An Interview with
BRUNO and ANN SKANOVSKY

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada

Tonopah
1987

Ann Skanovsky
1987

Bruno Skanovsky
1987

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

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

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

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.

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

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed deep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L. Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have

become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

Jean Charney served as administrative assistant, editor, indexer, and typist throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Louise Terrell provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Barbara Douglass also transcribed a number of interviews. Transcribing, typing, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Alice Levine, Jodie Hanson, Mike Green, and Cynthia Tremblay. Jared Charney contributed essential word processing skills. Maire Hayes, Michelle Starika, Anita Coryell, Michelle Welsh, Lindsay Schumacher, and Jodie Hanson shouldered the herculean task of proofreading the oral histories. Gretchen Loeffler and Bambi McCracken assisted in numerous secretarial and clerical duties. Phillip Earl of the Nevada Historical Society contributed valuable support and criticism throughout the project, and Tom King at the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada at Reno served as a consulting oral historian. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

All material for the NCTHP was prepared with the support of the U.S. Department of Energy, Grant No. DE-FG08-89NV10820. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of DOE.

--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
June 1990

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

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

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

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources

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

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

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

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

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

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in 1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Nye County

communities that may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Bruno and Ann Skanovsky at their home in Tonopah, Nevada October 20, 1987

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Bruno, could you state your full name as it reads on your birth certificate?

BS: Well, I was born in Douglas, Alaska, and they didn't know what kind of a name to give me. So I go by 3 different names: I go by Robert John, on my birth certificate; and I go by Bruno Skanovsky; and I go by Bronco Skanovsky.

RM: And what was your birth date?

BS: My birth date was October 27, 1916.

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

BS: John Skanovsky. He was born in Yugoslavia, in Beograd. I call it Beograd, and they call it Belegrad. It was right in the central part of Yugoslavia.

RM: Do you know roughly when your dad was born?

BS: No, I don't. He came to the United States in 1902. He came to Chicago, and he stayed around Chicago for a long, long time, and then he went to Alaska.

RM: What did he do in Chicago?

BS: He was a dishwasher, but he was really a shoemaker. Then he went to Douglas, Alaska, and worked for a person up there; I don't know who he worked for, but he was a shoemaker up there.

RM: Where is Douglas?

BS: Douglas is 8 miles across the bay from Juno, on the Yukon Collar.

RM: What made him leave Yugoslavia? Did he ever talk about that?

BS: No, he never did talk about it. He just wanted to come to the United

States. Then he wrote back to the old country for a bride, as they used to do. And my mother, I guess, was available, and . . .

RM: Had he known her there?

BS: He knew, through some of my relations up there, who she was. He talked to them, and they said, OK, she'd marry him--the old fashioned way. I think she came to Alaska in 1913.

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

BS: Yes. From Yugoslavia. She was born in Boka, on the Mediterranean Sea.

RM: And so they were married in 1913, in Alaska?

BS: Yes. Then they heard about the boom of 1917 down here, the Divide boom. They come down here, and he opened up his shoeshop in Tonopah. They came in January of 1917.

RM: The Divide Boom must have caused a stir.

BS: It caused a big stir.

RM: Could you explain for the tape exactly where Divide is?

BS: Divide is about 5 or 6 miles south of Tonopah on the Goldfield highway, going towards Goldfield.

RM: Was there a lot of activity there?

BS: There was a lot of activity at that time, because it was a real strike. But it didn't last as long as it should have, because everybody was making money, and the money was flowing like water.

RM: The mines were going good in Tonopah?

BS: The mines were going good at that time. I guess every silver mine in Tonopah was working at that time. They had the Montana, the Belmont, the Rescue, the Hallifax, the Gypsy Queen, the Ohio, the Cash Boy, the Mizpah, the Silver Top . . . all those mines were running. There were a lot more of them--the Tonopah Extension--but they all closed down when the war came

along. Silver went down so far in 1929 . . . Then I think 1942 was the last time they really worked. The leasers had the Tonopah mining up here [then].

RM: Where was your father's shoe shop?

BS: The first shoe shop my dad had here in Tonopah was on Florence Avenue, right across from where Paul Wiese had his grocery store. It was the old Coleman Grocery Store, known to a lot of people, but it was Paul Wiese's first. There was a kind of a livery stable, and there's a one-room house there, where my dad where my dad had his shoe shop. It's on Florence Avenue.

RM: What is there now?

BS: There's nothing there at the present time, but next to it, right across the street from Joey Maslach's service station, was where the building was, east of Maslach's.

RM: How long was he there?

BS: He was there 5 or 6 years, then he moved and came downtown. He had a shoe shop--the place has burned down--between the Liberty Club and the McKim Building. There was the McKim Building, which is known now as the Ramona Hotel. Then there was a tailor shop by the name of Billy Cardelli's. Then there was a saloon, then Glen Saint Peter had a root beer stand, and a little kind of a casino in the back, then my dad had his shoe shop there--it was just a little alley. It was about 7 feet wide and about 60 feet long.

RM: And what's there now?

BS: Well, it's a vacant lot to a certain extent, but the bank is there now.

RM: Which bank?

BS: Western Savings.

RM: OK, so it was right there. And how long did he stay there?

BS: Until 1937. And he had a stroke, and he passed away in 1938.

RM: So he made his living, his whole time here, as a shoemaker.

BS: Right; as a shoemaker.

RM: And your mother . . . in those days, the women were housewives, weren't they?

BS: Yes.

RM: When you were growing up, did you speak Serbian in the home?

BS: Sure.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about the Serbian culture in town?

BS: There were quite a few Serbians here. There were the Banovichs, the Boskovichs, and the Kerpetichs. And there were the Malkovichs, the Petrovichs, the Vlacovichs, . . . oh, many, many more. Jerkovitchs . . . They used to have their own communities, just like they have every place else. When Christmas came along they'd have a big 3- or 4-day party. If one of the daughters got married, they'd have a big party, and they'd all get together.

They had their own type of food, like rolled cabbage, what they call sarma . . . And they'd have their own goat cheese, that they'd make out of goat milk, and they had their own kashtradina, which is a dried goat meat that they smoked and dried. They'd have that with cabbage and so forth.

RM: Was there a split in the Slavic community between the Catholics, and the Serbian Orthodox?

BS: Not at that time.

RM: It had pretty well gone away by that time?

BS: Yes. And then later on, it came back. It was the Croatians and the Slavs.

RM: What brought it back?

BS: Well, I don't know . . . Some of these guys want to be high priest all

the time, and . . . it just brings it back. Like Tito, who was a Yugoslav, and then there was somebody else who was a . . . like the Greek Orthodox, he would be a representative of the Yugoslavs. He was more or less the head man of the church, and the other was Croats.

RM: And this was in the Serbian Orthodox Church?

BS: Yes. They just more or less congregated and then they split apart. It's just like the English and the Irish, and a few others.

RM: When did you start school here?

BS: I started school when I was 6 years old, in 1921. My first teacher was Mrs. Curieux. She was a beautiful woman and a nice teacher. She taught me, and I went to school there . . . well, she beat up on me a couple of times. [laughter]

RM: She did? [laughs] How did she do that?

BS: She'd just pull you around and spank you on the butt a little bit. They taught you in those days. And then I went through school and I quit school when I was in the eighth grade. So I never did graduate from high school.

RM: Did you like school?

BS: School was very, very good here. They taught you. But if you didn't want to learn, they didn't put up with you; they'd run you off. It was up to you. People who tell you to "do this," you'd better do it. If you didn't do it, you went to the superintendent. We had Pop Anderson here, who was my first superintendent. He'd come down and he'd talk to you . . . But he was a beautiful man. As a kid you don't think he's too beautiful, but he was very good, and he took care of the kids, and he wanted to educate them. He finally got to be superintendent of all the schools in the state of Nevada. We had a lot of beautiful people who were really good school

teachers, but I was too smart for the teachers. Do you know what I mean?

RM: Yes, I was that way, too.

BS: And I never did graduate. It was my own fault. I've been sorry for it ever since. But kids don't realize what they go through for a long time, until they grow up and it's too late.

RM: Did you have brothers or sisters?

BS: Yes, I have one brother and one sister. They're older than I am. My sister lives here in Tonopah--she's Catherine Stockwell. She has a son by the name of Dane Stockwell. My brother's Danny Skanovsky, and he's married to Rose Beko. They have 2 daughters, DanRa and Debbie.

RM: Did the Slavs in Tonopah all live in one little community?

BS: Oh, no, they were scattered all over town. But people like the Malkovichs and the Petrovichs and the Navakovichs all had their grocery stores, and you traded with them. He'd come around with an old Model T--they had Model T's or horses at that time--and they'd pick up an order, and you'd give them the order, and they'd bring your groceries to you.

RM: Were most of the Slavic families here before your family came in?

BS: Oh, yes, there were quite a few of them.

RM: So your father was, so to speak, a late-comer in the Slavic community and in Tonopah?

BS: That's true.

RM: Did he fit right into the community?

BS: Oh, yes. They fell right in. Just like you do anyplace else, you know, if you're their breed, why, that's it.

RM: Did you ever feel like you weren't accepted in the community as a whole?

