An Interview with JOYCE HARTMAN

An Oral History produced by
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Esmeralda County History Project
Esmeralda County, Nevada
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PREFACE

The Esmeralda County History Project (ECHP) 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.

The Esmeralda County Board of Commissioners initiated the ECHP in 1993 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Esmeralda County communities that may be impacted by the construction of a high-level nuclear waste repository located at Yucca Mountain, adjoining the Nevada Test Site in Nye County. Though the repository has yet to be built, the ten oral histories in this group of interviews were paid for by county monies received in connection with the Yucca Mountain effort, which is now in hiatus.

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 ECHPôs 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 ECHP 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 ECHP 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 Esmeralda County History Project (ECHP). It was an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to obtain oral histories from participating individuals. I was welcomed into many homes and was allowed to share in the recollection of local history. I thank the residents throughout Esmeralda County and Nevadað too numerous to mention by nameð who provided assistance and information. They helped make the successful completion of this project possible.

Appreciation goes to the Esmeralda County Commissioners who initiated the project in 1993: Chairman Wade Barton, Virginia Ridgway, and Joyce Hartman. Appreciation also goes to current Chairman Nancy J. Boland, William C. Kirby, and Dominick Pappalardo, who initiated the current project in 2012, and to Ralph M. Keyes, who became a commissioner in 2013. Ed Mueller, Director, Esmeralda County Repository Oversight Program, gave enthusiastic support and advocacy for this effort. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Muellerôs office, provided funds for this round of interviews. Thanks are extended to Commissioners Boland, Kirby, Pappalardo, Keyes, and Mr. Mueller for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board as we worked out methodological problems. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Esmeralda County commissioners and Mr. Mueller.

Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Jean Charney and Robert B. Clark transcribed a number of interviews, as did the staff of Pioneer Transcription Services in Penn Valley, California. Julie Lancaster and Suzy McCoy provided project coordination. Editing was

done by Jean Charney and Darlene Morse. Proofreading and indexing were provided at various times by Darlene Morse and Marilyn Anderson. Joni Eastley proofed all the manuscripts and often double-checked, as accurately as possible, the spelling of peopleôs names and the names of their children and other relatives. Jeanne Sharp Howerton provided digital services and consultation. Eva La Rue and Angela Haag of the Central Nevada Museum and Suzy McCoy served as consultants throughout the project; their participation was essential. Much-deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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ð Robert D. McCracken
2013

INTRODUCTION

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

Yet, even in the 2010s, the spirit of the American frontier can still be found in Esmeralda County, Nevada, in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents.

Esmeralda County was established by an act of the Territorial Legislature of Nevada on November 23, 1861. The first boom camp in the county, Aurora, named after the goddess of dawn of Roman mythology, mushroomed into existence in the early 1860s with a population of at least 5000. The name Esmeralda, Spanish for "emerald," was provided by a member of the party that made the initial discovery of gold at Aurora; the individual probably had some beauty in mindð the term was then a common name for girls with green eyes. Another version is that the name referred to the Gypsy dancer Esmeralda in Victor Hugoôs novel, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame.* Discoveries at Aurora were followed by others at Columbus (1864), Red Mountain/Silver Peak (1864), Gold Mountain (1866), Palmetto (1866), Montezuma (1867), Oneota (1870), Sylvania (1870), and Lida Valley (1871). Goldfield, which sprang to life in 1902, was the last great mining camp of the American West, and one of the greatest gold camps in the history of the world. Along with Tonopah (1900) and Rhyolite (1904), its two sister boomtowns, and several score of smaller, shorter-lived daughter camps located on the central Nevada desert, Goldfield was the last magnificent flowering of the American frontier.

Between 1903 and 1942, Goldfield produced approximately 7.7 million tons of ore containing more than 4.1 million ounces of gold and over 1.4 million ounces of silver, worth $90 million, mostly when gold was priced at $20 per ounce. Goldfieldôs glory days were from about 1904 until World War I. After approximately 1918, mine production declined to a fraction of what it had been, yet the town lived on. It survived a terrible flash flood in 1913 and a catastrophic fire in 1923 that wiped out a substantial proportion of the townð at least 33 square blocks, by some old-timersô estimates. Another fire in 1924 nearly applied the coup de grâce to the grand lady, but still she persevered.

Much has been written concerning Goldfieldôs prosperous years, but relatively less material is available on the town and its people from the decades following the end of World War I. Much of the history of Esmeralda County is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Esmeralda Countyôs close ties to the land and our nationôs frontier past, and the scarcity of written sources on local history after 1920, the Esmeralda County commissioners initiated the Esmeralda County History Project (ECHP) in 1993. The ECHP is an effort to systematically collect and preserve the history of Esmeralda County. The centerpiece of the ECHP is a 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 Esmeralda County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada.

The interviews conducted between 1993 and 1994 vary in length and detail, but together they form an unprecedented composite of life in Esmeralda County after 1920.

These interviews can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is uniqueð some are large, others are smallð yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a view of county history that reveals the flow of life and events for a part of Nevadaôs past that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

A second set of interviews was initiated in 2011. The goal here was the same as for the interviews collected 20 years earlierð provide a view of Esmeralda County history unavailable elsewhere through interviews with county residents. However, in this series interviews were also conducted with a second goal in mind. Over 97 percent of the land in Esmeralda County is controlled and managed by the federal governmentð more than any other county in Nevada; indeed, in any state outside Alaskað and of the private land approximately 50 percent consists of patented mining claims, leaving little opportunity for community expansion on private land. A large percentage of Esmeralda County residents consequently believe the county is in large measure governed by the federal government as opposed to elected state of Nevada, county, and local officials. Many feel the strong presence of the federal government has the effect of constricting economic opportunity and personal freedom for local residents in many areas of life and would like to see changes made in that arrangement with the transfer of more control to local and state government. Those issues formed part of the focus of these oral histories.

ð RDM
2013

This is Robert McCracken talking to Joyce Hartman at her home on her ranch in Fish Lake Valley, Nevada, June 5, 2012.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Joyce, what is your name on your birth certificate and your married name?

JH: Itôs Frances Joyce Osborne Hartman.

RM: And when and where were you born?

JH: I was born in Whittier, California, on July 26, 1942.

RM: Where did you grow up?

JH: I grew up in Brea, California.

RM: Thatôs the La Brea tar pits?

JH: No. Brea is close to Fullerton and Anaheim. Then my family moved to Victorville, California, when I was starting third grade. I lived there until we moved to Fish Lake Valley. We moved here in 1973. We bought our ranch in 1971, and got some alfalfa planted before we moved up in õ73.

RM: Was this your parents that moved here?

JH: No. I married Bill Hartman.

RM: Okay. And just quickly, what is his background?

JH: Farming, alfalfa.

RM: Farming in Southern California?

JH: In Apple Valley. In fact, he was born in Apple Valley.

RM: Where Roy Rogers was, right?

JH: Yes, when there was just nothing there. They rode their horses to school, kind of like a one-room schoolhouse in Apple Valley. The kids all tied their horses to the hitching post. We go back every five years for class reunions and see everybody. When I

graduated from high school in Victorville, I think there were 400 in my graduating class. But they came from the entire high desert: Wightwood, Apple Valley, Lucerne Valley, Oro Grande, all of these surrounding towns. Now, almost every one of those towns has their own high school. So it has just, like, exploded. And they probably give you a smog report now.

RM: What was your fatherôs name, his birthplace, and birth date?

JH: Henry Sanford Osborne was born in Arkansas, and his birthday was February 8, 1917.

RM: When did he come out to California?

JH: When he was a kid, so probably middle-school age. He graduated from Brea Olinda High School. They lived in Yorba Linda for a while, and then he ended up in Brea. But he was a tank manufacturer. Then he moved to Oro Grande, where we lived, five miles away from Victorville. He started a tank manufacturing business and sold tanks. In fact, he built the water storage tank in Beatty and in Searchlight, Nevada. They would just go on location and build them.

RM: Are those tanks still being used?

JH: I think so.

RM: It must be a treat for you to think about that. And what was your motherôs name?

JH: My motherôs name was Sally Vilarino. Her birth name was Cebelas. She was Italian.

RM: What was her background and where did she grow up?

JH: She was born in Inglewood. My grandfather was an Italian from Spain, and my grandmother came from Northern Italy when she was 18. They had 11 kids. And he was a chef for one of the big restaurants in that area.

RM: So your mother grew up in that area?

JH: Yes. She grew up in Inglewood. She remembers the big earthquake where they all had to go outside and stay outside for days.

RM: Was that what they called the Long Beach Earthquake?

JH: Probably. It would have to be in the ó30s. She said that was amazing. We had a few in the Victorville area, too.

RM: How old were you when you moved up to Fish Lake?

JH: I was 31.

RM: Was your husband already in ranching here, or did you come up here to start in ranching, or to work?

JH: We did custom farming in Apple Valley.

RM: Which is what?

JH: Custom farming is where you take your equipment and go in and put up somebodyôs hay, and they pay you so much to do it. His dad had, I think, about 80 acres in Apple Valley. He sold that to Apple Valley Ranchos because he wanted to retire, and then he helped build the Jess Ranch. We put their hay up. We put the collegeôs hay up and we were on a little 80-acre place where we put the hay up.

RM: Did you guys ever cross paths with Roy Rogers?

JH: Yes.

RM: You did? Tell me about it.

JH: I had a candy store when my kids were in high school in the shopping center. It was called Candy Caper. That was from ô82 through ô86. Thereôs no high school here, so we went back during the school year and then weôd come up here on weekends. They were out during the summer, and weôd all come back home. Roy Rogers would come in

and buy candy and he could be seen at the swap meet almost every weekend in Victorville. He loved it. And my oldest son worked for an opthamologistð they did the implants and transplants and all those procedures. Roy Rogers would come in and Fred would always be the one who interviewed him for his eye care. He really liked him; he was a nice guy.

RM: He was our hero when my brother and I were little kids. Then driving back and forth from Vegas to L.A., I discovered that Roy Rogers was in Apple Valley. I got to meet him two or three times and I just loved that. It was so disappointing when they tore the museum down.

JH: I know it. Wasnôt that awful? And sold everything.

RM: They sold it? They said they were going to build a museum in Branson.

JH: They did. Then they gave that up and sold all the last bits and pieces. If you drove from Vegas to Victorville, then you passed my dadôs hangar. You know where the two Stoddard Wells Road turnoffs are?

RM: No.

