AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE JEFFS

An Oral History
Conducted and Edited by
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Lincoln County Town History Project
Lincoln County, Nevada

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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 George Jeffs at his home in Mesquite, Nevada, January 29, 1993.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: George, why don't we start with you telling me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

GJ: It now reads George Aaron Jeffs, but it was George Jeffs, Jr.; I had it changed when I was in seventh or eighth grade.

RM: And your date and place of birth?

GJ: I was born June 2nd, 1923, in Caliente, Nevada, in a home on Spring Heights.

RM: What was your father's name?

GJ: George Eli Jeffs.

RM: And when and where was he born?

GJ: I don't know the exact date; he was born in Evanston, Wyoming. We had kind of a flood down in the basement and we lost our genealogy papers, so I'm going to miss a few dates.

RM: Were they ranchers there, or did they work on the railroad or something else?

GJ: They were railroaders, and my dad worked in the shops.

RM: And what was your mother's maiden name?

GJ: Mary Elizabeth Foster.

RM: When and where was she born?

GJ: I don't know the date, but she was born in Cornwall, Canada. Then they moved to Vermont and then they moved to Delamar. I think she was 2 at the time they moved to Delamar.

RM: Oh. So you're related to Elaine Eardensohn through the Fosters.

GJ: Yes, my mother and her mother are sisters.

RM: The Fosters had a store in Delamar, didn't they?

GJ: Yes, they did. Do you want to see a picture of it?

RM: I'd love to. How did your parents wind up in Caliente?

GJ: My father's sister married Karl Alquist from Sweden and they moved to Caliente to start a store. And they did start a store; it's called the Blue Front. When my dad was around 22, he was working in the shops in Evanston, Wyoming, and my aunt, Lottie Alquist, asked him to come down and manage the store. So he and his brother, John Jeffs, both went to Caliente; Dad managed the store and John worked in it. I don't know how long he was in Caliente until he married my mother, who had moved from Delamar to Caliente.

The Fosters my grandparents had a store in Caliente and they sold it to my parents. Two years later they had a fire down the south strip; it burned out 27 businesses. So they lost their business.

RM: Was that in what they call Overtown in the business district there?

GJ: It was right down the business street, but I've never heard it called Overtown.

RM: Did all the stores get burned?

GJ: Yes, 27 businesses.

RM: When was that?

GJ: It was in 1918.

RM: What was the name of your parents' store?

GJ: You know, I don't think I've ever heard that.

RM: What kind of store was it?

GJ: Dry goods.

RM: Did they have insurance or anything?

GJ: No. I heard them say many times how long they paid for a dead horse; years and years. I think they had the store for only 2 years. They were doing well with it, too.

RM: What did they do after the fire?

GJ: My dad went back over to the Blue Front, and he stayed there until around '52. Then they moved to Reno and he had a store in Reno.

RM: Were they all dry goods stores?

GJ: No, the Blue Front had meat, groceries, dry goods, coal and lumber. I worked there a long time.

RM: Was it successful?

GJ: Oh, yes.

RM: Did he move to Reno because the town was going downhill at that time?

GJ: Well, my aunt Lottie, who owned the store, had a grandson named Karl Pulley. Karl kind of wanted the store and so she sold it to him. I guess things were going downhill, and Dad thought he could do better in Reno. He had an opportunity so he moved to Reno, and they had that store for about 8 years.

RM: What do you recall about operating the Blue Front?

GJ: My job, besides waiting on customers, was to stock shelves and mostly to deliver ice. We had an ice plant in the back room. We'd make blocks of ice about 3 feet by 4 feet by 8 inches. After it was frozen we'd pull the ice and then haul it around town for refrigeration. Mostly I did that myself.

And when the coal would come in on the freight cars I'd unload it into a truck, then haul it over to the store and unload it in a big bin. I did the same thing when the grain would come in and when the lumber came in; we'd haul it from the train cars to the store, and then when it was purchased I'd deliver it.

RM: Did you deliver with a vehicle, or with horse and buggy?

GJ: No, with a truck.

RM: What do you recall about the business aspects of the store? Is there anything that you remember your father talking about?

GJ: He said that he thought the people were very honest. There were a lot of people who got in a spot, and both he and my aunt were very good about carrying them. He said most people came through in the end. I've heard him say a number of times that he was impressed with the honesty of the people.

RM: So he gave a lot of credit and usually didn't get stiffed?

GJ: Yes.

RM: Were your dad and his sister partners?

GJ: No. Karl and Lottie owned the store and my dad came in to manage it, and he managed it all those years. Karl drank a bit, and he was incapacitated some. How Karl got over here from Sweden I don't know. So in Caliente you've got my aunt, Lottie Alquist, her brother George Eli Jeffs and her other brother, John Jeffs.

RM: And your mother was a Foster, and she'd grown up in Delamar.

GJ: I think they were in Delamar either 4 or 5 years. She was 2 when she moved there in 1889.

RM: Do you recall your mother ever telling stories about what it was like in Delamar?

GJ: The story that most runs in my mind was about the opium dens. I remember where they were. I didn't go to Delamar until they'd gone downhill, of course; no one lived there then. But I knew where the opium dens were on the street, because there were remnants of the buildings left some of the walls. And she told me where to look. She told me that she would often go by on the south side of the street; the Fosters were on the north side of the street. It was across the street and just a little bit east. I don't know the name of the building, but she said you could stand there and watch them. Most of them were Orientals. And they had tiers beds. I don't know if there were 2 or 3 bunks. But they would lie there and smoke opium, and she said you could look in the window and watch them. She said the kids did that all the time.

I'll tell you about something that happened in Delamar in 1906. Frank Pace told me about this. There was some kind of conflict between the famous sheriff Jake Johnson and an Indian named Bateman. It was just about directly north of town. When you came into town there was a toll gate. There was a toll road there.

RM: To go to Delamar?

GJ: Yes.

RM: You mean, from where the highway is now?

GJ: No. The toll road branched off south of the highway. The toll road was to pay for constructing the road. The freighters had to pay the toll to go by the road, and they paid for the road that way. Anyway, there was some conflict between Jake Johnson and this Indian named Bateman. Bateman ran up on the hill near the toll road. I know about the spot because Frank told me about it it was out by the jail. They had a jail dug into the side of a cave.

RM: Is that right? And just put bars on the front of it?

GJ: Yes, and a door; like the one in Panaca. Do you know the story about the first inmate in Panaca's jail?

RM: He was chained to a tree, wasn't he?

GJ: Yes. Anyway, this Bateman ran up by the toll road and fired a couple of shots at Johnson and Johnson unloaded his gun on the Indian and he hit him in the neck. They thought he was dead, and Frank said Johnson told him to bring the body down or something to that effect, and then they discovered that the guy was still alive. And Bateman's wife treated the wound in his neck by taking a silk handkerchief and pulling it through.

RM: Oh, it went all the way through?

GJ: Yes.

RM: I've heard of doing that.

GJ: Anyway, Bateman lived. And some years later, when Jake Johnson was going from Caliente to Pioche he stopped at Cold Springs for water and Bateman shot at him again.

RM: What did Johnson do then?

GJ: He took off. [Laughter]

RM: Bateman didn't kill him?

GJ: Oh, no, it didn't hit him.

RM: And he didn't kill Bateman that time?

GJ: No, I'm not even sure he knew who it was. Frank knew who it was. I don't really know how Frank knew.

While we're on that story, do you want to hear another one that Frank told me? The sheriff at this time was Monahan.

RM: Was he after Johnson, or before?

GJ: He had to have been after. This must've been at the very waning moments of Delamar. He said a lady came to town, a lady and her husband (I guess it was her husband). Their name was Monroe and she was called "Cowboy Nell" because she wore lace boots, which was unusual at that time. At any rate, they came to Delamar with intentions of robbing several of the stores after the payload had been deposited at the end of the month or the beginning of the month. They had plans to rob 4 stores. I'm not sure, but I think this is the physical sequence of stores: Nesbitt, Wertheimer, Samuelson and Miles. Miles' store was the last store they were going to rob. When they came to town they became friends with a young assayer named Frank Sanford, who lived in Delamar, so he was in on their plans.

Frank Pace worked in the Miles store; he slept there at night as sort of a night guard. Frank Sanford was a friend of Frank Pace's, and Sanford would often come to the store, so it wouldn't be unusual to see Sanford come to the store to visit Pace. But the Monroes were going to kill Frank. They were going to rob the 3 stores, then knock on the door and get Frank to come out, because they knew he would be there. And they already had his grave dug. They lived in a home that my grandfather rented to them and they had torn up the floorboards and they'd dug Frank's grave under the floor. Frank says he's the only guy he knows who ever saw his own grave. [Chuckles]

At any rate, following them into town was a Pinkerton detective this sounds like out of a pulp book [laughter] who was seeking them for a murder charge in Montana.

RM: So they were tough customers.

