An Interview with R. J. GILLUM

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Esmeralda County History Project
Esmeralda County, Nevada
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PREFACE

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

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

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

It is the policy of the ECHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherence. The type font contains no

symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the ECHP will, in preparing a text:

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

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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

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

All material for the ECHP was prepared with the support of the Esmeralda County Nuclear Waste Repository Oversight Program, 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 Esmeralda County or the U.S. DOE.

ð Robert D. McCracken
2013

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

Aware of Esmeralda Countyôs close ties to the land and our nationôs frontier past, and the scarcity of written sources on local history after 1920, the Esmeralda County commissioners initiated the Esmeralda County History Project (ECHP) in 1993. The ECHP is an effort to systematically collect and preserve the history of Esmeralda County. The centerpiece of the ECHP is a set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Esmeralda County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada.

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

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

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

ð RDM
2013

This is Robert McCracken talking to R. J. Gillum at the Yucca Mountain Project Public Information Center in Goldfield, Nevada, September 9 and 11, 2011. Mrs. Gillum is present during the September 11 interview.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: R. J., what is your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

RJG: I just go by R. J. Gillum; itôs the third generation.

RM: And when and where were you born?

RJG: I was born in Travis County, Austin, Texasð Breckenridge Hospital, third floorð in December of 1940. I was born one minute before my grandmother Bertha Maeôs birthday, and she has never forgiven me.

RM: Because you were early?

RJG: One minute early. The doctor wouldnôt fudge, either. She lived to be 96ð and we made up along the wayð but of course, I was her favorite grandson.

RM: Where did you grow up?

RJG: I had a torn life. Mom and Dad left Texas when I was three. He went to east L.A. and worked in garages there as a mechanic until the late ô40s. It was a rocky marriage for 13 years and one morning I woke up and Dad was gone, and I was living with a woman, Mother, who was very mixed up.

RM: This was in L.A.?

RJG: Yes, in east L.A. between Figueroa and Vermont on 66th. My dad went back to Texas after the divorce and Mother was out here with her mother, who was working at L.A. General Hospital. The family all worked at L.A. General and they were all SDA, Seventh Day Adventists; L.A. General was part of the SDA Loma Linda hospital system. Anyway, Mother would send us back to Texas for four months every summer to our Grandma and Grandpa Gillum, and those were the best days of our lives.

RM: In Austin?

RJG: No, they were in Burnet, the Llano Lampasas area. Grandpa was a highway department employee. We had two farms there; Grandma had a farm in Elgin. We would do things like hand-dig a well, three feet across, 80 feet deep, at eight years old. And we would have to rake rocks with horses. We had school in the city, but we also had the treatment of the people who were still living in the Dust Bowl, still trying to get back on their feet through the ô40s and ô50s.

RM: What a contrast. Now, what was your fatherôs name?

RJG: R. J. Gillum.

RM: And when and where he was born?

RJG: He was born at home in Burnet County, Texas, just a little bit below the dam, Lake Buchanan. Itôs a beautiful place. They owned a quarter of a city block; my grandparents had three homes.

RM: Tell me a little bit about your dad.

RJG: His early days in my memory were in Richmond and Rosenberg and Liberty, just out of Louisiana. When I was eight years old, in 1948, he was working in the oil fields. Iôd go out there with him and heôd be walking these big cylinders, maybe pulling big pistons out, doing welding and so on. A couple of years later, when I went back, he had his own garage in Damon, which is just outside of Richmond. Dad bought a brand new welder in 1949, a 220 welder.

RM: Thatôd be an electric welder?

RJG: Yesð quite the invention, when you think about it. Dad had rigged up two copper wires about 12 feet long, and heôd walk outside to the telephone pole where the power was. He wore big rubber gloves and heôd put one on one wire and one on the other wire,

and he would go inside and weld. Iôll never forget that. I would watch him, and when the clouds would come over and it was going to rainð you know how the coastal area isð he would go unhook them, site them back in the corner of the garage, and pull his welder in. For all those years he was stealing electricity or he didnôt have the breaker system to hold itð probably the latter. Then he finally got his own garage.

He would go out in the oil fields and work and people would promise to pay him. When we left Texas, he was owed about $16,000. He was flat broke and chasing people everywhere trying to get money. In the ô40s, it was bad. It wasnôt the ô20s and ô30s, but it was bad. And Grandpa and the other kids were still cutting cedar posts, plus Grandpaôs highway job, to make it. They were getting 10 cents a post. Youôd cut them, strip the cedar, and stack them.

RM: Thatôs not much for all that work.

RJG: Iôd work and make a couple bucks a month, maybe, and Iôd walk three miles to get a Pepsi for a nickel and a candy bar for a penny. A good Baby Ruth, oh manð I was living in tall cotton.

And Grandma dragged us off to the UPC Church, United Pentecostal, every Sunday. It made us be good for at least three days. Mom was a SDA, and Grandma and all that side, the Dunks and the Klages, were all UPC. So you see the religious upbringing we were getting. But Dad was none of the above. He kind of turned his back on it. He wasnôt evil, he just said, ñI donôt need it.ò

RM: How did he wind up in Nevada?

RJG: He got in his car and hooked the trailer on it. He had seven children by his second wife, and me and my brother, Ronny, and we all went to Fernley, Nevada. I remember traveling all that distance down I-80 coming into Fernley. He got a job on the highway

there at the Texaco station doing mechanic work for trucks.

RM: What year was that?

RJG: When did Carlin come in, ô57? Iôd say it was probably 1958. No, it had to be before then because I went to Tonopah High in ô57. When he first came in there I think I was 12, and I got a job helping with flat tires. On the school days I had to go to school but I would make more money in one evening doing a big truck tire, busting down those split rims, pulling out the flaps, big old tubes, to repair. Iôd make almost $10 a hit. And that was back in maybe ô52.

I also bucked bales in Yerington for a buck a day, a buck and a quarter a day. Do you remember what bucking bales is? A guy hooks his tractor to a trailer, and heôs already cut and baled the hay out in the field. Youôve got two hooks, and you keep up with the trailer and tractor. One guy is on the trailer stacking and thereôs one on each side of the trailer bucking the bales up onto it. Theyôd get high school boys, from the football team usually, and I was a little 140-pound skinny brat.

RM: Thatôs hard work.

RJG: Yes, itôs tough work. But if I could bust down those 80-pound wheels, I guess I could buck 60-pound bales. In the winter, I had to go back to Mom for the school year because she still had me enrolled at a parochial school; and Dad was kind of glad to get rid of us, anyway. We were getting to be teenagers, not pleasant little children.

So I went back. In the eleventh grade I turned 16, and Iôd had all I wanted of East L.A. and Mom. I was 14 and I was running a service station on Manchester in L.A. for a fellow who was of Jewish descent. He taught me everything about business, from selling used oil for 10 cents a quart to how the gas pumps had to stop at the zero on the little white line, and if you went over that, the penny come out of your check. If you went

under it, he kept the penny. He was very honest. You couldn't cheat the customer, you couldn't shortchange him. You couldn't short-dipstick him; you didn't punch holes in his tires. I learned those tricks later, at a Chevron station. I could tell you tricks of the 1960s of Chevron and Shell and Exxon, all those big boys.

RM: What they were doing?

RJG: It was just unreal; just evil.

RM: Give me a quick example.

RJG: At the Jack Chevron and U-Haul in Long Beach in 1964, they trained us that if we saw a nail or a rock or a piece of glass in a tire, we should take a sharp pointed object and pull it out, then puncture the tire tight in the hole. That was a $5 fix. They told us to take rubber lube and wet the shocks so they dripped and looked like they were leaking. We would take the shocks and sell them $60 worth of shocks. Oil leaks, we got them. It was things like that, where they made money but there was really nothing wrong.

RM: Fraud.

RJG: That's fraud. And they did it at all the stations. Especially at the Chevrons– I can remember in downtown Las Vegas, Charleston and something. That was years later, when I was in my 20s.

Anyway, Dad drove into Fernley down the highway, and we pulled into town and were looking for a place to rent. Of course, he'd dump us at a park, all nine of us and Grandma and his wife. A guy came through the park and he wanted to sell a gun. He had a little .22 Ruger. All I had was $10, and I bought it; I have it to this day. That was over 60 years ago. That's how I remember Fernley. Later on, Dad got a job in Tonopah, in 1956. He was the head mechanic at the Ford Garage.

RM: For Red Douglass? We used to trade with Red. I bet my dad knew him. I know

that Solan Terrell worked there then.

RJG: Yes, Sollie worked there, and I worked there at the age of 14 and 15. I remember my dad was the only person Bobbie Duncan would let touch her car. Nobody else could ever touch that pink Dodge, and nobody else touched her other car. When she brought it in, he was the only one who could touch it. Do you remember Bobbie and the Buckeye?

RM: Oh, sure, she was the owner of the Buckeye Brothel. I remember her well.

RJG: She had a brand new ô55 pink Dodge.

RM: And she would only get it serviced there with your father?

RJG: Thatôs it; no one else could touch it. When I was 16, I was in Tonopah High. I donôt think I was there very long because I went in the Marine Corps from there, in ô57. But I do remember an air force boyð I think he was 19 or 20ð and I became pretty good friends. He came and got me one Saturday and he had a case of T-Bird.

RM: Thunderbird wine.

RJG: I think it was 1956, in the summer, because I wasnôt in school. All I can remember was waking up in a shack in Goldfield, and I can show you the shack. I can remember puking for a couple hours; I never had touched wine in my life and I donôt think I had more than a third of a bottle. I donôt know how I got from there back to Tonopah, but Sheriff Walker said he picked me up in front of the Mizpah in Tonopah on the double yellow line, walking down the street.

He picked me up, put me in his car. At the time Dad lived straight up from the Mizpah, up the street at the top of the hill. He got my dad up and said, ñHereôs your drunken son,ò and got in his car and left. Dad put an old garage cloth or greasy quilt down at the garage, and I had to sleep there that night. I didnôt know it at the time, but Iôd been with an Indian guy, too. Five days later, he sobered up and I had to put up with him

for five days. We were high school football players.

RM: And that was ô57?

RJG: I think it was ô56 or ô57. The Mizpah was a real going place. We kept getting thrown out. I mean, we were kids. We got thrown out of Bobbieôs; we got thrown out of the Mizpah. Nobody loved us. They didnôt like our Muckers, our school team, and they wouldnôt let us come in and visit.

RM: Bobbie wouldnôt let you into the parlor at the Buckeye?

RJG: No, Sheriff Walker was really tough on these people and they obeyed the law. That was the old days in Tonopah.

RM: How interesting. Now, what was your motherôs background, and what was her name?

RJG: Margaret Klages; itôs Irish Dutch. She came out of Elgin, Texas. There were four girls.

RM: What was her familyôs background?

RJG: All the SDA. The church was just down the country road and there was no pavement and the house had no electricity, no water. They were digging a well by hand. They were building a new home, and they did sharecropping. They did beans and cotton, and her father would farm and do the okra and pick pears, whatever it took; thatôs how they survived. It was that type of community.

RM: How did she meet your dad?

RJG: Weôre not sure.

RM: Did they go to school together?

RJG: No. He come out of Burnet. Maybe it was at some function. I think one of the sisters hooked them up, personally.

RM: And how many kids did your mom and dad have?

RJG: Mother had two, but Dad had seven more. Dad was already married.

RM: When he married your mother?

RJG: Yes. That turned into be quite a thingð he spent a little time in jail in Sugar Land for bigamy. I was just three years old and I had a brother with the same name in Marble Falls.

RM: He was married and got married again?

RJG: Yes, and Corina, his first wife, didnôt like that. She had a boy born about the same time I was. So Dad was busy.

RM: Where was his first wife?

RJG: She lived in Marble Falls, Texas. Thatôs a long way from Elginð 60, 70 miles. He was getting around; he had a motorcycle.

RM: Well, back to Nevada. So you were in Tonopah and joined the marines?

RJG: Yes. A Marine Corps recruiter come through, and it was pretty exciting to me.

RM: Where did you train?

RJG: All I remember is getting on a bus, going to Frisco, and they flew me to San Diego. I spent all my days down there at basic and ITR, and then went around the world.

RM: Were you in for four years?

RJG: No, I was in six.

RM: Did you reenlist?

RJG: No, I had a brother that got nearly killed 19 times in Vietnamð he got four purple heartsð and another brother was heading over. I said thatôs it, Iôm not going; and my time was up.

RM: You enlisted for six years in the beginning?

RJG: They didn't mention that part until I got on the plane.

RM: [Laughs] What did you do after you got out of the marines?

RJG: I was a round-robin mechanic. One of my jobs was in Austin with a Chrysler dealer, and I was just a youngster and learning about dealers. You can be very young at a dealership, or maybe 30 or 40, when they start nailing you. Your percentages, the jobs you get, you climb the pole. The higher up the pole you get, the more you make. I didn't like that so I left; I got away from the dealers and worked in machine shops. If I didn't like a job, I was the type of guy that would give them notice and walk away because I could always get a job. I never in my life couldn't get a job anywhere, including even union jobs here in Vegas and even when I was contracting.

I was a contractor for years building homes. Outside Austin, Texas, I built half of Lakeway World of Tennis. I built Scott Carpenter's home, I built Governor Connolly's home, and a home for one of his lawyers.

RM: Where's the World of Tennis?

RJG: In the Texas Hill Country outside Austin– there's the Cottonwood, Austin Lake Estates, and the World of Tennis.

RM: So you spent some time in Texas.

RJG: I was a major contractor. I built homes like Nashville, Colpus, and so forth. And I built custom homes. I had some really big people that I built for; I worked on Willie Nelson's home in Buda and D. X. Bible's house, chancellor of the university back in the late '60s; things like that.

I was the only guy with a blasting license who could work with dynamite. Back then, you could pretty well get away with whatever. The insurance, I think, was $300,000 minimum. Now it's like $3 million, or $30 million. I started off doing septic tanks and

blasting for swimming pools. Then I worked my way up to the special custom homes, all concrete fabricated, slabs, columns, overhead floors, kind of like youôd do a high rise.

RM: When did you get back to Nevada?

RJG: I donôt think I got back to Nevada till the late õ70s. I had an Exxon station in Austin, Texas, and I had the construction business. The service stations offset the fuel, and I had a lot of equipment. Plus, I could keep the people working. The workers then were called Mexicans; we didnôt call them illegal aliens. Theyôd work for us pretty reasonable, and they did a good job. Then in 1974ð and I didnôt realize this until just this yearð all my pumps wouldnôt go over a dollar.

RM: I think I remember hearing about that.

RJG: When I look at it, I now realize why my 26,000 gallons of gas a month per station got allotted down to 10,000. And iron went from one dollar something to four dollars and something at that time. The cost of iron for homes tripled, for the rebar. Lumber had a 38 percent increase.