JH: Okay, youôre dropping down in Victorville on the freeway. If youôre on I-15, before you cross the river there are two Stoddard Wells Road turnoffs. On your right-hand side, there was a runway with a hangar and there was always a twin-engine airplane sitting out there. That was my dadôs.

RM: So he was a pilot.

JH: Forever. Besides being a tank manufacturer, he bought out Britain Aircraftôs Fuel Tank Division and he started making aircraft tanks. My youngest brother bought that part of the business when my dad was getting ready to retire.

RM: He must have been a very enterprising man. Now, how did you and your husband

focus on Fish Lake?

JH: Bill got out of the Army. He was stationed in France for a year and a half and we were over there.

RM: When was this?

JH: He was drafted towards the end of 1960, right after the Korean War. He lucked out there. I mean, he didn't get in any skirmishes. They drafted him and sent him to France. As a funny little story, in high school I chose French as my foreign language. My dad said, "No, you're not, I'm not signing this. I'm not going to approve it because we are surrounded by Spanish-speaking countries. You're going to take Spanish."

And I said, "No, I'm not. If I can't take French, I'm taking nothing then." There went my college prep course. So the first thing that happens is I live in France for a year and a half. And my dad said, "I'm sorry." [Laughter]

But anyway, we lived there a year and a half and we came home and somehow Bill was driving all around up here. I think he stopped down by the Cottontail Ranch. There was a store or something there. It seemed like the 1960s.

RM: Slim Riggs, maybe?

JH: I don't know. But he pulled in there and he said to some lady, "Is there any farming around this area?" and she sent him to Fish Lake Valley. So at one point, we flew in and looked at a ranch down here. We landed on the highway.

RM: Highway 6?

JH: It was Highway 264.

RM: Oh, this highway.

JH: This highway. And there was snow everywhere. They came out and took us down to look at the place. It wasn't as easy as it is now. We didn't buy that place but Bill's

brother bought the one where he is, just north by Arlemont. We bought this place from the Lewises.

RM: What year was it when you bought it?

JH: We bought it January of 1971.

RM: You moved up here then?

JH: Not until õ73. We sent somebody ahead to put in alfalfa. Bill would go back and forth in the winter and we would do what we could up here since it was nothing but sagebrush.

RM: There werenôt any big fields here then?

JH: No, there were just the major ranches. Interestingly enough, when we built our house here, you passed that house as you came in. I said, ñI donôt want to live close to the road.ò

Bill said, ñWhy?ò

ñWell, because, Iôm just sick of hearing traffic.ò We lived real close to the road in Apple Valley.

He said, ñYou donôt want to live down at the bottom of the field. The wind blows all the time. The kids will have to walk a mile to catch the bus. Your car will always be dirty. Joyce, look around. How many cars a day go by?ò

I started checking it out. Maybe three. Thatôs the way it was in those days. We had just a gas station and a bar and a little, teeny grocery store.

RM: Was that yours?

JH: No, they had that here. Do you know where ñBoonieòs is now?

RM: No.

JH: Thatôs across the street from the store. That used to be Ted and Ethel Grayôs

house. Just north of that, across the yard, was the store and bar, which burned down. The first time we pulled through here, we stopped to get gas. Ethel came out and I said, ñI need so many gallons of ethyl.ò

She said, ñListen, honey, Iôm the only Ethel here. Itôs regular or nothing.ò [Laughter]

I said, ñI really wanted regular all along. I donôt know whatôs wrong with me.ò So, we got whatever we needed. She was hilarious.

RM: How many people were living in what we would call Fish Lake at that time?

JH: Not very many, maybe 100, 150. When our oldest son graduated, there were three graduates from eighth grade.

RM: You had a school here in the valley?

JH: Yes. There was a kindergarten through eighth grade. There were three boys who graduated. They wrote to the governor and he flew in and spoke at their graduation. It was awesome.

RM: What governor was that? What year was it?

JH: It was in, letôs see, 1978ð Governor OôCallaghan. He handed out coins to the kids for graduation. Everybody loved him. He was in for quite a while and he has a radio station, doesnôt he, in Vegas?

RM: I donôt know.

JH: In our house, if I canôt remember what it is, Bill can. If he canôt, I can. We say it takes two brains to make one anymore. [Laughter]

RM: You were a ñCalifornia girlò in the classic age of the California girl. They were the envy of the nation; the world, maybe. Youôre down there and you make this big transition up here. What was that like for you?

JH: I can say I didn't like it. There's no fast food, no place to go. I used to worry when I had to go to Bishop to buy groceries because I knew it was 80 miles one way, and just the thought was enough to keep me awake half the night.

RM: When you go to Bishop, you don't go over the White Mountains, do you?

JH: We go this way, over Montgomery Pass– Highway 6.

RM: That's the better way. Do you go this way versus the other because it's shorter?

JH: Not really, because then you get to Big Pine, and you still have to go 14 miles back. If we're going to go south to Southern California, we go that way. But if I have to go to Bishop, it's kind of hard on my car. It's a lot of curves and braking on Westgard Pass. Now they've got hay trucks on it so it's even worse.

I went through one night about six or seven years ago. A carrot truck had rolled just past the little spring area. There were carrots everywhere. As I got down the road, here was a tractor. Somebody from some farm down the road had come and they were dragging the trailer out.

RM: They grow carrots here?

JH: They do off and on. They haven't now for a few years.

RM: Did you want to be back in California at first?

JH: Well, yes. I missed my mother and my sister and all my friends but I got acquainted with the Marteneys at Circle L, the Cord Ranch. They just took us under their wing. That first two, maybe three years, they were here. With all the events they would get going and with the school and so on, we were entertained. In Apple Valley when my kids were little, I wanted to donate my time but there were just too many people that wanted to do the same thing so I never did really get involved with anything. I made the attempt in the beginning but they had more than enough help.

So I moved up here and all I wanted to do was just mind my own business, be a mother and a wife, and all of a sudden, thereôs nobody to do it. I found myself getting involved in community activities because somebodyôs got to do it. Thatôs how Iôve evolved to whatôs going on.

RM: How far back does ranching in the valley date, as far as you know?

JH: I think at the turn of the century, the early 1900s. I know the Chiatovich family did some kind of farming up Indian Creek. That was in the late 1800s.

RM: Are they located north of your place?

JH: Up Indian Creek. You know where the scale is? Basically across from the scale, north in the valley. Thatôs about 10 miles. It was called the McNett Ranch, Upper McNett.

RM: Were they producing crops here for market in Tonopah and places like that?

JH: Maybe. Actually, they have a gathering right here every year on Labor Day weekendð they come from all over.

RM: Oh, former residents.

JH: Yes and they do kind of like an ñold-timersò thing.

RM: Were the farms and ranches originally homesteads?

JH: Yes.

RM: So the land in the valley was withdrawn as government land through homesteads and maybe other programs?

JH: Yes. Those programs were over by the time we came.

RM: But had the land you purchased already been withdrawn?

JH: Right. And the valley didnôt have electric power here until 1961 through ô63.

RM: Is the power with Valley Electric? Do they bring it up from the south?

JH: Yes. Actually we get it from Edison, and they trade because we service Death Valley.

RM: Yes, but itôs through Valley Electric.

JH: Right.

RM: But they already had power when you came in.

JH: Yes. Oh, that would have really been bad.

RM: California girl. [Laughter]

JH: Yes, an episode to get through. Of course, I grew to love it. Now I wouldnôt live any place else. Because weôre farmers we canôt go anyplace for the summer. We would take the kids out of school in the winter and head for Victorville. Billôs parents lived in Apple Valley and mine lived in Oro Grande. Weôd spend our Christmas vacations down there but it was always nice to come home.

RM: What do you like best about living in Fish Lake?

JH: Itôs quiet and the people are niceð everybody helps each other. You donôt really have to worry about your kids. The biggest worry I had when they were growing up was making sure they had a dog with them when they went fishing in case of rattlesnakes. We had a big black lab that killed rattlesnakes a couple of times.

RM: He would kill them?

JH: Oh, yes. They kill them.

RM: They donôt get bit?

JH: This dog got bit once up Indian Creek and he jumped in the water and just hung out in there for a while. Maybe it didnôt get him real goodð it got him on the back. After they fight them or kill them, theyôll shake them and the snake just flies to pieces. Then, after itôs over with, theyôll throw up and they wonôt eat or drink water for a couple of

days.

RM: Even if they haven't been bit?

JH: Right. I think they just have so much adrenaline. It's amazing. But there's no place for anybody to hide around here– there didn't used to be, anyway. You didn't have to worry about perverts carting off your kids.

RM: And you think there were about 100 people when you got here?

JH: Maybe 100 to 150. I would serve on the voting board every once in a while when we would have an election. I think we'd have 150 to 200 people registered to vote here. A lot of them lived someplace else.

RM: But this is their voting place.

JH: Right. They had property here, but they didn't live here. I know we have absentee ballots. We didn't have that many come and vote, but that's how many were registered to vote.

RM: What's the population now?

JH: I've heard 400 or 500 people but I don't know that that's true.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: People have told me that in Esmeralda County there are basically three communities: Fish Lake Valley, Silver Peak, and Goldfield. They say theyôre three different cultures with different values.

JH: Totally different.

RM: Do you want to talk about that?

JH: Out here people are hardworking farmers and thereôs not a lot going on because no matter what direction you go, itôs going to be a minimum of 75 miles. Thereôs not a lot of traffic that comes through. We get some, but itôs pretty peaceful.

RM: Some people have suggested that if they found a big gold deposit and wanted to create an open pit in the valley, it wouldnôt fly here.

JH: Yes, people would want to keep it small and keep it quiet.

RM: They donôt want a big open pit or a big mine or some intrusive thing like that on the land. You would agree with that?

JH: I donôt know. If itôs up in the mountainsð as long as it wasnôt in my yard.

RM: They found gold under Highway 95 outside of Goldfield and Goldfield is planning to move the road. Somebody told me, ñIf that happened in Fish Lake Valley, it would be too bad.ò

JH: Theyôd have to figure out how to mine it from five miles away. If they can drill for oil, maybe they can figure a way to suck it out. [Laughter] As long as nobody had to look at it. I know that everybody was complaining about more people at Chiatovich Creek.

RM: Which comes off of the White Mountains?

JH: Yes, itôs up Chiatovich Creek. If you go north where the Arlemont Ranch is, where that maintenance station is, right up that creek on both sides. They were all having a fit about that. I think itôs great, myself.

RM: What were they having a fit about?

