AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN FRANKS

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

LINCOLN COUNTY TOWN PROJECT
LINCOLN COUNTY, NEVADA

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The Lincoln County Town History Project (LCTHP) 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 LCTHP'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 LCTHP 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 LCTHP will, in preparing a text:

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

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

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

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

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

This is Robert McCracken talking to John Franks at his home in Pioche, Nevada, February 21 and 22, 1990.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: I'll just start by asking you what your name is as it reads on your birth certificate.

JF: It's John Jacob Franks - John for my grandfather Franks and Jacob for Jacob Johnson, the sheriff.

RM: And when and where were you born?

JF: I was actually born in Berkeley, California. My mother had a sister living in Berkeley and she went on down and I was born there. My mother was born in Delamar and my father was born here in Pioche.

RM: And what was your birthdate?

JF: September 24, 1921.

RM: And what was your father's name?

JF: George W. Franks. And he was raised here. When he was 9 years old his father died and he more or less had to do the best he could to help the family - he had 3 sisters and one brother. My mother told me that when he was just 9 years old, to help the family he even worked bucking samples in the assay office. And then later he was employed at Thompson's Grocery and Hardware Store, and then went into the bank and was cashier there. And then he went into the service - World War I - and when he came home he ran for and was elected county treasurer.

My mother and my father separated and he re-married and went, I think, first to Fallon and later to San Francisco. And his younger brother, Dan Franks, was appointed in his place as county treasurer. Later, in 1935, Dan Franks was elected state treasurer and served 24 years as state treasurer of Nevada.

RM: Wow. That's something. What was your Grandfather Franks' occupation?

JF: He was a musician, he was a carpenter and he was the undertaker, he was just really a talented person. Grandfather Franks migrated to this country - I'm not certain of the date - back in the late 1800s and he married a girl from England. (I think they were married there, but I'm not certain of that.) They had 3 sons and that branch of the family went by the name of Frank without the "s".

RM: What were the names of his 3 sons?

JF: The oldest one was Johnnie, and then Louie and then Fred. Louie and Fred never married, but Johnnie Frank was a noted mining man in Tonopah. That branch of the family remained at Tonopah. Most of their history is at Tonopah, in fact,

Johnnie's son Billie Frank was a state senator. And Bobby Frank is still alive.

RM: My dad was good friends with Bobby Frank.

JF: Bobby is related. He's my cousin. But the strange part is that Mrs. Susan Frank died and my grandfather married her sister, Louisa, and they raised another family. And this branch of the family remained in Pioche.

RM: And that's your father.

JF: And that's my father.

RM: Oh, I see.

JF: The older boy was my father, George. And then the youngest of the children was Dan, who became state treasurer.

RM: And where did your grandmother - his second wife - come from?

JF: They were sisters in England. There was a brother who lived here by the name of Frederick W. Dickle, and I think maybe . . . everybody remembers him. He was a bachelor but he was a type of person who people remembered.

RM: What was your mother's name and her birthplace?

JF: My mother's maiden name was Johnson - that's Jake Johnson. But almost the same thing happened with Jake Johnson.

RM: Is that right?

JF: They were from Denmark, and I imagine some way or other they become involved in the LDS church.

RM: Before they came over?

JF: Well, I'm not certain of that. Evidently my grandfather's father . . . I think they were nobility or something and he fell in love with their maid and he was disowned. But anyway, they ended up in American Fort, [Utah]. Now there was one brother, Chris, who was 2 years older than Jake, and as they became young men they were in the freight hauling business. Some way or other they were transporting supplies from that area to Eldorado over near Las Vegas - below the dam on the Colorado River. They came through Panaca, and my Grandfather Jake fell in love with a local girl there by the name of Eliza Langford. His brother disowned him because he stayed, and his brother never spoke to him again the rest of his life. Chris ended up in Helena, Montana, and was a judge there.

RM: Is that right? The brother who went on?

JF: Yes. But Jake stayed and married Eliza, had 2 daughters by Eliza, and then they divorced and he married my Grandmother Connors. And she already had a family of 6, I believe - 4 boys and 2 girls.

RM: Oh, she'd been married before, too.

JF: Yes - to a man named Connors. She was connected some way with the LDS Church too. And her maiden name was Evans.

RM: And what was her first name?

JF: Oh, boy. I'll have to check with my sister (Elizabeth). Anyway, then they married and Jake and my grandmother had 2 daughters - my mother was the youngest and Edna was the oldest. Edna married Alex Lloyd and my mother married George Franks. So my grandmother and my grandfather had 2 families. Jake was a very burly, tough sort of a person.

RM: How big a man was he?

JF: He was big for those years. He was probably close to 6 feet but he weighed about 190 pounds which, in those days, I think was considered large.

RM: Did he come from Denmark?

JF: He was born in Utah, but his brother who was 2 years older was born in Denmark. The family migrated from Denmark and ended up in American Fort, Utah.

RM: Where is American Fort?

JF: Up by Provo and that area.

RM: What year would that have been?

JF: Well, my Grandfather Johnson was born in 1858, I believe, so the time period would be then. I believe they were connected with Brigham Young and the church in some way.

Then Jake came down through Panaca and fell in love and remained there.

RM: What was his occupation?

JF: That's what I was starting to mention. As far as I know he worked at different laboring jobs, and as a teamster, driving the teams in the freight hauling business. One article I read said that he could handle 12-horse trams with the best of them.

And the one article I gave you explained that . . . I think he was about 32 years old and he was playing cards up in the bar. And this Jack McKuen, who said that he worked for the railroad, was kind of a professional gambler. And my belief is that Jack baited him on and let him win. So the next night - as the one story you have will tell you - when he came back in, McKuen wanted to clean him out good, he and another fellow, McKuen wanted to play again. They said no, they'd played enough, so McKuen accused them of cheating. He said, "You cheated me," and pulled a gun.

My grandfather was unarmed and he had a reputation as a rough-and-tumble fighter. He went out and evidently he had a gun in his saddlebag. He came back in and told the bartender and everyone to get out of the way, and they went to shooting at each other. My grandfather hit him a couple of times and because he had gone and gotten his gun, they arrested him. Because it was more or less what you'd call premeditated. If he'd had his gun to begin with, then he would be justified. But anyway, he was arrested and held on $500 bail. And he had a younger sister, my aunt Mary,

who was a nurse. She came down and helped nurse Jack McKuen back to health so that it wouldn't be murder.
And Aunt Mary, who was affiliated with the church, was one of the early settlers of Hawaii. And she never married. We went down and lived with her once, in Hawaii. She lived out her life there.
But anyway, Jake married my Grandmother Connors, and they had 2 children. Well Delamar, at this time, was the most active camp -Pioche had kind of died out.

RM: Now what year are we talking about?

JF: 1892 to '94. And Delamar was where Jake's reputation really was made, and he was really the man for the time. Many stories refer to Jake Johnson with "Johnson's Law."

RM: It was Johnson's Law that ran . . .

JF: Yes, his own law. Mother had told me all about him long before [I saw] any of the stories I've read. And he was really something. Any tough miners who came to town would try and fight him. And Johnson's Law was, when he told them to get out of town, he just kicked them in the hind end and he'd be telling them they'd better never show up again.

RM: How long was he sheriff?

JF: Off and on for 20 years, first at Delamar, and then back here after Delamar's . . . I think at first he was constable at Delamar and then he ran for sheriff. Then he was either deputy or sheriff till he passed away in 1915.

RM: And he was sheriff of Lincoln County when it was the full county?

JF: Yes - either sheriff or deputy. But he was sheriff of Lincoln County when it included all of Clark County.

RM: Where did he make his home? Was it in Pioche?

JF: Yes. One picture shows him right by the old Mountain View Hotel. The next house above this one is where they ended up, they made it their home. That's where he died.

RM: So your mother grew up in this town?

JF: Yes. Delamar first and then here.

RM: And did we mention her birthdate?

JF: She was born in June of 1894. And her sister Edna - Mrs. Lloyd - was 2 years older.

RM: It sounds like your mother told you a lot of stories. Are there any other incidents that . . .

JF: There's one that nobody has ever written about, and I know it to be a true story. While he [Jake Johnson] was either sheriff or undersheriff or constable of Delamar, a young Indian boy got drunk and went above the town in the rocks and was firing a rifle down into the town. My grandfather had a deputy, another lawman, by the name of Frank Pace. Well, my grandfather had to do something about this and he

was good with all firearms and he was very good with a pistol. So Frank took his rifle and the boy would come up to shoot. Frank would keep shooting and hitting the rock to make him keep his head down, and Jake walked up the hill and when he was within range, the boy stuck his head up over and Jake shot him through the neck.

He went up and the boy was lying there and they thought he was dead. Well, the Indians all lived below town - there was quite an encampment of them - and Jake went down and told the mother that he had to shoot her son and he was up there. The mother went up and he wasn't dead, the boy survived.

RM: Is that right? Was he paralyzed or anything?

JF: No. But that shows the type of a man he was - to go down and tell the mother, and to go up a hill against a boy behind a rock with a rifle.

RM: Do you recall any other stories that your mother told you about your grandfather?

JF: Well, one I like happened in 1900. At the little gold camp out at Fay, Nevada (which is about 26 miles out towards Utah), there was a Negro who came in to fight and stayed on. The story got involved, and some way he was accused of burglarizing homes. He was working in a lumber camp out of town, and a group of about 13 went and got him out of his cabin and took him and was going to hang him. Twice they put him up and he wouldn't admit it and the third time he acknowledged it - though I don't believe he really was the guilty party - to keep them from killing him. Well, they tried to hang him but the limb broke.

They told him to get out and never come back and one of them pistol-whipped him. But instead of going to Utah (they thought he was headed for Utah) he circled around and then caught the little train that came back up here, and he told my grandfather. Jake took his deputy John Ewing and a buckboard and went out and arrested 13 of them. He manacled them and brought them back to town in that buckboard. And they tried them and found 8 of them guilty and gave them 6 months' hard labor.

RM: Is that right? He had a lot of guts, didn't he?

JF: Yes. My mother said he feared no one. Mother told me about what eventually might have led to his heart attack early in life -at 58. Mother told me that anybody who would come into town. . . in fact, Mother said they'd try and import fighters to fight him. Mother said 2 big Swedish miners - 2 toughies - fought him.

RM: With guns or with fists?

JF: With fists - that was what he preferred. And why there were 2 of them, I don't know - maybe he said he could lick

them both. I don't know, I've never heard. They broke his hip, but he broke an arm on one of them. But that was kind of his undoing - you know, a broken hip would just take a lot out of him at his age.

RM: Why didn't they just bushwack him?

JF: He was shot at many times. Oh, I'll tell you another story. This one Indian - Elik, a bad Indian - trailed him when he left Delamar to come to Pioche. In those days they'd come almost to Caliente and then turn up and stop at what they call the Cove Spring. He stopped to water his horse (his white horse) and Elik had followed him. When he went to water the horse he took the bridle off so the horse could drink (he was in a buckboard), and Elik shot at him and hit the horse in the ear and missed Jake. Well, he didn't wait around, you know. He got out of there. But Mother told me that white horse would just go crazy any time a shot was fired.

RM: Because of that incident?

JF: Yes. He was shot at some other times.

RM: I've read, I think, that Pioche was a very tough camp.

JF: It was as tough as any of them.

RM: So here he was sheriff in a . . .

JF: Well, this was a little later.

RM: Was there any evidence that his brother was that tough?

JF: I have no idea. And my aunt died before I could become old enough to ask her.

RM: You said his brother eventually wound up in Helena, Montana, as a judge. So they both wound up in law enforcement, didn't they?

JF: Evidently.

RM: Yes, that's interesting. One of them in a little less dangerous end of it, though.

JF: I'm curious myself to know if he was as tough as my grandfather.

RM: Was there any evidence that their father was that tough, or anything?

JF: Yes, but I can't tell you about it.

RM: You wonder what makes a guy like that.

JF: Yes. And in my family, whenever any of us get a little bit unruly, they just say, "Well, that's the Johnson temper."

RM: So Jake had a temper.

JF: It dates back . . . there was only one way - his way.

RM: And so your mother grew up as the daughter of the sheriff in town. Do you recall stories she told you about her childhood here?

JF: One story that might be of interest to you . . . when they lived in Delamar when she was a young girl, they went up picking flowers. Well, my mother was hard of hearing and

she reached up over a ledge to pick a flower and there was a rattlesnake there and it bit her.

RM: Oooo.

JF: And there was a family there by the name of McNamee. They ended up a very prominent family in Las Vegas. And one of the boys - Luke - carried her back down to town and tried to take care of her arm. And she told me she was very sick for about a week but she did get well.

Another story, to show you what type of a person old Jake was . . . My father and my uncle weren't married to the girls at that time. Maybe my uncle was, but they had a good friend who had the store in Pioche - a Jewish person named Cohn, whom they liked very much.

RM: Was it the mercantile store?

JF: Yes, but there was more than clothing - it was the general store. In fact, their family's brother took over later. But anyway, he raised a couple of turkeys and as a joke, Alex and my dad, George, went and took his turkeys and killed them. And my mother and Aunt Edna, I think, cooked them up and then invited Cohn to come and partake of the food. He didn't know that he'd be eating his own turkeys. But they made the mistake of inviting Jake. Well, after everybody enjoyed their turkeys and were sitting there, they fessed up. And Jake didn't think it was funny at all and was going to arrest his future son-in-laws.

RM: [Laughs]

JF: But Cohn took it the right way and didn't press charges, or he'd have arrested them both.

RM: His name was Cohn?

JF: Yes - C-o-h-n. But later his brother used the "e" -C-o-h-e-n.

RM: And Jake was going to arrest them?

JF: Mother said, "He was taking them to jail but Cohn wouldn't press charges.

RM: How did your mother and father meet?

JF: They both had grown up here. They went together 10 years and then when he went into service they were married.

RM: That would have been World War I?

JF: Yes.

RM: And how many children did they have?

JF: Just 2 of us - I have a sister 14 months older.

RM: And what's her name?

JF: Mary Louis Franks, and her married name is French. She lives in Las Vegas.

RM: And so you grew up in Pioche?

JF: Right here.

RM: Could you describe what it was like growing up in Pioche as a small child?

JF: Well, to me it was fine. But my kids don't believe what it was like during the Depression. But we were happy kids. We made our own entertainment.

CHAPTER TWO

JF: My father remarried. For some reason he left Lincoln County and ended up in San Francisco and became involved in real estate and raised 2 more girls by his second marriage. My mother raised my sister and me. She remained single, then later married for a couple of years but my stepfather didn't like living here. His name was Cook, Mother had met him in Hawaii, visiting my aunt. They never divorced but they never lived together after that. I was more or less raised here in Lincoln County and Pioche and went to high school here.

After getting out of high school I worked in mines a little bit, and then in 1942 I was working as a brakeman in Las Vegas on the UP Railroad. I enlisted in the air force under the cadet training program and became a pilot. And eventually - a point of interest - I ended up as a B-25 pilot flying off the island of Corsica. I was supposed to fly 50 missions and I ended up flying 70. I flew with Joe Heller, the author of Catch-22, and that was what his story was about. Shortly before I joined the outfit the astronaut Deke Slayton was in the 488th, right across the road. I was in the 489th, but I never knew him.

RM: I'll be darned - that's fascinating. We should talk more about that, but why don't we take you through chronologically. I'd like to know more about growing up in Pioche. It was a mining camp that was way past its prime when you were growing up, wasn't it?

JF: Well, here's what happened. The original rich silver mines were in the quartzite, and the ore was depleted pretty much in the first 8 or 10 years.

RM: Now what years are we talking about there?

JF: From say 1870 to '78. And it was the county seat, so there was always something doing here. Later, Delamar boomed - from 1892 or '94 into 1908 or '09. But later the big beds in the sulfide ore bodies were discovered in the limestone formation. [At that time] they had no way to separate the metal from the ore. A person by the name of Ed Snider (I think he was a metallurgist and mine engineer) found a floatation process [which separated it] about 1914, and these bodies of ore were really something.

RM: Would you describe what they looked like?

JF: Well, the bedded ore in the limestone is a replacement. They'll have these metals along where the fissures fed the solutions into the beds. There are certain beds of limestone that are good for the ore to replace. And he found a method of floatation that could separate these

ores. And there were mills up at Bauer, Utah, and in that area where they started taking out this type of ore.

RM: They were flotation mills, then?

JF: Yes. And for many years the ore was sent up there. In about 1936 and '37 the power line from Hoover Dam was put into here and they built a mill here to process the sulfide ores. During World War II it might have been the second largest producer of zinc in the United States. They operated continuously until they depleted the known ore reserves in the late '50s. At that time there were still many deposits of low-grade manganese. They set up a process for it - a kiln over at Castleton - and they nodulized it there and it was sent down to Basic Magnesium. They had a plant there, but it didn't prove successful.

RM: I didn't know they treated manganese at Basic Magnesium.

JF: Well, in that area. It was called Pioche Manganese.

RM: Oh, in the Vegas Valley. OK.

JF: But it didn't prove successful, or the ore wasn't quite high-grade enough.

RM: What is the general geology of the Pioche area? You say that there's a limestone and there's a quartzite.

JF: In the quartzite you have what you call the Yuba dike, a big intrusion in the quartzite.

RM: Is it an igneous dike?

JF: I guess so. They think that it was the primary ore bringer. When it went under the limestone it fed the solutions up.

RM: Are the limestones and quartzite side by side, or are they on top of each other?

JF: The underlying structure is the quartzite. Then it pushed up, and the limestone is above.

RM: So it isn't a caldera here?

JF: No, I don't believe so.

RM: It's more just an intrusive of this dike coming from underneath, then?

JF: Right. That's the ore bringer.

RM: And what were the characteristics of the ore in the quartzite?

JF: Primarily it was for the silver, lead and some gold.

RM: What were the veins like? How big were they?

JF: The main vein was the main discovery. It would range from just a few inches up to 6 feet, and maybe it could get as wide as 9 feet. They were high-grade. Then the veins split and there was more than one vein. At one time the mining stocks here traded on the stock exchange, just like Virginia City. And at one time they thought this silver was so rich that it would influence the world market for silver.

RM: What did the veins run in the quartzite?
JF: It would be different grades, but the typical ore that they really like was 150 ounces of silver and 50 percent lead.
RM: Wow. So it was a lead-silver ore.
JF: Yes.
RM: And how did they treat it?
JF: First they treated it at what they call Bullionville, by Panaca. They even brought a small train and took the ore down there because of the water.
RM: A train from Pioche down to Bullionville?
JF: Yes. At that time the nearest main train was Milford, Utah - there was no connection with the main artery. And then they had what they call Dry Valley. It was a little closer, and some of the ore was milled there.
RM: Do you know what kind of silver it was? Was it native silver or horn silver or ruby or . . .
JF: No, there were 2 types. Let's see. It might tell in my book here. (I've got a heart problem and I can't always come up with names.)
RM: (You've got an outstanding memory.) Was it a carbonate?
JF: Yes. Well there were some, but it was the oxide lead cyruside with galena . . . the galena was lead.
RM: And were their mills gravity, do you know, initially?
JF: Whatever it was, they had the stamp mills. They pulverized it and I'm not sure if they tabled it, but they used quicksilver to gather it.
RM: So they were getting a goodly amount of lead, weren't they?
JF: It wasn't a bad recovery for those kinds of conditions.
RM: And then on top of this quartzite was the limestone?
JF: Yes. The limestone produced much more than the quartzite ever did.
RM: And those were the big flat beds in the limestone?
JF: That's right.
RM: How big were those beds?
JF: They varied, but at the Ely Valley Mine I've seen them 40 feet high and maybe 100 or so feet wide. The other veins were better ore than the Ely Valley.
RM: Where is the Ely Valley Mine?
JF: It's 3 miles out. It was discovered and worked during World War II.
RM: OK. And they basically didn't work the limestone veins until 1914 or '15, and they were shipping the ore, you say, to Utah.
JF: Yes. That's when they had the mill up there that could process the complex limestone ores.
RM: But they didn't build that mill for this ore, did they? It was already there.

JF: I think so. They wouldn't have built it that quickly. And they had what we called the dinkee - a little train that would pick up the ore here at the Number One, which had the big ore bins, put it in another bin at the main line and then the UP Railroad would take it from the bin and transport it up to Bauer and Tooele, Utah.

RM: OK. So they had a UP spur line up to here?

JF: Yes, later. I think it was put here when they started to find all this ore.

RM: So there was something of a boom in Pioche in about 1915?

JF: I don't think it really boomed too much at that time.

RM: But it was a kind of a life injection?

JF: Yes. And there was a short period of time when the mines didn't operate during the Depression.
[The operation] was called Combined Metals. Herbert Hoover was a stockholder, and he was a mining engineer. He used to come out here for a few years, after he was President, and spend his birthdays at Castleton. They had a house over there that was big enough for him and his family.

RM: Is that right? Now, where is Castleton?

JF: It's about 3 miles over the hill, but about 10 miles around. That's where the big mill is.

RM: And about when did they build that mill?

JF: They started in about '36 with power from Hoover Dam.

RM: Why couldn't they generate their own power there?

JF: I don't know why it never happened. Maybe it was just because the mill up there handled them, and the cost of everything was too much. They probably got the ore and put in the train for 60 cents a ton, and it might have cost $2 or $3 to transport it.

RM: Were the mines under the control of one outfit, or were there a lot of little companies?

JF: There were several, but the main operation was called Combined Metals.

RM: When did Combined Metals come in?

JF: I don't know just when it was formed. That was Ed Snider's company. But when they started calling it Combined Metals I can't tell you. It's probably in here.

RM: You're referring to a little volume - what's it called?

JF: It's an old one - it's good, too. It's written by a prominent mining engineer: Geology and Ore Deposits of the Pioche District, Nevada by Louis G. Wingate and Adolph Knopf.

RM: I wonder what year that is. Is that available, or is it a rare copy?

JF: This is out of print.

RM: OK. So they built their own mill here when power became available in the 1930s.

JF: And it was a very successful mill from the day they started.

RM: And was Herbert Hoover a partner in Combined Metals?

JF: There was a parent company called National Lead (it's probably still going) and I think he was a large stockholder. But Ed Snider was the one who got it all going.

RM: And so they operated all through the war because they were producing zinc. They weren't closed down like a lot of the gold mines were.

JF: You bet. They even sent miners here to work . . . most of the soldiers were coal miners. They did send them here. They took a lot of us who could [work in a mine]. Of course, I volunteered.

RM: Were you a miner?

