An Interview With
Val
Boni

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

An Interview Conducted by
William Belli September 1996
and Indexed and Printed by the
Nye County Town History Project
2014

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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 recordings 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

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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 Butch Borasky, Lorinda A. Wichman, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, Fely Quitevis, and Dan Schinhofen provided unyielding support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave enthusiastic 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 strong support. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Lacy's office, provided funds for subsequent rounds of interviews. Thanks are extended

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Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Debra Ann MacEachen, Robert B. Clark, Lynn E. Riedesel, Marcella Wilkinson, and Jean Charney transcribed a number of interviews, as did Julie Lancaster, who also helped with project coordination. Proofreading, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Joni Eastley, Michael Haldeman, 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. Eva La Rue and Angela Haag of the Central Nevada Museum served as consultants throughout the project; their participation was essential. Much-deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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—Robert D. McCracken
2014

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 discovered mineral deposits, 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 early 1860s through 1900. Austin had a newspaper, the *Reese River Reveille*, starting in 1863 and the Belmont area starting with the *Silver Bend Reporter* in

1867. Ione had a paper, the *Nye County News*, for a few years in the 1860s. More information representing the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915 is available; from local newspapers after about 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 from its first year, starting with the *Tonopah Bonanza*. Goldfield had the *Goldfield News*, which began in 1904. 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. All oral and community histories and photographs collected under the NCTHP are available on the Internet.

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
2014

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ TAPE 1 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

This is William Belli, September 1996, interviewing Val Boni about his life in Manhattan.

WB: Okay, Val, would you tell me your full name as it appears on your birth certificate?

VB: Virgilio Boni. Val was hung onto me when I went to school.

WB: When and where were you born?

VB: I was born May 13, 1909, in Manhattan, Nevada.

WB: What were your parents' names?

VB: My mother's name was Domenica Ghensi Boni, and my father's name was Pietro Pete Boni. Pietro was the Italian name, and Pete was the name he went by here. Ghensi was my mother's maiden name.

WB: Do you know where in Italy they were from?

VB: They were both born in Monno, Italy. That's a town in the northern part of Italy, in the province of Milan.

WB: Were your mother and father married before they left Italy?

VB: Yes. In fact, they had a child back there. The plan had been that my father would come over here and work about two years, make some money, and then go back. About a month or two before he left over there, they had a little baby girl. She happened to get the whooping cough, which was going around over there, and the doctors weren't able to do anything for them, really. They lost a lot of children, and theirs was one of them. In fact, my mother's sister lost a child, also.

WB: Do you know when they were married?

VB: I couldn't tell you exactly. I know is it was about two years before my dad came over to the States, and he came over here in 1905, so they'd had to have gotten married in 1902 or 1903.

WB: Do you know when your mother and father were born?

VB: My mother was born on November 4, 1884, and my father was born on November 7, 1879.

WB: Then when he came over he would have been about 26 years old.

VB: He was approximately, because he came over in 1905, in the latter part of that year. I think it was close to December.

WB: Do you have any idea how your father decided to go to Manhattan, Nevada?

VB: When he came over here, he had a brother by the name of John living in Ohio. When he decided to come over to the States, he went to Ohio, and his brother got him a job working in the coal mines. My dad worked there about a month or so, and he just

didn't like working in those coal mines.

He had heard a lot about Tonopah, so he decided he was going to take off. He quit his job and headed for Tonopah. When he got there, he found out about the big boom in Manhattan so he ended up over here. He did not go into mining when he got here; he ended up at Peavine Ranch. A fellow by the name of Benard owned and operated that ranch and he talked my dad into going to work for him. I never did get to know the man, because he was gone by the time I got to the age where I could recognize him.

WB: So your dad leaves Italy in 1905 and goes to Ohio and then ends up at Peavine Ranch via Tonopah and Manhattan. How did he get to Tonopah? By train?

VB: Yes, he came by train.

WB: Did a railroad go through Tonopah in those days?

VB: It was a branch line from Millers, Nevada. They had one branch going to Goldfield, and one into Tonopah, and then he had to take a stagecoach out to Manhattan.

WB: Would that have been a horse-drawn coach?

VB: Yes.

WB: Did he stay in Manhattan before he went to work with Benard at Peavine?

VB: I don't know whether he stayed here overnight or any length of time; he immediately went down there and went to work for him. They were partners together in a vegetable garden, and my dad was delivering vegetables up to Manhattan. That was in 1906.

My dad sent for his wife in 1907. He decided he didn't want to go back to Italy; he wanted to stay here. My mother arrived in Tonopah on January 8, 1908. She had to take a stagecoach from there to Manhattan also. My dad came up from Peavine and met

her in Manhattan, and they stayed at the hotel called the Santos Hotel. It was the only hotel at that time, my mother said, that you could get a room in. Then the next morning they got up, had breakfast, and went to Peavine.

WB: Was all this traveling done by wagon?

VB: All by wagon. My dad met her up here with a little buggy and a horse.

WB: What was it like at the Peavine Ranch?

VB: When my mother arrived there, she was very dissatisfied, because there was no housing. There was a little adobe shack, which is still standing, and my dad said, "This is going to be the place where we're going to live for the night."

My mother said that her heart just sank. She looked inside, and all there was was a three-legged stool and a bedspring on the ground—it was a dirt floor—and she almost started to cry. She told my dad, "I never thought that I would come to something like this."

She had a nice home back in Italy. He said, "This is only temporary. Tomorrow we'll have a different place to move into."

They slept there that night. My mother said she never slept a wink because she thought the bugs and everything were going to be crawling around. The next morning they found a little cabin down there and they moved into it.

Then she became pregnant with me, and she did not want to have her baby in Peavine and raise a child there because there was nothing there but Indians. She told my dad, "We have to move out of here. I'm not going to stay here."

My dad said, "I'm going to quit my job here, and I'll go up to Manhattan and get a job working in the mines. We'll move up there." And they did. They came up to

Manhattan and rented a little cabin. I think they were paying two dollars and fifty cents a week for it—just a one-room; it was next to the Santos Hotel. S. P. Santos was the owner of the hotel and had all these cabins for rent. He knew my dad, so he rented him this cabin, and that's where I was born.

WB: If we could backtrack a bit, you mentioned that there were no people at Peavine Ranch except Indians.

VB: No white people. Benard was a white man, and the others were all Indians.

WB: Were the Indians working for Benard?

VB: Oh, yes. They worked in the kitchen, did the cooking, and worked out on the ranch. That continued for years. The Indians lived down not very far from Peavine at an Indian camp. The remnants of their camp still exist at Peavine.

WB: After you became old enough to see and remember such things, do you recall anything about the Indians at Peavine?

VB: Oh, yes. I worked with them. In fact, as a youngster when I went to school, I spent my summers working down at Peavine, but a different family had the ranch. I did haying there, and I did weeding in the garden. I helped irrigate and learned to milk the cows and feed the pigs.

WB: Okay, we'll come back to that later. So you've just been born in the cabin in Manhattan next to the Santos Hotel. What happened after that?

VB: My dad got a job working down in the placer mine in the canyon for a fellow by the name of Nick Bozich. He had a lot of claims down there and was operating placer mines and hiring people. My dad worked for Bozich as a laborer and in a partnership for several years. Finally the mining operations that he was in partnership with Bozich were

worked out, and Dad decided that he would like to go into mining on his own. That's when he wrote to two of his cousins in Italy who wanted to come to Nevada and go into mining. Their names were Louie and John Boni. When his cousins arrived from Italy, they went into partnership in a placer operation and claim that they had leased in the canyon south of the Black Mammoth Mountain.

By the year 1916, they had worked out the claim. About this period World War I had broken out, and John and Louie left for basic training and finally shipped overseas to France. They were over there for approximately two years. Dad decided to sell his mining equipment and went to work for Dry Wash Wilson. His real name was Thomas Wilson, and he had several of the largest placer operations in the canyon.

The placer mining operation began having problems running out of pay dirt. They were smoking new shafts, and many were duds with no paydirt so they began shutting down their operations; they could not continue to work their leases or claims without paydirt. Claims and leases were abandoned all along the canyon. That was when Dad went to work for a mine on the Big Farm Hill called the Big Pine. He worked there for approximately one year.

My dad and the two cousins, Louie and John Boni, continued that mining for quite a number of years until the ore body played out in the lease they had. Then he had a couple of other relatives that had come over from Italy and were working down at what they called the Bulldog. That's down in the end of the Manhattan Canyon, right at the end.

The two uncles (I called them uncles, but they were cousins of his) were the Caldonelli brothers. There was a Paul Caldonelli and an Isidoro Caldonelli. They were

doing pretty good there. Old Dry Wash Wilson had one of the biggest operations in the canyon, and he had about 30 to 40 men hired. My dad worked for him for a considerable length of time. Then mining petered out. By this I mean that practically all of the placer operations were sinking a lot of holes in the ground that had no pay dirt, and it was getting hard to make a living. As I said, my dad went to work for a mine in Manhattan on the Big Four Hill called the Big Pine.

WB: Was that a placer operation?

VB: No, that was a quartz mine. He and a working partner by the name of Daniel Sullivan were buried in a drift in the mine a short time after going to work there, due to a cave-in. They were buried there for about 40 hours before they were rescued. He continued to work there for about a year until the mine closed down.

He went to work at the White Caps where he worked as a trammer, tramming ore cars out of the drifts in the mine to the station, where they were loaded onto the cage. Later he was promoted to top man, where he trammed the ore cars from the cage to the dumps if they were loaded with waste or to the ore bins if they were loaded with gold-bearing ore. Then he put the empty ore cars back on the cage to be lowered down the shaft. The White Caps temporarily shut down mining ore for milling but continued with exploration work. Dad was one of the employees laid off.

In 1914, the White Caps discovered arsenic in their ore. They were having problems milling the ore and could not salvage the gold with conventional milling methods. The White Caps did not have their own mill at this time. During the war period, from 1914-1918, the White Caps took over the Associated Mill and operated the mill up until 1920. They were forced to close due to depressed metal prices. During this period

the White Caps built their own mill. In 1915, the White Caps was reorganized under the direction of a Tonopah mining man, John Kirchen, who also developed a roasting process to remove the arsenic from the ore, which proved very successful. He designed a roaster himself and re-modernized the mill, and then he really made a go of the mill.

WB: Is that roaster still up there?

VB: No, the mill is gone; it burned down. They had a fire up there. As near as I recall, it was 1937.

WB: There's a big round thing that looks like an oven. . . .

VB: There are parts of it—I think the roaster—that are still there.

WB: When did the White Cap shut down because of the arsenic?

WB: I think it was 1914, the year they ran into that arsenic problem. I know my dad didn't work too long there at that time, because then they shut down the mine. When they reorganized and started back up, my dad went back to work up there again—they hired him back.

WB: What did he do in the meantime?

VB: I think he worked in the wood business at that time, for a little while. He worked for a man by the name of John Zunino.

WB: We're talking about 1915, and you were born in 1909. In those intervening years, were any other children born to your parents?

VB: Oh, yes. I had a brother who was born about a year after I was, and a sister. My brother's name was Pete Boni, same as my dad. I had a sister named Mary Boni, and then there was a brother named Albino, and another brother named Jimmie—he's the one that narrated that book, James. Then there was a brother named Ermand, and a sister named

Irene. There was Rosie. Then there was Irene, and Leo was the last. With me that's nine kids.

WB: Did all your brothers and sisters survive their childhood?

VB: Yes, they were all living. I lost my first brother, the youngest one, during World War Two. He passed away over in Japan. My sister Mary was the next who passed away. The next one to pass away was my brother next to me—Pete. He passed away quite a while ago.

WB: Are any others living beside you now?

VB: All that's living now are me, my brother Albino, who's living up in Washington, and my youngest sister, who lives in Tonopah. Her name is Irene.

WB: Are you in fairly regular touch with Irene?

VB: Yes. We keep in touch and she comes to Reno quite often and stops by. On Memorial Day many of my relatives come out to Manhattan to decorate the graves, and we have a nice get-together for the day.

WB: Val, I'm going to ask you if you can tell me what your first memories were and about how old you were when you began to have memories of Manhattan.

VB: I can remember things when I was about five or six years old.

WB: What do those memories consist of?

VB: I can remember many things that went on in Manhattan. I can remember in 1912 when they built the mill up on the Big Four. They built a huge mill up there on the mountainside.

WB: You were about three years old then.

VB: It was 1913 when the mill was completed, but I can still recall the completion of

the mill.

WB: Where was that mill?

VB: The only things that are standing now are the foundations. When you're down where my garage is and you look up on that hillside, you can see the foundations on the Big Four.

WB: You're looking south?

VB: You're looking south. That mill was built right on that hillside coming down toward Manhattan. Boy, it was a beautiful mill stuck up in the sky up there, all with bright galvanized iron. It was built by the Big Four and they ran a test run through the mill in 1913, then the mill was never run anymore.

Everything shut down. I guess the mine didn't have enough ore to justify running it. They had two mills. They had another one prior to that in 1910. They had a mill on the Big Pine side, on the north side of the hill, and they were milling their ore—the Big Four leaser's ore—as well as White Cap's ore at that time; the White Caps was operated by leasers.

WB: What other memories do you have of that time?

VB: When I got up to about six or seven years old, I can recall all these freight teams coming in to Manhattan from Tonopah.

WB: Where was the road in those days?

VB: The road at that time came up through Ralston Valley to Spanish Springs. Then from Spanish Springs they come up to Pipe Springs, and from Pipe Springs they came over the summit down into Manhattan. That was called the Tonopah Road, and there was a large warehouse up on the Tonopah Road, not even a quarter of a mile up. After you go

around the corner where that trailer is, it's about a quarter of a mile up the road. There was a huge warehouse on the right-hand side, and on the left side was a big corral where they kept their teams and horses. The teams would come into Manhattan, and if they had any freight they would unload it at the warehouse. It was called the Wittenberg Warehouse and Transfer Company. A fellow from Tonopah by the name of C. F. Wittenberg owned it, and it was operated by Byron and Merle Wilson. All the teams would stop there and unload their freight there. Then Wittenberg would distribute the freight to whoever it went to, but if they had lumber or machinery on there for mines, the teams would deliver it directly to the mines. C. F. Wittenberg owned many of the freight trains, and many were privately owned.

WB: Do you know what the population of Manhattan was in 1905?

VB: From hearsay they had about 700 people. They say in 1906 it got up to around 4,000, 5,000 people; then, when the San Francisco earthquake happened, Manhattan went down the drain because it was all a stock operation and San Francisco was furnishing the money. It started declining right after the earthquake happened. A lot of people left in 1906 after the earthquake, and from then on it was just people moving out.

WB: I see. So, the boom started in 1905. In 1906, the population . . .

VB: Exploded. It had grown to four or five thousand people. Then immediately after the earthquake it began declining.

WB: How long did it continue to decline?

VB: Things just kept getting worse and worse. There was practically no work due to the mining companies that were financed by San Francisco. The only mining that kept Manhattan going was the leaser.

WB: Do you recall what the population was in Manhattan in 1912 and 1913, when the mill at the Big Four was being built?

VB: I don't know the figures. I was five years old in 1914 and the population wasn't very large at that time. That's when I started school.

WB: How many students were in your class or in your school?

VB: In our school? I went to school in a one-room schoolhouse located up on Erie Street.

WB: Where is Erie Street?

VB: That's the street that turns off to the left right below Parlet's Bar. It's the street that turns up there and goes north . . .

WB: Toward the new mill, that Tony Selig operation?

VB: That's right. When you get up that street before you get to where Tony's offices are, there's a road that turns off to the left and goes up a little gully. The school was situated right at the top of that little knoll there, on that hillside. There's a bunch of rocks up there.

WB: Overlooking the town then?

VB: It was overlooking some of the town. Down the street was all you could see. We had no playground. That's where I started school, and my teacher was Ida J. Fisher North. She had married a fellow by the name of Fred North. That was her first year of teaching, in 1909.

WB: That was the year you were born.

VB: Yes, and it was the year she started teaching there. I had her as my first teacher. The first teacher that taught at that school was Miss Leehy. That school was moved there

from the main street in Manhattan up on the east end. In 1908, it was moved up to Erie Street. It was built up on the main street in the upper end of town but then they moved it in 1908, for reasons I don't know. The school remained there and it was finally dismantled because they constructed the schoolhouse that is located there now.

WB: That's the schoolhouse.

VB: This school that they built had three different rooms—one for the primary grades, one for the grammar grades, and one for the high school. I can remember when they were building the school next to us. I saw the whole construction on that school. I know the carpenter who had the contract that built it.

WB: Who was that?

VB: His name was Joseph Cook.

WB: Was he from Tonopah?

VB: He had a shop in Manhattan. He was a carpenter and had a paint shop, and he later moved to Tonopah when things went bad in Manhattan. They started construction on that school in 1912. They began to have quite a few students go to school and they couldn't handle the upper grades, so they had to teach the students in other buildings. There was a building situated right above where you have your property.

WB: Up that hill?

VB: Up on that hillside there. The grammar kids went to school up there, and the high school was held down in the Palace Hotel. When they finally opened up the school to all the different classes, everybody was moved up to the new school building.

WB: How many years did you attend the school on Erie Street?

VB: I attended the school on Erie Street for three years. Then I went down to the new

school building. The teacher I had up there was transferred down there. I was transferred in there, too, because they closed the school that she was teaching at on Erie Street. I went one year to her in the new school.

WB: Which was the first house you recall that you lived in in Manhattan?

VB: I lived in quite a few places. We lived for about a year in that little cabin of Santos after I was born, and then my dad went to work with Nick Bozich in the placer, a new operation that Bozich had started down below the Central. We went down there and lived in tents. My dad had set up two tents; one of them was our kitchen, and the other one was our bedroom. That's where we lived for about a year—my mother, Dad, brother Pete, and me.

Finally my mother said she couldn't take that kind of weather. Winters were bad and she said that she'd have to move up to town and get a house, so my dad rented a house up on the Tonopah Road, which was above the Wittenberg Warehouse and Transfer Company. In fact, the cabin is located right next to my house—it was moved down there. We lived up there for another year, I believe. We had no electricity, and we had to use coal oil lamps. Then my dad purchased a home right next to where the schoolhouse was built.

WB: Was there electricity in the town at that time?

VB: At that time there was electricity. The Nevada California Electric Power Company put power into Manhattan in 1906.

WB: Where did it come from?

VB: It came from Millers. Millers had a big substation there. The power came from California. There are some creeks down there by the name of Bishop Creek where the

power was generated, and it was transmitted over the White Mountains into Millers. Millers distributed the power to Tonopah, Goldfield, and Manhattan. Then eventually in 1909, the power company built a substation in the canyon below Manhattan.

WB: Where?

VB: Well, it's destroyed now. Tenneco Mining Company had mining claims adjoining the substation, and in order to continue with their open pit operation, they purchased the property and bulldozed it. As near as I can recall, it was around December of 1989. The substation was situated at approximately the west end of the pit.

WB: The pit that's remaining now [1996].

VB: The one that's there now, yes.

WB: That was to the west of the Big Four Hill.

VB: Yes, it is the one to the west of the Big Four Hill, and, in fact, a little while after the power company put that substation in there, that's about the time that they put in a power line over to Tybo that went in just a little after that.

WB: What year would that be?

VB: I don't know for sure if that was 1910 or 1911. It was shortly after they built the substation.

WB: Then when did electricity go over to Belmont?

VB: They never had electricity in Belmont. That power line that went to Tybo went near Belmont—it went not through it but right near it. The transmission lines that they were transmitting power was 55,000 volts, and they'd have had to put a little substation or transformers there in order to produce the power for lights. It isn't justified because there weren't enough people living in Belmont. It was practically a ghost town.

WB: I see. Did it go to the east of the hills?

VB: I don't remember exactly whether it went up.

WB: The pole line itself starts right there at Belmont on the east side of the town, by that mill.

VB: It comes by Belmont, but it bypassed the town. I don't remember where the cut-off was down there.

WB: Do you recall approximately how many students there were in the new school when you started attending it?

VB: I don't recall. There weren't too many. Of course, we had the grammar grades and the high school, too. At our primary grades, there weren't more than 15 or 20 kids, and with the grammar grades and high school the total was about 60 pupils.

WB: Now, primary grades would have been what?

VB: That was from the first through the fourth.

WB: Let's talk for a little bit about the ethnic makeup of Manhattan when you were a small boy. Were there many Italians in Manhattan?

VB: There were a lot of Italians. There were Italians, Austrians, Yugoslavians, Montenegro, and some Irish.

WB: Was Italian spoken between the Italians?

VB: Between the Italians, yes. When they were together, they always spoke Italian.

WB: What about the Yugoslavs?

VB: The same thing.

WB: And the Austrians and the Montenegros?

VB: All of them.

WB: So there was quite an ethnic flavor there.

VB: There was an ethnic flavor.

WB: Were there any Chinese?

VB: There was one Chinaman in town that I recall. He was a cook at the Connors Hotel. In fact, the Connors that ran the Connors Hotel had adopted a boy. His name was Sylvan Duke, and I went to school with him. He took a liking to me. He was a pampered kid, and his parents didn't want him connected with a rowdy crowd, so he took to me and the parents liked me. I would get invitations to go up there and have dinner or lunch with them—that's how I recall this Chinese cook was working there. During his breaks he would go out in the back of the building and sit on the hillside and smoke his opium pipe.

WB: And the Connors had a restaurant?

VB: They had a restaurant there, and rooms.

WB: In terms of proportion, were the Italians in the ethnic majority?

VB: I think there were more Italians than any group. There were quite a few Austrians.

WB: You were all Americans then, but there are people who have accents and people who don't. In terms of the town of Manhattan, were most of the people in Manhattan of one or another fairly recent ethnic group?

VB: A recent one?

WB: Yes, fairly recent.

VB: Well, they were coming in little by little. It's like my dad come over here, then he sent for his cousins and they came over here. Then they, in turn, wrote to some cousins, and they come over and went to work. It was the same way with the Austrians and all of them. They'd just bring their relatives or friends over.

WB: Was Manhattan made up of people who were mostly recent immigrants to the United States as opposed to people who had been living in the United States for 10 or 20 or 50 years and came from other parts of the United States?

VB: Most of them were people that came directly to Manhattan. They heard about that—of course, a lot of them ended up in Tonopah and then eventually came out to Manhattan. A lot of them had lived in Tonopah for years.

WB: Was there any kind of ethnic conflict between any of these groups?

VB: Not that I recall. We all got along pretty well.

WB: In all your years of growing up and living in Manhattan, did you feel discriminated against by anyone, or did you see examples of discrimination against any particular ethnic group by members of other ethnic groups?

VB: There was a little discrimination there. I call them white people, and they were against the Italians. They called them "dagos." They called the Austrians and the Montenegros and Yugoslavians and all of them "bohunks."

WB: Now when you say white people, who are you referring to?

VB: Well, natives.

WB: These were not Indians.

VB: They were mostly Americans.

WB: What kind of ethnic background—English, Irish, German?

VB: They were mixed, you know. A lot of them weren't strictly truly like an Irishman. There was some that were full-blooded Irish, but some had a mixture.

WB: They didn't have a particular ethnic characteristic about them, like an accent.

VB: Some did, but a lot of them didn't.

WB: We're both laughing a little here because it's something you don't really think about until all of a sudden we're trying to define these different groups. Then we find out that there is something called a white person that does not include Italians or Yugoslavs or Austrians.

VB: Well, that's right. That's what they used to say in Manhattan. The white people don't like the Italians or the Yugoslavians or whatever they are, or Austrians.

WB: Let me put it this way. Would it be accurate to say then that there were people who considered themselves to be more American than the rest of you?

VB: That's right.

WB: Okay. Those are the ones you're calling white.

VB: Yes. [Laughter]

WB: That's interesting. That's part of our history. I think this is a good point, really. Now, we've got all these ethnic groups and we've got the white Americans. How do the Indians fit into this, if at all?

VB: The Indians stayed to their own campground and didn't bother anybody.

WB: So in the little town of Manhattan, we had these other ethnic groups you've named, then we've had the Americans or "white group," and then we had Indians. With the Indians, was there a particular tribe or group of Indians, or were there more than one?

VB: There were two tribes who lived in Manhattan. There were the Paiutes and the Shoshone, and they lived separately. Their camps were in separate locations.

WB: Where were their camps?

VB: The Paiutes lived up the road that goes up towards Shorty Nix, and it continues up near the home that we had on the hillside up there; it's that old house that's falling down.

There's a home up there, right at the top of Chipmunk Hill, they call it. You follow that road around Chipmunk Hill, and they were located right up at the edge of that hill where it overlooks that little canyon, looking north.

WB: It's a junkyard off to the left.

VB: Yes, off to the left there's a little junkyard. The Shoshone lived down there, right this side of where the red light district used to be located. Do you know where all those pick-up bodies are located down there? There's a bunch of bodies down there.

WB: Let's try to locate it in relation to the schoolhouse that still stands.

VB: The Shoshones lived just west of the schoolhouse down at the mouth of the draw about 500 yards.

WB: That was next to the red light district?

VB: Right. It was just a little this side of it.

WB: Tell us what the red light district consisted of.

VB: It consisted of buildings; I think there were four buildings. One was operated by a madam called Ella Clark. Another one was in my early days, way back when I was a kid; it was run by Helen and Mildred Towns, the two sisters. Later on a woman by the name of Marie St. Clair came in there and operated it, and the upper building was operated by Pearl Stewart. Later she married and became Pearl Linders. The other building [in the red light district] was just used off and on. There were people moving in and out of that; it was never permanent.

WB: How old were you when you first became aware of these places?

VB: I can remember as a youngster...

WB: Five, six years old?

VB: Yes, I imagine.

WB: What was your impression then of these places? Did people have a particular attitude towards them?

VB: No, the women that worked down there were very nice. They didn't associate with any of the people in town. In fact, they wouldn't even come up and do their grocery shopping, and they didn't go to the post office; everything was delivered to them. They never attended any doings in town; they stayed to themselves.

WB: When you said they were very nice, what do you mean by that?

VB: When the school had some doings and they needed money for something, they made contributions like anybody else.

WB: Did you ever know any of them personally?

VB: Oh, yes. I knew them from when I was a little kid.

WB: How did you come to meet or know them?

VB: I used to go walking a lot. I was always hiking around, and there was a road that goes down there. By the trailer parks was the main road down the Manhattan Canyon, and it was in front of the business houses. It was on this side of the pads, on the north side.

WB: The one where the Shoshone settlement was?

VB: Yes, you continued down that road and walked right in front of the homes. This was the main road leading down the canyon. They would come out, and you'd talk to them. I'd talk to them. They'd speak with all the children.

WB: As a young boy, what was your impression of them?

VB: I never thought nothing of it.

WB: Did you think they were pretty?

VB: Some of them were. Some of them were up in age. [Laughter]

WB: How old do you think they were?

VB: There were two of them there. Pearl Stewart was an old woman. She was the madam and run the place herself in later years.

WB: She was a working girl, too?

VB: Yes.

WB: How old do you think she was?

VB: I couldn't tell you. She was old when I was a little boy.

WB: Your impression of her as a little boy was that she was old. That could have been 20.

VB: She must have been over 20, though.

WB: Okay, so she might have been 30.

VB: She might have been 30.

WB: She wasn't 60 or 70.

VB: No.

WB: How young were some of these girls?

VB: Oh, I don't know. I don't recall any really young girls; they must have been over their 20s, between 30 and 40 years of age.

WB: And some were pretty?

VB: Yes, they had some. Helen Towns and her sister Mildred were very beautiful girls.

WB: They were madams, though?

VB: Well, they also ran the business.

WB: They were also working girls as well?

VB: Working girls also. They owned the place, and they run it. They had a little dance hall in there, a place where they had a bar. They'd drink and dance. They entertained their customers.

WB: When you say dance, were they dancers on stage?

VB: Not on the stage. They'd dance on the dance floor and dance with the customers.

WB: I see. So these houses had bars and little dance floors in them and live music?

VB: They didn't have live music. It was just a phonograph at that time. They had a piano in there because somebody would play the piano. The home that Helen Towns and Mildred Towns were in had a piano, and one of them played the piano.

WB: How large were these homes?

VB: They were one story, but they were pretty large buildings.

WB: Let's say in terms of the barroom and dance floor.

VB: The bar didn't amount to much; it was just a little bar like people have in their basement now.

WB: I see, and then they had little bedrooms?

VB: Oh yes, they had bedrooms off to the side.

WB: About how many girls would work in each one of these houses?

VB: At my time, there weren't too many girls working. Ella Clark only had usually one or two women working for her, and she worked, too; she wasn't only the madam. Helen Towns and Mildred Towns pretty well operated on their own. They were the sole operators and took care of the customers.

WB: Over all, how many girls would you say were working at any one particular time in that little red light district?

