

# An Interview With Norman N Coombs

An Oral History conducted and edited by  
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Board of Commissioners  
Nye County, Nevada  
Tonopah  
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Norman Coombs  
1988

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## PREFACE

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

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

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

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;
- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;
- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and
- e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed jeep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to r. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

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--Robert D. McCracken  
Tonopah, Nevada  
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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the Round Mountain Nugget, was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper; Beatty's independent paper folded in 1912. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All six communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities after their own papers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, which was published as a supplement to the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

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

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

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Nye County residents. In all, more than 900 photos have been collected and carefully identified. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories.

On the basis of the oral interviews as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories also have been archived. The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in 1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Nye County communities that may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to care, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Norman "Curly" Coombs at his home in Tonopah, Nevada - November 2, 3, 4 and 5, 1987

## CHAPTER ONE

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

NC: Norman Coombs; no middle name.

RM: What is your birthdate and place?

NC: It's February 16, 1914, in Tonopah.

RM: What was your father's name?

NC: Oswald Coombs.

RM: And where was he born?

NC: He was born in Cornwall, England. We're Cornish miners, you see.

RM: Do you know when he was born?

NC: November 26th, 1878.

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

NC: Lilly Glidden.

RM: Was she Cornish, too?

NC: Oh, yes.

RM: And when was she born?

NC: She was born June 10, 1888, in Cornwall.

RM: Did they care over here together?

NC: No, my dad came first. He came years before, with her brother. And they went back, and he married her and I had a brother who was born there. He [my brother] died about 2 or 3 years ago. He was born in the old country but raised here. My father was there for about 3 years, then he come back here in about 1910, and my mother came in 1911.

RM: What year did he first come here?

NC: 1903.

RM: What brought him here?

NC: Well, he and this McNerny and my uncle Glidden were going from Bingham Canyon, Utah . . . They were up in Elko and heard about the boom town here, so they decided to come down and check it out, and that was it. They just stayed. He worked here for 2 or 3 years and then went back to the old country in 1907 and married my nother.

RM: And after he married he came back with your nother.

NC: Yes; but he worked back there in the mines some again. Her brother, though, stayed here all the time. He was one of the heroes in the Belmont fire of 1911. By then I had another brother who is buried down there in the old graveyard - from 1911.

RM: Do you remember any stories that your father used to tell about the early days in Tonopah, or any adventures or descriptions that he had?

NC: Well, the big point would have been that fire, but it's a matter of record, I would think. Then my folks bought a ranch out here at Frazier's Wells - about 7 miles out. They knew then that these guys were getting silicosis and dying from it. Some of them never lasted any time at all - especially heavy smokers.

RM: Oh, the heavy smokers got it worse?

NC: Oh, my God, yes. My mother ran a boarding house here, and she wouldn't all people to smoke in her house at all. And a lot of those miners were like it is nowadays. You tell people, "Don't smoke in here," and they leave and you don't see them anymore. They think- you're the bad guy. But she knew it; she could see it in the old country. My people - Cornish people - have been mining for thousands of years - those tin mires. She said all the smokers she noticed when she was young, and brothers and relatives who smoked, died young; some of them in their 20s. Like my dad. Of course, he'd put in 17 years here, but he crawled down the West Tonopah shaft and died down there - committed suicide.

RM: He did?

NC: He was dying with the cough.

RM: Why did it take him so long to get it?

NC: He smoked a pipe, but he never inhaled, and he didn't really have the habit, I guess. But he had one brother who worked here a little bit and went back to the old country; Christ, I don't think he was 30 when he died from it.

RM: Was it dry in the mines in the old country?

NC: No. Back there it was nice and wet, you know. The ones here were dry - especially the Mizpah. It was the worst one. Of course, the North Star, the one above it, had . . . The ones after the Victor never even got into the ore until they were near the water level, which is just 1,100 feet here, so they were wet. And my dad put quite a few years in that mine and the Ohio down here. But those who [worked] around that Mizpah . . .

RM: They got it.

NC: Oh, God. Some of them in 6 months.

RM: Is that right.

NC: Yes. Big, husky Slavonian people. They came over here and it just finished them right off.

RM: Did they not have wet drilling equipment, or was it that they just wouldn't use it?

NC: They never really had it. I've got some of the old machines out here and there are no water connections on them. Or - Pat [Chiatovich] has 2 or 3 there in the yard. A lot of those old miners, after you get it, your joints swell up or something - that's what they claim - so they wouldn't use it. I've seen in Round Mountain, when I was a kid, in some of those stopes, water right there, and dust coming out from them drilling dry. But they wouldn't do it.

So they made it a state law - you can get a year, I think, in the penitentiary for drilling dry now. Or, you could then. They started to really enforce it, and then it kind of changed, because they started fining the companies. If they went up there and saw a guy drilling dry, they'd raise hell . . . But a lot of times I've seen the safety-first guy go through the mine and make the guys hook that water up and all that, and spray it down, because they've been drilling dry before the inspectors got there.

RM: Could you tell me a little bit about the boarding house your mother ran?

NC: Yes. It was down here by the Victor mine, and I think she had about 15 boarders.

RM: What kind of food did she serve?

NC: A lot of Cornish pasties.

RM: Now, what's a Cornish pastie?

NC: Oh, it's kind of like a meat pie, but it has a complete cover over it, which locks in all the goodness of the onions and the potatoes and turnips and the meat. It cooks in about an hour and they're really good.

RM: Did she have mainly Cornish boarders?

NC: About half of them, I'd say. And she had a lot of the others, too. They'd been here for quite a few years then, but . . . and they weren't all miners. Some of them worked on the section gangs of the railroad and so forth.

RM: Did they sleep at her house, too?

NC: We had 2 or 3 houses there, but most of them stayed somewhere else and just took their meals there.

RM: What did a breakfast at her place consist of?

NC: Mostly bacon and eggs and potatoes.

RM: And then would she fix their lunches?

NC: Oh, yes. And those English pasties make a great lunch; they're good eating cold. If you had pasties for Wednesdays, then maybe Friday it would be in your lunch bucket. In those days a lot of them worked 7 days a week.

RM: Oh, I didn't know that. How many hours a day?

NC: Eight. I think when the can first started it was probably 10, and at one time it was 12 hours underground.

RM: Bingham Canyon was 12 hours?

NC: At one time about half of the people in Tonopah came from Bingham Canyon, Utah. You see, Bingham started dying out some, before they got the big pit going there. So most of the undergroundminers [came] from [Bingham Canyon] and Grass Valley. Grass Valley was Cornish, too.

RM: Was Grass Valley dying?

NC: No, it started picking up. But a lot of guys didn't want to work in that wet mine, you see. They'd stay here where it was dry.

RM: Oh. So when Tonopah boomed, then a lot of them came here.

NC: Oh, yes; they came from all over - Colorado, a lot of them.

RM: Was there a Cornish community in town?

NC: Yes, kind of. That lower end of town was mostly Cornish. The town was split up into districts where . . .

RM.: What part of the lower end of town?

NC: Well, do you know where they've got that junk thing - Bumpers?

RM.: Yes?

NC: Down in there. I was born just across from there. Leroy David has built about 3 houses there. About that middle house, there.

RM: As you're going down to the highway off to the right?

NC: Yes - off to the right.

RM: Down below, where the old railroad station was?

NC: Yes. The main road used to go right down through that way underneath a trestle. There was a big trestle from the Victor mine, and the train and everything went under it. That came there and had their own motors on it, and took the ore over to the Extension mill. So on one side of the main road was the railroad, and then the highway was on this side. But it was no highway - just a dirt road.

RR: By the time you were a kid, was there still a Cornish community in town?

NC: Oh, yes. When I started school you'd look out for your h's and things like that.

RM: Were there any special characteristics of Cornish social life?

NC: Well, not really. About all those guys ever thought of was work. Most miners figured their life was over when they were 40. Or, like my dad. I would figure, 'geez, he's pretty old,' and I think he was 53. Before he crawled down here. Because he wouldn't have lived long. He had a . . .

RM: Was it was because of the silicosis, or were there other things, too?

NC: NO, I think it was mostly that because he was pretty healthy, otherwise. His lungs were gone. But he had it for several years. Even during World War I - he couldn't go. When England went to war, a lot of the young Cousin Jacks left here and went to war. They went up to Canada

and got over to the war that way. The uncle I had here left for that reason. He went over, but my dad couldn't get past the examination even then.

RM: And how old was he then?

NC: He was 35 when I was born in '14, and this was in '16, so he wasn't even 40 yet. He had it for quite a few years. I can remember, when I was a kid, that he'd spit blood all the time. But when he got so he couldn't work, that was it. Then he killed himself; did himself in. I know a lot of them in our family that did. They couldn't die, so they just did themselves in.

RM: Was that a common thing in Cornwall?

NC: Yes; they suffer from that, you know. They're in pain, because every time they cough, it's like it's ripping than apart. You see, it tears the lungs where that silica is. This type of quartz crystal here, they claim, is a plain crystal with little barbs on it. Once it embeds itself it can't . . . it just tears. Have you ever talked to Ed [Slavin], up here?

RM: I've been trying to get ahold of him for 2 weeks. [chuckles]

NC: Yes, he's in and out. But he can't hear very well, and sometimes the phone rings and he doesn't hear it. Just go up there. I would. Because he knows it pretty well.

RM: Yes, I wanted to talk to him, too. If the miners figured they wouldn't live much past 40, how did they look at life?

NC: Most of them lived to the fullest; they drank and raised hell up there. Well, they weren't old [chuckles] when they died. But I was raised with some of them who worked up here, and I used to tell them, "Hell, that . . ." They'd say, "Ah, you stay off that goddamned Round Mountain," you know. The old-timers knew these mines, and they put you right on the ore, like the ore that I had up here. I didn't need to find it - they told me where it was at. They couldn't work anymore.

And they used these guys - I know a lot of them - the Eason family and the Martins and all of them - had money running out of their ears. Just young people, in their 20s, but by their 30s it was all gone. Their health was shot, and they dissipated with it, too - that drinking. I saw them go down here feet first. I've seen them on wagons go down here, especially in weather like this - the fall of the year, or the spring of the year; in the wet weather. They'd get pneumonia or something, and they were gone like that. There's a book - I don't know if it's in the library - called *Gold In Them Hills* - did you ever read it?

RM: I've seen it; I haven't read it.

NC: It's got a good thing on the silicosis. They called it the "Tonopah death." They would be in the barber shops and the guy would go to wake them up after he had the towels on them, and they'd be dead. And some of them in the restaurants - just as if they'd gone to sleep.



RM: Most of them didn't kill themselves, did they?

NC: No, they just died. A lot of them worked right up to the time, or died in the restaurants - were in there eating. Maybe they had had a coughing spell before, and were hemorrhaging inside. When I was a kid I was in Gold Hill, and the Belmont Company and the Mizpah Company went together with a joint venture in the Gold Hill mine out the other side of Round Mountain about 6 miles. I worked on top there some, and I'd drive the bus, and it was mostly Tonopah miners out of the mines here. A lot of times, if there were 20 guys in the bus, there might be 10 of them sound asleep when you got there. You see, their lungs never got the oxygen and they'd fall asleep. I never had any dead ones in there, but some of them were goddamn . . . I had one who just got off the bus and went in the change room and lay down on the bench and died. They were full of dust Boy, it was son-of-a-bitching stuff.

RM: Well, you were born here in 1914, and how long did you stay here?

NC: I was about 8 or 9 during the Gilbert boom, and I went out there with my brother. My folks split up, so I went out there and lived with him. My dad went over into California somewhere - the Saline Valley - and my mother stayed here. She married a guy who ran the New California mine up there right where the state highway building is. He was the foreman there, and so . . . I never lived with them much, but I went out to Gilbert and finally my dad came out and went to work in those mines. Then he went to the old country, and I went back there with him and went to school there for about a year when I was 10. This was in 1924 or '25.

RM: What town in Cornwall?

NC: St. Ives.

RM: What was school like in Tonopah?

NC: Tonopah had good, strict schools. The teachers had an awful time here, because we all spoke with different brogues. She was Irish, I remember - Mary Lamb was her name - and her dad was a miner; old Mike Lamb. She was strict as hell, but you realized afterwards what a job [she did]. She had about 40 kids and some of them couldn't speak English at all - the Slavonian, or "bohunks," they'd call them. And then guys like myself had a brogue. Oh, she had one, too - it was Irish.

RM: So there was a real mixture here; yes.

NC: A real problem for her, yes. Or, like some of them who were raised here . . . like Annie Tomany - did you know her?

RM: I've heard of her.

NC: She was a teacher here herself for years but I remember when a lot of the Slavonians started school, they couldn't talk at all. I came back here when I was about 12.

RM: How long did you stay at Gilbert?

NC: When I came back from Cornwall, my dad had gone back out there, and my stepdad, at that time, was running this South Gilbert mine. In fact, he found the one there, and another guy. Here I still own it.

RM: What's his name?

NC: Alec Anderson. But he found that, and he was running it and my mother went out there running that boarding house, and that's where they met. My brother was still at Gilbert, so my dad and I went out there and I went to school there, but not very long - they shut the school down in about 1926, and I finished the year in Goldfield.

RM: What was it like going back to Cornwall, after having lived here?

NC: I didn't like it much. I thought this was strict, but back there, man, you toed the line. But I think it's good. And then, when I came back here, it was as if this school was nothing. You went all year round there. There was no summer vacation, but you got a lot of time off for kings' and queens' holidays and such. But they made you learn there; they used the whip on you. Well, they did here, too, until I went to the old country. Then when I came back, they'd still yank your hair around a little. I was in about the 8th grade here when I finally came back. Ed Slavin's aunt was one of my teachers, and she was strict. She was an old maid, but she was really a good teacher.

RM: How was community life different in Cornwall as compared to here?

NC: Well, here you seemed to have meetings. Like where the convention center [is] was the old air dome, they called it, and they had community dances. You didn't seem to have too much of that stuff back there, but the streets of town seemed [to be] the meeting place. The streets are narrow, and some of the shopping streets had no vehicles - it was mostly wagons and horses. One side of the street would be where they could go, but they could supply the stores from out there. I used to go down there with my aunts and my dad's twin sister. She'd take all day to shop, because you're visiting. Well, you do it a little here. It's about the only time I see old-timers - I go up to the store and run across them.

Of course, guys like Pat and Ed Slavin are guys you knew all your life. This street's all old-timers - Solan Terrell's the Johnny-come-lately. He came in 1926. Ed came here about 1908. He was born in Mexico and then come to Goldfield, and over here.

RM: Who else lives on this street?

NC: Well, Alice Lorigan. She makes all of us look bad. She's 87, I think.

RM: Is she that old?

NC: Oh, yes. She was born in Belmont, and she's been here for years. And then Bernie Merlin<sup>o</sup> was born up in Idaho, but he's been here . . . he's no kid either, anymore - 50-something, I guess.

RM: So you left Gilbert. How old would you have been then?

NC: I was about 12, I think, when the town started dying - the mine and that.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about the mines in Gilbert?

NC: They were mostly all gold mines.

RM: Were they deep, or were they shallow, or . . . ?

NC: It seemed that the ore didn't go down. The main one was the Last Hope mine. The Gilbert brothers found that, and that's why they called it the Last Hope. They were raised right up over there. There was an old mine called the Carrey mine - that was their mother's name - and they eked a living out there. There were 4 boys, I think. There were pretty good-sized veins there, but it had the richest streaks in the veins. The Last Hope was the big one, and then they traced that vein over to one called the Farrington lease. Then, eventually, the Black Mammoth Hill - they owned that, too. It was the same structure, so they found good ore there, too. I guess it was probably the biggest producer. And then eventually another hill kind of to the east called the Monte Cristo; and the Homestake. There were some pretty good mines there.

RM: Did they mill it there?

NC NO, it was all shipped to Millers.

RM: Oh, I thought there was a mill out there.

NC: Oh, no. They built a little one in latter years, but it didn't run very long.

RM: How did they get it to Millers?

NC: On those old hard-tired trucks in those days. Wagons were pretty well gone - I don't think there were any wagons there. You see, Millers had quite a bit of business themselves in those days, because the mines were going pretty well yet in '26. She never started falling off until about '28. And then the stock market crash finished her, and with [the price of] silver going down. She slid down to less than 25 cents at one time.

RM: And that was the end of the mines in Tonopah as they had been known. ?

NC: Well, once they fill with water, you know . . . The deep ones were over at the Belmont, and . . .

RM: OK, now, the Belmont is . .

NC: Around back of that hill right there.

RM: OK, yes; to the north.

NC: Just - where you can see the old cement forms there? I have a thing here that tells the depths of all those shafts.

RM: I'd like to make a copy of that, if I could. NC: Yes, I can get it for you.

## CHAPTER TWO

RM: Curly has shown us a chart which gives the depths of all of the mines in the Tonopah area. Could you tell us a little bit about it, Curly?

NC: Well, the deepest is the Cash Boy, though a lot of people think it's the Victor.

RM: Where is the Cash Boy?

NC: Bob Merley's wrecking yard is right on it - where Bumpers is. Do you know that wrecking yard - the lower one?

RM: Yes?

NC: That's the dump, right there.

RM: OK. And it's the Cash Boy. It was down 2,300?

NC: Yes. The reason there are not too many dumps there is because they went over from the 1800, I think, and sank a mine down. But it's right where the shaft was. They just continued . .

RM: Oh. So they went over to . . .

NC: Yes - they went over here and sank it. So the ore had to come up here and over here and then up here.

RM: So the Cash Boy didn't go all the way to surface?

NC: Oh, yes. They continued the shaft down - she was about 1,800 feet.

RM: Yes. At about 1,800, they drove over from the Victor?

NC: From the Victor. And then some say they went to 2,000; I'm not too sure of that. But they both have a 2,000-foot level, so it could have been. And then they sank here.

RM: What did they hit when they sank on down in the Cash Boy?

NC: They were right near this big vein. The big producer was this vein right here - it came from the 1,500, I think, and went up to where they hit the surface rock, so then the Cash Boy went down and had this part of it worked out. But that was a producing vein - it was 100 feet wide. It ran \$100 a ton at something like 60-cent silver.

RM: At what depth did [the vein] begin at the Cash Boy?

NC: It was really good up to the 1,500, but it went a little higher - maybe to the 1350. They had a level there. In fact, this was the water level.

RM: Oh, the water came up to 1,100 in the Cash Boy?

NC: Yes. But the big pumps and everything were over here in the Victor.

RM: So they were pumping the water out of the Cash Boy through the Victor.

NC: From the Cash Boy over here to sumps, and then out in there. But this shaft on top of the Cash Boy . . . when they used this for the hoist and the water, there was a big ventilation fan right on top here. It blew air down in there so the miners . .

RM: The water was hot, wasn't it?

NC: Oh, red hot; yes. It'd get up to maybe 120 degrees.

RM: How did people work in those conditions?

NC: On some of the faces in the Victor they had to work 3 or 4 crews. You'd go in and stay a half hour, and then heat exhaustion started [setting in and] they brought them out, and another ore went in and worked. It was pretty tough. That's when they brought the Mexicans in - because they could take that heat better.

RM: When did they bring the Mexicans in?

MC: In 1921 or '22. You see, they had a hell of a strike here in 1921. They eventually settled it, but the main one that was striking was the Tonopah Extension. The Belmont [and the] Midway [also] had strikers. The Ohio, where my dad put in a lot of time, and the West End mine were owned by Borax Smith, from the Borax Works . . . He also owned the West End Mining Company - West End Consolidated. And he always paid about \$1 more a day.

RM: Why did he do that?

NC: So he could keep the best miners. He was paying more than the union was really asking. A lot of the [other owners] blamed him for paying more, but they all had ore, but they wouldn't [pay more]. The strike lasted several months - I forget just how long - and it was bad. There were several people killed.

RM: Were the Wobblies involved?

NC: Oh, yes; it was the IWW that was out. And all Borax Smith's men were IWW, and they kept the other miners - that's how they stayed out so long.

RM: Oh, they helped the miners who were on strike.

NC: Yes. For instance, there were 4 or 5 miners [who] ate at my mother's boarding house all the time, and I guess the union paid her.

RM: So Borax Smith's mines were good union mines?

NC: Oh, yes. The Ohio was their big mine.

RM: Why wouldn't the others pay a better wage?

NC: I guess they figured they weren't making it. But in those days you had unscrupulous mine owners. There were just no benefits at all. And they were getting to the point where they were realizing these guys were dying with the con, and the county had to keep some of them. They also had pest houses back up here where the high school is. Pest [was short for] pestilence. [They were where you went when you were done for - had a terminal disease. The guys who had consumption lived up there, and then there used to be one behind the old county hospital. I don't know who lives in there now - Gary Godfrey and some of them were living there. And the miner's hospital - after they got bad - put them in those other places. They just stayed there until they died.

RM: And the county supported them?

NC: Oh, yes. So that was a lot of what was behind the strike, too. To get some kind of benefits.

RM: Was the strike successful?

NC: Yes, the companies came around and raised them 50 cents a day or something like that.

RM: What would the pay have been, then?

NC: About \$5.50. Borax Smith was paying \$6. If they wanted to go from \$5 to \$5.50, they probably asked for \$6 and settled for \$5.50.

But there were a lot of people here. At one time they figure there were pretty close to 6,000 miners here. A lot of people say this town was 25,000 but my mother used to say maybe 15,000. Most of the miners were single, you see. The big buildings - there are not many of them left - Like the McGloughlin house on the hill [housed a lot of miners]. Butch Fuson and his wife own the McGloughlin house. And the old Bryant boarding house [is still] down here on this street - Bryant. Where Dick Sauer lives. They are some of the last of them, but you'd board and room there. See, like where my mother was we had the whole family house, [and there] was a big dining room. And then she had cabins around the old houses. I dug all this out by hand.

RM: Where you're living now.

NC: Yes. When my kids are here they stay upstairs This was their bedroom, some of than. I stay down here because it's warm, so you don't need much heat or anything.

RM: When did you build this house?

NC: The old hoist engineer at the Jim Butler died, and it sat here empty for quite awhile. I bought it about 1950 or '51. It was just the upstairs and this was a garage in here. There was an old Saxon car in here and I dumped it. Geez, they're worth a fortune. [chuckles] I was working out in Gabbs and I was telling a guy about it . .

"Jesus Christ," he said, "you didn't take it out to the dump?" I said, "Yes."

We came back that night, and it was down the German American shaft. We backed over that dump and just dumped - it was gone.

RM: Somebody had already gotten it?

NC: Yes. I'd dumped it a couple of days before when I was cleaning this all out. It was just this room to here. They were narrow old cars, and it was apart, and the top - it was an old touring . . . I have the registration for it; I think it was a 1914 or something. I didn't realize what I was doing 'till I threw it away.

RM: Curly, could we go through these mines? [See Table 1]

NC: The Mizpah was the big producer. But the ore only went to the 600, and this shaft L a lot of them think that was the bottom of it, but it wasn't. They sank it on down. They drilled all over down here. But it hit a flat fault here. The fault cut it off. But all their ore came - well, you can see it on the hillside, where the poles are.

RM: But the shaft went down 1,500, didn't it?

NC: Yes, but they never found anything. They had that other level and they put [in] several levels looking for it. But down here in the bottom, my dad [told me about] a guy named Ross Soaker [Who] had a big old-type prospect machine that put long holes - and they didn't find anything.

RM: How far out would they go with those levels?

NC: Oh, some of those cross-cuts go 'way out under town 1,000 feet. RM: Where they were just looking?

NC: Yes; looking for ore.

RM: But they never found which way the ore faulted out of the flat fault?



NC: Well, they figured it faulted this way - to the south. But what would've done it . . . they figured it was an anticline on the ore because all these mines, after you get down here, got into the deep-seated ores. This was the Mizpah vein, and they figured when it faulted down in the Victor and the others it was called the Murry vein. A lot of old-timers figured it was the same vein that got away - oxidized into the sulfide zones.

RM: Does this map of yours go east and west - or is it a list?

NC: It's a list of the mines.

RM: Do you have anymore on the Mizpah?

NC: As I say, she was the big producer. They took several million out of there. And there were so many holes to the surface, even after they started using water, that you could wet it - drip down, you know - so that there was no dust at all, and in a few hours it was dry, because all that came to the surface and air just flowed through there and dried it.

RM: It was a bad one for the dust, wasn't it?

NC: Yes; really bad.

RM: What were the veins like in the Mizpah?

NC: There were 7 of them [that] went through town, they figured, and they intersected right there where that big hole is. It was a big square-set stope and it caved. It came pretty near from the 600. That was the bulk of their ore. It's that law silver, you know.

RM: That was the site of Jim Butler's original discovery, wasn't it?

NC: Yes, right in near there. He was a little this way - towards the Silver Top.

RM: OK, what are they? Let's name them off:

NC: Mizpah, Red Plume, Silver Top, Sand Grass, and Desert Queen. Those are the ones that Jim Butler staked out himself.

RM: And those mines are over kind of behind the Mizpah Hotel.

NC: Yes. And then they ran right down to were Leroy David built that new stuff on the lower end of town.

RM: Oh, they ran clear down there.

NC: Yes, that's the Sand Grass. First you come to the Mizpah and the Red Plume, and then - do you know the gallows frame that's standing alongside the Mizpah shaft?

RM: Yes?

NC: That big old red wooden one - that's the Silver Top. Then, when you get down to the lower end, you get to the Desert Queen.

RM: What about the Red Plume?

NC: That was a continuation of the veins - they went on down that way.

RM: Oh, OK, from the Mizpah. And it went down to 800 feet?

NC: Yes. They worked her clean down to the Sand Grass, and she kind of cut off down in there. That's this one.

RM: I see - yes.

NC: The elevation was lower at the lower end of town, you see. She went down pretty well - down to the thousand.

RM: OK, what about the next mine over?

NC: That was the Tonopah Belmont. It was the second biggest producer

RM: And where was the Belmont?

NC: It's the one behind that hill there. That was the main. mine - right behind the hill - and then right down below it, the deepest shaft that they had, was this one, the Halifax.

RM: The Belmont and the Halifax were together, then?

NC: Yes. And then there was another one right in town - that's the Jim Butler.

RM: Let's talk about the Belmont and the Halifax.

NC: It [the Belmont] was a rich mine. They took millions out of it. But it was the one that had the big fire - the Belmont fire. The Belmont was connected with the Desert Queen, you see. And some of the miners came up there and there was this door there and they couldn't get through. In latter years, the mine inspectors made than connect all these mines. And if there was a wooden door, there had to be an axe on each side. I think the door in here was metal

RM: And they died as a result of it?

NC: Yes. A lot of them got up against this and couldn't go any farther –the smoke killed than.

RM: What year was the fire?

NC: 1911. They're buried in this old graveyard down here. Do you know Leroy David?

RM: I don't think so.

NC: His dad was one of them. I have a tape on that that my mother made. let's listen to it a little bit. Can you shut yours off?

RM: Sure.

:tape is turned off for awhile]

RM: Let's pick up on where we were, now, on the map. You were telling about the Belmont fire.

NC: The Belmont and the Halifax were the same company, and so was the Wandering Boy. But the Wandering Boy shaft was really the Jim Butler shaft where the . . . the Silver Queen Motel is built right on the dump, there.

RM: Oh. It goes down 800 feet?

NC: Yes. Everybody knew it as the Jim Butler. That was the old guy who was hoist man there for years and had this house here.

RM: So these 3 were big producers?

NC: Yes. The biggest was the Tonopah Mining Company; the Tonopah Belmont Development Company was the next.

RM: And they were eventually owned by the Brock family, weren't they, or by other outside interests?

NC: I know Brock had something to do with it, but Billy Douglas promoted a lot of it. Paula Douglas is his granddaughter; she's the only one left. He came here in 1900 from Douglas Camp. He came down there by Mina. He was one of the big promoters, and he helped promote the Tonopah Belmont Development Company, which has the Belmont, the Halifax, and the Wandering Boy. He kept it for quite a few years and he made a lot of money there. Then he started the West End Company. I think his daughter was one of the first kids born here in town - ladies. She's still living in . .

