then after 3 years of production you were back to bust.

AB: Then we went down to nice and quiet again.

RM: How long were you down, then?

KB: They came back in '57.

RM: Who came in then?

KB: The same outfit.

RM: Oh - South African Gold came back? Did they keep the lease on it, or did they re-lease it from Gordon?

KB: Yes - they kept the lease. I was on the standby crew. They had watchmen, and that's practically all we were, but . . . They came back in '57 and they spent a year and a half redesigning the mill.

RM: And then what happened? Did you get an influx of people, then?

KB: Oh, a few, more.

AB: I'll see what it was in '58 . . . [Mrs. Berg begins looking in her water records book]

RM: How did they redesign it?

KB: It had to do with the designing that they did to start with. They didn't do a lot of research before they built that mill, and they had problems with the materials. As I said, Yuba did a lot of dredging in California and they were used to riverbed material and what have you where it's washed. It's easier to handle. This is sharp - it wasn't eroded. It came right off of that mountain and traveled a very short distance. It was sharp, angular material that needed more grade and more water, so the whole mill was . . . we put sideboards on everything - it would flow over, or you had to use more water to push it. And the conveyor belts had to be put at a different grade - all kinds of things like that. They came back and redesigned it and tried it again in 1957 and we started it up again in 1958.

I'll tell you, it wasn't all as it sounds - [that] they made a mistake in redesigning and what have you. This mill was actually planned before World War II. They had gone so far as to order conveyor belts from Goodyear, and when the war came along, of course all gold mining was shut down. So it was put on hold. Then after the war they came back and went in again. Well, you can see what happened in that span of time: wages went up, prices went up - what did gold do? Stayed at 35 bucks. And that's what killed us. Even when we shut down in that period of time and then started up again in '58 inflation was what killed it.

RM: Yes - and gold was the same.

KB: Still the same. And that gold is a little over 600 fine, so we were only getting about \$22, \$23 an ounce. Look at the difference now.



RM: How long did they operate then?

KB: They shut down in '60.

RM: It just couldn't make it - was that the deal?

KB: No. We had one month where they showed a profit - we did a big, major cleanup at this mills and . .

AB: There were 191 hookups [in 1958]; in '51 there hadn't been more than 125.

## CHAPTER FOUR

RM: What happened after the mine shut down in 1960?

KB: Machinery Centers - a company out of Salt Lake City - bought all the machinery - the equipment . . . they bought an electric shovel from us. [chuckles] We helped pay for it . . .

RM: Yes, Bob [Wilson] was telling me about how they got it out of the pit.

KB: They stayed in our house - the rock house. Bob and I both worked on tearing her down. [chuckles]

RM: What did you folks feel about tearing down the mill like that?

KB: It was a job for me, for one thing. We knew the history of gold mining and you just look back - you know some day it will go again; the values were still there.

AB: If you're in mining, you just stay . . .

KB: At the price of gold, it just couldn't operate under any conditions.

RM: What happened then?

AB: There wouldn't have been anything in '61, would there, Sweetie? I mean, there wouldn't have been anything else.

RM: Just tearing down of the mill?

KB: Yes, and in '61 we were back to square one.

AB: [laughs] Yes, here we go! [sound of pages turning] In 1961 – look at the hookups in the water book!

KB: Yes, there were a lot of people who stayed here, remember?

RM: And what was the next phase after they tore down the mill? Meanwhile, Gordon still owned the whole thing, didn't he?

KB: Yes - Round Mountain Mining Company. Then next was Cal Owen. But he was the next story. Who was the old guy who promoted the whole thing? Remember, he came in and came to the shop and talked to me all that day about what he was going to do over there, and when he left he wanted to know if I had a mattress - he didn't have a mattress.

RM: Right. Curly had to give him a pair of shoes.

AB: Oh, yes! That was the one. You've got the name - Dietrich.

RM: And that was in the '70s, wasn't it?

KB: Yes.

RM: So basically the mine sat idle for 10 years, except for Curly and a few other leasers?

AB: Yes; who was the other one who leased there - that friend of Fromk's and Getta's?

KB: Nick Andreason.

AB: We had 46 hookups, and one of those was the county, in 1970.

RM: You can really get a feel for the ebbing and flowing of Round Mountain with your water book, can't you?

KB: That is a true record of it; yes.

RM: What's the last entry in there - what year?

AB: 1980.

RM: So you still had the water company in 1980?

