

Interview with  
**ROBERT A. REVERT**

An Oral History conducted and edited by  
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
1988

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89049



Robert A. Revert  
1956



The Revert Brothers - Norman, Robert, and Art  
1956

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## PREFACE

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

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

It is the policy of the NCTHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on 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,

- 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.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 hauses—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 Tam 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

## INTRODUCTION

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

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that while much of the state was 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 Bob Revert at his home in Las Vegas, Nevada July 9, 1987

## CHAPTER ONE

RM: Bob, we were just talking about your careers in law enforcement and politics. You said that you became the Beatty deputy in 1946.

BR: That's right.

RM: How did you happen to get that position? Was it elected or appointed?

BR: At that point, people were looking for a new deputy. The old man who was there, John J. Vignolo, was ready to retire. To be perfectly fair about it, they had the post of constable there and always have had that post. They just increased the salary, and took the salary from the deputy, so that, in effect, it made the deputy and constable position consolidated, and put a salary on that. A constable is an officer of the justice court, serving subpoenas and notices and things of this nature, and a deputy sheriff is a general law enforcement officer. They combined the 2, so that it was the constable and deputy sheriff, and you had to stand election, which I did. I prevailed in the election in '46, and I stood reelection from then on.

RM: Are you elected by your district, or county-wide?

BR: For the Beatty township. Later on they wanted me to run for the Assembly, so they took the position of constable and deputy sheriff and made it appointive so that I could run for the Assembly and still hold the constable-deputy sheriff job. I did that for some while.

RM: I see. Now, you ran for the Assembly in '52 and were elected and began serving in '53.

BR: Right. I didn't run for election in '55, but they hounded the hell out of me. [chuckles] I didn't run for that one, but they finally got to me again and I started running in '57, and in '59 and '61.

RM: What district did you serve?

BR: It was District Number Two of Nye County, which was everything but Tonopah. They had 3 precincts of Tonopah that elected one assemblyman, and then I stood for the rest of the county.

RM: I see. And you ran as a Democrat, right?

BR: Right.

RM: Reverts are long-time Democrats, aren't they? Your father was a Democrat.

BR: Yes.

RM: Could you tell me a little bit about Vignolo.

BR: Well, he was an elderly gent when I got there, and he was a ranch-type individual - he liked ranching and cattle raising. He'd spent a considerable time down in Mexico, and I always thought that he might've left there in a hurry, because he was always complaining about the Yaquis - the Yaquis chased him out of there. And he considered them to be absolutely the worst people you ever met. He was always talking about Yaquis; he didn't like them at all.

RM: He was a big man, wasn't he?

BR: Yes.

RM: Somebody told me that he wasn't opposed to roughing somebody up if he thought they needed it.

BR: No. Back in the days when Indians couldn't get liquor, they . . . well, used to get it [anyway], of course. One [time an] individual was in front of the post office and he was staggering along - a very tough Indian, too. He came up to Vignolo, and Vignolo told him to go home, and he gave him some back talk. Vignolo had a little Colt Frontier model that he carried under his shirt. He took this gun and hit the Indian over the head with it, and the Indian kept coming, and kept coming, and kept coming. He just kept hitting him. Finally Chris Jewel, who lived there at the time, stepped in and stopped the Indian. The blood flew everywhere - it was terrible. I don't know, this might have carried over from the days when he was fighting Yaquis, because he just did not like those Yaquis at all.

RM: Did he live in Beatty?

BR: He lived on a ranch out of town where the Knights live now. That's south of the hot springs, to the left. And then he moved into town - into a house next to Irving Crowell, which has been torn down. And they retired and he went over to Modesto, California, where he had some relatives of the same name. I think there are probably some still there today.

RM: I notice you say Vig-no-la?

BR: Well, it's Vignolo.

RM: OK, but they pronounced it Vignola.

BR: Yes.

RM: What was involved in law enforcement in those days, as contrasted, say, with when you took over?

BR: Well, when I took over the sheriff up in Tonopah was Sheriff Thomas. He had been for years and years. He told me, "Well," he said, "you're not going to have any soft time of it, I'll tell you that." He said, "You've got Ash Meadows, and I consider that to be the worst part of this

county. And then you have Pahrump with it." So I had Pahrump, Ash Meadows, and Beatty. In fact, everything south of Beatty and everything north to the Esmeralda County line, which was next to an impossible job - you'd meet yourself coming back.

RM: When did Thomas go in?

BR: He was prior to World War I.

RM: He was really there a long time.

BR: He was there prior to World War I. There were all those old miners around there - they called them Wobblies, the IWWs, and . . . Then they had some of them there who were pretty well radicals and they had some they called Socialists. There was some phase of that thing that appealed to Thomas, and he was a mild red guy, so he ran as a Socialist.

RM: This would be before World War I?

BR: Yes. He got beat. He had served, then he ran as a Socialist, and that beat him. Then he came back as an Independent, and never had any more trouble.

RM: So he served until when, do you think?

BR: Oh, I'd say 1958, probably.

RM: He always lived in Tonopah, didn't he?

BR: Yes.

RM: What kind of a guy was he?

BR: The easiest-going guy you ever met. Never raised his voice, never had a word to say to anybody, much. He just went along . . . One time he asked me, "Can you come with me?" I happened to be in Tonopah on some other business. He said, "I want to go out here and pick up a guy." We got started in the car and he said, "You got a gun?"

And I said, "No."

"Well, I haven't, either." So . . .

RM: [laughs] So you didn't carry guns or anything in those days.

BR: Well, I did sometimes, and most of the time I didn't.

RM: What kind of calls would you get, and what kind did you go out on, and what kind were ignored? Because you couldn't handle everything, could you?

BR: Well, you had to sort them out a little bit, and give something priority somewhere along the way.

RM: What kinds of priorities did Vignolo have?

BR: Well, he didn't let things bother him too much. If something came his way, why, he would take care of it, but if it was removed, somewhere at a distance, that was good, too, because he may not go out there. He didn't respond to any automobile accidents.

On one occasion, back in the days of Prohibition, they had him on the stand in Tonopah. I'm not sure what kind of trial it was. One of the questions in the trial was, "Well, where were you when the crime occurred?"

He was chewing tobacco, and he said, "Well, I was in a bootleg joint playing solo."

RM: [laughs] Beatty and Ash Meadows were pretty big bootleg centers, weren't they?

BR: Well, Ash Meadows, mainly. It was noted for being a kind of a center of bootlegging. Pro-his - federal agents - didn't go down there; they just ignored it. In fact, one of them was slain down there. I guess he was slain, he just disappeared. They found his car and looked all around the back end of the car for him, and couldn't find him, and let it go at that. It was not a good place to be, and if you didn't know somebody, and they didn't know you, why, you could get in a bad position going through there.

RM: Yes. I've been told that it was a pretty lawless place up until recent years.

BR: It was bad; I had my problems over there.

RM: When did Vignolo come on as the deputy there?

BR: About 1930, '31. In that era.

RM: Who preceded him?

BR: J. B. Southey. Southey left the position because it got on his nerves so badly. What happened to him shouldn't have happened to anybody. He responded to a call in a saloon there which burned in 1941 - the Gold Ace, which was across from the Exchange. A man was in there armed and threatening people. So he went in and when the man pulled a gun down on him, why, Southey killed him. And he looked at the gun, and it was empty. It wasn't loaded. So that bothered Southey and he just quit.

RM: When did he begin there?

BR: He was there when I got there.

RM: Yes. That'd be in '30.

BR: Southey lived in that stone building just up from Lisle's. I think one of the Lisle kids live in it, now.

RM: Yes. And then Vignolo took over in about '30, '31 and he was there until '46? And then you took over.

BR: Yes.

RM: What kinds of priorities did you see?

BR: At that time car thefts were terrible - it was a national headache. I was able to nail car thieves up there by the scads.

RM: Were they bringing stolen cars in?

BR: No, they were just going across county, actually - deserters from the army and things like this. They'd care in town and you'd nail them. don't know how many stolen cars I recovered, but - lots of -them.

[tape is turned off for awhile]

RM: Were there any famous desperados, or noted cases, that you came into contact with?

BR: At the one point we had an Indian who was in Tonopah. They picked him as a sleeper in the Mizpah and took him to jail.

RM: By a sleeper, you mean he was sleeping on the chairs?

BR: That's right. He got up there in the jail, and then when they came in to feed him in the morning, he seized a tear gas pen and started hitting the deputy in the head with it. Looked like somebody put a biscuit cutter right through his head up here. They've got pictures of it up there in the Tonopah . . .

RM: Killed him?

