An Interview With

Tim Hafen

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

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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.

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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 Tim Hafen at his office in Pahrump, Nevada, May 25, 2011. Mr. Hafen reviewed this transcript some months later.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: All right, Tim. What has happened in the 23 years since we last talked?

[Chuckles]

TH: It's hard to recall the exact time frame of 23 years ago. It may be that I'm repeating some things but I'd like to start by talking about when I physically moved here July 2, 1951. I'm trying to recall who was in the valley when I came out here. Of course there was the Bowman family, Elmer S. Bowman and Elizabeth. At that point Perry Bowman, an older son, had already broken off from the Bowman Manse Ranch operation and moved onto his own just a little bit south of the main Manse Ranch. Lynn "Digger" Andersen (now deceased) and Elmer's daughter Imogene were here. Elmer was the visionary and the boss, so to speak, and the sons-in-law and sons worked the ranch together with Elmer. Elmer's daughter Kenna and her husband, Arlan Frehner, and Arlan's, dad, Joe also were on their own piece of land farming.

Today, Imogene Andersen still lives here. Another son-in-law was Lyle Christensen. He died in Reno on July 14, 2011. His wife, Mary, was one of the Bowman daughters. They live in the Reno area at this point. When Elmer got a little older they broke up the Manse Ranch. Perry Bowman, of course, was already off on his own piece of ground, so Lyle Christensen took a chunk along what is now Manse Road to the north side, which is also now part of Mountain Falls.

Digger Andersen took a long strip basically running from Highway 160 clear to Homestead Road. It was very long and narrow but Elmer had, originally, more than 6,000

acres. That's part of the Mountain Falls project right now. In addition to that the two youngest sons, Murton and Melvin, each took a chunk. So they split the ranch basically into four pieces and farmed individually.

Lyle Christensen had always been a small airplane pilot and he went into the crop-dusting business, which was a great service to us back then. He would fly insecticides and defoliants and different things onto our cotton crops. He filled a very important niche. He named his company Christensen Aerial Application Service. Now, that's a real mouthful and it's worse trying to write it on a check so he finally shortened it to CAAS. That kind of fit him anyway—we called him Casanova. [Laughter] He was straight as an arrow but we called him that. Anyway, when the county was casting about trying to find a name for the road that went in front of his house and along his property he was the only one living there so that half-mile stretch is named CAAS Road. We even put signs in our real estate office and in different places saying, "Here's the explanation of CAAS Road and why it was named that way," because it is very unusual.

Murton and Melvin were living in Las Vegas the last I heard. Some of the farmland was sold. Murton still owns most of his and Melvin sold to the Calvada people—that was the strip from Gamebird Road south.

It's still undeveloped because of the lack of utility infrastructure. But in any event, Al Collins with Mountain Falls came out here and his first idea was he was going to build a three-step retirement community where you would have apartments that could be taken care of, kind of like hotel rooms. But you'd have your own apartment, your own kitchen and service as necessary, and it would be part of the community. The next step up would be intermediate care, which would be not a nursing home but an assisted living home. And then there would be a third component, which would be the nursing, more

acute care.

I sold the North Ranch, which I bought from one of Elmer Bowman's sons-in-law and daughter, in 1963. His name was Arlan Frehner and his wife's name was Kenna. I sold that to Al Collins. Actually, I sold it on a lease/option-type of an arrangement and he had to pay me so much a year to keep the option alive. I sold it to Collins a year or two before he actually got started on Mountain Falls. But then he kept going to the north and he purchased the Christensen and the Andersen property and part of Murton Bowman's property. That now comprises Mountain Falls.

But Al Collins had prostate cancer and he died at age 74. At that point in time he had extended himself drastically, buying other pieces of property and not being able to get his project moving like he wanted to. So the heirs, the company, declared bankruptcy. Out of that bankruptcy eventually came William Lyons Homes, which bought the property north of Manse Road. American West Homes out of Las Vegas bought my property and in the meantime, Al Collins had also bought the Perry Bowman property south of my north ranch.

In the bankruptcy, American West took over the lease/option on my piece of property, which was 650 acres. And they bought Perry Bowman's ranch, most of it through the bankruptcy. There were some portions of it—160 acres of the original Perry Bowman Ranch—and then one of Perry's sons, Mark Bowman, had 80 acres there and he grew sod. That was kind of separate from his dad's farm. The Perry Bowman family foreclosed on that 160 acres during bankruptcy and resold it later on. That ended up being 230 acres—Mark Bowman sold 70 acres (he kept 10 acres for his house) along with the 160, making 230 acres. The Focus Group bought that and it's right along Hafen Ranch Road, where the old Bowman headquarters were—the old Bowman house and so on.

So they had all of this property, including my north ranch and part of the Perry Bowman Ranch, which had been master-planned in a development agreement reached by Al Collins. American West bought the 650 acres plus some of Perry Bowman's ranch and then Focus bought the other 230 acres. That was included in the development agreement, which still carries on.

In about 1990, we decided to take 160 acres of alluvial fan that wasn't really farm ground because of the rocks and gravel. We turned that into a subdivision named Cottonwoods and we divided it into 255 half-acre parcels. The state doesn't allow you to put a well and a septic tank on anything less than an acre so we built a sewage plant and took all the sewage from those 255 half-acre parcels to that plant.

In addition, we had to deed back to the state of Nevada two acre feet for every lot that we divided that was going to have a domestic well. So you take two acre feet times 255 lots and that's about 510 acre feet of water rights that we turned over to the state. They would not allow any more subdivision parcels to be created where domestic wells were going to be used unless you gave them the water rights in an amount that is allowed on their domestic well.

At that time we had quite a few water rights from our farms and so on. We didn't have the money to put in a water system, so each one of those half-acre parcels now has its own domestic well. And they're mostly built out. That's Cottonwoods.

RM: How did they get their own wells?

TH: They had the right to drill their own domestic well. The state allowed that to happen on those parcels since I gave them the water rights to compensate for it. We put in a package plant at the west-northwest corner of Cottonwoods. Once you hook up 25 households, you have to become a state-regulated utility company so we formed Pahrump

Utility Company and became a regulated private utility company. And it was kind of slow taking off.

At that point in time I talked to my family members and said, "If any of you want to invest in this project, we could use some money." Well, two of the kids, my oldest daughter, Vicki (Vicki Hafen Scott is her name now; she's married to Dick Scott) and my second child, the only boy, Gregory, put money into Cottonwoods. I put the land in, they put the money in, and we built Cottonwoods in phases. It was kind of slow getting off the ground and we were a little disappointed in that. But things were okay because we paid for it as we went. Then it kind of took off and sold.

We quit growing cotton in 1982. The reason we quit cotton then was because, if people will recall, during the '70s before the oil embargo, we were buying gasoline for 35 cents a gallon in bulk. It went to a dollar. We were buying diesel for 12 and a half cents and I don't remember what it went to, but 30 or 40 cents. Everything that we purchased to grow cotton, whether it's a tire, rubber, fertilizers, oil, diesel, gasoline, equipment, steel, it doesn't matter, it's all affected by the price of oil.

But the price of cotton in those days was fairly stable, about 65 cents a pound. What happened simply was that our costs to grow the cotton increased dramatically but the price of our product didn't increase. The price of cotton is kind of set worldwide because a lot of countries grow cotton. And a lot of countries will sell it cheaper than the United States if the price gets too high, so that's what happened.

RM: Did the other farmers in the valley quit growing cotton at that point also?

TH: Well, here's the other thing that happened. If you'll recall, back in about 1970, I believe, Walt Williams sold to the Calvada people, Preferred Equities. They leased out the ground for a little while so there was some cotton but eventually, roads crossed the

fields and it just become uneconomic to grow cotton.

