

An Interview with
ROY and
MARY VAUGHN

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
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Roy and Mary Vaughn
2008

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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, Roberta “Midge” Carver, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Peter Liakopoulos 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 Commissioner Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Mr. Lacy for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Lacy.

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

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—Robert D. McCracken

2009

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
2009

Interview with Roy and Mary Vaughn and Robert McCracken at the Vaughns' home in Pahrump, Nevada, December 7, 2008.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Do you like to be called Roy or Leroy?

RV: Roy.

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

RV: Leroy Fed Vaughn.

RM: And when and where were you born?

RV: I was born 10/12/21 in Valera, Texas.

RM: And what was your father's name as it reads on his birth certificate?

RV: Russell Marion Vaughn.

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

RV: I really don't.

RM: And, approximately, what year?

RV: In 1885.

RM: What was your mother's maiden name?

RV: Her maiden name was Irene Barton.

RM: And do you know when and where she was born?

RV: I don't. I think she was five years younger than my dad, so that would've been in 1890.

RM: Okay, and do you know where she came from, or where her people came from?

RV: I really don't know.

RM: And do you know where your father's people came from?

RV: No, but it was in the southern states. It wasn't in Texas, but I'm not sure where it was.

RM: Where is Valera, Texas?

RV: It's right in the center of the state, Coleman County.

RM: And what was your father's occupation?

RV: He was a farmer and rancher.

RM: Did he have his own land?

RV: No. I'm sure he leased everything.

RM: And where did you spend your younger years?

RV: In Coleman County, near the town of Santa Ana.

RM: What stands out in your memory about your younger years in the Santa Ana area?

RV: Well, tough times, for sure, in those years. We lived on a farm, and that's about all we had. My dad did have some cows and sheep and things like that but things were pretty short. I graduated high school, I think in 1938, and about that time is when times began to pick up a little bit in the farming country.

RM: What kind of crops were they growing?

RV: They grew cotton and grain.

RM: And what high school did you go to?

RV: Santa Ana High School.

RM: And what did you do then?

RV: After high school, I came to California. I had a sister who lived in Needles, California, and I went there and went to work for the railroad.

RM: What was Needles like then?

RV: Hotter than hot. But it was a nice little railroad town, small town. I was only, I think, there two years before I went in the Army.

RM: And what railroad did you work with?

RV: The Santa Fe. I went to work as an electrician's helper in the shops.

RM: Working on the electric systems of the engines?

RV: Yes, of the engines, and the maintenance of the shop and everything.

RM: Were they using diesel then, or was that pre-diesel?

RV: It was steam.

RM: They were still steam. That must have been interesting—the hugeness and power of those things.

RV: Oh, they really are.

RM: Do highlights about your career in Needles working for the railroad stick out in your mind?

RV: No, not really. My only highlight is it's where I met my wife; she was in high school.

RM: And let's introduce you, Mary. What is your full name as it reads on your birth certificate?

MV: Mary Jane Ford.

RM: Talk about when you guys met. [Laughter]

RV: I was an upperclassman; I was out of school. Some of the guys my age who worked where I did had lived in Needles for years. Four or five of us attended all the high school dances and things like that, and that's where we met.

RM: Were you a native of Needles, Mary?

MV: No, I was born in West Lima, Wisconsin. My family decided they would come to California when I was 14 months old.

RM: And when were you born?

MV: I was born May 9, 1924.

RM: And your family just picked up and came to California?

MV: Well, my grandparents, my dad's parents, were already out here. And he just followed them, I guess. [Laughs]

RM: What part of California did you go to?

MV: We went to San Dimas in Los Angeles County.

RM: Whereabouts in L.A.?

MV: Well, Pomona.

RM: And you grew up there?

MV: I was there until I was six years old, and then we moved back to— where my grandparents lived there—Glendora, about 30 miles out of Los Angeles.

RM: What were they doing there?

RV: Your grandfather had some cattle out there.

MV: My grandfather had cattle and then they moved to San Dimas. But my dad had already moved out here when I was in first grade and I went to Lanfair Valley in the Needles area.

RM: I think the environment in L.A. as kind of a paradise in those days.

MV: Oh, I think it was, in those days. The Japanese were there at that time and they grew flowers. . . .

RV: Orange groves.

MV: Orange groves, yes, but the Japanese grew these big flower gardens. I went to kindergarten in San Dimas. I started first grade there, and we moved from out to Lanfair Valley and I went to first grade there. And I don't know, my dad liked to move around, I guess. Anyway, we ended up back in Glendora. I started my second grade there and went through my freshman year of high school. Then he wanted to move again, so we ended up back in Essex. I went into my second year of high school and graduated from there.

RM: And when did you guys get married?

RV: In '42.

MV: I was still in high school and I finished.

RV: She was a senior.

RM: Then tell me about how you ended up in the military. It's appropriate for today because it's December 7.

RV: I was drafted.

MV: "Uncle Sam needs you."

RV: Because I was married at the time. We'd been married a short time.

MV: Six months.

RV: Is that all?

RM: What did you think when you got drafted?

RV: [Laughs] That was the end of the world, even though I knew it was coming because of December 7, and they had already declared war on Japan. Most of my friends had volunteered and joined. I knew it was coming and just waited it out.

RM: So you went into the army?

RV: Yes. I was in an amphibious assault brigade. I wasn't in a division. We were just a brigade, which is about 5,000 people. We were assigned to different infantry divisions for the invasions—half of us would be assault going in and the other half would bring up the tail end and clean up things.

RM: What theaters were you in?

RV: I was in the Pacific.

RM: Did you make many landings?

RV: Nine times. We started in New Guinea. I think we made five or six invasions into New Guinea, and then went into the Dutch Indies and did one, and from there we went into the Philippines.

RM: And you hit the beaches? How did you deal with that psychologically?

RV: Well, you just made up your mind. If you were going to come out of it, you just did what you had to do to survive.

RM: Did you have the expectation that you might not, or probably wouldn't?

RV: Oh, many times, yes.

RM: Were you ever wounded?

RV: No, fortunately. Very close a few times, but. . . .

RM: How do you look back on all that?

RV: I wouldn't trade the experience for anything, but I don't think I'd want to go through it again. I lost a lot of good friends, you know. You spend that much time with them, and then you lose them; it's pretty upsetting.

RM: Why do you think you survived? Just pure luck?

MV: Because I prayed for him. And he had a little girl. We had a daughter and she was three months old when he went overseas.

RM: So they were taking fathers?

RV: I wasn't a father when I went in. I'd been in the States about a year or so at the time she was born.

RM: So you really had amazing luck.

RV: Well, I did, but then there were a lot of people who did. There were several of my friends—we went in together, and we survived the whole thing and came home together.

RM: Were you, in effect, involved in re-taking the Philippines?

RV: Yes, we were the first ones in there.

RM: Where did you land?

RV: Leyte in the north and we went all the way down into Manila.

RM: Weeding them out along the way?

RV: Yes, and then we were in Manila for close to a year, cleaning up the snipers.

RM: And you were never wounded.

RV: No, I wasn't.

MV: I told you. I prayed for him.

RM: I'm going to have you pray for me! [Laughs] Somebody must be listening to you!

MV: I believe that.

