# An Interview with
# JEANNE POTTS

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
1987

Jeanne and Donald B. Potts
Late 1970s

CONTENTS

# PREFACE

The Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) engages in interviewing people who can provide firsthand descriptions of the individuals, events, and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the NCTHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the NCTHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the NCTHP will, in preparing a text:

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;
b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;
d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and
e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As project director, I would like to express my deep appreciation to those who participated in the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP). It was an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to obtain oral histories from so many wonderful individuals. I was welcomed into many homes--in many cases as a stranger--and was allowed to share in the recollection of local history. In a number of cases I had the opportunity to interview Nye County residents wham I have known and admired since I was a teenager; these experiences were especially gratifying. I thank the residents throughout Nye County and southern Nevada--too numerous to mention by name-=who provided assistance, information, and photographs. They helped make the successful completion of this project possible.

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed deep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L. Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
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# INTRODUCTION

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

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that while much of the state was napped and its geographical features named, a vast region--stretching from Belmont south to the Las Vegas meadows, comprising most of Nye County-- remained largely unsettled and unmapped. In 1890 most of southcentral Nevada remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be for at least another twenty years.

The great mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), and Rhyolite (1904) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, southcentral Nevada, notably Nye County, remains close to the American frontier; closer, perhaps, than any other region of the American West. In a real sense, a significant part of the frontier can still be found in southcentral Nevada. It exists in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area also is visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, most of it essentially untouched by human hands.

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the Round Mountain Nugget, was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper; Beatty's independent paper folded in 1912. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All six communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities after their awn papers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, which was published as a supplement to the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Nye County's close ties to our nation's frontier past, and recognizing that few written sources on local history are available, especially after about 1920, the Nye County Commissioners initiated the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP). The NCTHP represents an effort to systematically collect and preserve information on the history of Nye County. The centerpiece of the NCTHP is a large set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County libraries, Special

Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada. The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite picture of each cam unity's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique--some are large, others are small--yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a composite view of community and county history, revealing the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Nye County residents. In all, more than 700 photos have been collected and carefully identified. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories.

On the basis of the oral interviews as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories also have been archived.

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in 1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Nye County communities that may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Jeanne Potts at her home in Tonopah, Nevada October 19, 1987.

## CHAPTER ONE

RM: Jeanne, first of all why don't you tell me your full name and date and place of birth?

JP: OK. I was born in Fallon, Nevada on June 23, 1927. My given name at the time of my birth was Mildred [laughter] Jeanne Cirac, but I dropped my first name when I got old enough to realize that I hated it and could do without it, and I've gone by the name of Jeanne ever since.

RM: What was your father's name and where was he from?

JP: He was from Fallon. His name was Louis Victor Cirac, Jr.

RM: Do you know about when he was born?

JP: His folks lived in Ione, but he wasn't even born in Nevada; he was born in Utah, although he would never admit that. He said he was born in Colorado. He was born on November 16, 1908.

RM: What was your mother's name?

JP: Her name was Alice Lena Pratt. She was from Tuolumne. She was born in 1908 and she's still alive.

RM: What did your father do for a living?

JP: Oh, he worked on the railroad when he and my mother were first married. He was into mining and gambling . . .

RM: And he worked on the railroad out of Fallon?

JP: He and Mom lived in Fernley. The little house they lived in is still there. That's where I was "made," I think.

RM: Where did you go to school?

JP: I started to school in Ely, and then we moved to Fallon. We had lived in Fallon before that. I went to school in Fallon through the 4th grade. Well, in Fallon they have half-years. There's 1-A and 1-B and 2-..A and 2-B, etc. I skipped a half-year because I was smart [laughter] in the second grade, and then I lost a half a year when we moved to Tonopah from Fallon in 1938. When I left there I was in the 5th grade, I guess, [or] I went ahead to the 5th. I gained a year someplace.

RM: What brought your father and mother down to Tonopah?

JP: Work. My dad got a job at the Ace Club, dealing, for $10 a day; that was big money!

RM: What did he deal?

JP: He dealt '21' or anything.