GJ: Yes, they were. They were murderers, I guess. He alerted the locals and the Pinkerton man became friends with them. So he knew exactly the time that the robbery was supposed to take place. The Pinkerton man, and I presume the sheriff, and 2 other people went to wait for them. The Monroes went to the first store, which was the Nesbitt store, and the law was waiting just outside, including the Pinkerton man. They didn't intend to apprehend them then, but some guy who was with them, named Harry Turner, got excited and started saying, "Hold up your hands," or some darn thing like a Wild Western. Cowboy Nell suspected that the Pinkerton man, who she didn't know was a Pinkerton man, had informed on them, and she was going to kill him. He grabbed her from behind, and Frank said she had a gun in her hands and was shooting at the Pinkerton man's feet; she didn't hit him.

RM: What happened then?

GJ: They were apprehended, and they were sent to Montana to face murder charges. Sanford, the local kid, was acquitted because he contributed evidence. The Monroes were convicted, I guess of murder in Montana. They

both went to prison, and she was released soon thereafter because she was pregnant. After they were apprehended Frank and the sheriff, Monahan, took them to the sheriff in Caliente, who was my uncle Jay Les Denton.

RM: That is an interesting story.

GJ: I'll bet you haven't heard that one.

RM: No, I haven't.

GJ: I doubt if anyone has heard that. Frank died right after I got this tale.

RM: What do you recall about Charlie Culverwell?

GJ: I knew Charlie really well. He lived across the street from me.

RM: And he was the guy who owned the land where Caliente was built?

GJ: Yes, he did; the Culverwell family owned it. It was nice meadowland.

RM: What's the history of the Culverwell family? When did they come in there?

GJ: I would guess right at the turn of the century. Charlie came there to ranch and they had a ranch house sort of before the rest of the town was built. It was on the same site right across the street from where I lived and the town kind of built up around it. Are you acquainted with the town?

RM: Yes, I am, but I don't know the names of all the streets.

GJ: The main street on each side of the track runs east and west. On the south side of the tracks is Spring Heights and Denton Heights; they each go up a hill. If you go up Spring Heights, the first house on the right is Charlie's.

RM: Was there a ranch there when he came in, or did the Culverwells start it?

GJ: No, they started it the Culverwells and Jim Ryan. Jim had his ranch.

RM: Was Jim Ryan's ranch in Caliente or was it down the canyon?

GJ: If you go about 4 miles down Rainbow Canyon, Jim had his ranch there. They lived on the ranch when they first started, and then they moved into town and he lived over by the grammar school, but some of the ranch hands lived at the ranch. And then the Ryans bought the Newman Ranch. It is about 7 miles south of Panaca on the highway, right where the 1001 Ranch is now. The Ryans ran their cattle between Caliente and Panaca, and it was nice pasture land.

RM: Where did the Culverwells run their cattle just in the meadow there?

GJ: Yes, mostly. They might've gone up Big Springs Canyon I think they ran some of them up there. And they ran some of them down by the depot. And they ran some, I believe, between Caliente and Panaca. From Charlie's down to the depot was all nice meadowland. And then John Conway ran cattle; their ranch was maybe 9 miles south of Caliente, down Rainbow Canyon. They ran their cattle up and down the canyon.

RM: Did floods used to come through and flood the ranch there?

GJ: Oh, yes like the 1910 flood.

RM: But apparently it didn't hit the town, did it? It washed out the tracks and everything, but did it destroy the town?

GJ: Well, I can remember a flood that came over to our house many years later. We lived over by the elementary school; that was maybe 3 blocks over from the creek channel. It didn't come in our basement because we backed it up with sandbags.

RM: When Culverwell just had a ranch there, did it flood out the meadow there from time to time?

GJ: No, because the gorge for the creek is a deep gorge it would handle a lot of water. So the floods did not go over that way, they went down the creek route. The floods would come down from the Pioche area or they'd come down from the Big Springs area and go down the channel. So that diverted it from the town.

RM: Would you describe Charlie Culverwell? What was he like?

GJ: He was short and stocky. I imagine Charlie was about 5 foot 4 inches and stocky and ruddy faced, with freckles and reddish hair. He was the sheriff of Lincoln County for quite a while.

RM: Was that before the county was divided into Clark and Lincoln counties?

GM: No, it was afterwards.

RM: What kind of a man was he?

GJ: He was always very pleasant with me. I used to go over there and ride his horses. He had a boy named Charlie who was a little bit more cantankerous than his father; a little more difficult to get along with, but he was a nice person. The old man was very easy to get along with. And his wife, Jenny, was a little bit sophisticated; reserved; sort of anti-children in a way. A nice lady, but . . . I used to go over there sometimes and eat breakfast with them, because she had hot cakes every morning, and I loved hot cakes; my mother never made them. So young Charlie would invite me over and about once a month I'd go over and have breakfast.

RM: Did Charlie Culverwell live to be old?

GJ: Yes, I would say he was approaching 90.

RM: What kind of a deal did he have with the railroad? The town was built on his land, wasn't it?

GJ: I really don't know. The whole valley was not his. I don't think he owned the east part. I think his meadows . . . you know where the depot is now? He owned that section of the area.

RM: Yes.

GJ: Well, Charlie's house was on a road that goes east of the depot about 3 blocks. But I think the Culverwell family owned that section of the town.

RM: So the railroad probably took some of his land somehow.

GJ: I suppose they purchased it; that was private property. Although he didn't ever tell me anything about that.

RM: What was the Culverwells' standing in the community?

GJ: Very lofty. They were well respected. He was always considered a fair person as the sheriff he was a very fair person. I thought he was a good human being.

RM: Let's back up and talk a little bit about you. What do you recall about growing up in Caliente?

GJ: I recall the winters. The snow was deep, usually about a foot. And that's pretty deep. Some winters it was 3 or 4 feet deep.

RM: Was there snow on the ground most of the winters?

GJ: All the winters until 1930 there was deep snow. Then as I recall there was a climatic change and we just got less and less snow.

RM: So you say that the winters before 1930 were longer and harder?

GJ: Yes. There was heavy snow; very heavy. And we would sleigh-ride every night. It was mostly on Denton Heights because it was steeper than Spring Heights. We'd have sleigh rides in Spring Heights, too, but most of the kids went to Denton Heights. We'd start at the top of Denton Heights that's where Frank Pace lived, at the top of Denton Heights. We'd walk up the hill and sleigh down, then walk back up. And we would take rubber tires up to the top of the hill and build a fire with them to try to keep warm, and then put potatoes in and cook them. Then we'd eat the potatoes they tasted just like rubber tires. [Laughter]

But it was OK, because they warmed your hands as you held them. [Laughter] We used to sleigh-ride every night in the winter. And every night in the summer we played Kick the Can until midnight every night. The summer nights were quite warm, but they'd start cooling off about 11:00. We played Kick the Can till it got cool.

RM: What other things do you recall?

GJ: Well, the sleigh wasn't a real sleigh, it was a piece of metal, I think steel (it could've been iron). It was about 5 feet by 6 or 7 feet and we'd bend up the front portion. We'd hook it on the back of my dad's car and he'd pull us around town in the snow. That was great fun.

I remember one night Duke Eyraud went through the fence and cut off his nose.

RM: Oh!

GJ: He lost control and ripped through the barbed wire fence and his nose was just hanging down the side of his face.

RM: Oh, how awful!

GJ: They sewed it back on and you can't see the scar.

RM: Is that right; the doctors there in Caliente did a good job, then.

GJ: J. B. Demman was the doctor, and he did a great job. When you see Duke today, you can't see the scar.

RM: Were you there?

GJ: Yes, I was there then.

RM: And he just went through a barbed wire fence?

GJ: Yes. Sometimes we'd have sleighs that you couldn't guide; just homemade sleighs with no steering mechanism. That's what he was on, I think. Usually we'd make one out of bumpers from a front bumper of a car. You'd put a 2-by-12 on the front bumper of a car and attach it and then just go down . . .

RM: How did you attach it? Didn't it rock sideways?

GJ: It did everything. [Laughter] It was uncontrollable. I remember I knocked down a backyard fence with one once.

RM: They were pretty deadly coming down the hill, then?

GJ: Right. And if they hit you, oh, they're heavy. You know, that's a large plank. And a few kids got hit. But Duke couldn't guide it, and he went through that barbed wire fence.

RM: What do you recall about school?

GJ: The most vivid thing I recall about school was our basketball team. We won the state championship once. They'd never won a championship before, and it's been a long time since then before they won one [again]. That was in '39.

RM: You went to high school in Panaca you were bused over there, weren't you?

GJ: Right.

RM: Were you on the team?

GJ: Yes, I was on it.

RM: Is that right? Who else was on that team?

GJ: Let's see, Joe Mozanno, John Franks . . .

RM: I'll be darned. I interviewed him.

GJ: Oh, John was a great guy. A good ballplayer, too. And we had Howard Anderson, Ray Cook, Charlie Culverwell, and Lynn McGee and a CCC boy named Alfonse Wysnewski from Ohio. He was going to school there and he played on the team.