JH: Because it was bringing more people in. I thought, ñWell, you know, how did you get here? Maybe we should have kept you out.ò Iôm for progress.

RM: What do they call itð the last one in or something? Close the door. That is a phenomenon here?

JH: Yes. How about, justice for them and mercy for me or something like that? I donôt know.

RM: What kinds of environmental-type things, land issues, did you first encounter here? When did you first become aware that unlike the land around Victorville, which is private, you come up here and most of the land is federally controlled. What was your take on that when you first got here?

JH: I didnôt really have a take because a lot of the private land that was here wasnôt being farmed.

RM: Why?

JH: It just wasnôt. Like the place that we boughtð it was 160 acres. Well, actually, it was 320. It went from across the road and then all the way down in a string of 40-acre pieces. Later on we bought the piece that weôre on right now and filled it in so we had a square. None of it was farmed. Itôs just people who invested or bought land and never really intended to do anything with it. They just had it.

RM: Had your land ever been farmed?

JH: Maybe 40 or 50 acres of it at one time. We had to apply for the water rights and

prove up on them and then transfer water rights onto this piece because there weren't any water rights by the time we got this. That was the early '80s.

RM: What is the water situation in Fish Lake?

JH: It's a closed basin.

RM: The water mainly comes off the White Mountains, doesn't it?

JH: Right. They monitor it to see how much the table drops and if it ever gets to the point where it wouldn't recharge. Where we are, it's dropped very little in 40 years, which is amazing compared to a lot of other areas. It's dropped tremendously in California down by Oasis, the 160 acres that we had there. That water comes off of Lida.

RM: Is the water situation here a long-term threat to the agricultural community that you know of?

JH: I don't think so because it recharges. It's kind of like a green zone. You're not depleting the basin.

RM: What if I somehow acquired some of this vacant land? Could I get water for it?

JH: No.

RM: The water has all been allocated?

JH: That's right. The way I understand it, if they start having problems, the last guy to come in gets kicked out.

RM: Who controls all that?

JH: The water resources in Carson City.

RM: The state of Nevada controls it?

JH: Right.

RM: Do you have any thoughts on them?

JH: No. We haven't had any problems. We follow the rules. I have a little four-acre

field down here and we were trying some alternate crops and have a two-span pivot. They were aware of it and we got permission. Actually, we were in the process of taking some of the water rights where the little vineyard is as youôre coming up here. We were going to transfer the four acres of water rights down here and it got to be kind of a hassle so we decided to leave them where they are for now. The last time I talked to them, the state doesnôt know if theyôre going to require water rights for vineyards because they take so little water.

RM: They donôt take much water?

JH: I am amazed. A half-hour of watering on a drip system twice a weekð thatôs it. You canôt give them too much water, or they rot.

RM: So it has a low impact on the water situation. Maybe thereôs a future in vineyards here.

JH: Now, this is the fourth year. We get to pick the fruit this year. Weôve got eight varieties of wine grapes, and weôll see.

RM: So maybe down the road, we see a wine industry here?

JH: We could.

RM: The weather is okay?

JH: After the last three years of the kind of weather weôve had, and after the dirt storm and the heat yesterday, if we have even a grape left, thatôs good. [Laughter] Nothing short of a miracle so stay tuned. The test plot was to see what varieties did the best.

RM: Are you the only ones testing grapes or are there others?

JH: Thereôs another family down south of us in the valley. Theyôve had about 400 vines for a few years and so far theyôve done really well. I think they had trouble this yearð somehow they lost most of their vines. But I think it will grow back up from the

rootstock. We'll see. They've got different soil and different conditions where they are.

RM: Is there a lot of variability in the soil in the valley?

JH: Amazingly so.

RM: Some of it is really good for growing?

JH: This is real sandy up here. Then the temperature will drop five degrees just driving down to the bottom of the field. It will freeze down there. It's crazy. It's real tight ground down there. It's kind of like clay.

This morning somebody was checking the irrigation lines down there and called me on their cell phone and said, "Can you send Bill down and have him pull me out? I got stuck." He was chasing the horses which got in last night. I don't know how they got in.

RM: Wild horses?

JH: Yes. They come in and tear everything up.

RM: Let's talk about wild horses. Is that a problem? That's an important issue.

JH: We never had a problem until all these people started moving in on five-acre parcels.

RM: Here in the valley?

JH: Yes, probably in the early '80s. There were people that had 100 acres, 160 acres probably they homesteaded. They couldn't get water rights on them or the ground was so bad, they couldn't farm or get a crop. They subdivided them into five-acre parcels and sold them to people, and the people who bought them would feel sorry for the horses. They'd put feed and water out for them. In the early years when we lived here we didn't have that problem; those horses stayed up there where they needed to stayRM: Which is where?

JH: Up in the mountains and the foothills. We never saw a horse down here, ever. Then they all started getting run over. We've lived here since 1973 and never hit a horse, never hit a cow. About four years ago, Bill almost completely totaled the car out at Circle L Ranch. There were a bunch of horses. He hit one and said, "You can't believe how many I missed." They said if they had to change out the carpet, because it was packed with glass, they would have had to total the car. I mean, it was a wreck. The boys had to go down and put the horse out of its misery.

RM: Are other people hitting them, too?

JH: Yes. That was right after Thanksgiving. The following spring I was coming in at 2:00 in the morning with a pickup and trailer with two pallets of cement on the back, with one of the boys following me. I wasn't going over 45 miles an hour because I knew that they were out there. I made my way through so many horses, you can't believe. And here's one, half-grown, standing right in my lane, looking off towards the desert. I hit the brakes and I started to fishtail. So I just aimed away, and he took two steps this way and I hit him in the rump. He did $5,000 worth of damage to my truck. It didn't kill him. He was standing there shaking like a leaf. My son said, "What are you stopping for?"

He was behind me and I said, "I hit a horse."

He said, "You're kidding. Is it that horse that's standing off the side of the road over there?"

It tore the mirror off and wrecked the radiator and wiped out the fender. I made it home before I lost all the water in the radiator. Fred, our oldest son, works for Cal Trans in Bishop. He's got a house across the road. He hit a horse about five or six years ago.

RM: And that's just your family. Ultimately, the wild horses are a federal issue, aren't they?

JH: Yes. Itôs more than that. Youôre safer to go out after dark in Fallujah than you are here. [Laughter] Iôm not kidding. Every once in a while, Iôve had to call and rant and rave and say, ñIf you donôt get these horses out of here . . .ò

RM: Who do you call, the BLM?

JH: I first called the state. I think I called somebody in Tonopah. They referred me to somebody else. Bill hit that horse that night on a Friday. And on Sunday, one of the hay trucks hit two of them. Thereôs anybody hardly in this valley that hasnôt hit a horse. And that doesnôt count the near misses. I canôt tell you how many times Iôve literally locked it up and thought, ñOkay, this is it.ò

RM: Not to mention ruining your drive because youôre worried. You canôt drive and sit back.

JH: Yes. During the day you can at least see; at night you cannot see. A cow will hang out. They hardly move. One of the women that works for me was driving home and all these horses just ran across the road and right into the side of her van. Now, how dangerous is that? I mean, how do you miss something like that? No, this is out of control.

RM: As I understand it, there are two aspects to the problem. One, the federal government is protecting the horsesð are there more horses now than when you came to the valley?

JH: I think so. Now, let me tell you what I think. We were coming home from down south one night at 1:00 in the morning. We pulled off at Ridgecrest and went down the road a ways because thereôs a station and a little mini-mart that had the best price on diesel. Bill was talking to this guy that had a horse trailer packed with horses. He was BLM. Nothing was marked. The truck wasnôt marked. The trailer wasnôt marked and he

wasnôt in uniform that I recall.

RM: How do you know he was BLM?

JH: He told Bill. Bill said, ñWhat are you doing?ò

He said, ñOh, Iôm hauling some horses. You know. Iôm with BLM.ò

I said, ñYeah, heôs probably hauling them up here in the dead of night to drop them off.ò You canôt imagine how many mornings we wake up and thereôs another herd that weôve never seen before.

RM: So theyôre dumping them here?

JH: All I can tell you is that theyôre showing up from somewhere.

RM: Yes, and you kind of know the horses. I mean, thatôs the red one and the blaze and so on.

JH: Yes, and you know where they hang out; you have to protect yourself. Theyôll come in and round up approximately 80 and get them out of here and the next thing you know, here we go again. They start trickling back in.

RM: By themselves or is the BLM bringing them, or is somebody else bringing them in?

JH: Donôt ask me. I said to Bill, ñItôs just too bad that we canôt follow him to see where heôs going to dump those tonight.ò I had that opinion already and then we saw him with a pretty big horse trailer, packed.

RM: Almost in the dark of night.

JH: Oh, yes, in the dead of night. He certainly wasnôt going to drop them in Ridgecrest. Itôs probably where he picked them up because theyôve had a lot of trouble down there.

RM: And you said another aspect of the problem is the newcomers feeding them.

JH: Absolutely. They don't get it. They put water out for them and then they come down across the highway. Now we have to fence everything because of the cows.

RM: You mean to keep the cows out of your fields?

JH: Exactly. If they come in your field and they die, you pay because it's an open range.

RM: This is an open range?

JH: Yes. Basically if that cow gets in your field and you don't have a fence up, you owe the farmer or the rancher for the dead cow because the cow rules here. They have grazing rights.

RM: So there are ranchers that have grazing rights in the valley but they're not supposed to be grazing on private land, are they?

JH: No, but it's your responsibility to fence them out. Like instead of four wires, we'll put up five. Down at Oasis it's mostly desert and the cows are out at a certain time of the year. When you drop down out of Lida, you really have to start watching for cows.

RM: I didn't know that.

JH: We've had several ambulance runs where people have hit them over and over and over.

They're Black Angus and you can't see them on the highway. Part of the year they're up in the mountains before they can take them up there, provided the Forest Service allows them to go graze in the mountains. Jack Vogt from Lida . . .

RM: Is he still there?

JH: No, he's passed on. But they wanted him to put cows on the mountains six months of the year and be off the land for six months. Well, you can't do that. I mean, you're done right there– but they know that. They know that when they lay that rule

down.

RM: Thatôs part of their strategy.

JH: Sure. Youôve got an old cow that takes them from one waterhole to the next. To move them, you just turn off the water where they are and they toddle off to the next watering hole.

RM: Oh, thatôs how the rancher moves them.

JH: Theyôre on a pattern, yes.