The acreage diminished because of urban residential-type development, Calvada mostly, because Walt Williams's old Pahrump Ranch, which is Calvada Valley, had the largest cotton allotment of any of us. I think they were growing about 1,000 acres out of about 4,000 total in the valley. We should have gone out of the cotton business three or four years before we did, but we'd grown cotton for 40 years; it was like part of our family. We just hung on and hung on and hoped things would change, and finally in 1982 we all made the decision, including the owner of the cotton gin, that we would quit growing cotton—"We're losing money on it, it's time."

The fellow that owned the gin, Elroy Greer, was an officer of Arizona Cottonseed Products Company out of Phoenix, who built the gin originally. The gin wasn't too economic when the acreage diminished and so at that point we just quit growing cotton.

I have to tell a story about that cotton gin. You know, cotton is only grown in the warmer climates, and southern Nevada is right on the edge of the cotton-growing belt. (We grew a variety out of the Pecos, Texas, area that was more like the climate here in Pahrump and we did pretty well for a long time.) This was the only cotton gin ever in the state of Nevada and once it quit, there was no chance of another cotton gin ever coming in.

A group of us—local growers and different people—hated to lose that historic object, the only Nevada cotton gin. It's on 40 acres, by the way, that Walt Williams donated to get the gin in here and it's right on the northeast corner of the major intersection in Pahrump. We knew that had to be tremendously valuable some day for a commercial hotel/casino. Greer wanted $250,000 for the property, the 40 acres and the building and the office, everything that was there at the time. We didn't have any money;

we'd shot our wad growing cotton. We tried every way in the world to get investors interested in buying that and just holding it for future development. In fact, we had hoped we could find a developer to maybe do a co-venture with us and call it the Ginning Company because we could have left the cotton gin building with all its gin equipment inside and it would've been a historic thing. It could have been a themed hotel/casino.

But we couldn't raise the money. So it was sold to Joe Bob White, who's still out here, and another partner. Joe Bob has the convenience stores, gas stations, Horizon Markets. They sold the cotton gin property, I think, to the Binion family. Binions had bought the old Frank "Pop" Buol place out here. Now about that time, Benny Binion was getting old.

There's a story to go with that, which has probably already been told: Doby Doc Caudill lived in Las Vegas and he had a five-acre parcel south of the Tropicana Hotel on Reno Lane. This was back when fallout shelters for an atomic bomb were encouraged—you've got to build a fallout shelter to protect yourself. Well, he bulldozed out a huge pit to build a concrete bomb shelter.

Along came a county inspector and asked him if he had a permit to do that. [Laughter] They got into an encounter and in effect he told them he wasn't going to get a permit from anybody. Then he bought the old Pop Buol place out here on Wilson Street and moved out here and built his bomb shelter. The bomb shelter exists on that property today. He left that hole in the ground in Las Vegas, I think for six or seven years, just to aggravate the county. [Laughter] He spent quite a little time out here, but as he got older he moved to Las Vegas. And that's when Benny Binion, who was a close friend of Doby Doc's, bought the Pop Buol place.

Then they bought the gin property. Teddy, the Binions' younger son, had a real

heroin problem and had had his gaming license taken away. They had hopes of bringing him out here and getting him straightened out and building a casino on the cotton gin property if they could get Teddy relicensed. As things went, Teddy went out right in the middle of the gin yard in the open area, dug a pit and put in a big concrete bunker-like vault, and put his gold and silver coins and bullion and stuff in there. He hired a fellow that was working for him, Rick Tabish, to build that vault and it was fortified. They put a huge two-ton concrete block in front of the door; everything was underground. Nobody knew much about that being there. Harry "Button" Ford would have remembered; I think he knew.

RM: I think Button knew, yes. It was close to Button's place, wasn't it?

TH: It was on the gin yard, right where the Nugget stands right now. That's where Teddy's vault was. But the bomb shelter isn't far from Button's property. Anyway, then Teddy Binion died mysteriously. Rick Tabish—I think he was either from Wyoming or Colorado—was the contractor who was working for Teddy. He and Teddy's girlfriend, Sandy Murphy, were accused of not only trying to overdose Teddy but also smothering him with a pillow, and they were convicted of murder. And by the way, Rick Tabish came out a day or two after Teddy died and had a big back hoe and belly-hopper trucks and he was digging up all that stuff when it was noticed by the sheriff's department, who then got to checking into it. That's how they found out about Tabish and Sandy Murphy.

Then Binions I think sold it; I want to say it was the Ensign family (Senator Ensign's family) from Las Vegas that bought it. But whoever purchased it from Binions built the Pahrump Nugget, it's changed hands since then and is owned by Golden Gaming. In the meantime, the cotton-ginning building and the equipment and everything was removed; it just became a bare piece of ground. The irony is that what we saw in

1982 as a choice site for a hotel/casino site came true—it is a choice site. The only thing that we don't have is the old historic cotton gin building and equipment, which would have been quite a curiosity in today's world.

RM: I agree; that's too bad. Do you want to talk a little bit about how, as a 19-year-old kid, you would go out and start a farm, basically on the frontier?

TH: I was the oldest of four boys; I was born and raised in Mesquite. I was married right out of high school and I moved to St. George, Utah, to attend Dixie College. My dad, Max Hafen, didn't really think college was necessary. Oh, he helped me buy a used car and one thing and another but he really wasn't too enthused about me going to college. At the time my wife was working at a coffee shop as a waitress and I was working in a body shop on Saturdays and we were starving to death.

My dad was on a board that was called the Taylor Grazing Board; that was the forerunner to the Bureau of Land Management. They periodically had meetings and on one of their meetings they took a field trip through Goodsprings, Sandy Valley, up through Pahrump, and out north and hit the Reno highway and back into Las Vegas. Elmer Bowman and his family came from Logandale, Nevada, and Logandale and Mesquite are only 35 miles apart, so everybody knew everybody. While they were out here they ran into Elmer Bowman and visited with him and they stopped at a big artesian stream that was running under the gravel road there—a big stream they used to irrigate.

RM: Was it that Manse Spring?

TH: Yes. Anyway, Elmer knew my dad and he said, "You know, you ought to buy some of this property because we're trying to get a community going. We need to have people." And he told him about the old Kellogg place that had been acquired by Dr. Cornell after Lois Kellogg died. It had become part of the Manse Ranch when Bowman

bought it and he sold parts of that off to us. He offered us 840 acres for $30 an acre with nothing down and 20 years to pay and four percent interest. My dad put up the money to drill a well. If the well came in good, we were going to take up the option. Well, that well produced 1,000 gallons a minute—free flow, artesian—so we took up the option. That was in March and April and then I moved out here in July of '51. So that's what started that. But it was that Bowman was trying to get a community going out here.

I'll go back to something I didn't quite finish. When you went on up the valley to the north, the Pahrump Ranch at the time was owned by C. B. Dickey and some of his partners out of Bakersfield. And the Fords were here. I believe that the Raycrafts were here at the time. They were older and had a little farm. As we went up the valley, the Simkins brothers up on Simkins Road were here. Allen Simkins married Zula when he was 40 years old, after I moved out here, but the other one, Paul, never married. Allen died of cancer and Paul sold the place. I can't recall the exact chain of the ownership, but Allen Estates was named after Allen Simkins.

So then you go on north, and the Dollar Ranch was farmed intermittently but Dorothy Dorothy was here.

RM: What do you recall about her?