BR: Oh, hell, yes. You can take a look at the pictures - Ask Davis to show them to you. Sheriff Thomas called me, and he said, "Well, he's headed down your way." He got in a police car which had just been filled with gas and took the sheriff's gun. Here he came. I took a few shots at him as he came down the road. I had some friends with me, and they had a shotgun that really, really tore his ass up. We filled him full of shotgun pellets. I could never get a shot at him with that Magnum. Of course, he had the station wagon. It had [the back] seat, [the middle] seat, and then the driver's seat. It's all upholstered and the bullets can't get through. So I tried for side shots, and I tried for every kind of a shot imaginable as he was driving by at 100 miles an hour. I'll bet we put 50 rounds in the back of that station wagon. The shotgun did the most good - they had to pick a lot of shot out of him. He went to Carson and finally died up there. I think he kind of willed himself dead. We had a few of those. I've had standoffs like that - people who are just mad.

RM: What was your relationship with the sheriff, in terms of responsibilities and so on?

BR: He let me have absolutely a free hand. Anything I said was it. If somebody would come up and ask him, he would say, "That's right. That's right. That's what I told him."

RM: And when Vignolo was deputy, was the constable a separate position?

BR: The constable position was dormant at that time. He performed the constable duties as deputy. The post wasn't filled. It didn't have any salary with it, and there was no point.

RM: Who was the Justice of the Peace in Vignolo's time?

BR: Judge Gray, at the beginning. His son, Howard, was a very prominent attorney in the state. He was chief counsel for Kennecott Copper in Ely. He used to come down, but he didn't come down to visit the old man too often, because one day on a case, the son said, "You can't do that. That law's been changed."

He said, "Well, I'm just using the old one on there." [laughter] They came from Rhyolite to Beatty. And, by the way, Howard Gray was raised in Rhyolite.

RM: Where did Judge Gray come from?

BR: I don't know. He was in Rhyolite at the time of the boom, he and Mrs. Gray. Mrs. Gray died in about 1931 or '2. It was during the big winter, and they had to hold her remains in Tonopah for about a month before they could bring her to Beatty to bury her.

RM: Who followed Judge Gray as J.P.?

BR: A man by the name of Kimball - Laurence Kimball. And R.P.A. - Dick Aylward - followed him.

RM: When did Judge Gray pull out?

BR: I don't know. The only thing I remember is that, when I registered for the draft in about 1940 or so, the J.P. was the deputy registrar, and I registered with Dick Aylward. And before that, Kimball had been the J.P. He's buried in Beatty with a date on the headstone.

RM: Was Kimball a native of the area?

BR: Kimball was an old-time native, of the oldest old kind. He was in Rhyolite when they had the Kimball Brothers Stage Line. He used to run stages from Vegas, and from Tonopah. And as the railroad progressed, they went from the rail end up to Rhyolite. Yes, he was really an old-timer.

RM: What was Aylward's background?

BR: He was a blacksmith, and a very good one.

RM: Do you remember where his blacksmith shop was located??

BR: You know where Stick lives?

RK: No, I don't.

BR: You know where the ballpark is. There's a house [on the] southwest corner. Stick's house has little short bricks on it, but they go up. Across the street from that is where Dick Aylward lived. He had a brother in Goldfield who was a prominent junk dealer up there. Disagreeable kind, too. He finally came to Beatty, and was living there when he passed away.

RM: Now, you stood your first election in '46, and then in '53 you ran for the Assembly. They elected from the Assembly differently then, didn't they?

BR: Reapportionment has brought all that about. Nye County used to have 2 seats. Every county had at least one, and the populous counties had more. they readjusted it since Vegas got so big - they overpowered them.

RM: What stands out in your mind about your career as an assemblyman?

BR: We passed a lot of gambling legislation, and a lot of legislation that permitted the smaller counties to get greater benefits from gambling.

I've always been proud of (proud; nobody pays any attention to it, but . . .) that I was the one who brought the telephones to Beatty.

RM: There were telephones brought in, in World War II, though, weren't there?

BR: Yes, but I mean an actual exchange, where you could get a house phone. RM: What year was that?

BR: I fought the telephone company solid from '53 on. I battled them to the finish.

RM: Did the phones come on the same poles and everything as the power did?

BR: No. It was a whole different process. The poles had been in there since the very start of the war - they had a couple of phones in there. And I insisted that they put in an exchange here, and get same local service.

RM: I see. The station was in Tonopah then, wasn't it? When you rang, you rang Tonopah.

BR: Right.

RM: So the modern phone system came into Beatty before the power.

BR: Yes.

RM: You took office in '53, and then you said you didn't run in '55. Why didn't you run in '55?

BR: I wasn't really fond of going back, so I just laid out. But they kept after me; finally I ran again - in '57, '59 and '61.

RM: So you had developed quite a bit of seniority there.

BR: Yes, I had good seniority. I always was Chairman of the Committee on Roads and Transportation, and I played an important part in getting the road paved over Mountain Springs to Pahrump in about '56. Of course, nobody ever said anything about it, but I was one of the guys who really worked on that, because I was Chairman of the Transportation Committee.

RM: That made a big difference to Pahrump, didn't it?

BR: Oh, that made all the difference.

RM: What do you think about the road they want to make now, going over to Ash Meadows?

BR: I think that would be a good thing. There are a lot of people here who come into Vegas in the wintertime and would like to go to Death Valley, and there's no really direct way to get there. If they could go through Pahrump and then go to Ash Meadows, into Death Valley Junction, this would bring a lot of people into Death Valley who don't otherwise get there, and would also provide a nice road for people in Death Valley to come here. It would be a grand thing for them - I really think it would be a great thing.

RM: It looks like it's going to go through, doesn't it?

BR: Yes, if the funding passes. I hope it does. We had another project - 8A - that was of particular benefit to Tonopah and that area up there.

RM: That's the road from Tonopah to Round Mountain, right?

BR: Yes. There were 3 that I really put on the highway system. One from Rhyolite down to the highway, and then I put the one on from Gabbs to the Ichthyosaur Park (there was another reason for that, and I'll go into that in a minute). And the other one was the Poleline Road that goes from Tonopah to Gabbs, because that shortcuts a tremendous amount of time.

RM: Yes. That's a dirt road, isn't it?

BR: It is now - it still is. It was what they call the Poleline Road. It was a seasonal type of washout. I tried to get that at least graveled, you know, but I never could get that one going just right. But it would be a great thing for Gabbs. I wanted to make Gabbs more than a one-industry town. There were several reasons for paving the road from Gabbs over to the park. At that time, there were - and I guess there still are - a considerable number of Indians over there in the valley. For each Indian student you get, you get an additional amount of money from the U.S.

government. They were going to Austin, which was in another county, and I wanted to stop that - I wanted them to come to Gabbs, so Gabbs could share the money. But the Poleline Road - I still think that would be a good thing. It would maybe make it possible for the people in Gabbs to have a decent restaurant, and a good service station, and a few of those things that they just don't have otherwise. Get away from the one-industry clannish-type of community they've got. Some of those things come to mind. After you're gone, I'll probably think of some more [chuckles]

RM: Really. [chuckles] When did you stop running for deputy?

BR: They made the post appointive. I only ran a couple of times more, and then they made it appointive, and I didn't have to run for it anymore.

RM: OK, then how long did you stay on in that position?

BR: I stayed on until about 1960. That's when I went to the Test Site.

RM: So you were deputy from '46 to '60 continuously - is that right? And then you went to the Test Site. What was your position there?

BR: I was the captain in charge of the sheriff's department at the Test Site. We had 26 people.

RM: How long did you hold that?

BR: Until 1972.

RM: Was that a federal position, or county, or . . . ?

BR: It was appointed by the sheriff - county.

RM: Who was the sheriff at that time?

BR: George Barra.

RM: How was law enforcement different than, say, from now? How would you feel about it now if you were going in?

BR: Well, it's a whole new ballgame. In those days, you used to have a lot of indigents and derelicts and people going through the country. They had a useful tool we used to call a floater. If somebody came into town and started really causing some problems, you went down and told - them, "Look, I know what you're doing, and I think it would be a good idea if you moved along. And if you don't, I'm going to do something to you." And that was the floater. Now, if they didn't, you could take them in, put them in jail, and tell them, "Well, now, what we're going to do with you, is we're going to give you 10 days," but you put them on their honor, out there, to work someplace, and they were gone.

RM: Oh. [laughs] And didn't show up again.

BR: No more. Well, they might show up next summer, next winter. But it was awhile. But they understood what the deal was. If you did that today, the ACLU would be on you. And in those days, if you had somebody who really pounded you up a little bit, why, when you took them into jail, it was customary that you sort of retaliated. And if you did that now, why, forget it.

RM: Do you think law enforcement is less personally dangerous now, or more, or about the same.

BR: Oh, I think it's more dangerous now. These guys have got all these sophisticated weapons and everything that you can't do much about. Really, where law enforcement went down the skids was when Earl Warren was the Chief Justice of the United States; you can nearly trace all the problems right to that. Those people in San Francisco never would've made those marches if it hadn't been for some of those Warren decisions. It just turned the country upside down. Made a shambles out of law enforcement - you can't do anything. Oh, I would be the first to admit that there were some abuses, but certainly there are a hell of a lot more abuses today than there ever were then. Not by law enforcement; taking these people in, giving the Miranda warning, and . . . even the Supreme Court got to the point where they couldn't stomach that - they've modified some of that. Then they have that Mapp vs. Ohio decision - maybe you're familiar with that.