JF: Oh, no. I had run the hoists, but I was just out of school and the only mining I did was for myself. I'd do leasing.

RM: I see. Could you name me some of the major mines during the quartzite period?

JF: Oh, yes. They start about 1-1/2 miles out of town to the east. Right on the road, the first one that had any production was the Wide Awake. And across the road was the Alps. They're both shallow mines.

RM: What do you mean by shallow?

JF: Well, they didn't go down any distance - just about 300 or 400 feet. The Alps had pretty good production - a couple of million back in the early days. And then, as you come on towards Pioche, there was one called the Bowery, where I fool around. And it was very rich right on the surface.

RM: How deep was it?

JF: It went deep searching for ore, but the ore vein was right in the first 50 or 75 feet. Back over on the Wide Awake, in later years there were 2 partners, Stindt and Donahue, and they found a little bunch of ore. It amounted to about 2000 tons. Of course, it looked pretty good for a while. And they sold out to Stetson and Gillette - the sons of Stetson hats and Gillette razors. I don't know how much they got out of it, I think it was some kind of an option deal. They took out all the ore and Stindt and Donohue received very little of it, so it didn't turn out as well as it should have for them.

Then the next mine was the Boston Pioche, and it was a producer. Then you go into the real Pioche workings - the Yuba. And there are different names for it, like the Washington and Creel Mine. And then on to the Number Five and then on down the Number Three. That's where the original workings were. And then the Number One is into

the limestone. The main veins over there went down to 1400 feet.

RM: Is that right? And they were all in the quartzite?

JF: There, yes.

RM: Were they sinking through limestone there, or was the quartzite on the surface?

JF: On the surface.

RM: I see. So really what we're talking about is a big mineralized zone, isn't it?

JF: Oh, the geologists think that this is quite an area. But all of the known ore bodies are pretty well depleted.

RM: In the early years, did they know that the rich ore body was down there?

JF: Well, they were down underground. They weren't exposed. The flat beds were on top of the quartzite. There was nothing to show them that they were there while working the others. Then they found the big deposits.

RM: How did they find the sulfides? Are there any stories behind that?

JF: There's one up here called the Susan Duster where they followed a bed of manganese-type ore and then it went into the sulfides. But I don't believe that was the first. I think one of the early mines - the Lightner - came under the limestone and they had to go through the limestone 200 feet to intersect the quartzite underneath, and it was rich.

RM: And they hit it?

JF: And they hit the same vein in the quartzite. And then on in, the Number One right in that area is where they had the big zinc beds. There was a fellow by the name of Greenwood who was off to the side. He was doing some prospect work and he hit an upper bed (there were several horizons). He thought he really had found something, but come to find out, he'd crossed over onto the other property and he was lost.

RM: Is that right? So they had found these big sulfide beds around 1915 or so.

JF: Well, they might had known about them earlier but there was no way to do anything with them. This Mr. Ed Snider was really the one who came in here and spent many lean years, but he perfected the floatation process, or he found the method in some way.

RM: And what did the big beds run? What was a typical . . . ?

JF: Well, the good beds would run 14 percent zinc and maybe 7 percent lead and 7 ounces of silver - something like that. It was a complex ore, but if you could recover them it was good ore.

RM: Was there any gold?

JF: A little bit.
RM: This wasn't a gold camp though, was it?
JF: No. You'd find a little gold in nearly everything but it was never . . .
RM: In the early days in the quartzite, was it basically a chloride-type operation? I mean, was it worked by chloriders just following these veins and stopes and so forth?
JF: Yes. They were good miners and they took it out clean.
RM: And then what kind of mining methods did they use when they started on the big sulfide beds?
JF: In the big beds of ore, a lot of them had to use the square-set timber that was perfected in the Comstock Mine by Diedershire, or whatever his name was. They had the beds of ore you can read about in here. But they were in certain portions - you'd have the upper bed that was pretty good, and then you'd have what you called a rib or kind of a blank, and then the lower bed would be smaller but even better ore. But over all they'd separate the waste - take the rib out of it and the rest was good.
RM: But that was on one horizon. An upper and lower on one horizon, or was it all in one bed?
JF: It was all in one bed.
RM: And you said they were 40 feet thick?
JF: Well, they could be. I know they got that thick at the Ely Valley.
RM: They had to hold a lot of ground when they opened that up then, didn't they?
JF: Oh yes. They used square-set timbering . . . they couldn't have taken it all without it. They had a way of mining so much of it and then taking the waste - and then, whether they mined the lower bed first and then let it cave down . . . but it took some savvy.
RM: Could you name some of the big mines that came on after 1915?
JF: There were several mines. The Prince Mine . . . during World War I it had huge beds of iron manganese. There are some big glory holes over there where they took the ore out because the smelters wanted it. It was a low-grade deal. They really mined a lot of ore there. And then the Combined had Castleton - it was the producer for many years. And during World War II they diamond drilled on some ore out here at the Ely Valley. They had the same structure of manganese beds and all that. About the 600-foot level is where they hit the huge beds of ore. They weren't too extensive, but they were big. And they had good production there for 4 or 5 years.

RM: So a few years before you were born there was kind of a second wind for the camp.

JF: Right. The '20s, I think, were when they hired quite a few men. Then they had the Bristol Mine out here about 30 miles. That had been a producer for many years dating back to the 1890s.

RM: And what was it?

JF: The name of the mine is the Bristol Silver. It was silver but it had copper and some gold.

RM: Was it a complex ore, too?

JF: Well, yes, but not like the sulfides. It was oxide ore, and good sized stopes. They think there's good potential there at depth.

RM: Did they have water in the mines here?

JF: They did at the 1200- and 1400-foot levels. In Castleton, when they sank it on down and then connected up (these mines were connected), they encountered quite a water problem. I can't remember how many thousand gallons a minute it was, but they had like 8 pumps a-pumping to keep it de-watered.

RM: Did water eventually shut them down?

JF: No, because it ended up in the quartzite. I think the early mines would have gone deeper, but when you get into the water level the ore changes, too - it's not as good.

RM: You mentioned the Bristol. What were the characteristics of the ore there?

JF: Well, it's a fissure-type ore, but they had some good ore bodies there. It operated up until the '50s. The ore is still going down but they never controlled the water. They pumped a little for a while, but whether they encountered too much to pump, I can't tell you.

RM: Was it big ore, or was it little veins?

JF: Well, they had some big stopes. They had one stope they called the Million Dollar stope. It all blossomed out - they took $1 million out of the workings in one spot.

RM: Was there a town there?

JF: Oh, yes. And they even had a place down in Bristol Wells in the early days where they tried to mill and smelt and there are kilns there and there's a big slag pile with 20,000 tons of slag.

RM: What do you know about Timpahute?

JF: I know a lot about it. I leased out there on the tungsten.

RM: Is that right? My dad worked out there in the '50s.

JF: Well, that's when I was there.

RM: Is that right? Bob McCracken. I don't know if . . .

JF: Well, that name sounds a little familiar. I can't say I knew him but I must have known the name. I lived right at the Wah Chang Camp.

RM: Yes, he worked for Wah Chang there.

JF: Four other fellows and myself (it ended up as 3 and myself) had the east portion of that same formation. It was a 20-year lease.

RM: Tell me a little bit about it.

JF: I haven't been back since the '50s.

RM: It was an old camp, wasn't it?

JF: Yes. The old original Timpahute was a silver mine that was 3 or 4 miles down the range. And then they discovered this big deposit. They didn't even know what it was - these big granite intrusions, and a replacement thing that had made the deposit a large one. It might be the largest in the United States.

RM: It's scheelite, isn't it?

JF: Yes. And the Bradleys called it the Lincoln Mine. It worked during World War II, and I think there was one camp there. But then later, when the Korean conflict started and they guaranteed the tungsten for $63 a unit, that's when Wah Chang came in to operate. First it was called Black Rock, and this Clarence Hall - he was the mining man who interested Wah Chang in the mine . . . they spent a lot of money there and put in a large mill. At first they

tried to open-pit it and they weren't successful. They built their mill and then they used a shrinkage method. These big ore zones are called lenses.

RM: Are they vertical lenses?

JF: Yes. It wasn't flat, it was vertical. And they used the shrinkage method.

RM: I don't know what a shrinkage method is.

JF: Well, I'll explain it to you. You start up in the ore and you shoot and you draw one-third of what you've blasted. Then you go up on what's left and blast more and you continue on up. And on each end that you're working you have a raise - a manway.

RM: Yes?

JF: And then they had these draw points and they'd pick up the ore (because the ore broke big, you know, it was bad to use chutes). They'd pick it up with mucking machines and transport it out.

RM: Oh - they only drew off one-third because they had to keep raising up on the ore?

JF: Yes, when they ended up they'd have a whole stope full of broken ore.

RM: I see - that they could just pull out.

JF: When they finally got it all shaped up and opened up with their drop points, 4 men would work a stope. And each stope could break 100 tons a day. I think maybe 10 or 11 stopes of ore supplied the 1000-ton mill.

RM: How wide were these . . . ?

JF: They were wide - 30 or 40 feet, some of them.

RM: And how much depth did they have?

JF: Hundreds of feet.

RM: Was the horizontal?

JF: The granite intrusion came up like this, and the ore would be on the contact of the lime.

RM: OK, the granite intrusion came up on a kind of a slant, you say?

JF: Well, yes. It didn't come straight up. I don't remember, but the limestone there would be where the ore was formed.

RM: Where the contact was between the granite and the limestone. Yes.

JF: They had 3 ore zones. There was a sulfide zone, the garnet zone and then the calcite fluoride - that was where the best was. Some places you could take it all.

RM: And there was scheelite in all of it?

JF: A certain amount. The sulfides were lower grade. And then the garnet had some, but some of the other was very good.

RM: What did the ore run?

JF: Well, under that high of volume their millheads were less than five-tenths. In fact when they put it in operation

the last time, they were taking two- to three-tenths. But in my days they had about four-tenths.

RM: And how wide was the mine operation? I mean, what kind of an area did it cover?

JF: The contact was kind of in a horseshoe shape. I would say half a mile at least - maybe more than that. We had one end of it.

RM: Were you very far underground?

JF: How deep did they get? They had their main level at the 500 and I think that was it. The ore's still going down.

RM: There's still ore there?

JF: Oh, yes. The last big company invested about $30 million to reactivate it and then when we bettered our relations with China . . . you can't compete with them, boy.

RM: When was it that they most recently spent money there?

JF: Wah Chang operated until '56, I believe, so it would have been much later. Timpahute was operating here 8 or 10 years ago.

RM: But then they started bringing it in cheap from China? Plus they had the price support on it before, which helped it.

JF: Well, no. The price support only lasted during the Korean conflict, but the natural level of it got up good. Even iron production was up then. I have a tungsten mine called the Minerva out here 75 miles, and I really thought I had something - and would have, because the price we had was good and getting better. Even GTE (General Telephone and Electric [Sylvania Electric]) was contacting us wanting to know if we could guarantee [production]. But then, of course, when we bettered our relations with China, that was the end of the tungsten. I don't know if there's a tungsten operation in the United States.

RM: Was Wah Chang ever on the site there?

JF: Yes. <u>His</u> name is K. C. Li and the company is named Wah Chang.

RM: Did you know him?

JF: I saw him. But my wife worked in the office and she remembered him. He was a little Chinaman.

RM: Was he from China, or was he from Nationalist China?

JF: He was from Nationalist China. He was related to Chiang Kai Shek or connected to him in some way. He wasn't Red China. I'm sure he's passed away, but his company might have been what is now Tenneco, I'm not sure. He was a very big operator world wide, but I'm just guessing about Tenneco. K. C. Li discovered the first China deposits, and they are by far the world's biggest.

RM: You said that you had a lease then?

JF: Yes. You see, part of this property . . . there were some farmers from Alamo, and their father or somebody liked prospecting, and he located part of this. He could have had it all. But he didn't realize anything about that, and he located part of it.
RM: Who was this farmer?
JF: The name is Schofield. The 5 brothers were raised in Alamo. They had 40 claims but they only had about one-fifth of this big property or less. They had located and they didn't even realize that these big zones were scheelite and went way beyond their claims.
RM: When did they locate those claims?
JF: I'd say in the early '20s. And we had a good ore zone, for a small operation.
RM: Who located the rest of it?
JF: Wes Kohen and the Thiriots. They're a local family down there. I think Wes Kohen just died. He was the one who really operated out there. And for a while the Bradleys were big in tungsten. They had it leased and I don't know why they didn't end up with it - maybe it was a straight lease. But they were successful operators out there.
RM: Was the rest of it located in the '20s also?
JF: I think so. With Kohen and all they had to be, because they weren't that old.
RM: So the Schofields saw something out there but they didn't know what . . .
JF: Well, yes. But nobody knew anything about tungsten in those days.
RM: They knew it was tungsten.
JF: Well, no, not at first. But I think Kohen did, and Thiriots. I think Kohen was a mining man and he knew this big ore zone, probably.
RM: Did they try and make a go of it then?
JF: Oh, yes. As I said, the Bradleys operated it on a lease and built a 75-ton mill, and they had a successful operation when the price was high enough. Prior to World War II their price was $30 or something a unit.
RM: Why don't we say what a unit is for the reader.
JF: A unit is like one percent.
RM: One percent. OK, 20 pounds of what - tungsten or scheelite?
JF: Well, scheelite is just a form of tungsten.
RM: So it wouldn't be pure tungsten, it'd be the pure scheelite ore - one percent of it.
JF: No.
RM: Is that what the 20 pounds is?

JF: That's the amount in one ton of rock. In some of the scheelite out of my place, the Minerva, the nodules that are formed in the rock are maybe over 60 percent tungsten.
RM: Is that right? And what did you have to get to get the top price - what plus?
JF: When it was guaranteed at $63, that was great. In those days your costs were so low.
RM: And it had to be what grade to get $63?
JF: The concentrates had to be 60 percent or better to get that price.
RM: Then when did Wah Chang come into the picture?
JF: In 1950 or so at Timpahute.
RM: And who did he buy it from?
JF: Well, he evidently didn't buy it. At least there was a purchase deal because it reverted back to Kohen and Thiriots.
RM: But he acquired from local owners?
JF: Yes. And I don't know whether it reverted back to them or they sold out to the large company - Union Carbide - that spent $30 million out there the last time to put in the mill and power lines and develop it again.
RM: Why didn't Wah Chang acquire the portion of it that you had leased?
JF: [chuckles] They weren't too happy about that. The guy who interested Wah Chang was Clarence Hall, and he just fell asleep at the switch a little bit. He figured no one else was interested in tungsten and he was always going to go down and tie up the property with the Schofields. Well, the main person in the group I was associated with in mining had a connection with the people [who held the property] and they gave us a 20-year lease.
RM: Oh. You were operating there at the same time Wah Chang was, then?
JF: Yes.
RM: Where were you selling your ore?
JF: We shipped ore to Bishop for quite a while. We even sent some down to Mountain Pass, by Vegas - they thought maybe they could handle it. But the freight ate up the profit. But we knew we could handle it if we had a mill. Then we got a government loan to go after a better grade of ore. It was called Defense Minerals Exploration, and it was to develop our own property.
RM: You didn't have Wah Chang mill your ore?
JF: They were going to. They took over our lease and were going to pay us a royalty in about '56 or '57 - in the last part of their operation.
RM: Describe the living conditions out at Timpahute.

JF: Oh, they had a nice little camp. Wah Chang built a first-class camp. They had maybe 30 nice little homes and then trailers - I lived in a trailer and my wife worked for the company. Living conditions weren't bad at all. We had power - they generated the power there at first and then later power was brought in from Hoover Dam.

RM: Which way did it come in?

JF: It came in from the east. It'd be right down - like on the way to Delamar or Pahranagat.

RM: Kind of by Hiko? At the peak of activity out there, how many men would you say were working at Timpahute?

JF: Oh gosh. It was underground mining. There must have been 200 or 300. I would think at least 200. My wife was in the office, but I just don't recall exactly. They operated around the clock, and between the mill and the mine it was quite a little settlement.

RM: Was it mainly leasers, or was it day's pay work?

JF: No. They had contract miners who really produced.

RM: They were evaluated by how many cubic feet of ore you turned out, weren't they?

JF: Yes. I can tell a story about Ely Valley. I was running a hoist out there in the late '40s, and the price of metals dropped. They had 32 men employed underground and Mr. Janney didn't want to shut the mine down. But he told the men, all of us, "If you can produce 300 tons a day, we won't make any money but we can keep operating." Well, we couldn't do it - couldn't produce 300. So they were going to close it down.

Twelve of the good miners said, "Well, why don't you give us the bonus incentive." And they agreed, rather than closing down entirely. I was the hoistman, so I didn't get in on the [incentive], but they were bragging because they'd only take 300 ton a day. They could make 400 ton a day. When they worked for the company 32 of them couldn't work it, but when they were on a bonus deal, 12 or them could get it and up the tonnage.

RM: That's a great story.

JF: That is the truth. I just kid this one guy who's still here, I always kid him about that. So you'd better put them on bonus.

RM: And Wah Chang had them on bonus?

JF: Yes. And as I say, maybe 10 or 11 of the stopes could produce 900 or 1000 tons a day.

RM: When did Timpahute shut down?

JF: It was '56 or '57. And then they were just really getting going well, with a big mill and . . . I don't know too much about it. I've never been back out there. I lived in Vegas for many years and I was kind of out of touch. But

they had taken even the power lines out and then the [new operation] put them back in and built another mill. It was another nice operation out there.

RM: About when was that, do you think?

JF: I'd just be guessing - 10 to 15 years ago.

RM: About 1975 or a little later?

JF: Yes. It was operating then because that's when I got interested in the mine I have.

RM: Tell me about your tungsten mine.

JF: Oh, it's a dandy - for a small operator. It's called Minerva. It's 75 miles out - right by Mount Wheeler, on this end of it. I'm right where the oiled road and the power line end. (Of course, they didn't oil roads and all that until later.) But every time the price was up it would operate during the World War I, during World War II and during the Korean War.

RM: Is that right? So it's a proven producer.

JF: Oh yes. It's produced 150,000 tons of ore that averaged one percent.

RM: And is it on a granite-lime stone contact?

JF: No. It's strictly quartz fissures through the limestone.

RM: I didn't know that scheelite produced like that. How wide are the veins?

JF: Well, they'll average 5 feet. And they're the same - the quartz might be 20 feet wide, but maybe 5 feet of it will be mineralized. For instance, there'll be 10,000 tons in a spot and then it might blank out and then you get 10,000 more.

RM: Do you have a mill there?

JF: There was a small mill there. There were 3 different mills at different times - I think one was a 75-ton mill. But they never kept it busy, the actual production was 25 or 30 tons a day average.

RM: And when was the last time you operated it?

JF: Well, the last time there was a real operation there, Combined Metals had it. They had a 25-year lease.

RM: From you?

JF: No. I got it after they went bankrupt. Combined gave it up in about '74 or '75 and that's when I acquired it.

RM: Did you buy it or get it on open ground?

JF: I bought it. It reverted back. Combined held it for many years because they liked it. But when they went bankrupt it reverted back to a widow whose husband had operated it [with his] father, [who was] 90-some-odd years old. Well, she couldn't operate this mine, so we were able to purchase it. And tungsten was looking good at that time. But I never really got into operation.

RM: So you're just hanging onto it now?

JF: Yes.
RM: It'll probably come back some day, won't it? Everything goes in cycles.
JF: Well, like, Red China, now - it would be a real problem if they ever broke relations with the U.S. I told Clarence Hall, the man who really interested Wah Chang in his mine, that I'd gotten Minerva and he said, "That's the best tungsten in the United States. The purest." Bob Stauffer, who operated the small mill there, would take the concentrates down to Bishop - he'd get a 65-percent-concentrate with just tables. He just got it to that grade and they liked it [that way] because they could mix his ore with other ores that wouldn't pass, or would have impurities. He had no trouble selling this to them and [they] probably gave him a bonus.
RM: Your mine must be down close to the [Great Basin] national park.
JF: Yes. They were going to include it in there and then they reduced the park boundaries. If they'd paid me for it they could have had it. Because some of it's patented ground, and if I had to have a price for that patented ground . . .
RM: It dates way back then, doesn't it?
JF: Oh, yes. They operated in World War I and World War II and the Korean War.
RM: Could we talk some more about the mines in Pioche? For instance, what kind of mills were present in 1915?
JF: None. Later this Mr. Janney came along and built a mill down here which operated in the late '20s.
RM: Where was it?
JF: Right down a mile below town on the north. The stack is still there and there's a mill there now. It was where the railroad came in.
RM: Was that the only mill in town when you were growing up?
JF: Yes.
RM: And was it operating?
JF: Yes. It burned once and then they rebuilt it. And yes, it operated. This Mr. Janney had mines up here - the Treasure Hill in the quartzite.
RM: Are we talking about ore in the quartzite or in the limestone?
JF: The quartzite. But the Number One, in the limestone, was going all the time in my lifetime.
RM: Was it going big, or . . .
JF: Well, there was one period of time - 6 months - when they shut down. They'd have 100 or 150 men. It was the big employer in those days. There was just one period of time during the Depression years for a short while (1932) when they didn't operate.

RM: And what was its name?
JF: They called it Number One, of Combined Metals.
RM: Incidentally, in Timpahute were they pulling it out of a shaft, or a tunnel?
JF: They had a shaft in the original workings. But then they went down and drove a long drift from the bottom, down where the mill was. And that's where they could produce the tonnage.
RM: And they came under it?
JF: Yes.
RM: And is there a shaft in your mine out by Mount Wheeler?
JF: It was all tunnels and one connecting shaft and winzes at 500 feet. There were different tunnels and different veins. And there are a few winzes that went down a little ways.

Combined operated and took out about 30,000 tons before the price dropped - they paid $75,000 just for a lease. They operated on a joint venture with American Zinc and they tried to send this ore up to one of their mills at Bauer, which is floatation. Bob Stauffer took over some of the ground. He had a little mill there and he was just doing great. They even ended up putting some of their ore through his mill. Mr. Gemmill (they were an old family here - he was Combined's head geologist) told me that when they let Stauffer process their ore, they darned near made back all the money they'd put into it. Young Mr. Snider was trying to float it up at their property at Bauer, and you didn't need to. All you need is gravity. It just was great for gravity mills.
RM: And when you were growing up the Number One was a big employer . . .
JF: Yes. And then you had what were called the Pioche Mines. That was Mr. Janney's operation there in the quartzite. And he had the mill for his ore, which was oxide ore, which requires different milling.
RM: And which mines where those again?
JF: He had all of Treasure Hill, as we call it. They were all connected. But the main workings had the Burke tunnel going through them. They drew out through their tunnels. They'd bring the ore up even though they were below, and then they had what they called the Number Three. It was a shaft, and they'd bring everything up and transport it over to the tramway. (That tramway is still there.) The tramway would take it down and put it right into their mill.
RM: And what other mines were working when you were a kid?
JF: The Bristol. There was a period of time when it didn't, but . . . And then the Prince Mine. And that was the same kind of deal - as Combined, they'd take the ore on the UP

Railroad and pick it up from there and put it up to the Combined's mill just a mile or so [away].