RM: Is there anything that sticks out in your mind that you would like to comment on?

RV: No, not really. I've thought about it a lot, but it's pretty personal.

RM: How does a man deal with fear? You must have experienced it. How do you deal with it under those circumstances?

RV: I just kept telling myself that you're here to do a job and you just get busy and do it, that's all. Do what you were told and do what you were trained to do, and survive it.

RM: You really weren't much more than a kid, were you?

RV: Well, a little more.

MV: He was 20.

RV: I was the old man of the crews I was in charge of. I had some kids in there under me who were just 17 and survived. I was an officer—a master sergeant.

RM: When did you get out?

RV: In 1945. After Japan surrendered we went from the Philippines into Japan. As a matter of fact, we were aboard the troop ship preparing for the invasion of Japan when they dropped the bomb in August.

RM: So you were glad to see it.

RV: Yes. [Laughter]

RV: They took us on over there anyway. I think we went in Japan just before Thanksgiving. It was only for a month or so.

MV: He came home Thanksgiving Day.

RM: Did you by any chance get to Hiroshima or Nagasaki to see what had been done?

RV: No, I did attempt to go and see it but they had everything blocked off; you couldn't go near the place. It hadn't been quite long enough, I think, at that time, for them to let anyone get in there, which was probably a good thing, that we knew no more about the effects of it.

RM: So you would not be one of those who says we should not have dropped the bomb?

RV: No.

RM: I'm not one of them, either. Back up just a little bit. What did you think on December 7, when you heard about Pearl Harbor? Do you remember where you were and what you were doing?

RV: Yes, I was at work. At that time, I wasn't married. And I think myself and three or four of my buddies went out and got drunk that night, just to celebrate.

MV: You probably did, too! [Laughter]

RM: Did you think, here we go?

RV: Yes. Not only that, but being young kids like that, we were all ready to go. But then, of course, when I came home, and we decided to get married, then I changed my mind, I wasn't ready to go! [Laughs]

RM: Do you recall a sense that war was coming?

RV: I think so. I think we all did, because before I came to California, after I got out of high school in Brownwood, Texas, they were putting in a barracks building because they had anticipated this draft was coming, and they were already building some army camps. I worked where they were building them for a short time, and everybody was talking—you know, "It's coming, one of these days." Only they were thinking at that time that it would be Germany that we'd be going to instead of Japan. But we all talked about it. I remember after I came to Needles we'd talk about, "One of these days, we'll have to go," but you didn't really get too serious about it.

RM: What did you do after you got out?

RV: I went back to the railroad again, to Needles.

RM: Mary stayed in Needles while you were in the service?

MV: Yes. I had two sisters that lived there.

RV: But by the time I came back, they had pretty well closed down Needles because they had come out with the diesel engines. All of the shops, then, were moved to Barstow and San Bernardino so I went over to San Bernardino and back to work for the railroad.

RM: As an electrician?

RV: Yes.

RM: Mary, how did you deal with the fears that you must have experienced? Because here you were with a small child, and you didn't know whether he was going to come back.

MV: Oh, I knew he was coming back.

RM: There never was a doubt in your mind?

MV: Never. Well, he had to come home and help me raise Linda.

RM: Well, a lot of guys didn't.

MV: I know. But I just knew he was coming back.

RM: You just knew it. How long did you stay with the railroad, then?

RV: Until 1952. We bought a home in Colton, California, which is only a short distance from San Bernardino. And then in 1952 we came to Pahrump. Her folks lived here at that time with Button and Mary. We came out here on a vacation, and by that time I'd had enough of the bright lights and was wanting to get away from that type of living and still had the jitters from where I'd been.

RM: You had after-effects, then. Now they call it post traumatic stress.

RV: I think so. Anyway, we went back home and I told Mary, "Let's get out of here and go to Pahrump." So we sold our house, which we had just purchased the year before, I think, and moved out here.

RM: You quit the railroad. Now, you're related to Button (Henry) Ford?

MV: He's my brother.

RM: Describe Pahrump when you got here. What was here? [Roy and Mary laugh] You had a good job with the railroad but you were going to pick up and go to Pahrump, which didn't amount to much. How did you make that decision?

RV: Well, from my perspective, I just knew I had to have a lifestyle change of some kind.

RM: Why?

MV: That's what I said, many times. [Laughter] Why? My mother did, too.

RV: I think it was from the effects of the war. You just wanted to get away from everything.

RM: You'd had enough of civilization, so to speak?

RV: Yes. [Laughs] You bet.

RM: And you didn't have that feeling before the war, did you?

RV: Oh, no.

RM: And you wanted to get to a place where it was less crowded and less structured?

RV: Less crowded. I'm kind of a loner in the first place. I just wanted to get away from it, and I did. That's the only way I could do it.

RM: So what did Pahrump look like, the first time you guys set eyes on it?

MV: It was beautiful.

RV: It looked great. The old Pahrump Ranch up there was green and had cattle and the Manse Ranch down here was a big cattle ranch and raised alfalfa, and there was water everywhere, all the artesian wells. It was just really a place that you wouldn't believe until you've seen it. We moved in with her parents and lived there for two months, and they had an artesian well in front of the house—and water flowing, everything was green. It was really something nice. You could just sit back and relax. And the north end of the valley was the same way. The Dorothy Ranch was up there, and the Dollar Sign Ranch and lots of water and lots of greenery. It really was nice.

RM: And the Fords were living on the Raycraft Ranch, weren't they? So you lived there a couple of months?

RV: Yes.

MV: Until we built our house.

RM: You didn't come here with the idea of just checking it out and seeing how it is. You came with the idea, "this is it."

RV: We sold before we ever left.

RM: Just out of curiosity, what did you sell your house in Colton for? Do you remember?

MV: Six thousand.

MV: It was a nice new home.

RV: We had no down payment because we bought it under the G.I. bill so all we had was a little equity, about \$1,000. So that's what we sold it for.

RM: You sold it for \$6,000?

RV: He just took over that contract.

MV: But we sold it for \$3,000.

RV: We got \$3,000 out of it, you mean? Okay. And he took over the contract; I guess that's what it was.

MV: We went there years later and the lady that had purchased it had paid \$16,000.

RM: And probably now it's worth what, \$300,000?

RV: Probably. The land alone! [Laughter]

CHAPTER TWO

RM: How did you expect to earn a living in Pahrump? What did you do?

RV: The first thing we did, her dad, Stan Ford, said to us, "If you want to build a house, I've got some property for you, and if you've got the money to do it, we'll build you a house." So Button and I hauled railroad ties from Ash Meadows and built a house made out of railroad ties.

RM: Where did you build it?

RV: It's on David Street. It's still there, and in as good of shape as it ever was.

RM: It would have been ties from the old LV&T, the Las Vegas and Tonopah Railroad. Where did you get them?

RV: They had taken the rails up, but the ties were still in the ground. Button and I dug them out and hauled them over here. There must have been four or five truckloads; it took a long time. We did it in the summertime, which was nice. It was nice and warm.

RM: Yes, very comfortable. Good working weather. [Laughter]

RV: So her dad and Button and I mixed and poured our own cement floors. I hauled gravel out of these washes, up out of the mountains here, and that's where we got the gravel for the cement.

