

An Interview With
Millie
Cornell

*An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken*

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Nye County Commissioners
Tonopah, Nevada
89049

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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

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 to Commissioners Eastley and Hollis and to Mr. Lacy for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Lacy.

Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. 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

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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

This is Robert McCracken talking to Millie Cornell at her home in Gabbs, Nevada, April 17 and 25 and May 1, 1990.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Millie, let's start by having you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate.

MC: On my birth certificate it reads Mildred Mary Humphrey.

RM: And when and where were you born?

MC: I was born in Manhattan, Nevada, August 13, 1918.

RM: And could you tell me your mother's maiden name?

MC: My mother's name was Ella May Thorn. She was born in Carson City. Her mother and father homesteaded King's Canyon and were one of the first people to locate up out of Carson City. My mother and father were married there in 1895.

RM: Is that right? Do you remember when your mother was born?

MC: I've forgotten exactly. She was born November 13 on a Friday, I remember. She always laughed about that. She lived to be 87, too. She was born along about 1875.

RM: And what was your father's name?

MC: My father's name was Charles Archibald Humphrey.

RM: And when and where was he born?

MC: He was born at Stoneberger Basin or Lost Creek, which is up in the northern end of Monitor Valley, out of Belmont. His father came to the state of Nevada (to Virginia City) from Illinois. His first wife had died in childbirth in Illinois, and he left the baby with his sister and her husband and came across the plains to Virginia City, then to Austin. He and a friend became partners in the teamster business. In fact, later on they had a teaming operation from Thorne, out of Hawthorne, across what we call Finger Rock Wash down here. And they had a well where they sold water by the barrel. They went through to Grantsville and Ione.

My grandfather, William Carroll Humphrey, married a second time in Austin. She was the mother of another daughter, Lida, who was born in Austin. Then they had my father and two other boys, Frank and John, who were born in Belmont. So my father was kind of unique, having been born way out in the country.

RM: So there weren't that many people born in Belmont at that time?

MC: Well, between Austin and Tybo, Belmont was the only real place that was inhabited by a lot of people. You know, Belmont became the Nye County seat.

RM: Right. Was your grandfather always involved in freighting?

MC: And mining. Wherever there was some activity going on he moved the family. They also did some ranching. He moved the family, along with my mother and father after they were married, to Sodaville and they had a stagecoach stop.

RM: Where is Sodaville?

MC: Out of Mina. That was when the teams and wagons would go through to Tonopah.

RM: This was right after the Tonopah boom?

MC: Right, in 1900. Then they moved to Crow Springs, which is about halfway, I would say, between Sodaville and Tonopah. They were there until after Manhattan was discovered in 1905. By that time the railroad either had come in or was coming in to Tonopah, so their operation wasn't as prosperous. The women ran boardinghouses at Sodaville and later at Crow Springs.

RM: The old freight line didn't go down around Coaldale like that. It went over the Monte Cristo Mountains, didn't it?

MC: Yes, exactly.

RM: Whereabouts was Sodaville in relation to it?

MC: As you go through Mina toward Tonopah, it's just a few miles. You pass a little mining operation to your left. There's a mill standing back.

RM: Yes. I remember that.

MC: That's Sodaville. And the old little settlement was just east of there.

RM: And where's Crow Springs?

MC: Crow Springs followed a trail that bent a little northeast through the Monte Cristos. They've mined quite a bit of turquoise in that area through the years. In fact, my family mined some.

RM: Oh. That would be south of Gabbs, wouldn't it?

MC: Yes.

RM: And does that old trail cross the Pole Line Road at all?

MC: No. It came into what we think of as Lower Smoky Valley. A friend of mine told me quite a lot about it when he freighted across there. I think where Miller's is now.

RM: That's where it came out?

MC: Well, they rested there because there was a well. They watered their horses and teams and rested because the pull from there up into Tonopah was sandy and real, real tough on their teams. Then it crossed to right where Millers sits today. I'm not sure if it's where the rest stop is, but right in there.

RM: And after the railroad came, your grandfather moved to Manhattan?

MC: Yes, my whole family. Prior to that, my father and his brothers and his sister had gone to school in Grantsville. But most of their schooling took place in Belmont, and relatives and friends were still there. And they had occasion to travel back and forth from Crow Springs to Belmont. The wagon trail (or the road or whatever you'd call it) went up Manhattan Canyon. You could go up Manhattan Canyon (it wasn't, of course, called Manhattan Canyon then) over into Ralston Valley or south around the corner of the mountains to where our highway circles back towards Tonopah into Ralston Valley.

And my uncles and my father, to earn money, rode a lot when they were young men for ranchers (as cowboys, you know). They had occasion to take livestock across Belmont and back and forth and it was during that time that they noticed signs of possible gold deposits in Manhattan Canyon.

RM: They saw indications of ore?

MC: Exactly. Of course, Nevada is a mining state. Along with making a living by driving teams and livestock and that sort of thing, they also were always interested in looking for a mine. My father, especially, was a really good prospector. A friend of mine, who is a geologist, told me that he was as fine a geologist as he ever knew with absolutely no formal education.

But that is how my family was involved in the discovery of Manhattan. Early in the spring of 1905, my uncle Frank and my uncle John and a relative of Uncle Frank's wife were camped at what they called Palo Alto Springs. If you were coming out of Manhattan and crossing down to where you can see Smoky Valley, to your left is some greasewood and there was a spring there. They were camped there prospecting up the canyon. On April 1, 1905, they located the April Fool claim, which was the first Manhattan location.

There had been some earlier mining done in the area by a man by the name of George Nickels. He had named it the Manhattan Mining District because he had come from Manhattan, New York, and was working for a milling company in Austin. I think he was working as an assayer. He had prospected along Smoky Valley down as far as the mouth of the Manhattan Canyon, and he located some silver claims and named it at that time. That was in the 1880s or '90s—maybe the '90s—at the Manhattan Mining District.

RM: So it was silver and not gold?

MC: Well, yes, but some miles distant from the gold areas farther up the canyon.

RM: Had anybody ever staked out where they actually found the April Fool and the other claim?

MC: No, it was virgin country.

RM: I know in Tonopah, when Jim Butler staked it out, there were some stakes that looked old and weathered and had fallen down, but there was no notice. Somebody had had an idea there before.

MC: True. But to my knowledge there had never been any locations up Manhattan Canyon. Of course, there'd been mining at Barcelona and Belmont since the 1870s or '60s, and I know of some very old prospect holes, and probably you can even find a post or so around. And over east of Manhattan toward Belmont, there were some old, old mining diggings.

RM: That date to when? Are you saying that there were maybe even Spanish diggings? Was Barcelona Spanish?

MC: They brought in Spanish people to do the work and I'm sure in Grantsville there were Spanish people. Sam Pedro was one of the men's names. Many years later my father named some claims up out of Grantsville the Sam Pedro claims. I think you will find this same Sam Pedro in Belmont history, and I think he was involved in the mining at Barcelona.

RM: This would have been when, in the 1870s, and '80s?

MC: Well, of course they were in there in the '80s, because Belmont was '67. I think they moved the courthouse in about 1870, so Belmont was thriving. Barcelona was operating also, and it did for some years. Not on a steady basis, but off and on.

RM: Did you ever hear any stories about the Spanish being in there much earlier? Say, even before 1850?

MC: I've heard that they were at San Antone. I have a funny little story to do with the Spanish people. My father and his brother Frank were riding after cattle south of Belmont in country they call Little White Sage. They came upon this group of Spaniards who had a regular camp set up. Now, my dad didn't swear very often, but he said they were a "surly bunch of bastards." He said they made them feel very unwelcome so they didn't hang around much. They knew they were mining, and they thought the Spaniards didn't want them getting around too much to find their mining operation.

It was always in my dad's mind that he wanted to go back there. And years after this episode they had an awful time looking for it. You know how things change when you can't find the exact location?

RM: Yes.

MC: When I was about 18 years old, he and a friend of ours from Manhattan, George Rong, were out there prospecting. There'd been some heavy rains and darned if they didn't find the place. The Spaniards always would dig holes and bury barrels, because it was cool.

RM: For water, you mean?

MC: No, to keep their food. The ground would keep the coolness and then they'd keep their food in the barrels and cover them. And, I suppose, maybe water. And they found this place. So a friend of George Rong's, Billy Amadon,

came to Manhattan. He'd been camped out there because George had told him about it, and he said, "I found the ledge," and was so excited you can't believe it. He came in for supplies and he had a couple of big chunks off the ledge (not panning, you know, but right off a ledge). George went back with him and they never found that place again. Now, this is a true story.

RM: Is that right? But he found the ledge that the Spanish had been working on?

MC: Probably. Because it was right in that area. That's where he was camped and he was working the country around there.

RM: Did he have it assayed?

MC: I'm sure he did.

RM: And it ran good?

MC: Yes—rich. Now, this April Fool Hill—the first locations my family made in Manhattan—turned out to be stringers of veins. They're not big, but they're rich. But it has never been open-pitted or anything. It turned out to be not the kind of big, rich ore body where they could go in, sink a shaft and have a big lode.

RM: More of a chlorider operation?

MC: My dad used to tell me just how it was, but I've forgotten. At one time, Bob and I were having a baby and we had no money—in the wintertime there were no jobs. The mines all were down and we needed some money. There was a little jeweler named Kalkbrenner, and he and his wife lived on Main Street. Dad told Bob, "Go up there just above his house (and he told Bob exactly where) and you dig a trench right along from here to there." Bob did, and we sold that gold for \$600. And that's when gold was worth nothing, in 1940.

RM: How long did it take him to dig it out?

MC: Oh, a few days, four or five.

RM: Why didn't he keep on digging?

MC: It ran out. That's the way the gold would lie. They called it stringers. Somehow, the formation would lay this gold, but then that's all there was to it. And that's all located ground, you know. So maybe one of these days they'll go in there and rip it all out; I don't know.

After that, the White Caps was discovered and worked on—that big mine which is out of Manhattan. That was a deep mine and rich, but it was very hard ore to treat. They built a mill but they were never very successful at milling it in Manhattan, so they hauled it to Tonopah and shipped it by rail to Salt Lake, where it was milled.

RM: So your family actually discovered Manhattan?

MC: Yes. The historical society just put a marker on my Uncle John's grave in Manhattan as one of the founders.

RM: What kind of indications did they see that made them look there for gold?

MC: Well, quartz outcroppings, I'm sure. I don't know that much about mining, but I know that that's a very strong indication. My dad was a better prospector because he had more patience than Uncle John, but they worked pretty well together. If they saw an indication on a hill or mountain or area where ore was possible, they'd pan all the lower little draws. If they panned and got gold, that gold came from someplace. Manhattan Canyon has been so rich in placer gold because it came from someplace.

RM: It was coming off the formations there, wasn't it? So it was your father and his brothers who located Manhattan.

MC: My father wasn't with them when they made the locations, but they were always associated in business operations. My father was still living at Sodaville—my father and mother and my grandparents. And Uncle Frank was living at Sodaville. His wife and he had some turquoise claims at Sodaville. Uncle Frank would mine it and Aunt Maggie would help him and they'd sort out the rich turquoise. They'd box the very best in a small box and mail it to Tiffany's in New York without any return receipt or anything. Tiffany's would keep what they wanted, and the rest they returned the same way, with a check, and that was the end of the transaction.

RM: Is that right? And everybody trusted each other.

MC: Everybody trusted each other.

RM: What turquoise mine were they getting it out of?

MC: I don't know what they called it then, but now it's the Royston.

RM: So the Royston Mine is right out of Sodaville?

MC: Well, it's over the mountain more, looking toward Smoky Valley. I've never been there; I've only seen pictures of it. I've been all through that country, but I've never been right to Crow Springs.

RM: But they were working that at the time that your family found Manhattan?

MC: Yes. My dad and my uncles were riding for the ranchers. And those were big ranches—some of them had thousands of cattle. They would winter range far below Goldfield—out of Reese River and into the Belmont area. Also they rode up through the Monitor Valley area.

RM: Just as an aside question, was the range for the cattle a lot better than, say, it has in the last 10 or 20 years?

MC: Sometimes, but sometimes they had terrible times. Some winters were so terrible. My grandfather and his family were living at Pine Creek Ranch in Monitor Valley and they had quite a lot of cattle and the cattle just froze and died in their tracks, it was so bitter cold.

RM: Was that that terrible winter of 1887?

MC: Along there, yes.

RM: Yes, that really wiped out the ranchers of the West. I've read about that.

MC: It's funny that I would end up living here, because growing up with my brother (my oldest brother was 21 and his brother was 20 when I was born) I grew up listening to all these stories. My dad talked about the Reese River country and Gabbs Valley country. He said the greatest winter range was Gabbs Valley. Ione Valley was colder than the Gabbs Valley area. But in good years, the cattle would be just up to their bellies in feed around here. And I've seen it that way here. Not, maybe, that much, but up to their knees—lots of feed. But not now.

RM: You mean, with the drought.

MC: Yes.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Could you talk a little bit about your grandfather's ranching and the stories you grew up hearing?

MC: After my grandfather, William Carroll Humphrey, moved to Belmont, he had a meat market in partners with a man named Esser—I think the store was called Esser and Humphrey. They bought, of course, a lot of beef and, I guess, raised beef. My grandfather was at the Pine Creek Ranch.

RM: Did he own the Pine Creek?

MC: He must have. Their oldest daughter, Lida, was married in Belmont, and she and her husband lived at the Pine Creek Ranch. William Carroll Humphrey was Nye County Commissioner when he died in 1910 at 80 years old. And when he died, my father was appointed to fill out his term, so he was Nye County Commissioner. Bob's grandfather, Charles Goldback, was Nye County Commissioner from 1890 to 1897, when he died at the Barley Creek Ranch in Monitor Valley. Then my husband Bob was Nye County Commissioner. And Lida, William Carroll's oldest daughter, was Nye County Recorder and Auditor for a lot of years in Tonopah. (Her husband died and left her with several children to raise.) Her husband was, I think, Nye County Treasurer, or maybe he was auditor and recorder, and was a great friend of Jim Butler's. They used to go to visit Jim Butler in Monitor Valley. I guess that's how my aunt Lida became recorder and auditor. Probably when her husband died she was appointed and then re-elected for a number of years. So we've been actively involved in Nye County.

RM: Yes. It almost runs in the family, doesn't it?

MC: Yes. We're very proud of that.

RM: Now, let me just back up so I've got things clear in my mind. Your grandfather came to the area from . . . ?

MC: From Illinois. He came to Virginia City, then he went to Belmont. There's a family, the Acree family—Bert and Millie Acree—who were musicians from Austin.

RM: Yes—people in Smoky Valley talk about them.

MC: Absolutely. They're like a legend in all of Nevada. Well, her father and my grandfather met in Virginia City and went to Austin together. And after my grandfather married, they were partners in this operation at Stoneberger Basin. They came out of Austin up on the mountain and crossed the mountains down through one of the canyons and crossed Monitor Valley to Tybo. And they had a stagecoach stop where people could rest and stay and water their horses. My father and his second wife were married in Millie Acree's father's home in Austin, and Aunt Lida was born there.

And this is another really interesting thing. Millie Acree's father's name, I think, was Pibbits. (That isn't exactly right. I'll have to correct that.) Anyway, he was responsible for bringing the yellow roses that you see in the various mining towns.

RM: No kidding.

MC: Honest. He was from Texas. The roses were taken to Belmont as people went there. Then they were in Manhattan. We have some yellow roses in Gabbs that relatives of Bob's living in Manhattan brought here in the '40s when this was built and people settled here.

RM: And they're also in Tonopah. Did people take them from Austin to Tonopah?

MC: Yes, or from Belmont to Tonopah.

RM: So one person brought those yellow roses in.

MC: That's the way I heard it. He was from Texas, you see—"The Yellow Rose of Texas."

RM: That is amazing. I've been wanting to write a little article on those yellow roses.

MC: Oh really? There's a lady by the name of Rene Maestretti who lives in Austin who is a daughter of Millie and Bert Acree's, and she can tell you about them. And across the street from us in Manhattan there are two or three houses, and every year, here they come. They just bloom like crazy.

RM: They're incredible, aren't they? And you don't have to take care of them or anything. It seems they hardly need any water.

MC: They don't; it's amazing. Especially if there's snow during the winter—the snow will fall gradually off of a rooftop and there along the drip line. A Virginia creeper will do the same thing, you know.

RM: Now, what's a Virginia creeper?

MC: It's a vine that turns red in the autumn. They're really beautiful. And they do much better if they're let alone.

RM: Do the roses like to rough it, too?

MC: Well, pretty much. But they require some water. This storm will be wonderful for them because it's just the right time of year.

RM: Yes. They bloom in late May, don't they?

MC: In Manhattan they don't bloom till June because Manhattan is 7500 feet.

RM: Tonopah's 6000; I think I remember them in late May in Tonopah.

MC: I think the White Caps is just 8000, but down in the canyon it's 7500.

RM: How do you transplant them?

MC: Well, for instance, in Manhattan there's a deserted house across the street from my place. Everybody tried to buy it and people won't sell it. A person could just dig up a few roots and transplant them.

RM: That's the most beautiful flower.

MC: There's only one bad thing about them—they will thrive, you know; they'll scatter. You have to kind of keep them under control, or they'll take over the whole garden. [Chuckles]

RM: One of these springs, I'd like to go up to Austin, Tonopah and Manhattan and take some pictures of them and write a little article on that.

MC: I have things I've written, and all winter I've promised my family I'd get them all sorted, but I did write a couple of paragraphs about that, and I'll look it up and give it to you.

RM: I'd like to have that—that'd be great. So your grandfather came to Austin with Millie Acree's father, and then he went on down into Monitor Valley?

MC: Yes, and Millie's father stayed in Austin. My father was in Belmont. I just signed over to a grandson of mine—it's over 100 years old—the Quarter Circle Z brand in the Humphrey name that my grandfather registered in the

Belmont courthouse in, I think, 1873. My father kept it, and every four years you have to pay to keep it registered. My brother Carroll had horses, and he kept it. Then his health got bad and one year he was discouraged and he said, "I'm not going to pay that this year."

I said, "Oh, my God. I'll pay it." So I sent the money in in Carroll's name and mine, but I didn't look into the matter. It went on for eight years and my brother died, and I found out that I couldn't claim that brand because he hadn't left it to me in his will.

RM: Is that right? So it's like property.

MC: Exactly. And do you know how I was able to straighten it out? I called someone on the state brand board and I said, "Do you know what? I'm going to lose that brand. I've paid the fee for eight years. They accepted my money and I signed it under my brother's name and my name." And by gosh I got it and it's in my name. Then, when Bob and I were making a new will a few years ago, that was one of the things that our lawyer pointed out to me, because he knew I had this brand. He said, "You know that must either go in your will or you deed it." So I went through all the paperwork and now it's in my grandson's name if anything happens to me.

RM: It'll go on in the family. They did that so nobody could steal a brand, didn't they?

MC: Sure they did. But to me, that's a heritage. It was actually a horse brand. Bob was so mad at me. I sprayed it gold and my husband told me that was sacrilegious.

RM: (Millie is showing me the brand.) It's a "Z" with a quarter circle on top of it.

MC: Then this (another brand) was our old cow brand which my grandfather got when he bought some cattle—he he bought the brand with the cattle. When we sold our ranch in Smoky Valley we lost Bob's family brand.

RM: The brand you just showed me is the H I Quarter Circle.

MC: Quarter circle or half circle. I guess quarter circle, isn't it?

RM: Yes, it looks like it. The "H" wouldn't stand for Humphrey, would it?

MC: No, it didn't. I forget how that came about. But this Quarter Circle Z brand is on all of our horses. Have you ever heard of Dr. Fred Anderson?

RM: I don't think so.

MC: He's retired now, but he was originally from Elko country I think, and was a surgeon and physician in Reno for years and years, and is very interested in Nevada history. He accumulated as many brands as he could. There is a display of all the old brands at the Livestock Center in Reno at the University of Nevada where they have the sports arena.

RM: I've got to ask you a question on your family name, because there were Humphreys that had the packinghouse in Goldfield.

MC: Yes. We were no relation—it's a different family. They were out of Reno, too. In fact, they owned Pine Creek Ranch after my grandfather lived there. It was Humphrey Packing Company out of Reno. (I've forgotten his first name.)

RM: I know that later those Humphreys merged with the Reeds and they were involved in the United Cattle and Packing Company.

MC: It was United Cattle that was at Pine Creek; they're not my family.

RM: Now, your grandfather started right off with a butcher shop in Belmont—he didn't go into mining or freighting or anything?