TH: Curiously enough, that wasn't just a pen name (she was a writer). Her name was Dorothy something and she married Dale Dorothy. She wrote columns for the *Las Vegas Sun* and at times the *Review*, and the *Tonopah Times* pretty regularly. She had a column named "The Land of Ahs," or she called it "Pumpings from Pahrump." When you talk about visionaries, she was one. She really promoted, with other people in the valley, the road from Pahrump to Las Vegas over Mountain Springs. That was completed in 1954.

Prior to that we had to go up north over a rock road to hit Highway 95. From this

end of the valley it was 40 miles to Highway 95 and 70 miles back into Las Vegas; it was an all-day trip. We didn't have air conditioning back in those days. We had pickups, which weren't too airtight. I remember wrapping clothes in a sheet (we really didn't have plastic back then either, handily) to protect them from dust. When we'd get to Las Vegas we'd stop at the first service station and change our clothes and kind of wash up because you had to run with the windows down or you'd suffocate.

Anyway, she was a real promoter. She was a fairly tall woman. Always kept herself trim. She had bleached blonde white hair always, and it was quite bushy. That was kind of her trademark, and the other trademark was that I don't think I ever saw her in a pair of pants. Of course, back then there weren't as many women wearing pants. She would wear a skirt down to about knee length and she always had white bobby socks on. This wasn't what you'd call the most fancy garb in the world, but it didn't seem to bother her too much. She was a go-getter.

People nowadays say, "Well, yeah, you're pro-development but we kind of like Pahrump Valley the way it is. I'm not sure we'd like any growth in here."

And I say, "Let me tell you why I'm pro-development. When I moved out here I couldn't buy a hamburger and a milkshake. And that was important at my age. If a fan belt broke on my pickup, I had to take the tractor and drive to a neighbor and ask when he might be going to Las Vegas or if he knew anybody going to Las Vegas, to bring me back a fan belt. In the meantime we drove the tractor until we could get a fan belt. You couldn't buy a battery, you couldn't buy a tire." We did get gas delivered from Shoshone, California, from the Charles Brown Company, in barrels. We didn't have telephones, nor electricity. I say, "You bet I'm pro-development. I wanted to get a community going where we could at least buy most of the major things that we needed to operate and to

live with." I think most of the people at that point in time were pro-development.

The first supermarket was PJ's. That came in 1981 and that was a big step up. Calvada, Preferred Equities, had just got started down at what they call the Eye. They promised the county commissioners that they would open a grocery store, and they did, in one end of the Calvada building, which is now gone. It was in about 5,000 square feet at the end of the building. They had a pretty good little line of groceries and a live butcher—well, kind of, once in a while. After PJ's, the big jump was Smith's, Smith's Market. Oh man, you talk about . . . then we got McDonald's.

Prior to that there was the old Trading Post, which is near where the Nye County School District headquarters is now. Guy Pinnell was operating it when I came out. You could buy canned goods and flour and beans, things like that. He went to Las Vegas about every two weeks, so if you wanted milk or meat you either put in your order or you got there the next day before it was all sold out.

The Calvada people did do some good as far as the local population because they had a nice steak house. I could actually take people from out of town who came to visit me out to a nice dinner for the first time.

RM: About when did that happen?

TH: If PJ's opened in 1981, that had to be in the late '70s. Calvada's store was there for a few years before PJ's and then they closed it up. At that same time they had a cocktail lounge and restaurant.

RM: Was there a spark point or something where things took a big jump? In other words, was there a dividing line between farming Pahrump and what was the future?

TH: No, there was not a definite dividing line, but you had to accumulate the elements to make a community. The first thing you had to have was a road out here. The next thing you had to have was electricity. We generated our own electricity, the farms did, but the ordinary person who just lived out here and worked somewhere couldn't afford to do that. We got electricity in 1963, then telephones in 1965. Now we began to get the elements that it takes to put a community together. In fact, here's that first phone book.

In 1966, the road was extended from the town of Pahrump on the north to the Reno Highway. That made two ways out of here—if you were going to Tonopah you had a way to go, or if you were going to Las Vegas you'd go out south over Mountain Springs and that way.

In about 1963, a group of townspeople got to talking that we had no place to hold a public meeting. We had a little schoolhouse that was a barracks building moved from Indian Springs.

RM: That wasn't the little red school house that Button used to talk about?

TH: No, this was at the site of the Manse Elementary right there on Wilson Street. It was difficult to hold a public meeting and try to fit grownups in those little desks. [Laughter] There was no place to sit down.

So some of the local people, Nadine Garlin and others, talked to the county commissioners about forming an unincorporated town, a tax district so that we could float a bond and put a local assessment within that tax district to pay off that bond and build a

community building. There's opposition when you're going to raise taxes. I was involved with it and a lot of local women carried the petition everywhere in the valley and got signatures to form a tax district. The majority of the people realized that we needed a building. We presented the petition to the county commissioners and they formed the unincorporated town of Pahrump. Now we had a boundary, we had a tax district, and by gosh, we built the community building up there, the Bob Ruud Center. That was finished in 1966. Now we had a place with a kitchen and restrooms to hold a public meeting; that's how that came about.

With the Calvada people coming in, they exposed Pahrump to the whole world. They sold lots in Germany, you name it. Even though the housing development didn't start from Calvada, so to speak—they had an agreement with Nye County that they didn't have to put in infrastructure for a certain number of years to give them time to generate some funds and so on.

Basically, one of the biggest generators of outside labor was the Nevada Test Site. From the center of the valley, we were only about 40 miles from the Test Site; Las Vegas is 70 miles. There were a lot of people that could buy land very cheap out here; that's when we started dividing it into five-acre parcels and two-and-a-half-acre parcels.

RM: When did that begin?

TH: I'm trying to think. Here's an ad for choice five-acre parcels—this is 1971, the very first issue of *PV Times*. We have choice five-acre parcels just off Mesquite Road starting at $750 per acre. Terms: Ten percent down and $50 a month including eight percent simple interest. Two-and-a-half-acre parcels for $40 a month.

RM: Was there any selling going on before, say, '70?

TH: Yes, I got my real estate broker's license in 1969 and we operated in an office out

of our house. So in the late ’60s there were pieces being bought up.

RM: Could you say a little more about the Test Site and the effect that it had?

TH: If you were working at the Test Site you had a pretty good salary—there were some of the scientific types, some of the management types—and a lot of people liked horses. They could move out here and buy five acres for $4,000 and drill a well and put a septic tank on it and have their own little rancho. Back in those days everything pretty much was manufactured homes. You could buy a five-acre site, put in a well and a septic, and have the home on it within 30 days set up. Ready to go. So that was an attraction and a lot of people moved out here because of that.

RM: What would Pahrump have been then without the Test Site?

TH: It would’ve been slower.

RM: It would’ve been slower, but it would have happened?

TH: Most of those parcels were in the north half of the valley—from Highway 372 north, because that was closer to the Test Site. Yes, it would have been slower but it would have happened eventually because with the highway and power and telephones, we had people from Las Vegas move out here, also, either to retire or drive back and forth and raise their family in a rural environment. And it was very rural.

I’ve been asked many times, how did certain roads get their names? That was easy. Take Abe Fox. Abe Fox used to have Foxy’s Deli at Sahara and Las Vegas Boulevard South, across from the Sahara Hotel. A very popular deli. His corned beef and pastrami sandwiches served with sauerkraut . . . it made him a millionaire, I’m sure. Well, Abe Fox had started purchasing land out here—the Green Saddle Ranch, primarily—a section, 640 acres of ground, and breaking it into acre and a quarters, back when it was easy to do. You’d put a gravel road in. That’s all you had to do, really.

RM: So he was a visionary, too.