RM: You mixed your own?

RV: We had a mixer and we mixed our own cement and poured it. And then she and I kind of designed the type of house we wanted and built it out of those railroad ties.

RM: Did you stack the railroad ties, or what was the method you used to build the walls?

RV: You would lay them all end to end and the next one would overlap half of it.

RM: So basically just like bricks. And did you use mortar in between them?

RV: No. We just stacked them and then we put tarpaper on the outside, under the shingles, to seal it.

RM: How did you stabilize the wall, or you didn't need to?

RV: No, if you found some pretty good, straight ties, we didn't need to do any of that.

RM: Did you nail them together?

RV: We did nail lots of them, yes.

RM: Would you toenail them in, from the end?

RV: Toenail them in and from the side, on the outside, where they would be covered.

RM: Drive a spike in the edge down into the other tie. And how big was the house?

RV: It was two bedrooms and one bath, living room, dining room, kitchen. I think it was 1200 square feet.

RM: That was a big house.

RV: Pretty big. As big as this.

RM: And you built it all out of ties.

RV: Yes. Even the partitions inside were built from railroad ties, to partition the rooms.

RM: And you did that with several loads of ties.

RV: [Laughing with Mary] I would say at least five, on a flatbed truck.

RM: How long did it take you to build the house?

RV: We were about three months with it. I do know we gave 10 cents apiece for those railroad ties.

RM: Who owned them?

RV: A man by the name of George Ishmael.

RM: Had he already collected them and stacked them?

RV: No, no. He just showed us, "There's a railroad. Go get 'em."

RM: And he had the rights to them?

RV: Well, he told us he did; I assume he had the rights.

MV: He took the rights. [Laughter]

RV: I assume he had the rights.

RM: And then you would frame in the windows and the doors—and how did you finish it out on the inside?

RV: With regular wallboard.

RM: Did you insulate it?

RV: Only the ceiling.

RM: What kind of roof did you put on it?

RV: Trusses. Her dad and I made the trusses. We had a metal roof, didn't we, on half of it? The other side was just regular shingles.

MV: We ordered that out of, what was it, Sears and Roebuck. [Laughs]

RV: I don't remember. I bought it. It was aluminum.

MV: Yes, it was nice. As far as I know, it is still on there.

RM: Did you plumb it? Indoor plumbing?

RV: You bet.

RM: And you guys had a well there, probably.

RV: Yes, her dad drilled the well.

RM: He probably didn't have to go very far, or did he?

RV: I think he went 100 feet. He didn't have to go that far for the surface water, but he went on down to try to get a little more than the surface water.

RM: And there wasn't any power in the valley at that time, was there? Did you have a generator?

RV: We had a little power plant.

RM: Did you just use it to pump water, or did you run it at night?

RV: We'd run it at night sometimes, depending on the weather.

RM: At first, did you have a Servel refrigerator, or did you have an electric?

RV: A brand-new gas Servel refrigerator.

RM: That was a real luxury, wasn't it?

MV: Oh, it really was.

RM: They were wonderful, weren't they?

RV: You said "wonderful." We left that house in '53 or '54, sold it, and sold our furniture and everything in it to her sister. Then the electricity came in and they took that refrigerator out and set it out back, back of the chicken barn.

In later years, back in '68 or '69, we built a cabin in the mountains in Trout Canyon. We didn't have electricity up there at the time and we thought, "Oh, if we had that old refrigerator."

So we went back out, and by this time, her father lived in the house that we had built. And he said, "You know, that old refrigerator's been out there ever since you guys left here. I don't know if it works or not."

We went out, got it, took it to the mountain, hooked it up, and it was just as good as new. It had sat there for all those years. It was eight to nine years that it just sat there in the dirt behind the chicken barn. The only thing we had to replace was the seal around the door; that had dried up. We used it up there until '76, when we finally sold it again.

RM: When did you build the house in Trout Canyon?

RV: We built that in '69.

RM: And you had that for how long?

RV: Until '74, '76.

MV: It was '76.

RV: We lived in Vegas and we just wanted to get out of Vegas, and so we bought some property up there and bought a pre-cut, A-frame cabin and put up there.

MV: And you know what it sold for last year? Two hundred and fifty-three thousand dollars.

[Roy is laughing.]

RM: No kidding. How much land did you have?

RV: A quarter of an acre.

RM: So you did okay.

RV: No, we sold it for \$45,000. Then just this last year it was advertised in the paper for \$245,000.

RM: Well, how much cash out of pocket do you think you had in the house you built down here?

RV: I think \$800.

RV: But we did all the work.

RM: You and Button and Stanley. Looking back on it, was it a lot of work?

MV: [Laughs] Well, yes.

RM: I've never built a house, so. . . .

RV: That was my first. It's good thing we had Stan with us. He knew what he was doing. But yes, it was a lot of work but I think we enjoyed it because in the first place, it was something that was ours, and it was a new experience.

RM: It'll probably last forever.

RV: It'd have to burn down but I don't know how you'd catch it on fire.

RM: The ties were creosoted, weren't they?

MV: Oh, yes.

RM: Could you smell the creosote in the house?

RV: No, they had laid out in that hot sun over there for many years. I don't think we ever smelled it, did we?

MV: No.

RM: What did you do then to earn money?

RV: Shortly after that I went to work for the Nye County Road Department.

RM: Did you know how to operate the equipment?

RV: I first went to work for them as a truck driver, then after a short time I got on the blade and the backhoes and things.

RM: And how long did you stay with that job?

RV: Just over a year, wasn't it?

MV: Yes.

RV: Then we got involved with the Revert brothers and the oil companies. There were three Revert brothers, and they had the Union Oil distributorship for this area. Of course, they all lived in Beatty. They had been coming in here and making deliveries, but they hated that drive so they contacted me and said, "We'll make you a deal on running that distributorship." They owned everything. They owned the trucks, the tanks, the storage facilities.

So I quit the road department and said, "Good, we'll take it."

And they said, "If we can lease some property, we're going to build a service station here."

"Fine, I'll be interested."

Shortly after that—just a month, I think—they came down and said, "They're building the freeways in California around Los Angeles and San Bernardino and Union Oil Company has got a gas station that's sitting right in the middle of a freeway down there in Riverside. If we can make a deal on it, we're going to tear it down and move it up here, if you're interested." I said, "We're interested." At that time, we still lived in our house out there. We said, "If they're going to do that, we'd better find another place to live, closer to it." So we went into Vegas and bought a 35-foot mobile home.

MV: A singlewide; but it was a good one.

RV: And so we moved it out here. They went to Riverside and Union Oil Company gave them the service station because they were going to tear it down anyway. They hired some people to go down there and tear it down and move it up here and assemble it where the Bank of America is now at Highways 160 and 372. But before they could do that, they leased two-and-a-half acres of that corner. The Pahump Ranch owned the property and they wouldn't sell but they'd lease it to them.

RM: Long term?

RV: Twenty years. So that's where they put the service station. By this time, we had moved our mobile home out here.

RM: What did you do with your house?

RV: Her sister and brother-in-law moved into our house and bought our furniture. The Reverts put the station in, and they said, "We don't want anything to do with this station, now that it's up here. We'll lease it to you for \$100 a month, this whole corner."