RM: There must have been a real problem with silicosis in the quartzite mines.

JF: No, Delamar was the camp that was the widow-maker, especially in their mill when it was a dry grind. In 6 months they could get silicosis and die. It was terrible.

RM: Terrible. What kind of rock was it?

JF: It was the quartz.

RM: But the quartzite here wasn't so bad for silicosis?

JF: Eventually, over a period of time, but it wasn't a big problem. In all my days they used the water and controlled it. And they didn't mill it here. But at Delamar they mined and even ground it up without water.

RM: Wow. It must have been hideous. Tell me a little bit about the mines at Delamar - especially some things that I couldn't get from books.

JF: At one spot there there's a glory hole - that was the veins and mineralized areas that they took out first, then nearly all of [the rest] would make a low-grade ore that was worth taking. It tells about it in this book a little bit. But eventually the values decreased and finally when they closed it there was still ore but it was such a low grade that it didn't pay to operate.

RM: The mines there were never working when you were a kid, were they?

JF: Just with leasers.

RM: Were they doing any good?

JF: Yes. During the Depression years a fellow in Panaca who's still here leased there, and he made money.

RM: What's his name?

JF: Marel Bradshaw. He knows mining. He knows how to get ore out clean and has been a successful leaser.

RM: But there must have been some pretty extensive workings there.

JF: Yes, there was. It was a pretty big operation, especially for those days.

RM: What about in the '30s?

JF: In the '30s there were maybe 4 or 5 different sets of leasers at the most.

RM: What other notable mines are there in Lincoln County?

JF: Well, out on the other side of Highland Peak is what they call the Pan American. That was sunk on a big bed of ore that pitched under the hill. I think the shaft on the incline went down 2600 feet. They are tremendous bodies of low-grade thick ore, but it's real low-grade.

RM: How low?

JF: Oh, lie 2 percent zinc, and maybe 1 or 2 percent lead and an ounce or two of silver. But Charlie Steen (you've heard of him - he finished up over in Moab in the uranium when he left his operation) had all this equipment and he came out here and operated a combined mill and these big beds of ore. He had big trucks and so on and for a year or two he did real well. What shut him down is that Great Falls went on strike and wouldn't take his concentrate and that put him out of business.

RM: Is that right? But he was making money on that?

JF: Yeah. I know he did because he paid bullion tax. I wasn't here at that time but I'm sure he had his dumpsters and all go right down this incline.

RM: How deep did he go?

JF: I don't think he got clear down but he had some good ore zones around 500 or 600 feet.

RM: Does the Pan American date to the early days?

JF: I don't know . . . I think they sank that shaft in the '20s. Then the Comet's out there and it operated off and on. In fact I believe it might have been in the late '40s that the Gemmill family had control of it. They had a fissure of zinc there that was very good. In fact I ran the hoist out there for a little while for them, just as an employee. They had a shaft for about 300 feet, and then a tunnel, and then a winze, and while I was employed the idea was they would come back under and raise up and connect up the shaft. They did a fine job - it connected right on the money.

RM: Is that right? How deep were they?

JF: I think they were down to 500 or 600.

RM: And they made the connection?

JF: Yes - and hit it right on when they did. The engineer was Steel McIntyre, he was doing it when I was there (I was friendly with him) and he did a fine job. He was from a mining family up in Utah, I think. Later Steel did real well up there himself.

RM: Was that a lead-zinc operation too?

JF: As I said, it was a good zinc stope. There's even tungsten there - wolframite tungsten. I think it was silver and lead and zinc. This zinc they hit was about 40 percent zinc. It was the prettiest stuff you ever saw.

RM: Wow. Was it good-sized?

JF: Yes. It had been mined out when I saw it but I was down there and it seemed to me that it was 6 to 8 feet wide. It was good stuff.

RM: And when was that going, again?

JF: Well, it went off and on over the years but this period of time was in the '50s.

RM: What other mines do have some knowledge of?

JF: There's the Mendha Mine. I leased out there. [chuckles] It has a production record.

RM: Where is that?

JF: It's out on the Highland Range on this side of the big mountain about 10 miles. I worked for the company as a hoistman and they did some development and didn't hit anything. But they did hit a nice little ore zone down a winze. And one of the bosses, an old Swede by the name of Leo Nordquist, decided he wanted to lease it. Well, he kept me on with him because I knew a little about leasing and I had the hoisting license. There were 4 of us: Jim Hulse, who is a real mining man - he had been the superintendent for the Ely Valley Mines and he liked to lease, and Ole Bleak, who was a local. The 4 of us took a lease. We'd go down 1100 feet on an incline, then in 300 feet, then we'd go down another 100 feet in a winze and mine our ore.

JF: We took out 6 railroad cars - it'd be like 360 tons. It was great fun - we worked hard. And it was good ore. Our ore averaged from about 18 to 25 percent lead and 17- to 20-ounce silver and .33 to .44 hundreds of an ounce gold.

RM: That was darn good ore.

JF: That would be good ore today. The way we were going it was just small, and we mined it real clean. But a fault cut us off. And we were down almost to water so that put us out of business for sure.

RM: Could you tell me its location again?

JF: There's a little area out here where there's another mine, the Highland Queen you can see, but the Mendha's on the opposite side of the foothills adjacent to the big mountains. We had a great time working there.

RM: Well, you were just shipping pure ore then. You didn't have to mill it, did you?

JF: No. We had 3 smelters that wanted our ore - International, American and U.S. Smelter near Salt Lake City, Utah. We were the last one to operate the Mendha.

RM: Is there any mining in the Pioche area now?

JF: There's me. [laughs] And others just did a little drilling out here. Newmont came in 2 years ago and did a lot of drilling but they didn't find anything.

RM: Where did they drill?

JF: Mostly out by the Ely Valley.

RM: What were they looking for?

JF: Calderas, microscopic gold that they would open-pit.

RM: And it doesn't look like there are any big heap leach gold operations in the area?

JF: Well, so far, no. But I got friendly with the geologist for Newmont because he was going to include our little property out here. And he said that Newmont and these big companies might go into an area and give it up and then another might come in and find a good deposit. Just because they give them up doesn't mean that they proved nothing is there. Pickins, a big corporate raider, tried to take over Newmont at that time, and I think that they depleted a lot of their money to prevent him from getting Newmont. So I think maybe that curtailed their operation, I've heard that.

RM: It makes sense. And you mentioned you have a mine?

JF: Well, it's part of the original workings right out here. I'm on what they called the Mascot Silver, Phil Hulse and I have 11 claims leased. We've got several potential spots to look for some more of this high-grade, but we haven't found it. But I'm still not too discouraged.

RM: And you're out in the quartzite, right?

JF: Oh yes. It'll be the rich ore if we find it.

RM: How deep are you?

JF: Right on the surface. I've sunk one little shaft and . . . one shaft was completely covered up and I didn't know how deep it was, I got down 74 feet before I hit the bottom.

RM: Is that right? So you cleaned out that old shaft, in effect?

JF: Yes. And I'm in line where I thought there should be a vein, but I think that the formation is twisted there.

RM: What makes the veins out there? Should there be a vein there . . .

JF: Well, this Yuba dike, the main ore bringer, goes clear through our ground. There are little spots of ore all through it. Below me in the late '30s and '40s the Salt Lake Pioche found this ore and it was good, rich ore. They took out, in those days, $1-1/2 million or $2 million. Now it'd be like $10 million.

RM: Yes, right.

JF: And above me, on my ground, was the Bowery. It was right up at the surface and you can look down and see where they mined out the ore, it was maybe $1 million worth taken out.

RM: How big is the Yuba dike?

JF: Oh, it varies from 10 to 150 feet, and it goes clear through our ground.

RM: Clear through the quartzite?

JF: Yes. I think it made all the ore in the limestone, that is, where it went under the limestone.

RM: OK. So it made the ore in the camp.

JF: Yes. Most geologists agree that that was the ore bringer.

RM: And then what happens? Are there stringers that come off of the dike?
JF: Yes. The solutions come through the dike and then go out in the fissures.
RM: And is there a predictable pattern where it comes off of the dike?
JF: Not too much.
RM: What did it do? Follow the cracks in the rock?
JF: Evidently, yes. The little fissures or something of the quartz. The fissures that crack open from the surrounding rock.
RM: Yes - there must be a big magma or something underneath that was feeding that dike.
JF: All the mining engineers and geologists think it was quite a zone there.
RM: How far down have they traced the dike?
JF: Right out about a mile is all. Then you go into limestone again. But as far as I know, the dike starts there, and I don't know how far out it goes west, several miles perhaps.
RM: And how deep have they followed it?
JF: Well, up here they were down 1400 feet and it was still going below the water level.
RM: Where did Pioche get its miners from about '15 on?
JF: All over the west. We had what you call tramp miners. Many good miners came here from different areas - Colorado, Arizona, all over. We called them tramp miners and 10-day miners.
RM: Working the circuit, in effect. They were good miners, weren't they?
JF: A lot of them were.
RM: Were there any special mining techniques that you're aware of that had to be used here? What were some of the mining problems that had to be overcome?
JF: The main problem was when they had to use the square-set timbers.
RM: Oh - to hold that ground.
JF: Yes. That was the main problem. In the quartzite you wanted what you call chloriders. And the Cornishmen were great for that. Have you ever heard the expression "Cousin Jack"?
RM: Oh, yes.
JF: Do you know how the name originated?
RM: No. What's the story on that?
JF: I read this - I don't know it to be true. But they have these tin mines or whatever over in Cornwall, and they were great miners. So when Butte was going these miners would come over and go to work. And the bosses wanted more of

them. They'd ask these Cornishmen, "Are there any more like you over there?"
And a lot of them would say, "Well, me cousin Jack might come." They got the name Cousin Jack.

RM: That's good.

JF: We had them here in the early years in the quartzite.

RM: What about later - in the second phase?

JF: There were lots of good Italians. Bristol had lots of Italian miners.

RM: When you were growing up were there a lot of Italians there?

JF: Yes. We had 7 or 8 bars here and nearly all of them were Italians, and they were funny.

RM: Name some of the bars.

JF: Well, there was the Pioche Club the Overland, the Nevada, the Alamo, the Bank Club . . . and I think one was called the Silver during World War II. And one little one - I don't know whether we called it Purdy's or what, but Purdy was the operator. And there was the Miner's Spot. That was where the Italian miners from Bristol would go. Do you want to hear a little story about those miners?

RM: You bet.

JF: Now, the fellow is still alive - Duce Dominicci. He's down in the hospital. He was an Italian miner, and he was a bachelor. He talked quite broken, as most of them did. A young, good-looking girl named Marva came through. I don't know if she was a runaway, but she was a very attractive girl, and Duce took her in and married her. So she was expecting a child and all these Bristol miners would come into the little Miner's Spot bar. (That was their place. Others'd go too, but that was their bar.) So anyway Marva was down at the hospital in Caliente. And of course everybody knew she had been taken there to have a baby and Duce came in and went on down. Well, they're all in there and Duce comes back. So naturally they want to know what it is, so John Piantoni, the owner of the bar, says, when Duce comes through the front door, "What he is, a she?"
Duce says, "No. Her's a him."

RM: [Laughs] That's cute. Was there a bar where the Cousin Jacks hung out or . . . ?

JF: Well, that was in the early days so I don't know. Some of my relatives might be Cousin Jacks.

RM: Were there any other ethnic groups in town when you were growing up?

JF: The Italians were the only ones that were enough to call a group.

RM: Were there Indians here?

JF: Yes, a few. As a young boy I can remember Mother had a squaw who would work for her a little bit.

RM: Do you remember her name?

JF: No. My sister might, but I don't. But at Delamar there was a regular settlement of them below the town. My mother evidently was very friendly with a little Indian girl and went down in her teepee or whatever to play with her and she got lice. And her older sister, naturally, got it too. They had to shave their heads and my mother's older sister Edna was really upset at Mother. [laughs]

RM: Were there any Blacks in Pioche?

JF: There was a Mexican married to a Black lady, and I can't even think of her name. And then there was Snowball Johnson, when I was just a boy. I think he was more a cowboy. He could fight too. I remember him working out with the gloves up in one of the old buildings. And then they had a rodeo, and he evidently was a good bulldogger. I remember as a boy that he bulldogged a steer and he was so powerful that he pulled one horn and broke it. I couldn't believe that - it's stayed in my mind. I was only 5 or 6 years old, but I can still picture that broken horn and the blood.

They used to have good fights here. We had a couple of real good fighters. They had some employees [who were pretty good fighters]. They even brought headliner fighters off the coast to fight this one fighter. His name was Adrian Elton and he worked on the engineering staff. He wasn't an engineer or anything, but with his fighting ability, they kept him employed. He was a nice guy - small, though. In the late '30s he fought Chalky Wright down in Vegas. Chalky knocked him out in the 7th round but they told me that Adrian was ahead of him on points. Chalky became world champion and was champion for 10 years.

RM: Was Chalky Wright from Vegas?

JF: No. He just had some fights there. They used to have some good fights here. A fellow by the name of Joe Liston who was a World War I veteran and became involved with American Legion promoted these fights.

RM: How often did they have fights here when you were growing up?

JF: Oh, they always had them on Labor Day, because I fought a few times [chuckles] - in the kids' fight. They always had a fight going on Labor Day. There was a big celebration here on Labor Day. That was our big deal.

RM: Bigger than the Fourth of July?

JF: Oh, yes. Fourth of July was Caliente and then we had Labor Day.

RM: Tell me what they would do on Labor Day here.

JF: Well, we still do it, I furnish the dynamite. We have what we call a "sunrise salute." Old Theo Johnson would set off the charges and believe me, he woke you up. (They won't do it any more because they cracked some windows.) But anyway, that started the day. And then usually the mining events took over and they went on for 2 or 3 hours - drilling and mucking and single jacking. And then the kids would be involved in their sports.

RM: You mean foot racing and that kind of thing?

JF: Yes, all that. I used to end up with some money - big money for me.

RM: Oh, you'd win money if you won.

JF: Oh, they paid off.

RM: None of this win a ribbon business, then?

JF: No. They even put money in the barrels of flour, and there were pie eating contests and it was quite a deal. And then the men would have a tug-of-war and then there was always a ball game. And in the evening there was a fight card with good fights. (Later there was some wrestling, but it was mostly fights.) And then there was the dance. And that ended it.

RM: And where did they hold the fights?

JF: Well, 2 or 3 places. Right up there where the little park is now was a natural bowl. When I was real young we always fought there. Then later they would have them down in the old Thompson Theater. And one time they were down at the grade school gymnasium. Later they built their ring down at the ballpark. But mostly in the early time it was right up there at the park. It was just a natural little amphitheater.

RM: And where did they hold the dance?

JF: In the old Thompson Hall, mainly. That thing would just sway. You ask anybody who was ever up here and that's what you remember -your New Year's dance and all the celebrations nearly every Saturday night during the Depression.

RM: The whole building was swaying?

JF: Now I don't think people would brave it. It didn't bother them in those days.

RM: Were the tramp miners and the miners working here pretty heavy livers, so to speak?

JF: They'd drink on credit and boy, the first bill they paid before they even paid their board bill was at the bar they patronized.

RM: [Laughs] They weren't going to miss out on that. What hours did the miners work? Did they work 8 hours . . . ?

JF: There were usually 2 shifts. Your day shift would run from 7:30 or 8:00 till 3:30 or 4:00

and then they'd blast, and then what you called your swing shift would come around 6:

6:00 till 2:00 a.m. And then you usually had a shaft crew or a repair crew working until morning.

RM: Did they work 5 days or 6 or 7?

JF: At Ely Valley during the war and afterwards, heck, I worked 6 months out there without a day off. But the normal was 6, and on your sixth day you got time-and-a-half. Your seventh was double-time after the war, but not in the early days. The early days was a 6-day week with no overtime or any fringe benefits.

CHAPTER FIVE

JF: Back in the days of my boyhood every kid was fairly close to the kids in their age group. You played together and did things together. And when I was in grade school, or upper grade school, we boys liked to participate in athletics. Well, during the summertime about all you could play would be baseball. But we didn't have the equipment, the grade school had pretty good equipment but they wouldn't allow us to use it during the summer. We had a group of 8 or 9 or 10, and we'd choose up sides and play.

But after a while that became a little bit monotonous and we wanted to try our skill against another team. There were very few phones in the county at that time, and one of the boy's fathers was an official at the mine and he had access to a phone. So he phoned down to Panaca and got a grocery store down there that had a phone and he told somebody that we'd like to challenge them to a baseball game. And we thought it was all set up - I don't recall who said yes, they'd play us.

So now we had to get down there and nobody had time to take us. There was a very nice fellow who worked at the mine by the name of Red Walthers. He had one of these big cars that had the double seats for the back. He liked all of us kids and we liked him, so we went to him and we said we wanted to go to Panaca, and would he take us.

He said, well, yeah, he guessed he would, but he'd need 2 gallons of gas. Gas was 20 cents a gallon and we tried to raise 40 cents but we only came up with 20 cents. We ran back to Red and said, "Look. You'll coast darn near down there. Can't you get by with one gallon of gas?"

And he was a nice fellow and he said, "Well, OK, one gallon."

So we gathered up 9 of us and off we went. And when we got down there, there wasn't anybody at the field right by the grade school to play with us, and that was a bit of a disappointment. But finally we spotted one of the Panaca boys and told him, "Well, can't you gather up a team?"

After about an hour and a half and everybody running around to different places they gathered up 9 of the Panaca boys to play a ball game with us. And I remember we played right by the Panaca grade school, which was a 2- or 3-story block building. (In the summertime, of course, it was all locked up.) But we started our game and I remember we batted first - we were the visiting team -and they got us out. I was pitching that day and the very first player who faced me was a boy by the name of Arshall Lee. (He died here about 3 years ago, he was for many years a state band

inspector and things like that.) Our only ball was a completely taped baseball. On my first pitch Arsh swung, fouled it and it went up on the grade school building. Well, we didn't have another ball, and there wasn't one kid in Panaca with a baseball. [laughter]

Our game was called but it wasn't a total loss. Red was a nice fellow and we all loved to swim and there was a reservoir a little bit out of town, so even without bathing suits you could go. So that was our consolation prize - we all went swimming.

RM: That was a cute story.

JF: If my kids do anything they've got to have the finest equipment. [chuckles] They can't believe that we couldn't even afford a baseball.

RM: Do you have any more stories like that?

JF: Well, they made a play of one I told last year and put it on at the Heritage.

RM: Here in Pioche?

JF: Yes, they have it every year. They try to find these things to write about. The one I told them was about the same time period. We were about 11 or 12 years old and we were playing right over there. The courthouse was up there and below a big dump of earth. And over in the dump we found something that we thought was of value. I can't remember whether it was a coin or what it was. But you know how little boys'll get all enthused - we decided we were going to dig for treasure.

So we started a diggings. We were old enough to really kind of get with it. Of course we didn't find anything more of value, but we decided we'd like to have our own little mine and get down and tunnel around and have our own little clubhouse and all. (It was just across there.) So we worked diligently for several weeks, and we got down 12 or 14 feet. One of the boy's fathers even rigged us up a windlass so we could keep going. We progressed pretty well and different adults would come by. I can remember one of the mining men came by and advised us that we were getting pretty deep and to comply with state laws we'd have to timber the collar. [laughter] It eventually kind of wore out a little bit so that we took some time off and everything was fine.

But one day I happened to walk by there and there was a toilet placed over our [diggings by] Mrs. Stewart - Ma Stewart. She was a widow and she had 5 sons. She was kind of like my grandfather - she had her own law. Well, we didn't appreciate that.

RM: They put an outhouse over your mine! [laughing]

JF: Judge Roscoe Wilkes, who's a federal judge up in Seattle, we a little bit older, and he seemed to be our spokesman. So he and I went down and we were a little afraid to tell Ma Stewart about it. But Ma had several sons, and the older boy, Jack, was about 16 at that time. And he was quite a fellow himself. Roscoe said to Jack, "You've got to go tell Ma she can't do that to our mine."

Jack said, "I'll tell Ma nothing. If you want to tell Ma, then you do it."

RM: [laughing]

JF: Ma had several little cabins there that she rented to the miners and it was just perfect for her. So we accomplished something. And later, as I think about it, it was a good project. Because we were getting down to where it could become dangerous and it served a good purpose for Ma. But they put on the play [about that event in Pioche in 1933].

RM: Plus it was deep. [laughing]

JF: Really - deep enough. She didn't have to worry. But that was quite a shock to . . .

RM: Oh, that's funny.

JF: The next story I tell about Ma is about a Thanksgiving turkey. I used to go and stay way out at a ranch with a rancher named Charl Lee. (I think his name was Charlie Lee but everybody seemed to call him Charl.) But he was from Panaca, from a large family, and he like me and I liked him. And he had raised a certain amount of turkeys. Well, he gave me a small turkey poult to raise. Our old house up here had a coop and a board fence clear around and it was fine. And supposedly I was going to raise this turkey and we'd have it for Thanksgiving.

Well, it turned out to be a beautiful tom turkey. It would sit up on the back fence and gobble and it kind of became a landmark in town. I was playing down in front of what is now the Silver Cafe down on the street and Ma Stewart walked up to me and she said, "John, hold out your hand."

I did and she placed 2 silver dollars in it. She said, "I'm taking your turkey." She didn't ask, she just told me.

Well, I'm not about to sass Ma Stewart. I'm looking at the 2 silver dollars and the only thing left for me to do is run home and tell Mother. I can remember going up the hill and carrying these 2 silver dollars. I went up to Mother and said, "Mother, Ma Stewart put those 2 silver dollars in my hand. Said she's taking my turkey."

Mother answered, "John, Ma Stewart likes you. She was going to take that turkey anyway." [laughter] And that's another case where she did me a favor, because there's no way I was going to kill that turkey and eat it. And she

wanted the turkey. Her oldest boy had a ranch 30 miles out and had several hen turkeys and needed [a tom].