RM: How did he happen to be going to school there, being in the CCC?

GJ: Some of the 3-C kids who hadn't finished high school and wanted to go went to school there.

RM: Oh and they lived at the camp?

GJ: Yes. We had 3 or 4 of them at the high school.

RM: Who all did you play in that championship year?

GJ: That was when the whole state was open; you had to play against everybody, and everybody was in the same bracket.

RM: You mean you had to play the big high schools in Reno and everything?

GJ: Right.
RM: And you guys won? Boy, that was something.

GJ: The first night we beat Montello. That isn't even a town anymore. It was a railroad town right on the eastern border, by Utah. The next night we beat Winnemucca.

RM: That was a pretty big town.

GJ: Yes, Winnemucca was a lot bigger than we were. And for the championship we beat the Stewart Indians in an overtime, 28 to 27.

RM: Is that right. Where were the playoffs in Reno?

GJ: Yes, it was at the university.

RM: That was a thrill for the town, wasn't it?

GJ: Oh, I'll say. We stayed up all night and this probably never happened before and never happened since: The school bought us beer.

RM: [Laughs] The Mormon town bought its kids beer?

GJ: Yes. If you wanted a drink, the school bought it.

RM: [Laughs] I'll be darned.

GJ: [Chuckles] Hugh Jacobson was another kid on the team, and he drank his beer and mine. He was a good kid. He was killed in the war. That was a very good ball team.

RM: It must've been! Las Vegas didn't amount to a whole lot then, but it was a pretty good-sized town.

GJ: Vegas got beat the first night. We didn't play them in the championship, but we beat them twice that year.

RM: How did you get to the towns that you played?

GJ: In 2 touring cars.

RM: Did the cheerleaders come along?

GJ: Oh, no.

RM: [Chuckles] Did you stay all night in Las Vegas, or turn around and come back?

GJ: When we went to Vegas we stayed all night. That was a 3-night tour. We played Cedar City the first night and stayed in Cedar City, played Hurricane the second night and stayed in Hurricane, played Vegas the third night and stayed there that night and then came home the next day.

RM: Did you ever take the train to get anywhere?

GJ: The only time we ever took the train was when I was a senior, when we went down by train to Las Vegas to play football.

RM: Was going to Vegas a tough trip in those days? Was the road pretty good?

GJ: It was good.

RM: Did it go the same way as it does now?
GJ: Yes. The proposal had been for years to go down Rainbow Canyon and around.

RM: What other things do you recall about childhood?

GJ: Well, I started school the first grade in Evanston, Wyoming. I lived in Caliente but my mother thought I was too skinny, so she wanted to send me up on the farm. My aunts lived in Evanston, and I went there and lived with one of them and went to school there for half a year and then came back home.

I remember Frank Wilcox was the principal here. I think I was in sixth grade when Frank moved to the high school and Golden Hollingshead took over as principal. Some of my teachers were Eulah Jacobsen, Lillian Barnum and Hazel B. Denton.

RM: And your elementary school went through the eighth grade?

GJ: Yes.

RM: Did kids have a lot of freedom then? I mean, you were on your own a lot when you were out playing, weren't you?

GJ: Yes. When I got home from school, I started playing. The kids got together and we played rubber guns a lot.

RM: Is that right? You had wooden guns that would shoot rubber bands?

GJ: We had some gangs in town.

RM: But not gangs in today's sense of the word.

GJ: Oh, no. Just rubber gun gangs. They were friendly gangs. Our rubber gun gangs would challenge the other gangs in town, but it was a friendly kind of thing. I happened to be the captain of our gang. It was mostly because I was the oldest on Spring Heights.

There were Joe and Kelly Mercie Joe's grandfather made booze in their basement. They lived across the street and up one they were very good people. They made booze down in the basement, so they didn't let us down there very often. But I would go to their home a lot and eat spaghetti; the old man was from Italy.

RM: Were the rubber guns homemade, or was it something you bought?

GJ: No, we made them.

RM: It was a clothespin, wasn't it?

GJ: Well, our favorite was what we called the machine gun. [Chuckles] It had notches in it, and you'd put a rubber band in the first notch, another one in the second, another one in the third . . . you had a string in the notches, so you'd pull up the string and all the rubber bands would shoot off, just like a machine gun.

I remember a Palmer kid Price Palmer. One time we had him cornered [laughs] in a shack over there, and I had that machine gun on top, pointed down. I didn't really mean to shoot him, but he poked his face up, and I emptied the whole thing. Those things hurt, you know.

RM: Oh, I'll bet. It probably could've hurt an eye if it hit it right.

GJ: Oh, yes, it could have. His dad was the manager of J. C. Penneys. He was a good kid.

RM: Did they have a Sears?

GJ: No.

RM: That was before Gottfredson came in, wasn't it?

GJ: Yes, it was maybe 10 years before.

RM: You've never heard the term "Overtown"?

GJ: No, I haven't.

RM: That's what I heard from Elaine; she said that's what everybody called the business area across the tracks.

GJ: I've never heard that, except in Overton that's how it was named.

We used to ride horses often.

RM: Where would you get the horses?

GJ: I'd get them from Charlie Culverwell.

RM: Where did you go when you rode?

GJ: Usually down in Charlie's flats that was down toward the depot. It was marshy down there, and it was nice.

RM: Did those marshes afford any fun opportunities for kids? I'm thinking of frogs and things like that.

GJ: Yes, we used to go frog hunting a lot over at the creek. You know, you'd stab the frogs pierce them. I never did eat the legs. That's why we were doing it, though [to be eaten], but I went just for the hunt. They were not really large frogs if you extended their extremities, I imagine the whole body would be no more than 6 inches.

RM: But some people did eat them?

GJ: Oh, yes.

RM: Were they supposed to be good?

GJ: Yes. I've eaten frog legs since and they were darn good. It just didn't appeal to me then.

RM: Did you guys ever do any hunting with guns?

GJ: Yes, lots of times. I had a .32 special that was my dad's.

RM: A pistol?

GJ: No, a rifle. It's downstairs; it belongs to my kids.

RM: At what age did kids start hunting?

GJ: I'd say about 12. I think I started hunting when I was about 12. And I'm about as good a shot now as I was then. I've killed one deer . . . well, I killed a couple more when I lived in Elko. I went up Spring Heights with Clarence Lane and his boy, Rocky.

The sheriff at that time was Jack Fogliani. A recent paper came out on Jack Fogliani. Louie Gardella wrote it. He's written a lot on Lincoln County; he lives in Reno and he was with the Soil Conservation Service when I lived in Lincoln County.

RM: Where was the paper on Fogliani published?

GJ: I don't know. Jack's sister, Jo Oxborrow, showed it to me.

RM: I interviewed Fogliani's sister, Mary Scott.

GJ: Where does she live?

RM: They live in Pioche. So you went to school . . .

GJ: In the spring of '37 I graduated from elementary school and in '41 I graduated from high school. That fall I went to UCLA.

RM: How did you happen to pick UCLA?

GJ: Because 2 Jacobson kids were there, and Price Palmer, whom I shot with the rubber gun. They were going there and they kind of talked me into it. I lived with them. My motive for going to school was bad I went to play football.

RM: Is that right? So you were a football player.

GJ: Oh, sort of.

RM: Did you play on the UCLA team?

GJ: Yes, the freshman team.

RM: Did you have a scholarship or anything?

GJ: No, I was just a walk-on. But I played.

RM: Who did you play?

GJ: We played Cal and Stanford and all PAC 10 schools. The freshman team usually played when the varsity played. We played the game prior to the varsity game. We had a lousy team that got killed all the time, but it was fun, anyway.

RM: Did you graduate from there?

GJ: No, I only stayed there a semester.

RM: Why did you leave after a semester?

GJ: Football season was over. [Laughs]

RM: Oh. You liked football, didn't you?

GJ: [Laughs] Oh, I must have!

RM: What position did you play?

GJ: Quarterback. I was a running back down there; the quarterback was a running back.

RM: Were you fast?

GJ: I was just mediocre. I made the team, though. I played and I liked it; it was fun. Then I stayed down in Los Angeles because my grandmother, Edna Foster, had moved there. I lived with her the next semester and worked in a Max Factor factory making tubes for lipstick.

RM: No kidding! Where was that located?

GJ: You know, I can't remember. My grandmother lived west in Los Angeles, right down by USC. If you go east on Jefferson, it was about 10 miles, down in an industrial area.

RM: Did you take the bus?

GJ: Yes, a streetcar with the wires.

RM: This would've been during the war?

GJ: Yes, it was '41. I was in school December 7th. When I lived with my grandmother, they would have blackouts all the time. You knew where the sea line was and you could see all the searchlights. That's all that was lighted; everything else was blacked out.

RM: And the whole town was blacked out?

GJ: Yes.

RM: That must have been interesting.

GJ: You weren't allowed out, so of course we didn't go out.

RM: What was it like, living in L.A. then?

GJ: I didn't like Los Angeles.