RM: Is he related to Red Douglas?

NC: No. Did you know Anne Wardle?

RM: Only by name.

NC: Well, Anne's sister was married to Belmont Douglas, who was named after the mine, or the mine was named after him. Belmont was Paula's dad, and he married one of the Mann girls - that was her mother. And they're both gone.

RM: Who staked out the Belmont and the Halifax?

NC: I don't know whether Douglas and [his partners] staked them or not, or just got in on them. [It was Tasker Oddie.] :

RM: Were there any special characteristics of the Belmont complex?

NC: No, it was a good deal like this ore. The top levels were an oxide, or horn silver, they call it. And the cerargyrites [silver chloride]. And then when you get lower . .

RM: What is a cerargyrite?

NC: I have a book here . .

[Tape is turned off for awhile]

RM: Cerargyrite is just horn silver.

NC: Yes; it's a type of silver ore. mg:

RM: OK. So at the higher levels it was horn silver.

MC: Yes; that's more of an oxide. And then you get down into the sulfide none, and it gets into what you call the argentites.

RM: I see. How far down did they have to go in the shafts to get into the argentite?

NC: It varied. Sometimes the argentite came clean to the top.

RM.: So the next mine here on the list is the Mizpah Extension.

NC: That was a joint venture between the Belmont and the Mizpah. It's over behind that hill there, too just over from the Belmont. And they went together on that one.

RM: How did it work out?

NC: It wasn't much of a producer. They got out of the ore zone, and . ... She went down there pretty good, you see.

RM: She went down 1,460 feet.

NC: It's the one that kid drove in a couple of years ago with that motorcycle and fell down about 60 or 70 feet. The only thing that kept him [from] going farther was an old wreck of a car down there; it had lodged in there, you see. But the Mizpah Extension was really nothing.

RM: Why would they sink a shaft that deep there?

NC: Well, there was a lot of money around in those days. And then those other deep producers are [on] both sides of it. So they were there through a joint company thing. They figured that it could have gone that [way] - which I think some of it did. And you get into those ruby silvers. They're an animonial silver out that way. The one that Pat [Chiatovich] and I worked - the Summit King - got into it.

RM: Now, where is the Summit King?

NC: It's about 2 miles out from town due north, here. But the next one is the Buckeye, and it belonged to the Belmont Company, too.

RM: It's another deep one - 1,200. And that's up, where the Buckeye brothel is now.

NC: By where the brothel is right now; right on the dump.

RM: Did they find anything in the Buckeye?

NC: Not a hell of a lot. There was some production, but it was minimal.

RM: And then the next one is the Rescue.

NC: The Rescue got its name because they put up a lot of money to get it down where they could get near these other shafts, and they went off and connected the others, you see. The Rescue Eula was the right name of it. ill;

RM: And it was to connect them? It really wasn't . .

NC: Yes, but they had some ore.

RM: And where is the Rescue located?

NC: It's right alongside the highway. Do know where Robert Bottom has his yard up there?

at:

RM: No.

NC: It's right on the Belmont summit, there across from the bowling alley. The dump that . . . you go across the road and there's a dump right there; that's the Rescue.

RM: And the next one on your list is the North Star. It's 1,250 feet.

NC: Yes. That's the one 'way up on the hill above the Mizpah. It was quite a producer, too; they took a lot of money out of there. [Later] it opened for leasers and a lot of leasers made a lot of money there. And the Montana is just in between it and the Mizpah, part way up the hill. They had their own mill right there; you can see the old forms and stuff there

RM: The Montana was comparatively shallow, wasn't it? It was just 765.

NC: Yes, it didn't go down too far, but they had awful ore there. And some of those veins went off that way from the Mizpah. It was quite a producer.

RM: Let's see. The next one is the old Midway.

MC: Yes. That was a Billy Douglas enterprise, too. He started the Midway and made a lot of money in it. He built a mill there. He had it - I think - about the same time he had the Belmont, or was in on the Belmont. And he was a promoter and a stockbroker and . . .

RM: Where is the Midway located?

MC: Do you know where that fence outfit is? That Lou Redman got that fence . . . like you go over towards the foundry?

RM Yes.

NC: And you turn and go up . . . and there was a flower [shop] layout there, just down here.

RM: Yes, right.

NC: Yes; that dump right there. That's the old Midway. Billy Douglas got out of there with, say, \$3 million dollars or something. But he started the West End Company too, and he sold the mill to them, and you can see the foundations there of the old mill. He sold the mill off, and then he went over and took his last money and sank this shaft. It's pretty deep . . .

RM: The new Midway. Yes, it goes 'way down there.

NC: Yes - they didn't even list it. But it's still over there; it's kind of north and west of the foundry. Off in there. Then there are several buildings on it - like the old hoist house is there yet. But that broke him. He put a lot of money in that and it . .

RM: Didn't find that much.

NC: He figured those veins from the old Midway went over that way, and they didn't do it. Then he tried to get a lease from another one and drilled the Merger and he didn't get it, and the Tonopah Extension got the lease on their ground, or something. I was living with them when he went broke. And he died that spring - I think in '29 or somewhere around there. He wasn't very old, either - probably in his 50s. But that finished him. He'd taken all the money, and he'd gambled her off.

RM: Is that right.

NC: Oh, yes; he was quite a guy. He put lots of her back in the ground but that's gambling, too.

RM.: Yes, that's right. [chuckles] The next one is the McNamara.

NC: Yes. The McNamara is right in the area where they built a muffler shop just off of Knapp Avenue. You know where that transportation outfit is.

RM: Yes.

NC: Well, that first wreckage - or, foundation - old mill foundations is west - or, the Extension mill? And then just above there there's some ore material in a dump right in there? The county has their stuff right on the dump

RM: OK; yes.

NC: That's the McNamara.

RM: What happened there?

NC: They didn't have any ground. They only had about one claim, you see. °They had a real good ore, and they went over into the West End ground that's down . . . I remember they had a hell of a lawsuit in the early years, when I was young. They just never had any ground, and they narrowed or petered out going down, and then they shut her down. They had a small mill there.

RM: How many of these properties were just promotional jobs?

NC: Well, most of them were producing some. This one down here I think is the old Tonopah 76. That's . . . the Red Rock shaft was dawn below - or, the old dumps were right in there.

RM: Was that was a promo?

NC: Yes.

RM: Let's go back up the list here to . . . after the McNamara comes the McQuillen.

NC: Yes. I think that's the old Yumatilla shaft. They had a little production, but it was very small. They did a lot of work there, but I don't know how deep that shaft was. I don't think it was too deep.

RM.: And the next one is the West End.

NC: Yes. The West End is the one right in town there.

RM: Not too far from the convention center?

NC: Yes: their parking lot goes right up against the dump. It was a good producer. and then they had the Ohio and the . .

RM: That was a Borax Smith mine.

NC: Yes. They could hardly dump anymore in town, because there were buildings around there, so they eventually had the Ohio. Do you see their first, shaft was right where there's a big old office building, right there on a dump like the convention center, here?

RM: Yes?

NC: That's the West End shaft. Their first shaft was right there. They built their big office building. That was their office, see, and it's just right there by the . . . thing and - or, Wally Boundy - that surveyor. Then they started the new shaft, and I think it went down maybe 1,400; I Don't know how deep it was . . . the West End was down pretty far.

RM: Well, the West End was down . . .

NC: One thousand feet?

RM: And the Ohio was down 1,200 feet.

NC: But, when they couldn't dump . . .

RM: Oh; they hoisted out of the Ohio?'

NC: Yes, and then they hauled the ore over to this - [it] was the Midway Best End] mill.



RM: How long was the connection between the West End and the Ohio?

NC: Oh, I guess that drift was about 1,000 feet. These were all connected. After that law came in they made it a point to connect. You could go down the Mizpah and come out the Victor, if you wanted. Or the West End, or whatever.

RM.: Is that right - if you didn't know the way you could really get lost down there.

NC: Well, they had it pretty well marked.

RM: Have people ever gotten lost down there and never found? [chuckles]

NC: No, not that I know of. They had the signs and there are probably a lot of them down there yet. They were in the different languages so the

### CHAPTER THREE

RM: Curly, the next mine on your chart is the old Tonopah Extension.

NC: Yes. This was called the Number One shaft, you see. It's right up from the old graveyard that's right there in town - the one on the west side. It was a good mine. They produced quite a little bit. And I'm wrong on that - the old one was on the east side of that graveyard. See, it was right there - just off the street where the . . . There are some service stations across the street there?

RM: Yes?

NC: And Rhines has a lot of trailers right on that dump there.

RM: OK, on that dump.

NC: That's the Number One extension. And the other one, on the west side the graveyard, is the Number Two shaft.

RM.: Oh, OK. And were they good producers?

NC: Yes, they took lots of ore out of there.

RM: Where did they hit the ore?

NC: Well, they knew that some of those veins came down that way, you see. So they sank . . . But they had to get through cap rock, most of them, as you can tell by the levels here. There probably wasn't a level until they hit to the 600, there.

RM: OK, in the old and the new Tonopah Extension, they didn't even put a Level until they got [to] 600. So in your map, when you start seeing a lot levels, you know you're into something.

NC: Yes. They generally started getting . . . they ran them to see if they were getting into the ore, you see. They always tried to get below it so they could stope up . . . But the Number Two Extension went down to the 950, and it's an incline. You see these were all verticals, the shafts here. And then they sank right on the ore, and it went way down to the 1,400.

RM.: It went 1,400 on an incline?

NC: On an incline. And supposedly they were still in ore. But it got so low grade that in those days you couldn't handle it. Well, nowadays they wouldn't think of it, either. And nobody wants to work underground anymore.

RM.: OK, the next one is the Tonopah Merger.

NC: Yes. And the Merger is . . . do you remember where the old lumber yard was down there?

RM: Yes - Conley's.

NC: Just north of it. And the dump is still there. It was a pretty good producer, too; they took out quite a little ore. But they never had much ground, some of them. You've seen the old maps of town, haven't you?

RM: Yes, just a checkerboard - overlapping and everything.

MC: Whereas the . . . the old; yes. You [can] see the ones that didn't have much [ground]. I have the old colored maps and that down here. They tell of the different companies; where their . . . This is [from] 1906, I think.

RM: Could we make a copy of that?

[tape is turned off for awhile]

RM.: Curly, we're taking a little side track here, and you're telling about your father, and how he died.

NC: Yes. He had silicosis, and he was dying, so . . . He'd send my brother letters that he was going to do himself in - either crawl out under a sagebrush or down one of these shafts. He disappeared from the old Graystone, which was one of the big old boarding houses down there. He didn't show up for a day or two, so they got in touch with us.

We came up, and I said, "I bet you that's where he's at. Because he knows that this carbonic gas . . ." He worked the West Tonopah there and my uncle was a hoistman. I figured he went in there, because he knew this gas, and if he could get down there a ways, it would just put him to sleep. A healthy man would never wake up unless somebody woke him up - he'd just go out of it.

I figured he knew that, so maybe it would be a good place to start. So we went down there and old Sheriff [Bill] Thomas, who was here for 40 years . . . He was a Cornish man, too, and a family friend. He was born in Austin, but they went back to the old country afterwards. Old Bill said, "Well, I'm not going to let you go down there." Of course, it was out of his county - that's Esmeralda down there. He said, "[If] you go down there, instead of one being down there, it'd probably be 2," because • collar set was rotted pretty badly. He said, "What if he is down there? It's the way he wanted to go." Cornish men don't think anything of Death. You don't work in a mine if you're too skittish about dying, because it's a dangerous occupation. Anyway, he said, "What more befitting a gravestone it is to have [than] a gallows frame over a miner's grave?" So we bought that.

RM: So he's still down there.

NC: No, he was in there 4 years. And the war was on, but we weren't in it yet - in 1940 - and a guy was down there stealing the fan pipe and wiring out of there. He probably fixed the collar up. He got down on the 150- foot level, and here's a guy sitting on a landing, all dried up. That was my dad. So they got him out. I was in Butte at that time, and I came back for the . . . He was over in Goldfield, then. He'd belonged to the lodge over there so I went there, and you could just see, he was just dried up. He just didn't weigh anything. He was a small man, anyway. And he just dried up. But I could tell it was him - he had black, curly hair, you know. He was humped over like that - you could see the hair

RM: So he's buried in Goldfield?

NC: Yes, he's buried in Goldfield.

RM: So he didn't get to stay in the mine - his final resting place.

NC: No, they spent all that money, getting him out and all that, and he hated morticians. I remember [when] my aunt died. She's buried down here, -and my mother and sister. The bill was \$50, and Jesus, I though he was going to die [chuckles] over that. I was just 7, 8 years old. He used to tell them, "You'll never get me."

RM.: And they didn't, did they?

MC: Well, at the last, but this guy didn't. He used to say, "Hell, I'll outlive you." But I think Cavanaugh outlived him. He ran the home down here But they found him in Esmeralda, and a guy named Noon over in Goldfield did the work on him. They just put him in a box; it was really nothing.

RM: Well, where were we on our map? We were to the Merger, I think. Why did they call it the Merger?

NC: They tried to merge all these companies in here at one time, and I guess it didn't work. But they had quite a little ground there. They produced some, but . . . They went down to 1,100.

RM: Now, the Extension was right here; your old and new.

NC: That's probably the reason the Merger got in there; all 3 of these were together. Where's the McKane shaft - is it on . . .?

RM: Oh, here; we're coming to it. Let's talk about the Victor.

MC: Well, that was the deepest . . . at that time. And they went over and sank the Cash Boy on down to . . .

RM: Was it profitable?

NC: Oh, yes. The Victor produced a lot of money. Most of the money that was brought out of there came over on this 1,800-foot level, I think. Or - its s got to be some level between these two.

RM: Yes, they don't have a station 'till 1,540.

MC: And that was about the top of the ore, I think, that they took out of there. They used to say it was 100-foot wide, 100-foot long, and ran \$100 a ton at about 60-cent silver. A big block of ore in there; it was rich as hell

RM: Why is it so deep down there, whereas up at the Mizpah [it's less deep?

NC: Well, this is the anticline, you see. Like the town - without this map . . . At the lower end like this they were all deep mines, and then the ores came up like this at the enrichment. And they hit the anticline right about the Mizpah - came right to the surface, and then it bent over again, and went down towards the Belmont and out that way. You can see your Halifax and the others are so deep. It goes right up here. The Mizpah shows 1,500, but the production level was the 600 - that's as far as they go.

RM: Yes. Whereas, down there, they didn't hit anything until they got down to 1,500.

NC: It was the cap rock, you see.

RM: Curly, what would make them sink a shaft dawn 1,500 feet with no ore?

NC: Well, it was up here, you see. And a geologist figured that this was an anticline, and her values were dipping that way. And that big Mizpah . . . after it faulted . . . But what it did was it kicked it, and went this way. A lot of than thought the Murray vein and the Mizpah were nothing but the same one. And the Murray vein was in the Extension and the Tonopah Victor down there. It's the same vein, only it got into a sulfide zone. But whether it was or not, I don't know.

RM: How did the Victor stand in terms of production?

NC: She was a good one, all right. And she was the last to go down.

RM: At what level do they hit water in these mines?

NC: 1,100 was your water table.

RM: And the water was hot?

NC: Oh, God, yes; red-hot. The Victor and the Halifax were the two hottest.

RM: OK. The Halifax is up at this end, isn't it?

NC: Yes, but that was on the anticline on the other way. And it was red-hot down in there. I remember when I was a kid . . . The gallows frame of the Victor is still there - you've seen that big steel one?

RM: Yes.

NC: That's when old Charles M. Schwab owned it. He was a big steel manufacturer and he put that big gallows frame there. I remember when they built it, I was just a kid, and my dad worked on the hoist house there. And steam would come out of the Victor. Down there in the winter, when it was real cold, you couldn't even see that gallows frame - that steam would come out of the shaft; she'd just boil out. And I remember when she started to cave. I said to my dad, "Jesus, how come I couldn't see any steam coming out of the Victor?" This was about 1932 or so; I think he was in Round Mountain then. It was as if it just shut off. (I used to go down to the old house all the time.) He said, "It's caving down there, is probably what's happening."

RM: Why would it cave down there?

NC: Well, the timber rotted out.

RM: The ground wasn't solid?

NC: Oh, no. It was bad ground. They tried to get down the Victor a few years ago, and they had a hell of a time. They spent a million dollars and sewer got . . . It was just like rock, but it was full of old timber and snuff and they couldn't make it; they didn't go at it right. But anyway, it caved, and those bulkheads - she just shut all the steam off.

RM: So there's no more steam coming out of it?

NC: No. I don't think it comes out from the McKane, either. The McKane is in the lower end by the new graveyard. If they wanted to get down, that would be the one to go down, because I think most all the McKane was doped timber. They creosoted, so it might be standing better.

RM: Why was the ground so bad?

NC: A lot of the cap rock is a tufa, or tuffs. [When it] gets wet, it's just like clay, or nearly a mud. That's why they can sink these holes . . . We used to be on cess pools here before the sewer, and if you wet it every night [you could] dig 2 or 3 feet in it by hand. It just turns damn near to mud.

RM: Yes. And there's no values in the capstone, is there?

NC: No, the cap rock is just tuffs.

RM: What kind of rock are the values in?

NC: Well, you go into your andesites . . . And then they have the Tonopah breccia. The Mizpah was in a trachyte up here - it's a kind of a rhyolite. They're all igneous rock; there are no sediments in Tonopah.

RM: So in these shafts, when they're sinking through that tuff, they really have to timber it. And if the timbers don't hold, it all comes in?

NC: It all rotted down; yes. The only way to have done it was steel and concrete, and they never used that much in those days.

RM: I've heard that there's still ore going down.

NC: Oh, yes. It's in the Cash Boy. You see, you'd have to come over here and down. Or I imagine that's a common level there, because there's none on the 18[00]. See, the 18[00] - here would be where's the 18[00] -there's none on the Cash Bay. But they sank that winze from here. Yes, this is all blocked out.

RM: All blocked-out ore.

NC: All ready to take out. They operated until [the price of] silver started going below 40, and they knew they were done.

RM: And they never opened it during the leasing period in the '30s?

NC: Oh, no. Once they pulled the pumps, the water came up to about the 1,100.

RM: Would the water rot all those timbers?

NC: As long as it's underground, it'd be good. But it gets damp, and the dries out, and gets damp, and dries out . . . it's the dry rot that fixes it. What could get it down in there is the swelling of the ground; that would cave the timbers. The timbers would be good, but it'd be hell to get through. They swell enough to break the timber.

RM: But it was 100 wide, 100 . . . what did you say . . .?

NC: It was 100-foot wide, 100-foot long, and ran \$100 a ton - I think it was about 60-cent silver.

RM: Think what that'd be worth now.

NC: Oh, God. Well, they took out \$17, \$18 million out of that one ore body, I think. If I could find those production records . . .

RM: Did they have ore in the bottom of the shaft at the Cash Boy?

NC: That was still going on down; yes. I've heard stories of than drilling below there, but I don't know whether they did or not. The bottom Level would be about 2,400, you see - the sump. Most of than have sumps below there. I don't know whether they were right on the ore, but it was right near it. I remember my dad even worked some in the Cash Boy. He said that they really had the ore. He didn't give any widths or anything but it was one of the biggest ore bodies, I guess, ever found here. The companies hung on as long as they could, working it at a loss. But they just couldn't keep pumping from that level, and once they pull the pumps, that's it. There were enormous pimps down here on the 2,000 - big Nordbergs. They were bigger than this house.

RM: Would there be any other economical way to drain that?

NC: Oh, there's no way.

RM.: [chuckles] It'd be below the valley floor, wouldn't it?

NC: Yes. You figure it's about 1,100 to Millers; you raise 1,100 coming up here and that puts you at the water table. And geez, look at - that's 14 miles. There's no way you could [chuckles]....The big drill holes, now, they could drain it all right, I think, but they'd have to have a way, because you'd probably get into faults and get the return water. So you'd have to use solar, or pump it out where it'd go on flat, big ponds and solar for evaporation or something.

RM: Was the water good?

NC: Well, we had a swimming pool down there; it's still there. It was just pure white - It'd look like milk - and we'd swim in it. It was full of drillings from the drilling machines. All that was pumped out of the Victor and it went into a couple of settlement tanks, but it was still just like milk. It was hotter than hell, too. They had quite a park down there - the Victor park - in the early days.

RM: OK, the next mine on your chart is the.....

NC: Monarch-Pittsburg. It was a good producer. Not a big one, but....

RM: Where was it located?

NC: It's down there in the old dumps, too. It was right next to the Red Rock. I don't know who acquired the Red Rock, but I remember the stock there in the stock markets. There used to be a couple of stock markets here.



RM: The Red Rock doesn't show a level.

NC: It was the Tonopah 76. No, they never - it was a promotion. Because it was in between producers. McKane was a pretty good producer.

RM: OK, what about the McKane - you mentioned it a couple of times.

NC: Yes. It was connected with the Victor. See, the Victor - eventually, they got it; they got all these mines here but I don't think they ever did take up the Red Rock or the Monarch-Pitts. This was the Tonopah Extension. They acquired all these - the Tonopah Victor, and the McKane, West Tonopah, Cash Boy...all of them; yes.

RM: So the McKane was a pretty good producer. And then it got the West Tonopah.

NC: Yes; it wasn't much of a producer. They had a bunch of ore made way up in that tuffs, they claim, but it wasn't much. There was some production off that lower level, there.

RM: Off the 950?

NC: Yes. She went down about 1,000 feet or better.

RM: Now, tell me where the Cash Boy is located, again.

NC: Well, it's by the wrecking yard, there. Right below Bumper's. And you can see where the old trestle came across - it's that one back there; where he has the old cars all over the dump - that's the Cash Boy. And that was where the air was pumped down for the Victor and all of them. But the Victor went down and went over like on that 2,000 and sank from there, rather than to do anything with this shaft to move the ventilation system.

RM: Oh, I see. The shaft was filled with ventilation [equipment].

NC: Yes. And once they took it over and up to the Victor, then they had that tramline - it was just like a little railroad - and they pulled the cars over to the Extension mill. Or this one, though the bins were gone and everything.

RM: Now, which of these mines still have ore left?

NC: The only one I know of real value would be the Victor - or, the Cash Boy. And now, with silver \$7 or something, you could get ore out of the Mizpah, but.....

RM: Would it be just - what do they call it - high-grading and taking pillars and things like that?

NC: Yes.

RM: Yes. There are no real streaks of substance or anything.

NC: No, she's pretty well gutted. You could pit this whole town at one time - before the sweetener was taken out, but all the sweetener's gone. The old-timers gutted those veins and streaks. They took her all - took all the best of it.

RM: Otherwise, it could take the whole town.

NC: Yes. Especially in there where the....the Mizpah and the others are. Just come in there flat - say from the Red Plume or even down by the Sand Grass. could've had quite an open pit.

RM: And cyanide it?

NC: Yes. but closed vat, I still think is - it's a cyanide system all right, but when you soak a solution in a ...you're going to get it all out of it. They had awful recovery in these mills. They had 5 mills here, you know.

RM: OK. Let's go though those.

NC: All right. the tonopah Mining's mills were down at Millers.

RM: OK. Now, what mines did they have? They had the Mizpah and all of those.

NC: Yes.

RM: OK. So they built the Millers operation.

NC: They started that, and the Tonopah Mining's mill was down there. And the Belmont built their first one down there, too. Altogether there were about 3 mills there - 2 of them belonged to the Tonopah Mining and one to the Belmont. Then the Belmont decided to put theirs right here, and that was supposed to have one of the best mills that was ever built.

RM: That's the one up at the top of the hill across from the Buckeye.

NC: Yes. And when things started going down, Mr. Robbins sold this mill. They claim if he hadn't done that....because the water table wasn't bothering him 'way up on the hill. They were down about 1,600 feet, but it wasn't bothering him that much. It could've been shut down and just left, and then when the time came [he could have] revamped the mill and started her up again. They were making money at 40 or 50 cents an ounce. Anyway, he said he couldn't sell the mill at Millers because it was in terrible shape. So when he sold this one up here, they moved it out, and then that one sat there and junked out after it went down.

Anyway, I think the Belmont company built the first one in town. I wouldn't swear to that - maybe it was the Montana. There was a mill at the Montana, and then there was a mill in

the west - or, the West End, of course, was the old Midway mill. And then the Tonopah Extension had theirs. There were 5 of them, I think.

RM: Where did the mills get their water?

NC: They were getting it from Rye Patch at one time. Then when they got deep, the Belmont got their water out of the Halifax and the Extension got theirs out of the tonopah Extension. I think they sold water to the McNamara.

RM: Was the water hot at that level?

NC: Oh, yes. It was all hot. But the first ones that got in it to any extent were the Halifax and the Victor, so they had plenty of water. The Victor was making 5,000 gallons a minute and they said the Halifax was, too. That's one of the reasons .... when the Belmont went down, all the water went down in that one, see.

RM: You mean when it burned?

NC: No, when they shut her down. But when she burned that time in 1911 .... It burned twice. The last time it guttered her was on a Sunday, and nobody was in there; they were just leasers then. But when the Halifax quite pumping , the bulk of your water went to the Victor. they got more water, and for them to pump and just sit there would've been enormous in cost.

RM: What were the mills like?

NC: did you ever look through a 100-mesh screen?

RM: Yes.

NC: You can hardly look through it. These were 200-mesh so the cyanide could attack every particle, you see, because a lot of it's in the siliceous ore. The best tailings down here are from the McNamara, because it was only a 100-mesh screen.

RM: Oh, so there's a lot of good ore left.

NC: Not really that much, but some. They started building a little leaching pad thing down there, but it never went anywhere. But the McNamara, just by .... they never had any ground, you see. They sand down, they drifted both ways, and they were stoped off, so they couldnt acquire any more ground. It was right in between the Extension and the West End, as you can see by that map. so that was the story on them.

RM: did they use stamp mills?

NC: Yes. The Montana was rod and ball; I don't think they had any stamps. some of them added ball mills besides the stamps.

RM: Why would they do that?

NC: It would give them a finer grind. They could, say, coming off the stamp mill, take it out of there may be at 50-mesh, run it through ball mills or rod mills and come out with a 200-mesh. That's why they had such recovery here. And then they had a closed-vat system of cyanide. And [they used] strong solutions - these tailings were poison. They made than put chlorine solution in it, but they had a drip system that dripped into the tailings and it would corrode up, and nobody took care of it, so . . . A lot of cattle and horses died from drinking it.

RM: But chlorine will neutralize it?

NC: Just like that [sound of fingers snapping]. You can have a 10-percent solution, give her a dash of Clorox, and drink the water It's that fast -it just kills it.

RM: Is that right. So they would grind it down to 200-mesh, and what would be the next step?

NC: Then they put it in the big tanks and mix their solutions with it and agitated it. They put it first, generally, through agitators . . . that's where the mix come in. They added the solutions and it went into the big settling tanks. It was agitated with big wheels that went around those big tanks. They'd test those solutions until there was no more. They were called pregnant solution - until there were no more values in it. Then it was bled off and went down as tailings. But the pregnant solution was all taken out and run through zinc or carbon or something; they stripped the ore out of it.

Then they smelted it. They had had their furnaces right here. I can remember when I was a kid, at the depot, you'd see silver bars - I think 500 pounds apiece - stacked up there. They used to tell us kids, "Go ahead and take one." One of those yardmen just [laughter] . . . We'd get on it and couldn't even budge it.

RM: And they'd ship them out on the railroad, wouldn't they?

NC: Yes; with the baggage.

RM Where did they ship them to, I wonder?

NC: I imagine to the Mint in Frisco or Denver. I imagine most of it went to Frisco. But a lot of the gold was still in it. I don't think they ever refined it here at all.

