An Interview with

CHARLOTTE FLOYD

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada

Tonopah
2009

Charlotte Floyd
2008

CONTENTS

Preface v

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction ix

CHAPTER ONE 1

Charlotte's memories of her family; growing up on a farm in California; meeting Ron Floyd in high school; joining her sister Jacque Ruud and brother Frank Woner and their spouses in Pahrump; Ron brings his knowledge of the well pumping business to Pahrump; the advent of cotton and Frank Woner's work with the Pahrump Ranch.

CHAPTER TWO 12

Building a home and shop in Pahrump; running a motel; selling the motel and business complex; working in the cotton gin; Ron's work drilling and pumping wells; how the hardware store and business began; a discussion of well-drilling.

CHAPTER THREE 24

Further discussion of well pumps; climate differences between Pahrump and California's Central Valley; Pahrump's Harvest Festival; the community spirit in Pahrump; further discussion of the Floyds' hardware store; observations on present-day Pahrump; subdividing and selling land; thoughts on Pahrump's future.

INDEX 38

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, Roberta "Midge" Carver, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Peter Liakopoulos 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 Commissioner Eastley, Gary Hollis, and 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
2009

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.

—R.D.M.

Charlotte Floyd interview with Robert McCracken at Ms. Floyd's home in Pahrump, Nevada, November 21, 2008.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Charlotte, why don't we begin by you telling me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

CF: Charlotte Anne Woner.

RM: And when and where were you born?

CF: I was born in Merced, California, and we were raised in Chowchilla, California, on my grandparents' farm.

RM: What were your parents' names and where were they born?

CF: I really don't know too much about my father. His name was Glen Woner and he was born in Missouri; that's all I know. My parents were divorced when I was about eight. There were seven of us kids.

My mother, Mildred, was born in Denver, Colorado. Her dad was born in Missouri and my grandmother—her mother—was born in Nebraska or Illinois but her father was an immigrant from Sweden.

RM: How did your mother happen to be born in Denver?

CF: When he married my grandmother, my grandfather had emigrated from Missouri to Colorado. He farmed potatoes and developed land in Fort Morgan. My mother was an only child.

RM: How did your folks meet?

CF: I really don't know. There is a lot of things about their marriage that we never heard. They were divorced.

RM: And where did you grow up?

CF: I grew up in Chowchilla, out in the Ashview district, which is all farming. We moved into town when my grandparents sold the farm (we lived on their farm) when I was a sophomore.

RM: And what do you recall about growing up on the farm? Does anything stick in your mind?

CF: Yes, you worked a lot. [Laughs] They had a 40-acre almond orchard, which was fairly unusual at that time; there were only three around there. And my sister Jacque and my sister Lois drove a tractor and they did everything. I was small and I had asthma and they thought I was frail so I didn't do as much work as some of the others did.

RM: Was moving into town a big change for you?

CF: Yes, it was very much so. We just weren't used to being in town. Of course, Chowchilla is not very big as far as that's concerned. But my mother was quite concerned about moving her wild Indians, as she called us. [Laughs] We weren't used to behaving and not running out after each other and yelling and screaming. It was all girls on down; my brother Frank was the third one in the family and he was married when we moved into town.

RM: So it was the girls who were left.

CF: Yes, Lois and Jacque and Frank were all married.

RM: And then you went to school in Chowchilla.

CF: High school, yes. I was already going with Ron when we moved.

RM: And where was Ron from?

CF: His family came from Oklahoma to Texas. His dad went in the service when he was in Texas. After they got out of the service, they moved the whole family—it's a very large family—to California.

RM: To the Chowchilla area?

CF: Yes. His uncles and his dad went to work for a man who had a pump company and then they started their own. When I met him they'd already started in the pump business and that's basically what brought us over here.

We came to Pahrump because my sister Jacque and her husband, Bob Ruud, moved over here in 1958 and my brother, Frank Woner, and his family also moved over here in 1958. Frank was the foreman of the Pahrump Ranch.

Bob started coming over here in '51 or '52 with some of his cousins to look at farm ground. His dad had died and he was running his mom's ranch in Madera, California. They had a vineyard; I don't know what else they had, but they had vineyards. He and his cousin who was also farming came over and were looking at land in Pahrump. I know they bought land together when they first came here.

RM: How did they hear about Pahrump?

CF: There were a lot of people from that area that knew of Pahrump. I think it was because of the Desert Land Entry and the Pittman Act. There were a lot of people from Porterville, the whole San Joaquin Valley, who lived here when we came here.

RM: They saw farming opportunities here and probably saw a chance to better themselves?

CF: Yes they did. It's the same thing we came here for—taking a chance.

RM: Did you see it as taking a chance, or how did you look at it?

CF: Oh yes. We'd come over to visit my sister and her husband and Frank and Carol in 1960, and thought it was just a really neat place full of opportunities—or Ronnie did, let's put it that way. [Laughs] Then we had heard that they were putting in power and he started coming back and forth to meetings with Amargosa Valley Power, as they called it at that time.

Ronnie decided that we would move over here when the power came in because all the pumps ran on diesel. All of those diesel-powered pumps had to be converted over to electric and they were all being financed by the government through the REA system.

Ronnie and I were at a party—a women's guild that supports a hospital in Fresno—and Frank called us and said, "If you guys could be here on Monday morning, you could go to work in the gin." They were bringing the power in and we'd both have a job and get acquainted with everybody. So we packed up and left. [Laughs]

RM: How did Frank learn about Pahrump? Was it Bob Ruud?

CF: Yes, Bob told him and they came over and he went to work for Ted Blosser. That didn't work out and that was about the time Walt Williams bought the Pahrump Ranch and he hired Frank to run the ranch.

RM: And so it was kind of all initiated through Bob Ruud.

CF: It was. I'd never heard of it before. So when we came here in October 1962, we moved in with Frank and Carol. We had no place to live and we bought a 10 x 40-foot single-wide trailer sight unseen that came from Goldfield. Walt Williams let us put it on the Pahrump Ranch. We had power that came from the gin over to the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Not everybody had it at that time. did they?

CF: No, everybody else had generators and they just ran the generators at night.

RM: Tell me what the Pahrump Ranch looked like and what kind of an operation it was and as much as you recall.

CF: For one thing, it was very dusty. They have since burned down the house that my brother lived in—they were railroad tie houses.

RM: From the old T&T Railroad?

CF: I think so. Where the Pahrump Ranch sits, or did, was originally a spa for the Union

Pacific officials. When we got to Pahrump, they had the Bracero program going and Mexicans would come in to work. They had a big barracks right close to where we put our trailer and they all lived there.

There was a great big hole in the ground and that had been a spring; it's covered up now. And I know there was an airstrip right close to it. That hole had been a great big spring; I don't know how many thousands of gallons a minute it poured out. It was part of that spa back toward the beginning of the century. Our kids used to go down in there.