BS: No, never. This town of Tonopah was never like that. We had the

Mexicans here, and we had the Indians here, we had the Finns here, we had the Jews here, we had the Swedes--we had everything here in this community, and everybody was treated equally. There was never any animosity amongst any of them.

RM: Were there Chinese here?

BS: They were here. They were good people, but we used to give them hell, because we were kids. We used to torment them. They had laundries here. There was a laundry down on the corner of Water Street and Napa, and we used to go down there and throw rocks at their tin roof. They used to come and holler at us and chase us around, but we kids just tormented them. But they were good people.

RM: Were there many Chinese here at that time?

BS: There were maybe a dozen families.

RM: How did they earn their living?

BS: They had a Chinese restaurant here, and they had laundries--there were 4 laundries--and they had a couple of Chinese stores where they used to sell tea and other things, and they had 3 restaurants down here. The black people used to eat at the Chinese restaurant all the time.

RM: Were the blacks allowed to eat in the other restaurants?

BS: No, they didn't, at that time.

RM: Were there many blacks here?

BS: There were quite a few blacks.

RM: What did they do for work?

BS: They did porter work. They worked for the railroads, and they worked for the Mizpah Hotel as porters, and they worked in the red light district at that time as porters.

RM: With the Slavic community, some of the Slavs were merchants like your

father, but a lot of them were miners, weren't they?

BS: A lot of them were miners.

RM: The Cousin Jacks--Cornishmen--tended to be miners, too, didn't they?

BS: Oh, yes. They got the best jobs; I don't know why, but . . . and they always stuck together pretty close.

RM: More so than the Slavs?

BS: Yes. But they'd make the Slavs work to beat hell.

RM: The Cousin Jacks would?

BS: Yes. They would create some kind of friction between them, and they'd say, "Well, so-and-so got 6 cars more than the other guy got out, and 3 or 5 cars or more . . ." They worked the damn fools' heads off to try to get more cars. Heck, they're all down in the cemetery now, [the ones] who worked in that dust; they're all dead.

RM: Could we talk some about the non-glamorous side of mining? For instance, the dust.

BS: The dust killed a lot of these young people who came from the old country. They drilled dry, and they'd blast, and they'd go in there and they'd work in the dust, and in 6 months' time they were dead from silicosis. They are down in the cemetery, and they came to this country with the intention of making their fortune. They didn't make their fortune; they made this cement slab.

RM: And it would happen as quickly as in 6 months time?

BS: In 6 to 7 months they were dead.

RM: What about the guys who died a slower death?

BS: Somebody took care of them; they had boarding houses. For instance, Mrs. Boscovich had a boarding house here and she would feed some of them. Her husband, old Nick Boscovich, worked over here at the West End. He had

the dust. He would help them out; he'd feed them. She had a boarding house, and kept feeding them all the time, until they died. And that was it. People just helped them out the best they possibly could.

RM: Did the mining companies help out?

BS: The mining company just took the money and went to Philadelphia with it.

RM: Could we talk a little bit about how people felt about that at that time?

BS: They couldn't do anything about it, because they were too ignorant. They didn't like it, but they were too ignorant. They didn't know what to do. The Philadelphians were eating the fat of the land and these poor devils were working for them for $1.50 and $2 a day. I wish I had kept that card that I had, showing how much everybody made in one week.

RM: Well, Jim Butler made the original discoveries, and early on the Philadelphia interests came in and acquired them, didn't they?

BS: That's right.

RM: And then they bled the money off; is that what happened? Were the workers paid good money by the standards of the time?

BS: Yes. Because you could go downtown and get a glass of beer and a sandwich for 5 cents. That's what they told us. When I was growing up, you'd go down here to the Quick Lunch--Marco Dobro and his brother and all the rest of them--and you could get a T-bone steak for 35 cents! And this was a big meal. You'd get soup, salad, and a T-bone steak for 35 cents.

RM: Did they discriminate against people; for instance pay the Cousin Jacks more than the Slavs, or anything like that?

BS: Well, there was discrimination, all right, but, they kept it amongst themselves. They didn't fight too much.

RM: Did all the mines pay about the same?

BS: They all paid about the same.

RM: How did people in the town feel about wealthy outside interests, from Philadelphia, taking the cream, and here are the guys getting silicosis. Was there bitterness or anything in the community?

BS: No, they finally built a hospital here and took care of some of them until they died. They made a mines hospital here, called Tonopah Mines Hospital. I think all the mines chipped in to make this hospital.

RM: Where was the hospital located?

BS: It's still standing up here, kind of catty-corner over from the Catholic Church . . . Mike Fitch lives there now. Where all the nurses used to live. And down below they had the 2-story building all fixed up.

RM: Did you ever talk to any of the guys about . . . Here's a fellow working up there in all this dust and he must look at other people and see what's happening to him. How did they feel about that?

BS: They either had to work, or their family would go hungry.

RM: So they knew that they were slowly being killed, but they had no choice?

BS: That's right, until they passed a law of some kind that they had to water things down it was terrible for a long, long time around here.

RM: In your view, was water available before they used it, or was the water technology not there?

BS: The water technology wasn't there and they never had the water here. They had to haul it in here, until they finally went out here at Rye Patch and brought the water in; they pumped it in here sixteen miles.

RM: Were you here when that happened?

BS: That was before I got here.

RM: And you dropped out of school about 1930?

BS: '31. I went to work for Buck Shelton at the American Rail Express Company and I worked for them for about 2 years.

RM: What did you do there?

BS: I drove a truck for them; I delivered around town here.

RM: Where was their office located?

BS: Their office was located where the Country Closet is now, on the main street.

RM: And what did they pay you?

BS: I was getting paid . . . I think it was $3, $3.15 or $3.25 a day.

RM: By then the Depression was on, wasn't it?

BS: Yes, it was tough. Then Buck Shelton was transferred, and a fellow by the name of Merrill Peters came in. Merrill Peters said he was going to put his wife to work, and he'd drive the truck; he put her to work in the office and I was let go. Then I went to work for the Golden Gate Motor Transportation, and I helped them out on the candy wagon. We used to go Tybo and back with the candy wagon. Tybo was working at that time.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Bruno, could you state the name of the company you went to work for after the Express?

BS: I was driving candy wagon for Golden Gate Motor Transportation. They were a trucking company. They were hauling lead in from Tybo and putting it on the railway here, and hauling it out. It was a lead-silver.

RM: Now, what was the candy wagon?

BS: You'd haul groceries and things like that out to the mine.

RM: So you hauled out to Tybo.

BS: I hauled to Tybo for a while.

RM: Was that a dirt road?

BS: It was dirt road, and the state highway department kept it up in pretty good shape. They dragged it every day. A couple of fellows, Tony Antoniaza, and Mike Landers, who worked for the state, used to drag the road every day.

RM: What would they drag it with?

BS: They had one of those old bottom drags. It was a regular drag that was on wheels, but they would bring the muck in to the center of the road all the time.

RM: Did the road follow the present Highway 6?

BS: Yes, it was pretty much the same roadbed.

RM: Do you remember when they paved that?

BS: I don't remember when they paved it.

RM: What would you make--a run a day?

BS: Yes, you'd make the run every day. You'd go from here to McKinney Tanks. Jack Clark had a little rest stop there at that time. He'd sell a little bit of booze once in a while.

RM: Oh, was it a bar. What side of the road was it on?

BS: On the left-hand side going out.

RM: Where that rest stop is now, about?

BS: No, that's Salisbury. McKinney Tanks is the first one right on top of the summit.

RM: Right as you cross the valley, after you cross the valley and the airport.

BS: Right there. The road was down in the gulch just a little bit; it didn't go up through that cut. And it goes down in there about 200 yards, down there in the draw. He had a little bar there.

RM: There's a house off to the right there now.

BS: Yes.

RM: But it was down below the house?

BS: It was down below the house a little bit.

RM: What kind of a bar was it?

BS: It was just a little bar, just a table. You'd come in there, sit down, have a little drink. He used to make a little booze once in a while.

RM: And that's how he earned his living?

BS: That's how he earned his living. And then we'd continue on; we'd go to Five Mile.

RM: Now where's Five Mile?

BS: That's past Salisbury.

RM: Salisbury is where that huge tank is now, on the right-hand side of the road?

BS: Yes. They used to have a ranch there, years and years ago. John Connelly and a fellow by the name of Salisbury had it, and the Antoniaza family had it. I don't remember all that; it was before my time.

RM: There wasn't anything at Salisbury when you were making that run to Tybo.

BS: Just the water hole.

RM: OK. Now, where's Five Mile?

BS: About 35 miles out on the road. It's on the left-hand side going out.

RM: Oh, where that ranch house is?

BS: That ranch house is there now.

RM: Past Clifford turn-off.

BS: Yes. That's what they call Five Mile.

RM: What was there then?

BS: There was a woman there and named Bressingham. She was a red-headed woman, and she used to have a kind of a little restaurant there.

RM: Where the house is now?

BS: Yes. She'd come out and steal all the groceries that we'd haul into Tybo. [chuckles] While we were in there, she was stealing. But she was a nice old lady, so we just let her steal.

RM: Now, exactly where was the restaurant in relation to where that farm house is now?

BS: It was just west of it, underneath those trees. She didn't take too much; enough to keep her busy, though.