RM: Yesterday on the phone you were saying that your family goes clear back to Ione and Austin.

JP: As I understand it, in the 1800's my great-grandfather and great-grandmother came to the States from France. They came around the Horn. And she was a doctor; she was educated in Paris. I should know her maiden name, but I can't find where I have it written down. They went to San Francisco and when they had a big silver strike in Austin, they moved there. It was just a tent city. And that's when the Black Plague - a pneumonia-like illness - broke out. It was very catching. My great-grandmother nursed people and finally contracted it herself. She's buried in Austin in an unmarked grave. And then my great-grandfather and the children left Austin and went to Ione. She had had 4 boys and a girl. One of than was my Aunt Alice, who is now dead. Uncle Leon, my Grandfather Louis, Uncle Charles and Uncle George. I think that was all, if I'm not mistaken.

I know my great-grandfather was a mean little old son-of-a-gun. After his wife died, he never remarried. The other little kids in town, I know, were scared of him. He was ornerier than hell. [laughter]

RM: That probably was when Ione was seat of Nye County.

JP: I really don't know. All I know is when I was working at the courthouse I found an original affidavit. It was written by my grandmother's father, giving permission for her to marry my grandfather a few days her 18th birthday, so that they could go to Utah together. [laughter] It's dated 1880 something.

RM: Please note that the Cirac family is discussed in Some Remembered and Some Forgot, a little book put out by the Nevada State Park Natural History Association, 1974. Is there anything else that you feel you want to say about your family's history before you roved to Tonopah?

JP: I was a Depression child, and I can remember living all over. I lived with my father's aunt and uncle during the Depression when things were really tough. She was a kindergarten teacher. Their daughter Edith and I were good friends. And that was in Fallon.

RM: So you didn't live at home all the time?

JP: No, because of the Depression. Daddy was all over, trying to get work. He was at Lake Tahoe, and we lived in Winnemucca for a while in the summer of '35 or '36.

RM: Then he came down here because he had a job?

JP: Right. He went from Fallon to Tonopah because he had a job.

RM: Do you know how your father got his job at the Ace Club?

JP: He was working in Fallon off and on, whenever he could find some work to do, and it wasn't that far away; I guess he just heard about it; I don't know, really.

RM: Had he done dealing before?

JP: Yes, when he had worked in Fallon. He worked at the Owl Club . . . I don't know where else.

RM: So he was an experienced dealer.

JP: Right. He had been to Reno, looking for work, and he had been to Lake Tahoe, and he and Mom both worked at the old Star Cafe and Bar and Casino -the old one - for one summer in Winnemucca.

And then a year or two later we came to Tonopah, in March of '38. I remember coming into town. We got about as far as Millers and my little brother and my mom and dad and I were in an old . . . I think it was a pickup. [laughter] Good old pickup, you know, with the back loaded down with all our possessions. Daddy was trying to point out to us where Tonopah was. [laughter] He had something to say about the little hills and valleys up there and then he said, "Whatever you do, when you get into town, don't tell anybody that you're Mormon." [laughter] I had been baptized a Mormon in Fallon. And he was really serious about it. His mother's family was Mormon, and his father's family was Catholic. He said, "Don't let anybody know that you're Mormon." I guess Tonopah people then just didn't have much use for Mormons, being strictly a mining town.

Insofar as the town went, I remember Ronzoni's clothing store was down where Glenn Jones later had J. C. Penney's store, on Main Street about where the Forest Service used to have their office.

RM: Yes, OK. That's where the barber shop is now.

JP: And there were quite a few cottonwood trees right on Main Street.

RM: Is that right?

JP: They were chopped down. Ronzoni had a store there [laughter] - Ronzonis later went to Vegas and had a big department store there. They were quite wealthy. I think they started in Manhattan, actually. As a matter of fact, my first mother-in-law said that Mrs. Ronzoni used to

do her laundry. But I can remember pawing through the stacks of clothing looking for a dress. Of course, the school was in the old location then . . . RM: Right. Where the park is now.