VB: About 10 or 12; that's about all. Of course in the early days, before I could recall the red light district, it was pretty large. They had an awful lot of women there.

WB: How old were you when you recall that there were 10 or 12?

VB: This was about when I was a little young kid; I was maybe 8 or 10 years old.

WB: Did the townspeople generally have any bad feelings toward these women, or did they regard them in a positive light?

VB: There were no bad feelings against them. The women stayed in their place. They were very nice women. In fact, my mother ran a little restaurant for a while after my dad passed away. That's the only time that I had ever seen any women from the red light district come up, and they were boarding with my mother. Ella Clark and Marie St. Clair boarded with my mother for quite a while.

WB: By boarding you mean they had their meals there at your house?

VB: No, at the place my mother was taking in boarders. She rented a little room at the bakery there.

WB: Oh, I see. She cooked and served meals?

VB: She cooked meals and had customers from the town come down.

WB: But she didn't rent rooms?

VB: Oh, no. All she did was cook meals there, just to make some extra money.

WB: But it wasn't a restaurant. It was for regular people who paid.

VB: Well, it was like a boarding house, I'd say. It wasn't advertised as a restaurant. She cooked homemade meals and served breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

WB: When was that?

VB: That was after my dad died, so it was about 1933.

WB: Okay, so that's some time later on. Getting back to your first memories when you were about four, five, and six years old, what do you recall about the Paiutes and the Shoshones in the town? Could you distinguish a Paiute from a Shoshone in any particular way?

VB: No, I couldn't. To me they looked like Indians, all of them.

WB: How did they dress?

VB: They dressed like we did, in modern clothes.

WB: Did they speak a native tongue, or did they speak English?

VB: Between themselves they talked Indian, their native tongue, but they also had learned the English language. Some of them spoke very good.

WB: Did their children go to the school with you?

VB: That's how I came to get connected with them; I went to school with the children.

WB: What can you tell me about your memories of the Indian children?

VB: They were just like any other children. I don't see any difference. They were willing to learn, they were good students, and we played with them. I was closer to the Paiutes than I was to the Shoshones. The Shoshones were a little distant, but the Paiutes were people that'd mix with you. I went to school with one of their boys about my age, and they would invite me to go fishing on Sundays. They even prepared the lunch. I didn't even have to bring my lunch; I ate what they ate, and they treated me just like one of their kids.

WB: What did they eat?

VB: Just like we do. It wasn't any different.

WB: Where did you fish, over in Barley Creek?

VB: Peavine is where we went fishing; it was closer.

WB: Was there ever any discrimination against Indians by any other ethnic group?

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ TAPE 2_ _

WB: Val Boni, we've been talking about whether there was discrimination against Native Americans in the area.

VB: I don't recall of any particular discrimination from other ethnic groups.

WB: Not even by the people who would call the Italians "dagos" and the Yugoslavs "bohunks?"

VB: No, nobody discriminated against them. The Indians stayed at their place. They were very nice people that didn't bother anybody. In fact, my mother would hire this Paiute woman, who was a mother who had all these children when my mother happened to have a baby, and she couldn't do the washing because you had to use a big scrub board. My mother couldn't do that heavy work so she hired this Indian woman named Judy Sam. She would come and do the washing and help do the housework for my mother. She was very nice, and she stayed in her place and never caused any problems.

WB: Did she speak English?

VB: Yeah, she spoke English—not very well—but she spoke it. Her husband spoke very good English.

WB: What did he do, do you know?

VB: He worked on ranches and woodcutting. That's about all the kind of work they could get; they didn't seem to want to hire the Indians in the mining industry. They went out on the ranches in the summertime and did haying and buckarooing, anything they could do on a farm.

WB: In terms of the farm work, were they treated the same as any other person in terms

of the wages that they earned?

VB: That's right. They paid the same. They were treated very fairly.

WB: When you say they didn't work in the mines, was it because the mine people wouldn't hire them?

VB: I guess they wouldn't hire them. I didn't recall one Indian working in the mines. However, in Round Mountain, there were Indians that worked in placer mining. That's out in the open, doing open work.

WB: Do you think it was because of discrimination that they didn't work in the mines or because the Indians didn't like tunnel work?

VB: The Indians weren't too eager for going underground. That's probably the reason.

WB: It was probably by their personal choice.

VB: Yes.

WB: Can you describe how the Indians who lived in Manhattan would go to work at the different ranches around Manhattan?

VB: About the only type of work the Indians could get was working on ranches. When they were hired by the ranch owner to go to work there, they'd just take their camp gear with them—things they needed—and they'd go out and stay at the ranch. They were fed there along with the white men that were working there, and they were treated just the same as if they were one nationality.

WB: That's a good way to describe it.

VB: And they were good workers.

WB: Did people in Manhattan in those early days from 1905 to 1910—or even beyond that—own and keep their own horses for transportation?

VB: A lot of them had horses. There were still buggies running around that were horse-drawn. Of course, this was in the early days when I was a young boy. In later years a few of them purchased cars and replaced the horses.

WB: How about the Indians?

VB: Indians always had riding horses.

WB: They always did?

VB: Yes. I'm talking about Paiutes and Shoshones both.

WB: Did they have more horses proportionately than the other groups who lived in Manhattan?

VB: Oh, no. One of the men that was related to Henry Sam was a brother of his; he was a heavy drinker, but he was very talented and used to make leather gloves out of buckskin. He'd make belts and beaded belts. And he used to make spurs. He forged them out of metal and made the complete spurs. He made the rowel and cut it all out by hand—everything done by hand. Then he engraved them, and he'd inlay the silver in them. He made bridles. Oh, he was really a talented person. He also braided the reins for the bridles out of horse hair from the horsetails.

WB: And was he a Paiute or a Shoshone?

VB: He was a Paiute.

WB: Where did he learn the silversmithing?

VB: I don't know where he learned it. You could never get close to him. That was one fellow that just wouldn't have anything to do with a white man, especially. He was a heavy drinker, but I was in his little shop. He had a little dugout up there; I think the dugout is still there—like when you're going over that hill where I showed you the

Paiutes lived. If you go down in the draw and cross the draw on the other little bank of the draw, there's a little dugout over in there.

WB: This is on the other side of Chipmunk Hill?

VB: Yes, on the northwest side of Chipmunk Hill.

WB: Where the Paiutes lived.

VB: Yes, where the Paiutes lived. That's where he had a little shop, and in there he had a vise and a blacksmith forge, an anvil, a hacksaw, files, and all the tools that he worked with.

WB: How old were you when you knew him?

VB: That's when I was going to school with Brownie Sam. It was in the grammar years. I'd say it was probably the fifth or sixth year of school.

WB: You were about nine or ten?

VB: Yes, I must have been. That was about the time he came there and started this work.

WB: Where did he come from?

VB: I don't know where he came from. He was a brother of Henry Sam. His name was Andy Sam.

WB: How old do you think this brother was?

VB: I don't know. I think he was younger than Henry Sam. I just couldn't say; it was very hard to determine the age of an Indian. He acted like an old man because he was such a heavy drinker, but he wasn't as old as he appeared. One of the Indian boys, Brownie Sam—I went to school with him—took me over there one day to the shop. Of course, he spoke in Paiute to him. I watched him do some of the work. He just continued

to work while I was there with this Indian boy watching him. Not many people would go over there and interfere with him when he was alone.

WB: Did he sell his spurs and jewelry to the regular community?

VB: In fact, my brother had some spurs made and had to furnish the silver. You had to give him dimes, and that's what he melted to make the inlay in the spurs. Then he made bridle bits; he made the whole bit. He'd inlay the part where your bridle reins attach. Yes, he would sell the items he made and also made them on special order for many of the cowboys in the area.

WB: The headstall.

VB: They'd have a bridle bit, and on the side of your bit, you have that.

WB: Shank?

VB: I don't know what they call that—was it a shank? Anyway, that would be all engraved and inlaid with silver. He made beautiful bits and beautiful spurs.

WB: You don't know where he lived before he came to Manhattan?

VB: I don't know.

WB: Did he dress any differently than anyone?

VB: No, he just wore Levi's and a blue chambray shirt. He wore a vest made from buckskin or deer hide.

WB: Did any of the Indians then braid their hair or did they cut their hair short?

VB: Their hair was long. The only one that was clean-cut was the father of these children. He was Paiute. He had his hair cut fairly short, like we cut it today; it was like a normal hair cut, but they were longer. Nick Rogers, a Shoshone down there, had his hair cut pretty fair, but some of them had long hair. They weren't braided, except for the

women. The women did braid theirs.

WB: During those years when you were attending your grade school and your grammar school, what was your everyday life like? What are your memories of being a child from the age of five to the age of ten?

VB: There was nothing to do, and I always went around, watching the teams come into town. They'd unhitch the horses and unload the freight wagons. If somebody had bought a car and was working on it, I'd be right there and had my nose in that, watching him work on the car. [Laughter] We went hunting; we had slingshots in those days.

WB: With rubber?

VB: With rubber. They were made out of old inner tubes and we'd go out hunting birds and shooting squirrels and rabbits with our slingshots.

WB: Now, this would be later, right? This would be later, after the cars came—from 1905 to 1910.

VB: Oh, until 1910. That's about when cars started to come into town. There were very few, because I can remember some of the first cars that came into town. The first one, I think, was an Oldsmobile; it was built like a buckboard, like a little wagon. It had a wagon seat on it, and your motor was underneath the seat, chain drive. Instead of a steering wheel, it had what they called a tiller, and that's the way it steered.

Of course the fellow that had that vehicle was John Humphrey, who discovered the April Fool. Then there was a fellow at the Peavine Ranch. His name was E. E. Seyler, and he was also involved in that April Fool deal. He owned a 1912 Model-T roadster pickup. There were several other Fords around town; they were all mostly Fords. I'll bet there weren't a handful of cars, though.

WB: Now when you lived in the house next to the new school, all your brothers and sisters weren't born by that time, right?

VB: No. While I was living by the schoolhouse, my brother Pete, sister Mary, and brother Jim were all born in that home.

WB: But at some point in your growing up process, all your brothers and sisters and you lived in the same house with your mother and father.

VB: Oh, yes.

WB: How did that work out? How big was your house?

VB: You can see from the house on the hillside up there . . .

WB: The one that's still standing now?

VB: You mean the one that's falling apart. [Laughter] Well, the other house we had was about the same size, the one by the schoolhouse.

WB: Do you think there would be maybe two little bedrooms in it?

VB: Yes, that was about all.

WB: And the living room and a kitchen?

VB: The living room had two double fold-up wall beds covered with a curtain during the day. That's all.

WB: Did you all sleep inside?

VB: Yes, we all slept inside except when we moved up to the upper house; then more children were born. My dad moved a little cabin next to it. In fact, you can still tell where the cabin is there—right on the west side of the building—and three of us boys used to go over there to sleep at night.

WB: In the wintertime, too?

VB: Yes. We had a woodstove in there.

WB: Did you get along well with your brothers and sisters growing up?

VB: Fine, we never had any problems. We were a very close-knit family.

WB: Did families then do things together more than they do these days?

VB: Yes, they did. Families were closer.

WB: Describe how the family functioned, if you can. For example: You were the oldest, so presumably you were the first to lend a hand in the process of growing up with your father and your mother. What sort of things did your parents have you do as a boy?

VB: They started by giving us chores to do. My mother and my father raised chickens and rabbits and we had to feed them and clean out the pens. My dad chopped the wood; he wouldn't let us use the ax, so when the wood was chopped, we carried it into the house. Also, we learned how to take the ashes out of the stoves, and it was just chores around the house. The girls had to help my mother with cleaning house, and she was training them how to cook and bake. It was all just chores around the home.

WB: What are your early memories of your father? What sort of a man was he?

VB: He was a very hard worker, easy-going, well-liked and respected. He ruled us with an iron thumb all right, but he wasn't so strict as to where he had to spank us. He'd just speak to us, and whatever he said meant law. He was a very good father. All through life I worked with my dad as a youngster. I'd go out with him all the time, even when he was in the wood business, and I'd help him—the work that I could do. In fact, as I was growing up my dad didn't drive a car; he never did, and when he went into business for good—of course, that was way up in later years—I did the truck driving. His family was always primary, and he and my mother taught us to have respect for the elders. My dad

had no enemies.

WB: When you say he went into business for good, do you mean as a woodcutter?

VB: I am talking about cutting wood and selling it. That didn't happen until about 1929. That's when we got that contract over in Tybo for 100 cords of wood, and then they increased it to 50 more cords. I was driving an old 1918 solid tire Republic truck hauling the wood, three cords per trip, and I hauled every stick of wood down there and stacked it myself. Dad, my brother Pete, and partner John Zunino, were cutting the wood to the north of the charcoal kilns above Tybo.

WB: Let's back up now to about 1909 or 1910. You were born in 1909 so you have no personal recollection of that; but, you did say earlier that in 1906, following the San Francisco earthquake, the big boom that had occurred following the discovery of the April Fool find in 1905 went down. The population quite rapidly began to decline, so in 1906 or 1907 with the lack of the money which previously had financed the mining operations, people left town.

Now by the time you were old enough to remember things, which would have been about 1912 or 1914, the town had probably diminished considerably; is that correct?

VB: Well, it had diminished considerably; the mines were operated by stocks. They were financed by San Francisco capital and operated by incorporated mines, but when the San Francisco earthquake happened, the stockbrokers lost all their records; everything was gone, and they couldn't supply any more money. The banks closed and there was no money for mining, so all that was left was the independent leasers. That's the way Manhattan was operated. That's what really made the camp and kept it going.

WB: Right. During that period, do you have any idea what the population was?

VB: I couldn't say.

WB: It had been about 700 in 1905.

VB: Yes, they had about 700. Between the summer of 1905 and December 1905, it had increased to approximately 1,000; that's what they told me. My dad and other people that I spoke with said there were approximately 700 people and that it increased to 1000 by December 1905.

WB: Now, Manhattan as a town existed quite some time prior to the April Fool discovery in 1905, right?

VB: Oh, yes.

WB: When do you believe the camp of Manhattan originated?

VB: Mining was going on in Manhattan in 1866, but it wasn't named Manhattan at that time; it didn't have a name.

WB: Did any particular event create the activity that developed into the camp that later became known as Manhattan?

VB: In 1866, they had discovered gold, and there was mining going on there. They had no mills to mill the ore, and the ore was hauled by freight teams over to Belmont and was milled in Belmont. Then, in 1863, there was an Irishman that came over from Ireland. He landed in Manhattan, New York, and he decided to come West; he'd heard a lot about these gold strikes. His name was George Nichols, and he ended up in Austin as an assayer; that was his trade. He worked for a mining company up there called the Manhattan Mining Company in Austin in 1863.

About 1866, he happened to come down here into what is now Manhattan. He was doing some prospecting, from what I understand, down in the lower part of

Manhattan and he discovered some silver ore. He later called the canyon where he discovered the ore Manhattan Canyon. Where he got the name, I don't know; maybe he took it from the Manhattan Mining Company in Austin. In 1867, he finally named it the Manhattan Mining District, and that was the name it went by ever since. I was told by an old-timer in Manhattan that the name Manhattan was taken from the name Manhattan Mining District. They gave him credit for the naming of Manhattan.

WB: Who's "they"?

VB: I don't know who gave him credit back in those days. I wasn't born then. These are stories that were told to me. In my later years I became well-acquainted with a mining man who had been in Manhattan since 1906, by the name of Matt Kane. I gained a wealth of information from him with regards to Manhattan history.

WB: But you first heard these stories when you were maybe five or ten years old?

VB: Yes. I always loved to get history, with regards to Manhattan, and I'd talk to these old-timers.

WB: This was the story you heard when you were 10 or 15 or 20 years old?

VB: That's right, and my dad told me about it; he came there in 1906 himself. He had heard these stories from people who had been here before him.

WB: I had heard another story I remember. I think Bob Bottom and some other people were talking about how Manhattan was named, and Bob had heard this story that I've heard others repeat. It was that Manhattan was named Manhattan because in the early days it seemed that there was so much gold there, and somebody prophesied that some day this place would be even bigger than Manhattan.

VB: I never heard that one. I talked to the old-timers. I just used to love to visit with

them. I associated more with old people than I did with kids my own age. I never associated much with the kids. Anytime I found a man that I could talk to that was interesting, I'd just question him and follow him around. One of the fellows was J. W. Coop. His name was Jim Coop, and he operated what they called the Yosemite Stables in Manhattan and a blacksmith shop. He was an early pioneer in Manhattan, and this is one of the men that told me this story.

There was another fellow by the name of Charlie Dearing; of course, Charlie Dearing came there a little later. Anyway, he told about the same story. C. F. Wittenberg ran the Warehouse and Transfer Company in Manhattan, and he was involved in mining up on the Big Four in the early days. He knew about the history of Manhattan. Those are the people that I have spoken with. Everybody seemed to have about the same story.

They always talked about this George Nichols. That's why it stuck in my mind, and I even remember the dates that he came. They say he came into Austin in 1863, and he was an assayer there. I tried to look it up in books; I couldn't believe that there was a Manhattan Mining Company in Austin, but I did find in a mining book that I read that there was a mine and a mill in Austin that was under the name of Manhattan Consolidated Mining Company. That might be the mine that he had, I don't know. Manhattan Consolidated was in Manhattan.

WB: Oh, another one?

VB: Yes, there's one here in Manhattan.

WB: A different one than the one in Austin?

VB: It was different than the one in Austin.

WB: That came later, after the one in Austin?

VB: Oh, yes. This one came later because that was way back in the 1860s. This one up there was discovered in later years. I've heard some stories about a fellow by the name of Graham Rice. Now that's another story. I was told that he had a lot to do with purchasing those mining properties in lower Manhattan, he and a fellow by the name of L. M. Sullivan. I understood that he had operated the Palace Casino or Palace Club in Goldfield. Later on, he started the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company. He had come to Manhattan in 1905 and purchased the mines down in lower Manhattan—I think it was the Jumping Jack and the Stray Dog and the Indian Camp. Now these stories were told to me, also.

In fact, the fellows told me that about 1905 or 1906, L. M. Sullivan hired a mining engineer from Goldfield to come out there and operate those mines; his name was Jack Campbell. He had worked with a lot of big mines in Tonopah, Goldfield, and down in Bullfrog. He put Jack Campbell in charge and, of course, they had three properties they had bought. He says that when he hired him, Sullivan said, "I want you to put all these properties in operation. I want head frames on them. I want gas hoists in there, and I want those operations running."

There was a blacksmith shop, and he even built a home there on the Indian Camp property—a nice home for Jack Campbell to live in. That was in the 1930s, and that house was still there. Before I heard that story, I often wondered why anybody built that house down there. I think part of the house is still there. I've never been down there because you can't get through on account of that mining company.

Anyway, they gave a lot of credit to L. M. Sullivan for developing a lot of that property. In fact, Sullivan tried to purchase the Dexter claims, but the Dexter claims were

already being promoted by some stock company; they were already selling shares of stock. I understood that they were selling stocks for a dollar a share. How true it is, I don't know.

WB: Okay. Anyway, in 1866, this George Nichols came down from Austin and he prospected in the canyon there.

VB: He found silver ore with a trace of iron and copper. There was no gold.

WB: That's surprising because I always think of gold but no silver in Manhattan. Did he mine that silver?

VB: No, but there is silver around Manhattan.

WB: In quantity?

VB: No, he didn't mine it. He just found that while prospecting.

WB: It was down in the gulch?

VB: Yeah, down in the gulch. Just where it was I never did find out. I'll tell you where he was probably prospecting was down around where that William Patrick Mine is because they have silver in there.

WB: Where's that?

VB: It was where Bob Bottom was working his mine, way down in the canyon, in the gulch.

WB: This is a few years back? About ten years ago?

VB: Well, no. He was operating it two years ago because I went down there to see it while it was in operation.

WB: He was doing placer mining but not on the hillside where he had that other operation?

VB: Oh, no.

WB: You know where I mean? He's got that crane, that little crane there.

VB: Yes, that little crane there, but it's not there. You would keep on going down the canyon; it's way down there about two-and-a-half miles—he's got some water tanks down there.

WB: Is that near where Maude had her claims?

VB: Maude's claims were right out in that area there. I cannot recall the exact location of Maude's claims because the dredge left all of those tailings, and all the area is not familiar.

WB: Did you ever know a guy named Curley Wright? He was a partner with her or associated with her? He had a little cabin down in the gulch there.

VB: That's right.

WB: That's where her claims were. So that's not where Bottom was; he was beyond that?

VB: Yes, Bottom was way down there.

WB: Down at the mouth of the gulch?

VB: No, not as far as the mouth. He was just below central Manhattan. They had placer mining; they had a little townsite there.

WB: Was there a little townsite called Palo Alto?

VB: Palo Alto is where the people settled when they first started to come to Manhattan to mine.

WB: You know that first little hill; it's the last one before you get down in the valley. It is crisscrossed with little dirt tracks on the left as you're going down to Big Smoky

Valley. There's a little hill there off to the left and then there's just the alluvial fan down there. Was his place near there?

VB: Palo Alto? The area's vegetation is green, and there is also a small spring there.

WB: Was Bottom up from there?

VB: Oh, no. Bottom's is way down in the canyon.

WB: Can you see it from the road?

VB: I don't think you can see it from the road because the day I went down, he told me where he was, and he was down near the William Patrick Mine. That's where I drove down. Of course, I worked at the William Patrick. I ran a hoist and pumps there when they were de-watering the mine to sink the shaft.

WB: Oh, okay. So a couple of years ago Bottom had a mine he was working down there?

VB: He still owns all that property.

WB: Was he mining gold or silver?

VB: It was gold.

WB: Hard rock?

VB: No, it was placer.

WB: Why did Bottom stop mining that?

VB: I have no idea as to why he stopped mining. I think he located and purchased some of those claims. There was a pretty good spot there that the dredge bypassed when they came through so Bob Bottom decided to go down there and try his luck at working it. He did pretty good. He got a lot of gold out of there.

WB: This is just a couple of years ago?

VB: Oh, yes, about two years ago.

WB: What did he use? A backhoe and stuff?

VB: He had a backhoe, and he had a Caterpillar with a blade. He built a little plant down there, and he had a hopper where they put the ore and the gravel in. Then it went through a trommel screen that rotates and then it went down into sluice boxes. He had pumps there to pump the water from a big pond for washing the gravel.

WB: I didn't even know about that.

VB: It was interesting to watch the plant in operation. He had a very nice operation. The day that I was there Moorhead was working with Bob. Of course, I was used to it. I've seen a lot of those placer mining operations in the Manhattan Canyon.

WB: All right, NOTE that Val told me a story about a flying saucer that a man named Bill Unruh, who's now up in Paradise, Nevada, saw some time in the '70s down in Smoky Valley; and then a few years after that he was up prospecting in the vicinity of Round Rock when he found a burnt circle just like the one he said was left by the UFO that he saw in Smoky Valley.

Val, can you describe for me your earliest memories of the mining activity in Manhattan?

VB: The earliest activities as I was growing up that I can recall are the mills operating in Manhattan because you could hear the stamps going all night long and all day. There were gas engines operating at all the mines. You could hear them, especially in the early morning. Also, I can recall some of the mines that used a horse on a winch to do their hoisting instead of using gas engines or power mainly in placer mining.

WB: Was there electricity in Manhattan at that time?

VB: In 1909, there was. Of course, I don't remember anything about 1909. This was the year that I was born.

WB: And it was brought in by a power line?

VB: Yes, in the early part of 1909, they brought in a power line from Millers to Manhattan, and within about three months they built a substation there. When they built that substation, they brought in three more wires of power with a high tension voltage and also another telephone line to the substation; power was distributed to the mines and to the town of Manhattan. I recall hearing all these stories from many of the old timers and my dad, later.

WB: So your earliest memories of the mining and activity have to do with being conscious of the constant sound of the mills in operation.

VB: Yes. That's when I was about eight or nine years old.

WB: Do you recall the names of some of those mills?

VB: Oh, yes. The first mill that started operating in Manhattan was the Manhattan Ore Reducing and Refining Company; they called it the Lemon Mill. This is all information that I gathered from many of the old-timers, as I was not born yet. Why it was named that, I don't know. They must have had a lot of problems with it. [Laughter] That was built in 1907, and it started crushing ore in 1908. Then they had another mill at the Big Four, and it was operating in 1910. It was crushing ore for the Big Four Mining Company as well as White Cap leasers. It milled ore for both of them.

WB: What did the Lemon Company Mill actually mill?

VB: They milled custom ore also, but that was for leasers for different mines.

WB: Where was the Lemon located?

VB: The Lemon Mill was located down behind the substation on the other side of that pit that's down there now, the Tenneco Mining Company. It was on the north side of that hill. In fact, the foundations are still up there, and I think there's a partial framework for the stamps still standing at the Lemon Mill.

WB: Was it down toward the Arizona Hillside?

VB: It's up from there. The location is just about across and west from where the War Eagle Mill is located.

WB: Black Mammoth Hill?

VB: It's just about southeast from the Black Mammoth. You can see the foundations up there on the hillside. In fact, it's facing the Black Mammoth and the pit; it's right in that area. I don't recall what they call that mountain there. There's a little mountain range there. It was located directly behind the Manhattan Substation.

WB: On the south side of the road?

VB: Yes.

WB: Okay. What other mills do you recall, and where were they?

VB: Then in 1912, they built the Associated Mill. In 1913, it went into operation also. It is no longer in existence. It was dismantled in earlier years. That mill was only operated by the people that built it for a couple years, and then the White Caps Company took over operation and began milling the White Cap ore in the mill. From 1914 to 1918, the mill was operated by the White Caps Company. Of course, they didn't have a mill up there at the time.

In 1912, the Big Four started construction of a new mill up on the top of the Big Four Hill. That was on the north side of the hill facing Manhattan, at the very peak of the

hill. That mill was completed in 1913, and they made a trial run with it. For some reason or other, the ore petered out at the Big Four, and that mill never went into operation. It was dismantled in the 1930s and hauled out of there.

One of the men that worked on it when they dismantled it was Ed Egan, and he had a team of four horses. He had the contract to remove one of the ball mills out of there. They put it on skids and took the lower wall out of the mill. Ed Egan hitched his team of four horses onto the skids and started to drag the tube mill out of there. Well, the tube mill started to slide faster than the horses were moving. It ran into them and killed one of his horses. The man sat down and cried like a baby because he had those horses for many years. He just unhitched the team and took his team home—the other three horses.

Finally some of the construction crew up there that was working at the mill decided to just turn the ball mill loose and let her go down the hillside. They warned everybody who lived down in that area on the hillside to get out, and they released the ball mill from the skids in some way. They guided it to get it started, and the mill just rolled down the hill clear to the foot of the hill and demolished one cabin that was situated below the mill.

WB: What building did it demolish?

VB: There was a little Scotchman who lived there; they called him "Scotty." It just demolished the cabin. It was built from five-gallon kerosene cans that were cut, and the tin was flattened and nailed to a wood frame.

WB: It was a cabin?

VB: It was a little cabin, and he finally moved over to another location. The cabin that

he lived in is still sitting over on Big Four Hill.

WB: Is it that little cabin that's just up from the town dump?

VB: Yes, it's right up from the town dump. The one that was demolished was over a little lower down there.

WB: But the little one that still stands there belonged to him?

VB: That used to belong to him, but another fellow got ahold of that after Scotty died. It was a fellow by the name of the "Dutch Kid;" I can't pronounce his name. It was Vonheimer or something like that. Anyway, he was the last person to live in there.

WB: Now, the activity you described of the constant sound of the mills in operation, day and night—how long did that level of activity last?

VB: The Associated Mill was run by the White Caps Company, and they closed it down between 1918 and 1920. It was due to depressed metal prices and what little silver there was in some of the ore. Then a lot of them had difficult mines with a lot of water, and they couldn't handle the water in the mines; they didn't have pumps to take care of it. The American Reducing and Refining Mill closed up just about the same time, and it never did operate anymore; it just sat there idle for years and years.

I read articles where they say the Big Four Mill operated into the '30s. That mill never operated after the early '20s. They mined up there on that hill, but the mills were never in operation. There was the Lemon Mill, the Big Four, and the Associated, and it was during the time when the White Caps closed up and ceased operation of the Associated Mill that they started to build their mill at the White Caps. As soon as they got that mill completed, they started milling up there. From about 1920 to 1932, production from the mines was down.

WB: When did the White Caps build their own mill?

VB: It was during that period—between 1918 and 1920—that they were shut down. The war was on at that time. I failed to mention that there was another mill built in the early days in Manhattan, but I do not recall what year. It was called the War Eagle Mill—nicknamed the Red Mill—constructed of corrugated iron with red oxide coating. The mill operated almost continually throughout the years up until World War II when it was forced to shut down.