RM: Yes, it was in that gas price rise back then.

RJG: It was never a crisis, by the way. It was a way to get digital pumps because those pumps would go to $10 a gallon. That was the whole key of it. Nobody realized that.

When I sold my business in õ78, õ79, my dad and my brother had moved to San Diego and opened up a construction business. I sent some of my equipment up to them in San Diego, and I finally showed up at Rios Canyon and I worked with them for a year and a half. Rios Canyon is just out of Mission Valley, going up to Alpine Juneau off Highway 8. I did some trucking and the construction; I would haul equipment.

Iôve had a CDL, a commercial driverôs license, since I was 14. Back then, when you were 14 and you worked on the farm, you got to get your driverôs license and it was

called a commercial driverôs license because you had to drive the tractor on the highwayð the old Farmall. We didnôt have those fancy John Deeres or big Caterpillars. No, we had the really good stuff, the Ford, the old 220 diesel. That lasted and you never had to work on it. Youôd put fuel in it, keep oil in it, and drive it and try not to get on the thorns and the brushes. They beat the horse all to hell. (I hated horses, by the way.)

But my wife, Rita, and I came to San Diego with seven children, and she hated leaving Texas. We still have land down there, cows and everything; her brother has half of it.

So we went to San Diego and I bought a house on Rios Canyon. I think itôs 22 miles out of San Diego past Mission Valley as you head up the highway. I went in with my dad and my brother and that didnôt work out too well because Larry was young and wanted things done his way, and I was older and wanted things done my way and Daddy wanted things done his way. We are all three very independent, strong-willed, hard-minded, decisive, and quick. We donôt mull things over. So it wasnôt going to work out.

I let them keep the equipment there and I said, ñIôm going to go look around.ò I believe it was 1979. I read in the paper, ñBrand new mine opening up in Tonopah, Nevada,ò and it said that they were hiring on a Monday; they were going to hire 64 people. I had a ô74 Ford one-ton with a camper on it already, because weôd come from Texas. I still had my loaders and a lot of stuff lying around. I had just started putting together a 40-foot Lowboy moving van with a ô63 Peterbilt engine. I already had the beds in itð Iôd planned on going somewhere. So, it was sitting there, and the kids were up the hill at Rios Canyon School, all seven of them.

I said, ñOkay, Iôm going to take my Ford and Iôm going to go up to Tonopah, and Iôm going to be there Monday morning.ò The construction company that was hiring was

Brown & Root and I knew Brown & Root from STP in Matagorda, Texas, from the power plant there. I knew that they were a pretty good company. I didn't at the time know that they were connected to Lady Bird Johnson and Halliburton.

RM: I didn't know that. Halliburton was connected to Lady Bird?

RJG: They owned it. Her daddy also owned Channel 7 in Austin. Basically, when her dad died she was in control of Halliburton, but it was through a whole proxy of CEOs and stuff. She didn't really walk in and do anything, though she might have said, "I'm going to make a suggestion."

Speaking of Johnson, at one time we were living at Lake Travis. We had 20 acres on the lake, and they were just down at Johnson City. We would always go by Johnson City when we went to Stonewall to get peaches or when we'd go down in the creeks to get grapes for grape jelly. The mustang grapes… have you ever had mustang jelly?

RM: No, never have.

RJG: It beats anything you've ever eaten. That and the pecan trees. There's a lot down there I miss, but there's a lot I wouldn't go back to. I don't like bugs and I don't like green things. I don't like water, I don't like grass. The bugs love me. I haven't been bitten since I've been here in Nevada, and my wife got over her asthma here, 47 years ago. From the day we came she never had another fit of asthma. And I thank God for that.

RM: That would make a big difference. So you read about a mine that was hiring; was it Anaconda?

RJG: Yes. So I headed up from San Diego. I came up I-15, over to Victorville, and on up through Barstow. As I got into Yermo I saw the little cutoff to Lathrop Wells. It was Saturday night, about 10:00, in Yermo. I got into Lathrop about 11:00. My camper and my truck were running along just fine. I think I fueled up at Lathrop, and went into Beatty. I got into Beatty and I may have fueled again, or I may have even got some coffee.

RJG: I drove on up to four or five miles out of Tonopah, to the little cutoff going to Smoky Valley, the back road to Beaver. I went out there and parked at the front gate. The next morning I was hired immediately. I didn't have time to get an apartment, I didn't have time to get my clothes, and I didn't have time to get breakfast. I had to eat what I had and I went to work.

RM: That next day?

RJG: On 12/7 shifts.

RM: That's tough.

RJG: And I was dry-camping. I parked in the middle of the desert a mile from the gate. I was the first dry-camper to walk into the valley on the Anaconda molybdenum mine. I made more money in one week than I'd ever seen on any of my contracting jobs working for myself, ever. I was working 7/12s, over $17.00 an hour. But it was the overtime, and I was all alone. My wife was down in Rios Canyon with seven children, but I couldn't take a day off for six months.

RM: How did you manage to survive working 7/12s for six months?

RJG: I just did. Iôd go to town, get food, take a bath when I could, drive, whatever. I guess I was that good.

RM: And you were an operator there?

RJG: A welder, mechanic, operator, it didnôt matter.

RM: Was it a union job?

RJG: No. Brown & Root never would go union. (I think at STP at Matagorda they had to go union on the power plant.) STP Matagorda was the nuclear power plant where Austin, Texas, got one-sixteenth of the electricity. The boys that came to work for Brown & Root from Texas were packing pistols in their boots. They had rifles in their trucks and they all had brand new Snap-on tools with ñSTP Matagordaò still stamped on them.

RM: Is that right? Was the mine called Anaconda then?

RJG: I think it was the Anaconda Molybdenum, but I could be wrong. Anyway, I looked ahead at the calendar, and for some reason they said we were not going to work on July 4th. Luckily, it hit on a Thursday so we had Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday off. Iôd worked my wealth up pretty well by then.

Iôd like to mention that my dad had been working at the Test Site since 1966.

RM: So he had gone from Tonopah down to the Test Site?

RJG: Yes, when the garage closed. Now, weôre not talking the Ford Garage on the west side of the street, weôre talking the Ford Garage at the Y.

RM: I rememberð Midland Motors.

RJG: One weekend he took me down to that garage and made me work on a Dodge flathead, L-head; thatôs where the valves are in the block. It needed a head gasket. It was the first job, so to speak, where I had to do it by myself, basically. Dad was really under

the gun. He had so many cars and tractors and welding to work on that he couldn't do it. So I got it torn down, I cleaned it up and scraped everything. Those old gaskets, they weren't easy… you chiseled them off. I got it all done, got the new gasket on, bolted the head down, and I got right down to the little bypass hose, and the clamp was missing. I couldn't find it and I looked everywhere. And you didn't run down to the NAPA parts store to buy a new clamp… you'd better have it. We turned it over and it'd go "clunk" and it wouldn't turn over any more. Dad walked by and said, "Hey son, did you forget something?" Oh, I had to tear that baby down on a Saturday [laughs] for one cylinder, and there was that clamp. You talk about teenage blues and heartache, you know?

RM: Yes, learning the hard way.

RJG: The last summer I spent with my mother was when I turned 16 and got my driver's license. She gave me Dad's '42 Merc, which she still had. That's when I left there and came back to Fernley. That winter, I took the '42 Merc out on the ice at the sewer ponds and had a ball. [Laughs] Have you ever done that?

RM: No, I never have.

RJG: We would pull people with sleds and so forth. Then we went to Tonopah, and I had the car there. It broke and it had enclosed rear drive lines, and there were no parts available for a '42 Merc. I think I sold it over there. But anyway, Dad was at the Test Site for all those years.

RM: Starting in '66, you said?

RJG: I know he was with three blasts in the early '60s, and then he was with seven blasts in the '70s. He was working as a re-entry operating engineer. My dad did a re-entry right after Tunnel 14 was open; it was one of the X tunnels. It was a 2,500-foot straight-in tunnel with a football (an atomic device).

RM: In Area 12?

RJG: Yes.

RM: My dad worked there; Iôll bet they worked together.

RJG: When I worked there and went into Area 6, I was the only person to ever clear clearances within six months, to move to 51.

RM: Is that right?

RJG: And I was only four and a half months at Area 10; I donôt know why. It had to be because my dad had been with them so long that they knew the history of the family.

RM: Iôll bet being in the marines didnôt either hurt, either.

RJG: They knew I was in the marines, but they knew my dad so well. My children didnôt have to wait long to be cleared, either. To this day, if they need somebody to work on something, I can be called and I can go right through the gate. Iôve had that happen a couple times since I retired.

But anyway, Dad was doing a re-entry on the second gate in that tunnel; it was 70-ton concrete gate. One day they lost a gate that went 14 miles across the valley on a shot. Thatôs the one that contaminated the whole northern edge of the Test Site

RM: Oh, my God. It blew the 70-ton gate 14 miles?

RJG: And itôs still out there. There was one instance where three men were pulled into a hole. They were doing a down shaft and they didnôt stop pouring.

RM: So they are in the concrete still?

RJG: Theyôre still there. Theyôll never tell you this.

RM: I wonder what they told the families?

RJG: I donôt know. My dad told me about it. Anyway, he was burned on re-entry on this second door. The guy watching his badge went to go take a leak because Dad had the

hood on, he had the torch going full blowing the hinges off the gates so they could remove them. A pinhole went through when he was working on the lower hinge and the gamma particles went across his pancreas and his liver.

The guy came back and he saw that Dadôs radiation badge was stone black. They shut the torches offð everything was radiated. People come in, in suits. They took off all his clothes and burned them immediately in the incinerator. They gave him a massive blood transfusion immediately and he got yellow jaundice. For ten years after that, they trimmed his pancreas and his liver every year till he died at the age of 62. Now remember, Iôm a stepchild. His other family didnôt document this event and keep all the information and when we tried to make a claim over this and the government denied it ever happened.

RM: So he was drilling into that door . . .

RJG: He was torching, and there were four inches of metal.

RM: And there was pressure inside?

RJG: No, gamma doesnôt require pressure. Gamma just shoots radiation. There was a pinhole no bigger than a pencil and it came out the hole. The radiation was so hot that it cut, just like a pencil, across here. It radiated out and the badge turned black. The other guyôs badge turned black but he didnôt get the dose. Like I said, they denied it ever happened, but it killed him.

RM: How long did he live after that?

RJG: Ten years.

RM: Was he able to work?

RJG: Yes, he went back to Spring Valley down in San Diego. Thatôs when we started the business down there. He was functional but they had to trim the decay. Gamma goes

in and keeps eating. Itôs not like you get a shot from a fluoroscope or something when youôre getting your x-rays. The alpha rays can be pushed away with paper. The beta is less than a quarter inch, or can be pushed by clothing. The gamma goes through everything except lead. That was my first introduction to radiation.

Anyway, getting back to these three days off in July, Iôm going, ñOh boy, I get to go home.ò [Laughs] I had my truck all set up and I took the camper off and left it in dry camp. I was out the minute that whistle blew and I had that check in my hand. My checks were hitting $1,200, $1,500 a week, so that was pretty good stuff.

RM: That was great money back then.

RJG: So here I am, and Iôm headed down to San Diego. Iôm going to put two days on that Peterbilt and that trailer. I called Rita and I said, ñGet the kids and start loading that thing up and get it ready.ò [Laughs]

I got down there, and she hadnôt made a move toward packing. We had a good weekend, and I got the truck pretty well finished, and I said, ñOkay, next time, weôre moving.ò

And she said, ñOkay, dear.ò A good Texas gal, a tough Attila the Hun-ess. Dad and my brother were taking care of her, making sure she was okay, and I was sending money home so things were pretty good. I got back to work, and now weôre getting into Christmas. I think I went home maybe Thanksgiving for a little bit. Iôm not sure when, but somewhere in the end of that year, I went home and had to pull teeth. It may have even been spring; I just donôt remember. We didnôt have any bills anymore; we had money in the bank.

I got her a ô68 Bonneville wagon. I loved that carð you could depend on it till you died. The seven children were in it, and I had everything we owned in this big

moving 40-footer, and Iôm trucking that 5 and 4 Peterbilt right down into Lathrop Wells now.

Mom was honking and waving the lights coming down the hill, and I said, ñOh, crap.ò So we pulled right in the middle of the road. I didnôt see a car from Barstow till Lathrop, not one car. Weôre talking the days when there was nobody out there.

She said ñI canôt go any more.ò

ñOkay, honey, move over there. Roxy, get up here. You ever drive before?ò

ñNo, what do you want, Dad?ò She was 15.

I said, ñPut it in drive, follow the truck, and thereôs the brake pedal.ò My wife came unglued. She was really tired, though. I said, ñHoney, itôll be . . .ò I got her calmed down. So my little 15-year old, Roxanne, drove with all the kids in the car from there to the dry camp.

RM: Up to Lathrop Wells and then up Highway 95?

RJG: Up 95, the whole route, behind my truck. I wasnôt worried. She could have hit the back bumper and it wouldnôt have hurt anything. And the little girl was having a ballð 15 years old, midnight, driving, no cars. We pulled into the dry camp with this big old tractor trailer right beside my camper buddy and parked it.

Now, the mine hadnôt drilled any water wells yet. They were still building a levy and building the bank up to protect it from the wash of the tanks where they were going to do the molybdenum wash with sulfuric acid. We were in the dry camp and in the morning when my wife woke and looked outð you couldnôt even begin to imagine what she thought. First thing out of my wifeôs mouth was, ñWhereôs the school?ò

ñIn Tonopah.ò

ñHow far is that?ò

ñTwenty-two miles.ò

ñWhereôs the road?ò

ñRight over there.ò [Laughs]

You canôt imagine what Iôm thinking: divorce, divorce, divorce, divorce. The kids are out there just having a ball chasing lizards and snakes and rabbits and going, ñNo school!ò [Laughs] Theyôre not kids, theyôre children. Theyôre Godôs children. If they were kids, they never would have put up with that.

I had to go to work the next morningð I had had a 12-hour reprieve. (If you ask my wife, she would never tell this story the way I would.) Going to work for that next 12 hours, I had plenty of time to reflect on the possibilities of the evening and the next day or two, so I knew some changes had to be made. It just happened it was about a mile up the hill from dry camp to where they had drilled two 18-inch wells. They had water coming outð beautiful, clearð in a big pond that we could bathe in.

RM: How deep were the wells?

RJG: I donôt know, but two 18-inch wells were running full time with drinkable, bottleable water. We would go up and get our water from there. But this was a very colorful erað there wasnôt much family here. The Brown & Root people would come to town with their checks on a Friday night and cash them. They would go into the Mizpah, rowdy, rakish, and dance on the crap tables, stand on the bars, buy everybody drinks. There were fights, motel roomsð theyôd find any woman they could. The years ô81 to ô85 were a heyday for Tonopah. There was money flowing, land was being bought. There were things going on that you couldnôt imagine.