TH: He was a visionary, too. But he called a public meeting and he had acquired a large valley map and hung it on the wall of the Manse Elementary at that time. (Now we're out of the old barracks building into Manse Elementary School, which is about a four-classroom building.) He put it on the wall and called all the local people together and said, "We've got to figure out a naming system for the roads. You can't just always say, 'Well, go about a mile and turn left or turn right.'" [Laughter] Because there were people scattered all over the valley, especially in the northern half of the valley, of the people that worked at the Test Site and different places. We tried to outline every section line and every half-section line so we'd have a grid at least; it could infill later on.

So Hafen Ranch Road got named Hafen Ranch Road; I had two places on Hafen Ranch Road. Perry Bowman had the other one. I had naming rights I guess. Manse Road was named after the Manse Ranch. Sandy Lane down here was named after my daughter Sandy and Vicki Ann was named after another daughter. Ronny Floyd named Gamebird Road and I don't know why he thought of Gamebird, but he's also got a bunch of his kids' names on roads here. And everybody did that. If they had kids, they wanted to name after them or if they thought something sounded good, they put it down.

Back in those days, the county was glad for the help. I'm trying to think whether we bought the street signs or whether the county helped us—I think it was a combination of both. The county was very limited at the time and they had trouble enough just buying gasoline and diesel for their equipment.

RM: So Homestead was . . .

TH: Well, Homestead was a different story. When I first moved out here in 1951, everything west of Homestead, south of Gamebird, was federal land but it had been open

to homesteading. In fact, it had been open for homesteading in the late '40s, but it didn't really catch on until into the '50s when we begin growing cotton. Cotton was grown first in 1949 and that's partly why we moved out here. I had no idea how to grow cotton but my neighbors were very helpful. You know, you just go ask. And they had a couple years' experience. So the valley became a little more attractive for homesteading. Now, a homestead was 160 acres that you could file on. You had to identify it, but there had been a USGS survey of the whole valley previously so if you could find section corners and quarter-section corners you could pretty well isolate and describe that 160 acres. You had to live on it and develop enough water for 20 acres, I think, and farm it and then you could get a patent (title).

The Desert Land Entry Program was a little bit different. That allowed you to file on 320 acres, half a section, and you didn't have to live on it but you had to develop water enough for more acreage proportionally than the homestead.

RM: Did many people pick up the Desert Entry here?

TH: Yes, they did.

RM: How has it turned out for them?

TH: It was a struggle. Most people were on really a shoestring. They had a job and they were trying to develop a homestead and work and different things so it was a real struggle. Few succeeded. I'd say a lot of them succeeded in getting their patent and then they just left, but a lot of them stayed with it. Herbst Lakeside Casino was an old homestead. So was everything west of Homestead Road, hence the name Homestead Road.

RM: What about just some names that come to mind, like Blagg?

TH: He was the only realtor out here at the time, Cy Blagg. He wasn't a realtor, he was

a real estate broker. Realtor is a professional designation. He was an old character; he listed and tried to sell real estate out of his house and did a little advertising around.

RM: About when was this?

TH: It was probably along around the time we were trying to name the streets. Basin Road was named by Bob Ruud because he called his ranch Basin Ranch. That's where the dairy is now. Bob came in 1954, as I remember. Ted Blosser was at about the same time—Blosser Ranch Road.

RM: What was it like for you as a kid, basically, to come into this virgin country?

TH: I'd been raised in Mesquite and my dad was fairly successful in the dairy business. In Mesquite, 100 acres was a big farm. Well, 840 acres? That's gigantic. I had visions of really developing some kind of a huge operation. I moved out here and my dad put up the money. We formed a partnership and I would borrow his farm equipment and truck it out here on his truck, farm like hell for a couple of weeks, and take it back. He had a John Deere tractor and a plow and a disc.

The hugest investment we made was about 1952 when I was able, with my dad's cosignature, to borrow money from Farmer's Home Administration (that's a low-interest type loan program designed for farming). I was able to borrow $7,000. I went to Hughes Garage in Mesquite, which was the John Deere dealer, and bought a John Deere A tractor. I bought a hay baler, one of those old side-throw hay balers, right after they come out as automatic tie. I bought a ditcher, I bought a disc, I bought a posthole digger, a cultivator, and a cotton planter.

RM: For $7,000?

TH: For $7,000. I was sitting on top of the world. The next big investment we made—at that time the mechanical cotton picker had come of age and Perry Bowman had one, as

did Elmer; I think Elmer had two of them. I would hire Perry Bowman to pick my cotton. The only problem was, he would pick his first and because we didn't defoliate, we'd have to wait till the frost, which is usually the end of October, to get the leaves off before we could pick the cotton.

By the time we'd get done with his, it was getting into December and then it was a race against the weather. Cold. There's no cab on those things. I worked for Perry on his cotton picker, picking his cotton, and then moved over and started picking mine. You'd have to stomp your feet just to keep warm.

Clark County Wholesale in Las Vegas was a feed store, western store, parts house, automotive parts house, and they had the International Harvester agency. International Harvester perfected the automatic cotton picker first. John Deere came along later, but a one-row picker cost us $9,600. I was able to borrow the money by then to do that. Man, now we're really in hog heaven—$9,600 for one piece of machinery.

RM: More than you had bought all that other equipment for, yes.

TH: Today you get a fancy pickup for $45,000. [Laughter] So the vision was working into a very large farming operation, which had no chance in Mesquite.

RM: What were the first crops you put in here?

TH: We moved out here in July and that fall I put in 40 acres of alfalfa. And I prepared ground to plant the next spring, in April, 100 acres of cotton.

RM: What were you doing with the alfalfa?

TH: We were baling it and selling it where we could and we trucked a lot of it back to Mesquite to the dairy. I use the story, and there's some truth to it, that the reason I moved away from Mesquite was because those cows have to be milked Christmas morning, New Year's Eve, after basketball practice, before you go to school in the morning, every day. I

vowed I'd never milk another cow in my life and I've stuck with that.

RM: I think dairying is one of the toughest jobs in the world. You never get a break.

TH: That's right.

RM: Now, you had never grown cotton, so what were you thinking and what were the challenges that you faced?

TH: That summer I spent a lot of time talking and looking at my neighbors' crops and seeing how they planted, how they cultivated, and how they irrigated and different things. We used open ditches with siphon tubes to irrigate down the rows of cotton. The ground out here was fairly uniform. In order to make siphon tubes work you had to fill a ditch higher than the ground outside so that the siphon tube would pull the water over the bank into the furrow. The way we made it level was we bought a little hand level, a Sears Roebuck hand level on a tripod, and we would level those ditches. The low spots you'd go uphill, the high spots you'd go downhill. It looked like a snake when we got done, but that allowed us to fill that ditch and irrigate with it. It was primitive but it worked good.

RM: Was it hard to grow cotton initially?

TH: No. The old Kellogg farm had had at least one crop of wheat on some of it back when Lois Kellogg still owned it and it had grown back up to tumbleweeds so it had been irrigated some. The secret is this desert soil out here is salty, alkali, and you need to irrigate it to dissolve that salt and push it down into the ground below the root zone. You have really good soil but when you start, it isn't good soil. So the cotton crop didn't do well, but I got lucky. I made a bale to the acre, which was good, my first year and that got us going. The price was pretty good as compared to our costs. Then the next year I grew 120 acres of cotton and produced less than I did on the 100 acres so I got taught a few things—just take care of the better ground for a few years.

Anyway, that's how I got started. The neighbors hadn't had a lot of experience either, but it's amazing how much information you can get from different sources.

RM: People were sharing information, weren't they?

TH: Back then everybody was pleased if somebody would do well.