The owner of the mill was a man by the name of Matt T. Kane, and he had owned and operated the mill for as long as I can remember. It was originally a 20-stamp mill and was very noisy when in operation. It could be heard way up to the town of Manhattan. It also had its own scales, a large gyratory crusher, located in the ore bin where the ore was unloaded. They had their own complete machine shop with a large lathe, blacksmith shop, and an assay office. It is located west of town on the south side of the Mustang Hill and is now almost completely dismantled.

One of the problems was when the White Caps was milling at the Associated they ran into arsenic in the White Caps Mine, and they couldn't treat the ore in these mills with the conventional methods they then had for milling ore. John Kirchen, who had taken over the management of the White Caps, reorganized it, and when he built that mill, he also installed a roaster that he designed to roast the ore and extract the arsenic from the ore so that they could treat ore with the new milling methods. By doing that, they also realized a profit from the arsenic they were selling. I don't remember how much arsenic they produced and what they realized in profit, but it was considerable.

WB: What were the conventional methods of treating ore in those days?

VB: Your normal mills, like the Manhattan Ore Reduction and Refining Mill, used stamps and ball mill, also amalgam plates.

WB: What is a ball mill?

VB: It's a large tubular mill, probably five to six feet in diameter and 15 to 20 feet long. Inside the mills they had what they call liners. If you put ore inside of that mill and kept grinding ore, it would just wear the ball mill out. They used what they called liners, thick metal plates bolted in there. They were about a foot long, almost a foot square, and were held in with bolts. When they ground the ore, they used pebbles in the ball mill, and the pebbles are what do the grinding. They just keep tumbling. That mill turned at so many revolutions per minutes—real slow—and it just ground the ore practically to silt.

WB: Did the war have any effect on the level of mining in Manhattan? If so, how did it affect it?

VB: It had quite an effect on it. One of the problems was before the war, the mines in Manhattan were getting their pebbles for the ball mills from Denmark. The ships that were going over to Denmark hauling freight were returning empty, so they were loading pebbles from the beaches in Denmark and taking them over here for use in Nevada and Tonopah mills to grind the ore. Then the war broke out about 1914, and they made more money hauling war materials, and they couldn't afford to haul the pebbles. The mines, again, were left without a product to use in their milling.

A fellow that had come to Manhattan in 1905, by the name of Omer Maris, settled in East Manhattan. He located some quartz claims down there and he located some placer claims in Manhattan Canyon. He sold the claims in East Manhattan for about $50,000 just before the San Francisco earthquake. Also, he knew of this mineral deposit that was

out here on the way to Belmont. It's located about two miles below Silver Creek, and it was called a chalcedony deposit. It was silicified rhyolite, and it was harder than agate. He located the claims and called it Maris Butte. He sunk a shaft on that claim to mine the rhyolite, and he had the Campbell & Kelly Foundry in Tonopah manufacture a ball mill for him—a tube mill. Campbell & Kelly had quite a problem with it. I was told they ran into a lot of difficulties, but they finally solved it and Omer Maris, in 1914, started working the mine and making pebbles out there with his ball mill out of the stone that came out of the mine. Omer Maris designed the tube mill.

WB: Now the pebbles, were they round?

VB: Yes, they were round, and they looked just like pebbles. They were oblong, all different shapes. Some of them were mostly oval.

WB: Were these pebbles from the rhyolite?

VB: That was from that rhyolite; they called it a chalcedony deposit.

WB: Is that as you're heading toward Belmont and you come down out of the mountain? You're just getting into the valley there, to your left as you're heading up to Silver Creek?

VB: You have to take the old road that goes to Belmont, but it also goes up to Silver Creek. On the way going up to Silver Creek, you can still see the mine sitting there, what's left of it.

WB: Right. That's where he got those pebbles?

VB: That's what they called the Pebble Mine. He manufactured those pebbles there and sold them to the mines in Tonopah and to Manhattan up until 1918. Then mining went to pot there, again. The pebbles were transported to the mills by horse and wagons. I

personally [knew] almost all of the teamsters that did the hauling.

WB: When you say he manufactured them, he mined them?

VB: He mined them, and naturally he manufactured them because he had to process them to make them out of rock.

WB: What did that process involve?

VB: Well, he had to blast that stone and hoist it out of the mine. It came out in big chunks of rock. They were put into this tube mill, and I guess he'd load it up with a certain amount of rock. Then he'd start the tube mill up churning, and then he'd tumble those stones in there until it made them round.

WB: That's interesting. How else did the First World War have an adverse impact upon the mining in Manhattan?

VB: Depressed metal prices were one of the big reasons.

WB: Did the war have an effect on the stock market and the amount of investment that was going on?

VB: It had some effect on the stock market as well as taking away all these people involved in mining for the military. It depleted a lot of the work force. I had two uncles there that worked in the mines with Dad, and they were drafted for the army.

WB: And you were about 10 years old at that time?

VB: They didn't start taking people until about 1917, so I was eight years old. I can still recall when they took my two uncles and they went off to war.

WB: Was there any feeling of patriotic fervor in the town of Manhattan that you can recall?

VB: There was one man that operated a bakery; he was German. His name was Albert

Schragle. They had a bond drive in Manhattan trying to raise bonds for the war effort; they had a big parade that day. Then they notified all the businesses to shut down for the day. He had the bakery and refused to do it. He said that he wasn't going to shut it down, and he kept the place open. Well, they arrested him, and he practically got railroaded out of town. That bakery was closed for years, from that day on.

WB: How long did he spend in jail?

VB: I don't know how long he spent in jail, but he just left Manhattan. He ended up in Reno.

WB: Was he against the war because he was German?

VB: Well, he was hardly against the war. Of course, he was a German, and I imagine he was patriotic toward them. That's what I imagine.

WB: I see. What kind of businesses were there in town? There was the mining going on, but what sort of businesses do you recall existing in Manhattan during 1910 to 1920?

VB: As I recall as a young boy, they had three saloons.

WB: Do you remember their names?

VB: One of them was called the Red Front Saloon, and it was owned and operated by a man by the name of Martin Bertolino, who later owned the Peavine Ranch. Then there was another one that was run by a man by the name of Tony Brackett; I don't recall the name of the saloon. Then there was another little bar up there; I don't recall who owned that.

WB: Were these big places?

VB: Pretty good size. Tony Brackett had a big one, and the Red Front Saloon was also a big saloon.

WB: In terms of the bar itself, how long would the bar be?

VB: I'd say it was maybe 16 to 18 feet, or maybe it'd be even longer.

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

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WB: Were they the size of the Miners' Bar and the Manhattan Bar today?

VB: The bars were bigger than that; they were twice that length and then some.

WB: Really? High ceilings?

VB: Yes, they had high ceilings and the high back to the bar. Their glasses were all set up on shelves. They were beautiful. They had large mirrors in them. I would say they were very good-looking. Down at the foot of the bar they had the brass railings and the brass spittoons sitting down there. I can still remember the janitors cleaning those spittoons. That was a nasty job.

WB: Who did that?

VB: They always hired somebody that didn't have a job to do it, but mostly it was done by the janitor or what were often referred to as "swampers." [Laughter]

WB: Was there any particular minority group that got that particular job?

VB: No, all kinds of people that did it.

WB: There was no discrimination?

VB: No discrimination. [Laughter] Then they had a restaurant that was run by a man by the name of Tarrish; I can't remember his first name. There were three brothers, and I don't know which one operated it.

WB: They had the restaurant where?

VB: In Manhattan.

WB: In one of the bars?

VB: No, in Manhattan. Then they had a clothing store called The Toggery, and it was

operated by M. P. Heard. Then on up the street a ways there was a German watchmaker by the name of H. F. Kalkbrenner, and he operated a shop repairing watches and making and selling jewelry. He was also a jack of all trades. I worked for him doing all sorts of stuff.

WB: Doing what, exactly?

VB: I worked with him on many occasions after school, on Saturdays and Sundays and during vacation time. He had a little truck and he was hauling wood out of Timber Hills. On the side he did some trapping for coyotes and badgers so he'd hire me to go out and help get wood, and while he was checking his traps I was getting the wood for the truck. We were hauling it into Manhattan for his own use.

WB: How old were you then?

VB: I was going to high school so I was about 15 years old. Kalkbrenner later purchased that property across the street where the Manhattan store now is situated, and he built that building all out of used lumber. He did the work all himself, and he had me pulling the nails out of the used lumber. I pulled all the nails out and straightened all the nails. The nails were used in putting that building together, and I nailed a lot of boards in that building. He purchased very few nails and very little lumber.

WB: What was that building used for?

VB: When the business was completed, he moved from his business and home across the street and operated his business from the new building.

WB: You're talking about the two-story building across and up from the Manhattan Bar. At that time, back in 1910, in that time period, what was that used for?

VB: It was rented after the Dexter's Mining Company closed. It was called the Dexter

Building.

WB: What did the Dexters do?

VB: That was a mining company. They owned the Dexter patented mining claims there in Manhattan. Your property is on their claims, also.

WB: Was the Dexter Building their office building?

VB: They had offices in there. It was vacant for years, and then a family by the name of Mushett came to Manhattan. There was a Leo Mushett—the one I remember well—and there was a Jim Mushett. They rented that building when they were involved in a lease on the Big Four Mining. He and a fellow by the name of C. F. Wittenberg went in partners in a lease up there, and the Mushetts were living in that building. That was around 1917. I was told that they took out approximately $320,000 worth of gold from their lease.

WB: What other stores can you remember? Was the Southworth store in existence then?

VB: Oh, yes. That was another store in Manhattan, the old Southworth store. He operated that store, I don't remember just how long, because I was just a young kid going to school, but he sold out and moved to Tonopah. A fellow by the name of Fred M. North and another fellow by the name of Ferguson took over the store. I was going to the school up on Erie Street at the time, and I think I was in about the third grade so I was about eight years old at that time.

I can remember the teacher taking us down there; they had the telephone exchange there, and the teacher took us down there to teach the students how to use the telephone. The teacher was the wife of Fred M. North. Her name was Ida Fisher North—

her maiden name was Fisher. Fred M. North and Ferguson operated that store almost until the time that they had the fire and burned the place down.

It burned all those places downtown where the Southworth store was; Tarrish had the restaurant where the saloons were. All of them burned down where the entire business district on both sides of the street was.

WB: Where in relation to existing landmarks was the downtown district that you're talking about that burned down?

VB: It's where Erie Street is. Right below the bar where you take that street to go up that canyon to Tony's mine, you go from there up to a little bit this side of that Manhattan store. That's where the business district was on the left-hand side. That's where your restaurants were. They had two bars on that side; North and Ferguson were located there, and there was a storage garage for storing cars. There were a few other little businesses in that area. All of the business district was on the north side of the Main Street from the Erie Street to where the Manhattan store building is located now. Then on the right hand side of the street, right across the street from where that road goes up the hill to go to Bottom's, I think Harry Hughes owns that. He's the fellow that owns that little building down there that's got all that paraphernalia around it. From there down almost to the Francisco garage, is where it is now situated. The Francisco garage building was not erected until 1925.

WB: The fire station?

VB: That's right across from the new fire station approximately. That was another part of the business district. Over on the south side they had two-story hotels. There was the Merchant Hotel up there on the east end. That was run by the Bart family. Then down

next to it was the Connors Hotel, which was a two-story building. Joe Connors operated that. From then on down there was a lot of other little businesses that were vacant. The post office was located below that in a two-story building, and below the post office building was the Nanini property, which consisted of a grocery store, a bar, a butcher shop, and a family home.

WB: The bank building is still standing across the street, right?

VB: The bank is way up there. It was the only stone building built in Manhattan. That was built in 1906.

WB: Where the post office is today, there is that little stone building. Was that the jail?

VB: That was the jail. It was built in 1906.

WB: So the only two stone buildings were the jail and the bank.

VB: The bank was stone, and the jail was a little bit different—I thought it was cement blocks. I recall reading that when the county commissioners decided to build a jail in 1906, the bid was for a building 28 x18 feet with two-foot thick walls, with a corrugated iron roof. No mention of wall material. I think it is cement block because they say that the bank building was the first and only stone building that was built in Manhattan.

WB: When you say stone, you mean rocks?

VB: Rocks, yeah.

WB: Was there a regular police station near the jail?

VB: In the early days in Manhattan they didn't have policemen; they had constables, and a constable worked right out of his home.

WB: How many were there?

VB: One constable was all they had that I can remember, but in the early days they had

a sheriff. They had a building in Manhattan that was located above the firehouse, and it was called the Santos Building. S. P. Santos was the fellow that owned it. It was a two-story building, and he operated a hotel in there as well as a hock shop. In the early days the stagecoaches would stop there to drop off the passengers. He had the hotel and had rooms for them. He was a sheriff there. Prior to him there was another sheriff there by the name of Logan. You probably heard some story where he was shot and killed down in the red light district. I had the story on him, so I'll look it up and have you read it.

WB: Tell me what you recall about it.

VB: I don't recall hardly anything about it because I was too young, but I'd heard about it after I grew up.

WB: What did you hear?

VB: I just heard that Sheriff Logan was playing shenanigans, and he was going around with one of the gals down there. I heard that he and some gambler named Barieau, who was patronizing the place, too, got into it as he was using county money to buy lumber and building material for the saloon. It was called the Jewel House, owned by a May Biggs, the woman that Sheriff Logan had a long relationship with. I guess they went out on the street and the gambler pulled a gun on him and shot him. It's quite a story.

Anyway, they had one constable, but then in later years they did away with the sheriff's job and just had a constable and a justice of the peace.

WB: In your earliest memories of Manhattan, do you recall the common means of transportation as consisting of horses and wagons? Were there any automobiles or motorized vehicles at all?

VB: There were not many. I can count them on one hand.

WB: Could you give me some idea of the transition from predominantly horse-powered transportation to predominantly motorized transportation during that period from your earliest memory until whenever the transition was completed?

VB: Near as I can remember, they started using trucks for transportation and doing away with the teams in about 1919 or 1920. C. F. Wittenberg operated the warehouse, the Wittenberg Warehouse and Transfer Company in Manhattan, and he was freighting with teams. About 1920 is when he started using trucks, and he was about the first one that I recall.

WB: Do you have any knowledge of approximately how long it took to transport a wagon with a team of horses with freight on it from Tonopah to Manhattan?

VB: About two days. They left Tonopah early in the morning, and they'd drive to Maggie Blue's, almost halfway to Manhattan.

WB: Where's that located?

VB: That's located down near Rye Patch. When you're coming from Tonopah to Manhattan on the road, you'll come to a spot there with some little hills with some little knolls, and you'll notice there's a windmill there and a trailer sitting on a little hillside. That's Maggie Blue's; there are some trees there. All the teams and the stagecoaches would stop there and change horses.

WB: Was there a spring there?

VB: There was water. That was one of the reasons.

WB: Who lives there now?

VB: There's somebody living there. I don't know who it is, but there's a little mobile trailer that's been sitting there for years.

WB: So they stopped there for overnight.

VB: The teams would stop there for overnight. The stagecoaches would just change horses; they'd make the trip in one day. Of course, they'd run the heck out of these fresh horses. They really drove the horses, but I don't think the teams traveled over two miles an hour.

WB: Which is pretty good, actually.

VB: That is pretty good, and they had a heavy load because they were loaded with lumber and mining machinery and all kinds of supplies for mining. There were two wagons they were pulling. There was the lead wagon, loaded. They were like these trucks with these dual trailers—same thing. They'd have anywhere from maybe 12 to 20 horses on those teams depending on the loads they had.

Then they'd leave Maggie Blue's the next morning and drive to Manhattan. They'd stop at Spanish Springs to water the horses. Then they'd make a stop at Pipe Springs and water them and give them a little rest. Then they'd come over the hill and come right into Manhattan. That's where I used to go. Me and Louie Aimone, my brother Pete, and a couple of other boys would walk out to Pipe Springs early in the morning and meet the teams there so we could get a ride back to Manhattan on the teams. [Laughter]

WB: How old were you then?

VB: Well, pretty young. I don't think we were about eight or nine.

WB: So it's about five miles to Pipe Springs.

VB: Five miles. We'd leave Manhattan, and we'd get there about 9:00. That was just about the time that the horses were having their rest and they'd get buckets and bring the water over to the horses. They would unhitch them. All they'd take was the bits out of

their mouths.

The teamster would teach us how to handle the reins for the team. They would put every one of those reins between your fingers. You had to scratch them just to a certain point. [Laughter] Then you could just pull on them to slow them down or relax to let them go faster. If you wanted them to turn to the right, you pulled the right side, and if you wanted to pull to the left, you pulled to the left and yelled "gee" or "haw." The teamsters were very good to us. Maybe we'd be a little late getting there so they'd start taking off. They'd tell us, "Get on in the back," and they always made us run to the back wagon. They wouldn't let us get in the way of the wheels. We had to get on where the tailgate was and climb over the top and get on the wagon because they did not want anyone to get hurt.

The teams were hauling ore in Manhattan from the mines to the mills. They were called belly dumps. They had trap doors in the bottom, and these doors, when they were closed up, had chains to hold them shut; they had a special type of a chain fastener. I can't quite describe it—I'd really have to show you one to show you how to operate it. It had a metal O ring that slipped up over a little lever holding the chain. It was like a toggle. When they'd get up to the mill to dump their ore, the teamster would slip the O ring from the lever. If unable to slide the O ring, he would use a hammer to tap it off, and the chain would snap off the lever. Then the belly dump doors opened and dropped the ore in the bin.

It was quite interesting in how it was fixed up. First, you had to weigh your load. You drove up on the ramp onto a scale. You weighed your wagon with the ore. You had to weigh your empty wagon to get the weight of the wagon minus the ore. That had to be

recorded in a ledger at the scales. The mill man would deduct the weight of the empty wagon from the weight of the loaded wagon to get the actual weight of the ore. They'd dump the ore down into a bin. At the bottom of the bin there was a crusher. They called it a gyratory crusher. It was a huge crusher down there just like a cone, and that cone just wobbled. It went in a circular motion, and it ground the rock up to a certain size.

Then it went down to another ore bin, and they had a crusher down there that would crush it finer. Then they had a conveyor belt that ran up to another ore bin where the ore went into the stamps, and the ore was fed to the stamps to grind it yet finer. They called them batteries, the stamp sections. They had five stamps to the battery. The stamps would crush the ore real fine, and then the ground ore and water would float up. Then it would run over the plates they called amalgam plates.

They used an acid to treat the plates, and they'd take the quicksilver and would put it in a bottle. They put a little piece of canvas over the neck of the bottle and tie it on a string or wire. They pricked a few small holes in it and they would use it like a salt shaker. They would go around and sprinkle that amalgam plate. They had brushes, and they would brush that quicksilver onto the plate. It would shine just like silver. When the gold would go over the top of that amalgam plate, the gold would adhere to the quicksilver. From there the rest of the slur that would run off the plates would go down into the ball mill, which would grind it yet finer. In later years the ball mill was not used.

WB: You call it slur?

VB: Well, it was a product of ground rock.

WB: OK. Now, that didn't stick to the . . .

VB: No, just the gold. The slur and the mud that flows over the plates are set at a

certain angle because if you set it too steep you lose your gold also—it goes too fast. You've got to have it running over the plates at a certain rate.

WB: Did the gold combine with the quicksilver?

VB: That's right.

WB: So then it had to go through another process to be extracted.

VB: When they'd have a clean-up day after so many hours of operating, they'd shut the mill down. They used scrapers where they would scrape all that gold and quicksilver off the plates just like a sponge. Then they would take scrapers and scrape it all up. They had wire brushes that they used to brush it all up and put it into a ball. They squeezed all the quicksilver out of it. The way they did that was they took a piece of wet canvas and wrapped it around that amalgam sponge. Then they squeezed and twisted the canvas and the quicksilver.

Well, it was heavy, and it went right through that canvas. They separated it after all the quicksilver was removed. They put it through what they call a retort. They had a tightly sealed metal container that they put that amalgam ball into. They put it into the retort, and it was heated up to a high temperature. The retort has a piece of pipe that comes out of the top and goes into a pan submerged in water. When they got up to a certain temperature, the vapors went out of that pipe. When they hit the water they condensed and went back to quicksilver. The vapors are dangerous. A person who works with a retort for any length of time ends up losing his teeth due to what is called salivation.

WB: That's right. That mercury poison is very dangerous. It erodes the bones and so forth and can kill you.

VB: When they cooled off the sponge that was burned it is nearly pure gold with some impurities. Then they shipped it.

WB: Shipped it to where? San Francisco?

VB: The San Francisco Mint.

WB: You can't remember the name of the process.

VB: No. But the mint that processed it in the early days would, in turn, pay—the mining company that sent that sponge to the mint would be paid off in gold. They would always send gold pieces and gold paper money. In later years, they started paying off in regular money and checks.

WB: You told me you would explain some more about the process that you've already described.

VB: Do you mean about how they get the sponge?

WB: Yes.

VB: Like I said, rock is crushed by the stamps, and all the ore that is crushed—including rock material and gold—flows over the amalgam plates and the amalgam plates are coated with a quicksilver. Then the gold is collected in the quicksilver coating on the copper plates. When they clean up the plates, they scrape up all the amalgam. They call it a sponge because it forms a mass of quicksilver and gold combined. But they don't want the quicksilver, so the way they remove the quicksilver is they take a piece of canvas, which is a heavy material, and place the sponge into this canvas and twist and squeeze the canvas and form a ball with the material. It squeezes out all of the quicksilver that they can get.

Then they take that ball of amalgam and they put it into a retort. The retort is

placed in a very hot fire, and that ball is all enclosed in the retort. The retort has a pipe leading out of the top and placed into a pan of water or a tub of water, which is submerged so that you don't get the fumes from the quicksilver. The quicksilver vapors or gas that comes out of there are condensed and return to quicksilver, and the ball that comes out of that retort is burnt gold; it's just a ball of burnt gold, which you have to send to the San Francisco Mint. They were mailing it from Manhattan. They would reimburse you with gold money, all the gold that you shipped to them.

WB: Was the burnt gold that was shipped down in pure form, or did they have to evaluate that in San Francisco?

VB: They would evaluate that in San Francisco at the mint. They determined the value of it after having removed all of the impurities.

WB: By what?

VB: I guess they did it by the fineness of the gold—the percentage of gold that's in it. Of course, there was probably very little quicksilver in there, but there might be other metals like silver.

WB: So there might still be impurities that would diminish the value of the sample, and it would vary somewhat from sample to sample depending on the amount of impurities.

How old were you when you remember going from Manhattan to Pipe Springs to wait for the freight wagons coming from Tonopah so you could ride into town on the wagons?

VB: I was between ten and 12 years of age.

WB: What other things do you recall doing as a boy? Start back from the time when you were allowed to go off on your own with the other boys your age. Did you have

adventures with your friends? Did you do things like go away from home and do things like you described with the wagons coming in from Tonopah?

VB: First I want to tell you that there wasn't much in Manhattan for us to do, and that's why we took the trips down to Pipe Springs in order to get a ride back. It was quite a thrill to get on that wagon and ride to Manhattan. As I said, the teamsters would teach us how to rein the horses, put the reins in our hands. They had a name for every one of the horses, and they would call out the horse's name if one was lagging behind and wasn't doing his share of the work. They'd call him by name and just crack a whip.

WB: What other things, in general, would you do to fill in your time?

VB: When they'd come into Manhattan with a team, we'd help the teamsters unhitch the horses. They allowed us to do that, so we'd take the horses into the corral and the stables and remove the harnesses and fill the feedbag with oats and buckle the feedbag on the horse's head so they could get their oats. They wouldn't let them drink water right away because they were overheated from pulling the wagons in. The first thing they did was to remove the harness off them, and, in fact, if the horses were sweating they had blankets they put on them to cool them off, and they always put on a leather feedbag. You put oats in it, put it over the horse's mouth, and buckled the strap over his head and back of his ears. Then the horse would eat the oats. They let them cool off, then eventually they took the feedbag off and let the horse drink his water.

WB: Did you have any particular horse that you favored?

VB: There were some that I favored.

WB: Do you remember their names?

VB: Oh God, I can't remember their names. There were so many horses, as many as

12 to 20. That was the maximum amount but normally there were 12 to 16 horses to a team. We would help feed the horses there; we put hay in the mangers at the Baldwin stables; that was a stable right across from the garage. They had enclosed stables where they could put some of the horses in an enclosure. Some of the stables were just a covered shed with a manger. They would put the hay in these mangers and we always helped with that.

WB: Were these horses treated well?

VB: Oh, they were treated very well, like a human. In fact, sometimes it was better than humans because every day they were rubbed down, curried with a curry comb, and brushed all down.

WB: Who did that work?

VB: The teamster who had the teams did that work himself.

WB: Was that particular job, a teamster, considered a particularly good job to have in those days?

VB: Well, I considered it a pretty rough job because they were on those teams for long hours, and when they traveled across those deserts it was dusty. They put up with heavy wind storms. They put up with snow, with rain. They had no canopy, no protection. All they had was their heavy coats and their rubber slickers that they wore during rain or snow storms, and they sat on a seat. They had to sleep out and usually they would just sleep right beneath the wagons with their own bedding; a bedroll is what they called it.

WB: How old would these teamsters be?

VB: Some of them were pretty old men. There were very few young ones. They were pretty old people.

WB: They must have been in pretty good shape, though.

VB: Well, they were tough. I can remember the names of some of them. There was a fellow by the name of Ed Egan, and he was one of the men that had a team of horses. He only had a team of four, and he did a lot of contracting and a lot of hauling. They were big gray horses, too. They're huge. In fact, Ed is one of the men that was leading that ball mill out of that White Cap Mill when they lost one horse.

WB: Did the teamsters generally own their own horses?

VB: Every one of them owned their own teams, although C. F. Wittenberg owned his teams and hired the teamsters.

WB: Did they make good money?

VB: I guess they made good money. I don't know what they made; I couldn't tell you. I never got into that.

WB: Do you think they were personally attached to their horses? After all, their horses were their livelihood.

VB: They were very close to their horses. They always checked them over to see if they got bruises from the harnesses, and if they did, they treated them. In fact, they used the wagon grease that you lubricate the wagon wheels with.

WB: Axle grease.

VB: Axle grease. That's what they would rub on the sores to heal them. They always checked them over, and they always made it a point to fix the harness so that it wouldn't hurt them. They were very good with animals.

WB: What other things did you do as a boy for amusement?

VB: We used to go down in the valley below Manhattan, down around the Bulldog,

they called it. It was down at the mouth of the Manhattan Canyon, and there were burros there that the old prospectors released and turned loose. They were pretty tame, and we'd go down and get those burros and bring them into Manhattan and ride them.

WB: How old were you then?

VB: We were only about nine or ten or 11 years old.

WB: After you rode them, would you take them back down?

VB: No, we would just turn them loose and they'd go by themselves.

WB: Was the Bulldog an old mine or something?

VB: That was a mining district down in lower Manhattan Canyon. When you're going down the canyon, you come to the mouth of the canyon and the canyon turns to the right. Over to the left are mountains that we call Timber Hill. You go off to the right, and that little canyon continues on down the valley. That's the Bulldog. That's where placer mining was discovered.

WB: Now this is before you get into the Smoky Valley.

VB: That's before. Just as you go out of the mouth of the Manhattan Canyon, if you go up to the left, you go to Timber Hill, and if you go to the right, the canyon continues down into Smoky Valley.

WB: All right. So you're talking about the road that you take right there by the cemetery. It angles down to the gulch, and it goes to Bob Bottom's mine. Is it before or after Bottom's mine that the road takes off to Timber Hill?

VB: After. You continue on down the canyon until you get down to that bluff. Now, if you climb that bluff, or if you go up that road straight up, you go to Peavine or to Seyler Lake. Do you know where Seyler Lake is? That used to be the original road to down

Smoky Valley to San Antone, Liberty, Tonopah, Millers, Mina, etc.

WB: Really?

VB: I will take you up there and show you around.

WB: About two-and-a-half miles below Bottom's mine the road forks three ways?

VB: No, you continue on down for two-and-a-half miles until you hit that bluff or bench—they used to call it a bench. And when you get to the bench, there'll be a road turning to the left and that heads toward Timber Hill. If you go straight up over the bluff, you go down to Seyler Lake or Peavine, but if you turn to the right and go down and continue on down the canyon, that's what they call the Bulldog Canyon. There is a road down there that leads you down into Smoky Valley. It's just a dirt road. Then you go over by Palo Alto, and it goes down towards Smoky.

WB: From the ages of six through ten, did you have any boyhood pals that you particularly hung around with? And if you did, do you remember their names and the kinds of things you used to do?

VB: Oh, yes. I had boys that I palled around with. One of the boys that I went to school with on Erie Street was Roy Smith. James Pierce was one, and another one was Sylvan Duke. In later years the Aimone family moved in, and I palled with Lou Aimone. There were a lot of other kids that I didn't pal around too much with. I went to school with them, but James Pierce and Roy Smith and Sylvan Duke were mainly the ones that I palled around with.