AB: We sold it in '81 - the last of 1980, then. (There were 175 hookups in 1980.)

KB: The mine told me what they were going to do, and asked me if I could expand the water system to take care of it. And I told them, "You guarantee me you'll be here 20 years, I'll do it." But they wouldn't guarantee me one year. [chuckles] So I said, "Well, then, I can't make an investment like that." So they had to buy me out. They didn't have to, but I couldn't invest that much money not knowing how long the mine would run.

RM: How did you feel about selling out?

KB: Well, I realized it had to be done. I couldn't make provisions for all those people. And I was under the Public Service Commission, which meant I would probably be forced to serve them. I was between a rock and a hard place. I wasn't necessarily wanting to sell it. But I was forced, I would say, because I couldn't see that . . . far enough ahead. As I said, if they would've guaranteed me even 10 years . . . (I said 20, but in 10, probably, I would've got my investment back.) But you see what happens - look at the history, right there. In 2 years there might be 12 customers again, and I'd have put out a few hundred thousand dollars for a water system. It didn't make business sense. And they paid me a fair price for it; I have no .

RM: Maybe we could talk just a little bit about the structure of the water system. Where did your water come from?

KB: Three small sources: Inkhous Spring, they called it, which was on the north side of Jefferson; Healey Springs, which (and it has a history, too) was in Jefferson Canyon; and a place that my dad had started in Shoshone Canyon. There were about 4 miles of pipeline, just to serve that little town. [chuckles]

RM: How many gallons were coming out of each source?

KB: Well, of course they varied. But one complimented the other one and it evened out; probably 30 gallons a minute, maximum.

RM: Out of each spring?

KB: No, total. At the last there, I had developed Healey Park a little, and we probably got up to about 60 - I'd probably doubled it. And it was all gravity; there was no pumping.

RM: How big were the pipes coming out of the springs?

KB: That was one problem: You couldn't develop more. My dad put them in by hand, so . .

RM: How did he know where to go? Were they seeps when he developed them, or what?

KB: Yes.

AB: He tunneled one of them . . . I mean, put 2 big tunnels in, just like tunneling in a mine.

RM: How far did he run the tunnels?

KB: The Shoshone tunnel was over 100 feet.

RM: Is that right!

KB: The one up Inkhouse was shorter than that; it was about 50 feet.

AB: And that was underground water that never saw light till it came out of your faucet.

KB: By hand. By himself.

AB: Yes, by hand by himself

KB: He had a little mine car, put tracks in, and would dig so much a day.

AB: It was just really something.

RM: How did he get control of 3 springs?

AB: He got the water rights from the State of Nevada. But he had the one on Shoshone, didn't he?

KB: Yes.

RM: But he'd never filed on them?

KB: Well, back in those days you didn't . . •

AB: You just used the water.

KB: Later on, as I realized that you had to have water rights, we did it. But they grandfathered them in for us; there was no problem.

RM: Was there a tunnel on Healey's Spring?

KB: The mine had used that for quite a few years when they were hydraulicking; it was one of their sources. But he developed that - did a lot of digging, too. Then they ran out another line for

the town - a 3-inch line. He bought steam boilers and cut the tubing out by hand, with a cold chisel, and then tarred it. The plant's still up there. He dipped them in tar and then jammed them together. It was a flow line -by pressure, you know.

RM: Was it a lot of trouble keeping it patched and everything?

KB: Yes. You had to be there all the time, and if you had a break, you'd go fix it.

RM: Yes. We had a water line out at Reveille Valley when my dad was running a mill out there. When the pipe would break we'd use the old inner tube. [chuckles]

AB: You bet! Skook and the kids and I did a lot of cutting of inner tubes and wrapping, I'll tell you. [chuckles]

KB: Take a tube and cut it in half and . .

AB: Ask our kids - they grew up working on the water company. When Skook had to work on it, the kids and I were beside him. We said, "We're going up, working on the water." We'd load than in the car - from the time they were little bitty kids and they went up and wrapped pipes with him. [laughs]

KB: There were a lot of us working.

RM: How deep did you have to bury the line?

KB: Well, with flaw lines like that, where it was moving all the time, you could get away with 2 feet of cover. But normally, after you got into town . . . I've seen them freeze at 4 feet out in the street.

AB: It always cracks me up to think of Granddaddy with 7 miles of 2-foot ditch without machinery. [He'd be up working] at 4:00 in the morning.