RM: Was it smoggy?

GJ: No, not at all. Westwood was very nice. When I went to school we lived in Santa Monica and I didn't have a car, so I hitchhiked to school and back.

RM: Did you have problems with that?

GJ: No. In fact, you'd get the first or second car. They knew you were a student.

GJ: Was there a lot of open country between Santa Monica and Westwood, or was it all pretty well houses?

GJ: No, it was occupied. Westwood was pretty, and so was Santa Monica; I liked Santa Monica. But it was a city, and I wasn't accustomed to cities. I came from Caliente and I liked a rural area better. So I worked there for half a year, and then my high school coach moved to Southern Utah University in Cedar City and he took 11 of us over there to play ball.

RM: So you were on the team over there? Did you graduate from there?

GJ: Yes, but I just played that year and then I went in the service. When I came back I started playing and I became sick and couldn't finish the season. That was the last I played.

RM: What branch of the service did you join?

GJ: I was in the army in Texas. I trained at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio and then I was stationed at McKinney Hospital just out of Dallas. So I went in the service in the medics. I went in in February of '42 and I came back in October of '45 and started playing and got sick. Southern Utah was a junior college at the time, so I then went to Utah State and finished my bachelors there. I stayed on a year and worked on a masters, but I didn't finish it.

RM: What did you major in?

GJ: Zoology, and my masters was in parasitology. I was working on my masters in 1948 and '49. In '49, when I finished that year, I hadn't finished my masters but I went to Carlin, Nevada, to teach school. I taught there for a year and went to Fallon. I was in junior high in Carlin and I wanted to teach in high school. So I went to the high school in Fallon in '50. I was having a hard time making a living. I was working on farms on Saturdays . . .

RM: You couldn't make a living as a teacher?

GJ: I couldn't do it. So I went to Farmers Insurance Company and adjusted insurance for a year. Then in '52 I came to Henderson to teach. I taught 4 years in Henderson, then went into administration for 4 years. Then I went back to Utah State in 1960 to work on a doctorate. And in 1962, when I finished my doctorate, I went to the University of Nevada in Reno to teach and I taught there for 2 years.

RM: What did you get your doctorate in?

GJ: It was in school administration and ed psych [educational psychology].

RM: What did you do your thesis on?

GJ: On ability grouping the variation of aspiration levels with ability-grouped kids.

GJ: After I left the university at Reno I came back to Vegas.

RM: Did you like teaching at the university?

GJ: I liked the teaching, but I couldn't tolerate the politics. They were always telling you how to vote.

RM: Let me back up just a moment. What was it like teaching in Carlin at that time?

GJ: It was great. It was terrific, because the people were so good and the kids were just super. And there were lots of Italian people there, and they would bring Italian food to the house. Oh, I love that Italian food.

RM: How did the people there earn a living?

GJ: It was a railroad town.

RM: Was there anything happening up where the Newmont mining operation is now?

GJ: No, that was quiet at that period of time.

RM: Do you remember any old prospectors in there or anything?

GJ: No, but I worked a second job at Carlin, too, so I didn't have a lot of time.

RM: What did you do for a second job?

GJ: I worked for the railroad at night and I worked for them all summer.

RM: So a teacher then had to work a second job?

GJ: Yes, you had to work 2 jobs.

RM: What were you getting paid a year when you started out teaching?

GJ: Oh, let's see something like $6,000 a year or less.

RM: Were you married by then?

GJ: Yes, and we had 2 children then. Well, one was born there in Carlin.

RM: Who did you marry?

GJ: I married Toni Antoinette Sullivan from Hurricane, Utah. Her father was a sheep rancher in Hurricane till the crash came and he lost it.

RM: Where did you meet her?

GJ: I met her at Southern Utah University when I was a student there. And we have 5 children.

RM: Do you want to list them by name, going by age?

GJ: The oldest one is Vicki Chalis. She teaches in the elementary school in Cedar City, and her husband teaches at the college there. The next one is a boy, Paige, and he's a dentist just outside of San Francisco. The third one is Jodi; she's married to an IBM executive and they live in Connecticut. The fourth one is named Lee, and she lives in Cedar City. She's the only one who doesn't have her degree; she's a quarter short of her degree. And the last one

is Dirk; he just finished his masters in business, and he works for a company called EFI in Salt Lake; he's their international sales coordinator.

RM: Is your family LDS?

GJ: Yes. My wife's LDS; I didn't join the LDS church until about 18 years ago.

RM: I see; the Fosters and the Dentons weren't LDS; were they?

GJ: No, they weren't. My father was what they call a jack Mormon. My mother was not very religious, and he wasn't either. My sister LaPrele and I used to go to a Methodist church when we were young, because my mother wanted us to go to Sunday school.

RM: Is the term "jack Mormon" a disparaging term? How do the Mormons feel about it?

GJ: It just means you're inactive.

RM: So it's not an insult?

GJ: Not to me it isn't; it's just a way of saying inactivity. It might be an insult to some.

RM: So then you were in administration in Henderson.

GJ: Yes. I came back to Las Vegas and was a counselor at Western High School for a year. Then Clark opened, so I went over there as director of research and stayed there 4 years. Then I went to the ed center and was a director of curriculum services, and then I moved out here to Mesquite as the principal of the school. It's a K-12 school.

RM: When was that, roughly?

GJ: Let's see, '72, I believe.

RM: What was your thinking in leaving Vegas?

GJ: I kind of wanted to get to a rural area.

RM: Back to your roots?

GJ: Right. I wanted to go to a small town. I looked the school over and watched the kids play ball, and they were so different from the kids in the other schools.

RM: How were they different?

GJ: They were humble; not boisterous more reserved. They're not hicks, but more just good kids. And they are.

RM: Do you attribute that to the church?

GJ: Yes, and the rural environment.

RM: How would you describe the big city kids?

GJ: Oh, too worldly. They're too sophisticated. They know more than I want them to know. But that's the way it is in the rural area anymore.

RM: So the kids here are starting to get like the kids in Vegas?

GJ: Yes. Television has just made all the difference in the world.

RM: Do you think its effect is negative overall?

GJ: Yes. It's exposed them to what I didn't want them to be exposed to. I wanted to shelter them, I guess.

RM: Yes. I raised my daughter in Tonopah. I wouldn't raise a kid in Vegas.

GJ: Well, 2 of our kids graduated from Clark High School in Las Vegas. And I will say that in those days both those kids got a fine high school education, and they were ready for college. And they both did very very well. But it's sure different now, and most of it you can attribute to television. If there's an evil, that's the evil. Well, I think some music is an evil anymore.

RM: Yes, I think it's not just old fogies talking, either.

GJ: Well, it might be.

RM: I think it's partly that, but I don't think all of it is. Did you finish out your career or are you still the principal?

GJ: No, after I had 30-1/2 years [with the school district] I retired.

RM: When did you retire?

GJ: In about '80. Then I went to work for 3 years at Nevada Power to vest myself in social security.

RM: What did you do at Nevada Power?

GJ: What they call "make water." We were purifying water so you could steam it to run it through the turbines. If it's dirty, it'll ruin the turbines.

RM: You didn't use distilled water?

GJ: No. They use just a gigantic amount of water.

RM: Do they recycle the steam?

GJ: They do, but they lose some. They have collectors, and they recycle it.

RM: You've got a lot of notes there.

GJ: Yes, I'll just go through a few of these notes. I remember Les Denton, my uncle, was the sheriff. He lived on Denton Heights, just a couple of houses up from us. And one house up from Les were some Mexican people. They had a knife battle one night (they did that often), and one of them was killed. Les went up to get him, and took his horse up, and I went with him. I think he asked me to go; I'm not sure. But he just threw the guy over the saddle and we went back down to the jail.

RM: You didn't have a morgue there, did you?

GJ: No. We did have a mortuary later; Lester Burt owned it. He was a state senator.

I remember an open-air dance hall that was probably synonymous with rural communities.

RM: Where was it located?

GJ: It was up the canyon I always called it "Happy Burke Canyon" because of Happy Burke. I don't know his first name, I just called him "Happy." He lived up the canyon by the dance hall. The canyon is on the way from Caliente going toward Panaca about 2 miles out.

RM: Off to the left?

GJ: Right, up that canyon. They had a dance there every weekend in the summer, I think. It was built up about 6 feet off the ground. And they used to have lots of fights; everybody thought they had to fight.

RM: Was there a lot of drinking?

GJ: Yes. We used to go to the dance to see them dance and fight.

RM: Was there live music?

GJ: Yes.

RM: Who usually furnished the music for something like that?

GJ: Elmer Cornelius had a little band.

RM: And he was local?

GJ: Yes. He had the Cornelius Hotel in Caliente the one Frank Scott bought. Is it still there? The hotel was up above, and down below was the drugstore.

RM: Yes, I'll bet it is; right on the corner where you turn to go to Panaca.

GJ: That's the Cornelius Hotel.

RM: Did the dance pavilion have a name?