MC: He didn't go into mining in the Belmont area, but he might have done some freighting and some teaming. They always had horses and wagons. One time when my brothers and my cousins—the Gilbert boys—were all about the same age (there were, I think, six or seven of them), they were all sitting on our front porch in Manhattan. Grandpa, by this time, was an old man. The corral sat up the canyon across from our house and he always had a milk cow up there. Every single morning and evening he'd take his bucket and go up there and milk the cow, and then he crossed to our house and we'd get some and then he'd go over to their house. (He and his wife lived with my widowed aunt, Mary Richards.) They got some, and Uncle Frank lived next door.

The boys were on the front porch and here came Grandpa with his bucket of milk, and motorcycles were just coming around the country, and down the canyon came a kid on a motorcycle. He skidded out of control and knocked old Grandpa gaily-west, and [chuckles] just spilled the milk all over. The boys never got up or made a move to help him, and one of them looked around and said, “Boy, is Grandpa going to be mad about that spilled milk.” [Laughter] He was not concerned for the health of the old man, but they knew he’d sure be mad that he spilled the milk.

RM: That’s funny.

MC: I never got to go, because I was born in 1918, but after they were all in Manhattan, every single August the family went by wagon through Belmont to Barley Creek, and then by horseback onto Table Mountain for three weeks. They took all of these—at least five—little boys with them, and the littlest one sat in front of the saddle with my mother. They stayed up there for three weeks every summer, just to camp. It was their vacation. They ate sage hen and fish and a little venison, I’m sure. That’s quite a trip.

A fellow by the name of Saylor and my father and Uncle John were involved in Peavine—they owned Peavine.

RM: Were they the first owners?

MC: As far as I know they were. Then my dad built our house in Manhattan in 1906. And when I got old enough to think about things like that, the dredge had come to Manhattan, and they brought the water from Peavine. And that brought Mr. Keough quite a lot of money.

RM: He owned Peavine at that time?

MC: Totally. I asked my mother, “How is it that my dad didn’t stay in partners with Saylor?”

And she said, “Because he had a family to raise and they weren’t making a living out there.” And of course, they weren’t. It was a small ranch and Keough and his wife (they were Reese River people, by the way) didn’t have any children. But my father had a family to support. So he went to work as a hoist engineer when he wasn’t prospecting.

RM: When did your father have the Peavine Ranch?

MC: About the time Manhattan was discovered.

RM: Was your grandfather in Belmont in the mid-’70s?

MC: Let's see, Aunt Lida was born in '69 so my father was born in '71 or '70, something like that.

RM: And he was in Belmont by then.

MC: Yes.

RM: How long did your grandfather have the butcher shop?

MC: Oh, for quite a few years although they left that area and lived in Grantsville for some time. I think Grantsville was active about the time Belmont began to die down. My father and his brothers were small children when they were in Grantsville. And then they went back to Belmont.

RM: What did your grandfather do in Grantsville?

MC: I guess he mined. I don't remember anyone ever saying that he worked in the mines. My grandmother ran a boardinghouse, I know that.

RM: She ran boardinghouses everywhere she went, didn't she?

MC: She did. A lot of the early day pioneer women had to help out to make ends meet.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about her running the boardinghouse?

MC: Yes. I have a story I've written about a friend of ours, an older man, Art Hudson, who lived in Manhattan. He was a teamster through Sodaville into Tonopah before the railroad came in. And because I was born in 1918 and my grandparents had died, I wasn't as familiar with that part of their life. But Art told me about them. He knew them when they were at Sodaville and then at Crow Springs. He said, "Boy, the teamsters really looked forward to hitting Crow Springs."

My mother helped my grandmother. And in the meantime, my mother was having babies. They were married in '95, and in '96 in March, her first baby died. She went home to Carson to her mother and father's, and her baby died. The next year she had a little boy. That was the one who was 21 years older than I—Carroll. The next March she had a little boy, Alvin (that was '98). Then she skipped a couple of years to 1900 and she had a little boy who they named after my father and always called Charlie Boy. Then in 1905, the year Manhattan was discovered, she had another boy. So she had five boys.

RM: So you came very late in her life.

MC: Yes. They finally had a girl in 1913—Helen, my sister (she and I are the only ones who are still living). Then I was born five years later.

RM: Was that a strain on your mother? I mean, essentially, she spent her whole life raising kids.

MC: Never. She was a strong, good-looking, intelligent lady. She was teaching school at Cloverdale—that's where she met my dad. He was riding as a cowboy for T. J. Bell out of Reese River. They met and she was, I think, 19 or 20 years old when they got married. But during all the time they lived at Sodaville, Crow Springs and Manhattan [chuckles], she was having babies.

She'd go to Carson and have a baby and come back and help my grandmother in the boardinghouse. It was quite a distance and a lot of times people stayed all night at Sodaville. They had a livery stable and a saloon, and my father ran that part of the business. It was a family project. And when they moved to Manhattan they loaded my grandfather and grandmother's house on a flatbed wagon and moved it to Manhattan.

RM: From Crow Springs? How in the world did they do something like that?

MC: I don't know. But they carted them around all over. Some people were living in it after my aunt had died in about the '70s. Someone started to burn some weeds in the neighborhood and burned the house down.

RM: Oh. What a shame. It had a history.

MC: It had a real history. And my grandmother was . . . I mean, you think of a lady running a boardinghouse under those conditions—they carried the water in, they carried it out—it was incredible work.

MC: My brother Carroll was a remarkable person. Bob Perchetti will tell you this—his mind was so alert and he had such recall, that you couldn't believe it. He remembered everything he had heard or had been told or had experienced. And he had a sense of humor that wouldn't quit. He kept a whole lot of this history alive.

RM: And you got it from him?

MC: Yes.

RM: That's good. That's the way things get passed down, isn't it?

MC: Really. And wherever he was, there'd be a group of people around him. He died in 1980 or a little bit before. He was 83 years old and had been quite sick. But you know, oftentimes, you hear stories and, especially if they're in your family, you accept them as the gospel. It's kind of a shock to you later on if something comes along and you find out, "Well, I guess that wasn't exactly the way it happened." But everybody has his viewpoint. I have yet to find anything that he told me about any experience that happened or our family's history or Belmont, that I've ever been able to find was wrong. He didn't like to dwell on running people down and saying bad things about them, so that didn't enter the conversation. If he did say anything, he'd say it in such a witty way that you'd be able to see the person in an ordinary light.

RM: Do you recall any more about what was involved in running a boardinghouse?

MC: This friend of mine, Art Hudson, who told me a story about going to Crow Springs, said that he had been in Tonopah and he got terribly sick and he just thought he was going to die. He had terrible dysentery. There was a doctor there, but nothing seemed to help him, so he told a friend of his, "I gotta get the hell out of here. I'm going to leave, 'cause if I stick around here I'm going to die." He got as far as Crow Springs and he said my grandmother took one look at him and she said that he was about the sickest man she'd ever seen. She had him go right to bed and she doctored him and he said, "She fed me graveyard stew." You know what graveyard stew is?

RM: No.

MC: Graveyard stew is scalded milk that you put over toast. Evidently it has a very calming effect if you have dysentery or are terribly sick. It used to be quite an old way of treating people. Perhaps he was throwing off whatever germ he had anyway, but he stayed several days and he said my grandmother took complete charge of him. And he said, by golly, he walked out of there a well man.

RM: Is that right? I guess she wasn't worried about getting it?

MC: Oh! With all they came in contact with, I guess they didn't have to worry much. [Chuckles]

After they moved to Manhattan, she was getting older and they didn't run a boardinghouse or anything. And of course, our family thought they were really going to be in the money. Then the earthquake happened in San Francisco.

(This is part of Manhattan history, you know.) So much capital was involved in Manhattan and it all of a sudden came to an end. So things slowed up considerably and it wasn't until maybe about 1910 when they began placer mining. My dad had several prospects in the placer.

RM: Oh, he'd dig those shafts and go down in them?

MC: Well, yes. But they weren't deep shafts, you know.

RM: They were down 50 feet or something, weren't they?

MC: Oh yes, some of them were. And they'd have a little windlass.

RM: Jim Larson told me all about working the placer. I thought it was fascinating.

MC: Oh yes. Jim was just a boy but I think he would remember my dad.

CHAPTER THREE

MC: My dad died of a massive heart attack November 17, just before Pearl Harbor.

RM: Is that right? How old was he?

MC: He was 73. He had never been sick, but he had had all of his teeth pulled and had never gotten dentures. And he was an old-time eater—he loved beefsteak. He had sold the Sam Pedro claims up above Grantsville to a mining company, Volmer, out of Silver Peak. They had considerable money behind them. My brothers were working up there and their two wives were up there like old times, cooking for them, and my dad was never happier in his life. He thought he had finally made it. He was going to re-roof our house in Manhattan and oh, he was full of plans. We bought an oil living room heater from the mining company in Round Mountain and he put it in and my mother and he had a great time. They went to Hunts Canyon and visited friends and went around and he died that suddenly.

The war broke out, of course, right after that. And the mining operation—it was a cinnabar operation—came to a complete halt. That was the end of that. So a little down payment was all he ever got out of it.

RM: So he died thinking he had made it. Maybe not a bad time to go.

MC: Exactly. After looking for that gold mine all those years, you know. And you know a strange thing that happened? The mining company that's out at Silver Peak right now took an option on these claims which have been heavily drilled in the past few years—the cinnabar claims. Evidently they were loaded with gold, too. It's the type of gold you can't pan—it's microscopic.

RM: The kind they like to leach?

MC: Yes. So they hauled, I don't know how many tons. I know they had a contract for 80,000 or whatever they had, and then they extended it for much more. They hauled over the summit to Silver Peak and demolished three or four semis milling this ore. So by making this contract for more ore, they evidently got a good amount of gold out of those. Life is funny, isn't it?

RM: Yes. Are the Sam Pedro claims still in the family?

MC: No. My brothers kept the assessment work up after the war for a while and then my brother Alvin died in 1943, and cinnabar was worth nothing, and they had quite a few other claims scattered around the country. I know for a long time they weren't located, because we used to travel over there for fun once in a while and there were no posts up or anything. And then, about the time this gold began to come about, we noticed new posts up all over. Of course now they're all over; everywhere you go, there are posts. But I think Amco Company (Amco, I think, is the company that went in there) has got them now. And then this Zephyr Company contracted from them to mill the ore. So I suppose next time I go up there there'll be a big open-pit.

RM: You won't even know the place. The mountain will be gone. Well, so your grandfather came to Belmont, ran the butcher shop and then moved to Grantsville, I suppose because Grantsville was booming and Belmont wasn't.

MC: As I remember it, when the courthouse was moved to Belmont, Belmont was thriving and then Belmont went into a slump for a while and then had kind of a revival again. As I said, the only formal education my father had was at Belmont, when they were older. But I know there's a little story about my grandmother running a boardinghouse in Grantsville (my dad told this story lots of times). The boys were little and there were a couple of Chinese men who had a laundry and they had long pigtails. The boys, I guess, would tease them. One day there was a big commotion at our front door, and one of the men was after them with a cleaver and they were scared to death. Dad said the only thing that kept them from losing their scalps or their head was that the "formidable figure of their mother" met him in the doorway and the kids got by her and she stopped the Chinaman. But, he said, when my father got home that night, he took his belt off and worked them over. Now he'd probably go to jail, I guess, for child abuse. [Chuckles] But he said they never bothered those Chinese anymore.

RM: That's a good story. What about your grandmother's family?

MC: William Carroll's wife? We know very little about her family. My sister has done a complete family genealogical search on the Humphrey family. My great-great- (I guess) grandfather came to this country from Wales. They had one little boy a year old and they came to Virginia and went into Pennsylvania. And he and five sons served in the

Revolutionary War. I believe his name was David and then I think the oldest boy was George and there was a Robert and I don't know who else. The youngest was only about 15.

So then my grandfather, William Carroll, married a lady—my grandmother (and that's the lady who held off the Chinese)—whose name was Nancy Anne Butler. (She was no relation to Jim Butler.) As far as we know she had one brother who was buried in Manhattan (and he was kind of crippled) and a brother and a sister in Austin. And I think she ran a boardinghouse.

RM: You mean before your grandfather married her? Because she was a young woman when he married her.

MC: Well, let's see—say they were 30 or something. Because my grandfather had been married and lost his first child and had come across the plains to Virginia City and then to Austin. Then when he met this lady he went back to Illinois, where he owned 300 acres or some acreage. He signed that over to his sister, who had been taking care of his first child, Mary. Now, this took place over a period of several years (but not a whole lot of years). Then he came back and married Anne Butler.

RM: How old was Anne Butler when he married her?

MC: She was in her 20s, I would say. She died in 1914 and she was 84 years old. Let's see—Aunt Marta was born in 1869 and my dad was born the next year—'70—and he was 80 when he died.

RM: But you don't know where her family came from?

MC: No, we don't. Helen and I went to Austin while Bert Acree was still living—he had been county recorder for many years before he retired—and we had copies made of my grandfather's wedding certificate. But I don't know more than that.

RM: Just she and her brother, then—maybe the two of them lived in Austin?

MC: Evidently. But you know, that happened quite a bit. My mother's mother (whose name was Sarah Greer) and a younger brother, who was only 17, came from Ireland to New York, then around the Cape to San Francisco, and ended up in Virginia City. And he worked in the mines and that's where she met Frank Thorn. He had settled this piece of land out of Carson City. (Now it's houses for 100 miles, you know. I think of how much it probably was worth later on.)

But Virginia City went into sort of a slump, it was dying down, and there was a big rush over around Eureka and Herb—the younger brother who had come with her—and some friends went on to Eureka.

RM: Now, this is on your mother's side?

MC: Yes, my mother's mother and her brother—so, my mother's uncle. Of course this was long before the turn of the century. So the last they ever knew of this boy who was a young man—I suppose maybe eight or 10 years had gone by by that time—was that he would write occasionally to his sister Sarah.

RM: And Sarah stayed where?

MC: In Carson. He wrote to her about how their claims were so rich and he had met some really fine people who were going to invest some money in their mining property. And she never heard from him again. Later on she wrote to the courthouse, but there was never any indication of what had happened. They have, I think, seven graveyards in Eureka and it was a time of a lot of violence.

RM: You mean they have a lot of graveyards because there were a lot of people dying. Are they small?

MC: They're small. Each faction had its own cemetery. It's really quite unusual. I had always heard about this and Bob went to a commissioner's meeting up there and while he was busy I went out to the cemeteries and it was most amazing.

RM: So her brother disappeared, in effect, in Eureka.

MC: He could have gotten sick and died. People died and if nobody knew much about them, they buried them.

RM: Yes. Or he may have been a victim of foul play.

MC: Exactly.

RM: The dream that he had was the dream that all miners have, even up to the present day: "I've got some good ore and know people who have money and they're interested." It's the dream of the West, isn't it?

MC: Absolutely. I'll tell you another little story about Bob. Bob was always prospecting quite a lot and we had located claims and we did considerable work on some of them. Anyway, he was sitting there one day reading the paper or something and I was cleaning the bedroom. I came out and said, "Bob, look at this," and I had a rock. Usually I would do

that in the hills all the time and he'd look at it and then he'd say, "Uh-huh," and toss it out in the brush. So I handed him this rock and said, "Look at this. Doesn't it look like it could be high-grade silver?"

He looked at it and said, "I'll be darned. My gosh, it sure does. Where did you find it?"

"In the dresser drawer." [Laughs] I didn't have any idea where it came from. So he put it down on the window sill and that was the end of it. He always said it was the only time I had a rock that was worth a darn and then I didn't know where it came from.

RM: Isn't that the way it is? Well, did you want to say some more about your mother's family?

MC: Sarah Greer Thorn had quite a family in the east—in Pennsylvania—and even after my mother was grown, some of them corresponded. Two of them were Presbyterian ministers. And Samuel Thorn was my grandfather's name. I'm not exactly sure where his family came from to this country, but he came from Arkansas to the mines in Virginia City.

And when my brother Carroll was a little boy, he spent a lot of time with his grandparents in Carson. Do you know the famous Indian basket weaver, Dat So La Lee? Her baskets are considered the most valuable of all Indian baskets. She was a big, huge Indian lady. She used to go up and she'd stay for several weeks during the summer and gather reeds and willows or twigs, whatever they use to make baskets. And she loved to gamble. She'd gamble off the baskets or sell them for very little. But there was a man by the name of, I think, Abe Cohen. (This whole story is in that Arizona book up there.) Abe Cohen was a Jewish businessman. He had a store and he recognized her ability, so he took her under his wing and she made the baskets and he sold them. That way she had money and he made money. He took her to the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1918 and she displayed some of her baskets and became nationally famous.

RM: Is that right? Was she a Nevada Indian?

MC: Yes—from, I think, the Washoe tribe around Carson. But you know how life weaves its way in and out.

RM: Isn't it something? After your grandfather went to Grantsville, what did he do there?

MC: He freighted. I don't know what else he did, but when he was at Grantsville, I'm sure that's when he and T. J. Bell sank a well out here at Finger Rock. T. J. stands for Thomas Jefferson. That's an old family name; he was a state

senator to Carson City from our area and his father was related to quite a few of the old families from Nevada. He was great friends of my family.

RM: Where is Finger Rock?

MC: If you cross going up toward Luning, you go through a dip.

RM: Oh, and there's a little house with a corral? That's Finger Rock?

MC: Yes. This country, you know, gets really, really hot in the summertime and it was a long way between spots for water. So they would sell by the barrel or "water your horses" or however they did it. I think I've read where it was only \$1 or \$2 for a barrel of water. It wasn't much money, but that's what they did. They traded.

RM: From Luning to . . . ?

MC: I think it was before Luning. Thorne, I think, was the end of the railroad. That's across from Hawthorne. It was quite a bit later on that they were at Sodaville, because the railroad had gone in further and Sodaville was the end of the railroad until it went on to Tonopah. So when my grandfather was in Grantsville he wasn't freighting because this was long before Tonopah. My father was a small boy.

RM: So this would have been in the '80s that he was at Grantsville?

MC: Yes, I would say so. My mother and father were married in 1895 and that was at Sodaville. They lived there until after Tonopah, and then they moved to Crow Springs.

RM: That was your grandfather and your father?

MC: Yes. My family all sort of worked together.

RM: It's too bad families don't do that now. I think life was better when people did those kinds of things.

MC: Really. It's funny, my uncle John, who is credited with being a great part of discovering Manhattan, never married. And it wasn't that he didn't like ladies; he was quite a lady's man. But he wasn't crazy about working. He preferred to kind of take it easy and enjoyed visiting with the fellows down at the saloon and that kind of thing. So my dad always looked after him.

And when it came along August, it was time to go out in Manhattan and get winter's wood in. Uncle John had a Dodge truck—flatbed—with no cab on it or anything. Dad would stir around and he'd get the axes sharp and he'd get this done and, "Oh, that John," he'd say. So finally they'd get out. And it was go out and saw the tree down and load it and haul it in and then after you had it unloaded, you ran the saw off of the wheel of your car or your truck and sawed it into logs. Of course, men always wore a hat, you know; it was sort of a sign of manhood. My dad didn't have much use for the young fellows, as he called them, when they started going without hats and wearing wrist watches.

RM: That was very effeminate to him? Probably about the way I feel when I see a guy wearing an earring.

MC: Oh, exactly. I don't know what he'd think if he saw that. So they'd come in with this load of wood. Uncle John always was the driver and my dad was the helper and they'd back into our yard and every single time, the whole neighborhood knew exactly what was going to happen. My dad would get out and he'd direct Uncle John to back up a little more, a little more, a little more. Pretty soon he'd go like this [gestures], to signal him to stop. Uncle John would keep backing up and backing up [laughs] and my dad . . . oh, my. Pretty soon he'd throw his hat on the ground, "Whoa, goddamn it, whoa!" [Laughter] And I know Uncle John did that on purpose.

RM: Just to tease him?

MC: Sure. Dad would be yelling, "Whoa, whoa. Whoa, goddamn it. Whoa!"

RM: [Laughs] That would be a pretty good joke on somebody. Do you recall any stories or any information about life at Sodaville when they were there?

MC: There was hardly anybody who lived at Sodaville then. I don't know where my grandmother was—maybe they had gone on to Crow Springs and my mother was the only one in this little settlement of Sodaville. It was August and the men had all gone with wagons and horses; they'd stay for several days in the mountains and get wood. (It was further to go for wood at Sodaville than it was in Manhattan later on.)

This was around 1900, because she had two little boys and a baby. She had a little low rocking chair that she would always hold the baby in and rock him. The two little boys were playing on the floor in front of her and a terrific storm with thunder and lightning was going on. All of a sudden there was a crack of lightening and it blew out a big window at one

end of the room—and across the room was the telephone.