James Pierce and I were pretty close, and we did a lot of things together. He was one of the boys that used to come with me and meet the wagons at Pipe Springs and ride back. My brother Pete and I were pretty close and we did a lot of things together. He used

to come with me; he was next to me.

WB: How old were you when you first began palling around with Pierce?

VB: I started palling around with him when I went to school up on Erie Street. It was 1914 when I went to school with him.

WB: So you were about five years old.

VB: Five years old. Roy Smith was the same, and Sylvan Duke was about the same time. We all went to school together.

WB: Did you have much homework to do?

VB: There was a lot of homework, but that was not until we transferred to the new school from the school on Erie Street. The teacher always loaded us up with homework.

WB: What time did you get out of school?

VB: When we went to school on Erie Street, I think we'd get out about 3:00.

WB: You went home after school?

VB: We went straight home. That's the orders we had.

WB: What did you do when you got home?

VB: We'd ask our parents if we could go out and play, at first. [Laughter] In the summertime we would play marbles.

WB: Did they let you?

VB: Our parents let us go. They told us to be sure and be back for supper or maybe give us a couple of hours.

WB: What time was supper?

VB: Usually it was when my dad came home from work. He'd come home at 5:00 and my mother had supper pretty well ready by that time.

WB: Then after supper, what did you do?

VB: We went out and played until it was dark; then we had to come in. That was when we were young. Well, of course we had to come in and do our schoolwork; our mother always wanted us to do that before we went out to play. When we got the schoolwork done, we could go out. Sometimes they'd want us in about 8:00 and if we wanted to continue to play, like in the summertime when the weather was nice, then the mother said, "Well, you can stay out until nine, but I want you in at nine sharp. And go to bed."

WB: What kinds of things did you do when you were playing?

VB: While it was daylight we played marbles mostly, or we batted a ball around. We didn't play baseball because we had no baseball fields. We didn't have anything. We'd play catch or just bat the ball to somebody and kick a ball around. Of course, at the schoolhouse they had swings that we'd swing on. They had a teeter-totter and bars that you could chin on and two basketball posts or goals. We'd just play with a basketball, throwing in the baskets, but there really was nothing to do. In the winter months when we had snow, we did a lot of sleigh riding. We had to make our own entertainment.

WB: What about the little girls, what did they do?

VB: The little girls had to stay in the house after the ages of ten to 12. The mothers were pretty strict with them. They didn't let them run around like they do today. They had things for them to do. If we went out in summer or winter to sleigh-ride or to play some games, like hide-and-seek or something like that, the mothers would let the girls go out maybe for a half an hour or an hour and then wanted them in the house.

WB: Were they expected to help their mothers out doing a lot of things, mainly household duties?

VB: Of course, the mother was teaching them cooking, sewing, and anything pertaining to housework.

WB: At what age did they start learning those things?

VB: Oh, they started pretty young. My sister Mary started at the age of about eight to ten. I can remember Inez when she started learning cooking. I think she started when she was about seven or eight years old.

WB: When did you first meet Inez?

VB: Inez? I knew her when she was born. [Laughter]

WB: How old were you when she was born?

VB: I was six years old.

WB: And you were right there.

VB: I knew just where they lived. I knew the family.

WB: Did you decide then that you were going to marry her, or did it take a little while?

VB: No. [Laughter] She was born in 1915, and in 1916, she had a brother that was born there in Manhattan. Then in 1917, the family moved to Tonopah from Manhattan, and they lived in Tonopah until 1924. Then they moved back to Manhattan. That's about the time that I became real acquainted with her—just puppy love, they called it. [Laughter]

WB: But then you would have been 15 years old. Do you recall at the age of 15 being attracted to her?

VB: I didn't have any girls on my mind when I was a boy. I never went around much with girls.

WB: Well, you mentioned something about puppy love. Now, when they moved back

from Tonopah . . .

VB: That puppy love was in the younger days. [Laughter]

WB: At what age did you actually have these fond feelings for Inez?

VB: It was after she moved out from Tonopah.

WB: That was 1924?

VB: Yes. They were just like sisters and brothers to me.

WB: Right. Before that, yes. But you were 15 when she moved back, and you had a fondness for her. It was a little bit of romantic feelings.

VB: But we weren't going together or anything. I didn't play too much with kids, either. In those days when I got out of school, I'd ask my mother if I could go down to the blacksmith's shop. I used to love to go down there and watch those blacksmiths work.

WB: How old were you when you started going off on your own on these kinds of pursuits rather than hanging around with your childhood buddies?

VB: I started at about 11 or 12 years of age.

WB: From the age of six to 11 or 12, you were still hanging around with those guys you mentioned earlier and would do things like you described.

VB: Of course, I'd go fishing with them.

WB: Where would you go?

VB: We'd go fishing out to Barley Creek and Mosquito Creek and Peavine.

WB: How would you get there?

VB: Some of the parents would take us. James Pierce had a father that had an automobile.

WB: What kind?

VB: He had an old Durant.

WB: I never heard of that. What were those old cars like? Were they like the Model T?

VB: Oh, they were larger. They were a little better than a Model T. They had a regular gear shift lever and were more comfortable to ride in; they were a heavier car and had more power.

WB: I guess when you were born in 1909, there were a few automobiles in Manhattan.

VB: Very damn few because I can remember some of the first cars in Manhattan as a little kid. I remember a fellow that had one of these Oldsmobile with a curved dash. It had the engine under the seat, and it had a seat like a buggy on it. The dashboard in front was just like it was on a buggy. It had a little curve at the top—that's why they called it the curved dash Oldsmobile. In place of a steering wheel, it had what they called a tiller; it was a stick and that's the way they steered it. The engine was under the seat, and it had chain drive that drove the rear wheels with chains.

WB: Was it a three-wheeler?

VB: It was a four-wheeler. They were gasoline-driven. Now there was only one of those that I remember in Manhattan, and the other ones were almost all Model T Fords.

WB: Now, when did the Model T first come out?

VB: In 1908, I think, was the first one. He built some Model Ts before that, but not in production.

WB: How did people get around? In your earliest recollection, did many people ride horses in Manhattan?

VB: Oh, yes. People had horses, and of course they had to realize sometimes that if they wanted to go somewhere and somebody had a car, that person could take them there.

If you wanted to go to Tonopah, they had a stage route. There was a gentleman there in Manhattan by the name of Clark James. He had old Studebakers. The earliest one that I remember he had was a 1916, and that was a seven-passenger touring car; he had a regular route between Manhattan and Tonopah. A daily route cost you $5.00 one way. They used to call him Jesse James because it was a hold-up. [Laughter] That was the nickname they gave him. His real name was Clark James.

Of course, people paid that to go to town because they had to pay that to get transportation. I always remember it was a seven-passenger touring car. They had side curtains, and they put them on in the wintertime because there were no heaters in cars in those days. He carried his bearskin robes—lap robes, they called them. They had what they called a lap robe rail in the back of the front seat right on the back end of it. This robe was always over that rail. If it got too cold, you'd take that lap robe and put it over your lap and cover your feet up to protect you from the cold. You had to wear heavy clothing if you were going into Tonopah in the wintertime because that wind was going right through there, except for the side curtains. For the windows you did have side curtains, and they did have that isinglass in them so that you could look out.

WB: When do you recall there being any kind of a medical facility in Manhattan, a regular doctor's office?

VB: I can just barely remember that one hospital building that's still there. It's the house that's owned by Thelma May. That was the Miner's Union Hospital. I can recall when that was still in operation, but it closed up in the early days.

WB: About when?

VB: It was a long time ago. I can't think of the year exactly.

WB: Was it closed before 1920?

VB: It would probably be around 1914, as far as I can remember.

WB: We discussed this before, but when did the population of Manhattan decline significantly?

VB: The decline was after the San Francisco earthquake and the San Francisco fire. That was back when all these mines in Manhattan were financed by San Francisco capital. They lost all the records and everything, and they just pulled out of there because the banks closed up.

WB: From your earliest recollections of Manhattan, what can you recall as the population of Manhattan at that time?

VB: It's just some hearsay from what I had heard through my dad and other people I talked to. The population during the time of the earthquake had reached almost a maximum number of 4,500 to 5,000 people. I have seen articles in the paper that said they had it as high as 7,000, but that isn't what the old-timers say—4,500 is what most of them say it reached. Right after the earthquake, the population dropped down to around 1,200 to 1,500 people within a short period.

WB: For a lot of those people—going through Manhattan's heyday—it would have been tents, right?

VB: Mostly all tents. At first Manhattan was called a tent city. In fact, I think Thelma may have a picture. She did have it hung up in the bar wall showing the tent city.

WB: A period of boom occurred from the time Thelma's great uncle John Humphrey found that ore sample, right? He was a miner, wasn't he?

VB: No, I think he was a cowboy. I think they had met up there at Palo Alto, and those

cowboys had told him about this little outcrop up there or something up there on a hillside. They went up there and sure enough, they discovered ore.

WB: That was 1905?

VB: In 1905, yes. They named the claims the April Fool as it was around the first part of April.

WB: Until that time there were placer operations down at the gulch, right?

VB: There were no placer operations at this time. There was quartz mining down in the canyon from about 1864 or '66. That's what I was told, anyway. I don't remember that because I was too young but my father had come there in 1905, and he got a lot of that history between him and some of the other old-timers, so I gathered all this information. I was always interested in the history of Manhattan myself.

Anyway, they were mining in 1905, and the Big Four had been discovered. There was the Dexter Mines, the Jumping Jack, the Stray Dog, and the Indian Camp. They were all in that area. In fact, some of these mines were very well-connected—the claims were.

WB: I always thought that they were old placer mines, but they weren't.

VB: Oh, no. Placer came in later. They didn't discover placer until 1906, and that was discovered down at the Bulldog. A fellow by the name of Jack Price discovered the placer gold.

WB: Now, these other mines—the Stray Dog and the Indian Camp—were they blasting into quartz veins, or were they tunneling around getting gravel and everything?

VB: There was blasting. It was quartz mining. The ore was in the rock.

WB: It was a lot of visible . . .

VB: Yes, some of it. They ran into pretty rich gold in there, but the trouble was that

they were not big ledges. They were mostly seams, little stringers they called them, but there was some rich ore discovered.

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

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VB: As I said, they ran into pretty rich gold in there, too, but the trouble was that they were not big ledges. They were mostly seams—the little tiny stringers, they called them. When they mined that ore, they had to mine some of the waste. That was one of the reasons they had so much trouble in mining in those days; they didn't have a mill to process it.

WB: Now, by waste, you're talking about the quartz.

VB: The quartz has no value in it.

WB: Then a little seam in the quartz has the gold in it?

VB: That's right. It may be what they call a seam or a stringer. At the start I understand they were shipping it to Belmont. Belmont had a mill already, and the teams would haul the ore over there; that's where they were milling it until a few years after. Then they started shipping the ore into Tonopah and down into Sodaville. They were milling the ore for them, and that was about 1907. I imagine it was because all these leasers and property owners were demanding that they should have a mill there, so that's when the first mill was built in Manhattan. That was the mill built by the Manhattan Ore Reducing and Refining Company. In 1907, they started building the mill, and they went into the production of grinding ore in 1908.

WB: Where was that located?

VB: It was located right on the hillside west of the Tenneco open pit.

WB: That mill would have been located just west of the Big Four.

VB: As I told you, it was just west of the open pit on the hillside, and in fact, the

foundations and the stamp frames are still visible there. That was called the Lemon Mill.

WB: When the population of Manhattan dropped from 4,500 to maybe 1,200 to 1,500, were those 1,200 or 1,500 still actively engaged in mining?

VB: There were a few property owners that owned mines, but the biggest percentage were leasers; many were not connected to mining.

WB: How many years did the Lemon Mill continue in operation?

VB: I don't remember exactly when it closed down, but I think it was around or right after World War I, around 1918. It was between 1918 and 1920 when it shut down. I remember as a kid going down there and playing in that mill; we walked through it and had to climb over the machinery. It was wide open; there was nobody on the property. When they shut those places down, they just left them.

Of course, at the same time the Big Four mining company built a mill also, and they were milling Big Four ore, as well as for the leasers at the White Caps. The ore was all milled at the Big Four Mill. Right after that, in 1912, the Big Four built another mill. That's the mill that I was talking about where the man lost that horse. They built that mill at the top of that hill facing Manhattan. They completed the mill in 1913 and I can still remember when it was completed. They made a test run to try the mill out, and that was it. That mill never ran after that.

WB: Why was that?

VB: I don't know whether the Big Four Mine went kaput about that time. I guess there was just no ore. Then in 1912, the Manhattan Associated Mining and Milling Company built a mill. That mill was built in 1912, and it was operated by that mining company for two years. Then in 1914, the White Caps Company took it over, and it was milling their

ore because they didn't have a mill.

WB: Do you know what that mill was called?

VB: They called it the Associated Mill. There was another mill built below Manhattan, the War Eagle Mill.

WB: In 1912, you were only a few years old, but what do you know about Belmont at that time? Was Belmont pretty much a ghost town, or was there still a lot going on over there?

VB: I can recall as a kid that Belmont was pretty much a ghost town. I think Belmont went down before 1905 because they moved the county seat from Belmont into Tonopah in 1905. Belmont was on its way down then. I was pretty young when a lot of these things happened. I just heard about them.

WB: From around the age of 11 or 12, you started going off on your own and becoming interested in adult pursuits. You mentioned going down and hanging around the blacksmith and watching him. Tell me about that.

VB: I used to love to watch those blacksmiths work. They had this one blacksmith shop there that was attached to the Baldwin stables; it was a huge blacksmith shop. It's right across from the garage there. They did all kinds of work. They built wagon wheels there from scratch. They'd take a hub and put the spokes in it, put the bellows on, and make the tires for it out of metal. They'd just take the straight metal strips of iron. They had a little wheel that was graduated called a trammel, and they'd determine the length of the strip that they needed to go around that wheel. They'd go down on that strip and roll the wheel, then they'd mark it and cut it off. Then they'd put it in the forge and make a hoop out of it. They would weld the tire together in the forge, and then shrink that hoop

onto the wheel. That was the tire. I was just amazed at the work that they did there, and they even painted them and treated them with linseed oil. I watched them shoe horses; they used to shoe the horses and make parts for wagons and all kinds of repairs.

In fact, I got to know the blacksmith pretty well. He let me operate the bellows for him. You've seen how those bellows are made. Well, they had the bellows in there to start with. Later on, they put in what they called a blower that you could crank by hand, but they had the bellows at first and they had a long pole to get leverage. You'd get that pole and then you hook the pole up and down and work these bellows to make air for the forge to keep the fire going.

WB: You were still in school at this time, right?

VB: Yes, I was going to school, but when I would come home from school, I would ask my mother if I could go down there. She'd say, "Yes, because I know where you're at. Be home at a certain time." That's where I would go because she could always find me.

WB: Up until you were 12, what kind of work was your father engaged in?

VB: He was working in the mines. He was working in placer mines in 1912. They discovered that placer down at the Bulldog in 1906, but it was in 1909 when they started placer mining. There were quite a few operations going on in placer mining. That's what resurrected Manhattan.

WB: Had he been involved in any other kind of work before that?

VB: He was involved in ranching when he first came to Nevada. He ended up in Peavine.

WB: How long was he there?

VB: He came here in 1905. My mom stayed in Italy. My dad came over by himself. I think I told you about that he'd come over in 1903 and gone to New Philadelphia, Ohio, to visit with his brother. He had a brother by the name of John, and his brother got him a job working in the coal mine. My dad didn't like that coal mining. He didn't work very long. At approximately one-and-a-half to two years he had heard a lot about Tonopah mining and decided to come West. That was in 1905. He happened to know this fellow who ran the Peavine ranch, and he came into Tonopah. He was going to go to Manhattan to work, and this fellow by the name of Frank Benard wanted my dad to go farming with him down there. My dad decided to take a try at it. He didn't like working much in the mines, anyway.

He didn't send for my mother until 1907. My mother arrived in Tonopah on January 8, 1908. She come in by train. She spent the night in Tonopah and the next morning she took the stagecoach for Manhattan—I remember her telling me how they changed horses at Maggie Blue's and then took a little rest there and then headed off for Manhattan. They stopped up at Spanish Springs and let the horses have a drink of water and then came into Manhattan. She said she arrived in Manhattan about 4:00 in the evening and my dad met her there.

WB: Getting from Tonopah to Manhattan in a day was pretty good, considering.

VB: She said those horses were on the run all the time. That's why they had to change horses in Maggie Blue's.

WB: Maggie Blue's is down by Rye Patch, right?

VB: Yes. As you're coming from Tonopah toward Manhattan, you come to the pump station that pumps the water up to Tonopah called Rye Patch. You continue on, and you

come to a little knoll or hill there, and there's a windmill over there and a trailer parked up in that area. There are a few trees; that's Maggie Blue's.

WB: It looks like there's a stream there or something.

VB: Yes, there was water there, even in those days. The stage stopped for the passengers to get something to eat and to rest.

WB: Was there a little bar or something?

VB: I don't know. I was never in the place, to tell you the truth. It was just a little station, is all it was.

WB: What about San Antone?

VB: San Antone was what they called San Antone Station or a stopping place for teams going through the valley the other way, at the other end of Smoky. This was the early route to Manhattan. I used to know the name of the man that had a freight route through there, and I can't remember his name.

WB: How long did they continue the use of horse-drawn stagecoaches from Tonopah to Manhattan?

VB: That was when cars came out to Manhattan. By 1909 and 1910, they already had a car carrying passengers.

WB: Had cars already totally replaced the horses by then?

VB: No, I can remember going out there and riding those teams in from Pipe Springs. I think it went on until about 1918 because that Wittenburg Warehouse and Transfer Company introduced trucks about 1919. The team continued hauling for a few more years.

WB: If you went out there at the age of 11 or 12, that would be 1920. Maybe you were

younger.

VB: 1909.

WB: Yes, 1909. Eleven years would make it 1920.

VB: I might have been going out a little earlier.

WB: Earlier than you thought.

VB: Yes, 1918, 1917.

WB: How did you feel when trucks and cars started replacing the horse there?

VB: To me it was interesting. It was a change. I was interested in automobiles anyway. Every time I saw a car stopped there and having trouble, I'd have my nose in there trying to see what they were doing. [Laughter]

WB: When do you recall first starting to do some work on a piece of machinery?

VB: Well, I built my first Model T bug. I think it was about in 1923 when I built my first little car, the Model T Ford speedster.

WB: What do you mean, you built it?

VB: Well, I bought an old car that some Indians had; I just stripped it all down and started to work on it and rebuilt the engine because it wasn't running. I went through it from one end to the other, and I made me a little bug. We called it a bug or a speedster. I did away with the original touring car body and built a speedster body.

WB: So you would have been about 14 then?

VB: About 14 years old.

WB: Where did you get the money for that?

VB: I earned it.

WB: Doing what?

VB: [Laughter] When I was 12, I was going out to Peavine ranch and working in the summers.

WB: What did you do out there?

VB: I started out just irrigating and pulling weeds in the gardens, feeding the hogs, the cattle, the pigs, the horses, and some of the milk cows, just chores like that. The first year was a learning period, and I did not earn much. The following years I got a dollar a day and my room and board.

WB: How did you get out there?

VB: I stayed with the people that owned the ranch; they were good friends of the family.

WB: Was your father still working out there?

VB: No. When he sent for my mother, she got pregnant a little while after she got here. She just hated Peavine because there was nothing there.

WB: Was she afraid of the cliffs or something?

VB: She was afraid of those mountains, that they were going to close in on her. She'd never been in that kind of country. Over in Italy, I guess it was more open. [Laughter] She said it felt like it was closing in on her. She just couldn't take it and didn't want to have a baby down there, so my dad decided to move up to Manhattan. He quit the job there, and he went to work in mining.

WB: What was he doing over there?

VB: At Peavine? He was farming. He went in partners with Benard, and they raised vegetables for a while. He was delivering vegetables up to Manhattan with a horse and buggy.

WB: Were there Indians over there?

VB: Yes. That's another thing that my mother was scared of.

WB: Really?

VB: Well, they couldn't talk English. It was blabber, she said.

WB: Of course, she was speaking Italian? Right?

VB: Oh, yes. She didn't know any English, either.

WB: So the Indians worked on the ranch.

VB: They worked on the farm haying and doing that kind of work.

WB: Were they Shoshone or Paiutes or both?

VB: They were mostly Shoshones.

WB: Did those Shoshones and Paiutes get along together?

VB: Oh, they got along, but they didn't associate.

WB: Right, but they didn't fight.

VB: No. There was no trouble.

WB: They spoke their own languages, or were they similar?

VB: There was similarity in the languages, but it wasn't the same.

WB: Did they speak some English?

VB: They learned it later on. I went to school with Indian boys and girls, and the parents learned English, also. They spoke pretty well for not going to school. Well, my mother learned English and so did my dad.

WB: When your dad went to Manhattan, what kind of work did he do there?

VB: Mining, mostly. He also went into the wood business several times.

WB: When did he go into the wood business?

VB: The first time he went into the wood business was about 1923 to ’25.

WB: You would have been about 14 to 16 years old.

VB: That was about the time I built that bug.

WB: Did you help him out in the wood business?

VB: Yes.

WB: What did you do?

VB: I drove the truck and hauled the wood.

WB: Were you still in school then?

VB: Oh yes, I was going to school.

WB: When did you finish school?

VB: In 1927.

WB: So you were 18 years old. You went, right, and had all four years of high school?

VB: Well, I didn’t finish high school. I had six months left. I had the last half year to go, and I had a teacher that wouldn’t teach me the subjects that I wanted. [Laughter] I didn’t see any use in studying ancient history and all that baloney. I told my dad and mother that I had planned on going to a trade school as I had been corresponding with this school and making arrangements to go after I graduated. I told my mom and dad that I did not want to finish school and that I was going to quit and go to my trade school. In December of that year my parents finally decided, “Well, if you want to go to school, that’s up to you. Go to your trade school.” I had saved the money to go to it, so when the time came, instead of going to school, I took off and went to Los Angeles and went to trade school. I went to mechanics and electrical and carburetion school.

WB: How did you get to Los Angeles?

VB: I went by the stage from Manhattan to Tonopah.

WB: The automobile stage? Five dollars was the fee?

VB: Five bucks. I went into Tonopah, and in Tonopah I went to see a friend of ours there, a friend of my dad's by the name of Charles Demark. I went to see him that day because I was going to take the train from Tonopah to Mina and down through Bishop, Independence, Laws, and all that country, Big Pine. He said, "If you want to go down to L.A., I'll take you down and make arrangements to take a stage by car that leaves here in the morning, that goes down through Oasis, California, and goes into Laws, California." He said, "You don't have to stay on that train all those hours, and it's cheaper."

It didn't cost very much. I don't remember what the fee was. It was wintertime. It was snowing and it was cold, so instead of taking the train, I got on that stage there and went down into Laws. Then I took the train from Laws to Los Angeles. It was a narrow gauge line.

WB: How had you saved that money?

VB: Like I said, I worked part-time at the Peavine Ranch during summer school vacation. I was always able to get odd jobs. I collected scrap metal, and I was always able to get jobs cutting up firewood and doing chores around people's homes. I worked at the Baldwin Stables cleaning up horse manure in the stables and stalls. I also worked on accessories for a man by the name of John Zunino who was in the wood business helping him deliver wood. I had part-time work for Bud Gale, a man who had taken a lease on the Kelly Garage and Service Station; I tended to the station and assisted him at the garage after school and on Saturdays.

I was hired by H. F. Kalkbrenner and helped him haul in his firewood from

Timber Hill on Saturdays and Sundays. In 1926, I was hired by a man by the name of Remigio Del Angelo (real name Butoli) to help with assessment work on his mining claims, where we eventually made a gold discovery. I also had numerous other part-time jobs, and all of these jobs were to help until I left for trade school.

WB: So then at 18 you went off to Los Angeles. Where did you stay when you were there?

VB: I stayed in a private home that housed other students. Of course, that was the cheapest way to go. It was not far from the school because I could walk back and forth in about ten or 15 minutes between the school and the house.

WB: How big was Los Angeles then?

VB: Oh, it was big. Of course, me coming from Manhattan, it was a big city. There were all those street cars and cars all over. Traffic was pretty thick. I was right down on Santa Barbara and Figueroa, right at that intersection. The national schools were right there on the corner of Santa Barbara and Figueroa. Then across the street was the Figueroa Theater, and this house that I lived in was just a few houses down on the next block.

WB: This was your first time in any big city, right? What were your impressions of this?

VB: I was lost for a while. [Laughter]

WB: Were you excited or scared?

VB: I liked the school. I was interested. In fact, I spent all my time in school. I didn't carouse around or anything. I went to a few shows uptown with some of the boys that I had met in the school, but I even went to night school. I was allowed to go to take all the

classes I wanted, so I took advantage of everything I could get a hold of.

WB: Now, at this age of 18, there was still nothing more than puppy love between you and Inez, right? She wasn't on your mind that much.

VB: I didn't have any girls on my mind. [Laughter]

WB: How long did you spend in L.A.?

VB: About a year.

WB: And you stayed there the whole time?

VB: Yes. My dad came down one time. He wanted to see how I was doing and he wanted to visit people down there he knew in L.A. that had lived in Manhattan and had moved to Glendale so he came down and spent a week there. Of course, I couldn't go along with him because I had to go to school, but on Saturday and Sunday before he left, he and I went down to the ocean together.

WB: Was that your first time to ever see the ocean?

VB: Yes.

WB: What did you think of that?

VB: It was quite a deal.

WB: Did you have any feeling either way about the country, like the mountains or the ocean, or did you prefer the country around Manhattan?

VB: I did, yes. I didn't like L.A. at all. It didn't impress me one bit.

WB: So you missed the mountains.

VB Oh, I missed it, yes. Of course, as soon as I graduated out of school they put me to work in the garage for one month. They had their own garage where they repaired cars. They paid you for working there. It was not very much but enough. [Laughter] They had

instructors watching your work and instructing. I stayed one month there, and then they decided that I could go off on my own. They said I'd have to look for a job or leave.

They did promise me when I went to school there that they would help me find work. They located a job for me up on the ridge route going to Bakersfield, at a place called Grapevine. When I went up to the employment office to get the job, I had to pay for it. I believe it cost me $7.00 for the job, and it cost me $5.00 bus fare to get up there. I was paid $75.00 a month and my room and board. Of course, wages were bad in those days, and jobs were hard to come by. I worked up there for two months, 12-hour shifts, and I had the night shift. I ran the gas station and I learned how to do repair work. It was just miscellaneous; it wasn't heavy work. They had mechanics in the daytime that did the heavy engine work, rear end and transmission repairs, and front missions. I had people come in with broken fan belts, cars overheated, and I'd put on a water pump, fuel pump. I'd put in plugs and anything that was minor. I'd repair tires. Those 12-hour shifts got to me, and it really was hot down there, so I wrote home and told my parents that I was going to quit and come back home. [Laughter] I quit my job and I went back to Manhattan.

WB: How did you get from Bakersfield to Manhattan?

VB: I took the bus back to Los Angeles and took the train. There was a narrow gauge line that ran from Los Angeles to Mina.

WB: What was that like?

VB: It was a rickety old train that came up there rattling, and it was slow. [Laughter] Anyway, it was cheaper for me, and of course, when I got in to Mina, I had to transfer over to the big train that went into Tonopah that comes in from Reno. I had to stay there

overnight. Well, I didn't have any money, so I just slept in one of the coach cars. [Laughter]

The next day I took the train and came into Tonopah, and as I was walking up the street in Tonopah to pick up the stage to Manhattan, some fellow in a car drove up beside me and said, "Hey, Val. What are you doing here?"

I said, "I'm going back to Manhattan. I'm just going up to get the stage."

He said, "Get in the car. I'm going to be going in a couple of hours. You can ride out with me." It was a fellow from Manhattan by the name of Tony Brackett; he ran a bar there. When I got to Manhattan, I got a little work on the side there. I picked up a lot of little jobs. Joe Francisco had a storage building there—a garage building where he stored his cars and trucks.

WB: It's still there now, right?

VB: Yes, it's still there, and he had built that in 1925. That's where he stored all his vehicles. There were no mechanics. He had to have work done on his cars and trucks.

WB: What did he do?

VB: He was in the wood business and the water works. His wife ran a little butcher shop at that time. He asked me if I'd come down and repair his trucks there, and he made a deal with me. If I'd do his work, I would have the use of a space in the rear corner of the building, rent-free. I stayed there from 1928 until 1933. I worked in that building repairing vehicles.

WB: During this time, did anything happen between you and Inez?

VB: No. We'd go to dances together along with my brother Pete and sister Mary.