RM: No.

BR: Well, these guys chased an individual into a cat house, and searched it without a warrant. They knew he was in there but they had an underground passage and he got away. They made a lot of hay out of that -you've got to have search warrants and all the rest of it, now. Then you have the Miranda warning where you have to give each individually all of his rights. You have another one called the Escobedo case; I've forgotten exactly what that is, but it's along the same line as the Miranda. And one or two others that don't come to mind right now, but . . . They have taken law enforcement as it was when I was in it, and really just ruined the whole thing. The old-timers who used to work law enforcement - if they'd come out of their grave today and see this, they wouldn't believe it. And like these people down here. If they put them in jail, why, they claim . .

RM: You mean, on the Test Site?

BR: No, I mean Las Vegas. If the conditions in the jail don't favorably compare to the Hilton, or someplace, why, that's cruel and unusual punishment. It's just a whole new ballgame.

RM: Now, who succeeded you as the deputy in Beatty?

BR: Gilbert Landess.

RM: And how long was he in there?

BR: He was in there several years, then I had him come down to the Test Site to join us down

there, and I've forgotten just exactly who did take his place, because I wasn't there anymore. They had 2 or 3 up there. They were only there a short time because it was such a screwy job up there. I mean, it put gray hair on me, I'll tell you. It was just terrible. Just not a very good position.

RM: And tell me again who succeeded Thomas.

BR: George Barra. He was killed in an auto accident just north of Beatty.

RM: Oh, was he? How long did he serve?

BR: He was just starting his second term. It was in December, and his next term would've begun in January. A nice, guy, too, really.

RM: What kinds of unique problems did the development of the Test Site cause for you in Beatty and southern Nevada, if any?

BR: Well, it brought some additional people in there - a lot of them. And they lived up there for quite a while. And there was a lot of additional travel going through, and a lot of activity at the Test Site. You see, they didn't have a sheriff's station down there for a while.

RM: Were you responsible for the Test Site as the deputy?

BR: Yes [chuckles] I was Ash Meadows, and Pahrump, and Beatty. [laughs]

RM: Was the Test Site a lot of problems and work for you?

BR: Only as far as accidents go, and trying to fix liability here, and who did what to what. Then occasionally I'd have some drunks down there; they'd have to go down and kick them around a little.

RM: Did you investigate accidents?

BR: Oh, yes. By the scads.

PM: You changed that from Vignolo. Were they car accidents, or other kinds of accidents, like cave-ins?

BR: Well, anything. Anything that came along, by default, you were the lucky Louie.

RM: When you became head of the station at the Test Site, then, what did that involve?

BR: Mostly it involved general law enforcement on the site itself. And the highway patrol wasn't very strong in those days, so we used to take 95 for them.

RM: Oh, you mean the Widow Maker out here. You didn't go all the way into Clark County,

did you?

BR: No, we went just to the county line. But for instance during the month of December, 1961, we had 8 fatalities. And from that on down.

RM: It was a widow maker, wasn't it? You said you had 26 deputies.

BR: Yes, we had a big crew.

RM: Did you find it a challenging position, or interesting, or how did you find it?

BR: Yes, it was a challenging and interesting position. You had all these people of high caliber who'd want to come out there and protest . . .

RM: Even then?

BR: Oh, yes. There was a lot of that. And then you had people who were doing things out there, and that the FBI was right on their case. You worked in cooperation with them. Then you had those speed limits to enforce out there. There's a lot of road out there, you know. We had the speed limits, and then we had general law enforcement. The canteen and bar at the other end - the recreation hall, they call it - could be a headache at times. In our spare time we used to figure out things like had much beer they drank out there in one day.

RM: Was it a lot?

BR: It was a lot.

RM: Where was the canteen?

BR: Area 12. It was something like 132 gallons of beer in one day. They sold 132 gallons of beer and 18 gallons of whiskey in one day.

RM: [laughs] In one day. Yes, I worked out at Area 12 when they first opened it in '58, I think it was. They didn't have anything like that then.

BR: All they had was some trailers, then, and a cook shack?

RM: And a cook shack; yes. Did Roy Neighbors come after you were there?

BR: No, he was there ahead of me. We worked together for a short time, and then he went over to the assessor's office.

RM: Did he have your position, or did you pioneer the position?

BR: When I came down there, Hugh Morant, from here, had the position. He had 4 people. They weren't too happy with him, so they asked me if I'd take over. When I went down there, I

was only going to be there to work a couple of vacations for these guys. I said, "No, I don't think that I'd like that." I had some other things I was looking at. I said, "I think that when I finish up, that'll be enough for me."

They said, "Well, stay on a little while longer, and then somebody else won't . . ." All of a sudden one guy quit, and they said, "Well, take his place for awhile."

So I said, "Well, OK, I'll finish that up."

RM: Were you still deputy at Beatty?

BR: No.

RM: Oh, you'd quit by then. But you were still in the Assembly.

BR: Yes. To me, it was pretty obvious that this guy wasn't doing what he should be doing, but I didn't say anything, I just did my job. Finally they came down, and they said, "Well, we can't stand this any longer. We're going to make a change, here." They said, "Well, why don't you take it?"

And I said, "Well, I'm not really . . . Like I told you when I came down here, I want to leave."

They said, "Well, go ahead and take it until we can get it straightened out."

So I took it, and then 12 years later . . . [chuckles }

RM: So you really developed it into a major position as opposed to a fairly small one.

BR: Well, we had 4 when I got there, and I told them, "Now, look, you people want these things done, but we just don't have the people to handle that. We're going to go as far as we can, but there's no reason for us to work night and day. I mean, we can't do it. We're going to lose some more people if we do."

So they said, "Well, OK, we'll give you 3 more people."

I said, "OK," so they sent down 3 people.

Then they said, "We're going to open up the NRDS out here," – the Jackass Flat.

And I said, "Well, OK. What do you want to do about that?"

"Well," they said, "send a couple of men over there."

I said, "Well then that puts me right back where I was when you sent the 3 down."

So they said, "Well, yeah."

I said, "Well, OK. I'll send the 2 men over." So I sent men over, and of course they didn't even . . . they had traffic out there that was tremendous - 30 and 40 busses a day filled with people, and all these cars.

RM: This was in the early '60s?

BR: Yes. And so I sent these men. Well, like I told them, "Send down some more; send down some more." Finally we got it up to 26, because they wanted the coverage, and they got it.

RM: The NRDS. That was the nuclear engine, wasn't it?

BR: Yes - nuclear rocket. You throttled up that engine up there, and it shook the ground at 20 miles.

RM: They actually had an engine that ran there? Why did they quit it?

BR: I don't know. They were very top-secretish. They had a test run for, I don't know, like 30 seconds or something. They started that baby up and it shook the ground at 20 miles. Just like an earthquake.

RM: Good lord. I didn't realize they actually had an engine that actually ran.

BR: Yes, they sure did.

RM: Did you have any role in that suit that Nye County brought? 'To get the taxes on the Test Site?

BR: Bill Beko started that suit. And here's some irony for you. He began that suit - worked on it every day for years. And I mean years. Saturday, Sunday, and the whole works. And as time went along, why, he finally got it to court. And AEC put on a search for legal talent - a national search - to fight it. And they were all in Tonopah. They said there's never been that many attorneys in the Tonopah courthouse before or since - even in the days of the boom.

## CHAPTER TWO

BR: I think they had about 20 attorneys for the AEC. Beko could tell you about that. Have you ever talked to him?

RM: I'm going to do Tonopah, I think, and I want to interview Beko.

BR: If ever there was a hero for Nye County, it has to be Bill Beko. the one individual who has done more for Nye County than anybody else. You can talk about Pat McCarron, you can talk about Brougher, you can talk About Pittman, or anybody else . . . Single-handedly, Bill Beko has done more for Nye County than any other person in the whole state, ever.

He brought those taxes in, and over in Pahrump they got a high school out of it - bright, shiny new school - with the tax money from the Test Site.

RM: Fully paid for, yes.

BR: And when it came time to name the school they cast around - they couldn't figure out who the hell to name it for.

RM: Isn't that something.

BR: That's real gratitude. And you go throughout the county - here's a community building down in Amargosa - that's Bill Beko. You can go up to Tonopah, here's a fire department - Beko. Round Mountain . . . All came out of that. He won that lawsuit single-handed against 22 attorneys. If there was ever a David and Goliath battle, that had to be it. And the people in Tonopah, and the people throughout Nye County, just don't realize Chat this man has done for them. At a considerable sacrifice for himself, because he could've been carrying on private practice, and making some money for himself. Instead of that, he tried to help the county. That was, I guess, one of the bonuses for having a home-town kid - he could see the need.