JP: We'd only been here - I guess less than a week - and I was walking home from school during the lunch hour; I got caught in a blizzard and got lost; that I remember.

RM: It hit that quickly?

JP: Yes. Very fast. I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I ended up on the side of "T" Mountain I knocked on a door up there for some help and Jack Kiekel - he was the barber here - took me home.

RM: What do you remember about the Ace Club, where your dad worked?

JP: Oh, it was a nice spot. Jo Foster - we were just talking about her -worked there. There was a keno game, and there was 21 and roulette; I can't remember if there was a crap game or not. And in the back there was a little dance floor; a nice bar. In those days it was owned by George Barra, who became the sheriff, and by Robert Marker. His wife's name was Myrtle. George Barra later was killed.

RM: How was Barra killed?

JP: In a car wreck. He just drove too damn fast. [laughter] I loved him dearly; he was probably my father's best friend. He was certainly a good friend to me and my kids. But he always drove too fast. And he and the undersheriff, who was about 24 or 25, were both killed this side of Beatty about 10 or 15 miles. They were killed in December of '66.

RM: And was he sheriff at the time?

JP: Yes. It was in the sheriff's car, as a matter of fact.

RM: What do you remember about the school?

JP: [laughter] I remember my first teacher, Mrs. Harbaugh, and how mean she was. She had brown hair and it probably had a little bit of grey in it. She used to dye it, and it turned green. Her first name was Nella, and her maiden name was Gray, and the reason I remember that is because we used to sing, "Oh my darling Nella Gray, they have taken her away . . ." [laughter]

I had her in the 6th grade, so I must have gone into the 6th grade when I got here. I remember I went home in tears every day, you know how a kid is when you take than out of [one] school and put than in a new one. I used to go home and say, "Mama, how care my name isn't Ciracovich?" Because here you were either a bohunk or an Italian.

RM: So you felt out of place by not being . .

JP: Well, the kids were mean; kids are mean, you know.

RM: What did they do to you?

JP: Oh, I don't know, just talked . . . you know how they are. Virginia Germaine lived across the road from us. She was married to Ray Germaine, and they had the paper here. They had a little girl, Gerry Ann, who was 2 at the time; I used to babysit with her. Virginia told me once that the kids wouldn't make fun of me if they didn't like me. [laughter] So then I was all right.

RM: The mines were pretty well down when you arrived, weren't they?

JP: Yes; I don't remember too much [activity]. I do remember the old mine right over here. It burned on a Halloween night. I remember seeing the smoke and flame [came] out of it, but I don't think anybody was hurt in it. RM: What supported the town?

JP: It was kind of down, much the same as it is now. I think everybody sort of supported each other. And then, of course, the Second World War came along and it boomed again.

RM: Were there a lot of bars and everything up and down Main Street?

JP: Well, of course the Tonopah Club was there, and the Ace, and the Rex. The Coors Bar isn't there anymore.

RM: There was a Coors Bar'

JP: The Coors Bar, it was called. That's where Taxine used to drink beer out of a champagne glass. She was the local Madame, and she was a nice lady.

RM: And she hung out there?

JP: Yes. Across the street during the war . . . I can't remember if they opened just before the war, or during the war. The Town Hall and the Mizpah were about all on that side of the street.

RM: Oh, the Town Hall was over there. What grocery stores were there?

JP: There was the Central Market, which was about where the Mizpah parking lot is now, and Reischke's little grocery store. .

RM: Yes, I remember that.

JP: And there was a Safeway's for a while where Coleman's is now.

RM: Where exactly was Reischke's?

JP: It was probably in the block where the Silver Queen motel is.

RM: Then along came the war, and they started the air base out there. What do you remember about that?

JP: Not too awfully much. I'm much more familiar with it after it got started. Different companies built it. I know there was a group from Fallon; I don't know if it was Dodge Construction, or just what it was. But I knew a boy from Fallon - I can't remember his name - was killed out there. He was crushed between two trucks.

I do know that the base started out being a training base for P-57 fighter planes, and it was decided that it was just too dangerous. There were too many mountains for them to crash into, so they switched to a bomber base. Their safety record was pretty good, although they of course had accidents.