RM: Was there a lot of traffic on that road?

BS: Not too much. There used to be a stage going through there; they'd haul mail through to Ely.

RM: A stage to Ely in the '30s?

BS: A stage with one team; yes. A fellow by the name of Charles Perry had the stage run there.

RM: And it was a dirt road all the way to Ely?

BS: All the way to Ely.

RM: How often did he make that run?

BS: Every day. He'd go to Ely one day and back the next; 167 miles.

RM: There must have been enough traffic to justify a stage, then?

BS: Oh, yes. And from Five Mile you'd go to Warm Springs.

RM: What was at Warm Springs?

BS: Wilson was the man's last name and he had a bar there.

RM: Where the present bar is?

BS: Oh, no, it's all gone.

RM: Was there a community there?

BS: Oh, yes, there were 5 or 6 houses and a good swimming pool. We used to stop there all the time. It was a good-sized bar. Do you know where the rock corral is there?

RM: Yes?

BS: Well, the bar sat about 50 or 60 feet south from there. Then they had the bath house up above, there.

RM: Right. Just as a side note here, I've been trying to find out as much as I can about the old Reveille Mill. Do you remember anything that was happening down in Reveille Valley at this time?

BS: No, not at that time.

RM: The Fallinis would've had the ranch at Twin Springs by that time, wouldn't they?

BS: No. I think the Reischkes had it.

RM: And was he related to the Reischkies who had the store here in town?

BS: Yes. The Fallinis had the place up in Eden Creek--that's the original Fallini Ranch, and that's where all the kids were born; up there in Eden Creek. Helen [Fallini] can tell you about it, because probably Joe had told her about it.

RM: Did you know a guy out that way at that time--Jack Longstreet?

BS: I knew of him. I saw him a half a dozen times. Used to sell papers to him here in Tonopah. He wasn't in Monitor; he was up in Stone Cabin Valley.

RM: Initially he had a homestead over around the Kawich somewhere, didn't he? On the west side of the Kawich?

BS: Well, he'd come in the Kawich, and they ran him out of there. He'd gone on somebody else's property, and then he'd go up to Longstreet. But they call Longstreet in Stone Cabin Valley.

RM: And Stone Cabin Valley is on north of Stone Cabin Ranch?

BS: Right.

RM: Where was he initially, in the Kawich area, before they ran him out?

BS: Down below Silver Bow . . . I can't even think of the name of that. I think they call it Rosewater now. They brought a bunch of horses in there; from Texas.

And this is where he had all his troubles, was down in that country, because he was on somebody else's property, and this is where all the trouble started between what they call the "Big 10," I understand; I don't know what the heck it was all about.

RM: Do you remember him as having clipped ears?

BS: I never could see his ears. He always wore long hair and a big beard.

RM: They say he had clipped ears.

BS: Yes, for stealing horses in Texas. [laughter] I never did see his ears. But he used to buy papers from us kids. I don't know where he got his money or how he got his money or anything, but he just did.

RM: He originally homesteaded down in the Beatty and Amargosa area, and before that he came from the Moapa area.

BS: Well, I don't know, but I know he was up in Longstreet. He had a little place up there.

RM: After Warm Springs, what was the next stop?

BS: You'd turn off to go to Tybo.

RM: What did Tybo look like at that time?

BS: Tybo was quite a place. They had a big boarding house there, a school for the kids, a big bunkhouse for the men; they had a large mill there; they had a large shaft; they had a big tunnel going into the main hole . . . they had quite a place.

RM: Were they moving a lot of ore?

BS: Oh, yes. They had 5 or 6 big trucks running; they were hauling concentrates in here, and 20 and 30 ton to a load.

RM: They were turning out that much concentrates?

BS: Every day.

RM: That must have been a huge mill.

BS: A big mill. I don't know how many men they had there.

RM: So you'd make the run every day?

BS: Every day. Five days a week, and 6 days, and sometimes 7.

RM: What would they do; place an order, and you would bring it back in with you, and they'd fill it the next day?

BS: Bring it in, and they'd fill it that night, and you'd just take it in the morning and go on up.

RM: What kind of truck were you driving, do you remember?

BS: I was driving an old Ford, a 1929, 2-speed axle, Ford 6-cylinder ton-and-a-half.

RM: Did you have trouble breaking down or anything?

BS: No, you took care of your truck. [laughter] Because it's a long way to walk.

RM: Did you ever have trouble in the winter?

BS: No, they kept the road fairly open. They had those old-time plows; these FWDs that used to run down there. And Antoniaza would go from Tonopah to McKinney Tanks and open up the road right quick--one trail, you know.

Then he'd go to Tybo and turn around and come back. There was only one time that we couldn't get through and that was the winter of '37 or '38 or '39, I think; it was a hard winter. We couldn't get through at that time, but they had plenty of provisions to keep everything going.

RM: In your view, is the country drier than it used to be then?

BS: Oh, yes, a lot drier. Heck, years ago, they used to bring the sheep down from the north and they'd keep them in the bed ground here for 30 days; never move them. The Pottses used to bring their sheep down; the people from Duckwater used to bring their sheep down; Florios; then later on Bertrand Aaron Bell came from Eureka; then Woods moved in; oh, heck, there was a lot of sheep men around. Then they had a big squabble. Carter got shot by Florio . . .

RM: How long did you drive the candy wagon in and out from Tybo?

BS: I worked for them about 3 years. A fellow by the name of George Faber was the boss at the trucking company.

RM: And what did you do after you quit that?

BS: I went to work for Weepah Nevada Mining Company, at Weepah, and I worked in the mill as a mill helper.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about Weepah, and what it was like out there?

BS: Weepah was a good place to work. I worked under Jim Perkins for 5 years. I moved from there to Northumberland, after they closed that place down. Weepah had good accommodations. They fed well and had good bunkhouses.

RM: What did you do in the mill?

BS: I was a mill helper--just [did] everything, you know. Carried in cyanide cans, and put things on the belts. Kept things going, cleaning off

the classifier . . .

RM: You were still really just a kid, almost, at this time.

BS: Yes. Then I ran a span of horses for them. They had a bunch of tailing ponds down there and they wanted to re-run them, so they designed a re-pulper. They'd put water through it, and then pump it back up to the mill and run it through the cyanide plant. This was all flotation before. They designed it, and they got a span of horses from Dodge Construction.

RM: How many are in a span?

BS: Two. [laughter] So I ran this couple of horses around there; you'd have to plow it up first, because it was dry, and then you'd pick it up in a fresno, and then you'd go over this ramp, and you'd dump it in this hopper, and it'd go down, and it'd mix it up, and then it'd pump it up . . . the 4-inch line up to the mill. I was there 2-1/2 years with them, then I moved to Northumberland.

RM: What kind of a community did they have at Weepah?

BS: They had a few houses, not very many, but [a few] had their own homes. It was just a mining camp.

RM: Was there a school there?

BS: Yes, there was a school there, and a boarding house, but no bars, and no stores.

RM: Then you moved to Northumberland. Could you describe where Northumberland is for the tape?

BS: Northumberland's out there about 90 miles from here on the other side of Belmont. You go out towards Belmont, and go up towards Pine Creek Ranch, on up north, about 30 miles. It's in the Toquima Mountains, right up high.

RM: How long were you at Northumberland?

BS: Two-and-a-half years. We went up there in '39, wasn't it, Mom?

AS: Yes.

BS: We got married in '39. We just got married, then we moved up there.

RM: Could you say who you married?

BS: I married Ann Rosndich.

RM: Rosndich. Was she Slavic, and from Tonopah?

BS: Yes.

RM: Had you gone to school with her?

BS: No, she was born and raised in Tonopah, but she went to Carson City, and she was in school in Carson City. Then she moved back to Tonopah, and that's where we met, when I was working. We moved up to Northumberland and lived in a one-room wall tent for 2-1/2 years.

RM: Even in the winter?

BS: Even in the winter.

RM: The winters were rugged up there, weren't they?

BS: Yes, they were.

RM: What's the elevation up there? It's high, isn't it?

BS: 8800 feet.

BS: We chopped our wood, and we hauled our wood, and we hauled our water. We had to haul water. We'd go down the canyon in the old Chevy sedan car that we had and we'd throw wood in it and bring it home, put it in a little shed that I made up there. We kept going like that. She'd make bread and cakes and things like that; she cooked all the time.

RM: How big was the tent?

BS: Nine by 12. We put up the sides on it. It was made out of 1x12's. Then we put the tent over the top of it. She took the scrap material that came out of the mill, the cellotex and things like that, I brought small pieces of it home, and she cut it all up and studded it and put the cellotex

on the studs, on the inside. And then she wallpapered it. And we had a couch that we used to break down into a bed every night. And we had a nice cook stove.

RM: Was it cold?

BS: Well, we were young. I don't know if it was cold or not. Was it cold, Mom?

AS: It wasn't cold. We got along.

RM: What did you do about the snow and the melting ice and all that?

BS: Oh, we just let her go.

RM: It never leaked on you?

BS: No.

RM: What kind of a door did it have?

BS: A regular door with a glass window in it. We had a carpet on the floor.

RM: Were there other tents up there?

BS: Oh, yes, lots of tents. I'd say there were 15 to 18 families there, weren't there, Mom? Or maybe more.