RM: They never separated them? Because it would take a different process, wouldn't it, to do that.

NC: Yes. I don't know - it could've been done here. I never did see any. 11e- used to go around and sweep the old ones - down at the Extension there and you'd get beads of silver where it'd pop out when it was poured into the molds. It wasn't that much, maybe a half ounce or so.

RM: When did the mills close?

NC: In about 1930. But the West End kept it going, and they ran gold ore from Divide. That's what kept the McNamara going after they ran out of cm, too; the Lida ore. They took that custom ore. I think the West End was actually the last mill that ran. The Montana mill closed first, I think.

## CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Curly, could you tell me more about how the miners lived back in the '20s and '30s, and what they thought about, what kind of people they were?

NC: Well, they were really trustful people. You very seldom ever locked your house. They lived a good deal like I do now; just comfortable. Of course, in those days you didn't have the green vegetables and such [as much], but they had old Victor Ranch - Lambertucci's - below town. It was called Victor, but that was his name - Victor Lambertucci. Or, I imagine it mss. But, the water [for the ranch] came from the Victor and the McKane. He ditched it on down. He had reservoirs below the graveyard there. And it was really a green spot. The old Cornishmen used to call him Greenpatch; he really had a beautiful garden. He pretty near supplied the town, along with a few of the smaller ranches around.

RM: So the water that came out of the mines was good for agriculture.

NC: Oh, yes. It was just full of the drillings from those machines; that's what made it a milky color.

RM: So in the season, they were getting plenty of vegetables and from there.

NC: Oh, God, he had a beautiful . . . The old hot house, I think, is still there - a big, glassed-in thing. All the glass is broken, but it's still there. And he had fruit trees. You can't see, in the back there, but you can go over and see the fields where he did grow those things.

RM: Did the miners who weren't married board?

NC: Yes.

RM: Were the majority of miners married?

NC: No, they were mostly single. My mother, for instance, had 20 boarders, and I don't think there were 2 of them that were married - had a wife somewhere else. Of course, eventually when those men got something going or got a house, they moved here. You'd live in small houses; they weren't big unless your families were big.

RM: What were the houses like?

NC: Most of them were single-wall dwellings.

RM: Were they cold?

NC: Oh, yes. And it was hard to get wood here. We burned mostly coal, which they hauled in on the railroad.

RM: Where did the coal come from?

NC: Utah, mostly.

RM: What would a little cabin have? A bed, and a table, and a . .

NC: And a stove. Just the essentials. There was no sink, generally. They just took a bucket or dish and threw it out in the street. And no bathrooms; it was all outhouses. I still have mine out there. They tried to make me tear it down and I wouldn't do it. Someone once was moving it and I came in from Railroad Valley when I was running a tungsten mine there and raised hell about that. They have no right to come on your property and take a building. Just because it looked like a outhouse - maybe I lived in daughter]

RM: Yes, right. Did most of the miners who lived in the cabins board with someone?

NC: Yes. Some batched, but . . . There were grocery stores and so forth here, and a limited amount of fresh vegetables, but . . .

RM: Was there any rivalry between the different ethnic groups?

NC: Oh, yes. The Cousin Jacks and Irish fought all the time.

RM: They didn't like each other?

NC: Well, they did in a way, but the idea was the rivalry. The Irish came by building the railroads here. When they were done they were here without k, so they went to work in the mines, and there aren't too many mines around Ireland. That's all the Cornish have ever done.

RM: The Irish probably weren't good miners?

NC: Well, the Cornishmen were always the bosses.

RM. Oh, I see.

NC: There were some Irish who were just like anyone else - they learned, and they got good at it, too. They were good workers and hard drinkers. So were the Cornish, so that's . .

RM: The Cornish were hard drinkers, too.

NC: Oh, gosh, yes. As I say, they lived fast and died young.

RM: Yes. What about Yugoslavians and so on? How did they fit into this picture?

NC: They were hard workers. And big people; Cornish people are generally little. And they were damn good hard workers. But they died young. They had a different-type lung, a lot of them. Old Doc Craig here told me that people from] the British Isles were different. Their lung was more like a wet lung, where these other guys had a dry lung, and it wouldn't . . . the dust got way down in them, or something, and just finished them off. The wet lung . . . a lot of it lodged before it got there, and you spit a lot of it out, I guess. That's what he said, and it made sense, because, Jesus, some of the Slavonian were done in 6 months.

My dad said a lot of than never even learned the language, because they didn't live that long. They'd work down this West End in some level there - the 800 or something - and he said instead of pushing one car at a time, those guys could push 2. They had tallies to meet, and he'd say that they said, "Well, I got my 20 cars out of there." That was all you'd have to do in those days. And he said, "And the night life - they liked that, too." They all liked to drink, but the Slavonians would do it night after night. He said, "Those young guys never seen nothing like that, and they like that." So they'd perform all night in these casinos and brothels and then they'd go to work and work like a dog for 4 or 5 hours and they were done, but they wouldn't let them go home. So they'd lie out there in the station on those cold turnsheets.

RM: Now, what's a turnsheet?

NC: It's an iron sheet where you bring the cars out from the drifts 'way back in the mines. You hit it and you can turn it because they glaze it. They were all over the stations. It was cool, so they'd lie right on those cold turnsheets and sleep for 2 or 3 hours until time to go home. They couldn't go home [sooner] because it was cars on the cages then. The only way you could get out is climb out. So they'd catch cold, and then they'd start that coughing, and once they started that they were done. It just cut them to pieces and then they'd hemorrhage.

RM: Now, you mentioned that they had a 20-car tally. Was this standard in most of the mines?

NC: Well, that was a lot of muck. Some of them brought it out of chutes and stuff . . . If you were mucking in there, you might muck a car, and push it down there to a switch, and then get an empty and come back. This other guy had to take than from there up to the station. But most faces, in those Days, would break maybe 14 or 15, cars. Fourteen was an average - 12 to 15. ALL: the muckers were back there filling those cars and then you'd take them, bring than out to the stations, and then the cages would get than and send them on top.

RM.: I see. The muckers would fill it, and they didn't do their own tramping.

NC: No, they'd just go out, maybe to a switch, and the trammers would take Ser clean out to the stations.

RM.: Did the trammer have a tally that he had to meet?



NC: Well, the law was, even when I was young: you muck her out or else. See, whatever was broken on that face - you had to clean it up so the machine men could go in there and go to work. They gave you the 8 hours to clean it out.

RM.: OK, you got 8 hours to muck 14 - 12, 14 cars?

MC: Yes. But that was nothing.

RM How . . . how big were the cars?

NC: In cars.

RM: How long would it take?

NC: Well, if you had good sheets under you - shot down on steel sheets, and they shot it down - and it's broken up, well, you could knock 20 out. It all depended on how far they made you tram them. If the switch was a long ways off, it was something . . . Sometimes when they had big rounds, and driving those bigger drifts, they got 2 of you in there to muck side by side. They'd try to get a guy who could muck from the left, and one from the right, and then they'd switch off. But I've seen guys load those cars it 5 minutes, some of them.

RM: Two guys could load a ton-car in 5 minutes?

NC: Two or one of them, off those sheets with these square points.

RM: They used square points?

NC: Well, you mucked the sheets, and then the new, broken face was called the rough, see. And mucking in the rough, a lot of them got up there, even if they were alone, and pulled it back onto the sheets with the round point, and then used the square point to load with. But a lot of them just pulled the last sheet up and put it up against the wall, and the track was under k, and you brought the car right up to there and mucked it. That's what I aimed to do. Rather than handle it twice, I'd . . . But it's rough sometimes because that's rough bottom. But I've seen guys muck 30 cars.

RM: Did they get extra pay or anything?

NC: No; not generally. No, they wanted you to clean it out, is the only thing that counted. If layoffs come, they kept him [chuckles] and let you go. A good mucker stayed.

RM.: So that your job for the day was to clean out the face, and then they had other guys who were doing the drilling.

NC: Oh, yes - machine men would come in, maybe on another shift. And then they also had those who came in - you were mucking behind machines, they'd call it. So you'd come in, but a lot of times the miner helped you. And when you got the face mucked out enough, he could put a cross-bar for the top - holes - and then you helped him put that up and then . . . But it was miserable. The hoses were in your way, and fog from the machine; you could hardly see. You mucked right up under his feet, and then by the time he'd got the back holes and the breast holes and maybe the cut holes, see, in, You were damn near cleaned out. Then he helped you clean that right out of the face, and then he'd drop his bar down and drill the lifters.

RM: They didn't have jack legs, did they?

NC: Oh, no. They used regular pneumatic machines.

RM: Was it what they call a stoper?

NC: No, they're called jack hammers on a shell.

RM: What was the shell?

NC: The shell had a screw feed on it, and it was clamped . . . there's one, think, out here. Pat's got one.

RM: I see - you've got a bar going across and you clamp it on there.

NC: Yes, like this. And then there's your clamp, or, saddle, they call it. You put a screw-type thing on there and your machine is hooked to it. But you've got a crank here in the back. They've still got that type now, but they're automatic. Like on the jumbos down there?

RM: Yes.

NC: Only they're automatic. There's no screw-type any longer. Now they use the jack legs.

RM: How long was the typical round?

NC: Oh, about 5 feet. And it was real hard . . . they tried to complete a cycle and it was tough ground - hard. If you could drill a 4-foot one, and 3C it every day, it was better than to pull a 5-foot and not be able to complete the cycle. But most of the time they'd pull than 5. Of course, they had contracts, where the long steel men would run them in there 8 feet. One of [Pat Chiatovich's] old partners was old Long Steel George.

RM: Is that right. And they could break 8-foot rounds?

NC: Oh, yes. It was hard in those days, because they didn't savvy that burn cut like they have now. Have you ever seen burn cuts?

RM.: Why don't you describe it?

NC: Well, you take a space this big in your face.

RM: About 18 inches?

NC: Yes, at least; about a foot. And right down the middle you would drill holes. And of course you try to get them maybe a little closer . . they're only that far apart.

RM: About 2 inches.

NC: With a center hole in, and then one on top, one on the bottom. When you get so you understand striations in the earth, you know which way it'll break. Sometimes you put them like this, sometimes like this.

RM: Sometimes horizontal, and sometimes diagonal.

NC: So we'll say these vertical ones like that - and they're about that far apart - the whole thing.

RM: The whole thing is about 8 to 10 inches.

NC: The top hole - this is the bottom one; the one in the middle. So then -- put relievers around, say out to that foot. And you put maybe 4 relievers around. Round the burn. The main thing is that burn. Then you shoot the 2 outer holes. You're going below that . . .

RM: Oh, I see; you shoot the 2 outer holes on the burn.

NC: And they break into that . . . A cant hole and then the relievers start pulling.

RM: Start pulling and breaking.

NC: If you could get them in there right for 10 feet, they're going to break, see, into [the center hole]. But the hell of it is, your drill would ac off, and you can't see that.

RM.: At an angle; yes.

NC: And it might - in the back - be this much you're going to pull. You can watch that pretty good for . . . But 8 feet, sometimes, you get off. Then you lose a round, then your contract's pretty near sunk; you've lost all you made.

RM: When did they savvy the burn?

NC: I think they started using it first it was up in the Coeur d'Alenes. That's the first I ran into it.

RM.: When was that?

NC: Oh, it'd be about middle '30s; like that.

RM: What did they do before that?'

NC: Well, they had toe cuts, and upper cuts, as they called it. You'd toe them in like this, see.

RM: Oh, I see; you'd come from an angle from the top.

NC: So that the effect of your blast would kick it out.

RM: You'd come in at an angle?

NC: Yes, like that.

RM: Yes, and then it popped it out.

NC: And then there was a pyramid, that they'd drill them in like this -towards the center. Then pull that center out, and then you had your relievers around.

RM: Then you had something to break to; yes.

NC: But the trouble with some of them that left so damn much - you pulled a wedge like this, and you couldn't get a hole. You had to have it damn near right along or you couldn't cross it, because it would all go at once. You to get a holder to pull it and the back end of that one had a lot of ground on it, you see. Those were some of the troubles. But half-decent ground is . . . Those old guys got so they had . . . For instance, they'd put those toe cuts in there 6 feet. But they had another one they put here - It was called a baby cut - or, primary cut.

RM: Oh, a baby toe.

NC: Yes. It pulled that off and relieved the longer . . . for the big toe to pull. And then sometimes if it looked like real good ground, you could turn them and drill them. Because if it's ravelly ground you can't drill down. So you swung under the bar and put your holes up like this, and that ravelly stuff would work out of the hole.

RM: Oh, I see. But if you came down from the top the ravelly would . . .

NC: Top it just . . . yes. You couldn't get it out.

RM: Your hole wouldn't clean.

NC: Yes, you're sticking steel all the time. But the other way, you could.

RM.: And they shot with fuse, didn't they?

NC: Oh, yes. Pretty much all safety fuse. The real wet mines had electric.

RM: Did you ever see any running fuses?

NC: Oh, yes. I've never had one happen to me, but I've had friends who were killed with them. It was over here in Gold Point a few years ago, they kill them. It ruined [one man's] ears. I said, "I just can't believe that goddamned running fuse nowadays." You know, that type of fuse. Finally he checked into it, and out at that Gold Point mine there was a run the early days. There was an old powder magazine or something full of t:ILs old fuse, so the guys were burning that up, and that's what caused it. It was just so damn old. The N.I.C.. made a settlement with him, because he lost his hearing.

RM: My dad had a running fuse one time; an 18-foot fuse that went off in cut a minute.

NC: Oh, Jesus Christ.

RM: He had 10 sticks on the end of a stick.. It blew him clear across the.....

NC: Was this below the chutes down there?

RM: Yes; he was trying to break a boulder in the chute, It should have killed him.

NC: Yes, I've seen guys where the damn thing are.....A lot of it's carelessness, too. You work on these contracts and you go at a dead run to make that money. You get a little careless.

RM: How big were the typical drifts?

NC: Generally About 8 feet high and 5 feet wide. A lot of the old-timers were 7, because .....The 8 was brought in on account of the mucking machines; the clearance was that different. It takes 7'4" or something from the top of your rail, to clear those.

RM: In the day's pay work in the mines, then, there was a division of Labor. They had trammers, muckers, and drillers.

NC: Yes; machine men, they called them. When you hired as a miner, you could do all that. There were also timber men, chute blasters . . . the whole thing.

RM: Oh, they had a specialty of chute blasters?

NC: Yes, . . . [just to] keep those chutes down, you see. That's where you put it onto those poles. Hell, I've seen them run than up there 100 feet in that caving system.

RM: I don't understand . . .

NC: Your charges are all set off electrically. So you make your charge and then put it on the end of one stick, and when you get to the end of that one, you splice another stick. And as long as you can keep pouring it up there . . . But you know that there's a grizzly up there 100 feet, maybe, or something, so you get maybe 30 feet [below it].

RM: You don't want to blow the grizzly out up there.

NC: Yes. Or there might be people working up in there. And there are other levels, like in the big mines in Idaho, Arizona, or the Climax. Or, \*the cave-in system. So that's chute blasters. That's what made those levels so tough to work in. Geez, they were full of smoke all the time, from the blasting. Then when it hangs - and they can't use water, a lot of times. That's their last resort; to flood it - wash it down. But if this won't . . . when it cores, and it's dry, Jesus Christ, that drop may be 50 or 60 feet or more.

RM: Would it take out the chute?

NC: Once in awhile it could. But they're really put in the chutes, and a lot of it was metal. By the time it fell, it didn't all core at once, but was an awful jar; you could feel it way out the drifts. That's what made the dust. Climax and those mines made you wear masks all the time.

RM: Did you work at Climax?

NC: Oh, yes. I worked pulling chutes. I was on the motor.

RM: Could you go through the specialties again?

NC: In the smaller mines, like Tonopah, before they had motors, all the big dumps you see in town have been handled by hand. So you started with a mucker. He was generally the low man. Then they had the track men, who worked the track and if it was a smaller mine, it was pipe and track. But, if it was a little bigger, like, say, the Mizpah, they had a pipe man, and a track man.

RM: Were they called the bull gang?

MC: No, that's top stuff.

A lot of times you'd go to work in a mine and you'd say, "Geez, I knew ham from Butte. He's a top miner." But you hired as a mucker in most of them unless they were really short of miners. They'd give those muckers a chance. Especially guys who would say, "Well, I wouldn't

muck behind a goddamned machine." But that's where I learned to run machines. But, say if I'm on a night shift, all I see is that muck stick.

RM: Did the mucking go on at night and the drilling in the day?

NC: They switched off; changed shifts. They'd work 2 weeks graveyard. Anyway, the mucker would get, generally, 50 cents a day less than anybody else. Then it would come up to the track men and pipe men, and they'd sometimes get two bits more a day. And then they'd get up to the machine men, and the timber men. An all-around miner generally could do it all, but some guys just could never timber. But they [might be] good machine men. And a lot of people just didn't want to be around machines or timbering or something, so they were pipe men. Sometimes you'd see old guys, and that's the only job they ever had in their life around here - 30 years as a pipe son, or a track man. . . they just didn't want the other jobs.

RM: And it was probably the muckers and drillers who were really getting the dust, wasn't it?

NC: Yes. The dirtiest jobs were generally the machines.

RM: Probably pulling chutes was dirty, too, wasn't it?

NC: It was unhealthiest. I'll tell you, the damn dust . . . Did you ever pull chutes?

RM: Yes.

NC: It's pretty hard to find one where you can't see a spray of dust come out, even with the water running on it. I've seen the Grass Valley and the Mother Lode with the water running there, and running in your car. You'd open it and see a puff of dust So you've got to watch it and keep your seek on.

RM: And who were the guys on top?

NC: The top man was generally a low-paid guy, but then there were capers. The trammer brought the car to the station, and when it hit the station, the taper's ready to catch them. You catch them moving, you know, and you can them right around in circles; he'd keep the turn sheets greased. He'd ;cat that thing, and his cage was waiting - he'd get it on there, and bang! held have his hand on the bell, and the safety thing goes down at the same tee, and away that cage goes.

RM: So the trammer didn't dump it.

NC: No, it went on a cage and went clean on top and then trammed over to the ore bins, for instance at the West End, and then dumped in the ore bin. 'Then that same car came back. In latter years they started using skips where they dump into pockets. If you look at it the other way, that guy brought a car out and dumped it and it went down through a chute; you had to

here a skip tender down there to load the skips. And then it went on top And it dumped automatically. But it dumped at the collar of the shaft, and still had to be trammed out to the ore bins. In the old-type way, we'd Load that car and it's the same car I loaded in that face; there was no switching. They only handled that car once. Because when he got to the collar, instead of having to put it in a bin up there, and then taking it out with another car to the other bins, . . . Very few mines were set up where the bin fed into the mill. So it's 6 of one and half-a-dozen of the other, but . .

But it was something to watch some of those cagers. He grabbed that car when you trammed it out, spun her, or whatever he had to do, and put it on that cage, and he did the bell and she went to the top, and then another cager grabbed it and pulled it off. Then he grabbed an empty and threw it 3n. The top man took it out to the bin. That muck stayed in the same car. when it went back down, the cager down there grabbed one and then stuck a load on. And a lot of them had 2 compartments. He was a pretty busy guy. :7 all depended how many trammers you had, but . .



## CHAPTER FIVE

RM: You started to say some more about the skip.

NC: Well, where the skips gained [was in the tonnage]. For instance, the victor had double-deck cages. In Butte, I've seen 4 decks on those cages, :which is] four ton at a time. After the skips came in at Butte, that big skip would go down and it'd hold 15 ton. And it hung below the cages. The cages were just for lowering men and material. It hung below and then they went up and automatic. But some of them weren't high enough to have all that, so after the men were in, they took those - they call them dollies - and brought it up to the surface and unhooked it. And they could take it all off those 4 cages and push it on a track over here all at once, and then take the skip and hook it on there. And that would be hoisting muck. Then some of the big shafts had the man compartments, and more of that. The skips just stayed there permanently. But there'd be 15 tons at a time instead of, say, 4. But these Tonopah mines started going down before they started using the skips, so they were all cages. The Victor was the biggest with those double-deckers.

RM: I'm confused, Curly. What's the difference between a skip and a cage?

NC: Well, a cage is a car, and the skip is an automatic thing. It comes up and it hit channels up there, and it goes right over and dumps like that in the bin. There are cages for the men to ride in, and some big mines have special compartments called the surface compartment.

RM: But they never got skips here.

NC: No, the skips were a newer thing. Of course, incline shafts had it all the time, and then they finally figured, what the hell, they got an incline, so they could fix it so it would dump. So there was just no problem after that.

RM: It was a long haul to the top on some of these shafts, wasn't it?

NC: Oh, yes. Well, some were pulling 2,000 feet, like the Victor was the deepest. That's damn near a mile round trip. But they really let her go down. One thousand feet a minute then was nothing. I think this state's L law is 1,500 feet a minute. In Arizona it's higher; I think 1,800 feet. When there were no men on those cages - they'd just cut the rope. Jesus, :chuckles] I've seen her hit those stations and that thing is just going like this. It stretches the cable. And once she starts throwing, then that cager reaches over and throws his thing in - called the chairs - and then it tits that and she stops like that. By the time he stops, he's got a car on there. Those guys would get so fast; I've done it myself. Where you grab that car, by the time . . . everything just went automatically. That car but there and I had that bell with that . . . Have you ever seen those deep mines, or watched those cagers ring those signals?

RM: I've only worked in 200- or 300-foot shafts.

NC: They go like that, and they couldn't even read or write, but those flashes were perfect. A lot of them - especially Cornish people - didn't believe in school, much. When my dad was 11, he was working in one of the mines there, and they'd have kids that were as low as 8 years old working in the mines.

But a new law came in, and I think you had to be 14. They gave those young guys who had been in the mines a chance: You could go to school or go to sea. Cornwall's right on the sea - a lot of them were seamen. For most of them, mining paid more, and there weren't those long years away from home. So dad said, "Jesus, I'll go to sea. I don't go to school." And he said he was 11, I think. So he said he got on that ship, and [meanwhile] I got to thinking, 'how in the hell did he work geometry and everything else?' He said, "When I got in that ship, there was a classroom and there was no getting away from it there." Where was he going to run? [laughter] He said the guys who stayed home started school, but they'd play hookey, and . . . he said half of them wound up at sea 'till they got old enough to go back in the mines.

RM.: But he started in the mines at 11?

NC: Yes, he was about 11. He said he worked about that year and then that's when the law came in, so he went to sea. He had the equivalent of a couple of years of high school, but in that country he only completed the 6th grade. But in history, Christ, he could . . .

But he was happy for it, because at least, he said, how many of them could read and write, even when I was grown up? You'd make their time slips mud; they couldn't read or write; they didn't know how many cars they had; nothing. But they were good workers, they savvied the work. Years ago, the mid' foreman would keep track of all that. I've seen times there in Round Mountain, even - and this is in the '30s - a lot of these old guys [couldn't read or write]. Of course, you got so you knew who they were and got it all made out, pretty near. But some of them - that guy'd say, "Where are you working? 8-10, or - in the long drifts," and everything.

"I don't know," [they'd say]. You see, they couldn't even read the signs.

So there'd be another miner: "Yes, he's working in there with so-and so.

The foreman would say, "How many cars do you figure he got out of there?"

"Well, he cleaned it out."

So you'd put down 14 cars. They wanted to list all the cars to keep records]. That's why those tonnage records can get off. Because I don't know what the hell he mucked - he might've mucked 10, or he might've mucked 20. He might've been getting 20 every day; you don't know. So a lot of those tonnage records were wrong.

RM: Curly, what was the boss hierarchy in a mine?

NC: It started, generally, with the shift boss. They had level bosses, too. You started up at the top with the manager and then the superintendent. The superintendent went to the mine all the time, but the manager very seldom did. He did office work and taking care of the stock propositions or whatever. A lot of times [he] was the owner, or one of the big stockholders. Generally they had one who knew his stuff. He managed the mill, and knew whether that bullion was paying or the mine was paying or losing or whatever. Then the mine

superintendent - of course, they had mill superintendents, too - but the mine superintendent was next, and of course he was in the mine whenever he needed to be.

RM: What would he go down for?

NC: To check to see how the ore was, or the vein sizes . . . of course, the foreman took him.

RM: Did the superintendent have a good grasp of what was going on everywhere in the mine?

NC: Oh yes. The good ones knew every guy by their first name, pretty near. And then the foreman was under the super. He took care of all the shift bosses, and, for instance in the Victor he might have 6 shift bosses under him, in different levels. Say there was a shift boss on number 10 level, the 2,000, or whatever.

RM: What would you do with the different shifts, then?

NC: The shift bosses changed with them. That's why they called it the shift boss, you see. And the foreman, of course, stayed there.

RM: Now, did each shift have a foreman?

NC: Well, sometimes when it was a big mine you had night foremen who stayed, generally, nights all the time. He was under the main foreman - Kind of an assistant foreman. The bigger the mine . .

I was an assistant foreman out here at Divide that last drilling program. I was there 4 years. But I was just . . . what I figured was just running the that operation there were only 4 or 5 men. But this was John Jacob Astor money, and they were using it for a write-off. So this guy said, 'I'm going to raise your pay.' And I liked that, all right. He said, 'I'm going to make you assistant superintendent.'

I'm looking for the money so I said, "Yeah, that'll be good."

And he said, You Know what the assistant superintendent's job is." And out there I was the only boss.

I said, "Yeah."

"Well," he said, "in this case, you've got to make the superintendent look good."

And I said, "Who's the superintendent?"

He said, "That's my brother." [laughter]

Said he never even knew a mine from a warehouse, but, as long as I turned in big drilling reports and this and that - and no accidents - everything was a feather in his brother's hat. But it was a friendly thing.

RM: How many guys would be working on a level that a shift boss would be in charge of?

NC: If a crew got too big, you had more than one shift boss on a level.

RM How would they split it up?

NC: Well, say if you had 200 men, or you had 50 drifts going . .

RM: They would have 50 drifts going on one level?

NC: Oh, yes. Some of those levels are enormous - miles of drifts under here. In the Victor or the Mizpah, for instance, the north end of the mine would be too goddamn big to make all the rounds back in there. He wouldn't have time, you see, because he'd not only walk the length of that drift, maybe he had 3 raises going. He had to go up in all those and some of the \_scopes. He'd go up in the raise, and go off in the stopes, and then intermediates. [If] they saw he couldn't handle it they it another ore on. Men he might be able to handle the north end, and there would be another guy for the south end.

RM: What was the most men that a shift boss could look after?

NC: Well, same mines are all on one level, because the stopes are flat - flat veins. Then he could walk to than easily. When it's like that, he can handle 50 men. That would be 25 sets. Nowadays they generally have 2 of them together. When I was younger and first started, you could go out there all by yourself, but now 2 men have got to be together - or, within shouting distance. Which is a good law.

RM: Who was taking care of the quality of the ore?

NC: That was generally the foreman's job. You grabbed in the faces every round, then he checked the assays. Every morning, before his shift would start, he knew whether it was running \$4 or \$20, and there was a mark put on it. The shift boss got that, and he'd say, "Well, round in this north drift is waste." So then the cager got hold of it, and maybe the first part of his shift, he'd haul ore out. And all the cars would build up in the back there; that's why they needed so damn many cars. That's another thing with the skips - you do away with that. If your mill was short of ore, you'd haul the ore out first and put it in there. If it was real short, you'd put the waste and all in the mill to keep her grinding, at full capacity.

RM: Why?

NC: The tanks would hold so much, and so much solution, so there just had to be that much in there.

RM: I see; yes. So they basically grabbed every round. Why don't you explain what a grab is?

NC: Well, you just take a handful - a grab - off the top of the car and throW it in the powder box. And the last car out has that powder box on top.. If the guys couldn't read or write, the machine men or a cager who knew where it came from would mark it: "Sample from so-and-so." And then it went right on top of that car.

RM: Did each mine have its own assay office?