Anyway, some time in the 30 days after the family got here, I befriended a young man from across the way who had a little ranch where he did hay. Ozzie and Nelson were

the two owners. I went over and befriended Marty Donaldson and Gary Purdue, who ran the hay ranch for Ozzie and Nelson out of Nebraska. They had two circle irrigation deals. I said, ñHow would you like somebody to come over here to help you on weekends with your baling, cutting, and watering, or at least when Iôm not working, and you let us live on your ranch?ò That way we had water, a septic tank, and electricity hooked to the home. So we pulled in there.

CHAPTER THREE

RJG: Well, the wife was a little bit happier. She could now do washing with the washing machine and so on. The children got to play with the goats and the chickens and the horses and the cows and I would go out and help keep the balers going when I could, but most of the time I was still working at the mine 7/12s. We were starting to get caught up on a lot of things but she still had to get in the car and drive 22 miles to put the children on a bus. Or, I think the bus came to the asphalt curve, not the dirt.

So we were living at the hay ranch and I was learning all about raising hay and living rural life in Nevada. When we left dry camp there were 14 campers living there. This was before they put in the Anaconda-owned, KOA camp and the store.

RM: Where was that? Out by Anaconda?

RJG: Yes, it was up on the top to the north. An actual KOA opened up there. We never did move into that, but 14 people had pulled in beside us and squatted right on our dry camp land.

RM: You had a little community?

RJG: We had a community, people we knew and trusted. But Rita and I are pretty good Christiansð we didnôt do the cussing and the chasing and drinking, but the ones around us did pretty good on the weekends. They ate out there with their little barbeque. They loved it. They barbequed, drank till they fell down.

We left about the time the KOA came in, but we preferred the ranch because it was more independent; we could do what we wanted. And Marty and Gary appreciated having somebody out there to talk to because they led a lonely life. Garyôs one of those cowboys who had to go to every rodeo and he went through women and money like the

fastest thing you can think of. But he did his baling, his $70,000 worth of hay a year, and he kept the boys happy and kept the ranch up.

So we were into the second year now. Actually, 18 months into it, there were a couple of incidents that happened on the job. First off, they brought in the first 2D9s, ôdozers, or Caterpillar track equipment, and they put a 100-ton New Holland in between them.

RM: Whatôs a New Holland?

RJG: A New Holland was a thing with teeth out here between the two ôdozers. It had a big belt, and you could load 100 tons in three minutes into those 100-ton Electra haulers. My first job was to run that. Quad nines theyôre calledð one in front, one in the rear. Hook to this thing and you pull it into a bank, and all that dirt falls off of the graded teeth onto a belt, and into these trucks. I was the first man in Nevada who ran a set of quad nines in a construction operation in mining. That machine lasted about four weeks; the dirt was too hard.

RM: Were they scraping off the overburden?

RJG: They cut a bank with the ôdozer eight feet high. They wanted to remove all the material to get down to the molybdenum. You know how you pitð you open a pit 20 by 20 feet. They were going to try to cut this in a circle and then the trucks would haul it away. But that didnôt work so they brought in Internationalôs largest single-engine loader in the worldð a 27-yard bucket. I was the first guy to run it. That didnôt work out because it couldnôt load it fast enough. Then they brought in the French LeTourneau. Boy, that was a big baby. All electric.

RM: A loader?

RJG: Yes, a V-12 electric loader; it was 32 yards. It was big. But it couldnôt keep up to

do the work so that went down the road. Then they brought in these Electra haulersð uphill, 100-ton, electric V-12s with the grids with the Dyno motors. Theyôre supposed to haul everything uphill. They turned them into downhill trucks, and soon we started seeing 100-ton loaded Electra haulers out in the desert with the wheels up like a belly-benched frog, dead. When the guy took the 70-mile-an-hour ride down the hill in that truck, he couldnôt stop it. The grids burned. They didnôt have any special type of braking system on the electric loaders. They decided that wasnôt going to work, so they went to a 75-ton Cat. They finally got it ironed out after they spent millions and millions of dollars.

RM: The Cat would do it?

RJG: Yes, because itôs a downhill hauler. The brakes would work with the heavy load, but they couldnôt go over 75 tons. It was a learning experience for these people, going broke. There were two memorable experiences up there on the hill. One night I was out welding on a single-engine loaderð we had to put brand new teeth on it (it had 14 teeth). I was in there having to hard-face this bucketð itôs a three-week jobð and all the lights went off. Roy, the general foreman, came running out: ñWhat the hellôs going on?ò

On the radio comes, ñThis guyôs trying to kill a D10 with a D9.ò He pushed him off the edge of the bank. This was right after a young lady was killed in a rollover, in a hauler out there. When it was rolling she tried to climb out, and she got her head between the bed and the cabin and it crushed her head. That was one death I knew of. There was another death on the road because the drivers would drive the pickups fast so they would hit head-on. That was the other problem.

But anyway, this guy took a D9 and pushed this other ôdozer off the edge because he had come up on his side where he was pushing. He wasnôt supposed to be out there, and they had already had some altercations about something else, I think over a woman.

He hit him with the blade and turned his ôdozer downhill. When he did that, the guy jumped off, and the ôdozer was in five high, going about as fast as you can go. It had no decelerator; those throttles were wide open. He hit a pole and the ôdozer was headed to town, right down the side of the road, knocking down telephone polesð boom, boom, boom. And weôre talking 250 feet between poles.

The one guy just went back to pushing dirt and the other guy was standing over there watching his ôdozer go down the desert. My foreman and six or ten other people got in their trucks and were trying to catch that ódozer at night, in the dark. Remember, the ôdozer didnôt have any lights on. They got it just before it got to the highway. It knocked over nine poles. How it got lined up on those poles, they never figured out. But somebody jumped on it and they got it shut down and got it back. They fired both of the guys immediately, of course.

RM: Did that make the papers? About what year was that?

RJG: It was ô83, maybe. I know that was in the papers. Then about two weeks later, a guy brought in one of the big haulers to get something done. I was welding, and he backed over my brand new 400 Lincoln; [laughs] there wasnôt a piece any higher than this notebook.

RM: Oh, my God.

RJG: That truck didnôt go bump, bump. It just went [squishing sound]. Iôll never forgetð that couldôve been me. There were other things out thereð guns going off and guys carrying guns in their socks and so forth.

RM: Really?

RJG: Well, theyôre Texans, dumb-ass Texans. You know how we are. By now we were living on the ranch. I was in my third year on that job and we were starting to look for

property. We'd already sold our place in Texas. I think coming out of that, I broke about even. I might have owed the bank a little bit, but I don't remember. But Rita was getting acclimatized because her asthma went away— she really enjoyed being able to breathe.

And the children were having such a great time. Down at Rios Canyon in San Diego when we left there was a fruitcake running around with a knife chasing little kids so we were glad to get out of there. We were too close to people who were mentally impaired, basically. They have a clannish-type of living in that area of Rios Canyon. (That's an area where the big beautiful avocado orchards were so we ate a lot of that.) The point is, Rita didn't like it in San Diego. She was born on a farm in Texas. And the children didn't know anything about any of it. Mom and Dad are here, we're new to the world, that's it.

Tonopah was in its heyday, the Mizpah was going crazy. To speed up the story a little, we finally ended up here in Goldfield with all seven children.

RM: How did you end up in Goldfield?

RJG: We first went to Kingston and bought land in the Kingston Village. I remember driving down the interstate and I would see these signs out in the middle of Arizona or New Mexico: land for sale, $1 down, da-da-da-da. Over the years, I finally learned that nobody ever lived there or got their money back. I kind of see Kingston as one of those types of development: ñYou give me a down payment, I'll give you this property. Here's the lot.ò They don't tell you about no water, no sewer, no electricity.

We went through all that and then I had to go to Battle Mountain for Brown & Root, which I was working for, to help build the new Barrick Mill. We spent seven months building that mill— poured the concrete, ramps, put in the Raymond roller mills. I remember being up there at 40 below at 70 feet off the ground hanging on a rope,

welding the pipes together in insulated coveralls.

RM: What year was that?

RJG: That would have to be ô83 or ô84. Iôll tell you about Nevada: There are places you never want to go, and Battle Mountainôs one of them. Our family got into a little RV park right across from the Owl Club, just on the other side of big, ugly railroad tracks, where at 1:30 in the morning this blasting noise comes through town, blowing its whistle at every crossing. Youôre trying to sleep so you can go to work the next morning at 6:00. How she put up with thatô the kids going to school at Battle Mountain and everything, with that noiseô Iôll never know.

But the money was so good. We were now up to about $22 an hour, still doing 82 hours a week. We were up to $2,200 a week, and we never imagined that kind of thing. I look at todayôs fraction of life where people that donôt have money are starving, and I look at other people coming from other countries that have more money than they know what to do withô I see so much money lying around out there, but yet I see these poor people who canôt get a job. How in the heck do you make these meld?

Anyway, we were out there busting our butts. Of course, we were gifted with the knowledge of certain things like welding, mechanics, and common sense. We never really took time to see what the world was doing at that time. We just basically started looking out for the future of our children. I donôt think we ever stayed in Tonopah; I donôt remember. We got over here, and a guy had this property for sale here in Goldfield.

RM: So you left Battle Mountain and came to Goldfield?

RJG: Instead of going to Kingstonô she decided it was a little cold there in the winterô we busted right on through. I had to get back to work, but we pulled that 40-foot Peterbilt right in here on Franklin and Hall, on this property, where our home is today.

RM: So you bought this land?

RJG: Oh, yes.

RM: You planned on settling in Goldfield?

RJG: We didn't know. When you're in construction, you never know. When mining people come to town, most of them are just trash leaving one job going to another job. That's all we were– mining trash. We didn't have any direction in life; all you think about is the next job. And the Tonopah job was over; molybdenum went down and Anaconda went away. And you weren't going to sit around three or four years till they reopened it, like Yerington. When you study the history of the Yerington aluminum and Alcoa and Anaconda, it's not pleasant. They're still fighting battles over there– EPA, environmental– it never quits. When China and Japan started mining molybdenum cheaper than we could, it went to pot.

It's like the lithium here in Silver Peak. There's only one other lithium mine in the world and Phelps Dodge used to own that. I don't know who owns it now, but they moved things around to get better deals. My daughter, Melissa Jennings, is running that plant, and she goes to Chile all the time. Her husband, Tom, works at the Test Site. So my family's still tied in pretty good.

RM: When did you go to work at the Test Site?

RJG: Well, next I had to work a couple of gyppo mines. I helped Parsons at Silver Peak, and I did pretty good over there, but we're talking $6 an hour stuff, we're not talking any real living. I had had my name in with the Operators Union, like my dad. He died in '82 while I was on the job at the mine up in Tonopah. In fact, they wouldn't even let me off to go to the funeral.

RM: That's hard.

RJG: They went in to do his liver, and he died when they tried to trim it. There was nothing left to trim so he just went home and died. But he had a good life. He did everything he could to keep his family happy and take care of what he could and give them the things they needed. And we lost two brothers. One died in Las Vegas at 15 in a trailer fire; another one was killed in a car wreck in San Diego. Zane come back a flower child, screwed up from the Vietnam War. Heôs still around; I think he does jewelry now. Debbie did okay; she married an insurance salesman. Larry, my stepbrother, was probably the only one I really had a connection with. He is still doing the business in San Diego, doing well. Itôs a hazmat business.

RM: Did you go work at the Test Site after you moved to Goldfield?

RJG: We were living in the trailer; we havenôt built a home yet. First I worked with Elton Parsons; he hired me in a minute. Iôd never worked with these kind of people in my life, the Silver Peak people. I did not know what the word Silver Peak meant till then. Thatôs a whole different way of life. He took care of the playa to keep the salt brines from washing into each other because of the different levels of lithium in each pond. His job was to keep the salt ripped out of the good beds where the good lithium water would be and not let the preg ponds bleed into the bleed ponds, which would be the wash ponds, which go back into the ground, and they pump it again. He would core the center of the dikes with rock and clay because these things would always try to wash through. That was basically Eltonôs job for the lithium mines back in the ô70s, ô80s, and ô90s, until he got too old and gave it up.

When I worked for him, our job was to keep things runningð ôdozers, trucks, air compressorsð anything you can think of in terms of mining equipment. I started off on the oldest 1939 crane. It had slider gears. You had to slide a gear from this side to that

side if you wanted to turn. If you wanted to go, you had to push a gear into that position. You had a can of Bon Ami when you were running the cable to throw on the brakes so they wouldn't slick up and keep slipping. We're talking the good old days. It seemed like I got my share of the good old equipment. I did that for three years.

That job kept us fed. We still had money so we were doing okay. We were starting to build our house. One day a call came into the office and Elton called me and said, "R. J., there's somebody on the phone from Las Vegas wants to talk to you."

It was Yvonne from the union: "R. J., we have a job for you at the Test Site."

"What am I going to do?"

"They need a mechanic."

So I went out there and went to work. It was $17.80 an hour starting, all benefits, all holidays, every day.

RM: What union?

RJG: The Operating Union called me and put me to work out there. I ended up working for them for many years, enough to get a pretty good retirement. Well, not really good, but it's kind of like PERS (the Public Employee Retirement System): I give my whole life to this county for eight years as commissioner… I get more in Social Security than I ever got from the county. But never mind. I went out to the Test Site and I went to Stealth (I didn't know that at the time) in Areas C and D. The Stealths were just being put together. I worked there two or three years, then the wife said, "I'm going to work now."

"Where are you going to go?"

"I'm going to get a job at the Test Site." Damned if she didn't do it. She got on as head custodian. She got awards. We've still got boxes of those awards they give you on walnut plaques.

RM: Interesting. So you both were working from the gate out east of Goldfield, right?

RJG: Yes, and our children were going to school.

RM: What do they call that gate?

RJG: Able Gate; itôs ten miles out of Tonopah. You had to go to Tonopah to go to work. For all the years we worked out there, you had to drive to a location, get on a vehicle, and ride to the Test Site.

RM: What years did you work at the Test Site?

RJG: In ô84, ô85, ô86, ô87, up to the late ô90s. The seven children went through grade school here in Goldfield. All seven children are on the walls of Tonopah; they all graduated from high school thereð two salutatorians, one valedictorian, and another salutatorian, and almost another valedictorian. My wife was the school board president for six years and a member for ten.

But back to the Test Site, my basic seven years were at Area 10. I worked where I had to go into secure areas.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: What were you doing in Area 10?