RM: But he ultimately canôt control them, can he? I mean, hereôs what Ben Colvin told me. He was running the vast rangeð he had 1,200 or something, 900, or a pretty large number. They said, ñWhat we want you to do is take your cows on the northern third of the range and keep them there three months, transfer them to the middle third for three months, and then transfer them to the southern third for three months.ò

Ben says, ñWell, how am I going to do that? How am I going to manage cows over that vast area?ò

They said, ñWell, we want to give the range a chance to regenerate.ò He counted horses on his range the same number as his cows, and they werenôt doing a damn thing about them. So Ben doesnôt have any cows running on his range.

JH: Right. Because thereôs nothing left to eat after the horses get through with it.

RM: Yes, and besides, itôs too much to deal with, with the BLM and everything.

JH: Yes. Thatôs what they want.

RM: So you think itôs a strategy to get them off the land?

JH: I do. You can have your own opinion as to whatôs up or what their final goal is. But when I was commissioner, they were constantly trading out. They would give people land in Las Vegas, and they would trade them any deeded ground up in the mountains.

That was 20 years ago. They were actively trying to clear everybody out of these mountains so they could close it off and keep everybody out.

RM: Yes. Wilderness-type thing.

JH: Exactly. If a rancher, a farmer, wants to stay in business, heôs not going to destroy his grazing; otherwise, heôs out of business. Thereôs nothing for the cows to eat. The ranchers are not going to overgraze it. And the ranchers certainly know more about the business than these BLM guys that if they were doing their job, theyôd get the horses out of there.

RM: Well, now when you came into the valley, what was the horse situation?

JH: There werenôt any horses. The only time we ever saw the wild horses was when we went up in the Silver Peak area, up in the mountains.

RM: What do they call this range here?

JH: The Silvers, the Silver Peak Range.

RM: Okay. So there were horses up there but they didnôt come down?

JH: They werenôt coming down here. The only reason we fenced our property was to keep the cows out. Now, we had some Indians up here that would let their horses loose at night to eat so that was a problem. But we had a cattle guard, and they wouldnôt come in so they werenôt really a problem for us. But they werenôt wild horses. Down the way, maybe six miles down here, was a crossing for wild burros. Now, that was our only place that we had to watch when we first came here.

RM: Were they a problem for you? Burros?

JH: They were a problem for anybody using the road at night. But now theyôre gone. Somehow they all disappeared.

RM: Who got them?

JH: I don't know if somebody did away with them. I just have heard rumors. There are no burros coming across the road.

RM: But you didn't see horses crossing the road? The horses were in the range to the east.

JH: They were in the foothills. We didn't have this problem.

RM: When did you start seeing the problem?

JH: When we started getting a lot of people to move in, retired people. There were people that had 100 acres, 160 acres, probably they had homesteaded. They couldn't get water rights on them or the ground was so bad, they couldn't farm it or they couldn't get a crop. So they subdivided them into five-acre parcels and then sold them to people. That's when the trouble started.

RM: When did that begin?

JH: Oh, probably early '80s. We started noticing the horses are down here. We actually took our cattle guard out because the cows weren't coming through here anymore; they were keeping them up in the hills. Now we wish we had left it because now we're going to put another one in. And it's not for cows, it's for the horses. We had two horses in here this morning.

RM: Has the horse problem become more intense since it began?

JH: Oh, I'd say yes. We've got to lock everything up at night now. Somebody didn't shut their gate. Bill finally got them run out.

RM: So he had to go out and run out horses.

JH: Yes, two horses. They eat up the stacks of hay. They come over here. They poop all over and they walk all over the yard. I burned some trash and there're hoof prints all around down here. They stomp your flowers and go over here and eat on our bales.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: If you were running the show, how would you solve this problem?

JH: If I was running the show, I think I would try to keep the horses out of here.

RM: Would you reduce their numbers, first of all?

JH: Yes. Totally.

RM: Like how? Half or . . . just a wild figure.

JH: Get as many out as they can, and quit bringing them in. You can't believe how many of them get killed and maimed. I feel bad for the animals. Yesterday I went down to the hardware and there was a herd by Gary Feedor's. That's where the Billy Wright Road is, south. You'll see the fire department building across the street from that. They were up behind the fire department. There were probably about six of them just waiting for it to get dark so they can come on down. And when it rains or if there's any moisture at all, it runs off the pavement so there is a little bit to eat on the edges. In the wintertime the pavement picks up heat.

RM: They like to hang out there in the winter on the pavement.

JH: Yes. I don't know if they think it's warmer if they're looking for food. But we never did have that trouble. Cows we did, but never the horses.

RM: I know you say it's grown a lot, but can you give me a percentage of how many more horses there are now than when you first came in?

JH: I don't know how many they take out of here and how often, but they'll come and get 80 of them at a time– they can actually find that many. No wonder we see maybe three or four herds up and down the highway. There's a bunch of them right off of Highway 6 at the foot of Montgomery Pass. They constantly cross the road there.

RM: So they're in that range around there.

JH: Oh, yes. That's absolutely loaded. This is what I would do. If the BLM doesn't want to come in and take them, let's put a fence up on the road so that they can't fly out of nowhere and come across the highway. They finally put a fence up from Montgomery Pass all the way down. When we came home from Bishop after dark, we would really have to watch it. In fact, my daughter-in-law actually hit a burro and a horse. She missed the horse, but she got the burro barely. I don't think she killed it. It ripped her mirror off and dented the car a little bit. Even though it was fenced, they can come up Montgomery. It's the foot of Montgomery at the junction of Highway 6 and Highway 360 that goes to Highway 95. There're always horses in that area. They can come up Montgomery Pass and then over on the inside of the fence and that's one of the ones that she hit.

RM: The bottom line is the federal government's horse policies are making life difficult and dangerous for people here.

JH: Oh, yes. And the animals are just getting beat up, too. It's sickening. It makes me sick to see the poor things suffer like that. I think if people weren't dumping them in here, and if people weren't feeding them and watering them, they would stay up in the mountains with the creeks and their grass.

RM: Do you think it would be possible to get people here to stop feeding them?

JH: I think they think they're helping the animals by providing food and water. They just don't get it.

RM: Do you have any other information about the wild horses?

JH: You know that little Dyer Bar? There's a red car out in front of it. Did you see that when you first drove in?

RM: Yes, I did.

JH: He hit a horse. A little gal who lived down Billy Wright Road and worked at Montgomery Pass or someplace, was coming home in her new pickup and hit a horse. It totaled her truck but didn't hurt her; she got lucky. I want to show you this car out here– you're not going to believe he got out of that Volkswagen Beetle alive. He hit it doing 70.

RM: This is your son?

JH: My oldest son. It was a huge horse. It came up and over and rolled right. The whole roof came down on him and pushed him up like this. He said it came up out of a canyon just before you get to the Esmeralda County line. He stood on the brake and held the steering wheel like this. He turned his face so he didn't get glass in his eyes. The whole roof came down and pinned him. The horse hit his hand on the steering wheel and broke the backs out of three knuckles but he hung on. Just before he got the car stopped, the horse rolled off. He was worried: he didn't know where it rolled off, or if it was in the road for somebody else to come along and hit. It was in August about 9:00 at night.

That was a crazy story. After it stopped, he felt for the door, and it opened. And he thought, "Oh, wow. I struck gold here." He pushed way back in his seat and he slid out. He turned the car off, reached in around, had groceries and stuff in the back. He felt around, got his cell phone and called 911, and they called the Fish Lake Valley Ambulance Service. He got out, and he saw that his car was in the road so he pushed it off to the side of the road.

He said another car came flying through there. He thought, "Oh, man. I hope and pray they don't hit that horse." There was debris all over the road from his car. They turned around and came back; they were from Arizona. She was a nurse and she made him lie on the ground and covered him with a blanket. Then the ambulance came and they strapped him to a backboard and he said that was the worst ride that he's ever had.

ñTalk about a ride from hell.ò He had all that glass in his forehead.

In the meantime, Iôm coming back from Southern California. Iôve been in a court proceeding down there for two weeks and this was the end of the first week. I was really tired and my car was full of Costco stuff. I was coming down into Ridgecrest, and the wind was blowing like crazy. Iôm thinking that when I get down here to Pearsonville, Iôm going to pull off and see if I can sleep for a few minutes because Iôm really getting sleepy. Well, I get down to the bottom of the hill, and Iôve got a highway patrolman pulling me over. I talked to him for 15 minutes. He said, ñIôve been following you.ò

I said, ñHave I been speeding?ò Because I usually set my cruise control, but I hadnôt.

He said, ñNo, you were just perfect but you were kind of bouncing off that double line, so I was watching you.ò

I said, ñBecause Iôm tired. Iôve been in court for a week.ò

He said, ñThat would make anybody tired. Well, listen, pull over and go to sleep. Thatôs the last thing I want to do is have to worry about you.ò

I said, ñIôm awake now.ò [Laughter] So then I headed on home. He delayed me about 15 minutes. Just as I was coming into Big Pine, I get a telephone call from Darrell, the youngest son, whoôs got 160 acres of hay down here and he comes up on his vacations. Heôs an engineer for the city of Irvine.

RM: Thatôs great.

JH: Anyway, so he called me and he said, ñHi. Where are you?ò

I said, ñHey, Iôm just coming into Big Pine and Iôll be home. Iôll see you in an hour and 15 minutes.ò

He said, ñDonôt come home. Theyôre taking Fred to the hospital in the

ambulance.ò

I said, ñHow bad is he?ò

ñHe said heôs okay. You never know. You better be there. Dad and I are going to go get his car.ò

I said, ñDo you know where it is?ò

ñNo, but we know where he came from, so weôll find it.ò So they took off. I just kept going on into Bishop. Now, nobodyôs seen me for over a week and here I am waiting for the ambulance. How bizarre is that? When they backed in with him, thereôs his mother standing there.

RM: Oh my gosh!

JH: Iôve got a bunch of pictures of him. He looked just terribleð covered with blood. They checked him out. We were there until 6:00 in the morning. They bandaged his hand. He had to have surgery the following Tuesday to repair the broken knuckles.

RM: All because of the horse problem. Now, if you put up fences, that would solve them getting in the roads. But what about getting on your land and all of that?

JH: We fence our land. But the sorry part is theyôre letting the horses eat up all the cowsô food on their grazing range. The cows keep all the grasses and the brush and everything trimmed down. They keep it healthy.

RM: So the horses are coming along and eating that because there are so many of them.