RM: Did you know Leonard Rosen of Preferred Equities at all?

TH: I met Leonard a time or two. They were out here mostly for business reasons and I didn't travel in those circles. But I got to know Jack Soules—I think his title was President of Preferred Equities—very well. Jack was a very, very capable person. He was one of the shrewdest, smartest guys, but yet I never got the impression that he'd take advantage of you. He knew a hell of a lot more than I did about a lot of things but I got the impression he just wouldn't use that. I had a lot of respect for him. He died the same year that Bob Ruud died from a heart attack, 1983.

Bill Beko was Nye County District Attorney. He had been a state assemblyperson from Nye County and he moved back to his hometown, Tonopah, and practiced law and became the district attorney. Bill Beko had the ability to have been a multimillionaire if he'd moved to Las Vegas. He was smart. He was a big guy, he was an imposing presence, as shrewd as could be. He just had an affinity for his hometown.

When he was district attorney, the county commissioners on what was then a three-person county commissioner board were sometimes very ordinary people, like a bartender or a worker at the Gabbs minerals plant. They did not have broad exposure to things and a lot of times Bill Beko was asked for advice. Then everybody accused him of running Nye County: "Old Bill Beko, he runs Nye County." He didn't intend to do that. He got sucked into a vacuum.

Anyway, I was going to suggest that I thought at one time I'd like to hear a debate

between Jack Soules and Bill Beko about the pluses and minuses of Preferred Equities. I'll bet that would've been a hell of a debate.

RM: I'm sure. What would have been some of the pros and cons?

TH: Well, some of the negative part was that when they moved in here, they promoted a city of 100,000 or 250,000 and gave everybody the impression this was going to happen pretty soon. I think some of their arrangements went seven years and some may have been nine years before they actually had to extend water and sewer and streets to certain areas. So they built the core area and got started but it didn't move very fast; people didn't move in.

While I was in the legislature, the Nevada Land Sales Act was passed. A lot of that was not necessarily aimed at Calvada, because by then we had a lot of other individual guys out here who were pretty loose with their promises. The Nevada Land Sales Act says that if you draw up a prospectus and a property report you can put anything you want to in it, but you'd better deliver. And they sometimes would require a bond and so on. So that stopped a whole lot of the less-than-ethical sales practices.

For instance, not long after I'd gotten my broker's license I had a buyer out from Las Vegas looking at a five-acre parcel. I thought it was a pretty good one—it was kind of in the middle of town and so on. I saw him about a week later and I said, "Did you decide to buy something in Pahrump?"

He said, "Well, yes I did. I bought five acres out on the end of Charleston Park Boulevard."

I said, "That's way out there. Those improvements are going to take a long time. Why did you do that?"

He said, "There's a helicopter factory going in out there." [Laughter] That was 40

years ago.

RM: If Preferred Equities hadn't have been in Pahrump, what would have happened?

TH: It would have been a lot slower developing.

RM: So they were an impetus for the development?

TH: They were a catalyst. Especially when they built their cocktail lounge, steakhouse, little grocery store, and things like that. Those were firsts out here. There are still thousands of lots out there unoccupied. Calvada knew how to sell land. They would solicit buyers from across the country, bring them to Las Vegas, take them out to see a show at one of the hotels, and then the next morning put them on one of their van trucks and drive them out here. They would show them a piece of land, give them a colored brochure and so on, then take them in and sell them that piece of land. They had a captive audience and sometimes people felt like if they wanted to get back to Las Vegas they probably ought to buy a piece of land. [Laughter]

When there were five-acre parcels selling for $10,000, they had quarter-acre lots selling for $30,000. People from the outside didn't know that there was $10,000 land available anywhere in the world. And Preferred Equities were big enough to survive the threats of some lawsuits or people getting their money back. But they wrote the book on land sales and they exposed a lot of people . . . in fact, a lot of people who are living here today, I find originally came in on either a Calvada presentation and bought a piece of land from them and are living on it now or they didn't like the location so they bought a piece of land somewhere else. So it was an accelerator.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Since we talked years ago, what would have been some of the things that have happened that catalyzed the development in the valley?

TH: I guess the biggest thing in the late ’90s and into 2000 was the Las Vegas economy; it was booming—new hotels, housing. We were only an hour away. Land prices were less expensive, home prices were less expensive. We became a bedroom community for Las Vegas because of people wanting to live and raise their family out here and drive to work.

The other thing is we attracted more and more retired people. I must say that during this recession, we’re kind of fortunate to have the retired people because they have a steady income that wasn’t affected by the recession. That’s been different from some of the trades people who, when this hit and jobs just disappeared, were in a world of hurt.

As there were more houses built and more people moving out here . . . I’m trying to determine when the population boom really occurred. It was in the ’90s. It was really booming in 2000. Of course, it crashed in 2006.

I mentioned the fact that we sold out Cottonwoods. And then we built the Artesia subdivision—that was the south ranch, the old Kellogg Ranch. In fact, two of the old grain bins still stand down there. The Cottonwoods was part of Kellogg’s also. We were out of cotton and we grew alfalfa and made hay cubes. A hay cube is about an inch-square pellet-type thing, very heavily compressed. You could handle it by machines, by conveyors or end loaders. It was compressed very dense so you could put a lot of weight in a shipping container. We sold those to Japan for a number of years, probably ten years, and did well.

Then a number of things happened where our water got a lot more expensive from power costs and so on so we decided that we were kind of going out of the farming business. By then it appeared that we could sell residential lots so we went in and created 873 lots, Artesia, on the old Kellogg south ranch. They're about a third-acre; the lots are 100 feet wide and 150 feet deep. We had to move the active sewer plant down to the west end and build a bigger one. Then we decided that water rights were too valuable to give up two acre feet for every lot created so we formed a water company and utility company and we serve water and sewer in Artesia.

From Cottonwoods we just flopped the money over into Artesia. We were kind of fortunate because we got in on the leading edge of the development. And there's a total of five phases in Artesia and we had four of them sold before this recession hit. Just to show you how much of a frenzy there was at one time, we developed it in phases. Phase I was kind of slow selling. There were probably 170, 180 lots in Phase I.

We went on to Phase II and it picked up a little bit, but in Phase II there were probably 200 or more lots. We got Phase II sold out and before we could get all of our approvals and the water, sewer, streets and electric and phone in, we had people wanting to buy lots in Phase III—they wanted us to hold lots for them in Phase III. We got so many requests that we said, "Here's what we're going to do; we're going to hold a lottery." Phase III was small; it was only 115 lots. We wrote everyone and said, "If you want to send us $1,000 by a certain date, we're going to hold a drawing, a lottery. We'll put your name in there and if you can, be here," which most of them were. We put up a big tent in the back yard at the sales office and we conducted a lottery.

There were a lot of people—we had about 215 requests for those 115 lots. In about three hours we were all done and we had 115 lots sold. Then we went into Phase

IV. There was one funny story that happened at that lottery. We were selling those lots for about $40,000, $42,000 per lot. We found out through a buyer that one of the guys who had drawn a lot went out on the street and sold it to someone for $80,000.

RM: Here in Pahrump?

TH: Same time that we were doing the lottery.

RM: So demand was that strong?

TH: Demand was that strong so we raised the price on Phase IV and sold that out, too. But then the crash hit, so we've still got Phase 5.

RM: Were the other developers in Pahrump selling that well during this period or were you doing something right?

TH: We were doing something at the right time. Most of the other developers didn't have a project on board yet. Classic Homes, Celebrate Homes—on the north side there were some developers who bought pieces of ground in Mountain Falls to do their own community there. They got all the infrastructure in and had already built a model home or two and it crashed. We started Artesia in the year 2000.