RM: And it was dry?

CF: It was dry. The kids would bring out some of the most beautiful rocks you ever saw; they were polished. Apparently back in the years somebody had decided to try and drill down and make it better and what they did is lose it.

RM: Do you know when that happened?

CF: No, I really don't.

RM: But when you came in '62, it was a dry hole. How big was it, would you say?

CF: Oh, it was huge. I'd say from that wall clear out there to clear over there.

RM: Probably 60 feet or so. And then, how deep did it go down?

CF: It was deep; I never went down in it but, as I said, the kids did.

RM: Was it pretty steep?

CF: No, it was like a big dish. After Preferred Equities bought it they filled that in. It's right behind the Rebel Service Station.

RM: Could you find it if you went up there?

CF: I doubt it; it's been filled in so many years.

RM: Describe those tie buildings. How big were they?

CF: I'd say they were probably about 1200 square feet. The walls were made out of ties

and they finished them on the inside with some kind of fiberboard.

RM: But you could see the ties on the outside?

CF: Yes, you could.

RM: Were they warm in the winter and cool in the summer?

CF: Yes, they were, pretty much.

RM: Was the Pahrump Ranch headquarters where the Rebel Station is now?

CF: No, more off of Highway 372. Do you know where that 99-cent Store is? It's back in behind that. I think the Pahrump Store is there; I don't know if they've moved that or not. That was in there and the granaries, the round buildings. I think they're still there; the shop building's still there. The school that they moved down to the museum was there.

There were two homes that were built out of railroad ties. Walt Williams used one of them when he was out here and my brother lived in the other one. Then there were three or four homes and the barracks buildings for the Mexicans who lived there. It was quite a complex.

RM: Were there a lot of trees?

CF: Yes, and they're all gone. There were a lot of fruit trees—a big old fig tree, which you wouldn't think would grow here. There were so many things that used grow there that are not there anymore. They had four or five apricot trees and pear trees.

RM: What was it like living there?

CF: Fun. When I was a very young kid, I wanted to be on a cattle ranch. I wanted the cowboy thing. And when we came over here that's what you saw; they had cattle. Most of it was cotton, but they had cattle and everybody rode horses and it was just a lot of fun. You didn't have telephones, you didn't have TV, you didn't have anything like that so everybody made their own entertainment. Everybody went on trail rides and it was just fun.

RM: It's interesting that you wanted to be a cowboy; that's what my brother and I wanted to be, seriously.

CF: Well, I found out I was afraid of horses.

RM: Me too; I don't trust anything that's bigger than I am.

CF: That was my problem. I figured that thing's a lot bigger than me and it can go where it wants to. [Laughter]

RM: What else do you recall about the ranch? How far was the cotton from this complex you were describing?

CF: Do you know where Calvada Boulevard is, and Pahrump Valley Boulevard? There was cotton all through there. There were over 3,500 acres of cotton here in the valley. Most of this area through here was just desert.

RM: So there was no cotton where you are here; and you are south of Calvada Boulevard?

CF: Yes, they didn't have any right in here. Hafen had cotton down that way and all the Bowmans had their own ranches. I remember when Ronnie first started putting in pumps all through this area, sometimes you'd have to take a D8 Caterpillar to pull his rigs in because there were no roads at all—the only road was Homestead Road. And in this poof dirt, you stuck. On the Pahrump Ranch they used 'dozers for all kinds of things. They used them for all of the land-clearing, for everything.

And everything was run on butane. They had a huge propane tank at the main headquarters because all the tractors and trucks and everything ran on propane. And that thing scared me to death—I could just see it going. I've always been afraid of it anyway, and that was sitting right behind where our trailer sat. Every morning all of the workers would stop and fill up whatever they were driving.

RM: And those were the Pahrump Ranch vehicles?

CF: Yes, but not only Pahrump Ranch, I remember the gin manager's pickup ran on propane, also. Their refrigerators ran on propane, everything ran on propane; it was cheap.

RM: Do you remember what you paid for it?

CF: I really don't. I remember what diesel was, and that was about ten cents a gallon. We sold diesel for a while.

RM: Did you buy a gas station?

CF: No, Ronnie got tied up with Chevron Oil and he was selling barrels of oil and he'd have truckloads of diesel come in.

RM: Was there another spring on the Pahrump Ranch when you got there besides the one that had dried up?

CF: I can't remember. Well, there was a seep. You know where the golf course is up there? There was a kind of river-type thing that went down through there, and where that spring was coming from I don't know, but it was fed by a spring. It wasn't like the other one by any means.

RM: With the cotton and the things they were growing they had to pump water, didn't they?

CF: It was all pumped. In the San Joaquin where we came from, you got 700-, 800-foot wells and over here they are shallow wells.

RM: How deep were you going?

CF: Ronnie drilled some of them but not the ag wells. But they are 300, 400 feet, something like that. But in the San Joaquin you've got big wells, water-wise. Here, you get 300, 400 gallons a minute and sometimes you can get 1000 or 1500 gallons, but you don't get big volume.

RM: What's considered a good well in the San Joaquin?

CF: About 3,000, 4,000 gallons a minute. It's a big difference.

RM: But the farmers over there saw potential in Pahrump, didn't they?

CF: Yes, and I really don't know how Bob and those guys heard about Pahrump.

RM: Was Bob Ruud the first one from the San Joaquin in here?

CF: I don't think so. I think McGowan . . . I can't remember ever meeting him, but his land was on the corner of Homestead and Gamebird. And the Brady brothers had a ranch that Preferred Equities bought; I think they were from Porterville. And the Mankins came from Porterville, and they were all here before Bob. The Mankins came over here the first time about 1950 or something like that, to homestead under the Desert Land Entry Act. Most of those people came over and homesteaded.

RM: Did your family or you and your husband do any homesteading?

CF: We bought Bob and Jacque's rights to the property on Vicki Ann and Gamebird down to Pahrump Valley Boulevard, 320 acres. We paid them what they had in it and went ahead and finished it. You had to fence it, put your wells in, and get enough water to take care of it. We never farmed it.

RM: Did you eventually subdivide your land?

CF: Yes, we did.

RM: How long did Frank work for the Pahrump Ranch?

CF: He worked for them from '60 until way in the '80s.

RM: So he was there after they quit growing cotton?

CF: Yes, he was there after Jack Soules died, and that was in '83.

RM: So he was there after it became Preferred Equities. Was he running the farm at first, growing the cotton and all of that?

CF: Yes, running it as foreman.

RM: That was a big job, wasn't it?

CF: It was; they had 10,000 acres. Of course, not much of it was in production, but it was still a lot.

RM: And were they also growing alfalfa when they were raising cotton?

CF: I don't think so. I can't remember it if they did.

RM: Were they raising any cows?