AS: Twenty. [difficult to hear]

RM: Were there stores or bars or anything?

BS: No. Everything was brought in on the candy wagon from Tonopah. It would go to town every day, and if you wanted something, you told them, and they'd bring it out to you. You worked 15 days, for $4.50 a day, and you'd work 7 days a week.

RM: Did you ever get a day off?

BS: Not unless you took it, and then you were docked for it.

RM: What was your job out there?

BS: They had an open quarry up there, and I'd drive the truck.

RM: What kind of mine was it?

BS: Gold and silver. It was open pit. Then along came the war, and they shut it down after that.

RM: Did they mill it there?

BS: Oh, yes, they milled it there.

RM: Was it a successful operation?

BS: It would have been a successful operation, but the war shut it down. They tore everything down and moved it out. Of course, what they spent on it, they recovered. They never lost any money on it.

RM: A couple of years ago, it was a going operation. Is it still operating out there?

BS: It's operating again now. I don't know who's operating it. Cypress had it for a while and now somebody else has it.

RM: That's fascinating, to have lived in a tent at that altitude. They get a lot of snow up there, don't they?

BS: Quite a bit.

RM: Did you come into town very often?

BS: Whenever we could. When we could, we'd buy 50 gallons of gas. We had 15-gallon drums we'd put in the back end. We'd haul them back out.

RM: Was this all on dirt roads?

BS: Oh, yes. We'd buy a case of eggs, 100 pounds of flour, 100 pounds of sugar. My wife bought--what the heck was that baking powder you bought from United Packing Company?

AS: Bought 10 pounds of baking powder! [laughter]

BS: At one time [laughter] from Mrs. Welch. That was United Cattle Packing Company, at that time. Mrs. Welch says, "What're you going to do with all that baking powder?" [laughter] But in those days we'd go down to Pottses

and get a hind quarter of beef every month, and that would last us a whole month.

RM: And it would keep up there because it was cold.

BS: Cold enough. And we paid 15 cents a pound. We'd buy a whole hind quarter and it'd cost us about $17.

RM: Who were the Potts?

BS: They had the Potts Ranch--George Potts and his brother John and his family. It was about 18 or 20 miles north of Northumberland down on the flat, in Monitor Valley.

RM: How long did you stay there?

BS: Two-and-a-half years.

RM: Where did you go then?

BS: We came to Tonopah.

RM: Were you glad to get out of there?

BS: Well, yes, we were glad to get out. But things got tough then, didn't they, Mom?

AS: Yes.

BS: Yes, the war had broken out and they couldn't get any material. I quit up there because of the war, and then I came in here and worked for Campbell and Kelly, and then I was drafted, and I went into the service in '43. I worked here for Campbell and Kelly for 6 months, and he wasn't paying too well, and the base was going strong then, and I went out there, and went to work at the base.

RM: What did you do at Campbell and Kelly?

BS: I was greasing cars, doing a little mechanical work.

RM: Basically, what was their operation? Was it a garage?

BS: There was a garage and a foundry there, but they were pretty nearly out

of the foundry work at that time, because all the mines had closed. They used to make mill liners and things like that for them.

RM: The war shut the mines down, didn't it?

BS: Yes. Because they didn't need gold, and they needed the iron for the war. Then I went to work out at the base.

RM: What did you do out there?

BS: I did a little roofing and did a little cement work on the bull gang; you know, as regular laborer on a lot of that stuff. And then I worked with George Corey and Tony Perchetti; we were doing a lot of roofing out there. We roofed all those big hangars.

RM: That looked like it would be a scary job.

BS: It wasn't a scary job; it was a good job, but it only paid 90 cents an hour. But that was big money then. And then in February of '43 I had to go to the service, and I never got back until '46.

RM: Could you tell a little bit about what Tonopah was like when the air base was going?

BS: Oh, boy, there were a lot of people coming in here . . . I wasn't really here when the height of the thing was going, I was in the service. My wife was here, and she worked at the telephone company.

AS: The wives would follow the soldiers. And there wasn't a single shack or anything else in this town that was empty, because the wives were following the soldiers. A lot of people, like Christina Boscovich, took kids into their own homes.

BS: My mother took in some kids.

AS: Yes, his mother took in wives who wanted to be with their husbands. You see, the boys were only here for 6 weeks at a time and then they were shipped out. This was their last stop. And they were sent overseas; they'd

fly them out. They were the bombardiers. There wasn't a shack in town that was empty.

RM: Did a lot of new businesses spring up?

AS: Well, the town was going good, yes.

BS: Just nothing but gambling and casinos.

RM: It was gambling and casinos; basically night life for the soldiers?

BS: That's right.

AS: We had everything here--a telegraph office and everything; but after the war, everything moved out; even the railroad moved out.

RM: Could I get you to introduce yourself on the tape?

AS: [laughter] I'm Bruno's wife, Ann.

RM: Ann Skanovsky.

AS: Yes. But that's what happened. I had worked at the telephone office, and I was there 2 years. They had 10,000 soldiers out here. Oh, it was a mad house. Every boy trying to call home.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: We were talking about what Tonopah was like during the war.

AS: It was busy; we had a U.S.O. in here and everything.

RM: Ann, you were saying that you worked at the telephone office. What was it like there?

AS: It was very busy. We had an old switchboard--the drop type--an old, antique board. That was the equipment of that day. It didn't have a dial or anything.

RM: It was an old hand-ring-up?

AS: Yes. We answered all calls. You'd ring and ask for a number, and we'd get it for you. We took telegrams; we did everything.

RM: And where were you hooked into?

AS: We went into Reno.

RM: Was everybody on a party line?

AS: Yes. Sometimes there were 8 people on a party line.

RM: Did anybody have private lines?

AS: Not that I know of, in those days. If they did, it was unusual.

RM: What was life like in Tonopah after Bruno left for the army?

AS: Well, it was busy here in town, all right. Everybody had a job. All the wives went to work.

RM: To make money, or just to keep busy?

AS: To exist.

RM: So the army didn't give you--the wives--a living?

AS: They gave him $50 a month.

RM: That's all you got?

BS: That's all. She was only making $125 a month at the telephone office, working 7 days a week.

AS: Wages in those days weren't high.

RM: Bruno, where did they take you when you went into the army?

BS: I went to Fort Douglas, then from Fort Douglas I went into Boise Barracks, and from Boise Barracks I went to Camp Shelby, then from Camp Shelby I went overseas. I was in the European Theatre there; I was in Dusseldorf and Bonn, Germany. I was in the Treadway Bridge Company.

RM: Building bridges?

BS: Yes. I was in that for 2-1/2 years. Then I came back and they put me in the quartermaster, and I was at Barstow, California for a while. Then I

came home in '46. I was discharged out of Marysville, California.

RM: What did you do then, in '46?

BS: I thought I was going to draw some pennies from heaven, but they wouldn't let me; they put me to work right away. I went back to work for the State Highway Department. I worked for them from there on out. I worked for the state for 20 years, until 1962, and after 20 years I went to work for the sheriff's department here.

RM: What did you do for the highway department?

BS: I drove a truck and did maintenance work. I worked right here in town.

RM: So you drove a truck in the local areas?

BS: Yes; and repaired roads. Then after 20 years was up, I went to work for the sheriff's department, with George Barra, and I worked for the sheriff's department at Mercury for 10-1/2 years.

RM: Did you know Barra very well?

BS: Yes, I did.

RM: Could you talk a bit about him?

BS: George Barra was a beautiful man; one of the nicest persons you'll ever want to meet. He had a business here in Tonopah; he was a bartender. First he was a mechanic . . . He was a working man, that's what he was. Then he got into the bar business, and he made a little money. He and Bob Marker had the Ace Club for a long time. He went from there to the sheriff's office, until he got killed.

RM: When did he become sheriff?

BS: I think in 1960. I went to work for him in '61 or '62.

RM: Who was the sheriff before him?

BS: Bill Thomas. He had been sheriff for 40 years.

RM: So Barra succeeded Thomas. When you went to work for the sheriff's

department, did you go there as a deputy at Mercury?

BS: As a deputy for Nye County. But the Test Site was paying us. I was at Mercury 3-1/2 days on, and off 3-1/2.

RM: Would you come home on your days off?

BS: Yes.

RM: And Ann stayed here?

BS: Yes. You were on 24 hours. You'd work 84, and you were off 84.

RM: So you were on call 84 hours. Was that tough?

BS: No, you'd work 12 hours, and get off 12 hours, and somebody else would work the night shift. But you were always on call. I worked under Bob Revert, who was another beautiful man to work under.

RM: Could you describe any of your experiences out there?

BS: I didn't have too many experiences, because people on the Test Site knew that when you had a badge on, you were in control and they were under your supervision. If they got in trouble, they were automatically terminated. And they didn't want to lose their jobs, so we never had too many problems. If you had problems, it was just with speeders. You'd give them a day off, which would cost them $100. Those tickets came pretty high. I made a lot of friends down there, and sure, I made a few enemies probably, but I made more friends than I did enemies, by talking to them and telling them, "Now listen, if this happens again, you've got a ticket, and you're going to get fined heavy."