Well, we signed a 20-year lease with them for \$100 a month. We were in the station and running the distributorship about a year, I guess. I was hauling fuel all over the valley to all the farmers, and she was helping and running the station for me part of the time.

Mr. Bowman, Elmer Bowman, had the Bowman Ranch down here and he came by one day and said, "Boulder City is wanting to get rid of all the old housing that is left over from building the dam. I'm going to go get two or three of them for my hired help to live in. Would you guys like to have . . . ?"

Well, of course, Mary and her mother, said, "Lord, yes, we'd like to have one here. We'll make a café out of it." We bought one and remodeled and redid into a café, and we bought two more for the motel.

RM: You started a motel.

RV: Yes; it was a four-room motel. I got some people to help, and we remodeled and rebuilt, and she and her mother, Hattie, and our girls ran that thing 'til we sold it to Mankins.

RM: Yes, I've talked to Pat about when they bought it. What year was it that you made the deal with the Reverts to begin with, doing the distributing, and then when did you make the deal on the gas station?

RV: The Revert brothers approached me to take over their distributorship and put the gas station in, in '55. I think it was in February, the early part of the year.

RM: When did you start delivering for them?

RV: The year before, in '54.

RM: And when did Bowman come to you?

RV: Probably '56 or '57.

RM: And when did you put in the café? You had the first café in Pahrump, didn't you, and the first motel?

RV and MV: Yes.

RV: It had to be the same year.

RM: What was involved in moving a house from Boulder City?

RV: Bowman moved it. They were all bolted down, actually, to the cement floor. We had to go over and prepare them to be loaded. Then he sent his truck and his crews over and they loaded them and brought them over.

RM: Could they put one house on one truck?

RV: Yes, on a semi.

RM: How big were the houses?

RV: The motel was two rooms. The cafe was just one room and it didn't have a restroom or anything. [to Mary] Remember, it didn't have anything. But the motels had bathrooms in them.

RM: So you had to plumb the restaurant. Did you do all the work or did you have it done?

RV: No, I had help—two or three guys here in the valley.

RM: Did you have a grand opening?

RV: I don't think we did.

MV: No, we never did. [Laughter]

RV and MV: We just opened it.

RM: What was the community response to it?

RV: Very good.

MV: Our truck drivers out in California would come, turn off at Baker, and come up here and buy my mama's pies.

RV: Of course, there was quite a lot of trucking in and out of here anyway, hauling hay and everything. But the local people responded to it, too.

RM: Did you get many tourists?

RV: We'd get a few, yes.

RM: What were you serving? And what were your hours?

RV: Usually 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning until they stopped coming at 8:00 or 9:00 at night.

MV: Well, Mother would work until about 5:00, but then I'd. . . .

RM: What were you serving during the day?

MV: Just short orders.

RM: In the morning, you were serving. . . .

MV: Breakfast.

RM: Eggs and toast and hotcakes?

MV: Oh, yes.

RM: Coffee?

RV: Tons. Gallons of coffee.

RM: And what did lunchtime consist of?

MV: Sandwiches, I guess, a nice sandwich and hamburgers and chips.

RM: Did you have a deep fryer?

RV: I don't think we did for a long time.

RM: What kinds of sandwiches would you serve?

RV: We had ham and chicken and turkey, and then those canned hams.

RM: Where you were getting your supplies?

RV: I'd haul supplies out of Vegas.

RM: You were buying them wholesale in Vegas and bringing them out here.

RV: Yes, we had a tax permit and everything.

RM: How often did you have to make a run?

RV: At least once a week.

RM: And how long did you operate that restaurant?

MV: He ran it longer than I did because I had to go to Vegas to take our daughter to high school.

RV: We ran it until 1960, when we sold it to Pat Mankins.

RM: Now, tell me about the motel. It was across the street from the gas station, wasn't it?

RV: No, it was on 372.

RM: Oh, on the same lot. So it would have been the northwest corner of that intersection. And those two two-room dwellings over at Boulder City had a room for each of two workers and each one had its own bathroom?

RV: Right.

RM: Did your motel have a name?

MV: It was "Vaughn's Corner."

RM: Do you have any pictures?

MV: We were talking about that.

RV: We have kicked ourselves so many times; we didn't have any pictures of any of that stuff. We probably had two or three cameras lying around, too, and just didn't do it.

MV: We were working.

RM: Tell me, Mary, about the hard work that was involved. It must have just been horrendous.

MV: Well, you have a family, you just have to work. That's all there is to it.

RM: Did you ever get so tired you felt like you were going to drop?

MV: [Laughs] No. When our daughter was starting her sophomore year of high school she told me she was going to leave home. I said, "Oh, no." My sister-in-law in San Bernardino would have liked to come and get her, but she was mine and that's all there was to it.

 Leroy came in about the time I was crying and making beds and stuff, and he said, "What's the matter?"

And I said, "Nothing."

And he said, "Yes, there is."

I said, "No, you'd just get mad if I told you."

And he said, "No, I won't."

So I told him, and he met Linda in Vegas.

RV: You'll have to back up quite a bit.

MV: Yes. You tell him this part.

RV: Well, about the time our oldest daughter became high school age, Nye County School District bought a '56 Ford station wagon and said, "We're going to send the kids to Las Vegas." That was Linda's freshman year. Well, Mary was very nervous about her daughter riding a school bus to Las Vegas, and that's when the daughter decided that she was going to leave home and stay in Vegas.

When I was told this, I think the next day or two days later, I went to Vegas and bought a house. I said, "You're going in there with the kids." That was the end of her working in the café.

RM: So Mary, your career of tending a motel and a café had come to an end, but then that turned the work over to you, Roy.

RV: Well, I stayed two years and commuted. When I bought a home there, we moved everything to Vegas. Her mother continued to work in the restaurant and we hired some ladies to help her. She was there for a long, long time.

RM: It must have been a huge job because now she had really long hours.

RV: No, she wouldn't work extra long hours. She was there every morning, but I had help who would stay and run it until 7:00 or 8:00 or 9:00 at night.

RM: Just out of curiosity, where was your house in Las Vegas?

RV: Bruce and 17th.

RM: What was Vegas like then?

RV: It was a good town, a nice town. Because it was small enough that you knew everybody. Well, you didn't know that many of them in the casinos, but you had two schools, Rancho and Las Vegas High, and that was all.

RM: And where did your kids go?

RV: Rancho.

RM: And what are your kids' names?

RV: Linda and Rita.

MV: Linda was born in November 1943, and Rita was born September 3, 1949.

RM: Talk about running the motel. You didn't always sell out, or did you?

MV: Sometimes we did.

RV: I think we did during the cotton season because there was always somebody. . . .

MV: Some of the drivers from California.

RM: Were there times when you didn't have a customer in the motel?

RV: Yes, I'm sure there were.

MV: Did you tell him about the company that you let rent those little spots behind the restaurant?

RV: That was the geological survey people. They had three or four people that had trailers and what not, and they moved in back of the restaurant and they had help that moved into the motels. That only lasted six months or so.

MV: I think so. It paid for everything we had purchased. [Laughs]

RV: They were good customers.