WB: But you weren't thinking of marriage or anything.

VB: I wasn't thinking of marriage.

WB: How old were you when you got married?

VB: I was 33. She got married before me.

WB: Oh, I didn't know that.

VB: She got married much younger. I don't remember what year it was. She had gone to beauty school in Los Angeles. In 1933, when she graduated from high school, she wanted to go to beauty college to learn hairdressing, so she went down and stayed in L.A. until 1940, I believe.

WB: She got married down there?

VB: No. She'd come back to Manhattan, and she married in Manhattan and stayed there for a while. I don't remember how many years she stayed in Manhattan. I think it was a couple of years. Then they got a divorce. I think after she divorced, she went back down to L.A to work there.

WB: When did you start dating her?

VB: I didn't start dating her until she came back from L.A. again in 1940 when the war broke out. She didn't want to stay down there any longer, and she started a beauty shop in Manhattan. She also worked as an operator at Gloria's Beauty Shop in Tonopah.

WB: How many people were living in Manhattan in 1933?

VB: Well, it wasn't too many. I wouldn't say it was more than a couple hundred.

WB: When did the dredge start operating down in the gulch?

VB: In January of '38.

WB: How many years was it in operation?

VB: It operated from 1938 until 1948.

WB: Ten years. Right through the war?

VB: It operated continually. It took it that long to go from that bench down there where they built that dredge. You go down to the Bulldog, and you climb that hill there where you see the valley. It was probably a couple of miles down from the Bulldog. After you top that bench there, go down a couple of miles. They built a large open pit there about 20 feet deep, and I think about an acre in area. That excavation had to be level in the bottom, just perfectly level and even. These pontoons are a big square tank, and there were 38 of them. They weighed 18 tons apiece, and they took those pontoons with a crane and had to lift them up and gently set them down so that they wouldn't disturb the unevenness of the soil.

Of course, they had that packed pretty hard on the bottom. They put those pontoons down in there, and they were all riveted together. They had these steel workers working there—welders and steel workers. Once they got the pontoons together, the size of that boat was 60 feet by 174 feet. They called it a boat because actually that's what it ended up being. When the pontoons were assembled, they started putting all the machinery on top of the pontoons. They had two stackers that were installed at the rear.

Of course, they had conveyor belts on the stackers so all the waste gravel material was disposed out of the stacker in the rear of the dredge. These stackers were 120 feet long, and they were attached so that it could be raised or lowered or moved from side to side. One man controlled everything on that boat.

Then they had what they called a gantry on there, and attached to this gantry they had what they called a digging ladder. This digging ladder was 90 feet long as near as I can remember, and that had 120 buckets. Each bucket had a capacity of nine cubic feet.

They could dig to a depth of 110 feet, and that's below water level. Of course, that was quite an operation. They moved the dredge with Caterpillars in order to continue up the canyon. To operate that dredge the water was piped from that lower ranch at Peavine called the Seyler Ranch.

WB: That would have been about ten, 12 miles?

VB: Yes, 12 miles away. They got the water rights from the ranch [which] drove the well down there. They put in a pipeline that was 14 inches in diameter, and the pipeline delivered—through the well—2,200 gallons of water a minute. The water in that pump was going, continually pumping water. When they turned the water in there, that dredge floated like a boat.

Inside these pontoons, they had all their shops. They had a machine shop with a very large lathe. One of them had a welding shop, an electrical shop, and storage place to store their supplies.

WB: Did they actually work inside the pontoons?

VB: Yes.

WB: How big were these pontoons?

VB: They were very large. That hole was 20 feet deep, and those pontoons were ten to 12 feet, as near as I remember. I don't remember the dimensions inside; they were very large. As I said, there were 38 pontoons, and the boat was 60 by 174 feet.

WB: The pontoons were square in shape?

VB: Square. On top they were just like a floor.

WB: They were made of metal.

VB: They were all made of metal.

WB: Then they floated this dredge inside that area that they built west of that bench, right? How did they get it to go up the gulch?

VB: Digging. They had a digging ladder there with these buckets that were on a chain, and these buckets just dug the dirt as they were going.

WB: And while they were doing that . . .

VB: Well, the boat was anchored. They had cables to anchor to shore.

WB: But it's afloat.

VB: It's afloat.

WB: They are pumping the water in as it goes to keep it floating.

VB: While digging, it starts on the bank, and then it keeps digging down. As it goes down the water level goes down, so as you dig the dirt out and as the boat goes down, you go down to bedrock. You've got to keep that water level working. As it moves forward with tractors pulling it from shore and start at the top, you have to raise your water level. It was all dependent on that water level. That digging ladder was always working, and it would swing from side to side as well as up and down. They called the man who operates the dredge the pilot.

WB: One man operated that whole thing?

VB: One man operated the whole thing. He had an array of levers up there. My brother-in-law operated that on one shift. He was an engineer, and his name was Al Brashears.

WB: OK. Let's go back to 1933. You came back from L.A. to Manhattan in 1928 and you started working on your own?

VB: On my own at home, at our house. I had the little garage building there that I had

converted from a cabin. It was a little shack that my dad helped me move into. I cut the front wall out to make an entrance for a car, and I dug myself a pit.

WB: Is that still there?

VB: No, but the place where it was standing is still visible.

WB: That's the house up there on the hill.

VB: On the hill, yes. Somebody tore the shack down. I got back in '28 and we were doing work at home for various people who owned automobiles.

WB: How long did you do that?

VB: I think I only did it for about three months until I went up to Francisco Garage. I'd go up to repair his cars, and he offered me that deal on the garage building, then I began working in that garage. Of course, I couldn't keep busy; there wasn't enough work to do. He had a truck that he hauled wood, and once in a while he asked me if I'd go get a truckload of wood if I wasn't doing anything.

WB: Were you doing any work with your father at that time?

VB: No. My father at that time was in business with a fellow by the name of John Zunino, an Italian fellow. He had a string of pack mules; my brother Pete was working with him at that time. I did leave the garage in 1929 and went over to Tybo to haul the wood for my dad when he had that contract over there.

WB: What was that all about?

VB: In 1929, Tybo started back up. I think it was the Treadwell-Yukon Company. It was a Canadian mining company that took over Tybo Mine and Mill and decided to sink the shaft and start the mining up and start the mill. They had to have wood for the bunkhouses over there because they hired an awful lot of men. They had to have a

cookhouse, and they had to use wood for that. They got ahold of my dad to see if he was interested in contracting for a wood permit for 100 cords of wood that they wanted.

When they saw the stack, they didn't think it was enough wood to last them a year so they extended the contract to 150 cords. Well, my dad and my brother Pete cut the wood with axes; they didn't have chainsaws in those days. If the trees were too large to cut with an ax, they would use a two-man handsaw that had very coarse teeth. They cut the trees down and then trimmed off the branches and cut the trees into four foot lengths. They had these Mexican packs on the mules, and they called them *aperajos*. The aperajos had iron hooks on them to carry the wood. You could put a quarter of a cord of wood on each pack mule because they're sturdier than a horse and tougher. The mules carried them to where I could get to it with the truck because those hills were steep up there and rough country; it was hard to get up there.

WB: That's in the Hot Creek Range?

VB: Yes, it was in the Hot Creek range. It was up where the charcoal kilns are. That's where we were camped, right below them, and we got the wood off toward the right.

WB: In that mountain range. You're talking about the kilns that are there on the east side of the range?

VB: Yes. I had the job to haul the wood. I would load the wood on the truck and then haul it down to Tybo, and then I had to stack it there by the bunkhouse and the cook shack. We delivered 150 cords one year and 150 cords the following year, and I took time off from the garage work to go up there and help my dad out as auto repair business was not very good. It was very spotty because there were no mechanics. Then I went back to the garage again.

WB: How long did you continue there at that Francisco garage?

VB: Until 1933.

WB: Then what happened?

VB: Then that's when I decided to build a place of my own because I had gotten a tip that they were going to put a dredge in Manhattan. I knew the fellow real well that owned all of the placer mining claims. He had almost everything in that canyon tied up.

VB: What was his name?

WB: Bill Donald. In fact, he used to board with my mother when she had that little boarding house there in the bakery. Donald was a good friend of ours, and he tipped me off. "Val," he said, "I'm going to be getting a dredge in here, but keep it under your hat. It's going to be a little while yet, but I suggest you get yourself a place of your own and put in a gas station and some pumps. You can make some money."

There was another mining company that was coming in where they struck the ore down at the Reliance. I knew a fellow down there real well, a very good friend. His name was Matt Kane. He owned the War Eagle Mill and I had done a lot of work with him. He also tipped me off about the mining company that was going to come in there and take over the mine.

There was another fellow from Fallon who had been working tailings up at the Penalis Mine in Fallon; he had a contract in Manhattan to run the tailings from the White Caps Mill. He was going to fix up the mill to take care of that process, so he told me, "I'll give you all my business if you have your own place."

Of course, I decided that sounded like a good idea. I didn't have any money, really, so I got to figuring out, "What am I going to do here?" I was talking to my two

uncles I had there, and they were retired and were planning on going to Italy. They said, "If you get the material and the lumber and everything, we'll build the place for you."

So I went into the county seat in Tonopah and checked up on buildings that I could maybe buy from the county for taxes and found out there was a church in Belmont that was on the tax roll. It was the Episcopalian church, so I decided to go out there and take a look at it. It was all built out of 2 x 6 lumber. It had a steep little frame roof. I could see that it was a good deal; I could get all the lumber to build the garage. My uncles had come with me, and they said, "Go ahead and bid on it for the taxes." My brother would haul it to Manhattan. "When we get it out in the yard, we'll get these rafters and change the pitch of the roof and make a nice big building."

While I was in Belmont, I ran into a fellow who was living there by the name of Lee Brotherton I had known for many years. He said, "Well, being that you're going to build a garage, where are you going to get your sheet metal?"

I said, "I plan on going to Tonopah. They're tearing down all of those old mills in Tonopah, and they're selling the sheet iron. I was going to buy that from them."

He said, "I'll tell you one thing. I've got 100 sheets of brand-new sheet iron here from one of the mills they built here in Belmont in the early days. That sheet iron's been sitting in that old shed there ever since they built that mill out there, and it was brand new sheet iron." [Laughter] He said, "You want that iron, and I want to get rid of it. Give me a dollar a sheet, and you can have it." So for $100 I got 100 sheets, and it was ten feet long by two and a half feet wide. I got practically enough metal there to cover the whole building.

WB: Is that the sheets that are on it now?

VB: That's what's on it now. In fact, on some of the sheet iron you can still read the name: The Monitor Valley Mining Company in Belmont, Nevada. [Laughter] Then I went into Tonopah and made arrangements with some friends of mine I had known most of my life that had the Union Oil bulk plant. I made arrangements to get gasoline from them and to purchase some used pumps—these old visible gas pumps. We installed some tanks underground and got started.

In the spring of 1934, the building was complete, and that's when I started to work on my own. I did real well. In fact, I sold a lot of gasoline. I sold a lot of oil and did a lot of repairs. I was busy. That fellow from the White Caps had some fellows come from Los Angeles with trucks that took the contract to haul the tailings up into the mill. He gave me the contract to supply all the trucks with gasoline and oil, and they purchased tires from me and a lot of supplies for their trucks. I was selling gas to the Reliance Mining Company for their company vehicles, and I did repairs on their vehicles. I got myself a sub dealership for Fords and sold a few cars there and a few trucks. I got myself a commission on the sales, and then, when the dredge came in, I landed some business with them.

WB: Speaking of churches, was the Catholic church in Manhattan originally a Catholic church?

VB: It was a Roman Catholic church.

WB: Was it originally in Belmont, too?

VB: Yes, it was built in Belmont. I used to know what they built it for. I think it was $3,000. Yes, I have a religious garage there. [Laughter] Both churches are in Manhattan now.

WB: Yes. Okay, during this period of time when you came back from Los Angeles and started your career in the repair business and gasoline business, what was the rest of your family doing? Your father was still in the wood business?

VB: Yes, my father was in the wood business at that time, and Pete was working in the wood business with him. Of course, he was helping my dad, and then my dad got killed in '32. He had an accident. The wood saw burst.

WB: You were there working at Francisco's Garage, then.

VB: Yes, but I was helping my Dad that morning.

WB: Oh. What happened?

VB: This particular morning was a spring day. It was March 21, 1932. My dad said he could use a little bit of help to saw some wood; money was coming pretty hard at that time. Things were rough, and you had to take every job you could get. Pete had gotten a job at San Antone to run the ranch down there for a fellow by the name of Charlie Keough, who owned the ranch. Charlie Keough was in politics and also managed the Pine Creek Ranch. He had to go to the assembly in Carson City and all over, and he wanted somebody to run the ranch so he hired Pete.

My dad didn't have any help as John Zunino, his partner, was out in the hills cutting wood. My dad said he could use a little help so I said that I could help him; I had nothing pressing at the garage. So we started up the wood saw, and I was off bearing; that's when you cut these blocks off. You get on the side of the saw blade, and you hold the right piece of wood that is being cut off. Then you throw it out of the way of the saw so that it doesn't fall on the ground and pile up to the saw blade. My dad was getting the four-foot logs and putting them on the table and shoving them into the saw blade. He had

a bad habit because he always held one hand on the part of the log that I was holding on to.

WB: His arm was around the front of the saw.

VB: Yes. The buzz saw was circulating right here by the shoulder. I always told him, "Dad, don't stand that way." I said, "It scares me. I can hang onto this. Stay over there on your side."

"Well," he said, "I can saw better this way." He'd use his knee underneath this table to push the log into the saw. Some reason or another, that saw just exploded.

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

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VB: Like I was saying, that saw just exploded. Of course, they buzz at a pretty good speed.

WB: What was driving it?

VB: We had a Model T Ford engine mounted crossways on a frame with a pulley on the end of the transmission. Originally they had a gas engine, but the gas engine went bad so it was done away with. Dad rigged up the Model T Ford engine. Anyway, we had been sawing wood for about a half hour, and then I just heard an explosion.

It happened so fast I didn't know what had happened. I glanced around, and I saw my dad fall backwards. God, blood was running out all over on him, and over his shoulder. He was trying to get up and he couldn't. His arm was cut off and was hanging by the tendons. His chin was knocked off. The mandrill had two boxings and one bearing, and the boxings were split halves. The vibration of the broken saw blade broke the bolts on both of them, and the mandrill went spinning through the air. It hit him in the chest and hit him on the chin, and the blade cut his arm off. A piece of the blade just broke right out of the saw blade. The broken piece of blade was never found.

WB: What are those parts you mentioned? You were describing what broke off and hit him.

VB: Boxings are your bearings that your shaft rotates in. The bearings or boxings are a split casting with a babbit lining, and the two halves are held together with bolts. They support a rotating shaft; in this case, it was the saw mandrill. The two bearings or boxings are bolted to the saw framework. When the saw exploded and the metal section came out

of the saw blade, it threw the whole assembly off balance, set up a terrific vibration, and broke the bolts out of the boxings. The saw mandrill went sailing through the air.

WB: All right. These are the boxings of the assembly that held the shaft.

VB: Yes.

WB: So they were attached to the table?

VB: No, to a framework—the frame of the saw. Your table is movable, and the table is mounted on a pivot at the bottom of the frame and manufactured out of angle iron.

WB: This is a special arrangement for cutting wood?

VB: For cutting wood, yes. It was a factory-made unit. [Tape off]

[At this point, the transcription picks up on a separate copy that was sent along with the tapes. Thus, part of this interview has already been transcribed.]

WB: Because Val worked in the Francisco Garage but for himself, not for Francisco. He just rented space there from ’28 up until ’33 when, he and his uncles built the garage. Val’s garage was built out of the wood from the Episcopalian church in Belmont and now stands in Manhattan. When you went in business for yourself, did you have anybody working with you?

VB: No, I worked all by myself.

WB: How long did you stay in business there?

VB: I was in business until I went into the service in 1942. It was about nine years.

WB: What can you tell us about that period in your life? Were you single that whole time?

VB: Yes, I was single.

WB: How many of your brothers and sisters were living in Manhattan in that period of

time?

VB: At that period of time they were all living in Manhattan except one brother. Al Boni—the one that's up in Washington—had gotten married. He had left, and so did my sister Mary, who was married and living in Colorado.

WB: Now, what year was it that your father had died?

VB: March 21st of 1932.

WB: That's two years before you opened the garage. So that whole period, you worked alone?

VB: Except for having my brothers help once in a while. When I went to eat my meals, they just took over watching the gas pumps. They waited on the customers, and that was about it.

WB: Tell me what your business consisted of. How many gas pumps did you have?

VB: I had two gas pumps. I only installed one gas pump to get the garage and station in operation, and approximately one year later I installed the second pump along with the canopy over the pumps.

WB: Were they the only ones in town?

VB: No, at the time when I built the garage, Kalkbrenner had a gas pump. He was handling Shell gasoline.

WB: Where was he located?

VB: That's the building uptown that's called the Manhattan Store now.

WB: It still has the pump standing out in front.

VB: Is there a pump in front there?

WB: I remember there used to be.

VB: I think it's been taken out. I think there was a pump up there up until a few years ago. It was called the Manhattan Store.

WB: Yes, I know where it is. So then you had two pumps, and he had one pump.

VB: Francisco's had one pump, and that was all.

WB: Were these the pumps where you pump the gas up into a glass cylinder?

VB: They had a glass bowl at the top that held ten gallons of fuel. Gravity fed to the tanks. They were hand-operated as well as electric. If the power went out, they had a handle that you could pump by hand.

We have it written down somewhere. I'll have to find those papers, but that property there that Pauley owns now where the Francisco Garage is was originally owned by a man named Mike Kelly. When he built that station, it was the only gas station in Manhattan, and he also built the gas pump.

WB: When was that?

VB: That was way back in 1914 or 1915, I believe. Kelly also captured and owned a Ford Model T dealership. This was the only car dealership in Manhattan. He designed the gas pump himself. He used a metal cylinder, and he mounted it onto a large standing pipe; he put one of these air tanks underground, compressed air tanks that you use in the mines that are heavy gauge metal. He built himself a compressor out of a gasoline engine—one cylinder engine—and it pumped air. It was driven by an electric motor. He had a control valve at the gas pump that he could turn the air on down into the tank and by putting the pressure on the gasoline it forced the gas up into that cylinder. When the cylinder was full of gas, he would shut off the valve and release the discharge valve. Then the fuel flowed by gravity out of the cylinder to the car tank. That was the first gas

station in Manhattan.

WB: Give me an idea of what your business was like. When you first started in 1933, you built the place, and then you installed those pumps. You put the tanks underground. Did you gradually build this business up? Why don't you tell us how it grew?

VB: Well, when I started out, there wasn't much work at the time then in town, not any mechanical work. I had a good business in gas sales, oil and tire repairs, and I took care of all the repair work that could be done as I was the only mechanic in town. That was about the extent. There were some mines operating, and I did welding for the mines machinery or pumps that broke; I welded for them and also did some of the mechanical repairs.

WB: Did you study welding at the school?

VB: At the school, yes. That's where I learned machine shop and welding also.

WB: Did they have such a thing as hydraulic lifts—where you put your car—in those days?

VB: No, I had a pit. When I built the garage, I built a pit in there and drove the car over the pit.

WB: So you had the pit, and you had one pit so you'd work on one car at a time.

VB: It was one car at a time on the pit; there was a lot of work that you could do on the floor where you didn't need the pit, and I also had an overhead dolly with a chain hoist that I used to pull engines with.

WB: Right. What about your tools and all of that? Did you accumulate those gradually, or did you have those before you even left for Los Angeles?

VB: I had started buying tools when I worked for myself, like socket wrenches and

open end wrenches and things like that. Then as I was working I gradually got the other necessary tools that I needed like micrometers, cylinder hone, and special tools that you needed.

WB: How sophisticated was the kind of work you could do? For example, could you rebuild an engine in your shop?

VB: Yes. I did a lot of that all except reboring. I would send the stripped-down version into Tonopah to Campbell & Kelly Foundry.

WB: Back in those days, you didn't buy rebuilt parts; you rebuilt them yourself.

VB: Yes, most parts. I'd rebuild them myself. You bought kits. You could buy a kit and repair the water pump. When a fuel pump would go bad, you bought a kit and repaired the fuel pump. You rarely put in a new pump... generators and standing motors were the same, carburetors the same.

WB: What about your social life around the garage there? Did people tend to hang out there and stop by and socialize?

VB: Old-timers used to love to come by. That's where I gathered a lot of my information with regards to early Manhattan. I had a stove in the place built from a 55-gallon gasoline drum. In the wintertime I fired up the store, and the old-timers would come by there. They loved to visit and stay by the heat, so they'd get some boxes or empty oil drums or something to sit on and they'd sit there by the stove. They'd stay there and smoke and visit with me while I was working. [Laughter] They'd visit between themselves, mostly discussing the early days in Manhattan and their mining experience.

WB: Physically, what does this place consist of? Was there a front part that was an office? Was it all one big room? How was it situated?

VB: I had one big building that was the garage part where I did all of the repairs. It stored cars that I was working on. If I had to order parts, I would set the cars aside and wait for the parts. I also had a lean-to on the buildings, which meant that half of that was where I had the office and carried a small supply of car parts, batteries, fan belts, radiator hose, and a few sizes of tires and tubes and miscellaneous parts.

WB: Was that in the back?

VB: No, it was in the front, off to the side. It was up on the upper end of the street, on the east side.

WB: It's not there anymore?

VB: Oh, yes. It's there. If you'll notice the garage building, there's a lean-to.

WB: I never noticed.

VB: The front part I used as my office. My book work I did at home at night, but in there I took care of the cash and business ordering parts and stocked auto supplies.

WB: That was a separate room there?

VB: That was a separate little room, attached to garages.

WB: Then you had the lean-to. What was in there?

VB: Well, that was it. The lean-to was half the length of the garage. Then the other half in the back was made into a body shop. I had hired a man that came to Manhattan; he was a body man from Indiana. There was a lot of body work to be done there, and there was nobody to do it. The cars had to be brought to Tonopah and left there in order to get the work done. This fellow was working down at the dredge at the time on the night shift. That was about 1938. He had all his own hand tools. The only thing I had to supply was a spray gun and air pressure regulator, compressed air, paint, masking tape, paper, etc. We

went on a deal where we went 60/40 percent. I'd get 60 percent and he got 40 percent. That way I didn't have to pay him a salary.

WB: Did he pay you any rent?

VB: No, it was free rent. That was the deal. All he had was just that one space where he would do his work one car at a time.

WB: That was just when there was work for him to do. Otherwise, he worked down there at the dredge?

VB: Yes, he worked at the dredge. This was just a part-time job.

WB: During this period of time, what did your social life consist of?

VB: I didn't have any social life except going to dances. I played in a little band, too. We had a little band and played for the dances. I played the drums.

WB: Where did you learn to play the drums?

VB: Myself. I just learned it.

WB: What other instruments were there?

VB: We had a piano player and a banjo player and a saxophone player.

WB: That's quite a combination—a saxophone and a banjo. [Laughter]

VB: Yes, that was a pretty good little band, though. The girl who played the piano was Helen Humphrey. She was one of the Humphreys—the relative of the man who discovered Manhattan. She was my sister's age. They'd gone to school together. And the banjo player, he was the son of Lee Abernathy that operated the substation. He learned it by himself also. The saxophone player was a boy that lived in Smoky Valley on a ranch, and he would commute and come in to play with our band.

WB: Do you remember his name?

VB: Lyster Farrington. His father was a rancher.

WB: What about the banjo player?

VB: His name was Robert Abernathy.

WB: That was pretty much the band for that whole period of time?

VB: Well, for a period of time. Helen decided that she didn't want to play the piano anymore so she gave up the piano playing. We contacted a girl in Round Mountain. Her name is Georgetta Berg. She played the piano and she agreed to play with our band. She played the piano for a period of time—maybe about a year—and then she decided that she didn't want to play the piano, either. You know what I mean: girls, they'd all rather have their social life. [Laughter] I had a sister. Her name was Rosie.

WB: How old were you when was she born?

VB: I believe she was born in 1921. She learned to play by ear. She learned to play piano by herself at home. We had an old organ that was given to my sister Mary, and in fact, Rosie learned to play sitting on my lap. I would sit her on my lap because she could not reach the pedals, and I used to have [to] pump the pedals on the organ to pump up the air. She started playing by listening to the radio and just picked it up by ear. She got so she could play well, and she played piano with us. She played it for years. In fact, she played up at the El Capitan in Hawthorne at night in the 1940s.

WB: From 1933 to '42 is when you operated your garage, and is that the period also when you were in the band, or did you start that earlier?

VB: No, I started that when I was working at the Francisco garage. That's when we started.

WB: About when?

VB: Oh, it was somewhere in 1929 or 1930.

WB: Well, 1930 and then 1933 is when you built your place, right?

VB: 1933 is when I built the place, right.

WB: '29 or '30 is when you started playing in the band.

VB: Yes. We would play on Saturday nights.

WB: Where did you get your drums?

VB: I ordered them from Montgomery Ward.

WB: OK. It was a set of drums with a bass drum.

VB: It was a nice set of drums. The whole thing—all the paraphernalia: the cymbals, the temple blocks, and all.

WB: [Laughter] Did they have a book of instructions that came with it?

VB: Yes. I'd watch fellows play the drums. I used to love to watch them, and I got the idea there of how to snare.

WB: How long did it take you to be fairly competent to do it?

VB: It didn't take me long. I would practice at home all of the time. We also had practice sessions.

WB: Where were you living during this period of time? Did you have your own place?

VB: No, I was living at home.

WB: It was still pretty crowded up there, wasn't it?

VB: Yes, it was pretty crowded. Especially when we had an organ in the house, and then later on we were given a piano by the fellow that owned the San Antone Ranch. My brother was running the ranch out there, and the ranch owner's wife had a piano that she had brought down from a ranch that they had in Reese River in the earlier years. She had

no room for it and offered it to my brother and me. She said if we'd haul it away, we could have it. She knew we had a sister that liked to play piano, so we went down and hauled it up from San Antone. The piano was built in 1901. I just gave it to my son, John, about ten or 12 years ago. He had it restored and has it in his home.

WB: In Winnemucca?

VB: No, he's here. He and his wife have a home in Spanish Springs. It's a beautiful piano. He had it all restored, every bit of it, along with new ivory on the keys.

WB: Where did you have the dances?

VB: We held them in Manhattan and Round Mountain both. Our dances were held up in that odd-looking building, the Toiyabe Hall. Some fellow purchased that building and enclosed it with a wooden structure.

WB: Yes, that two-story building.

VB: Yes. That was the Dexter Building. It was a nice-looking building and had a nice dance floor. A women's group called the Toiyabe Literary Club purchased the Dexter Building, which had been vacant for many years, after their original club building burned down. The Toiyabe Club renovated the Dexter Building by removing the walls in the first floor and installing a post in the center of the building to support the upper floors, and installed new flooring along with a stage at the south end of the building. Upstairs there was a complete kitchen, where the women members would hold their regular club meetings and play bridge and then have their club dinners. This is also where the meals were served during the midnight dance breaks. The schools held their dances and school plays in the club building, which was also used by the politicians running for office. They would have the Republican and Democratic rallies, followed by a free dance.

The building was sold during World War II because it was being broken into and belongings were being stolen and a considerable amount of vandalizing took place. In the dance floor, they had chairs around the walls for seating where all the families and spectators could come and watch the people dance and also seating for the dancers.

WB: How frequently were these dances held?

VB: Sometimes every Saturday night. Many of these dances were put on by the bar owners like Frank Slate in Manhattan and Dan Kirby of Round Mountain. Sometimes they'd skip a Saturday, and maybe it would be every other one, depending on how many people attended the dances.

WB: Now during this period of time when you were young, you started your own business, but you were only working for yourself at Francisco's from the age of 19 until you went in the army in 1942. What other kind of social activities were you involved in? Did you play ball or anything like that? Even if you didn't participate, what kinds of things did people do for social activities?

VB: They used to have baseball games there in the earlier years before I was of age to play ball. I never played baseball. There wasn't any activity in that sport, but around 1934, the fellow that was running the water works—his name was Jack Lashley—got the idea to get a ball team going. He got all the youngsters in town to start training for it, and they got ahold of somebody in town—I forget who it was—that went down, raked off the rocks, and pulled the sagebrush down there right across from the War Eagle Mill. Looking south, they cleared up that area of sagebrush and leveled it out and picked up all the rocks and trash, and that's where they played ball games. They got all the school kids—the ones that were in high school and grammar grades. A few Indians boys played

in it, and they were good baseball players, too. In fact, one of my brothers, Ermand, played ball with the team.

WB: This was on the south side of the road?

VB: It's on the south side of the road opposite the War Eagle Mill.

WB: OK. That was about 1934? Did they have a ball field near where Tony Grimes's claims were by Black Mammoth gulch?