NC: Yes, pretty near all of them did. It's a good idea to have one. When they were leasing here, you had to take it downtown, and sometimes [it took] 2 days. So you'd lost a shift - there's no use mining waste, you've got to know whether it's going to pay. But that's where they got the grab - it was just a grab.

RM: I didn't know they grabbed it that way. I've always seen my dad grab the muck pile.

NC: Well, if he had mucked that up in the car, he's got her mixed up pretty well, so you get a pretty good average. Of course, the assayers know that ore, and if they see pieces of high-grade in it, they generally throw it out so they get a better average, you know.

RM: Speaking of high-grade, what about high grading in the mines here? was there Much of that?

NC: Yes, [especially] Round Mountain and Manhattan. Here there wasn't too much. There was some in the Belmont; they had that wire silver, and they would steal it. But old miners . . . My dad, I think, was one of the most honest men I ever met in my life. He didn't believe in God, but you could lay out all your money and he'd lie there and starve to death before he'd take your money without your permission. But he would take gold. He would tell us that honesty is the best policy and all this, but here he was a high-grade. I'd say, "Hell, you tell us that, but that gold - that ain't

Or in the case of this Lou Gordon we were just talking about. I said, That's the company's ore." But no. [They] don't look at it that way. As I said, he never had a religious bone in his body, but my dad said, "God put that there, and the first one that gets it, it's his."

RM: So the gold was interpreted with a different value system.

NC: Yes. I've seen it out there. I know people who wouldn't cuss or anything, and they had some big gold. .You can't trust anybody with gold. I've worked alone pretty near all the time. I've had this guy working for me. I don't think he'd ever take it because he really doesn't know what it is. He doesn't know the real value. I can show him that bullion there - that's \$8,000 or \$10,000. To him it's just same metal. I've seen times when I've had \$50,000, \$60,000 here; I'd take it and buy a Mercedes. He'd like the Mercedes - he'd steal that, but he doesn't have that value. But most guys interpret it as: "Geez, if I take so much of this I could get a beautiful car." Or a home, or whatever. In the early days in Grass Valley. there - Jesus. I've had relatives there who were nothing but muckers. And, God, the homes they had.

RM: Is that right - from high-grading.

NC: From high-grading; yes. But they'd get enough, and most all the old :Cornish used to want to go home and die.

RM: Did they go home to die, or home to live?

NC: Well, they knew they were washed up here with the miner's consumption. A lot of them weren't, though. They'd sell those big homes, go back there - and there are beautiful homes there. I talked to a lot [of people] when went to school there, and Christ, they knew this town better than I did.

Most of the smart ones didn't stay here. They knew this dust, and they went to Grass Valley, and that's where there was more gold. That's where my dad and uncle were heading, and old McNerny. They came down here, and none of them ever got - old McNerny. You knew him, didn't you?

RM: I don't think so.

NC: He was a policeman here for . . . he died here a few years ago. He was a tough son of a bitch, the old guy - he was an Irishman. I don't know what he was doing with 2 Cousin Jacks, but they were friendly. Well, we'd stopped all that. You started interbreeding, going to these schools. A Lot of them were English and Irish.

Most of the old high-graders I would work around would say, "The way you figure this stuff: now, I'm digging it down here. There's none of these bosses or white collar guys around here." One old high-grader told se, "But I always give them a break. You take this high-grade here, and you throw it right up the back of the drift, or the ceiling. And," he says, "whatever stays up there belongs to the company." [laughter] But real high-graders kept their mines going because they believed in take-some and leave-some. They knew that if they took it all, the company would fold up and there'd be no way to get down there for. Those Grass Valley mines, for instance, are thousands of feet deep; you have 10,400 at the bottom.

RM: Is that right.

NC: Yes, they're flat shafts, and, say, maybe 7,000 straight through. Oh, yes, this country has deep mines.

RM: Well, when a man's working in a mine like that, how do you spot it?

NC: Oh, you can see it. It's just like you saw in that rock [specimen I showed you].

RM: Well, yes. But I'm mucking away - I couldn't see that, could I?

NC; No, but you'd go for this. See that hematite streak? Now, that streak was this big - so you'd take and break it. If I broke that it would .be all hackly-looking. You could hardly miss in Round Mountain A lot of times I've seen guys in Round Mountain - take this stuff and put it in their pocket. Where they'd go off - and there's a little bit made right there; see how it went off in the pink? I've seen her 'way over in here be high-grade, too. And look at Round Mountain today - that's where they're digging; right in that pink stuff. That's why Echo made 500 ounces a day

there. They went right in the richest of those intersections. Now, what are they going to do when it's gone? You know, it might be an awful fall, there.

RM: Do you think so?

NC: Well, it's going out. I can tell by looking clean down from the road.

RM: Aren't they supposed to have humongous reserves?

NC: Oh, yes, they claim that, but I know all of it isn't like that. The old-timers mined it, you see, and we mined just the high-grade. But that thing was called the King Tut stope, and in places it was 100 feet to the back. But they used big pillars and they shrank it. When they shrink it they drill off the muck, and then when they get all the ore that's good out, then they drew it out below, then just leave that big empty hole. So they went right in there, but the walls that, say, we left . . . I took a fortune right out of the footwall of that thing.

RM: Out of the King Tut stope?

NC: Yes. There was one streak they missed; or, they didn't miss it; they went right through it. That's why I can't understand how in the hell it was there. [chuckles] When I first found it was 16 feet from the top clean down to the bottom. There just wasn't a break in that streak. It was narrow; it would get about like that . . .

RM; Half-inch.

NC: But it was solid gold. Pure gold, a lot of it.

RM: And Round Mountain is digging in the King Tut stope now?

NC: Yes. The old-timers left hundreds of feet in the hanging wall and maybe hundreds of feet back in the foot. I know I wasn't in the foot and I took that ore like that out of the footwall. So they got that and of course the old-timers knew it was there, too.

RM: Why didn't somebody take it?

NC: It was too low-grade for us, you see. I know the last end of the King Tut stopes even helped shoot a lot of those big pillars. They didn't give a damn if it all came in. We shot same, and that ore was down to \$4 or \$5 a ton and we took \$4 to break even. If it got to \$6, it was done all right. But . . .

RM: How did the high-graders get it out of the mine?

NC: Just in your pockets. They had change rooms but you didn't need to use them. I've seen guys with it right in their lunch bucket there. Of course, they didn't go in the change room. They

had another guy called a specimen boss, but they never ever had any in Round Mountain. The shift boss might shake a lunch bucket, and if he saw your name on it . . . But the big mines had specimen bosses. It was generally a miner who was sick and couldn't work hard any more.

RM: And what did he do?

NC: He checked for high-graders all the time. If he had an idea that you were a high-grader, he'd watch you. He'd check your lunch bucket, and then you had to stand for a frisk. Or maybe if you used the change room and you had the high grade in your digging clothes, when you were in there Wiring he'd check that out. Then there were others outside who watched for sales. If the Chinaman would buy it, for instance.

RM: Yes, That was my next question: how did they dispose of it?

NC: There were high-grade buyers. Most of them were jewelers, the one down here in town. Of course, he's dead now.

RM: What was his name?

NC: Tasem - a Jewish guy. He'd give you a pretty good shot at it, but he never had to leave to do it. And then old Blackjack Raymond down here . . . :In fact, I owned a property . . . That's the one I was telling you I sold me company.

RM: Oh, yes; sold Echo Bay.

NC: Yes. Yes, Echo Bay - or, it was Nevada Porphyry then. He would buy because he had a little mill right there. And it was the same type of gold. You see, they can take this gold and analyze it and tell you just what mine it's from. He was there on the property, which I owned later. : Could have taken tons of ore out of there and stolen from myself. But I was there, 6 years, and I took several hundred thousand out of there.

RM: At Round Mountain.

NC: Round Mountain. I never needed to steal it, I was making enough money my own. I could've shorted the company, but I got 80 percent of it anyway; it was an 80/20 deal.

RM: What did the guys do with the money that they were getting from high grading?

NC: Drank and threw it away; gambled it off. There were very few who . . . When I was young it didn't do me any good. Most of the high-grade I took out of there, I just threw away. Yes, just - easy come, easy go, I guess you figured. Of course, it wasn't that easy.

RM: [chuckles] Yes. Do you have many recollections of the night life in Tonopah from the '20s and the '30s?



NC: They had a place called the Big Casino down here right across from the Tonopah Garage.

RM: Where the L&L Motel is now.

NC: Well, it was lower down than that. But the L&L Motel were . . . there were a couple of joints in there - saloons - and a Chinese restaurant and [a] barber shop. And then there was the livery stable. And right about in there, there was a fence that went away back to St. Patrick Street. And up on St. Patrick's there was another one. That was off limits to any young people; it was all boarded up. And they had a cop there all the time.

RM: Oh, they did.

NC: Oh, yes. He was generally one of the older guys. We'd go down and 2 or 3 of us would be talking to him. We'd sell papers and we weren't supposed to go in there and sell than. But we'd talk to old Dan Corbett and a couple of guys would slip in behind him, [laughter] and then he'd chase them, and the next thing, the whole bunch was in there. [laughter] And those gals in there - those hookers, instead of them giving you a nickel for a paper . .

The papers were the old Tonopah Times . . . there were 3 papers here -the 'Tonopah Miner, Tonopah Bonanza, and the Tonopah Times. When I was a Mad, the Miner was pretty well shot, but there was the Tonopah Bonanza. We'd run in there, and old Dan would go down there.

Those gals weren't allowed to go uptown, but there were saloons and restaurants right there. That's where that Chinaman made out a lot of his money, you see. They could come into his restaurant the back way.

A lot of than got uptown anyway, because guys married them. Some of The leading citizens - I'd better not mention their names - came from there. But they were all right. Hell, I was all for it, because they kept their place and they were human like the rest of us.

RM: There was more than one big place like the Big Casino, wasn't there?

NC: Oh, yes. The was the Newport, and the Hermitage, and . . . There were 3 streets of them.

RM: And how many blocks long were the streets?

NC: Oh, just about a block long. And every saloon had a little dance floor. There was a back street where the colored girls were - Nigger Dee's place .

RM: Did they have other . .

NC: Yes, there was every ethnic group; Filipinos and the whole bit. There 3 were lines - About 300 or 400 girls, I imagine.

RM: Did the girls stay a long time, or did they drift in?

NC: Well, it seemed like they didn't. They never allowed pimps here, you:. We had the old guys like old [Bill] Thomas.

## CHAPTER SIX

NC: But the younger miners like, you know, the guys in their 20s - they didn't condone those pimps, so they'd run their ass out of town. So generally when they did their gal would go too.

RM: I wonder where they went.

NC: Oh, just another camp. They'd go to Goldfield, and the same thing would happen to them over there. And then Round Mountain and Manhattan had hock shops.

RM: What did they do about VD in those days?

NC: It ran pretty rampant. They didn't have many cures for syphilis and gonorrhea. It was an awful painful thing to cure.

RM: How did they cure it then?

NC: Well, the miners used to call that Chinese Bujee. It was like a catheter. They ran it down your penis, and then they'd flick these blades, and then they'd drag that out through there, and it would cut all those puss bags. And when you went to the bathroom, Jesus Christ, it'd drive a guy . . . And they kept cleaning it out till the germs were gone.

Sometimes it would get into the system pretty bad, but generally with gonorrhea they'd get it out. They'd use disinfectants and such. But in the hook shops, most of those old gals washed you up pretty well before the act and then afterwards. In syphilis they had a thing called 606. That's something I've never had - a venereal disease. And the way my old man turned up, I was lucky I've ever had any kids, I guess.

RM: [laughs] He scared you?

NC: Oh, yes. And he'd point guys out. They couldn't talk 'cause it got in their throat. And guys you saw in the change room never had any privates se all - they just rotted off. They had to take it off when . . . It was my dad said - it was really no crime to get a dose of clap, but it is w harbor it. But if you harbor it, it kills you. A lot of them tried self cures on gonorrhea and syphilis.

RM: What was 606?

NC: It was some kind of medicine. They took it with a hypodermic, I think. They'd burn it out of them somewhere. But it seemed the guys who gm it never were the same if they had it very long. It did something to their immune system or something. Another one old Pat and I used to know - Frank Hill. I saw him with sores from syphilis on his leg that big, and he lived with it. He took some treatments, [but] I think he never went for most of them. He just tried to cure it himself. He got pneumonia - he was er here in Gabbs - and they took him to Hawthorne, and shot penicillin in him, and then he came back and I went down to see him in this trailer, and

goddamn, he looked pretty good. He pulled up his [trouser] leg and those sores - were all gone. You could see scars . . . the penicillin had cured it. But he didn't live long after that.

RM: Then the miners must've had a good chance of getting something down in the red light district?

NC: Oh, yes. But booze entered the picture. Some of the hookers would get on that booze and just let anybody jump their bones, I guess. Sort of stupid.

RM: What were the going prices down there back in the '20s?

NC: On the lower ends of the streets, it seemed they were cheaper; a dollar. And then the upper end was \$2. And maybe some choice ones - which there weren't many . . . your choice stuff was uptown, I guess. But very few of them ever charged over \$2. The old gals generally were the \$1 ones. They knew the rackets and they knew what could happen to you. So they'd clean you up well before you had any act with them, and then after you were done they did, too.

RM: Did they use condoms or anything like that?

NC: Well, you could use them, but most people think it's like taking a shower with a raincoat on; washing your feet with your socks on. But a lot of people . . . with myself, you used prophylactics before you went down there or took it with you. Most of those old gals didn't give a damn.

RM: The prophylactic was that salve, wasn't it, that . . .

NC: Yes. It was about that long. So you put about half of it in before, and then some afterwards.

RM: Was that pretty effective?

NC: Yes, I think so. But the guys would go down there drinking and so forth, and that's where you get those things. Then instead of just staying there for one time, they'd stay all night, which you could do for \$10.

RM: What was that - 2 days' pay?

NC: A day's pay was about \$5, so by the time [you paid] your board and stuff, that was 3 days' work - to stay one night. Now it'd take you 3 years to pay for one night. [laughter]

RM: And did a lot of the single guys do a lot of hanging out down there?

NC: Oh, yes. I used to go down there a lot of times - you didn't need to have any sex acts. But you could dance, and it seemed like they were your kind of people.

RM: Did they have good music in the places?

NC: Oh, damn good bands sometimes. That's where the pimps were, was in the band. You see, as long as you had a visible means of support . . . that's what they'd do with them. By law they could bag them, because they never had any visible means of support. Here the guys really frowned on pumping.

Old Jerry Murphy was the chief of police in Butte, and when he grabbed your hand and looked at . . . I'm the type who never calloused. My hand's just like that when I work hard. He'd say, "Where's the diamonds?" he called them - those were the calluses. But then, of course, I knew him, and I'd tell him I was on motors and something. Motormen didn't get calluses too much.

RM: And if you didn't have calluses . . .

NC: He'd run those pimps out of town. He'd beat the shit out of them and everything; sap up on them. He'd go in those saloons and see a bunch of young guys and he'd come up and make them show him their hands. And he'd but the eye on you. He was a mean old bastard. But one young guy finally beat him to death; or hit him hard and he went over and hit the curb. He was an old Irishman. He ran that town with an iron hand.

RM: How did Sheriff Thomas handle them here?

NC: Well, the chief of police generally did it here. They were pretty strict, you know.

RM: Who was the chief of police?

NC: Doc Galvin was one of them. He was an old miner. He was all conned up; he used to be foreman of the Gypsy Queen down here. And then H. O. Smith, and Haskins . . . there were several there. The guy who was stationed around [in that red light district] stayed there all the time, and then all he had to do was reach over to a pull and push a button and it turned a red light on in town. So they'd head down that way, or go to the office, and they'd get a phone call where to go. So if he was having trouble down there, several of them would go down and stop it. Then [if] it got too tough, they got old Thomas - he knew how to stop it. He'd just go down there and bat their heads together and tell them to get the hell out of town.

RM.: Was he a pretty tough character?

NC: Yes - a big raw-boned man. Best old guy in the world, he was. Everybody thought the world of that guy. I think he was about 88 when he was still [chuckles] sheriff here. He was a butcher by trade, you know. He was an old Cornishman.

RM: He could still handle them physically, even though he was an old man?

NC: Oh, he was so damn strong; yes. Never had a gun. If he had to, he'd generally take a shotgun. He still used to work up there even after he retired. They'd get him because they didn't know how to handle things the way he did. He'd go down - and he had steel-grey eyes. And he'd say, "Now here, young guy, take care of your goddamned stuff. Now get out of here. And I don't want to see you up there anymore." And you believed him. He had a way of getting over to everybody, it seemed. The next thing you knew he was out there petting a little kitten or something, after pretty near beating a couple of big bohunks to death. He knew the trouble-makers. He said, "You keep them thinned out and you've got a pretty good town." Which is true. There are always a lot of bad people who are on the edge here. All they need is that leader. Then if they get a leader, away they go. But if he eliminates that leader . . . they're timid then.

RM: You say there were a lot of bad people. Do you mean because it was just a rough mining camp?

NC: Well, a rough time of life, you know. There are a lot of them who would] make beautiful crooks, but they didn't go that way; but some went the other way. [If] they get on the edge and a certain leader cores by, they're a little weak. We've all got weaknesses. You go along and you say, "I'm going to go with him." Like, my sin - "I'll buy a lot of that stock," you see. That was the wrong way to go. [laughs]

RM: Were there people here with their families?

NU Yes; there were people with families, and we had good schools here. they were strict. But there are a lot of people who left this town who amounted to a hell of a lot.

RM: What religion are the Cornish people?

NC: Most of them are Episcopalians. Nearly all of them belonged to the Masonic lodges. At one time I guess the King of England was figured the Grand Master of the World. But when you were a Mason, in their day, you'd better be a Mason. I mean, because you were a bricklayer, you laid that right; or a miner, you did it right. And you lived an honest life. Now they've dropped the fence as they have in everything else. But they believed in work. They'd kick you out of the lodge if you were lazy. Now it's all lazy, and they kick you out if you work. Oh, it's not that bad. I worked in Grass Valley with a few - I wasn't a Mason, but my folks were, and my uncles and so forth. That was the only reason you got hired. They wouldn't even hire you if you weren't a Mason.

RM: In Grass Valley?

NC: It went clean to the top; yes. Foremen, and managers, the whole thing. But they got so that the lodge started deteriorating, I think; I don't go to find out. My brother was a Mason, and a cousin who's still living. He thought it was terrible that I didn't join, but I figured, What the hell, I know how to work without that. If they don't want to hire me for my ability . .

RM: How did a miner get a job here in town?

NC: He rustled at the collar of the shaft. Those old-type foremen used to frown on employment offices. They wanted to look at a man. From the looks of a guy's name he must be big as hell, but he'd come up here and have one arm or . . . You see, he wanted to talk to you. He'd call you in and you'd sit in his office and he'd quiz you. Even if he didn't ask you about mines, he could damn near tell: this is a miner, or whatever. He hired you right at the collar of the shaft. You went up and rustled at the collar and at noon he'd come out and pick whoever he wanted. Of course, some of them had different hiring times. But the foreman came up for lunch time.

RM: Would word of a job spread?

NC: Oh, yes. Say you were related to some miners or were friendly with them. They'd say, "Christ, there's a bunch of guys quit last night." So you'd get out there that morning.

I worked at one - this Murchee mine in Grass Valley - and the foreman was named Ernie Cole, and they called him Papa Cole. He had been foreman of the Belmont. When it shut down, of course, they were good men. Right away he took over the Murchee mine, which belonged to Newmont Mines. And it was tough to get on; I was a skip tender for him down there. There were about 400 men in that mine, and I'll bet every noon there were 400 in the yard looking for a job, and sometimes they didn't hire anybody. Sometimes they were there 3 times a day. They'd try to get him before he went down in the morning, and then at noon. And they'd be there at quitting time. But noon was the only time he'd hire. I used to say to him, "Have signs there: 'Noon Only.'" I guess they wanted to show him they were desperate for a job.

And [there was one way] that you could finish yourself for sure. He'd come right out and tell you, "No use you ever hustling here" [by] following an ambulance up there. You could hear the blasts at the mine - they generally rang 3 blasts and an ambulance would take out and go down there. If he saw you down there, you were through. Because you were trying to get that at guy's . . . [He might be] hurt badly; sometimes dead. He was a pretty good old guy, though. "Jesus Christ," I used to tell him - I was a young guy. I'd say, "God, that poor bastard out there had 3 or 4 kids. He sure heeds a job."

[gruff voice]: "Well, goddamn, I didn't make his goddamn kids." And he had a big red moustache, and he'd blow it and it would shake. He'd go on in and he'd be eating and he had big red hair on his chest - he was a musky man. He'd open his lunch bucket, and maybe take out a cookie and start eating it, and he'd tell me, "Here, take this out and give it to him." He'd give him his lunch.

RM: A good-hearted man.

NC: Oh, yes. He seemed gruff as hell, but he had that soft spot. But he couldn't invent jobs for them, because it was . . .

RM: So it was the foreman who did the hiring; not the shift boss or the super?

NC: A lot of times the shift boss would go up and say, "I got a friend who's a good miner, good timberman, or whatever." Or all-around miner, generally. That's about all they hired. If you didn't have all that experience . .

RM: If you were just a pipe man or something, it was hard to get on?

NC: Oh, yes. And over in Grass Valley he knew a lot of them from here who had worked for him. He was at the Belmont several years, and thousands of men went through his hands. So they'd show up there. He knew who the good men were. But guys like me, he knew your dad, or your uncle, or something - he'd give you a shot at the skip tending or . . . I was a skip tender there. Or a tool-nipper. They were the guys who took care of the tools.

RM: How did men get laid off?

NC: Well, if the mine just wasn't producing. These mills were in batteries, you know; say, batteries of 5. They generally shut 2 batteries down - they were in pairs, you see. When they shut that down, they didn't need the tonnage because they never had the ore, and it would be a layoff. :1r silver would drop, or gold would drop, or whatever. Sometimes the shafts would go, and they had to get different shafts down in different places. They'd reopen some of them, but some of them never did. And they went down, here, in the early '30s, or '29. Like the McNamara; once she shut, she never opened again. The West End . . . all of them were the same.

The Mizpah and the Belmont were the only ones that opened for leasing. And some of them worked through the Mizpah - went back in the West End, because the West End shaft and the Ohio shaft started rotting out. They never repaired it.

RM.- But most of the mines didn't re-open after they closed in the early '30s?

NC: The Victor and the Halifax filled with water where the ore was. But the upper levels of the Belmont and . . . of course, you came over by the Desert Queen, and all of them belonged to the Mizpah. The North Star kept some, and the Montana, for awhile. But most of them worked through the other mines.

RM: In the '20s the mines were primarily day's pay, weren't they?

NC: Yes.

RM: Were there any leasers at that time?

NC: There were a few; yes.

RM: How did a guy get a lease when everybody else was day's pay?



NC: Well, sometimes the company just couldn't operate a small streak or something. They had to have that tonnage and it wasn't feasible for them to do it, but a leaser wasn't eating any hay at all. Then if he did make it, a lot of times it was a 50-50 split, so the company came out pretty well anyway.

RM: The leaser would have to come out better than day's pay, wouldn't he?

NC: Well, but some of them . . . I'd rather work for damn near half pay and work for myself.

RM: So some guys just preferred leasing.

NC: Yes, because you're your own boss. And if you don't make it, it's your fault. Because if the ore isn't there and you don't have sense enough to get out . . .

RM.: Guys would work harder on a lease, wouldn't they?

NC: Oh, yes; with longer hours, and everything. When the Mizpah was running it generally would run just 2 shifts, but if you wanted to stay later in the evening, you'd go ride those cages till, say, 12:00 at night. So you'd put long hours in. But the Mizpah didn't have too many Leasers till they shut down, and then it was all leasing. But the Victor had them, and the McKane had had leasers before they shut down. I had an mole and others who . . . And the West End, I think, had some, too. But the North Star and the Montana were some of the first - when they started - Jesus, some of those guys made fortunes there in the . . .

RM: Why did they lease?

NC: It wasn't feasible for the company to keep it going . . .

RM: This was in the '20s.

NC: Yes. And even earlier than that. If they couldn't keep a tonnage up..... The Montana, for instance, shut the mill down, and the next thing they knew, the only way they could do it was lease it out to somebody. And the North Star was the same. I don't know who milled the ore for the North Star, but I think it was all hauled out of here on the railroad, so it might've gone to the smelters in Utah. It could've gone to Millers, too. But they had a big long tram that came off the mountain there - did you ever see where it . . .?

RM: I probably have seen it; I can't recall it.

NC: That's that upper one. If you look, you can see the brush never grew back on there very well. And it came down. But if they couldn't . . . Say they contracted with a mill down here to send 50 ton a day and they couldn't do it. They just couldn't operate a company, paying a lot of people who don't do anything. And you have managers and so forth. I was just saying that I generally work alone. I go in that mine and take it off. I learned by shipping that I'd better learn

something about milling so I built 8 small mills in my time. Tungsten, different . . . sometimes it's the same one and you put it back up again. But that way I know the count I don't have 100 people sniping on me. I dig it out of the face and mill it and put it into bullion like you see now. When I ship it, I generally put it in a sponge, and the sponge goes to the Mints or gold refineries. Then you aren't worrying all about guys stealing from you.

RM: So at the North Star they found that they could get better tonnage by just working with leasers?

NC: Yes.

RM: And some of the leasers did very well?

NC: Oh, yes. There are some whose families [are] still here.

RM: Well, why couldn't the other mines do better with leasers?

NC: Well, they had big veins, and they could do better that way. The trouble with a mine, like in the Victor, if you kept a leaser, was that the company has got to make enough all the time for pumping and big power bills and so forth. He'd have to have a lot of leasers in there. And they aren't producing enough, so the company doesn't think it's feasible to have them, so they just don't start. But the Mizpah had no pumping or anything.

RM: When some of the mines re-opened with leasing in the early '30s, were the mills shut down too?

NC: Well, the West End mill kept going. It was the last mill, I think, here. And Millers kept on. Gilbert and those camps were putting in ore. And they took custom ore and it kept them going. They ran for several years, but about the middle '30s there was nothing. I think the West End might've been going, because Divide was going.

RM: What did the leasers do with their ore then?

NC: They sent it to the smelters then. And the railroad . . . it's 732 miles by railroad to the Utah smelters.

RM: Is that where they shipped?

NC: That'd eat you up. That was a hell of an expense.

RM; Where was that - to Tooele?

NC: Tooele, and then Murray and Midvale. They had several up and down there, but most of it [went to] Tooele.

RM: So you had to have good ore, didn't you?

NC: Yes. And when the railroad went, some of them were still leasing here, so they trucked it to McGill.

RM: But they could ship it by rail to Tooele cheaper than truck to McGill.

NC: Yes. When you could save it in these bins . . . Or you could get a car, and there was a demurrage on it. If I ordered it for today and I couldn't load it, I had to pay so much for that car. Generally you got 50 ton in the bin, but if you got 40 you just shipped it. The last I shipped here was by truck. Hall Brothers; they have a truck hauling the ore over to McGill. You had to have \$12 to \$15 rock to just break even. The millheads in this town, so it's damn near \$15. It was some of the highest in the goddamned world, these millheads were. It was really high. Because there were a lot of times you were pouring stuff in there and you got nothing in it.

RM: What price silver are we talking about?

NC: When they were making good money, it was at 60. But once you dropped way down to about 40, she was pretty near done.

RM: So that stuff was running about 40 ounces.

NC: Yes. The Mizpah had the richest ore, it seemed. The Belmont was good, too. When they got down the Victor, they had a lot of good ore, but Jesus Christ, they had that pumping and [it was so] deep; a lot of things to contend with there. Still, it was the last one to go down.

RM: Do you know much about the ownership of the mines during the '20s and '30s?

NC: I knew several of them.

RM: Were they owned by outside people, or local people?