RJG: Basically, we took care of anything that had to move. They would take the MiG 25 and the T-38 and the Stealth out there.

RM: So they had a Soviet MiG 25?

RJG: Yes, they had several. That's what the 445 did, was make parts for the MiG. They were from Russia so of course, they had Russian parts and they had to make parts out at the Test Site– you didn't order a ball bearing from Russia. That's what that wing did, strictly, was keep the Russian planes flying.

RM: Were they using the Russian planes for training?

RJG: How else are you going to keep the Russians from seeing your airplane if you don't know what the MiG can do with it and the Stealth can do with a MiG? That's how they got all their information. That was why everything was so secret.

RM: So they were analyzing its performance and giving the guys training against a real MiG.

RJG: Right, and to be sure the Stealth could not be recognized or seen.

RM: Do you believe that it can't be recognized?

RJG: There's no doubt about it.

RM: I was on an airliner from Vegas to Reno one time and I was talking to the pilot, and he said, "I fly this route a lot at night."

I said, "How do you keep from flying into a Stealth, because it's not going to show up on your radar? They're supposed to be invisible to your radar."

He said, "Yeah, supposedly."

RJG: Well, he was wrong. They could fly right up beside you and you never would know it. Iôve often believed that theyôve invented a vehicle thatôs invisible. If Iôm on the highway and I pull out, what keeps that invisible car from hitting me? Because if it ever happens, itôs all over for the invisible car, for the driver, and for the secrecy.

RM: So this pilot was wrong?

RJG: You could not tell the Stealths were there, period. Russiaôs got one now that we canôt see. At 600 miles an hour, they can come to a complete stop and turn around in mid air.

RM: Impressive. So you were doing this work at Area 10?

RJG: Yes. Basically, I would fix anything that needed itð a pickup truck, a car, a big rig, a fuel truck, a bus, a crane. My expertise was the crash recovery crane. I had to install the Kelsey systems that kept the load limiters working.

RM: You mean the crash of the airplanes? You were in on the recovery operations?

RJG: I didnôt do the drivingð only air force could do thatð but I kept it functional. One night I got called in to a Stealthð thatôs the first time Iôd ever seen oneð in Hangar C or D because they had a flat tire on the tow rig. I looked at the Stealth and I looked at the pilot. It was a kid. He said, ñOh hi, R. J.ò (I knew all these guys personally). They didnôt bring the Stealth out of the hangar door with the tugð theyôd hand-push it to the main runway at night because of the satellites. If they knew the satellites werenôt tasked, they might drive one out, but I never saw it happen. And I never knew when the planes were going to go out. Everything was top secret.

Then I got on as a wrecker driver, where I had to go to other secure areas to tow things out that didnôt work. This was the end of the Test Site, up here, where thereôs no radiation. No bombs or anything ever went off up here.

RM: If you went east from Goldfield, where would Area 10 be?

RJG: Ten miles out of Tonopah and ten miles south.

RM: Thereôs a big slab of concrete out there a couple blocks square or so, and itôs about so thick. I helped pour it. Do you know about that?

RJG: Yes. Do you know what it was there for?

RM: It was a target, we were told.

RJG: It is. Itôs still in the middle of the valley. Theyôve never hit it, to this day. They got close. One time they even sent one into Goldfieldð that one missed by so far that it blew up over there on the hill. The target has a big red cross on it. I would go by there in the wrecker when I had to go into 4. Area 4 is the most secure areað you really had trouble getting into it, even if you had clearance.

Later, the unions left Area 10ð Local 12, the operators, the mechanics, the carpenters, everybodyð any union that was with EG&G through REECo at Area 10 was leaving. This was in ô87, I think. I told my head guy, Danny Brooks and Loper to tell folks we would like to move out to Area 51, which was still union. I said, ñIôm not working nonunion. Iôm not going to scab out here.ò And Gary Brockway was going to go with me.

RJG: So they were going nonunion in Area 10?

RM: Yes, they were going to do away with that $7 a day subsistence. They were sick and tired of it.

RJG: Why were they doing that?

RJG: In the real world, when I worked for Frehner and the big boys, if youôre out of town, you get $25 subsistence pay per day. They were giving $7; the union negotiated that. They were trying to dump that subsistence and get the pay down to $15, $16 an hour

and get away from the union demands.

RM: But they hadn't done it at Area 51?

RJG: Right. The Stealth was being moved God only knows where, because the bomber was now coming on line; they didn't need the Stealth so much. Two things were superseding it, the black Stealth helicopter and the drone. We did not know this. That was all being done at 51; that's where they initiated it. That was the real reason there was no more need for Area 10.

Do you know what a super pulse generator system setup is that feeds certain things? They had Big Bertha, the biggest underground computer, at Area 10 to do their work. It would come out of the ground; they'd plug it in, use it, and then put it back in the ground. The parts that it would generate to would be in Area 51. It had something to do with satellites… everything was in total hookup to this machine. Then there was no more need for it. Russia had one. It's been so many years I've forgotten. I spent nights coming home and I'd see lights flashing up in the sky, and I'd stop. I'd hear no noise. I could not see anything. But yet they were there looking for something. They weren't helicopters and they weren't airplanes but they were something. I've seen it and other people have seen it. We're not trying to make up UFO crap; it's not a UFO. Whatever this was, our country made it, and it was doing great. I've never seen anything that people describe in the UFO category, never.

By the way, Gary and I are the only two men in the history of Area 10 who were arrested by the advance security, handcuffed to a fire truck, and hosed down.

RM: Why?

RJG: They were hazing us. They thought, "You did such a good job, you're not coming back, we're never going to be able to have fun with you again, so this is our last hurrah."

The air force and the local mechanicsð I think even my son-in-law, Tom Jennings, was there (he wasnôt married to my daughter at the time). They hosed us down and sent us home.

RM: And then you went to Area 51.

RJG: I went up to 51 within a week and I was there all week, locked in. I had to spend six months or three months at Area 3ð thatôs the base camp.

RM: Was that down in Mercury?

RJG: Yes, 3 is Mercury, and I had to work at 6. Everything I ever touched had to be RADCON checked for radiation. Thereôs places you cannot go for the next 2,500 years at this whole end of the Test Site.

RM: This northern end, you mean?

RJG: Yes. These are all the radiation-impregged areas in the Yucca Mountain/Yucca Valley area, over at Frenchman Flats. Area 3 is clean, but not in the hills, and Area 6 is dirty. They built the first underground laboratory with leaded concrete between 3 and 6. Itôs top secret. Thatôs where they would put the bombs together, or whatever they were doing. Area 6 is where they did all the staging and 12 is the driller.

RM: Where they did all the blasting?

RJG: Well, where they staged. Thatôs where they put the football and cameras and everything and set up the concrete trucks. Area 6 was the staging area.

RM: And thatôs where the tunnels were?

RJG: Right, and thatôs where the radiation is today that you cannot go near. Thereôs still ôdozers out there and concrete trucks, stuff sitting out there you canôt touch. You canôt even get close to it. What better place is there to put stored pellets that couldnôt hurt you from 30 feet in canisters where the waterôs already impregnated down to the 4,000 foot

level? But you can't tell anybody that.

RM: Right. Now, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act came on line in '83. That's when the Yucca Mountain development was formally beginning. They'd been doing research before that. When you were out there during these years, what kind of things did you as a worker hear about Yucca Mountain? And what was your take on it?

RJG: At Area 51, I was on a crew that was going to put the railroad in from Rachel down into the valley over to Yucca Flats.

RM: That was when they were going to put the railroad across the Test Site to take the nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain?

RJG: Yes, I actually became part of that. We put the road in, and they were going to put the railroad right beside the road, to the corner of the area into Groom Lake, and head right down into the valley.

RM: And it was going to go to Yucca Mountain from Rachel? I'll be darned. Do you remember approximately what year that was?

RJG: Somewhere between '89 or '90 or a little later. The kibosh to that came from Area 51.

RM: Really? They didn't want it going across that secret area?

RJG: Remember what I told you about what was being developed– the black helicopter and the drone. And there were other reasons having to do with satellites. That was the reason the railroad got kiboshed.

RM: Okay, it wasn't because the air force needed all of that space; very interesting.

RJG: Now, these are my suppositions based on things I've seen here. It's all history now.

RM: What other impressions did you have about Yucca Mountain, being on the spot

there during those years?

RJG: Itôs a great place to put radiation. Itôs already contaminated. The water levelôs already shot. Theyôve got 4,000-foot holes and tunnels up there completely impregnated; you canôt go in them. What are you going to do with it? You canôt clean it. Why not stick the nuclear waste out there and make some money off of it? The problem is thereôs never been enough money to pad the pockets of those who care. And the rest of them are not farsighted. I donôt believe that Harry Reidôs ever toured a nuclear power plant like Palo Verde. He needs to tour some power plants; walk through and see whatôs going on.

RM: I recently interviewed ex-Governor Bryan about his stand on Yucca Mountain back when he was Nevadaôs governor, and he said that his opposition was because they screwed up with weapons testing and put out a lot of radiation for the downwinders and all of that. He said the Department of Energy couldnôt be trusted.

RJG: The government may have screwed up. It may have radiated everything at the Test Site, but what better place to put your radiation? Bryan is an idiot, as far as Iôm concerned. Heôs a Democrat, heôs a liberal, heôs a communist. Heôs not conservative. He doesnôt care about the people in Nevada. He doesnôt care about the working man. He doesnôt care about putting jobs in Nevada. He doesnôt care about making a deal where the money is. Thatôs my opinion. He and Harry Reid, as far as Iôm concerned, are kind of floating in the same canoe.

RM: Before he died, I interviewed Senator Chic Hecht, and of course he was very pro-Yucca Mountain.

RJG: A different guy altogether. But he couldnôt get the funding to come the way he wanted it.

RM: His take was that Nevadaôs opposition was cynical because basically, the

politicians knew fear could be whipped up on the Yucca Mountain issue in the public. I asked him, ñHow did they know in the beginning that it was a good issue?ò

He said, ñFear always makes a good issue for a politician.ò

RJG: In 1940, a guy came out to the desert and built a casino and they killed him for it. Then the casino people come from New York and realized how much theyôd screwed up and started building more casinos. Then they started sending their little boys with their satchels to haul all of this money out of here. And they saw the possibility of a nuclear problem arise.

But the people on the Test Site who had good healthy jobs were making money for the first time in their life; they were doing so great. I donôt see a lot of them running around radiated and cancered and screwed up. A few, but not a lot. Of the hundreds of thousands of people who worked out at the Test Site, maybe only 500 could have been in danger. When I worked on a ôdozer from out there, I called RADCON. They sent over three people with their testers, and they checked the dirt in the belly and the enginesð they checked every inch of it while I watched. Who created the fear? The gambling commission. And who was in charge of that from ô63 to ô69? Harry Reid, I believe. He was the gaming commissioner, wasnôt he? And Bryan was his governor, I believe. Robert List didnôt have any problem with it. Guinn fought it a little bit but that was a political move. Obama is pulling his crap now; heôs going to make jobs appear out of thin air. Itôs more political.

RM: Itôs definitely political. Do you have any other takes on Yucca Mountain and what you saw, or your interpretations of what happened, in those years, particularly when you were at the Test Site?

RJG: As far as we were concerned, the nuclear repository at Yucca Mountain was a

beautiful thing; it was going to happen. When they did the tunnel, there were jobs; people were making money. They were inventing new ways to remove dirt from the earth. They had created machinery that could tunnel through a mountain and put a railroad train through anywhere in the world in the fastest time possible. The innovation of the industry had gone from experimentation to fact. We can now do this because of what they did at Yucca Mountainð the size of track they had to lay, the type of train they could put on it, the weight it was going to carry. Things they engineered and did beyond belief had all come to pass. The learning curve is gone. Letôs bring on the canisters.

And as usual, the men in Washington with the minds of children, still wearing diapers, in their infinite wisdom have decided that they know better. Itôs better to be out of work, lose your home, and never have a chance at life than it is to store radiation in an area thatôs already got radiation in it. I watch whatôs going on every day. The news media is a circus.

RM: I know what youôre saying. Now, when did you leave the Test Site?

RJG: Frehner Construction offered me a pretty good job for three years on the bridges at Glendale. I tore out all the bridges, did the Muddy River.

RM: On I-15?

RJG: Yes. I tore out the railroad bridge. I was pretty well head of all that. They gave me a young engineer out of college who didnôt know anything but I let him think he was running it. [Laughs]

Another thing that happened was that I got injured on the Test Site and didnôt know I had a hernia in the fourth year.

RM: At Area 51?

RJG: At 51, yes. I was lifting a Clark transmission off a bench. Every year, Dr. Chrysler

would have you go to your medical in Area 3 and you would get your physical or your drug test, whatever. The doctor knew I had a hernia; I didn't. Two years before I quit, he put in my record not to rehire because of this hernia. He didn't tell me I had a hernia and to go get it fixed. That's the way they played their politics. I went to a doctor, burning, and said, "Man, did I do something wrong?"

The doctor said, "You've got a hernia."

"What the hell's that?"

He explained all the different hernias; I didn't have a bad one, where everything falls out. I approached Chrysler, and oh, did he do the two-step. I decided I didn't want any more to do with the people who covered up my dad's death, let people get radiated, fall in holes, and now tell a man that he has a hernia because they didn't want to be responsible for it. And we had insurance.

RM: Who was Chrysler?

RJG: He was the head doctor of REECo for the Test Site at Area 3 and in Vegas for years. I think even my dad had Chrysler. I wanted nothing more to do with them because I knew somewhere down the line, I was going to get nailed and they would cover it up. Frehner offered me the bridges work and I took it. I worked three years at Glendale and made more money that I'd ever seen in my life. We were up to $100,000 a year now.

RM: Really? Did you leave Goldfield, then?

RJG: Yes, for four or five days at a time.

RM: The family stayed here?

RJG: Oh, yes. We had the house going now; the kids were in high school.

In the Test Site days, we were dealing with people who had no concept of pain and suffering, had never been out of work, who always got a raise when they wanted it.

We're talking about congressmen and senators. They've got the best doctors, the best automobiles, the best of everything, and they have no feeling whatsoever for the common man.

RM: That's the problem.

RJG: And they're going to come full face to that pretty quick. I hope that you and I are better prepared for the outcome, because it's not going to be pleasant. You're already starting to see murders and rebellion.

RM: I think life might get real rough in places like Vegas.

RJG: And L.A., maybe. They always were in trouble with other countries; they never were in trouble within their own country. Mexico City is the most dangerous place now, the most depressed, and L.A. will become that way.

RM: I was in L.A. when they had the Watts riots.