RM: If she hadn't liked you she'd have just taken it?

JF: That's right. It would have ended up that nobody would have known where it was.

RM: God, those are good stories. They have a Mark Twain quality to them. Do you have any more of those stories, John? I'll take all you want to give.

JF: Oh, I'll tell you a good one. Well, to me it's a good one because it's me. Now this boy I told you, Jack Stewart, was an older boy - in this period of time he would be 15 or 16. And his mother was a widow and they had to make a living as best they could. Well, they would raise pigs. And their pig pen was about a mile out at Slaughterhouse Canyon. Jack would have a Model-T all stripped down except for the little box on the back, and each day he would go to the restaurants and hotels and get whatever they had for slop to feed the pigs. And then he had to haul water. And of course everybody liked to go with him if he'd take you. And I remember he'd also go out across the valley and get wood. This particular day there were, I think, 4 boys. Roscoe Wilkes was one of them - and they were older boys - I was about 3 years younger. Jack was going to go and get a load of stumps out there. And, of course, I wanted to go. And he looked at me and said, "You can't go. You're too little. To go with me, you've got to work and what the hell can you do? You're too little." Then he thought for a minute. He said, "Oh yeah. You can go. I got a job for you." So I was very happy. Well, when we got out there my job was powder monkey. He had a sack and in it he had several sticks of dynamite, the fuse and the Giant caps. And he said, "Yeah, you're big enough. You can go out ahead of us and blow up the stumps and we'll come and gather them. But now you got to pay attention," he said. "This is dangerous work." And I'm 8, 9 years old.

RM: Wow.

JF: Yes. If my mother had known . . . But I was all for it, you know. So he gave me the knife and showed me how to cut the fuse and he said, "Now, here's what you've got to be careful of." He said, "Now you've got to put the fuse in the cap" (he didn't have anything to crimp the cap) "and crimp the cap with your teeth." And he said, "Now God damn it, pay attention. If you don't you're going to blow your head off."

RM: Jesus. [laughs]

JF: Oh, how he could have done that! But anyway, I did it, and I blew up plenty of stumps for him. But later in life when I told my mother she just about died. She used to beg me

not to even ride on his buggy, because I fell off of it twice.

RM: Is that right.

JF: Damn near killed me. We were all playing baseball and once we were through, Jack's was the only ride. You can imagine 10 or 12 kids trying to find a place on that. And he only knew one speed and that would be as fast as it would go. [chuckles] And the roads were all gravel. I remember there was an older boy, and I got on and the wheels are going without fenders. He made a turn, and of course I was going off right under the wheels. An older boy by the name of Otto Straus could see that was a bad deal, and he grabbed me and rolled off himself and we just rolled in the gravel. Damn lucky he did. I would have been injured badly. As it was we just got skinned up a little bit. But he more or less saved my bacon.

RM: Yes. Tell me some more of your childhood-type activities and everything, growing up here in Pioche.

JF: We used to go out through the old mines - that's another thing we did where our parents didn't realize what was going on. We'd be lucky to find one old carbide light. We'd go up to the Number One mine and in those days everybody used carbide - they didn't have electric lights yet. The miners would come up from their shift and they'd go over to one particular spot and shake out their used carbide. Well, a certain amount of it'd be good. We'd screen it and take whatever was salvageable for our own use. And there had a mine over the hill called the Pacific Tunnel. It's a long tunnel, and on in there's a winze that goes down below the tracks and further on in it's connected up with the shaft at the Boston Pioche. Maybe there'd be 4 or 5 of us - even the girls would go with us - with one old carbide light, and we'd climb up and come out the Boston Pioche shaft on up the hill.

RM: Is that right? With one light?

JF: With one light. And that was something we definitely should have never been doing.

RM: You could have fallen down those winzes in there.

JF: Oh, you could. I remember there were 2 fellows - one of them, Glen Davidson, was a grown miner - and they were interested in leasing and they had heard that up at the top of one of these stopes there was some ore left.
Of course, when they went in to investigate, it was too dangerous for them to crawl up, so they spent 10 days making new ladders and new timber to get up to it. And when they got up to see, my cousin Danny's name was on there and the date - the day before they started.

RM: [laughs]

JF: They'd spent 10 days getting up there to look in, and that kid had been up there the day before they . . . [laughter]

RM: And he was a kid?

JF: Oh, yes. Danny was just a boy, 2 years older than myself - about 12, 14.

We were all crazy about swimming. When the mill didn't operate during the tough Depression years they kept water in the tanks down at the mill and we would go down and swim in them.

RM: Were they cyanide tanks?

JF: One of them was a cyanide but they kept them full of fresh water so they wouldn't deteriorate.

RM: And they were wooden tanks?

JF: Yes. And it was a big deal to go down there and swim.

RM: Were there burros running wild?

JF: Oh yes. In my earliest memory there were maybe 20 or 30 burros left here in the town. I can remember seeing them along the trails. And the different kids had them so they could ride them. The different ones were just wild - more or less nobody owned them - the old prospectors and all had left them. But the kids would each claim one, and possession was 9 points of the law.

And I was too young [to have one]. But some way or other some of the miners took a liking to me as a boy and this one miner - Jimmy Sloan was his name - would maybe buy me a candy bar or something, so I wanted him to catch one of these burros for me. And he was an Irishman. He said, "I'm going to catch you a Irish donkey as soon as I see one"

"Well, what's an Irish donkey?"

"They have green tails."

And I was always looking for a donkey with a green tail.

RM: [laughs]

JF: Of course I never had one. But they became such a pest in the late '20s that they gathered them up and shipped them down below Caliente.

RM: Do they run wild down there now?

JF: No, I don't believe so. Farther down there are lots of wild one, but these particular ones, no. But later, as I grew up, in the '30s, Mr. Orr had boys and bought 2 burros from the owners in Panaca. And then my uncle Mr. Christian bought a black one for my one cousin and my other uncle (the one who became state treasurer) bought a jenny for his son. So actually there were 4 of these donkeys and the kids would keep them. But they would have to turn them loose. And then it was fair game for the rest of us. If we could catch them we could ride them for a while. And even though the owners could make us give them up, they

became tired of always having them. So it was quite a game to catch the donkeys and ride them.

RM: Did you kids feed them at all?

JF: The owners did but we'd see them eating magazines and we'd gather up a bunch of magazines. [laughs] You know a donkey'll nibble at anything. Sometimes we'd pull a few of the milkweeds or something. They named them . . . actually the Panaca people named them Thunder and Lightening. But the Orr boys renamed them Popeye and Wimpy. Now Wimpy was fine, but Popeye'd kick your head off. Many of us got kicked. And he'd buck if you tried to prod him too much. You could ride him but if you tried to run him, pretty soon he'd buck. And then the other 2 were good donkeys to ride. We called the black one Jim and we just called the female Jenny. It was a fun time, wherever you'd go and do.

But what we really liked when we were riding the donkeys was if somebody would come by on a horse. Some way or other the donkeys had been chased with horses and you could get them to really run and gallop if they had a horse behind them. But otherwise, it was a one-on-one proposition: You hit them once and they'd take one step.

RM: [laughs] You rode them bareback?

JF: Yes.

RM: What did you do for a bridle?

JF: Oh, make one out of just a piece of rope. They pretty much did what they wanted to do anyway, but you could get by that way. Once in a while if they were out they didn't want to be caught, then you had to kind of run them a while and finally they'd stop.

RM: Where did they water here in town?

JF: In those days a spigot would be coming out of the ground for different things [at various spots]. There was a big corral out here.

RM: Oh, right out in front of your house here?

JF: Yes. And there was a tap into the main water line. There would be 2 or 3 spots like that where you could turn one on and get water for them.

RM: Did they use burros underground here?

JF: In my earliest memories they had a mule up in the Burke tunnel. And he was quite a mule. My uncle was superintendent there for a while and I remember that he'd take me [up there] - I was really young at that time. But this mule (I think it was typical of them) would only pull so may cars.

RM: Yes, I've heard that.

JF: This one could make it with 7. If you put on 8 cars, he'd take 2 steps and stop. You might as well give in because he just wouldn't go with it.

RM: He didn't stay underground, did he?
JF: No, they'd bring him out at night.
RM: How far back in there was he pulling?
JF: Oh, that Burke tunnel goes in there quite a ways - I'd say 700 to 800 feet. Of course they'd coast out and he'd just have to draw them back. Yes, he was that way. I can remember my uncle laughing. You'd think you could slip in an extra car on him - no way.
RM: They say there was a mule over in Tonopah that would get on the cage (and of course he wouldn't fit) but he would get up on his hind legs and put his feet up high so he could ride down in the cage, and they'd take him up and down every day.
JF: I wouldn't be surprised, a mule is much smarter than a horse, really.
RM: But that was the only mine they used them in?
JF: That's the only one I know of.
RM: Were there a lot of dogs in town?
JF: Oh, yes. Each of us had dogs. Art Bernard, who was raised out at Bristol or lived there as a young man, became a mine inspector and later he was the warden of the penitentiary. (He's still alive up in Carson City.) But he writes a lot of good dog stories. He wrote a book about his dogs - Dog Days - that's very well written. He's good.
I remember one old dog we had - I don't know how he got the name, but it was Pupsize. He was kind of like a Newfoundland - a big black and white dog. But he became kind of a bum around town. All animals loved my mother, of course, but this dog would even go down and go into the Pioche Club and other bars and they would allow him to come in and give him something to eat and off he'd go. And it was kind of sad - he was just a town pet, and one winter night somebody let the door swing close and he cut off his tail coming out of the Pioche Club. It was late at night, I guess when they were closing up, and the poor old dog went to everybody he knew for help, I guess. You could trail him from the blood. And he did die. And the whole town felt bad.
RM: Oh, Were there any characters or people who stand out in your mind?
JF: [chuckles] We had lots of characters. Down at the lower end of town there were some old makeshift buildings, and we had different kind of derelicts down there. One we Doc Mac. He weighed about 80 pounds and was humpbacked and he would pull a little wagon, a boy's wagon. He'd gather anything, you know, that was salvageable. But he lived down there and he was quite a character.
RM: Was he a real doctor?

JF: No, no. Doc was a nickname. But I remember as boys we'd go down to his place, and it was a junk heap. We were always fascinated about going in to see Doc Mac. And Doc Mac loved whiskey. He'd find knives and things that were of some value and if you could find a little whiskey to trade, he'd trade with you. I remember, some way or other I had found a part of a bottle of whiskey and he traded me a real fine pocket knife for it.

RM: Were there bootleggers in town?

JF: Oh, you bet.

CHAPTER SIX

JF: A real good story involves a gentleman by the name of Edgar L. Nores. He was from New Orleans, from a wealthy French family, and he had married a widow with 2 children. And the widow had inherited a lot of money - $275,000 (I know because Nores told me himself) and they were considered wealthy people in those days. Well, the 2 children became teenagers, and they wanted to go to Hollywood. So they ended up taking them to live in Hollywood. The daughter, Edna, was an attractive girl and she married a cowboy movie actor by the name of Art Acord. And he was a good one - he was a real cowboy. And the boy, Dick, married a very beautiful girl named Martha Jane. Dick wanted to be a real cowboy and wanted a ranch. So some way they ended up here and they purchased a little ranch - it's now Mount Wilson Ranch, but at that time it was Cow Creek Ranch. They bought it for Dick so he could become a cowboy, and of course, Art Acord was a real cowboy and he fit into the picture all right.

Then Mr. Nores decided he had to have a business, so he had a pharmacy and a fountain and everything. And he was quite a character. He was well known throughout the state. Many stories are told, I know lots of them. But he became involved in politics. The governor and everybody knew Mr. Nores and if they came through town they'd go up to the drugstore. The big attraction was in the fountain drinks. They had what they called Green River syrup, and if someone ordered a Pioche Special it was the Green Rive mix with a shot of his bootleg whiskey. He later was a state senator (they called him "Senator") and he was one of the closet friends Senator Pat McCarran ever had. Pat McCarran would do anything for him.

But he was a true character. And he'd talk southern and his thinking was unbelievable. I was just a young boy - 4 or 5 years old - and his wife, Mrs. Nores, was a very gracious lady. She was crippled from arthritis or something and never left the house, but she would let us kids go in and play and then, of course, the daughter, Edna, and Art Acord . . . It was something to be around them, because they were wealthy people.

But the story I first remember [happened when] I was 4 or 5 years old. I was always going down to the drugstore. It was located right where Stevers Store is now. One Sunday morning I went down [to their place] and they had been partying there all night and they'd locked up and there wasn't anybody there. But Art Acord had a trained dog that he used in the movies - a big collie. And as a little boy,

I went and rattled the door. Well, this dog was trained and he came and hit that window and just splattered me with glass. And I went home with cuts all over me. It could have really hurt me, but luckily it didn't.

RM: Was he a watchdog?

JF: Well, he was trained, you know. Part of his training was like Rin Tin Tin or [a dog that] would attack.

RM: But when he came at you was he attacking?

JF: Yes, they left him in there - he was protecting the place. I don't think he'd have bit me but at least he broke the window. And then later Edgar owned the local paper. Of course in those days the votes here in Lincoln County amounted to something. And he thought he controlled politics.

There are so many stories that are about him that it's just unbelievable. I'll tell you one that involved me. For a short time I ran the employment office - I just took a state job. And of course I was available and Edgar was always including me on anything that had to do with the town. One day he came to me and said, "Kid, we've got to go to Vegas." (He called everybody "kid." It was all right, because I was just a kid, but that was his expression.)

RM: He called everybody that?

JF: Yes - any males. He said, "They're having a doings for Senator McCarran, we've got to have a good representation." Well, it just so happened that I kind of wanted to go down there for some purpose. But Edgar was a very poor driver and all of us knew it.

I got to thinking and, "Yeah," I said. "Yeah, I can go." And then I got to thinking, "Do I really want to go"? I said, "How we going to go"?

"Oh, we'll go in my car."

I got to thinking about it. I thought I'd pull a smart one. I said, "That sounds pretty good, Edgar. We'll take your car and I'll drive and that'll give you plenty of time to talk to the rest of the fellows that are going with us and decide which things to talk about."

"Fine, kid. Fine, kid." And then he got to thinking. (And everybody was a "dutty [dirty] little bastard.")

"Well, you dutty little bastard, what do you mean, we'll go in my car and you'll drive. Don't you think I'm a good driver?"

I said, "No, Edgar. Frankly, I don't."

"Well, you dutty little bastard, I've never had a wreck in my life."

I said, "Oh, for goodness sake Edgar. Six months ago you rolled your car over going to the Castleton."

"Wasn't my fault, kid. Faulty brakes."

RM: [chuckles]

JF: That was his thinking. He was quite a character. Another story about Edgar and me involved this little building out in back. Before I even owned this, I befriended a little Italian, Louie Lazarini. He became very ill and he couldn't fend for himself, and I would come down and do his shopping and buy him things and check on him. Lo and behold, when he died he had deeded his ground over to me. I didn't even realize that he'd done it. And some way or other, Edgar (who was in the insurance business) found out the property now belonged to me. So he came to me and said, "Kid, you've got to insure that property down there."

I said, "Well, Edgar, I'm not going to use it or anything."

"Kid, that'll burn down on you and you'll just be out."

And he was very persuasive.

And I said, "Now listen Edgar, if you sell me a policy, remember, I'm just using it for storage."

"Kid, I'll take care of you." So he wrote up a policy and it was cheap in those days - like $50 for 3 years. So finally I went by the printing room and, "Hey kid. Here's your policy."

I took the policy home and clause 17 said, "If premises are unoccupied for 30 days the insurance is void." Well, I didn't take the policy but when I saw Edgar I said, "Damn it, Edgar." I said, "You sure I'm covered . . . ?"

And he just lit into me. He said, "What the hell's the matter with you, you dutty little so-and-so. Are trying to tell me my business? This is my business. You're insured, I'm telling you."

Well, he kind of bluffed me, you know. But I got to looking at the policy again and Roscoe Wilkes was then district attorney and he was my close friend. I thought, "Well, I'll go down and talk to Roscoe about it." I went down there and I said, "Roscoe, read this. Edgar sold me this damn policy. I don't think I'm insured."

He read it and said, "John, if somebody doesn't live there you're not going to be insured."

So I went back up again and here he is sitting up in his office in the printing shop and I went in and said, "Edgar."

He called me "you dirty little bastard" again. "You back, kid? What the hell's the matter with you this time?"

I said, "Edgar, would you do me one favor? Will you just take this policy and just read clause 17 to me."

"Oh God, I'll do anything to get rid of you." He read it and I can just see him pushing his glasses . . . He finally looked up at me and he said, "My God, kid. You're not

insured." [laughter] He said, "Aw, don't worry about it. It burns, I'll take care of it for you."

Another good story happened right up there where the water office is now - it adjoined the printing shop. It was a home for rent at one time and the wife and I rented it and we had 2 little daughters. And I told her, "Now Pat, for goodness sakes don't ever park next to Edgar." I said, "He'll get your fender if you do."

"OK, John," [she said].

And I was working out at the Ely Valley and I came home one day about 4:00 and here were Edgar and my wife Pat, out looking at my hind fender. Well, I was fit to be tied because I knew what happened. And I went out with blood in my eye and I said, "You had to do it, didn't you, Pat?"

And she said, "John, I had the 2 little girls. I went down and I had 2 big bags of groceries and there wasn't another parking spot this side of the service station." And she said, "I looked. Edgar was busy at his desk and I thought, 'I'll hurry the 2 little girls in and my 2 bags of groceries and then I'll move down there and walk back.'"

She said, "I got the little girls in the house and I then got the groceries in the house and when I came out from the groceries there he was. He had me." [laughter] She hadn't parked 5 minutes. I was looking at him and for him there was nothing to be disturbed about. "What the hell's the matter with you. I'm insured." I had to fix it on my own but . . . why was I concerned?

RM: Do you have any other thoughts about life as a kid growing up in Pioche?

JF: All I can remember is, we made our own entertainment. All of you would be, for a while, playing with rubber guns. And then maybe it'd be spinning tops and then maybe playing mumbly-peg with knives. And then maybe baseball - we'd just go from one thing to the other. But as a rule, when we entertained ourselves, none of us had any real good toys of any sort.

You made your own. Like when we became involved in skiing - we would find an old wooden barrel and use staves. Or maybe we could find a 1-by-4 board, or maybe for 2 bits (25 cents) you could buy one long enough to make do. You'd cut it and tack it on so that you had the staves turned up and tack leather straps on. I remember skiing off the hills as best you could. And you spent more time fixing your broken straps . . . [chuckles] I remember, in all the years we did that, only seeing one pair of store skis. And they weren't even the ones real skiers use. They had the leather straps, but . . . all of us were in the same boat and we had fun.

And then sleighs were a big deal. In those days the roads weren't oiled, so when the snow would hit and they would become packed, they didn't have good ways to blade the snow off immediately. You might have practically ice on these roads for weeks at a time. We would use the main highway here. We'd start up at the top of the hill, where it started to steepen. And then we'd come right down through town and right down here and down to the schoolhouse. If you could, you'd turn and go into the soft snow there to stop. That was quite a thing.

I remember, if you were fortunate enough to own a sled, that was quite a thing. The rich boys would have Flexible Flyers - they were the best. I had a Firefly. On ice the Fireflys were the fastest sleds. The Flexes were better in the softer snow. If there were 7 or 8 of us sleighing we'd all go as a group and I'd let everybody start and then I would lie down - you'd take a running start - and with this little Firefly sled I had I could pass about any of them up on the ice. And that was a big deal for me.

RM: It was a long run, wasn't it?

JF: Yes, we could go clear to the depot, but you'd stop as best you could below the school. There wasn't anything below there except trash piles. And you'd go at night, but it was dangerous. There weren't many cars, but there were a few. We weren't supposed to do it - we had a curfew and during the school days Deputy Ewing would ring the curfew bell- a big bell - at 8:00 (In the summer it was later than that.) But one girl was killed. She ran under an old car and was killed. So they would clamp down on it. But it was pretty hard to keep a bunch of kids out. Johnnie Ewing was the sheriff - he was a tall man with the bib overalls. I remember one night, right up where you come over the hump by where the road branches, there he was. Well, he was a-grabbing us as best he could and turning us and stopping us all. But he got too involved in the last sled and a boy by the name of Glade Nielsen came and hit him and down he went. We were in kind of trouble for a while. [laughter]

RM: How did the cars get around on those slick roads?

JF: Well, they used chains.

RM: So they just chained all the time.

JF: Oh, some people would chain up their car and there'd be chains on them for weeks at a time. It's not that way anymore. Of course with the oiled roads, they blade it and it melts off.

RM: You don't get as much snow, do you?

JF: We don't seem to.

RM: That's what other people have said in other parts of the state.

JF: We always had big snowbanks.

RM: Did you play a game called King of the Mountain?

JF: Yes - if there was a sand pile. We had a baseball game called Tin Can Cooney. You'd dig 2 small holes a certain distance apart, like 50 yards or 20 yards, and you'd place 2 milk cans by the hole. Then you would stand in the hole with a bat and the other side'd throw at you. The idea was to knock the cans over. If the ball was in line to hit the cans it'd be in the strike zone and the batter would hit it. And if he hit it, then you had to go run it down and he'd go back and forth as many times as he could and then you'd tally it up that way. But if you hit the cans, that was called an out. [You tried to] knock both cans over. Then you'd have to pitch to the batter on the other end. And that was quite a game.

Have you ever seen the Tv show "Bewitched"?

RM: Yes.

JF: Do you remember seeing Larry, Darren's boss? He's a tall fellow in many episodes . . .

RM: Yes.

JF: Well, he was a boy here. He goes by David White, we knew him as Danny White. And he was a teenage boy then in high school. He was probably the best shot with a marble I ever saw.

We had some good ones. My cousin Bud was very good. But as I came along Cousin Bud got to the age where he was in high school and he didn't play much. So he gave me all his marbles, several hundred. But the idea was that he and I went into the marble business. We would sell these marbles to the other boys - some of them 2 for a nickel and many of them a penny apiece. It was good money. And for many years Bud and I would sell marbles.

RM: He could win them and then you guys would sell them?

JF: Oh yes. And I could win them, too. I wasn't as good as he was, but I became proficient.

RM: What were the games you played?

JF: Circle. That's where Danny White - David White - was the best. Even my cousin Bud wouldn't go against him very often cause he was just phenomenal. Once when Bud and Danny were in high school the bus came in from Panaca - the high school - and Bud and Danny got off. Danny still had a lot of marbles he had saved and they got to arguing about marbles and they started to bet each other. Their bet was, they'd put up 75 marbles apiece and lag at a line for them. (It happened right up here.)