RM: He dug 7 miles of ditch?

KB: Oh. Well, yes. He dug by hand. He would buy a shovel and cut it down till it was real narrow; he was small. I couldn't even get in the trench, hardly. But he could dig! He'd go out every day at daylight and dig 50 feet a day or whatever he could dig. You know, in 30 days you had .....

RM: Did he use a pick?

KB: Oh, yes. That's all he'd use - pick and shovel.

RM: What kind of a pick did he use?

KB: He used a miner's pick - the lighter kind, with a real sharp pick. A lot of that picking was in rocks up there.

AB: I told Bob about when the mine bought it and they went up there with their equipment and couldn't even move the rock out of the way.

KB: Well, he'd just go around. Then he'd blast one once in a while.

RM: When did he put in that waterline?

KB: Well, part of it was in; we don't know when he acquired it.

AB: That was that piece from Shoshone, though, wasn't it?

KB: Well, it was the one from Jefferson, too.

AB: But weren't those papers 1918?

KB: Right. I was going to say, close to 1920.

RM: So somebody else had put in part of it?

KB: Yes.

AB: From Shoshone.

RM: How did they get it from the springs?

KB: They came from north of Round Mountain - Kelsey Canyon.

AB: Oh, they came from Kelsey too?

KB: Yes, that old pipe is part of it, and that dried up. So he had to go look for water elsewhere.

AB: But actually, the pipes were in town. He brought it in from Shoshone and Jefferson, because

KB: Right; most of them were in town.

RM: OK, the water was already in the streets.

AB: Part of the streets; yes.

RM: Yeah. Well, how did that work? I mean, was there water to every lot in town? What if a customer was, say, down the street a ways from the last customer on the line? How did that work?

AB: Then he'd run another piece . .

KB: You add on. And for a lot of those lines up there they took the shortest route. They went across empty lots and . . . But the mains were in the street.

RM: How did you find where the lines were when you had to work on them?

KB: Well, I had a pipe finder. My dad had it in his head.

AB: Tell him about that one pipe finder - the telephone.

KB: Well, Daddy had one, then I bought one from back east where you hook the wire on one customer on one side and one on the other side, and then it'd run a high voltage - like a coil - an old Ford Model-T coil - which would send a high voltage through the pipe. And then you had earphones. You could hear humming until you got right directly over the pipe - it'd cancel out. He had a system for finding his valves. He'd tie a copper wire on the valve and run it up to the street and then bend it over. He knew where they were, in his head, but he'd go out and scrape around till he found that copper wire.

RM: Would he ever witch it?

KB: No, he didn't. He didn't believe in that, and I don't, either. But the copper wire would lead him to the valve. Those shut-off valves were all out in the street - off the main. Say if you had a service to do out there - somebody didn't pay their bill or it was a line broken [and] you had shut it off. Well, he'd tie this wire on the valve and bring it to the surface, when he installed the valve. He would fold it over on top just an inch or two below the surface. He'd go out there and scrape around and find that wire (he knew where they were) , then he'd dig straight in. [chuckles]

RM: How much did service cost over the years?

KB: [laughs]

AB: It was \$5 a month - flat rate - in 1951.

KB: For a family, and \$2 for a single person.

RM: What was it in 1960?

AB: In 1960 it was still the same.

RM: Still \$5?

KB: Yes - a non-profit.

AB: That's what the guy from the university said: "Bay, you talk about a non-profit organization." In 1970 we went to \$7 for a family and \$3.50 for bachelors.

RM: It didn't matter how much water you used, then?

KB: No meters.

AB: Well, if they used too much we got on them, because we'd be out of water - if they started running it to keep their pipes from freezing. Ok, in 1976 we went to \$8, and \$4.50 for the bachelor and in 1978 we went to \$9 and \$5.50. Oh, bay, we went up. In 1979 we went to \$10 and \$6.50. And we went up to \$12.50 in 1980 and left bachelors at \$6.50. [chuckles] We're really

gaining, here. And then when the mine took over, they went to \$15, didn't they? October of 1980 was when they took over, because it went to \$15.

RM: How did the system work? Did the 3 pipes coming in from 3 springs come together and form one pipe?

KB: No, my dad had built underground cement reservoirs. He had 2, and after the town started the first time, I put in a redwood tank. The redwood tank and the top cement reservoir were for storage. The bottom tank - a cement reservoir - was a steady head tank. The lower one was the one that dictated the pressure in town. I had a float valve so that it would stay full all the time, and the other 2 supplied it.