RM: They had a telephone in 1900?

MC: Yes. Tonopah, I know, had telephones pretty early. Anyway, lightning hit this telephone and blew it off of the wall and across the room, through this window. The little boys were playing on the floor and she was in the little rocking chair and it just missed them, and it set both walls on fire. There was an old man in town, the only adult there besides my mother. She said some people were coming by or something and saw the smoke and helped them and put the fire out. It was just by the grace of God that nobody was hurt. But after that she was sure afraid of lightning storms.

RM: I'll bet. Do you ever recall your mother talking about how women felt in those days? Because frequently they were the only woman in camp and they were alone a lot with all these kind of wild mining characters and so on. I think a woman nowadays would feel insecure in a situation like that.

MC: I never heard her really discuss it. But I know—and I know through Belle Butler's stories—about being alone on a ranch in some isolated place like my mother and my grandmother were. And I mean isolated. One story, which is a true story, involves my grandmother when they were living at the Pine Creek Ranch. Have you heard of Myrtle Miles, a noted Nevada writer? She's dead now, of course. She wrote a lot of Nevada and Nye County history. Her maiden name was Tate, and the Tates were Smoky Valley/Austin early settlers. I knew her quite well.

Anyway, she wrote a true story about an Indian affair in Smoky Valley. There was something going on and the Indians got hold of some whiskey and one man went home to wherever he and his squaw lived in Smoky Valley and he beat her up real bad, I guess. He didn't kill her. Then he left there and crossed the valley to a little place which we owned many years later. And a man lived there with his family. The Indian went to the door and wanted someplace to stay that night. The people were in bed. So the man of the house got up and put on his pants and everything and told him to go in the barn for shelter, and he said he couldn't get in. So the man got out of bed and put on his clothes and got a light—a lantern, I suppose—and went out there with him and opened the door and went in to show him where he could bed down. The Indian grabbed an ax and hit him over the head with it and killed him.

Comment [JE1]: I have no idea if this is spelled correctly. I never heard of it.

There were two little girls and their mother in the house. I think they heard the man cry out and they knew something was wrong and they locked themselves in their house. The Indian stole a horse and a saddle and later on he crossed the mountain over into Monitor Valley. There were some Indian friends of his living over there and he got a gun from one of them. (They were scared to death of him—the story had gotten around that fast. In those days, stories would spread.)

My grandmother was alone at Pine Creek with her children, who were teenagers then, but still children. And when she got up at daylight, she saw this Indian sitting on the wood pile. She hadn't heard the story, but she knew something was probably wrong. He had a gun and he was sitting on the wood pile. So she told the children, "Do not go to any window or make any sound or anything." And she went outside and called to him and asked him if he was hungry. He signified he was hungry, so she went back in the house and prepared food, and then she took it out about halfway to the wood pile and set it down and went back. He ate and then disappeared with this gun.

Well, he went back over to Smoky Valley and they were looking for him. When he came to the Moores Creek Ranch there were two brothers living there and they had gotten word of this killing and that people were looking for this Indian. And they knew him—he had done some work for them. So when he came into the yard the one brother went out. The Indian had the gun and he told him to stay a certain way away. Between them—I've forgotten exactly how they worked it—one of them kept the Indian occupied and the other one shot him. I think of that when you speak of a woman being alone, you know.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: I sort of have the feeling—I don't know if it has any historical accuracy or not—that a woman might be concerned now about being raped and molested. But I have the impression that that wasn't really the case back then. The Indians might kill if they went on a rampage or something, but it didn't seem that they were sexual perverts.

MC: I don't think they were.

RM: I don't think the old-timers were, either. The men might be drunken rowdies and kill each other and act crazy and everything, but I don't think they assaulted women.

MC: Yes. It wasn't uppermost in their mind. Women were scarce in those days.

RM: Maybe they held them higher regard, then?

MC: Possibly. I also think that there was a high rate of morality then. I think that sex was just . . . children didn't see it. They didn't see it on TV, they didn't hear it all the time, and it wasn't, certainly, discussed. It sure wasn't in my house.

RM: Yes. And a person's word meant something then.

MC: Absolutely.

RM: I interviewed a man named Frank Brockman, who moved to Beatty from California in the '50s and bought land there. He said it was really a shock to do business in Beatty because he found a man's word there was worth more than a contract was in California.

MC: I'm sure that was the case. Anyway, as I grew up, and when I look back on my family and Bob's family . . . Bob's family had a tremendous history of women raising children alone. Bob's grandmother (that's another complete story) had lost an arm as a little girl in England. She came to Belmont as a young woman and married Charles Goldback, who was much older than she. They went out to Barley Creek—he had homesteaded it—and they had three or four children and he died. She had one arm, and she raised that family. The only help that she had was an Indian or two who lived on the place with them.

And Bob's mother used to laugh. She could remember, when she was a little girl, that one of the Indians, when he was supposed to be irrigating, would slip around back of the willows and go to sleep. And her mother, with her one arm, would get a willow and go over and just whack the heck out of him. And he'd just be so scared. The Indian was quite a young man and lived at the ranch and helped. (He was a great friend of our years after this happened.)

And she said, "Here was Mama with her left arm." She said the Lord took her arm away because she'd have been uncontrollable if she'd had two arms. She was a wonderful lady.

RM: You knew her—she was still living when you met Bob?

MC: Oh, yes. Bob's grandmother's name was Elizabeth Noonan, and as I said, she was born in England. When she was about nine years old, she was involved in an accident and lost her arm.

RM: What kind of an accident was it?

MC: It was in regard to a mill. There was an underground pulley and at intervals, I guess, it had covers on it or they could open it up and look at it or something. Everyone was warned not to bother it. But she did, as a child, and reached down there and it caught her arm.

RM: Oh!

MC: She thought afterwards, for years, that had she had good medical care right away they could have saved her arm. I don't know.

RM: How far up was it lost?

MC: Oh, clear up almost to the shoulder; just below her shoulder.

RM: Wow.

MC: She was very intelligent and very involved in reading. She died of cancer when she was 90 years old. She was living with us at the Moores Creek Ranch, where Bob's mother was taking care of her. The cancer began as a little sore on her lip and of course, it was neglected. The war was going on. We were living in the Bay area, and by the time she got medical help it had involved too much of the area into her throat. But she never lost interest in the news—in anything that was going on.

Anyway, she came to New York with an aunt when she was just a girl. (Some other relatives had come ahead of them.) She went to work as some kind of a housekeeper, or with housekeeping work, for a Dr. Stites, and they just sort of adopted her—they became very fond of her. He and his wife had two or three children. Then his health got very bad—he must have had what they called consumption or something of that nature.

He decided to come West for his health and he came to Belmont, and they brought her with them. He practiced in Belmont and some of the old Nevada families—the Ernst family, the Essers, the Brotherton family and some others—were all old Belmont families; they were all friends, find that's where she met Mr. Goldback.

RM: And what was his background?

MC: He had come from Leipzig, Germany, to Virginia City and then to Belmont, I guess. He had also been involved in the sawmills up on Jefferson that supplied timber and things for the mines in Belmont. And he settled this piece of land at Barley Creek.

RM: Did he homestead it, or buy it?

MC: He didn't exactly homestead it, but he settled it; you could take up so much land, you know.

RM: I see. He was the first settler on it.

MC: Right. He was a great friend of the Ernst family and that's how he met Bob's grandmother. Then Dr. Stites regained his health and went back to New York, but she stayed on. And when they got married, they were married at the Ernst family home. And it was so funny. Years later, when Belmont was deserted, some of her grandchildren were in Belmont just wandering around. There was a huge, flat stone doorstep in front of an old fallen-down building. One of the grandsons got to digging around it and underneath it were some ledgers. The little worms or whatever they are that bother paper into bits had destroyed some of the first pages but the inside pages were intact. And the ledger was over the days that Charles Goldback and Elizabeth Noonan were married. I think it was from Esser's store. When you went to the store and bought anything, you wrote down what you bought.

RM: Yes, I've seen those accounts.

MC: It was in his handwriting and hers. He bought so many yards of carpeting and carpet tacks for his house. And a side saddle, which was his wedding gift to her. And she bought so many yards of dress material and thread for her wedding dress. And the day of the wedding he bought several bottles of whiskey and several bottles of champagne. We all just laughed. I tried to get a Xerox copy of that, but the boy who had it has died and I don't know what happened to it. But it was priceless. They had the wedding at a certain time on a certain day and a couple of hours after the wedding he was back at the store and had bought some more liquor. So it must have been a pretty good wedding.

RM: [Chuckles]

MC: Then they went to Barley Creek. She always said he married her sort of out of pity because he felt that she needed someone to take care of her. But other people said that wasn't the exact fact. He thought an awful lot of her. Then she had four children out at that ranch with no one but her husband—who had been a bachelor (he was quite a bit older than she)—to attend her, and an Indian. She delivered two boys and two girls.

RM: And she took care of all those babies with one arm?

MC: She knew exactly how to diaper them. I saw her do it with my children after they came along. She always wore dresses that were pretty long. She'd spread her legs out and it made sort of a nice cradle and she'd lie the baby in it. I couldn't tell you exactly how she'd do it, but she had a certain way and she'd open the safety pin with her mouth, then get the baby down there. She told me herself that those babies always helped her. They seemed to realize that they had to lie in one position. It was very awkward for her to nurse them on one side because she had to hold them with one arm. So she only nursed with one breast and the other one just dried up. I have read that that's impossible. Doctors will say that if you're nursing a baby, you have to nurse with both breasts, but she never did, and it was no problem.

Oh, she was the most remarkable person that you ever saw in your life. She decided one time that she'd need a little lean-to built on to put her wood under or something or other. She'd grab a hammer and go on, she'd use her knees and her legs, and she'd have to make a hole for the nail and then get the nail in it and then get it on something. Oh, and she could ride.

RM: Was she right-handed originally, I wonder?

MC: I haven't any idea.

RM: Did she ever talk about any stigma associated with only having one arm?

MC: Never. In fact, she was more . . . not forward, forward means that you are too much so, but she never backed up for any reason.

RM: Maybe losing the arm made her stronger?

MC: It could have been, but I think she was born with a lot of that grit. She's buried in Belmont right by Bob—a remarkable lady.

RM: Last time we were talking about your husband, Bob Cornell's, grandmother, who had come from England and lost her arm in a childhood accident. I thought maybe we could talk some more about Bob's family.

MC: Well, Bob's mother was born to Elizabeth (we always called her Lizzy) and Charles Goldback at the Barley Creek Ranch in Monitor Valley. There were four children born to that marriage. The first was a boy, Harry, and then Bob's mother, Nellie Ernst. Ernst is an old Nevada name. One of our governors, Governor Russell—who just passed away, I think within this last year—was a grandson to the Ernst family and they were great friends with the Goldback family in Belmont and in Monitor Valley. Then there was another girl, Rose Goldback Walter; she just recently passed away in the Tonopah hospital. The younger boy, Charles, named after his father, died of rheumatic fever when he was 12. He's buried in the Belmont cemetery. And Bob's father was born in Austin, Minnesota (I've forgotten the exact date). His father's name was John Hamilton Cornell. We used to have some newspaper clippings on the Cornell family, and they were evidently related to Ezra Cornell, who founded Cornell University. Ezra was one of, I think, 12 children, and they all had big families.

The family moved west and they lived at Deadwood, South Dakota, for a number of years. A little boy died there of scarlet fever. Bob's father's name was Jack Cornell—his given name was John Henry—and he was only eight years old at that time. After the death of his mother in Deadwood, leaving two daughters older than John Henry, the father and his family moved on. His father made his living by buying and selling horses. A lot of people did in the early days, you know.

They moved on to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Well, they lived at Spearfish, Wyoming, for a while. There is a lot of meadowland, I understand, there. They stayed there for some time while he rebuilt his herd and then they moved on to St. George, Utah, then on across where Las Vegas is now—I think they called it the Old Spanish Trail—into the Los Angeles area.

RM: With his horses?

MC: Driving horses, selling, buying. When they got to the Los Angeles area, he accumulated—I don't know how—some land. Later on they had walnut orchards and orange groves in Anaheim, I think.

RM: What year would this have been, Millie?

MC: Well, let's see. Bob's dad was in his 80s when he died in 1955.

RM: So this would have been in the '80s, probably.

MC: Probably, or maybe into the '90s, because he and his father didn't get along and he left home in his teens. He left after they got to Los Angeles and came into Nevada and worked at the mines and did whatever work he could get. He lived around Blair, at Silver Peak. They had that mining operation and a big mill there. And at Palisade out of Lida. And he was at Tonopah for a while. He met and married Bob's mother, who was a widow, in 1912 in Manhattan.

RM: Let's talk about Bob's mother growing up on the ranch in Monitor Valley. Did you know her?

MC: Oh yes. Very well. She was just a wonderful person. Her mother, as I said, was a very resourceful lady and lived to be 90. She died at our ranch in Smoky Valley in 1951. Bob's grandmother was very outspoken and free speaking. Bob's mother was more quiet; she had dark eyes and dark hair. She and her sister grew up gathering and breaking wild horses—mustangs—in Monitor Valley. They could ride bareback as well as they could ride with a saddle. This was something everyone knew through the years. They had to help with the horses because the one boy died and they had an older brother, Harry. They lived out at this remote little ranch.

RM: And their mother just had one arm.

MC: Yes.

RM: There were no men there, really, were there?

MC: No. Their father died in 1897. Bob's mother was 67 when she died, so she was born in '93. But they had to rely on their resources—the cattle and horses they owned, and their garden. And they had a schoolteacher come to the ranch. There were just the Goldback children and maybe a few Indian children. The schoolteacher who lived with them was a lady who is well-known in historical accounts of Tonopah—Lottie Nay.

RM: Oh really? Lottie Nay was the schoolteacher at the Barley Creek Ranch? She wound up as Tonopah's first cook.

MC: Absolutely. Her maiden name was Stimler.

RM: Isn't that something.

MC: One year they'd been snowed in and it was pretty dreary. Finally the snow had melted quite a lot and Bob's mother and the children and Lottie were all dying to go to Belmont, so against his better judgment their father got the team and wagon and everything ready. Lottie was driving the team and Bob's grandmother was sitting on the seat alongside her, holding one of the babies, whoever was the youngest child, on her lap. Now, Barley Creek sat down in a little draw where the creek came into the valley, or meadowland, and the trail went up a steep little hill onto the top of the little ridge. Just before they got to the top, the wagon wheel went over a big rock. And because the grandmother had only one arm, she was holding the baby with her arm. And out they bounced, she and the baby. The old man was watching (I say old man because he was considerably older than Bob's grandmother) and he came running up and was going to run up the hill and forbid them to go on. Before he could get there, Lizzy had gathered herself up (and, you know, they wore those god-awful long skirts and dresses) and gotten back into the wagon. It didn't hurt the baby at all, she held her tightly. And she was calling to Lottie something like, "Hit 'em . . ."

RM: Hit the horses, you mean?

MC: Yes. "Whip 'em, Lottie. Whip em. Get the hell out of here," or something like that, before the old man would catch them.

They went to school in Belmont in the winter after their father died—and probably before. A lot of their education was in Belmont, where they would stay with friends. I think sometimes, after he died, the mother would stay in Belmont also. She sold the Barley Creek Ranch to the Nay family—John and his . . .

RM: Is that right? Do you know about what year it was she sold that ranch?

MC: I think it was 1910, but maybe it was earlier than that.

RM: It was considerably after Tonopah had started, then?

MC: Yes.

RM: Do you recall any more things Bob's mother told you about growing up on the Barley Creek Ranch and in Belmont?

MC: Oh, they used to talk about all their experiences. I think there was a road farther up Monitor Valley that crossed into Little Fish Lake Valley from the Monitor Valley side, but a lot of the Belmont travel and a lot of the Monitor Valley travel went up Barley Creek and over Barley Creek summit. There was quite a steep climb there and down to get to Tybo and Morey, and all of that country.

RM: Oh, that's how they got up there. I'll be darned.

MC: And they liked that because when the wagons came through they always stopped at the ranch. Sometimes they stayed all night. Of course, there was quite a bit of water—streams—along the way, so there wasn't a lot of difficulty about water. But they enjoyed that a lot because they got to see people and visit and know what was going on in the world.

RM: Was there a store or anything at the Barley Creek Ranch?

MC: No. Over on the other side of the mountain was Tybo—I think that was about the nearest. And Belmont was fairly close.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: What was happening at Tybo? Was it a going concern then?

MC: There'd been, I guess, early mining work done in that area. And then when the power came into Manhattan from Millers . . . it comes from below Bishop in Big Pine and up over the White Mountains to Silver Peak and then to Millers and was put from Millers to Manhattan when it was built in 1909. And just after that it was extended from Manhattan to Tybo. I think that's quite remarkable.

RM: I do, too. It indicates that some things were happening at Tybo.

MC: Oh yes. In fact, I know that Tybo was operating before 1909 because when Jim Butler met Belle Butler in about '79, they were living at Tybo. Butler was working there.

RM: Was this before he had his ranch?

MC: Well, it wasn't his ranch. It was their ranch, but his father gave Belle this little ranch in Monitor Valley, the Little Empire Ranch, for a wedding present when they were married.

RM: Millie, what's your source of information on this? Is this something you've read or is this something you know from having lived there?

MC: I know.

RM: How interesting. I've never read any details on that. As long as we're on it, why don't you tell me why Jim's father gave it to Belle? Incidentally, was Belle part Indian?

MC: Oh, no. Jim Butler had lived with an Indian woman and he had two children by her. Let's see—where did they live? It wasn't Tybo. It was out of Eureka, up around that area. Maybe Duckwater, Currant Creek, someplace around there. They were never formally married.

Then when he was working at Tybo, Belle was running a boardinghouse there. Her family had moved to Tybo. And she was married to a man by the name of Donahue. He would evidently spend a lot of time at the saloon, and when he did he'd get pretty abusive to her. On one occasion, he was mistreating her and I guess there were other people there besides

Jim Butler, and he interfered and worked this guy over pretty good and told him that if he ever touched her again he'd kill him. There have been insinuations in articles and things that something was going on between Belle and him. I've been told on good authority and the things I trust that I read, that that wasn't the case. They knew each other because Jim was a boarder at this boardinghouse.

But a short time later, Jim Butler and a man from Austin who was in Tybo on business were walking down the street one afternoon about 5:00, I think. This Donahue came out of a saloon all drunk up and when he saw Jim walking down the street he pulled his gun and shot several times, missed Jim and hit the other man.

RM: Oh my lord.

MC: And Jim pulled his gun and killed this Donahue. And the other man lived. There was a doctor there; it took him some time to recover, but he lived.

I believe that Jim and Belle were married in '89. Jim's father was a mining man and had come from the mining country around Sutter Creek (around that area in California) to Eureka with two sons. He thought a lot of Belle and admired her, so when they got married, as a wedding gift, he gave her this ranch. It was their ranch but he gave it to her. And that's where they lived after they were married.

RM: I see. And they lived there until they went to Tonopah in 1900?

MC: Oh yes. But Jim, you know, was D.A. of Nye County.

RM: That's right. In the meantime, he was elected D.A.

MC: In the '90s. And they were very good friends of my Aunt Lida (Humphrey) Gilbert and her husband Robert Gilbert. They lived at Mosquito Creek, which is below Pine Creek Ranch. And because they were both in public office, they had occasion to be in each other's company. So Belle and my aunt Lida were good friends. But the Butlers were so poor when they were at Little Empire Ranch that there were times when Jim walked to Belmont. He would walk from Little Empire to Mosquito Creek, over to Pine Creek and stay all night, and then walk on into Belmont the next day.

RM: How far would that be?

MC: It's quite a way. Let's see, Pine Creek must be 30 miles from Belmont, and it's another 10 miles or so to Little Empire.

RM: Whatever happened to the Little Empire Ranch?

MC: After they moved to Tonopah, I believe the Potts family bought it. When we were up there 10 or 15 years ago it had been taken up by a big ranch outfit, like all the little ranches.

RM: What ranch is it a part of now, do you think?

MC: I really don't know that. At that time it was Monitor Livestock Company or something. We talked to some of the people who owned it and they gave us permission to open the gate and go in and just look around.

RM: You said that Jim had two children by this Indian woman. Whatever happened to them?

MC: I think they grew up around Reno.

RM: Was she Shoshone?

MC: Yes, she was Shoshone.

RM: I wonder how long he lived with her? Was it a long relationship?

MC: I would suspect the children were pretty little. I don't know whether he left her or he just had to go and get a job or something and she stayed; that's what I would suspect. And he met Belle.