CF: No, they were just cotton. Walt Williams came from Texas; he was in a partnership. They grew cotton both down in Texas and up here. I don't know if he is the one that helped get the gin in here or not.

RM: I think he was.

CF: But Jacque Ruud worked at the gin and I think that came in in about '59 or '60.

RM: What did Frank do after Walt Williams sold out to Preferred Equities?

CF: I guess he was still the foreman; I don't know.

RM: So he was there what, 20 years or more; that was basically his career, then?

CF: Yes, it was. He had a trucking business for a while and then something else and he left Pahrump and went up to Idaho.

RM: Is he still living?

CF: No, he died three years ago—his heart.

RM: He must have liked working the ranch.

CF: Well, he was raised on a farm. He lived with Grandma and Grandpa and helped Grandpa before we did. Grandpa had what would be common over there at that time—he had the orchard, he had alfalfa, he had dairy cattle, he had cotton and there were little plots of each. I think we had about 20-something dairy cattle.

RM: So you were running a dairy over there? To me, that's work; it's never done.

CF: When Frank wanted to go on some kind of trip, fishing or something, since he milked the dairy cattle, he trained my sister Leila and me to do that for one day only. And that was an experience. [Laughs] We had one cow that we called Jughead that would kick you all the time and she kicked over the milk can. I had a heck of a time getting the milking machine hooked on. And then we shut off some kind of valves where the milk went through the cooler and you weren't supposed to do that and that blew. I think I was a freshman in high school and Leila was a sophomore or junior.

RM: Did he let you do that again?

CF: He probably would have liked to, but no, Grandpa didn't let us do it again.

RM: What did you think when you first saw the Pahrump Valley?

CF: Oh, I loved it.

RM: What did you love about it?

CF: I think the open spaces. I know one thing we just couldn't believe—when we were looking up at the mountains, Bob and Frank were saying something about all of the trees up there. I said, "There are not any trees up there." I was so shocked because they took us up there and there they were.

RM: You have a wonderful view of Mount Charleston from your front yard.

CF: That's the reason I picked this place. I looked all over the place so I could get my view. We lived for 27 years down on Betty and Dove Street and you looked right straight out at the mountains. We've always had a view of the mountains.

RM: How long did you live on the Pahrump Ranch?

CF: A year, and then we bought on West Street where the New Hope Fellowship Church is now. There was a house and shop there. We moved over there and set up our trailer and then we bought some barracks buildings from Nellis Air Base—one was a rec hall and we had it moved out and made a house out of it.

Ronnie needed a shop so he found out, through the cotton gin here, of a cotton gin over in Weedpatch, in Bakersfield, that you could get for nothing if you took everything down and cleared it off. We used half of it, and then the Wilcox Ranch, which is in the north end of the valley, took the other half.

The Wilcox Ranch was on Leslie. It's not a ranch anymore; Preferred Equities bought that also. But the Wilcox Ranch took half the gin building and we kept half.

RM: Do those barracks that had been at Nellis still stand over on West Street?

CF: Yes, it's a school now and the shop building is a church. I know when I heard they were turning that into a church I thought, "Well, I hope they blessed it!" [Laughs] I always loved that house. When you look at it, you think of all the soldiers. It had pretty carved beams on the ceiling of about a third of it.

It took quite a bit to make it into a house. Our office building on Highway 160—what was Charlotta Inn Motel—was a barracks building. It was the general's home; it was three barracks buildings. We moved that out and made a motel out of it.

RM: So you had a motel here?

CF: Yes, our motel was where Floyd's Construction is now, across from Saddle West. We opened that in '68 with six rooms and then in the '90s, I'd just had it and I didn't want to

mess with it anymore. We had expanded because of Preferred Equities—they needed a place to have a sales reception area so we made a deal with them and a lease and built the wing that faces the highway. Preferred Equities had that lease for about five or six years before they built their own.

RM: And the building is still there?

CF: Yes, we lease it out all the time. It was a motel and then we leased out a few of the front spaces to a barbershop and other businesses and now it's all leased out for businesses.

RM: Was it the first motel in Pahrump?

CF: Yes, it was. There wasn't anything else around it, nothing. [Laughs] We had an idea that that's what we would do in our retirement but by the time we'd run it on the manager's days off and week off, we decided we didn't want to run a motel. [Laughs]

RM: Is it a tough go to run a motel?

CF: It is.

RM: What are some of the challenges you had to face?

CF: Drunks coming in at 3:00 in the morning. It's very disconcerting to have that; you don't feel safe. Maybe it doesn't bother some people but it bothered me.

RM: Where were they getting their booze?

CF: Oh, we always had bars.

RM: Did you have trouble with them damaging the rooms and everything?

CF: Oh yes, you had that, and you had them throwing up. As for damage, we had somebody just totally strip a room one time. We've always been a very trusting people and we had just put our TVs on locks maybe two months prior to that so they didn't get the TV. Prior to that we just had them sitting on the dresser. But they took blankets, pillows—everything that wasn't tied down, they took.

RM: Did you follow up on them?

CF: We found out earlier from when we would have the Harvest Festival or rodeo and events like that, unless you actually see somebody putting things in the car, you can't do anything about it. We had that problem before, with kids. We got so we didn't rent to kids or anybody under 18 years old.

RM: And you started with six units?

CF: Yes. By the time we finished adding on to it there were 23 units.

RM: And when did you close it, or did you sell it?

CF: Ronnie and I sold the land there and what goes up to Ace Hardware. We owned all of that land and we sold that to our kids about five years ago.

RM: So they own what was the motel?

CF: Right. But I had already turned it into business units before that.

RM: And when did you shut the motel down as a motel?

CF: I would say it was about eight or ten years ago. I can't remember exactly.

RM: Do you have pictures of the motel?

CF: Yes. Up in my office I have one that Ray Wulfenstein took when it was still just six units. It was just a straight line, three barracks put together.

RM: One of the things that strikes me about interviewing people here in Pahrump is how enterprising you were back in those days.

CF: Nobody had any money. [Laughter]

RM: You were forced to be enterprising. in other words? It seems that people were really doing interesting things to make a go of it.

CF: I always said we were young and we were having fun.

RM: Did you do any other enterprises?

CF: Oh, Ronnie got into everything. He bought and subdivided land. We came here with no money.

RM: And you had jobs in the gin?

CF: Yes. I worked there in the daytime, he worked at night.

RM: And did you have children by then?

CF: Yes, we had our two oldest kids. They were six and eight when we moved over here.

RM: What were being paid at the gin, do you remember?

CF: I got a dollar an hour and Ronnie got a dollar and a half an hour.

RM: What was your job in the gin?

CF: Secretarial and weighing trailers. They had scales there and you weighed all the cotton trailers that came across. Jacque was working there and she taught me what I was supposed to do. I worked weekends. You worked five days a week.

RM: What was Ron doing at night?

CF: They first had him sampling the cotton bales and then he went to work in the gin itself. I don't know what all he was doing in there.

