An Interview With
MARIE
WILSON

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
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Marie Wilson
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PREFACE

The Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) engages in interviewing people who can provide firsthand descriptions of the individuals, events, and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the 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 incoherence. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the NCTHP will, in preparing a text:

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;

b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and

e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project in 1987. Subsequently, Commissioners Richard L. Carver, Dave Hannigan, and Barbara J. Raper provided support. In this current round of interviews, Nye County Commissioners Andrew Borasky, Lorinda Wichman, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Fely Quitevis provided unyielding support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the program within Nye County in its first years. More recently, Darrell Lacy, Director, Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office, gave his unwavering support. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Lacy's office, provided funds for this round of interviews. Thanks are extended to Commissioners Eastley and Hollis and to Mr. Lacy for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Lacy.

Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Kimberley Dickey provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Jean Charney, Julie Lancaster, and Darlene Morse also transcribed a number of interviews. Proofreading, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Marilyn Anderson, Joni Eastley, Julie Lancaster, Teri Jurgens Lefever, and Darlene Morse. Joni Eastley proofed all the manuscripts and often double-checked, as best as possible, the spelling of people's names and the names of their children and other relatives. Jeanne Sharp Howerton provided digital services and consultation. Long-time Pahrump resident Harry Ford, founder and director of the Pahrump Valley Museum, served as a consultant throughout the project; his participation was essential. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

All material for the NCTHP was prepared with the support of the Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Office, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect the views of Nye County or the U.S. DOE.

—Robert D. McCracken
2010

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.

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

The spectacular mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), Rhyolite (1904), Manhattan (1905), and Round Mountain (1906) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, southcentral Nevada, notably Nye County, remains close to the American frontier; closer, perhaps, than any other region of the American West. In a real sense, a significant part of the frontier can still be found in southcentral Nevada. It exists in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area also is visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the 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. The Rhyolite Herald, longest surviving of Rhyolite/Bullfrog's three newspapers, lasted from 1905 to 1912. The Beatty Bullfrog Miner was in business from 1905 to 1906. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All these communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities once their own newspapers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, published as part of the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 resides in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Nye County's close ties to our nation's frontier past, and recognizing that few written sources on local history are available, especially after about 1920, the Nye County Commissioners initiated the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) in 1987. The NCTHP represents an effort to systematically collect and preserve information on the history of Nye County. The centerpiece of the NCTHP is a large set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County

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

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

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

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

—RDM
2010

This is Robert McCracken with Marie Wilson and her sister Gloria Shearer at Marie's home at the Las Vegas Indian Colony in Las Vegas, Nevada, October 30, 2009.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Marie, why don't you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

MW: Marie Wilson, born 7/11/1942, Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Las Vegas Hospital, and I'm a resident of the Las Vegas Paiute Indian colony.

RM: When did you move here?

MW: I moved here when my oldest son was about nine years old. I lived on the outside, I had worked at the hospital, and then I moved here to the colony.

RM: The land for the colony was originally given to the tribe by Helen Stewart, wasn't it?

MW: It was originally given to the tribe by Helen J. Stewart and it cost a total of $500; I've got the ledger showing what she paid for it.

RM: And who did she buy it from?

MW: I don't know. We bought it from her—I guess the government paid the $500.

RM: Tell me your mother's name.

MW: My mother's name was Juanita Weed Lee and my father was Boone Wilson.

RM: When was your mother born?

MW: June 20, 1923.

RM: And who were her parents?

MW: Rosie Weed was her mother and her father was Seraphino Esteves.

RM: And were they Paiutes?

MW: My mother was Paiute and her mother was full-blooded Paiute. Her dad was a Spaniard.

RM: What was he doing here?

MW: He did all the masonry work down at Death Valley, he and the Shoshone Indians from down there.

RM: How many brothers and sisters did your mother have?

MW: My mother was an only child.

RM: And where did she grow up?

MW: She grew up round about Pahrump and Shoshone when she was a child. The Paiutes were migratory people and they traveled for the season, wherever the food was. Then that took her home to the place where they lived, Chappo, at the foothills of the Nopah Range. Shoshone sits in that basin right up on the mountainside. After you go down in that little gully, Shoshone's here, Chappo was on the east range.

RM: Can you see Pahrump from Chappo?

GS: No; there's a mountain. It's west of Pahrump. But when you're in Shoshone it's on the east side.

RM: Tell me about Chappo. What was going on there?

MW: That was where her grandmother and grandfather lived and worked. They had raised their children there; then the children married and moved on. Her grandmother and grandfather burned up in their house there.

RM: Oh, how awful. Now, what were her grandmother and grandfather's names?

MW: Nellie Weed and Tom Weed.

RM: And they were Paiute?

MW: Full-blooded Paiutes.

RM: Tell about the fire. When did it happen?

MW: I don't really know about the fire, just what I have been told, that they burned up.

GS: That was when Mom was about six years old.

MW: Mom was born in '23, so 1930, somewhere in there

RM: Where there any other dwellings at Chappo?

MW: That was the only dwelling there at that period of time. Nellie and Tom Weed are buried in the cemetery at Shoshone and other members of our family are buried there, too. I think that's also where Dad Fairbanks and those people are buried. Right, Gloria?

GS: I don't know. I know old man Brown and his wife are buried there.

MW: Yes, Senator Brown is buried there.

RM: And you lived at Chappo as kids?

MW: I never lived at Chappo. My mother got the property up there through the Indian Land Grant, the ten acres, so that's Indian land.

RM: Does it belong to the tribe?

MW: No, to her—Juanita Lee Weed. It does not belong to anyone but her and her descendents. And she is dead and is buried in Pahrump.

RM: Is there water at Chappo?

MW: Yes, there is a spring; that's why it was valuable land.

RM: Are there any other springs in the Nopahs where the Indians might have lived?

MW: I'm sure there are—Resting Springs is maybe about 15 miles down towards Tecopa. There is a spring there that belonged to Cub and Phi Lee and those folks.

RM: Where did you mainly grow up, then?

MW: When we were small, I lived in Shoshone with my grandma, my kaku. That's an Indian name. Kaku means "grandma." We lived at Shoshone up below the Black Mountain as children

GS: For about a year and a half.

MW: I didn't go to elementary school there. Gloria did; I'm two years younger so there's a lot that she did that I didn't do because I had to stay home. She was allowed to do a little bit more than I was.

RM: Was it typical that the older child, even a girl, would get a little more freedom?

MW: Yes, that's typical of any household, even our household. My sons have four years between their ages and what my oldest son did and my youngest son couldn't do . . . we always had a little conflict with that. That's the way it is typically in an Indian house.

RM: Is the younger child typically a little more conservative?

MW: No, we're children and we're treated as children. That's how the household was run. As a teenager Gloria was 16 and I wasn't, so I couldn't do a lot of the things that she used to do. She always had a curfew time at 10:00 and on weekends she had to be in at 12:00, but I was never allowed to go do that because I was too young. I had to stay home.

RM: But when you got that age, were you allowed to be out?

MW: Yes, but we always had a curfew at 10:00.

GS: It didn't matter how old you got.

MW: No, it didn't matter how old you got—rules are rules. We had rules in the house, my mother and dad did. It was an absolute must.

RM: Where else did you live growing up?

MW: I lived in Pahrump as a child—my father worked down at Bowman's ranch. In the summertime we used to go up and live with Annie Beck. Tom Bob was my mother's uncle and he was married to Annie Beck's daughter Sarah. We would spend a little bit of the summer at Uncle Tom Bob's place at Bowman's ranch just down by the highway. Annie Beck had a spot up there.

RM: So your family lived on the Manse Ranch, Bowman's ranch.

MW: Of course we did. We lived in the house down below there when we were children and my dad worked for Bowman.

RM: You don't remember how much he got paid, do you?

MW: No. We were so small that that was of no consequence to us. We just ate and slept and played at that period in our lives.

RM: What did your play consist of?

MW: We played with hoops and we had dolls. We played skoomer dolls—little dolls that we used to make of sticks and we'd put hair on them. And when we were little up at Shoshone, there was always clay and we made clay dolls and Kaku, Grandma, would make little dishes and they would make toys for us.

RM: You made your own toys.

MW: Yes, they made toys for us and we made toys for ourselves. We had little toy cars and things made out of blocks and spools of thread. We had a lot of beautiful toys I wish I had now that we played with when we were small.

RM: Tell about making the clay dolls.

MW: If we wanted to make a deer we would put in sticks for antlers and we might get one of those fuzzy little things, grasses, and stick it in for a tail. We played with all different things.

RM: And what were the skoomer dolls?

MW: That was a stick doll and we tied it with the arms and the legs and stuff. They always had cloth—material—that they let us play with to make dresses for the dolls.

RM: So you made their clothes, too.

MW: Sure we made their clothes. We'd use a child's imagination and Daddy and those guys would make toys for us. We had some beautiful toys to play with. I wish I had them now; they would be collector's pieces.

RM: We used to make our toys too, and my grandchildren can't relate to that. [Laughs]

MW: No. And we had round hoops off a wagon and we'd get a piece of stick and tack the lid of a can on it and use the stick to roll the hoop.

RM: Did you play with horses or go horseback riding?

MW: We didn't have horses.

RM: Did you do any hunting?

MW: The only thing we hunted was lizards and rabbits. We used to tie strings on their tails.

RM: On lizards?

MW: Yes. Of course, the men folk went hunting and brought in the deer and things.