RJG: Before I went to Nevada, I was delivering the *L.A. Times* in Watts. I was within bicycle distance of the newspaper. I delivered there for two years. People had every lie in the book there was not to pay their paper bill— I've never seen more excuses and more lies in my life. I'd go over to the other side of town and I'd get paid immediately.

RM: In Watts they wouldn't pay their bill?

RJG: Two-thirds of them.

RM: What did you do?

RJG: You've got to understand the *L.A. Times.* They'd send you a hookup and you'd deliver a paper because somebody called in wanting that paper. At the end of the month, you'd go collect that money. And when you got out there and there was no money to collect, you'd pay for that paper.

RM: That's right, they'd take it out of your pocket. I used to deliver *The Denver Post*

and it was the same thing.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Have you had any thoughts since we talked, R. J., about some things you'd like to say?

RJG: When we left off, I had left Area 10 and gone up to Area 51 and the wife had been working at Area 10 for three years as head custodian. Our last child had graduated from Tonopah High School; all seven graduated there and four went on to college. Three went to UNLV and successfully graduated and one went up to Great Basin in Elko and graduated. So we're into the '90s.

While I was working up at the Test Site, we had a man down here in Nye County by the name of Wayne Hage. In the '90s he had filed a lawsuit against the federal government over water issues. It got pretty precarious in Nye and Esmeralda counties because he had a friend, Dick Carver, who came along and, as you well know, fired up a 'dozer on Independence Day of 1994 at about 3:00 in the afternoon and decided to open a road over to Mr. Hage's place, the Jefferson Canyon road. There was quite a following; everybody was armed, everybody had guns. There were two BLM officers out there who used common sense and didn't start anything and let him 'doze his road.

Hage had filed the lawsuit because his cattle were about to be confiscated off his property over the issue of the people, the government, owning the water rights and mineral rights and everything on the land even though the government had stolen the land and had turned it over to the BLM of Nevada. It was a big issue. As we well know, after he died he won the case about who had the rights to the water in the ditches. The government had to give it up because of the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution.

With Carver, the issue went on for years. He didn't lose anything and really didn't

gain any ground or win anything, but it made an impression. I think Carverôs actions helped Mr. Hage win his case, basically.

At the time, as I said, we were working and raising children, who were just about out of the home, and we were watching these events. The wife had stopped working at the Test Site; I think she was working at the post office. We were watching the Sagebrush Rebellion form in Nevada and all these issues. We already know of the great gorilla down south, Clark County. We know the story of Washoe and Storey counties up here and their little battlesð all the legislative power was up north and all the voting power was down south. So we had quite a mess going on through our lives.

We were watching the land issues and one case in 2003, I believe, involved a man here in town named Ben Colvin, a rancher who had decided that he was no longer a citizen of the United States, he was going to be an Indian owning land and was not going to have to pay his preference fee, which is about $1.61 a head, on the cows he owned here in Esmeralda County and ran on BLM ground. I guess he quit paying in the ð90s. He and Carver and Hage were very good friends and they were all kind of hanging together, fighting the government and using what they could to keep this open land thing with the cows and grazing rights. But he refused to pay for a while and in ð03, they came and took his calves off his property because he had no preference. Colvin filed a $30 million dollar lawsuit and they lost and they got to keep the $77,000 worth of cows.

RM: The government did?

RJG: The government did. Thatôs the only case I know of that the ranchers lost; they won the other two. Basically, the environmental groups donôt believe you should own property in the United States. They think it should all belong to the Communist party. Mr. Hage said that the only difference between the Republican and the Democratic parties

was that it takes the Republicans three months longer to become Communist. [Laughter] So that pretty well said it. Basically, the environmentalists donôt want you to own any land at all. They donôt want the cows mucking up the water with the cow turds and the dirt, and they donôt feel that anyone has any rights but them.

RM: Where do you see the whole issue of ranchers and their cows going?

RJG: Keeping Nevada free is one thing. I became an Esmeralda County Commissioner because of my wifeôs insistence that they do a recount. This was in 2002. I ran for commissioner a couple other times and lost tangibly, but this time it came down to a count of 105 to 107, and my wife was suspicious. We thought somebody in the courthouse might have flipped a couple votes one way or the other. I said, ñTo hell with it, Iôll go back to my business and mind my own.ò

And she said, ñNo, weôre going to do a recount.ò We went up to the courthouse and they told her a recount would cost $1,300, and she said, ñNo way in hell.ò She took it a little farther up north and called the Nevada Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Heller. [Laughs] He called them and the cost went down to $300 real quick.

One of the things that I asked Mr. Heller was that if they were going to go to all this trouble and mess our lives up wholly and put everything on the block here in this little community, Iôd like to be able to sit beside the person turning the votes over and look at each vote personally. Mr. Heller said I had every legal right to do that, but he did inform me that I could not touch the votes. So while Kelly Eagan, the deputy clerk, was flipping them over, I could actually see the mark and everything about it. And the vote got down to 105 to 105, but there were still votes in the pile.

Now, the only thing I found discriminatory about this whole mess was the last two votes were the only two altered votes. Was this a chad year? Chads, punch holes?

Rita G: I don't remember that part, but it was 107, not 105.

RJG: Well, it was 105-105 or 107-107, the two votes left. But anyway, there were two votes left.

Rita G: It was something with the absentee votes. One was marked with ink and one was marked with a blue pencil.

RJG: And the machine spat them out.

Rita G: It couldn't read them.

RJG: But those two votes were for me.

RM: Were you running on a party ticket?

RJG: I had to change from the three-month communist decision Republican Party to the Democratic Party to get on. I ran as a Democrat, but I never made any allusions about being a Democrat.

RM: What made you decide to run for county commissioner?

RJG: Corruption, good ol' boy capitalism.

Rita G: Capitalism is good unless it's corrupt.

RJG: Corrupt capitalism, the good ol' boys. Little things… the suspected pornography ring going on at the road department with the drug deliveries. Hauling LLC, low-level waste, down the highways. The people running the ROP, Repository Oversight Program, at that time were very incompetent. (Now it's a good program.) People were abusing their credit cards with the government, overdoing their budget… that shouldn't be happening. And the oversight was very poor; it wasn't being monitored.

RM: And that was part of your motivation to run for commissioner?

RJG: Yes, that and commissioners of the time were not what I'd call doing their job. They were doing it for the good ol' boys side, maybe for a rancher or for a federal

intervention job or something along those lines, but the things they were doing werenôt benefiting the taxpayers, the people paying their jobs and their salaries. For instance, the sheriffôs department budget was getting larger and larger and less and less was being done. And the county was suffering from no vehicles. They couldnôt get out and do their job, they couldnôt go to the NACO, Nevada Association of Counties, conferences. I didnôt know that much about government, by the way, but I said, ñYou know, Iôm going to try it one more time.ò

RM: Did the things that were going on with Wayne Hage and Dick Carver have anything to do with you wanting to be a commissioner?

RJG: I was concerned to start with because just before that, they went to court to try to get our land back for the state of Nevada. I still think we would have gotten to keep our land if theyôd provided the land under constitutional rights that they did for the other states, but because the Test Site had a foothold here with the air force and the bomb testing, the government could not possibly save face and give up that land. If they did, there would be so many lawsuits that our government would be broker than it is now.

RM: The argument that youôre talking about here was that the other states started off as federal land, too; explain how that works.

RJG: The earlier states were allowed to keep their land as they went into the United Statesð all except for Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and I think Wyoming. There were only four or five states that actually had BLM land. Texas never had BLM.

RM: So the argument was that Nevada was being treated differently than the other states?

RJG: And itôs the only state that had a Test Site. That was the difference. I had been on the Test Site for years so I knew both sides of the fence. In the early days, from 1940 to

1964, you could put a stake down on a piece of ground and homestead it. All of a sudden in the õ70s, here came the Desert Land Entry Act into Nevada where if you had a minimum $250,000 you could get 640 acres, I believe. You had to improve it and grow hay on it and make money with it for seven years before you could own it. We knew of five or six people out here in the valley who had done that.

Some of the land over in the region of Peavine was acquired through the Desert Land Entry Act. The ranch that I was talking about that we lived on while we were working at the mine was one of the early DLE entries. Next to it was another 640 acres, which died a couple times, but they picked it up and they finally got it going and maintaining and became free landð to the owner.

Now the Desert Land Entry program is pretty well washed out. I was thinking I could homestead when we first came out in the õ70s, but we got all the information from the BLM and we said, ñOh, wait a minute. We canôt afford this.ò Right there we knew we were headed down the environmental road.

But yes, all this was part of the politics. Everything going on up north, everything down south, is political. We had been at the Test Site, weôd seen the layers of red tape. We watched the politics there, and the stupidity and the aggression that went on. For instance, REECo had a contract with the federal government to supply workers to build a new housing unit and a new hangar in Area 10. They hired contractors and REECo got probably 10 percent of everything. Youôd get to the Test Site, call in to the union hall. If I was a carpenter, I was going to go out there and drive nails. You were getting $17 an hour and they got 10 percent of that. They didnôt care if you were qualified, they didnôt care if you were trained. Of course, when you went on the site, you were trained to their safety rules and legal rules, but you didnôt have to be trained to drive a nail.

RM: And REECo got 10 percent of all that?

RJG: Cost of materials, oversight, regulation, leadershipð 10 percent of everything across the board. When you went into that office down in REECo and you filled out your papers to get a job, you sat there. Those people didnôt ever ask if you were you qualified to do the job, they just wanted to be sure you could get past security. All they wanted was a warm body to show up out there and look like they knew something. The average worker that went to the Test Site couldnôt probably have made it at McDonalds. Of course, Iôm being facetious a little bit, but thatôs the truth of it.

RM: I was sent out there in ó58 by the LaborersôUnion and went through their process.

RJG: You understand everything Iôm saying and you donôt find any fault with what Iôm saying, right?

RM: I donôt think so.

RJG: Did they ever ask you if you could labor?

RM: I went as a laboring miner.

RJG: Did they ask you if you could mine? They didnôt check your qualifications.

RM: They sure didnôt give me a test.

RJG: I remember that and it always stuck in my mind as funny because the few people I knew who were competent and could do the job and knew what they were doing were good people. I could walk out of there and go to work for Frehner building highways or bridges or high-rises because I had the experience and I could get the job. I didnôt have a lot of sheepskin on the wall, but I knew what was going on. Iôve been blessed at that.

Now we get into the part where Iôm watching the politics of Nevada, which I love dearly. Donôt get me wrong: Iôm a native-born Texan. I love Texas, but Texas had things I couldnôt live with. We donôt know things like that until we get older. I found that I

could live here comfortably and have the independence and freedom that we deserved. The tax basis was cheap and things were right for raising seven children and making sure they got a good education, which I couldnôt do in San Diego or in Zilker Park, outside of Austin, Texas. We lived out on Lake Travis there and only two things concerned that school districtð how good looking your daughter was to be on the football cheerleading team and how good a player your son was. Or could he play in the band? Could he march? Could he wrestle? They didnôt give damn about their education. I saw the kids coming out of there and I said, ñThatôs it.ò We took our seven children and got out of there.

Today, as I told you, the children are graduated, with four through college, and three are married with children. We are learning how to enjoy living without the noise. When we moved here we sent them across the street to the school. We watched them walk to school, walk home, never worried about them; we knew when they came home theyôd throw their homework on the table. We didnôt have to put them on a bus and be city folk and put up with the nonsense that they go through. Of course, they have to do it; they donôt have a choice in the city.

RM: My daughter went through junior high and high school in Tonopah and then went to UNLV and I feel she got a good education in the state of Nevada.

RJG: Some of our children kept coming home saying, ñThere is not enough curriculum in this area for us. We need more.ò Melissa and Deb and Michelle and David all came in saying, ñWe need more.ò We didnôt have the online options available, either. But they did well.

So now we get into the political aspect. As I said, the vote for commissioner was 107 to 105. But when she turned over the other two votes, it became 107 to 107.

RM: What happened then?

RJG: Then we had a whole new set of rules that weôd never heard of.

RM: Sure, it was a tie.

RJG: There was a gasp, then three minutes of silence. Everybody was staring at the walls with their mouth open going . . .

Rita G: And I got my $300 back.

RJG: She got her $300 back. So now a whole new set of rules had come up and the clerkôs office was going to have to call the secretary of state or someone to ask them what to do. It came down that it would be settled by drawing lots. You could either draw straws, draw cards, or throw dice. Anything to do with gambling, you could do this.

They set a date and we had national news in the beautiful courthouse here in Goldfield. They put us at the big table in the old courtroom and there were cameras whirringð it was just unbelievable. They brought in three decks of cards and De Ann Siri threw the cards down and said, ñPick.ò I let Mrs. Honeycutt pick the deck. Then De Ann shuffled themð she shuffled forever. Then she spread the cards out and said, ñEach of you pick a card.ò Well, being a gentleman, I had Mrs. Honeycutt draw first and she turned over the jack of diamonds.

Iôm going well, a jack of diamonds, Iôm not going to be here long. Iôm going to be right back home in a few minutes. But I pulled one out and turned it overð jack of spades.

RM: Do spades trump diamonds?

RJG: Yes, spade is the top suit.

RM: What a story.

RJG: Thatôs the way it happened. Itôs not the irreverency of drawing lots, itôs not the

idea of the split vote, itôs not the idea that anything was corrupt. It is the idea that it went down to being within two cards of each other that makes it so unique. You can never beat that.

So anyway, all of a sudden Iôm going to be the new commissioner. Now, Mrs. Honeycutt had already gone to the NACO conference in Carson City, thinking she was going to be the next commissionerð you get to go to the conference if you win the election; the county pays your way. They went up to Carson for a week with all the stateôs county commissioners and the governor, all the big-wigs. I didnôt get to go so I felt pretty jilted, but I didnôt miss a one after that. I went into office low man on the pole with little knowledge, inept. They turned out to be gracious.

One of my pet peeves when I went in was the oversight for the Yucca Mountain Project, the ROP (repository oversight program). I had this pet peeve because I already knew what was going on behind the doors, and it wasnôt good. Iôd been following it religiously, kind of like the Environmental Protection Agency is a religion for some people. I was following religiously the Yucca Mountain repository oversight because I saw what was going on. But I couldnôt jump in there and just attack; I hadnôt even taken the oath.

RM: Sure, you were the new guy.

RJG: But I was laying plans. In the first year, ô03, I got to be on the board for the Yucca Mountain Repository. I was going to be the member who did the correlating for Esmeralda County. It went first to George McCorkle, who was the head man here from over in Caliente; Robison/Seidler was running the show back then, and theyôre still running the show in Lincoln County. But Iôm already laying the groundwork. In November ô03, I went to my first NACO conference. In the meantime I was going to

Yucca Mountain oversight projects around the state. Ed Mueller was representing the Department of Energy for each one of these with his desk and all his plaques, all his folders, everything showing what they were doing. I met him in ó03 and I would quiz him on what was going on, what the oversight was on this and that and everything. He would give me the answers that he had.