RM: What is "lagging"?

JF: That's just throwing it down - it was just like pitching pennies. Of course Bud and I were partners on all these marbles.

I didn't want him to do it, but Bud was a gambler and Danny was a gambler, so the game started. And Danny outlagged him so I had to pull out 75 marbles, which was a lot. And I wasn't too happy about it. But Bud naturally still wanted to gamble. So they lagged again and he beat Bud the second time. But then he decided that maybe he wanted some of the better marbles and he said, "Well, if you'll let me pick 35 of your best ones, I'll only take 35." That was better than losing 75, so he did that.

About this time a boy a little older than I who was watching all this had his gambling blood got up. He had marbles and he said, "Well, how about me lagging you?" to Danny. Well, some way or other he beat Danny out of 75 marbles. But they were still my marbles as far as I was concerned. I wasn't afraid to lag against this boy, so I challenged him. Yeah, he'd lag against me, so I out-lagged him and I got my 75. Now we were only out 35 marbles. And gee, the boy was kind of upset, but he wanted another shot at me. So we lagged again, and I lagged first. And I remember I put it right on the line. He said, "You fudged. You didn't stay back there where you were supposed to."

Well, the 2 older boys, Bud and Danny, were doing the best they could to be fair, so they let him take about 3 big steps beyond the lagging line . . . damned if he didn't put it right on the line. So then they called off everything. Bud and I were only out 35 and it was getting a little bit touchy.

RM: When you lagged, you lagged each marble.

JF: Yes, trying to get it on the line.

RM: And you bet 75 marbles on one lag.

JF: Yes, it was a big gamble. It was like betting $1, in those days, every lag. I recall I was happy to get off with only a 35-marble loss.

RM: Did you play holes? Where you had holes and you went around 5.

JF: Oh, yes.

RM: What was that called?

JF: Let's see. Did we have a name for that? You had the different holes . . . I think we called it Purgatory.

RM: There were 5 holes and you went around and wound up in the center hole.

JF: Then we had a game called Fish. You'd draw a little oblong circle and you'd put whatever amount of marbles you wanted to play in it. You had to start back a ways, and to become poison you had to knock one out of it. We called that

"poison." And when you became poison, if you could hit the other fellow's taw, that ended the game.

RM: You could stay inside the circle?

JF: Yes. And then you stayed in. But also, if you could get a shot at his taw and you hit him, that ended it.

RM: The taw was what? His shooter?

JF: His shooter. What I did I do with that . . . [brings out a container of marbles.]

RM: An agate? You mean an agate marble?

JF: We called them agates or flints.

RM: We called them agates too. They were worth a fortune.

JF: This is all I salvaged. That one would be worth at least 50 cents.

RM: Oh, boy.

JF: I cornered the market.

RM: John's showing me some of his agate marbles here.

JF: These are all different . . . See the moon shape - do you know that if you take those, smear butter on them and leave them, it'll take those moon-shaped things out of them?

RM: Oh, really? Once you acquired one, it was like having a Cadillac or something.

JF: Yes, that's it. (These were kind of like bullseyes.)

RM: We had the myth that if you keep it in a little jar of lard, it'll help preserve it. So I got a little jar of lard to help preserve it.

JF: Yes, different ones. Even the smoke colored ones are . . .

RM: That'd be a fortune where I came from. You must have about 20 agates there.

JF: At one time I had 26 but over the years some would come up missing. I don't believe there were 50 in the whole town and I had better than half that.

RM: That's great.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: John, could we talk a little bit about the tramp miners - what kind of people they were and where they came from and so on?

JF: We had many of them. I can remember as a boy, they seemed to be a fairly high-class type of miner. At least they were pretty good with us kids. I remember many times that they'd get us boys to fight. Not to be mean, but to entertain them a little bit. And they would pay us. They wouldn't let us hurt each other or anything. But we'd put on a little show. And we would really fight. We didn't phony anything. If we fought, we fought. And I remember I had pretty good luck as a fighter as a boy. That was because of my cousin Bud.

RM: He taught you how?

JF: Well, and he was always getting someone to fight me, to entertain him and his older friends. At one time in my life I had an inflated ego, I guess, because I thought I could lick anybody my weight and my size and age in the world. And I was curious. I remember one time when I was in the third grade, they had what they called a track meet down in Panaca involving the 3 schools: Caliente, Panaca and Pioche. Well, come to find out there was a boy in Panaca - I've forgotten his name now - who was supposed to be pretty good, too. And I knew about him so I went looking for him. Some way or other it was just he and I way around the building and I walked up to him and said, "You like to fight?" And he said yes, he did. And I said, "Well, I do too. Let's fight." He agreed and I got the best of him.

RM: What did you do? Bloody his nose or something?

JF: Yes, I threw him down and sat on him a little bit. We whacked at each other. It was kind of rough and tumble but we didn't hurt each other. And he'd had enough.

And then I went looking for the boy from Caliente, who was supposed to be pretty good. And luckily I didn't find him. Come to find out he was about 2 years older and maybe 5 or 10 pounds heavier. In later years I got to know him - he ended up in Vegas and I played against him in basketball in high school. His name was Lynn Wadsworth and he still has relatives down there in business.

RM: Did the tramp miners tend to come from any section of the country?

JF: I remember a lot of them were from Butte . . . well, they didn't come as a group, you know. And then maybe they'd be gone and then next year they'd show up again.

RM: They were single men, weren't they?

JF: Oh, yes. Nearly always
RM: And they were heavy drinkers?
JF: Oh, you bet. As I said, they'd have credit at a bar and when they got paid the first thing they took care of was their bar bill.
RM: But the mines were always glad to see them because they were good miners, weren't they?
JF: Well, in most cases. If they weren't good miners they would get to know that. I can remember during the real tough times that the mine up here employed on the day shift, and you could see them.
There were very few cars. You'd see them go up and there was a long stairway [where] those employed would go to work. And for every man a-working there'd be one rustler This was during the real tight times. And that was quite a thing. Sometimes they'd rustle twice a day.
RM: When they went on shift and when they went off?
JF: Yes. And they'd put in a regular schedule and let the bosses know how long they rustled. It might get them the job if they told the boss, "Well, I've been rustling for 2 months."
RM: Where did the tramp miners live when they were here?
JF: They had rooming houses and little cabins and things like that. Usually they'd stay at one of the boarding houses if they had money.
RM: Were there quite a few boarding houses in town?
JF: A few. Usually the were just the rooming houses and then the restaurants'd board them on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.
RM: There weren't that many people boarding miners?
JF: There would be some. Maybe some widow woman would have 5 or 6. One story I like to tell is about the young fellows - Mormon boys - from over in Utah who would come and eventually get to be miners and hire out. One of the bosses up at the mine was named Hickey, and he had quite a sense of humor - and was good at his job. But this one young Mormon boy, one morning in rustling, said to Mr. Hickey, "Can I have tomorrow off?"
And Hickey looked at him and said, "You don't work here."
He said, "No, I'm just rustling, but I'd like tomorrow off."

Hickey said, "No, you can't have tomorrow off. You're going to work." [laughs]
RM: I understand that there were quite a number of men from Panaca who would work their farms in the summers and then come up here and work in the mines in the winter.
JF: Yes.

RM: Were they pretty good miners?
JF: Oh yes. They became good miners. It was just a matter of learning, you know. This special type of mining . . .
RM: What was special about this type of mining?
JF: Oh, how to place the holes and how much powder and . . . being a good miner is a real profession.
RM: What were some of the secrets of mining in the rock here?
JF: It was just a matter of breaking the ground with the least amount of holes - placing the holes so they broke clean.
RM: What kind of a cut did you use on it?
JF: Well, they had a burn or . . . what did they call the others?
RM: I've heard them called a toe cut and a hammer cut.
JF: Well, a burn is where you drill a group of holes together and blow that out first. That's hard ground. But a lot of this ground breaks real well. You put in what you call your cuts and shoot those first. And then everything else . . . you have your cuts, your breast holes, your back holes, and then your relievers maybe and then your lifters.
RM: Was the quartzite here hard to drill?
JF: Not exceptionally hard. Out where I am it's not difficult. The real hard ground is out at Timpahute. It's a metamorphic contact. Oh, that ground is something else - even with the Swedish steel. The first time I worked out there we had these throwaway bits and I'd knock bits as we call it and my partner would drill continuously all day long. And some of the ground was so hard you wouldn't get 6 inches and have to throw a bit away.
RM: Oh, wow.
JF: Then we got these Swedish steel [bits] with the carbide inserts, but it was still quite a job. That's where your good miners came in - to place those [charges] so that you broke that ground.
RM: They'd have to place those holes right, wouldn't they?
JF: Yes. And use the right amount of powder.
RM: But this ground here wasn't hard to break?
JF: No.
RM: Was it hard to hold at all?
JF: Yes. When they opened it up they had to be very good . . . many miners were killed over that period of time. And it was mainly from the slabs coming off.
RM: Was the quartzite slabby?
JF: No, the quartzite held them. There were areas where the quartzite was all fragmented and it could become dangerous. But the limestone was slabby. That's where the dangers were.

RM: Were there any tricks of the area for breaking the ground or holding it or anything a miner had to know here that would help him?

JF: There were a lot of the tricks of the trade but I was never a real miner myself. Boy, I worked around one or two and they made every move count. I admired them. To me a miner who knew that was very valuable. They would think ahead to what they were going to need and have it available when they needed it.

RM: You worked as a hoistman, didn't you?

JF: Mostly, yes. Only for myself did I actually do the shoveling and so forth.

RM: Tell me of some of the mines you worked as a hoistman in.

JF: [chuckles] Quite a few of them. I started up at the Susan Duster. I had a lease and we put up the headframe and our own hoist and somebody in our group had to have a license, so I applied for one and was given a second-class electrical single-drum license. And then, when I wanted to work, they needed a hoistman out at the Ely Valley and I was on an underground hoist. It was the same thing - a second-class license. Then they put me up on the incline on the surface and then they had the big double-drum hoist that they broke me in on. To run that, I had to have a first-class double-drum electric, which wasn't any great deal to qualify for. That's where I really became known as a hoistman. I ran hoists for nearly all of the mines. I never ran the Prince or the main hoist at Combined, though I ran the man hoist at Combined a little bit.

RM: What is a man hoist?

JF: They had a separate compartment for hoisting the men and to lower timber and that. They needed the other 2 compartments to get the muck and ore out. That was about all they could handle.

They knew I was a hoistman if they needed one and if I wasn't working for myself. I ran 2 of the Comet hoists once - an underground and then the surface one. And then I ran the hoist at the Pan American. We had to go down and grease the pump and things like that. And then later they started operating out at the Jackrabbit when they started to try and mine the manganese. They had an underground hoist out there and I ran it for a couple of days and then they put me out on the surface hoist. And I ran the Bristol hoist just a little bit. I ran it not too long ago when they did a little repair work because they knew I knew hoisting. I ran a hoist below the Salt Lake Pioche where I'm working now.

RM: You didn't run the hoist at Timpahute?

JF: No.

RM: Well, they were taking it out on a tunnel there, weren't they?
JF: Yes. They also pulled some out their shaft.
RM: Did most of the mines hoist waste, or did they backfill with the waste?
JF: No, you had to move waste. You couldn't backfill - there was too much of it. No, all of them had a certain amount of work and then when they'd sink shafts or run prospect drifts it was always waste.
RM: There was a standard system of codes that the hoistmen used, wasn't there?
JF: Oh yes. You'd better know them, too.
RM: And it was always used in all the mines?
JF: Yes. It was established by the state and you adhered to it.
RM: Did they use a different code in other states, or was it standardized?
JF: It could have varied a little but it would be more or less the same, I believe.
RM: And it worked on a system of bells and . . .
JF: Yes - or buzzers. When you ran a double-drum hoist one side would be a buzzer and the other side a bell so you would know which you were answering.
RM: Now a double-drum hoist is hoisting 2 cages that are independent?
JF: No - counterbalanced.
RM: Oh, they're counterbalanced. So when one goes up the other goes down. And one is a buzzer and one is a bell?
JF: Yes. Like if we were drawing from the 600 pocket I'd spot the right side at the dropway - the loading point. And as soon as it was filled, maybe that side would mean the bell. And I knew just what it was. And then when I spotted the other side it'd be the buzzer and then . . .
RM: Give me an idea of some signals that they used.
JF: Well, 3 bells means "men on." If you have your cage spotted and you get a 3-1, if it's spotted at the station and you get a 3-1, that's "men on."
RM: Now what does the 1 mean? Hoist?
JF: Hoist. And if it's 3-2 it's "men on, lower."
RM: So 1 is up and 2 is down.
JF: Yes. But then if they got on at the 600 and they wanted to go up t 300, they'd ring 2-3, and then 3-1. That'd mean "Take it to the 300 station, men on."
RM: Could you go through that again?
JF: You've called for the cage at the 600 so the cage would be sitting there. Now I don't know whether they want to go down or to the surface. If they're coming up to the

surface they'll just ring 3-1. Now, if they ring 2-3, that's the signal for the 300 -3-2 is for the 600.

RM: 2-3 means . . .

JF: Two bells and then 3. If there's an empty cage it'll just ring one to hoist it up there. If there are men on, then they'll give me 3 and 1 to hoist away.

RM: OK, 2-3 was to go to the 300. What did the 2 mean?

JF: That was just designated for the 300.

RM: What would the 200 be? 2-2?

JF: Yes. Let's see, they only went to 5. I'm a little [chuckle] . . . I'd kind of have to think about it. But anyway, the 600 was 3-2, the 700'd be 3-3 and then you . . .

RM: OK, so it was by different bells.

JF: But it was posted, and after a while you knew.

RM: And when you have a double-drum you may be loading guys on one . . .

JF: But you don't load on both. Well, you would but you're only paying attention to one. They might come up on one cage and then the other cage is spotted there, and they could ring you up with that one.

RM: The 2 drums are not perfectly in coordination, are they?

JF: Well, you can set at any station so they counterbalance. You can also set them so they dump, but usually with men you pulled them on one side.

RM: So you're not unloading and loading 2 at the same time?

JF: No, it would be too confusing. You counterbalance, so you'd be spotting the one at the back and dumping the other one. You can unclutch and set it up and you have your marks on your indicator so you know just where to set each drum.

RM: How do you allow for the stretch of the cable?

JF: [chuckles]

RM: That's the trick, is it?

JF: The deeper you get, the more stretch. And if you're hauling, you adjust a little just on your own if you . . . maybe you're spotting and you don't know just where you're spotted. Your cage man might ring you up a little bit.

RM: He'll ring you up a foot or something?

JF: Yes, give you 3 slow bells and then another slow one, then when he got it to just where he wanted it he'd give one. Then you'd try on the next go-round to put it there yourself.

RM: And you had marks for the 400 and the 600 and so forth?

JF: You had an indicator. But to really get it on the money you had your drum mark.

RM: OK. You had a mark on the cable.

JF: Yes, that's where you spot marked. You watched the indicator to know when to get ready to stop.

RM: I see. With a hoistman there's no doping off, is there? I mean, one slip and you . . .

JF: I remember I was employed once to sink the Ely Valley shaft and they had a regular shaft crew that had worked at Butte. Boy, they were big, tough guys. And they didn't know me, I didn't know them, and I was just a young guy - pretty young to be running a hoist, anyway. And I can remember this spokesman for them had to do a little talking to me. He came in and he said, "You going to be all right?"
I said, "Yeah."
And he wanted to know how long I'd had a license and I talked to him a while and he questioned me just like you are doing about the bells: "Well, here's the way we'll operate down there," which I already knew, but he wanted to be certain I knew it. I got along fine with him, but boy, if they didn't like you or didn't trust you . . .

RM: The hoistmen tended not to drink, didn't they?

JF: They shouldn't drink.

RM: You can't go to work with a hangover, can you?

JF: I only know one fellow, his name was Fred Manser, and he never had an accident, but he did drink. And he ran the Castleton hoist for years and he never had any problem. But ordinarily, if you were a drinking person, nobody'd work with you.

RM: Yes. It's one thing to go down and drill around when you've got a hangover . . .

JF: It's like flying an airplane. You don't fly when you're drinking.

RM: Right. What's the deepest pull you've ever had?

JF: Well, the Number One - what they call 1200. And they just had it counterbalanced. It was a double-drum but just with a counterbalance.

RM: But you had a 1200-foot cable on it?

JF: Yes.

RM: Boy, that's deep.

JF: Castleton was similar. They went down to 1200 or 1400. But they aren't the real deep mines. Boy, in Grass Valley and South Africa and different areas, they have mines down 5000 feet or more. Terrific big cages and fast hoists.

RM: Were there brothels in Pioche?

JF: There was one right down here at the lower end of town, but it burned.

RM: What was it called?

JF: The Green Lantern, I believe. They had a couple of girls there in the early days, as I remember.

RM: When you were a kid?

JF: Yes. My grandparents owned the ground out here. There wasn't anything below except this one cat house.
RM: But that was the only one?
JF: That was the only one here. Caliente for years had one up what they called Strawberry Gulch. But there was no big amount. In the early days they had lots of them. My grandfather [chuckling] didn't go for them much.
RM: You mean Jake?
JF: Jake, yes.
RM: He didn't like brothels?
JF: No. Maybe I gave you [the article that] tells about him down in Vegas when the railroad came in and they had Block 16. Anyway, he went down there, and of course he was still sheriff of everything at that time. He made a fence to separate the cribs off from the bars. The prostitutes complained, "How are we going to get into the bar?"
His answer was, "Jump the fence." [laughs]
RM: Is that right? So the cribs were in back of the bar - at the same location . . .
JF: Well, in some places the bar would have rooms on behind or even upstairs or something.
RM: But they had to be separate. Is that what the deal he made was?
JF: Well, in his thinking . . . I don't believe they were separate later in what they called Block 16. But it was restricted to certain areas of the town.
RM: So he was the sheriff of Lincoln County when they . . .
JF: It was all one big county. I think they separated in 1908 when the railroad came through.
RM: But he was the sheriff when they had the original land auction down there and started Block 16?
JF: Yes, that's my understanding.
RM: Now, where is Strawberry Gulch?
JF: Well, if you're down in Caliente and you go across the tracks and then go up to the left along the main road, as you go up there's one canyon where the homes are.
Then the next little canyon goes way up - and I don't know if it's still up there or not. But there was a little house up there and it was always called Strawberry Gulch.
RM: And that was the name of the joint, Strawberry Gulch?
JF: That's what we called it - I believe it was also known as "The Green Lantern."
RM: There was just one there?
JF: Just one that I ever knew of.
RM: It doesn't sound as if there were that many brothels here then.
JF: No. In the early days there were lots of them.
RM: But not from the time you can remember up to modern times?

JF: Not really, not many. Ely had lots of them. What did they call that?
RM: The Big 4?
JF: The Big 4, yes.
RM: And they had a Green Lantern up there too, I think.
JF: Yes, it's still there.
RM: But why didn't Lincoln County have them? I mean, with all these miners and everything?
JF: In the early days they did.
RM: They still had a lot of miners and everything.
JF: They just allowed so many and that's probably all the town would support, I believe.
RM: I'll be darned.
JF: Some of the girls ended up marrying locals. For instance, 2 of the old bar owners married girls from there.
RM: Not brothel owners, but bar owners.
JF: Yes. The bar owners ended up marrying them and they lived out their lives here.
RM: The prostitutes didn't hustle out of the bars, did they?
JF: Oh, no. Absolutely not. Once in a great while you might see one in a grocery store, but not even that.
RM: They basically didn't want them uptown, did they?
JF: No. As long as they didn't cause any problems they tolerated them.
RM: Are there any active brothels in the area now?
JF: No.
RM: Is Lincoln County against them?
JF: They did away with them about 10 years ago. They had what they called Sherry's just across the county line this way from Vegas - I believe 70 miles this side of Vegas. And the policing of it cost the county money, so they did away with them.
RM: There are no brothels in Lincoln County now?
JF: Not that I know of.
RM: That's interesting. It sounds like they didn't have the number of brothels that they had in Ely and Tonopah and Beatty and some of the other towns.
JF: Yes. It's a political thing.
RM: Could you talk a little bit about distances out here? You have Pioche and you've got these other towns - Panaca and Caliente - but then it's a long haul to any place else. What were your relations with these other towns like Ely and Cedar City [Utah] and Vegas and . . . ?
JF: Cedar City and St. George [Utah] are patronized very much by our locals today. In the old days the roads were not that good, but now some of these people go over to either Cedar or St. George 2 or 3 times a month and can get whatever they need.

RM: Would you say the majority of people do that now - go to Cedar and St. George?

JF: Yes. More than Ely. They don't seem to go to Ely for some reason.

RM: Did they used to go to Ely?

JF: Not too much. It was the other way more - Vegas.
Going back to the topic of brothels, I'll tell you kind of a good story. When Strawberry Gulch operated, my friend the judge, Roscoe Wilkes, was district attorney. I don't know her name, but the owner was Betty something. So Betty came up, and somebody had robbed her of $686. And of course District Attorney Wilkes had to do whatever he could, because it wasn't right. And Betty, who was a nice lady, was very perturbed about losing all this money, as anybody would be. Especially in those days. So Roscoe got all the information, trying to see if they could do anything to help her to recover her money. And as a gesture of sympathy, he said, "Six hundred eighty-six dollars. That is a lot of money."
Betty said, "You don't know how much money that really is." She said, "You divide that by 2 and that's how many gandy dancers I had to take care of to earn that much."
Roscoe said, "Boy, that is a lot of money."

RM: [laughs] That's good. But people historically - I mean, speaking say from 1920 - have never oriented that much to Ely, in terms of shopping and going to town and that kind of thing.

JF: Maybe it's because in the winter the roads to Ely are difficult or something. But you did. As a boy, I went over to a dentist there when we wouldn't have a dentist here. They had a good dentist there and they had good doctors in their heyday. That Ruth Copper Pit employed hundreds or maybe a couple of thousand employees, so naturally they had better facilities.

RM: Well, how about Vegas? Did people orient toward Vegas? They could get on the railroad and go to Vegas.

JF: Yes. When it became more entertainment, then you'd go to Vegas.

RM: So they didn't go to Vegas that much in the early days?

JF: What happened is, at the start of the war they started to build Basic Magnesium, and many of us went down there. I went down and I hired out and made student trips as a brakeman on the UP Railroad. I became a brakeman and lived there nearly all of '42 until they lowered the requirements so I could enlist directly into cadet training in the air force.