RM: What happened if you didn't use the water?

KB: It just overflowed out of the upper tank.

RM: Where were those tanks located?

KB: Right above town, right where the big one is right now; right next to it.

RM: Has the mine made any changes in the system, or is it essentially the same?

KB: They put in a 300,000 gallon tank, put in a chlorinating system and changed all the mains in town.

AB: And their water is terrible. They stopped getting it out of nice clear springs like we did; they use any water.

KB: I never chlorinated, at any time. I had no way to chlorinate, unless I just dumped bleach in.

AB: But we didn't need to.

KB: We met all the U.S. and state standards, so they couldn't force it. But after the mine came in, they picked up water practically out of the creek. (The state would never let me do it.) They put a gathering box a few feet from the creek and then surrounded it with gravel; it's surface water.

RM: So they're collecting surface water and using it?

KB: I was declared an underground source; that's the only way I would run it.

AB: Modern people don't understand systems that work like that. This one engineer, when they were bringing the water in, said that according to the books, the water could not flow from those canyons into that storage tank. And it's been doing it for 70 years.

RM: Is that right?



AB: Yes - the books say. So first of all, he drilled a hole several feet back from where it was going in. I mean, he sees it coming out of the end of the pipe. But he drilled a hole back here a few feet on the pipe and looked down in, to see . . . the water was still flowing there. But he was so convinced that it could not flow like that.

RM: What did he think - that the outlet was higher than the source, or what?

KB: Evidently, the way he'd surveyed it.

AB: [laughs] But that was so funny. For 70 years that water's been coming into that storage tank . . . They just didn't understand anything about that kind of a system. They couldn't handle it, so they had to go to picking up just anything.

RM: Could we talk a little bit about the Bergs in the valley and what has happened to them? First, how many Berg brothers were there?

AB: There were 4 brothers who came here - Jack, Karl, Elmer and Granddaddy.

RM: And did all the brothers come to the valley?

AB: All 4 of them came here. Then Uncle Elmer went to California and Uncle Karl, Uncle John and Granddaddy stayed.

RM: What did the brother who went to California wind up doing?

KB: Uncle Elmer was a machinist. He had a little machine shop in Modesto for quite a few years. Then he moved to northern California, to Klamath, and he ran a machine shop there.

RM: What did the brothers who stayed here do?

KB: Well, Jack Berg (John Berg was his right name, but everybody called him Jack) . .

AB: By jingo!

KB: By jingo, yes. He ran a garage and a service station. In fact, it's right across from our house in Round Mountain. You've probably seen it - that big galvanized building?

RM: Right.

KB: Well, I own that. I bought it from him. But he had it below town then. My dad had a livery stable there and my uncle had the garage. And Uncle John built the garage down there and moved it up across from the house in 1930, I think.

RM: And did he stay here, then?

KB: Oh, yes.

RM: Did he have a family here?

KB: Yes.

KB: That's where Lucille comes in; the one [who wrote an M.A.] thesis [on the history of Round Mountain].

RM: Oh, that's Lucille. Was she the only child?

AB: Yes.

RM: And what happened to the other brother?

AB: Uncle Karl married Rene Berg's aunt, Katie Rogers. They had 2 children - 2 little girls. When one was 3 years old, it died of - was it croup?

KB: Yes - croup or pneumonia.

AB: And then, it wasn't but about 18 months later, the littlest one, who was about a year-and-a-half, died of food poisoning. So they lost both those children, and she never had any more. And then Uncle Karl died . . . when did Uncle Karl die, Sweetie?

KB: I knew you were going to ask me that; I don't remember.

AB: Were you away in the service?

KB: No. I was at school. It had to have been in '40 or '41.

AB: And of Granddaddy's kids, Dan stayed here.

RM: These are your brothers and sisters?

KB: Yes. William and Dan both finished high school in the L.A. area somewhere. Dan stayed on the ranch until he died in '56. Of course, Getta married and moved away. Shirley Ann married and moved away a couple of times [chuckles], but she always cares back.

AB: Getta had one boy, Fromk Farrington, and he's a pilot with one of the airlines. Dan and Rene had 3 boys, who are here in the valley - Kenny, Roger and Jim. Jim has the ranch now. Shirley Ann and [my brother] John had the 5 girls, and there's just one of them in town now, but Shirley Anne's still here.