RM: And that was the old Kellogg Ranch. What do you know about Lois Kellogg?

TH: Not much, except what I read in some of your volumes. I visited her little house down at Mound Springs; almost no sign of it is left. I'm told that that's where she lived. I have some drawings that were made of her layout for that ranch.

RM: I've heard about drawings that were done by Frank Lloyd Wright?

TH: Junior. I had those drawings. I found them in the building down there when I first came out, stuck in the wall. I gave them to a cousin of mine who was a new attorney in Salt Lake City, Utah, who was going to verify them, that it was Frank Lloyd and so on.

I didn't get them back and I let it go for a year or two and then he couldn't find

them. I could've killed him. Now, especially. But since she lived in Palm Springs . . . I've got some information on Frank Lloyd Wright Jr. since then. He was a good architect but always in the shadows of his dad. He was a neighbor and friend of Lois Kellogg's so he did this for her. Let me pull this. . . .

RM: You're showing me some maps and drawings and documents.

TH: Yes. These were given to me by a historian/researcher. I think there's a Frank Lloyd Wright library in Los Angeles. Here are some hard copies. Frank Lloyd Wright Jr. designed the original grain mill for Lois Kellogg. She had the building built and the machinery was inside the building, but she died before she ever assembled it and put it to use. In addition to that, this is a design for roadways and different things around the building, including fields. It's not a landscape plan, but almost like a landscape design. Apparently he was a friend of Lois Kellogg's when they lived in Palm Springs. He was a good architect, but always in his dad's shadow.

RM: You're showing me a preliminary general plan—Pahrump Valley, Nevada, for Lois Kellogg II, by Lloyd Wright, Architect.

TH: They were going to call this the LO Ranch.

RM: I guess she had money, didn't she?

TH: Bob, you probably know more of her story than I do.

RM: I doubt that.

TH: She had money. I think she was an heiress to Kellogg Telephone. You know the old hand crank phones and the switchboards? Kellogg was state of the industry back then.

RM: Is that right? Talking about other people who held land, did you know Roland Wiley?

TH: Yes, I did.

RM: Let's talk about him. He and I got to be pretty good friends.

TH: I didn't know him well. My first experience with Roland Wiley was one time when I was on the Manse Ranch shortly after I moved out here, maybe 1952 or '54. I was up visiting with Elmer Bowman and we were out in the yard visiting, and in drove a black Lincoln, a shiny black car. This was before roads, so to speak. And this guy, highly dressed, gets out of the car and introduces himself. He's Roland Wiley. He's running for governor and he'd appreciate our vote. We visited a little bit. I'd heard about the Wiley Ranch. We visited a while and he left.

Other than maybe a public affair very early on like a barbeque or something, I don't think I ever ran into him again. He appeared to be quite a flamboyant-type person and very self-confident. I don't remember who was running for governor back then or how it all came out, but he didn't win.

RM: No, he lost. He told me that people had asked him, "Well, why didn't you buy more land in Vegas?"

And he said, "I don't need this land you can't grow anything on. I bought my land in Pahrump where there's good land." If I remember right, he had something like 15,000 acres. What's your take on what's going to happen to that land, his Hidden Hills Ranch?

TH: That's a very good question. I think some of it's in California. It's still in the Pahrump water basin, but on the California side you're not controlled by the state as far as well permits so you can drill. You have to report those wells and make sure California Public Health Department knows about them and the construction and so on, but I'm not sure that that water couldn't be piped across into Nevada. It would be very difficult to get a well permit in Pahrump Valley anymore—they quit giving those out 40 years ago.

I think one of the things that's been kind of against development down there is

that the water is a lot deeper and the wells don't produce as well. There have been several propositions to develop various projects down there but none of them have happened. I'm told that there's a good chance today that a solar project will go in on the California side—Valley Electric has been looking into potential transmission lines to carry power away from a solar plant. That could be something—they use lots of acreage. But beyond that, I don't know.

As far as water out here, there's a lot of concern. Even today there are stories that Las Vegas Valley is going to come and take our water. Well, they can't take water. It's permitted, it's owned; you can't just take it. You have to buy it. That means buying everything in Pahrump Valley and there's not enough volume to do Las Vegas Valley any good anyway. Potentially it could support 150,000 to 200,000, but that's not the answer. It would be a very big project to pipe it over the hill, even if you could generate electricity going down the hill and so on.

Also, Hidden Hill lies at a lower elevation than most of Pahrump Valley so water that goes into that area is down gradient. There could be some lowering of the water table but I don't think it would be a serious thing. I don't know—there's land down there and it's a good location. I just think the lack of a good source of water, good producing wells, may be one deterrent. That's not to say that you couldn't drill a lot of wells, but it gets expensive.

RM: You said you wanted to talk a little bit more about Elmer Bowman.

TH: Elmer had farmed over in Logandale in the Moapa Valley area and he got a chance to buy the Manse Ranch, which was owned by Dr. Harold Cornell from San Diego. So he bought that—I think there were about 6,400 acres, or in that range—and moved out here with his family. He induced his two sons-in-law and a son, Perry, to

move here with him. As I said earlier, the sons-in-law were Lyle Christensen and Lynn "Digger" Anderson.

Elmer had quite a dynasty going here at one time because he had trucks that would truck his hay out to market; he could truck his cotton to Bakersfield for ginning purposes before we had a cotton gin. He even had a large-scale dairy here at one time. So he had things really going his way. I believe, without having firsthand knowledge, that probably the time came when Elmer was getting older and, like some of us, weary. I think it came time to split the ranch up among the sons and sons-in-law and the overall dynamic picture then kind of shrank into individual ownerships.

But he was a goer. Elmer's one of the primary reasons we have electricity in here, and telephones. And he obviously contributed to the roads—his ranch was a huge operation. It was probably the biggest in terms of income and sales of anything, even bigger than the Pahrump Ranch, because the Pahrump Ranch was not developed and farmed as intensely as the Manse Ranch was.

RM: He was a visionary to come here, wasn't he?

TH: I think his vision was somewhat along the lines that over in Logandale acreage is very limited so it's hard to expand. Out here you've got 6,400 acres. So yes, I think his vision was to build a huge operation, which he did.

I've got to tell a funny story. Elmer had a fairly prominent kind of a hooked nose. During the time he was in the dairy business he had Holstein bulls and those bulls were kept separate from the cows, you know, until the time was right. Those bulls had horns. He was doing something in a corral and a bull charged him and he got into a corner, but the horn caught him on the end of the nose and split it. Well, because of him screaming and because there were other people around, he got away. They had to redo his nose and

when he come out, hell, he had a good-looking nose. [Laughter] I'll never forget, I said, "Elmer, you look different."

RM: What kind of a person was he? How would you describe him? Was he quiet?

TH: He was fairly soft spoken. He didn't get very excited, but yet the strength of his personality came through. He wasn't flashy.

RM: Pretty down to earth?

TH: Pretty down to earth.

RM: You knew Walt Williams.

TH: Yes, I did. I could not understand why Walt would live in Las Vegas and farm out here but after a number of years I completely understood it. That gave Walt a courier service between Pahrump and Las Vegas. You didn't have UPS, you didn't have anybody to go get parts and bring them out here. He would leave here early enough in the day to go gather up what parts he needed around town. Next morning, he'd take off and get out here fairly early. That was quite a courier service; it was very important.

The other thing was, he said, "That gives me an hour or so each way to plan my next day." And that's important—thinking time. A lot of times, we get busy and the day's gone and we miss a lot of things that we could've done differently had we thought them out.