It was a very good job, as far as I was concerned. I would put in my 12 hours, and I'd take care of the people the best I possibly could. You'd have a few accidents now and then; you'd have to write a citation and you'd have to go in front of the magistrate and see him and talk to him. But you always used to try to cover up for the guy, so he wouldn't get too heavy of

a fine, and things like that. You didn't try to be a hero for the people down there working for wages because you were wearing a badge. Because, as far as those badges go, you can use them for a cookie cutter. [laughter]

RM: [laughter] Yes. Did you cover all the Test Site?

BS: Yes; all the Test Site. You could get on one road and drive 265 miles without getting off the same road; you'd go right around in circles. Every day you'd make a route. Then you'd be down there when the traffic would go out. I was there when they had over 13,000 people working there. On Christmas, all those drill rigs working down there looked like a big city. They were all lit up with lights in Areas 5, 7, and 10 and all on through there; all lit up, it was beautiful! It looked like a big city.

RM: Did you get up to Area 12 much?

BS: That was my headquarters, Area 12.

RM: My dad was down there at that time.

BS: Yes, I know. He was there for a long time at the main tunnel. I saw him all the time up there.

RM: Did you ever have any contact with protesters or anything like that, down there?

BS: Oh, yes, a few of them. We took 3 or 4 of them to jail, and they turned them loose after that. You know, they wanted to protest. I guess they have a right to protest. People have the right to believe what they want to believe, I think. But you have to do your duty. You've got to protect the company; you've got to protect them, too. They'd get out in the middle of the road and lie down; you'd grab them and jerk them off the road and throw them in the car and take them up to Beatty to jail.

RM: Was there a lot of that then?

BS: Not too much, no. They had a couple of strikes down there, too. We

had 2 or 3 picket lines and 3 or 4 protesters. Before they had the big shot, or something like that, they'd have a bunch of protesters come out there. But they would just carry signs in front of the gate. They'd never get out any farther than they had to. We'd have a line, maybe half a mile away from the main gate, and they couldn't come any farther than that. If they did, they were in trouble.

RM: What did they do to them when they arrested them?

BS: They'd take them up and fine them $5, $10, something like that; it didn't amount to too much. But now they're starting to raise hell with them.

RM: When did you quit?

BS: I got laid off in 1973. Don Tomany was the sheriff at that time.

RM: He was sheriff of Nye County?

BS: Yes, after Barra was killed. Barra and John Maslich were both killed down there by Beatty.

RM: Was Bob Revert still there then?

BS: Bob Revert left, I think, the last of July, and I left the 29th of August.

RM: Who did they put there in his place?

BS: Tim Lydon. He's Catherine Lydon's son.

RM: I wonder how long he stayed there?

BS: I don't know. He was there for a while.

RM: And what did you do then?

BS: Then I came home, and I had 8 months to go to complete my 30 years, to get 30 years in for the state. So I completed my time right here in town for the highway department. I put my 8 months in and then I retired and I laid around here for about 6 or 7 years.

I was sitting here one day, about 7 years later, and in 1980, I think, I went to work for Houston Oil.

RM: What was Houston doing here?

BS: They had all of these mines here. They bought them from Summa.

RM: Summa was Howard Hughes's outfit; yes.

BS: Then Houston bought them and I went to work for Houston. I was sitting here, and 3 guys drove up, and I gave them hell; why don't they have a security officer up here, taking care of these kids. Because they're going to be falling off the head frame and things like that.

And they were surprised, and they said, "Do you know of somebody?"

And I said, "Yeah, me. I'd work for you."

"What would you take a month?"

And I said, "Six hundred dollars a month, I'll work for you and I'll make my own time."

So they said, "All right." They made the deal with me, and I worked for Houston; then Tenneco Minerals took over from Houston and I worked for them for 6-1/2 years, until Echo Bay took over.

RM: Did Echo Bay buy all the mines that originally Summa had had?

BS: Everything that Summa had had in Houston Oil.

BS: Now they've got Manhattan, McCoy, and so forth.

RM: And Echo Bay still owns them? Why are these big companies interested in them?

BS: They're trying to be gold producers. They've got Manhattan, Borealis, McCoy, Round Mountain, Ivanpah, Red Mountain; they've got quite a few. It's a Canadian outfit.

RM: The Mizpah Mine is right out your front door?

BS: All the dumps have a little value. $1.50, $2 a ton right now.

RM: Is that right? At today's prices?

BS: No, that was 90 cents.

RM: No kidding.

BS: That's what they say. They're going to do something, but they don't want to do it right away. They're just taking their time, waiting for silver to go higher. But this mine alone has produced $45 million.

RM: What was the biggest producer?

BS: I think the Mizpah.

RM: The ore was deep at the Extension, wasn't it?

BS: Yes, it was down 2,200 feet, but they were pumping 5,000 gallons of water a minute down there, and they couldn't pump it out. And they've got ore down there blocked out; they figured they had 2 or 3 million dollars of ore blocked up when silver was 26 cents. That's when they had to shut it down; it was 26 cents. Silver was down to 26 cents an ounce. That was during the Depression in '29.

RM: And the Tonopah Extension never opened up after they shut it down?

BS: No. They called it the "Victor."

RM: Some of the mines opened up to leasers, didn't they?

BS: The Mizpah is the only one. And the Belmont opened up, until it caught on fire in '40 or '41, something like that. The shaft burned up. Somebody left a carbide light down there, and it caught on fire and burned the shaft out, and they had to close it down; they couldn't get back in there.

RM: But there's good ore on the 200 and 300 foot level in the Mizpah?

BS: Oh, and down farther, too. They just couldn't ship it. They just dumped it in the big stopes and took the best. Fifty and sixty and seventy dollar rock . . . they chlorided it.

RM: Oh, I see. So there's a lot of what was low-grade to them. Left in

the mine?

BS: Oh, yes. They had to ship it by rail, and they couldn't ship it to the smelter because they had no mills around here.

RM: The mills never opened after the '30s either, did they?

BS: No.

RM: So you look for them to do something with the Mizpah eventually?

BS: I think they will in time. It might not be for another 10 years, but I think they'll do something.

RM: And since you worked for Echo Bay, you've been retired?

BS: Yes, I've been retired.

RM: What were the roads like in the Tonopah area from the time you got out of school up to the '50's?

BS: Some of them were paved, and some of them were dirt roads. They didn't pave them all; they paved some of the main streets, Florence Avenue and the road going to the school and so forth.

RM: Was the road to Reno paved?

BS: Oh, yes, it was paved in '35, I believe; Highway 95. And Highway 6 was paved to a certain extent, from Ely this way.

RM: But as far as Tybo it wasn't.

BS: No, it wasn't. I think they started paving that in the '40s sometime.

RM: What were some of the problems with road maintenance that you saw when you were with the highway department?

BS: Transportation was a real thing. You had to haul your oil in, and make your own gravel and mix your own oil stock and things like that. It was a headache. The transportation is hard, because you've got to haul things so far. Of course, the rest of the country's doing the same thing, too, but they have more money than these small communities. You have to go where the

people are; that's where the money is.

RM: What about the railroad?

BS: The railroad used to come into Tonopah and go to Goldfield. They had a few cars running back and forth. They had a pullman car with a porter. And they had Arlene Franks, who worked in the office as a ticket agent. Bud Morris was in there as a ticket agent.

RM: This would have been in the '30's?

BS: Yes. Jack Peck was some kind of a big boss there. Then you had Knezivich Warehouse, where they used to bring in the a lot of fruit and vegetables.

RM: The railroad went from Goldfield and circled around, didn't it?

BS: It went down in what they call McSweeney Well, down here about 3 miles, and then went back. It got off the top of this hill, and then went back to Goldfield.

RM: Is McSweeney Well along the highway down there?

BS: Yes, it's maybe a quarter mile off the highway. You can see the old bridge down there.

RM: How far past Lambertucci's would it be?

BS: I would say maybe about a mile and a half.

RM: And then it joined with the tracks that went on to Mina by way of Coaldale?

BS: Yes. Well, it went to Gilbert Junction first. That's where you turn off to go to Weepah. Then it continued on and went into Coaldale.

RM: Why did they call it Gilbert Junction?

BS: Well, Gilbert Junction was there before Weepah was ever discovered. There used to be a house there, and they called it "Gilbert Junction"; I don't know why. Then they went on to Coaldale. And in Coaldale they

continued on up Redlik; there was a little place there at Redlik on the summit.

RM: Up the valley?

BS: Up the valley. And then into Sodaville. I think that's where the Tonopah and Goldfield Railroad stopped. And then the Southern Pacific came in from Mina to there.

RM: Was the railroad still in place from Goldfield to Beatty?

BS: No, that was all torn out. That was that Tonopah and Tidewater.

RM: People never went down that way on the railroad?

BS: No, they always went up, to Reno. That was taken out a long, long time before this railroad was ever taken out.

RM: And this railroad wasn't taken out until '46?

BS: Something like that. They sold it all.

RM: Was that a blow to the town?

BS: Yes, it was.

RM: Before that, everything came in on the railroad, didn't it?

BS: Yes. The trucking was so damn high, and trucks were pretty hard to run at that time. But they can transport pretty fast on trucks now.

RM: What kind of banks were there in town?