NC: The manager of the Extension and . . . was old John D. Kirchen. He promoted most of it himself. And there was the Cole interest in there. He had that big home right in front of the courthouse where Beko lives. You looked up to those guys as if they were kings in those days.

RM: Where were the Coles from?

NC: I don't know; I think they were [from] back east someplace. Old Kirchen was quite the promoter, too. But promoters, in those days, it most of what they promoted right in the ground. It wasn't like now, [when] they take it all; run off with it.

Charles M. Schwab owned the Extension. That was his money in there. RM: Who owned the Mizpah?

NC: It was Tonopah Mining Company. It was mostly stock. When they liquidated the stock there was a hell of a payoff there. The Extension was stock, but Schwab probably had control of it. And Borax Smith had the West End. It was stock, too, but he owned the bulk of the stock. And I don't . . . The Mizpah mine itself made 100 millionaires. But they dug it right out of there.

RM: How many of the millionaires were local guys?

NC: Well, some of them were. Most of them spent it as . .

RM: They were all outsiders, weren't they?

NC: Yes, most of . . . Philadelphia's where the Mizpah money . . . Billy Sharp was a promoter and a geologist, too. And most of the world's leading geologists turned the Mizpah down; or, turned Tonopah down. They said that possibly couldn't go anywhere. Billy Douglas was there, and he said, "God, you could see the silver and stuff. And these geologists from the Hays office and all of them turned her down." He was a promoter too, and a miner with it. He was just waiting to get his clutches in that damn thing, see. [chuckles]

Old Sharp promoted her and he had to go back east to get the money. But in this Hays office thing, old Butler was there too and he said, "Well, it can't go down - " because the chemical reactions were wrong. "And it couldn't go to the east - " because this was wrong. "And it couldn't go to the west - "

So they looked at old Butler, and he said, "Don't look at me. The only thing I know; it can't go up." It was on the surface. [laughter]

## CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: Curly, why don't we go back now and pick up on your life when you moved to Goldfield?

NC: Well, school was in Gilbert, which is in Esmeralda County. It was closing, so I went over [to] my dad, [who] was working at Goldfield.

RM: What was Gilbert like?

NC: It was a nice camp. It lasted about 2 years, and there were several -hundred men working there.

RM: Were there pretty good holes there?

NC: Yes. They weren't real big, but they . . . but there never was a mill. They always used Millers or shipped to smelters. But there's a lot of enrichment through those hills; they're talking open pit there now. 'They started to shut down when the ore got so low-grade they couldn't run

RM; Did Gilbert have a business district?

NC: Oh, yes. There were a couple of grocery stores and several restaurants. Most of the guys were single and they ate out. There were a lot of tents that they lived in the winter and everything. In those days with a short-lived town they'd pick than up, or roll than up, and they were gone. But there were several saloons and I think 2 grocery stores and about 5 eating houses, a post office; and a surveyor's office and an assay office - Pat's dad ran the assay office - and a couple of mine offices. The business district was just one long street.

RM; Now, what year was this?

NC: I think it was 1923 or '24. When I left there my dad and I went to the old country. The mines there weren't doing too well, so he came back. And my brother was out at Gilbert, too. Eventually I followed my dad back to Gilbert.

RM: Oh, you didn't come back with him.

NC: No, I stayed there and went to school damn near a year. I stayed with tt.;, sister; my aunt in St. Ives. I liked it there all right, but it was just a different life than I was used to. Pretty strict; you toed the line.

RM: It was a totally different climate, too, wasn't it?

NC: Oh, yes - that fog and all. But Cornwall's beautiful.

Anyway, when I came back, I went to school again in Gilbert. But the camp was damn near done, and then my brother knew that he was going to get d off, so then I went over to Goldfield where my dad was; he was working there then.

RM: Was it mainly leasers in Gilbert?

NC: No, it was nearly all company stuff. In latter years . . . It reopened again in '31 or '32. I was leasing then myself. We stayed there 7\_111 school was out, and then my dad came back here again and I think he 'went to work in the Belmont. But our old home was still here, so we stayed Mown there. It was down near that trestle. I was born in that house. We kept it 'till . . . I let it go after he died. I just let it go for taxes, because I was never here. And I didn't buy this place 'till 1950 or '51.

RM: Then you left Goldfield and came back to your home here in about

NC: '26, I guess. Then I went to military school in Los Angeles - Las Felis Military School.

RM: Did you like that?

NC: Christ, no. I lasted awhile and then I ran off from there. I came in to Hollywood [to see the] lady who put me in there. Of course, it was my mother's and dad's orders - to get you out of these mines. It was Judge Hatton's wife - old William D. Hatton was the judge here for years and lived in the big stone house down here. She was a friend of the family and she lived in Hollywood.

I went into the house to tell her I was done out there - I was taking off regardless. She wasn't home, but John, the youngest son, was there. He was having a little trouble with school, too; he was going there in Hollywood. So we decided to just take off. We hitchhiked and got clean up here to Independence. But it was during school; that was the tough part. is cop saw us kids walking down the street there in Independence and it was night. He said, "Where are you kids heading?"

And this Hatton was a kind of a wise guy. He said, "Well, we're beading to the outskirts of this town, here," And we had a little bedroll with us and stuff . .

It was getting pretty cool. It was in the fall, about like now. He said, "Why don't you go down here and you can stay in this place down here?" That's the county seat, you know, of Inyo County. We went down there, and Christ, I knew then we were cooked. That was the courthouse, 'chuckles] so it was the county jail. He took us down there, but he said, "Sell, just sleep in there." And he the left doors open and everything - there was nobody else that I could see in there.

We went to bed, and you saw it was all open. In the morning we rolled our junk up and were just going out, and this old sheriff said, "Well, I'd like to talk to you a minute."

We went in there, but I knew we were hooked. We wouldn't tell him who we were. [laughter] I didn't know him, and neither did John Hatton. He said to us, "Well, you're not going to get out of here till you do tell us. Eventually it'll be an order that you're missing somewhere." Because we were 12 or 13. Finally we told him, and I told him my name was Coombs.

And he asked me if I was related to Ozzie Coombs, his kid. I said, .yeah, that's my dad. My brother has the same . . ." He knew him over in Saline Valley when he worked in that plant. He ran the plant and he knew my dad well. And then the other guy said his name was Hatton, and William . Hatton was a judge for years, and he said, hell, he knew him well.

So he got on the phone. My brother was 6 years older than I and John Hatton had a brother about 4 or 5 years older, and they ran around together. So they got hold of his dad, and they sent those 2 over to get us. My brother was strict as hell, and I thought, Christ, I was in for a beating. But he didn't say a word and neither did the other guy's brother. They told us we shouldn't have done it and all that, but I told him I didn't like it, and I'd write letters and my dad would write back, "Geez, I'm glad you like it in there." They were changing them; they didn't want to lose that client, I guess. It was like a goddamned reform school or something, so I finally got out of there. We got home and then we went to school here - we were in the 8th grade here or something like that. Then I stayed here and graduated into high school.

RM: What was high school like here?

NC: It was good; you got good learning here. It was up to you - as it is the finest of schools; it's still up to that student. It's up to the teacher to open his eyes to it, but . .

RM: Did they have sports teams?

NC: Oh, yes. Hell, they went back east. We had [a basketball team] I think a couple of years before I was there. Ed Slavin went back with them. have you ever seen the picture of that? Ed got that picture from me. It was in '25. I think Ed's daughter Kay was the one who had this made up.

RM: Was it Kay Slavin who does the interviews on that tape you gave me?

NC: I don't know if it was Kay or her mother, Helen Slavin. And Bill Thomas, I think. But aren't there other voices on that?

RM: Yes. And one of them is Sheriff Thomas?

NC: Yes. I remember playing that tape, but I remember just playing the part where my mother was talking. You could hear the part where those miners were trapped up here that time - in 1911. You see, her brother was a kind of a hero in that thing. He was pulling men out of there when the goddamned.....

RM: That's your mother's brother?

NC: Yes; that was Sid Glidden. The guy you just saw a picture of was named after him. There were about 12 in that family, and it seemed that Se 10 of them were named Sid, after him, because he was that kind of a guy.

RM: Well, to backtrack, Tonopah had some pretty good athletic teams at that time?

NC: Oh, yes. I think it was the year before or year after, they were so good nobody even wanted to play them. I think it was that year. That's the reason they got in that invitational. But they didn't do well back there [in Chicago]; I think they lost the first game. I remember my cousin saying, "Jesus Christ, there's just a different brand of ball back here [chuckles] Hell, we're out here in the middle of the desert" - and a coach wanted to live here. But they had a pretty good one - his name was Snyder.

RM: So then you graduated from Tonopah High?

NC: No; from the 8th grade into high school. Then I went 2 years here - that's freshman and sophomore - and then I moved to Salt Lake and went there for the 3rd year. My mother had moved there. I didn't like it up there, so I came back here and just never went to school the next year. I went about 6 months, I guess in Salt Lake, and I wasn't doing any good, so I just called it quits and I bummed around the country and then came back here. It was about 1930, I think, when I came back. I went out to Round Mountain and got a job out there, and my dad was there.

RM: What mine were you working in?

NC: In the old Nevada Porphyry, or the Sunnyside, they called it. It's right where Echo Bay is now - right in the hill there. It was all underground then.

RM; That was, what, the big knob, there?

NC: It's disappeared, pretty near, now. I went to work in the placer there first. And I remember I came up to the office one day and they said, "You have to pay this poll tax." They charged everybody who worked \$3 a year poll tax.

Well, I said, "Hell, I don't need to pay that, 'cause I ain't old enough." But I had started underground then.

And he said, "You're working in the mine here, ain't you? You're supposed to be 21 years old - or 18 with your dad's consent."

So I said, "Hell, I ain't 18." I think I was still 16. It was about 1930, I guess.

Anyway, he said, "Well, you can't work underground no more, then." And it was the fall of the year and the placer was laying people off. When the freeze came, the water wouldn't come down. And they started enforcing the law . . . I think one young guy got killed and one hurt badly in the Mite Caps in Manhattan. They were just kids, you know. So you had to be 18 or over with your dad's consent, or 21 to work underground, and it still holds, I think.

So anyway, I [was] around town. My dad said, "Well, you go back and finish school." I said I didn't want to go to school. But you couldn't work in the store or anything because it belonged to the company. The old men who owned the Sunnyside - old Gordon - was that way, too. In the summertime he'd employ kids or young people, but not when they could go to



school. 'Cause he wanted them to go to school. So I took off and went down into San Diego and got in the Merchant Marine. I sailed around for damn near a year and then came back.

RM: What was it like in the Merchant Marine?

NC: Oh, it was low pay - \$45 a month and your keep, of course. I was a regular deck hand. And you worked in the galleys washing dishes and so forth. But I got on working with ships' carpenters. I still can see things that I learned. But I got tired of just seeing that water all the goddamned time, so once I was in Boston I got off the ship and came back here.

I went out there in the summer of in '31 or '32. Then I went to a Citizen Military Training Camp at Fort Douglas, Utah. I was up there for a month and then came back. In fact, I went up there 2 summers, so it could've been that I was still only 17. Because I couldn't work in the mdse. When I came back from there, my dad was out at Round Mountain yet. Gold Hill was another mine out there then, and he was working there, so I went back out there. I hadn't finished my junior year in Utah so I went back to school and finished my junior year at Round Mountain.

Then the next summer I went to the training camp again, and when I came back he'd gone from Gold Hill and gotten a lease in Gilbert. It was S32 - I remeMber that - because I was 18 then. So I was working with him on this lease at Gilbert. The Green Gold, they called it. It didn't turn out too well, but we were there quite a while - 10 months or something.

RM: What was the Green Gold mine like?

NC: It was narrow veins, but pockety, you know. We just weren't lucky enough to hit a good one. We made some small shipments - poor; not too mood a grade. But I was working in there and I was down in the bottom and was single-jacking - drilling. We did it all by hand. And a mine inspectors, I remember, came down. My dad wasn't there but he didn't say anything about [my] being alone; my dad was just up on top if something 7:12iNi happened]. He asked my name and I told him, and he said, "You're ramie Coombs's son."

And I said, "Yeah."

He said, "How old are you?"

And I said, "21." I figured . . . [laughter]

He said, "I knew your dad 20 years ago, and you weren't even born."

[laughter] He remembered me, I guess, from when I was a kid. But anyway we left there and came back to around Round Mountain

RM: Could you say a little bit about what the community of Round Mountain was like then?

NC: Oh, it was a nice community. There were a lot of men there then; there were about 500 working in that one district. Jefferson, Gold Hill, and Round Mountain . .

RM: So there were stores, and saloons?

NC.: Oh, yes. There were a couple of big grocery stores. In fact, I worked in one off and on. And I went back to school again and graduated in '33.

RM: Were there many kids in the school there?

NC: No, there were only 5 of us in the graduating class. I don't think there were 20 in the whole high school. And then there was a pretty good sized grade school. There were quite a few Indians there then - Shoshonis. They had quite a few students, but [in] those days you couldn't transport then the way you can now. They had busses, but it'd take all day to get there.

RM: It was all dirt roads out there, wasn't it?

NC: Oh, yes; it was tough. You went up through the mountains and through Manhattan and down . .

RM: You didn't go up the valley the way you do now?

NC: Oh, no. Well, there was a road that went out here and up the valley.

RM: Went out up west of Tonopah up north.

NC: Yes. It went down by Anaconda and San Antone, but Jesus, that's a long way.

RM: Oh - that's how you got to Round Mountain?

NC: Well, you could go that way or this other way. So this way you went over the Belmont summit, and then out and you went right up through Pipe Wings; you went up in the mountains, you see, instead of over San Antone pass and around. You went up and you got through Manhattan. They followed the old wagon roads, where there was water for the horses. That Pipe Springs was a pretty good pull, up in there. And when it snowed, Jesus. Well, they just never did it. You figured when you went to Tonopah and back to Round Mountain in one day you had quite a big day. But generally, when I'd come in here, the old house was down there and I'd go down there and stay and go back the next day.

I finished school there, and then that summer I was still only about -25, or something, so they put you on the bull gang. I could've worked underground because my dad wouldn't have cared.

RM: Was your dad still working at Round Mountain'

NC: Yes, he went back to work at the Sunnyside again. So I went back there and went to work. It was a good mine.

RM: Could you say a little bit about the mines there?

NC: Eventually during that time the main shaft was sunk to 1,200 feet. And it was an incline - it was all incline.

RM: Was the collar of the shaft on the Round Mountain?

NC: Yes. Just below the peak, there, was the Number One shaft. But there were several shafts - there was the Number Two, Number Three, and Number Four. The Number One was the big one that they hauled all the ore out of. It came right up and then went to the mill, which was right there. The waste would core out of the Number Four, you know, or Number Two, or . . . The ore was all milled right there - that Number One.

RM: Was the ore thin and stringy, or how was it?

NC: Yes, but rich; rich as hell. There were veins like that King Tut mope - she's 100 foot thick, there.

RM: OK, so there's a lot of variability.

NC: Yes. There were several veins in Round Mountain, so it was just like here. The biggest productive one I guess at that time was the Lost Gazabo vein. The Number One shaft was sunk right on it, and it would go down like this, and then it'd get steep and then it'd flatten off, so . . .

RM Oh, I see. They just followed it down.

NC: They followed her down so they could stope off each side and stay with the vein, too. And make ore while they were sinking. They stayed pretty [smith that way 'till it got to the 800 and then they just sank her straight. 4r, not straight, but on a 45 [degree]. And they sank right down cut that 12010 level. But, Jesus, the high-grade was there.

RM: On the 1200 level?

NC: Well, all over. It was always exposed where you could see it, and the miners would take it. I remember in '34 or '35 they decided to have a strike because the ore was getting kind of poor, or so they were saying. Yom see, skip tenders and trammers - a lot of the men - couldn't get at them high-grade. But the machine men and muckers could, because they were right in that face. So they had a meeting there in the change room and Old Gordon was there. The wages were \$4 for muckers and \$4.50 for miners and machine men in there. They wanted to raise it 50 cents a day. He said, "I'll go for 25 cents." Because, he said, "I just can't make it \$4.50."

An old guy named Bill Bennett was our spokesman, and he said, "Well, we couldn't make it at that, either. So," he said, "We might as well shut this son of a bitch down and leave." So they started filing right out.

Old Gordon followed them out, and he hollered, "Hey, you guys, come back here." There were over 100 men in there. He said, "We'll try it. lit if we can't make it we have no alternative other than to shut it down." it they agreed with it. "But," he said, "here's another

thing I want to show you." And he pulled those guys around the change room by the blacksmith shop, [to] the parking area. He said, "You're starving to death, but there's not a goddamned car here that's a year old. [laughter] And they're paid for, too," see. So he was quite a guy. I remember we went back to work. I was on the skips then, I think.

RM: So he knew full well he was getting ripped off? [laughs]

NC: Yes, somebody was making money. But it was the truth. You'd see guys buy a new car every year.

RM: What was Gordon's first name?

NC: Louis, Louis D. Gordon.

RM: And what was the name of the company?

NC: Nevada Porphyry Gold Mines. He'd had several companies there. First he had the Round Mountain Mining Company, then he formed that other company and he bought out the Fairview and Nevada Sphinx and all those around there. So he owned the whole area in there.

RM: Were the mines right on the Round Mountain or did they go out from it?

NC: Yes, they came out from it. And then they went around the hill, kind of, and then over, and they call it the Fairview hill. It had a big mine, too, and he acquired that. The back side of Fairview hill is where I owned that Blackjack mine.

RM: How long did you stay at Round Mountain at this time?

NC: I guess I left there in '34. It was right after that strike, I think.

RM: Why did you leave?

NC: There was a layoff, and they laid most of the single guys off. I think that's when I left.

RM: So Round Mountain didn't follow Tonopah with the leasing and everything in the '30s?

NC: No. And in '32 and '33 Tonopah opened for leasing and about half of the Tonopah miners quit and came back, because they knew where there was ore here.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: What were you saying about the cream of the crop?

NC: The mines went down, and then eventually gold, went up in about 1932. The country out there boomed, but all the miners around here weren't working; they went to Round Mountain, and he got the best of them right here.

RM: So he could take his pick of the good ones.

NC: Yes; he got the best miners in the country. That's where I learned a lot, because the ones that were there were the best. If you learned how to build chutes or drill holes or whatever the right way . . . it was a good experience for me. But when leasing opened here in '33 or '34, after Roosevelt went in and they pegged the price of silver at 64 cents . .

RM: What was its low point?

NC: It just got a little bit below 25 cents an ounce. Of course gold went up, too. And when they opened for leasing, a lot of the guys who wanted to work for themselves came back here. They knew where the ore was, and quite a few of them made lots of money here.

RM: Did you come back?

NC: No, I stayed out there. And then I think in about in '34 they had drought years like this one was and the water went way down - there was only enough water to run the mill maybe one shift. They used to lay off the single guys in those days. Women didn't work much, just stayed home and took care of kids or did housework. I don't think there was a woman tracking in that town. They had names for guys who had their women working.

RM: What would they call them?

NC: Pimps.

RM: You mean if a miner's wife worked he was still called a pimp?

NC: School teachers were mostly women. But out there the only working woman that I knew of was a school teacher.

RM: So it was OK for a woman to be a school teacher, but that was it.

NC: If she didn't have a husband. If she had a husband, she could work as the auxiliary or as a part-time teacher. Damn near all the miners I knew didn't believe in your woman working. There was plenty of work at home, especially some of them with several kids. But women like my mother would have boarders in their home.

RM That was considered OK, wasn't it?

NC: Yes, because they were waiting on the miners, I guess - I don't know. But a lot of guys . . . I know a lot of the old-timers don't believe in their wives working. But [women] damn near have to, nowadays.

MP.: Oh, yes. You can't make it now without it.

NC: But in those days it was funny - how could they make it on \$5 a day - or \$4.50? Mines like Park City, and over in the Mother Lode, paid \$2.75 a day in the early '20s. Before World War I wages were even lower than that, a they worked . . . My dad said when he first came here it was around \$2 a day in Michigan, and you worked 12-hour shifts. But you only paid, say, \$1 a day for board, room and keep - your wash and everything. 'And then Bingham Canyon, Utah, he said, cut the hours - it was \$2 a day for a 10-hour shift.

And then they came up here, and of course this was a boom camp, and they were paying \$4 or \$5 a day for 8 hours. They drove you with a whip here, though. The minute you eased up, you were done. But they got by. Of course, people could get by with nothing. I look back at it now and you wonder how.

RM: Why did they pay so much here? Did they have to because of the dust?

NC: Yes, the dust, and this is isolated. When it first started, Jesus Christ, there was just nothing. They had to pay it to keep . . . privations, I guess. You've got to pay. At Round Mountain, as I said, the reason they got by with it was because of the high-grade. But a lot of guys there weren't getting high-grade. The guys in faces and mills could snipe it out of there. Very few mill foremen ever worked after 3 or 4 years in that mill out there; they'd retire on it.

RM: Is that right. What end would they take it from? I mean, was it a cyanide operation . . . ?

NC: No, it's all amalgamation. There's nothing to mill - it's right there in front of you. The squeezed amalgam went up to the refinery, and there 'was a retort there. Those guys could get it, too.

RM: What's a squeezed amalgam?

NC: Well, your amalgam is juicy . . . you've seen quicksilver. It flows, you know. You put it in a cup lined with a chamois skin or unbleached muslin, and pour it in there. Then you twist it and squeeze and the gold stays up in there. The mercury will go right through it and you wind up with a ball of amalgam. Then you put that in the retort, and you burn it and get some more quick; you're going to re-use that quick all the time. I have lots of it right there. Then you take that, and it's a sponge, and it's yellow, and most of them melt it, or put it in a mold like the pieces you, saw there, only they put a big wood . . . how much you have. I do it like that just to keep it. And then if you want to sell . . . I have that 7-ounce piece, you know; there are not too

many people who want to buy \$2,000 worth or more. But they'll buy a ounce piece to keep. But companies put it in bars and shipped it to the Mint. That was all worked up there.

It was called dore, pronounced doray. That's maybe 6/50 fineness. When it's refined in the Mint it goes to the thousand fine or 999 or whatever. The dore is a natural bullion out of the mine as far as the actual gold out of the mine. But Goldfield was 999, a lot of it, in the natural state. But as you can see it - the specimens I've shown you don't even look like gold. It's the best. Three places in the world - Goldfield and Grass Valley and Alaska - were over 900 fine.

RM: How long did you stay at Round Mountain, then?

NC I went to Grass Valley and I stayed down there a couple of years, and I used to come back all the time. I used to buy gold. I'd take it to Grass Valley, and you could get a better price for it there. I could give the miners \$20 an ounce for it, where most gold buyers here were only giving than about \$15 at the most.

RM: Was that nuggets and things coming up from the mine?

NC: Yes. That gold out there, when gold was \$35, was only worth about \$22, \$23. But you could take it to California, and whether they thought it was all California gold or not, or from Grass Valley or the Mother Lode, those Chinese in California would pay you \$30 an ounce for it, even with rock on it.

RM: Why did they pay so well for it?

NC: They were probably smuggling it out to the old country. But you went where the money was.

RM: And it was against the law to hold refined gold at that time, wasn't it?

MC: Oh, yes. Well, you could hold a few ounces. When I was first leasing cut there, you . . . 200 ounces. It was a lot of gold. But they didn't want you to have any refined gold at all, see. It was [because of] hoarding.

RM: But you could hoard coins, couldn't you?

NC: No, you had to turn all them in at one time, too. I remember when they did that. My dad had \$1,800 face value in coins. And I said, "Hell, I'd keep them myself, and I can . . ." But I never had money enough to pay him off - only half of them.

RM: What would you have done with them?

NC: I'd have just kept them. Look at a \$20 gold piece now; \$1,000 is nothing for them. They're collectors' items.

RM: Did you work in the mines in Grass Valley?

NC: Oh, yes.

RM: What were they like?

NC: They were about like these, only they were wet and the water was ice cold. They were deep mines, some of them, too. They were really booming after gold went up. There were 10,000 miners, they figured, in that district.

RM: How long did you work in the mines in Grass Valley?

NC: About 2 years. I came back up in here about 1936.

RM: Why did you go to Grass Valley?

NC: Oh, it was different. Miners get . . . they call them tramp miners. just get in your blood to start moving - always a little greener on the other side of the hill. When you finally wind up to the fact that it's just more sagebrush over there, then you quit it. You're filled of it. :laughter]

RM: Were the Grass Valley mines unhealthy?

NC: No, they were wet. It was quartz, though - bull quartz, you know, out of it, but it was so wet.

RM.; What exactly is bull quartz?

NC: It's just a real white, dense quartz. It very seldom has too much value in it, but it generally makes along with the ores there were some rich mines there, the Idaho Maryland and the Empire. And it's all specimen When it makes in that white quartz it's just beautiful. And you .:an cut the hard quartz, and do so many things with it. There was a lot of high-grading going on down there, but there they had specimen bosses and double change rooms and all that. It was pretty hard to get the high-grade out, but they still got it.

RM: How did they do it?

NC: Well for instance, a job I had one time in the Idaho Maryland was as a skip tender I took blocks of waste wood all up to the top and then the top man would take it and throw it over a kind of a fence in where the furnace was, to burn it all. But the miner's cars were out on that side of the fence, and those blocks were all marked. The ones that had [gold would have] holes bored in them. They'd take it and then put a plug in it. And those guys would know the ones that were marked. The trouble there was, [there might] be 8 or 9 of us in on the deal. So you're getting . . . You'd sell it for \$30 an ounce, but you had to take quite a few ounces before you got a decent wage out of it of any kind. Of course, you would get paid a wage in the mine so



everything you made was a velvet, so if you made a couple of bucks . . . I used to snipe along the creeks, and by the time you made 50 cents you were pretty happy, because it was on top of your wages. EMU How else did they get it out of the mine with the double change room? IC: Well, they'd put it in their hair. Your partner would get right under that rich streak, and then you'd drill and let her fall down in his hair. The middle of those double change rooms was a shower and one guy I knew from here, Johnny Mulligan, was 6'7". He'd get in those showers - and his old head was really above where the water was squirting. [chuckles] And get through . . . and they'd stick it up their butts and everything. Finally at the end they started getting those metal detectors, but the way you kind of beat that was to get a guy with a bunch of gold in his mouth. Half my mouth was gold then. So it'd read all the time anyway, and if you did have it up there they just didn't pay any attention. But it was a poor practice. A lot of them were killed doing that. It ruptured their colon. They'd put it in test tubes, and I've seen them [use] an Alka Seltzer bottle. But it's pretty rough, I guess. They had a string about the same color as your flesh that would go around and hang in behind your privates; things like that. Oh, they'd get it out of there all right, but some of them would get caught.

RM: What would happen when they got caught?

NC: Generally, they'd just fire them and put a black mark [against you] in that area. They generally had to get the hell out of there.

RM: How did they snipe in the creeks?

NC: Well, you went up on the creeks and dry washes on their property with little sluice boxes. And most of it was wet there - there was plenty of water. You had little sluice boxes and you'd go on and after the winter was over the high waters would come down and you could go right back in the same place pretty near every year and get a little. It was something to do other than hang around the saloons and throw your money away. I used to live right down one Deer Creek - and I would work in the Murchee mine just on the hill. I had a tent and stuff and I'd stay there. I'd go up and work my shift and then I'd go back down there and work pretty near every day at my placer.

RM: Meantime you were coming over to Tonopah from time to time and buying some gold

NC: Oh, yes. My dad, you see, was still out there at Round Mountain.

RM: How did you buy it? Did you weigh it, or did you just look at it?

NC: I had a scale. I have those scales upstairs; a million dollars has been weighed on them.

RM: In your bedroom; yes.

NC: Most of the guys just had little bunches weighing 2 ounces. But if it got bigger, you had the other one. And then sometimes when they had a lot of rock on it, you could see that possibly it

was specimen stuff. You made them different deals. You could make money at it, all right. Sometimes, geez, you'd core up and it seemed like everybody had it. All depended on the mine; sometimes they'd get into ores, and then sometimes there would be lean periods. I generally knew, because I'd call.