GJ: It did have a name and I can't remember it. The Fourth of July, you know, was a big time in Caliente. It was the same kind of thing, in a way. I don't know why the rural people are always fighting, but it seems like you have to have a battle a fist fight all the time. Then it's all over and everybody's friends. I remember a lot of that. And they always had a big parade and races for the kids. If you'd run in the race they'd pass out the nickels. I mostly remember my uncle Les passing out the nickels.

RM: Did you always race?

GJ: Oh, man, yes.

RM: Could you outrun the other kids?

GJ: It didn't matter who won, they just passed out nickels. I didn't even care whether I won or not. I'd just run over to the bag where Les had the money. [Laughter]

RM: I'll be darned. What else took place on the Fourth of July? Describe a typical Fourth of July.

GJ: Well, they'd have the flag-raising ceremonies at 6:00 in the morning. They set off dynamite at 6:00. I guess that was to get everyone up. Then they'd have the flag-raising ceremonies up behind the Mormon church. The Mormon church was up on a hill.

RM: Not where it is now.

GJ: No.

RM: Where was it in those days?

GJ: It was on Spring Heights. If you go up Spring Heights my house was on the left you turn there right up behind the post office. You know where the theater was?

RM: The theater was in that shopping center thing? Yes.

GJ: Well, it was right up behind that, up on the hill. In the summer, I don't know how those people ever stood it in there. It was hotter than heck in that building.

In the summertime they'd have band concerts that were great. They had a carousel-like building in the center of town that was a bandstand. In the summertime, on Saturday nights, they would have band concerts. I loved those band concerts.

RM: Where did the band come from?

GJ: They were local; Frank Wilcox was the director. Some of the people in the band were Evan Edwards and Whitey Denton that was Les's boy. Evan ran the paper and he was an insurance man. And Dan Pete, who was from an Indian family, and Elmer Cornelius and Lee Liston were in the band. Most Saturday nights all the cars would park around the bandstand and they'd play a piece and then everybody would honk the horn.

Now, back to the Fourth of July. After they set off the dynamite sometimes they would have some kind of a community breakfast in the park. And then they would have the races and then usually a band concert. And almost always they had boxing matches.

RM: Were the boxers local guys or did they bring people in?

GJ: They were mostly local. Truman Harvey is the one name I can remember. He was a big kid and he was pretty good, I guess. They set up the ring on the bandstand, so everybody had a ringside seat. That was fun. And the day was culminated with a dance.

RM: With a dance out at the platform?

GJ: Yes, or in the gymnasium.

RM: They had a dance hall, too, didn't they?

GJ: They did have a dance hall the Rose Don. That was Rose and Don. Rose was Joe Columbo's daughter; Joe owned the Shamrock Cafe. It had a cafe in it, and gambling. I remember as a kid we'd go to a movie on Sunday and then my sister and I would always go in there because we loved chili, and they made good chili. And they always had a lot of Chinese people in there playing panguinge. Have you ever heard of panguinge?

RM: Yes, I have.

GJ: They call it "pan." Well, the Chinese were always in there playing pan. And the Chinese worked on the railroad. They lived in a separate section of town and the Mexicans lived in several sections of town. They also were usually railroad workers. And I remember the Chinese didn't speak English.

RM: Did Caliente have a parade in the morning of the Fourth of July?

GJ: Yes, it was a great parade.

RM: Who all was in it?
GJ: Well, I was, once Elaine and I. I was Uncle Sam and she was Uncle Sam's wife.

RM: I'll be darned. [Chuckles]

GJ: But every year there was a good parade. And the other festivity was on Labor Day in Pioche. It was the same kind of thing same kind of opening ceremonies and so on. Theirs differed in that they would have manual contests like jacking [drilling] and other mining things. Both celebrations always had a ball game, and different kinds of eating booths hot dogs and all that.

And Pioche always had fights. They were kind of noted for their boxing matches. In fact, that's where I first saw my brother-in-law. My wife's brother was a fighter and he always came over to Pioche from Hurricane in those days for the fights. I knew his name, but I didn't know I was going to [meet and marry his sister]. Then they had the dance at night with local music.

RM: And then didn't they have the Mormon day in Panaca?

GJ: Yes, that was in Panaca. That was the Twenty-Fourth [of July]. Actually, I don't recall ever going to the Twenty-Fourth celebration in Panaca, but I did in Eagle Valley.

RM: Oh, they had it in Eagle Valley?

GJ: I think they had it in Eagle Valley rather than Panaca because I remember the Twenty-Fourth celebration. Have you been to Eagle Valley?

RM: Yes, I did some interviewing out there. Could we talk about the railroad? That was really the life blood of the town, wasn't it?

GJ: Yes. One thing I know about the railroad was the depot. We would spend lots of time as kids in the summer going down to meet the trains; there wasn't anything else to do. We'd go down and meet the trains and talk to the people. Once in a while a movie star would come through for instance, I remember Don Ameche; he talked to us. And it was real exciting. We always went down there because we thought a movie star was going to get off. And also it was cool there, because they had a nice lawn and lots of hollyhocks; it was colorful. They had a black fence made out of about 3-inch piping. We'd sit on that fence for hours, waiting for a train.

RM: Did you go to see specific trains, or did you kind of wait for one to come through?

GJ: We knew the schedules. And more than one came through per day.

RM: Would you go down several times a day, or just maybe spend the day there?

GJ: No, usually we'd catch the evening train. In the morning there was something to do.

RM: And the train would stop and people would get off?

GJ: Yes, it would be there about 20 minutes. They'd get off and there was a restaurant in there. It seemed to me everybody got off the train. Yes, we were waiting for the movie stars. [Chuckles] And there were always people who would talk to you. It was fun.

They had a motel-hotel kind of place there, too. That was mostly where the train crews slept. When I was a junior and a senior in high school I called crews at night. You'd have to go wake them up and say, "You're on you're the engineer for this . . . " And they'd always cuss you out. [Chuckles] They were ornery guys, especially Flake Dula. You know Dula Memorial Center down in Vegas? It's a recreation center that's named after his boy, Robert. Flake was an ornery cuss. They would get ornery; they didn't want to be awakened.

Then we had the roundhouse. You know, Caliente was the central point between Salt Lake and Los Angeles. The roundhouse was built in 1904, I believe. Do you know what the roundhouse was?

RM: Yes, they'd turn an engine around.

GJ: Right. You had a mobile bridge, and you'd pull the engine on the bridge and then it would mobile around until you got to the slot you wanted to put it in in the roundhouse. Well, those guys were real good to us kids. They'd let us get on the engines and ride while it was turning on the turntable. That was a lot of fun; we used to do that.

RM: The roundhouse was over behind that row of company houses, wasn't it?

GJ: Right. And mostly what I remember about the roundhouse about the guys working in there was that they would be working on the boilers, or the piping from the boilers. So they must've had a lot of trouble with those. They'd have maybe 6 engines at a time in there. Those were big locomotives. They wouldn't be working on all 6 of them, they'd be working on about 2. It was a big roundhouse. Their parts department was next to it. When I came home on furlough all the girls were working in the parts department. There weren't any men around.

RM: Sure, the guys had gone to war.

GJ: As you said, the railroad was the blood of the city.

RM: Did it wake you up at night, coming through and blowing its whistle?

GJ: No, you'd get to where it was part of your sleeping. You could hear them, though.

RM: Do you remember a lot of indigents coming through during the Depression in the '30s?

GJ: The only one that sticks out in my mind specifically was one night . . . they had what they called "railroad bulls," and they were railroad detectives. I don't know exactly what they did; throw people off the freight trains, I guess. Anyway, there was a confrontation between a vagrant and the railroad bull, and the railroad bull shot him. My mother was driving by, so the railroad bull hailed her down and they put the guy in our car and took him over to the doctor's office. And my association with it is, I had to clean up the car. It was bloody.

RM: Did he die?

GJ: No. I don't really remember any other vagrants. We were just kind of a home-knit group. I did see lots of people on freight trains, but they didn't get off.

I do remember one night when I was home on furlough. A friend named Hans Olson used to drink a lot, and he tried to hop the freight train and slipped under it and it mangled his foot. I was in the medics in the military and the doctor, J. B. Demman, was a real good friend, and he asked me if I wanted to come over and help him take his foot off. So I said OK. I went over and I was holding Hans's foot and Dr. Demman sawed off his foot. What a strange feeling that was there I was holding my friend's foot. I remember that night.

RM: Do you remember any strikes on the railroad?

GJ: No, I don't. There may well have been strikes, but I was not aware of any.

RM: Could you remark further on the role that the railroad played in the economy of Caliente?

GJ: Well, it was the economy. There were just a few ranchers and if you had to depend on them for an economic livelihood you would've folded because of the limited number of people. In 1902 the railroad didn't go any further north. And Clark built the roundhouse in 1904, I believe. I don't know when they extended on to Salt Lake; it had to have been very soon after that.

RM: Oh, yes. They were done by 1905.