JH: Beyond that, theyôre tearing up the watering holes. Once the ranchers shut off the water to move the cows to the next place, those horses will come in, and they donôt give up. They kick and just destroy these things.

RM: Are they trying to get water?

JH: Yes. They got water there before, and now itôs gone. Theyôre not real smart. We

saw pictures where those horses were trying to suck moisture out of mud.

RM: Pitiful!

JH: It was brutal. Just sick. They either need to harvest them, send them to some other country, or make dog food out of them. Do you realize what it costs the government to house these horses?

RM: Yes, itôs crazy.

JH: Thereôs no excuse for it. People are starving; itôs not right.

RM: And they like horsemeat in France.

JH: Yes, they do. And it could be sold for dog food or anything else. Iôm not saying that Iôm anti-horse, but the population needs to be controlled.

And what are we going to do for beef? Weôve actually had reasonable prices for beef in our markets because they graze. If you put all those animals in a feedlot where they have to shoot them full of vaccines and everything else, and then feed them, who knows what gets in the meat, and then we have to eat it. Plus, we have to pay a fortune for it because theyôre feeding them day after day. They would have to buy hay from farmers; how could they afford it?

RM: Thatôs right. Do you raise beef?

JH: We donôt.

RM: You never did?

JH: We just would raise enough for our own needs.

RM: So you never grazed on public lands?

JH: No because we just farm the land.

RM: Could you talk some about the challenges that the area ranchers have faced? Even though itôs not your problem, youôve seen it.

JH: They arenôt letting them have free range so theyôre not able to raise their animals like they should. Theyôre going in and making impossible demands on them and putting them out of business.

RM: Do you see an end to ranching in Central Nevada?

JH: Iôve already seen quite an end to it.

RM: Is it basically at an end?

JH: I hope not. But they turned all this land into wilderness. They put up fences and blocked our access to go up in the mountains.

RM: The White Mountains are wilderness?

JH: Right. Anything in California. Theyôve got a big fence up Furnace Creekð a big iron gate.

RM: So when I look out on that range there, thatôs pretty much wilderness?

JH: Iôm not exactly sure, but I think about down to where you go up Indian Creek at the foot of the mountains. Thatôs the Nevada line. It runs along the base of the White Mountain Range. Anything above that is California. When the kids go way up the creek to fish, theyôre in California. All thatôs been turned into wilderness. Theyôve had all kinds of meetings about it. Weôve gone to those and weôve complained, and Harry Reid sends people out. They talk about it but they do exactly what they want to.

RM: And they are wilderness areas, not under consideration wilderness?

JH: I think it is now wilderness. I could be wrong, but we could ask Bill Kirby. He would know if it is.

RM: Whatôs your take on the whole wilderness concept?

JH: I think that theyôre trying to kick everybody out of there.

RM: Why?

JH: Thatôs a good question. I think they want to know where everybody is. Not to be an alarmist or anything, but I donôt trust them. Anyway, you canôt get up there anymore around their gates.

RM: So you canôt go into those hills unless you walk. Is that it?

JH: You can walk around the gate, maybe. You canôt believe the rules theyôve got. Iôm just going to give you some rules from Southern California for the San Bernardino Mountains. Years and years ago, they passed a law that you could pull off the road up in the mountains, but youôre not allowed to go more than so many feet.

RM: Even walking?

JH: Thatôs right. If they catch you, they can fine you. And if you want to fight it, you have to go to a federal judge, which would be in San Francisco or Denver, Colorado, or someplace else. I had an article in the *San Bernardino Sun* where they were writing tickets for people.

RM: Just walk into the forest a little bit.

JH: Everybody was complaining now. They said, ñThis law has been on the books for 20 years and it just never was enforced, until now. Weôre enforcing it.ò See how it is? When I was commissioner, they would say, ñOh, well, we want to pass this ordinance or that, this and that.ò

I said, ñNo.ò

They would say, ñWell, weôre not going to enforce it.ò

I said, ñMaybe you arenôt. But maybe 10 or 20 years from now, somebody else will use it to beat up on somebody. So why would you do that?ò

It was like our fire ordinance. They had a fire ordinance going on. I said, ñDonôt even put it on the agenda, or you wonôt like it.ò

They said, ñWell, itôs already a state ordinance.ò

I said, ñThen leave it a state ordinance. But weôre not going to adopt it. Iôll have this place full of people.ò They had to move the hearing into the courthouse room.

When Wade Barton saw that, he said, ñWeôre not even going to deal with this. And I donôt ever want to see it on the agenda again.ò

RM: What were they trying to do?

JH: They wanted to say we couldnôt have a pit barbecue. You couldnôt burn your trash.

RM: In Esmeralda County?

JH: Yes. I said, ñThe only thing that I see thatôs worth anything on this ordinance is the fact that they want you to have your propane tank a certain number of feet from your house.ò I can go for that. But I said, ñThe rest of this stuff, youôd think that Iôm not going to have a pit barbecue or burn my trash? We have to burn our fields once in a while and the weeds around our fences. Forget it.ò I said, ñIôll get everybody in town here.ò

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Talk about your career as an Esmeralda County Commissioner. What was your thinking when you decided to run for office?

JH: When I signed up for that job? That is a good question. [Laughter] I had some people in the valley come and say, ñYou need to do this.ò They talked me into it. I thought maybe I wouldnôt get it.

RM: This was ô92, right?

JH: Yes, I did get it. It was a lot of reading; I did my job.

RM: How many terms did you serve?

JH: Just one. That was enough.

RM: From ô92 to ô96.

JH: Yes. I got a call from a doctor the last year in San Diego who said, ñYour life is in danger. We contacted the county and the Sheriffôs Department and youôre going to have to ride with somebody to the meetings from now on.ò

RM: Somebody had threatened you?

JH: A disgruntled employee that the county had let go.

RM: Oh, they were going to harm you?

JH: Yes. They had a restraining order. Every night Iôd go out and think, ñOh, boy.ò

RM: ñIs this the night?ò

JH: Yes, so then I had to carry a gun and I had to get practiced up. My brother is a Vietnam Vetô he was on Hamburger Hill. He was one of three guys left out of his entire company. Heôs got every medal that they give. He was amazing. He said, ñJoyce, go to Goodwill and buy up a bunch of purses. Donôt ever pull your gun out of your purse. Just

shoot it right through the purse. You'll get real good at it.ò

RM: Oh, good advice. That way you just put your hand in your purse and bang.

JH: That part wasn't too bad.

RM: Would you have gone for a second term if it hadn't been for that?

JH: I did run, but I didn't really. The powers that wanted me out all turned into Republicans at the last second and voted me out in the primary. I was delighted.

RM: To give us insight into these issues we're talking about, what were some of your other experiences as commissioner?

JH: The big thing was I really hated to see this landfill situation.

RM: What was that?

JH: They made us go into this landfill program where we couldn't burn anything at the dump or cover it up. It all had to be hauled out. We're 80-some miles from Goldfield. I was the NACO, Nevada Association of Counties, commissioner; I'd go to the NACO meetings in Carson City and I testified at one of the meetings. I said, ñWe have no hospital waste. We're nothing but agriculture here. We don't have anything really bad. Why can't we just keep it here and take care of it here? Cover it up and take us out of your loop.ò It's a burden for the county. Now every parcel of ground has a $38 price tag on it for taxes.

RM: Where there's a dwelling on it?

JH: It doesn't matter. Our place has so many different parcels; we pay approximately $300 a year in landfill fees because I've got two half-acre parcels up here. Then we had 40 acres we subdivided into five-acre pieces so each one of those carries a $38 fee.

RM: Even though there's nothing on it.

JH: It doesn't matter. We probably had six, seven parcels with a $38 fee.

RM: So what happens to your trash now?

JH: We still burn our trash, and we take the stuff to the dump.

RM: Itôs a landfill dump?

JH: No. We just dump it in big bins and they come and carry them off.

RM: Oh, I see. They take it to a landfill.

JH: Yes. I donôt know where they take it.

RM: I see. But youôre allowed to burn.

JH: Probably not, but we all do. And we had people all the time setting the dump on fire. You know how that goes. [Laughter]

RM: A constant struggle with rules and regulations, isnôt it?

JH: Yes. And then, before I got out, I was working with somebody from the state. We were looking for another spot for the landfill. They wanted to line it, and they were actually going to work with us. We found some ground a little farther south and then they were worried about that little, tiny airport.

RM: This is for Fish Lake?

JH: Yes. That little Dyer airport. You had to be so many feet or yards (I donôt think it went into miles) away from the end of an airport because cities have birds that come in and eat the garbage.

RM: And then the planes hit them.

JH: Yes. Like that would be a problem here. Get it?

RM: Right. [Laughter]

JH: So once I got out, nobody else fought for it; that was the end of it. The guy who took over was from Florida in a big city and he liked the regulations.

RM: Thatôs really the future, isnôt it? More and more regulations.

JH: Itôs sickening. Then we had a translator site up on the hill for a TV district here. When these people from down south started moving in, besides feeding the horses, they all complained about the $5 a month fee to keep the translator going.

RM: They didnôt need it.

JH: Thatôs right. They all had satellite dishes and they didnôt want it. When we first moved here, we were lucky if weôd have one that worked out of three.

RM: Three channels, you mean?

JH: Yes. We had ABC, CBS, and NBC. Well, NBC really kind of took a dive in the early years and then we had PBS. The translator was way up on Miller Mountain. That road was just unbelievable. The county would take people upð the power company would read the meter once or twice a year, I think. A lot of people got hurt going up there trying to take care of things. After this commissioner took my place, I heard they were going to get rid of it.

RM: They were going to get rid of the translator?

JH: Just completely shut it down and let it go. They were going to give it to some guy in Tonopah. I told my middle son, Mark, ñWhat are we going to do? We canôt let that go. These people in the ô60s just killed themselves getting something for everybody here. They said itôs our only link to the outside world. We get legislative news during the legislature.ò It gives you a chance to respond.

RM: But people had their satellites, right?

JH: Yes, but that still isnôt local TV. They had earthquake reports, emergency signals. They have everything that weôll never see again. Weôre stuck out here. He said, ñOkay, letôs put together a foundation.ò

So we put together Fish Lake Valley Communications Foundation. We worked on

it night and day and faxed and did the high-speed thing to get it all put together. A week later, the two of us showed up at the county commissionerôs meeting when they were trying to give the translator to this other guy. In the meantime, we called Valley Electric and had the power put in our name.