RM.: How were you able to find your buyer, then?

NC: You'd just go to damn near any saloon there.

RM And say, "Who's buying gold?"

NC: Yes - "Wonder where the buyers are?" The Chinese moved all the time, because I guess what they were doing was illegal. [I always wondered] where the hell they got the money? It was brand new stuff; even the coins were shiny. Those hundred dollar and thousand dollar bills

RM: Thousand dollar bills?

NC: Oh, yes. There were a lot of times I sold \$10,000, \$15,000 worth. They'd just count her right out. Of course most of it had to go to the people I've got it from. Sometimes I could pay for a lot of it, but not generally that much.

RM: Where were they getting these new bills and everything?

NC: I don't know. It was all good. [chuckles] Probably back in China or something. They were pretty shrewd people. They had little mills and refineries mounted on old trucks and so forth, even in those days. They would be in the French Corrals for a week, and then the next thing you know I'd come up and buy gold and go up and they wouldn't be anywhere near French; they'd be gone. You'd find out they'd moved to Rough and Ready or maybe they went up north in the Jackson area or something. The Mother Lode's a big country. But I never did hear of than getting caught - I've heard a lot of the white buyers, though, got caught.

RM: Who would catch them?

NC: The government; they had the FBI in there.

RM: They were probably setting than up and everything.

NC: Yes. There was one guy who stayed there all the time - everybody knew him. He was working the mines here and he'd spot you.

RM: Did you buy it unrefined?

NC: Some of it, yes. Some of it the guys would put it into sponge, see.

But take stuff like that - there's over an ounce of gold there. I could get \$400 for that and make myself \$50 right there. You've seen those earrings and stuff - I make it or I make them up here . . .

[Tape is turned off for awhile]

RM.: Curly, you've just pointed out to me that you take some of the raw gold that's in little nuggets and pellets and flakes and you make little earrings out of it. How would you sell them, then?

NC: Well, you figure your price. If I weigh this, it weighs 2 pennyweights, or about \$40 worth of raw gold. And then you have the chain and so on. You figure you're in there \$50, and it takes you 3 minutes to make it and how much did you spend getting the gold and everything . . . say I have to have \$100 for that. I just go down and show it to somebody at a restaurant or somewhere.

RM: And what would you say?

NC: Well, I might see you in there. I'd say, "Did you ever see these things made up like that?" Or we're in the post office. The first thing somebody you know or I know says, "Oh, let me see that." It's not long somebody's asking you about how much . .

[I] say, "Oh, I want \$100 for that." Some of the people who don't know gold figure they're getting took. But all this is 14-carat gold around here, and the chain may be 18, so it's all good stuff.

RM Yes. You have got a little necklace with gold inside a little vessel.

NC: Yes. I sent for these. But I wanted a huskier chain, you see. I sold all those that I had, and I got \$150 for some of them.

RM Do you find the gold yourself, or do you buy it?

NC: That's Manhattan. I refined that; took it out of the scoop box of my , mill. I had 30 ounces - some of it's that dore in there. But you put it on a piece of paper and sort out the pure stuff. Now, those half-breeds I'll put in a mortar and crack them and the rock will fall away. The gold stays there.

RM: Yes. How did you get into the gold buying end of it?

NC: It seems like I've been in it all my life. [chuckles] My dad used to do the same thing. Friends see you're interested, and they help you get started.

RM So you stayed at Grass Valley a couple of years. And then where did you go?

NC: Oh, I tramped around quite a bit. I was all over - Butte, South Dakota, Arizona . . .

RM: Did you work in the Homestake in South Dakota?

NC: No, I worked out at the Trojan out at . . . Bald Mountain Mining Company was the name of it. But the Homestake in those days was tough to get on. There were more men rustling than working. It was a good mine to work at and it was still tough times.

The Depression never really ended until Britain went to war with Germany in '39. At that time another guy and I had left Butte and we went to Howe Sound in Washington; a big copper mine up there. Britain declared war and Butte just opened again overnight.

RM: But they needed that copper then for the war?

NC: Oh, yes. They needed that copper ware some. In fact, the mines started all over, then. When the copper mines were good, a lot of [miners] went back where their homes were and it made the gold mines good, too.

RM: But when the war broke out they shut the gold mines down.

NC: Yes. They had to, to get them into essential minerals. They had a hammer over their heads. Either be drafted or go to work here.

RM: Oh, so they didn't legally shut the mines down?

NC: No, they really didn't need to. That's because damn near every mine can prove they've got an essential metal. For instance, in Tonopah these are part silver and silver was kind of essential, and the Mary mine over in Silver Peak had a lot of lead in it - that was essential. Or whatever. The dredge ran all the time through the war - in Manhattan. That's where the gold [I'm showing you] came from.

RM: During the period from the early '30s up until the time of World War II,, you just were going from one mining camp to another, then.

NC: Tramping around, yes. But I could see I wasn't getting anywhere, and I made money and I threw it away. I was working up at Darwin, which was lead and silver. I quit there but I registered for the draft there in October of 1940.

RM: So you knew the war was coming?

NC: No, they had a draft going then. And in 90 days or less I was called.

RM: Is that right; so you were called before Pearl Harbor.

NC: Oh, yes. I'd quit at Darwin, then right away I got a notice that I'd have to go to the training camp - Selective Service, they called it. So I went up to U.S. Vanadium at Bishop. It was a big

tungsten mine - essential mineral - and if you were working there they'd never touch you. Link was the superintendent up there, and I was still a young miner, and I could take that high altitude - 13,000 feet - and still know what I was doing. Mg young miner, pretty near, who hit there, all you had to do was call the mine, and you had a job. And that's how you got a 6-month deferment.

I went up to the Vanadium and went to work and I got tired of there and took off and finally went down to Jerome, Arizona, and I got another notice - the 6-month deferment was up. Of course, I'd been working in the big hole in Jerome, and that's copper, but you still had to go apply for deferment. So I told my friend, "Boy, we'd better get back to Bishop or we're going to go to this army stuff." I got back to Bishop and got another deferment, so I stayed there awhile. I got tired again and I came over to Silver Peak. You could still get a deferment in the lock because there was a lot of lead in that mine, too.

I got another notice, and I said, "Ah, to hell with this. I feel like damned escaped convict, or something." And I didn't mind the military too much, because I'd been in those training camps and all. So I figured, Tell, all I'm doing [is] . . . making [myself] an old man working in these bastards, and I'm throwing all the money away anyway." And then I got thinking, "Hell, I don't know whether I could get by the examinations." I was 30 years old then with 10 years or more of underground work. So from Silver Peak I went over to Bishop and went through the draft board. There were 13 of us, [including] me and a beat-up looking Indian. I figured, °Sell, we'd be the first they kicked out." We were the only 2 they kept. [Laughter]

I let it go, and I never tried [to get out]. Link, at the mine, said, \*You know we're going to go to war." The war hadn't started; this was November, '41. He said, "You know we're going to go to war."

But I said, "Hell, I don't know that."

He said, "You're not helping your country any by going, because you're too valuable out here" - in these mines. "'Cause you savvy this stuff and you can work . . ." He had a hard time keeping [miners] at 13,000 feet up.

## CHAPTER NINE

NC: As I said, we went through the draft board in Bishop and then to L.A. for the physical and then I was in the army. I went to Fort MacArthur down at San Pedro and was there about a month or so. I had that military training, so right away I was in charge of men. I got shipped to Maryland - the Aberdeen Proving Grounds - for training there [in] small arms - machine guns and pistols and rifles. I was in Maryland when the war was declared; December 7th. Pretty soon it'll be 46 years ago.

And I figured I was in bad shape then. [laughter] I'm still here. I went to Louisiana for awhile, and then we got shipped to the South Pacific. : was in New Guinea and the Philippines. I was in the infantry, mostly.

RM: What was your rank?

NC: I was a First Sergeant.

RM: And you made a landing in New Guinea?

NC: Oh, yes, several. I put about 3 years in those jungles around there. I married an Australian girl - my oldest boy was born there.

Link [had] said to me, when I left Bishop, "You know damn well you're in good shape. You ain't going to come back. We'll be in war." And I couldn't see it.

So I said, "Hell, I won't get through this examination. I'll be back in 3 weeks." Forty-nine months and 7 days later I came back; I was in there that long.

RM: How did you survive that long in the Pacific? There were a lot of casualties, weren't there?

NC.: Yes, there were a lot of them. I got wounded in the leg one time - not bad. And then I had malaria. You had a lot of those fevers, you know. But tt's like an old doctor we had here one time - old Doc Cowden. I was sick as hell when I was a baby. My mother had lost a boy before that - he's —ed down here - with spinal meningitis. In those days they were generally just gone with it. Old Cowden came down here and I had every goddamned thing - whooping cough and diphtheria and . . . The eczema will t eat up a . . . still got the bastard. But she said, "Goddamn, Doc, I don't want to lose this one."

Oh," he said, "don't worry." And I was a big baby - I weighed 11-3/4 pounds. He said, "Don't worry. This guy's going to take a lot of killing." [laughter] And I think he was right. I've had some awful [chuckles] stuff happen; it just goes away.

Look at the years I put in the mines, and they have to look for the silicosis. It's in the tips of my lungs. He said, "You just wore those masks so much." But I can see times that I didn't have it on, and my nose would get so plugged with dust you couldn't breathe . . . They were running use machines . . .

RM: But it didn't get in your lungs?

NC: No, it couldn't go down. I never smoked to speak of. I probably have wet lungs. That doctor I told you about said there are different types of. And my mouth, right now, is full of saliva all the time. I don't think it gets down there. I remember a lot of times I came out of the mine. You spit and you could just see; it looked like mud. It just didn't get =to the lungs, I guess, where it [does] in a dry lung.

RM: And that was true of the Cornish, to a degree.

NC: Oh, yes. They were little people. It seemed like it killed big people quicker, I guess they'd breathe harder or something. Most of the Cornish were pretty small, but they worked so damn young they just didn't grow. And probably those English pasties [chuckles] . . . there's a lot of dough in those things.

RM: [chuckles] And you met your wife in Australia. Were you down there on leave?

NC: Yes, I was down there on leave. The big camps were down around Townsville in Northern Queensland, and Rockhampton. I was in the 32nd 41st, and it was the 32nd and the 41st that did most of the fighting down there. One would be up there for awhile, and they'd pull them out and put the other one up. So we had rest areas in Australia all the way from Brisbane to Townsville. They were good takeoff points for the ships, to lame you back up, and those big airfields there. They were the biggest in the world at one time, I think. We had damn near a million men down there

Australia at one time - airmen, sailors, marines. Townsville is where a lot of the marines were buried from Guadalcanal. They dug a lot of them up and put them over there. A lot of them, I guess, died in those big general hospitals, like in Brisbane. The big casualties were more from malaria; fever.

Then when Atabrine came in, that stopped it. That was a drug that [stopped the fever. You could keep going even with it. It turned you yellow --you jaundiced with it. But it was more effective than the quinine.

Quinine was good, but the Japs knew that this maybe was happening - and they captured most of the quinine islands. But they finally got Atabrine; Christ, you could still be active on duty and have that fever badly. You'd just keep taking it and eventually it'd go away. You'd have attacks - when you came back here you still had them - but you had Atabrine to take. eventually it burns itself out. You can see those natives; they've been with it for years and you notice that they all have a big stomach. the spleen drops, and then they claim the fever doesn't bother you anymore. Or, it gets in your liver. You got a pension when you came back from it, but you got that amoeba liver, and as soon as that died out, they cut your pension off. They figure that you're OK, then. It's been years since I've ever had an attack; 40 years, I guess. I only had them a few years after I came back.

RM: But you had amoebas that you'd picked up down there for a time?

NC: Yes. And they'd test you for it, and then eventually . . . I don't know what happens to it, it just dies out.

RM: What was it like for a guy from a desert environment like this to be down there in the jungle?

NC: Well, at first a lot of the training I took was in Louisiana and it's goddamn near as bad as New Guinea. [laughter] There was a lot of malaria in Louisiana. If you were busted out with it there in New Guinea, you might love got it up here. In fact, it's still there. That was the biggest . . . one time I figured our company had 85 percent casualties, and most of it was malaria.

At times you'd have a little action, but sometimes you'd go weeks and never see a Jap. You were on perimeters and they'd move back before you got there. You'd find their camps and material, or foxholes, where they had been. But guys were still carted out of there - some of them dead, too - from that damn stuff. The old pump won't take it, or something; they'd keel over.

RM: What are some of the islands you were on?

NC: Mostly Papuan New Guinea. And when I left Sador, New Guinea - that's in Dutch New Guinea, the northern part - I went from there to the Philippines. And I was there when she ended and came back from there.

RM: And, meanwhile, you'd gotten married.

NC: She stayed in Australia and of course, I had a kid . . .

RM: Did you bring her here after the war?

NC: Well, to Park City; I was living up in Utah. She came there, and then my youngest son was born there at Park City. And after we split up, eventually I got the kids and raised them right here in this house. That picture's one of that littlest right here. She went back to Australia and then she got pneumonia there and it killed her. We were divorced then. She was only 37, 38 years old. Of course, she dissipated a lot - smoked, drank - that smoking's one of the worst goddmned things . . .

RM: A curse.

NC: It's a curse.

RM: It's a curse - it truly is. It's a horrible drug.

NC: Geez, I feel sorry for . . . there are some people I think a lot of :on] first impression, and they come in, and say they sit there where you are, and the first thing, they have one of those goddamn . . . I'm ready to them out of here. I lose pretty near all use for them: "You're so goddamned stupid that you can't see you're killing me and my dog." I'm not worried about me, but my poor dog.



RM: [laughs] Yes. It's a terrible addiction; it's worse than heroin. It kills a lot more people than heroin.

NC: They say you can't do it . . . but I don't think Pat's a strong-willed person. I've known him since I was little. [chuckles] You don't see him smoke. As soon as they told him, "You've got emphysema . . ." He quit smoking. It took a little doing, but he did it. Look at old Ed - smoked all his life and quit 10 years ago and had cancer of the lip from it. They tut it out. It was irritation from that damn cigar hanging in there all the time And it killed Helen - his wife. Her lungs were just shot, and she had a heart attack out there and they got her to Reno, but she couldn't make it because she had nothing to fight with.

RM: Yes. What was Park City like?

NC: It was a regular mining town. They had big mines there - lead and zinc and silver.

RM: Were they good mines to work in?

NC: Yes, they weren't too bad. They were damp, and there was no dust problem. But it's everywhere, underground, the host, or a lot of it, is that quartz material - silica.

Eighty percent of the damn land here in Tonopah is silica. Even the just When I worked in the Coeur d'Alenes, there was a doctor there - Dr. Mowrey - who was a doctor here in the early days when it was really rampant. There you have to take an examination, if you're questionable [for silicosis], every year. I got talking to him and told him I was born in Tonopah, and there were people we knew, and such, so we were pretty friendly. I broke my foot in one of the mines there and that's when I first met him. I asked him one time, "How in the hell do I have to take an examination every year when I know, a lot of these guys who look like they're dying take one every 3 years?"

"Well," he said, "it's your birthplace." He said, "You know, even the chickens and dogs got the goddamned con there." [chuckles]

RM: It's just in the air'?

NC: Well, look at the tailings. It's all around town. Of course they're packed down now, but I've seen dust in this town - it was pitiful. You see yet, but it was . . . And if you tested it, there was a lot of silica in it. My aunt was right on the edge of a dump here at the West End mill, and she died with that flu in about 1922 or '23, when there was quite an epidemic here. And that's what they figured - that she had a lot of dust from that dump; just living around that damn tailing pond. I remember the Just there, but I was raised down around there, too, and I don't have hardly any and put my lifetime in these damn mines. But . . . she did. But some people, I think, are susceptible and some people have a resistance to it. But I think it's that lung business. According to old Craig - he was quite a doctor here. He was pretty rough, but he was a good one.

RM: Where did you go from Park City?

NC: I went to Austin [Nevada]. Pat and all of us were there and I got a contract and went up there and stayed around about a year, then that mine shut down. Then I came back here, and here's when I leased a little bit up here at the Mizpah.

RM: The Mizpah?

NC: Yes, but the ore was over toward the Silver Top. Two friends of mine - Fred Del Pepa and Nick Banovich - had the lease; they'd just bought it off some guy. I happened to be here looking for work. I don't think I even had my family with me. But we went up and looked at it, and I saw that ore above, but I said, "Goddamn near all gone." That guy just gutted it. I said, "There's one chance you might have. He had ore right here to start with in this drift. It might've gone on down." I was around here a couple of days and we mucked all that out and it got so I could see ore in this rock. But I figured a lot of it was pieces that he might've shot and they got down in there. We cleaned her off real well and got down there and that vein was about a foot wide and still going down. And it ran - well, you could see the silver in it. It ran about 78 ounces in silver, see. And most of this stuff has about a ounce of gold to 100 ounces of silver; it's 100:1.

RM: So it was running good gold, too.

NC: Pretty good gold, too. But of course gold was \$35 then. It was still damn good ore.

RM: What was silver then?

NC: About 90 cents. So you had good \$80 rock, or damn close to \$100. If you could make a ton a day, 3 guys would do pretty well and I figured we could. But you had to get your waste all out of there and you paid so much a car to hoist your waste because there was no place to gob it. We went to work on it, but I wasn't satisfied the way things were going, because those guys couldn't put full time on it. I'd moved my family here from Austin. Mick had the Rex Bar down here and Freddy had the 21 game in there, so they were up all night running that thing and in the day they weren't much force. So I . . . wasn't satisfied. I got to thinking about this damn silica and all that. And I figured about what I was making. They had 14 tons by then and I'd, been there about 3 weeks but that ore was still going on down and in the heading, but it went in there like that. So I just told them I was done and that we'd gather up, what ore we had and ship that - which I did. I was up there about 15 years ago, and it's still just [chuckles] the way I left it.

RM: How far underground is it?

NC: It's on the 400. Nobody's bothered it. Nobody gets down and looks at rock, like that I was showing you with the silver. I showed a geologist some of that dark red and he said, "I know there's silver in it, but I can't see it."

I said, "The whole damn thing's silver, pretty near." But, they just don't see it.

RM: What was Tonopah like after the war?

NC: Right after the war was still good because the base was there. There were 12,000 airmen out there. When they started to leave she just started to die, and about '48 she was starting to get pretty lean around here. Where were several leasers here.

RM: Some of the mines were still operating?

NC: Well, just the Mizpah. The Belmont, I think, let leasers go in there. Their shaft was all burned so they let you work over in that side.

RM: And you'd pull it out the Mizpah?

NC: Yes. The Desert Queen was doing some hoisting there, too. But that didn't last too long, and it went down.

RM: Where were you shipping - to McGill?

NC: McGill; yes. To the smelters there.

RM: Could you say a little bit about what you called gobbing?

NC: Well, that's your waste rock, you see. You take the worked-out areas like your stope - if there are great big open holes. Sometimes it's an asset to you to have a place like that, and also to stop your ground from caving. You fill it and then it won't squeeze in. A lot of times they'd fill it and go down and right on the top, where there are stulls or timber, They robbed the timber; bring it out and then the muck holds it. So it has quite an advantage.

RM: Was there a lot of gob in Tonopah?

NC: Oh, God, there's millions of tons underground. For damn near all the are that's on the top there's damn near that much underground. They wanted that fill. A lot of than would haul it clean to the top and sometimes put it back down there. They'd drive those raises through, tap that ore, and put it back down to hold the ground. Oh, it's the best thing there is. It's damn near the same as putting the rock back in its place. The quicker you catch that, [the quicker it] stops the cracking. Especially if you have a vein here and then 30 feet out there you have another one. If this one starts giving, that ground in there moves and it might get so you can't even work it at all. So they try to stop that.

RM: It wasn't just to save money on the hoisting.

NC: NO, it was . . .

RM: The one thing it does do, though, is make it hard for further exploration, doesn't it?

NC: Yes, but that area is mined out anyway. There's very little left. It sometimes happens between them, like these between all the veins, it might run \$20 now, and they could pit it. But a lot of that gob runs, too. I've known guys - do you remember old Bombassei?

RM No.

NC: He's a friend of your dad's. He made lots of money sorting gob. That's one of the reasons I got out of there, because him pulling that gob would make too much dust. Old dust would work back in there where I was [working].

RM: Yes. And you just couldn't keep things wetted down . . .

NC: No. There were so many openings to the surface, the old air would course through there and get her.

RM: What did you do after you quit your lease at the mine?

NC: I went back to the Coeur d'Alenes then.

RM: What are the Coeur d'Alenes like?

NC: They're big mines; the richest silver mines, I guess, in the world. Most of the Coeur d'Alenes are in northern Idaho - in Shoshone County. It's a big area, with 40 square miles of mines. I made a lot of money up in there, too. The first time I went back then I worked just for wages, and that's where my wife and I split up. I stayed there, and then I got a lease and I made a lot of money on it. And then about the end of '48 or '49 I pulled out and I went back to Park City and worked around there for awhile but it didn't do too well. Then I went back to the Coeur d'Alenes and I made a little 'Toney again that time. Then I went over into Washington; I was the foreman of a mine there for a couple of years.

RM: What kind of a mine was it?

NC: Lead and silver. It was in Stevens County, in the north part of Washington that borders Canada. In fact, the mine was only 30 miles from Canada. I stayed there close to 2 years. But I started getting crippled up badly. It's damp country up there - fog and so forth. So I thought, 'Hell, I think I'll go back down on the desert,' so I came back down here. Then I went leasing in Manhattan. Didn't do very well there . .

RM: Was that underground, or placer?

NC: It was underground. The old gallows rig and everything I built are still there. I went to Cimarron from there.

RM: Where's Cimarron?

NC: It's right on the end of the San Antone range here. I did pretty well there, and when I left there I went down in Arizona. I guess it was winter, so I went down around Superior - down in there. I stayed there till the weather started to warm up and I came up here. In the meantime, I bought this house. I hadn't had my kids yet but I'd gotten married again - was working on it then. I came back here and it was in April and man, it turned cold as hell, and I was used to that warmth, so I went back down and worked in Vegas in that gypsum mine there - the Blue Diamond.

RM: That's open pit, isn't it?

NC: It's open pit, but there's underground, too. They have great big drifts in there. And the high-grade is taken out underground, generally -the castings, they call it. I stayed there awhile then finally came up around here and I've been here pretty steady since. Round Mountain, and . . . Of course, I've always had claims up here. I guess it has been since about '53.

RM: How long did you work in the gypsum mine down there?

NC: Oh, just 'till the weather got warm, and then I came up. But I've gone down there every year for about 3 years. I knew the people down there -Brooks was married to a girl I went to school with here. So it was pretty friendly; whenever I needed a job, you know, day's pay or leasing, and I'd get him on the phone and call him, and generally he always had some kind of opening. We'd go down there and work when it was cold. But otherwise I'd stay up here. There was no big money there - no chance to make anything.

I stayed up here mostly, and then [would] work at Mercury and out here at the base off and on as I needed money and would lease some. But I never did too well till Round Mountain opened up. Then I made enough [that I]don't need to work for anybody, I guess, for the rest of my life. Just had sense enough to hang onto it this time. After 70 years, I got wise. :laughter] I think [when] I was 47, I had her pretty well made, and I . . . That's a long time ago.

## CHAPTER TEN

RM: Curly, we left off in the '50s yesterday [November 4], and I'm wondering if we could talk a bit about what you remember about establishing work out here on the Flats?

NC: Well, in Vegas in about 1950, '51, they started the base - I think it was Nevada Rock and Sand and Haliburton Enterprises, or someone like that; I forget now. But people didn't pay much attention. I knew a lot of construction men from around here, but I was working sinking shafts around by what was called the Bingo Club. They sunk these deep shafts and connected them for the high-rise that's at the Sahara Hotel. They had to sink shafts for the foundations. Pretty near all of them have it. Some of them they do with drills, but these they sank a shaft. They were only 2- compartment things, and they went down about 100 feet. Then I guess they filled them with concrete and steel. They connected some of them, too.

We thought we were making fabulous money, but I was talking to a guy in town one time, in the Westerner. He was playing cards and he handed his check stub back to me he said, "Look at that." I asked him where he was working and he told me out there on Yucca Flats. And it was just fabulous; that money. So right away I wanted to get out there.

I eventually did, and you couldn't believe the money. That's what hurt the mines a lot, because the mining companies couldn't afford to pay that kind of money. We figured, 'Oh, it's just a flash in the pan,' anyway. They couldn't pay that kind of money. It'd ruin construction and everything else. But that's - how many years ago now? [chuckles] Thirty- six years and it's still going.

RM: So you got on out there when they were still testing in the open air")

NC: Oh, yes; before. They were building the main camp at Mercury. This was in '51, and there was nothing there.

RM: Where did you live?

NC: In Vegas. We drove back and forth. Travel time [was] 5 hours a day. You opened your eyes, you had a good . . . You had more made than I made sinking those shafts. But it just went on and on. Then I used to go out here and work some at the Test Site out of Tonopah after they got it going. it was about '55 before they started that. I was running a mine called the Mexican mine out in Lone Mountain. I own it yet. I had about 6 or 8 men there. Mercury would lay off, and you'd get miners, then, so I had a pretty good crew. We lived here in town - it's just 20 miles, [away] - and we had a pretty good camp there, with a watchman there all the time. One day I went in the station wagon to pick these guys up down there by the Tonopah Club - the park there. Generally they'd eventually all get in and we'd take off. But none of them showed up so I went in to see what the Hell was wrong. I heard Mercury had started hiring again, see. There'd been a man-catcher, as they called them, around town so I had no crew.

RM: They hired your crew?

NC: Yes. I took the station wagon back up to the main guy's house here. I told him, "Well, there's no use of me going out today, 'cause I haven't got any crew. So," I said, "I wonder if you'd get in and I'll take you up to my house and you can bring the station wagon back."

And he said, "Well, you'll need it when you get another crew."

I said, "No, I won't need it, 'cause I'm going with them."

I was a superintendent. You've got to know something to protect the lives of all these men and everything, but they made 3 times the money down there I was making as superintendent for cleaning the water ditch, and you didn't know where the ditch was. Geez, [when] the government gets into it, they wreck her for people. But it went on and on. Of course I guess they've done some good; I don't know. It's a place to work, because that's where the money is.

But you see, Round Mountain and the others have to pay that money, or they can't get anybody. Another thing that's making them stay with their jobs at Round Mountain [is that the Test Site] has strikes, and it scares them to go out there. So all they get, mostly, is culls. But even your good miners . . . Men I worked down there as a lead miner. I knew they were top men on those jumbos, and they wouldn't even work. They knew they didn't need to.

I used to tell [Bill] Flangas, "Why do you step over all these guys?" You see, I didn't drink or smoke, so I was always ready to work. And I knew cribbing - I know every inch of this mining. I said, "I know miners in there [who] probably forgot more than I know" - lying in those alcoves.

"Well, they smoke and you don't smoke. And they got a hangover," and so forth. So that's the way it is. Some of them just didn't want to work.

It would make me figure, "Why should I work?" All I'd have to do is light a cigarette and stand there with it; it all pays the same. It's a poor thing. But I hate to see anything like a depression come along to make them work like the way we had to - your dad or myself. [chuckles] Though I don't think it kills you, because we're still here.

RM: Did you work several rounds at Mercury? I mean, go there and then leave and then come back . . .

MC: Yes. They'd have layoffs, and I used to try to get in them because I could come up here and prospect and lease and draw unemployment insurance. And I watched the money I made there, so it never bothered me if I couldn't get unemployment. But if I hit a good lease I'd forget that down there. The last I hit I went to Round Mountain, but I waited a long time. I could have got leases there, but they were too short - 5 or 6 months. I wanted to put a little mill in and do this and do that . . . I knew where there was ore, but I had dead work to do, and 6 months just didn't give you enough time.