But Walt was a go-getter. Man, he had energy. He didn't stand still very long in any one place. He always liked a new car, a new Chevrolet, and he liked to drive the hell out of it fast. We depended on Walt. When we were first involved with cotton we had to hire people to weed the cotton. Fortunately we had mechanical cotton-pickers, because you could never have hired enough people to come out here and pick cotton. We did have the pickers, but we had to go through and what we called chop the cotton. Primarily you

are after weeds that you can't get right in the row with your cultivator. And if cotton is planted too thick, sometimes it wants to grow tall and lush rather than set cotton bolls, so you kind of block it out as you go and that's where the cotton chopping comes from.

Since Walt came from Pecos, Texas, he knew about the Bracero program; he knew about the Mexican workers. He would spearhead an effort every year for a number of years—"How many braceros do you need?" He'd line up the government papers and go down to the border and personally select them and get them transported here.

RM: He would personally select them?

TH: He would personally select those workers for the rest of us because we didn't know what we were doing. That worked out well. We had to house the workers, provide kitchen facilities, and make sure they had food supplies and that kind of stuff; they did their own cooking. We did that for a number of years. Earlier, I had hired a labor procurer from Las Vegas who would go around and pick up people and bring them out and take them home at night. You had to pay them every night, because a very small percentage were back the next day. It wasn't a workable situation because he was just picking them up off the street and you paid him a fee per head. And in the summertime out here, working up and down those cotton rows was pretty tough labor. Most people didn't do it that well.

But Walt knew his way around with the Bracero Program. That was really good. But then you get the exposés coming, saying those people are being exploited because they're not living in the living conditions that some writer thinks they ought to be. As a result, the government kind of pulled back on it and made it tougher and tougher. They would come out and inspect your facilities and if they'd just left it alone and let it happen . . . Those folks never caused any problems. Once in a while they'd ask you to haul them

to a bar on a weekend and they might have a few beers, but they were here to work. They were only here for a period of three weeks or a month and they accumulated all their money and took it back with them. Those folks back there needed it. They were good workers; never gave any problems.

RM: Somebody told me that one year they used geese. Did you ever use geese?

TH: I did on a field, as a tryout. They were marginally successful. Walt Williams used a lot of them. Geese were good for Johnson grass, which is one of the weeds that we had out here. He especially had it up on the Pahrump Ranch because it was an old ranch and it had been infested. Johnson grass grows very tall; it grows above the cotton and it's a thick, coarse grass. Geese love Johnson grass, so if you get them in there when it's very young, they'll pretty well clean it out. You've got to have a lot of geese, hundreds and hundreds of them. Then you have to have people that herd them and spend the night with them, protecting them from the coyotes and bobcats.

RM: Can you describe chopping cotton in a little more detail?

TH: If cotton is planted too thick and it doesn't quite get the sunshine it needs growing up it tends to want to overgrow, and if it grows too lush it doesn't produce as many blossoms and bolls. Now, you can control some of this by irrigation. If you put on lots of water it promotes growth so you kind of control your irrigation. What would be ideal would be to have one cotton plant about every six inches. Well, back in those days we couldn't plant that precisely. And since some would germinate and some wouldn't, we'd kind of over-plant and then go through and chop them out. You'd take your hoe and just chop as you went down the row. Of course, those plants and weeds would be quite small then so they weren't difficult to chop out.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Another story I'd like to verify with you is that Leon Hughes was the one who really demonstrated that cotton could grow here.

TH: He was. He came from the Central Valley and had some cotton experience over there. In fact his dad, at one time, had the Pahrump Ranch. Leon moved over here with his folks and his family. As I recall, he tried to grow a little cotton on the Pahrump Ranch, but it was a small block. In 1949, he made a deal with Elmer Bowman to grow a demonstration field of cotton. On the Pahrump Ranch, he was trying to plant it on new ground and the new ground was too salty and cotton is not real salt tolerant so it didn't do well. He came down to the Manse Ranch on an old alfalfa field and it just took off. That's what started the cotton industry here.

Leon was never able to really take advantage of all that because the family didn't have the Pahrump Ranch anymore—they lost that—and he was working around. He was a wealth of knowledge about cotton. I used to talk to him a lot. In fact, he worked for me for a while. He had a large family and mostly worked on the farms around and raised his kids. Some of them are still here, although now they're retirement age and they're moving back to Colorado. I think DeAnna Brown is the oldest.

RM: DeAnna's moving?

TH: Yes, that's home for her. They've got some other family around there. A fellow that worked for me, Ron Demos—he was our utility superintendent—was married to one of the Hughes' daughters. They moved a month or two ago; he retired. But Leon was quite a character. He was a very strong-minded person and he had his definite ideas about how things should work. Most of the time they were right.

RM: Who else are we leaving out that we might should talk about?

TH: The Brady brothers. They were here when I moved here and they were growing cotton. This was two bachelor brothers. I think they came from Southern California, or maybe the Central Valley. In any case, those were the guys that you always competed with. Because we did compete among the ranches for who could produce the most cotton per acre and those guys were usually No. 1. Once in a while I could top them and boy, I'd never let them forget it. But I used to say, two bachelor brothers on the ranch—they didn't go anywhere to speak of, they didn't have any distractions. They spent all their time growing cotton and the rest of us had wives and kids.

However, Calvada bought their farmland. They called it Calvada Meadows; I assume it's still Calvada Meadows. They were getting old enough to kind of retire so they moved away and built a house in Calvada, in Unit 1. Glenn Brady died—I'm not sure what he died from—not long after they sold the ranch. And then Wes Brady, the shy one, got married and he and his wife lived there for quite a little while until he died three or four years ago. They were extremely good farmers. They could tell you a lot about it and they would. They had a good piece of ground and they intensely farmed it.

RM: Was Ted Blosser here when you got here?

TH: No, Ted came about 1954. Ted's another character and one of his favorite sayings used to be, "You know, they can send a man to the moon and bring him back and we can't even get electricity out here." [Laughter] His wife, Marie, was a schoolteacher. She taught the lower grades and was an extremely genteel-type person. Ted was verbose a lot of the time. We became good friends.

There weren't that many of us. When we'd have a little barbeque not everybody could come, but if you had 50 or 60 people you had most of them. I need to check this

out, but I think there are two of the Jim girls still living here now.

RM: Yes, Clarabelle and Cynthia.

TH: I think Cynthia married Charles Lynch and he died a few years ago. They used to spend the summers up in that little green spot at the foot of the mountain and the winters down here.

RM: Speaking of the Jims, what was the role of the Indians when you came? What part did they play in the community?

TH: Most of the men folk worked around on the ranches and they had their summer encampments. They were a good part of the valley. Labor was very difficult and if you could hire those guys they would work pretty good. It was a resource that you wanted to use because back in those days you might hire somebody to come out here and now what the hell do you do with them? There's no housing so you're going to have to furnish something. And if you didn't furnish something reasonable, it was tough to keep an employee.

The Indians were part of the community, part of the social life. Any time we had an event, most of them would attend. I don't know how many are left; not many. There never was a reservation as such out here and a lot of the younger people moved away, especially into Las Vegas.

RM: Was it the Sharps who had a homestead? I heard that Elmer Bowman was very helpful in helping them get it.

TH: The Sharp family was camped on the east side of Highway 160 then. They had an encampment, their houses, right about where the road goes up to the fire station and Carpenter Canyon. I think Elmer knew that if he ever tried to sell the farm, he could never move them because they'd lived there so long.