RM: Do you know how many bales they were turning out a day or a season?

CF: I wish I could remember that because the year that we moved here and were working in the gin was the largest amount that they'd every produced. Jacque could tell you.

RM: So that was the peak?

CF: It was. I can't remember when they shut the gin down, but it was after Preferred Equities bought the ranch, I know that. It just gradually got worse and worse.

RM: Yes, because that took the Pahrump Ranch out of production and there just wasn't enough to keep it going, was there?

CF: Right. They used to bring their cotton over from Logandale and Moapa. They would

bring it all the way over here to be ginned. Before they built this gin, they used to take it to Bakersfield, to Weedpatch.

RM: How long did you work at the gin?

CF: Just that one year.

RM: And then what did you do?

CF: Then I found out I was going to be a bookkeeper. [Laughs] That had never been in my plans because I hated math, but Ronnie started his pump business right after that.

RM: Talk about that and how he got into it.

CF: His dad was in business with his two brother-in-laws in the pump business in Chowchilla. In 1960, they split and his dad started his own so Ronnie, who had been working in a grocery store since he was 13, quit that and went to work with his dad selling pumps and learned that business.

Then we decided to move over here, because all these pumps had to be changed over from diesel to electric, and he started selling pumps here. In working at the gin he was able to meet the farmers; that helped. Before he was through at the gin he was pulling pumps, pulling them because it was between crops, and talking to people, and then he started putting in the new pumps. But he had to test-pump each well; you have to test-pump them to see how much water and what size bowls were required. So he was test-pumping wells and putting in new pumps. He had one helper—his name was Jesus and he didn't speak any English.

RM: But he knew what to do?

CF: No, not particularly. [Laughs] But he worked and that's how he started out. He started drilling wells a couple of years after that. In California, you have pump installers and then you have well-drillers, but in Nevada it was a combination of both so if he was going to be competitive, he had to start drilling wells. An old friend of ours from Chowchilla came over

who had been a well-driller all his life. He taught Ronnie how to drill wells and he got his license and started drilling wells.

By this time, we had built the shop over on West Street. How we got into selling hardware was through this. When we were still on the Pahrump Ranch, Ronnie had a tent behind our trailer and he would go over to Bakersfield and bring back all of the supplies he needed for well-drilling and putting in pumps. Well, the farmers would come by and because it was so hard to get anything like that—you had to go to Vegas or Bakersfield—they'd say, "Can I borrow. . . ?" or "I'll pay you this." That's how we ended up in hardware because we finally started just selling it and when we moved over on West Street, we were selling it.

RM: That's really an interesting story.

CF: It was, and from that he started selling plastic pipe and he sold the oil and greases and diesel. You sold anything you could to make some money.

RM: Talk about how you got into the diesel and oil business.

CF: The gin manager that was here at that time, George Slater, had been doing it and he and Ronnie were in business together on the motel. And they left; he decided to go back to school. So we bought them out and we also took over the oil business that he was doing before.

RM: And did the operation have a name?

CF: It was PA Distributing. They left and we ended up with the motel and the oil businesses, both. I can't remember how long Ronnie did that.

RM: Now, what did the oil business consist of?

CF: It was mainly bulk—55-gallon drums of different kinds of oil and the greases that they use in machinery and everything. The diesel came in on the truckloads and everybody had their own great big tanks and they'd go empty it into their tanks.

RM: How did you get the diesel?

CF: They brought the diesel in but Ronnie went and got other things. Ronnie bought a two-ton truck. We had a ton-and-a-half truck, I think it was, and it ran on butane. He bought it from J. W. Laughinghouse from Long Beach. He was a good buddy of Doby Doc's and Benny Binon's and he was a character. He would write out a contract on a napkin or a piece of torn paper. That was our contract. For some reason, probably through Doby Doc, he brought in some used cars. And that's where Ronnie met him; he bought this truck from J. W. Laughinghouse.

Anyway, when Ronnie gave up on the ton-and-a-half truck, he had gone over to Bakersfield and picked up pumps and barrels of oil and different things, and started up Tehachapi Grade. He got about halfway up there and the truck quit. He said he just kept looking behind him to see the cars coming and he finally flipped that thing around and let it head back down to Bakersfield. [Laughs] I imagine he was going pretty good by the time he got down there.

Anyway, he called Laughinghouse and Laughinghouse said, "If you can get over here, then I've got a truck for you." So Ronnie got on a bus and went to Long Beach and got his truck and got it ordered. I don't know if he flew home or what; I can't remember that. But I loved that truck because when he left he'd come back. [Laughs]

RM: You weren't so worried.

CF: No, I never knew if he'd get back in that other one.

RM: Was it a new truck? Do you remember what kind it was?

CF: We still have it. It's a Chevrolet 1968 two-ton truck.

RM: Oh, my gosh. And that's what he would use to haul the pumps and the barrels and everything. And who brought in the diesel?

CF: Golden Bear.

RM: They had their truck to bring it over? And then did you have a big tank they would load it into?

CF: No, it went right straight to the farmers.

RM: So you were kind of a middleman for that? And you were the distributor for the greases and the pumps?

CF: Yes.

RM: Were you the only ones in the valley doing the pumps and so forth?

CF: We were the only ones for quite a while. Charlie Nyberg moved over here in '64, I think it was, and he started drilling wells. He is from Chowchilla, also. We knew him over there; in fact, he went to school with my youngest sister. I don't think he put in pumps, but I think he tied up with somebody that put in pumps. But they were all the domestic pumps.

RM: Were other people in the valley drilling wells?

CF: Of course, Stan Ford was here when we moved here.

RM: Yes, and he was drilling, but did he do pumps?

CF: He must have; I don't really know. But as far as ag pumps, it was Allen Pumps out of Las Vegas. There was another pump dealer in Vegas, I can't remember his name, but Allen Pump was the main one that came out here and most of them used people out of Bakersfield before we moved out here.

RM: Did you take their business away when you started?

CF: Basically, yes.

RM: Putting in a domestic pump is an entirely different proposition than an ag well, isn't it?

CF: Oh, definitely. I helped him a few times putting in the domestic pumps because it is

just two-inch pipe where for the other, you've got eight- or 10- or 14-inch pipe.

RM: So they're much bigger wells. Do you recall the cost to drill in those days?

CF: About $2 a foot for domestic.

RM: And what would a big ag one cost?

CF: I don't remember that, I really don't. I know the whole set-up was only about $4,000 for a big pump.

RM: And how many gallons could one of those produce a day? How many acres could it handle—I guess that's a better way to say it?

CF: That I don't know.

RM: If you had 100 acres, say in cotton, I wonder how many of those wells you would need on average.