RM: Yes, sure. Ralph Lisle told me that then he became commissioner he had no idea how poor the county was, and the big difference that that suit made, just in terms of what the commissioners had to work with.

BR: Not to throw bouquets at me, but when I first went to the Test Site on a gasoline contract.

RM: When was that, now?

BR: 1951.

RM: Oh, you had the initial contract there.

BR: Yes. So when we went down there on that, all these people were flocking in from outside with cars, so I was the guy who established the deputy assessor's post down there. We forced these guys to buy license plates in Nye County. In one lick we took home about \$4500, which at that time was a lot of money, and it just kept going from there. Clark County was screaming their

head off - all those people were living down there with Nye County plates. But we sold plates up there like . . . That's where it got started - that was the original start.

RM: Yes, Ralph told me that when he became a commissioner, the total evaluation of the county was less than the budget now. [chuckles] Beko got my dad and me jobs at the Test Site. I worked there one summer and my dad worked there for 15, 20 years.

BR: Where did he work?

RM: Area 12, in the tunnel. He retired about '75.

BR: He worked for Flangas?

RM: Yes, in fact he worked with Flangas up at Ely when their . . .

BR: Yes. Star finder.

RM: Well, when they were sinking the Ruth and Kalinski shafts up there for Kennecott back in the early '50s. And he worked with a lot of those guys from Colorado - Mickey Fleetwood, and Les Meyers . . .

BR: Polecat?

RM: Who was that?

BR: That's Polecat, they called him.

RM: I don't know if I remember him.

BR: What was the guy's name up here that begins with an A who was riding a bicycle - one of Flangas's men? He got run over and killed?

RM: I don't know.

BR: I keep thinking of Abbott, but that isn't right. It's . . . Adair

RM: Adair? I didn't know him. I remember Frank Salegi. He was my walker when I started there.

BR: He had to be the unluckiest guy I ever met.

RM: Was he unlucky?

BR: Oh. He had a few drinks one night, and he came out of Area 12 and came down there between Indian and Cactus and he ran over those 2 - killed them.

RM: Yes. It really bothered him, didn't it?

BR: Oh, my . . .

RM: That's what my dad said.

BR: It really bothered him. What really bothered him was that the people at Indians Springs wanted to go out there and erect a memorial and put some crosses up, and all this stuff, and he'd drive by it every day. That really bugged him. Frank Salegi is a good guy - I like him.

RM: He was a really great guy to work for. I was just a kid, you know, and didn't know what the hell I was doing.

BR: When they got in trouble up in Alaska, they sent for him. Where was it - on Atu or Adak, I forget the name of the island - it was on the Aleutian chain, there.

RM: Do you ever see any of those guys? Are they still around?

BR: I talk to Flangas occasionally.

RM: Is he still working out there?

BR: I think so; he was the last time I talked to him. He wants to go back to Ely. And did you know Paul Piskovich?

RM: I know him by name - that's all.

BR: I've never seen an alcoholic who was anymore alcoholic than he was.

RM: Is that right.

BR: Oh, terrible. Nice guy. And good - in the underground mine you couldn't beat him.

RM: Yes. I went back to Ely a few years ago and I wanted to go out and find the Ruth and Kalinski shafts. And I asked somebody, "Where are they?"

And they said, "Out there in the middle of that glory hole."

[laughter]

I'm also working on the history of the Amargosa Valley, including Ash Meadows. What are your memories of that in terms of its development, and any problems, or . . . ?

BR: My first recollection of that is that the railroad ran there, and it put in a development there called the T&T Ranch. You've heard about that.

RM: Yes; sure.

BR: That's my first recollection of it. My next one is of Gordon Bettles going down there.

RM: Did you know Bettles?

BR: Oh, yes, Gordon and Billie.

RM: What kind of a guy was Bettles?

BR: Bettles was a nice guy - I liked Bettles a lot.

RM: He was an older man when he came there, wasn't he?

BR: Yes. And Hank Records. Have you talked to Hank?

RM: Yes, I've talked to Hank, and Pete Peterson. Pete'll show me around, and everything, but he won't let me turn on the tape recorder. [laughter]

BR: Pete's kind of a dandy. He's kind of a social butterfly. He plays the piano, and everything. [tape is turned off for awhile]

RM: Bob, as an Assemblyman from Nye County, what was it like to Cork with other representatives from the state? And what kinds of satisfactions did you get, and what kinds of problems did you encounter?

BR: Each area of the state, of course, has its own problems, and they have their representatives up there just the same way that I got there, and you have to be a little bit sympathetic. I guess politics is a series of compromises, and you have to drive bargains here, and drive them there, and hope that you come out with at least your share, or maybe, hopefully, a little bit more. But sometimes you don't do that. Sometimes you do a little bit better. It's a matter of being there, and staying there every day, and running your committee as best you can if you're lucky enough to get one, and drive your bargains from that point. It's an experience. It's something that you can't . . . I've tried to take other people and explain to them what happened, and what to do, and what to look out for, and things that can happen to them, and try to help them take a position on different things, and it just doesn't work. You have to get up there and feel that experience for yourself; there's no way that anybody can help you. It's on-the-job training every damn time.

RM: How do you feel about Bullfrog County?

BR: There are going to be some repercussions from that. Number one, there's a lot of funding that's tied to counties that is distributed by the 17 counties. Now Bullfrog will come in for their portion of the funding. And there's a whole new set of county officers that are going to have to be worked in some place along the way. It just doesn't make any sense. They could have done the same thing in a different way that would've been a little bit more appropriate, I think. I think the architect on this did a very poor job.

RM: What is it about the legislature - some people say that in the last days of it, they

sometimes get carried away. What happens?

BR: Well, here's some of the things that go on. You'll get some bills that are real dogs. They'll go to a committee. Normally, a bill has to be introduced. The procedure on a bill is to be introduced, and read the first time, placed on the board for the second reading, and then possible amendments if anybody has any ideas for it, and if not, Why, it goes to the third reading, and that is When the final passage takes place. Let's say that this is an Assembly bill. When it goes over to the senate, it comes in there just as though it were a new bill. It's introduced over there, goes on the first, second reading, and then the third reading and final passage, and then it goes to the governor. This is all well and good and the new people up there think that all bills are going to be treated that way, and they're not. Along about 2 weeks before adjournment, they suspend the rules. And it's possible, or conceivable, at that point, to take a bill from a committee, call it an emergency measure, take it up and pass it, take it down to the senate and pass it the same day, and you have it in the governor's hands that night. This is what everybody lays in waiting for, and that's what you have to brace for. You can't afford to be gone, because if you've got anything that's bugging you laying around in a committee someplace, Why, it can hit you pretty good. You wonder, sometimes, Why they have those rules, and then suspend them, but they do, and that's how it works. So it's very wild and dangerous and trades are made, and you don't have time to amend then, and if there are any undesirable features in there you can't research the damn thing, and say, we don't want this, and we do want that." You can't do anything with it. I Men, you're just stuck.

RM: Do you think they ought to have that suspension provision?

BR: It's been going on since the days of Mark Twain, so I guess it will continue. [laughs] Mark Twain said that for anybody who had any strong feeling and high regard for the law, there are 2 things they should never watch being made - sausage and the law. [laughter]

RM: Back when you first became deputy, what was Ash Meadows like? There wasn't anybody in the other part of the valley, was there? When did Bettles go in there?

BR: Much later than that. When I first went in there, there were a few families down there, and they were rustling cattle and doing all kinds of bad things.

RM: Literally rustling.

BR: Oh, yes. It was really a bad deal.

RM: Where were they getting then? From each other?

BR: Yes.

RM: The bootlegging ended with Prohibition, didn't it?

BR: Oh, yes.

RM: How do you see the Ash Meadows land withdrawal?

BR: Well, Ash Meadows is a funny place. The water is there - it's close to the surface - and for years people fought that to a turn down there, trying to do something with it. They were never able to make much out of it as far as growing a crop. This tremendous amount of water down there - it's just unbelievable. Have you ever been through there?

RM: Oh, yes.

BR: Well, they have this tremendous amount of water down there, and the ground is kind of sour - it's alkali. I don't know what else they could use it for, really. I guess if you wanted to fight it, maybe today's technology - treatment for the soil and those things - probably you could work it, but . . .

RM: You think it's better off, the way it is being withdrawn.

BR: As well; as well.

RM: With prostitution in the county, did you ever encounter any special problems as a deputy?

BR: Oh, just the usual; run of the mill. Go down and throw a few of them out and [chuckles] a few things like this. But it was an accepted practice and has been since there was a Nye County. I guess it'll be there when we're all gone, the way it looks.

RM: How about the proposed county split - with the whole Pahrump problem?

BR: When I was in the legislature I tried to talk them into taking in Esmeralda County. At that time they couldn't pay for their street lights, and E. L. Cord was the biggest taxpayer in the county. The county officers would draw their salaries sometimes. We could've taken Esmeralda County - it was \$2.3 million evaluation at that time - for the salary of a couple of deputy sheriffs and a couple of J.P.s. They fought me to a turn on it, but it would've been . . .