You had to have 2 years of college to even take the exam to qualify. And then when they needed more pilots, if you could pass their mental exam and physical exam, you could qualify for cadet training - either pilot, bombardier or navigator. As soon as that restriction was lifted I volunteered to take the test at what was then called McCarran Field - it's Nellis now. And I enlisted right there.

RM: Let's talk about that period of your life.

JF: Well, they built up quite a program and I was sworn in. I was in the air force but I had to wait to be called up, and I didn't know whether it'd be a week, a month or what it would be. And I liked to be up here in the fall, so when I decided to take my leave from the railroad they thought I was called in. But I hadn't actually started active service so I came up here and went back to work over at the Prince Mine as a pump man, waiting to be called. It was 3 or 4 months later, in February of '43, I believe, that I finally got called to go. I had to go to Salt Lake to meet the different groups and then we went up to Buckley Field, Colorado, for our basic training.

We were only there about 10 days and then they shipped us all off to different universities throughout the West. I was sent to Grand Forks, North Dakota, to the University of North Dakota. To this day I can't understand why they decided to do this. I gained over a year's college - got 1-1/2 years college credit in just a few months, attending what they called College Training Detachment.

And then finally I was sent to Santa Ana, California, for classification. And that was a bad experience for me. Here I'd been with this group of boys and we got down to Santa Ana to be assigned to our squadrons and take a certain amount of the continued training and much more intensive physical and mental tests. And finally it was classification day, and there was a squadron of 240 of us. I was in the unclassified squadron at that time. And here were all these boys I'd become well-acquainted with - and they called us out and put us in formation and said, "The

following 8 cadets fall out of formation." They called off the names, and I was one of them. "Oh, what could have happened," I wondered. And all my guys went down to be classified either pilot, bombardier or navigator and I was here with these 8 and they said, "Who's Cadet Franks?"
"Here, sir."
"We broke your blood sample. You'll have to get another blood sample."
You know, that stupid air force! Instead of just letting me go ahead, I had to go up to an unclassified squadron and nothing happened. I gave my blood sample and there was no contact.
I was just going crazy up there - I was all alone. Finally I went and they start checking it. "Oh, we got to get another blood sample. Yours is still sitting on the shelf." [laughs]
Then finally they got me cleared. But then I was assigned to another doggone squadron - a bunch of boys mostly from Texas and southern points. And they sent us out on a bivouac - make us go out and rough it for a week. So instead of graduating in '44-C (that would be March of 1944) I graduated 44-D.
I had another funny experience. I got my orders after graduation as a second lieutenant and had my pilot's wings . . .

RM: Where did you get your pilot training?

JF: It was Douglas, Arizona. In my first days of training I was sent to Thunderbird One Primary Training Field in Phoenix or Glendale. That was a good one. And then I was sent to a civilian field - Lancaster, California - to the Polaris Flight Academy. And that was a good one. Then I ended up back at Douglas, Arizona, for advanced training, and that's where I graduated as a pilot.

RM: Which plane were you trained on?

JF: Well, these were just training planes. First I flew a Steerman. That's a primary trainer - a great little plane. Then the next was a basic trainer in Lancaster - a BT-15. That had the radio and the canopy. Then I ended up in twin engine back at Douglas, in what they called the Advance Trainer 17. It was just a little plane with twin engines.
Then I'd become a second lieutenant and pilot and they sent me back to Columbia, South Carolina, to a B-25 transitional school.
But I didn't get into school. There was 600 of us back there all summer just waiting for a turn to get into transitional training. And some of the boys had flown B-

25s in their advanced training so they really had the jump on you.

And one day General Black, a 2-star general, came through and saw 600 second lieutenants around there doing nothing, and boy! He fired 400 of us off to different air commands. One hundred of us went directly into combat, and I was in that hundred.

RM: How could they send you to combat? You hadn't had any training on it.

JF: That's right. It was just a typical foul-up, you know. We didn't know where we were going, they didn't tell us. We boarded a liberty ship in a convoy, and when we disembarked we were in Naples, Italy.

And they sent us out to a replacement depot, where the combat squadrons would get their replacements. And this is quite a story - I tell it and even the people involved don't believe it. This one day, 7 B-25s landed out at the field. And these were combat troops - just a pilot, a co-pilot . . . then they told us whether certain ones would be going with them. Well, we were out at the field and we knew which plane we'd been assigned to, so these 2 combat pilots said, "Well, we want to go get a bite to eat. You guys go put your stuff in the plane." And these were combat crews - just real grateful that we'd shown up so they wouldn't have to continue flying missions. They went to eat and when they came back we were all standing at the plane looking at it with our B-4 bags and barracks bags. And, "What the hell's the matter with you guys." Get in the plane." None of us knew how to drop the hatch to get in the plane - and we were supposed to be going into combat.

RM: And to fly a mission. Good lord.

JF: And there guys said, "What in the hell." But anyway, there was nothing to do but they take us back [with them]. Three of us went to the 489th [squadron] and of course it amazed them that we hadn't even seen the inside of a B-25. But there were only 3 of us [replacements] in the 489th and they put us on to fly as co-pilot whenever they could for a while - at least so we could get the plane back in case the pilot got killed or something.

And about the same time they had some other replacements who were trained for combat. And to show you how [fast] training is when you're in the real thing, I would say within 2 weeks I was ready to fly as a co-pilot, and the boys who had arrived at the same time had only flown a couple of missions by then.

RM: So you were as an observer at first?

JF: Well, you were the co-pilot, but they didn't let us go on a combat mission. Finally they decided we could at least get the plane back, you know.

RM: Where were you?

JF: Off the island of Corsica. We were flying over Italy on most of our missions - and one or two in southern France. By anyway, we weren't a month behind the pilots with hundreds of hours of combat training. You learn fast in combat. All of us flew co-pilot for a certain amount of missions. Even the ones who had bomb training with bombardiers and all would have to fly 7 or 8 missions as co-pilots before they could fly first pilot.

I think I only had to fly about 16 [missions] before I was made first pilot. I learn pretty well, you know, so they scheduled me for my first mission as a pilot. Well, they gave me a co-pilot I didn't even know, and come to find out he was flying his first mission.

RM: Wow.

JF: My bombardier was a high-mission bombardier. He just had a couple of missions to go to be rotated. And he had seen me but he didn't know my co-pilot. So we all went down to the plane (and the gunners meet you there). So I wasn't going to question anything - I'll tell you why later - but this high-mission bombardier looked at me and he said, "How many first pilot missions have you flown?"

And I had to admit, "Well, this is my first today."

He looked at my co-pilot and he said, "How many missions have you flown?"

And he said, "This is it. This is my start."

He said, "I'm not flying with you guys." And he wouldn't. And I don't blame him.

RM: I don't blame him either.

JF: And I asked my gunners, "How about you guys?"

Well hell, they were game. They said they'd go with me. I don't know how they fouled it up, they shouldn't have. But anyway, I had to designate one of my gunners to be a toggolier.

RM: What is that?

JF: He would open the bomb bays and set it up. And when he'd see the bombs go he'd toggle our bombs. He agreed to do it and it was an easy mission - no problem at all.

But that bombardier had quite an interrogation as to why he wouldn't go with me. Heck, I was on his side. I'd had an experience shortly before, I was flying as a co-pilot and I was learning and on this one particular mission the pilot was a fellow by the name of Rossler. He liked me and I liked him and he really let me do just about everything, to teach me fast. Well by golly, on the next mission they put

up a tentative schedule (you could go see if you were going to be on a mission) and I was going to fly with Rossler. Well, that tickled me. I thought, "Boy, this is as good as I want and I'm learning." And later, when posted they it, I wasn't flying as co-pilot with him. And I couldn't figure why, because it shouldn't have mattered. So I went to the operations officer, Captain Bowden and I said, "Captain, you had me flying co-pilot for Rossler and now you got me flying co-pilot for (whoever)." I said, "It doesn't matter, does it? Couldn't I fly with Rossler?" And he kind of chewed me out. He said, "Listen, you're in combat. I'm going to give you a little advice, but I'm only going to give it to you once. Don't question anything. You just do what you're told." So I was cut down, you see. But I couldn't see why it should matter. Well, that was the first plane we lost. I could see it and only the tail gunner got out. From then on, no questions.

RM: And you'd have been on that one?

JF: And I was trying to get on it. So I wasn't questioning anything. That happened twice more to me. I saw 5 planes shot down. I was out where I could see every one of them. And I'd been scheduled . . . once I was scheduled to lead the chaff.

RM: To do what?

JF: You drop chaff, it confuses the enemy radar. And when they changed me to number 4, which is Element Lead. I'd have my 2 wingmen in the first box and then I ended up number 4 in the second box. And they put up 15 planes on this mission, which was a lot. The lead chaff ship and one wingman were shot down, and the number 4 in the first box. So 3 times I was changed for some unknown reason.

RM: I'll be darned.

JF: So I never questioned . . .

RM: You never questioned your orders after that.

JF: Never.

RM: Wow, that's interesting.

JF: Joe Heller, who wrote Catch-22, was in the 486th. I didn't know him then but the 486th, the [4]87th, [4]88th and [4]89th all belonged to the 340th bomb group and flew off the same field. And it depended, you know. Maybe our squadron'd put up 6 planes and the 486th [would put up] 6 and you'd fly with each other, but you didn't know each other unless you met at the officer's club.

RM: How many planes were in a squadron?

JF: Oh, between 18 and 20.

RM: And then how many would go up on a mission?

JF: It would vary. You might only have 6 or 12, 18 was a big mission - 3 boxes.

RM: What were you bombing?
JF: Mostly precision bombing - bridges, marshalling yards . . . We fragged the front lines twice. That was another story, I'll tell you.
RM: And it was mainly in Italy?
JF: Oh, nearly all Italy - the Po Valley, mostly. They'd already gone up a long ways, shortly after I was there they took Rome. My first missions were above Rome and we ended up mostly bombing the Brenner Pass and Po Valley.
RM: Were you taking a lot of ground fire?
JF: No. That anti-aircraft fire was the big danger. And boy, they were good. That's what would get you, because we would be at 10,000 feet and higher.
RM: They were that good?
JF: You bet. They'd been shooting for a long time. They would have batteries of 4 guns and they'd shoot off one, with radar. Your bursts of 4 always came up.
RM: Oh, they were shooting off radar?
JF: Yes, they'd shoot at you right through a cloud cover. They were good.
RM: Were they Italian or German?
JF: German. Hell, the Italians couldn't hit anything. Their hearts weren't in the war.
But we'd do this precision bombing. There'd be 6 planes drop off one bomb sight. (At the later part they were radio controlled.) But if I had a bombardier and he wasn't sighting on the Norden Bomb Sight, as soon as the bombs'd go he'd toggle our bombs.
RM: Now, toggle means drop.
JF: Drop them - just release.
RM: OK, so the lead guy was dropping.
JF: All 6 of you dropped your bombs off one guy (by sight).
RM: So as soon as you saw that other guy go, you would go.
JF: Yes. And then they set it up so the radio dropped them all. You were supposed to get a better pattern [that way].
RM: Why didn't you all drop off bomb sights?
JF: It was better this other way because when you get a good lead pilot and a good bombardier, you're going to be better at hitting it.
RM: I see. And that was a Norden Bomb Sight?
JF: Yes. That was highly classified.
Then what happened - the Battle of the Bulge, I think, caused it - they didn't send any replacements. Ordinarily if you flew 50 missions, there was no argument - they grounded you themselves. And you could be rotated and come back home. Well, I think maybe the Battle of the Bulge prolonged the war about 6 months [because] they knew they

just about had them. And we were really bombing their supply line.

As I say, I wasn't going to complain. When I had 37 missions they were going to make me a lead pilot, and that would call for a promotion and everything. I was for it, but then they said to me, said, "Well gosh. You've built up your missions. You only fly 50 and you've got to fly 17 lead missions [for the promotion] and you won't be able to do it." But I'm not going to question anything. They said, "So even though we would like you to be a lead pilot, it won't do you any good to get a promotion.'

But when I got about 40 missions they weren't sending any replacements and they said, "Well, this 50 automatic grounding is no longer good. You'll have to go to at least 60." Well, what are you going to do, you know? That's what Catch-22 is all about.

RM: Oh, yes. I'd forgotten the story.

JF: Rosarian . . . Joe Heller wrote the story.

RM: I see. So he wrote it from the same experiences that you were having.

JF: Yes. In later life he did write it. And it's a satire of how things were. When I read it I know what he's really talking about. I guess it's a classic.

RM: Yes, it is.

JF: But anyway, when I am about up to 55 missions, then they tell me again, "Well, it's not going to be automatic when you get to 60." A lot of the guys would just go to the flight surgeon - and you could convince him, then he could ground you. But otherwise they'd keep scheduling you on missions. I got plenty shook up plenty of times but it seemed like I could get over it. There were only 3 of us in my squadron who went to 70 missions without being grounded. I had to come back on single engine twice, once due to malfunction and once having an engine shot out.

The bad part of it was that we only lost one plane in my first 50 missions but before I got to 70 we lost 5 more - 4 from anti-aircraft and one in an accident. We only averaged 9 planes and we'd lost 6 so I was fortunate.

RM: When guys would go to the flight surgeon what would they tell him?

JF: Oh, some of them had to go. They were just "flack happy." And if you were "flack happy" you were just getting to a breaking point from too much combat.

I went on 3 rest leaves and we looked forward to that. On my first rest leave I went to the island of Malta. [We spent] several days there and it was fine. It had been the most bombed place in the whole European theater, but by that time it had all gone by. And the little Maltese girls

were just real little beauties and they liked us. As they got older they ate the coarse food and they weren't so attractive, but as young girls they were beauties. And so my first rest leave was there.

And for my second rest leave I got to go up on the Riviera. They had taken the Riviera and about 60 of us got to go at the same time. I was in the second group that got to go to the Riviera and they have a big string of famous hotels, like the Carlton, and we stayed at the Martineze, a very nice hotel. And next door was the Miramar. They met us when we landed at the airfield and instructed us, "Now, you'll be staying at the Martineze and you can't take any of the little French girls to your rooms. But the Miramar'll sell you a room for $1 and no questions." [chuckles]

RM: So you got the French gals?

JF: Oh boy. And every afternoon, like at 2:00 at the Martineze, they'd have a tea dance. There were 60 of us and there were about 30 who were married or weren't interested, so that left about 20 or 30 of us with 100 of these French girls wanting to dance with us. And they had an orchestra there for us. The reason they liked us so much is that each one of us could invite a guest to dinner that night, or late in the afternoon. And you'd go and they had all these people who had been entertaining the super wealthy [chuckles] and they'd have the string orchestra. And the girls really liked it because they'd been through a lot of hardship and we had, too. It was an experience for us. There'd be 4 , 6 or 8 of us at a table, and for every one of us they would have a waiter and we'd have the string orchestra come and play for us. It was GI food but it was prepared by good chefs.

RM: Were these girls romantically inclined?

JF: Oh, they were available.

RM: [laughs] That's great. Well, when did they finally ground you then?

JF: Well, on my 60th mission they got 3 planes. We had put up 15 that day and they got 3 And on my 65th mission I was under the lead ship and they got the lead ship right in front of me. All of us got holed. And I tried to get them to join me and [go back]. I had a bombardier . . . in fact I'd never dropped any bombs but I guess I was gung ho or something. And I called them to re-form and I'd make another pass but nobody'd go with me. [laughs] I don't blame them. I probably couldn't've hit anything anyway. In fact, that shook me up pretty well, they were the friends I'd gone through combat with. They even got our

operations officer, Major Rittenhouse, who was doing a second tour. And the lead bombardier was Captain Lynch.

RM: How often did you fly a mission?

JF: Oh, you might fly 2 or 3 times a week - it depended on the weather and so forth. I flew 70 missions in 6 months or 7 months, so you were flying pretty constantly.

RM: Did you kind of look at a mission like, "Jeez, I wonder if this isn't the day it's up," or what?

JF: We knew the targets. I'll tell you a story about one time when we . . . The 8th Army under General Mark Clark wanted to make a push over on the Adriatic side. And we had been just blowing up bridges and things like that, but they loaded us up with fragmentation (anti-personnel) bombs. In briefing (before each mission you were briefed, they'd give you your courses and where you were going and what to expect) they said, "Now, you're dropping frag bombs today and you'll be bombing real close to our front lines and you don't want to drop short." We had never dropped them and didn't know how we'd do, but they told us that we had to be pretty careful. Boy, we flew the mission and it was an easy mission because it was just over our front lines. We got shot at a little bit but it wasn't bad. And we dropped about 100 feet short. When we got at a little bit but it wasn't bad. And we dropped about 100 feet short. When we got back they had the pictures and the bombardiers themselves knew they'd dropped a little shorter than they were supposed to. And we were feeling pretty unhappy because we don't know but what we've killed a lot of our own men. We got a wire from General Mark Clark: "Didn't realize precision bombing could be so great. We mad a 4-mile push today. They gave us some extra leeway and we really clobbered them."

RM: [laughs] That's a good story.

RM: When did they finally ship you out of there?

JF: Well, I was on my 65th mission, and then I flew 2 more and got to go on another rest leave. And that's where the pictures on the wall are from - I got to go to Cairo. Our squadron would send a group down to Cairo and there'd be a group down there and they'd fly the plane back. When I got to go, I was in charge. I had 4 other officers and I think 7 enlisted men with me. And they told me, "Well, when you get down there tell the other group to just stay a few extra days and then all of you come back," because we were going to move from Corsica over to Italy.

Well, I didn't find anybody down there but they knew how to find the plane at Payne Field, the airfield. I didn't get a chance [to tell them] and I didn't think I'd need to write a note for them not to take the plane, but they came and were all ready to go home and they got out there and went home and I was down there with all these personnel - 4 other officers and the 7 enlisted men - gunners.

Well, first we went up to Alexandria (a lot of those pictures are from Alexandria.) You go on the train to get up there. While I was in Alexandria the girls from the Red Cross were nice to us. And while I was there we went to a little nightclub where they had the belly dancers. And who's sitting next to me but King Farouk. He had his eye on these belly dancers.

RM: Is that right.

JF: And we knew we couldn't talk to him or anything - he had a bodyguard. But we knew who he was. We didn't give a damn about him anyway. But [it shows how] things happen to you. But then we couldn't get back to our squadron. We realized that they had probably moved, and we didn't even know where our outfit was. We were there for over 30 days, and every day we'd go out to Payne Field to see if anybody had come after us. And finally, after 31 days, sure enough. They didn't even send a B-25. This Major Hackney, the C.O. of the 487th, flew a C-47, and he was there to take us back.

Well, we figured in that C-47 we were going to get a chance to talk him into going to Malta. Because that was a good deal, too. We were ready to get back there. Well, he goofed off - I don't know what he did, but this damned old C-47 was so slow we couldn't make it to Malta, so we had to set down at Bengazi.

RM: Where's that, now?

JF: It's on the coast of Africa. And hell, that's terrible. We were very disappointed. Then the next morning we took off from Bengazi and it took us all day . . . Of course now

we knew where we were headed. Our whole group had moved to Rimini on the Adriatic side of Italy.

Well, Rimini was fine. I've only got 3 missions to fly and we got in there about 7:00 or so . . .

RM: And you knew you were going to be grounded at 70 missions?

JF: Oh, yes. No more argument. I could have been grounded by going to the flight surgeon and trying to tell him I'd had enough, but because I'd enjoyed this 30-day rest leave . . . [chuckles]

But I didn't think I'd be on [that day's] mission, I didn't even know anything about what was going on. Well, the last thing, my buddy and I went and looked (he'd become an operations officer, and he had my bed and everything in this old, kind of a hotel thing) and I was scheduled for a mission in the morning.

And I didn't even know anything - where the planes were . . . but they sent me as a co-pilot, and the first pilot had never flown my position, you know. He was an instructor from the States with 1000 hours but he hadn't had any combat time. So we took off and he panicked on the bomb run. He didn't have the experience. And hell, I hadn't flown a mission in over 30 days. He panicked and I could see he couldn't do it, and I hadn't flown a plane in 30 days, and you get rusty. But anyway, I had to take over and fly the bomb run - which was all right, we made out all right. And then he apologized. He said, "Hell, I've never flown a bomb run and . . . "

And I said, "Well, that's all right." Even though he had many more hours than I did, till you fly combat you aren't too proficient.

We landed and they were going to fly another mission that afternoon. I went to look and I was on it! [chuckles]

RM: Oh!

JF: Well, at least I wasn't so shook up. So I went and we flew that and they were easy missions because the front line . . . hell, we had to circle our own field to get altitude. By golly, we got in and I checked the schedule that night and I was to fly another mission the next morning. Well, that finished me up, so that was it. And I tried to stay over. I wanted to, for some reason . . . I tried to get in the 12th Air Force Headquarters as a pilot and fly the generals around. But then the war ended.

RM: It ended before you came back?

JF: Oh, yes. I was over there when the war ended. But the war was still going in Japan. We came back aboard an old French liner, Athos II. And it was all right. There were even a lot of civilians who had worked over in the oil

fields or something. But anyway, it was nice - conditions weren't bad.

RM: What happened after you came back here?

JF: Well, when we landed I had 69 different pilots and gunners and so forth [to escort] and report to Fort Douglas, Utah. That was quite an experience. In my contingent going to Fort Douglas there were about 20 veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. Here I was, a little air force pilot lieutenant, and I was supposed to be their C.O. Those combat veterans . . . I had 5 master sergeants and I thought, "Well, at least I'm smart enough not to try and order these old combat GIs around." I told them, "You guys handle your men." It was a 3-ring circus. I was supposed to be in charge of them. God, all they wanted to do was try and buy booze and drink, you know - just raise hell all the way across [the country].

We got into Denver and stopped and all these guys jumped out and went and bought armloads of booze. Well, the MPs wouldn't let them back on the train with the booze. And they expected me to overrule the MPs - which I couldn't do. They'd say, "Lieutenant, get them back on there! These guys are going to take our booze."

I said, "I can't do anything." Finally I told them, "You guys got to get back on here. You don't want to be stuck here. They'll just put you in the brig."

And here all this whiskey they'd taken . . . There was kind of a tunnel into the train, and the MPs wouldn't let them go into it. So they'd take and break the whiskey bottles and say, "You're not going to get this, you so-and-so," to keep them from the MPs. But the MPs couldn't help it. And I finally got them back on.