CF: It would depend on where you were drilling. On the Desert Land Entry we did on Gamebird, we had seven wells to try to get enough water. Most of them only produced 250 to 300 gallons a minute. The aquifers in Pahrump are very different. There is a really good well out on Thousandaire in Pahrump Valley that belonged to Vic Kuntz. He got a really good well. Hafen got a good well on Hafen Ranch Road down there. It was artesian; it still runs artesian at times. But there are not that many really good wells here. You have to drill a bunch of wells to get enough.

RM: And they were costing $4,000 a pop? So it took a little money unless you were real lucky.

CF: Well, most of them got their financing through the government. It was 3 percent money or something like that.

RM: And what agency was it coming through?

CF: I don't know; I think it was REA money.

RM: So when the electric pumps began to become dominant, did you lose your diesel business?

CF: Oh, yes. Well, I think we had quit selling it by then.

RM: When did you start selling diesel, would you say?

CF: It was probably the late '60s. I don't really remember.

RM: And when were you out of the diesel?

CF: It was before we moved from there, which is '72. I think he was still selling bulk oil, but I don't think he was in diesel. Mankins got into some kind of deal with Texaco and we just couldn't compete—he was the sole distributor for their oils and greases and everything. And they had the service station on the corner.

RM: So when were you out of that?

CF: I would say it was before '72 or right around that time. We moved from that house down to Betty and Dove in '72 so probably by then. Ronnie sold the pump business to his brother Wayne and they took over that and we got out of it completely.

RM: And when had the whole thing been converted to electricity?

CF: Oh, it all converted in '63, '64, '65.

RM: But you were still selling diesel after that?

CF: Yes, because they were still farming. They used it for running their tractors and everything.

RM: But they weren't using as much, right?

CF: No. It just amazes us what we sold it for and what you pay for diesel nowadays. It used to be considered junk and now it's higher than gas.

RM: When I was in high school I always wanted a Mercedes diesel car because I couldn't afford gas; diesel was so much cheaper. What happened after you got out of the pump

business?

CF: We were doing just strictly septic tanks.

RM: Was that good?

CF: It was all right; Ronnie was just tired. He always worked seven days a week. Unless we were out of the valley in Vegas or on a trip, which is very rare, he worked seven days a week. He was just worn out—plus we subdivided land and everything else. He got out of it, but he was bored sick; I could just see it.

In '77 or '78, Ronnie started putting plastic pipe back in up where the Preferred Equities reception area had been in the motel. They were out of it by that time so he put plastic pipe and fittings and other hardware in that great big room and that became our hardware store again. [Laughter]

RM: When you went from his own parts for the pumps and everything, did you actually open a hardware store?

CF: Yes. Back then it was 20 x 50 feet and he had pipe fittings and faucets and hoses and you name it; if somebody wanted something, he got it.

RM: Did it have a name?

CF: No, it was just part of the pump company.

RM: But people would come there and buy these things?

CF: Oh yes. Mike, our youngest son, was born during this time and I'd have to be watching him. I'd run to Vegas for all of the parts and so on, so half the time the store wasn't even manned. We left the back door open and the invoice book on the counter and people came in got what they wanted and wrote it down and we billed them at the end of the month.

RM: What a great story.

CF: I don't think we ever lost anything. You couldn't do it today. [Laughter] Did you ever

interview Tom Duke?

RM: No, I didn't.

CF: They had moved out here during that time and Tom didn't believe in trusting people. He would just have a fit about me doing that. And I'd say, "Tom, nobody is going to get anything." And he made me so nervous about this that if I ever screwed up on an account it was Tom Duke's. [Laughs] But, no. I don't think we ever lost anything.

RM: About what year was this?

CF: It was from when we opened in '63 through '72.

RM: And then you dropped that when you got out of the pump business?

CF: Yes, we figured that Wayne and his wife would keep it going, but they didn't.

RM: He bought the whole pump business and everything?

CF: Yes, and they rented the building and everything from us. Then he sold out to Ronnie's brother John and he ran it for three or four years and then he got out of it. I know we went back into it for a little bit.

One of the people we knew from the San Joaquin came over here. He used to blow wells over in the San Joaquin—blow sand out of them. He came over to blow our well—we had alfalfa on that place we moved to; we had 100 acres down there and one well kept plugging up. We called him and he came and blew the well and it had a lot of sand in it, which is very unusual here. But he stayed and Ronnie had a deal going with him where he'd drill wells and Ronnie would put in pumps for maybe another year and a half, and that was about as long as it lasted.

RM: And that was about in the '70s?

CF: In the '80s. But our sons didn't want to do pumps. [Laughs] When you do pumps, then you get phone calls in the middle of the night saying, "My pump's not working."

RM: So it's a 24-hour deal.

CF: Yes, it is. And they just really didn't want that part of the business.

RM: Are pumps pretty reliable or do they break down quite a bit?

CF: Pumps nowadays are good for about five years—about as soon as that warranty's gone. The pumps that we put in to start with were called Red Jackets and Jacuzzis and brands like that and you'd have 15, 20 years out of them. But they started making them out of plastic

like they did everything else. and they just don't last. It's like appliances and everything else. That's one reason I said, "We're not getting back into this anymore." They don't make them like they used to.

RM: So it's even more of a headache.

CF: Yes, it's a headache. I am not kidding—if people get up and they don't have any water, they call you.

RM: Sure, in the middle of the night, and so you have to go out there then.

CF: Yes, you do. Over in San Joaquin they put in pumps for the farmers and they had to have somebody on call 24 hours a day.

RM: Now, just for my own ignorance—you drill a hole and then you've got to put casing down it, right? And the casing serves as the well?

CF: Yes, it does. And it's perforated so the water comes in.

RM: And when it sands up, the sand is coming in through the perforation?

CF: Yes, it just fills up the pipe.

RM: And you can blow that sand out of there?

CF: Yes, you can.

RM: But that tends not to happen here?

CF: Not very much; you don't have that many stratas of sand. What was down at our place is almost like a sugar sand and it filled that thing up twice.

RM: And how deep was that well?

CF: About 300-and-something feet.

RM: And then you've got a pump up at the top?

CF: No, the pump is hanging on that pipe way down in the water.

RM: It doesn't go clear to the bottom, does it? In a 300-foot well, how far down would it

go?

CF: I think that one was about 180 feet.

RM: And it's just hanging there and sucking the water up?

CF: Yes, we had a 40 horsepower and a 30 horsepower and a 20 horsepower down there on that. That was 110 acres and it took all three of them to water it.

RM: What part of this pumping apparatus tends to break down in those days versus now?

CF: Basically your bowls will wear.

RM: Now, where are the bowls?

CF: That's the pump. They look like a big brass bowl and there are just stacks of them. The sand will wear on those until they are not efficient anymore.

RM: So you have to pull all of the pipe? Did you ever lose the pipe down the hole?

CF: They've lost drill pipe by drilling where it gets jammed and they can't get it out of there, yes. That means you go drill another well.

RM: And what kind of strata are you typically drilling through here in the valley?