So the guy that was commissioner for this district said, ñNo. We donôt want it.ò The other two commissioners said, ñOkay. Weôll give this site and everything to the guy in Tonopah, but heôs got to give them a 99-year lease and all their equipment. And he can have the radio station,ò because he had a couple of radio stations. So he got the BLM site, but he never would sign the contract. The DA put the contract together, and he never would sign it.

In the meantime, I called BLM and I talked to the gal who was in charge of that. I said, ñHeôs not doing anything with it. Letôs try and let me have it for this communication foundation.ò So they did; they worked with me. Then at the end they couldnôt because the guy complainedð he said it was his and he had the commissioner minutes and everything. Then my dad passed away and I was in Victorville for almost a year. I get a call from the BLM and she said, ñWeôre taking this guyôs site away from him because heôs got sites all over and heôs not paying anything on any of them. Would you like it?ò

I said, ñWe would.ò So we have it secured now. Itôs Fish Lake Valley Communications Foundation. Weôve got permits for five stations.

RM: Is it functioning?

JH: We get a radio signal. Everything went from analog to digital so weôve got to replace the translators. But we can do it. Iôve been so busy; weôve just had no time. We need to get some grants or something going because it would be nice to be able to have the ability for anybody coming through to be able to have television without a cost, plus

thereôs a lot of people that live here that canôt afford a satellite. It would be nice for them to have two or three stations that they can look at. Thatôs the thinking on that. But anyway, we saved the site.

RM: And so everything is there.

JH: Oh, yes. We keep everything up to date with the feds but we just donôt have TV right this minute because of the digital thing.

RM: So people are relying on the satellite?

JH: Yes, right now. We have a Bishop radio station. We can always get one out of Reno if we just would apply ourselves and get it over with.

JH: We started a new business in 2001. We package hay for the small animal market.

RM: That was when you were in Europe.

JH: Right. We were in Germany.

RM: Why donôt you talk about that?

JH: My brother is a businessman. I kept saying, ñHey, why donôt you start a business up here and Iôll run it for you?ò

And he said, ñWhy donôt you start your own?ò

I said, ñWell, what would I do?ò

He said, ñWhat do you have the most of?ò

ñAlfalfa.ò

He said, ñCome down. Weôll do a flow chart and see what we can come up with.ò

Well, we never did that but that kind of opened the door to thinking about it. Then the oldest son, Fred, was working for the Eye Institute down there. He was driving down to San Bernardino and back, riding with some guy. They had to go in PetSmart one day. He said that he went over and looked at the alfalfa theyôre selling for the small animals

like guinea pigs, chinchillas, all these little critters. He said, ñItôs total trash. You need to be selling this small animal feed. This is terrible.ò

Thatôs how this concept started. Then when my dad passed, I inherited a little bit to be able to start the business with. Itôs just kind of evolved, because nobody did what we do. We take a double compressed baleð do you know what that is?

RM: No.

JH: You know what a regular bale looks like. Well, you press it down to half the size and leave it like that and retie it. You leave it a certain amount of time. The stem loses its memory so that when you cut the strings it doesnôt bounce back. Then we put it through a hydraulic cutter, a big hydraulic ram that pushes it through a knife and cuts it in half, slices it. It drops into another one and another ram cuts it again so itôs a quarter cut.

RM: Does it make cubes?

JH: No. We weigh one-pound flakes, a one-pound bag of hay thatôs half the size of just stuffing hay in a bag. It takes all the air out, keeps it fresher, keeps every leaf in place. Itôs just amazing.

RM: And then people feed this to their pets?

JH: Their little, tiny petsð chinchillas, rabbits, guinea pigs. All those little guys. Turtles.

RM: Turtles eat alfalfa?

JH: Reptiles. Yes, they all eat it, too.

RM: Thatôs neat. How is the business going?

JH: Weôre doing a lot. We were in Petco for about seven years and then we got out of Petco. We go to these international trade shows and we sell in several countriesð England, Russia . . .

RM: So you established this international business right here in Fish Lake Valley. Thatôs really cool.

JH: Itôs mostly amazing to us.

RM: And selling a homegrown product.

JH: Yes. We started out, and we had to learn everything from the ground up because basically weôre farmers. Mark, the middle son, graduated from Redlands University in California and majored in German. We kind of scratched our heads and thought, ñWhat are you doing that for?ò But thatôs okay. Whatever they want to do, thatôs what they need to be doing. And thatôs after my dad telling me I had to take Spanish and I wanted to take French. I decided that I would just let him do what he needed to do.

None of us really had the right background to do this business but we just started in. We made a lot of mistakes and we spent a lot of money. We worked really hard and we got down to the point where we did everything. I mean, itôs hard. You start out and you want to price your product. You want to stay in the marketplace. You donôt want to ask too much for it, but then again, you donôt want to give it away and lose money, either, and you donôt know what anybody else is getting. Itôs just try as you go.

So anyway, we went into Petco and we had to pay the shipping. The amount that was factored in at the time of our contract was okay, but it was before the price of fuel went up to $5 a gallon. The shipping was all the way to New Jersey and Arizona and also to California, Mira Loma. We had to haul it ourselves to Mira Loma. We would put it on a couple of gooseneck trailers and off weôd go but we had to pay to ship the others to the other two distribution centers. If we did that and we averaged it out, we could still break even. We figured it was advertisement. We were in millions of homes, and Petco paid for that. We would give coupons for buy two, get one free. We also have an Internet site that

people can order from. We were there for seven years and all this time Iôm thinking, ñI hate this shipping.ò

We started going to these pet trade shows. We started picking up a little bit of international business from Malaysia and Singapore and Hong Kong. Then we started going to Interzoo in Germany one year, and then Zoomark in Italy the following year. Then youôre exposed to the world market. Thatôs where most of our business is now, international. I love it, because we sell X Works, which means they buy it right here so theyôre responsible for the shipping.

RM: If somebody in Spain orders it, and then they have to pay the shipping?

JH: They buy it right here.

RM: How do they order from you? Through the Internet?

JH: We go over there and make contact with them or theyôll email us and say, ñSend us samples. Weôve seen your product.ò

RM: Would this be a store or a distributor?

JH: A distributor. Some of these people we sell to have hundreds of stores. They not only distribute, but they also take care of their own stores.

RM: You do all this packaging and everything right here?

JH: Right here.

RM: And you had to design the packages?

JH: Yes.

RM: You grow the product here. You process it here. You package it here. Right here on the ranch?

JH: Right here, in Fish Lake Valley.

RM: That is such a wonderful story.

JH: People would get so excited because no matter where they were in the US they could go into a Petco and say, ñOh, my gosh. Look. Itôs Alfalfa King, Fish Lake Valley, Nevada. I canôt believe it.ò

RM: What a story. It shows you what you can do with enterprising ideas and hard work. Itôs a really great story of how to bring enterprise to a very remote area like this.

JH: Well, it was an eye-opener for regulations and taxes and stuff like that. Right after we got started, they started in on this $100 business tax a year and all these different taxes. At the end of the year, you canôt believe how much you paid in taxes. I know what they do. They sit up there like a think tank and figure out how theyôre going to get you for 1% here, 1% there. Do the math and it adds up pretty good. Then they can hire yet one more person to make your life miserable.

RM: Does it pretty much take all your time?

JH: Iôm blessed because my son helps run itð I should say, I help my son.

RM: Itôs wonderful to be working with your mother in a business. What a treat for both.

JH: Yes. Heôs so funny. We went to this show last year in Italy and we had two or three people come through, a mother and a son. She said, ñThis is my son, and Iôm teaching him to do what Iôve always been doing.ò

I said, ñI know. And this is my son.ò They were from Holland. They wanted ground timothy to put in some of the dog treats they make. We saw the son this year at the Interzoo, and I said, ñWhereôs your mother?ò

He said, ñShe didnôt come this time.ò

ñYou tell her I miss her.ò She was real cute. I liked her.

RM: Did you do the timothy for them?

JH: We sent them a sample. They're going to get back to us.

RM: Do you grow timothy here?

JH: That was what I tried on that little pivot down there. Oh, just to jump back one second: the state water resources look at you from the satellite. They know exactly what you're growing, what you're doing at all times.

RM: They can tell what you're growing from the satellite?

JH: They don't know what it is but they know that you're watering something. Because after they told us not to do it anymore, we tore it out. But then the wind is so bad, dirt was covering up the neighbor. We were watering it at night and we had just basically a crop of weeds. They wrote to us and said to cease and desist. I called the water engineer, Buschelman, and they communicated with the water resources that we were trying to keep the ground wet to keep the dirt off the neighbors. It never ran during the day. We'd just run it at night; it's not that you want to do anything that you shouldn't. But we get our timothy from Eureka. That's what we got this morning.

RM: What is timothy, exactly?

JH: It's a grass hay. It's got a little head on it, or a big one. The horse people like the great, big head. It only has about 8% protein. Alfalfa's got about 18%.

RM: Why would they want timothy, then?

JH: Because it's low in protein and the long strands clean out their digestive tract.

RM: Who? Horses?

JH: On, no. The little critters.

RM: So the alfalfa's not as good for them as timothy.

JH: The alfalfa is for rabbits… you give alfalfa to the mothers that are going to have babies. While she's nursing, she can have a lot of it. The babies can have it up to six

months, I believe. After that, you feed it as a treat. Itôs too high in calcium. But you couldnôt prove that to our wild rabbits out here. [Laughter] I donôt see them dropping off. But thatôs just science for you.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Thereôre some other topics maybe we could touch on. Do you have any thought on the general Sagebrush Rebellion?

JH: The Sagebrush Rebellion was just a forerunner to our present-day public lands issues. They pretty much had the same goalsð to hang onto our rights to graze our cows on public lands. You canôt blame the BLM employees; theyôre doing their job but theyôre taking their orders from somebody else. Itôs basically, the government wants you out of here. They want our food brought in by some foreign country that we have no clue what theyôve done to it. Iôm an officer in the Central Nevada Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau Women fought for COOL, Country of Origin Label, so that we know where the foodôs coming from.

RM: It would be labeled.

JH: Thatôs what COOL stands for. So when you go to your supermarket and you see a steak, you can see where itôs from. For a while they had to do that. But do you know what they did to get around it?

RM: What?