RM: And of course, Ed Mueller is now in charge of Esmeralda Countyôs Repository Oversight Program.

RJG: Thatôs right. But in ó04 we were still suffering with our leadership in that oversight. The other two commissioners werenôt too interested in it because it didnôt involve Goldfield. One of the issues was that the then road supervisor had worked a deal with a local realtor to take a house that belonged to somebody and purchase it, or pay $600 a month ROP money, to use as a Yucca Mountain office. I donôt know who got what part of the money, but it was a good olô boy fix and the ROP and Ace Robison went along with it. I objected to it; itôs on record. You asked why I ran for commissionerð thatôs the kind of thing that was going on. That was government money, ROP money, but it wasnôt benefiting the town a bit, or the taxpayers.

Correlated with this, my wife and I went over to the fire department and got ourselves a couple of 600 radiation detectors. Under the LLC, the low-level waste shipments were coming through. They were sneaking through at midnight when nobody would know they were here. They were going down the road and going to God knows where. Actually, they were going to the Test Site. There was low-level waste at Yucca that theyôd been burying.

RM: Yes, and there was the low-level waste repository out of Beatty.

RJG: And that was supposed to have been shut down 25 years ago because itôs so hot.

Anyway, one of the things I had hoped to achieve was to take federal government money for the ROP and put some of it into the town and the people working here– bring some of that money back into the system where it belongs, which you can do legally. That would require an audit, which wasn't happening because all the money was going through the house and the head of the ROP and back to the Robison/Seidler– everything was going through the Robison/Seidler system.

RM: Your money was going through them?

RJG: Yes, it wasn't coming into the county. I knew that and I was watching other counties to see how they were doing their Yucca Mountain money. In my third year as commissioner something happened, and I don't remember the exact details, that gave me a door to shut this whole thing down.

Rita G: The contract was expiring.

RJG: The Robison/Seidler contract was expiring and coming up before the board. Was I chairman then?

Rita G: Probably.

RJG: I probably had just made chairman. Bennett had term-limited out and I became chairman. Kirby was appointed when that gal got kicked out. We put in recommendations for Kirby. He became Fish Lake Valley, District 3's, commissioner and Nancy Boland was voted in for Silver Peak because Ben Viljoen was term-limited out. So anyway, the contract was going to expire, and in the meantime I went to Mr. Mueller and Mr. Mueller got together with ex-Governor List, and they created a formidable plan of what they could do for the county. We had a fight over that one because Robison/Seidler said you have to have an RFP or an RFQ, one or the other, and List and Mueller said no, this is what you can have. List and Mueller had it together; they knew what they were doing.

Anyway, the contracts came up before the board and the board voted for the Robert List Company on the ROP and Seidler and Robison were out, and you wouldn't believe the fur that flew; it was almost a blood bath. Finally it cooled down and things went on. Mr. Mueller came on board. He worked a deal to lease the school's property and now the rental monies, $400 a month or something, go into the school system, not into somebody's pocket. In addition to that, he put two employees into the county who were helping.

Plus he went over to the courthouse and set it up so that if you do any work on this project, you get paid. You do any bookkeeping, you do any assignments… I don't care if you're the commissioner's secretary, the clerk, the assessor, the road department… if you do anything you will be paid X amount. And that was legal. So now all this money was funneling back into the system. Not a lot, but if it's $100,000 out of $700,000, that's a help. Before, we were getting nothing. Now we were funneling money back into the system, which did nothing but good for the community. It made us stay alive. So now I was beginning to feel rewarded and Ed Mueller was doing a fantastic job. To this day, he is doing that well.

When I went in as commissioner, a 1987 Dodge Ram was the only decent car the county had to go anywhere and do anything (although the sheriff was getting new cars). I immediately petitioned, in '02 or '03, to buy two brand new Explorers, which are still running today, in 2011. I told them before I left office that they needed to go get a couple more, but they kind of ignored me.

I would drive out to Silver Peak in the county at night and there were no lights on the road. Half the time you'd go right past the cutoff to Silver Peak at 70 miles an hour because you couldn't see any signs. In '04, I asked them to put a light out there at that

cutoff and they did. Now thereôs a nightlight; itôs been there ever since. We petitioned to put a turn lane in there. Iôve just got a list of things that weôve gotten done.

RM: How long were you commissioner?

RJG: Eight years.

RM: And why did you not go for a third term?

RJG: In my prayers I didnôt feel led to run, and the fleshly side was not wanting to step up and do it again. I was already bored. And I had done everything I could do. I got one of the finest road supervisors in. I got people in position who could do the job and take care of government and so on. I had done pretty well and I didnôt feel led to run.

CHAPTER SIX

RJG: I like to think that I wanted to save four years in case it got so messed up again that I could go back. I know I wouldn't have any trouble being elected– I can always walk back in there. Just the threat of my walking back in scares them. Now, Nancy Boland will be term-limited in '12. That means that Dominick Pappalardo will probably become the chairman and I don't know who's going to run for Silver Peak, but somebody will have to run in '12. But I'm very happy doing what I'm doing.

What I'm doing is trying to lead you to understand the reasoning of why I ran. It was to promote this county. Promote alliances with Nye County because we were both on record as wanting Yucca Mountain and doing everything we could to get Yucca Mountain.

We were both on record as trying to get a railroad through Nevada– which it looks like they're trying to do now– mainly not to handle waste, but to handle hay and other things. Amargosa has a diatomaceous earth plant that ships stuff all over the world for kitty litter, whatever you want to call it. He needs some way to get the stuff out of there. People want hay by the ton, thousands and thousands of tons. We've got people shipping the little cubed hay. We've got potatoes. I can't even think of all the things there are to ship by the railroad and they won't even look at us. Plus the fact you could go from A to B in four hours.

For another thing, I was afraid they might try to split the counties. Pahrump was always throwing such a ferocious fit because they couldn't be on their own. Right now I think Nye County has four county commissioners from Pahrump and two from up north. They're always trying to pull the power down south, and it's not so much Pahrump as it

is Clark County. As far as Iôm concerned, just give Pahrump to Clark County and Esmeralda will take over the rest.

RM: Youôre talking about a merging of Nye and Esmeralda counties?

RJG: You canôt merge, by the state constitution. And you have to have a two-thirds majority of the people in each county to change boundary lines. Remember the Bullfrog County act they tried to pull? They got shot down because they didnôt follow constitutional guidelines.

RM: If it could be done, would the people of Esmeralda be in favor of a merger with Nye?

Rita G: Absolutely not, for the simple reason that the voting population of Esmeralda is smaller than Tonopah alone.

RM: Where would they split Nye Countyð at Beatty?

RJG: There have been some good plans. I had drawn up one and one of the town managers over in Tonopah agrees wholeheartedly with me that it would have worked. We would draw a line right below Amargosa Valley and give Pahrump half the Test Site money and the other half goes up here. We would get Round Mountain Gold.

RM: By merging with Nye, you mean?

RJG: Basically Nye would merge with us. We would be the county seat. But the proud people in Tonopah donôt want to give up their county seat and the proud people here in Goldfield donôt want to give up their county seat. Thatôs where the battle would lie. I donôt know if you could ever work out the differences. But the split should come just below Amargosa Valley and across because most of the workers who go to the Test Site and work in Area 3 are down there anyway, and everybody else works this end of the site.

RM: That's interesting. I've wondered if there ever has been any discussion about putting a nuclear reactor in Esmeralda County to generate power and bring jobs and money into the county.

RJG: We have thoroughly gone over that, thoroughly studied the engineering, and decided there's no way you can do it because of our water supply.

RM: They have reactors now that don't take hardly any water.

RJG: Still, we can't produce the amount of water it would require. The people doing the new highway out here are using more water than the Esmeralda County residents. They're using more water every day than we use all month in the county. We even researched doing nuclear cleaning up like France does, cleaning up the rods and putting a plant here. Here's the main trouble with that: The federal government doesn't want to do it.

RM: They didn't then, anyway.

RJG: They don't now. But we're working on it. Let Yucca Mountain be the repository for cleaning it up. Salt Lake City does the cleanup for all the nuclear submarines. They're doing it, but it's not cost effective and it's not efficient. They're not making any money and they're subsidized by the federal government. Did you know that the Amtrak Railroad is subsidized by the federal government to the tune of $250 billion dollars a year?

RM: That figure sounds high, but I know they are subsidized.

RJG: Do you know the state of Nevada has no railroad commission?

RM: I didn't know that.

RJG: You're not going to get one even if you put a railroad in across the state. Now, that's kind of odd.

RM: That is odd. So your take on nuclear power is there's not enough water in Esmeralda County?

RJG: Yes, where are you going to put the lake? How are you going to build one big enough to confine your water to do the plant?

Rita G: The only thing that would work is to bring in seawater from the Pacific Ocean, and that is extremely costly.

RJG: You could take this nation and put it back to work tomorrow morning by going over to Boston Harbor and Lake Michigan and starting to build reservoirs. Then you could put two eight-foot pipelines across all the way to the Continental Divide and over here– and it would siphon, by the way– to the Colorado River. You could go up to Quebec and make a deal with them to get their water and bring it down to Arizona, New Mexico, all that barren land that needs water.

RM: I've see proposals lately to bring water from the Mississippi.

RJG: Yes, but the Mississippi doesn't have 200 inches a year like Boston does, or the Great Lakes. They only get, like, 80 or 90 inches a year. There are over 200 inches a year sitting down at that end of the country. If Rome could build an aqueduct, why can't America? Now, we're just talking about putting people to work; I don't care about the water. But look at our lake out here, Lake Mead. It's down about 180 feet or something. It is so far down, the white bleached cliffs are showing.

RM: Yes, water is such a serious issue. Now, as commissioner and in living in Goldfield, have you had a chance to get involved in other issues like wilderness areas?

RJG: When I came on board as commissioner, the federal government had already stolen three wilderness study areas from Esmeralda County over on the Death Valley side. They didn't get approval, they didn't get permission.

RM: They just set them aside, right?

RJG: They just are studying them. We fought to get those back and we didn't succeed. Mr. Reid in his infinite wisdom came in here wanting to make a trade for untitled land, which they have at Gold Point where people live.

RM: Oh, that land has never been officially withdrawn?

RJG: And they've fought to get these titles. As commissioners, we submitted a proposal for Reid to come in and do an untitled act where we could get some people to quit claim those properties. Man, that was a mess. He came back with a wilderness plan through the Sierra Club and a few other environmental groups to take all this land away from us out here.

RM: In exchange for title to the land in Gold Point?

RJG: Yes, in exchange for that. We caught on to that pretty quick. We had over 3,500 people come in here and write and email us opposing his plan. That was bad. He sent four people from his head office out of Vegas and we fought that one for six months. We had meetings at the community center. We had stacks of papers and so forth fighting it. And we won, thank God. He pulled his fangs in and left. It was worse than the Sagebrush Rebellion as far as the amount of people, and the government withdrew and left. I think that issue will come back, but not from Harry because I don't think Harry's going to last that much longer.

RM: Do you think he's getting weak?

RJG: He needs to go out to pasture, to go out stud farming or something, and get the hell out of office.

Now, to go back to radar detection. Remember I told you we got those little yellow civil defense meters? Well, Rita and I would go out and check buildings and

telephone poles and trucks and so forth. I would get with my buddy at the sheriffôs departmentð they would tell us when the loads were coming through while I was commissioner.

RM: Oh, trucks carrying low-level waste?

RJG: Yes, we would get records of when they were coming with the date and time. In the meantime, my wife and I went to hazmat classes in Vegas every year, the hazmat expo, and would take classes on how to detect radiation. Iôd already been trained at the Test Site on all the radiation. We would go out with these meters and check things. We even went out to Highway 6 where the trucks were coming in and we would find little traces that had fallen off in the rubber of the tires; not bad, just little traces.

RM: They were leaking it on the way?

RJG: In the tires, probably; we donôt know. We would check everywhereð on occasion, I would go to town and check the walls and the telephone poles and the light poles. At the summit, theyôd pull over at 12:00, 12:30 at night.

RM: Did you find traces up on the summit?

RJG: Nothing to worry about; it could have been from anything. Could have been plutonium dust blowing through with high winds we have. I let the sheriff know we were doing this checking. Then one day a truck blew a tire in front of my shop and he had three canisters, or boxes. I had seen him across the road and they were looking over at me like, can you fix the tire? I grabbed my detector and I went over there. I went around that truck and towards the rear I was getting a seven percent reading on the doors, which is nothing, itôs low. But it really clicked up pretty good and I said, ñHowôd they load that?ò

He said, ñOh, they probably turned all the burrito bags the same way with the zipper.ò Then youôll start getting a heavy reading. It wasnôt anything deadly, but it was a

reading.

Three months before that, I was called out to repair a diesel rig just outside of Tonopah that had a bad air compressor. I took my meter with me and it had an actual reactor thing on it; it was a 75,000 or 80,000 pounds load. He had to double the old nine-axel rig. I checked that one out and it was clean, tires and everything. I figured that came out of a submarine or something, but it was so clean that they didn't have to take it to Salt Lake. They came from Highway 6. I have the actual highway route, everywhere they turned and how they got from Knoxville, Tennessee, to here. And right after I checked the load out here, we no longer got notices of the loads coming through.

RM: They didn't want you checking them?

Rita G: They didn't want you to know anything, didn't want any kind of publicity.

RJG: The sheriff would tell me when he spotted them over the summit and sometimes I'd go up there and check them anyway. Most of the loads were clean and everything was acceptable, but occasionally you'd get a little reading. It's supposedly low-level. Well, I happen to know those loads weren't all low-level; some of them were high-level.

RM: Going to the Test Site?

RJG: Going to the Test Site; and they did it on the QT. They didn't like us checking that. Now, what does that tell you about Nevada and Yucca Mountain and the government?

Rita G: That little bit of reading wasn't enough to hurt anything or anybody.

RJG: No, but the point was they advertised that there would be no radiation with the low-level waste. Somewhere, somebody didn't do their job, or maybe we missed a load that was high. The point was, what was wrong with us checking? They never came to me and said don't check.

RM: Well, that would have been suicide.

RJG: Thatôs right. They never called me out on another rig again, either, or maybe nothing broke down. But that double-yoke nine-axel loaded with that thing on it that you put the nuclear rods in, was the biggest load Iôve ever seen come through. My imagination went wild when I thought of all those canisters coming down the road that way.

RM: You mean for Yucca Mountain?

RJG: Yes. Right after that is when the railroad push went through. They figured, well, we canôt use the highways, thereôs people out there watching. Then the low-level money went away the next year and theyôre still doing it. Occasionally, Iôll see a cask go by. Itôs not marked radiation.