RM: It would've been better, wouldn't it?

BR: Oh, yes. There are a lot of consolidations possible in Nevada. As you stop and look at it, Esmeralda County should be consolidated with Nye. And Mineral probably should be consolidated with Lyon or Churchill, or maybe those 3 should be consolidated. As you go farther north you've got Storey County, you've got Carson City, which used to be Ormsby County, and then you've got Douglas County down there. There are county seats within 10 miles any direction. There's no reason why those 3 couldn't be consolidated, to do away with all that county government. But you can't do that. There is just no way.

RM: Yes; too many vested interests.

BR: Yes. But I almost got Esmeralda County. Hell, we worked on it. Too much; too much. They wanted to join us; people were going to go for it. Couldn't get Nye County to go for it.

RM: Oh. What was their thinking?

BR: Well, they thought that it would be a drain on the county treasury and that it was just too much territory. It was one of the biggest counties in the United States already. No, at that time, they couldn't pay for the street lights in Goldfield. The power company had to wait for their money 'till the taxes came in again. If it hadn't been for E. L. Cord . .

RM: Now, who's E. L. Cord?

BR: E. L. Cord has a very rich history. He is a multimillionaire. He owned the big ranch in Fish Lake Valley and was the manufacturer of the Cord Automobile and Auburn. He was a very good friend of mine. I really valued his friendship - he was a very nice guy. So he went to the legislature and figured out a way to tax the gambling industry so much per table or - I've forgotten what it was now - and we put it into a jackpot and divided it 17 ways, so Esmeralda County got a shot in the arm after that. That was probably what saved them.

RM: There was a deputy in Beatty - Henderson. When did he come in?

BR: Glen came in about 1955, '6, in through there.

RM: And did he live in Beatty?

BR: Yes. Then he moved to the Amargosa. He came to the Test Site for awhile and worked with me and then he went and was deputy in the Amargosa.

RM: Where did he live in Amargosa?

BR: He went down as if you were going to Death Valley Junction off of 95, and then turn to your right, went over by the county building over there. And then turn to your right again and . . .

RM: So he lived out in the Farm Area.

BR: Yes.

RM: How would you describe his administration?

BR: Oh, he was just kind of a comical guy - very comical guy. He got tangled up in that beef up there with Bill Martin when they . . . If you want some information on his administration down there, just get it off The Nye County Brothel Wars book.

RM: Do you think it's accurate?

BR: Oh, to some extent. And some it isn't. There's some there that's not . . . you know, just a little bit farfetched.

RM: Well, he ran into trouble over at Ash Meadows, or something, didn't he? With some bikers over there, or some thugs, or something?

BR: There were always bikers over there [chuckles] - which time?

RM: I mean the Lodge.

BR: Yes. Which time?

RM: He was over there with a shotgun or something one time. I never have been able to get the details straight.

BR: I don't know too much about that, either. In fact, that's kind of new to me, but it's possible, because they had a lot of trouble over there, and lots of bikers, and lots of shotguns. [chuckles]

RM: Was that when it was being operated as a brothel by Anne . . .?

BR: Weller.

RM: And they shut it down after some beef or something. Have I got that totally mixed up?

BR: I'm not too clear on that myself. I didn't pay a lot of attention to it.

RM: Was the Lodge there a trouble spot?

BR: At first it started out to be a very wonderful place to go. Then Ben Knox got a hold of it and the thing went downhill from there.

RM: Who was Knox?

BR: He was a used car man from Los Angeles. It just went down the skids. And then Anne Weller got it and she got the girls over there, I think.

RM: It wasn't a brothel before that, was it?

BR: No. At the start, it wasn't. In fact, the guy that owned it lived there as a kid, and he came back, and always thought what a nice place it would be to have a lodge, and he built it, hoping to bring people in. His name was Berry.

RM: Did you know him?

BR: Yes. I think he's in Yuba City, now. Or Marysville. It was built in the '40s.

Oh, I'll tell you who another person [to talk to ] might be. Ask for Virginia Goodson up there in Beatty. She can tell you a lot of Ash Meadow stories. She was born and raised in Ash Meadows.

RM: Oh, she was? At what time, do you know?

BR: There were several of them there, but that was all history by the time I got to it.

RM: Yes. I just wondered what they were called, or . .

BR: Wes Morland had one, I think.

RM: Yes, I think I've been told that. But he eventually moved over to.....

BR: Rhyolite.

RM: Well, who supported the cat houses and the bars and everything in Ash Meadows?

BR: They had what they called the Clay Camp over there on the state line, and that was a big employer. And then they had the railroad people in Death Valley Junction. Plus a lot of people going through, you know. There were a lot of people going through up there. They screened them and they looked all right, so they let them come on in. There was a lot of activity around there.

RM: Yes, there was. A lot more than you'd think, just driving through now.

There is one question I want to ask you. I got the impression that your dad, Albert, owned the Verdi Lumber Company, and then I read somewhere where he had some partners. Was he the full owner, or did he have partners in that?

BR: Jack Salisbury was a partner at that time. He bought him out. Then he had some other partners - he successfully bought them out.

RM: So when the thing finally went bust with the Depression, he was the sole owner.

BR: Yes. I think that Salisbury was a partner; I think that - I'm not too sure. Of course, he bought the thing from a man by the name of Oliver Lonkey.

RM: Oh, I had the impression he built it up. He bought it from . . . ?

BR: Oliver Lonkey. They were all French people. Lonkey was a Frenchman.

RM: When did he buy it?

BR: About 1910, I think.

RM: Where did he get the money?

BR: From the Tonopah Lumber Company. You see, he went into Tonopah in 1900, and built that lumber company up. And then in 1910, why, he bought the Verdi Lumber Company. I think

that's the way it was.

RM: Oh. I had the impression that he was pretty successful before he went to Tonopah. But that wasn't the case?

BR: No. One thing about it - he'd never work for anybody. For anybody. When he was a kid up in Verdi he worked a few shifts up there in the sawmill and then he went down and bought fish from the Indians and shipped them to the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, with ice on them - things like that. He always worked for himself.

RM: He was always independent, then?

BR: He always figured out something.

RM: I read somewhere that after he'd started Tonopah Lumber they had something like 600 horses and mules that were freighting back and forth to Verdi. They were making \$4,000 - \$5,000 a day in lumber.

BR: Well, that's not to Verdi. He freighted from Mina or Sodaville to Tonopah.

RM: Oh, that was the way the railhead was.

BR: Yes. That's where he . .

RM: So they didn't freight clear to Verdi.

BR: Oh, no. But he owned 2 V&T locomotives.

RM: Really? Why did he . . .?

BR: Well, he bought them, and they wanted to use them up in the woods. We had about 35 miles of rails, you know. Do you know where Sierraville is?

RM: No.

BR: You've been to Truckee.

RM: Yes.

BR: OK. Sierraville is north of Truckee, and it's off to the west a little bit. They went almost to Sierraville with the rails. I'll get the book - I can show you where it is. They had to use shays because the shays had 4 sets of trucks under them and the V&T locomotives only had 2. As they'd go around a turn they'd spread the rails, so they had to go.

RM: And basically they went bankrupt because they were extended in credit when the crash came. Is that your understanding?

BR: No, that wasn't how it worked. My dad went up there in the woods and he specialized in clear lumber - a very good grade of high quality clear lumber. They went up in the woods and made the-cut to bring down to the mill that summer and while they were up there the mill in Verdi burned.

RM: No insurance, then?

BR: Well, not enough. He had very little insurance. He tried to go to the Forest Service and do something about this cut, and they said, "No. You bought it - it's there. There it is, and you pay for it." So they put the final knife to it. That was, in the final analysis, what happened.

RM: What year was that - '29?

BR: Well, the mill really burned a little before that - about '27. He had a small mill there and tried to recover, but he couldn't do it. You see, he had, I think, the one big mill fire. I can remember seeing that whole hill back of Verdi just red.

RM: You remember the fire?

BR: Oh, yes. That was in about 1926, I guess. That whole hill - Ladybug Peak - was back there. And you can see some stripes going up it now where the gas line went through, and the timber's just now beginning to grow up again. That's more than 50 years ago. And then he had another fire. They had a whirlwind that came and twisted around and went over and went into one of the stacks, and went right down into the boiler and blew those hot coals all over - and up she went.

Then in World War I, they had a fire up there - a mysterious fire. They picked up a German agent, sent him over to Fort Douglas, and he confessed that he'd burned the mill down. So it was a series of fires that really got him, I think.

RM: Just sapping off his profits?

BR: Yes; took everything.

RM: And he did a lot of molding, right? Shipping it to New York, and everything.

BR: Yes; everywhere. He specialized. And then [laughs] the Forest Service sold him some trees and he went up and cut them. They'd been down in a creek, and when he got them, why, they were so heavy that you couldn't load them, you couldn't do anything with them. I mean, you just couldn't handle them; there was nothing you could do. He put a few of them through the mill, and they like to tore the mill up. Terrible. You couldn't do anything with them, so he had to pass those up. But that was . . . I can remember that fire.