VB: Yes. That's what I was going to tell you. Later they were forced to find a better location for a field; there wasn't much room over where they were playing, so they were trying to find a location to play. They finally looked around and found a spot up there above the Black Mammoth, and they cleared that out. There wasn't much work to it, and that's where they played the ballgames later. Did you see that place?

WB: No. So the people would go up in their cars. This was in the '30s. Did anybody still have horses and buggies in the '30s?

VB: They had riding horses, but not buggies.

WB: Did they ride horses just to go out for pleasure, or did they actually use them for transportation?

VB: Mostly for pleasure and deer hunting. By that time there were quite a few cars already.

WB: Now in the '30s, were you involved any more in any mining work?

VB: In the '30s? 1929 was the last time I was involved in mining work. I went to work at William Patrick Mine as a pump man running pumps. In 1929, the people that owned that property came to Manhattan and decided that they were going to spend a little money for development work in the William Patrick Mine, and there was an incline shaft there

already. I forget just how many feet deep the shaft was; it was probably 150 feet. There was a lot of water in there, and they contacted Matt Kane, who owned the War Eagle Mill, to oversee the operation. He took care of hiring the people and took care of managing the property. They started an operation sinking the shaft and when they went in there they found out that they had an awful lot of water to get rid of before they could start sinking. They had to purchase a pump and start to dewater the shaft. Matt Kane hired me as one of the pump men to work on one of their shifts. George Ferrick was hired as foreman and master mechanic.

I was working at the Francisco garage at the time, and Matt Kane offered me this job. "I'll give you an extra job, and you can earn a little extra money. I know you can use it," because I wasn't doing much in the garage. I'd leave the garage at 5:00 and I went to work at 6:00. I'd work down there from 6:00 to 2:00 in the morning pumping water. All I had to do was be sure that the pumps would not quit. You had to go down the shaft and determine what the problem was and make the necessary repairs. I would go down the shaft two or three times a night on my shift to inspect the pump and see that everything was okay. I checked on the water level and repaired them to find out what the problem was. The shaft was an incline shaft.

WB: It was at about a 45-degree angle, right?

VB: Yes, 45 degrees. And you had tracks there for the car. It was a dolly that had four wheels on it, and the pump was mounted on this dolly. It was attached to a hoist cable so that you could lower the pump as the water level dropped because your suction hose was only so many feet long.

As the water level went down, you had to lower the pump with the water, and that's what

I had to watch for. I had to watch the pumps to make sure that they had no problems and keep the pump and motor lubricated and lower the pumps as the water level decreased.

When they got the water pumped out, they decided that they were about ready to start mining. They hired some miners, and they gave me the job of hoist man running the hoist. I think I ran the hoist for about two months, and then as I didn't have a hoist engineer's license, I had to stop. [Laughter] They said I was too young to get one, and a fellow come to town who had been a hoist man in the early days. He was complaining about me having that job and not having a license so they were forced to let me go, and he ended up with the job. I went back to work in the garage again.

WB: What year was that?

VB: That was in 1929 and part of 1930.

WB: You were there for six months to a year?

VB: I was there approximately six months.

WB: Where was that mine?

VB: It's down below Central Manhattan. Have you been down to Bob Bottom's operation?

WB: Which one—the placer or the other one?

VB: It's the placer, way down the canyon. It's about two and a half miles down there.

WB: It's located on the hillside, right?

VB: Three miles below town. This is the William Patrick Mine, and it's below Bobby Bottom's mine.

WB: Below Bobby Bottom's placer operation?

VB: On the same road, yes.

WB: Is this before you get to that bench you were telling me about?

VB: Oh, yes. It's before you get to the bench. The mine is located on a hillside, and you can see a big dump up there. It's about three miles, but it's right above Bobby's. You're looking at Bobby's work and right beside the William Patrick. That property had patented claims: the Diamond No. 1 and Diamond No. 2. They've owned that property there since 1907.

WB: Was there any rich ore there?

VB: It's a silver mine. When I left there, as they were sinking that shaft, they ran into some pretty good silver ore, but the company ran out of money so they just gave it up. It's never been operated since.

WB: The man who first was up in Austin worked for the Manhattan something, and he came to Manhattan and found some silver.

VB: Yes.

WB: Was he down on the lower end of that?

VB: I don't know. It was in the lower part of Manhattan somewhere because there are silver claims on that side of the canyon.

WB: On the south side.

VB: Yes. I always was told that he was prospecting several miles below Manhattan in the Manhattan Canyon, so I think that's where the canyon derived its name from him when he was prospecting there.

WB: Right. So your work ended at the William Patrick Mine, and you went back to work at your place at Francisco's. Were you involved in any other mining until you went into the service?

VB: No.

WB: Well, you told me once about the fellow with whom you used to drive up to Bald Mountain.

VB: The Oscar Peele mine. That's when I was up to Francisco's garage, but I was taking that fellow—Nick Bozich—up to the mine.

WB: Who was Oscar Peele?

VB: Oscar Peele was the original owner of that property in the early days.

WB: So he had to take those claims up.

VB: In the early days. He left Manhattan, and I heard that he had passed away and that the claims became vacant or were up for location and that Nick Bozich located them. He's the gentleman that I used to take up and drop off at the foot of the mountain with all his tools and anything he needed to do his work during the day. Then I'd go up in the evening and pick him up and haul him back home. He did not own a car and did not drive. About a year later he purchased a used Model T and hired me to teach him to drive. He was up in age, and it took quite a length of time for him to learn to drive.

WB: You did this every day?

VB: Every day when he worked. He only worked during the summertime.

WB: Did he pay you to take him up?

VB: Oh, yes.

WB: Did you ever go up and work in the mine with him?

VB: No, I never worked in the mine. I walked up to the mine.

WB: What was it like up there? Was it just a tunnel?

VB: There was a fairly deep tunnel there.

WB: They didn't have it shored up, did they?

VB: No, there was no shoring.

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

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VB: There was no shoring. I believe he had a collar set in the front of the tunnel opening was all.

WB: Did he have tracks in there?

VB: He had tracks.

WB: How deep was it?

VB: In the early days, when Oscar Peele was there, he wheeled it out with a wheelbarrow. He had a fellow working for him for a while, a young Austrian fellow by the name of Dan Porobich. He was the one that was mucking the ore in the wheelbarrow and wheeling it out on the waste dump.

WB: Was this pretty rich ore?

VB: No, it wasn't rich; it was low grade.

WB: How could they possibly make any money?

VB: Well, he didn't. He didn't ship any ore out of there.

WB: Why was he doing it?

VB: He was looking for an ore body. You know how these prospectors were in those days. They were out looking for a rich ore body, and when they started to dig a tunnel, they just kept going. If it was low-grade material, that didn't justify milling it or having it hauled to the mill, so they usually quit digging.

WB: That was something that always confused me. I was under the impression that when it was a tunnel, it meant that somebody had found rich ore, and that's why they went through all that time and trouble.

VB: They were looking for that big bonanza. There was a lot of work done there for nothing, but that's the way they were. They were persistent. The leasers and the miners that owned claims were the people that made Manhattan, it wasn't the mining companies. The leasers were the ones that made Manhattan.

WB: Define what you mean by leasers.

VB: A No. 1 party owns the claims; the No. 2 party is the leaser. A miner gets a lease from the owner of the claim to operate on his property or to mine on it, and the agreement usually is that you have to pay what you call a royalty. That was figured on a percentage of the gross returns from the mint. [Laughter] The percentage varied from 10 to 25 percent. A leaser was a miner that didn't have any mining claims, and he wanted to do some work so he would get a lease on this property and under conditions of paying so much royalty on what his gross returns were.

WB: Considering people like Nick Bozich and other leasers and miners who were there looking for the gold, approximately what was the ratio of married to unmarried men?

VB: The biggest part of them was unmarried. As to ratio, I do not know.

WB: What was their general age group?

VB: They were mostly older, and some were younger. Nick Bozich was pretty well up in age. My dad had worked for Nick Bozich when he moved to Manhattan from Peavine Ranch in 1908. I think I told you before part of the story when he worked for Nick Bozich in the placer mine.

WB: Maybe you did. Tell me again.

VB: When my dad came to Manhattan in 1905, he worked at Peavine, as I told you. Then he moved up to Manhattan and went to work in placer mining and worked for Nick

Bozich. That was about 1909. When he was working for him, we lived down in the Central in tents. We had two tents: one was for the kitchen, and one was the bedroom. My dad worked for Nick Bozich for three or four years, and he eventually went in partners with him.

WB: This was all during this time you're living in tents?

VB: No. Later on we moved up to Manhattan, but he continued to work for Nick Bozich.

WB: At the placer site?

VB: Yes, at the placer down in the canyon. Placer mining didn't start down there until about 1909.

WB: How long did your mother live down in the tents with him?

VB: We moved down there when I was about three years old—I was born in May of 1909—and we lived there for a little over a year. Then we moved up to the Tonopah road. I showed you a picture of that cabin that I told you was up there and was moved into town in later years.

WB: Yes. It's the house that now sits behind your house that belongs to your brother. What's your brother's name?

VB: James Boni. He passed away. His wife owns it.

WB: Okay, James' wife owns it now. It's above your house. That house was up on the Tonopah road farther east than the Wittenberg Warehouse on the north side of the road. Your dad worked for Nick Bozich for about three to four years total?

VB: It was about three to four years, and then they went in partnership. He worked with Nick Bozich, but I don't think they were partners more than a couple of years.

WB: How did they make out?

VB: Oh, they made out pretty good. Nick Bozich was an old-time placer miner. He hired a lot of people. At one time he had a pretty big operation. That's when they first started placer mining in the canyon. He was one of the operators that hired a lot of people, and then there was another fellow by the name of Dry Wash Wilson. Dry Wash Wilson had a big operation. He hired a lot of men. He had as high as 30 to 40 men working because he worked three shifts. It was going continually; it never shut down. My dad worked for Dry Wash Wilson after he left Nick Bozich. Later Dad and his two cousins from Italy leased some ground in Bozich's placer mining.

WB: Where were Bozich's claims? Was there a name?

VB: I don't know the names of the claims. There were so many claims there that I can't remember. [Laughter] The claims were located below the William Patrick Mine.

WB: Was it pretty far down the canyon?

VB: Yes, the first ones were down below the Central. When he worked that ground out down there, he had some claims right below Mount Moriah near the cemetery at the foot of the hill. That's when Nick was working on his own, and he had a crew hired in later years. He operated the mines there for four or five years.

WB: How did they work this placer ground?

VB: They just dug a shaft down to the bedrock and ran drifts; it's what they call a drift or a tunnel underground. All the time you have to keep panning the gravel to be sure there is gold in there because if you don't find any gold, there's no use to continue that tunnel, and then you drift off in another direction.

WB: What was the size of those tunnels? They weren't shoring those tunnels up, were

they?

VB: No, they weren't shoring them. They were not square. They made them round so they would support the ground better. They were low. They worked on their knees a lot because when they first started drifting, they didn't want to handle too much waste because that's a lot of loss in labor. If they found good gravel, then they'd make the tunnel a little larger so they could stand up in a stooped position.

WB: Were they blasting down there?

VB: No blasting. It was all with a pick and shovel. That's because it was just loose gravel. A lot of people had been caved in on and a few buried there.

WB: About how many?

VB: Well, I couldn't tell you. I know of two men that were buried there that they never did find; they never could get to them because the ground kept on caving in. They just left them. Two brothers, the Swanson Brothers, were working claims in the canyon below the William Patrick Mine.

WB: At the same time or different times?

VB: At the same time.

WB: That area there where they were tunneling, was that ground substantially mined from the surface? What happened to that ground when they had the dredge going up the gulch?

VB: When the dredge came up, it took in everything except approximately 20 to 30 feet of overburden that had no values, and they worked from the surface to the bedrock.

WB: All those areas where they had dug shafts and tunnels were subsequently dug up entirely by the dredge?

VB: Dug up entirely. The whole width of the canyon, they took everything. I knew the man who owned all that property down in the canyon; his name was William Donald. He purchased all these placer claims from claims owners because nobody was working them, and he also located many claims that had been abandoned. We were in a Depression era at that time.

WB: When did the placer mining really taper off down in the canyon?

VB: In the late '20s I recall that there was one placer mine operating—a fellow by the name of Bill Amadon. It'd taper off a little bit, but there were always placer miners working down there. In fact, the placer miners were run off when the dredge took over.

WB: That was in 1938?

VB: In 1938, yes. They started running them off about 1937. They were given notices as to when they were to cease any further placer mining.

WB: By running them off you mean because they weren't keeping their assessment work up or something?

VB: No, the dredge was going to purchase and take over all that property to dredge it, and they wanted to get the leasers and everybody off the property.

WB: Did the leasers do pretty well?

VB: Some of them did.

WB: How did Nick Bozich do?

VB: Nick Bozich made good money.

WB: For example, discuss when you were driving him up to the claims on Bald Mountain.

VB: That's when he was spending his money that he earned from the placer because

he was retired. [Laughter] He had quit placer mining at that time.

WB: So he could afford that, though.

VB: Well, he could afford it. He had a little money that he had made in the early days of placer mining because he was mining in virgin ground and on a large scale.

WB: Did he enjoy going up there to work?

VB: He enjoyed it. He liked to have his hands in mining.

WB: Was he doing any blasting up there?

VB: Yes, he had to blast.

WB: He had the tracks in there with one ore car.

VB: Oscar Peele had put the tracks in about the time that he quit working up there. He had an ore car, and when Bozich went up there, he didn't have to bring any ore car tracks in because they were already there. All we hauled up there were the tools that he worked with: drills, steel, hammers, picks, shovels, water, dynamite, fuse, and caps.

WB: How many tunnels were up there?

VB: There's a lower tunnel and an upper tunnel, but the lower tunnel, nobody did much work down there. I don't know why they went up there on that peak.

WB: There are tunnels right there at the end of the road?

VB: At the end of the road, yes.

WB: Who was operating or doing that work?

VB: It was Oscar Peele's claims, and the workings were dug in the earlier years.

WB: Did he do any good down there?

VB: There was never much of anything that came out of there. There wasn't anyone interested in mining up in that area. Why Oscar Peele went there and why Nick Bozich

went there is beyond me. [Laughter] There were gold showings, but nothing worth milling. But like all miners, they always have hope of finding ore with values.

WB: Right. As you're heading down the road to Belmont, off to the left there are those . . . For one thing, is Slaughterhouse Gulch that road that goes up to Bald Mountain?

VB: Yes.

WB: Then as you go towards Belmont there are other roads that cut over toward Bald Mountain Wash, and there are mines and tunnels off those places.

VB: You mean as you're going down the canyon.

WB: Towards Belmont.

VB: Towards Belmont there are tunnels down there.

WB: Yes, there are roads that cut off to the north, and also along the road there are deep tunnels. Did they ever get anything that way? These were silver mines.

VB: Nothing down there. There was a lot of work being done down there in that canyon.

WB: Do you mean even on the other side, the south side of the road?

VB: Even on the south side.

WB: OK. Once you get beyond the Manhattan Mine, where you found the gold . . .

VB: The Manhattan gold?

WB: Yes, Manhattan gold. Beyond that, there never was anything else?

VB: There was a little placer down in that area. In fact, I have a brother, Albino—the one that's up in Washington—he and a fellow by the name of McKinnon went down in that canyon and sunk quite a few holes down there, looking for placer gold. They found little values but nothing worth working.

WB: Tony Grimes was fooling around down there for a while. This is where you're going toward Belmont, and when you get down toward the valley the shortcut turns off to the left. You're right there on the right; there are the holes.

VB: My brother dug that—he and McKinnon. In fact, I think it's still got the windlass standards on it.

WB: That could be. I know they used to be there.

VB: They found a little value there but nothing worth mining.

WB: All the main concentrations of ore were from the top there at Manhattan Gold and west.

VB: Yes. As you go right over the summit to go to Belmont, and down at the foot you turn right, there's a mine in there with a gallows frame. There's a gallows frame and a building there. That mine belonged to a fellow by the name of Oscar Fletcher. That was his property: Oscar Fletcher Mines. They did a lot of mining in there, too, but never shipped any ore. That's what got me when we made that strike up there because the strike we made is right up above that Fletcher Mine up in the mountain. That's the only place where they ever found gold of any value on that side of the mountain.

WB: There may be some, but they haven't found it yet.

VB: Yes. [Laughter] There may be something there if they found the right spot.

WB: That's to the east of the Manhattan Gold. From the late '20s and through the '30s, was any mining activity being conducted in Belmont?

VB: In Belmont there was nothing in the '20s.

WB: When did it really peter out in Belmont? The end of the 1800s?

VB: When I was a little kid, there was no mining in Belmont. It petered out early just

like it did in Austin.

WB: Did they ever find any gold in Belmont?

VB: It was mostly silver ore. There might have been traces of gold, as there is everywhere. Even when you find silver ore, there is little or no showing of gold at all.

WB: What about Tybo?

VB: Tybo operated in the early days way back in the 1800s—somewhere back there. Then it shut down. It was resurrected in other times, but I don't remember the year. That was the year that they put power into Belmont. It was a couple of years after the power company put the substation in Manhattan, so that would have had to be about 1911 or 1912. The substation was built in 1909. They constructed the power line from Manhattan to Tybo about two years after. As I said, it went through Belmont to Tybo but Belmont never had any power. It was a high tension line; a high voltage of 55,000 volts, 3 phase line.

WB: Why did they go through Belmont?

VB: Well, that was their shortest route. The power company surveys the land, and they take the shortest and best route they can.

WB: The easiest route.

VB: Yes, the easiest, where they can get in to work and bring their poles in.

WB: Did you work on that?

VB: I did in 1929. I went there in the later part of '28 or '29. When Tybo quit the first time, they left the power poles in. The power company removed all the wire, cross arms, and all the insulators—everything was taken out and stored at the substation in Manhattan. The telephone line was taken out also. In 1929, when Tybo was going to start

operations again, another company took over. They wanted the power put back so they contracted the work out through the power company to do the work.

Tybo had their own men working from Tybo to McCann Summit, and the power company in Manhattan was doing the work from Manhattan to McCann Summit. The man that did the work was their lineman. The lineman that they had in Manhattan was put on the job, and he had to hire two helpers, so he hired Joe Francisco and myself to go out and work on the job with him. Joe Francisco had two horses and a sled. They were required to have horses in order to drag up power poles that had to be replaced. Joe had the sled to haul the cross arms, the wire, insulators, and miscellaneous supplies. When you unrolled the wire off the spools, you used the horse to pull the wire along the pole line.

I worked with the lineman. He'd go up on the pole, and he had a block and tackle outfit. He'd lower the hook, and whatever he wanted I would tie it onto the hook and the rope and would hoist it up for him. It was either with a cross arm or with bolts that he used to bolt it with, insulators. Then when it came time to put the wire up, we'd just tie the rope around the wire and I would hoist the wire up. He placed it over the insulator and wrapped it over the insulator. He went all along the power line that way. I worked on that project for about a month and a half. My first job in the morning was to go to Belmont and haul water in barrels for the horses.

WB: During this period of the 1930s in Manhattan, was the population about 300 or 400 people?

VB: In the 1930s? It was probably a couple hundred. From the 1920s on, it was a Depression era there. Everything had come to a standstill pretty much.

WB: Late ’20s, early ’20s or what?

VB: About 1920 is when it started. Right after the war, that’s when a lot of the mills shut down because of depressed prices in the metal.

WB: Still there were a couple of hundred people living there, right?

VB: It might have been a little more or less.

WB: What would the population of Tonopah have been around that time?

VB: I don’t recall. Tonopah was pretty depressed, too.

WB: But there were still the hotels in Manhattan.

VB: No, we had had the fire there. Everything burned down in 1922—that is, the business district along with many homes. It was from where the firehouse was located. I showed you the picture of the firehouse. From that firehouse up to just a little below where the Manhattan store is now located, that all burned down on that side. On the opposite side of the street from where the road goes up to Bob Bottom’s—where the Merchant Hotel was located—down to the Francisco Garage, all that was burned out, too. That just cleaned out everything—even houses on the hillside burned.

WB: Was that the one major fire in Manhattan?

VB: They had had one before, way back in 1909, but I don’t recall it as I was not born until 1909. There were eight or nine buildings destroyed, but they rebuilt right away after that first fire. After the second fire, nobody rebuilt. That one in ’22 cleaned them out, and that’s when people started to leave. This was when the post office was moved up to the Nye and Ormsby Bank Building that was vacant.

I recall Tony Brackett, who operated a saloon. He opened up another saloon in a small, empty building that was located below the Manhattan Mercantile Store. The

people on the other side all moved out. There were the Nanini brothers that had a grocery store, and they had a saloon there and a meat market. They burned out, and they moved to Reno and purchased the Plaza Hotel. The only person that constructed a small barber shop building on the right side of the street was George W. Miller, who lost his barber shop in the fire.

WB: Before we started recording, we talked about Hubert Welch. I asked you if you knew him. When did you first meet Hubert Welch?

VB: I had heard about him before, but when I first got acquainted with him was when he was running the stage into Manhattan, hauling the mail. That was between 1934 and 1935, when I opened the garage down there.

WB: What had you heard about him before you met him?

VB: I just heard of his name, and I knew somebody who associated with Hubert, Dave Banovich. He lives down in Fallon. They were kind of buddies. In fact, they operated the mail route together. Sometimes Dave Banovich would run the mail truck out to Manhattan, and sometimes Hubert Welch would run it out.

WB: What was he like? What was your impression of him?

VB: He was a quiet kind of fellow, an ordinary man. He wasn't boisterous or anything. To my impression, he was a nice fellow.

WB: During this period of time, how many bars were there in Manhattan?

VB: In 1928, there was a fellow from Tonopah who came out to Manhattan. He was a bootlegger. John Mitchell was his name, and he had been bootlegging and bringing booze into Manhattan and Round Mountain for some time. The only bar that was operating there was a bar operated by Tony Brackett. John Mitchell decided that he was going to

open a bar in Manhattan, so he had that building moved in from Silver Peak which is now known as the Manhattan Bar.

The fellow that hauled it in there was a fellow by the name of Dave Roberts. He was in the house-moving business over in Silver Peak. Mitchell fixed up the place. He bought a bar someplace in Silver Peak. I don't know where he picked it up, but he fixed the place all up and operated the bar there for quite a number of years.

WB: Did Prohibition have any effect on Manhattan?

VB: No, Prohibition didn't affect it much. There was a lot that was going on anyway. [Laughter]

WB: What do you mean?

VB: Well, people who ran bars up there were making booze or having it made and selling the booze they were making over the bar instead of buying it. [Laughter]

WB: During the period of Prohibition, there weren't any raids in Manhattan?

VB: They had raids—a lot of them. The pro-his would come in there when they'd be tipped off about who was making booze. Of course, the fellows who were making the booze would be tipped off also that the Prohibition officers were coming in so they'd leave town so they wouldn't get caught. Well, the pro-his would come in and go to their place of operation where they were making the booze and just demolish everything. They'd take an ax after all these wine barrels and whiskey barrels and let them sit on the ground, and they'd break up their stills. A lot of that went on.

Do you know Slim Russell, who later owned the Tonopah Club in Tonopah? He was a very popular man in Tonopah. He started out in Manhattan. He lived there and used to make liquor out there. He had that little house up the road from your place. When you

go up that hillside, there's a little house with a big deck out there built around it. It's below Zybell.

WB: Right across from Walt's, yes.

VB: Slim Russell used to have that. The house was painted green. Matt Mongrandi lived right below the church. He had a little house up there on the hillside. He got raided pretty often. There were a lot of others. Over in Round Mountain, there were a few. There was a fellow by the name of Blackjack who was dealing in illegal booze with John Mitchell.

WB: Now, did the red light district still exist during the '30s?

VB: Oh, yes.

WB: Okay. Now, when did you leave Manhattan?

VB: I left it right after I went into the service. I was gone from there during the service anyway. I was stationed in Tonopah, and I was in and out of Manhattan most of the time.

WB: Were you in the air force?

VB: I was in the army air force, yes. I was a supervisor in a repair shop.

WB: In Tonopah?

VB: Yes, at the air base.

WB: Then after the war in, what, 1946?

VB: I got out of the army in forty-five, and I left there in September of '45 and came to Reno.

WB: This was before you got married?

VB: I was married then.

WB: When did you and Inez marry?

VB: We got married during the war.

WB: In what year?

VB: In 1942.

WB: Did you volunteer, or did they draft you?

VB: I volunteered. They were going to draft me anyway. I was enlisted at the base as I was working there in "civilian" status as a foreman in the quartermaster repair shop. When they started that base, they started right from scratch putting in buildings and started building it up. Their trucks would come to Manhattan once in a while, and if one happened to break down over there I did the repair work on it.

Through that job I met a major who was in charge of transportation. He came out to Manhattan one day to take care of the billing, and he said, "Val, this mining here is going to go down because they're going to declare a moratorium on mining, and we're not going to be able to get blasting powder or anything. I'm going to have a good job for you in Tonopah, if you want to come and apply for it. I can get you in there. I'm going to need a foreman for the quartermaster shop and to repair vehicles."

I got to thinking it over, and I could see business was going to hell, so I went in one day and told him that I filed an application for the job. Right away they told me, "Well, you can come to work Monday."

I said, "Gee, I've got to get some notice out at Manhattan to my customers that I'm closing up."

They said, "We've got to have you here within two weeks."

So I went out and I notified all of my customers that I was going to close the place up, and I just locked the doors.

WB: Then you had to enlist?

VB: No. I went in there and worked as a civilian for three months. They put me on a civil service just a month before they enlisted me. I was on that job one month, and the draft board came up with my number to go to the service. They notified me that I was to leave for an induction center in Utah. I went to the officer and told him that I had my enlistment papers. I said, "I'm going to have to leave, and I want to let you know that I'm going to go in and take my exam tomorrow morning. Then I'm going to be shipped out to Utah."

He got on the phone to the draft board to get me off and they wouldn't let me go. I was already cleared to go. The commander of the base—his name was Colonel McCrillis—finally sent word to the draft board and told them that he was enlisting me in the base down there. He asked me if I was willing to stay there, and I said, "Sure, I would just as soon stay here as go anywhere." So they enlisted me at the base, and that's where I stayed for three years. I worked at the same job holding the same position.

WB: Did you marry before that job or after?

VB: I was married before.

WB: But in 1942 is when you got married. You got a license in Tonopah and got married in Reno by a justice of the peace in his office. Then you went to the Riverside Hotel and had your wedding breakfast there. Can you tell me about the event that occurred with your Model T? When did that happen?

VB: There was a fellow that owned a ranch in Smoky Valley named was Ed Turner. They called him Butch—his nickname—Butch Turner. Every so often he'd rent a truck from A-Truck. Kalkbrenner, the person that had that jewelry store and repaired watches

in Manhattan, had a little Model T Ford truck with an express body on it. It was a chain drive.

Butch Turner would rent that truck from him to go into Tonopah to purchase dairy cows, which he would bring out to his ranch. This particular evening when he was coming home from Tonopah with his cow on the truck, he got down below Pipe Springs about a half a mile in the canyon, and his truck stopped down there; it quit on him and he couldn't get it started. Somebody came by in a car and asked if they could help. They wanted to know what his trouble was, and he said, "There's something wrong with the truck; I can't start it. Would you stop by Manhattan and ask Val Boni if he would come out and get me?" It was about 9:00 in the evening.

I had a little Model T Roadster pickup. I had taken the top off of it, and the windshield was folded down. The windshield was made in those days where you could take the upper half and just fold it down. They didn't have any channel to protect the glass between the two halves. The glass was just anchored in the windshield frame on sides, bottom, and top. Jim, my brother, wanted to go with me. I said, "Okay, you can come for the ride." Of course, Jim was always there, and every time I went anywhere he was right there to go with me.

WB: This is 1929 in the summertime?

VB: In the summertime, yes. It was nice weather. It was a pitch dark night, and on those older Model T Fords, they had lights that operated off a magneto. You had to keep the speed of the engine up in order to have any brilliancy to your lights because if you slowed down, the lights would go dim; they're the brilliancy of a candle.

I was driving at a pretty good clip of speed so as to keep the lights bright, and I

knew just about where his truck was stalled. It happened that in the meantime, Ed Turner got the truck started. He had come up a ways above Pipe Springs right around a sharp curve and on a little hill, and the truck stalled again on him. Well, he had no lights because he had magneto-operated lights. He didn't have a flashlight so here I was sailing down the road, and with a good clip of speed, and just as I started around the curve, I spotted that truck in my lights.

Now, the old Model Ts had three pedals: one was low, high, and neutral; the middle one was reverse, and the other one was brakes. I guess in my quest to stop, I went down with both feet and hit all the pedals. This locked up the drive shaft, and when you do that one of the wheels on the Model T goes forward and the other one starts to reverse. This is due to the differential action and the light weight of the rear of the Model T. The car went into a spin and flipped over very slowly, and we started to put it in a turn. I headed for a bank because there was a drop-off on the right side.