BS: They had the First National Bank here, and the Bank of America--I think. A fellow by the name of Henderson was in charge of one bank . . . it was right there in the Mizpah Hotel. There was a bank next to it that they called the Old Annex. That's where the Dempsey Room is now. There used to be a bank in there when I was a kid. Then the post office was next to that. Fellow by the name of Henderson, I think that was the First National Bank. Then across the street, where that bank building is, that first flight of stairs where that woman has a whole lot of old furniture . . . ?

RM: Oh, yes?

BS: That used to be a bank, too. A fellow by the name of Ray Croft ran that.

RM: What about power?

BS: The power was always all right. They kept it up pretty well. The only trouble with the power was down there at the Tonopah Extension--that Victor Mine--had to have a lot of power. What really broke them was the power bill. They were paying $16,000 a month for power to pump that water. So they went ahead, and a fellow by the name of Schwab, from Philadelphia . . . Where Ringsby sits now? You can see some of the foundations down there where the old mill used to be; they used to have a power plant in there. And they put great big diesels in, to generate the power for pumping water.

RM: They got tired of paying that high bill?

BS: They did, yes. But for some reason or other the foundations weren't good enough, and they were breaking crank shafts. The crank shafts were 18 inches around on the big ones. And they were buckling. They'd bust those crank shafts, and they'd tear up the thing and so forth, because they'd get contorted.

CHAPTER FOUR

BS: The crankshafts would break. The staters would get out of line, and they just had trouble with the damn thing--they sold it to them for $300,000 and old John G. Kirchen went broke on account of it.

RM: You mean the Extension went broke because of the whole power thing?

BS: Yes; pumping the water and buying the power plant. Their main office

is--do you know where the county barn is, and that big 2-story building?

RM: Yes.

BS: That was the Tonopah Extension office. Then down below, where Anderson Trucking is, was the power plant . . . And then there was another power plant in between there. And they just couldn't keep those motors operating.

RM: So they had 2 or 3 power plants.

BS: Oh, yes; they couldn't [keep] a foundation under them. It just blew them all out.

RM: This was in the--what--early '30s?

BS: Yes, the early '30s.

RM: Did any of the other mines generate their own power?

BS: No, not that I know of.

RM: What about water?

BS: The water service wasn't too bad, that I know of. First they hauled it in, but then they put in that line to Rye Patch. That was all 10-inch line. It was made out of wood, but it had that wire wrapped around it. They have some of that pipe still lying around someplace. It lasted 50 years.

RM: In the '20s, when you were a kid, did most people have water into their homes? And did they have indoor plumbing, or did most of them have outhouses?

BS: There was running water, and there were outhouses. My wife and I had a couple of outhouses, didn't we, Mom?

AS: Yes.

RM: When did the outhouses finally see their end here?

AS: [laughter] I don't know.

BS: I don't know. I've got one up there in the back yard now. [laughter]

AS: He's got all his old plumbing stuff in it--a good storage place!

[laughter]

BS: I don't know when it ended, to tell you the truth.

AS: It just depended on the person. When they wanted to put in plumbing.

RM: But they were common in the '20s and '30s--outhouses.

AS: Oh, yes.

BS: Oh, yes.

AS: People couldn't afford to put in bathrooms.

RM: Was there a city sewer system in the '20s and '30s?

AS: Oh, yes, there was a sewer system.

BS: A fellow by the name of Grant Crumley owned it.

RM: What was it called?

BS: Tonopah Sewer. Yes. And then he sold it to John Connelly, Homer Williams, and Forrest Lovelock. He sold that back around '35; something like that.

RM: And then what eventually became of it?

BS: They finally sold it to the Tonopah Public Utilities, which is community owned.

RM: Could you tell me more about the kinds of stores that used to be here?

BS: The grocery stores and hardware stores and everything were reasonably competitive. They were priced fairly reasonably. Everybody could buy things from them, and they had charge accounts.

RM: That was one thing that was really common in the old days, wasn't it--credit?

BS: Yes. Your credit was good. If you said something to somebody, that was your bond and if you ever lied to them, you were all through, because the community wouldn't have anything to do with you.

RM: When did that system finally break down?

AS: During the war. For instance, we used to go into a bar, before the war, and we could place our money on the bar and never take it off. We could holler at the bartender wherever we were, saying, "Another round of drinks." And he'd take the money out of the spot where the money was, and then put the change back, and nobody ever touched anybody else's money. And during the war, that ended.

RM: The war brought an end to this "a man's word is his bond," and the whole system of credit broke down?

BS: Everything went that way.

RM: Why did it break down then?

BS: Fast living. And the government came in; they'd subsidize everything. They'd give you high-priced living, just like they're doing out at the Test Site now.

BS: Some of the people around here, getting social security checks, can't keep up with these people out here [who are] getting a hundred and some-odd dollars a day. [If a] guy getting $250 social security checks every month, and goes up here to the store, and tries to buy a steak, he can't do it. That's the trouble with the country today. You take the store right now--they have a monopoly here. They'll sell you anything they want you to buy, but at their price. If you go someplace else, where they've got competition, the price is different. You can see the prices change every day up here at this store.

RM: Did most people back in the '20s and '30s use credit at the stores?

BS: Oh, yes.

AS: We did, too.

BS: We used to go down to Johnnie Harrington's and Coleman's Grocery Store; we'd get paid once every 2 weeks. You'd write a tab, and then go down there

and pay the bill when you got your check. If it was $30 or $40 or $50, whatever it was, you'd pay it.

RM: And not that many people welshed?

BS: Oh, no. If you welshed, you only welshed that one month. Then pretty soon, boy, they nailed you.

RM: I can remember in '54, when my dad came in here, he went down to Bird's and told them he was trying to get a mine going out here, and they gave him credit.

AS: Sure.

BS: Yes.

RM: He operated on credit there for years.

BS: Wallace Bird carried a lot of people; he'd trust a lot of people.

AS: So did Coleman.

BS: We used to trade with Wallace Bird, too.

AS: Yes, we traded with him, but I never had credit with Wallace. I had credit with Coleman's.

BS: Didn't we have credit with Wallace and Joe Bird?

AS: No, we never did.

BS: His dad (Joe Bird Sr.)?

AS: No, we just traded at the one grocery store, and that's all.

RM: Bird's father was a groceryman, too?

BS: Oh, yes, the kids took over. Old Joe Bird was cutting meat before he went into business for himself for Nevada Mine Workers' Mercantile, where the old Tonopah Club used to be. It's burned down. He worked there for Allen Reeves for a long, long time. Then he went into business for himself. And he was in business one door above where Downs' Department Store is now.

AS: During the war there were at least 4 or 5 grocery stores here.

RM: Could you name them?

BS: There was Bird's, Coleman's . . .

RM: And Bird was originally down below the Mizpah, wasn't he?

AS: No.

BS: No, that was the Central Market.

AS: That was the Central Market. No, it was Joe Barker's Nevada Grocery; below the Central Market.

BS: Joe Barker was Nevada Grocery.

AS: Nevada Grocery.

RM: OK, there was a Central Market, which would be down the street from the Mizpah now, right?

BS: Yes, right. Then there was Nevada Grocery; Joe Barker . . .

AS: Joe Barker had a grocery store right there, almost next door to the Central Market.

AS: Mrs. Reischke was kind of a grocery store.

BS: Then Coleman's was up there on Florence Avenue.

AS: And there was a Mineworkers' Mercantile.

BS: Mineworkers' Mercantile is the one where Joe Bird worked. That was where the Tonopah Club burned down.

AS: Right there, by the Masonic Hall.

BS: Then Alvin Alstein had a place there . . .

AS: Up there where Hilda McGowan lives. Where the Bar-L Clothing Store is.

RM: They used to be McGowan's, didn't they?

BS: Yes.

AS: What he had, mostly, was a photography and second-hand store.

BS: And on the corner there used to be a United Cattle Packing Company store.

RM: What used to be where the post office is now?

BS: Lathrop Hardware Store. Then there used to be a grocery store where that new bank is--that Western Bank. Neupratt had a store there years and years ago.

RM: So there were a lot of stores in town.

BS: Oh, yes.

AS: We had different kinds . . . You had the railroad in here, and you had the telegraph office, and we had a J. C. Penney, and everything.

BS: Safeway.

RM: Where was the first Coleman's?

BS: The first Coleman's was up there where Paul Wiese was, up there on Florence Avenue . . . Then Safeway came in, and was there next to J. C. Penney Company, where . . . do you know where the Passtime is, and the Silver Strike?

RM: Yes.

BS: Right in there was the first Safeway. Then Safeway moved out of there, and moved up there where the second Coleman's was. Then Coleman bought Safeway out.

RM: When did Safeway leave town?

AS: They didn't stay very long. Gosh, they came in and went fast.

BS: They were here about 2 years in the '40s.

AS: And J. C. Penney was here for years and years and years, because I worked there for 2 years.

BS: Glenn Jones had Penney's in the McKimm building.

RM: Was Tonopah stratified into social segments or anything?

BS: No.

AS: No, everybody knew everybody. You could go down on the Main Street,

and start on one end of the street; people'd be sitting in their cars, watching the people go by, and you could speak to every person going up that street. You knew them and they knew you. There were no class distinctions.

RM: How about the character of the miners?