CF: Clay. I used to have to write out all these wells logs. It'd be brown clay and gray clay and sometimes gravel and sandy clay.

RM: Does it stand up pretty well? Of course, you've got the casing keeping it from collapsing in, don't you?

CF: I know a well can make a big cavern down underneath there, especially if you have sandy stuff. But actually that's not all that bad because you have big reservoir waters.

RM: Is there any stratum that the water really tends to flow in here? Like if you got a certain strata, oh boy, we've got a good one here.

CF: Like I said, that one down there on Thousandaire, I think, was around 1800 feet. But they are very rare.

RM: Is it really expensive to pump water?

CF: Well, it is now. I think it's more than the San Joaquin. With the power bills. . . . When they first started out, if you built a house and you built it all electric, they had special rates for all electric. The farmers had different rates: they don't do that anymore because Rural Electric is supposed to be for farmers and now we have a community instead of farming. So the rules have changed.

RM: What difference did it make in the valley when the electricity came in?

CF: We moved in in October and they hooked up the electric in March so they were putting the power lines in when we moved here.

RM: Did they put them in in any special order, like to the big ranches first?

CF: I don't remember. But, like the way they had to pull our pump rig out with 'dozers, they had to pull those trucks, too. One of the biggest things they did was use helicopters to place poles up on Potosi; they go over Potosi.

RM: Did you have any trouble with the heat coming here from the Central Valley?

CF: I can't say the heat bothered us much; it was the cold.

RM: It doesn't get as cold in the Central Valley?

CF: No. When Ronnie dug a ditch to put our water line into the trailer, he dug it 12 inches, which is what you'd do in the San Joaquin—where we lived, that's plenty. We went home for Christmas and came back and we had frozen pipes and busted everything because it all froze. [Laughs] You have to put it down a lot deeper than that.

RM: Does it still get that cold here?

CF: I don't think it gets as cold as it did. And we've got a lot more humidity. We don't really have much humidity but we have a lot more than when we first moved here just because of all the houses and lawns and trees.

RM: Has the actual temperature in the summer gone up at all or gone down?

CF: I think it's down a little bit. But I can't take the heat like I used to.

RM: When power came in people had swamp coolers, didn't they? When did air conditioning really come in?

CF: When we built our house in '72, we put in air conditioning, but there weren't that many stick-built houses here; it was more mobiles. If you got a double-wide, that was really something.

RM: Talk about the Harvest Festival.

CF: In '64, a bunch of us got together at the gin office. In Chowchilla, they have a Spring Festival and they always had the deep-pit barbeque and carnivals and everything else. We all got together and thought that'd be a really good idea, only our idea also included a stock sale for the 4H and FFA. That never came to be until this year—I saw in the paper where they actually had one. But that's how it got started.

RM: Were you a spark plug behind it?

CF: I don't think I was any more than anybody else. All the records show I made the motion to do this and I guess I did, but it was Atha and Chuck Connolly, Jacque and Bob, Frank and Carol, George Slater, and a whole bunch of them. We were all down at the gin office and just decided to do this.

The first one was held where the community building is now and there were still sand dunes all in there. They just kind of roped off an arena-type thing. I can't remember what all events they had; I do know they had a hide race. It's a cowhide and the rider has the cowhide on a rope behind him and he goes down to the end of the arena and his partner jumps on the hide and they race back down to the other end. The hide rider usually ends up under the hide. They stopped doing that. [Laughs]

RM: Oh my lord. It sounds kind of dangerous.

CF: Oh, it's fun.

RM: Do people get hurt?

CF: They get scraped up pretty good. I'll never forget Jacque's son Robin. Bob had him as his partner and he was little, I don't know how old he was, but when he jumped on that hide and Bob took off, that hide was flying in the air with Robin on top. [Laughs]

But anyway, the first one I worked as secretary for, taking times and what not. But I didn't do it after that. I always helped in the eating booth where we served breakfast and lunch and so on, but I didn't work as the secretary any more.

RM: It just became an institution, didn't it?

CF: It did. And after the first year, when we actually made a little bit of money on it, we decided that the money would go to things to do with kids. You've got to remember that just about everybody in Pahrump was involved in it. And this turned out to be very good because we decided that the money would go for playground equipment, anything to do with kids. For years it went for playground equipment or whatever, improving things for the kids.

RM: I've talked to women here in the valley and they talk about what a wonderful spirit it was, the friendships and everything.

CF: Yes, it was. We had the women's club, the Pahrump Women's Club, and we would involve ourselves in trying to help the school. We had nothing as far as schools and at that time we were so small and Tonopah was bigger so we were always fighting them (for county money).

We got together a lot. People got together and played cards and all kinds of things. You didn't have TV, you didn't have things to distract you that way, and it was just a very communal feeling.

I can't really remember too many arguments. The only big argument I remember at a town board meeting at that time was over what kind of chairs we were going to buy for the community building. [Laughs] Big fight! I am so glad that we raised our family here.

RM: Do you miss it?

CF: Yes, we're not involved like we were. We're not involved in the store and things like we used to be.

RM: Do you want to talk a little bit about the hardware store?

CF: Like I said before, we were selling pipe. Then our daughter Julie started working in it; I always thought she would take my place being the bookkeeper for this outfit but she liked hardware better. Julie is married to Carl Moore; they're the ones who run Ace Hardware. We built the red building that is up there on the highway thinking that would last us forever and that lasted five years and we outgrew it. Then we built half of what is up there now and then added on to that. But Julie has been running it ever since we franchised with Ace Hardware, which was in '82.

RM: And as Pahrump grew, you grew with it?

CF: Yes. Ronnie brought his sales sense, I guess you'd call it, that he had working in that grocery store when he was a kid—what the customer asks for, you see if you can get it for them. And that passed right on to Julie; she is a very good merchant. And that is going on to her son Nick, who is another one. [Laughs]

RM: What was involved in hooking up with Ace Hardware?

CF: It was quite difficult for us to do that because we had always charged to customers out here on 30 days or 45 days billing, whatever it took. Ace Hardware's policy is that you pay every two weeks. We just didn't see how we could do that and we finally decided to go in so we could be competitive in price, for one thing. We had to change our charge policies.

Over the years we had charged to everybody, but we ended up just charging to businesses instead of the general public like we had before. And it's a two-week policy of billing. It has to be because that's how we have to pay.

RM: Did you ever lose by people not paying their bill?

CF: Oh, certainly.

RM: Was it much of a loss?

CF: Some of it is; you still do. We probably had the biggest loss in the pump business. You can't really be in business without charging.

RM: So the pump business was not cash up front, and then sometimes they didn't pay. What did you do then? Did you ever have to take them to court?

CF: It took us a long time to learn what to do. [Laughs] I learned that you can't let it go, you have to do something about it right away. We found out the hard way by writing off some bills that had been out there for years. The IRS came back at us and said, "You can't do that; you didn't take them to court." You have to take them to court to be able to write it off.