RM: Was there traditional Paiute religion practiced in the area—would you attend services or powwows or anything like that?

MW: The only powwow we had was a Cry—after a person died you'd have a memorial.

RM: Were you kids allowed to go to those?

MW: We were not allowed to go in; we went but we had to stay way out at a distance, we could not mingle with the people. They would bring food for us to eat but we weren't allowed to go down there.

RM: How long did a Cry last?

MW: Three or four or five days.

RM: Where did they hold them?

MW: They held them at wherever the deceased had died. I only remember one I went to as a child. That was up at Ash Meadows, the Bishops'.

GS: I only remember one at Mamie Steve's.

MW: I didn't go to that.

RM: Where was Mamie Steves'? Where did she live?

GS: At that time she lived at two places in Pahrump. But this was at the very beginning, where the road goes to Shoshone and down to the old store. There's some mesquite trees in that corner and that was where her house was.

RM: And they had a Cry for her?

GS: No, it was for her daughter.

RM: How many Paiutes would you say were living in Pahrump during this period?

MW: There were the Browns.

GS: The Sharps.

MW: And Annie Beck and Mutt and Jeff and John, my mother's uncles. Those were the only ones.

RM: What kids were there that you remember?

MW: The only ones I remember were Rose and Marge Brown, Steve Brown's kids.

GS: And the Sharps.

MW: Yes, but I didn't know the Sharps existed down there when I was a child because we'd never see them.

RM: Did you ever leave the ranch, like to go down to the store? Was Pop Buol still there or was that someone else's store by then?

GS: Yes, Burketts'. I remember going down there.

MW: I don't remember going down to the store. All I remember was what I used to do, playing, swinging like Tarzan on the grape vines and things like that.

RM: You knew about Tarzan?

MW: Yes, I did. We listened to the radio.

RM: Did you listen to the radio a lot, like every night?

GS: Oh yes!

MW: She did but I didn't.

RM: Why didn't you?

MW: I had other things to do.

RM: [Laughs] What were the programs you listened to, Gloria?

GS: Stella Dallas and The Shadow are the only ones I can really remember, and all of those old mysteries that used to be on. My dad had to have the news or swing music.

MW: I remember the big band music because I still like Tommy Dorsey and those bands.

RM: Do you remember the radio stations you listened to?

GS: There's one radio station I'll always remember—it was out of Del Rio, Texas. It was a country western station.

RM: How did you listen to the radio? Was there any power?

GS: We had power. I don't know if it was generator run or what.

MW: We did have lights but I don't remember where the power came from.

GS: All of our radios were battery operated.

RM: What were your favorite things growing up?

MW: My favorite thing growing up was just playing. Playing Tarzan, getting out there and eating the tomatoes off the tomato trees, smoking grapevines. . . .

RM: You smoked grapevines?

MW: Well, we weren't allowed to smoke and we'd see other people smoke so we got the grapevines and we'd pretend. That burned the heck out of our throats.

GS: It just hurt so bad.

RM: [Laughs] Did most of the people smoke?

MW: Both Mom and Dad did. Dad was a pipe and cigar smoker and Mom was cigarettes.

RM: Did both of you go to school at the little red schoolhouse?

MW: I did and she did, too. I remember Freddie Sharp was our bus driver.

RM: What did the bus consist of?

MW: It was a panel wagon.

GS: There weren't very many kids.

MW: It was just the Indian kids that he picked up. We never saw the white kids in that car that I remember.

RM: How many Indian kids were there, do you think?

GS: The Sharps alone is a bus full. [RM laughs] And at that time there was you and I with Mom, and that's it.

MW: And Rose and Marge.

GS: They lived in Pahrump.

RM: You didn't consider out where you were living as in Pahrump?

GS: That's Manse.

RM: In your mind that was a separate town then?

MW: It used to be separate in our time. Now it's not; they've changed everything.

RM: Everything is just one big town now. Where did the Sharps live?

MW: The Browns, I know, lived a little bit down from Annie Beck's.

RM: Where did the Sharps live?

GS: They lived across the street from where we lived on the Manse Ranch, across the main highway right at the edge.

RM: Did you have brothers and sisters?

MW: No, it was just the two of us.

RM: And the other children came later?

GS: Just two more, yes.

MW: Yes, Marvin was born right there—Annie Beck delivered him the Indian way and Mom said that was the best delivery she ever had.

RM: Did she say why it was better?

MW: It was pain-free. There were heated rocks covered with some kind of sage with more dirt on top and it had a tarp on top of that and then a blanket, and that's where my mother lay. Her body was warm and it relaxed her, I guess. Old Man Bowman was there when Marvin was born and he was the witness. He's the one who named him Marvin D. Wilson. Lola Bowman says, "I remember when your brother was born."

RM: Where is he now?

MW: My brother's dead. He went to sleep and never woke up. Asphyxiation.

GS: He went to Vietnam and came back and he had that Agent Orange in his legs and hands. He died on his birthday.

GS: He was 24.

RM: Did the Agent Orange cause blisters?

GS: Oh yes, and skin peeling.

MW: He had it in his hands and around the groin area and around his earlobes. He would come stay with me when I was living in Vegas at my apartment, and I would look at his hands. My

mother used to doctor his wounds; she made him bathe in greasewood, seguvia, and that used to kind of heal it, take care of it.

RM: Was the government helping him at all?

GS: No.

MW: They still haven't acknowledged it.

GS: The Vietnam War wasn't even over yet. He and his buddy enlisted together and then they came home. They must have come home in February; March fourth was my brother's birthday and he and his buddy went to a birthday party they had for my brother. They came back and stayed in his buddy's trailer and they had all the windows sealed and they both died.

MW: From asphyxiation.

RM: How sad. And who was your other sibling?

GS: Elaine Wilson. She died just two or three years ago. And we had another sister, Charlotte—she died of spinal meningitis when she was about three or four months old.

MW: She was just a baby and she is buried here in the Las Vegas Paiute cemetery.

RM: I had a sister die of that before I was born. It's a serious disease.

GS: Yes, my mother said it was the most horrible thing she'd seen. And Mom was probably only about 19.

RM: So your mom was pretty young when you were born.

GS: Yes, she was 15.

RM: Talk about your father. He was related to the Wilsons out here at the ranch?

MW: Yes, his father was Tweed Wilson.

RM: Can you discuss the Wilsons?

MW: My grandfather's father was George Anderson, and he went someplace down in California and got killed. Let's see, how did that work?

GS: I don't really know how that worked.

MW: His wife died and they said he was really despondent and he left. He had a partner named Twilson and when he left to go to California he had Twilson take care of his two boys, because that was the old man's ranch.

RM: Now, this is the Wilson ranch up here?

MW: Yes the old Sandstone Ranch.

GS: And then Anderson, who was really our great-great-grandfather, went to California to a little town—Daggett?

MW: No, that's where Mother was born.

GS: Okay; it's somewhere around this little area, down this side of Barstow. Anderson bought a bar and he got shot in that bar.

RM: And was George Anderson a white man?

MW: He was a white man, a Scotchman. He was a redhead. They said you could see him from afar coming on a horse when the sun was to his back with the flaming red hair. An old lady up in Red Rock told me about that. It was so funny, the way she expressed it.

GS: Down at Blue Diamond.

RM: For the readers of the future, can you describe where the Wilson Ranch is?
MW: Now it's known as Spring Mountain Ranch. "Lum" (Lauck) and Abner bought it when they lost it. I don't know how they lost it—by not paying the taxes, I think.

GS: That's what they say.

MW: So Lauck and Abner bought it and then it went to Vera Krupp and then Howard Hughes. It is at the base of Spring Mountain, the Red Rock area just west of Vegas.

RM: It would be north of Blue Diamond town.

GS: Right.

RM: So Anderson had the ranch first?

MW: Anderson and Twilson. They were partners when they were on the ranch and then when Anderson left, he left Twilson in charge of the two boys, Tweed and Jim Wilson, and Twilson later adopted the boys and gave them his last name of Wilson. Twilson Wilson served in the Civil War.

RM: Did Anderson come there with his wife?

GS: No. She was a Paiute from the Panamint Range and her name was Kayier.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Do you consider the Paiutes over in the Panamints to be members of the Paiutes? They're not another branch of Paiutes.

GS: No, they are Paiutes.

RM: Is it Southern Paiute or Paiute?

GS: It's Paiute. It does not matter where you are—Northern Paiute or Southern Paiute, you speak the same lingo so how can there be a division?

RM: And where are the people called the Northern Paiutes? They're up around Reno, aren't they?

GS: Yes—Pyramid Lake, all through there.

RM: And you don't distinguish them as being a different tribe.

MW: No, they are Paiutes; the white man called us Paiutes. The white man came in and said "You're this, you're that, and you're this." We are the Mountain Sheep clan. The people down in Death Valley, the Shoshone there, speak a different language from us, but, we speak some of the same language. The people down in Parker say they're the new wave of Chemehuevis, but they're still Paiutes.

RM: And they claim they're from Ash Meadows and Snow Mountain, Mount Charleston, is their origin.

MW: They migrated down to Parker. And lot of the people from the towns are Paiutes. We all speak the same language.

RM: And it's the same with the Paiutes in the Panamints, then?

MW: Yes, because they say they're extinct but we still have the blood. Nothing ever goes extinct with the Indian. They've moved on and are called a different thing. The white man's always calling them something different.

GS: We were told also that the Paiutes are part of the Anasazi group.

MW: Yes, because they were up here; there are remnants of them all over in this valley.