So he made a deal with Louie Sharp and his wife to go down on Indian Road (named after the Sharps, incidentally) in that area, on Turner Boulevard, and he helped him apply for a 160-acre homestead, and they moved down there. This gave Louie a chance to become a capitalist. Elmer helped him develop a domestic well. Louie never did prove up on the homestead. Now this goes back to the '50s, and they were there forever and the homestead was on file and they paid county taxes on the land. Well, Louie died and the family still continued to live there. All of a sudden, the BLM sent them a notice that they were trespassing.

That hit the newspapers and the TV stations—BLM forcing this poor Indian family off their land that they had lived on and paid taxes on for 50 years. In other words, it hit the fan. And the Las Vegas BLM office decided that the most prudent thing they could do was just give them that property and forget it.

RM: And now that land's worth a lot of money, right?

TH: Well, the Hafen family bought that land in 2006 at the height of the land boom. Paid a lot of money for it. There were seven Sharp kids remaining and we were able to work it to pay it off. It hadn't been probated yet. We helped with getting the probate through so that all the kids got an equal share.

RM: I interviewed them and they're living in a nice house in Pahrump, partly thanks to Elmer Bowman and you.

TH: Elmer was the one who helped them move and drilled the well for them and got them set up.

RM: But they never did bring it to closure?

TH: No, he just never got around to it.

RM: Sharp was a smart person.

TH: Yes, but he wasn't educated to deal with the federal government so he never did close it. But they paid taxes all these years on the 160 acres.

RM: It's interesting that the BLM did that.

TH: Well, they decided that was the best thing they could do.

RM: What is your take on the development of prostitution in Pahrump? There wasn't a brothel here when you first came, was there?

TH: No, Walter Plankinton was the one who came in and wanted to develop the first brothel.

RM: When was that?

TH: Probably in the '70s. He opened up a place right down here, about where Gil's Way is. You know where the K-7 Pizza is? Back in there, there was a residence that he bought and opened as a brothel.

RM: And he would have had to have had county approval.

TH: It wasn't that—the No. 1 ordinance in the town of Pahrump prohibits brothels inside the town boundaries. He knew that. He just thought that he could get by with it. What happened is the town boundary line was down on the end of Homestead Road. The boundaries for the town of Pahrump enclosed all the private land up to the cattle guard; in the north end of Pahrump it didn't go up in the Johnnie area.

Well, there was a Desert Land Entry developed just outside the town boundary in south Pahrump after the boundaries were formed. Nobody paid any attention. They farmed it and then it was put up for sale and a guy by the name of Bill Hernstad, who was also in the state senate, who owned Channel 5 at the time, bought it, maybe for development.

He turned around and sold it to the guy who started Sheri's brothel down here. It's

two pieces, 300 acres, and they're owned by the two brothels and they won't sell it to any other brothels. That's what's driving Joe Richards nuts because he can't open a brothel here. If you'll recall, he tried four years ago to change the ordinance so brothels would be allowed inside the town and just about got it in, except for a huge turnout in opposition. Even though I think three of the town board members were committed, they looked like deer in the headlight of a car with all those people. A presentation was made about all the reasons we didn't need it and the presenter asked people to please stand up if they felt the same way that he did. Well, that whole room stood up. Three of the town board members voted no and it failed three to two.

RM: Oh, my gosh. Now, I wonder if you could talk about where you see Pahrump going, beyond this current recession. And in general, what's going to happen to Las Vegas? Because Pahrump partly follows Vegas.

TH: We're definitely tied to the economy of Las Vegas and southern Nevada. I really think that Pahrump is going to keep expanding in two ways. One is, I think we need to promote the retirement community aspect. Those people usually have a little money and they like to play bingo and they eat out quite a bit. The other thing is I think we'll still continue to be a bedroom community for people who work in Las Vegas—almost everything between Las Vegas and Pahrump is federally owned land. And as we grow, of course, that creates local jobs. I don't see anything big coming in here that's going to be a big catalyst.

After this recession I think our economy is going to grow and there are some signs of it doing that right now. In talking to some of the restaurant people, their business is up from a year or so, so that's a good sign. It seems like people probably are spending a little more money, they're a little freer now. They're not as scared as they were of the

economy. Or it's gone on long enough that they've decided to go ahead and spend. But unless something big, which I just don't foresee, comes along, I think we're always going to be a retirement community and a bedroom community for Las Vegas.

RM; How big do you see Pahrump getting in the next 40 years?

TH: Well, 40 years is a ways off. I think we have water resources for 150,000 people, anyway, with the supply we have.

RM: Basically recharge?

TH: Mountain water that's being recharged into the valley. Do a little fast arithmetic: You've got 25,000 acre feet being recharged and for easy figuring take three families per acre foot, or 75,000 families multiplied by two people per family, and it equals 150,000 people. And the trend that's happening now with the subdivisions, Mountain Falls, Artesia, and others is that we're only using 300 gallons a day or less per residential unit. That's one-third of an acre foot.

That doesn't count the domestic wells out there, however. And there's a potential for more domestic wells. But my point is with conservation and with the more urban-type development that will come along, I believe that 150,000 people is not unrealistic.

RM: You came out here as a young man and there was basically nothing here. You see what Pahrump is now. Projecting down the road, what goes through your mind?

TH: At my age, I may have ten years; I'm 79, and maybe less than that will be quality living. I'm not going to see much of this recovery myself.

RM: You think it's a long term?

TH: It's a long-term recovery. I think it's more than five years. But I have my family involved. Today my grandson is the general manager of the utility company and other companies. He's a crackerjack. He went to UNLV and we happened to snag him after he

graduated. I have the two kids involved, Vicki and Greg. Vicki's a CPA. She's very sharp. She doesn't practice publicly, but she's a real resource. My son, Greg, is a lawyer; he's a real resource, too. Our companies are in real good hands.

I was gone about a month recently and everything went well; I got my feelings hurt. [RM laughs] I have enough to live on; I don't need a lot. My lifestyle doesn't require $3,000 a night rooms, for sure. So I'm okay and the kids are okay. They're in place as this continues on.

RM: But what a contrast between when you came here—dirt roads and no amenities of life at all—versus now.

TH: I think Wal-Mart and Home Depot symbolically are some of the biggest things that happened to us because that pulls people from Shoshone, Amargosa Valley, Beatty, and even Baker. And there's people that will come from Tonopah to shop even though it's a little longer to here than it is to Reno. That's been a huge draw. We've got it all. And not only that, with UPS and overnight FedEx and everything else, I don't have to leave the office.

RM: What's your take on the fence they put down the highway on 160?

TH: I'm told that that cost $1,400,000. I wrote a letter to the director of the Nevada Department of Transportation explaining to her that I thought that was the dumbest idea I had ever seen. And how in the world could they justify that instead of accumulating the money to four-lane the east side of the mountain and into Las Vegas? I ended up saying, "However, for people who like to speed, it would be a real boon because the Highway Patrol would have to travel four or five miles to cross over to try to catch them."

The letter I got back said, "Well, it's a safety thing. It's to prevent head-on collisions. That will prevent a car from one side going into the other." It might, but it's

going to tear the hell out of that one car and it may be just as deadly as if you had a head-on. And the maintenance cost for that highway is going to increase tremendously because instead of just running up and down with a grader blading the weeds, now they've got a fence to maintain and two sides of the fence to maintain.

RM: I've never seen that kind of a thing in a rural area like this.

TH: They've got that around Carson City with the new freeway. I'm told that there are areas in Utah that have it.

RM: It gives me claustrophobia.

TH: Gary Hollis made a statement in the newspapers that he thought it was about as far out as anything they could have done and I agree with him.

RM: What do they do about emergency vehicles?

TH: Well, this letter said that they consulted the Highway Patrol and they helped provide the crossings. They're about five, six miles apart.

RM: Tim, thanks so much for talking with me and helping me catch up on things.

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