GJ: That's probably right. Then another bad flood took those rails out.

RM: There was one in 1910, I know.

GJ: And there was one in 1911, but 1910 was the bad one.

RM: Do you remember the tunnel gangs; when they lined the tunnels?

GJ: Right; they lived at the tunnels. The only time I ever saw them was when I went down to Buck Tennille's ranch I suppose it's 10 miles down the canyon. There's a tunnel right by Buck's ranch, and they were working lining that tunnel. I went over there and watched them one day when I was at Buck's riding horses.

And I knew quite a few of those guys because they had a ball team called the Tunnel Gang. They were the local basketball team. They were mostly locals who graduated from high school and stayed around then. (I was a lot younger than they were.) Ed Dula that's Flake's boy played on the Tunnel Gang.

RM: I've been told by sociologists that Caliente is famous in sociology because of a study somebody did there years ago; it's the town that the diesel engines killed. When they added the diesels, that was the end of the helper engines, and it was the helper engines that really made Caliente, I understand.

GJ: Yes, that's right. Caliente was the central point; it was the logical place to repair the engines, for one thing, and it was the beginning of the grade. You ascended in elevation after you left Caliente. So they had helper engines to help them up the hill going east.

RM: But when they came out with the diesel, they didn't need the helpers.

GJ: No. Then the community collapsed.

RM: What do you recall about that?

GJ: I wasn't there then.

RM: Oh, you basically lost ties with Caliente after you graduated, then?

GJ: As soon as I got out of high school I was hardly back. My folks moved to Reno not too many years after that, and the era of the diesel was after I left. One thing that happened, and I was over by the Blue Front when this happened Sheriff Judge Palmer shot a guy over by the post office, and killed him. I don't remember what it was about, but I do know that the sheriff went to prison because of it. I remember visiting him in the state penitentiary in Carson. He was a good friend of my dad and we were in Reno so we went down to visit him. He was kind of a little guy; he reminded me a little bit of Charlie Culverwell. And he was a real nice guy, I thought. But he went to prison over that, so the killing was obviously unjustified.

I need to tell you about Dainty Conway. Did anybody ever tell you about Dainty?

RM: No.

GJ: Dainty is John Conway's brother; John was a rancher down the canyon. Dainty was a drinker, and the greatest guy in the world. He was drunk all the time, and [chuckles] chewed tobacco that ran down all over his shirt for weeks at a time. Out in front of the Blue Front was a big tree the tree in the center of town. It was sort of the green spot of the town. Dainty would get drunk every day and he'd sit under that tree and talk to his hat cuss his hat. And we kids would gather around the other side of the tree to listen to Dainty cussing his hat.

There was a bar in the business section, right in the center. You had to go through the bar to the back to the pool room, and I used to play pool a lot, so I'd go through the bar to get to the back. We were back there playing pool, and Dainty came in with his horse. [Laughs] He guided that horse right into the bar and came back to the pool hall. He was a great old guy; I liked Dainty.

I remember how much water there was up by Yoacums' ranch.

RM: Now, where was that?

GJ: It's just past Cove as you're going up to Panaca. You know where Cove Spring was?

RM: Yes.

GJ: There was a little roadhouse . . .

RM: OK. Is that the building that's still there?

GJ: Yes, it's still there.

RM: It looks like a nice little house right alongside the road.

GJ: Fred I've forgotten his last name built that. Anyway, from there all the way up from Caliente it was nice meadowland. You'd go a little farther up beyond Cove, and you came to Yoacums' ranch. Just north of Yoacums' ranch there was a meandering stream. It was beautiful. The highway was graded up above it, and you could look down and boy, it was a pretty spot a nice meandering stream, the big high grass all the way to Panaca. Archie Yoacum had a lot of milk cows. A friend of his named Monte Orgle was accidentally shot and killed by Archie Yoacum's son. They were going through a fence . . .

RM: Oh! A hunting accident?

GJ: Yes. He was killed.

Lester Burt, I told you, was the mortician. Lester established the 55-mile speed limit in this state. He was always proud of that.

RM: Oh. He was the one that did that? [Laughter]

GJ: Yes, that was Lester. He was a good guy. His daughter is married to a Von Toble I think it's Jake.

RM: That would be Von Toble's son; not the original.
GJ: Yes. I remember old man Von Toble. He used to haul lumber and things up to Caliente.

RM: Let's explain that Von Toble had the lumber company in early Las Vegas.

GJ: That was Ed Von Toble. He used to bring lumber and other supplies to Caliente with a horse team.

RM: Oh; before the railroad.

GJ: Yes; before the railroad. But it was Ed Von Toble, and Barbara Burt married one of the Von Toble boys and they still live in Las Vegas.

Let's see. I remember the smelter in Delamar. All that was left of the smelter was the floor. It was big; it was a wooden floor. I understand there's nothing left there now.

Do you know where Bullionville is?

RM: I've tried, but I can't figure out exactly where it was located. You could probably go right to it.

GJ: Yes, but I don't know that there'd be anything there. All I know about it is that we used to go over there as kids and pick up those round metal balls. They were about 2 inches or an inch and three-quarters in diameter, and they were for a ball mill. We used to go over there and collect those. And there was a very nice spring over there and trees and a nice pool of water.

I jotted down the businesses in Caliente. Most of the businesses were on the south side of the tracks. The first one at the east, at the corner of that south street and Denton Heights, was Harry Underhill's; it was a hardware store. He was an ornery old cuss. Then the next one was the Denton Hotel. Then there were some apartments, and I don't know who owned them. Then there was J. C. Penny; I told you Palmer managed that. Then there was the Odd Fellow building; it was a 2-story building and they had their ceremonies upstairs; it was Odd Fellows and Masons and Eastern Star. (The Caliente Eastern Star chapter is named after my mother, Mary.) I can't remember what was downstairs; I don't think there was anything downstairs. Then there was the Rose Don Dance Hall. Have you talked to Rose?

RM: No.

GJ: Rose is still living Rose Rowan. She'd be a great lady to talk to. She's a fine lady, too. Then after the Rose Don was the theater.

When I was a kid we used to go to the theater. The movies were silent and one of the locals, a man named Mac, played the piano. Man, he played that piano and chewed gum so fast! I watched Mac as much as I'd watch the movie. We'd always sit on the front row right by Mac. The front row was here and Mac's piano was at right angles to us, right there. You could kind of watch the movie and watch Mac. He'd play that piano to beat heck!

RM: That's cute. You don't remember his last name, do you?

GJ: I never did know his last name. He was from Ireland, so I imagine it was Mac-something. He was a very good friend of my uncle Les Denton and I used to go to Mac's house. He was a drinker; he drank by day and played the piano by night. He was a good guy.

Then there was the post office, then there was a garage owned by George Center. His granddaughter or great-granddaughter is married to Bob Broadbent.

RM: Oh, really. He works with the airport in Vegas.

GJ: Wes Center's daughter married George Swartz and their daughter married Broadbent. Wes Center's daughter was named Maureen Swartz. They did live in Caliente. They live in Boulder City now. For all I know they're not living.

Then there was a bar owned by the Denton boys. It's where my folks' store was before it burned down. After that was Gottfredsons' clothing store, and then a pool hall. Then a drugstore. The drugstore was run by Frank Wilcox; he was the principal at the high school.

RM: Could you get anything you needed there in medications and so on?

GJ: I just recall how small it was. I think, pharmaceutically, they were extremely limited. Mostly what I remember is, that's where I learned there wasn't a Santa Claus. I was in there having a soda, and some kid came in and told me there wasn't a Santa. [Laughter]

RM: How old were you?

GJ: Four or 5, I think.

RM: [Laughs] What did you think?

GJ: I didn't believe her until my sister got so mad at her that then I did believe her, because my sister got so mad. I remember who it was, too. It was Mary Gentry. I guess we got talking about Santa Claus or something. It must've been during the season. And she said, "You're a dope for thinking there's a Santa Claus," or something. Funny how you'd remember that day.

RM: Well, that's one of the big eye-openers.

GJ: Then there was a bakery. And then where the bakery was, later on there was a dry cleaning establishment.

RM: There were a lot of shops along there, weren't there?

GJ: Yes, there were. And then there was a Soil Conservation Service building; my dad owned that. Then there was Spring Heights, and then on that corner there was a bar, and then Charlie Culverwell's place and then the depot. So that was the line of businesses down the south side of the tracks.

Now, cross over the tracks and come back over where the hotel is.

RM: Along where Main Street is?

GJ: Yes. Now we're back over at the hotel. OK, on that corner is the Cornelius Hotel; then on the other side of the street going north was Company Row.

RM: Did the Cornelius Hotel take up that whole block?

GJ: No, underneath the hotel was a drugstore.

RM: Were there pharmaceuticals there, or was it more of a soda fountain-type place?

GJ: No, it was more pharmaceuticals. The lady who owned it, Stella Grotto, was a pharmacist. I suspect that that's why Wilcox's drugstore was limited they were more dispensing soda and magazines and things like that. Then going west there was the 91 Club, and it changed hands a few times.