RM: Some people say that the Anasazi were in here using Paiutes for laborers. You don't believe that?

MW: No.

GS: I don't.

MW: The only warring tribe that we knew was the Mojaves. You can tell a Mojave from a Paiute—we were short in stature, small and barrel-chested, but the Mojaves were great big, six feet tall. Those Mojaves are big people. Before they started damming it, the Colorado River water would go down and there was always a land bridge. They would come across that land bridge down below and steal the Paiute women and take them back to their tribe.

RM: So was there fighting between the Mojave and the Paiute?

MW: I don't know.

GS: There was bad blood, let's say that.

RM: Did the Paiutes ever try to go get the women back?

MW: I don't know. Some of the tribes down in Arizona had tattoos on the women so they could identify their women if they were stolen. A lot of the old Indians way back 200, 300 years ago had tattoos on for identification. You'd be surprised how far the Benn family ranges—we're clear down in Arizona, down in the Pima Reservation.

RM: Because of stolen women?

MW: No, because of marrying out; you couldn't marry within your own clan because you're going to marry your relative.

RM: So you cannot marry a Pahrump Paiute.

MW: We're related to them.

RM: Could you marry a Las Vegas Paiute?

MW: No, we're related to them.

GS: We're related. Most of these people that are from here . . . our relatives came from around Pahrump. They came over this way like Angela and all of them down here but the rest of them came from down in Parker, up north in southern Utah. . . .

MW: Like I said, we're a migratory people. We traveled. They would reside here for maybe the wintertime where it was not so cold. And they would migrate up into Moapa and down from Moapa to Chemehuevi Valley and Parker and then up in Ash Meadows.

GS: And Barstow.

MW: Yes, clear down to Victorville, Barstow, and Apple Valley. We're migratory people. My mother also went clear up on the Test Site and lived. If the pine nuts were in season in abundance up there, that's where they went.

RM: So your mother was up on the Test Site.

MW: Yes. She would have gone by buckboard. She went up there with George Ishmael and her grandparents. He hung out with the Indians.

RM: Was he married to an Indian woman?

GS: Not that I know of.

MW: Elaine always said they've got Indian blood in them someplace but they don't know where. [Laughter] Elaine is George Ishmael's granddaughter. She said, "I know we have Indian blood in us someplace." And they do, somewhere along the line—I was looking at Elaine's son (Chris, my son, was good friends with him). I looked at that boy and I could see Indian in him.

RM: Is that right. Now going back to George Anderson, the two boys were sons of his marriage with an Indian woman, Kayier, so they were half Indian. Then Anderson gets killed down somewhere this side of Barstow.

GS: And then Wilson adopted the two boys.

RM: About what year was this, do you think?

MW: I couldn't tell you.

GS: All I know for sure is George Anderson established that ranch up here . . . or he got that place for the first time in 1860.

RM: And how long was he there before he took off?

GS: I have no idea. I never asked.

MW: I can remember a little bit of what Grandpa, Tweed Wilson, used to tell me. That used to be a way station for the Pony Express. They had the cattle and fresh changes of horses and then they went on.

GS: And the army always was there, too. Old Man Wilson had the cattle up there. That's like I was saying about Quesi, Stella Smith—Quesi is her Indian name. Stella Smith used to tell me that when the times were lean down here they would go up to the ranch because the Wilsons

would butcher cattle and feed the Indians up there. And they had fruit trees and so forth. I know that for a fact because I found a grindstone rock up there that I picked up and brought home. That is where the Indians went in times of need.

RM: And the Indians had a sharing thing—if you were hungry I would share with you.

MW: I don't know about Old Man Wilson; he must have had a good heart.

RM: Was Anderson married when he came in here?

MW: No, he married after he came. He married Kayier, the lady from the Panamints.

RM: How did he meet her?

MW: I hear that he wanted a cook and she was a cook.

RM: And he ended up marrying his cook.

GS: And I believe she died in childbirth. I kind of heard little whispers about it. My understanding was that when she had her last child, she died at childbirth. I think we found her coffin up there when we were burying Grandpa.

MW: Our dad.

GS: My husband and our brother were digging the grave at the ranch and they hit a casket. On the handle on that casket it said 1860. I figured that is the year she probably died. I just had little inklings through listening to all the old people. When we had that hundredth anniversary they were telling us stories and that was one of the ones I heard, that she died at childbirth.

RM: But 1860 would have put it too young, because if she had already had two children before she died. . . . But you believe that she died in childbirth and maybe that sent him into a tailspin and he said, "I've to get out of here."

GS: Right. In fact, I think that the baby died, also.

RM: And that would have been their third child. So he left and went down there and later got killed.

GS: That's what happened. I think he was just so distraught.

RM: Do you know anything else about Anderson besides his red hair and that he was tall?

MW: No. They had that Civil War ceremony for the old men and they did some research on Anderson, and they never did get back to us on that. I've got a picture of him.

RM: How old were the boys when George Anderson left?

GS: They were probably eight and nine, somewhere like that.

MW: This is a picture of them taken up on the ranch—Russell and Dad, Russell and Boone Wilson.

RM: And Wilson adopted them and he became the sole owner of the ranch.

GS: When he died he left it to the Wilson boys.

MW: When the boys were growing up at the ranch, Grandpa told me that they were well schooled. They had teachers with them up there. Grandfather Wilson wanted the kids to be educated. They were well-read young men.

GS: They had beautiful handwriting.

MW: The Oliver Ranch was the next ranch south from the Wilson Ranch. Old Lady Oliver and those people were well acquainted with the boys when they were growing up because they had cattle. They had cattle on this side and on the Pahrump side and they had all of the water rights on both sides.

RM: Oh really, going over Mountain Springs?

GS: That whole range.

MW: Beyond that whole range of mountains they had an upper cabin and a lower cabin. I don't even know the name of that canyon—we always called it the upper and the lower ranch. I remember I went up there one time with Russell in the old green pickup, checking it out. He said, "This is where we used to have our old cabin," and you could see part of the old cabin still stands. The Forest Service bulldozed the lower one. What an outcry they got from Las Vegas.

RM: How many head of cattle do you think the Wilsons were running?

GS: We had the ledger book. It was a big operation. In fact, Samuel Clemens worked for them.

RM: Is that really true?

MW: It's what they say.

GS: It's written in the ledger.

RM: Oh my gosh. They must have had a number of employees to handle all those cows. I'll bet a lot of them were Paiutes.

GS: No, not that I know of.

MW: We can't speak of that because we don't know. We only knew of one person, one black man that was a cowboy.

RM: So the boys grew up on the ranch. And who was oldest?

MW: Jim was the oldest, so they say.

RM: Then your grandfather Tweed. Who did he marry?

MW: He married Annie Benn. She was one of the Benns that migrated over to Pahrump to Moapa. She was a full-blooded Paiute Indian. I don't know how she got up there to marry my grandfather. I have no idea how they got acquainted.

RM: But the Benns were originally from Pahrump or they were just over in Pahrump?

MW: No, the Moapa Indians all lived here.

GS: We're all descended from them.

RM: You mean all the Indians in Moapa are originally from. . . ?

GS: The majority.

MW: They're descendants from Tule and Whispering Ben (they were brothers). There were a couple of other Ben boys but I don't know their names. All I know is Tule and Whispering Ben.

RM: And Whispering Ben, of course, owned Indian Springs and traded that out, right?

MW: And Tule Ben owned Tule Springs.

GS: And that is why I got so upset with Vegas for changing the name of Tule Springs to Floyd Lamb Park. It should still be Tule Springs.

MW: We have a relative, one of the Benns, who's buried up here at Corn Creek someplace but we don't know where.

RM: So Tweed Wilson married Annie Benn, and who was her father?

GS: Annie Benn's father was Tule Ben.

RM: Then Tweed and Annie lived at the ranch. Did they live there their whole life?

GS: My grandpa did.

MW: Yes, Jim and Tweed lived there all their lives but then Annie Benn and my grandfather separated and my father went with his mother to Moapa and Russell stayed with Tweed. He grew up over there and Russell grew up at Spring Mountain, at the ranch.

RM: How old were they when they separated?

GS: It sounded like Dad was pretty young when he was telling this story.

RM: So he grew up out at Moapa and the Moapa Reservation had been started by then?

MW: One difference between the two brothers is that my father and his mother, Annie Benn, spoke the Paiute language fluently. Russell knew none of the Paiute language; he did not grow up as an Indian. My father was a doctor with the Paiutes.

GS: He was a preacher.

MW: He was a talker.

GS: The two boys never got along. My dad was more outgoing and was a womanizer and would go honky-tonking. His brother, Buster, never did that. Buster was an introvert.

MW: Buster lived with my grandfather until my grandfather died at 90-something years old.

GS: Buster was in the military during World War II.

MW: Yes, he fought with Patton. He went up to Egypt or wherever Rommel was. Dad, Boone Wilson, never went into the military but he worked on Boulder Dam when it was being built.

RM: Now, tell about your mother's family, the Weeds. They are Pahrump Paiutes from the Pahrump area, right?

MW: Yes, I believe Nelly and Tom Weed originated from over in Pahrump Valley.

GS: They did.

MW: Like I said, they were migratory people and then they had a place in Chappo, near Shoshone. Nelly and Tom Weed had three daughters and they lived on the mountainside over by Black Mountain and they moved down to Apple Valley and out to the Test Site for hunting and gathering.

GS: Tell him about Mom's bloodline—the Benns.