RM: Do you ever get it through court?

CF: Some of them you do, some of them you get a lien; they say they owe you, but that doesn't mean they're going to pay you.

RM: Did you have to pay Ace Hardware a franchise fee?

CF: We paid them $5,000 up front and then you have to buy stock and each time you order then they tack on a certain amount of stock price to it until you reach . . . I can't remember what it was. But each year you get stock. It's kind of a rebate-type thing.

RM: What do you see when you see Pahrump now?

CF: I love it. Do you know why? Because I don't have to go to Las Vegas for anything. I spent so many years running back and forth to Vegas for everything. You never went to Las

Vegas without calling around and saying, "I'm going in; do you need anything?" Everybody picked up for everybody else and now you don't have to. The only time I go to Vegas to buy anything is at Christmastime.

RM: When you got here the road over Mountain Springs was in, wasn't it?

CF: Yes, it was. The only one that wasn't was over to Highway 95.

RM: Talk just a little about the Test Site. What effect did it have that you saw on the community?

CF: When they blacktopped the road from 95 to Pahrump in 1965, which ended up about where Leslie is now, that's when everybody started moving in. And the people lived in Indian Springs, they lived in Las Vegas, and most of them were horse people and they wanted five, 10 acres or more for their horses. That's what really started things moving. Stan Ford sold a lot of five-, 10-, 20-acre pieces to these people. And we started selling; Ronnie bought land and we broke it up into five-acre lots and sold it off to people that worked at the Test Site.

RM: And this was your subdivision that you had bought years before?

CF: Well, he has done a lot of it. He bought some in '68 out off of Homestead. He bought 80 acres over there and broke it up into fives and sold in the late '60s, early '70s.

RM: And what was your thinking to do that?

CF: You mean his? It wasn't my thinking. [Laughs]

RM: You weren't exactly for it?

CF: No, I wasn't.

RM: Why?

CF: We didn't have any money. He hadn't quite got that concept. Ronnie was really good about buying something and saying, "Charlotte, pay for it," and then he went on to the next

thing. [Laughs] Anyway, we bought from people—it would be like a $100 a month payment or $40 payment or whatever. They weren't very much, but they were hard to make. And then he'd break them up. You didn't have to subdivide like we do now. You sold things by metes and bounds.

RM: Metes and bounds are. . . ?

CF: Quarter, quarter—legal description. And you had to put in the roads but you didn't have to blacktop or anything; it was gravel roads.

RM: Did you sell them yourself or did you have a realtor?

CF: We sold them ourselves.

RM: How did you get the customers?

CF: People were just out here looking for land. And he put little ads in the Vegas paper. "For Sale by Owner." He learned how to sell land by going in Lawyer's Title and meeting them in there and having them show him how to write up an escrow.

RM: And you don't have to be a realtor or anything to sell your own land, do you?

CF: No. You're better off not being a realtor. Anyway, he just thought that was a lot of fun. When he was a kid, that grocery store he worked in was a country grocery store and it had a soda fountain, and the farmers would come in and sit there. Some of them were realtors and some of them were just really sharp and they were always telling him, "Buy land, Son; buy land." And he listened. And our kids have.

RM: That's very smart. And what are your thoughts on the contrast between what Pahrump was when you came here versus what Pahrump is now versus what you think it's going to be in the future?

CF: It's going to be a complete suburb of Las Vegas. I'm not so happy about that. I am not happy with the crime and everything else that comes along with growth. My grandkids

and great-grandkids have so many more advantages than our kids did, but our kids had a blast.

RM: They had a good childhood, didn't they?

CF: They roamed all over on horses and Jeeps and whatever else they had, motorcycles; they had a very good childhood here. Even when you didn't know exactly where they were there was a grapevine system that by the time they got home you knew exactly where they'd been, which they didn't like. [Laughs]

RM: They couldn't deceive Mom, could they?

CF: Even before we had telephones. They never could figure that one out. But that's getting back to the communal feel. If you saw somebody's kid doing something that was going to get them hurt or whatever, you just took care of it.

RM: You talked to them.

CF: Yes, you did. You wouldn't dare do that today.

RM: And they wouldn't sass you or anything because they knew they'd get it at home.

CF: Yes, they would. No, it was really a great place and you don't have that today. You don't have the same kind of people, for one thing. You wouldn't dare do that with somebody's kid even if they were about to get themselves killed; you wouldn't dare discipline them or get onto them about it. It's better as far as things like I don't have to go to Vegas for anything and that's wonderful. But I hate to see it get too much bigger.

RM: Do you think it will be big?

CF: Oh, I do. That's just what happens—look at L.A.

RM: It'll keep going until something stops it, water or no people or whatever.

CF: Water is what's going to stop it. Water is going to stop a lot of growth in Southern Nevada.

RM: Unless they figure out a way to get it.

CF: Well, they're going to take it from somebody else.

RM: Or they could desalinate down on the coast and then make a trade.

CF: Well, if they were smart. But do you think they'll do it?

RM: I don't think so.

CF: I don't, either. They're going to wait until it is absolutely critical.

RM: Do you feel like a pioneer?

CF: I never thought of myself that way, but I do now. I guess.

RM: At the time you didn't see yourself as a pioneer? But you look back and you were?

CF: Well, people tell me I am. I guess we were, but I've never felt that we were true pioneers here. People like Fords and Hafens and Bowmans and Andersons were pioneers: they were here when it was really rough.

RM: But you were pioneering business. You were pioneering a motel and pipes and hardware.

CF: Yes, we were; I never thought of it that way.

RM: What was it in your spirit that enabled you to survive? There is something remarkable about how enterprising you were.

CF: I was a very good follower. Ronnie and I got married when I was in my senior year; I was still 16 and he had just turned 18. And whatever he'd say, "We're going to do this."

I was just, "Okay." And the kids have done the same thing. Basically they all started working when they were 12. A lot of things he wanted to do I thought were absolutely crazy, but they worked out. It's just taken hard work. I've learned to do a lot of things that I never thought I would.

RM: And the hard work is part of the key, isn't it?

CF: It is. But we were raised that way. He was and I was and that made a big difference, I think. We worked on the farm; I had a job after we moved to town; I had a job after school. Ronnie always had a job and it's just the way we were raised.

RM: I don't think kids can work as hard now.

CF: You're right. In hiring people, the lack of a work ethic is just unbelievable. Every once in a while you get a really good one and you scramble like heck to hang on to them. And if somebody else finds out they are, they're going to try and get them. It's really hard to find good hard workers. They have been raised with an attitude that you don't have to. You know, "I want a paycheck, but I don't want to work."

RM: How did television change the valley?