RM: What made him come to Beatty?

BR: Well, originally he was looking at some mining property out there.

RM: Was it Chloride Cliff?

BR: Yes.

RM: Was it Crowell's old mine?

BR: No, it was McCrae - W.R. McCrae. And he had a partner in Reno who owned the Overland Hotel, and an ex-governor from Idaho, and McCrae - the 4 of -them. To make a long story short, the governor from Idaho died after the partnership was formed, and the guy who owned the Overland Hotel fell down a mining shaft out there at Wahnnonie and that ended him. That left my dad and McCrae, and neither one of them did much with it after that. He bought the property from McCrae.

RM: Was it a good property?

BR: Today it would be a good property but in those days it wasn't. It was isolated and the cost of production was just too much.

RM: Yes. Was it gold and precious metals?

BR: Gold and silver, yes. Heavy base ore - it had to be sent to a smelter; couldn't be milled.

RM: So he came to Beatty for that and stayed?

BR: Came to Beatty and these other people - the Shirks - had had a death in the family, and this estate was for sale.

RM: Who was Shirk?

BR: Shirk was only there a short time, so I really don't know too much. His heirs were the ones we bought it from.

RM: So he still had enough money to buy that.

BR: Oh, yes.

RM: He wasn't flat broke.

BR: No, but he was badly bent. I'd say that he had less than \$50,000 when he came to Beatty - if that.

RM: How would you describe your father?

BR: Well, he was a self-educated man who had a very keen insight into everything. He was very observant. And a person whose mental processes worked very well, and fast - very fast. He

could see through things that might take somebody else a little while to think over. He was generous to his family and he didn't ask for anything for himself. Everything he did was for his family. He did a good job of providing for them; I'd say an excellent job. For a man of his limited education to be where he was and be able to see things as he saw them . . . you just don't see that anymore - you don't see it in people. I don't know if he went to school an awful lot, but one of his jobs for the French Canadians up there in the woods - when he was a kid - was always acting as an interpreter and reading their letters for them, and things like that.

RM: How would you describe your mother?

BR: My mother was a very remarkable woman. She was raised in a German family in San Francisco. And, of course, that's where she met my dad.

RM: Her name was Henrietta - is that right?

BR: Yes. They were married in 1904, I think, and they went to Tonopah together. My mother graduated from high school, of course, and in so doing she got what they called the Denman Medal which was, in those days, really something for San Francisco. There were only, I think, 2 or 3 of them each year - she got one of them.

RM: For scholarship, and attainment?

BR: Scholarship. There wasn't anything that she couldn't do. She could cook. She could sew. She could keep books. She spoke perfect English, she spoke perfect German, and she spoke perfect French. And had a very even disposition. I've never seen anybody like her since. Just a great person.

[tape is turned off for a while]

RM: How do you see the future of Nye County?

BR: Well, Nye County's going to get back to basics. It's primarily always been a mining county, and I'm sure always will be. And if the price of gold continues, and I don't see any reason why it shouldn't, I think that Nye County has a very bright outlook with or without Pahrump. I can't see it ever going back to where it was at the time when I worked up there.

RM: Because of the mining potential.

BR: Mining potential, and some of the things that are coming into it now - bigger ranches and some modern breakthroughs in the treatment of soil, and a lot of factors. And the very fact that the rest of the country's getting crowded. I think they have a very, very good future.

RM: How do you see the Yucca Mountain potential? Aside from the Bullfrog issue?

BR: Well, if they put it in there it's going to, again, cause an upheaval here in Vegas economically. I mean, there are going to be enough people involved that it's going to be a small

Test Site all over again, on top of the Test Site. And it'll bring sate people to Beatty - naturally, it always does.

But Beatty's going to have a good future. I have some mining ground up there that I've disposed of, and this company's going to be coming in up there before the year's out. It's a big company. And they've been doing a lot of drilling up there.

RM: Is it out behind Bare Mountain? I heard they were drilling up in there.

BR: No. They're drilling there, but mine's out on Ladd Mountain, out there by Rhyolite.

RM: Oh. Do you think there's more left in the Rhyolite area?

BR: The drilling says yes.

RM: Is that right - that'd be great.

BR: Rhyolite was never short of value; their problem was recovery. They'd put it through those old mills, and . . . They have a situation they call sliming. Are you familiar with that?

RM: Sure - yes. Goes out on the slimes.

BR: Yes. That's what happened.

RM: With cyanide?

BR: Well, cyanide didn't get it.

RM: The cyanide wouldn't get it either? Yes, they've got a new technique, don't they?

BR: They have some new reagents, now, that'll really go through there. So St. Joe - maybe you've heard of them.

RM: St. Joseph Lead?

BR: Yes.

RM: They're going in there?

BR: They're not going in there - they're in there. They've had this property I'm on under option for the last 3 years. And I was talking to them on the phone here the other day - they're going to go ahead with a reduction plant out there very shortly.

RM: Will that mean an impact on Beatty?

BR: In terms of the size of Beatty - at least. They look for 150 men for the construction phase, and probably 50 for the operation. Then there's another one out there - at Gold Bar - that's

going to have about the same thing.

RM: Where is Gold Bar, now?

BR: Well, you know where the original Bullfrog is?

RM: Yes.

BR: OK, as you go out to Rhyolite, here's the original Bullfrog, and here's Bonanza Mountain. You go through that little pass - do you know where Mud Springs is?

RM: Yes, roughly.

BR: OK, go on out beyond Mud Springs and up against that hill out there.

RM: Oh. So there's going to be another operation there?

BR: There's a huge operation there right now. They've brought trucks and equipment in there - I've got an invitation to go up there and see the operation shortly.

RM: Oh - that's great. Almost a Round Mountain-type operation where they go in and take the whole thing.

BR: Right. They've got it all set up - they're going in. It's a big New York outfit - the funding is absolutely unlimited. They told me if I didn't have mine sold to St. Joe they'd pay me in cash. Just - flat out.

RM: So - it looks like things will be jumping in Beatty regardless.

BR: Well, Beatty - from this one operation that I'm aware of - will be doubled. And then the one that they've got going should double it again. So Beatty should have - on the payroll - 200 to 300 people out there within the next 60 to 90 days.

RM: That's great. Well, I think I've tried your patience enough, probably.

BR: No problem; no problem.

RM: So I'll just shut it off here.

SUPPLEMENT  
February 1, 1988

RM: Bob, you started to say something about . . .

BR: In Beatty - this is just a kind of comical incident. A man named Knox fell heir to a used car dealer in Los Angeles who had originally come to Ash Meadows Lodge, stayed down there for awhile, sold that and moved to Beatty to open a bar. The bar that he opened was formerly known as St. Peter's Bar. St. Peter's Bar used to drive the Catholic clergy up the wall, not realizing that the man who owned it was named Glen St. Peter. Glen was terribly crippled. He could only walk a half step at a time and walked with 2 canes; he was barely able to get around. He owned the bar and he made a living.

Then Knox came up (a couple of owners had [come and] gone in the middle), bought the bar, moved into it . . . and he was a little bit different. Some of the local miners were in there one night and they had their wives with them and they were dancing. Knox rushed around the end of the bar and separated them. He said, no, they couldn't dance because then he would have to pay entertainment tax. That didn't go over too well. There were some hard words passed back and forth and they said, "Well, we'll see you next week," which they did.

The next week they came in. He had a foam type fire extinguisher over by the stove. The dancing began again and somebody knocked over the extinguisher, and it lay a foam coat on the floor that wouldn't quit. You can't turn them off once they start, so they had this foam out there and everybody was slipping and sliding around and they couldn't stand up and it was quite a mess. They all left and Knox cleaned the place out. The next week they came back. They didn't like him too well, anyway; they just did this to irritate him. They said, "Well, you know, you've given us an awful bad time here, and we're customers and you're not treating us very good, so next week we are going to come back and that'll be the end of it; you won't have any business any more after next week."

He thought they were kidding him and he said, "Aw, you can't do anything to me." He thought they were going to simply boycott him or something like that.

The place had some venetian blinds over the windows in front, and as the day wore along he'd open them up so he could see out. Sometime in the early evening somebody had gone over there and closed them just barely enough that you couldn't make anything out on the outside. About 10:00 things were going along pretty well, and somebody opened the door and they threw in 3 sidewinders - rattlesnakes - out of a coffee can and people just flew. They dove out windows, they dove out the back door; they left and they never came back. They put him out of business.

RM: He had to shut it down?

BR: Well, he left, himself, with the rattlesnakes on the floor; my God! He bailed out and then he finally came back in, but he stepped around pretty carefully in there for awhile. None of the locals would go in. He had a little drop-in business, but the locals wouldn't get near the place. When they went out the back door they broke a window on one side. They knocked the hell out of it, getting out.