MW: Mom came from Whispering Ben, and Old Man Whispering Ben is buried in Pahrump Valley at the Chief Tecopa Cemetery. And her grandmother was Whispering Ben's eldest daughter.

GS: Whispering Ben and Tule Ben were brothers. And Whispering Ben is the one my mother gets her bloodline from.

RM: Okay, what was his wife's name?

MW: We can't go back that far.

GS: We can't find that out; we've tried.

MW: You know, the old Indians could have probably told you. My kaku, Grandma, could have told us, but she would have known the Indian name. The white man came along and gave us all of the names. We know only the Wilsons, that's the only. . . .

RM: What would an Indian name be? And do they have a meaning or is it just a name, like Judy.

MW: My mother's Indian name was Pisi.

RM: Does it mean anything beyond being a name?

MW: We don't know.

GS: Our grandmother's name was Angouts.

RM: And does it mean anything that you know of?

GS: Not that I know of.

MW: We can't tell you—that's lost in time.

RM: So the whites eliminated all the Indian names and gave you English words for names.

MW: That is like that lady who lived back of Burketts' store, Mamie Steve. Her Indian name was Kaitiou.

RM: What can you tell us about where Whispering Ben came from?

MW: You can't go back that far; that's lost.

RM: I wonder how Whispering Ben wound up with Indian Springs.

GS: They originated out of Ash Meadows, and it isn't very far.

MW: The Indians lived at all of these springs. That was their home. I don't know how else to say it.

RM: Going back just a little further, were the springs kind of owned by everybody?

MW: The Indians shared.

RM: They weren't like the whites, "get off my land".

MW: No. And at one time this was a fertile valley, a green valley; there were springs popping up all over. Each place a spring was, that's where the Indians were.

RM: Indians were camping and living part of the year.

MW: Absolutely; it was a source of water for them.

RM: But you believe that Whispering Ben came out of Ash Meadows.

GS: He had to have come out of Ash Meadows. Where he and his descendants came from before that, we wouldn't know.

RM: Ash Meadows is a key part of the origin, isn't it? A lot of Paiutes are coming out of Ash Meadows.

MW: Yes. Where they came from before Ash Meadows, who knows?

RM: I was talking to a fellow down in Parker the other day and he was telling me a Bear and Coyote story. I love Coyote stories. And Coyote's home in the story was in a cave above Ash Meadows.

GS: I've got to show you that place where the rabbit den is, and you can see a wolf or a coyote track.

RM: A rabbit running from a wolf?

GS: No, a rabbit was dancing in a circle singing his song and there was a coyote wanting to eat that rabbit. The coyote and the rabbit ran and you could see the coyote's footprints, where he ran.

RM: Where is that?

GS: In Pahrump, if it's not destroyed. Almost half of it is destroyed by now.

RM: Do you have more thoughts on growing up in the Pahrump area and that whole region?

MW: I remember growing up in Pahrump, a very little. I can remember being down in that house and there was a nest of some sort, bees or something, hanging. My dad used to tell me, "Don't be playing around there now." I'd get a stick and poke it. Oh, it got me—it bit me all over my head.

And I remember they had Brahma bulls in Bowman's corral. Daddy, Old Man Bowman, and all of them would say, "Don't be playing," because I would always go over to the Brahma bulls. I was teasing the bulls one time, I was inside the bull's pen. Lola Bowman was a young lady then. They were busy over at the house, bottling, and I was out playing. "Stay around the house," I was told. But I didn't stay around the house, I was out there messing with everything and poking a stick at the Brahma bull and I was inside the fence and he almost got me. Thank goodness for Lola—she saved my life.

RM: How did it happen?

MW: I was in the corral poking the Brahma bull with a stick and they went looking for me because it was too quiet at the house because I wasn't there. Lola found me out there and that Brahma bull came charging at me. She grabbed me and rolled me under the fence line. I got a spanking and I got another spanking when I got home.

RM: Now, who was Lola Bowman?

MW: Elmer Bowman's daughter. She reminds me of that periodically when I see her.

RM: Did you know Perry Bowman and his family?

MW: I did not know Perry Bowman. I really didn't know Elmer, his father, because I was a little girl.

RM: What kind of a life did your mother have at the ranch?

MW: My mama was a housewife.

RM: And what would that have involved, living at the Manse Ranch?

MW: Taking care of the house and having a vegetable garden and taking care of us kids and fixing the meals and keeping the house clean. My mother was very fastidious.

RM: What do you remember about the house at the Manse? What was it made out of?

MW: It was wood house. I can remember eating because I loved to eat when I was little. I had a hollow leg.

GS: It had two bedrooms. I do know that.

MW: All I can remember is sitting at the table and eating. That was my favorite pastime.

RM: Was there an adobe house at the ranch then?

MW: Not that I know of.

RM: Do you remember a vineyard there? Or was it gone by then?

MW: We had grapes there, grapes just growing on a fence. As for vineyards, I don't know vineyards unless Doby Doc had a vineyard.

RM: There was a vineyard there in the old days, but I think it had died by then.

GS: Doby Doc had one I know of.

MW: Doby Doc had vineyards because he made wine. And Old Man Bob Lee used to go get the wine. Doby Doc would always give him jugs of wine that he made down at the vineyard. He made all kinds of wine; he made fruit wine, apricot wine. And he would give that to Bob Lee. Grandpa.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: You're related to the Lees, too?

MW: Clyde Lee was my stepdad; he was Old Man Bob Lee's grandson. I knew Bob Lee.

RM: How old was he then?

MW: He was in his 80s, going on to his 90s. He drove an old Model T Ford; he had that until he died. It was kept up with baling wire. I can remember the times when Dad would get a call in the middle of the night, "Clyde, your grandfather is parked out in the middle of the road." Because wherever he stopped, that's where he camped out.

RM: So he was your stepdad's grandfather. Who was your stepdad's father?

GS: Bob Lee—another Robert Lee.

RM: Did he live in Pahrump?

MW: He lived in Pahrump. He lived in Shoshone, Tecopa, Noonday. They were migrants.

GS: He was related to Cub Lee and Phi Lee.

RM: Who was the original Lee in there?

GS & MW: Cub and Phi Lee.

RM: And who was their father?

GS: We don't know.

MW: Cub and Phi had mining claims all over that area. Remember that kid that brought me the purple bottles, Chris McDonald? He said he went way up over the Kingston Mountains—they had the Kingstons up at Horse Thief Springs. They had mining claims back in through that way, the Lees did—one of the Lee brothers. They had mining claims all over, clear down in Ash Meadows and through there.

RM: How is your stepfather related to the Lees?

MW: That was his great-great-great-grandfather. Old Man Bob Lee came from Cub or Phi Lee—I don't know which was his father. Bob Lee was one of the sons and then Robert Lee was his son and Clyde Lee, Robert Lee's son, was my stepfather. So there were four generations right there of Lees.

RM: How would you describe the Lees?

MW: Cub and Phi Lee were miners. Dad, Clyde Lee, didn't get into mining until his early 20s. Old Man Bob Lee had mining claims all over, too.

GS: There was Clyde Lee, our stepdad. [Showing a picture]

MW: There's Dad. This is my mom when they were young, when they were married.

RM: That's a nice picture. So you come from a lot of well-known people in the area—Whispering Ben, the Lees.

MW: We have a lot of history in this family.

RM: How long did you live in Pahrump then, on the Manse Ranch?

MW: A couple of years. I was a little girl; I don't remember. As I said, I wasn't even in school.

GS: She must have been about five.

RM: Where did you guys move from there?

MW: We were with Dad here at Vegas, right where we are living now.

GS: From there, Dad went to work for Morrison Knudsen. We moved to Baker and then all over.

RM: At one point you moved to the Kingstons?

GS: Yes, with my mom and dad, Clyde Lee.

RM: Tell me about life as you recall it.

MW: We spent the summer up there and then we had to go down below to go to school in Tecopa. We went through Tecopa Elementary. We went to school in Tecopa but stayed up in the Kingstons for the summer; which was really fun. We had a lot of fun up there.

RM: Is it nice up there in the summer?

MW: It was beautiful up there at the time we were living there, but now the spring has dried up.

RM: It's dried up at Horse Thief Springs?

MW: Yes. My son was up there four or five months ago and he said it is dried up and the cabin's burnt; there's nothing up there anymore. We used to get watercress and cottontail and the deer were up that way.

RM: You lived around the mountain from Horse Thief Springs?

MW: We lived down on the Sandy Valley side.

GS: We lived below, halfway down.

MW: Halfway down, called the Excelsior Mine.

RM: Was that a big mine?

GS: No it was small. It was run by just two men, my dad and my uncle.

RM: What kind of mine was it?

GS: Talc.

RM: Were they making any money there?

GS: Oh, yes. They always made good money.

MW: We lived down here and they lived way up on the mountain—I can remember them going up there. I often wonder how they got the talc down.

GS: They had big trucks that came through Sandy Valley and up.

RM: But the mine was up above your house—up high on the Kingstons?

GS: It wasn't up high on the Kingstons—it's halfway down from the Kingstons. Horse Thief Springs is here, you come clear down and Sandy Valley is right here and the two houses were here. One was sitting in a little gully and ours was on top and then the mine was right up here. It's not the Kingstons. The Kingstons were up here.

RM: So it's kind of the foothills of the Kingstons. I've never been to Horse Thief Springs. It's in the mountains?

GS: That's right, almost at the top, at the crest of the Kingstons. It's beautiful.