WB: Yes, I know that drop-off.

VB: I knew that road so well, and I knew right where I was at so I cramped the wheels and headed it for the hill thinking I would hit the hillside and stop, but the car climbed the hill at an angle and just flipped over upside down. It pinned me flat on the ground, face down, where the door is and the body makes a little curve. It landed right on my back. I grabbed my brother and I shoved him down because I knew we were going to tip over. I said, "We're going to go over." The windshield came down on his foot and cut him across the foot, right above the toes.

Turner came up right away and looked at the truck. He saw I was pinned under there, and he lifted the truck. He dragged Jimmy out and then he dragged me out from

underneath, too. When I got out, I helped him lift the truck up and put it back up on its wheels. Jimmy was cut, and he said, "We better get back to town." It didn't do any damage; it didn't break the windshield or anything.

We drove back to Manhattan, and an old doctor from Round Mountain happened to be in Manhattan that night for somebody. Dr. Crane was his name, so right away I had my sister Mary run down to the Ripey's store where they had the telephone exchange to find out where he was. She located him and got him to come up to the house, and he had to clean the wound and put some stitches in because he was bleeding like a stuck hog. They had to cut his boot off to get it off. After Jim was taken care of, Ed and I went back down to get his truck. He fixed it up so he could get back to his ranch. Of course, he had to travel all the way from there down into Smoky Valley where he had a ranch right where Carver's is now located.

WB: How did the road go from Manhattan down to Carver's?

VB: At that time you had to drive down the canyon, down to Central Manhattan. The road forked and you took the right turn and went over the hills into the next canyon and followed the road along the foothills. You followed the pole line road; there was a pole line going over to Round Mountain right at the foot of the mountains. You followed that road into Round Mountain, and then you went down the valley to where Carver's is now located.

WB: They called that the Round Mountain Road. When did they put the road up Smoky Valley from Tonopah?

VB: I can't recall just exactly, but it was around 1936. They always had to take the road by way of Pipe Springs. That was the Tonopah road. You had to go through

Manhattan on the way to Round Mountain.

WB: Yes, prior to 1936, the Smoky Valley road was always . . .

VB: Ralston Valley and then Pipe Springs. Yes, you'd come up through Ralston and then Spanish Springs and Pipe Springs into Manhattan.

WB: You could go from Spanish Springs to Belmont the way you can now?

VB: Yes. Right below Spanish Springs, there used to be a turnoff; I think the road is still there. It goes around there and then goes to Belmont. Then it goes to Hunts Canyon, too. There's a road that leads to Hunts Canyon.

WB: What activity was going on in Spanish Springs where you were a boy?

VB: When I was a boy, there was nothing going on there with the exception of the teams stopping there to water the horses. That had already been partly abandoned. It was used in the early days mostly. Evidently when I was born there was some activity there, but when I got up to an age that I could remember there wasn't much activity at Spanish Springs.

WB: What was there originally?

VB: It was just a stopping place for teams to rest and get water.

WB: That was replaced by the stop at Pipe Springs?

VB: They would also stop at Pipe Springs.

WB: In the 1860s and '70s, was Spanish Springs a stage stop?

VB: Yes, it was a stopping station.

WB: What do you know about the Spanish in this country, like the early Spanish that came up in the 1860s?

VB: I don't know anything about that, but they had Spanish people up there; that's

what I heard. I read some articles about it. They were mostly up in the Spanish belt area, they called it. Barcelona is where the Barcelona Mine is in Silver Creek. The Barcelona Mine is now owned by Fred and Virginia Masters. That was nothing but Spaniards. Then they had a Spanish settlement down in Liberty, and they mined ore there. In fact, they had some kind of mills down there that they called arrastras, and some of the mills were there when I was a boy; I saw the mills. There was a mill that just ground the ore by dragging large stones over a metal bed in a circular motion. The operation was being done by horse power.

WB: Right. When I lived in Spain in 1960, the little villages had the mule and the stone, and they would separate the wheat with those arrastras.

VB: Yes. That was where the principle of the mill came from.

WB: In the San Antonio Mountains where you visited those places, was that on the western side of the mountains by the Liberty Mine, or did you go up the northern tip of the San Antonio up to the town of San Antone?

VB: San Antone was just one of the freight way stations—they used to rest their horses and make a stop overnight. That was on their way to Belmont. They used to have freight teams that would travel to Millers. They'd go out to San Antone and make a stop there, then they would continue out to Palo Alto, Manhattan, over the Belmont Summit, and into Belmont. That was one of their routes.

WB: Why did they take this roundabout way?

VB: They did have a route that went from San Antone over what they called Baxter Pass. There was a spring up there that they called Baxter Springs, and they would go over that route into Ralston Valley and then head up toward Belmont. This was a much longer

route.

WB: Why would they bother to go to San Antone anyway? It seems that there was nothing over that way.

VB: That was a stopping station, a stopping-off point to rest their teams. San Antone had been a stopping place since the early days.

WB: That was in the early days, probably before Tonopah really existed. Then the teams would come up from Sodaville, and to Millers Station . . .

VB: In Nevada.

WB: Oh, Sodaville, Nevada, near Mina, and then up from Millers and up across the Smoky Valley by San Antone. That would account for that.

VB: From San Antone they'd come up through Palo Alto; at the time that place was called Rabbit Springs. I don't know why they named it Palo Alto. That sounds like a Spanish name for a high pole or a high mountain. [Laughter] When John C. Humphrey made that discovery on the April Fool in Manhattan, he was camping in Palo Alto.

WB: Then when Inez's father came over in 1911, the first place he lived was on . . .

VB: That's where he ended up at Palo Alto.

WB: That was a little mining camp?

VB: In fact, he told me that himself. That's where he ended up and he stayed there for a short period of time and then moved up to Manhattan.

WB: So it was a mining camp?

VB: There was a little bit of placer mining going on there, but it didn't amount to much. At first they thought they had a big discovery of silver and lead ore, but it didn't turn out to be the thing.

WB: Okay, in 1905, John Humphrey found the gold up on April Fool. A lot of the people from Palo Alto moved closer to Manhattan because there wasn't enough water down in Palo Alto to support that many people anyway. What about Central Manhattan?

VB: Central Manhattan was pretty well booming because a speculator was selling lots down there. When the people finally moved out of the Central and up to Manhattan, from reports that I had heard, they had five saloons down there, two grocery stores, two hotels, a steam laundry, and a lumberyard. They had the only place that had freezer lockers for perishable food, and they even had a brokerage house that was selling mining property. They had a post office, and they also built a power plant down there. It was operated by steam, but the plant just barely got into operation about the time that the people moved out of the Central right up to Manhattan because that's where the big strikes were up there. The people moved up to what was a tent city.

WB: Was Central Manhattan a tent city?

VB: No, Central was not a tent city. That steam plant was still there when I was a young boy. I would go down the canyon chasing burros and stop there and play around with the machinery.

WB: Where was the Central Manhattan town site?

VB: Do you know where Bob Bottom had his mining operation way down by the William Patrick? The Central was located up from Bottom's property, maybe a half a mile or so.

WB: On that road?

VB: Well, the road was different at that time, but it was down in the gulch area.

WB: Was it totally eliminated when the dredge went up the gulch later on?

VB: There weren't any houses left; there were just a few buildings. Central didn't last too long. After 1906 it started going down; buildings were torn down, and some of them were moved up to Manhattan. A fellow down there by the name of La Clare owned all the property where that steam plant was located. In fact, it was on his property.

WB: When did Palo Alto cease?

VB: It was abandoned in August of 1905. There were very few people living there after that. It was just people coming in. They didn't have a place to stay up in Manhattan, so that's where they camped, mostly living in tents. The stages stopped there.

WB: So that's why Inez's father went there, just as a stopping off place.

VB: Yes, just to get established. He didn't know where to go, I guess. [Laughter]

WB: I guess the town population was mostly miners. Is that right?

VB: That's what it was mostly. There were more men than women. There were many prospectors and promoters, also.

WB: What was the social life like in terms of the bars and the drinking and so forth? Gambling?

VB: All I know is what I heard. Of course, that was before my time, but that also was from listening to my dad talk about it. All there was in those days was drinking. The men would go to the bars, and they would spend their time gambling, drinking, and talking about mining. The women stayed home.

WB: What about gambling?

VB: Oh, there was heavy gambling.

WB: Where did they gamble?

VB: They had gambling in all the saloons.

WB: Did they have casinos?

VB: No casinos. The saloons had gambling. Of course, gambling went on in the years clear up until I left Manhattan. They were still gambling in the saloons on a small scale, mostly poker.

WB: Were there casinos in Manhattan?

VB: Not that I know of.

WB: In other words, were there establishments where the primary purpose was gambling?

VB: There were gambling establishments—"saloons" is what they mostly called them.

WB: What kinds of games were played?

VB: Oh, they played pan. They played poker. Poker was one of the big games, and then they had faro.

WB: Were they mostly all card games?

VB: Mostly all cards games.

WB: Did they have any crap tables, twenty-one tables?

VB: Yes, they had crap tables.

WB: What about twenty-one?

VB: I don't recall.

WB: Keno?

VB: I don't recall Keno, either.

WB: Were there any Chinese people living in Manhattan?

VB: All I ever knew was one Chinaman.

WB: What did he do?

VB: He was a cook at the Joe Connors Hotel. I think I told you something about Connors Hotel. I went to school with the adopted son of the fellow that was running the hotel.

WB: Yes. Now, what about crime and things like that? Was there a police station or anything like that?

VB: Oh, yes. We had a sheriff there, and we had a constable.

WB: So it was two men altogether?

VB: I don't know in the early days how many men they had, but in later years when I began to recall what was going on, I could only recall the sheriff and the constable. S. P. Santos was the sheriff and Henry Nofsinger the constable. As I told you, there's a story that has been published in regard to the first sheriff in Manhattan, Logan.

WB: Were there many fights, robberies, or things like that going on in Manhattan?

VB: Lots of fights. There were not too many robberies as I recall in my time. In the early days they may have had them, but I don't recall hearing anything about them.

WB: You never heard of any robberies. What about fights? Was that just basically your drunken brawls?

VB: Drunken brawls, people fighting over mining claims. There was a lot of dissent over the mining claims. Somebody would go out and jump a claim from somebody else. Instead of legally settling it, they'd settle it with pugilism. [Laughter]

WB: Did they ever resort to firearms?

VB: I never heard of anybody being shot. Of course, before my time in the early days they could have had that, too.

WB: Where was the nearest courthouse?

VB: It was in Tonopah.

WB: When did the Belmont courthouse shut down?

VB: That moved in 1905. The Nye County seat went from Belmont to Tonopah.

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

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WB: During the war, was the little red light district still in existence in Manhattan?

VB: Yes, but there weren't as many women down there.

WB: At its peak, how many women would be working down there, would you think?

VB: In the early days they had quite a red light district there, but by the time I got up to the age that I began to recognize some of those things, the red light districts had gone down because the population of Manhattan went down. There wasn't enough business to support them so they moved out and only left very few there. From when I was a little young boy, up until about 1942, there were only about nine or ten women that I recall.

WB: How many houses?

VB: There were four houses there to start with, then one of them was torn down so three were left. One of the women that operated a business down there had eventually moved up to Manhattan and purchased the rooming house that was across the street from where the Franciscos lived, where Pauley lives now. She purchased that in 1926. She operated the rooming house, but she also operated the business in the back end where the living quarters were. She was the owner, operator, and sole worker. [Laughter]

WB: What you're referring to as a motel, did they call it that in those days or was it a hotel?

VB: It was a little rooming house. In fact, they didn't even have the sign up there. All they had was a small lit-up sign that said "rooms." A fellow lived in the back where the living quarters were located; a fellow by the name of Frank Wilcox owned the property in the early days.

WB: When did the name "motel" first come into use, that you recall?

VB: I don't recall recognizing any places called "motel" until I started traveling around the country. I was probably about 13 or 14 years old when I started to notice them.

WB: They called them motels back then?

VB: Well, yes. A lot of them had just hotel rooms, and they started naming them motels, too. Anyway, in the early days I was told that they had a really large red light district down on the lower end of town.

WB: What stories did you hear about it?

VB: That's the only story that I heard about it, that it was a pretty huge red light district. They had a lot of women down there.

WB: How many houses?

VB: I couldn't tell you. That was at the height of the boom, around 1906 and 1905, when they had the San Francisco earthquake. Manhattan just went to pot.

WB: After 1905, when they moved the courthouse from Belmont to Tonopah, there were only a few people living in Belmont. Then somebody organized a dance in Belmont that was advertised for months in advance that drew people from all kinds of places like Eureka and Austin and Tonopah and so forth, and you were there that week.

VB: People from everywhere helped serve the food, but they had no electricity—no lights—so they had lanterns hung everywhere. There were all kinds of gas and kerosene lantern flashlights. [Laughter] They had a live orchestra that played for the dance.

WB: Where was it held?

VB: At the Cosmopolitan in Belmont. They had a live orchestra on that stage. The

benches were all around the walls so that people could sit. There was a huge crowd that night. In fact, the place was crammed to capacity and there wasn't even room enough to dance.

WB: Yes, it wasn't a very big place anyway.

VB: It wasn't very big, and the people were standing outside in the dark. There was a very large crowd. There was a fellow that had a fight with another man; they got into an argument, and, of course, they all were pugilistically inclined.

WB: Who were they?

VB: This fellow's name was Eldred Moore, and they were picking on his brother Jack. He was a Manhattanite and had a ranch in Smoky Valley known as Moore's Ranch—not far from Darrough's Hot Springs—and he had a brother named Jack. Then there was this other fellow, Fred Lindsay. He later became a policeman and constable over in Round Mountain. Lindsay was picking on this Eldred Moore's brother, and they finally ended up getting in a fight. Eldred was pretty tough. He held his own. He was a younger man. There was blood flowing that night. They had to stop them, split them up.

WB: Did anybody win this fight?

VB: No, nobody won it because they said they would have killed each other.

WB: Apart from the fight, what was the evening like?

VB: The evening was wonderful. Everyone had a good time. At midnight they stopped the music and they had tables set up in the back. Of course a lot of people brought their lunch over to the benches and sat there and ate because there wasn't enough room to set them all up at tables.

WB: Was it typical that they served food at these occasions?

VB: That was typical everywhere that we had a dance. Up in Austin they did the same thing at the dances. Hot Springs and Round Mountain used to have dances. Manhattan had them at the Toiyabe Club. When they had the dances, they'd go upstairs. They had tables up there, and that's where they served their little luncheon, or whatever it was, at midnight. Then when they got through eating, everyone would go back downstairs, the orchestra would start up, and they'd dance again until 2:00 or 3:00 or maybe until sunlight.

At the dances at Austin and down in Hot Springs, the people always would pitch in extra money to keep the orchestra playing because the orchestra was hired only to play until 2:00 or 3:00. They'd go around and make a collection, and the orchestra would agree to play. They played until the sun came up, and as that sun started to kick over the horizon, they played the last song and that was it. That was the only entertainment there was, and that dancing was enjoyed by all; everybody had a good time.

WB: As a boy and a young man, did you do any fishing or hunting?

VB: Oh, I've done quite a lot of fishing.

WB: Where?

VB: I fished at Peavine Creek, down at Kingston Canyon, at Pine Creek, Mosquito Creek, Hunts Canyon, and Barley Creek. I fished at all those places in the '20s and '30s.

WB: How far up Hunts Canyon did you fish?

VB: There were two ranches there in the early days—I don't know how it is now as I have not been there since the early '40s. They had a lower ranch that was run by a fellow called Billy Marsh, and then they had the upper ranch that was owned and operated by a Tom Trudgen. We did our fishing up above the upper ranch.

WB: Where was the upper ranch?

VB: They were almost connected together. It almost looked like it was one ranch in the canyon, but it was two separate ones.

WB: Today as you go up on Canyon Road and go past what is called Hunts Canyon ranch, do you know where those pictographs were—the Indian paintings on the rocks?

VB: On the rocks, yes.

WB: Now the upper ranch was beyond that, and the lower ranch was right there?

VB: Right there.

WB: That's pretty much the way it is now, but when you go past that rock, there's the remains of a ranch. There are a couple of buildings standing up there.

VB: That was probably that upper ranch.

WB: That's where the road curves off to go over the canyon pass.

VB: Yes, you could go over to McCann Summit.

WB: When you went up on the canyon fishing, you veered to the right and kept going up Hunts Canyon.

VB: Yes.

WB: Do you recall a cave up there?

VB: Yes, I recall that.

WB: It was like a regular cave. I don't know if Indians lived in it or what some years ago.

VB: I never heard any stories about it.

WB: Did you hike on up to the canyon from where you fished it?

VB: Going up, you mean?

WB: Yes.

VB: Oh, yes.

WB: How many miles?

VB: That (inaudible) got so bad that you couldn't fish. That is, the brushes were pretty heavy.

WB: How many miles do you think you went up from that cave?

VB: I couldn't tell you. Fishing was never too good if you got up too high; your fishing was always better down lower. We'd fish from the upper ranch up until the water was shallower, then we'd have to fish downward again.

WB: What about the Kingston Canyon? Groves Lake wasn't built probably back then yet.

VB: No.

WB: When did Carver's come in to existence? Ed Turner had the ranch where Carver's Corner is now located.

VB: In fact, Turner wanted to get out of the business. He offered to turn it over to my brother Pete for $4,500. Pete thought pretty well about it. Of course he had the money to buy it at that time, but he didn't know whether he could handle the thing.

WB: This was about 1928 or '29.

VB: There was an Indian village up in that area.

WB: When you were a young man?

VB: Yes. I was 11 or younger.

WB: What did you hear about it?

VB: Nothing except that the Indians lived up in that area and that they held these

fandangos up there—Indian dances and meetings where they all meet together and discuss their problems.

WB: They were still doing that back in the 1920s? There were Indians actually living up there?

VB: Maybe in the ’20s. No, it had to be before.

WB: There were Indians up there?

VB: They were living up there, yes.

WB: Living in the way Indians had lived for centuries?

VB: The same way they lived years ago.

WB: Hunting for their food and gathering and so forth.

VB: That’s right. Now those are stories I heard, but I never went up there. I hunted up on Jefferson Mountain, but I never went in that area.

WB: Then you heard, too, that the village was occupied only in the summertime.

VB: Right. There’s too much snow in there. There are bad winters in those mountains.

WB: So initially it was a hunting camp, and then it became a village that was used by families during the summer months. Then during the wintertime the Indians would go down in the valleys.

Now, you used to stay at your house in Manhattan. Ed Hughes lived in Belmont, and when he’d come visit you, he’d always had his bedroll with him. He’d stay a night or two and eat dinner, breakfast, and lunch with the family.

VB: Yes. He was a good friend of my brother Pete. That’s when Ed Hughes used to come to Manhattan in the late twenties.

WB: When you were growing up and you’d go to Tonopah, you saw Jack Longstreet.

Did you see him on the street, or what?

VB: I saw him on the street—people showed me who he was. I had heard a lot of stories.

WB: How old were you at the time?

VB: Oh, God, I was around 15 or 16 years old.

WB: Yes, because he was alive until ‘33 or ‘34. How did he strike you?

VB: Well, after all of the stories I heard, I just thought he was a renegade. [Laughter]

WB: What did he look like?

VB: I can’t recall exactly.

WB: Looking at him, did he sound like he could be the guy that you had heard the stories about?

VB: Oh, yes. He appeared to be that kind of a character.

WB: Was he a big man?

VB: Yes, pretty good size.

WB: How would he dress?

VB: He would dress just like a lot of the old-timers were dressed, like their clothes hadn’t been washed for some time. [Laughter]

WB: Did he wear a hat?

VB: Yes, he wore a hat.

WB: Did he have long hair?

VB: Yes, his hair was kind of long.

WB: Longer than normal?

VB: Yes, he had long hair. He was a scrubby-looking fellow. I remember he had a

beard of some kind.

WB: What do you recall, Val, about the Manhattan Bar and the Miner's Bar which still stand there? Tell us what you recall about when they were built and who owned them.

VB: The Manhattan Bar was not built there. As I told you, they had a fire in Manhattan in 1922 that burned the whole town up—that is, the business district—as well as many homes. It was on both sides of the street for complete blocks. There were no buildings on the ground—nothing was ever rebuilt there except the barber shop. I think it's still there. It was there a while back, but I don't know if somebody bought it and moved it or tore it down.

In 1928, there was a gentleman by the name of John Mitchell who was a bootlegger from Tonopah. He was hauling liquor from Tonopah to Manhattan and Round Mountain in a Studebaker car. He had a big barrel full of booze in the back end. He would stop at the garage, and I would do work for him. He was telling me that he was eventually going to put in a bar in Manhattan. This was 1928; he had that building moved in from Silver Peak.

WB: Which building?

VB: I'm talking about the Manhattan Bar that is there now. He opened up a bar there and operated it himself. He ran it, I think, for eight or ten years—something like that—and then he sold it. That's when a fellow by the name of Frank Slate bought it, and he ran that bar for I don't know how many years. Then a friend bought it from Frank.

WB: Do you know when?

VB: I don't remember; it was around '65, I think. She already had the bar. She was running the bar then, wasn't she?

WB: Right, and she was living in the bar. She had a little cot by the little wood stove.

VB: I don't remember that. When I was going up there, she was married to this Louis Vetsera. That's the guy that we called Broken Ass Louie. [Laughter] I don't know just when he died. He passed away there, but I can't remember the period it was. It was the time I went up there. She didn't have her husband. She lived by herself.

After a while there was a period in there . . . if I don't write this stuff down I get the times mixed. It was between that period when Frank Slate had the bar and Fern, my brother-in-law, and his wife owned that bar. Danny Daniels and his wife, Rosie, operated that bar for a couple of years. He finally got rid of it, and I think that's when Fern purchased it from him and Danny moved over to Round Mountain and started the bar over there, and a restaurant.

WB: So he sold it to Fern.

VB: I'm pretty sure that he was the one who sold it to Fern Vetsera.

WB: Let me tell you about the first time I went into that bar. That was in May of 1969, and I went to Manhattan because Ed Amonie had told me stories about Manhattan and Belmont and these stories intrigued me. When I came back to Nevada in 1969 from England, where I had been teaching for three years, I went to Manhattan from my way out to Reno, drove down there, got into town around 10:00 in the morning and drove up to Main Street.

Of course, at that time there were only seven or nine people—that was the population of Manhattan. I pulled up and I noticed that it looked like there might be somebody in that Manhattan Bar. I went up and opened the door, and there was Fern with her hair in pin curlers; she had little pin curls with bobby pins in it, and there was one guy

at the bar. That was Wild Bill Flannigan. It was about 10:00 in the morning. I opened the door and she looked at me and said, "Come on in and have a beer." [Laughter]

I said, "Oh, 10:00 in the morning is a little early for me. I was just looking if there's any place I could buy a little food and was going on to Belmont."

"Well, come on in and get a beer." She insisted that I have a beer. Next door they had a grocery store just up the street.

VB: Yes, the Manhattan store.

WB: Yes, but it wasn't open. Then Bill Flannigan said, "Well, when you come back from Belmont, come down to the other bar in town and I'll get you something to eat." I don't know if we went up and that grocery store was open or not. It seems to me it might have been, and I might have bought some tuna or something and some crackers. Anyway, that was my first meeting with Fern and Bill Flannigan. So, you met Fern when? Was the first time about 1965?

VB: That was about when I started going up there. My son and I used to go up there and would visit with her. Every time we went in there, my son would buy a drink. I would have a pop because I don't drink, and old Fern would listen to us talk with other fellows out in the bar. She was always over there. Her eyes were cock-eyed anyway. She had one eye on you and one eye over there. [Laughter] I don't know whether she was guarding her money or what it was, but she'd stay there and look at you for a while. Then she'd turn her eye, and she'd go over there and write something. Of course, she was writing an article for the Tonopah paper.

WB: Right, the *Tonopah Times* and the *Goldfield Gazette*. After I left that time, she was kind of cranky when I went in there. She wasn't real friendly, and she was having

her little drinks herself there at 10:00 in the morning. She liked this whiskey and soda, and Flannigan was drinking a beer. She had that one eyelid that was half-closed, and the other one would droop down all the way shut. Then it would snap back up all the way open, and then it would start slowly closing again and then jerk back up open. The other one always remained just about at steady half-mast. She always had this sort of faintly disapproving air about her, a little bit of impatience and disapproval mixed in.

Anyway, she was writing stuff down when I was there. I didn't know what she was doing, and some time after that I learned that she had done this little article in the paper, "It Happened in Manhattan." She talked about this couple coming through from England, and there I was. I still have a copy of that newspaper article from 1969.

VB: She had a sour attitude until you got to know her. Once you got to know her a little bit better, then she was very, very nice to you. She always enjoyed seeing us come in.

WB: After I bought her a drink, she got nicer, too. At that time, she had a little cot over against the wall where the entrance of the kitchen is now, and I don't think there was any room out there then. There was a stove, and between the stove and the wall, there was this little narrow cot. That's where she lived. Anyway, when was the first time that you met Flannigan?

VB: It was about the same time that I was going up there.

WB: Was he running the bar when you met him?

VB: No, when I went up there, as I recall, Tony Selig was running that bar.

WB: That's the Miner's Bar?

VB: Yes, that's the one. In fact, the bar belonged to Tony Selig, and Flannigan, to me,

was kind of a roustabout around town. I think he was helping Selig out, and he was putting in water lines.

WB: Do you know anything about Flannigan's background?

VB: No, I don't.

WB: About how old was he when you met him—45 or 50?

VB: I really couldn't say exactly how old he was. I never paid too much attention to him because he was kind of a story teller.

WB: Do you recall any of his stories?

VB: No. He was always talking about something, but I never paid too much attention. Well, he used to come down to see me a lot. I have that lot there between the garage, and Selig used to have those cabins there, right in front of Parletts. There used to be two cabins there. It's the lot where all those trucks and pickups are located. That lot was vacant at that time, and Flannigan had horses so he wanted to fence that in and make a corral in there. That's what he was after me for, and I wouldn't let him do it because I knew once he got a foothold in there, we'd have trouble getting rid of him. I finally told him, "No."

WB: Where did he have his horses?

VB: At that time he had them . . . right above you, there's a little white house.

WB: Yes, right on the main street there.

VB: I think he had them in there. There was a corral he had there.

WB: Where was the Seligs' property?

VB: There were two cabins in front of Parletts. That belonged to Virginia O'Rourke after her dad died.

WB: Okay, and just above that was where Lee Hyatt lived.

VB: That's the guy, Lee Hyatt. Lee Hyatt was living there, and he had horses, too. He had a corral right to the left of where the houses are, on the hillside. In fact, I think probably the corral is still there.

WB: North of where? Where Hyatt's house was?

VB: Yes, where Hyatt's house is located.

WB: Where that Manhattan store was sitting on the front . . .

VB: Yes.

WB: Do you mean just above my house?

VB: Yes, but across the street.

WB: Yes, across the street. But on the front of that—Bob Bottom owns it now—it says Manhattan Store.

VB: Oh, yes. At one time that was a store in 1938. There was a man from Elko who came down here by the name of Zunino, and he started a grocery store there.

WB: Any relation to the Zunino in Verdi?

VB: No, it was a different Zunino family. In fact, they moved in a lot of those houses in there. That lot there from Lee Hyatt, up the street there, there were some trees growing. I think there were a couple of trees still out on the left-hand side of the street as you're going up. That was all houses in there, and Zunino began renting homes. They came in around the time that the dredge was going to come in there.

WB: Now, Lee Hyatt's corral was to the north of that Manhattan store.

VB: Yes, that corral was in the back north.

WB: Yes, toward the church.

VB: In fact, I think there's still part of the fence there.

WB: When I met Flannigan the first time, he was running that Miner's Bar, and when I came back I went to Belmont that morning. I got over there and I met Rose Walters. She was the only person who lived in Belmont at the time, and that winter she had broken her wrist. She had set it herself. She never saw her doctor. The snow was deep, and nobody got up to see her that winter, apparently.

This was May of '69, and Flannigan wasn't sure how the road was from Manhattan to Belmont because he hadn't been over there. When I went over there I met her, and she came out of the house and walked down to the little fence there above the spring. I looked around Belmont, and the Cosmopolitan Dance Hall was still standing then. I could look inside the front windows and see the benches. I could see the little stage, and the benches were piled on one another in there. They looked almost like church pews, these benches facing the stage. Then I walked around behind, and I could see the sign that was printed on this cotton cloth hanging on the wall. The back part was pretty much crumbled down. It was made out of wood. This thing said "Ladies Dressing Room," and I imagined that that was either the dressing rooms or maybe... was that ever a brothel back there?