RM: Thereôs no mark?

RJG: Well, thereôs marking, but itôs not radiation. When I went to hazmat school in Las Vegas I would learn what the plaques read, what the loads wereð theyôd teach you all of this and give you updates. So it wasnôt a waste of time, even though I felt like I wasted my time, because you canôt do anything fast politically. It takes years and years.

Itôs like the Sagebrush Rebellionð Hage and those people would file resolutions, but thereôs no way to enforce them against the federal government stealing cows or taking land or water. Watching all that is kind of what shows you how slow it goes.

RM: Did you ever interface with Joe Fallini? He had a lot of lawsuits against the government.

RJG: Mr. Fallini led a quiet life, profile wise, in the area. He only had a couple incidents; they werenôt near as big as Hage and Carver. Mostly it was over land issues or cows or the BLM, but they werenôt big.

RM: He had some horse issues.

RJG: He had some horse issues, yes.

RM: What about the wild horses? Does that issue ever come on your radar screen?

RJG: Itôs like the antelope and the donkeys. I caught BLM in a great fiasco when they came in and wanted to know why we didnôt replace a fence around town that somebody took down. In 1965, a rancher had used his ranch preferment money to put the fence in. But he didnôt get permission, he didnôt get eminent domain, he didnôt get the entitlement to put the fence in. The fence was on the actual federal town site survey. He put it right on the line and then some idiots came here in early 2000 and started cutting wires because the mining claims overlap the fence line into the town and out into the BLM land. They said, ñThis is mine. I have a right to do it.ò

They would cut it and Mike, our utility supervisor, used to go out and mend the fences, but this one guy was going to shoot somebody if they came on his property, and it got to be nasty. The BLM came in while I was commissioner and said, ñWe donôt know why you donôt fix the fence.ò

I said, ñWe donôt own the land. We donôt have any right to do it.ò

ñYou had it there before.ò

We explained, ñYour rancher, through his preference money and his range land use funds, put that up because he was being sued because the cows came into town to eat the cabbage.ò The owner of the property in town would sue the rancher because of what his cows did to his lands and thatôs why he put the fence in. Judge Beko and the county commissioner at the timeð I donôt remember his nameð got it done. And it was through Don Schrider.

So the BLM came to two of our commissioner meetings and they brought in the

road department, NDOT, and they said, ñWell, whose land is it? How can we get this resolved? What can be done?ò I had a stack of papers from this issue a foot thick. Our D.A., Curtis Sweetham, was no help. No D.A. could go out there and say, ñWe are going to take this away or weôre going to get an eminent domain or weôre going to have a person sign a legal descript that you could put a fence across there;ò none of thatôs happened. It didnôt happen in ô65 and itôs not going to happen now.

I said, ñWell, Mr. Seleyò (the head of the BLM now that Nearyôs gone), ñIn ô83, when those three truckload trailers stopped out here on Silver Peak road and unloaded all those donkeys from China Lake, what did you think was going to happen?ò It got real quiet. I said, ñThe open range law is in effect for Goldfield.ò

ñWhat do you mean?ò

ñWell, letôs see, Beattyôs got cattle guards. Tonopahôs got cattle guards. In 1967, you painted two white ones here in Goldfield, one on this end of town and one at the other end of town. Can you explain that to me? How does that stop a cow?ò It couldnôt.

So we fought this over and over and over, as to why we could and why we couldnôt put in a fence. The D.A. would say, ñWe need to get the original survey by Cassanov.ò He wouldnôt relinquish it unless they give him $5,000 for what he had, and to this day we donôt know if he has anything. The county wasnôt going to start paying for a fenceð one they couldnôt repair, one they didnôt own, one where they couldnôt go on the property. Especially when the BLM kept bringing horses and donkeys and antelope and dumping them in Esmeralda County.

NDOT came to town and is now repaving our road. NDOT was at that meeting when I brought up the information about the cattle guards. If you drive down 95 now, youôll find Goldfield, as of last month, has two new cattle guards. Did you cross one

coming in?

RM: I wasnôt paying attention.

RJG: Well, youôll cross one going out. And theyôre going to hook a fence up and theyôre going to fence off the right-of-way to the highway for 400 feet. Theyôre going to tie that cattle guard into the highway departmentôs 400 feet to protect themselves from lawsuits.

I told Ben Colvin, the rancher, and three or four others, at the next meeting, ñIf you people want a fence so bad, hereôs what youôre going to do. Weôre going to go in and put on a special-use tax and weôre going to tax you for it for the rest of your life. And then weôre going to put up an eminent domain to take away your property so we can fence it.ò Eminent domain is something we would have to do to have the town fence. Because we donôt have a D.A. who can go follow a federal survey, in his infinite legal wisdom. I said, ñMy suggestion to all of you is if you want a fence to protect your carrots and your cabbage, put one up yourself on your own property.ò

Ever since then, it got quiet and the only thing thatôs happened is thereôs a cattle guard in the north and a cattle guard in the south. The fence around the town is not being repaired. If those donkeys want to come in on BLM ground through that open fence, they are quite welcome.

RM: What does Tonopah do?

RJG: Theyôve got cattle guards and theyôre all fenced off.

RM: Theyôve got a fence around Tonopah? I didnôt know that.

RJG: Yes, itôs all fenced off nice and neat. If you go to Beatty, youôll notice when you come through thereôs a little range where theyôre doing new highway work on the outside where itôs all flat and youôll notice the fence is missing. If you go into town at night,

youôll see a bunch of donkeys running loose because they havenôt put that stretch of fence back up.

RM: What is your take on the grazing problem generally?

RJG: When Ben Colvin declared himself an Indian reservation, or whatever he signed off onð Iôve got paperwork somewhere on itð he gave up his preference and never paid his fee. I donôt think heôs running cows to this day.

RM: Youôre right; I talked to him fairly recently.

RJG: Unless heôs running them on somebody elseôs preferenceð you could lease your cows to them because theyôre being paid for.

RM: So he tossed in the towel?

RJG: I think heôs tossed in the towel, personally. Since his wife has been justice of the peace, theyôve had a steady income. Ben comes from a big ranching family out of Oregon and heôs got brothers up there. If it hadnôt been for them, he might not have made it.

How do I feel about the grazing situation? I was raised here in Nevada where there was no speed limit for years; where everything was open. If you hit a cow, you paid for it. Iôve come out of Area 51 at Rachel at night when it was so dark and the road was slick and icy and thereôd be 15 cows in front of you. You didnôt have any brakes because of the ice. Youôd pray and hold on or kiss your ass goodbye.

I was overjoyed when they fenced Highway 95 up through Beatty because I would come out of Area 51 on the weekend trying to get home to my family and Iôd be doing 100, 115 miles an hour. Of course, not through town. But as I would head out of town, my foot would be going closer and closer to the floor, and all of a sudden thereôd be this black thing in the middle of the road. If youôd seen my tire marks, theyôd be black for 200 feet. I never hit one, thank God.

RM: You mentioned a pet peeve of mine. I used to live out here when there was no speed limit and it was fun to drive on the highway because there wasn't a cop hiding behind every bush. I don't even like driving anymore.

RJG: If you're a commissioner, they won't bother you. [RDM laughs] I drove through Beatty at about 75 in a 45 zone, and an old nice deputy came out and grabbed my license. I was in a county car, and he says, "Mr. Gillum, would you kind of slow it down?"

I said, "Well, yeah, okay." One time when I was working at the molybdenum mine before the family came up here, I was in a hurry to get home to San Diego. I had a nice little pickup and I was going past the Cottontail Ranch, which was flourishing back then, at 125 miles an hour. It didn't take me five minutes to get from here to the Cottontail, and it wouldn't have taken me another 30 minutes to Beatty. I wasn't a commissioner then, I was just a guy, and there was no speed limit. My old friend Jameson, the highway patrolman, was coming at me doing 125. His lights were on and thought, "Oh, no, man." So I pulled off and waited.

He said, "R. J., why are you doing 125?"

I said, "Why are you doing 125? I'm going to San Diego to see my wife. I've been working up here, I'm tired. I want to go home."

He said, "I'm going to San Diego for a convention. You've got to get it under 100, R. J. I know you can live through that."

And I said, "Well, you do the same." He said okay so he went, and I went on.

RM: Technically, you didn't have to get it under 100, because there wasn't a speed limit.

RJG: No, but he was concerned. I don't even think I had a seatbelt on. The "double nickel" speed limit in '74 just made me puke. It's so adolescent. We're back into the fuel

shortage thing againð the lie they told us. You think Kuwait was a lie? The fuel shortage was the biggest lie; even to this day itôs the biggest lie going. But you canôt convince politicians of that.

RM: I got a ticket in Wisconsin during that period on a divided highway, two lanes each way, for going 57 miles an hour in a 55 mile an hour speed limit.

RJG: Donôt cry too much. Iôve seen people in Tonopah get one for going 27 in a 25, depending on the officer and what mood heôs in. And Iôve had people come through town here and get nailed, but they were doing 45 or 50 in a 25, and mention my name and get off. That was wrong.

RM: Do you have any more to say about the grazing situation?

RJG: I was relieved that the community of Beatty was safe to go through because people were being killed all the time; trucks were being wrecked by collisions with the donkeys.

The range situation in Nevadað my gut feeling was always this: I didnôt really understand the law of paying so much per cow for grazing rights. And I didnôt understand why they were doing the range study areas and why they were planting grass. The worst one we had was the weed abatement. There are noxious weeds out there that the cows just eat. Who was paying for that? At the time, it was supposed to be the federal government. The allotment of funding going out there being wasted to protect those cows always irked me. And Iôll tell you why: My wifeôs brother down in Texas raises Black Angus.

We have 100 acres down there and he raises 100 cows. He grows his own hay, pumps his own water, and feeds those cows and sells them on the market at a high dollar. Now, you see which side of the road Iôm coming from? So what gives these guys the

right to think they can raise cows out here? Did you ever eat a range-fed cow that hasn't been fed on corn? It's the most terriblest tasting piece of meat you'll ever eat in your life. It's worse than eating grizzly or deer, or any other range-fed animal.

RM: So your take is, you're not that sympathetic with the range rebellion.

RJG: I don't think the government should have ever stolen Nevada's land. Then they turn around and abuse the fact by taking the land and not letting people come live on it under the Homestead Act. Then they make them pay through the nose in the Desert Land Entry program to get a little hay farm going. We grow the finest hay in the world. We grow the finest potatoes, and so on. Everything we grow is the best, and it does well. And the mining is good. No, why should the cow people get all the benefits? I think they were a necessary evil because as the evil of the government exists, I think one evil has to fight the other evil.

You have to put yourselves in the shoes of the man that came into that region and gathered up all those cows and opened this state up. He has that right. But as society grows, and the people grow around you and come into the communities and dwell, and make your state viable to survive, he should acknowledge that and give to a point where, if he's going to do it, he needs to do it on his own, not on my back.

Believe me, that BLM land isn't coming out of that rancher's pocket, it's coming out of my tax dollars. And these little environmentalists, these Sierra groups— it's all coming out of my tax dollars to fight them, it's not coming out of the rancher's pocket. It's costing me money from my checkbook to protect that rancher.

RM: And you're opposed to that.

RJG: I'm opposed to people on welfare, too.

RM: So what's the rancher to do?

RJG: I just told you what we do at our place in Texas: We grow our own hay, provide our own water, and raise the cows on our own land.

RM: But itôs not viable for him to grow on his land out here because so much of it is tied up by the federal government.

RJG: If the BLM would turn him loose, let him grow his own hay, and let him have the water rights, he could do it.

RM: Well, he has the water rights but he doesnôt have enough water to really produce hay. So you think if he canôt grow his own hay, he should just get out of business?

RJG: Or move to where he can. By the way, 60 percent of our hay leaves Nevada. And now, instead of $6 a bale, itôs $12 a bale or something like that. What should he do? I donôt want to get him mad at me, but if we could do cows down in Texas and make a profit, why canôt they here?

RM: What would you say if he said itôs a different environment down there?

RJG: It is. But Iôve been on the hay ranches here. Thereôs no reason you canôt start a hay ranch and feed your own cows. The government should give either the funding or whatever it takes to do it.

RM: Well, that just makes that welfare then, doesnôt it?

RJG: No, youôre misunderstanding. If that rancher was here first and the landôs been in his family for generations, he has the right to do that. Iôm not saying so much they help him do it, but at least they give him the wherewithal to do it with. And weôve got the Indians. They think the landôs theirs, too. The Sierra Club thinks itôs theirs, and all the environmentalists think itôs theirs.

RM: Everybody thinks itôs theirs.

RJG: Right. The native Indians didnôt live here. They migrated here and left when it got

cold; they never stayed through the winter. They donôt count, to me. The rancher sufferedð the guy at Stone Cabin suffered through those winters. He had to live in that seven, six, eight feet of snow. He had to worry about his cows dying from no hay. If he owns 2 million acres out there, they should leave him alone, instead of taking it away from him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: Were you here when the MX missile proposal was going on?

RJG: Yes.

RM: What did you think of that? That was another issue where the government wanted to take over the land.

RJG: First off, you have to understand what the MX missile does. Basically nothing. Itôs the worst thing they ever invented. Its accuracy is less than 10 percent, and its dependability on arrival is less than 10 percent. It was built as a large cannon on rails that you could never find if it was moving. So the theory was, ñWeôre going to build this great gigantic beast, put it on a truck or a train, and move it around the country.ò Well, first off, I saw the debacle of stupidity coming, even worse than Jimmy Carter being president when he passed the Nuclear Act saying you had to be in private enterprise or you couldnôt do anything with the nuclear rods. The worst law he passed was that you could only use 15 percent of a rod in the plantð the rest of it went to storage. So youôve got 85 percent of a rod sitting in storage.

RM: What did you think of the idea that they were going to take a huge proportion of Nevadaôs land for the MX project? What did you think about their authority to do that with the land?

RJG: Their authority was wrongð and I knew it would fail, which it did. I knew it would fail from the get-go because the missile itself is obsolete. Youôve got to remember; werenôt we fighting a couple of wars on the frontsð cold wars where you could scare the enemy pretty well to death if you had this missile in your yard, youôre moving it around, you could fire it, and they would never know where it came from? So my take on it was, I

didn't worry about it. Maybe I should have, but I knew it wasn't going anywhere.

RM: But they were going to take large chunks of land out of Nevada.

RJG: Did it ever occur to anyone that maybe that's what it was all about? It was another debacle to take our land away from us, to increase the size of the Test Site. But knowing that going in, it didn't bother me because I knew they couldn't do it.

RM: So your take would be that, once they took that land for the MX, we'd never get it back from the Test Site.