MW: We used to come into town from the Kingston Mountains to do our grocery shopping with Mom and Dad. We'd go through Sandy Valley and Goodsprings and come up the main highway and then into Vegas that way.

RM: Was there a road over Mountain Springs then?

MW: Of course.

GS: It goes through Tecopa; two roads, as a matter of fact.

MW: Going in from Sandy Valley you could head out the Pahrump Highway—that road going over the Kingston and Sandy Valley and then up, down into Goodsprings.

RM: Was it easier for you to go down through Goodsprings?

MW: Yes. The Kingstons were right up here about on the foothills of the alluvial fan and you would come down into Sandy Valley. It was all going down.

RM: Was it cooler there in the summer?

MW: We were up high in the mountains.

RM: Did you have water where you lived?

MW: We had to haul water in.

RM: Where did you haul it from?

GS: Horse Thief Springs.

RM: Were there a lot of deer and everything up there?

GS: Oh, yes.

MW: Game was of abundance at that time and they weren't afraid of being shot at like they are now. That's like Gloria's home in Caliente—in her back yard we see deer all the time. They're like statuary.

RM: Do you live in Caliente?

GS: Yes. You go into Caliente and then on Spring Street; it goes up and we're the last house up there and all the deer cross over. I feed them apples and peaches and pears and prunes and all kinds of stuff.

MW: From her fruit trees. It was a nice time. When we came down shopping through Sandy Valley, we would go through Sandy Valley and there were hardly any places. The valley was

called Sandy Valley because there was a lot of sand, but you'd see huge turtles out there. There are none out there now.

GS: We want to go down and take a ride through there to see what it looks like today.

MW: The last time I went up to the Kingston Mountains from Sandy Valley, we had an old white pickup. I wanted to take the remnants of the road to where we lived.

RM: You can still get up there?

MW: Yes, from down through Sandy Valley.

RM: How far from where you lived was it to what would be the town of Sandy Valley now?

MW: About 20 or 30 miles.

GS: It was all dirt road except to Goodsprings; Goodsprings was paved.

MW: Yes. That was a fun trip, especially coming down through Sandy Valley, because if Mom and Dad saw something that interested us kids, that we wanted to see, they'd stop and made sure we went to see it, like the turtles. Or we'd want to investigate a track that was going across so they let us get out. My one son said that every time we went out on a trip with Grandma and Grandpa, we got educated. And they did. It was a learning trip. My mother was very knowledgeable about everything in this desert. She knew about everything.

GS: There aren't any like her anymore. The only one who still knows that stuff is Clarabelle.

MW: Clarabelle and her family, her sisters.

GS: When we go out and get tamat, the Indian spinach, we'll cook it and eat it. You can ask anybody if they know about tamat.

MW: They don't know about it.

RM: In the colony they don't know a thing. It's all gone?

MW: And when the spinach is in abundance out there we go out and pick big bags of it. We parboil it, rinse it, and then we eat it all year long. We freeze it. That's part of the food that we ate when we were growing up and we miss it.

RM: Do you feel spiritually better when you're eating your native food?

MW: No, but I feel content when I eat that food. I think my system craves it. When we're out there picking it we're talking and giving our thanks. We talk to the spirit or whatever is out there.

GS: The mountain.

MW: The mountain or whatever; we thank the land for giving us what we're taking home for our meal for later through the year.

RM: What would you say?

MW: I speak Indian.

RM: Translated, what would you say?

MW: Thank you for the day, it's been a good day, and thank you for what I am receiving and I am going to take home to eat to eat later and through the year.

GS: And we have to feed the mountain, also. We have to leave something we brought.

MW: Whatever we take to eat.

GS: We've even given them cigarettes. The way that I believe . . . and Mama was the same way, and so was Dad, and my real dad, also—we never talked about somebody "up there." We were told that this earth was the super being. The earth is why we're here. If we did not have this, we would have no food. There would be no animals, there would be nothing. So this is what you give thanks to. That up there, I don't know anything about. I've never met the man or the woman or whoever it is up there. So you give thanks to the land—the mountain, the river, or whatever.

MW: Yes, because that's what sustains us; it's what gives us life.

GS: That's where we go back to, that's where we come from. Other than that, we would not be here.

MW: We wouldn't exist.

RM: There is not enough appreciation of that nowadays.

GS: Right. That's one reason that when we are out we never litter. If we see things wherever we are, we'll bag them and take them to the dump or whatever. That's the way Mom and Dad taught us.

MW: I used to take my sons out to the Red Rock area when they were small; they'd take their bikes up. We'd go for our walk and our little picnic—I'd carry a backpack with food because they were always hungry. Then as we were coming back, we'd pick up the litter—other people's litter, not ours, because we never left any. That's the way I always taught my boys because that's the way I was taught.

RM: Did you ever eat the big turtles in Sandy?

MW: Yes. We ate turtles.

GS: Not the big turtles.

MW: Not in Sandy Valley. We ate turtles when we were with Annie Beck when we were small. I never saw my mom prepare turtles. I remember one time that wikamat (wikamat is "very tasty")—the turtle eggs inside the turtle. Nopav is eggs. Wikamat means "tastes good," wikamar means "very tasty." They would give us that part that was really tasty but I don't know how they cooked them.

GS: They baked it underground.

RM: They baked it—the whole turtle?

MW: I don't know.

GS: I don't know how they butchered it, either.

RM: I wonder what it tastes like.

MW: It must have been good; we ate it. [Laughs] I can't remember it. I was telling my sister here a while back, sitting up there at Caliente, that I can't even remember what antelope meat tastes like. We ate antelope.

GS: When we were up in Ivanpah we ate mountain sheep.

RM: You lived at Ivanpah?

MW: Not Ivanpah down here; Ivanpah up in Utah?

GS: It's in Nevada, up by the Utah line this side of Salt Lake. My dad ended up marrying a Shoshone woman from up there and we spent a year or two there and that's where we learned how to eat antelope.

MW: They had cattle and sheep. I cannot eat mutton.

RM: Why?

MW: I don't like the taste.

GS: You know how bad this is? They had a big doings down here at Cashman Field and they were making gyros. I had no idea it was lamb; it smelled like beef. I told her, "Let's go get one of those."

MW: Big old beautiful things.

GS: We went down there we took one bite, both of us—seven bucks apiece. We bit into it and threw it in the trash. We couldn't eat it.

MW: I had a little old lady friend, Mary Baumain [sp]—she used to have articles in the Review Journal years ago. She said, "Come on, Marie, I made some stew." It smelled good because she made good stew out of beef or pork or whatever it was. But she was trying to trick me. She said, "Have some."

It was so good, looking at it, I tasted it. Mutton. I said "Huh-uh. It's mutton."

She said, "How can you taste it?"

I said, "I know mutton."

RM: Was your mother or father like that?

GS: Mom ate lamb.

MW: Yes, I used to always buy them lamb. Mom and Dad were both sick when they were living here in Vegas; they had to be on a special diet. I made sure that they got swordfish and all of that good fish and lamb and things that they were supposed to eat in their diet. Mom and Dad liked lamb.

GS: And our real dad loved it. I can remember when we were traveling, going from here to Castleford, Idaho, or to Ivanpah or someplace. Dad would say, "We're going to cook alongside the road and have us a barbeque." And he'd get big lamb chops.

RM: But you couldn't take it?

GS: He would give us a hamburger or something.

RM: So you went to school over in Shoshone and in Pahrump. Where else did you go to school?
MW: Overton.

GS: Yes, we lived on the reservation and went to school.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: What was it like, living on the reservation in Moapa?

MW: We had family over there. We were related to half the Benns. We went to school at Overton at the Mormon school.

GS: And it was a good school. I liked the school down there.

MW: I never learned anything down there.

GS: Oh, I did.

MW: They would pass me over. I finally taught myself how to read. I can read anything. I learned from the dictionary—if I didn't know words I would get that dictionary. When I was a child I was a naughty little girl. I was mischievous, doing things I wasn't supposed to do.

GS: That is how I she got the name of Little Lulu.

RM: Oh, from the cartoon character?

GS: Yes, she was bony just like that.

MW: I could eat but I was stick and bones and knobby knees. I went to school down there and I can remember the Perkins. A lot of the kids I remember I haven't seen—the only ones I ever see are Annie Perkins and Marley Perkins. Marley used to be the judge over at Moapa. And Susie Perkins was my good friend, my buddy. I had a lot of fun on the reservation.

GS: Oh, we did. They have a red mountain that goes around the reservation when you take this road. It's a red ledge and it has crags and drop-offs and stuff. We would race the hoops. It would depend on how tall you were because that hoop had to be from your hand to the ground. As I told you earlier, you took the stick and got the lid off a spinach can or whatever and bent it up and made it into a U shape and then you nailed it onto this board and you took your hoop and you'd roll it down with the stick and you'd start running. You'd make that hoop go. That's why you had that metal on the end—you could guide it and turn it. I've got two hoops up at my house and I was teaching my grandkids. They said, "Grandma, how did you play when you were young?"

I said, "Our biggest thing was the hoop."

"What's that?" So I made the little goody and showed them how to play. "Oh my gosh, Grandma, that would wear me out if I had to do that all day long."

MW: We would play all day long with those hoops, running that mountain or down on the road. And we went swimming in the Muddy River. There used to be apple trees with little bitty apples; we liked them when they were green and sour.

GS: Crab apples.

MW: We'd take salt and sit up there and eat our apples. And we had asparagus that popped up all over. It just grew wild.