JH: I live out here in the middle of nowhere. When I go to the city and I happen to be in a grocery store, I look at their meat department. Now they have a sign that says, ñThis meat is from Canada, the United States, and Mexico.ò They donôt tell you where itôs from. It could be from one of those three. Thatôs not Country of Origin Labeling, is it? So thatôs what theyôre doing. If they can throw all the cows off the range and make you buy meat from a feedlot, itôs going to be priced so high. Then theyôre going to start bringing in all this food from someplace else. And guess what happens? If we canôt feed ourselves

in this country, and they shut off our food supply, what do you think is going to happen? I can talk on something else, if you want to hear it, and thatôs biotech.

RM: Please do.

JH: The Farm Bureau is promoting biotech. I hate it. I donôt agree with it because theyôve changed the DNA of the plant. Your body doesnôt recognize it so it doesnôt get all the nutrients that it should (everybodyôs sick now, anyway). They can build anything into these plants. I went to a Farm Bureau Womenôs Conference in Colorado in 2000 and I took the biotech class. This woman was talking about how they had a field of corn that was so loaded with oil, they could make fuel out of it.

When it came time for questioning, I said, ñIf Iôm walking by that field and I decide I want to steal an ear of corn . . .ò I said, ñI donôt think thatôs a crime. If I was stealing a truckload and selling it someplace, thatôs a crime. But Iôm just taking one ear of corn and Iôm eating it.ò And I like to eat raw corn. I said, ñWhat will that do to my cholesterol, and what will it do to my body?ò

ñOh, well, we donôt know about that. But you would never be able to do that, because these are well protected.ò See? Okay.

So then, do you remember when they pulled all the Taco Bell stuff off the shelves a few years back?

RM: No.

JH: About maybe eight, nine years back. The corn was contaminated from a biotech that was called Starlink. It was a grade of corn that had pesticides built in, fertilizers built in. It actually killed some people and some people really got sick from it. So it got into the marketplace. They had to go in and pull all that stuff off the shelves. Now, isnôt that nice? Okay. So they told us in that class that they can take a grain of rice and they can put

enough in there to sterilize a country.

RM: No kidding? Sterilize it?

JH: Yes. They can put all the vaccinations in it. In a grain of rice. These third world countries, we send a big shipload of rice over to themð that could happen. Thatôs how far science has come. Itôs pretty far-reaching. Like the seed companies, thereôs Burpeeôs, there are all these different seed companies. Theyôve all been bought up by Monsanto.

RM: I didnôt know that.

JH: Yes. I read an articleð if you can believe what you read. You call in and they want to know what catalogue you ordered from and they have the same thing in all of them. Itôs just that they give them different names, flowers and stuff. Also, itôs against the law to replant stuff.

RM: Yes, you have to re-buy the seeds.

JH: Exactly. Okay? Now they have gotten rid of all the heirloom seeds, or all the heirloom plants, the ones that will keep going.

RM: Oh, so they wonôt even reproduce now? They donôt make fertile seeds.

JH: Right. Then I also read that in about three years the plant will go back to its original state, but it takes about three years. Apparently they canôt totally destroy Mother Nature.

RM: Interesting.

JH: So Iôm not going for biotech; I think itôs terrible. The cows eat it and you get it. When all this was going on in year 2000 when I went to that Farm Bureau meeting, Some of these other countries, like Canada and the UK were making the growers certify here for the grains. They wouldnôt buy their grain unless it was certified that it wasnôt biotech. So those people have enough brains to know that you shouldnôt be eating that stuff.

RM: Well, itôs just a matter of time until theyôre doing the same thing with animals. You know?

JH: They already are. Theyôre also cloning sheep and stuff. I donôt know.

RM: But they will actually insert a gene from another species into a cow or a sheep or whatever.

JH: Right. Well, this article I read suggested that towns have a pool of seeds. Somebodyôs always growing an heirloom tomato plant or this or that, and saving the seeds and everybodyôs taking turns growing this stuff so that they do have something to plant. One of the ladies that works for me said, ñOh, my gosh. Iôm going to have cantaloupe like you wonôt believe, and squash. Apparently some garbage got out there and itôs where I water the trees. Huge plants, big, gorgeous blooms.ò

And I said, ñYouôll get nothing. That stuff came from the store.ò

She said, ñOh, no. There are big blooms.ò

ñYou let me know.ò

And she said, ñYouôre right. Blooms dried up. Never got one.ò

RM: They didnôt produce.

JH: Nope. Got nothing.

RM: So now you have to keep going back for the seed. Thatôs the trick.

JH: Yes. Or else find a site where you can order. But look at the people in the cities. Times are pretty shaky.

RM: Itôs really worrisome.

JH: Yes, it is. You want to know that youôll be able to feed yourself. And then you go and you have nothing that will grow. How sad is that?

RM: My own prediction to this prediction is that by the year 2050, a billion people will

starve. That's what I think. I mean, like I say, it's a two-bit prediction.

JH: If they haven't killed them off some other way before then.

RM: They've got all kinds of problems, all the way from water to the glaciers in the Himalayas that feed the big rivers in India and China. When those glaciers are gone, the rivers aren't going to flow in the same way as they should. It's a huge problem.

JH: And there's all sorts of rumors about people messing with the environment and causing weather patterns, chemical trails and all that freak stuff. I don't know that it's true or not true.

RM: Do you have any feelings about the impact on Esmeralda County of the proposed nuclear waste facility at Yucca Mountain? Have you followed that at all?

JH: I haven't followed it that much. I didn't fight it. I thought it was probably good for the economy and would provide jobs.

RM: That's what most rural Nevadans, at least central Nevadans, think.

JH: I think about what we're exposed to and we don't even know about.

RM: You would be shocked, probably.

JH: Maybe I wouldn't.

RM: Maybe not. [Laughter]

JH: There's a lot of strange stuff that goes on and nobody will tell you anything.

RM: In broader terms, how do you see the whole issue of so much of Nevada, and specifically, central Nevada, being under the control of the federal government? Nevada is 85% government owned.

JH: I think they have no business being in the land business. They shouldn't have any control over any of it.

RM: What's your reasoning on that?

JH: In the very beginning when the Constitution was put together, they were told that they could have places for post offices and federal buildings and bases and to stay out of the rest of it.

RM: Apparently thereôs an issue thatôs evolving that when the eastern states came into the Union, they got all of the land to dispose of. That didnôt happen in the West and the government kept control of it. I think thatôs an evolving issue. Whatôs your take on that?

JH: I think that the federal government just hangs in there and they outlive everybody that fights it. They make their life miserable. I think itôs not right.

RM: In Nevadaôs case, the government having all that land affects the economy, doesnôt it?

JH: Well, sure. Itôs like when I was commissionerð they took deeded land from up here in the mountains and traded it to people for choice land down in Las Vegas. We said, ñFine, now what does that do for our tax roll? We were getting taxes out of that property. What are you doing here? And you want us to approve this?ò That was 20 years ago. They were actively trying to clear everybody out of these mountains so they could close it off and keep everybody out.

RM: Good point. The lack of a tax base is a fundamental problem especially for a small population like Esmeralda County.

JH: Right. For the countyôs sake, they should have turned over more deeded land to us that we could have sold to replace the taxes lost from the tradeout of the land. But no. They gave the deeded landowners land in Las Vegas instead and we lost our taxes on that portion of land. And do you realize the kind of money we have lost by not being able to put cows out on the range?

RM: Talk about that.

JH: Itôs absolutely huge. The state would receive a certain amount, and the counties would get a certain amount of kickback. The NRS (Nevada Revised Statute) statement for our county is: ñPart of the fund derived from the grazing lease charges are distributed to each county according to the proportional acres of land from which the AUM charges were derived.ò

RM: From those cows on the range?

JH: Absolutely. When the cow numbers start dropping, you donôt get that money.

RM: And meanwhile, the horses bring nothing. In fact, theyôre a drain, arenôt they?

JH: The horses are injuring the few people that live here via auto accidents.RM: Theyôre draining because now youôve got to have an ambulance to take care of the wrecks and everything.

JH: Yes. We just had a big go-around with 911.

RM: Oh, really? Talk about that.

JH: Oh, boy. Fred, our oldest son, was coming home from work and dropping down the hill. He was behind another car that was headed for Vegas and he saw a bunch of dirt down at the spot where you turn off to go to Tonopah. One of our locals, a little gal, had rolled her pickup and it threw her out the back, which was probably a blessing, if you call it that, because the driverôs side was smashed clear down. Anyway, she lay there for 50 minutes, screaming and crying.

RM: You mean with your son there?

JH: He was there. In the car in front of him was a doctor from Hawaii. He wouldnôt touch her.

RM: He wouldnôt help her? Oh my God.

JH: He was afraid of liability. And then other people from the valley came and

stopped. Anyway, Fred and the other car right in front of him arrived at the same time. He called me and said, ñMom, call 911 and get an ambulance down here right now. Itôs a rollover. I see one person out on the ground. I donôt know if thereôs more.ò

I was over where Bill was building another house. (Itôs going to be a bed and breakfast.) I was over there staining Mexican pavers to put on the floor. I stepped outside with my cell phone and called 911. I got a person and I said, ñWe need an ambulance right now. Could you page one?ò

ñWell, where are you?ò

I said ñDyer, Nevada.ò

She said, ñI donôt even know where that is.ò

I said, ñWhere are you?ò She was in Pahrump or some place. ñAll right. Can you put me through to somebody that can help me? Weôre Esmeralda County.ò

She said, ñIôll switch you over to Nye County.ò

I said, ñWhy not Esmeralda County?ò

She said, ñNye County can help.ò

ñOkay. Just do it,ò because I was really excited by now. So she called. I get somebody in Nye County. ñWeôve had a rollover. Weôve got one person on the ground. Itôs really bad. We need an ambulance immediately.ò I told her where we were and where it was exactly. I said, ñI donôt know if thereôs more than one person. Can you page?ò

She said, ñI can.ò

I said, ñIf not, please give me Esmeralda County.ò

She said, ñIôll call somebody out right now.ò It was 20 minutes before she paged anybody out.

RM: Good Lord.