RM: Did Belle have children?

MC: Two children—a girl and a boy.

RM: And what happened to those kids?

MC: They took the name Butler, but they were never formally adopted. They were fine children.

RM: They didn't come to Tonopah with Jim and Belle, did they? I never have seen accounts of that.

MC: During the time they were at Little Empire, the girl lived in Tybo with the grandmother. She was a little older than the boy. And the boy was with Jim and Belle a lot, but in the winter he went to school with an aunt who lived someplace else where there were schools available.

RM: Not in Nye County?

MC: No. But after Tonopah, Jim bought some property at Big Pine below Bishop. He bought a ranch and then he had property right in Big Pine and both the children then married around the Bishop area. They always went by the name Butler. Nothing much has ever been written about this because they didn't like it. I mean, they liked Jim and they were on real good terms, but they didn't like what had happened.

RM: Here he'd killed their father. Even if it was self-defense, he still did it.

MC: That's it, and there were certain people who would always frown on that. Belle Butler is buried in Bishop. I go by her grave because my brother and sister-in-law are buried very near to it. I went by it one time and I happened to notice a very large stone.

RM: Jim hung around Tonopah for quite a while, didn't he?

MC: I think that they were away a lot, even though their headquarters was Tonopah. They were in San Francisco and Sacramento, and he bought some property at San Jose. That's where Belle lived after she left the Bishop area.

RM: How long did they stay in the Bishop area?

MC: Belle died, I think, in the spring of 1926 and Jim died six months later. Jim spent most of his time at Big Pine but Belle lived down at San Jose. She took care of her mother, who was a very old lady by that time. But Belle was not old when she died. I don't know just what happened.

RM: I wonder how old she was?

MC: She died in 1926, and she was quite a bit younger than Jim; there might have been 10 years' difference in age between them.

RM: You know everything about this country, don't you?

MC: I feel that I know those people. I got so interested in it and studied and studied it. I think the Butler marriage would make a tremendous story for TV. Belle was a beautiful woman—very, very good looking, with very dark hair.

RM: How tall was she?

MC: I don't think she was tall—medium height, from what I have seen of her pictures.

RM: Where did she come from?

MC: Her father's name was McCormick; they came from Nova Scotia. They went to New York. [Chuckles] Lord knows how all of these people got from where they lived to the state of Nevada. They were at Fish Lake Valley and Aurora, around there. I'm sure her father was a mining man and worked in the mines. And they went to Tybo from there.

RM: Where did she meet Donahue?

MC: I don't know—maybe she met him after she got to Tybo. And you mentioned a second ago about the children and the stigma. I could never understand why Belle, after they were married, never left that ranch. He would go to Austin on the Fourth of July or Belmont, and he was gone on business a lot—prospecting, mostly. A lot of articles say he was so lazy, and he admits in his writings that if he hated anything, it was farming—cutting hay and that part of it, you know. But he loved to prospect.

My cousin Francis Humphrey, whom I mentioned to you, had a mother who was a very proper, very intelligent person who had worked with her father in the newspaper business. She was an old lady when I mentioned this subject to her one day. I did it because I knew she had worked in the newspapers and might have some more information on the matter. I said something about how interested I was in it, and I said, “Belle Butler must have been a very resourceful person, and very remarkable.”

She was a little lady—I don't think she was five feet tall—and she always dressed properly. She looked at me and said, “She must have been, to have married the man who murdered her husband.”

RM: Oh!

MC: Then I knew why Belle never left that ranch and never went to Belmont for the Fourth of July where all the people would gather.

RM: Apparently some people thought that it wasn't self-defense, then?

MC: At that time, you just didn't do things like that. If your husband beat you up three times a day, you didn't marry the man who came along and killed him. It seems ridiculous now.

RM: Even today it would be a very unusual thing.

MC: Yes, but people would think, “Well, he had it coming.” But they overlooked that part of it.

RM: It does raise the question of what was going on between them.

MC: Well, naturally that comes into people's minds—was there anything?—whether it was or not. But the more I looked into and the more material I got hold of and read, I found that Jim and Belle Butler had a very strong love affair going all the years they were married. I have had access to certain material and letters . . .

RM: This would be material that's not usually available in books and things like that.

MC: It isn't. And it is just fascinating.

RM: But she died young?

MC: Well, I suppose so. Her daughter's name, by the way, was Nevada; they always called her Vada. She's never had any children. She was married, evidently to a very well-educated man.

RM: Do you recall his name?

MC: Oh, let's see. I think he kept books for Jim Butler. I can't think of it right now.

RM: But in your opinion, there was nothing going on between Belle and Jim prior to Donahue's death?

MC: I don't think so.

RM: And you've had access to materials that would lead you to believe this?

MC: Absolutely. From personal things that I have read, I think any man who ate at that boardinghouse had occasion to know Belle quite well. And I wondered too. I thought, "Well, was there a basis for this problem that came up?"

RM: That happened to my dad one time. He was in a bar in Colorado and a guy was beating up his pregnant wife. And people were just horrified, you know. Somebody said to my dad (who was a professional wrestler), "Bob, why don't you do something about that?" So the old man went over and intervened. And the first thing the guy did was go over to the bar, break off a bottle, and come at the old man with this broken bottle. And the wife jumped on my dad's back and said, "Oh, don't hurt him." My dad got cut up.

MC: Oh, my God. If she hadn't held him, he'd have been all right?

RM: Yes. After it was over, my dad had a big gash in his arm and was cut here, and the deputy pulled out his gun and handed it to my dad and said, "Go kill that son of a bitch, Bob. I'll cover for you." But my dad didn't. And he said he

would never intervene in something like that again. And my dad didn't know this woman from Adam, so it could have been that way with Jim Butler.

MC: Yes. As I say, I believe that they were well-acquainted—they probably saw each other two or three times a day. But I have never been able to see any reason to believe there was hanky-panky going on.

RM: Actually, both of them had a bit of stigma. She married the man who killed her husband, and Jim Butler was what they derogatorily called a “squaw man” in those days.

MC: Well, in those days, an awful lot that was written about Jim Butler but you didn't read about those things. But in the early stories, they loved to point out that Jim had a squaw and two children. You know, people looked down on somebody who lived with an Indian woman. And it just tickles me, to think that after all of that happened, that family was considered (and it was) one of the finest Indian families in the country.

RM: His Indian wife must have been a woman of substance, don't you think?

MC: Oh, yes. I'm sure she was. Just like the white race, some of the Indians were totally worthless and some of them were all right, like Albert Hooper and his dad, Tim Hooper.

RM: Millie, as long as we're talking about legendary characters from that area, what do you know about Jack Longstreet? Did you know him?

MC: No.

RM: He died in '28.

MC: I was 10 years old, and at that time he was living at Longstreet Canyon. My family knew him. They were friends, and I'll tell you why. (I'm not exactly sure how this story goes.) I believe it was Francis's father, Uncle Frank, who was leaving Belmont, long after Longstreet had come into this country. Do you know how he lost his ear?

RM: From cattle rustling as a kid, wasn't it?

MC: Stealing horses. And so he always wore his hair long. He lived with an Indian woman, Fannie Black, from Ash Meadows. And speaking of narrow-mindedness of people and their outlook on certain things . . . When Longstreet and Fannie died they were buried in the Belmont cemetery. Well, Bob's grandmother (the lady with the one arm) raised holy

hell because she didn't want an Indian in the graveyard in the first place, and in the second place she didn't want Longstreet buried there.

RM: Oh, she raised hell about Longstreet being buried there?

MC: Oh, yes. And you know that Longstreet killed Fannie's brother. Also, some people—and I won't mention any names . . . there were some very strong feelings between certain ranchers and Longstreet, and there were problems that came up. I don't know whether any of them were over the death of Fannie's brother, but there were hard feelings.

RM: You aren't talking about the Cliffords, are you? That's been written up in books, so we know about that.

MC: But there are two sides to that story.

RM: Really? Incidentally, Sally Zanjani has written a very good book on Jack Longstreet.

MC: Oh, some friends of mine were talking about it in Belmont. The only little story I know about is something that happened one time when my Uncle Frank was leaving Belmont. He had a load on his wagon and he lost a wheel off the wagon. Longstreet came along—they came out of Belmont and went up over past Moore's Station down to Tybo—and he stopped and I don't remember the details, but he went back to Belmont and got another wheel and came back and this required hours, you know, on horseback. (I think this was just below Belmont—I don't know how many miles.) Anyway, he helped them out a great deal. Prior to that they had known each other, but after that he was certainly considered a friend of our family.

RM: Is that right? What's the story on the Cliffords?

MC: From what I've heard, the Clifford version of what happened wasn't the true version. The true version is that they framed Longstreet on the corral incident.

RM: I don't remember the corral story. I remember that they had a gunfight out in the open country.

MC: I don't know whether that preceded or came after the corral incident. The Cliffords were feuding with somebody else and they tied up this man and made it look like his horse had dragged him to death, or something to that effect, at a time when Longstreet was in the area. And it could have happened that he was responsible.

RM: Oh, they made it look like Longstreet was the villain?

MC: Yes. And I think that's what led to the gun fight. Now, maybe I'm all mixed up on that.

RM: Is that written up in a published article?

MC: Oh, yes. There have been several different stories written on Longstreet.

RM: Do you have any other anecdotes on Longstreet, or things which would provide us insight on his character or whatever?

MC: I wish my husband was here; it was his grandmother who was so upset when Longstreet was going to be buried in the cemetery in Belmont. It's really surprising—his grandmother never struck me as being a narrow-minded woman in any way.

RM: And she didn't dislike Indians?

MC: Oh, no. But she did have this old idea that there was a certain place for people and they'd damn well better keep it [chuckles].

RM: And one of them wasn't in the graveyard [chuckles]. Well, it sounds very English to me [laughter].

MC: It could very well be. My mother's mother came from County Tyrone, Ireland. I never understood what was going on till I was grown, but she'd always point out that it was the north of Ireland. And of course we had a lot of Italians in Manhattan and I had a case on several Italian boys and a couple of Indian boys from time to time [chuckles]. And boy, she'd get kind of nervous over those Catholic boys, you know [laughter]. When I grew up I thought, "How ridiculous can you be." And look at Ireland. They're still shooting each other like crazy. Just because somebody believes one way and the other believes another.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: OK, so we have Bob's mother growing up in Belmont . . .

MC: Bob's mother and Longstreet and a few other people. [Laughs]

RM: Do you remember any stories that Bob's mother told you about life in Belmont?

MC: They had a pretty good life. There was a group of early-day people in Belmont who were very determined that their children would be educated. They had a Catholic Church and an Episcopal Church and they had dances. People came from all over—Tybo, Smoky Valley—by wagon. And there were Fourth of July celebrations. Their homes were simple but adequate. They were just good people.

RM: Belmont was mainly a mining community—was it a commercial center and a ranching center, too? How would you describe it? All of the above?

MC: All of the above. Belmont was a silver mining town.

RM: But the ore was shallow, wasn't it?

MC: I don't know how deep those mines are, but the Highbridge over east of Belmont has tremendous size dumps, so I think it must've been a pretty deep mine. I think the price of silver—you know how things went—didn't hold up, or maybe the mines gave out. Then there were mines at Barcelona we talked about, and ranching. Ranching had a great deal to do with Belmont. There was all of Monitor Valley, and there was a little ranch out at Silver Creek. And there was a ranch in Hunt's Canyon. And also, the county seat was at Belmont until it was moved to Tonopah.

RM: What was the big commercial center that Belmont related to? Was it Austin? Do you remember your parents or grandparents, or Bob's, talking about going from Belmont to the big town? They must have gone to Austin, or did they?

MC: I think Belmont, in its heyday, was as big as Austin ever was. Of course, after Tonopah grew and had the railroad, it became the metropolis where people went. And it was the county seat.

RM: How did Bob's mother and father meet?

MC: His mother married a Belmont man by the name of George Brotherton (Brotherton is an old Belmont family name) who worked as a forest ranger for the government. They were married a few years, not long, and I think he had a lung problem. Anyway, he died. And they never had any children. Then after his death, Jack Cornell had come to Manhattan. Around 1912, the White Caps Mine was going very well and placer mining was going. And he met Bob's mother.

RM: Was she living in Manhattan or in Belmont?

MC: She and her first husband lived in Manhattan. There was a small home where the forest ranger lived. They lived there and a couple of other places during the years before he died. But they met in Manhattan. Bob's grandmother, of course, had sold the property at Barley Creek some time before that. And it made Bob's dad so mad. He said, "She spent all her money. She sold the property for \$10,000," which today you wouldn't hardly buy a postage stamp for \$10,000. But she took a trip back to New York and visited all the relatives and went to San Francisco.

RM: So she kind of went on a spree?

MC: She always was very interested in traveling and reading. We didn't have TV before she died but we had radio. And that's what she wanted to do. So she spent most of her money. She may have been living in Manhattan. I'm not sure. Or maybe her son and her other daughter and Bob's mother were there. They were married in Manhattan, anyway.

RM: And how many children did they have?

MC: Three.

RM: Was Bob's dad a mining man all of his life?

MC: Yes. They owned a piece of a ranch property at Belmont and they had a little ranch there below town. Bob was born in 1915 in Round Mountain, and his father was working at mining. Then when Bob was a little boy they had this little ranch just below Belmont and a few cows and that, I think, was the happiest time of Bob's life. He remembered everything about it and he was only three years old or so. They're subdividing it now.

Bob started school in Belmont. He had two brothers—a brother born in 1918 and a brother born 18 months later, his brother Jack and his brother Gene. When Bob was in the fifth grade they moved to Manhattan. He graduated from high

school in Manhattan and worked before he graduated—summers and other times—in the mines. His family still owned this property at Belmont and they had acquired some cows, I don't know how many head. The ranchers with the bigger amounts of cattle would always sort of take care of the Cornell cows as they went on to winter range and when they rounded them up. And as Bob got older he'd ride in the spring on the roundup and help gather cattle.

Then the war broke out in 1941, of course. Bob and I were married in 1937. Bob's brother Jack was already in the service—he had enlisted in the air force. He went overseas and was gone five years altogether, and the other brother went in the air force, also. Bob and I went to the Bay Area and Bob worked in the shipyard—Renship at Sausalito.

After the war, when we came home, Bob's mother and father had acquired a piece of property up Monitor Valley. The Taylor Grazing Act required that if you had so many head of cows you were supposed to have so much acreage that you cut hay on. So they bought these 92 acres in upper Monitor Valley miles from Pine Creek. Then they sold the Belmont property and bought a ranch in Smoky Valley. It involved quite a lot of property. They had three pieces of land, and then the summer range for the cattle was up Kingston Canyon. They had a permit for 500 head of cattle.

RM: Which ranch was it they bought?

MC: Moores Creek Ranch. And they had the Charnock hayfield, which was something like 600 acres of land down in the valley. (That's an interesting name. We always thought it was spelled S-h-o-n-i-c or something like that until the signing of the papers at the sale.)

RM: Is the Moores Creek Ranch in the middle of Smoky Valley?

MC: No. Do you know where Darrough's is?

RM: Yes.

MC: It's directly east from there, on the Toquima side of the Smoky Valley—it lies at the north end of Jefferson Mountain. The original road that crossed Smoky Valley and went over into Monitor Valley used to go right by Moores Creek Ranch. But a few years ago there was a heavy winter, and the spring thaw took out that canyon. So the road is routed up a little to the north and back over Moores Creek Summit. It's really beautiful country up there—just beautiful.

RM: Yes. Now, let's do just a quick biography of Bob. You stayed in Sausalito after the war?

MC: Well, Marin County. We lived there seven years. His mother had always had a dream and hope that someday her three boys would own a big ranch. In her heart the ranch part of her life had never left her. And so we came home, which wasn't very much my idea.

RM: You wanted to stay down there?

MC: Well, I knew the hard life that most women had around the area, without running water and no hot water and a lot of those things. And Moores Creek was totally far away across the valley. There was no power down in the valley anyway then, unless people had a power plant. So it was something like starting out 100 years before. We had an old adobe house.

RM: So you moved onto the Moores Creek Ranch?

MC: Well, because we had two children—one in the fifth grade and one in the fourth—when we moved back here in 1948, we lived in Tonopah the first year and Bob worked at a service station. Then in the summer we'd go to the ranch. Then Round Mountain had a burst of activity and they had construction work going on and Bob went to work—he had learned the electrical trade in the shipyard during the war. So he went to work as an electrician at Round Mountain and we lived there. He also worked for the Nevada Highway Department and we lived at the maintenance station and the children went to school at Round Mountain. Then the mine went down and Bob had quit the highway department. The wages were pretty bad in those days. That's how we came to Gabbs; he was looking for a job.

RM: And this would have been what year, Millie?

MC: It was 1952. By that time we had a little boy just a year old—a new little boy. And our daughter was going to high school in Tonopah, living with my brother. She was a freshman and our other boy was in the eighth grade. We moved over here in November and she transferred in January and all three of them graduated from high school here. When we landed here we thought, "Good Lord, if we can stick it out six months we might have money enough to leave."

RM: And you've been here almost 40 years now?

MC: [Chuckles]

RM: What was Bob's job with the mine?

MC: He was an electrician. There were two companies up here at that time, Standard Slag Company and Basic Refractories. Bob went to work for Standard Slag Company. He worked for them about 10 years or so and they sold their property to Basic and they had other properties elsewhere. We were transferred to Yerington and I thought that was pretty nice. That's a nice little town.

RM: Oh, you didn't live here continuously, then?

MC: We were only gone one year and we came back. Slag had an iron mine there. We thought it was pretty dusty and bad here, but that iron ore was really . . . Bob was having a lot of health problems. The general manager at Basic had told him when we left, "Look Bob, if you ever want to come back here, you've got a job." So he quit over there. He had 10 years in with retirement and everything. We thought about it a lot so we came back. We had sold the house we had before when we left, so then the company gave us this house.

RM: What year did you come back?

MC: The fall of '63, because my mother died in '62.

RM: When was Bob a Nye County Commissioner?

MC: He was commissioner for 12 years—three terms. He was first elected in '67, I think.

RM: How did he happen to run for commissioner?

MC: Well, we'd always kind of talked about it. As I told you, my grandfather, William Carroll Humphrey, was a Nye County Commissioner in 1910 when he died and Bob's grandfather, Charles Goldback, was a Nye County Commissioner in 1897 when he died. And Bob's dad had run for commissioner but was defeated. My family and his family both were very interested in politics and in the state of the nation and so forth. So we talked about it. As it happened, at that time you could only run every four years from our district. He wasn't getting any younger and the general manager, Bob Gates, talked to Bob about it. Bob was elected councilman here the first year that Gabbs became a city—incorporated. He served for seven years, I think, before we moved to Yerington. Bates said, "Did you ever think of running?"

Bob said, "Yeah, I have. "

But he had to run against one of our best friends, Nick Banovich. He'd been in office for eight or 10 or 12 years—quite some time. Bob went and talked to him. He said, "I've been thinking about running for Nye County Commissioner, and I want to talk to you."

And Nick said, "Go for it Bob. Don't worry about it."

If you had known Bob . . . there never was a dishonest bone in his body. He didn't know the meaning of the word "lie." Everything was completely open and honest. So he filed and this town was just tremendous. I think one time out of 280 votes he got all of them but 40 or something. And oh, he was mad. [Laughs] He said, "Who are those 40 people?" And Tonopah supported him very well. At that time, Pahrump was just beginning to grow. In fact, the first year he ran for office they had the dedication for the new Pahrump paved road. We became very good friends with a lot of the early Pahrump people.

RM: Do you want to mention some names?

MC: Sure. Tim Hafen and his wife, Jackie. And Bob Ruud, who later became a commissioner. He and Jacque, his wife, were very good friends. And "Digger" Andersen and his wife and Dan Wulfenstein. He and his wife are very fine people.

RM: Well, Amargosa was growing pretty well at that time, too.

MC: You bet. And Don Barnett, who became a Nye County Commissioner later on, was a good friend of ours, and his wife. And of course Duckwater . . . Bob, as I told you, grew up with Indian friends and the Indians liked Bob and he got along well with them. They were always distrustful of anybody in politics, but the Indians at Duckwater knew him.

RM: How about the Indians in Reese River?

MC: Oh, they were pretty good; they just didn't get that much involved.

RM: Was Bob known in Pahrump and Beatty and Amargosa and so on before he ran?

MC: Yes. It's not heavily populated, but it's a big county. For one thing, his background was so broad—he'd been involved in everything: mining, ranching, little towns. And he was very presentable and he always had time to talk to everybody. He just took it easy. Somebody ran against him one time and . . .