GS: And rhubarb.

MW: Mama used to get the wild rhubarb all the time.

RM: Where is wild rhubarb? I didn't know it grew wild.

GS: Oh yes, it looks just like a regular rhubarb. We'd cook it, make pies out of it. My mom was a heck of a baker. She knew how to do all that kind of stuff.

MW: She was an excellent cook.

GS: So are my sisters. Dolores Lee is an excellent baker and bakes excellent. And Jody bakes; they're all good cooks. I was never a good cook. I do cook but. . . .

RM: And they got it from your mother.

GS: Yes, Mom. We were all taught how to cook, even the boys. They learned how to cook, how to sew, how to wash clothes, sort the clothes, hand sew, all this kind of stuff. Mom always told us, especially the boys, "You might never get married so you've got to learn how to take care of yourself and to cook for yourself."

MW: Our mother was a great teacher. There was nothing that we didn't learn from our mother and my dad. When my little boys were small, especially Norman (he's a mechanic on motor bikes now), Dad would sit out in the car and say, "Come here, Norm, you might have to fix your mama's car for her later." And they would be working on the car. "Come up and watch me now. This is what you're going to have to do for your mama later." That is how my sons learned. Norman is mechanically inclined; the other one likes to do paperwork.

And over at Moapa, there were the berries and the kakath bush, the quail bush. Kakath is "quail." Mom used to get it when it was small with young shoots coming. That's another kind of spinach. My mother's grandparents and Julia and those folks used to eat that stuff. These people here don't know anything about it. That is like the mesquite bean; when that first comes out, it's like string beans. Mama used to cook that. It's delicious.

MW: Hu'up are those red berries she was telling you about the other day. The pa'up is the one that grows down in the lower part of the valley; hu'up is the one that grows in the upper mountain areas.

RM: Are they good?

MW: Yes. I like them.

RM: Are they bitter?

GS: No, they've got a distinct taste.

MW: They're sweet. A long time ago, way back in the day when the old Indians were here, they would gather those berries and dry them out and eat them later, during the wintertime. There were things out there that you gathered in order to eat.

Mesquite beans were good when they were young and green at about the middle of their growth when they were nice and juicy. Then when they dried they would take the grindstone and work that out. All of the seeds and stuff that came off the mesquite bean after it was dried would go into a container on the side and it was all saved. They would grind it all down to where it was like silt, powder, and they would put it in a coffee can and bury it in the ground so that it could harden. I don't know what they did with that but the seeds were sitting on the side and they would put them into a jar or some kind of container, pour water into it, and you'd get the sweetness from the drink. That mesquite bean went a long way. And in the wintertime we would eat mesquite bean candy. It was delicious.

RM: Why has nobody ever tried to sell mesquite beans commercially? They sound so good.

MW: I think with the Indian, that was our way and they didn't want anybody else to have it.

RM: But corn was your way and look at how the white man took that.

GS: With mesquite beans, you have to find the sweet ones. There could be a hundred trees out there and there might be four of them that would be real sweet.

RM: Could you get the sweet ones and breed them?

MW: It doesn't work like that. It has to have the right ground and water. And you might get a seed and plant it and it might not be sweet.

RM: But the sweet ones are always sweet every year?

MW: A sweet tree will always be sweet.

GS: Mom was eating sweet beans off one mesquite bean tree over in Shoshone when she was a child and I ate mesquite beans off it as a child and my kids can eat mesquite beans off of it.

RM: Where can I get some mesquite beans to try it?

MW: It’s too late now. The mesquite beans have already dropped and the animals have partaken of it.

GS: It’s like pine nuts—once they drop to the ground the animals get them.

MW: Yes. That’s why you have to harvest the pine nuts at this time, October, because that’s when they are dropping out of the cone. When it’s overcast the cones close and when it’s sunny the cones open and drop the seeds.

RM: Now, how did you harvest the pine nuts? You didn’t pick the cones, did you?

MW: Some of the people, like Clarabelle, harvested the pine nuts still in the cone and put them in the yandu, a big winnowing basket, like a boat. They would harvest them in the yandu and put it over the hot coals and the cones would open and the pine nuts would fall out into the winnowing basket and then they would get rid of the cones.

Or they would harvest on hands and knees. That’s the way we’d pick because when the cone falls, the pine nuts fall out of the cones. If you’re messing with pine nuts in the cones they’ve got pine sap on them and it gets all over your hands. That’s how a lot of these white people harvest the pine cones. Now they are only allowed a pound a day but we can pick all we want all day long.

RM: A long time ago, my dad and I tried harvesting pine nuts and we had to learn about it the hard way.

MW: It’s a tough job.

RM: But we were picking the whole cones. So do you pick each pine nut off of the ground?

MW: Each little pine nut off of the ground. We get a coffee can or a round cylinder can of some sort and put all the clean pine nuts in there. When we fill that up and put it in our bag, we go back and pick some more.

RM: How many pounds a day can you get that way?

GS: I’d say I could probably pick six pounds.

RM: Is that working pretty hard all day?

GS: Yes, that’s picking fast all day.

RM: And then, how do you prepare pine nuts?

MW: You cook them in a skillet. Some of the people, like my cousin, Delphina Benn, would take the pine nuts and soak them in salt water and then put them in the oven and bake them. She liked the salty taste.

GS: Yes, but then it pops so you have a messy oven. What you do is get a cast iron skillet and put about an inch and a half of pine nuts in it, just enough for you to enjoy for an evening. Put a lid on it, turn the stove on to medium or a little slower than medium, and just let it sit for a while and every once in a while get a spoon and turn it. Soon you'll hear pop, pop, and then you turn it because if you don't you'll end up burning it. You keep turning it; it might take ten minutes. Then you take it out and dump it in a bowl. The bean has to be transparent.

RM: What do you mean it's transparent?

GS: You shell it and look at it and it's got to be transparent. If it's chalky it's not done.

MW: You crack the nuts with your teeth.

RM: Is that how your people traditionally did it or did they have a way of doing a mass production?

GS: No, it was always just for the family.

MW: The people who went out to pick back in the olden days picked for the year and they made pine nut gravy.

GS: And they cooked it with beans.

MW: They cooked with beans just like we did dried corn. The pine nuts have to be shelled before you throw them in with the beans.

RM: And you have already cooked the pine nuts to shell them?

MW: No.

RM: How do you shell them when they aren't cooked?

MW: Back in the day I used to watch Harriet, who lived here when I was a little child do it. She would take her grindstone and roll it on the top to break the shell and then clean it.

RM: And then put it with the beans after the beans are kind of done?

MW: You'd know if the beans were done because if they weren't done they would be hard. Some people like their beans cooked soft but I like mine with the bean juice kind of thick.

RM: But the pine nut doesn't cook as long as the beans, so do you put it in towards the end?

MW: That I don't know. All I know is that we ate it.

RM: Is it good?

MW: Yes, yes.

GS: Beans are delicious, too, with dried corn. We used to dry corn and they'd get a handful or couple of handfuls and mix it with the beans.

MW: When they went deer hunting we made jerky. You strip the meat thin and put salt and pepper on it then hang it up there to dry in a screen.

RM: And how long do you leave it there?

MW: Till it's dried.

GS: Till it falls apart. The jerky that you buy in the store is nothing compared with that jerky. And man, that makes good gravy, jerky gravy. Mama used to cook with it all the time.

RM: The traditional diet didn't have that much fat in it, did it?

MW: Well no, there wasn't any. That's why you see fat Indians now. Everything that we eat is shot with growth hormones. The Paiutes from this area are supposed to be short, squatty, and bulky but never fat. When they used to eat the traditional foods, there wasn't a fat Indian.

RM: What was the most important food in the traditional Paiute diet?

GS: Deer, rabbit, jerky.

RM: You never ate fish, did you?

MW: We were not fish eaters. This is a dry valley. Only the people who lived by water and could harvest the fish were fish eaters.

RM: And what else would be very important in the diet?

GS: Pine nuts, corn, all kinds of vegetables.

RM: Did you grow your own corn traditionally?

GS: No. Well, we'd have a little garden but we never. . . .

MW: The Hopi and people from down that way traditionally grew corn and squash and beans. I like to call them Indian beans.

GS: But they were the white beans, not navy beans. They've got a distinctive taste.

RM: Can you buy them in the store now?

MW: I don't think they exist anymore. I had my dad's in a jar that I kept for years and then I don't know what happened to them.

RM: Were the Paiutes eating those beans before the whites came in here?

GS: Oh, yes. We always had beans and never potatoes.

RM: And no macaroni or things like that.

MW: No, that's all introduced.

RM: And bread too, probably.

GS: We made our own bread.

GS: My dad used to say, "Mom, don't make me a lunch out of white bread, I want you to make tortillas or a wimpy bread or a cowboy bread or a fry bread to make my sandwich."

And Mama said, "Why is that?"

"Because," he said, "I can't get full. When I get a loaf of white bread I can take that whole thing and squeeze it and make a ball about this big. If I take a tortilla or an oven bread or something, it takes quite a bit to chunk that into a little tiny ball."

RM: How about whole wheat bread?

MW: No, it's the same thing—it all squishes into nothing.

GS: He had to have homemade bread. And we did every day—every meal we had fresh bread—fry bread, tortillas, oven bread, cowboy bread, and wimpy bread.

RM: What is oven bread?

MW: It's made out of flour but baked in the oven.

RM: That sounds like regular bread, in an oven.

GS: Well, no, it doesn't come out in a loaf; it comes out about this thick.