RJG: It's like a wilderness study area sitting here in the southern end of Esmeralda County. We're never going to get it back. When do you think that MX land would ever come back? If it hadn't been for the cattlemen and the people that fought it, we would have MX now, only it wouldn't be called MX.

RM: Let's get into the details of your take on Yucca Mountain. You were here when they first proposed it in '82.

RJG: I've always thought that Yucca Mountain should happen; you're putting something that's radiated into an area that's already radiated, that's never going to be clean, and never going to be cleaned up. The most you could do is try to stop the contamination from going south.

One problem is this: They're using fear tactics that, well, if something happened to a canister– which it won't– in 10,000 years, we want to be protected from that. Well, Mister, I've got news for you. Nobody's going to be here in 10,000 years, not on this side of the planet. The stupidity and the involvement of following through with that kind of stupidity is showing in what our mindless children in Washington are doing today. Nothing. Zero.

RM: What's your take on nuclear power in general?

RJG: If we don't start building nuclear reactors by 2014, the revolt in this country and other countries is going to be so great, it's going to make this little thing look like a tea party.

RM: You mean because of lack of energy?

RJG: Have you ever tried to take a cell phone or an iPod away from somebody? I suggest you go back to town, go down the street, try it, and see what happens. They're worshipping that more than they worship their Father, their God. That is their God. My take is that, pull teeth, but it isn't going to happen.

The jobs that would come from New York or Boston to here if Yucca Mountain were to go because of the plants in New Jersey and all through the United States, moving that nuclear material— it's not waste, it still can be used. It's still rich in energy. Maybe that was their plan; in case of a war, we still have the rods available.

But the waste in jobs and employment— 1.5 million people could be put to work in the building of canisters, building of railroads, the transportation industry, the trucking industry, the concrete industry, the electronics engineering, any industry you want to name. You could put 1.5 million people to work just transporting waste, let alone cleaning it up.

RM: Yes, reprocessing and all that.

RJG: Reprocessing could be 600,000, 700,000 people. I was in Area 6, the leaded place underground where they put nuclear bombs together.

RM: It's underground?

RJG: Oh, yes. Eight stories. There's no reason they couldn't use that to disassemble the rods. But it's on federal ground, and the Nuclear Waste Act says you've got to have private enterprise do it. Well, they're not going to let private enterprise go in and use

government land, I don't think. But my take is this: You could put a million people to work by allowing the industry to go forth. People who complain about the "Screw Nevada" bill… well, pay us! There's $28 billion sitting there. Pay these people. In Alaska, they're getting $1,000 a person because they're pumping oil out of the ground.

RM: What's your take on global warming as it relates to nuclear power?

RJG: Show me the proof. Show me where my car is emitting carbon dioxide that's heating the earth. I'll show you seven volcanoes that heated the earth to a fraction that you can't believe, of over 12 degrees. I'll show you ash storms that buried people and killed them, and the earth's temperature went up 15 degrees. I'll show you the facts by history, but you can't show me where my car heated this planet. I'll tell you who can: every environmentalist from Rockefeller to Rothschild who wants to control the country and make us pay a carbon tax out of our pocket to them so Europe can rule the world in a one-world government form. That's what I believe.

RM: Okay. So it's not really related to the nuclear issue, in your mind.

RJG: How can it be? They've attacked coal, they've attacked fossil fuel, they've attacked human breath, human waste, cow waste, junkyards, trash yards… they've implicated everything you can come up with as the cause of it, and there's no proof. The scientists tried to phony up the proof just last year, and got caught because there's no proof. There's no legitimate, written engineering process to show that we're heating the earth. However, I remember reading somewhere where they dug up a dinosaur in Alaska. I think he was 12 or 13 foot below permafrost, and he had buttercups in his mouth. Now where did he get the buttercups from, when he died and he froze to death? And how fast did it freeze, that his body is still intact? Mr. Gore, did you know about this? How about the palm trees that were in Alaska before the glacier age struck or the earth tilted on its

axis and changed things? So youôre going to tell me all of a sudden you know weôre in global warming? It might be as normal as peaches and cream.

I will say this. My belief in my Heavenly Father Yahweh and His Son Jesus Christ told me through the Good Book what happened. It also told me whatôs going to happen. Thatôs my belief. Now, my religion is not environmentally concerned or Al Gore concerned or carbon tax concerned. I work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, as many others should. I am led to believe these things that Iôm telling you through my life existence and experience, and reading not fiction, but reading fact. A lot of people out there in the world who are scientists and engineers and knowledgeable mining people publish facts, and none of them have said that we are in global warming or that we are carbonizing the world.

RM: You mentioned a bit ago that there wouldnôt be any people here 10,000 years from now. Is that because Godôs going to intervene, or because theyôll go somewhere else, or theyôll all die out, or what?

RJG: Thatôs a hard one. In my mind, in watching fictional events on television with no documentation of their view of 2025, 2026ð first, you have to realize that everything thatôs come through the hypocrisy of media more or less has come to pass. The moon walk, getting to the moon. You remember Flash Gordon in the ô40s and ô50s? And things like *2001 A Space Odyssey*.

Donôt get me wrong: Iôm not against the media and television. Iôm sure there is a lot of religious broadcasting and thereôs a lot of truth of performances done by actors who portray the Bible and Noah and all that. Iôm not against that. What Iôm saying is that, if you study what happened against what they believe is going to happen, weôve got a close similarity. Now theyôve got cars that can drive themselves, if you put the proper things in

the pavement. They have people in space on a platform now and they're trying to reach Mars and beyond. I can see the Jetsons and so on coming to the fore. Solar, the iPod, the cell phone… technology is catching on so fast. They're doing a lot with visualization-type things. We now have a plane that flies itself and kills people. The government's surveillance is really great. They can fly out here around my place for days and know everything I do. When I was at Area 51, the surveillance was so great that a fly couldn't fart without them knowing. I'm serious. It's not a joke.

RM: I believe it.

RJG: Everything that happened was digitally recorded somewhere, and to this day it's still there. So who am I to say we won't be here in 10,000 years? But I cannot possibly see the performance of any more improvement or any more gaining of knowledge than there's been in the last 200 years. You've got to realize… in 200 years, we went from a stick to weapons of unbelievable mass destruction. Millions of years ago, this earth was formed and it went to the point of the sixteenth, seventeenth century, when the Chinese found gunpowder, before anything started to happen. There was the wheel, of course, and fire, so you figure it out. Ten thousand years… think about that. What are you going to do? Are you going to be a clone? A surrogate? Will you be a head in a jar, doing things from the jar? Because that's where it will end up.

RM: I see what you mean. What's your overall take on the Test Site in terms of starting in '49 and setting land aside? Basically, it's been taken out of Nevada's hands.

RJG: To understand the cost of the Test Site, you have to compare it to if Hitler had got the A-bomb. What would that have meant to America? To England? To France? What was the price worth?

RM: So you're saying a higher good justified establishing the Test Site?

RJG: The Test Site was established for one reason. Remember the Manhattan Project?

RM: Yes, we had won the war before the Test Site was established but they were worried about further development of nuclear weapons.

RJG: The Test Site was to prevent other countries from doing what Hitler wanted to do. And believe me, if any other country had got it and we didn't have it, you and I would not be having this conversation. I feel that the Test Site was a necessary evil to protect America from the other countries that had half the knowledge that we did.

RM: And should that land remain with the Test Site now, or should part of it be turned back?

RJG: It's like the rancher… there comes a time in life when somebody needs to give up something for the common good. They're still flying the drones right down here at Creech, in Indian Springs. They're flying the drones and stopping people from coming in here and doing another 9/11. That doesn't mean they're not going to rise again; Satan's going to have his way.

RM: So you're saying the Test Site needs to remain pulled out of public domain.

RJG: Well, you have to understand that can never happen.

RM: Why can it not happen? Well, part of it is radiation.

RJG: That's right.

RM: But not all of it's radiation.

RJG: How close do you want somebody living to radiation? Right now, the way it's blocked off, leave it alone. Give the rest of the land back to Nevada government and let Nevada run its own show. If the Test Site wants to keep putting 10,000 people to work, let them do it. If they want to keep security for the nation, great, let them do it. If they want to do enhancement for building and engineering war machines, let them do it. You

canôt live next door to a 25,000-year half-life. If you were to walk across a field and your child went out playing and fell down a mine shaft or walked across an impregnated field and came home with leukemia and died nine days later, youôd have a problem.

RM: To me, thatôs the best argument for putting Yucca Mountain there and reprocessing nuclear material.

RJG: And nobody would listen to it.

RM: You said it the other dayð itôs already contaminated.

RJG: Nobodyôs going to listen to this. Iôve tried it on people more important than me and itôs like water washing down a hill. Thereôs no way to stop the dam breaking, nobody to stop the flow.

RM: Do you have any other issues that you want to talk about, in terms of your time as a county commissioner and the land issues, and interactions with the federal government you experienced?

RJG: I have a lot of issues. The marijuana issue in California and here is quite a big issue. Itôs hard to say to people, ñDonôt do that. Donôt smoke that cigarette. Donôt go get drunk.ò You canôt really stop the common frailties, but for them to force things on you . . . Iôm torn between the federal government saying no, itôs illegal, and then the state of California saying, oh, itôs okay.

Speed laws, land issues, eminent domainð itôs all the same. On the one hand, the pot smokers say, ñHey man, go ahead and make it legal, tax the hell out of us, we donôt care. Weôre high, what do we care?ò And youôve got people on the other side saying, ñWait a minute, I donôt want them cooking my food.ò

RM: Or I donôt want them on the highways.

RJG: Or on the highway. But youôve got to understand, rural Nevada at this end of the

state is basically druggie communities. It always has been.

RM: Is Goldfield that way?

RJG: Oh, yes. You have no workforce. People came here in the ô50s, ô60s, ô70s. The cattlemen were clean. They might have smoked a bit, but who knows? Out of Kingman, Arizona, and up to the north is all druggies.

RM: I didnôt know that.

RJG: Esmeralda, Nye County, Goldfield, Pahrumpð these are druggie communities. I once sat with Steve Wynn and Ingle [sp] down at the Stagecoach in Beatty, and I said, ñDo you know that Goldfield is the most center point of the state of Nevada, and it could take on a really beautiful casino and a golf course? You could even put a big airport in there; youôd get people coming here for miles.ò

Wynn looked at me and he said, ñYeah, but I donôt build my casinos to house my employees. You have no workforce.ò

And I said, ñOh.ò Thatôs all I could say. The fact was this: Heôs not going to baby-sit them, heôs not going to take them to and fro, and heôs not going to let them live thereð the casino is for making money. He said, ñThatôs why youôll never see this type of environment in Goldfield, Nevada.ò

RM: Because thereôs no existing workforce there.

RJG: There are only four types of workforce: Federal governmentð Test Site; very limited. State NDOT workforce, very limited. County government, very limited. And free enterprise. There are 740 people in the county of Esmeralda. Thereôs over 40,000 in Nye County and 32,000 of them are sitting in Pahrump. A third of them spend their evenings in the bar and a third of them spend it higher than a kite, when they can get it. And thereôs not a drug dealer in either county that drives a Mercedes or a Cadillac or a big SUV

because they're too busy burning up their own stuff. And the next door neighbor they love so dearly, when they're out of stuff, they can run over there and get a hit, and then when they're flush and the neighbor's out, the neighbor runs over and get a hit. Isn't that amazing?

RM: It's interesting.

RJG: But you go down on 6th Street in Las Vegas and the boy drives up in the Beemer, and he's got three people working with him.

RM: As you said, the federal government has a law against marijuana and they're fighting California. What's your take on the federal government versus local preference?

RJG: The federal government caused the drug problem with their pretense of the war on drugs. Look at the mess with the arms deal, the 2,000 guns that went to Mexico. They couldn't even solve the simple problem of guns. How are they going to solve a problem like drugs? I was raised to believe if you were fat, you didn't do meth, but I was wrong. You could be fat and do meth.

RM: Is that right?

RJG: Or drugs. Once you've got the meth hit, especially crystal meth, you're diseased for life. There's nothing you're ever going to be able to do about it. And less than one to three percent ever recover, the lucky ones. Judge Lane down in Vegas could tell you about this, because he has the best drug program in this state; he's the one that has all the stats.

There are only three or four things that will stop somebody from doing drugs. One is get thrown in jail when you've never been in jail in your life– lose your job and get thrown in jail. The family leaving, the wife, the kids, that means nothing. The drugs are going to win. It's like smoking cigarettes– cigarettes are going to win. My take is this. I

believe that smoking cigarettesð and I did for 30 yearsð is the worst evil you can get because youôre an enhanced drug addict and you canôt stop. The odds are 30 percent that you can quit with Nicorette and all the schooling and everything.

The other thing is, once you become diseased, now we have a new metaphoric question. Itôs not like leukemia or AIDS or cancer. You have something you can never get over, and you may never get ill enough to die from it, and youôre going to become a person that has to rely on society to survive. Which puts it back into my wallet again. But remember, this person is diseased. And the government, in its infinite wisdom, says, ñWeôll give him methadone. Thatôll help him get off.ò Once you give them methadone, you donôt quit meth. You quit methadone, you die.

So donôt tell me the government, in its infinite wisdom, is fighting drugs. There are several answers, but you canôt kill everybody. You canôt put them in a labor camp. I tell you where we may go with this in 10,000 years: You may see labor concentration camps, if weôre still around. Because thatôs the only way I can see this thing surviving. Labor concentration camps would basically be drug entitlement programs for people to live.

RM: Is there anything else youôd like to cover here?

RJG: My children are on their own. One of them has lost their home and another is getting ready to from the sub-prime greed and for feeding the fat-cat stimulus. Weôre not going to recover, not yet. Not under this regime. Youôll have to clean out two-thirds of Washington to stop this, but they canôt. Theyôre entrenched.

I see the future right now as marginal. Iôve been in this 70 years. I see me not being around too long to worry about it, but Iôm going to do everything I can to protect what I can, and Iôm going to voice my opinion in areas that I know Iôm right about. Most

people think Iôm off the wall, but I have a pretty good success story for being off the wall.

And weôve had a marriage of almost 50 years (I like to say 50, she likes 46 better. Feels like 50, though). I guess I have to say my greatest worry is getting into heaven before my wife does. I want to be sure to get there. I love my grandchildren immensely, and I do everything I can to teach them not to get on drugs, not to be belligerent, not to be greedy, and try to raise them the best I can to help society survive.

Iôm an independent. I donôt like cities. I was raised in East L.A., like I said, and spent my summers in Texas. Iôd much rather live summers in Texas than ever live in East L.A. So Iôve had a round robin, and Iôve got stories I could tell you until you got old.

RM: Well, I thank you for sharing so much with me. This has been really interesting.

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