VB: Well, that was the Cosmopolitan Hotel building.

WB: Yes, Cosmopolitan Dance Hall and Saloon, I think, is what it said.

VB: They had a bar in there.

WB: Did they have prostitutes in the back? It said "Ladies Dressing Room," and it looked like cubicles back there.

VB: They used to put on theatrical plays and concerts by traveling entertainers in the

music hall behind the barroom. There were hotel rooms upstairs.

WB: So it wasn't a bordello.

VB: Oh, no. I never heard of it ever being a bordello, anyway.

WB: So that day we went over and we looked around, and there was more stuff there then than there is now around on the ground. It was just old pottery and china. You can actually tell it was good at one time. It seemed to me that there were more foundations of houses still standing than there are now. Well, we went back to Manhattan to get something to eat. I wanted to see this character smiling anyway, so we went down to the lower bar and got there maybe 1:00 in the afternoon. If that grocery store was open, we probably would have gone in there, but in any event, he bought me a beer and started drinking, and my first wife didn't really drink much. By the time we left it was 10:00 at night, and he entertained us with all these tall tales. Other people came in, too, and it was a fascinating place. Out behind the bar, he had a 1932 or '33 Chevrolet sedan jacked up with a thick belt around the rear tire attached to a buzz saw.

VB: Buzz saw or a wood saw.

WB: Cutting wood. Then in a little corral behind the bar there was a burro named Buckshot.

VB: Buckshot, I remember that.

WB: Flannigan drank a lot, so by about 3:00 or 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon, he was on his way, too. He was out there kind of fooling around, and he got on the burro and was riding him around in the corral showing off for my wife, I guess. He just kept buying me drinks, and he wouldn't let me buy any. I could hold quite a bit. I didn't get drunk, but I consumed more than I usually would. I remember leaving there about 10:00 at night. I

got as far as about Austin Summit, where I had to pull to the side of the road and get about an hour of sleep before I could make it on into Fallon. I got into Fallon about 3:00 in the morning and got a room at the Nevada Bell Motel on Main Street.

VB: I don't remember when Bob Selig died; he died a little bit before that. I was gone from there, and I know Bob passed away.

WB: Was Bob the father of Tony Selig? Flannigan claimed he owned a lot of things.

VB: He claimed he owned a lot of things, but he didn't. That bar always belonged to the Selig family, and they finally sold it. One time Flannigan might have legitimately had some small interest in it, but Flannigan, for the most part, was a great talker. For example, there was one story about Flannigan where he boarded somebody's horse over at Barley Creek Ranch or something like that. Of course, he didn't own this pasture. We were in that pasture. It was right at $25 a month, but it wasn't even Flannigan's pasture. Flannigan told me he was born on the Barley Creek Ranch, and when I told Rose Walters that, she laughed and said, "Oh, that's Flannigan. He was born in New York City." Rose Walters knows because her sister and brother were born on that ranch in the early days. Her father, Goldbach, homesteaded the ranch on Barley Creek.

WB: I didn't know they owned that ranch. I knew she was born in Belmont.

VB: Goldbachs, originally, in the early days owned that ranch there. Now that's what I had been told by Rose Walters. She's from the Goldbach family. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, I think there's something about that in the *Golden Gravel*.

WB: In that book, *Golden Gravel*, she talks about this area out across Monitor Valley where they go for a picnic, and it's an area where Indians used to have their fandangos. She mentioned being across the valley and over on the side of the Monitor Range there.

She said that there were some pine trees standing all by themselves out there. That's a landmark. Do you know where she's talking about? Lorraine used to talk about that.

VB: I know they used to talk about it, but I don't know just exactly where it is.

WB: When I was out there riding horseback last summer, I went up White Rock Canyon, and then I rode up to Elkhorn Canyon. At the mouth of Elkhorn Canyon, there are the stone remains of an old homestead and a well. I'm thinking that the area that she was talking about where the Indians used to have their fandangos is where there were lots of arrowheads and things that must have been over in that section. You don't know, do you?

VB: No, I don't know.

Unidentified Speaker: They used to talk about it all of the time, Helen and . . .

VB: Lorraine. Yes. One thing I never got to ask Jack Cornell when I talked to him was if he knew about that place because I know that was in *Golden Gravel*—there was an article about it.

WB: Jack Cornell is the fellow you just spoke to about the Indian cemetery.

VB: That's the one I spoke to. He was here a few days and just stopped in for a while. They were in town. He was getting some glasses.

WB: Try to ask him if he knows just exactly . . .

VB: I'll ask him. I never thought about it. I asked him about the cemetery, and in fact, when I mentioned the Anderson family, he said, "The Anderson Indian that was in Manhattan was buried there, too."

WB: What's Anderson's first name? The one that was married here? Was it George?

VB: George Anderson, yes.

WB: What about Broken Ass Louie? How did he get that name?

VB: [Laughter] Well, he worked in the mines around there, and that's all they called Louie Vetsera—Broken Ass Louie is all he went by.

WB: How did he earn the nickname?

VB: He walked with a hump in his back. He hurt himself some time or another in mining, and I guess that's where they named him that. That's the only thing I can figure.

WB: So he walked with his legs kind of splayed out?

VB: He was damaged, and he had a hump in his back. It was a name that fit him. [Laughter]

WB: I never met the man. What was his reputation?

VB: Hold on to your pocketbook, you know.

WB: He owned the Jumbo Mine, didn't he?

VB: He got hold of it some way or the other. I don't know whether he owned it outright or if he just had an option. Of course, he claimed he owned it. I think he leased it to the outfit up there now. Also, he built a mill up there in Manhattan.

WB: Which mine was that?

VB: It's the mine you told me about that's down where the Bullfrog used to be.

WB: Oh, that's that William Patrick?

VB: Oh, that placer?

WB: It's to the west end there, just before you go up a little rise and look down over the valley. Bobby Bottom leased that mine. There's silver down in that mine, right?

VB: Yes, it's a silver mine.

WB: I guess there's some gold in there, too.

VB: Well, I worked at the William Patrick Mine, and that was mostly silver. It's funny because there's gold down there in the canyon, and you had that silver mine in there.

WB: Did you ever know Curley Wright?

VB: I knew who he was. I think I was introduced to him by Fred Masters in Manhattan who's leasing my garage. In fact, I think he worked for Masters for a while.

WB: I met him right around in that time frame, maybe '69 or '70. I used to go visit Curly and sleep on the floor of the cabin. He had this cabin down there on the gulch; he had those 49 claims with that gal. She really owns the claims down there. Her name was Maude.

VB: Maude Goehring.

WB: Yes. It was the Shamrock Mines.

VB: Shamrock Mines. I knew the Goehrings well. Did any of them . . . when you went up there in '69 and '70?

WB: Are you talking about Curly?

VB: Yes.

WB: He and Maude were partners, but I think she owned the higher share.

VB: I was wondering about it because when the dredge took over, all those claims in that canyon. . . . I know they had a little problem with Maude Goehring getting ahold of that ground. I don't know whether the dredge had purchased the ground or whether they took a lease on it.

WB: They must have taken a lease because when her claim expired for lack of assessment work, she was filing the motives in the county. They put them up for sale, and Bobby Bottom was buying them all.

VB: He bought them so that he could save them from being wrong, and he took a half-interest on it. At least he saved whoever had inherited or bought those mines from Maude.

WB: He took a half-interest in it and preserved them for the people who would have otherwise lost it.

VB: I knew the fellow who was locating a lot of those claims that had been dropped because there was no mining going on. His name was Bill Donald. His wife was the dentist in Tonopah. He was relocating a lot of those claims, the ones that belonged to people who were not doing the work on them. He either got leases on them or purchased them. He tried to purchase the properties, but a lot of the people wouldn't let them go. They wanted all that royalty. I knew that he had problems with Mrs. Goehring.

WB: Curly showed me the map of the mining claims—the 49 claims. Over a period of time he was resurveying and staking them all properly. Also, when he was down there, he had this D9 Gold Caterpillar that he owned. He had high blood pressure from some old war wound, and he could only work about an hour a day. He was moving some gravel around, and Maude would come up occasionally and visit and fool around with some dry panning.

VB: That's right down the canyon there. There's a little cabin sitting there yet.

WB: To the right. Yes, that's where he lived. I didn't realize the cabin is still there.

VB: I think it's still there. I don't know if it was there last year or the year before.

WB: He did a little on that with that Caterpillar, but like I say, he couldn't do more than about an hour's work a day.

VB: I can remember in the early days when that placer mining was going on there.

There weren't too many big mines in that area. A lot of people sunk shafts, but they were not getting much out of it. Before the dredge came, you could tell the gravel that went through the sluice boxes by the dumps that were there. The rejects are just plain rocks, and from that pile you can tell that there were not many values in the gravel.

WB: What about further down?

VB: Going down the canyon further, yes.

WB: Even beyond that?

VB: Oh, yes.

WB: That's pretty much down the end there. What I'm talking about is more to the west. It's more of a lower end where the Shamrock Mining Company was. She might have had some claims up at Black Mammoth.

VB: Yes, she did. She had claims there. That's why I didn't know that she had those other claims there.

WB: What about the ones where he had his cabin were further down? In 1984, after Bobby Bottom got those lower claims that I'm talking about, there was a Canadian outfit in there. Frank Adams was driving the loader for them. Remember when that activity was? That's where Curly Wright had his cabin.

VB: Oh, that's where he had it. Well, that's down along the Central.

WB: Now let's talk a little bit about the lynching in Manhattan and this fellow you know named Brotherton. You used to fix his truck?

VB: Yes, I used to go to Belmont, and he was the only family living there.

WB: What year was that?

VB: That goes way back before I even went to school down in Los Angeles—1924,

’25. I used to work on cars and he had some problems with his Dodge out there.

WB: What kind of Dodge was it?

VB: It was a 1917 or 1918 Screen Commercial. They were built like a pickup with an express body, and they had a canopy-type top made out of wood and then covered with a black cloth. Then it had screens on the sides of the back, the pick-up box. They had the roll-up blinds that were made out of that same cloth. It was similar to canvas, but it was black. You could roll it down and you couldn’t see what was in it. They used them for delivery purposes a lot. A lot of the ranchers bought those vehicles. He had troubles because the engine developed a knock.

I went over to Belmont and determined there were loose bearings, so I proceeded to pull the pan and check it out. I told them that he’d have to have a bearing adjustment on it. Of course, we had to send into Tonopah to order gaskets for the pan. I made several trips out there to fix it up for him. He took me over there to the building he owned where supposedly these fellows were hung. They had red coloring on the wall because he said that that was the blood and they couldn’t wash it off. There was a cellar underneath and a building on top. They had a hole drilled in the floor with a rope that went down through this hole. They hung them down in the lower part of the building, and that’s the story I was told. As I recall, I think what they did was they were horse rustlers—stole horses. They branded them and resold them, I guess.

WB: Were you told anything about their ages?

VB: I probably was told, but I don’t recall.

WB: Did you hear anything about the curse that one of them supposedly put on Velmar? Lee Brotherton told you that they were horse rustlers. We also heard the other

story about them being labor organizers who were set up by the mine owners.

VB: I have heard that, but I don't know how much truth there was in it.

WB: How old were you when you went to work in the Manhattan store for Kalkbrenner?

VB: I was going to high school. It was 1923, approximately. In fact, at that time I was hired to get wood for the winter to start with. He had a little one-tone Model T truck, and we would go down to Timber Hill and rustle the wood while he checked his trap line. As I told you, he would trap for coyotes and badgers, and he put me to work and told me where to get the wood so I'd get all of the wood ready. Then he'd come back from his trapping and we'd haul it on the truck to Manhattan for his winter supply, and that's what I started doing. That's when he lived across the street, though. That Manhattan store building wasn't even built yet. That was just a big vacant lot.

WB: Which was a big vacant lot?

VB: Where the Manhattan store is located; there was no building there. That's where a big gymnasium in the early days was located in Manhattan. Part of the building was still in the hillside, and it was all caved in. Kalkbrenner had two homes on the right-hand side of the street.

WB: That's on the south side.

VB: Yes. He lived in one of the buildings. In the front end of the building he had his jewelry store, and he did watch repairing. He had a little foot-operated lathe that he worked with. He did all of his work, whatever work it was that he did in that line of work. That's where he did it, but they lived in the back end. He also sold gasoline.

CHRONICLER: Val Boni
INTERVIEWER: William Belli
DATE: 9/96

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VB: Like I was saying, on this side he was doing this trapping and getting his wood for the winter supply. He also sold gasoline out of drums. They didn't have any gas pumps in those days, so when people wanted gasoline or oil, he sold it out of his little garage that he had right next to his home.

WB: How did they get the gasoline into the car?

VB: He poured it in with cans. He had a five-gallon can that had a glass tube on the outside, and it was graduated in gallons and half-gallons. It was a special gas can made for that. A fellow came in and wanted two gallons of gas. He had the barrels set on their side with the faucet on them. You could just open the faucet and fill the cans with the required gallons that the customer wanted. Then you just poured it in his gas tank using a funnel.

WB: Now, this Kalkbrenner, did he have an accent?

VB: Yes, he did. He was of German descent. In fact, some of the people in Manhattan used to call him a Boche. I guess they didn't like him.

WB: What's a Boche?

VB: Well, that's what they used to all the Germans. [Laughter] In fact, there was a fellow by the name of Roff Midaugh. He bought a little Model T Ford from Kalkbrenner, a used one, and he had all kinds of trouble with it. Of course, he blamed Kalkbrenner for all the trouble. There were problems that the Model Ts had when they came out of the factory. He was always working on it and trying to fix it, but he could never get it to run right. I'd go up there while he was working on the car. He was always talking about

Kalkbrenner and cussing at him, “That Boche.”

Kalkbrenner was quite a talented man. I guess he learned most of it himself. I don’t know whether he came from Germany, though. Anyway, in 1923, he purchased those lots across the street, and he salvaged all the lumber that was in that old gymnasium that had collapsed there. He put me to work over there after school, and on Fridays and Sundays, whenever I wanted to work, he had me pulling nails out of this scrap lumber and straightening the nails, as I told you. Then he went over to Belmont and Monarch and salvaged some old buildings over there; he tore them down and salvaged the lumber. He obtained a lot of his sheet iron for the roof out of Tonopah from the mills that they were dismantling.

It was all used, and he built that building himself from the ground up with used lumber and used nails. I know because I worked on it. I drove a lot of nails in that building, too. He’d set the boards up where he wanted them, and I’d just go along and nail them. He moved across the street into the new building and he rented the property across the street to people who would come into town. There was a shortage of housing there, especially when things started picking up a little bit. Some of the mines started operating, and he transferred his business and living quarters all into that store across the street.

Right below the Manhattan store—I don’t recall how many lots there were there—but there was a big flat leveled out area. In the early days there was a tennis court on the lots, and the older people used to play tennis there. We had a lot of tennis players. It was all fenced in. There was chicken wire all the way up to about 12 feet or higher. Kalkbrenner purchased that and he tore the tennis court out because it wasn’t used

anymore. He moved in one house and two or three little cabins, and rented them. In fact, that's where many of the schoolteachers that taught in Manhattan lived. They rented those cabins.

WB: How big were these cabins?

VB: About two rooms. The Dillard family moved to Manhattan in approximately 1928 or '29; it was right in that time period. There was quite a family of them. There was George Dillard, the oldest, and they had a couple of daughters and another boy whose name was Edwin Dillard. In fact, he's still living down in Arizona, in Wickenburg. We correspond with him regularly. I guess things were pretty tough in Arizona, but things were tougher in Manhattan, too. He worked as an assayer in the mines down in Arizona along with his mining career. They hired him at the White Caps to do assaying. He ran the assay office for a short period, and then they shut the mine down again and laid him off.

When he left there, he went to work for Joe Francisco. Joe had purchased the Indian camp property down where that open pit is now that is Tenneco Minerals. There was a little fraction down in there, and they called it the Indian Camp. Joe Francisco purchased that from J. W. Coupe and Henry Shubert; they were two partners. Dillard went to work for Joe Francisco. They built a little stamp mill down there, and they tried to work the ground. However, there were no values in the ground at all. It was a low-grade proposition. Then Joe Francisco took a lease on the Jumbo, on the summit going over to Pipe Springs. They milled that ore for just a couple of years.

It wasn't too high grade of an ore, either. That was about 1940, I believe. I'd say '40, '41, '43 because when I went into the army, he was still milling ore then. He shut it

down a little while after that. When that shut down, I guess Dillard's family moved out. There was nothing to do in Manhattan so they moved back to Arizona. The only one that remained in Manhattan was young George, and he lived up on the hill. In fact, he lived in the house that Inez was born in.

WB: His father's name was George, too?

VB: Yes. He was also George Dillard. They say that he wasn't all there, but he was smarter than you think. He built that old Model T, and he had to gather enough parts to build a Model T Ford. He built it inside of his cabin, and when he got it all assembled, he started it up and it'd run. Somebody asked him, "Well how you going to get it out of here now?" He said, "No problem." He took a wall out and drove it out. He owned that car for years and drove it around town into Tonopah and Round Mountain.

Another thing that happened one year was that Emerson Hyde took a lease on the Consolidated Mine. That's on the way to the White Caps. As you're climbing the hill off to the right, there's a little mill and a little mine there. He hired George Dillard as the hoist man. When they shut down the mine, he wanted to keep the water pumped out of the shaft so it wouldn't destroy the timber and mine shaft. George Dillard got tired of climbing up and down the ladder to lubricate the pumps with grease so he rigged up a mechanism on the hoist with the controls in the cage. That way he could lower himself down the shaft with no man operating the hoist, and when he went down there, he lubricated his pumps and all the work that was necessary. He got in the cage, pushed a little button, and up he'd come to the surface. People just couldn't believe it.

WB: How old was he when his parents went back to Arizona?

VB: He would have been about the same age as I am.

WB: How old is that?

VB: I'd say around 32 years of age.

WB: How long did he stay in Manhattan?

VB: When I was going up there in 1965, he was still there. Of course, he was running his little old Model T up and down the streets there. He died there. He rustled parts all over for that Model T.

WB: Did he ever ask you for help on how to build it?

VB: No, he never asked anybody for help.

WB: Did he ever work on cars?

VB: Oh, yes. He was pretty talented with Model Ts.

WB: Where did he get his experience?

VB: Down in Arizona, I guess. He had the experience before he come up here.

WB: How long did the Dillard family stay in Manhattan before they went back to Arizona?

VB: They came there in 1928 or '29, I think. They lived there up until about just before the war.

WB: During that period of time, did you know young George?

VB: Yes, I knew him well.

WB: What did he do in that period of time?

VB: He just picked up odd jobs that he could get. There wasn't much work in Manhattan, and whatever he could get to do, he did. He worked around the mines, whenever he could get a job. He worked at the Consolidated Mine for Emerson Hyde for quite a period of time. There were no benefits of any kind. You had no insurance with the

mines.

WB: Were you good friends with him?

VB: Oh, yes. He didn't talk to many people. He was very hard to get acquainted with, but being that I knew the family and his brother used to hang out at the garage all the time with me.

WB: What was his brother's name?

VB: His name was Edwin. In fact, I put the name of Scotty Dillard on him, and he still goes by the name of Scotty. [Laughter]

WB: So he's still alive.

VB: He's still alive. We just heard from him at Christmastime. We got a nice letter from him. He's got a business in Wickenburg now. He's in the business of making asphalt for highways.

WB: Is he younger than George?

VB: Yes, he's younger.

WB: What nationality were they?

VB: I don't know what nationality they were.

WB: I was told that George was part Yaqui Indian.

VB: They could be; being from Arizona, it's possible. They were dark. I know the father and the mother especially were. She was darker complexioned than the rest of them.

WB: Was George strange in any way?

VB: Oh, yes. He looked like he had a demented mind.

WB: How did that manifest itself?

VB: He was just peculiar. He wouldn't associate with anybody, and he was a loner; he stayed by himself. He didn't live with the family in Manhattan for a long time. He lived by himself.

WB: Where?

VB: Up in that little cabin where Inez was born.

WB: Is that cabin still there?

VB: No, Zybel tore it down not too many years ago.

WB: Was it right where he has his house?

VB: Yes, right near it. It was right in the back there. I'd have to show you the spot. I have a picture of the cabin, but this Dillard is one that you mentioned was arrested. Well, he had a habit of going into Tonopah an awful lot, and when he got in there, I heard that he got to drinking. I guess he raised holy hell in there, and the cops arrested him and took his Model T away and disposed of it. They wouldn't let him have it anymore, and they committed him to the asylum in Sparks. He called us from the asylum. He called me at home quite a few times and wanted to know if he could come and visit us.

I told the woman down there that he called me when she asked, "Are you sure that you'll let him come?"

I said, "Sure, he's OK." I said, "No problem at all."

She said, "Well, we'll let him out one of these days and give him a pass and let him come out and see you, but I want him to come back by a certain time."

I said, "Okay."

Well, he came knocking at the door, came in the house, and sat down. My wife made a sandwich for him. I think it was noontime when he came by. She made a

sandwich for him and gave him something to drink, and he stayed and visited just like normal. He had a folder and had a lot of pictures in it of the mining and the Consolidated and Reliance and all those mines.

Then he said, "Val, I'd like to have a little spending money down there at the place where I'm at. I don't have any. Would you give me $5.00? I'll let you hold these pictures just for the $5.00 to redeem them."

I said, "Sure, that's fine." I gave him the five bucks, because I figured if I lose five bucks, what the hell.

He came back one day, and he got a pass. Of course, the woman down there at the asylum always called us and wanted to know if it was OK. I said, "Yes, we had a fine visit the last time he was here. I don't see anything wrong with him."

She said, "You know, I think the people that committed him are crazier than he is." This is what the woman told me.

I said, "You're right," because I knew the people that committed him. I knew they were just after him. Anyway, we had a nice visit that day again, and then we didn't see him for a couple of months or so. Then one night about 9:00 in the evening I heard a knocking on the door. I lit the porch light and looked out, and there he was bloodier than hell. He had blood all over him. I opened the door and said, "What's the matter, George?"

He said, "Oh, hell. I don't know. I got tangled up in some barbed wire somewhere." He wouldn't tell me that he escaped from down there. He wanted some money to go down and get on the bus to go back to Tonopah, and he also wanted to go to Arizona. He said, "I want to go to Arizona. I'd like to have some bus fare. I'd like to have those pictures back."

I said, “Do you have the $5.00?”

He said, “No, I don’t have no money, but I want the pictures.”

I said, “OK,” and I gave him the packet. I said, “I’m not going to give you any money.” I should have called the asylum, but I decided that I better not get involved in it.

He visited a little while, and then he said, “Well, I better go and see if I can find somebody that will give me a few bucks at least so I can get on the bus. And he left. I never saw him again until I went back to Manhattan.

WB: When was this that he was up here in the asylum?

VB: After he left here. I don’t remember what year that was.

WB: Was it after ‘65?

VB: It was after ‘65. We got a call from Edwin Dillard, his brother. He called up one day, and he told me, “George showed up down here in Wickenburg.”

I said, “He did?”

He said, “He was all bruised up. Do you know what happened to him in Reno?”

I said, “I don’t know.”

Well, we did find out because that lady called the next day and said that he had escaped down there. He broke out and got tangled up in barbed wire, trying to get out. Ed said he showed up and was all bruised. He said, “We can’t seem to find out from him what happened.” So I explained to him what he was doing down there.

He said, “Yes, I knew that. I should have come down to see him, but I didn’t want to get tangled up in the deal. No family ever comes over. We didn’t get along too good, I don’t think, but anyway, he’s down here now, and he’s doing OK. We got him all cleaned up.” Well, it wasn’t too long before he appeared back in Manhattan again.

Unidentified Speaker: Did he die?

VB: Yes, they found him dead in the cabin. Bill Unruh found him. Bill had a little house right in the back of my home up there that Paulette's son lives in, and Bill always looked in on him. Bill used to take him to Round Mountain shopping for groceries once in a while in the store over there.

Unidentified Speaker: He was getting his money from Tonopah, wasn't he?

VB: That would have been county assistance. I heard so many stories about him, walking. He used to walk over to Round Mountain, and many times he'd get a ride to go over and then walk back. If he didn't have a ride to come back, he'd just walk. Oh, he did that many times. He was a good walker. He always walked. He used to walk down to the garbage dumps on this side of the cemetery in Manhattan every morning. When I would go up to Manhattan and spend a week or so there, I'd see him leaving his house and walk down the old Tonopah road in the back, and go down the canyon. He would always go down and scrounge through the dumps looking for things, especially reading material. Then he'd walk back up to his home. I saw him do that every day while we were up there.

WB: Did you ever hear any stories about him walking all the way back from Gabbs?

VB: I never did hear the one about Gabbs, but it's possible. I wouldn't doubt it.

WB: Did he walk barefoot a lot?

VB: No, I never saw him barefoot.

Unidentified Speaker: He always had his shoes on.

VB: Yes, he always had his shoes. You go in those bars in Manhattan, and you hear so many people telling stories—Parlett tells me this, too. He always asked me if some of

these things are true. Somebody tells him some of the weirdest stories that I have ever heard in my entire life. I can't even remember half of them. Parlett always asked me, "I got something to ask you here." There'll be fellows around the bar, and the guy would say, "Well, I heard this! Well, I heard that!"

Unidentified Speaker: Half of them never heard.

VB: A lot of things are nothing but baloney. I lived in Manhattan all my life, and I remember pretty well what went on. I knew everybody in Manhattan. I bet you that I could make you a list right now and give you the name of every person who lived in Manhattan in the '30s and give you a census of Manhattan by name, kids and all.

WB: What about this Model T that George made from spare parts?

VB: It was just a stripped down Model T with no body. All it had was a seat that he made himself. It had a wooden seat out of boards with the gas tank mounted in the back and no windshield, no hood on it. It was just a radiator, an engine, the steering wheel—it was just a chassis with four wheels.

WB: What was in the back?

VB: He had a little wooden box. It was very small.

WB: I remember that thing. Where is it now?

VB: They sold it. They took it to Tonopah, and they stripped it and sold the parts.

WB: They never gave it back to him?

VB: Oh, no.

WB: When was it they took it away from him?

VB: It was when they arrested him and sent him down to the asylum.

WB: That would have been in the late '60s or early '70s.

VB: I just don't remember the year.

WB: It would have to be after '69 because I remember seeing him.

VB: Yes, it was after that. When I was going up to Manhattan in those days, they didn't have any water inside of the homes. Right next to your house right across the road, they used to have a hydrant there.

WB: Yes, I remember.

VB: Everybody in Manhattan would have to come up to the hydrant to get their water. That was for public use.

WB: There was a hose on it.

VB: Yes, there was a hose on it. George Dillard always got his water in glass jugs, and he had them wrapped in canvas. He would come down there with those two jugs. If he saw anybody down there getting water, he'd sit up on that hillside and wait until everybody left before he went down and got his water. He wouldn't come down and talk to anybody. He wouldn't come down and talk to me unless I was alone.

WB: What did you talk about?

VB: Most of the things that he talked about were the jobs that he'd worked on. Like he worked at the Consolidated and odd jobs he worked at down in Wickenburg, Arizona. They were always just little old menial jobs. He was a peculiar fellow. It takes some brains and a lot of guts to rig up a remote control to operate the hoist to go up and down in that cage. He must not have been too much of a dummy because you have to know something about building one of those, especially when he just collected a bunch of odd parts and put them all together. [Laughter] It'd miss every once in a while. Of course, he had some little troubles. Sometimes he would go up the street, "putt, putt, putt." It'd be

missing in one cylinder. He was happy by himself as long as he had his toy to play with.

Unidentified Speaker: He never bothered anybody that I know of.

VB: He never bothered anybody. He never caused any trouble, and all that trouble he had in Tonopah was all blown up just to get rid of him.

WB: Why would they want to get rid of him?

VB: I don't know.

WB: Did you ever see George when he was drinking?

VB: I don't ever recall seeing him drunk. Oh, he might have drunk in moderation and started drinking in later years. I don't know, but I never did see him drink in all the time I knew him.

The cabin was built at the mouth of an opening of a tunnel, and it was a tunnel going into the hillside at an incline. It was a very slight incline, and it went back about 15 feet. About halfway down, they have a little dug-out off to the side. That's where George Dillard would sleep in the wintertime to keep warm down in there. The cabin was just built out of tin. They'd take these five-gallon kerosene cans and cut the ends out of them and then cut the can open on one side. Then they'd flatten the tin out and nail it on the framework that they built out of wood, and then they painted it with roofing tar.

WB: Was that the same cabin Inez was born in? With the tin and everything?

VB: Yes. That was built right from the start. There were two cabins there; both were built alike, and one of them was torn down in the earlier days. I don't know who it belonged to.

[These tapes were transcribed by Danny Howard.]