BS: They had good spirit, and they worked hard. They believed in their work. They wanted to produce, and they did produce--until it killed them. They worked their hearts out. And if the boss come down and praised them, it was worth a $20 bill to them, or more.

RM: Is that right?

BS: A [word of] praise means more than a $20 bill if it's used right. You know what I mean?

RM: That I do.

BS: Like Old Man Gallagher. The guy came down in the hole there and he said, "Gallagher, you're doing a hell of a nice job."

He says, "The praise is all right, but let's see it on the pay check."

RM: [laughter] A lot of miners lived in boarding houses, didn't they?

BS: Yes, but they were single people.

RM: Was the housing pretty good for miners by the time you arrived here?

BS: Oh, yes. They had a lot of rooming houses here. They had The Merchants, The Big Ship, The Brian, The Greystone . . .

RM: Did each guy kind of have his own room?

BS: Oh, yes, but some of them shared their rooms.

RM: Was the majority of miners married or single?

BS: The majority was single. And I know that their life expectancy, in this country, was short.

RM: So a lot of them didn't get married. Why did they stay with it, then?

AS: Once a miner, it's like a gambler; it gets in their blood and they

can't get it out. Just like a gambler, they stayed with it. They always figured they could make their fortune.

RM: What were some of the recreational activities in Tonopah back then?

BS: Card games and pool halls. The Liberty Club had a pool hall, and the Elks' Hall had pool and Charlie Stewart had a pool hall. Then the Big Casino had a pool hall . . . there were 4 or 5 pool halls. Then they had a couple of 10-pins. It wasn't bowling, it was 10-pins. Then they had 3 theatres here in town--the Nevada Theatre, the Butler Theatre, and one other.

RM: And that was in the '30s?

BS: Yes.

RM: What kind of card games did they play?

BS: Oh, they played poker, and they played cribbage, and they played pinochle, and they played 21. They gambled, you know.

RM: Was there a lot of gambling? Gambling in Nevada was legalized in '31, I believe. Was there gambling before that in town?

BS: Behind closed doors. It's just like bootleg, everything's behind closed doors. Speakeasys had a little hole there; they could open it up.

RM: Do you remember the bootlegging in town?

BS: Oh, yes. [laughter] I knew a lot of the bootleggers. Old Burt Hodge was a bootlegger and John Mitchell . . .

AS: Even the old man who lived behind us, Ruffles.

BS: Old Art Ruffles, he'd bootleg.

RM: Did they make their own, or were they just selling it?

AS: No, they made it.

BS: They made their own, and they sold it, too.

RM: Did they make it locally?

AS: Yes. Ruffles used to make it where our garage sits now. He had a big shed and he made his whisky right there.

RM: What would they make it out of?

BS: Corn and mash.

AS: [laughter] He even had it hooked to the sewer. That way he could dispose of it; he didn't have to hide it.

BS: John Mitchell was the king of the Irish around here.

RM: Was he any relation to Joe Mitchell?

BS: No. Fred Jackson used to make booze.

AS: Everybody made booze. That's how a lot of people made a living.

BS: My folks made wine. We used to have to get a permit from the government to make 200 gallons of wine.

RM: Oh, during Prohibition?

BS: Yes, you could make 200 gallons of wine but you'd have to get a permit. My folks used to buy 2 ton of grapes. An old man down at Beatty--Old Man Burnes--had some grapes down there. He had the Burnes Ranch down there.

RM: And this was in the '20s?

BS: Yes.

AS: All the Italians and Slavs in this town made wine.

BS: Do you know where Holloway lives?

RM: No.

BS: Do you know where The Boiling Pot is?

RM: Yes.

BS: You know where that road goes up, and goes up into that little ranch up there in the canyon?

RM: Sure.

BS: That was the old Burnes Ranch. He used to grow grapes up there.

RM: Did he grow a lot of grapes?

BS: Oh, you bet. We'd buy 2 ton of grapes from him pretty near every year. It was up that Boiling Pot Road, up where that little water hole is.

RM: What difference did the legalization of gambling and liquor make?

BS: Oh, they just opened up a lot of joints and the competition got better.

RM: Did places like the Mizpah and the Tonopah Club have gambling and booze in the back rooms during Prohibition?

BS: Yes, and they had a little restaurant in the front.

BS: At the Tonopah Club, to get in back, you had to look through the little hole, or downstairs.

RM: And if they knew you, they'd let you in. And they probably always had warning when the Pro-his were coming, didn't they?

BS: Oh, they always had spies.

AS: Sometimes; sometimes they'd get them. [laughter]

RM: Then they'd just give them a little slap on the hand, wouldn't they?

BS: Yes.

AS: The only thing was, they'd take their still away, and that cost a little money, you know.

RM: How has night life changed from when you were a kid to the present?

BS: Well, there is no night life anymore in Tonopah. But the night life, years ago, was night life. They used to have these casinos here, with dance hall girls and so forth.

RM: Was that in the red-light district?

BS: Hell, they had 600-700 girls here at one time.

AS: The Big Casino casino had 300.

RM: Three hundred girls in one place?

BS: From the L&L Motel, all the way down that street and all the way back, to the top of--you know where Butch Fusor lives?

RM: No. But it's what--a couple of blocks?

BS: A couple of blocks back there. All that was all dance halls.

AS: It was the red-light district. It was right on the Main Street.

BS: There was The Cottage, the Northern, the Big Casino, the Windmill, the Green Mill, Taxine's . . .

RM: Were these brothels or dance halls?

BS: Dance halls and brothels. Even the colored section had the Pullman bar. Dee Morris. Hell, 600 or 700 girls is nothing. When you had the mines going . . . We lived in the house where John Adams lives when I was a kid. You'd look out the back door when the shift changed and there'd be 500 and 600 men going to work, walking, going up the back of the Mizpah, and up here to the Montana. Six hundred men going to work. That was night life, then.

RM: What was it like in the dance halls?

BS: They'd go down there and they'd get drunk, and they'd dance all night, and they'd be broke the next day, and they'd go to work.

RM: They'd be dancing with the girls. And then they would go off to her room if they wanted?

BS: If they had the money. [chuckles]

RM: Did they have to pay to dance?

BS: You had to pay to dance.

RM: What did a dance cost, say in the '30s?

BS: I don't know just what it cost.

RM: So the girls were dancing for pay, and probably hustling drinks, too . . .

BS: Yes.

RM: Did they have live music?

BS: Oh, hell, yes.

AS: Oh, yes, they'd have bands.

BS: They had big bands down there.

RM: How big were some of these joints?

BS: You know how big the front end of this motel is, down here?

RM: You mean the parking lot of the L&L?

BS: The parking lot of the L&L was just one room--one building. That was what they called the Mammoth Club. Then down below that was the Big Casino. And the Big Casino--you know where that lot is all torn out now, right across the street from the Mizpah Garage?

RM: Yes.

BS: That used to be the Big Casino. And, hell, you could put the Elks' Hall in the center of that. That's how big it was. A hundred girls could be on that floor at one time.

RM: I had no idea it was like that. Was it licensed or anything?

BS: I don't know if they had licenses then or not.

RM: Were things jumping all the time, or was it just on weekends?

BS: On weekends and at nights. They used to hold prize fights down there, too. Jack Dempsey used to fight here.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Ann, you were just showing me some coins from the Big Casino. How did the casinos use them?

BS: They used them for slot machines and trade coins.

AS: In other words, you could buy a drink at a bar.

RM: I've got a 50-cent coin here, a 25-cent, and a 5-cent. So you'd just go down and plop those on the bar?

BS: If you went in to a bar and you had a silver dollar you got this back in change. So they made sure that you came back to spend it again. If you had a 50-cent piece, they'd give you a quarter. Then you had a nickel. A nickel would buy you a sandwich and a glass of beer.

RM: What would 50 cents buy you?

BS: It would probably buy you a dance floor all night long. [laughs] A bunch of whiskey or something.

RM: [laughs] Did all of the dance halls have their own coins?

AS: Everybody had their own coins; even the Tonopah Club.

BS: The Mecca, the Little Casino, Mammoth Club . . .

AS: These weren't only local. They were all over the country.

BS: Yes; Manhattan, Goldfield . . .

RM: You said that even the bakery had them.

AS: Yes, they had little coins, too.

RM: So a lot of establishments in town had their own coins, which were good only at that establishment?

BS: Right.

AS: You had to go to the place where you got the coin.

AS: That's like DelPepa's down here. Do you know Jesolyn DelPepa?

RM: I know of her.

AS: He had a place down here by the Mizpah Garage and he had his own coins. He had a little bar there.

BS: We got [the coins because of] a fellow named Brock. He had a bunch of

slot machines that he brought in. They were nickel machines, quarter machines, and 50-cent machines. And everybody was using these as slugs. They would go through the slot machines, so he would pick all these up. But they were taking all the good money--the silver--for these coins. He was eliminating these as he went along, and he went ahead and put them in the cess pool down here.

AS: They were out there in bags hanging inside the cess pool. And the bags broke and they fell down in the cess pool.

BS: We tore the house down.

AS: We tore the house down and we got to digging down there, and found all these in the cess pool. We opened it up, and here were all these coins.

BS: We were going to fill the hole up at first . . .