RM: Oh, he was unopposed a lot of the time?

MC: No, I think he was opposed all the time.

RM: Was he a Democrat or a Republican?

MC: A Democrat. But this person said, “Oh, I get so mad trying to run against Bob, ‘cause all he does is just stand around and visit with people and get all the votes. And I work so hard.”

RM: Who did Bob run against the second time?

MC: I think the second time was a rancher from Reese River—Bart O’Toole. And another man from here, Vic Wallace, ran against Bob one time. Then Bobby Revert beat him the last time he ran. There was a woman—Jane Logan. Her husband is an electrician. Bob beat her but later on she ran against Andy Eason, who was a great friend of ours.

RM: Oh, so Bobby Revert beat him in ‘78?

MC: Yes, he took office in ‘78.

RM: But he did run against Bobby Revert? Because Bobby would have been coming out of the Beatty district.

MC: Yes, but we happened to be in the same commissioner district at that time.

RM: What was Bob proudest of as a commissioner?

MC: Everything.

RM: Was there anything that stood out in terms of his accomplishments?

MC: I’ll tell you, he had a paper that long of accomplishments. When Bob was a Nye County Commissioner he was lucky to work with people who you could work with because a commissioner who came from Gabbs or Tonopah or Pahrump or any area that had fewer voters . . . each little area had a need. So the other commissioners had to bend and give sometimes. No one area could have it all. And they worked together. That’s what he was proud of. The fire stations that are scattered around Nye County came at about that time: Manhattan, Round Mountain, Smoky Valley, Duckwater, I guess, or Currant Creek. And the parks and recreation department really worked then. Money was distributed and the areas all got something. I wish I could remember all the good things that happened.

RM: What were his frustrations? Did he have any?

MC: Oh, he had some. His big frustration was the brothels—he didn't like the county getting involved in the brothel business.

RM: He was against them being legalized?

MC: He wasn't against the operation, but he didn't think that the county should be involved, business-wise, in that business.

RM: How did he think they should be run, then?

MC: The way they had been run.

RM: How were they run before?

MC: Well, they had their business and they kept it out of the main channel of life in the community they were in. They pretty well took care of their affairs. Of course, times change.

RM: Yes. You mean, he didn't think the county should be in the business of licensing them?

MC: Right. Because when they license them, in a sense, they became a partner.

RM: Sure, they were collecting the taxes and everything. But did he think that if you wanted to open a brothel out in the country you could just open one?

MC: Well, no. You couldn't just go and open a house and put your sign out there and go into business. For one thing, it was more or less policed and you were required to maintain a decent establishment. And also, it had something to do with the liquor licensing; there were only so many licenses.

RM: So he felt it should be handled more like a liquor license?

MC: If he was here he could tell you in no uncertain terms. He thought that licensing . . . and it did open a kettle of worms that you can't believe, and it isn't over yet. Think of Plankinton. During that time Bob was in the hospital in Reno—he had eczema really, really badly. I went out of his room and the nurse came and got me and she looked kind of funny. She said, "Mrs. Cornell, there's somebody out here I think you should see." I went out there and it happened to be a woman deputy, and she had a subpoena to serve on Bob.

She was apologetic. She said, "I feel that this isn't the time."

And his doctor—Dr. Sage—blew his cork. He said, “Don’t you ever allow that to happen again. When those people show up and you’ve got somebody in the hospital ... I personally will testify if this ever comes to court.”

I don’t know what happened to Plankinton. It’s a constant hassle and a constant worry. It just undermined all the good things you were trying to do, trying to contend with that part of things. Of course, maybe with the growth of the population, it couldn’t have been handled any other way.

RM: How do you think it should be handled, Millie?

MC: As I say, I think in the old days, every little town . . . in Manhattan, we had several girls down below town who lived in some little houses. And it was a fact of life. Nobody paid any attention. We kids didn’t. If we had tickets to sell or anything we hit there first, because they had the most money.

RM: They were the most generous, weren’t they?

MC: A lot of the families had no money, but they did. My mother would never have believed it. Because that was something that was taboo. You just never mentioned it.

RM: You never mentioned prostitution?

MC: Absolutely not. I think she thought we grew up ignorant. But she knew, too; everybody knew.

RM: But it was never mentioned in polite company?

MC: No. Not in my mother’s range of friends. I had a little friend, Olga Francisco—she and I were the same age—and her family had some milk cows. Once in a while after school I’d visit with her for a while. I never told my mother this, but I just loved it on the days when she’d deliver milk down to the girls below town. There were two old girls down there, Ella and Pearl. I liked to go to Ella’s place because her house smelled funny and she had a player piano.

RM: So Ella was a prostitute?

MC: Oh, yes. So was Pearl.

RM: And they each had their own little house? Were they free-lancers, or was each a brothel?

MC: Each was a brothel.

RM: They were the madams?

MC: They were the only ones there. They owned the business, performed the services and made all the money. They didn't have to split with anybody. Ella would always give us cookies and we'd play the piano and gave her her milk. I was in the first or second or third grade and I never mentioned that to my mother.

RM: She'd have had a fit if she'd known?

MC: Oh, that would have been the end of that, and I knew it. I was a little dumb, but not that dumb.

RM: Now, this was in Manhattan?

MC: Yes—in the '20s. I started school in 1923.

RM: And Ella and Pearl had their little places down at the lower end of town?

MC: There were three little houses down there. I don't remember one of them—it was vacant anyway, as I recall. Ella got to be pretty along in years and wound up with one of the fellows who had lived in Manhattan a long time who ran our magazine and drugstore.

RM: What was it called?

MC: It was called Rippe's, and that was his name. He was a nice man. Evidently he and Ella were on very good terms. One winter he got very, very sick and she shut up her business, locked the doors and moved uptown and took care of him until he died.

RM: Is that right? How old was Ella at that time?

MC: I don't know. I suppose she was maybe 50. And then Pearl, the other lady, closed her business down but she lived there alone. She had a nephew who used to come and see her and look after her a little bit. In fact, I think he finally took her away someplace where she could have care when she couldn't take care of herself anymore.

RM: They didn't have a license or anything in those days then, did they? If a woman wanted to have a little operation like that she just did it, as long as it was in the right part of town?

MC: That's right. Tonopah had their red-light district, and they called it "at the lower end of town." They had one street and that's where they operated and had their businesses.

RM: What did their places look like?

MC: Very clean.

RM: Did they have a bar?

MC: No.

RM: What did the little house have in it?

MC: I remember a kitchen, and there was a living room and piano and I think there was kind of a little dining room and a bedroom, of course.

RM: Did they serve liquor?

MC: They probably did, but they didn't have a bar. It wasn't like today, with music and a bar and that sort of thing. She had the piano and it was bootleg days, you know, so they probably had access to liquor.

RM: Everybody was buying liquor surreptitiously, weren't they?

MC: Oh, yes. That's the only way you could get it—you'd know somebody who was in the business and buy from them.

RM: Did the little houses have a sign in front?

MC: No. But I think they had a light on them.

RM: A red light?

MC: It must have been. I don't remember too much about that, but I'm sure they did. Earlier than my time—in the heyday of Manhattan—there may have been regular brothels. I have read insinuations in papers, and I know they had a lot of saloons and hotels. And I've read that liquor was available as well as dancing, and these papers show pictures with a lot of women and one said, “. . . and entertainment.” That was before my time.

RM: But by 1920 there was just Ella and Pearl?

MC: Yes. When I was growing up I think there were three for a while, but I don't remember what happened to the third one. For one thing, Manhattan went down as far as activities were concerned. The mining was almost at a standstill so there wasn't a payroll. That's what it took to keep those places going.

RM: In your mother's house and among her circle of friends, how was prostitution viewed?

MC: As a necessary evil. My mother's mother was very strict and it wasn't a part of our life. I would think people who were in the lodging business or boardinghouses would come in contact with people from "the other side of the tracks" as they say, but my mother didn't.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: Over the years as you've lived in Nye County (and you've lived here almost all your life) how did the attitude change, if it did, from when you were a kid growing up in Manhattan through the '30s and '40s and '50s? How did the women of the community look at the brothels?

MC: I think they became much broader-minded. It became more a fact of life—more accepted, and not condemned; it was a part of life.

RM: How were the prostitutes themselves viewed? Let's start with Ella and Pearl. How were they viewed in Manhattan?

MC: They were just viewed as Ella and Pearl who lived down the line. They weren't in any way people that you wouldn't speak to on the street or anything like that.

RM: They weren't the brunt of jokes or stigmatized?

MC: Oh, no. But they wouldn't have thought of going to the Toiyabe Literary Club meetings or trying to join the clubs or anything like that.

RM: So they left the town alone and the town left them alone?

MC: Pretty much, yes.

RM: And was that pretty much the attitude toward prostitutes all through the years as you saw the institution continue in the state?

MC: Well, Tonopah always had, as I say, their "place." You'd see them around town shopping. I worked in Manhattan for a man and his wife who had a little clothing store. I went to work the last couple of years that I was in high school at 3:00 when the lady went home. When she was breaking me in, she showed me the lingerie area and certain parts of clothing, nightwear, that the girls from down there would buy. The little undergarment thing they wore was called a "teddy." It was lacy and easy to get out of and quite fancy. Most of the wives and people around town, for one thing, couldn't afford them. And I suppose some of them would have been scandalized. (I don't know, maybe they wore them.)

But they'd come in and talk to me and pick out what they wanted, silk stockings and different articles of clothing that they needed, and everything was fine.

RM: So the girls on the line were buying their clothes locally and spending their money locally?

MC: Oh, sure. As I said, they had money. But nobody had a lot of money. I've wondered whatever happened to Ella. When I get together with friends of mine (old schoolmates), we laugh about Ella and Pearl. And boy, the kids who could get to their places first with raffle tickets or something were the envy of the rest of the kids. They'd always buy \$10 worth or something, which was a lot of money in those days.

RM: Yes, really. Do you see the custom of legalized prostitution eventually being eliminated in Nevada? I mean, it keeps coming under attack.

MC: Well, it's just ridiculous that prostitution is for sale on the sidewalks in Washoe County and in Clark County, and yet we live with a sort of a stigma because we have it legalized; now, that makes a lot of sense. [Chuckles] I think that's ridiculous.

RM: I think the hypocrisy offends rural Nevadans, doesn't it?

MC: It does. It's kind of being the pits of the state. Churchill County legalized prostitution before we did. We have good friends who were county commissioners when they did it. Bob was also a commissioner, and he'd talk to them, and they presented their viewpoint and he did his. And it's practically nonexistent in Churchill County now. Both houses have closed.

RM: Is that right? From lack of business?

MC: I think lack of business and I think there's always a hassle going on. I can't believe it's a lack of business but I think, between you and me, things have become . . . I don't know what the term for it is—it's just not difficult to get that sort of thing if that's what you're looking for.

RM: You mean because of a more relaxed social ethic code?

MC: Exactly.

RM: Prostitution was more functional in the time when the sex code was more strict?

MC: Right. And the people watched their younger people as closely as they could. It just wasn't accepted in the openness that it is now. Don't you think that has something to do with it?

RM: Oh, yes. In your experience in the mining camps that you lived in in Nevada, sex just wasn't talked about at home, was it?

MC: Not in the homes I was around. I think it was kind of a part of our community—it wasn't a big deal. It was there and of course in mining camps there are a lot of construction areas. And people couldn't travel like they can now. But they had many more men than women—and a lot of them were single men, so there was a demand for it.

RM: Do you buy the theory that I've heard before that the presence of legalized prostitution in a community makes it safer for the women in the community in that it provides an outlet for men?

MC: I don't buy it. I think if these nuts are going to perform, that's not going to provide an outlet. Now I'm no authority, but why do you read so much of these terrible things that happen when it's very liberal today? It just makes you wonder. In today's paper this 16-, 17-year-old boy raped a couple of women in a kind of outlying area around Gardnerville or someplace. One thing I think that's wrong is that everything is on TV, videos—things that you would never have dreamed of. Any little kid can tune them in or buy them and show them. And I think there are certain people that that preys on. They build on it and maybe they're aided by a pill they take or something they drink, until it's just completely out of control. But I don't think that prostitution should be outlawed—that'd be ridiculous.

RM: There's a move on all the time, though. There are constant rumblings in Clark County, particularly, to eliminate it. A lot of it comes from Steve Wynn of the Golden Nugget and the Mirage.

MC: Licensed prostitution?

RM: That's right. They feel it gives the state a bad image.

MC: [Chuckles] I'll have to send him a little story in that regard. In Nye County when Bob was commissioner (and I'm sure that it goes on now), every once in a while they get really rabid letters from other states condemning Nevada.

RM: The commissioners do?

MC: Oh, sure. That we have no morals and one thing after another. And on occasion they would respond. There was one that I think came from San Francisco running us down and boy, the letter they got back really blasted them.

RM: Is that right? A letter that Bob fired back?

MC: Well, Bob didn't. But somebody connected with the county did. They just pointed out, blankly, "Hey, we're not blind and we're not dumb. We can walk down any street in San Francisco and it's available on every street corner."

RM: Yes. Every perversion known to man.

MC: God, I'll say. But right now there are things going on with Nye County that are just what Bob was afraid of. He said, "Any time you get mixed up with those people you're getting mixed up with the wrong people. Because they are in that business for one thing, and that's money. And they'll do anything to get money."

RM: That's right. How did he think it should be handled?

MC: As I told you, he didn't think it should be licensed—the way it had been seemed to him to be all right. But he knew the population was growing, things were changing, and the old way might no longer be able to handle it.

RM: But ideally, that's the way he would have liked to have seen it—like Pearl and Ella?

MC: Yes. They took care of their business and they didn't interfere with the running of the town and the town didn't interfere with running their business.

RM: Millie, can we take another track here now? Let's start with your mother and father meeting.

MC: My mother was born, I think I told you, out of Carson City at King's Canyon and she grew up in Carson City, graduated from high school there when she was 18 and got a teacher's certificate and taught school when she was 19 at Cloverdale. Do you know where Cloverdale is?

RM: I know the name, but I'm not sure.

MC: If you leave Tonopah and are going to Reese River on the Pole Line Road, you go through a little . . . it's deserted now. It's owned by a cattle company. But there are some big old poplar trees in a little meadow. Then you go north up the road a little way instead of continuing on towards Gabbs. My father was a young man riding for T. J. Bell, who had a big ranch in Reese River and owned a lot of cattle. That's where my mother and father met. My father was born,

as I told you, at Lost Creek in Monitor Valley. He went to school in Belmont and around that area. Remember when I told you they were at Grantsville?

RM: Right.

MC: They were at Grantsville in 1875. My father was born in '69 in Monitor Valley, so he was six years old.

RM: Was he one of the first whites born in Monitor Valley?

MC: No, Belmont was going then. The county seat was in Ione three years and then moved to Belmont in 1867. Belmont was pretty thriving along those years. I believe the family had lived in Belmont prior to coming to Grantsville. They also lived in a little mining camp, Downeyville, just north of Gabbs up here. It only lasted a short time. But wherever there was trading, that was my grandfather's business. And he usually had a meat market along the way.

RM: He was buying cattle from the ranchers?

MC: Yes, or sometimes he had his own. Mostly he bought. Then they went back to Belmont and my father went to school there.

RM: So your dad was born there in '69 and the family was working there in the freighting business because Belmont was booming. Is that right?

MC: Yes. They had a station at Stoneberger Basin; it was a station and an overnight stop for travelers traveling between Austin and Tybo, or into Monitor Valley or down to Belmont. They furnished water and supplies for them. And also they did freighting from Austin. They even freighted, at one time, from out of Grantsville from Wadsworth, which was the railroad.

RM: You mean Wadsworth east of Reno?

MC: Yes. And then, after my father was grown, my father and mother were married in 1895 and they lived at Sodaville. There was quite a little community there. There was a small kind of a hotel, and the railroad had come that far. They drove freight teams to the areas around Sodaville. And then they moved to Crow Springs. Then Tonopah was discovered in 1900.

RM: That would have been your mother and father as well as the other family members?

MC: Yes.

RM: Is there anything left of the station at Stoneberger Basin?

MC: I don't think so. We were up there some years ago when Bob was still in office. All we could see was where the spring had been and some remains of foundations where there had been a few small buildings.

RM: How long did they live at Stoneberger Basin?

MC: I think they lived there a few years and then they lived at Pine Creek and at Belmont. They lived at Grantsville in '75, then in the '80s they were back in the Belmont area. A lot of this I have from newspaper clippings.

RM: I think it's interesting to show how people moved in a sequence. Your father was born in '69 outside of Belmont.

MC: Yes, up at the northern end of Monitor Valley, which must be 50 miles or maybe more from Belmont. It's quite a little distance, but it's in the area. And then they were in Belmont.

RM: And then from Belmont they moved to Grantsville?

MC: Yes, in '75. I know that because of my aunt Mary. She was my grandfather's daughter whose mother died at her birth, and that's how he came to Nevada. Her father's sister—her aunt and uncle—had raised her. She came to join her father and family here. She was 18 years old and had graduated from high school from, I think, Marietta, Illinois, and she took the examination in Nevada to be a schoolteacher and was teaching school when she was 19 in Grantsville. Remember the story I told you about the Chinaman chasing the little boy?

RM: Oh yes, and his mother gave him a good licking.

MC: Yes. I checked the dates on that because I was thinking they were there later, but they weren't. So in '75, with my father born in '69, he and his brothers were pretty little boys. His sister was two (born in '67) and then my father was born a year later and two years later they had another boy. So the boys were little boys when they were tormenting that Chinese man. It was later on that they went to school in Belmont.

RM: Where did they go from Grantsville?

MC: I'm sure they must have gone back to Belmont. My grandfather had a meat market in Belmont and they also were involved with other members of the family in the Pine Creek Ranch.

One time I was in Carson City at friends of mine who had lived at Little Fish Lake Valley years ago. This man told about some people named Crawford, I think. He said they were there all alone and occasionally a wagon would go through with some people—maybe a couple of men or something. They'd be so tickled to see somebody and catch up on the news. One day they saw dust coming and his wife went into a frenzy and started dusting and straightening things and rushed in and put on her best dress and this darn wagon went right past their place and never stopped. She cried and cried. [Chuckles] She said, "I put my best dress on."

RM: And they just kept going? That was a very unneighborly thing, wasn't it?

MC: I should say.

RM: When we used to live out in the rural Reveille Valley, you could see a car coming for miles, from the dust. I just can't imagine somebody not stopping.

MC: Did you live at Reveille Valley? My sister taught school at Eden Creek.

RM: Is that right? When was that?

MC: It must have been about 1930, I guess. She lived with the Aragoni family.

RM: At the Eden Creek Ranch?

MC: Yes. She had gotten her teacher's credentials and had another two years of college left to get a teacher's certificate.

RM: That was her first job?

MC: Yes. She taught two years out there.

RM: Did you ever go down to see her?

MC: Yes.

RM: Did they live in that stone house right at the mouth of the canyon—the old house that Giovanni Fallini built?

MC: Yes. The Fallinis had a couple of children. They had a new baby, a little girl, she used to hold and rock. There were mostly Indian children at her school. One little boy ran away every recess. So she got a rope and tied him to the wood pile. I told her, "Would you be in trouble today." His name is Curtis Pete. He's something of an artist.

RM: I'll be darned. I think the Pete family lived at the Indian village just west of the mill up against the mountains. Did she like it there?

MC: She didn't like the winters. She darned near froze. But she had come from Manhattan so she was used to cold winters. It was more isolated than Manhattan, because Manhattan was a little town—the mail came in every day, and they had a school and so on.

MC: I know Helen Fallini just died.

RM: I interviewed her. We did an oral history with her.

MC: She was a great person.

RM: Yes, she was.

MC: Her maiden name was Baird, I think.

RM: Something like that. Yes.

MC: Her family had a mine, didn't they? I think it was Bellehelen? I think her family lived there and that's where she married Joe. This is one reason Bob was successful in running for commissioner—we knew so many people or their backgrounds or both.

RM: Because you both had deep roots. And most of the population was in the northern part of the county at that time. Pahrump wasn't like it is now.

MC: No, it was just growing.

RM: To go back and pick up on your father's family, they then moved back to Belmont from Grantsville.

MC: Yes. Since you were here I tried to put this thing all into dates. Our family lived in Grantsville in 1875 and in 1886 they were living at the Pine Creek Ranch. I told you the story about the Indian who killed his squaw and came to the Pine Creek Ranch.

RM: And then was sitting on the wood pile?

MC: Yes. That was in 1886; so ten years had gone by. During that time they had been, evidently, in this section—in Grantsville. And then they had returned to the Belmont–Pine Creek area.