CF: It didn't at first, but it did as the years went by. I notice a difference now. None of my kids were big TV watchers, just because they didn't have it for quite a while. In fact, Mike is now, but when he was little, when you think he'd be watching TV, he didn't. He was outside playing all the time.

RM: Does it hurt the community?

CF: I don't think it's TV as much as all of the games. They sit and play games all the time. How many kids do you see that don't have something in their hand? And therefore, they're not thinking about anything else.

RM: And your children were just free to roam.

CF: And you didn't worry about your kid getting hurt. Today if one of my grandkids was doing that, I'd be terrified. It's completely different.

RM: Well, I could sit here and talk all afternoon. You have got such a wonderful memory. Your recollections are just lovely and I think it's a real contribution. I really thank you.

CF: I've enjoyed my life here.

RM: Sum up your life in Pahrump.

CF: I very much enjoyed it. I've enjoyed all the people I've met and I've met a lot of really nice people being in business. Ronnie and I just had a really good time here. We're very privileged to have all three of our kids right next to us. All three work in the business.

RM: You are very lucky.

CF: And their kids are here. I have one granddaughter who doesn't live here; she moved up to Washington last year.

RM: That's a picture of the family?

CF: That's our 50th anniversary; there is a bunch more since then. I have 11 grandkids and just about 11 great-grandkids.

INDEX

A
Ace Hardware franchise, 30–31

B
barracks buildings from Nellis Air Base, 12
Binon, Benny, 18
Blosser, Ted, 4
Bowman family, 7
Bracero Program (Mexican Farm Labor Program), 5
Brady brothers, 9

C
Caudill, Robert F. (Doby Doc), 18
Charlotta Inn Motel, 12–14
Chowchilla, California, 1–2
Clark, Lois (Woner), 2
Connoly, Atha, 28
Connoly, Chuck, 28
cotton farming, 6–7, 10, 15–16
cotton gin, 4, 10, 15–16
cowhide race, 28–29
credit policies, businesses', 30–31

D
Desert Land Entry Act, 3, 9
Doby Doc (Robert F. Caudill), 18
Duke, Tom, 23

E
electric generators, 4
electric power in Pahrump, 3–4

F
Floyd, Bruce, 37
Floyd, Charlotte Anne (Woner)
  adjustment to climate, 27–28
  birth, 1
  and Charlotta Inn Motel, 12–14
  and Chowchilla high school, 2
  and cotton gin work, 15–16
  grandparents, 1–2
  and grandparents' farm, 2, 10–11
  and Harvest Festival, 28–29
  and horses, 6–7
  and house from military barracks, 12
  living on Pahrump Ranch, 4, 12
  marriage to Ron, 2–3, 35
  milking cows, 11
  move to Pahrump, 3–4, 11
  moving into Chowchilla, 2
  Pahrump, present day view of, 31–32
  pioneering spirit of, 35
  raising children in Pahrump, 34
  subdivision sales, 32–33
  subdivisions, 9, 15, 32–33
  summary of life in Pahrump, 36
  on West Street, Pahrump, 12, 17
Floyd, John, 24
Floyd, Julie, 30, 37
Floyd, Mike, 22, 36–37
Floyd, Ron
  and Chevron Oil, 8
  and cotton gin work, 15–16
  dating Charlotte, 2
  hardware business, 17, 22
  living on Pahrump Ranch, 4, 12
  marriage to Charlotte, 2–3, 35
  move to Pahrump, 3–4
  oil and diesel business, 17–19, 21
  pioneering spirit of, 35
  and pump and well business, 3–4, 7, 16–17
  and shop from cotton gin, 12
  subdivision sales, 32–33
  subdivisions, 9, 15, 32–33
  and truck story, 18
Floyd, Wayne, 24
Ford, Stanley, 19, 32

H
Hafen, Tim, 7, 20
hardware business, 17, 30–31
hardware store stories, 17, 22
Harvest Festival, 28–29
homesteading, 9
horses, 6–7, 32

J
Jesus (pump business worker), 16

K
Kuntz, Vic, 20

L
Laughinghouse, J.W., 18

M
Mankins family, 9, 21

McGowan (early Pahrump resident), 9
Merced, California, 1
metes and bounds, 33
Mildred (Charlotte Floyd's mother), 1
Moore, Carl, 30
Moore, Julie (Floyd), 30, 37
Moore, Nick, 30
motels, management challenges of, 13–14
Mount Charleston, 11

N
Nevada Test Site, 32
Nyberg, Charlie, 19

P
PA Distributing, 17
Pahrump, Nevada
  barracks buildings in, 12
  buildings, transitional uses for, 12
  Charlotta Inn as first motel, 12–14
  Children's activities in, 36
  climate, 27–28
  community feeling, 22, 28–29, 34
  electric power in, 3–4, 27
  enterprise of people in, 14–15
  entertainment, community, 29
  future and growth of, 33–35
  grapevine system of child care, 34
  Harvest Festival, 28–29
  Pahrump Ranch, locations of features, 5–6
  pioneers of, 35
  present day view of, 31–32
  reasons for people moving to, 3
  schools, 12, 29
  shopping improvements in, 31
  soil composition of, 25–26
  subdivision sales, 32–33
  TV and video games, changes caused by, 36
  West Street, 12, 17
Pahrump Ranch, 3–7, 10
Pahrump Women's Club, 29
pioneering spirit, 35
Pittman Act, 3
poof dirt, 7
Preferred Equities, 9, 10, 13
propane as universal fuel, 7–8
pump and well business, Ron Floyd's, 3–4, 7, 16–17

R
railroad tie houses, 4–6
Rural Electric Association (REA), 4, 27
Ruud, Bob, 3–4, 9, 28
Ruud, Jacque (Woner), 3, 10, 15, 28
Ruud, Robin, 29

S
schools, 2, 12, 29
Slater, George, 17, 28
Soules, Jack, 9
stories
  hardware store stories, 17, 22
  truck story, 18
subdivision sales, requirements for, 32–33

T
truck story, 18
TV and video games, changes caused by, 36

U
Union Pacific spa, 4–5

W
water
  desalinization, 35
  Pahrump Ranch springs, 5, 8
  and Southern Nevada growth, 34–35
wells
  agricultural wells, 8–9
  domestic pumps vs. agricultural wells, 19–20
  drilling, 8–9, 16–17, 19–20
  financing for, 20
  inner workings of, 25–26
  pumping mechanisms, 26
  sand in, 24–25
  variation in water volume, 20
  well pump reliability, 24–26
Wilcox Ranch, 12
Williams, Walt, 4, 10
Woner, Carol, 3–4, 28
Woner, Charlotte Anne
  See Floyd, Charlotte Anne (Woner)
Woner, Frank, 2–4, 9–10, 28
Woner, Glen, 1
Woner, Jacque
  See Ruud, Jacque (Woner)
Woner, Leila, 11
Woner, Lois, 2
work ethic and lack of, 35–36
Wulfenstein, Ray, 14