RM: What do you remember about the construction phase? Did they bring in a lot of workers? Because they did a lot of building out there, didn't they?

JP: There was an awful lot of building. First it was just a matter of clearing the brush, and getting it ready, but the decor out there was taken from the natural desert. They had a lot of yucca and sagebrush and rocks, and all the streets were dirt It was very pretty, really. But I don't remember too much about the construction.

RM: What about the railroad?

JP: I worked for the Tonopah and Goldfield Railroad. The war ended in August of '45 and the day the war ended, I was out of a job. [laughter] It was that quick.

RM: They closed the railroad down?

JP: Yes. There was nothing left to support it.

RM: So the air base was supporting the railway?

JP: Yes, the air base was almost the sole support of it. I worked in the old depot on Main Street about where Valley Bank is now. That made a hell of a big fire when it burned. It wasn't in very good shape when I worked there.

RM: What did you do?

JP: I was secretary to the vice-president, and don't ask me what his name was, because I have flat forgotten, except he was an old wolf. I was going steady with a man who was stationed at the base. He was a civilian with counter-intelligence with the army rank of a major. And he, apparently, knew about the bomb that were going to be dropped on Japan. Very few people, I

guess, did know. He didn't tell me, but he apparently knew, because I had a $10 bet with him. He said, 'When do you think the war's going to be over?"

I said, "Oh, probably in January of '46."

And he said, "It's going to be over in the summer of '45. I'll bet you 10 bucks."

I said, "OK, you're on!" [laughter]

He had called me at work that morning to tell me that the war was over; that they had dropped a bomb on Hiroshima. He called me about 10:00 in the morning; I remember we had lunch at noon, and I didn't even have to go back to work. They kept on a few men and that was all.

RM: What was it like in town when the war was going on?

JP: Overcrowded. There were so many men stationed here who had wives, and no place to put than. There were between 2,000 and 2,500 men out there all the time, I would say. A lot of the bomber crew officers lived in Goldfield in the hotel. It was difficult to find a place to live here.

RM: So the old hotel was functioning then?

JP: The Goldfield Hotel was full of men [laughter] and their wives and the bar was open and everything. I remember that we had a little old garage across the street from our house, and it had a dirt floor . . .wanted to rent it but my dad wouldn't. [laughter] He said it was too bad.

RM: Where was your house?

JP: It was on Prospect, right next to Campbell's. Wedged in between 2 houses. We bought it from Judge Hatton. He was the judge here before Judge Breen. Judge Breen's son is Peter Breen. Peter Breen in Reno was Peter Breen's son.

RM: Would that be the district judge, or the J.P.?

JP: The district judge. The J.P. was Bowler when I came to town. Do you know Patsy Douglas, Allan Douglas' wife?

RM: Yes.

JP: That's his daughter.

RM: Then the war ended, and you lost your job?

JP: Just like that. I didn't care. Criminy, I worked so many jobs.

RM: What other jobs did you work?

JP: Mostly I worked for Bill Crowell, who was a lawyer here, and I worked at Wardle's.

# CHAPTER TWO

JP: When the base was under construction, I was working behind the fountain at Wardle's, which was a drugstore here. [laughter] It was right where Family Drug was, before it moved out.

RM: There was another drugstore diagonally across the street, wasn't there? What was that one called?

JP: That was the Corner Store. But I was working as a soda jerk for Mr. Wardle, and in the evenings I was doing the payroll for one of the construction companies who had men out here. [laughter] You can't believe the jobs I was holding down and not making one penny. In those days wages were pretty poor, but I was OK.

RM: Were you living at home?

JP: Yes. And then I went to work for Bill Crowell when I was still in high school. He was a lawyer. When I worked for him full-time I made $25 a week. Then he became D.A, but right after that I got married, so I didn't spend much time at the courthouse. I was married in January of '47.

RM: When the war ended, did the town just die?

JP: It really died. The only thing I can remember about the financial stability of Tonopah is ups and downs. It seemed that just about the time everybody was ready to throw in the towel and say, "Oh, God, we'd better move," something would happen. And it was usually the government in one way or another.