RM: But to Pine Creek, specifically.

MC: Well, they also had a meat market in Belmont and some of the boys were living at the ranch, evidently. And my grandmother was there because some newspaper articles I've seen said, "Mrs. W. C. Humphrey visited Belmont from Pine Creek and returned to Pine Creek Ranch." There was Meadow Canyon Ranch and Pine Creek Ranch and Barley Creek Ranch. And by the way, Bob's grandparents, the Goldbacks, were great friends of my grandfather, W. C. Humphrey, and his wife.

RM: Isn't that interesting? Because they were living in the same area at that time, weren't they, on the Barley Creek Ranch?

MC: Yes.

RM: Did they stay in Grantsville a long time? Because the next date you have is 1886.

MC: Yes. I was trying to think, when I was going through this stuff, of the ages of the children. I don't know how long they stayed at Grantsville.

RM: But anyway, the next thing we know about them, they're at Pine Creek and your father's about 17 years old.

MC: By this time. I know they didn't have a high school in Belmont. They just went to the eighth grade there. My mother graduated from high school because she was raised in Carson, so high school was available.

RM: So Bob's mother just went through the eighth grade?

MC: Yes. But it's remarkable what they learned.

RM: Oh, yes. It was like a high school degree at least, now. Then where did they go next, after Pine Creek?

MC: Well, let's see. Then they were back in this country. They were there in '86 and in the '90s . . . during this time in Belmont, my grandfather was elected sheriff. (They also had a home in Belmont during this time.)

RM: This would have been in the '90s or late '80s?

MC: It's very confusing even to me. I think I told you that the brand I mentioned was registered in the Belmont courthouse in '73, but it was later than that. It was '76 or '77, something like that. So they were at Grantsville in '75, but somehow this brand was registered. So maybe they didn't stay very long up here. I know I've got all that information someplace about when he was sheriff.

And there've been several articles written. Myrtle Miles wrote one about an incident that happened during the time he was sheriff: They hung an Indian. And that was pretty much frowned on and you don't read about it so much. My family said that the Indian had to be no good and he had to have it coming and that's the way they dealt with things in those days.

They also pointed out that my grandfather got along very well with most of the Indians. On another occasion one of them came to him and told him that the Indians had taken an old squaw down Ralston Valley and left her. She couldn't have any teeth and she was very old, and that's what they did—they'd take them out and set them under a sagebrush and go home. My grandfather got some people and they went and trailed them and by golly, she was sitting there, all right.

RM: And they brought her back?

MC: They brought her back. So those things worked both ways, you know.

RM: But he was sheriff of Nye County in the '90s?

MC: I guess it was the '90s. It was the '80s, maybe.

RM: Now, at the Pine Creek Ranch, were they out of the freighting business pretty much?

MC: I'm sure that they weren't in the freighting business then. My father and his brother were young men. Uncle Frank must have been married shortly after my father was in '95, because Frances had one sister a little older than she. She was born in 1904. So he was married right before the turn of the century, because he was married when my family moved from Sodaville to Crow Springs. Uncle Frank drove the first stagecoach into Tonopah after the discovery of Tonopah so they still were in the business then.

RM: Where did they go from the Pine Creek Ranch and Belmont? Is that when they went to Sodaville?

MC: Yes.

RM: So they stayed there at Pine Creek and in Belmont quite a little while, didn't they? When did they show up in Sodaville?

MC: They were there when my dad got married in '95.

RM: And they were freighting out of the railhead there, and that's where your grandmother ran a boardinghouse?

MC: No, that was in Crow Springs. I think I did tell you that she ran one at Sodaville, but I don't believe that she did. In what I read (trying to find out since you were here), I think that's a mistake. I don't think she had a boardinghouse at Sodaville.

RM: How long did they stay at Sodaville?

MC: Till 1900. I have something here that you can read that will tell you exactly. The lady who did the writing came to see me a time or two.

RM: OK, you've got a magazine here called *Desert* from August 1974, and you're showing me an article on Crow Springs. Oh, that's great Millie.

MC: Yes. And there's a little piece there that has to do with my family.

RM: Is Crow Springs in Nye County or Mineral County?

MC: It's in Esmeralda County.

RM: So they were at Sodaville for five years. Then when Tonopah boomed again they moved to Crow Springs—is that it—and they were still freighting?

MC: Yes.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: Meanwhile, your father got married in 1895. Now, let's go back and pick up on your mother's family during this same time period. She came down from Carson City to teach school—what year was it that she taught at Cloverdale?

MC: Well, they were married in '95. It must have been two years before that, because I think she taught school two years.

RM: Could you describe what was happening in Cloverdale in 1893?

MC: Cloverdale belonged to T. J. Bell—Thomas Jefferson Bell. He had come to Nevada in the early days and settled in Reese River, where he established a ranch. He had probably thousands of head of cattle. He was very well educated and served as a state senator. And his granddaughter married my brother later on. He owned the home ranch—the big ranch—in Reese River and then he owned Cloverdale, which was a small ranch. Coming into the valley you can see across to Tonopah. They used that more or less as a stop-over or a place to be sometimes when they were riding. But someone always lived there. There used to be a nice old stone house there; it burned later on, somehow. But that's where my mother lived; T. J. Bell's daughter, Annie, was married and living there. My mother stayed with her and taught school. I suppose there were a few white children and some Indian children.

RM: Do you remember Annie's married name?

MC: Pendery.

RM: And what kind of guy was T. J. Bell? What do you know about him?

MC: If you read Thompson and West, 1881, it discusses him. He was a very fine man.

RM: OK. So your mother was teaching school there and your father was cowboying for Bell and that's how they met.

MC: That's how. And during the time they met, my grandfather and his whole family established themselves at Sodaville. The whole family was more or less always involved in whatever business venture they were involved in, which was mostly freighting. The railroad ended there and they went to the Lucky Boy and into Candelaria and into all the mining

areas and little communities that were scattered around away from the railroad. And that's where my mother came after she and my father were married. So the family was at Sodaville in 1895 and then in 1900 they went to Crow Springs. Then by 1905, the railroad had come into Tonopah, so Crow Springs was phasing out. And Manhattan had been discovered by my uncles and our family members so they moved to Manhattan.

RM: Did they move in 1905?

MC: Well, it was discovered in April and by the first winter, I don't think any of the women in the family were there. My mother had a baby that October 1905 so I know she wasn't there. There were no facilities established yet for them to live in. We have an old rock-in building against the side of the hill and it had kind of a board roof that they tarred with sagebrush. I don't know how it didn't burn down. Anyway, that's where the men lived that first winter in Manhattan. There was my grandfather, W. C. Humphrey; and John Humphrey; and my dad, Charles Humphrey; and Shorty Cooper, the Indian that I told you they befriended—he was with them. There was another man that was with them in a picture I have, but I've forgotten his name. It was probably George Maute. (That's a French name.)

RM: Were they the only people living there that fall?

MC: No. People were locating claims like crazy and things were buzzing all over the place. Buildings were going up and things were really stirring. The next spring was 1906, and that was the year that my father built the first part of our house—four rooms. My mother moved there that summer.

RM: Which claims did your family locate initially?

MC: The April Fool claims.

RM: Were there any other claims that your family located in Manhattan?

MC: Oh, yes. My family had located a lot of claims.

RM: What mine did they initially start working there?

MC: They never did develop a real mine. They had lots of gold, as I told you, in veins or stringers. Some of the property that they located at that early time later on became mines. But the April Fool claims, the original discovery, never developed into a big mine.

RM: Did any of the claims that they located develop into one of the big mines there?

MC: Yes, some of them did. And they made, from time to time, some money off them.

RM: Which mine developed on claims that they located?

MC: I don't know that much about it. I think they had the Thanksgiving claims at one time.

RM: Did your mother ever describe what Manhattan was like in those first months when she came in there in the summer of 1906?

MC: No. My grandfather and grandmother were located across the street. And Uncle Frank and his wife—he built a nice double-storied house, which, by the way, is in Tonopah today—in the '50s it was moved to Tonopah. So she had a lot of company; she wasn't isolated. There were women who were all geared to the same kind of a lifestyle. And my mother always had an Indian lady who came on Mondays and did the washing. Other than that my mother, of course, did all the ironing and house cleaning and all that sort of thing. As far as I know, all she ever hired done was the washing. It was done on a washboard.

Manhattan had a lot of troubles. Power didn't come into Manhattan until 1909. They had a power generator, which they had a lot of problems with. Sometimes they had power and sometimes they didn't, but at least you could turn on a light globe. And, of course, people didn't have washing machines or TV or anything. It might have been a few years before telephones were in the community. After the spring of 1909, power was available for everybody. Water was the biggest trouble they had in Manhattan. It was hard to find a good well. And, of course, there isn't any running water—any streams or rivers or anything. They always had water troubles. You had to haul water a lot of times in the wintertime.

RM: Where did they haul it from?

MC: There were two wells up what we call Pipe Springs Road; they would go up there and pump water into a barrel and bring it home. In about 1967 or '70, the county, I guess (Manhattan didn't have much money), sunk a well above town and that's what they've been using ever since. That's one reason the trailers have moved out of Manhattan. The well wasn't big enough to supply them. The company had tried to develop water of their own but all they were able to develop

was just what kept the operation going. And also in the early days a lot of people sunk a well right on their property and had their own little well. There wasn't a lot of water, but it was sufficient to take care of their own demands.

RM: How deep were the wells?

MC: I haven't any idea. The water that we used for gardening was water that came from the White Cap Mines. They ditched it around the tailing ponds.

RM: You were saying there were streams of water coming down from the White Caps and the water was highly mineralized?

MC: It had a lot of arsenic in it. There was a lot of arsenic ore in the White Caps Mine. The people in our end of town had an agreement. One side of the street used the water—had it ditched (you know, it's a canyon—Manhattan lies east and west)—and they'd water their gardens one day and the other side would divert the water the next day. People were able to have nice gardens and nice yards but you couldn't drink the water.

RM: What other things do you recall in terms of Manhattan developing as a town? I assume they had a fire department and things like that.

MC: In the early days they had a fire department. As a matter of fact, I remember the fire bell sat down on the corner of Erie Street. Manhattan burned three or four times. They were disastrous fires because as I say, they just didn't have a supply of water to put out a fire. And sometimes there was no water in the middle of the winter because the pipes were frozen.

RM: What did people do then?

MC: Hauled their water. And everybody had a rain barrel out at the corner of their house. We used it to wash our hair, always, because Manhattan water—even water that was pumped that we drank—was so mineralized and hard. My mother always had two rain barrels.

RM: Did you bring it inside and heat it?

MC: Yes. By the bucket. We'd always bring it in and heat enough to have hot water.

RM: Were you the last child in your family?

MC: Yes.

RM: What are your earliest recollections of Manhattan?

MC: We kids had a great childhood in Manhattan. We didn't know what it was like not to have something to do in those days. Everybody's dads were working hard and their mothers were working and they didn't have time to toady around to them. So you made your own amusement.

RM: What are some of the things you did?

MC: We played cowboy, and we'd go camping. We'd take our old frying pan and our parents would give us stuff and we'd go up by the mine just across from my house where the water ran. And marbles was a great game.

RM: Would you sleep out up there?

MC: No, we wouldn't sleep out—we'd just stay for a few hours.

RM: A picnic kind of thing, almost?

MC: Yes. And we ran the hills and we gathered pine nuts in the fall. My brothers always had horses in the summertime.

RM: Where did they keep the horses?

MC: They turned them out and they grazed around town and then they came in every night. We'd bring them in and they'd water. My dad had a barrel at the little stream that we used to water the garden. We kept it full and they'd water the horses and I think they had a little grain they fed them once in a while. I'm sure they didn't ever buy hay; they didn't have any money. In the winter they turned the horses loose and they went down south—sometimes down below where the Tonopah Air Base is, but at least around Rye Patch and in that area.

RM: And then they could find them in the spring?

MC: They'd round them up and bring them home along with the new colts, if there were any. And they always had a couple of young horses they were breaking. That was a diversion.

RM: What was the difference between the childhood of the boys and the girls in terms of games and things like that? Did the girls have their own little world and the boys theirs, or how was it?

MC: Not in my little girl life. I spent most of my time where the boys were because I liked to play cowboy and do all those things. My mother, I think, was a little disappointed. She got her girl and she thought we'd be making clothes. My sister was more inclined that way. But she was right in the midst of everything that was going on, too. I'd always lose, but I'd play marbles with the rest of the kids.

And up across the street from our house in the fall, there was an incline where somebody had had a prospect hole. I think a house sat there once, too. We'd go up there and build a fire right on the ground and dig a little hole and roast pine nuts in the cones. We'd be black from one end to the other.

Manhattan was known for its dancing. As I got older, we'd have a dance, Round Mountain would have a dance, Darroughs would have a dance—almost every Saturday night there was a dance. And our school was always having school parties and in high school we put on school plays.

RM: Did you have live music at the dances?

MC: We had live music. We had local talent but also. In the winter, for a while we had a man by the name of Jack Lashley and his wife who lived there. (He owned the water company at that time.) He had some kind of a record machine and he played records. We were snowed in one winter and we'd dance and dance and dance away to the records.

RM: What was it like being snowed in?

MC: We didn't mind it. From our house down to school must have been a mile and the pathway would be about 18 inches wide, and if you happened to slip off you'd go down into about three feet of snow. We were kind of isolated. We had a big sled that the horses pulled. They'd go down in the valley and meet a truck that would go down the valley to Round Mountain—the sled would meet them and bring our mail into town.

RM: Did the sled run every winter, or was it just this really bad winter?

MC: Yes, when we had really bad winters.

RM: Do you remember a number of bad winters?

MC: Oh, through my lifetime we have had them.

RM: It seems they used to have more bad winters.

MC: We had some times when we wouldn't have much snow and things would get very dry. But more often we had a lot of snow.

RM: Tell me about playing cowboys. How did that work?

MC: When I was a real little girl my dad would put a couple of saddles on two sawhorses in our yard for the little neighbor girl and me. We'd climb on and off and go all over the country.

RM: Did you ride stick horses? We played cowboys, too, and my brother and I had stick horses.

MC: I think we must have had stick horses, too.

RM: My dad even cut out heads for them and nailed them onto a broom handle. It was quite the thing.

MC: I'll say. You covered a lot of territory.

RM: Did you have guns and things like that?

MC: Yes.

RM: Do you remember the kind of fantasy world that you were in when you were playing cowboys?

MC: We were always chasing Indians or gathering horses or something or other. My family told a story about my brothers when they were little boys in Manhattan. In the dining room they had a table like this with some dining room chairs. They'd line the chairs up and that was the stagecoach and then the driver was on the first one, and he had some pretend horses and he'd have a rope. I think Carroll was the driver and the other littler guys had to be the passengers. My mother was busy doing what she had to do and she heard him say, "Giddyup, Turn a Bitch. Giddyup."

She heard it and then she said, "Carroll, what are you saying?"

And he said, "That's what Daddy calls the horses." [Laughter]

RM: [Laughs] That's cute.

MC: He thought that was their names. [Laughs] One story about me when I was a little girl: My mother had an awful time trying to keep me dressed up. And in that day ladies called on each other in the afternoon. She changed her

clothes, got her best dress on and even gave me a bath and put a nice, pretty little dress on me and told me to stay in the house and away from that barrel where the horses watered. Because I'd go out there and take my dad's tobacco cans (Prince Albert) and dip water out of there and make mud pies and things like that. As soon as she was busy I went outside and went right to that barrel and the water had gotten real low in the barrel. I couldn't reach it so I got a box and got on the box and leaned over to get some water and in I went, head first.

RM: Hey, that could have been . . .

MC: Well, it almost was. I said my life was almost shortened by 50 or 60 years—more than that, now. My youngest brother was in high school then (he was going to high school in Tonopah but he was home) and he was driving the little delivery truck for the store downtown. He happened to come up the street and he glanced at our house and my legs were sticking out of this barrel. One thing saved me. One hand had the can in it and with the other hand I grabbed hold of the edge of the barrel. But my feet were waving and I was not very strong.

RM: Was your head under water?

MC: Yes.

RM: Oh, my God!

MC: So he ran over there and pulled me out and I was screaming and yelling and choking and hollering and in the house my mother was absolutely devastated. Now what in the world had happened? And my brother started bawling her out, "Don't you ever watch this little girl?" [Laughter] And then she was mad! My brother always said, "I've always wondered if I didn't make a big mistake of stopping and pulling her out of that barrel. [Laughs]

RM: If you'd have fallen on in you couldn't have turned over, could you, in the barrel?

MC: No.

RM: And there's no way you could have got your head up.

MC: I don't think so.

RM: So you would have drowned if your brother hadn't come along.

MC: Yes. I had one hand down and I had a hold on the side, but the weight of my body was down. I couldn't have been but four or five. People have tried to teach me, and I can swim a little bit, but the second that water closes over my head, I don't like it very well.

RM: You're back there in that barrel?

MC: I think so. I learned to have a lot of respect for water.

RM: Millie, tell us a little bit more about the ladies calling on each other.

MC: Well, that's where my mother and I were going. She'd take me and my sister and we'd go and knock on some lady's door. And they would do the same sometimes at my mother's. They would visit and they always would make tea and probably have cookies or something. We'd be there an hour or so, and they would talk.

RM: Do you have any idea how the conversations went?

MC: They just talked about what was going on in the town.

RM: Gossip, maybe?

MC: No gossip. That's another thing. In some houses, whatever scandal was going on in town was what occupied all of their attention. That wasn't so in my house. If somebody killed somebody or something happened, people talked about it, but it wasn't dwelled on. The ladies my mother visited with had their Toiyabe Club and they had a PTA and all the things that mothers were interested in and that's what they talked about. Or that somebody died or somebody got married.

CHAPTER NINE

RM: Tell us a little bit about the Toiyabe Club.

MC: The Toiyabe Literary Club was a remarkable group of most of the ladies in Manhattan. My mother wrote a history of it. They met once a month—and they took turns. They would choose a topic of worldwide or national interest or some current event. It was an educational thing that kept them on top of what was going on in the world. Their original clubhouse burned, and they bought a building which still stands. It doesn't look much like it used to. It was a two-story building and their club rooms were upstairs. They were carpeted and they had nice paintings, and they had a complete set of silver. Do you see those blue cups?

RM: Yes.

MC: That was their dinnerware. They entertained. They had Husbands' Night, usually, I think, in January. They entertained their husbands at a dinner and they made the first floor into a dance floor and built a stage on. That's where we had the town dances, and we school kids put on our plays there. And at graduation, the ladies always had a banquet for the seniors and the eighth grade graduates also, and the alumni. (It got so that a lot of them happened to be in town, so they were invited.) They were wonderful, wonderful meals and beautifully served and everything, followed by a dance with live music.

RM: Who would prepare the meals?

MC: The members of the Toiyabe Club.

RM: Was it kind of a potluck type thing?

MC: No, it was cooked in their kitchen.

RM: They had a kitchen right there?

MC: Oh yes, completely serviced by everything they needed. And it was a sit-down dinner.

RM: What was the initial building like?

MC: It burned before I knew anything about it. They bought the new one—it had been an office building. I think it was called the Dexter Building.

RM: How did they get the money?

MC: They raised it through their own dues, but they must have raised money in other ways. The businesses in town and the mining companies probably donated money to them from time to time.

RM: When you say that it was most of the ladies in the town, do you mean that it was kind of for the upper crust?

MC: Not exactly. Everybody was a miner's wife and some of them had had a lot more education than some of the others. And some of the ladies didn't want to join. But it wasn't that they were excluded.

RM: Any woman could join then?

MC: Yes.

RM: Even a single woman?

MC: Oh, yes. Some of the schoolteachers belonged. And sometimes around town people would make fun of them. You know how little towns are—they sometimes felt that they were putting on airs or something. But all of us kids who went to school there and look back on it . . . in fact, we had two school reunions—'77 and '79, I think—and it was just remarkable. We look back and think of the way those ladies introduced us to a lot of things that we wouldn't have had an opportunity to experience, such as sitting down to a formally served dinner and listening to somebody speak at dinner and dressing up for certain occasions. The club helped the schools any way they could. It was part of the National Women's Club Association.

RM: What age could a girl join?

MC: I suppose 18. I don't think anyone I ever knew was still in high school when she joined.

RM: Did a lot of girls join after they graduated?

MC: Not really, because not a lot of them stayed. A lot of them married and moved on or went away to school. My sister went away to school and then taught and then married a Manhattan boy and came there to live and was a member of the club. A lot of the young women played bridge after their dinners.