AS: The water company got there and got to digging and found a lot of them.

RM: I'll be darned; that's fascinating. And I see what you mean that Tonopah doesn't have night life now. [laughter]

AS: Actually, I think all the strangers coming in kind of killed the night life.

RM: You mean, with the air base.

BS: Yes, with the air base.

RM: The army shut down the district, didn't it?

BS: Yes.

RM: What happened to it after it was shut down?

BS: That was it. It just caused a lot of commotion, that's all it did.

RM: So they just drove it underground?

AS: Why, certainly. As a matter of fact [in the early days] those miners protected everybody. They were good people.

RM: But they knew how to have a good time down at the bars.

AS: Oh, they could have a whale of a good time, too.

BS: Dance all night long. You've never seen sandwiches the way they put them out.

BS: Now, you take and put this piece of paper in a sandwich, and they call that meat. Old Marco Dobro over in Goldfield, when you had a sandwich, [put in] over an inch of meat. You couldn't eat it all. That was 2 bits. And they'd dance all night long.

AS: But you never heard of the trade coins before?

RM: Not on this level.

AS: Everybody had them--even the grocery stores.

[The Skanovskys show McCracken some old items.]

BS: I want to show you something. This used to be a spin the bottle [game from] Joe Bird's Market.

RM: Was he Wally Bird's father?

AS: It was Bird's Market; yes.

BS: You'd go in there and buy a steak, and he used to play double or nothing.

RM: "Spin to who pays?" Let me explain on the tape what you've got here. It's an aluminum finger that's shaped like a hand pointing. But it looks a little bit like a bottle opener, too.

BS: Yes, it is.

RM: It reads, "Bird's Market, Main Street, Phone 353. Groceries, Meat, Liquors. Tonopah, Nevada."

BS: Yes. Now, if you wanted to buy something, you'd go in there and say, "Joe, double or nothing."

RM: He'd do it?

BS: He'd put that down and spin it. It's got that little notch.

RM: Yes, it's got a little raise on the other side.

BS: He'd spin it and if it would point to you, you won. If it pointed to him, you paid up.

AS: Now, here's something else.

RM: OK, you're showing me a spoon.

AS: Yes, it's a measuring spoon; can you see the measures?

RM: Yes.

AS: This is "William F. Merchant Groceries . . ."

RM: "Merchant Grocer, Tonopah, Nevada." Isn't that something?

BS: Merchant's grocery store was right there.

RM: Let me describe this spoon. It's a large measuring spoon with concentric circles coming up from the bottom of the spoon--1/2 teaspoon, 1 teaspoon, 1 tablespoon, 2 tablespoons.

BS: Right.

AS: Yes.

RM: That's a good idea.

RM: And the other end is kind of wire and it's a bottle opener.

AS: It's a bottle opener.

BS: But you don't see these things any more. This has got to be--I'd say--60 years old or more.

RM: Did the grocery stores have their own coins?

BS: Oh, yes.

AS: Some of them did. But the bars were the ones that really had them.

RM: When did the dance halls start jumping?

BS: They'd jump every night, as far as that goes, but Saturdays and Sundays, when the boys didn't have to work, boy, they'd really give her

hell. Especially when the big Divide was going out here in 1917, '18, and '20, when there was lots of money around. That's when it was really booming.

I don't know how much they paid the dance hall girls, but they paid them enough. There was one fellow here--his name was Adam Okkie--a Finlander. He made a hell of a big strike. They say that he made $80,000. And he put money in the bank and he went down to the Big Casino and he never left until he spent her all--$80,000.

RM: Is that right--$80,000. How long did it take him?

BS: Not too long. Boy, did they take him. He was buying everything. And he died a pauper here.

RM: Were there bakeries in town?

AS: There was one bakery.

BS: No, there were 2 bakeries--Mrs. Merchant had a bakery, on the main street. Pete Fabbi had the bakery here on Water Street.

AS: He was the only one in the world who made the best French breads and pastries.

BS: He was really a baker. He lived to be over 100 years old.

RM: Did the miners work 6 days a week back then?

AS: Seven; they worked 7 days in those days.

BS: Seven days.

AS: Like we did at our company; 7 days a week.

RM: And how many hours?

BS: You worked 8 hours.

AS: You didn't have any unions in those days.

RM: Do you remember any kind of socialism or populism or unionism?

BS: They had a union here in 1917, but that was before my time. I know I

heard of the--not the National Guard, the American Legion or somebody out--to break it up. But I don't remember anything about it.

RM: How do you see the impact of the development of the Test Site and nuclear testing on Tonopah?

BS: It had a little impact on the town, but it brought in this grocery store. Until you get another grocery store in here, where they can get competition, and break up this monopoly, why . . . And the Test Site is going to get bigger. You're going to have big housing out here some of these days. It's got to get bigger.

RM: Do you mean on the Test Site or in Tonopah?

BS: It's going to be out on the Test Site. It'd be out there on the flat around the airport, I think. Because you've got flat country out there, and you've got water and everything else. It's a hell of a lot easier to get to. Tonopah will just be Tonopah, and that'll be it, but you'll have grocery stores and everything else out there.

AS: Well, the government's moving Nellis up there, so . . .

RM: Oh, they are?

BS: They're moving Nellis--been moving right along.

RM: Did the testing change Tonopah much?

BS: No.

AS: No, it just brought in a lot of strangers; that's all. It's given them better jobs.

BS: It gave them better jobs and a better standard of living--a lot of them.

AS: Most of them, but not all of them because there aren't too many who work out there at the Test Site.

BS: There are quite a few working out there, though.

AS: It gave them a better standard of living. Of course, everything's higher now, too, you know.

BS: But the old-timers living on social security can't compete with this stuff. The government's paying these guys $150 and $200 a day, and a guy who's working for $20 a day, or $30 a day, or is on social security, can't keep up; he's lost. He's damn lucky to have hamburger, and hamburger's $2 and some-odd cents a pound up there. You're better off to buy a round steak and grind your own.

RM: What impact did the closing of the air base have on Tonopah?

AS: Oh, it hurt.

BS: It hurt.

AS: They figured Tonopah would fold up. Everything moved out--the telegraph, and J.C. Penney's, and then the railroad moved out--everything moved out. They figured it would be the end of Tonopah. I don't know how, but we hung on. Tonopah's been down a lot of times, but it's always come back.

RM: What about Anaconda?

BS: It'll open up again.

RM: Did it make a big difference in Tonopah?

BS: Yes, it did.

AS: Yes; because the people lived right here.

BS: The trouble with the place out here at Sandia is that these people come up here, and some of them fly in, stay for the week, and they can stay in those trailer houses for $10 a week and they go to the mess hall to eat. They get steak and lobster out there for $3 where you have to pay $16 for it in Tonopah. They won't let us out there.

AS: And they fly back to Vegas.

BS: The poor tax payers pay for all that stuff out there--it's subsidized.

RM: Whereas you see Anaconda as having helped the town.

AS: Anaconda helped tremendously. The people lived here and bought things in our stores.

BS: All the people who come in from out at Sandia and stay the 5 days only pay $10 for room rent. You can't get a room in Tonopah for love nor money for $10. You've got to pay $16, $18, $20 for a room--and maybe more. Then if you go to the restaurant, it costs you $20 to eat. They eat out there for $3 and maybe less and they get steak and lobster. You can't get a hamburger for $3.

RM: How do you see the future of Tonopah?

AS: Oh, I think it'll be here forever. [laughter]

BS: We will.

BS: We will--she and I.

AS: We'll be here forever.

RM: Do you think Tonopah has a good future?

BS: I think so.

AS: Yes. It does--it'll be here.

BS: But it'll be the old Tonopah. The new Tonopah will be down on the flat.

RM: Ah, yes. Spawned mainly by the government activity out at the range.

BS: That's right. Some of these days you'll see that the government's going to take it all in. They're going to take Highway 6; they'll shut that road off and the main highway will be 8-A going out of Tonopah to Salt Lake and that way.

RM: You mean, you think they'll close Highway 6 out there.

AS: You know, 87 percent of this state is government.

RM: You mean they'll take all of Warm Springs and all of that?

AS: Everything they want, they'll take it.

BS: They'll take . . . Well, you've got Site C out there--all that.

RM: Where's that?

BS: Out there by Tybo. Out there on the flat, the other side of Warm Springs.

RM: You mean, they're working there?

BS: Sure. They've got 18 or 20 men working there.

RM: What are they doing?

BS: Just keeping it open so they can go ahead and test out there some of these days. They had one big shot out there at Moore Station. They're going to have some more, too, some of these days.

AS: That's the one that caved in. They've even been up Clear Creek. That's up in Little Fish Lake.

RM: They're clear up there?

AS: Yes; clear up there. They drilled a well up there and have water running.

RM: I know it's amazing to drive out toward Warm Springs and look at all those lights down there on the flats, now at night.

BS: Yes, it's getting to be a big place. They've got hangars out there . . . You know, these hangars out here [at the airport] are pretty good-sized.

RM: Yes.

BS: You could put 5 of those hangars in one hangar out there. That's how big they are. And they're building them bigger and bigger.

AS: They're doing an awful lot of building out there.

RM: But not much of it's spinning off to Tonopah, is it?

BS: No, it's going down to Vegas.