The only ones I lost were 2 pilots. They got off in Cheyenne. There was a good-looking girl. [laughs] When I got back, here I was short 2 officers. I had the orders for them and of course I tried to cover up for them. What they did was get off and mess around with some girls and then bought themselves a car and drove on into Fort Douglas. But by that time in the game you weren't too concerned about people giving you a problem or anything. I told the officer at Fort Douglas (he knew, too), "By golly, these 2 fellows, they told us we had 10 more minutes left for the train and they went to do something and they took off without them."

"Oh, they [the train] shouldn't have left those guys." [laughter]

RM: [Laughing] I'll be darned. When did you get back to Pioche then?

JF: Well, I didn't get out. I had my choice - I could be discharged, but I was considering making it a career. So I had quite a bit of leave and then I had to report back to Santa Ana. And from there I was sent back to Douglas, Arizona, again. Well, then the war with Japan ended. And I was still going to make it a career.
But to get your flight pay, you had to get at least 4 hours every 3 months. So I was down there, I hadn't flown an airplane for a long time and I wanted my flying pay. I went out to fly these darn B-25s and I was used to those planes being just perfect. Why, my golly. I got out there and I was more afraid to fly the planes to get my flying done than I was in combat.

RM: They were junk?

JF: Yes. They'd discharged all the good crew chiefs and that. Over there I had 5 people taking care of my plane - a crew chief and his assistants. There, one crew chief had 5 planes to service. And I said, "If this is the peacetime air force I don't need it." So they let me out and I came back here and messed around mines. I didn't even go back to my job as a brakeman on the UP. I just wasn't cut out to be a railroader.

RM: Why do you say that?

JF: Well, if you're a true railroader you live and die on the railroad.

RM: And that wasn't you?

JF: No. It's good if you're satisfied, but I wasn't.

RM: Did you take to leasing then?

JF: Yes. And then working in the mines. I thought I could find my own mine.

RM: When did you get married?

JF: Patsy Sullivan and I were married in 1948. I decided to go to school and continue my education and I went down and enrolled in the University of California at Berkeley. I had a cousin going to school there, but I was having a problem adjusting . . . whatever combat does to you, I couldn't settle down. So I came back here.

RM: Did you marry a local girl?

JF: Well, her father had come out as a safety engineer at the mine.

RM: Which mine was it?

JF: The Combined Metals. But she was raised in Butte, Montana.

RM: So she was from a mining family too?

JF: Oh, yes. We were married and lived here. Then I injured my back at Timpahute and had to have a back operation and that kind of knocked me out of the mining. So in 1956 I had friends in gambling in Vegas - I went down there and broke in as a cashier.

RM: Oh, you did? Whereabouts?
JF: The Boulder Club. It's part of the Horseshoe now.
RM: How long did you do that?
JF: Oh, I worked for 16 years . . . I worked for 12 years at the Tropicana when it was the top place.
RM: What type of cashier were you? In the cage?
JF: Oh, yes. The casino cashier - and with the big players and their markers and money.
RM: Tell me a little about what it was like working at the Boulder Club and then at the Tropicana.
JF: Oh, that was an experience. The Boulder Club a sawdust joint uptown. I got to know all these people like Jackie Gaughan, the biggest man in Vegas gambling - I knew him personally. He had the Derby Sports Book and I'd see him every day. And the different ones - I was really in on the early part of what was going on in Vegas.
RM: You saw that early expansion there. Really, you were there when Vegas was becoming Vegas.
JF: Yes. Oh, I saw it all. I had some great experiences there, too. The Boulder Club had the union offices there and catered to the different unions and cashed their paychecks for them.
RM: I see. That was to get them in there.
JF: The Tropicana had been built then, and one of the owners of the Boulder Club was Mr. Kel Houssels, who was big in the Tropicana.
RM: And he had built the Trop?
JF: Well, he was originally there as it was leased from the builders.
RM: I mean, he was the front man. Because it was really mob money, wasn't it?
JF: I didn't know it . . . oh, I suspected it, I guess. But I was there in the early days. I knew Nick the Greek (Nickolas Dondolas). I saw him many times. And some of the other old gamblers - Joe Bernstein . . . and Benny Binion was in prison at that time. And the Horseshoe was Joe W. Brown's Horseshoe. But then Benny served his time, then he took back over and finally acquired all of that.
RM: Did you know Doby Doc [Caudil]?
JF: Yes, but I don't know too much about him. But he was connected with Benny way back. And he had a younger fellow who was kind of an adopted son of Doby Doc's or something. I worked with him - he was a security officer and worked in the slot department at the Boulder, and then again out at the Tropicana. Doby Doc represented Benny at the Horseshoe while Benny was [in prison]. And he was always dressed immaculately. But later Doby had a place out behind the Tropicana and he'd dress like an old farmer with

bib overalls. But when I got to know him - I knew who he was from uptown - and when I was there, every once in a while he'd bring in a $1000 bill and exchange it. Well, I had no qualms about doing it for him because I knew the money was good. You know, if somebody else'd bring $1000 you might question it - want to know a little about it. And I knew him then.

But here, not a year or two ago after he died, they auctioned off his place right behind the Tropicana. It's there now. It's just a bunch of old stuff Doby had gathered to make a museum and that.

RM: It's still there? Which side of the Tropicana is it on?

JF: Go right down the old Strip, you know, like the L.A. highway, and turn left on the first road that goes behind the Tropicana. I've forgotten the street.

RM: I know the street.

JF: Just go down there and it's the big old place on the righthand side. You can't miss it.

RM: That was his place?

JF: Oh, there's just a bunch of junk there.

RM: I'll be darned.

JF: But it was sold here - Benny Binion bought it for $1 million. (And I have an idea why he bought it but I won't tell you what it was.) But anyway, it's for sale. There's a for-sale [sign on it] now. It was auctioned after Doby died. Benny went in when somebody had bid on it. When they do that, before the court finalizes it, you have a chance to reopen the bidding if you increase the bid 10 percent. Well, Benny went in and increased the bid and bought it.

RM: Did you know Binion at all?

JF: Oh, my family knows him real well. I personally only met Benny a couple of times. But his grandson practically lived at my house.

RM: Is that right?

JF: Yes. They went to school, my youngest daughter and his 2 grandsons.

RM: Oh, I see. They went to school together. So your children went to school in Vegas.

JF: At Gorman High. And my wife still lives there. We're separated but she sees Becky Binion nearly every week. [shows McCracken a picture] These are my 3 daughters.

RM: What are their names?

JF: This girl is married to Jim Crockett, the attorney. You see him on TV once in a while. Her name is Pattie. My second daughter is Kathie Roe and these are her 2 children. This is my youngest daughter, Joanie, who is married to Tome Rideout, a research engineer for Hewlett Packard.

They all went through Gorman. Joanie went to Girl's State and then to Girl's Nation. She's the girl who was [in school with] the Fochser boys. That's Benny's grandson - Steven Binion Fochser. And they're still in touch with each other. In fact, Steve gave me a pool stick which I have in there.

RM: How about Jackie Gaughan. Did you know him very well?

JF: Way back I knew him quite well. He didn't know me by name, but . . . I worked at the Boulder Club and I didn't know until recently, but he had a one-percent interest in it. But the people I worked for . . . Larry Hezzlewood was his partner when he really started to expand. And as cashier I worked and became more or less the credit manager on the day shift. I wasn't designated as that, but that's what I did. And there were only 2 people that I could give anything they asked for. One was Big Fong the Chinaman, who owned Fong's Gardens.

RM: Oh, Fong's Gardens. No kidding.

JF: They had the little lunch counter in the Boulder Club. But I had orders from Mr. Hezzlewood - a big owner in the Boulder Club . . .

RM: Now, this Hezzlewood was one of the big owners?

JF: Yes. They'd sold their lease and I went to work for some people I knew from Caliente - the Amantes. They broke me in as a cashier. But then '57 was a very bad year down there and they couldn't keep up. So Hezzlewood and Kel Houssels and different ones took the business back over.

RM: Oh.

JF: And they kept me.

RM: But anyway, Fong . . . what . . . ?

JF: Big Fong. There are 2 Fong brothers - Big and Little Fong. And they were very honorable. They'd had the cafe uptown and then Fong's Gardens. I don't know about Little Fong, but if Big Fong asked me for anything, there were no questions asked.

RM: Any amount of credit, then?

JF: Well, it wasn't credit because they weren't going to gamble. But if they needed money for some purpose I could give it to them. All they had to do was put the amount and their name and that was it. And it was the same with Jackie Gaughan - I was never to question Jackie. Jackie would get money from me with no question asked.

RM: Why would he need money?

JF: Well, he was running the Derby Sports Book and if he happened to have a big payoff or something . . .

RM: Oh, OK. What were your duties there at the Boulder Club?

JF: [chuckles] Cashiering is quite a profession. You can't believe that there's so much involved. But it's the hub of the business.

RM: Tell me about it.

JF: Well, you've got to set up credit - allow people to write checks so that you know they're good. And you've got to keep track of all the payroll money. And each shift closes out its shift, so you've got to refill the games. They requisition how many chips they need and they settle up money on paper that they're holding and things like that.

RM: Did you do a count?

JF: You don't necessarily count the drops. In some places they have a cashier assist. I've helped many a time out at the Trop and Boulder . . . but you take the money in from the count. And you've got to verify them, and accept the count, and also the slots. Everything hinges around the cage. All your slot take is tallied in the cage, if it's legitimate. And all your games take to the cage - all of them. Slots are separate now, as it's too big for the cage to handle.

RM: Everything that comes in from the tables? They bring the boxes in from the tables, don't they?

JF: Yes. And they count the boxes and then you accept the money into the cage. And you had different ways of giving them credit. At the Boulder Club I had a big sheet and I'd keep track of each game - the drop, the fill and everything, whether it was a win or loss. And it was the same way on any of it. As your win/lose comes in you accept it and then you have a method of putting that in the win. For instance, I might write the win in on my tally sheet. Well, the money's got to be there when they check out the cage. And you check out a cage 3 times a day, each shift. And you keep that money. It's got to be accounted for every 8 hours - the chips, the money, fills, checks, markers, all of it.

RM: And you were doing that out for one shift?

JF: Yes. But I might work different shifts. I knew the procedure for all of it.

RM: How did you happen to get into that line of work?

JF: Well, some people who lived in Caliente by the name of Amante (Pete retired as casino manager for the Showboat just this last year) knew me. And they liked to come up here. And they had these wealthy doctors from L.A. and this one doctor was an outdoorsman and liked to hunt deer and to fish. So I became the official guide, or whatever you might call it. He'd come up here and I'd take him out on all our hunting trips and things like that.

Then when I had the back operation and decided I had to go back to work somewhere, they had a job for me. I could have gone to work way back when they had gone down to the Pioneer Club in '41 or '42. I knew all the owners then and they had a job waiting for me any time I wanted to take it - to break me in. I didn't know any damn thing. I didn't like gambling and didn't want to get into it. I still don't like it. In fact, I had 2 or 3 chances to get involved to the point where I'd be an owner. I'd have been a millionaire. But it didn't work out and I'm just as happy.

RM: The Boulder Club didn't see that many high rollers or anything, did it?

JF: No.

RM: It was more of a grind joint, wasn't it?

JF: The only reason I got to know people like Nick the Greek was that we had the only faro game in town. Many of those old-timers like that faro game.

RM: Tell me, how did you get on out at the Tropicana then?
JF: Mr. Houssels was also an owner in the Boulder Club. And when they opened the Tropicana, my boss Walter Graham, who was head of the cage at the Boulder Club, had worked for him for many years -even when he had a race track down in Phoenix. He was a big, burly man, kind of a half bodyguard to Mr. Houssels at one time. So Mr. Houssels placed him as credit manager and head cashier at the Tropicana. Well, he had broken me in at the Boulder Club and I stayed at the Boulder Club for nearly 4 Club was going to be out of business - that is, their lease would expire. So I went out and broke in on the Strip as a cashier.
RM: Did the Boulder Club become the Mint?
JF: Well, part of the Horseshoe expanded into it. The Mint wasn't there when I worked there. It was where the bank used to be - First State Bank.
RM: Oh, there was a bank there then.
JF: Yes, the building was still there. And then they took it down and made the Bird Cage, which wasn't successful. And then they moved it all and built the Mint. I was working at the Boulder Club when they built the Mint.
RM: How long had the Tropicana been open when you moved out there?
JF: A couple of years. It was more than a year, maybe 2 years. I'd say they opened in '58 and I went to work like March of '60.
RM: And then how long were you there?
JF: I was there for 12 years, until the Houssels' interest sold out and I took a leave of absence.
RM: Who did they sell out to?
JF: Well, they were sold to a group from Minnesota. And Mr. Gustafason is in prison now, but [chuckles] . . . I took a leave and I didn't want to go back.
RM: Oh, you mean after Housells sold it to this Gustafason?
JF: Yes. The Minnesota Enterprises or something.
RM: And you saw them as being unsavory?
JF: I knew something wasn't right so I didn't want to become involved.
RM: And that's the reason you terminated there?
JF: Yes, I took a leave. I kind of had enough of that business anyway, but I took a leave and then I didn't go back. (I had 6 months' leave.)
RM: What were your duties at the Trop?
JF: Oh, golly, as I say, the cage is the center of everything. I wasn't classified as the credit manager but the cashiers

there were all [authorized to] . . . I could set up a card and give somebody $10,000 credit if I felt it was right.

RM: You must have really been trustworthy in their eyes, weren't you?

JF: Oh, we were, really.

RM: How did you determine a person's credit?

JF: It's quite a deal. It's a very thankless job, you know. I tended to be liberal, I wanted to bring business in. And you're going to guess wrong sometimes. But everybody's against you.

The pit all want you to give everybody credit, but when things go wrong it's not their fault, it's your fault.

RM: All for giving the credit, you mean?

JF: Yes. They didn't authorize it. But I had the say over the . . . even the casino manager couldn't approve somebody over me.

RM: Is that right?

JF: You bet. The way Houssels operated, the cage had more say than any of his pit men. Maybe the casino manager himself could influence you, but none of the other pit bosses. You made the decision.

RM: How did you determine a person's credit if you didn't know him?

JF: [chuckles] There are a lot of tricks of the trade. Every phony in the world's trying to take you.

RM: Let's talk about how you determined that and some of the scams people would try to pull.

JF: Well, you set up a card. It's primarily for check writing. Back in the old days they issued credit but they don't operate that way anymore. But then you weren't supposed to give over $500 actual cash out the window, but if they wanted to play I could approve them for $10,000 to play against. But every phony's trying to get you, you know. You learn to spot these things and you get a feeling.

RM: How did you start?

JF: Well, I learned at the Boulder Club with the Amantes. They knew the business quite well. For instance, I was one of the very first who ever believed there was such a thing as a card counter.

RM: Is that right?

JF: You bet. And I learned it from the Amantes. They knew that it could happen, but nobody in those days believed it.

RM: When did card counting come in?

JF: Well, that would be about '57.

RM: Before that there wasn't such a thing as card counting?

JF: Well, nobody knew it, about nobody believed it. None of my pit bosses would believe it. I'll give you an example. When I worked for the Amantes this young boy - he didn't

look like he was 21 but he was, just 21 - would come in and if he sat at a table to play, he wanted to play just against the dealer. His name was Ken Uston. And they knew him and they believed in the counting. They would send in 2 or 3 shills - [to keep him from playing] just against the dealer.

RM: He didn't want anybody else at the table.

JF: That's right. So then we would instruct the dealer, "Put out half the cards and then reshuffle." Well, that'd foul up his count and he couldn't make it work. And I knew this. So when the Boulder Club reverted back to the other group [of owners] they didn't know him. And I didn't know my bosses then - I was just starting to work for them. And I saw this kid come back in and he started looking at the games and I said to the boss, "Mr. Young, see that young kid?"

"Yeah, what about him?"

I said, "The other group wouldn't let him play just against the dealer. He counts cards."

And Mr. Young didn't know me but he didn't like to be told his business. He's a nice guy, but I was somebody he didn't know and he didn't know what my abilities were. "I tell you," he said, "you just worry about what you have to take care of. That's our job in the pit. We were successful. The Amantes couldn't make a go of it here. So don't tell me what they do or didn't do."

He cut me down. I felt real bad. Well, the kid asked. And they turned the other chairs over and let him play against the dealer. The next morning after he played 30 hours he had $18,000 of our money and they stopped his playing.

RM: [laughs]

JF: I even called my pit bosses that day. I said, "Don't let that kid do that. He's going to beat you."

"Oh, what can he do?"

I said, "If I knew, I'd be doing it." [laughs]

RM: You didn't understand how he did it?

JF: Well, not in those days. It wasn't illegal, you know. But not a one of them the next day would say a word that I'd warned them. And I know what's done is done, you know, so I just shut my mouth.

RM: That's funny.

JF: You bet it is. He's writing the books now. Well, he died last year over in Paris. But hell, he's had lawsuits even back in New Jersey. Because he didn't cheat. He just had that mind, and there's a certain point there if a certain amount of cards are left and they're low or high, there's a

point there that favors the player. And he knew it. And he wasn't cheating and could beat the game.

RM: That's right. Well, how did you learn to spot a phony?

JF: Just viewing. Experience teaches you the way . . .

RM: What are some of the scams?

JF: You're always having somebody trying to cash stolen traveler's checks with you. And if you'll go for it they'll sign them - get a good signature and bring them to you. Well, I never accepted one that was already pre-signed, unless I knew them. I'd make them sign again on the back.

RM: You'd ask them for an ID, too, wouldn't you?

JF: Well, not on traveler's checks - not in those days. That was the idea of traveler's checks - that they could countersign. But then the traveler's checks people would send you a list. And at American Express there was a guy named Webb, and he'd try and stick you with it. He'd say, "Well, we sent you a list." I didn't give a damn. If that was signed properly . . . but they'd try and bluff you and make you buy them back. But I saw it signed. If that man's signature matches, you pay him.

RM: What other scams did they use?

JF: Oh, phony checks. I got taken. I suspected something and I still got taken. This woman had come in and [the checks were from a] home construction business - a very good one, you know. And this woman would bring these checks in. I couldn't understand this old gal bringing these fairly good-size checks, so I got suspicious. (She'd bring them in every week.) I called the construction office and got the guy and I said, "This Mrs. So-and-so brings these fairly large checks in."

"Oh, yes. That's our very fine worker."

I said, "Well what does she do to earn this kind of money?"

"Oh, she finalizes our final house. Goes through and cleans up everything and then they're ready for sale.

Well, this same guy had gambled a little with us and he'd give me a $5 toke [tip] once in a while. But there was something that just didn't add up. But I tried the best I could. With my experience now I'd suspect that he was the guy writing the checks. [laughter] And finally they caught up with him. And this old gal would bring them to me and to different ones. And of course, once they were good you'd accept them. But they had all of us cashiers uptown . . . and I was the only one who smelled a phony but I still got taken. But we only had to make good on the last one that she cashed, so we did all right as they gambled.

RM: So you had an intuitive feel on a scam.

JF: Yes, you get that.

RM: What is it that makes that? I mean, they're giving you some clues. What are they?

JF: Well, a lot of times it's just the way the person acts around you. They'll kind of get a nervous talk or something. And to prevent taking checks, I would make them show identification (unless I knew them) and I'd pretend I'd write it down. Hell, I wasn't doing a damn thing. An hour later I couldn't have told you a thing. But I was counter bluffing as if I was really casing them, and that helped.

RM: Did you call the banks and things like that?

JF: Oh, yes. That was standard procedure. But that's where you might get taken. Caesar's just sued over a deal like that - there was collusion with the bank officials. I even had [something like] that happen to me. A young guy (a supposedly wealthy person) flew down from Jackson Hole to visit the Tropicana. And Mr. Jaffie, the landlord of the Trop, knew him up there. He came in and said, "Oh!" You know, old friends greeting each other. And he wanted to cash a $500 check. He'd had this private plane fly him in. Well, I set him up a card and called his bank and he had an account there. But what he'd done is deposited a phony check there and it hadn't come back to the bank. So the bank showed he had plenty of money. And the person I got on the phone wasn't experienced enough and I couldn't get enough information. They didn't know whether they were supposed to tell me. All they'd say was, "Well, couldn't get an opening date. (He'd just opened the account.)

RM: So the things that you would ask a bank were . . .

JF: Opening date, average balance - they wouldn't tell you exactly. They'd find out the average and they'd quote you like, "High 3, open for 4 years," and the kind of thing. Or, "No problems," maybe. That's all they needed to tell me. All the teller had to do was say, "Well, he has a deposit but the deposit isn't cleared yet." But I got a hold of somebody who didn't have that kind of experience. And they thought they weren't supposed to tell me and I could only get the information that that amount of money was in the account.

RM: The key thing is opening date and average balance, isn't it?

JF: They wouldn't give it to me at the bank. But I think it was inexperience. I just happened to catch a bank teller who didn't have that experience. It was a small bank.

RM: And banks will release that information?

JF: You bet. They did in my day. And you'd argue with them if they wouldn't. We'd just say, "Well, that's all right.

We're going to tell the customer that you won't give us enough information to accommodate them." They were walking a tightrope, too.

RM: Well, a person could just use that as a scam, too, couldn't they? They could say, "This is the Boulder Club calling and I want to know about Joe Blow's account."

JF: They did. Oh, you had to be careful. I caught up on 2 or 3 . . . you'd never take a customer's number to call. I'd look it up and get it through information. And I wouldn't ask for the [name they gave me to] ask for.

RM: Why couldn't the guy make a phony bank?

JF: You have a bank book that you can use. But I never had that problem.

RM: I could register a phone number as the . . .

JF: Yes, you can have a confederate, and that's what they tried. That happened many times. And that's pretty hard to overcome.

[chuckles] I'll tell you a little story about dealing with celebrities. Do you know who Vince Dooley is, the Georgia coach?

RM: Sure, yes.

JF: This was back 15 or 20 years ago. Vince Dooley came in. He wasn't a gambler, but he needed some money so he came over and I waited on him and I had him fill out a card. I think he filled it out for a limit of $2000. He wasn't going to use [that much], but just in case he wanted it. And so the girl would send out telegrams to the banks unless we needed it right away - then we'd place a phone call. But anyway, he listed 3 banks back in Georgia - Atlanta, I think it was. And when the report came back the next day the first 2 banks gave me what I needed - the average balance and the opening dates. And the telegram from the third bank said something like: "Mr. Dooley is not our customer. We wish he was. I highly recommend him. Give him anything he wants." Signed by the president of the bank. [chuckles] That shows how they thought - even if he wasn't their customer, give him anything he wanted.

RM: Is that right? What other things would you look for?