RM: When was this?

BR: Probably in the late '50s.

RM: And that was the end of the bar as far as he was concerned. Did someone else take it over?

BR: Yes, I think they did, but I've forgotten how that went. Boy, those rattlers really got them out of there. The people just flew.

RM: Did they know who did it?

BR: That's just it; the hand just came around the door. It was 10:00 or 11:00 at night and there was not much pedestrian traffic outside, and the venetian blinds had been slightly tilted, they thought by design . . . sure it was. And they just slammed in this can of sidewinders. That was one of the stories that I was going to tell you.

RM: I have a couple of questions that I wanted to follow up on. Ash Meadows always had the reputation of being lawless. I don't know whether it was you who told me that Thomas wouldn't go in there?

BR: Oh, Thomas would go in.

RM: What kinds of problems did you have with Ash Meadows? Were they any different from the kinds of problems you had in the rest of your district?

BR: Yes, you'd go along and get a series of reports on cattle rustling. Bob Owens, who was the undersheriff [in Is Vegas] claimed a bunch of horses over here. Tex McCall claimed the horses too, so there was always a certain amount of friction back and forth. Sometimes a horse would disappear and somebody would accuse others of taking shots at them; never anything that you could hang your hat on. [But] there was that certain level of tension all the time. People living down there like Dick Bell and Randy and a few of those people didn't see anything, didn't hear anything and didn't want to know anything. Period. Pete Peterson is that way to this day; he doesn't want to know anything. I don't know . . . is Norine [Rooker] still there?

RM: Yes.

BR: Well, for example, [Mr.] Rooker had a mill down there. People were always accusing him of stealing gasoline, and: "Rooker was stealing this," or, "Rooker was doing that." He had his truck alongside the mill and he and Norine went into [Death Valley] Junction - I think to get the mail or whatever - and on the way back they saw a column of smoke; there goes the mill and the truck. Somebody burned them Chile they were gone. Pete, who lives fairly close by (as you know), didn't see a thing. I don't think Pete did it, but I think that . . . I don't want to say anything I can't back up. I have my ideas about that. Nothing that would stand up in court, surely.

And you had the Indians down there and they were a constant problem.

RM: Drinking?

BR: All the time; yes.

RM: Were they Shoshoni or Paiute?

BR: They were Shoshoni, and some of them might have been Paiute. But they were a source of troubles all the time.

RM: How did they earn a living?

BR: They'd work a little bit, and they'd pick some pine nuts and somebody would need a hand on a ranch for a couple of months . . . They might work there, go back over and have a big party. It was just bad news. One of them got run over one day. I say it was murder.

RM: You're convinced?

BR: Yes, but we couldn't prove anything. They all swore up and down that the guy was lying down and they had the lights turned off when they backed the car up over him - about 2 or 3 times. You go on and on and you have things like that to contend with.

They had a powwow up at that big spring off the Pahrump Ranch one day and they had a beef over a sewing machine. They had everybody in the country over there and some people threw a jinx on these girls and one of them finally died. They always thought that she just willed herself dead.

And it would go on and on, but there was always something there. For instance, they had Richard Steve over there. I'd pick him up and take him up to Tonopah and they'd sentence him and he'd escape or get out or talk his way out or do something, and he'd go right back down there and start annoying people again. Just kind of a nuisance. So I thought, 'Well, this time I've got him.' He stole a car over at Shoshone and drove it to Pahrump over that dirt road, and they'd had a big rain storm and as he got over the state line he got stuck in the mud. So here's the car, here are eyeball witnesses who saw him get out of it and eyeball witnesses who saw him get into it and steal it. And it's interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle (Oger Act). So I got the FBI on him and they nailed him. Everybody performed as they should, they all testified, and he was found guilty and they sent him away - to Oklahoma, I think.

He was down there 9 months or so and out on parole, and here he is back, and making some pretty noisy threats about Chat he was going to do to me. So I said, "Well, that's fine. You just send him on up here. I'm waiting for him any time he wants to come up." He didn't show - it was just all talk - but . . .

RM: Did you get many threats?

BR: Oh, sure.

RM: Did it bother you or stress you in any way?

BR: Not that I know of.

RM: You figured you could handle it, then?

BR: Yes. I had a guy come up one time and he was going to do a lot of things, but he didn't. He was just all mouth, so it was all right. You do get a lot of threats, though. Some are anonymous and some are letters.

RM: One of the gaps in my research of Nye County is Bill Thomas. He was such a long-term character, and so important. Everyone knew him, but I don't feel I know very much about him. I wonder if you could tell me some more. For instance, where was he from? Was he married? Did he have any kids?

BR: He had been married 2 or 3 times; 3, I think, and he didn't have any children. He was a butcher at first. He came down to Tonopah from Austin during the boom of the early days. He was in Austin originally.

RM: Did he come in the early 1900s?

BR: Yes; right in the beginning of the boom.

RM: About the time your dad came? Was he about the same age as your dad?

BR: Yes, I would say so. He was a fine gentleman. He came down and ran a butcher shop there in Tonopah. He just was a nice, mild-mannered guy. But he was probably a little bit too mild-mannered. I say that because I used to transport prisoners from here up to Carson. They'd take them from here to Tonopah for overnight, then from Tonopah to Carson the next day. They had a bad load that went up there and Thomas went in that morning to feed them and one of the guys closed the door on his leg and tried to chop his leg off; he kept slamming the door on his leg. He wouldn't take his leg out, even with the guy locking him in.

RM: What happened?

BR: They escaped, but we got them all back; no problem. It's a good thing they didn't do something to him, because if they had done anything to Thomas, I think the guys would have probably . . .

RM: What did he look like?

BR: He was a tall man of 6 feet with a slender to medium build.

RM: Was he a powerful man?

BR: He'd been a butcher, and that takes a lot of strength. He had a lot of strength, but he was a trusting sort of guy.

RM: Was he dark complected or fair?

BR: I would say he had been dark; he was grey when I knew

RM: Did you ever hear how he got into law, enforcement from the butcher trade?

BR: I talked with him about that at one time. He told me the women in the butcher shop all told him that there was going to be an opening for sheriff and asked why he didn't run for it. And finally, I guess, he decided that maybe he would. He did, and he won.

Then he kept . . . he'd run for a little while . . . Jobs were pretty hotly contested in those days. He ran against 2 or 3 people and he was taken in by those Socialists.

RM: Why did they take him in?

BR: Well, I think he had been poor for a long time and maybe he saw that as an out for people who were poor. I don't think that he was really a Socialist at heart, he just got taken in by a few old-timers. There were some pretty ornery guys up there.

RM: What accounted for Thomas' longevity as sheriff? He was sheriff for 40 years or so, wasn't he?

BR: Oh, yes. He only missed that one term when he was a Socialist and then again as an Independent

RM: He always ran as an Independent'?

BR: Yes. He just had the knack of people liking him; they all did. You couldn't beat him. Toward the end I guess you could have, but nobody would. They sent down word to me . . . a Republican chairman came down and said, "We'll give you an endorsement from the party and you can get one from the Democrats if you will run for Sheriff.

I said, "There's no chance of that. I'm very well situated right here. I get along very well with Bill and I'm going to keep it like that." They told me that if I changed my mind, "Why . . . " I told them, "I'm not going to change my mind."

So that was the end of that. Bill would go along, and he'd run and wouldn't campaign much. He would just go around the county and meet everybody and see them all again. As assessor he was always pretty fair.

RM: Oh, he was assessor too?

BR: The office was combined. All the offices were combined up there at first. You had the auditor/recorder, as we still do, and you had the clerk and treasurer, which are now separated. And you had the sheriff/assessor.

RM: When did they split that up?

BR: About 1949.

RM: About the time you came in?

BR: Yes, because they offered me the job of assessor. They were going to split it up. What they wanted to do was split it up, and they were going to appoint me sheriff. I said no. So they split it up and asked if I wanted to come up as assessor. I thought about it for awhile, and thought maybe I would, then I thought not.

RM: Did Thomas have a way of working with people so that he wouldn't have to use force on them?

BR: Yes, he always had that.

RM: How would you describe that?

BR: I don't know. Some people just have it, and he was one who did. He'd go along and . . . you know I knew what had to be done on the job and he knew that I know that it had to be done. I think that's why he never offered me any advice of any kind. In fact, I couldn't even get any kind of advice from him.

RM: Even when you wanted it?

BR: Yes. But, he'd go along . . he had that knack that people just kind of followed him. They did what he wanted them to do and once in awhile he'd have to get hold of somebody and do something he didn't like to do.

RM: Was Tonopah a tough camp?

BR: He thought it was. But, you see, he had a buffer up there. He was the sheriff and they elected a constable and chief of police. So he had a buffer, and when it started to get sticky around town he would go out prospecting or something.

RM: Was he responsible for everything but Tonopah?

BR: He was responsible for the whole thing, but the guy at Tonopah was responsible for the township of Tonopah.

RM: Was he elected?