RM: And your father was working at the Ace Club all this time?

JP: Yes. And, as I say, during the war he probably made money. It seems to me that he had the gambling, somehow. He took over the gambling aspect of the business. It's nasty to say that because of the Second World War he made money or had fun, but I had fun, and Daddy made money.

RM: Well, I think a lot of people made money.

JP: And then he got involved in mining, of course. He always loved it. think what he made in the joint he poured down some empty hole.

RM: Was it one mine, or several?

JP: Oh, God! It was all over, rot only around Tonopah. He always had the inning bug. It would be very difficult, I think, to live in this area and not have it.

RM: So your perception of Tonopah's economic history has been a lot of ups and downs.

JP: Right. Right now it's really down because of the strike. [The union workers striking on the test range east of Tonopah during the fall of 1987.] RM: I see the strike as a temporary thing; do you?

JP: [sigh] Well, I hope so. I don't know. It is unimportant to me at this stage of the game because I'm not dependent upon making money.

RM: And your mother kept house during this period?

JP: Right. Mom still lives out at Round Mountain. She's married to Bob Wilson, and she's 78. I married Jim Lee in 1947 and had my, children by him. I divorced him in '65 and Don and I were married in November of '66.

RM: Did you meet Don here in town?

JP: Yes. I was working for Bill Beko, who is now the judge. Be was the D.A. then, and I came back here to go to work for him. Don came to him for his divorce and that's how I met him.

RM: Was this about the time of the big lawsuit against the contractors on the Test Site?

JP: Yes. I did all the pleadings; the complaint.

RM: Did you file it, or type it, or……?

JP: Well, I typed it; let's put it that way. What you like to know about the lawsuit?

RM: Well, Bob Revert, who used to be at Mercury, contends that that was a monumental thing that Beko did.

JP: It was. But of course, Bob and Bill were very tight

RM: He said it was an incredible accomplishment; a David and Goliath kind of thing.

JP: I don't remember it as being that. I do remember that we won, and it made a big difference in the economic stability of the county [when] those contractors had to start paying taxes.

RM: What other kinds of legal matters did you take part in?

JP: Well, in those days the D.A. was allowed to have a private practice, because he just didn't make enough money as D.A. So, what can I tell you? It was just an ordinary legal practice. I did legal work so much of my life that . . . When I came to work for Bill, it was a little different

because it was the first time that I had ever worked for a prosecutor. I had never been involved in criminal law and I enjoyed it.

RM: Were there any notable cases that you recall during this period?

JP: I remember the murder case of Sewell Carlton Thurlow, Jr. He had a girlfriend, and he and this girl killed an old man. The body was found, and I remember the morning I went to work Bill was very upset about the whole thing and very unhappy because first we had to identify the man who was killed before we had any chance of finding out who did it. It turned out to be a very exciting murder case, and the defendant turned out to be a little rat.

RM: Was he a local guy?

JP: No.

RM: Was he convicted?

JP: Oh, yes, we got a conviction, but not the death penalty, and I thought he should have it. He was one of these guys who used to turn around and grin at the audience and grin at the jury and try to make points.

RM: After you got married, you moved out of town, didn't you?

JP: Yes, I lived in Reno . . . I left in '47 and came back in '61. Right. I had ended up in Napa, California, and I was working for a lawyer there. Bill Beko called, and he said, "Your dad is sitting in my office, and he says you're going to be home for [laughter] a vacation this summer."

And I said, "Well, coming if I can afford it." Jim and I were having problems even then, and I was there alone with the kids, in Napa, starving to death. (Not really, but without enough money.)

Bill went on to tell me that his secretary, Jane Douglas, had cancer, and he said, "She hasn't been able to work for a number of months." He said, "If you're going to be home, could I talk you into coming in, at least part-time, while you're here?"

And I said, "Sure!" The minute he hung up, I started thinking about it, and I called him right back, and I said, "Bill, if I come back to Tonopah, can I go to work?"

And he said, "Oh, boy, can you!" So I did.