JH: That poor little thing lay down there all that time. The ambulance is right across the street here and Iôm standing outside and nothingôs happening. So I started calling peopleð I knew their number. I said, ñWho do you know on the ambulance team?ò Everybody was gone that day except for three people and they were all right down there at that end. But the lady across the street said, ñGosh, I donôt know who to call.ò

Well, youôre kind of in shock when bad stuff like that happens. ñWell, what about the fire department? Your husband is on the fire department. Donôt they all go to an accident?ò

She said, ñYouôre right. Iôll call the barn. Theyôre all down there.ò So she called them. I called her right back because my brain started working and I thought okay, Iôve got Nancy Knighton up on the hill. I donôt have her number in front of me. Iôm trying to save time. I couldôve run back to my house but I didnôt. She said, ñOkay. Iôll call Nancy. You call Barbie Aldridge.ò Her husbandôs a deputy here. Barbieôs on the ambulance team. I left her a message. Then I called down here. I knew the woman was gone to visit her mother, but I thought well, if her husbandôs there, Iôll get ahold of him. No answer. They all got their pages finally but Barbie never did get her page. She got my message. She said, ñI was outside. I heard the phone ring. I came in. Thank you. Always leave a message.ò She grabbed the phone, saw what the message was, grabbed her jump kit, and ran. But they had to keep waiting for the ambulance. The fire department beat them and the fire departmentôs farther away.

The other little gal was probably six, seven miles down the road this way. She had to run up here and grab the ambulance. Mark, the middle son, was here. He said, ñCanôt we go get the ambulance out and take it down to them?ò

I said, ñItôs locked up. We canôt get in there.ò Anyway, they finally got down

there. She was hurt real bad but I think sheôs going to be fine. Sheôs still in Reno in the hospital.

RM: They took her to Reno?

JH: They took her to Bishop, and then they flew her up to Reno. Sheôs doing pretty good. But anyway, that was quite an ordeal. I went over to see Commissioner Kirby the following day. I said, ñWhatôs this story on 911? Why doesnôt anybody know that when you call 911, anybody in the world can answer, even Bishop? Even Independence. What good does that do us? Why do we all think we have 911 when we donôt?ò

He said, ñYouôre kidding. I didnôt know.ò So he got on it and found out that we can upgrade for very little money, and that our 911 will probably go directly to Esmeralda County. But it takes something like this for us to get on it.

RM: And you look at the key role you played. If you hadnôt taken the bull by the horn, so to speak, the old situation would probably still exist.

JH: I said, ñOkay. Then hereôs the thing. Somebody needs to put it in this little Dyer flyer we have, óIf you call 911, donôt expect any miracles, because guess what? You could get China.ôò Not really, but anyway. I just picked up a Dyer flyer and thereôs an article in there about 911 and the sheriffôs department number to call instead. I did call 911 one night, and actually Esmeralda County picked it up. So I really didnôt have a clue.

RM: Catch as catch can, is that it?

JH: Yes. It was 1:00 in the morning. There were some really weird people out on the highway. They actually chased our car and I told the friend I was with, ñWeôre not stopping.ò This guy came running out of the brush with his arms up in the air, and I floored it. I said, ñIf he gets in front of us, heôs gone, because Iôm not stopping.ò

She said, ñThatôs really weird.ò I called the sheriffôs department. There was

nobody there because they had that jailbreak. These people were at large, and they had stolen somebodyôs truck. This was at the same time. There were two guys and a girl, and thatôs what they had over there. [My call] probably freaked them out. They probably thought, ñI wonder if this is part of whatôs going on.ò I think these people were out of gas.

That was a really nutty deal. But out here in the middle of nowhere, you donôt want to be putting yourself at risk. I thought, ñOkay. Iôll just call the sheriffôs department and somebody can go deal with them. If they really need help, then somebody can help them. But it wonôt be me in the middle of the night with no gun and no protection.ò

RM: Most of the people out here probably have firearms.

JH: Oh, absolutely. And ammo.

RM: You mentioned youôre building a bed and breakfast? Thatôs really interesting.

JH: My husband loves to build. He said, ñJoyce, Iôm going to build a house and youôre not going to tell me what to do.ò

I said, ñOkay. Iôll decorate it and you canôt tell me what to do.ò

He said, ñDeal.ò

But I said, ñIf you donôt put a fireplace in it, Iôm not moving in.ò

He said, ñNo fireplace.ò So this turned out to be the guesthouse when we have company. If you ever need a place to stay, just call me.

RM: And it will be your bed and breakfast?

JH: Well, weôve got two bedrooms upstairs. Mark stays here when heôs here on business. But we have all of our family gatherings down here. Then he decided heôs going to build another one because this one has no closet. I said, ñBill, youôve really outdone yourself this time. Where are the closets?ò

He said, ñIf you have too big of a closet, they stay too long.ò Just said a remark like that.

ñOkay,ò I said, ñIôm going to do a bed and breakfast.ò

RM: Now how many bedrooms will you have?

JH: Itôs got three.

RM: So you can take three guests. Iôll bet youôll do well.

JH: Itôs in progress. If you want to look, Iôll show you as you work your way through here. Itôs kind of fun. I can see what he means. It took him, like, seven years to build this. He said, ñI can just go work at my own pace and do what I want.ò So I kind of go over there and do the same thing.

RM: When is he going to be done with it?

JH: Itôs pretty close.

RM: Iôll bring my grandsons up here.

JH: And weôre getting everything cleaned up. Weôre going to put vineyards around it. So itôs moving along. I think Iôm probably going to rent the three rooms out for Labor Day weekend with this McNett crew that come. They drive all the way to Bishop to spend the night and come back every day. Linda at the store has trailers people can rent and stuff like that. But she said, ñWe have people that want to stay in a nice house, or have a nice room.ò So thatôs whatôs happening over there.

RM: Do you have any other thoughts on the land issues and the federal government and how they control so much?

JH: It would be interesting to know what they really have in store for everybody. Of course, Iôm as far as you can get from a Marxist or a Socialist or a Communist. I think that what they do is just criminal. Theyôre killing business and nobodyôs going to have a

job. It takes their creativity away and they don't have a goal or a future. Now, I started out in the Apple Valley area; as I told you, my dad was a tank manufacturer. I grew up painting septic, water, and gas tanks. If I wanted any money at all, I got 50 cents for the inside and 50 cents for the outside.

RM: So that's why you're so enterprising.

JH: My sister and I had paint clothes on. They were so full of asphalt emulsion paint that we could just stand them in the corner. We'd jump in them every day after school, or on the weekends early in the morning before it got hot. When my sister and I were out of high school and gone, they sprayed the tanks. They could have sprayed them then.

RM: But he wanted to keep you kids working; he gave you a work ethic.

JH: Yes. It taught us kids, my brothers and sisters and I, that if we wanted any extra money, we needed a job. And I'd decide what I wanted to buy and how long it was going to take me to get it.

RM: I've got an off-topic question for you on. Every time I go down I-15 to Victorville, I see the Apple Valley turnoff. And of course, I think of Roy Rogers. Where is Apple Valley? Is it off to the left as you're going west?

JH: Before you go over the river, as you're dropping down the hill into Victorville, and the river's there. Before you get to that point, off to your left, straight across, that's Apple Valley. That's where the Apple Valley airport is.

RM: That's where you lived and grew up, in large measure, and where Roy lived?

JH: Right. In fact, in Oro Grande.

RM: Where's Oro Grande?

JH: You go across the river, then you take the D Street turnoff. You just head for George Air Force Base. George Air Force Base is on one side of the river and Oro

Grandeôs on the other. Itôs five miles from Victorville. We used to ride our horses across the desert and across, before there was I-15, and go to Apple Valley and play with other kids. Go visit and go hang out. Weôd ride the horses back at night just before dark.

Now, there is just no way. One brother has a pipe and supply business. Heôs got a huge American flagð itôs the one on the left. And my dad had that runway right along the freeway with the hangar. You canôt miss it.

RM: Iôm going to watch for it next time I go down to L.A.

JH: My brother inherited that. My dad had this piece of ground, 23 acres, that he put the runway and his hangar on. There was another five-acre piece just down from that. Or, if you were on the freeway, it would just be straight down. The little brother got the middle piece and the older brother picked the one on the corner. All three of them were right in a row there.

One of my brothersô guys left the key in a pretty good-sized truck. Some mental case got in about a week ago and got it going and backed it into all their gates, knocked all the gates down. Then went up on the runway, knocked the gate down up to the other place, the runway and that hangar, backed up and rammed the door into the hanger. Fred was showing me the pictures on his iPhone the other day. It buckled that first big support beam. Then he took off down the runway, somehow managed to get onto the freeway, and they picked him up. Of course everything has security and it all went off. The cops speeded out there but he was already gone.

They picked him up just before you go over Cajon Pass. He pulled off the side of the road and was passed out over the steering wheel without a stitch of clothes on him. He just tore everything up. John said, ñAt least he missed all the airplanes.ò So somebody left a key in one pickup, which they never do. But wouldnôt you know, some demon

would find it and get going like that.

RM: Demonôs the right word.

JH: No kidding. Iôm telling you. So that was pretty interesting.

Anyway, then you come on down the hill. And then the next [sign] you see is for Stoddard Wells and the next one you see is also Stoddard Wells. Thereôs two Stoddard Wells. The hangar and the runway and the buildings are in between the two.

RM: Iôm going to watch for some of the things you mentioned because Iôve got to go down to Southern California. My grandson, Billy Metscher, is graduating from high school next week.

JH: Where is he?

RM: Long Beach. Heôs graduating from Wilson High.

JH: Good; congratulations.

RM: Heôs a fine boy.

JH: Boy, what a relief when theyôre good. I look around and I think, I had these three boys and we have never had any trouble with them.

RM: I think the biggest part of it is parenting. My daughter is a wonderful mother and the boys have been very lucky.

JH: I always say, ñI grew up with my kids.ò

RM: Did you?

JH: Well, kind of. We all worked hard. We had absolutely nothing but sagebrush when we started out and they worked right along with us.

RM: My brother and I were wilder because our parents got a divorce. A lot of parenting was on Day One. Iôm not blaming the parents.

JH: But it doesnôt help.

RM: No. Have you got any other thoughts on being a commissioner? Have we covered your commissioner recollections on the commissary?

JH: Well, just mostly that it was the landfills. It was cutting our cow load on the range. It was leaving all the horses there to destroy all the feed and blaming it on the rancher, putting him out of business.

RM: Are the landfills on federal land or do they have to be on private land?

JH: Iôm pretty sure theyôre on BLM land because they control it. I knew that if we kept this one, they decided it was already contaminated so we were going to find another site and line it and use it. But that never happened.

RM: So youôre still using the same site?

JH: Yes, but they cleaned it up or whatever they did. Now theyôve got the two dumpsters. Thereôs a place for tires and a place for this and a place for that. You can see it when you go. It will be on the west side.

RM: Yes, Iôll watch for it. Well Joyce, thank you so much for talking with me. This has been very interesting and informative.

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