RM: What was it a bar?

GJ: Yes. Press Duffin owned it at one time. Jim Ryan came from Ireland (I don't know about his wife). Their daughter's name was Mame Ryan, and Press Duffin married Mame. The only time I remember old man Ryan, which was about every day, was in the bar across from Company Row the Olson Bar, I believe. He sat in the same seat back at a table all day the whole day, every day. And drank, I guess. He wasn't very hospitable with kids, or else I wasn't very forward. I went in there all the time for various things to do with the store and Jim was in there all the time, but we rarely talked. I do remember speaking to him a few times, and he wasn't *in*hospitable; he just wasn't very talkative. But he was always at that table. I think he would go home about dusk. I think he retired early and came back the next morning for the same thing.

Anyway, Jim had the cattle and then Press married Mame, so Press took over the ranching duties. Mame and Press had 2 boys Tom was the oldest and Bud was the youngest. And Tom didn't like the cattle business. He graduated from USC and was a heavy drinker. (Everybody I mention is a heavy drinker.) Anyway, Tom finally destroyed himself. Bud ran the cow business until they went out of business some years later, and then he ran the bank in Pioche and now he lives in Caliente and/or St. George. I don't know if he'd be in the St. George phone book, but Doug Liston in St. George would know. They drink coffee every day. For all I know, the Duffins are back in Caliente, so you might try him there.

Then after the 91 Club, on that side of the street was the Blue Front. Then there was a hardware store, and the owner was Dinkle. Then there was the newspaper building, and the newspaper was run by Evan Edwards and Phil Dolan. They also had an insurance business. Then there was a service station, and that was the one Frank Scott had. Before he had it, Buck Fulton had it; I don't know whether Buck owned it or not. Now, going out the other way, north up Company Row . . .

RM: Oh, there were shops along there?

GJ: Just a few. But let me take you up the Company Row street on the other side of the street. First there was the bar where Jim Ryan drank, the Olson Bar, then there was a hairdressing shop owned by Mrs. Price and then a motel. Les Denton owned the motel. Then there was a Shell service station.

RM: Was that the first motel in Caliente?

GJ: No, there was one up to the hot springs. Ray and Katrina Rice owned that, and they owned the hot springs. It's still there, I guess, isn't it?

RM: Yes, it's still there.

GJ: Then there was a Presbyterian or Methodist church. Then there was another service station, and Tom Dewey ran that.

RM: Do you remember the brand names of these service stations?

GJ: That one was a Texaco. The other one was a Shell station. And the one around the corner, that Buck had and Scott later had, was Standard. A little later on, the Shell station moved down by where the Standard station was, down a little bit further towards Vegas west. That was run first of all by Speed Price, and in later years Red Gottfredson had it. And Red died. A couple of doors down from there there was a cafe and garage run by Bob Olsen. And that was the end of town, except a residential area behind there.

RM: How about the churches in town?

GJ: There was and still is, for all I know a Catholic church on the street between Company Row and the elementary school.

RM: What do they call the section of town where the Catholic church is?

GJ: I don't think any sections of town had a name. Like Overtown; I have not heard of that. It's probably something Elaine made up. [Laughter] Sounds like her. Then there was either a Methodist or an Episcopalian church up where the [railroad] shops were. The building belonged to them; I think it was Methodist, but I'm not sure. Then the Mormon church, as I told you, was up on the hill. Then they built a new one down in Charlie's fields down by the depot. And that's the last one I knew. Now you say they have a new one?

RM: Yes. It's on the right-hand side as you're going out of town toward Vegas.

GJ: I'm not familiar with that.

RM: A lot of the small towns in Nevada have a Mormon church, and they all are based on the same design, I believe.

What else do you have in your notes there?

GJ: Oh, let's see; some of people who lived on Company Row Andy Anderson, the Cooks, the Roberts, Red Kay, the McGees . . .

Later on, a grocery store came in called Allen's. It was managed by Bob Olsen and the cafe was managed by a guy named Olsen I think his name was Bob. I don't know whether they were related. And Joe Columbo built the Shamrock bar and cafe, where the Orientals played panguinge. Then a couple of doors down, the other bar was owned by Joe Mercie. There was the old man Joe and his boy was Phil Phil still lives in Caliente. I told you that they made booze in their basement.

RM: How could they make that in their basement without getting caught?

GJ: I don't think it was a matter of getting caught; I don't think anybody cared. I think they just kept us out of there as kids so we wouldn't mess it up. It was perfectly obvious what they were doing; it was a strong smell. The Mercie family was well respected. They were very good folks.

GJ: Les Denton was the postmaster, and he was also the sheriff for a while. And there was a house of prostitution up . . .

RM: A place called The Green Lantern?

GJ: Was it?

RM: So I've been told.

GJ: Well, I guess it was. All I know is that as kids we'd drive up there and throw rocks at it. And the girls would come out and cuss us, and we'd speed off. [Laughter] I used to deliver groceries there all the time for the store. And they were very nice ladies; they were always very hospitable.

RM: Did you know the madam, or was it the girls who you met there?

GJ: Maybe one of them was a madam; I don't know. You would usually see just one. I'd go to the back door, knock on the door and one of them would come to the door and say, "Bring the groceries in." I'd carry the groceries in and they'd give me a tip. They were the only ones in the whole town who'd ever tip me. I'm not sure I recall anything else, unless you stimulate my memory.

RM: Do you remember Flo Mitchell at the phone switchboard?

GJ: Oh, yes.

RM: I understand that if you called somebody and said, "Can I speak to Mary Jones?"

"Well, she's not home now. She's over at so-and-so." And she'd route you over there.

GJ: [Laughs] That was Mitch.

RM: She knew where everybody was, and all their business and everything.

GJ: Yes, she did. And the reason she did is because she listened in. Her daughter, Virgie Price, had a hairdressing salon in the home. You'd walk right past the switchboard if you went into the hairdressing area.

RM: When did they bring the phones into town?

GJ: Well, we did not have a phone when I lived on Spring Heights. When I was in eighth grade we moved over to another part of town; we built a house over by the elementary school, and that's the first time I recall a phone. And that was '35.

RM: With the railroad there they must've had phones early on.

GJ: Yes, but I just don't recall phones.

RM: You don't recall anything else about Flo Mitchell?

GJ: [Chuckles] No, except she knew everything that was going on in town. The tale you told about her is not far-fetched. She knew where everyone was at all times of day, and it was a valuable source of information. She didn't treat you medically over the phone; that was the only thing she didn't do.

RM: [Laughs] That's good. What do you recall about Cathedral Gorge? That was before it was made a state park. Did you kids ever go out there?

RM: Oh, we went every day in the spring. We'd have football in the fall, followed by basketball, and basketball ended in March. We didn't have track or baseball, so we didn't have anything. Babe Denton drove the bus, and every

lunch hour, he'd take the bus to Cathedral. We'd all eat our lunch on the way over, get out, and play in the caves. And he'd honk the horn when it was time to come back. We did that every day in the spring.

RM: I'll be darned. That's a nice story.

GJ: Oh, that was a lot of fun.

RM: And what about Ryan-Kershaw Park?

GJ: If you go down Rainbow Canyon, down past . . . well, you don't know where Duffin's ranch was the old man Ryan's ranch. Go down the canyon 5 miles, and turn left. Go across the tracks, and go around the back and up into Kershaw. I'm not sure who Kershaw was. I vaguely recall that Kershaw may have been Mame Duffin's relative, but I really don't know.

RM: What's special about it?

GJ: It was sort of an oasis. It was really spectacular. We used to hike there as kids. We used to go in the back way up Spring Heights Canyon. It was about a 6- or 8-mile hike one way. You'd go up the canyon and you're hiking up all the time. You have to know where you're going, of course, but you're going south, and when you get to a certain point you turn west and start going down a little bit, down into Kershaw Canyon. It had a big wall about 40 by 15 feet with water flowing out

RM: Water was coming out of the rock?

GJ: It was running down from the top of it, dripping down. And it had vegetation all over it; beautiful. It had the wild grape vines and as kids we would rig up a grape vine tour, like Tarzan. You'd swing on one and then catch another one and swing. You could really do that. And it had a pond where the water ran off. It was really quite spectacular. It was sort of in a desert setting and all at once you came into this oasis.

RM: How big was it?

GJ: I would say 2 acres. When they made it into a park that kind of ruined it, in a way.

RM: Too many people coming there?

GJ: Well, they destroyed some of the naturalness of it, I thought. They had cookout areas and they cleaned a lot of the park out, and I liked it in the wilds like it was. But I understood the floods came down and took it out.

RM: Oh, it's not there?

GJ: I heard that the floods came down and took it out and they rebuilt it and it happened again. I'm not sure if it's there. But that was a beautiful place. We used to hike in there and stay overnight for one or two nights and then come out the other way. So we took our camping gear in with us.

RM: What do you recall about Indians in the area?