RM: How long did you work for him?

JP: That was in '60 . . . over 6 years.

RM: And when you met Don, he was working down at Mercury?

JP: We built this house in '79.

RM: When did your father pass away?

JP: In 1962. Much too young - he was just 60.

RM: When did you graduate from high school?

JP: I was supposed to graduate in '44, but I was expelled when I was a senior, in January of '44, for calling the principal a son-of-a-bitch, which I thought he was. [laughter]

RM: And they expelled you for that?

JP: Oh, you bet! I didn't graduate with my class.

RM: Who was the principal?

JP: His name was Clarence Byrd. It was during the war. I thought he was a Nazi and I told him so, too many times. I really think he was. And he made nasty remarks about my father. He called him "no-good" . .

RM: The principal would do that . . .

JP: One day he called me in - in fact, the day we had the big blow-out - and said he couldn't expect much of me when my father was nothing but a no-good drunk, or something. And I called him a Nazi son-of-a-bitch, and away we went! [laughter]

RM: And they expelled you for that? They couldn't get away with that, nowadays.

JP: Anyway, I was working for Bill Crowell then, and Bill happened to be on the school board. So I went in to work early. [laughter] Bill wanted to know what I was doing there, and I told him the story, and he said, "Hmm. Are you going to go back to school?"

And I said, "No way." [laughter]

Bill said he could get me back, if I wanted to. And he said, "If you want to wait till next year to get your diploma, I'll guarantee you he won't have a contract next year." And he didn't.

RM: Did Tonopah have sports teams?

JP: Mostly basketball; outstanding basketball. I don't remember much about football, but I remember basketball because I was a cheerleader. I was with a man - one of the boy students whose name was Jack Brady. He lives in Fernley. Jack was over 6 feet tall and I was a little punk then. And we were the cheerleaders - a boy and a girl.

RM: Did you travel around to the games?

JP: No, we didn't travel. Goldfield was our big rival in those days. One night after a basketball game I know it got pretty nasty with rotten eggs.

I remember that nobody had a car; we had to walk every place. And it was just different. It was bound to be different. It was different when kids went to school than it is now.

RM: Who else did they play besides Goldfield?

JP: [laughter] I'm sure we played many people, but I don't remember. I know we played Ely.

RM: How many were in your graduating class?

JP: By the time they graduated there were not too many, because it was a war year. We have a reunion, believe it or not, every 5 years. It seems to me there were 8 or 9; not very many. When we started out there was over 20 of us. But because of the war, and the fact that Mr. Byrd had expelled a few of us [laughter] . . .

RM: He must've been a real …..

JP: Well, my brother, for instance, liked him very much. He went from here to the university [laughter] as the registrar. But boy, I didn't like him. He was at the university for years. I used to see him in Reno and he used to cross the street to keep from saying "hello" to me. In fact, when I came back to Tonopah and went back to work for Bill Beko, he came into the office one day; he was on his way to Vegas with another man, and he just greeted me like a long-lost friend. And I just thought, you know, that was cool. RM: The mines were closed down during the war, weren't they?

JP: Yes.

RM: Was there anything happening at Manhattan or Round Mountain or . . .?

JP: Not that I remember. There probably was, because I know that even in those days . . . in fact, I went to school with George Vucanovich, who is Barbara's husband . . . George and I were schoolmates and he was from Round Mountain, and he used to ride into town every day to go to school. I don't know if he was the only student out there who came in, or not.

RM: It was during the war that they had the big mining operation at Gabbs.

JP: When I was married the first time, we moved to Gabbs. My husband worked in the mining camp there. It was Basic Magnesium. I don't remember much about it. We didn't stay very long. We moved to Reno.

RM: Then Basic Magnesium was still going in '47? I thought they shut that down about 1944.

JP: Well . . . what was the name of the company that took its place?

RM: Oh, I don't know. But they were mining in Gabbs in 1947?

JP: I guess. I didn't pay that much attention.

RM: Have you said what you wanted to?

JP: Yes. Your questions have been very helpful. Otherwise, I would never have dragged any of that up.

INDEX