RM: About two inches thick.

MW: There's substance to that bread.

RM: And what was wimpy bread?

GS: It's mixed like pancake batter but it is thick, about this thick.

RM: About an inch thick.

GS: Cowboy bread is almost like a tortilla but it's a thick tortilla. Then you have your tortilla—my mom and dad used to say you had to be able to read a newspaper through it when you rolled it out; it had to be very pliable. And then we had our fry bread.

RM: What kind of fat did you use for the fry bread?

GS: In those days, Mom used Crisco or lard.

MW: Mama used to make her own. When we lived down in Tecopa when we were kids, my mom used to like to buy slab bacon and she would save all of the rind and cook it down. We would have chicharones and lard.

RM: So then you would cook fry bread in that.

MW: Yes.

RM: I'll bet it was good.

GS: It was good.

MW: That's what we used to do a long time ago, but then later on there was Crisco. She did a lot of baking and always used Crisco. She had her own hens in the back so she had her own eggs.

GS: We had pink eggs, blue eggs, yellow eggs—the hens were crazy. [Laughs]

MW: We were more or less self-sustaining. And I bought my mother a couple of flats of asparagus so she could plant asparagus in the back. Because by that time the Moapa farms had killed all of the asparagus off.

GS: They plowed it up.

MW: Yes. And when our dad was working in the fields over at Moapa for Kenny Searls, the fields were always lush and green with different crops coming up; asparagus came up every year. But not anymore; there's nothing.

GS: No rhubarb, but the funny part of it is, none of the people over there knew you could eat asparagus. None of them knew they could eat rhubarb.

MW: Even when we were small, we were eating asparagus all the time with my dad.

RM: So he knew but the others didn't. Was there a taboo or something?

MW: I don't think they liked the taste of asparagus.

GS: It was silly. It was so odd for us. When Mom married Dad and we moved over there, I don't think they had ever seen anyone make a turkey. And when Mama made her dressing, I don't think they had any idea of what she was doing. But oh man, was it good.

MW: When my youngest son, Chris (the boy in the picture, that small one) was small, they had a daycare up there. He'd go up to the daycare and Mom would go up there and fix the senior lunches. Olivia, my mom's first cousin's daughter, ran the daycare. She'd have Mama fix the turkey—make the turkey, fix the dressing, do the mashed potatoes and the gravy and they'd fix the rest of the stuff. Mama used to do that kind of stuff because my son was going to daycare.

And they had bake sales—Mama would make things for them. And her pies, a long time ago, used to sell at seven to eight dollars a pie. They were good. People would say, "Which one's Juanita's?"

RM: Now, what did she use for crust?

MW: Crisco.

GS: I remember Mom used to use lard in that little red box. She used that when we lived in Shoshone. Our house had a windowsill on it about a foot wide and one Thanksgiving Mama had the window open and as the pies were coming out she was setting them on the windowsill. We had a bunch of bachelor miners that lived across the street and they were coming over and taking Mama's pies.

MW: But they were so gracious to Mom. They would thank Mom and give her something.

RM: What kind of pies was she making?

GS: She made the best lemon meringue pie you ever tasted in your life! She made all kinds.

MW: From scratch.

RM: Where did she learn to cook?

GS: On her own. She was only 15 when she married my dad so she had to do all of this after she married my stepdad. She was a good gal, that one. I was thinking of Mom's picture. I've got one of her in her older years and she's sitting there and just smiling, and every once in a while I go up there and pinch her cheek because she was just so sweet.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Did you guys ever get up to Ash Meadows at all?

GS: The only thing I remember about Ash Meadows is the clay pits. And I went to the Bishops' funerals a couple of times.

MW: I went up to the Bishops' funeral once and we used to go up there on a weekend and go swimming and have picnics. And I remember Old Man Tubbs; we used to go over to his store and then to the bar.

GS: Ash Meadows, was that the name of it?

MW: Ash Meadows Bar—no, it was a resort and cat house at that time and a hotel and swimming pool and everything else. It was really nice.

GS: It was a nice place. We used to go there a lot. We used to go there for New Year's Eve from Shoshone.

RM: You mean to the cat house?

MW: They had a bar, a restaurant, and everything.

GS: That was so nice.

MW: And we'd go swimming. I only remembered one time going over there when I was a little girl, going to the funerals.

RM: Would it have been a traditional funeral, a Cry?

MW: Yes, it would have been a traditional funeral. They had a funeral over there for Old Man Bishop and it lasted for three or four days. We stayed in one area because we weren't allowed to go down into the funeral. They brought us food but we were never allowed to go down and mingle with the people. That was a no-no. We weren't supposed to be there, period.

RM: How many people do you think were there?

MW: There were quite a lot. It had to have been the neighboring people from around. I can't really say because we were so little.

GS: I know when our father died we had a traditional funeral because he was the last.

MW: The last of the old talkers and the old-timers who did the old way.

RM: What do you mean by a talker?

MW: A spiritual man who was telling the story of that person's life that was lying there.

GS: What do you call those guys that give you the person's history at a funeral?

MW: They are telling the story of that person's funeral. My dad, Boone Wilson, and Billy Fisher and Billy Anderson—there's a cave at the foot of the Sunrise Mountains where the old Indians used to go a long time ago to receive the gift of healing and speaking and doctoring. They went in there, they fasted, and they were given the gift, they were swallowed—the gift of a ball of fire. But they had to fast.

RM: Sent to them by the spirit world?

MW: The spirit world gave them the ball of fire to help their people. And they had to fast—I don't know going on how many days they fasted but they went in there and stayed four, five, six days, something like that.

RM: And your father did that?

MW: Three men did it together. Boone Wilson fasted and did that and he was given the gift to talk.

GS: And to be an eye doctor.

MW: Oh yes, he removed cataracts from people's eyes.

RM: By surgery or some other way?

MW: With a lizard's scale.

RM: Using it as a knife?

MW: Sure, I guess.

GS: I was told that a bunch of times by the old people that were here.

MW: The old people and the white people used to go to him to have them removed.

RM: And they could see fine afterwards?

MW: Yes, he used to do that, and then he had his gift to talk.

RM: A Paiute told me the other day that he had a very serious eye disease that was getting bad and he went to the doctor and they told him about it. And he said, "I'm going to use a traditional way." He went over to Pahrump and he couldn't find the plant there but they went north and found it up around Beatty.

He took the plant and then he went back to another doctor and that doctor said, "You don't have any disease." Do you know what plant that would be?

GS: Yes, she's got it out front.

MW: I don't know the name of it.

RM: Do you know how to use it?

MW: I don't really know how to use it but it is eye medicine.

GS: It grows in abundance here.

RM: How do you use it? What do you do?

MW: I am not saying I know but I believe that they boil it and strain it and make sure that it is clean and then use it as an eye wash.

RM: Did you get that knowledge from your father?

MW: No, we always used it. I had pink eye one time over in Shoshone as a child from swimming in the swimming pool. We were told not to go down to that public swimming pool and swim because we'd get the pink eye. Down below where we lived, up at Kaku's house, they built a little pool where we could swim privately and not get pink eye. But they used that eye wash medicine on us.

RM: And it cured it?

MW: Cleaned it right up.

RM: The doctor asked this guy what the plant was and the guy said, "I can't tell you, this is ours; this is for us".

MW: I don't know what it's called. But there are medicines out there like that orange one that grows behind my house.

RM: Do you use either of them?

MW: We don't have to now; we've got modern medicine. [Laughter]

RM: You go to the doctor and give him your money.

MW: That's the way with a lot of the Indians—they don't give the medicinal secrets away.

GS: Clarabelle jumped all over her sister because she told somebody all about it.

MW: Cynthia told this lady out who was wanting to know the name of the bushes and what Indian names were and Cynthia told her. The lady took credit for the book and didn't give anything to Cynthia. That's what angers me. That's why when we say anything, we have to proofread it.

GS: It's just like we have a plant that cures venereal disease.

RM: Which ones? Gonorrhea?

MW: All of them, I think.

GS: And another plant that is used for arthritis.

MW: My mother's grandmother, Nelly Weed, was a plant doctor; she knew all her medicines out there and my mother knew her medicines. I've got some of the medicines back in jars.

GS: And makeup.

MW: Makeup, eye makeup. I've got some right here.

GS: It's the eye liners that the Indians used. The Indians have their own that they can put on and it's permanent.

RM: It dyes the skin?

GS: Yes. The girls would take a little stick and run it through like that and it's done. And rouge.

MW: This belonged to that old lady I was talking about—Quesi, Stella Smith. She gave it to me years and years ago. This one is the eye liner. This is her original pouch.

RM: And this would make a permanent. . . .

MW: This is not permanent. You just put it on your eyes and it's to shield your eyes from the glare of the sun. These are medicinal things that were used. This was the original stick.

RM: This was the plant?

MW: I don't know what the plant is. But see the powder? That is powder.

RM: That would be for the eye liner.

MW: For the eyes, to keep the glare of the sun out.

GS: Do you have any of that rouge?

MW: I've got it right here. This was Stella Smith's original bag. I've had this I don't know for how many years. I gave some to my sister too—this is the powder, the rouge; it is called ombi.

RM: What is the rouge made out of?

MW: I don't know. It's probably made out of some rock powdered.

GS: You put it on very lightly.

MW: I've even used it.

GS: When you go to funerals and powwows, you're not to wear makeup, you're not to wear jewelry, no fancy clothes.

RM: Even a wedding ring or anything like that?