RM: Did the club have a president and a vice president and secretary and all that?

MC: Yes.

RM: Were they elected?

MC: I don't know how they did that. But when the war came along and the place was deserted, they weren't active anymore. There was a lady by the name of Merle Abernathy, and she had been the postmistress in Manhattan and she was living in Round Mountain. She and my mother were down to about the last members and my mother was the only one still living in Manhattan. My father had died and then my mother died. After she died, people began to break into the place and vandalism began to occur. There was a piano in it (there had been two, but there was one) and some other things.

Anyway, Merle sold the building and what was in it. I think she only got \$1,300 for the building. She gave that money to the Tonopah Scholarship Fund to be used for a student. They were busing the Round Mountain kids—I don't think there were any Manhattan kids—to Tonopah. So Manhattan or Round Mountain kids, any that were eligible, could receive this money. That was a nice gesture.

RM: So that was kind of a last gesture of the club.

MC: Yes. That was the end.

RM: Millie, you went all the way through school in Manhattan, didn't you? Why don't you talk about your career as a student in Manhattan?

MC: I was born in August, so I was six when I started school. And my first teacher—for the first two years—was Elsie Pendry, who married my brother in 1926. Our schoolhouse (which still stands in Manhattan) had all 12 grades. One room on the east side had the first four primary grades and the room on the west side took care of the next four grades through the eighth, then the middle room was the high school.

Meyer Hall was my second teacher, for the next two years, and was the first white child born in Manhattan—in March 1906. Her father and mother had moved from Austin to Manhattan. She's still living in southern California.

I went through the next four grades and graduated from the eighth grade into high school the same year that Bob—my husband—graduated from high school. Then I attended all four grades of high school and graduated in 1936.

RM: Did you have one teacher in high school or did you have several?

MC: Sometimes there was only one teacher, who also was the principal of the school. But by the time I was in high school we had another teacher who taught commercial subjects. She might have taught some other classes—I don't remember.

RM: How did they do the classes in one room? Did they have one row for the ninth grade and one row for the tenth and so on?

MC: Yes.

RM: And then in the grade school they did the same thing? I went to one of those schools. While the teacher was working with the other grade you were doing the assignments that she had given you. Did you find that a good way to learn?

MC: Everybody seemed to learn just about as well as they do now and the teacher was busy all the time. I found it a better way. You were always listening to the grade ahead, or at least I was, and learning what they were doing. They'd be working at the blackboard and you were absorbing things that you wouldn't come in contact with until later.

RM: Do you remember the high school teacher's name?

MC: Yes. His name was Ernie Moeller. He had taught in Austin and he was a very, very good teacher. He taught Spanish, mathematics, English . . . they were excellent. He was very interested in plays. And the high school put on plays. That's the way they earned their money. They were very well received and they'd take them to Austin and around and put them on.

RM: Is that right? How many were in your class, would you say?

MC: I think there were five in my senior class when I graduated.

RM: So there would have been about 20 in the high school?

MC: Maybe. I think sometimes the whole school had 40 or 42.

RM: Did Manhattan have its own school district or was it a part of the Round Mountain school district?

MC: It had its own school district.

RM: Did they raise their own taxes and everything?

MC: They must have had county assistance.

RM: But it was controlled locally.

MC: Yes.

RM: It was before they had the county-wide system, wasn't it? How do you think that local control system worked out?

MC: At that time it was fine because the communities were pretty isolated. We didn't have a lot of contact with each other. Everybody took pride in their own school. We had dances and all kinds of entertainment. And the students who graduated from Manhattan High School all went on to either establish themselves in a career of some kind or went on to college, and they graduated from college. One boy from Bob's class graduated from the University of Nevada and then was publisher/editor of the *Times Visalia* newspaper in Visalia, California.

RM: Is that right? What was his name?

MC: John Brackett. And another boy, Walter Fancher, graduated from MIT. I think the last two years of high school he attended high school in California or someplace, but up to that point he had gone to school in Manhattan.

RM: How advanced did your teacher go in mathematics?

MC: Well, not very far with me. [Laughs] But we had to take so many years. I think I took the minimum requirement; I was never very good in math. I think he taught trigonometry.

RM: Is that right? How did he do that? Let's say the sophomores are studying geometry. And they're also studying English and history and other things—he's got three other grades to teach, too. Does he teach math one day, or how did they work that?

MC: I think every subject we were studying had a class every day.

RM: So he was jumping around. He was doing that for four grades, wasn't he?

MC: Yes, he was. There was a hall right in the middle of the building as you came in. One corridor went to the left and one to the right and the high school room was right across. But on either side of the entrance door were two little

rooms. We used one for our typing room, so that that wasn't a distraction. And the room across the hall had extra books stored in it and was more or less his office. So he had some time to be by himself or with one student if he had something to discuss with a student.

RM: Did you have athletic teams?

MC: Yes, basketball and baseball.

RM: You had a baseball team?

MC: All summer, from long before I was in school. In the old newspapers I think it describes their baseball teams.

RM: Was it a school team?

MC: No. But in high school we had basketball.

RM: And who did you play?

MC: We played Tonopah and Round Mountain and Austin.

RM: Did you have a bitter rival?

MC: Pretty much.

RM: Who was it?

MC: Oh, Tonopah.

RM: Everybody hated Tonopah, I suppose.

MC: Sure. They had the most kids and the best gym. In fact, we didn't have a gym . . . well, in the early days they had what they called the athletic club. The men used it but it was used by the school kids, too, and they played basketball there. I guess they had games with other schools there. But in my time the townspeople—and I've forgotten where the help came from—built a gym. It wasn't anything fancy, I'll tell you, but that's what we used. It wasn't, of course, in the school building anywhere. At school all they did was practice in the schoolyard.

RM: When they put on the plays did they hold them in the gymnasium or in the literary club?

MC: The Toiyabe Literary Club. As I said, the Toiyabe Club built the stage and that part onto the first story for the use of the school. The Dexter Building was an office building, and they converted the first floor to a dance floor. And then at the further end of the room they built the stage with two dressing rooms on either side of it.

RM: Do you remember any of the plays you put on?

MC: Did they do "The Drunkard?" I don't know. That was before I came along. The teacher took Bob and John Brackett and Ruby Goldback to Ely on several occasions and they went to Reno and one of them took first place in forensics. They were very good, I think.

RM: It sounds like it was no handicap to go to a little school like that.

MC: It really wasn't.

RM: Maybe there were even some advantages that you wouldn't have had in a bigger school.

MC: I think we were especially fortunate that we seemed to have really good teachers—dedicated teachers—and our parents were dedicated to the idea that we were going to learn something when we went to school. One of the teachers after I got out of high school was Roy Petrie. By the way, several of the teachers that I remember were also coaches and coached the boys. Leo Schill was one of them, and Lefty Mayer—he later on went to Hawthorne and was regarded as a very fine athletic coach.

RM: Did the teachers they recruited tend to stay quite a while or was it generally a one-year appointment?

MC: I think it was unusual for a teacher to stay only a year, especially in the earlier years.

RM: I interviewed a lady yesterday in Las Vegas named Bessie Holtz. I don't know if you know her. She was a teacher for 10 years in Round Mountain.

MC: Sure I know her.

RM: I also interviewed Norman Hanson, the former manager of the mine there, by phone. He's 96 years old and sharp as a tack.

MC: Oh, is that right? How wonderful.

RM: He was one of the first guys in here. He came in before there was anything here—it was just a trail. He told me about that and of his experiences here.

MC: Oh, that's wonderful. Bob and I knew Mr. Hanson. I think he left.

RM: He left in '59.

MC: Well, then he was here for quite a while when we were, because we came in '52.

CHAPTER TEN

RM: Yes. Well, now you graduated. One of the things I wanted to ask you is, when children graduated from school—in Manhattan specifically, but I think probably it also applies to some of the other mining towns in rural Nevada—the children tended to leave the town because there was nothing there, was there?

MC: No, there wasn't. Even if you simply wanted to make a living, most of the time you had to leave. The town was up and down and there wasn't a steady source of income for people. The mines were all there was. And especially in Manhattan in the winter, when the weather was really bad, if the mills were operating they would have to close down because of water freezing.

RM: It must have been kind of a sad thing for people when their kids had to leave. Did they look at it that way?

MC: I suppose some of them did. But I just think that it was an accepted fact of life. Bob's father was not happy about his sons leaving. He wanted to keep them pretty close to home. My brothers came back from time to time for a short time. I went away after I graduated from high school. I graduated the end of May in '36, and the first of January I went to San Francisco and went to business college at Heald Business College.

RM: How long did you go?

MC: I came home the end of May and I didn't go back and I got married the 20th of July 1937.

RM: What did you do then, Millie?

MC: Bob was working for the Reliance Mining Company as a mill man.

RM: In Manhattan?

MC: Yes. And then our first child was born the next February—in '38.

RM: What was that baby's name?

MC: Linda Jean Cornell. Then two years later we had a son, Robert Humphrey. They were both born in Tonopah. And it was funny—we didn't have any more children for 11 years. By that time we had been gone eight years and we were

back in Nye County—we were at Round Mountain—and our third child was born in Tonopah. All three were born in Tonopah.

RM: Do you remember the doctor's name in Tonopah?

MC: Dr. Joy was Michael's doctor. The other two had Dr. Robert Craig, who is well-remembered around Tonopah.

RM: How long did you stay in Manhattan after you got married?

MC: We stayed there until the war broke out, in '41. Bob was working at Hawthorne at the ammunition depot.

RM: Was this before the war broke out?

MC: Yes.

RM: Was he commuting?

MC: Well, he'd come home when he could.

RM: But you were in Manhattan?

MC: I was in Manhattan with the kids. Bob's folks were there and my folks were there until my father died in November of that year. I would have been in Hawthorne but things were getting very tense and Hawthorne was crowded with people working at that base and there was no place to live. Bob was living with some relatives of ours who had been there earlier. They had a house and Bob stayed with them. After my father died Bob quit and went to work for a mining company at Nivlock out of Silver Peak because we could get a house there.

RM: So housing determined where you would take a job.

MC: Well, if you wanted to be together. That didn't turn out to be the greatest move we ever made. But we were only there until the first of August of 1942, and they closed the operation down.

RM: As a non-essential mining industry?

MC: Yes. Then we went to San Francisco. Bob went first with two friends of his. Well, his brother had enlisted—the middle brother had already been in the air force a year or so. Then after the war broke out the youngest brother enlisted. So Bob and a friend and Gene had to go to San Francisco, so he went to work in the shipyard.

RM: Which shipyard was it?

MC: Marin Ship in Sausalito. A friend of ours was a boss over there. His father had been around Manhattan a lot so he'd been around Manhattan as a young boy. Bob got in touch with him and the first job he had was on the scaffolding they put around a ship. Then Bob transferred into the electrician's end of it. That's where he learned electrical work and became a very, very good electrician. He used to go on the oil tankers when they'd go out on their trial runs. My sister's husband had gone to work here at Gabbs.

RM: Is that right? What were their names?

MC: Bill and Helen Wood. They joined us in Marin County and we lived together, because they couldn't get a place to live. Bob was an electrician at the shipyard and worked days—most of the time, 10 hours a day or so. Helen went to work at the shipyard as a welder; she worked days. Her husband was a machinist—a very good one—and he worked graveyard. And I was driving a Greyhound bus.

RM: From where to where?

MC: Out of the San Francisco Terminal to wherever they sent me. When you first go to work you have to drive the extra board. After you're there a while you can bid on a run. At first I just went wherever they needed an extra bus—down as far as San Jose and, of course, all down the peninsula and then across the bridge. Sometimes I didn't get home for two or three days at a time because I'd get back to San Francisco too late to get the last bus to Marin County. We had friends there so I'd have to stay with them.

RM: Who was taking care of the children?

MC: Somebody was usually home, with us working different shifts. But we had them in daycare centers; somebody was always home to pick them up at night or to get them there in the morning. When I was able to bid I transferred to Marin County and drove out of San Rafael and as far north as Santa Rosa.

RM: How long did you do that?

MC: About two years. The reason I took that job instead of going to the shipyard was that I was afraid to ride the bus. People who were driving the bus . . . they were hiring anybody and teaching them how to drive. That's the truth.

RM: You figured if you're going to ride the bus, you're going to be the driver? [Laughs]

MC: You bet. [Laughs] For a while I drove Whites out of the shipyard. They go more like a truck than a bus. The first time I showed up down there with my bus, boy, everybody took one look at me and hurried, trying to get on the next bus.

RM: They didn't want any part of your bus?

MC: No. They didn't like the looks of me. You know, women weren't doing too much of that. But I showed them before I was through. I wasn't born and raised in Nye County for nothing. I'd been driving old trucks and cars all over, you know. I found out that the guys who got the people first on their bus and got out of there were the fastest drivers because those guys wanted to get home. So here would go this old bus a-passing everybody. Well, I knew how to double shift and really keep the speed up. The next thing you know, my bus was full.

RM: That's a good story, Millie.

MC: It was quite a time, I'll tell you.

RM: Those old buses didn't have power steering or anything either, did they?

MC: They sure didn't. I had to stand up to get enough leverage sometimes to turn those things in the direction I wanted to go. And everything at night was all dim, and then every once in a while you'd have a blackout. The sirens would start and off would go all the lights. That's why I never kick when the planes fly over Gabbs. Because back then you'd hear the planes and we'd just have to pull off the road and stop; you didn't know who the planes belonged to or what was going on. So until the "all clear" blew and the lights began to come back on, everything . . . because there was Hamilton Air Base and Treasure Island and Alameda.

One time I came out of Marin County and went to San Francisco and Bob got on my bus at Marin City, which was the housing project for the government (that's where we lived). We were going to go out for dinner or something. When I got to San Francisco I had to take a bus of passengers down to Palo Alto, then deadhead the bus back. On the way back Bob and I were the only ones in the bus and we had an air alert or a warning. We pulled off and stopped. Well, it had been annoying Bob because the fans were going in the back of the bus. I told him, "They won't stop. They just go all the time."

“I don’t know why in the hell they do that,” he said. So while we were sitting there he fooled around with pushing buttons and stopped the bus completely and I couldn’t start it—he pushed the emergency stop. The only way you could start it again was to open the back and start it from the back and that took a mechanic. So we were there until a bus came along and stopped to see what was wrong; they sent the mechanic. We were there all night until about 4:00 in the morning. So he swore off riding around the country with me.

RM: How long were you down there?

MC: We were there from the fall of 1942 till June 1948.

RM: Then where did you go?

MC: We came back to Tonopah. Bob’s folks had sold the Belmont property I told you about before and they had bought the little Pascoe Ranch up above Pine Creek. They cut some hay and pastured the cows or the calves they were going to sell—the yearlings—every year. Then Bob’s brother Gene was home from the service and they bought the Moores Creek Ranch in Smoky Valley. The Charnock fields were 600 acres down there. What they had at Moores Creek and Anderson Creek was a little ranch and a bit of land and winter range for 500 head of cows at Kingston. But after the war they sold almost all their cows to buy this ranch and they had to make payments every year. It was really tough going; the price of cattle went down to practically nothing. We sold everything out there for \$40,000 when we gave it up.

RM: Now, that would include the Moores Creek, the Kingston Range . . .

MC: First we sold the Kingston range and then we sold Moores Creek Ranch (and that’s with Charnock) and Anderson field. We kept Pascoe in Monitor Valley. But we sold the three pieces of property for \$40,000. The people we sold it to later on split it up somewhat and ended up with \$140,000 for one piece, because land began to increase in value. Now I don’t know what they’d sell it for.

RM: Did Bob have a job there when you moved back to Tonopah?

MC: Yes. The first winter we were back we lived in Tonopah. Linda was in the fifth grade and Robbie was in the fourth grade, and Bob worked at a service station—Midland Motors—for Allen Douglass. That winter was one of the worst winters we’ve ever had—‘48 and ‘49. Right after the first of January I took him as far as Carver’s with my brother’s

pickup. It was 5:00 before we got there. His brother and the family were in bad trouble because the snow was so deep cows couldn't graze at all, and they didn't have much hay. And we had already hauled some cotton cake out to them to Charnock. (That's where the cows wintered if they had to get them in off the range.) The highway department and two or three other friends of ours with 4-

wheel drives took Bob from there to the Moores Creek Ranch. It was seven miles from the highway across to the ranch, and it took them seven hours to get there.

RM: Wow.

MC: It was something like six weeks before I heard anything from him; they were isolated out there.

RM: You took him out there and he stayed.

MC: Yes. I took him as far as Carver's so he could be with his brother. His mother and dad were at the Moores Creek Ranch and they had her mother, who was approaching 90 and was suffering from cancer. They took a quarter of beef from the ranch and she had quite a lot of eggs and of course, out like that, people prepare. They stayed at a cabin down there at Charnock and fed the cows.

RM: Now where is Charnock, exactly?

MC: These old maps show it. Moores Creek, you know, is almost across west to east from Twin Rivers and Charnock lies sort of in the middle.

RM: Kind of in the valley. So they had a cabin and he stayed there six weeks

MC: Maybe longer than that. But it was at least a month before they crossed on horseback, or maybe they used an old Chevy truck. Maybe they were able to get over to Charlie McCleod's ranch and he called from there. (They had a telephone line through the valley into Tonopah.) I'm telling you, that was some kind of a winter.

RM: What did the McCleod Ranch eventually become?

MC: I don't know what they call it now. We bought the Moores Creek Ranch from Charlie McCleod and his wife, Lena. His family were old Smoky Valley settlers—the McCleod family. He owned the Moores Creek Ranch, but he didn't live there. The McCleod Ranch was the home ranch.

RM: Where was that?

MC: Down right in Smoky Valley. Do you know where Kingston Canyon is?

RM: Yes.

MC: Well, it's the last ranch on your right. Just above and just below Kingston is the Young family. They have a big ranch.

RM: It's north of the R.O.?

MC: Yes. There was the R.O. and Millett Ranch . . .

RM: It's south of Millett?

MC: No, it's a little north of Millett. There's the R.O. Ranch and then the Millett Ranch, then the McCleod Ranch and then the Ferine family.

RM: And by now we're in Lander County.

MC: Just about. The line's just above there. I think the Youngs' family ranch below Kingston is probably in Lander County. But the Ferine Ranch was still in Nye.

RM: How long did you stay in Tonopah?

MC: The next summer we moved to the Moores Creek Ranch and stayed there all summer. Bob and I moved a little tent house on the back of that old truck from Manhattan. He put a new floor in it and we had a couple of dressers and two beds for the kids. The old adobe house had two bedrooms in it. And then Bob's brother Gene married. We were only there summers because of our children having to be in school, but Bob would be there quite a bit. Then Round Mountain (I've forgotten the name of the mining company) began operation and Bob went to work for Morrison Knudson on construction. That was when they first were dredging. Then we lived in Round Mountain. We rented a house.

RM: What year was that?

MC: Let's see. Linda was in the fifth grade in Tonopah and then she went to school in Round Mountain for the sixth and seventh grades and graduated from the eighth grade in Round Mountain. They didn't have a high school so she was staying with my brother and his wife in Tonopah.

School had started and we didn't have Mike yet. When we got back from vacation, just before school started, the men went to work one morning and everything was locked up and had gone down. But just before that Bob had worked for the state highway department for a while and we had lived at the maintenance station at Carver's. He was with them two years, I guess. Then when the company started operating he went back to work—because of the money—and we lived in one of the company houses on what they call Sunnyside. That was the little hill that was there; the mining company houses were up there. So the job was down and Bob went to Reno. He thought he could get on through the union at Lake Tahoe someplace. That was in the fall of '52, and there weren't any jobs.

Well, the job that he thought he had fizzled out. Something had happened. So a friend of ours, Tom Cahill, an engineer who was born and raised at Round Mountain, was one of the bosses up here at Gabbs. He left a message for Bob saying that if he wanted to go to work to come here, so Bob came over. He went to work for Basic and they had houses sitting down here, but the fellow who was in charge of the houses was an independent sort of a person. Bob went in two or three times to see when he could get a house and the fellow told him he'd give him a house when he got ready and Bob told him well, he wouldn't need one, and quit, because the other company here—Standard Slag—had told him he could have a house.

So we got a little house—all they had—right up by the job on the hill. It was two rooms and a bath—a kitchen and a living room and a little bathroom with a shower, and then a trailer where we slept. We stayed there, then Linda came to Gabbs and went to high school and Robbie was in the eighth grade. A couple of years later there was a pretty nice house next to us at Standard Slag, and we lived there. For five years we lived on that hill.

RM: How many houses were up there?

MC: Just the two, by this time. There was a bunkhouse and then several trailers for bachelors. There weren't any other families up there.