RM: Is it a rough life to try and run a motel, with people being dirty and messing it up and breaking things?

MV: Sure.

RV: It takes a lot of work to clean them up in the morning.

RM: And most of the time, you didn't have hired help.

RV: No.

RM: What did a room cost when you first opened it—do you remember?

RV: I couldn't even guess, because I had nothing to do with the renting of them. It was rented in the coffee shop; the girls took care of that.

MV: That geological survey crew were really wonderful. Those boys, there were quite a few of them that were bachelors, and they used to eat with us.

RM: What were they doing here?

RV: They surveyed this whole country. Most of it with a helicopter, didn't they?

MV: And Mount Charleston. They were a nice bunch of guys.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: And so you sold out. How did the deal with Mankins happen to come about? Did you advertise?

RV and MV: No.

RV: Bill Mankins was an ironworker. He and his dad had homesteaded this property here, and they had moved here; Bill and Pat had moved just up here on the corner. He was commuting to and from Vegas, working on building the convention center. Pat had babies and she wasn't working, she was just living here. Anyway, Bill would buy his gas from me, going to and from Vegas.

Something came up one time, and he said, "Man, you've got the life. You sit out here and I have to drive all the way out to Vegas to work."

And I said, "Well, you know something, Bill? You could sure take my place anytime you wanted to." We got to talking, kidding. And probably for the next two or three weeks we kept talking about it.

Finally one day, he came in with his dad, and he said, "Are you real serious about making a switch, you going to Vegas and me coming out here?"

I said, "You bet."

And he said, "Why don't you give my dad some figures?"

So I think that night I went back to Vegas and talked to Mary, and we came up with a figure, and the next day he came in for gas, and I gave it to him, and, "Oh," he said, "you're completely out of line. No way in the world."

I think his dad by this time had gone back to California, where he lived. Bill had contacted his dad, evidently, and the first thing you know, his dad was back over here. They walked in there one morning, and, no arguments, they said, "When can we take it?"

I said, "Just give me a few minutes." [Laughs]

RM: Time to get my hat, in other words?

RV: Didn't happen quite that fast, but that was the gist of it. And they bought it.

RM: What was the figure you gave them?

RV: It was \$6,000.

RM: For the motel and the restaurant and the gas station?

RV: Everything. But there are a few things attached here that I haven't come to yet. By this time, the Reverts had sold out. We owned everything. We owned all the buildings but the land was still leased. And the deal was, at the end of 20 years, you cleared that two and a half acres completely; everything. Nothing was to be left. The tanks and the ground were to be dug up. The sewer systems were to be filled. All of that. It was all written out.

Well, after they said that they wanted it and we came to a price and all that, I showed Bill this lease that the Reverts had. When we purchased everything from them, the Reverts just turned the lease over to me. Well, they began to back down and said, "Hey, that's going to be a lot of work."

I said, "Well, that's 15 years from now; what do you care how much work is involved?" Well, it wasn't quite that much. This was in '55 or '54, the original lease on it, and this was in '60 when they purchased . . .

RM: So you were about six years into the lease.

RV: Yes, so at \$100 a month, it wasn't very much. Anyway, they talked about it a little bit and said, "Well, that's all right. We'll take it anyway." And at the end of the 20 years, Mankins had to clear that corner.

And before he died, every time he'd see me, Bill would say, "Man, you owe me for this somewhere down. . . ." [Laughter] I don't know where the old service station was for a while, but it's been reassembled about a block from here as a museum piece. It's got Texaco on it, doesn't it? Bill was Texaco when he purchased it.

RM: When you bought it from the Reverts, did you still have an agreement to use Union gas?

RV: No, I went with a refinery company in Bakersfield, Mohawk Refinery.

RM: And did they deliver to you?

RV: Yes.

RM: Were you still distributing fuel to the ranches and everything?

RV: Oh, yes. Yes, sir.

RM: So you had your own truck and everything.

RV: I owned everything. I owned two or three delivery trucks, and so forth.

RM: So initially you got oil from the Reverts, but then when you bought it, you started getting it at Bakersfield.

RV: It wasn't too long after that that I became a partner with the distributor of Tidewater Oil Company/Flying A, in Las Vegas so we changed the product out here to Tidewater. We did away with Mohawk, they were out of the picture, and went with Tidewater. We were Tidewater when I sold to Mankins.

RM: And did your sign say "Tidewater?"

RV: I think it said "Flying A."

RM: How many gallons on a typical day were you pumping out of the station?

RV: Out of the station, probably 300 to 500 was about all. But with the wholesale distributorship, we did 100,000 gallons month after month.

RM: Was that in the peak season here, or year round?

RV: No, peak season. But even in the wintertime, you'd do 40.

RM: And then did that really drop off when they brought in electricity?

RV: That's when I left; I knew it was coming. And Mankins knew it was coming but he didn't particularly care, because you still got the local business, tractors and things like that. Electricity didn't stop that but it did stop the pumping.

RM: What was your profit margin?

RV: We bought bulk diesel for nine cents and sold it for 13. If they took a 10,000- or 8,000-gallon load, we only took a penny. We'd give it to them for 10 cents because we didn't have to touch it; the trucker would come in and dump it. I can't remember what the margin was for the station, but it wasn't much—six to eight cents, maybe.

RM: And what was gas? Probably 30, 40 cents?

RV: I was going to say 28 but I'm not real sure—28 to 30, something like that.

RM: And give us an idea of what kind of volume you were doing in the restaurant—100 meals a day, or 50?

RV: I don't think you'd run over 50 customers.

RM: And you could buy a meal in those days for \$1, couldn't you?

MV: \$1.25.

RV: That's right. Chicken-fried steak for \$1.25.

RM: So for people in the valley, basically, that was where they ate?

RV: Once a week, maybe somebody would. . . .

MV: Hamburgers, milk shakes.

RM: And where were you getting your ice cream?

MV: He hauled it. [Laughs]

RM: You didn't have to go to the creamery?

RV: No, we got it from Anderson Dairy.

MV: The big cartons. Was that gallons?

RV: I think they were bigger than that—two-gallon buckets.

RV: But we had two big freezers.

RM: And you probably carried the old strawberry, chocolate, and vanilla?

MV: Yes, those are the only ones we had.

RM: And after you sold out to Mankins, what did you do?

RV: I went to Las Vegas and went to work for Union Oil Company. During all that time I had made some pretty good contacts with them. I went to work for the Union Oil Company distributor in Las Vegas for quite a long time, and then I got the bug that I wanted to have a service station. I leased a service station up west of Bonanza on Main going toward Salt Lake City.

RM: What brand was it?

RV: Union Oil Company; 76.

RM: How was that?

RV: That wasn't a real good station. I was there for a short time and they came to me and said, "There's a station for lease out on the Strip, by the Sahara Hotel." It was one block before you got to the Sahara, going out the Strip. I think the place is still there, too.

RM: Not too far from where the Stratosphere is now?

RV: Right.

MV: But it's not called Union Oil anymore, is it?

RV: I can't remember.

RM: What year was that?

MV: That was '60. Linda was in high school. She graduated in '60.

RM: How did that go?

RV: That was a good station. It was strictly a tourist station. That was still back in the days when the silver dollars were floating around pretty heavy.