GS: We never had wedding rings.

MW: That is a white man's custom. This stuff I have here is called ombi. Legends say it comes from the Colorado River. There's a certain cave as you're going down, and there's a creek that runs down from the cave up there where they get the red powder. But a woman is not supposed to go up to that cave; it's not allowed. That's with the ombi. And this is salt from one of the salt caves down there.

RM: Did the Paiutes have any things for birth control?

GS: Yes. It was something you drank.

MW: If a woman got pregnant there was a medicine there to abort the baby.

GS: And there was birth control.

RM: So if a woman was pregnant and didn't want to be pregnant she could take this and it would abort it. Would it cause problems for her, like threaten her life?

GS: No.

MW: But you figure back in the olden days the Indian, when a woman got pregnant with a baby, that baby was cherished.

GS: The baby was cherished. And there was birth control. For instance in my mom's family, Mutt, John, and Jeff never had any children. Neither did Tom Bob and Sarah—when they were married they never had any children. My mom's Aunt Lily never had any children. My mom's other aunt had two children.

RM: And that is because of birth control?

MW: I don't know. They just might have been infertile; we have two brothers who are the same way so it might be a gene in the family.

GS: I wish I'd have inherited it. [Laughs]

RM: Did you have a lot of children?

GS: Five.

MW: I only had two and Elaine had four.

RM: Let's say a woman isn't very fertile and she wants to be—did you have something for that?
MW: My dad had a lot of children with my mom, and his sister was barren. She never had a child but she wanted one of his children; she wanted Nathan. Dad said, "No, that's my boy." Quesi said that sometimes way back in the olden days, some of these momoo, the Indian ladies, would have babies and would sometimes give one of their children to one that didn't have any. Stella Smith used to tell me that.

I would come down and visit the old people. I loved visiting them and I'd take them to the grocery stores or whatever they wanted to do but we'd end up talking about something like that that was important. Like the time when she said that all of the people down here who used to go hungry would go up to the ranch and they would feed them. And that in the olden days they put those apples in the storage area.

GS: Cellars.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: Where were you living at the time when your schooling was over?

MW: I was living in Shoshone and when I got older, down in Tecopa. We lived across from the Snake Room, the restaurant, and the mercantile store. I left Shoshone and came over to Vegas at 16. When I was 16, I was on my own.

RM: What did you do?

MW: I did little odd jobs, worked in restaurants, worked as a waitress, then worked at a laundry. I lived out here with Quesi, Stella Smith, when I first came over and after that I started working and I rented little studio apartments.

RM: So you were very enterprising and independent.

MW: Yes I was, I always have been. Even after I got older I was never without work. I did electronics work and I worked in a hospital; I did just about everything. I'm a jack of all trades and master of none.

GS: And I went clear up to my senior year and ran off and got married about four months before I was to graduate. I didn't graduate and I could just kick myself in the rear end for that. But I have learned a lot and I have done a lot, too. I've been a waitress, been a bartender, worked in a casino, was a shill, have been a cashier.

RM: Did either of you ever work over in Pahrump or Ash Meadows?

GS: We worked in Death Valley Junction.

MW: Yes, I worked cleaning rooms up at the Junction.

GS: And I ended up waiting tables.

RM: Talk about your Death Valley Junction experience.

MW: There used to be that little opera house, what's that lady's name—Marta Beckett.

GS: She didn't have it then.

MW: She didn't have it then; we were way before Marta Beckett. And then Judy Trenary [sp], Old Man Tubbs's daughter, worked there so we would go back and forth to see her father. There was nothing else to do in that area but work at the Junction.

RM: Was there a motel there?

GS: Yes. It's still standing. The restaurant was open as a restaurant, the garage was open. I don't know who was running it.

RM: Did you work there at the same time?

MW: She worked before me. Then I worked there.

GS: I was telling Mom that I needed to get some money somehow and she said, "Well, you'd better go to work."

And I said, "I don't know where I'm going to go to work." I had waited tables in Shoshone and Tecopa both, so I said, "Well, I'll go to the Junction." I started out in the laundry and ended up waiting tables.

MW: Yes, when we were living in Shoshone and Tecopa, I always worked. I either babysat or I went and did somebody's house. I always made my own money to buy my own school clothes, even when I was 12, 13 years old.

GS: I did, too. We all helped.

MW: And when I left Tecopa and Shoshone, there was nothing there for me; I never did go back.

GS: For me, that's my home.

RM: Is that where you feel at home—Tecopa and Shoshone? Would you rather live there?

GS: Yes, in Shoshone. Not Tecopa anymore, but in Shoshone. But I left there when I turned 18 and got married and I moved to Beatty.

RM: How long did you live in Beatty?

GS: At that time I was probably there for maybe five years. The second time, when I married the husband I've got now, I was there probably 35 years.

MW: She has been married 45 years to her husband.

RM: Who did you marry?

GS: Don Shearer. He used to be the sergeant on the police force in Beatty. He was there when Tomany was sheriff.

RM: So you knew the Reverts and everything.

GS: Oh, yes. That's how I got to know Bobby. [Laughs] Not the old man, the young Bob.

RM: I didn't know you spent all that time in Beatty. Did you know Bombo Cottonwood?

GS: We're still fishing and hunting buddies.

MW: Bombo Cottonwood and Gloria's children from her first marriage are cousins.

RM: Did you marry when you were living in Beatty?

GS: Yes, he got out of the military in 1961 and we were married in 1964. We got married in jail.

RM: [Laughs] You got married in jail because that's where he was working?

GS: Yes. I knew all of those people up that way.

RM: What stands out in your mind about Beatty?

GS: Beatty is a fun town. The Burro Days—oh my word, that was so fun. I saw Lady Godiva riding through the Exchange Club on a horse. [Laughs] I know that the old man who originated Beatty (Montelius Beatty) married one of the Lees. He was married to an Indian woman that was one of my stepdad's family, Anna Lee. Somebody gave me her watch and it's got her name on the inside, called Anna Lee.

RM: Where was she from?

MW: I don't know.

RM: I wrote a book on the history of Beatty.

GS: Did you?

MW: You were going to bring us some literature to read, some book you wrote about Pahrump.

RM: Sorry, I just plain forgot.

GS: Did you ever write about Panamint Annie?

RM: No, I didn't.

GS: Oh my goodness, there was a character. She was from New York and her entire family was so well educated, I'm telling you. Really high up; they were from money. She came out here and she turned into a damn miner. She was a little old woman and she had an old Ford station wagon. She used to sleep in there and have all of the clothes piled all over inside and on top. You'd see her camping out in the sticks. She had two kids.

GS: She had one son; I don't know what ever happened to him. She died quite a while ago.

MW: Panamint Annie was from Tecopa.

RM: I don't know that much about Tecopa. My focus was the Pahrump Valley.

MW: Did you read the book my uncle George Ross wrote on Shoshone? He is a publisher, too.

RM: The one on the graves in Shoshone? No, I didn't.

GS: Uncle George, Mama's first cousin, is the one that found remnants of that Spanish Trail.

RM: What is your overall impression of Beatty?

GS: Beatty's got quite a bit of history.

MW: My impression of Beatty is that it's a little Peyton Place.

GS: Every small town is like that

RM: Yes. Big towns are, too; they just don't know it.

GS: I used to visit with Art Revert in Beatty.

RM: Oh, yes. I interviewed Art and Bob.

GS: He used to tell me about how they would do autopsies in the old town hall. He said when people died they would take them to the town hall and drain all the blood from them. He used to tell me all kinds of stories. He would say, "Come on up to the house," so I'd go up and we would sit there and talk for hours. He'd tell me all kinds of stories, different things about Beatty. But then unless something crosses my mind I can't think of anything; it was so long ago.

RM: Did you know Ralph Lisle very well?

GS: Oh yes, I knew him real well.

RM: I interviewed Ralph, too. Ralph was a good storyteller.

GS: He was a good man, period; he really was. He was related to Charley Brown in Shoshone.

RM: Well, Ralph was related to Dad Fairbanks. And he's Celesta's brother.

GS: Yes, and they're all related to the Browns in Shoshone.

MW: Pop Fairbanks was Mrs. Brown's father, Stella Fairbanks.

GS: Charley and Stella Brown had this parrot in Shoshone. When Mom was a little girl the parrot used to be outside, I guess, when the grandparents were calling the kids and the parrot would say "Juanita! Bernice! Get on home!"

GS: And when I was a young girl that same damn bird. . . .

MW: It was still alive when we were small.

GS: It was saying things like that about me and Charles.

RM: Parrots live a long time.

GS: You know where that little museum is—that green house right to the left of it is where they used to live.

RM: Where did you live down there?

GS: At Black Mountain, right on the face. That's where we lived with Kaku.

MW: Down in Barstow, Celesta Gillam called Mom and asked her if she wanted Polly the parrot.

GS: And then Mom and Celesta went to school together. I guess their last year of school, one of them sent the other a Valentines card—they made their own Valentines card. Every two or three years they'd mail that same Valentines card to this one and three years later they would mail it back.

RM: How sweet. So it has a history.

MW: It had a sucker in there. I've seen it. Mom and those folks go way far back with the Browns. Charles was up here three, four months ago—once in a while he pops in.

RM: One of the things we need to do is sit down and do a chart of your family.

GS: That would be a good thing.

MW: You would be surprised, though. It always amazes me about our family, how far back we can go in history with different people. We are all intertwined.

RM: You sure are. Thanks so much for talking to me.

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