RM: Where else did you work on the Test Site after the camp was built at Mercury?

NC: Most of it was in the camp. I worked there several months and then they had a pretty good-sized layoff; they'd run out of money. Another time worked on the roads that they were building way back in Frenchman's. [I also worked] close to Area 12 - you were in 12, right?

RM: Yes.

NC: And then when the tunnels started, I was in there with [Bob] Nichols. It drove that first tunnel up there - B-tunnel, I believe. It was the tunnel where the first 1,000 feet went right straight in; we drove that first 1,000 feet. It was that straight tunnel running straight in; the first one to your right. It went in and there was a winze sunk down. They set the Rainier shot down in that winze and then we went back down in and I was on the recovery force. That was in '58 and we drove the tunnel in '57.

RM: Maybe I was there at the same time. Was this was a great big tunnel?

NC: Yes. Your dad was the yard boss there for awhile right after . .

RM: He got that after I left. He was working as a miner at E-tunnel. s was a great big tunnel, and they had great big arched steel to....

NC: Yes, I worked on the yard there, too. That was after we drove the one up there. It was in '56 or '57 that we drove . . . Because it was '57, I think, when I came in from Railroad Valley. I'd been running a tungsten wire out there. I came in and Nichols' Brothers got that contract, and I went with them. We made some good money there. We drove 1,000 feet straight in. That was B-tunnel.

Then E-tunnel was the next year or the year after I came out of the tunnels - I don't know - I wasn't gone too long. I was the only guy in out there. I was building the yard where that big dump was - or, facing off the portal where E-tunnel went in. I used to go out there all alone, and I had a 600 compressor out there and a wagon drill. I could move all over that; it wasn't real steep. I was drilling it all, and I'd load my own bores and the whole thing. I'd drive from camp about 50 miles, but I'd take off early and I'd get pretty near an 8-hour shift in there.

RM: You were living at Mercury?

NC: Yes. In those days they'd leave you work alone, and you could start your own compressor and everything - nobody bothered . . . Pretty quick the melons came. Then the next thing, I had to have an operator to run the compressor. We got there about 8:00 or 8:30 and his job consisted of running up and pushing a button like that and going over and going to sleep till noon. Then he'd come up when I stopped to eat dinner. (Sometimes they'd let it run through.) And he would have to add a little bit of gas to it, but generally there was a diesel truck that came out and filled it. He'd wake up and then shut it off and then he'd eat lunch, and then give the button a push and go lie down some more. My work was just the same. The only thing was, I didn't have the responsibility of pushing that button. So there were 2 of us who rode out, and the next thing, they cried like hell because a Teamster wasn't driving us. So we got a kind of a little van deal, and about 3 or 4 of us then went out. The next thing there were about 8 of us, but the same amount of work was being done. I had to have powder men and all that, and I think there was about 8 of us in that van.

The next thing I knew, the A-E-tunnel got going, and they faced off there. I wasn't on there at first; I came back up here. They came up here to the house and got me to go back



down there. Or, he wanted me to get a Bunch of miners, and the tungsten mines went down, so I said, "Yes. I know a lot of them, but," I said, "I don't know whether I can get you some." [I said this] to Ryan. You said you remembered him . . .

RM: Oh, yes; he was great.

NC: We were kids together over in Ely when I worked there in the Con Copper. Jim Ryan said, "You can get some men there."

And I said, "Goddamn. What's the matter? You ain't hiring these guys from Tonopah."

He said, "Get a bunch together; at least 10."

So I hustled around town and I had about 12 of them lined up. And then they came up here and none of them would go down. They didn't want to go through security clearances and all that bull to work down there.

He said, "Christ, you got me in a hell of a spot now. You told me you had all these men - you got nobody. It don't look good, you know."

I got an old guy I used to work with, old Joe Hayden, and Bombassei. They were conned up pretty badly. And I said, "Well, to save some face I'll go myself." Because I didn't want to lie around, but I didn't really need the money. We got down there and I was overweight - about like I am now - and the other 2 guys all loaded with con. [chuckles]

Old Ryan says, "Geez, you're really scraping the bottom of the barrel up there."

[laughter] He said, "Where is those guys?" We got the politicians on it, and eventually they got [Bill] Beko on and he would travel around . . .

RM: That's how we got our jobs down there; through Beko.

NC: I didn't want a job being a man-catcher, so he took it on and he did pretty well because he'd get around. Then I got on the phone and called over in Bishop - the Vanadium had a layoff. That's how that bunch came over. Christ, they sent them all down there. Some of than were pretty good miners. Then the word got around well, and they called Winnemucca and Ely and those places - and eventually . . . That's how Flangas and the ethers got down there. I stayed there damn near 8 months that time; I think it was the longest I ever stayed. But it was something. It was just a madhouse. [chuckles]

And a waste - that's what hurts me. They took 49 months and 7 days of my life, this country did, and to go down there and see things thrown away. . I started seeing it [overseas] before I left. They didn't get pepper here. I used to send it to my mother in those envelopes with a letter because I could get pepper in there. I was in Manila one time and I saw a great big mound of stuff . . . I had these guys down there in a detail and said, "What the hell is that stuff?" I thought it was maybe black powder. It was pepper - they were burning it. I said, "What the hell is the idea?"

They said, "Well, it got in one of those ships and the holds were leaking and the salt got .

I said, "What the hell - salt ain't going to hurt pepper. Salt and pepper,,- you use . . ." But they burned her; plowed her into the ground. That's just waste.

And look at the vehicles over there. We'd take than in Manila and load them up. After the war we were all waiting to come home. We had details and we'd load those big old ships

and the stern was fixed so that you could just drive the trucks right off the edge. It went off there, and your screw was down here, so . . . But Jesus, big LaFrance wreckers and all....

RM: You mean, they were just driving them into the ocean?

NC: Yes. We'd get than started and get than in gear and then step out and Let them go right off the fantail

RM: Why did they do that?

NC: They couldn't bring them back here [because of the] contract they had with the car companies. You got back here and you couldn't even get a vehicle at all. Here I'm throwing \$30,000, \$40,000 ones off the end of a ship. Oh, it was pitiful. In Australia they started shipping than up north, but they lacked 3 main components - a carburetor and a generator and something else. They just left them there. I was over there in '53, and out where I was, in Townsville, Australia, in Northern Queensland, I said,

This used to be just loaded with vehicles as far as the eye could reach. They never moved a one

The guy said, "Most of them's still there." That kunal grass grew right up through then; you couldn't even see them. He said, "If you walked out there you'd be walking right on the top of them." [chuckles] He said the Aussies stole all they could and there were probably thousands . .

RM: But there were more than the Aussies needed?

NC: Yes - thousand of them. It was such a ripoff; I hate to see that waste. You saw it out here, too. [You had to bury things.] Even a light switch - you throw it in a pit there and bury it. That's something this country . . . it seems if you don't do it, then guys get laid off in the copper mines or something. They dig it out, and you use it little bit and throw it back down in the ground.

RM: Did you ever work in the shafts that they sank down there at Mercury -those big rotary drills or whatever they call them?

NC: No. After '58, I almost never went back out there. At the end of '58, old Eisenhower pulled all that money out of there because they were blowing it. So they kept all the deadheads and laid all the workers off. I went out here several times.

RM: Out on the flats?

NC: And I was out here the last time in about '60-some - that roller coaster job they had out here?

RM. Yes?

NC: I was the general foreman there for awhile. It's when your dad was fixing Bobby's place up there. Had a little Jeep - I forget what the hell - think that was the little boss - Jeep so . . . He wanted me to . . . I went out there to try to get your dad to core out, and he wouldn't go. I forget what that Jeep's name was - was probably a new one.

RM: You mentioned this mine out here at Lone Mountain - what was the name of it?

NC: Mexican mine. It was a silver mine and it's a small vein, but it's a fabulous hole. I'll show you some in a little bit.

RM: How big a vein is it?

NC: Oh, it gets down to about 2 inches - never gets much over a foot wide - it's in and out.

RM: What does it run?

NC: Right in the streak itself it'd go 600 and 700 ounces in silver. I set up a promotion there once, and it took me about 5 months sorting that ore. I shipped it, and I only had 2800 pounds and I had 11,000 ounces of silver in it. You use something like that to promote with, you see. Vic Smith had it, and he used that slip and went back east and promoted about 5140,000. But he came back here in town and gambled and drank half of it. I was a foreman out there - I put in about \$40,000 and did the tunnel and retracked it and built bins, and we were all ready to go, but then ran out of money. But I mined a little ore out, and it wasn't quite as fabulous as a lot of that, but it made a shipment to Millers.

That's when I went back to Mercury that time. I remember I was a powder man down there for awhile when they stopped the miners from loading the holes.

RM: You mean the miner didn't load his holes?

NC: No. When I first went down there, they were working when . . . after we drove that long tunnel. I went back down there and they were driving the drift around to sink that winze there at Rainier. I saw this guy drilling, and, man, he was pouring it to her - on a jack leg, you know, and it was hardly turning. Instead of easing off and letting it rotate, you know, spin and wash . . . I watched him and - he was a Mexican fellow. They got these holes drilled, and geez, that - to me, it just wasn't a round - it was just holes stuck in a face. They brought the powder in and everything, and I was watching, and goddamn, they never never took a blowpipe and cleaned the boles or anything. I said to this guy - and, you know, I'd worked in the Blue Diamond with one of them - I said, "Don't they blow the holes?"

He said, "I don't know." He was an operator below. He said, "I don't know nothing about that."

When they started loading it is when I stopped it. They took a piece of broken steel and were loading them holes with that.

RM: With broken steel! Oh!

NC: Yes. It was a long one, you know - they have 8-foot steel there and the retainer was broken off it, so they just used [chuckles] . . . And I told that Mexican, "You never want to ram iron down than holes, you know."

And he said, well, they don't have any other thing here to do it I said, "Christ, they're common as anything," you know - loading sucks.

But you'd think the powder outfits . . . they're lucky they didn't kill people. I started to chewing on . . . there was a guy who came in them, and he was a shift boss. He didn't know any better, either. Then they started that lead miner stuff so I was his boss, then. All I was in charge of was just the face there - just the lead. But - there were no blowpipes.

I went outside and made one - pretty near got run out of the camp for smoking it. I made it out of a plastic thing - that first one. Then I told them to get same 1/2-inch or 3/8 pipe, and how to make it - they're hard to make. You take and bend it like that and screw a valve on the end and you're ready. That's about all there is . . . They started using a . . . those plumbers or somebody got ahold of it. I said, "Well, any time my life's in jeopardy I don't give a goddamn. The President of the United States ain't changing my opinion of it. That's the way it was.

But this mine out here - there's still a lot of ore here. I sold it to a Chinese, and he's been making payments on it for several years.

RM: Can you talk about promoters?

NC: Promoters are good. For instance, nobody would have probably ever done anything with that mine I was talking about. The Chinese who have it now are promoters. They'll spend money drilling and doing assessment work and so forth and . . . what they pay me. And I have a partner in it - it's all spent right around here - so it helps. Without that promoter, it would never happen. [When I was working with Vic Smith] I told him about the ore that I had. He took an option on the property, and they gave you \$1,000 up front, I think, at that time. Then he hired me to sort it. I showed him where there was high-grade underground. I said we'd have to have machines, and he never had that kind of money. So I said, well [I'd go], through the dumps, and what I could get out of there - moil it out. I said, "If I could get enough of that high-grade out . . ."

That was his idea, too. He said, "So we could show something on paper, where we've made the shipment." It took me 5 months. Of course, he was paying me about \$500 a month, so I wasn't hurting. But he was having a hell of a time even getting that together. He'd gone back east to try to raise money, but he couldn't do it, because he had no production record or anything. So I got that 2,800 pounds - about a ton and a half. So we shipped to . . . Shelby was still going down here, and Frisco, and the AS&R. We shipped that high-grade down there, and that's we got 11,000 ounces of silver out of it. Of course, we sold it to them. The check was nearly that, too, because silver was a little bit better than \$1, and there was a small amount of gold in it. Then he had that return sheet to show what he'd got out of it. And actually the 11,000 put him even from what he was in it for at the time.

So he went back east and promoted this money, and I ran it for him for 5 or 6 months. After we got out, nobody did a damn thing there except drill. There are a lot of drill holes there, and they've come up with small ore bodies, and they're good ones, but what it needs is a mill

there. the [people who bought it] made a payment here not too long ago. They call me from Hong Kong once in awhile. Then they've got an office in Hawaii, too. It's a big promotion deal.

RM: Well, there's another type of promoter. There's the guy who's really trying to build the mine, and then there's basically a crook, isn't there?

NC: Yes. That's what happened to old Vic. He promoted all that money, and then he ran into other promoters who promoted him. They were locals, and they're all dead now - the whole bunch. They promoted him out of about \$100,000, telling him how he could do this and do that. I tried to steer him away from it, but he said, "Hell, I've known those guys all my life." they never stuck a pick in the ground. [If] they get your money, they aren't going to put it in.

RM: Were they trying to sell him mines?

NC: Yes, they got him interested up around Lone or something. But when his money was gone, they wouldn't even go see him. Anyway, he went broke by then and I took the mine back. The ones who are there now do their assessment work every year, and then they put a few - sometimes it consists at drilling, and other than that, they haven't done anything. They haven't taken any ore out or anything.

RM: Maybe they're just promoting.

NC: Oh, sure. I can tell because when they're talking to me on the phone, they're telling me about veins that: [gruff voice:] "Well, that one down .1m the north end run pretty good, didn't it?" Christ, I don't know of any vein in the north end, or . . .

And I say, "Well, I don't know it."

"Oh, yeah, well that's good." They've got somebody there listening to that, you see. He brought a busload of people out there and none of them could [speak English]. He brought a big bus, like a Greyhound - one of those lease things. There were 40 people in it. I was meeting him there, and I thought maybe a station wagon or something. So I had a truck to take them up farther. [When] they got to the mouth of that canyon, I said, "there's no way you could get that bus up there." They stopped it there and I said, "Now, I could take a few at a time up."

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

NC: I told him, "Hell, I'll take them up there." He said I didn't need to. Stan Kukuno's his name - he's half Hawaiian and half Japanese. He's a nice guy, and he's a geologist, too.

He said, "No, I don't think there'll be any need for that." And I don't think half the people could even understand the language. He brought them over here on this junket, and they'd been down Vegas gambling and all that. He took them up the canyon, and a lot of it's in the blue lime; it's all in the sediments. And sometimes it'll leach out and get iron stains, and there'll be a band in there 20 feet wide. And he's telling them they should see the ore structures go through here, and . . . [laughter] He didn't walk them up there 300 or 400 feet; he was really telling them. And some of them were jabbering and pointing. I didn't even know what he was telling them till he told me afterward. He said, "Hell, they wouldn't know. If you took them underground, they wouldn't know any better. But," he said, "the thing is, if they see any type of a privation or anything they have to put up, because they live there, it hurts your promotion." Oh, he's a real promoter.

God knows what he's promoted on it. They've got hundreds of claims surrounding me and they're damn near the only ones I could sell to. They've got 300, 400 claims staked around there. I have 5 in a line.

RM: But you have the ore.

NC: I have the ore. I have the bait; he knows that.

RM: So they just went in and staked all these other claims out to make it look good.

NC: Yes. It's a corporation called the R.C. Yee Corporation. I don't think it's Limited. And I know another that guy who's a promoter - Bob Steadman. He was with the Flying Tigers in China. That's how these guys got up in here. I guess he promoted the promoters; I don't know. He was with the Flying Tigers, and the last check I got was Flying Tigers, limited. It was a Canadian check. I knew him, and that's one of the reasons that Chinese man came in here, too.

RM: Why don't you go through the story of Round Mountain and your experience there?

NC: The first time I was ever there was around 1926. It was a nice little town then, and there were quite a few leasers there at the gold mines - the Fairview and the Sunnyside were both going. And there were people up in Jefferson then - the mill was going up there. It was before Gold Hill or Toquima or any of them started. The town of Tonopah was good in '26, too; my mother was still here then. In fact, I think they were out at Hannapah. But we went out there to visit some friends of my mother's. Or, she used to live right there when her brother was out there. We went out to see her brother and he took us around the mine. He had a lease in there; he made lots of money there. So that was the first time I was there. We used to go to Manhattan, too, quite a bit, at about the same time just for visits.

The first time I went out there to live was 1928. Gold Hill hadn't started then, either.

RM: Where is Gold Hill?

NC: It's about 6 miles north of Round Mountain. You can see it out there in the flat, kind of. That big gallows frame over a pit and . . . Homestake owns it now. I went out there that time, and I wasn't a big kid, but I was around the mine there, and I knew this big guy - Ewing - and he was the mill man. I was talking to Johnny and this boss came in and he said, "Hell, you're looking for a sample carrier. Here's a damn good one." I was 14 that summer. He never even asked me how old I was. But I was down in this place they called the mule raise. They had mules underground there. And they had passed a law that you had to bring that animal out every night. If you were down here in the 800, you had to drive a tunnel - or, a raise like that - they called it the mule raise.

RM: Oh, you couldn't take than out on the hoist?

NC: No. You see, it's pretty hard with inclines. So they brought him cut. But of course that tunnel was driven way out of the hill, and the 100-foot level would only be down there about 200 feet or less. So that aid mule would wind right around. Or you'd just turn him loose and he'd follow you. He'd go right out. Their barn was up in the top there. They had 3 of than in there. We'd go down into this level and pack those samples out, then pack a lot of than up to the mill. It was quite a job, but it was still underground. I mean, a little kid, you know. I worked most of the summer of '28 in there.

RM: When did you get your claims out there?

NC: I handled an estate there about 20 years ago. A guy owed me \$500, and some other people owed me about \$1,000, I guess. I was making a lot of money. Most people in town owed me; still do. [chuckles] ' I just figure I give it away, so I don't miss it. Anyway, this Johnny Henniburg owned that [claim]. He'd worked for a guy and he had a lot of claims at Round Mountain and he built a mill over there in Jefferson Canyon. It was called a shale mine there. Anyway, he got hold of that, and I guess the guy didn't pay him or something, so he took these 2 claims - the old Blackjack mane - it was the Monte Cristo and Shannon, but Blackjack was the name of it. Henniburg got sick, and I helped him out, and Johnny died. But he'd given me a quit-claim to the property; the deed to it.

His wife got sick right after that, and I told her, "Well, I think the mine's worth more than that." It was maybe \$1,000. I told her not to worry about it, because I didn't want the damn thing, anyway. Because I just about had it made about that time. I used to help her - whatever she seeded - and paid same of her doctors' things. I never kept track of it. but she wanted to know how much it was; her brother was caning up and he thought he could pay it. So I said, "Ah, give me \$500; I'll call it even."

And this other guy was there visiting - his name was Carl Ford. He said, "That's all you want for that mine?"

Or, I said, "Well, that - it's hers. I don't know what they want." But the brother came up, and he just didn't want to put up anything. The other guy said, "Well, hell, I'll give you the \$500 for it. I said, "Well, if it's all right with her."

"Yes," she said. "Fine."

Just a few days after that she died. I told the guy, "You get the \$500 up, and you can have it." But he wanted to do some work up there first, so I said, "Go ahead." So he just kind of took it over. Of course, I'd never given him the deed to it.

He monkeyed around up there quite awhile and he told me he thought if he had the deed he could take it to Colorado and get some money. He was from up around that Leadville country. I let him take it and he came back and had all that thing registered in his name. [chuckles] I don't think he was trying to pull anything crooked. But he got sick and then of course my lease . . . When I quit out there, they bought the lease off me, so I came

I was running this thing at Divide, then. He came in and was working for me to pay me the money. Damned if he didn't get sick and die. So the relatives - some of them knew about it - had me as administrator of the whole estate. You're not supposed to have it if the guy owes you anything. But that was what the deal was; that they would give me the deed to that property. Or, would fix it so I'd get the property back. There were 8 heirs, and it dragged on through the courts for 2 years. By the time it was done there were 32 - the others would die, and leave it to the others. . And they had a lot of claims in Jefferson, and I wound up, with all

I was doing the assessment work. I got in there several thousand dollars. One of the heirs was a lawyer, and he said, "Why don't we just quit-claim all this stuff to you for what you're in it?"

That was OK with me. I told them, "There's so many heirs in here, if I take this on it, and you take this paper and try to get their names on it and everything else. And none of them even give a damn about the mines." And I didn't want them, either. "But," I said, "you're not going to get it done."

He said, "Well, why don't we just let it run out, and then you relocate it." And that's how Galley got in the picture.

I had another company in there, and then they didn't do anything, so I told Galley, "If you want to relocate that all, and then quit a claim . . . I gave him the deal. I'd give him a year option on it. He said that he wouldn't quit-claim than back to me. He put than back in his name because he did all the locating. So I threatened him. I took the Blackjack back because by then gold started moving up well. And I knew that that streak . . . you can make a hell of a living out of it. But that silver up there, I wouldn't . . . And I never did anything about it. That company offered to put up the lawyer's fee and everything to take than away from him, or at least get 10 percent finder's fee. I took him up there. He didn't even know where Jefferson Canyon was, I don't think. But when he started to taking something that I figured was really good - then I made him give that back. He quit-claimed than back to me. I got it in there; it was recorded up here, but . . . I eventually sold it to the company, Dot it was a good property.

RM: The Round Mountain Company that's . . . ?

NC: Yes. It's just right against than, so it's actually a nuisance claim So them. But there is ore there. They figure they can pit that, too. it's part of the Fairview Mountain. They dickered with me for a long time even after they bought my lease. I had 2 more years to run on the lease, and I wasn't getting along with than, so I wanted to get out. So they paid setoff. Then they came to me and wanted to buy the Blackjack, so I said, Mat kind of a price?"



They said, "We'll give you \$10,000 cash. This is my real good [outfit] - this is like a tuxedo to most people. Of course, this is a little bit ragged.

RM: Yes, your shirt is.

NC: So I told this man - Knapp was his name - "Hell, I wouldn't sell you that for \$10,000."

And he just couldn't - he said, "We'll pay you cash."

And I said [chuckles], "No. Hell, there's that much ore I can see there, pretty near."

So anyway we got friendly. He'd come up there when I was digging that summer. I had a cabin there, and I'd go out for my mill and my 20 buckets of 1,000 pounds. I'd stay there till I got it full and I'd take it over. He'd come up there, and sometimes that streak - when you'd hit it right - you could] use just a regular old railroad pick or a pick-axe kind of - and rake it down like that, and you could see where you'd hit the gold. It was really rich stuff. At times it was in and out. But I'd take it all and take it over and mill it. I went clean through that whole summer milling and so forth, and they made me another offer one time - I think they wanted those lots downtown; I had 7 lots and about 3 on . .

RM: In Round Mountain

NC: Yes. I still have them. They wanted all of it and they got up to \$25,000, I think. I put all this stuff in the dore form - like that is in there?

RM: Yes?

NC: I had 70-some odd ounces. I figured it was worth \$40,000. I had it out at the cabin, and so Knapp came over - that's when they offered me 525,000. I said, "You offered me \$10,000 once."

He said, "Yeah, but we want this property with it."

So I took this big sack of this ore up and dumped it out there. I said, "You see that? Every bit of it I took out of that streak up there. that's \$40,000. And I still own the mine and the houses and everything. So," I said, "that's nothing."

"Well," he said, "maybe they'll go higher,"

So I told him I wasn't really interested in selling it. There's more are there yet, you see. But then I needed \$100,000, so one day I was out there and I called up Green . .

RM: Clark Green; yes. He was with the Smoky Valley Mining Company.

NC: Or he called me. So I told him, "I might want to talk on the Blackjack."

He said good, so I went over to the office and he and I and another guy talked. He said, "What do you want?"

I said, "\$100,000." And he just went in the office and got the check. [chuckles]

RM: Just like that?

NC: Yes. Or, he would've, but I said, "I don't want it that way. I wanted to change it to try to get some of that interest and income on time. So I put it into some other things. But they paid her right off. I could've probably said \$200,000. Then - I think it was the same day - he said, "What do you want for that property over there?" They were trying to buy the whole town.

"Oh," I said, "I don't know."

He said, "Well, put some kind of a figure on it so I can tell the big shots," actually, the owners.

I said, "Well, I'd at least have to have \$40,000 for it."

"God," he says, "it's a little steep. But it's up to you."

"Well," I said, "here's the way I look at it. right now," (I meant at that time) "I rent it for - \$425 a month I get off that property there." I have one 6- or 7-room house, and then my cabin's a 3-room, and then I have another small, 1-room cabin, and a trailer space. It's all income property. I said, "You look at that and in 10 years I'll have back and still own these."

So he said, "Yes, that's a long time." It's about 6 or 7 years now, so in just a few years, I'll have my money back and own it too.

RM: Are they going to open-pit the town?

NC: No, I don't think so. That ore kind of ends when it gets near where they are right now. What they'd want there would have been dump room and [space] for the rim of the pit. They'd have to slope the pit . . . to get any real depths in that pit they'd have to . . . So the town might be in their way.

RM: What are they going to do, then? Will they eventually have to buy it?

NC: Buy it or something. But it would be such a thing. The county collected taxes off that thing. But the BLM has kind of taken the land owners' part.

RM: Have they?

NC: Sure.

RM: Because there's that controversy about . . .

NC: There are guys like Berg, who have been paying taxes since 1906.

RM: Yes. And there's a legal question about who really owns the town, isn't there?

NC: Yes; that squatter's law and all this junk. If they had carried it through when it was started, it would've been all set. But they only went so far, and they'd change D.A.'s, and they'd throw it out. Anyway, I don't know what'll happen. They would've bought them at one time but right now they're not. I think they did a lot of drilling over there and found out there's really no ore there, and that they can still get that pit going the other way. Then they figure they'd have to sink shafts to get some of those different types of ore, like Type 2 and Type 3.

RM: What is Type 2?

NC: It's a lower grade, and a heavy sulfide ore. The old-timers knew it was all there but they couldn't mine it.

RM: How deep is their ore?

NC: Well, we were on the 1,200, and the Caine vein goes out towards the valley floor. It was heavy sulfide, but the gold content was so low that we couldn't think of it, and it would've had all the pre-milling process -amalgamation. But several guys sank a shaft down there about 60 feet right on the Caine vein where an ore shoot came up. And man, you ought to have seen the ore in that damn thing. It just cut off like that down there about 40 feet. It went into sulfide and then changed - lost the gold content.

To us, if the gold content ran .04 or .1, 1/10th of an ounce, we couldn't handle it. We had to have \$4 to meet millheads to handle it at all, and 1/10th was \$3.50. And now, they can run down to .018. Point-three [3/10th of an ounce] is high-grade there now.

RM And that just keeps going down?

NC: Oh, yes. We never bottomed it out. A. O. Smith came in there in latter years. They drilled it, but I don't know whether they put any holes down in there or not. I know the company put some drill holes down . . . you see, that 1,200 would actually only be about 700 straight through. So 1,000-foot holes could prove up. And then they sank a decline on that Type-2 ore, the one towards town, but it goes off towards the valley floor - it's the McKane vein. That's Type 3. They get complicated ores through sometimes. They get depths, you know. But I think they can do pretty well with Type 2.

RM: What's the Type 3?

NC: Well, they're sulfides, probably mixed with other metals that complicate them. Maybe you get cyanides in them that the cyanide won't attack. But by the time they need to get that there might be some advances in recovery systems.

RM: How wide is the ore body there?

NC: Well, it varies. For instance, the Caine vein at times is 50 or 60 Meet wide.

RM: I mean the body that the mine is working on now.

NC: Oh. I guess it's 1,500 by 2,000 or 3,000 feet long.

The main thing with a mine is, when you mine it out of that hole in the ground, before the ore hits the ground, get everything you can out of it. Because very few of them ever make it by the second shot at it. For instance, they had the ore, and instead of taking and getting what

they could out of it, they threw it on the dump because they were going to get it later. But don't they have to pick that up again and go through the whole process again?