RM: Yes, you knew an outsider in Nevada, if they had paper bills. [Laughter]

RV: And we were there for two or three years and gave that up and went with a friend of ours at AAMCO Transmissions; I was manager of that place until 1974. That was on Main just south of Charleston and I know it's still there. And from there we came back to Pahrump.

MV: Sixteen years and one day later!

RM: Now, tell me how Pahrump had changed.

RV: When we came back? Well, it was a brand new high school; that's why we came back. We moved back here and went to work for the school district. I was a maintenance supervisor.

RM: How did you happen to get that?

RV: I had told Button and Mary that we were about ready to leave Las Vegas and if anything good were to come up out here, to let us know. They called and said, "We understand there's a maintenance job open at the high school." I came out and saw Don Worden, who was the principal, and he hired me right then. I went back and she was still working in Vegas.

RM: What were you doing at that time?

MV: Working for AAMCO Transmission.

RV: We both worked at the same place. I went back and commuted for a month or two, until we sold the house. We moved out here in 1974.

RM: Into this house?

RV: No, we bought a mobile home and moved it out on David Street right behind the tie house that we had built. Her dad still lived in it.

MV: My mother had passed away.

RM: So he moved out of the house they were living in, and down to your house?

RV: Yes, rent was cheap.

RM: It must have been nice to be back.

RV: Yes, that's one of the reasons we came back. Her dad was in pretty bad health and her mother had gone, so we had a chance at this job. Besides that, we were about ready to get out of Vegas by then. It was beginning to outgrow us.

RM: How had Vegas changed from when you moved there to when you decided you'd had enough?

MV: Oh! [Laughs]

RV: You wouldn't believe it if you couldn't see it. When we moved there in the '60s, you could drive across town in ten minutes. And when we left there in '74, it had become a big city. The Strip had all been developed by that time and it was just altogether different. And of course, the developers had started coming in, building houses, and it was growing. It wasn't the old friendly town that it used to be. In the first place, you didn't know as many people because of the new people moving in all the time. There was just a different atmosphere.

RM: And now it's completely different from the mid-'70s.

MV: When we moved there, Rancho High had been built a couple of years before. But there was a pasture across the street from Washington, where you could see the kids.

RV: Washington and Stewart was Anderson Dairy.

MV: You could see across to the high school where the boys were playing football. And then it all filled in with houses.

RV: Anderson Dairy was right up the street there, I guess, off of Main Street, or Fifth Street, and that was their dairy farm, right in that area.

RM: And what had happened to Pahrump in those 16 years?

RV: Well, it did grow, with the new high school coming in, but not like it has in the last ten years. But as far as the town of Pahrump, it was just about the same. You had the Saddle West and Mankins by that time had moved across the street from the Saddle West and put up a service station.

RM: They put a service station across the street when they had to move?

RV: Right. At the end of the 20 years, he had to move out from there. So he put it up there. And Wolfenstein I guess was in the area at that time; he was developing and building roads and what not.

There were only 35 or 40 seniors in the first high school class. But it was growing, and it was a strong town and you were out of the hustle and bustle of Las Vegas. That was what we wanted to get away from. We have always said, "When the kids left home, we sold out and did the same." That's what happened—our kids got married and we decided to get out of there.

MV: Both of our girls graduated from Rancho.

RV: They married, and so we sold out and came back and that's where we are today.

RM: And how long did you work for the high school?

RV: Ten years.

RM: So you retired from that and what have you done since?

RV: Nothing—play golf and run around the country a little bit.

RM: How do you see the future of Pahrump?

RV: I think in another year, this economy will pick up and it'll start building again. I think people are looking for a rural setting, so I think it'll come back and be as busy as it was two years ago.

RM: Looking down the road 20 or 30 years, what do you see here? Do you have a crystal ball?

MV: I'm not going to be here.

RV: I really don't know. But we're getting some industry and some big stuff in here now like Home Depot. And Wal-Mart is supposed to be going to build a big super center and their wholesale store, Sam's Club, I understand is supposed to be taking over where Wal-Mart is now, and then they're going to build the big super center somewhere else.

RM: Do you see 100,000 people here in the future?

MV: Well, I don't know . . . that penitentiary. . . .

RV: I doubt it. I think they'll run out of water before they get that far.

RM: Did you ever take a fling at mining, or any of that?

RV: No, no.

MV: I'd shoot him if he did that! That's the most horrible thing, I think, would be trying to live, and the main person is working in a mine? Oh!

RV: I sold gas to the miners. The Johnnie Mine was running up here. There were some people out of Utah that came in here and were going to mine gold. I guess they did, a little bit, but it wasn't enough to pay much. They didn't last. Less than a year, and they were gone.

RM: And they were working in the old Johnnie workings?

RV: Yes, I think most of it was in the tailings and what not.

RM: Did you sell gas down around Shoshone or any of that area?

RV: Oh, yes, I used to haul gas to the talc mines over there.

RM: Where are the talc mines, exactly?

RV: Some of them are around Tecopa, but most of them are west of Shoshone, over the mountain there. We used to go out and around to them. As a matter of fact, I think Button was with me a couple of times; we hauled some storage tanks over there and filled them.

MV: We used to haul in Ash Meadows.

RV: Where they had the lodge.

MV: It was nice.

RM: What did it look like? Was that when it was a brothel?

RV: No, this was before it was a brothel.

RV: It was a . . .

MV: Bar, I guess.

RV: Well, yes, and motel. It had rooms. They catered to moneyed people from California. They had a little airstrip and they'd bring them up there for the weekend.

RM: When was that?

RV: That was in the early '50s, because we were here. And then the man that owned it sold it to a lady in Vegas and she turned it into the brothel. Her name was Ann Weller.

RM: Did she run the brothel there?

RV: No, she didn't herself, but she moved a building out there, separate from the restaurant and bar she had. And then she had a man and lady run it.

RM: Do you know when that began?

RV: I was still hauling fuel to them; it was before electricity. That had to have been in about '56. They had a big diesel power plant. I loved them. It would drink more diesel—lots of it!

MV: But the girls had their place over in. . . .

RV: They had a big house.

RM: When did they originally build the building there, do you know?

RV: That was before my time.

MV: Roy used to take our little girl, our youngest one, with him; she always wanted to go with her daddy.

RV: They had a swimming pool.

MV: They had a swimming pool, and the girls really enjoyed her; they just thought she was such a nice little girl.

RV: Some of the ladies from the brothel would always be hanging around the swimming pool. So while I was unloading the fuel, our daughter would go to the pool to swim. And those ladies would take care of her.

MV: They enjoyed her.

RV: It was a very nice place without the brothel, you know. A nice restaurant.

MV: There was nothing wrong with the girls. That was their business but they didn't. . . .

RV: The pool was not on their side of the thing. When they had time off, they'd be over at the pool.

RM: Did you ever deliver to Roland Wiley?

RV: I'd hauled to him many times when he had the Hidden Hills Ranch. It was before he put in the Cathedral Canyon. He had an orchard in there, and he pumped, irrigated it.

MV: Beautiful peaches. Oh!

RM: Weren't they called Last Chance peaches, or something like that?