JF: Well, here's one they used to try and pull. I know it cost us $17,000 out at the Tropicana. These 2 fellows came in and I could just tell they weren't real gamblers. They set up cards and the bank reports were fine. And they'd go out and play on credit and ask for $1000 or $2000 worth of chips and then they'd horse around and move around the games. Then they'd go back as if they'd lost it and ask for more. But they weren't losing it. Some way or other I could kind of feel that. And I called the pit and I'd say, "What kind of play are you getting on this guy?"

"Well, I don't know about him." They knew [something was going on] too. "Ah, this guy's no gambler," you know.
So pretty soon they were over and they cashed out a bunch of the chips that they had in their pocket. Then they'd go back and start getting credit again - getting chips. Well, these 2 guys had set up a card and they were around playing all right, but they just weren't that kind of players. They made small bets, you know. So my boss came in and he happened to be a little bit upset with me. And I said, "Got a couple of new players out there but I don't like their play."
He said, "Well, what did the bank say about them?"
Well, I had to tell him the bank approved them, and for some reason he got upset. (He was that kind of a person.) He said, "Well, are you the credit manager?"
I said, "I'm sure not. I have to handle credit but I'm not considered a credit manager."
He says, "That's my job, isn't it?"
I said, "It sure is."
"Why don't you just forget it then?"
"Fine."
He found out about a week later when they all came back - $17,000 worth of worthless checks. What they do is go back and pull all their money out of the bank before the check clears.

RM: So they were writing checks to gamble with and they weren't gambling with the money.

JF: They were pretending to gamble but not losing very much. And if you're in good with your pit you watch for that kind of stuff.

RM: And then they went back and drew all their money out of the bank before your checks could clear.

JF: When we'd suspect this . . . one time, I was the only casino down there that felt this guy was a phony. This was the Boulder Club and it was only $500, but I could keep real good track. I had a little experience by then. He came over and I let him have $500 all right. He got $500 in chips and he fooled around. Then he went next door to the Horseshoe and cashed my chips in there. Well, that alone was all I needed to know. Here I was sitting with a $500 check and it's too late now - I didn't even know where he's going to be. So I got my boss to take over and I went to the bank and put it in for collection, immediate (air) reply. You fill out a form and the bank'll get it right back there the following morning for you if they can. Well, I got mine back and everybody else that time lost $500. My check beat him. He was there the next morning but they processed my check before he could pull his funds.

RM: Was that a pretty common scam?

JF: It's still being pulled. You get a concern that can't keep track . . . these big places play for such big money they never know. I can't believe the action they have now compared to what I knew. They play for millions, now. In my day, if somebody lost $50,000 it was quite a sum.

RM: Well, what other scams did you see?

JF: Oh, another thing that'll get you if you don't have experience: A fellow will come up and cash in some chips. You know, just a regular cashout. And there'll be a woman or another person who comes up and starts talking to you. "Would you cash my roll of quarters?" Just to try and distract you a little bit. Or maybe the man will get you distracted. You'll be making the payout and you're trying to talk to 2 people and the guy with what you think is a legitimate cashout will say to you (he hasn't moved anything), "Wasn't that supposed to be $300?"
"Yeah."
"Well, you gave me a $1 bill."
"I did?"
And the woman'll speak up and say, "Yeah, I saw that. I wondered why he gave you $1. I can see you had 300 . . ." Well, there's 2 against one. The only thing you can say is, "Well we'll count down the cage and if you're right, well, have it. But if they raise enough hell . . .

RM: Could you go over that again? I'm not sure I followed that.

JF: The fellow with the chips is making a cashout, and you think he's picked it up, but he's put in a $1 bill and taken $100 out.

RM: Oh, he's palmed it.

JF: Yes. But the other person has distracted you, maybe you have to reach over here to take care of her. Then he says, "Well, you made a mistake." He's nice, you know. And she backs him up.

RM: She's a conspirator.

JF: Yes.

RM: You didn't have much to do with slot cheating, did you?

JF: Well, at the Trop we took the slot count in. As the slots were being counted we'd take the bags in and they kept track of each machine. It was up to them to detect slot cheating.

RM: Yes - drilling the slots and all of that.

JF: That goes on. I knew of that happening at the Boulder Club. The reason I knew it was that the mechanic in charge of the slots was a brother to a woman who owned 40 percent of the building and they kept him on. In fact, he and I got along real well. He wanted to get the next lease and

take me in as a partner. But anyway, the employees mostly - and confederates - were stealing so much money out of the slots that it showed we had very liberal slots, but we had such tight slot machines that we were losing our play. I didn't know it at first but it finally dawned on me what was happening. But, you know, it's not my business to tell other departments what you suspect but can't prove.

I know one time they got this poor lady who had been an employee for a long time in on this scam: Each time there was a jackpot called, she'd pay out the money and write it down on the sheet. And finally when she had this yellow sheet filled out, she tallied it up nd then brought it over and I'd reimburse her with cash for the amount that she paid out. Well, they got her calling these phony jackpots. They'd call them out - say, "Five dollars on number 10," or something and she'd put it on the sheet. These slot people would call out phony jackpots and they had to sign that it was right. And she had to give them the money to give to the players.

And she got so flustered she couldn't add. She had 9 sheets over - added up incorrectly. She never would add up wrong. Hell, I knew what was going on, but the owner might be in on it. I'd already had the experience where thy wouldn't believe me on the card counter.

RM: When you were at the Tropicana it was one of the top places in town, wasn't it?

JF: It was. They called it the Tiffany of the Strip.

RM: Did you see a lot of high-rollers there?

JF: Yes. But not like today. For every high-roller I saw for $100,000 they have 10 million-dollar players that play.

RM: Yes.

JF: I still know people that I knew in the business and it's unbelievable to me that so many big hotels can have such a terrific amount of play.

RM: Do you remember celebrities coming through there?

JF: Oh, I got to know many of them. I knew Benny Goodman and all the entertainers - like Louie Armstrong. When he died, I told Mr. Houssels that Louie had died. Count Basie . . . oh, in those days all of them came to the Trop. I knew Telly Savalas personally.

RM: What was the Trop like? Could you describe the atmosphere at that time?

JF: They had a great atmosphere. It was run like a friendly old place. Mr. Houssels was the old-time gambler. Your dealers could talk to customers. Part of a person being a high-roller is to be acknowledged as a high-roller. A lot of them may think they don't want it. But a lot of them like to be acknowledged. They come in and everybody,

"Well, how do you do Mr. W.? So nice to have you with us." But they like that, you know. "We want to rob you some more." [laughs]

RM: The mob was siphoning-off out of the Tropicana when you were there, weren't they?

JF: I joined after the mob had been out. It was legitimate, but they were there prior . . .

RM: You think Houssels was on the up-and-up?

JF: Oh, yes. You bet. But he had quite a go. No, he ran a legitimate place - I could see the count.

RM: There wasn't a scam going on that you . . .

JF: No. Only the people trying to cheat you.

RM: Yes. But I mean, they wouldn't have been shorting it before it came in the cage or something like that?

JF: No. Heck, I sat back there on the counting many, many times. There was no taking anything out of the count. The boxes were locked up, I saw them opened. All credit slips and fill slips were accounted for. There might have been some dealing off, but the owners wouldn't be involved.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RM: Panaca is mainly a Mormon community, isn't it?

JF: Yes. That was the original LDS . . . Brigham Young sent them there back in 1858 or something like that.

RM: And then Caliente has quite a few Mormons, doesn't it?

JF: Oh, yes. The whole community - Pioche, all of them.

RM: Does Pioche have a lot of Mormons?

JF: Oh, yes. It's predominantly LDS now. When we were growing up it wasn't.

RM: Oh, that's what I wanted you to talk about.

JF: They have gradually become the permanent people and they're a majority.

RM: But when you were growing up that wasn't the case?

JF: No. The Episcopal Church probably was stronger at that time. And the Catholic Church had burned and they didn't even have a church going here.

RM: When did their church burn? Do you remember?

JF: I think it was after World War I.

RM: And they never rebuilt it?

JF: No.

RM: Were there any other churches in town?

JF: Fundamentalists - there were just the Mormons and Episcopalians and what you call the Fundamentalists.

RM: Was there a Mormon Church here in town when you were growing up?

JF: Yes. At first there was not a church, but at one time they held [services in] the bottom part of the Odd Fellow's Hall. And another time they had a little building at

Connors where they now have the sign - where Mrs. Gemmill has her studio or whatever it is. And then they built a church that is now the town hall - that was built in the early '30s. And from that time on they expanded and just a few years ago they built the [present] Mormon Church.

RM: A lot of the people in mining communities are not too religious. Would you agree with that?

JF: Well, the old permanent people still had quite a bit of religion.

RM: Was there a Masons' group here?

JF: Oh, yes. The Masonic Lodge dates back to 1872.

RM: Were they strong when you were growing up?

JF: Yes. I'm a Mason myself but I'm not active anymore. But yes, that dates back to 1872. St. John 18. It's less of an organization now. Without support from Vegas they wouldn't have enough to operate. The members from Vegas have joined and supported and kept it going.

RM: How about Lions or any of those clubs?

JF: They had a Rotary way back, and the American Legion for a little bit.

RM: Was there any prejudice between the Mormons and the . . .

JF: A little bit. Now, not much. But way back there was a little friction there. It didn't amount to anything - maybe somebody'd call you a Mormon or a dirty Mormon or something.

RM: Were there any Chinese in town?

JF: Yes. Chinatown was right across here.

RM: Oh, it was?

JF: By my time there were a lot of old buildings there but we only had about 5 Chinese left. There was China Charlie. He was an old gentleman - I don't know what he did originally - but we would go over and he even had Chinese candy and you could buy a little from him, and firecrackers. And then there was China Tom and then up the street there was Last China Wa or something. He was kind of a mean old boy. We used to tease him - [chuckles] that was quite a thing.

RM: What would happen?

JF: He had this old tin house and we kids would come along the trail and throw rocks down on it and yell, "Chink chink Chinaman, ain't no good. Chink chink Chinaman stole my wood." And this one friend of mine, Norval, and my cousin Danny, who were a couple of years older, tried it one day. Well, he came out with a big butcher knife and they took off running. To this day, my friend Norval . . . he ran so far he was just totally exhausted. [laughter] That ended that. My cousin lived right there and he ran in the house. But the old Chinaman just about scared them to death. He

actually had a big butcher knife, chasing them. I don't know what he'd have done. But you never know. He wasn't too stable, so it wasn't too good an idea to tease him.

RM: But the Chinatown was gone by the time you came along?

JF: They even had a little joss house - their church or place of worship.

RM: Oh really? When you were a kid?

JF: Yes. They didn't use it but it was still there. And then we had the Chinese restaurant. His name was Wing and he had an employee or two - Chinese. And he ran a restaurant for many years in the '30s, I believe.

RM: Were there any other ethnic groups? Were there Yugoslavians in the community here?

JF: Well, not really. Just the Italians, that you could call an ethnic group. And the Mormons, kind of.

RM: Was there a Cornish - Cousin Jack - community?

JF: No. Not in my time. But some of the original people who had come here were from Wales. In fact, one of my grandmothers was from Wales.

RM: Was the town divided along social lines - rich and poor or anything like that?

JF: A little bit. Not much.

RM: Who was kind of on the upper crust?

JF: You had 4 or 5 families - maybe the mine bosses and the owners of some of the businesses. But it wasn't too much.

RM: Did you have a white-trash community?

JF: Oh yes. We always had that. [chuckles]

RM: Were they real poor and . . . ?

JF: Yes. You know, that's just the way they lived and that's the way you treated them. But there was no real bad treatment of anybody.

RM: Could you say a few words about the roads in the area? There was the highway going to Ely but it wasn't paved when you were a kid, was it?

JF: No. During my time they had a graveled road that was maintained. Prior to that, I can remember - as a little boy 4 or 5 years old - that my mother bought an Overland car. She would transport people to outlying districts for money. I can remember going with her. I remember one time we went clear out to Garrison, Utah - took a party clear out there and had to stay overnight. I was just barely old enough to recall it.

The roads weren't too good over to the Prince and in there -it was just an old dirt road. And somebody who lived there might be over here, and rather than walk over the hills they'd pay her to transport them like a hire service.

RM: What about the road over to Cedar City? What was it like?

JF: It was the old dirt road that followed the gullies and contours of the land. I'll tell you a story about Cousin Bud. [chuckles] This is later, in about 1935, I think. He worked at the Hodges and Cook Mercantile and they purchased a Dodge pickup to use, you know, in their business. And that thing was fast for those days. It would actually go 85 miles an hour on the road if you wanted to push it. And Pat Christian - the father of the owners of the store - liked to go fishing. His sons would take him a certain amount, but they didn't care much for fishing themselves. Well, Bud, my cousin, was working as a young man at the store and Uncle Pat wanted to go over to Enterprise [Utah] fishing. And, "Fine."

Well, in those days you delivered groceries. The people'd either leave their list or, if they had a phone, phone it in and you'd put it up and deliver it. And on Saturday, Uncle Pat'd want to go fishing and you had this nice pickup to take him and you'd get everything ready, your bedrolls and a certain amount of food to last you through Sunday. And of course, Bud would include me. He wanted company and that was great for me. And we could leave after he made his deliveries because they needed the pickup there to make the deliveries. But once they were delivered we'd be free to take off with Uncle Pat to travel on these old roads to Enterprise.

We'd go over to Modena [Utah], which was not too direct, but that was the way to go. And we'd always stop at Modena and maybe visit Old Man Lund, who had the store there and maybe buy a soda pop or something and go on to Enterprise. And in Enterprise you would find one of the locals who could dig the worms for you and then you'd go on up to the Enterprise reservoir, which was great fishing. Uncle Pat really loved to go fishing. But ordinarily when we went we would just barely have time to get up on the reservoir and make camp, there was no time for evening fishing. But this one day everything went right and we got a pretty early start. When we arrived over at Modena and stopped, Bud looked at the sun and said, "By golly, if we can keep making this good of time we'll get in some evening fishing."

Of course I was all for that. It was 26 miles on this dirt road to Enterprise so we took off and Bud really put the gas pedal down. We were just a-sailing over with the dust a-billowing. Your stomach'd get light, like when you go on a roller coaster. And Uncle Pat was an old-timer and he was sitting there, "Dum de dum," not paying attention. So we came skidding into Enterprise to get our worms and Uncle Pat says, "Driving pretty fast, kid."

Well, if you know Bud, he's full of hot air. He can talk his way out of anything. He said, "Well no, Uncle Pat. We really weren't going very fast." He said, "I know the speedometer said we were doing 70 and 80, but as a sales gimmick the Dodge people have set these speedometers fast." He said, "I don't even think we were actually doing 50 miles an hour." Trying to con Uncle Pat . . .
When he got through talking and explaining, Uncle Pat said, "Twenty-six miles, 25 minutes. Going pretty fast, kid," as he looked at his gold pocket watch. [laughter] We weren't conning him.

RM: [chuckles] What was the road south down Caliente and down . . . ?

JF: Very long and hard to travel. If you went down the canyon it was much shorter, but most everybody went to Alamo and on down. But I remember as a young boy - this'd be about 1932 - my mother had this car for a while and we went down the 24th of July to a rodeo at Alamo. And the roads weren't that great. When we got down there it clouded up and they had a severe cloudburst and we were afraid to come back that afternoon. Mother had friends there, so we stayed over. And I can remember the next morning we were quite concerned if the roads would be washed, and they were cut through several places. But other cars had made a trail and we made it back.

RM: Was there a road going out to Timpahute and over to Warm Springs in those days?

JF: When I first went to Timpahute it was just a regular old country road that didn't amount to anything.

RM: Before they built the Test Site was there a road that went down and across that land, like towards Beatty?

JF: Yes. In my time there were roads that went out to the Groom Mine. We went out there one time but they had started the Test Site and they wouldn't let us go any farther. But I think in the early days - the wagon days - you could go through to Beatty that way.

RM: I imagine the remnants of those old roads are still there, if a person knew where to look and they'd let you.

JF: You bet. Even some of the old Spanish Trail - the people who know where it went can still find where they were.

RM: I wanted to ask you a little bit about some of the merchants in town when you were growing up.

JF: Well, you had the 2 general stores: A. S. Thompson and Hodges Cook. And then you had an old market there run by a person called Olinghouse. In the earliest times it was just the one market. And he had an ice plant and he would make and sell ice, too. He'd hire a young boy to deliver ice and it was quite a job. He'd have some sort of a

pickup - at first it was an old Model-A. And during the summer months a teenage boy would work for him.

And he had a ranch out here. My half-uncle was a cowboy, and he would work for him. I don't know how many cattle he had but that's where our beef came from. He would butcher it out there and then send whoever was working for him to transport the beef back [to town]. And he had the ammonia pipes and storage for the meat.

And then later - in the early '30s - 2 young fellows had a clothing market. Vern Stever was one of them - he's still here. Then he and another fellow named Joe Templeman opened a market that they named the Lincoln Meat and Market. They operated where part of the Nevada Club is and ran a market for several years. Vern then opened the clothing store that's still operating.

And then later they had Allen's Cash Store come in. They were from Delta, Utah, or somewhere up there - and it ran continuously till about 6 years ago.

RM: And then you had a drugstore, which you mentioned earlier.

JF: Oh, yes. Then later they had 2 of them. And the one went out of business - Nores. And the operators of the other were the Cowleys - Mr. and Mrs. Cowley. They ended up over in Cedar and there's still a Cowley Drug there.

RM: Was there a movie theater when you were growing up?

JF: Well, [there was] one at the old Thompson Opera House. It operated except for 6 or 8 months when it we out of business during the real toughest times. As I recall, it had 3 shows a week - one for 2 nights, then 2 nights and 3 nights. That was another fond memory for me as a boy. I think Mr. Thompson knew what was going on all the time, but we had more ways to get into that theater . . . you wouldn't believe it.

RM: [chuckles] Sneaking in there?

JF: They had an old diesel engine to generate their power, which was located down on the lower floor. And they stored bags of grain for sale as part of the Thompson Mercantile [down there]. In the winter they'd go down there and start the engine up to generate power so the marquee would be lit up. And in the summertime they'd go down a little before [showtime]. The idea was that you'd catch whoever went in there to start the generator when they were busy and then you'd go in and hide behind the sacks. [laughter] And then they had a tunnel. They'd go back and you had a trap door. You could come up and get upstairs to the stage. But you had to wait up there at the stage because there was a stairway - you had to come down several steps (5 or 6) into the theater itself and you could be seen.

So you'd wait there and then when they'd turn out the light to start the movie, there'd be a little period of time where the lights would go off before everybody's eyes would adjust. Well, usually there wouldn't be a person in the front row when the lights went off, then finally when you could see again, here'd be 6 or 7 kids there. [laughter] We had to crawl across the floor to . . . I think he knew all the time.

Then in the summertime they had screen doors on each side of the stairs. And if you could get somebody with money to go in there, one of your friends or something, you'd wait till the lights went out and then he'd go flip the latch. In you'd come and you'd be there again.

RM: [chuckles]

JF: He finally put electric locks on those and they tripped them from the back and that cut that out.

Then the last thing we had going for us was: outside there was a trap door - a regular covered door. And it had one of those old padlocks on it - the type with the big key. My cousin and a couple of us were out there one day, and he was kind of a mischief-maker anyway. (Not Bud, but another cousin.) And he took a rock and whacked it. Well, it sprung it open. We shouldn't have done that and he knew it, but he put it back and it looked like it was all right. But all you had to do was put a little pressure on and lo-and-behold, you'd go down this trap door and come right back under into the stage. So they had us blocked off [the other way] but we had this. And one of us would stay there and fasten the lock back so that if they came looking it'd look . . . and that went on for about a year, till they caught up with us.

RM: One last question: What role has ranching played in the life of Pioche?

JF: Well, quite a bit. Even from the earliest times I can remember, they might come to town in a wagon from Eagle Mountain and all. Of course they had automobiles and it wasn't too far, but once in a while somebody'd come in [with a wagon] and bring grain to sell or something.

RM: Is Eagle Valley the main ranching area?

JF: Yes. It's 16 miles out. And there are several families that live there. They're old-time settlers - Mormons. There's the Hollingers, the Lytles, the Hammonds, the Francises, the Dwyers. . . maybe 4 or 5. They had their own little community there but they didn't have a store, they always came in here.

RM: Were there any other ranching areas that related to Pioche?

JF: Not too many. Wilson Creek and just some small places. There weren't many people involved out there. But there's

the mine out at Atlanta that operated way back. Then again, here 15 or 20 years ago they built a nice mill there and it operated for 10 years mining gold on an open pit operation. And it was profitable, too. But the mill and all were built . . . I knew the people who built them. They were oil people from Oklahoma named Jordan and they anticipated that there'd be an increase in the gold price. They thought they could even make a few dollars at the low price of gold. They built this mill out there. He had made a lot of money in oil in Oklahoma. And the other brother - Robert - was kind of a promoter and he was a gambler. I knew him at the Tropicana. They built this nice mill.

I remember they kind of questioned me about what I thought of their operation. I'd known a little about the mine and it's some of the hardest rock you ever can imagine. I remember we were out in Vegas - he had visited me, and his attorney was my friend, Roscoe Wilkes. We were out at the Sands and he asked me about the mine, so I said, "Well, do you really believe that you can mine that hard ore?" I said, "Do you know how hard that ore is?"

"Oh, no problem," you know.

Well, it was a problem. They couldn't make it, it was just more than he anticipated. The last time I saw him I said, "Well, I'm sorry you didn't make it."

He said, "Yeah, that hard rock beat me." [chuckles]

I felt like saying, "I didn't know anything, did I?"

But anyway, they were nice people but they gave it up. And then this is another strange thing. The owners then were a family out of Reno, but eventually a fellow by the name of Day [acquired it]. There was a lawyer and a boy from Ely who ended up as a supreme court judge here in Nevada (and his firm is still maybe the largest in Las Vegas) named John Collins, who was a classmate of Day's. Well, Day's mother had money and he had some money and he evidently decided that gold might take a jump. And he asked Collins' advice. Well, Collins really didn't know, but I think he asked Paul Gemmill about it. Paul Gemmill said, "One of the best gold property's right out there at Atlanta."

Well, some way or other this Day did it - I think he ended up owning it. Collins' family from Reno had owned it. But anyway, he ended up with it and owns it to this day, I believe. And for about 10 years, I'm certain he made several million from it.

RM: No kidding. But the Eagle Valley area is the main ranching area for Pioche?

JF: Yes. And Panaca and then, of course, Pahranagat and Alamo.