BR: Yes. The sheriff was supposed to be the overseer. People would get mad at him. They would say, "Where was Bill Thomas when this was going on?" Well, he was out in the hills. But he always had an out, because he was always out "assessing" some property, and there was nothing they could say about it.

RM: Because it was part of his job?

BR: Sure. That was the way that was handled; the [law enforcement officers] in town took all the sticky ones.

RM: Do you remember any of the [law enforcement officers] in town?

BR: There was Freck Lydon. I didn't get to know him too well.

RM: I understand that when he would go into a bar, if there was a fight or anything, or if somebody was giving him a bad time, he'd start putting on his gloves and then you were in trouble.

BR: Yes, you were.

RM: And I have a picture of him with Jack Dempsey and Lydon's nose was flatter than Dempsey's.

BR: I didn't get to know him too well, other than the fact that he would be up there when I was coming in with somebody or something like that.

RM: What about some of the old-time Socialists?

BR: They had a fellow by the name of Nick Schade who was a Socialist and a friend of Bill Thomas. In fact, one time Bill Thomas had him as a bookkeeper up there. He had a circle of friends up there and they were all pretty rough people. They didn't give him any static . . . he'd just walk around them a little bit.

RM: Were they rough?

BR: Yes, they were just determined people who didn't put up with any backtalk.

RM: Even by the time you got one there? Their last strike, I think, was in the early '20s. But by the time you got on the scene they were still . . .

BR: They were bad. There were enough of them around who were old-age pensioners. A lady used to come down [to Beatty] to service them - a social worker - and she was afraid of them. She'd have me go with her.

RM: Why was she afraid?

BR: Well, in those days they were very strict about the amount of relief they gave out, and they were always thinking they were entitled to more than she was giving them, and that she was the main stumbling block to them getting a better check. They were absolutely rude to her, not realizing that she couldn't do anything. She was very uncomfortable around them, too. They had threatened her; veiled threats. She was concerned about that and asked me to go with her when she made her rounds.

RM: How were these guys in Beatty looked upon by the town?

BR: Well, just like a bunch of raunchy old-timers. Someone who could give you some real stories about that would be Eleanor Bateman. Her mother and aunt were schoolteachers in early-day Tonopah. She's living in Carson, and she's probably retired by this time.

RM: At one time Nye County was quite a center for Socialist activity. In fact in Nevada, in 1912, the Socialists pulled more votes than President Taft. What other kinds of residues were there from the Socialists by the time you were on the scene?

BR: Oh, they were just grouchy old people who would agitate all the time. Do you know how they got to Tonopah and Goldfield? The original group of them were in Cripple Creek, Colorado, and they had a prolonged strike back there with fires and vandalism and trouble and everything. Finally the governor loaded them on trains and sent them anywhere to get them out of there, so a lot of them came to Tonopah and Goldfield. They hit the ground running on that one.

RM: At one point [in our last interview] you mentioned the NRDS.

BR: That's the Nuclear Rocket Development Station.

RM: In thinking back on your legislative career, how did you find the legislators from other districts? For instance, what about urban vs. rural representatives and so forth?

BR: There were a bunch of new legislators going in each time in the assembly. You'd go up there and stumble along with the rest of them who had never been there before. The ones who had been there before, those with experience, sort of take over and, of course, everyone has his own pet project. That's when the thing comes down to a grind - when you try to get your project on, and have problems with it for one reason or another. In the rural areas vs. the cities . . . When I was up there Vegas didn't amount to anything. Nye County had 2 seats and Clark had 4. Esmeralda had one.

RM: That's amazing.

BR: Yes. The ratio was pretty good, and then, of course, they diluted it as they went along, with reapportionment. Now one assemblyman represents I don't know how many thousand people.

RM: Yes, it's something like Nye and Esmeralda and Mineral.

BR: The worst one, though, is the two senate districts - Elko and all of the northern part of the state, and then the one down here - Nye County and the other half of the state. They shouldn't stretch the personnel like that. It's impossible to campaign it - you can't do a job for anybody. When I was in there, I represented everybody from cotton pickers to miners and the whole thing in between - gambling people . . . I just had everybody. Of course they were trying to look for tourists to try and get some bucks in, so you always had to be wary of that.

RM: Did you find yourself being contacted a lot about this and that?

BR: It was terrible. Even in those days there was an army of lobbyists up there, and of course it's twice as bad now. The phone rings off the wall at all times and you get a stack of mail that's totally impossible to answer; there's no way that one person could read it all. You have to have some help and when you get the help, they make mistakes and give the wrong answers, so you're damn near better off not answering [the letters] at all. And then there's the social life up there; every night there's a party of some kind some place.

RM: Does that get to be a grind?

BR: Oh, terrible. I've been lobbying up there these last 5 sessions and you go up and tonight there's a party over here, then the next day there's one over there; next day over here, and it just keeps going back and forth. About the only night you can be sure there's nothing going on is on a Monday night. They are all coming back from Vegas and you just want to dive into bed that night. But beginning about Tuesday night, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night . . . Some of them come down here Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The job of being in the legislature from down here drives you crazy. Why these people even think of wanting the job I can't understand.

RM: It doesn't pay that much, does it.

BR: As far as pay goes it's a very poorly-paid job - it's confining, it's nerve-racking, and I just can't see anything good about it.

RM: Was it that way when you were there?

BR: It was bad, but it wasn't as bad as it is now. It's absolutely impossible now. They are talking about going to full-time legislators; that's a mistake too. I don't know what the solution is.

RM: Do you think that they will meet every year?

BR: No, I don't think so; I think that would be a mistake also. They're trying to get their foot in the door by saying they should have a budget session every year and a general session every other year. No, I don't think they should have it every year. That's really freewheeling . .

RM: They'll just pass more laws, won't they?

BR: They'll stay up there and argue and talk back and forth all year. Of course, the legislators would like to have it.

RM: Was there anything else that you wanted to say?

BR: As a deputy, you'd get those people shooting at you and you've got a problem on your hands.

RM: Did you have some shooting at you?

BR: Yes, I've had people shoot at me. I had some Indians shooting at me in Ash Meadows.

RM: How was the prostitution end of things run in the county?

BR: Well, nobody ever paid much attention to it; it just went along. We didn't have problems with it, for the most part. Once in a while you got a call, somebody would be trying to shoot the place up - thinking about it or something. They'd get nervous and send for me. I wouldn't get a call a month on it.

RM: At what point did they move the brothels out of Beatty?

BR: They had a kind of uneasy situation there. They had [the brothels] down at the lower end by the ballpark, and at the time the town had started to build a little bit toward that [end] and there were children down there. There was a bunch of preachers in Beatty at that time who were a pain in the ass. Some of them are still there.

I was always elected to be in on everything. We had that water company there for years and furnished everybody water for \$4 per month, then the health department said that the water wasn't the quality it should be, it had a fluorine content that was too great, so we discontinued the service and then they turned around and tried to buy it from us for practically nothing and I sold it here the other day.

RM: Just the company, or . . . ?

BR: Ranch, water and the whole thing; St. Joe bought it.

RM: So you sold all that land going up north where the old stone house was?

BR: Yes, and the water with it.

RM: Did St. Joe want the water, or are they going to put some houses there?

BR: Probably, because they're going to have a work force up there. St. Joe doesn't want to have a housing project; they'd like to have someone else do it.

RM: They could sell them the land, then.

BR: I asked them about that, and they said no, once they bought it, they wanted it and they aren't in the real estate business. Yes, I sold it. I got a check today.

RM: Are they finding good drillings there? You said, the last time I talked to you, that it was really going to go.

BR: Yes. They found some great stuff.

RM: Are they going to heap leach it?

BR: Yes. They have around 150 people working up there now. They plan to have 450 in there by July first.

RM: Where are they going to live?

BR: I don't know, but I have an interesting theory. I felt they might be able to lease the Goldfield Hotel and let them commute.

RM: That's a pretty long commute - 60, 70 miles.

BR: That's not so bad.

RM: There are a lot of old houses in Goldfield.

BR: I understand that they are all full now. Maybe they could go down toward Gold Center, down outside the Narrows there; what do you think?

BR: No, I think if they put a housing project in there, and put it on the ranch, on the flat land, water is available for it. There is no more water available for Beatty. And the water they have now is not fit for human consumption. Those swamp coolers get a buildup like that brown and white stuff. We offered that water to them at one time for - I think it was \$125,000 - and they laughed. They've had grants and money and they've spend probably a half million or more looking for more water. They went up to Indian Springs and found a small basin of water and they pumped it dry. There were some prior water rights on it that they have to observe, so there is no more water for them unless they get it from someplace like Frans.

RM: Then the only water is your old ranch water.

BR: Well, they didn't want it. I tried to sell it to them and they just laughed at me. That was before they realized, I think, that there wasn't anything else.

RM: New developments will have to use that water.

BR: Well, the new developments, since the time it happened . . . they have made some breakthroughs on the treatment of water.

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