RV: Yes. I knew him very well. We got very well acquainted. He and I had a little saying to one another each time we'd meet. We'd say, "Here's the only man that's "crookedier" than me." Every time he'd see me he said, "Here's the only man that's crookedier than I am."

MV: He was married to his wife five or seven times.

RM: And then he spent his weekends over here while she lived in Vegas. [Laughs] Yes, I knew Roland. I really liked him. I found him very interesting.

MV: I'll bet he was interesting.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: We were going to talk a little bit about some of the people that you knew through the years here. Why don't you start with Pop Buol? Mary, what do you recall about him?

MV: Well, when Roy was overseas, I came out here and stayed six months with my family. Linda was born in November '43, and she was about a year and a half at that time. I used to go over to Pop Buol's. I think Mother got fruit or something for him, and I used to go over there and his granddaughters came out here and stayed with him in the summers. Mary Buol was my age; she was his granddaughter. And we used to talk to him.

What amused me was that he had a door on the back of his building where he could put his lumber, his firewood in. I thought it was really neat that he could just put his wood in there and then come inside the house and get the wood from inside. His mother passed away—she was in her 90s—and I used to go over there, and I bought some of her pans and things like that.

RM: Did his mother live with him there?

MV: No, she lived in California. She passed away, I guess, and at the time she had a leak underneath her house. She had passed away and he didn't know about it. A neighbor called him and told him about it, so that's when he went down and had to gather up her stuff. But that's the only thing . . . I just talked with him at the end.

RM: What kind of a person was he?

MV: He was kind of a fussy old man but he never did get mad at me or anything.

RM: What was he fussy about?

MV: Oh, just kind of crabby. I don't remember how old he was.

RV: He was pretty old.

MV: He had lost his mind. He couldn't remember anything. He gave me some money and I said, "Oh, Pop, you don't want to give me that. That's quite a bit of money." It wasn't that much money; it was old money.

And, "Oh," he said, "I didn't know I'd given you that!" You knew him, too, didn't you, when you . . . ?

RV: I only knew him well the last year he was alive, when he started to lose his mind. Several times I picked him up and took him home because he didn't know where he was. He'd be out walking, or he had an old Ford pick-up—somebody should have taken it away from him. But he would go off in it, and then he'd forget where he was. If he could see my station up at the corner, then he'd come in there. I hauled him home from there two or three times or more. He knew where he was at the time, he was in my station, but he didn't know where his home was.

So you'd take him home; as soon as you went in the gate, he knew where he was. And he might stay there for a month before he'd come out again. But if you'd see him out anywhere, you'd just as well expect that he was going to get lost before he got back.

RM: This was in his last year?

RV: Yes. Everyone kind of looked out for him, because they knew his condition. I'm surprised his family let it go as long as they did.

MV: I am, too. But he was just such a gripey old man, they didn't want anything to do with him.

RV: If he was on his place there, where he knew where he was, they'd just leave him there, hoping that he'd stay there. He never was crabby with me.

MV: He could get kind of grumpy.

RV: I remember one time he came up there. He wanted to buy gas and I filled his tank and he got back in his old pickup and started to leave. I said, "Pop, you didn't pay me for the gas." And he said, "I didn't buy any gas."

I said, "Well, maybe you didn't, but I put gas in your pickup and you didn't pay for it." And after about five or 10 minutes, finally he pulled out some silver dollars or something and just dropped them on the ground, and said, "You know, you cheat me all the time. I know you cheat me up here." He was just that type. [Laughs]

MV: I think little Annie Beck used to go see him all the time. She had an old horse. [Laughs] And bless her heart, she'd go to sleep and that little horse would take her home.

RM: Annie Beck was an Indian, wasn't she?

MV and RV: Yes.

MV: She used to come to see Pop quite a bit. I mean, she used to buy groceries from him when he had the little grocery store.

RM: Did you know any Indians at all?

RV: We knew all of them, or knew of them.

MV: I had two of the boys in school.

RV: Mary had the kids in school. After we came here and she was working at the school. She was a secretary at the middle school for 10 years.

RM: Mary, talk about being a secretary at the middle school.

MV: Oh, I loved them, every one of them. They just trusted me. When I started out, Don Worden needed help for the first-grade teacher. I used to help with them. And the little Sharp kids—did you ever talk to Imogene Sharp? She was Louis Sharp's daughter and her oldest boy was the same age as my granddaughters. I just loved them all. They were great. I helped with the first graders for a year when we first moved out here in '74. And then when they built the middle school, I got a job there. But those kids were something else.

RM: Yes. Now they're all adults, and. . . .

MV: And have babies of their own.

RM: Did you know Dorothy Dorothy?

RV: Oh, yes.

RM: Tell me about her. I don't have much information on her.

RV: I only knew her as a customer since they had the ranch out there.

MV: She wrote a paper. . . .

RV: Yes, and I can't hardly remember what it was. I do know that they said she did. I really don't know that much about her to talk about her, even.

RM: Did you know the Brady brothers?

RV: Yes. About the same way, though—as customers. You couldn't get very close to the Brady brothers. I can't remember ever seeing one of them in the restaurant, do you?

MV: Oh, yes, they used to come and brought their dad, don't you remember?

RM: Did you know Walt Williams at all?

RV: Yes, very well. He was a pretty strong businessman, a cotton farmer, and he was, to a certain extent, what I call a promoter. Anything that was good for that ranch, he'd promote it, I'll tell you. Whether it was fertilizer or insecticides or whatever, he was a good salesman for it. He was a good customer, also.

MV: His boys used to eat in our coffee shop. They'd come out with their dad.

RM: What do you recall about Elmer Bowman?

RV: Well, he was a lot like Mary's dad, Stanley. He was of what I call the old school. A handshake was better than a contract. It was a contract. Just as a reference, when he told us about these buildings in Boulder City and I said, "Well, how much is it going to cost me to move one of those over here?"

"Well," he said, "I don't know. I'm going to buy three or four of them myself and I'll move yours and when it's over with, why, we'll talk about it." You couldn't get him to do anything ahead of time. He had to experience something himself. I remember that he charged us \$50 per building. And one of the reasons he did, he bought the buildings and then we bought our three from him. I have an idea that they may have given them to him. I don't think he wanted to cheat us but when we got around to settling up with him, how much for the building, he did a lot of thinking: "Well, I don't know, we'll see. . . ." Then, the next time I'd see him, he finally put a price on them. Would you believe \$100 apiece, and \$50 to move them.

RM: So you gave him \$150 apiece.

RV: For each. The property we bought in the mountain up here, before we built the cabin, we bought from Mr. Bowman. After we moved to Las Vegas, we went up there deer hunting, Mary and I, and he had a few cows running in the hills up there.

One weekend we were up there deer hunting and we ran into Mr. Bowman riding his horse, looking for his cattle. He wanted to know what we were doing. We told him, and I said, "What are you doing up here?"

And he said, "I got a few cows running up in here." And he said, "I've got some property here that I've just subdivided. I've got 20 acres up here on the side of this mountain, and I've just subdivided it. And, I've sold a couple of pieces of it, and they're quarter-acre lots."

And of course Mary and I looked at one another, and we'd been wanting something just to get out of Las Vegas anyway, and I said, "Well, gee, we'd love to have a place up here." He said, "Well, go up there and pick you out a lot. There are several of them that haven't sold." "How much you want for it?"