## CHAPTER FIVE

RM: And the ranch was originally Grandpa [William Henry] Berg's?

AB: Yes.

RM: Did he homestead it?

AB: He bought it from Hannah Logan.

RM: Do you remember about when?

KB: No, I don't.

AB: We can't find the deed.

RM: Before World War II, would it be?

KB: Oh, yes. It's always been a ranch as far as I know.

AB: So probably 1920, or somewhere in there.

KB: Yes, before I was born, anyway.

RM: About how big is the ranch?

KB: Something like 860 acres.

RM: And where is it located, now?

KB: It's a mile this side of the Darrough's Not Springs.

RM: And it's called the Berg ranch. Does it have a sign on it?

AB: It just has Berg names on the mailboxes. [chuckles]

RM: And when did you move onto your ranch?

KB: January of last year.

AB: We've been trying to buy the ranch for 12 years, because we wanted a ranch.

RM: As kind of a summary, what would you say about your lives and the history of the Bergs in the valley?

AB: Well, I think it's been a real good life, and evidently the valley's been good to us, because all our kids are still here.

RM: That's great.

AB: Yes. And Dan and Rene's 3 boys are still here, and have raised their families here in the valley. Some of our children went away to college for a year and a half or so, but came back out to the valley. They're all working here and this is their home; they don't plan on moving anyplace else. We have grandkids that are here in the valley. So it's just kind of a generation going on in Smoky Valley.

RM: Karl, what was your birth date?

KB: September 17th, '23.

RM: And your name on your birth certificate reads . .

KB: Karl Ward Berg.

[Tape is turned off for a while.]

AB: This is an anecdote about Eddie Critchfield - he was one of our characters in Round Mountain. He'd been there for years - I don't really know when he came in - but he had been married to one of the Brotherton girls. He was up Jefferson doing assessment work, or was he mining, Sweetie, when that flood came in?

KB: He was fishing. Well, he was probably doing some work, but he was camped there, fishing. He was frying his fish - had a little camp right alongside the creek. It was cloudy and it started raining and there were a few thunderstorms, but he said he was still cooking - it wasn't raining that hard. He had an army surplus 4-wheel drive with a kind of a camper built on the back, and he went and climbed in it. Well [chuckles], he looked out a few minutes later, and that wall of water hit there. It wiped away all his camp gear, his fish, frying pan [laughs], and he survived; he backed out on high ground. But that's the way Eddie lived.

There's story after story. . . . He learned to fly. He and Lucille (Berg) bought an airplane and they both learned to pilot it. They started flying up Barker Creek over here - a canyon right across [the way]. He was just looking at the canyon and wanted to fly up it. Well, with those little planes, when you get trapped in a canyon, you're in it. And that's the way he got. It couldn't climb fast enough, and it [chuckles] couldn't turn around - too narrow. So they kept going and they kept going, looking for a low pass. He said that right at the very last there was a low pass that he went over it. He said he could've reached out the door and grabbed the top of the pine tree, but he went over the next canyon and back down.

And another time they lit and taxied into a barrel of gas that they had sitting there. The gas flew all over that plane, and it never caught fire. They got out of it and got away from it.

RM: He did have 9 lives.

AB: Ok, then tell the other one about the airplane.

KB: He went to start the plane, and he was by himself that time. They go through a procedure where they crank it over a few times. Well, he had evidently left the ignition on or something. Anyway, it started. [laughter] It was not on full throttle, but enough and it started moving. So he

ran around and grabbed one wing. It whirled around, and he had his car parked there. And the propeller went up the trunk of his car!

AB: [laughs] It chopped the trunk of his car. [laughs]

RM: Chopped his trunk? Good lord.

KB and .

AB: [laughter]

KB: One time he bought a crane from me - a truck crane. He got older and they didn't want to fly anymore - the fun was over - so he traded me that airplane for a truck crane that I had; he was leasing over at the mine (that was in the years that they were allowing leasers) and he needed that crane to move his equipment around. He told me that one day he hooked onto his trammel screen, which is a real heavy piece of equipment, and he was headed up a hill. Well, he was all by himself again. He said that all at once all he could see was sky. [laughter] He was driving his truck, and all he could see was the sky! [laughter] But he kept going. And he said, pretty soon it came back down and he could see. [laughter] And I could believe it. [laughter]

AB: Oh, tell him about the assay office.