RM: How many men were working at Standard Slag then, would you say?

MC: I would think they must have had 30 men or so working for them.

RM: Did they process their ore there?

MC: Yes.

RM: Did they have a roaster?

MC: I'm sure they did. They had an operation, but it wasn't as large as Basic Refractories.

RM: But just like Basic's?

MC: Yes. Then they sold their property to Basic.

RM: When was that?

MC: Around 1960.

RM: Did Bob then go from Standard Slag to Basic as an employee?

MC: Well, we left here. We bought a house a block up the street and we were living down here then and had lived here for quite a while. When Standard Slag sold out, they took all the men, as many as they could, with them and we went to Yerington, as I told you. They were building a mill at Beck out of Las Vegas. Have you ever heard of Beck?

RM: No, I don't think so.

MC: It's an iron ore area. It's very hard to process and I don't think they ever did get the mill worked out. So Bob went to work at the iron mine that they had at Wabuska at Yerington. I think they must have shipped that ore to Salt Lake. But Bob wasn't happy. He was just working—he wasn't doing electrical work or anything. And then he had two or three bouts with ulcers. I told you that the general manager here at that time was Bob Gates. And he had told Bob, "If you ever need a job, you've got one." So that's how we came back here.

RM: When you were living up on the hill at Standard Slag, were you a part of the community here or were you kind of isolated from it?

MC: We were a part of it. When we came here there wasn't any high school building and there wasn't any gym. They had a little gym they use as part of the classrooms now. And there was no swimming pool, no tennis courts, no anything. It was just after we came here that the high school building was built and then a new gym followed it.

But the townspeople and the young people here (during the time of Linda and Robbie and when Mike came along) were the greatest bunch of kids. They didn't know anything about having cliques or anything. If they decided to go out in

the hills and roast weenies they just went around and gathered up everybody. And the dances were the same; the townspeople were all just a part of everything. It was a great little community. Later on when things changed all over there wasn't the camaraderie.

RM: What do you mean, when they changed?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MC: I mean in the '60s and '70s. It seemed that it didn't have the same little town spirit. Maybe it was just because things were changing all over.

RM: Other people have commented on that, Millie. What do you attribute it to?

MC: I don't think things stay the same. I just think the world was changing a lot of outlooks on things.

RM: When you grew up in Manhattan, was it like that? Was it friendly?

MC: Yes—a community.

RM: Was Round Mountain that way?

MC: Yes.

RM: And when you were living on the ranch out there you were a part of the Round Mountain community, weren't you?

MC: Yes.

RM: Would you describe Tonopah that way?

MC: I'm sure they were, but we were only there a year. But we knew the people—we've known them all our lives. So they just accepted us right into the town.

RM: How would you describe Yerington?

MC: Yerington was a little different. We have some really fine friends there. But Yerington had a lot of Italian people, and they considered themselves the townspeople.

RM: Everybody else was an outsider then?

MC: I'm not a believer or a joiner, so it never affected me one way or the other. Bob's brother and his wife lived there for a long time, and I've heard a lot of people say they had experienced the same thing.

RM: Others I've talked to attributed part of the change in Gabbs and elsewhere to television.

MC: Oh, I think so. Up to that point everybody went to a summer's baseball game or a basketball game in the winter or a dance because that's what you looked forward to. Once television came into people's homes they lost a lot of interest and they just didn't have the desire.

Now, Gabbs always had a payroll. So people lived a different life than in Manhattan, where there wasn't a steady payroll. Everybody shopped on payday or went to town and they could buy a car if they wanted one. In Manhattan there were times when, for months, the man of the house couldn't work. I marvel at how people got along.

RM: How did they get along?

MC: Not very well.

RM: What did they do?

MC: Mostly, the people who owned a store or service station or something just gave credit. Bob and I did the same thing—charged—when we lived in Manhattan. And then when we could, we paid. There were people who left town and ran out on their bill, you know, but most of the people didn't. And some of the people were a little more fortunate than others. Maybe they had a trade other than just working in a mine where they could earn extra money. Some of the families hauled wood and sold it to people. But I know people just didn't have money. I never had a nickel or a dime in my purse or my pocket when I was a kid that I could buy an ice cream cone with if I felt like it. You just didn't.

RM: I know the feeling. An ice cream cone was a treat.

MC: Well, I'll say. And we didn't raise Cain about it—it was a fact of life. I think that's one of the problems that we have created with our young people; they have too much. I've done the same thing. I'd think, "Well, Mike couldn't get along without this." Or I'll break down and, "Oh well," you know.

Of course, young people have always had temptations and problems and always will have. But I think that we spoiled our kids. The thing is now, if a young person has a problem or is unhappy or this or that—blame somebody else. In my family, we had our problems—probably each and every one of us. But I never went to my mother and dad, ever, crying and expecting them to bail me out. There were times I wanted to. Bob and I'd probably split up and I'd have gone home,

but I didn't want to and they wouldn't have not accepted me. Well, they would have. But I just had this feeling of responsibility. Don't you think young people don't have that?

RM: Yes, I think so.

RM: Millie, did you know Sheriff Bill Thomas at all?

MC: Yes.

RM: Would you tell me what you remember about him?

MC: On a personal basis, I was quite a bit younger. I didn't know him to sit and have a conversation with him. But my family sure did; they were very good friends. My father was justice of the peace in Manhattan for at least 12 years or longer, till he died, so he worked with law enforcement. He was a good JP, too.

RM: Did Manhattan have its own JP and Round Mountain have its own?

MC: Yes.

RM: And then did each have its own constable or what did they call it—deputy?

MC: Constable.

RM: And they worked under Bill Thomas, right?

MC: Well, a constable, I guess, worked under the county, too. Later on, we had a deputy that worked under the county. But the constable must have worked under the county.

RM: What do you recall about Bill Thomas? How much do you know about his background and so on?

MC: I don't know very much about the family side of his life—I wouldn't be able to talk about that. As I say, he was regarded by most people in a pretty good sense.

RM: Do you recall any anecdotes involving him?

MC: Oh my gosh, I should. He was a very at-ease person.

RM: He was? Very relaxed?

MC: Yes; he never got excited in handling situations. I know that I've heard lots of stories about him. I know my mother was in the hospital not long before she died (she was in the hospital about six months and died in 1962). She had

had a stroke and had another in the hospital but was feeling pretty good. My brother lived in Tonopah and was up there a lot. Bill Thomas made it a practice to go to the hospital regularly and visit the old-timers and other people.

On one of his visits up there the door was open in the hallway and he recognized my mother. Carroll got up and shook hands with him and said to my mother, "Mother, you know Bill Thomas." And she shook hands with him and Bill sat down and they began to visit. Carroll said, "My mother just looked like a thundercloud. Wouldn't talk. And so Bill got a little restless and excused himself and left." Carroll said, "Mama! What in the world happened to you? You treated Bill Thomas pretty bad."

And she said, "Well, no wonder. Coming right into your room when a lady's in bed," or something.

RM: She thought it was improper?

MC: You bet. Carroll said the next time he saw Bill he explained to him why my mother was so unfriendly. She thought that he was just a little bit forward.

RM: Isn't that something.

MC: I know there are lots of real, real good stories about him.

RM: But he made it a practice to go around and visit the old-timers in the hospital?

MC: Yes, he'd go up the hospital all the time.

RM: What a guy. Bill Thomas is one of the figures in Nye County history who's kind of "tall timber," so to speak. He was sheriff for 50 years or something.

MC: Oh, yes. And in times of real danger or in a real touchy situation, apprehending somebody who maybe had killed somebody, he never wore a gun. He'd just say, "All right, now come on." And that's the way it'd go.

RM: Did you know Lew Gordon in Round Mountain?

MC: Yes, I did. He also was a friend of my family's. After Carroll and Elsie were married, Carroll worked at Round Mountain for Lou Gordon. I've read quite a lot about him, too.

RM: He was head of the mine for so long that he was kind of "Mr. Round Mountain," really, as far as the mine goes.

MC: I'll tell you the name of a person who can tell you all about Lew Gordon and the straight "skinny"—Tom Cahill. He's retired and lives at Yerington. He's very well-acquainted with Round Mountain history and a whole lot of people in the state. He told me different things about Lew Gordon. I think Lew Gordon was a pretty good manipulator. He knew how to wheel and deal, always in a dignified manner. [Chuckles]

RM: You, of course, knew Will Berg?

MC: Sure did. He was a fine man, Will Berg was.

RM: Do you have any interesting anecdotes about Will and Lillian Berg?

MC: Not that I can think of off-hand. I know that when we lived in Round Mountain Will was dead by that time, but Lillian wasn't. She lived in the family house and had an old gas pump, the glass type. Our son, Robbie, was always involved in something. Anyway, I helped him make this slingshot. I'll be darned if he didn't let the rock go right through that glass.

RM: Oh! Was that in front of the garage or in their house?

MC: Out by the garage. No, it wasn't his slingshot. There were dogs involved with the slingshot. He had some kind of a gun—a .22 or something—and they were shooting icicles off the edge of the . . . But we were great friends with the Bergs and we paid, and at that time you could get a new glass top.

RM: I don't know where you'd even get one nowadays.

MC: I don't think you would. I think it cost us \$25. It wouldn't cost that today.

RM: That was a lot of money then, though.

MC: Yes. Tom Cahill is also well acquainted with the Berg history.

RM: Did you know any of the prominent politicians or have any special information on any of the famous politicians who came out of Tonopah and Nye County. You know, like Pat McCarran and Tasker Oddie and . . .

MC: They both visited at our house at Manhattan, but I was pretty little. When Scrugham was governor he visited at our house.

RM: Why don't we talk a little bit about some of the characters that you've known in central Nevada?

MC: One in particular whom I've written a little about was a man who was abandoned when he was a baby and was raised in an orphanage, I think in Oklahoma. He probably had some Indian blood. He gave himself the name, when he got old enough, of Pat O'Neal because he said he thought that was a good name. He said he was born on the Fourth of July. He just kind of drifted around and came to Fallon and Dixie Valley, and from Dixie Valley to Smoky Valley. That's where we met him. He was a great friend of the Berg family and of our family, and he stayed with us and worked for us. But he got pretty wild when he got drinking. And he had always had guns and was thinking guns, you know. So people kind of steered clear of him when he was drinking. But as far as being around women, he never got out of line or anything like that.

Well, evidently one time in Tonopah he and some other people were pretty drunk and a big brawl broke out—a big fight. Pat was so drunk I guess he wasn't capable of fighting a very good fight. Anyway, a man, as they say, "put the boots to him" and almost killed him. He was in the hospital quite a while. He never got over that. He said right off the bat that some day he'd kill this man.

My sister was visiting out at the ranch at Moores Creek with her two children. We left the children and went to Tonopah and shopped, and on the way back we stopped at Carver's. That was a thing we always did because we knew everybody and they knew us and we got wind of what was going on in the valley. Pat was in there, doing fine; he wasn't drunk or anything. We visited with him and everybody who was in there. And this man that he had the grudge against and a friend of the other man's came in. Right away you could see a change come over Pat. Everybody in there felt it. So Helen and I said our goodbyes and went to Moores Creek. I guess not more than ten minutes after we were gone words were exchanged and Pat went outside and, I guess, everyone just thought he was leaving. He went out and got his rifle and came back and killed this man.

RM: Is that right? Right there in Carver's?

MC: Yes. So Pat went out and got in his car and left. He took the gun and went up to a little cabin he'd been staying at or knew about on Wildcat Peak. People were alerted all over and they didn't know quite what to expect. They

thought he might come to Moores Creek. Well, he didn't. I think Bill Beko was the DA and he was with a group and Pat's pickup was at the cabin. So they called to him and said, "Come on out, Pat." And so he did.

He was convicted and sent to prison. And he had a little horse called Arlene that he had broken at Bergs'. After he was in Carson for a while he took care of a lot of the livestock and was a trustee, I guess, and got along fine. He built a horse trailer while he was there. One day the warden drove him to Smoky Valley and he got his horse, Arlene, and took her up to prison with him. She spent the rest of the time Pat was up there with him.

Robbie graduated from the eighth grade. Bill Thomas could have been in office at that time, because Robbie graduated in '57. I had all these cards for Robbie to send to people inviting them to his graduation exercises. He addressed one and never addressed any others—it was to Pat O'Neal at Nevada State Prison in Carson City. They were great friends. Pat had been at Kingston with the cows in the summer and Robbie and my nephew, Bill Wood, went to Kingston and stayed with him. And boy, if they didn't have a great time. Of course I told them, "Now you keep your clothes clean. You wash your socks." So they'd rinse them out in the creek and hang them on the fence. They were just as stiff as the stiffest board you ever saw in your life.

Pat's method of cooking was, he had one big kettle. Whatever he had on hand—beef ribs or beans or whatever—filled the kettle and nobody had anything else till that kettle was gone. If it lasted three days, well, that's what they had. And the boys would fish and hunt a little bit. They had the greatest summer of their life. Of all the things that have happened to them (my nephew is an engineer) they remember and think about that.

Anyway, when Pat had served his term and was released, Bob's brother was living here and he had a pickup, so he went to Carson and got Pat and Arlene in the horse trailer and they came here. Pat stayed several days and then they took him to Round Mountain and he settled in there and finally died there after a while. But talk about a rough and tough character.

He had an old friend from Manhattan, Pappy Hendricks. He had a straggly beard. They were quite the drinking partners, you know. They were sitting in the Palace Club in Round Mountain one time. Some people were in there—the man was a retired policeman and his wife was a very nice lady. It was in the morning—11:00 or something—and Pappy

and Pat showed up having a couple of drinks. Pappy was sitting there and they both had on cowboy boots. Pappy had his legs crossed and was moving his leg and old Pat said to him, “You know, I could shoot the heel off of that boot.”

Pappy says, “Aw, you could not.” He just sat there as calm as anything and Pat pulled his gun and walked a few steps across the room. And this lady, I guess, almost fainted. He pulled out his gun and started shooting at Pappy’s boot. The first shot went through the jukebox.

RM: Oh, my God.

MC: And the lady ran for her life. Pappy said, “Ha ha ha, you missed.” So he took another shot. That’s what they did for fun—just unbelievable.

We didn’t have much money to pay him very much. He always got his bed and food and we gave him an old car we had. And the Bergs did the same thing. They just looked after him. But you realized that you had kind of a dynamite thing going there you had to handle with care. But he never, at their place or ours . . . he did shoot a couple of holes through the ceiling one time at Moores Creek. I wasn’t there. And the next morning Gene told him that that was enough of that. There’d be no more or else Pat would just have to pack his bedroll and move on.

RM: Did you know a guy named Charlie Anderson? When we were out at the Reveille mine in 1957, he was an electrician and worked for us there. He killed a man that summer.

MC: I sure don’t.

RM: He had killed his wife years before. I think he was from the area. But he was out on a mining claim. He had staked some claims out somewhere in the area—I think it was Nye County—and went out there and there were a couple of guys from Utah staking over his claims. He said, “Boys, these are my claims.”

One of them told him, “Old man, get out of here,” and started to rough him up a little bit. So Charlie just went over to his pickup, opened the glove compartment, pulled out a gun and killed one of them. And the other guy took off running. Charlie had to leave us then. They put him in jail and I think he got a couple of years or something.

As I recall, they said he had killed his wife years before under circumstances that weren't entirely clear. I think his conviction on this charge was a little bit related to that one. In other words, "Well, we didn't get him that time for that one. This one, the guy probably deserved what he got."

MC: The man Pat killed was a Mexican married to Emma Nay. Ornelas, I think was his name. It was a kind of a touchy thing in Nye County because of her family and wanting to really nail old Pat, you know. This fight had taken place down at the red-light district. They said Ornelas kicked him about the head and face till you would never have recognized him as a human being. So a lot of people figured he had it coming. And he did.

RM: On the frontier you often get what you deserve, don't you?

MC: If Pat had lived 100 years before, he'd have been right at home. He just was 100 years late.

RM: More of the Jack Longstreet mold, then?

MC: Sure he was. And of course with his background, I don't think he had any education. He had a heck of a sense of humor. When the boys were spending the summer with him at Kingston I was a little dubious—we all were a little bit—but everything was all right. Anyway, the boys went fishing one day. They had a willow and a couple of hooks, I guess. And here came a visitor. And right away Pat hadn't any use for him. He had on rubber boots and he was right out in the creek—Kingston Creek at its highest . . . flood time, probably. But you just didn't fish that way, and the stranger didn't have a doggone fish and he was pretty disgusted. He came up to where Pat was and said to Pat, "How in the hell do you catch any fish in this creek? I was told that you could really get some good fish here."

Pat said, "Well, I don't know, but why don't you ask those guys?" Here were the boys, no shoes on or anything, and they had a string of fish about that long—beautiful trout.

RM: That's good.

MC: Pat enjoyed that so much. The guy didn't say one word; he just left.

RM: Did you know the Rogers up at the RO Ranch at all?

MC: Yes.

RM: What do you recall about Rene and Pete's parents?

MC: Rene's mother was Grace Anderson. Her sister was married to one of my brothers. There was a big family of Andersons—quite a few girls and a boy or two. Grace and her husband were fine people. Bob knew a lot more about the Rogers family. I've heard different stories, but I can't tell you anything.

RM: You knew the Bonis in Manhattan, of course, didn't you? I interviewed Jim.

MC: His brother Alvino was in the same grade Bob was. Jimmie was a little bit younger than Bob and a little older than I. Then he had another brother, Ermine, who died. He lived at Pahrump, I think, at the end. He died a year or two ago. Ermine and I were in the same class. There was Ermine Boni and Olga Francisco, from another Manhattan family, in my class.

RM: Who else was in your class?

MC: Armando, her brother, and Blanche Brackett. It seems to me there was another boy.

RM: How do you look back on your life in Nye County and your family's deep roots there? How would you summarize what you've seen and experienced?

MC: I think the old-timers were strong, fine people. The men had it tough. Their jobs were tough, underground and cold—walking to work and walking home. But the women, how they managed—no water, trying to carry a bucket of water around, keeping their houses clean and taking care of things and seeing that we had schools and teachers. They just were remarkable, I think.

My family and Bob's are so involved in Nye County; I've always been very proud of Nye County and the people who grew up in the county.

RM: How do you see the future of the county?

MC: It scares me, mostly. Of course new people make a big change—they're bound to. What I'm really afraid of is the water situation. We have never had much water in Nye County. But during the time Bob was a commissioner, the AEC drilled quite a few wells. They were going to expand some of their test ground. And the amount of water that they

had discovered underground was never publicized.

RM: What did they find?

MC: They found an extreme amount.

RM: Whereabouts?

MC: Bob was told this but never mentioned it. One of them is Monitor Valley. It's a closed valley, you know, on that south side, and it drains a lot of country. And of course people will say, "Well why, then, has Nye County—or Nevada—been so arid for so long?" It's because people couldn't afford power to pump deep wells. And in a lot of that country there isn't power.

RM: Whereabouts did they find water, Millie?

MC: Probably in every one of those valleys.

RM: So why does it scare you?

MC: Because of Las Vegas going after the water. It must be publicly known by now pretty much how much water there is and where the best sources of water are.

RM: So you fear that Nye County is going to be dried up?

MC: I think they're going to take it away from us.

RM: Like L.A. did to the Owens Valley in California?

MC: Yes, I'm so familiar with the Owens Valley. God knows I'm not a person to look down on casinos or gambling or anything like that, but it seems to me that there is a very good possibility that that era may come to an end some time. That water will go to Las Vegas, which is a casino-oriented city. If it was a city where people worked . . . oh, I don't know how to explain it. I realize the people who work for them earn a living the same as anybody else, but they're not producing a product. And in our county, which is growing so fast (of course mining has contributed to that) there isn't room for people anymore. They've got to get out more. And industry has to get out more. We in Nye County have done without water, so much of the time because there wasn't the means to get to the water that we did have. Some of the water

is not deep—the wells we do have—and can only be pumped so much and then you're going to be in trouble. I'd hate to see them pump a lot of our underground water out.

RM: Do you have other fears about the future?

MC: The water is what I'd hate to lose. My people came to the United States looking for a better place to live and raise their family. And they worked hard to get what they had. But I hate to see a heritage disappear. I hate to have Nevada turned into a state where people are like they are in Los Angeles. What do they care? They don't care.

RM: Yes, right. You want to see people continue to care about the land.

MC: Yes, and where they live. I don't care if it's Ione or Manhattan or Tonopah—I lived in Tonopah, it becomes important to me, and that's the way I feel about it.

RM: Maybe that's a good way to end this interview. Thanks so much for talking to me.

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