"Well," he said, "I'm asking \$750." Nothing down, and \$10 a month. With no interest. And I said, "Well, how do we pay? Mary can write you a check.

"No, no," he said, "you go in to my attorney in Las Vegas," I've forgotten what his name is, "and just tell him that you want to purchase lot number so-and-so—whichever one you pick out—and he'll take care of it for you."

So the next day we went in and told the attorney what we were there for. And we didn't pay anything down, and we paid \$10 a month for a very short time. I don't remember.

MV: We ended up paying it off.

RV: We paid it off right away. But that was the just the way he did business, if he knew you.

RM: But you signed papers, with the attorney.

RV: With the attorney, yes. When you paid for it, they issued you a water certificate. He had water rights on it way above the springs, and he had piped that water down to this acreage. So

they gave you a water rights certificate, and a title to it to show that you had paid for it. But to my knowledge, I don't think I ever saw Mr. Bowman again. [to Mary] Did you?

MV: I don't remember, either.

MV: He was pretty sickly. Nobody could believe that he ever rode that horse.

RV: Well, that was one of his things. He was always the old cowboy along with the farmer.

RM: Oh, there was cowboy streak in him?

MV: Oh, yes.

RV: And he loved to go up into Trout Canyon where he had 20 or 30 head of cattle and just ride all day doing nothing but riding around, looking at his cows. Imogene Andersen, his daughter, told me that on his deathbed, that was one of his requests—to go ride his horse. Of course, he never did, again.

MV: She's a great lady.

RM: Yes. I interviewed her. Would you consider Elmer Bowman the father of modern Pahrump?

RV: Yes, I really would.

RM: What do you recall about Tim Hafen?

RV: Well, Tim has been a friend of ours for years.

MV: He was in his 20s. [Laughs]

RM: Just a kid when he came here, wasn't he?

MV: He and his wife.

RV: Yes. A very hardworking man. We've been real good friends with him for years. He was a good customer when we were in business here, too.

RM: Who else in the community do you recall from those years? Do you want to talk about your mother and father, Mary? Any stories that stand out in your mind?

MV: My mama was a wonderful lady.

RM: A hard worker, wasn't she?

MV: Oh, yes.

RV: Do you drink coffee?

RM: I really can't. You'd have to scrape me off the ceiling.

RV: Well, then, you wouldn't want to meet her mother; you wouldn't want to go to Hattie's house.

RM: [Laughs] You're not going to get out of there without coffee?

RV: And it's always been a little joke with me, because I used to go see her quite often. Before you got through the door—"I'll get you a cup of coffee." Well, you didn't want to refuse one. But boy, that second one, you sure didn't want to start on that.

RM: Powerful?

RV: She kept the coffeepot on all day long and never would dump the grounds. So by the time you got to the second cup, you had to darn near use a spoon to get it out.

MV: You'd have to have that piece of pie, too.

RV: Oh, yes, she'd always have a piece of pie for you to go with it. Let's see, you interviewed Helen Manley, didn't you? Her husband Ben, who is dead, when they lived here and we lived here, she'd treat Ben the same way she would me. The minute he'd walk in the house . . . He'd see me and say, "Man, have you been out to Hattie's lately?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Ach! That coffee! You can't refuse her, but that's the worst I ever drank in my life!"

So anytime I'd go near Hattie with Ben, I'd say, "Hey, Ben, why don't we get a cup of coffee!" [Laughs] And of course if she heard it, you can bet that she had the coffee out. Then you'd take a few sips of it and she'd want to fill that coffee cup. I don't know if she even drank it herself or not.

MV: [Laughs] Oh, she drank it.

RV: I guess she drank some of it.

RV: She'd make that coffee in that old aluminum pot. Boy, it was strong.

RM: Did she throw it out every day and start new?

MV: I don't think she ever threw it out!

RV: I think she may have just added a little fresh water to it! No, I don't know, she was pretty good about that, but boy, it was strong. Whoo! Mary had a recipe book of hers.

MV: Written in her hand.

RV: The other day, I said, "I wonder if Hattie's recipe for coffee is in that recipe book!"

MV: Button's got it now. I gave it to Mary.

RM: Was she well known for her pies? What was her specialty?

RV: Lemon meringue. I don't think she even had a recipe for that.

MV: I don't think she did, either.

RV: She just threw it all together. But it was always very good.

RM: And the meringue was probably the real thing.

MV: Oh, yes, egg whites. She was a nice, nice lady.

RM: What do you recall about your dad? What stands out in your mind?

MV: Well, he didn't like to stay put very long. I think Pahrump is the longest he'd ever lived anywhere.

RM: He was here a long time, wasn't he?

MV: Yes.

RM: One of things that strikes me about talking to people from back then in Pahrump is how enterprising and hardworking they were. Could you talk a little bit about that?

RV: Well, Stan, her dad, was a very hard worker. Working on that old well rig he had, a normal person couldn't keep up with him as far as putting the amount of work he put in to drill a well. And he drilled hundreds of them in this valley. I don't think he was much of a farmer.

MV: My mom was the one that wanted a farm.

RV: Stan was a dairy man. He liked the dairy cows and pigs and things like that.

RM: This has been a wonderful interview; thank you. Most people don't have dates on the tip of their tongue like you do.

RV: [Laughs] We went over it quite a while this morning getting dates, and I'm not sure we got them all right. Maybe by the time we see it in black and white, we can figure out the right ones.

RM: I meant to ask—you only delivered fuel to this part of Nye County and over into California?

RV: Out of Shoshone, there were a couple of little mines. Even though the Standard Oil distributor was in Shoshone, he couldn't get come down on the price as much as I was because I was working out of an independent refinery.

RM: Standard Oil kept the price up.

RV: Yes. But, even at that, he had some customers here in the valley that had been with him, I guess, for several years when we came in here.

RM: How do you look back on your time in Pahrump?

RV: I've enjoyed every bit of it. I really have. At times I've got a little disgusted with things. But as far as I'm concerned, it's been good to us. I have no regrets. Now you can ask her the same, and see how she answers. [Laughs]

MV: Well, I just couldn't stand my daughters out here when there was no high school, just grammar school.

RV: Well, that all worked out well anyway, what the heck. I'm sure, had the daughter not made the threat to leave home if she had to ride another school bus, our life may not have turned out like it did.

RM: Did you ever wonder what your lives would have been like if you hadn't made that decision, to move from Colton to Pahrump?

RV: I don't think I've ever thought about it, because I thought it was the best move I ever made. But who knows? The stress that you're under.

RM: You felt stress?

RV: Oh, very much so. When you do things that you know are going to affect your family, then you know you'd better make a change. My past was not too good; we'll just leave it at that. But it's been good since.

RM: Well, Pahrump has been good to a lot of people. Now, how long have you been married?

RV: We've been married 66 years. It'll be 67 come February of '09.

RM: That's wonderful.

RV: To the same person.

RM: Yes! And only one marriage.

RV: And only one marriage.

MV: My girls used to tell me about their friends who had two or three parents, families. I'd say, "Well, I don't care what you say. Just don't worry about it, because you're going to have just one mama. One set of parents."

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