KB: He worked for the company in the assay office as an assayer and amalgamated all the gold when we were running, both times.

AB: He was by himself this day and the office was closed down.

KB: Yes. He had done some work in there the day before, but somehow or another there was a propane leak. They had an oil heater in there going during the night and when he walked in, that fresh air hit that and it blew the whole building out. All the walls and the top came out.

AB: It blew him out with the wall. [laughter]

KB: He had a scratch - that's about all. Amazing.

AB: But he did go to the hospital that time; remember? His legs had some burns on them.

KB: Oh, Ok; yes. But I mean, not a broken bone or . . . and he was the one who told those stories on himself.

AB: Oh! And he'd laugh. What a character . . .

KB: And he'd get the biggest kick out of them. He was a good man. He was J.P. at times.

RM : Round Mountain had its own J.P.?

AB: Oh, for many years; yes. And who was the cop that all the ladies loved?

KB: Fred Lindsey.

AB: Yes, Fled Lindsey was the cop for the years when Betty Holts was teaching.

KB: Yes; in the late '20s and '30s. The town shut down in '36, so he . .

AB: Yes. And then Tom Smith was . .

RM: What do you mean, the town shut down?

KB: The mine shut down in 1936.

AB: We didn't go back to that first mining period.

KB: That was another up and down. I don't know whether you have a record of it, but the winter of '36 was a terrible winter all over here. We had 3 and 4 feet of snow and 30-below-zero weather. The mine shut down in the middle of the winter and there was an awful lot of snow; no travel on the highway. They took a bulldozer and took convoys of people out, because it was all shut down; no food, no payroll, no nothing. They would get a bunch of people together and - 30, 40, 50, whatever - and have a bulldozer in front and the cars right behind him. We had so much snow and wind [that] it would drift back in; the next day you couldn't see where you were

AB: They dozed them out to Tonopah.

KB: Yes, till they could get far enough to where they could go from there.

AB: And you guys got stuck at the ranch, going from school that same year.

KB: Yes. I went down to the ranch for Christmas vacation and that's when it snowed, and I had to get back to school - everybody else was at Round Mountain. Of course, Little Kelsay was at the ranch; I stayed with him. But I caught a ride with some people who were coming through in a pickup. We got to the Fromcisco ranch, which is right the other side of Carver's [south] - where Carver's is now - and then decided we had to walk. They had to get there, too, so I went with them. We walked 6 hours from there to get to Round Mountain.

RM: Wow.

KB: Fog moved in - it was night - and we got lost. We'd start veering off, then the fog would lift, we could see light and get lined up again. [chuckles] Yes, '36 was a tough winter.

RM: So the mine was down from '36 to '47, basically?

KB: Yes.

RM: And had it been good all the time before 1936?

KB: Yes. And Gold Hill and other mines were working also.

RM: Had there been boom and bust from 1906 to 1936?

KB: No.

RM: So basically there were 30 good years?

AB: Yes. Just working on kind of a level plane.

RM: Does your [water company] book go back that far?

AB: No, mine just goes to '51.

KB: My dad kept a book - we had it at one time - but I don't know where it is.

RM: All through the '30s and '20s the mine was owned by Gordon, wasn't it?

KB: Yes. He was the president of Round Mountain Mining Company.

RM: How much of it did he own?

KB: I really don't know. It was stock. He was a large stockholder, he and Albert Silvers. And Al Silvers took over after Lou Gordon died. At one time we could've bought this mine - it was when Dietrich came in for somewhere around \$900,000.

RM: Isn't that something?

KB: And I don't know what it's worth now. [laughs]

AB: These papers show that it was going good in September 1918. They show purchasing of dynamite gelatin or something expensive. [laughs]

RM: Bob Wilson has several payroll books from the mine dating back to about 1911. He's got names, hourly wages, jobs and all that.

AB: That's interesting.

RM: Some of it even has the tonnage and the stope and the raises they were working - they've got it by number.

AB: Isn't that something!

KB: Norman will tell you where they were.

AB: In fact, he'll say, "Oh, yeah - I worked with him. I worked with him in Coeur d'Alene," or, "I worked with him . . ." or, "Oh, this guy worked with my dad in such and such and . . ."

RM: In fact, I'll bet Curly's dad was there.

KB: I wouldn't doubt it.

RM: Yeah, because his dad worked there.

KB: And look for the name Ed Michel. He worked for the mine for years.