GJ: There was just the Pete family. Queenie Pete cleaned our house once a week, and did our washing.

RM: Where did she live?

GJ: She lived across the creek, over behind where the hospital is now. Wes Pete and I were the same age and we were very good friends. I used to go over to Petes' a lot. We used to trap chipmunks over there. We made little traps and we'd get a few of them and then just turn them loose. Queenie spoke just a little bit of English. She was a great lady.

Dan was the oldest boy. Dan, as I told you, played in the band. Dan went to an art school; he went to Carlisle and then he went to an art school, or else he was in art at Carlisle. And he came back and he was around there a lot. The Indians, I guess, have a tendency to get hooked on alcohol.

RM: Yes, they do.

GJ: And that happened to Dan. And the same thing happened to Leo and Wes.

RM: Is that right; all 3 boys?

GJ: And then there were 2 more boys. But Wes and I were good friends. I don't know what the old man's name was, but he was a nice guy. He didn't speak English. I remember their house had a dirt floor. During pine nut season they gathered pine nuts and roasted them outside, and I used to go over there and help them roast pine nuts. They made a bit of money roasting pine nuts.

RM: Where did they collect their pine nuts?

GJ: I think on the summit going towards Vegas 9 miles out there.

RM: What do they call that summit?

GJ: Gee, what is that spring up there? We used to go up there and stay too Oak Spring.

RM: Describe the interior of the Blue Front Mercantile.

GJ: Well, there were 2 doors going in, quite wide doors, and they were in the center. On the side of each door was a display area with glass so that you could look in. When you walked in, you walked right to the cash register and the serving area. It was square so if you worked behind there, you could work 3 sides. You'd walk in one side, which is open. There were 3 sides of a counter. If you were walking over on the left were the vegetables and over on the right was dry goods. Over on the left again, after the vegetables, was hardware and just beyond that was meats. In the back was the ice plant.

RM: How big was it all?

GJ: I would say the Blue Front was 75 feet wide. And depth-wise, 1-1/2 times that.

RM: Oh, really. So it was a big building.

GJ: Then in the back was the ice plant. They had everything in that store. Lumber, coal and grain were stored in a large enclosure behind the store.

RM: Did your dad's things come in on the railroad?

GJ: Yes.

RM: Where did they come from?

GJ: Mostly Salt Lake; some from Los Angeles.

RM: Do you remember any of the suppliers?

GJ: Salt Lake Sweets. They're still in business.
RM: Did you get free access to all the sweets and goodies?

GJ: I made it available, yes. [Laughter] No one ever told me that I had that prerogative, but I took it.

RM: Did you overindulge, in retrospect?

GJ: Yes, I'll say; every day.

RM: Did it affect your teeth?

GJ: No, actually my teeth have been pretty good. I have heard it said a number of times that people from Caliente have good teeth because there was fluoride in the water. I tried to offset it, but didn't. Yes, I ate plenty of candy. And buttermilk.

RM: What were your hours at the Blue Front? Stores weren't open on Sundays in those days, were they?

GJ: Right, they were closed. Let's see they opened at 8:00 and closed at 6:00. I worked a lot delivering, so I was out in the back a lot. And I fooled around with that ice plant, delivering ice and helping make it, and delivering coal and a number of other things.

RM: Would people just call in and place an order?

GJ: They usually came in to place an order. We'd have a little slip that had a carbon on it. You'd have an item on there and you'd rack up the item and deliver it, and then you had to check it off. I was mostly the delivery boy.

RM: What about going out to The Plunge? Was that a big deal?

GJ: Well, yes, every day. I didn't work all day in the store. And if I did, we went swimming at night. There wasn't a day in the summer we missed that. We had 3 swimming holes. You had to pay to get in at the Plunge, and that was warm water. You couldn't go in the first day they put the water in.

RM: It was too hot?

GJ: Yes. You had to wait a day or a day and a half and it was kind of miserable for the first few days. We used to be in that pool all the time.

RM: It was out on the right, going to Panaca, wasn't it?

GJ: Just after you cross the bridge, then you turn right.

RM: Did it have hours?

GJ: Yes. It was open in the evenings till about 9:00.

RM: Do you remember what it cost?

GJ: I sure don't.

RM: What were your other 2 swimming holes?

GJ: Just before you get to the railroad bridge there's the stream coming in from Big Springs and a stream coming in from Panaca, and they joined right there at the bridge. There was a pool down in there. We used to swim there a lot. We used to get out of the warm pool . . . although the one coming down from Panaca was warm water. (The one coming from Big Springs was cold water.) We used to get out of the warm pool and go down there and swim for a while, and then come back. And the other one was up Big Springs Canyon.

RM: Oh, so the 2 weren't that far apart.

GJ: No, you could walk down there in 5 minutes. And the one up Big Springs Canyon was part of the stream that the flood had washed out. But you could get up on the cliff and dive off on that one. And it was nice. It was deep, and clear water.

RM: Would you ride your bikes out to the swimming holes?

GJ: No.

RM: You'd usually walk?

GJ: Yes. I remember it was hot.

RM: I remember somebody talking about stealing what they called torpedoes.

GJ: Oh, yes, we used to do that. Do you know what they are?

RM: It wasn't too clear; not exactly.

GJ: They're about a 2-inch-by-2-inch flat packet mounted on a heavy spring wire. They clip them onto the railroad track, and a train comes by and sets off the torpedo, and it gives them a signal. (I don't really know what the signal means.)

RM: Oh the engineer can hear it.

GJ: Oh, yes; you can hear it. Well, we used to take those things on occasion and put them on the tracks. And it gave them a signal, all right, but it was the wrong signal. [Laughs] Oh, those were dangerous.

RM: Did you do anything else with them?

GJ: No. I didn't.

RM: You didn't use them for your own personal firecrackers or anything.

GJ: No, I think we all recognized how dangerous they were. I do remember one time we were out at Delamar another kid and I and we found some dynamite in an old mine. I didn't know how to set it off, but he did; he grew up at Joshua Tree.

RM: Now, that is dangerous! Was there a Dr. McCall?

GJ: Oh, yes. He was a great old guy Quanah McCall. He had a brother named Tecumseh. They were both named for Indian chiefs. They were from Minnesota. He was the dentist there. And he was a great old guy. All I remember about him is how hospitable and cordial he was; especially for a mean old dentist. His daughter practices in Vegas now.

RM: How about a Mr. Ence, the barber?

GJ: Ah, George. I think he is still alive; he lives in Santa Clara, Utah. George was the barber there forever; cut hair there for a million years. He moved to Vegas about 1945, and I went into his shop in Vegas a few times. George is a great guy.

RM: Was there more than one barber in Caliente?

GJ: Yes, there was a lady, Lillian Ousley. We used to love to go in and have Lillian cut our hair because she was so good looking.

RM: [Chuckles] Was she the same price as Mr. Ence?

GJ: Yes. Except George was such a good guy, but not cute.

RM: Was she married?

GJ: Yes. She had a boy my age Richard.

RM: Were there beauty parlors in town?

GJ: Just the one that I mentioned Virgie Price. I think that's the only one; I don't remember another one. I remember my mother went there every week, and I remember she was very busy. I used to go in there a lot, delivering, so I used to talk to Mitchie every day.

RM: Do you remember dances at the Rose Don Ballroom?

GJ: Yes. They were on Saturday nights. The Rose Don Ballroom was very narrow; small. It was crowded, for dancing. Lengthwise I would say it might be 60 feet, but it was very narrow, so it wasn't an ideal place. I'd say it was 20 feet wide, and you had chairs on the side. The bandstand was down at the other end. I don't remember who played in the band, but I remember Don and Rose were there all the time.

RM: Is there anything else that you have in your notes, or anything that comes to mind?

GJ: We used to go down to Rainbow Canyon for picnics. It was pretty down there, and there was a place down there called Grapevine Canyon that had wild sheep in it. I remember seeing them a few times.

There were quite a few Mexican people in town. One family lived next door to us on Spring Heights before we moved; their name was Huerta.

RM: Do you remember the father's name?

GJ: There wasn't a father. She worked at her house. She took in washing. She didn't speak English, but she was a very nice lady. The oldest boy was named Rico, and he was a good kid. The next one was Virgil, and he was my age; and then the next one was Gilbert. Virg and Gilbert and I played together all the time. In the summer her front and back door would be open, and one of our games was to run through the front door, through the living room, pick up a tortilla she had a stack of tortillas on the stove run back around, come through again, roll a tortilla on the way around and then scoop up the beans. But you couldn't stop; you had to scoop up the beans while you were running. So I ate a lot of beans and tortillas there. No, she was a good lady.

RM: Whatever happened to her?

GJ: I don't know. She was still there when I moved away.

RM: What were the other Mexicans in town doing? Were they working on the railroad?

GJ: Yes, they were all railroad employees. They lived in different parts of town some of them down below Charlie Culverwell's, down where they built the Mormon church later. And a few of them were up by the roundhouse. There were quite a few Mexicans there.