RM So, it's better to get it the first shot.

NC: Yes. But this Simpson didn't want an old tramp miner like me telling him. And there were all kind of Ph.D.s and badges and everything. The only thing I got was from being wounded. [laughter] Anyway, I didn't care to go. It's a part of your life you kind of forget; you've had yours out of it; I can't kick.

RM: Curly, Solan Terrell said you're one of 2 or 3 guys in the area who are still working mines. Could you tell me a little bit about how you work?

NC: Well, my biggest kick comes out of going out here and digging in a little streak. If I can get 1,000 pounds of rocks . . . my little mill runs about 4 ton a day. I take it out there and I have a nice cabin. I just stay there and mill it up. I have ore there, but it got so deep for me, and I generally always work alone, so when I . .

RM: Where is your mill?

NC: It's out at Orazaba.

RM: Where's that?

NC: Have you been on the dirt road to Gabbs?

RM: Yes.

NC: It's 35 miles out there. Where you dive under that pole line, look right up and you'll see a mill and so forth there.

RM: Do you have water there?

NC: Oh, yes; I have a nice spring. I was up there in the early days and knew all about it. When I took my stuff out of Round Mountain, I took it over there and set it up because I wouldn't sell it. A little old rig like that, by the time you've put it all together, [runs you] \$40,000.

RM What kind of a rig do you have?

NC: First I run it through a grizzly and it takes it down to about 3 inch. And then I put it through a jaw crusher - it was made over here in the old foundry - it's just like a new one. I crush it there to about 1/4 minus; 3/8 minus, and then I have a ball mill down there. It goes through a feeder and then into that ball mill. It comes out of the ball mill, and it's one of those self-classifying deals I grind the 20-mesh then, and what doesn't go through a screen goes back in and gets

ground till it is 20-mesh. Then I go over a concentrating table; gravity separation table. take the concentrate from that, and most all the ore I try to get is this free milling.

I have a little batch mill up here on the summit in that old water reservoir. It's a small mill that will hold about 100 pounds. So if I run a ton of ore and get 100 pounds out of it, I take it up there and put it in that batch mill with quicksilver. And the little mill's . . . I have to add steel balls to it, and water.

RM: And it grinds it up and mixes it with the quick?

NC: Yes. And by the time it's done there, it's over about 100-mesh. It has an amalgamation table there, and I sluice it off and slime all the slimes out, and I care out with the amalgam. Then I strain that - pour it through chamois skin or unbleached muslin. I take the ball of amalgam and take it and retort it right up here. And then that's when I sell the gold. But if I want to keep same, then I melt it and make the dore.

RM: Who do you usually sell it to?

NC: I used to sell to Simmons Refining, but they're in with this Garfield Smelters - they're back east. Simmons was out of Chicago. But Englehard, or Handy and Harman. There are several I've sold to. But you've got to be pretty careful with that.

RM: They'll cheat you?

NC: Oh, some of them would be questionable, anyway.

RM: How do they cheat people?

NC: Well, if you ship sponge sometimes . . . I get my sponge hot. Anybody who works with quick knows that it starts evaporating at 600 [degrees]. By 3:00 there's nothing left. So when you get it white-hot, you're talking 1000 to 1500 degrees. I've seen times I've got it so it the gold's melted, so there's nothing left in it. And then you ship it and you get a shrinkage that's where they get you - with the shrinkage. If you holler, they claim it had quick left in that's disappeared. And nobody knows; they don't have to account for it. But if [their report] says a lot of it was silver or iron, you want to see the iron or the lead or so-and-so. But a lot of them will put it down as lead and zinc, because they'll fume off at high temperatures. That's what you have to watch.

But most of the big ones don't need to be crooked. Garfield's a big one - that's in Pennsylvania - and Handy and Harman. I don't know whether they have one, but they were in New York. They're down here in Los Angeles now, but they . . .

RM: Yes. Do they pay you a spot price for it, or . . .?

NC: Yes. On a 30-day period, most of them. You see, they'll compile that average.

RM: How do you ship it to them?

NC: Parcel post, or through U.P.S., and it's return receipt.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

RM: Could you talk some about Billy Douglas? You've mentioned him several times.

NC: Well, I used to live with them down here. He had 4 sons and a daughter. He was one of the promoters who was a good one. If he promoted a00,000, he could show you where he put it in, because he believed that he could put it in and make money, which he did. He was in on the Tonopah Belmont, and the West End, and the Midway. He used to gamble a lot and he threw his money away, but he put lots of her back in the ground.

RM: But most promoters skimmed?

NC: Yes, they skimmed it. He lived high, all right, but they had a modest home down here across from where that Foster girl lives - and Sotak and those people. It's gone now. He was a good man. If you went to him with a mine and he thought he could do anything with it, he'd get it on the market. He built that brokerage where the Senior Citizens' is.

RM: Oh - that was a brokerage place?

NC: Big brokerage. But he had one across the street there. There used to be quite a building in there and it all burned.

RM: Where the pizza place used to be; yes.

NC: Yes, that all burned out. Then he built the one, - or, I think, he had them both going. He was quite a man with stock. He was in on everything, just like that one there - it's got a Tonopah Divide; that was Wingfield's stuff.

RM: Oh - Tonopah Divide was Wingfield?

NC: Yes. He had the control of that company.

RM: So he was doing stock for Wingfield?

NC: Yes. I don't know what Wingfield was - president or something.

RM: When did Wingfield come back in here?

NC: When it was sold?

RM: It had a date on here - 1923.

NC: Oh, yes; he died in '29.

RM: Douglas?

NC: Yes.

RM: But Wingfield had interests in Tonopah, too?

NC: Oh, yes. Wingfield started the Divide strike. That was the main mine. It's a hell of a mine yet - that's where all that silver I showed you came from.

RM: Was Douglas a local?

NC: Well, either that or a native of Nevada. I [don't know] whether he was born in Virginia City or not, but his daughter Gladys was born here in 1900 or 1901. And Paula's dad - Belmont, or Bud, they called him, or Douglas . . . all of them were born here. [His son] Lee died when he was young; he got pneumonia and died. But Jack is a multimillionaire He owns the Cal-Neva and all that and part of the Maxim in Vegas. And Bob's a millionaire too, I guess - from his mining. But Bob promoted all his. He promoted money enough to get all that real estate and so forth around Reno.

RM: How did Douglas promote his money? By selling stock, or did he do it other ways?

NC: Selling stock. They'd generally set up a stock company; say a million shares. They'd sell you \$100,000 block of stock. I don't know what the value of that was - about \$1, probably.

W: It's 100 shares at a dollar each, so this would've been \$100.

MC: Yes - 100 - 1,200,000 shares. So you'd sell blocks of stock out like that, and sink your shaft, and the stockholders there . . . The stockholders in Divide started raising hell because they just kept sinking that shaft out there. They wanted to know what the hell goes on here, so it was just Wingfield's luck that he got down to 500 and they pretty near iced him to run a cross-cut, and he ran right into that big silver vein. That's where that ore came from you saw there.

RM: Out of that vein?

NC: Yes.

RM: Tell me about Divide. When did it begin?

NC: Well, that date there - 1923. '21, I think, was when they really started, and by '23 it looked like an oil field out there, for the gallows frames. You've see the holes out there in those things - everyone had a gallows frame. It was all stock.

RM: What triggered it?



NC: Well, it was Wingfield. Of course, the one on the top of the hill –the Gold Mountain, they call it - was old Frank Golden, who built the Golden Hotel in Reno. That's where he got the money to build that. It was running before Tonopah was discovered.

RM: You mean, at Divide.?

NC: Yes. The Golden and the Klondike were both going. Old Frank Golden went up there and he took all that money out of that one, so old Wingfield saw these 2 big strikes on each side of this and you could see the potential they had to promote. And Golden had good gold there, but they didn't know anything about the silver till they cut her.

And then this old George Ford down here found it right on the top. Just a little way from the shaft; you could pretty near throw a rock and hit it. He dickered with them, and they knew that he knew where there was some ore, but they finally give him a lease there. He took out ore like I've got right there; the same vein. In fact, I'd come right alongside his shaft. He missed a lot of it, too. It had a fault in there and old George missed her. He'd done a lot of work and right where he ran one cross-cut the vein had pinched to pretty near nothing. If he'd drifted on that one streak . .

RM On either way?

NC: Well the south would've been especially good. They took \$9 million out of the Tonopah Divide.

RM: But it started as just a promo deal?

NC: Yes. And then the next thing, there's ore all over that hill. A lot of it is still there. But it had that bad name of just promotion, and people were skeptical of it. Everyone who's ever had it never did anything with it.

RM: Why hasn't anyone done anything with it now?

NC: Well, the that last one was this Berg out here, and you can see the type of ore he left, so he mustn't have had many people that knew it. I can go, right there and say, "You're digging right there." And I'll just take this 3 ton that must have \$15,000 in. So they must've known what ore was. Once in awhile a piece would fall out and hit them in the foot, and they'd kick it out of the way.

I had a geologist out there the other day and he said, "You're sure this is it?"

And I said, "Well, maybe it ain't. Maybe it ain't silver." Hell, I found him one piece - like that one you can bend there?

RM: Yes?

NC: It's about that big around. Just lying all over that pit.

RM: That wasn't where Foote was, was it?

NC: NO, that was Berg. He had Falcon Mining Company. That's the one down below town here now. Or, at the Boss mine. But he got in there and just didn't operate right. You can see the thickness of that silver there; it's an inch thick. You'd have to soak that forever. Silver is a little tougher than gold, you know. They ran it through some of these . . . The McNamara mill was 100-mesh, and they got awfully good recovery; they had awfully good ore. And then the West End was doing it at the end. But of the mines I've seen in my life - and I've been in some of them around the world - I always knew it was there in Round Mountain. But you couldn't interest people in it.

RM: Is that right.

NC: They just couldn't see it. "God damn," I said, "you can walk for 2 miles square around here and find gold." And you'd take them around, and about half probably thought I made the trip first and put it there. And then Divide is the other one. I still think . .

RM: And do you think Divide could be open-pitted?

NC: Well, no. I still think it's an underground mine. But it's a good one because they have depth here. Christ, they still have . . . that Divide shaft's 1,400 feet deep and it's blocked out on 1,000. You followed that vein and . . . I used to have a lot of dope on it. It still would be fabulous ore right now. And from the 1,000 up to about the 800 - above the SOO - there's quite a bit of stoping done. She's all blocked out, just like it is down here in the Victor.

RM: Is there water in the shaft?

NC: Yes, the 1,000's your level there, too. And it was red-hot, that water. They scalded 2 young guys to death out there once in a cage. I think they were shaft men, or something. They were way down on the 1,400 or 1,200 and they got on that cage. When they first pick it up, the locks - or chairs, they call them - always, automatically, are just on weights; they fall out like that. When you put them in you've got a big lever you pull and it pulls that in. His cage was there and the young guys got on it to go to the surface. The water was just below in the sumps there. I don't know whether they were shaft men, or what they were, but they got on this cage and gave them the signal to go to the top, and as soon as he picked that up he picked it up enough - the chairs fell in and then he lost his clutch, and the guys . .

RM: Oh! He dropped them in the hot water.

NC: And I guess they couldn't get out of the cage very easily. Most bonnets are fixed so you kick them up, but, geez, when you get plunged in red-hot water like that your senses have probably gone . . .

RM: Well, Curly, how do they mine in water that hot?

NC: Oh, they eventually get it pumped out, and they have cooling systems, how. I've worked in those in Arizona, where they use refrigeration systems because she's too hot to stay in unless you're using them.

RM: If it drips on you does it burn?

NC: It's cooled enough then that it doesn't burn you. But the water at the Victor was hot, even after it went through the tanks and into the swimming pool. And in the winter you could see the old ditches that went down to the ranch - there'd be steam coming off them.

RM: So the 2 [big] properties you've seen in your life are Round Mountain and Divide, and you never could interest people in Divide.

NC: Well, I had the people I was working for out there but he was an oilman and gambling with the money. He had it all put up at one time - \$1.5 million. I was going to put a small mill - say maybe 100 ton at the most - preferably about 50, to start with. I figured I could run the dumps that were there at that time for 3 or 4 years and by then I'd have something developed underground. You see, the long tunnel that I drove from the other side - there's ore right there to go on through. But I'd want to develop more - get deeper down and get places open. I think I could've run for 3 or 4 years and he would have had more than his money back. I figured he'd been, in there about \$1 million; maybe \$1.5 million. He had \$1.5 million in the treasury to do it with.

RM: Do you own the Divide?

NC: Oh, no.

RM: Who owns it?

NC: A doctor owns it now. Loomis, I think, is his name. He doesn't seem to want to do anything. They use those things for write-offs, and that hurts people. The tax law has changed, and I don't know whether it's changed for the betterment of that or not. But the people I was in there with just got out. They got old, and just didn't want even to be bothered with it.

RM: So by the '30s the Divide was finished.

NC: Oh, yes, she went down when silver went.

RM: Were there a lot of people living out there or did, most of them live in Tonopah?

NC: Well, most of them. But there was a town there, and a hotel - restaurants and boarding houses . . . It was quite a little town. I guess there were 300 or 400 people there.

RM: Where did they get their water?

NC: They hauled most of the drinking water. And then up around from the Divide shaft there's some wells. I located that years ago and turned it over to this oil company; it's pretty good water. But they hauled most of the water and they had tanks up in the hills - they'd pump it up. Wash water and all that - came out of the mine there. But they never did any milling; it was all done in here.

RM: How did they get it here?

NC: On big trucks. There was no railroad there. But they had everything else out there: the power and the whole bit.

They had quite a hotel. I think it was about 3 stories high - a big old wooden structure that lay there for years. And then there was a big Chinese restaurant; it eventually moved in here. And Dave Coleman, who owned Coleman's Grocery. I think he was from Manhattan, and he moved to one or the other, and then eventually moved in [to Tonopah]. But he had quite a store out there.

RM: Did you work at Divide?

NC: Oh, no. The old-timers were there. I ran it for 4 years [later]. Then I drove that tunnel for a dredging outfit for dumping income. I cut a lot of ore with it, too. They wouldn't work it; it was all write-offs.

RM: Was it good ore?

NC: Oh, pretty good gold ore; yes. I got clean in there and we ran one cross-cut - went way over and cut the foot wall to that gold vein and it was good. And the one ahead - it would still be good mill ore at say, \$5 silver. It's mostly silver ore.

RM: Does the country rock run?

NC: No, it's damn near blank there. That piece I showed you out there in the yard - with that gold all through it? I think that's out of a gold vein there. You hit stuff like that and you don't need many tons of it . . . And they had it. For that oil company, I took out about 14 tons and 18 tons - say 30 tons total - and it was worth \$58,000. That's what they paid me. That was their ore - they paid me the whole thing just so they could get the billion. They had it refined and gold was maybe \$4,000. And this Joe Waves of Neaves Petroleum ran it. I said, "Hell, you don't need to give me all of it." Because I had a little mill and everything.

Well he said, "I don't know where else in the world I could go and get some guy to mine my own mine and even take it out and put it where I could refine it . . ." I'd given him all sponge. He paid me about \$40, but it was all velvet to me, because he was paying me \$1,500 a month to run the mine.

RM: When was this?

NC: It was about 1970, I think.

RM: Wm long was that tunnel?

NC: Well, I drove it in '59. It was about - there are 2,000 feet of workings there - but the first lick I went in the hill damn near 1,000 feet and it came back out and ran that long cross-cut. And then I did some more

RM: And you cut ore in those . . . ?

NC: Oh, everywhere.

RM: Why hasn't anybody gone in there and started working?

NC: Well, they won't work underground anymore. It's just like the old Sunnyside. That's all they could see, was unde underground. They wouldn't take it. When this outfit - gold - went high enough . . .

But they don't follow it through. If something doesn't work, fix the Goddamned thing, or something. But they'll just . . . Out there at Round mountain it's the same thing. It goes on and on - just like 35,000 ton of waste on a dump? That could be tested some way a little cheaper than that. They [think] everything's ore here, but it's not all ore. Divide's the same thing. That's why I want to go underground. I've never really tried to interest anybody.

RM: So you couldn't go underground, because you couldn't get miners?

NC: You couldn't get anybody. But even with my small mill, where I do it all myself . . . That doctor wouldn't give you a long-term lease and you have to have a long-term. Neaves wouldn't [do a long-term lease] either. They were just interested in dumping money.

I was talking to the younger brother there. You see, this is John Jacob Astor money and they've got it running out of their ears anyway. Joe Neaves' wife was on the Titanic - she was 12 or something years old. I think she may be living yet - in L.A. When I was working for them, her older brother died and left them \$56 million. So they don't need money; they just juggle it around. Joe Neaves monkeyed with stocks and everything, too. Well, with the Astor money all of them did. He just wanted that bullion. But I told him, "Hell, you don't need to give it to me." I didn't think I'd ever see another poor day, anyway, at that time.

But, "No," he told me, "That's the reason I do it." So several years went by and I hardly ever heard from him. And finally gold hit \$800. I'd quit them and I was working for myself.

He was sitting on all the bullion. He said, "It was still all yours anyway, regardless of price." But what that bullion's worth . . . Well, his brother told me the other day it was still worth over \$1 million. So a poor guy could've hit something like that in 30 tons.

RM: So the 30 tons was worth \$1 million?

NC: Well, the 30 tons to me. He gave me the full value out of it –\$58,000 - plus \$52,000 in wages. I walked off there maybe - after taxes –with \$80,000 or \$90,000, which was damn good money. I had enough. But after it went up - like now - I think his brother told me about 2 or 3 months ago . . . I said, "Whatever happened to that bullion that Joe had?"

He said, "I'm looking right at it." He's got it on his desk, just stacked there. It's not that much, you know. A 14-inch square piece of gold is a ton, you know.

RM: So how big was it?

NC: Well, he's got it in several bars; it's quite a few ounces.

RM: And he just keeps it on his desk.

NC: Yes.

RM: Where's that?

NC: In L.A. They live in the Chamber of Commerce building there - rent the whole upper floor. If we had the money they pay for rent there . . .

RM: We'd be OK. And it's Astor money.

NC: Astor 'Money - John Jacob Astor. Yes, she was his daughter. The last I'd heard she was out of it, pretty much. She's up in her 80s; damn near 90. Her brother was 90-some. But he was a pretty good-sized guy when the Titanic went down. He was probably maybe 14, 15 years old. I think she told me once that she was 9. But she remembers it just as well . . . people screaming . . . She said she saw her dad on the deck, waving goodbye. She said it wasn't when it went down, but they knew that it was going. [There was] the mother, and I think there were 2 or 3 kids. He got them on the ship and the boy, or someone, tried to pull him on there, and he wouldn't go. He said, "No, warren and children first." That was John Jacob Astor himself. There was a story on it on the TV the other day.

Robert McCracken talking with Norman "Curly" Coombs at his home in Tonopah, Nevada - December 6, 1989, and January 3 and 11 and March 21, 1990. This is a supplement to Mr. Coombs's oral history. In this supplement, we will focus on Round Mountain, Nevada.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Robert McCracken: Curly, why don't you start with your earliest recollections of Round Mountain'

Norman "Curly" Coombs: First time I went there was 1926, when I was just a kid. But I knew these old cowboys like Jack Stebbins He found it, you know. A lot of them say [it was] Lou Gordon and all that, but Jack Stebbins found that mine. Jack Stebbins didn't think it was gold, because they have cube-type gold there and it looked like a pyrite. He had the little ranch there in the head of Jefferson Canyon called Healey's Park -he lived right there. He hung paper on it and went down and finally old Schmidtlein traded him that old Stump Ranch, which is the R.O. today, for that mine.

But Schmidtlein was old Lou Gordon's real dad. He had a daughter and a son, and he couldn't take care of them - his wife died. So they were adopted out by these Gordon and sent to fine schools and all that. But [Lou] Gordon was a promoter and mine owner. So he came back to this country, and it seemed he didn't have much use for his dad, but when they found out he had this mine, it seemed like things changed. Old Gordon took it from there, really - about 1906 or a little later.

RM: What year did Stebbins find it?

CC: About the same year, but he didn't have it long. Once he hung paper on it, it was probably good for 90 days or something. But he would've hung onto it, he told me afterwards, or I . .

RM: Do you know the circumstances under which he found it?

CC: Well, he was just roaming around. That's a prominent thrust there.

RM: What do you mean, a thrust?

CC: From a volcanic eruption. It throws it up and it goes through the solutions and the minerals and makes the gold. And it just sticks up like a sore thumb. Oh shit, this camp, and Goldfield . . . right today, with our knowledge of geology, it'd be nothing to find these places. That's first thing you look for - a pointed thrust. That was one, right there - Mount Oddie.

RM: Oh, it's a thrust.

CC: Yes. And then the ore lies in . .

RM: Basically an intrusion?

CC: Yes. And it's kind of the center of a caldera, or something, and the ore's right there. Of course as I say, those old guys didn't know that. They just panned and looked for quartz and whatever.

But anyway, Jack Stebbins saw this metal there, but I guess he'd done his location work, so he probably did all of it. There's another hill right alongside called Stebbins Hill, but he found it on the Round Mountain side.

RM: So he found it on the mountain.

CC: On the side of the gold Round Mountain. But they're both right there together. I took a fortune out of that one, just a little ways from where he took it. They left it as a shaft pillar, you see, and old Gordon gave it to me and I took it out.

But old Jack was up there in Healey's Park, and the same day that this guy. . . . He was in Healey's Park and old Slim Morgan came along. And he'd stay up there; an old prospector, you know. (I knew him well.) Old Slim saw that doorstep there and he said to Jack, "Where'd you get that?"

He said, "Oh, over here in the hill." He said, "It's pyrite."

And [Slim] looked at it and he said, "It ain't pyrite. That goddamned thing is that cube gold."

So old Morgan and he went over there that afternoon - it was 3 or 4 miles clear out there. They probably went horseback. And when they got there, old Schmidlein is there. He'd seen that diggings, where they dug that goddamn hole. Stebbins was a cowboy, so he said to him, "I'll trade you that goddamn ranch down there for . . . "

RM: That'd be the R.O. Ranch, now?

CC: Yes - where Emma Rogers moved in. That was his niece, you see. So he traded it right there. Schmidlein supposedly shipped just the dump of that goddamned thing and got \$30,000 out of it.

RM: How big a hole was it, by now?

CC: Well, it's 240 cubic feet assessment holes, there. That'd be, what -10 ton of rock. Well, it'd be more than that, because it would've been in place - 20 tons, say.

RM: And he got how much money?

CC: Thirty thousand dollars. In those years, that was like \$30 million -or about \$3 million, anyway.

RM: Right. How big was the ranch that he traded for it?



CC: Oh, it was a nice ranch. It eventually developed into the big thing it is today. Emma Rogers had it, and I . . . But Schmidtlein kept the Schmidtlein ranch. He hung onto it for a few years and then when Gordon heard what he shipped of that, then he moved in. Gordon was over in Goldfield, promoting, so he went over and took her from there.

RM: Did Gordon pay his real father for it?

CC: Well, I imagine . . . that might've been where the money went to develop some of them ranches down there, too. But Gordon took it from there, and it was a hell of a producer.

RM: So that was the initial hole on Round Mountain.

CC: Yes.

RM: Then did a lot of other guys come in then? It must've led to a big rush.

CC: Yes, there were claims all around there. See, and then this Morgan's friend come in there - name of Jack [Blackjack] Raymond. And, I eventually wound up with those claims; I sold them to the company that's there now. But old Blackjack moved in, and Morgan and all of them; they all made a little money out of it, all right. Oh, it was staked for miles around there at that time. A lot of it patent, I think - there were 44 patents right in there.

RM: Is that right. Was the ore on the mountain itself?

CC: Yes; right on her.

RM: Was any of it away from the mountain, at all?

CC: Oh, no. I got some right here - I'll show you. I had specimens that weighed, 6, 7 ounces.

RM: So these specimens that you're showing me, here, are cut and kind of polished. And they're from Round Mountain?

CC: Some of them are - that one is from Round Mountain. See the gold all through there?

RM: Yes. That one doesn't look cubed to me, Curly.

CC: Well, now, this one isn't, but I had some that were goddamn near square.

RM: Does that have a name - a special kind of gold . .

CC: That's cube gold. It's a gold crystal But it's the same fineness as this gold is, right here. These were streaks like this, up on the top of the hill - quartz streaks. I've seen some of them

where you couldn't break them. Or this one, you probably couldn't, because the gold holds it together; it's inside there. You see a lot of gold in this.

RM: What was the initial hole called?

CC: The initial claim there was the Sunnyside.

RM: Did he have more than one claim?

CC: Well, I think . . . Jack just had the one. But then when Wichita went in there, there was . . . I had leased, one time, the Sunnyside and the Sunnyside number one, and the Great Western and the Great Western number one. They were the best four there, and I had them, tied right up; sold to Echo Bay Gold.

RM: Did Schmidtlein expand it?

CC: I don't think he did a hell of a lot to it. He made that shipment, but according to old Jack, he had his wagon right there, and he told him, "What the hell are you doing?"

He said, "I'm sacking this ore."

He said, "Hell, this is my claim." So he showed him the stake up there; it was just a rock monument, in those days.

RM: But I thought you said that Stebbins had staked it.

CC: Stebbins come up to him, when he was loading the ore. He told old Schmidtlein, "What the hell you doing? This is my claim." Then when they saw the face, he said, "Well, shit, I'll trade you that ranch for it." So that's how it happened. He did it because he didn't really think it was gold yet, according to what old Morgan told me. But Morgan knew it was. Morgan got right in there, too; he was partners with a lot of them.

RM: And you knew Stebbins.

CC: Oh, yes. Where I knew him first was out here.

RM: Out where?

CC: Well, I was raised right out here about 7 miles. If I showed you where it is, you'd think a person couldn't exist there.

RM: Is that right. Seven miles north of here - what do they call it?

CC: Frazer's Wells.

RM: And you were raised there?

CC: Yes, the first 7 years of my life. We had goats and cattle. It was a hell of a place there - saloon, dancehall . . .

RM: And your father worked in the mines here in town.

CC: Yes. my-mother got it to get him out of the mines, because she knew it was killing him. But it didn't work; they still stayed in here - my dad and uncle - working.

RM: Your uncle's name was . . .

CC: Dumble. My mother and her [brother] stayed in town, most of the time Of course, they had two kids, too. But since she died - I don't know, in 1924 or something - was about the time we left there. We sold [to] the United Cattle out there. They've still got it there - it's in that Pine Creek Ranch operation.

RM: What do you know about Stebbins? Where did he come from, or what kind of man was he?

CC: Oh, he had an old, old family here. They care here in the [18]60s.

RM: Were they miners?

CC: No, cowboys. And they married in with that Rogers family. That's where the R.O. name comes from - first two letters of Rogers. Emma Rogers took over a lot of Stebbins' stuff. Mrs. Darrough, Luther Darrough's mother, was a Stebbins; another sister. This Irene Zaval who came out there . . . They had the old ranch and the stuff up in Anderson or Moore's creek. They had a mine there, too - the old Anderson mine. A rich son of a gun; the El Dorado. And he raised a big family on just what he took out of there. Because they're stump ranches. [In this country, to have a "Rancho Grande," all you needed was a cow and a tree and all you raised was a stump.] You can grow a lot of food, but you've got to have something to buy clothes and stuff with. But he raised a big family there; that's old country. My great-uncle was assessor of this county from 1872 to about 1878.

RM: What was his name?

CC: John Glidden. That was my mother's uncle.

RM: And Sid Glidden was one of the heroes of the Belmont fire.

CC: Well, that was his nephew - my mother's uncle. He lived in Jefferson, mostly, when he was assessor. That's just around the corner. Belmont and those places were going during the Civil War or right after, so they're real old families.

RM: Was the ore that Stebbins found sticking out of the ground?

CC: It was right there - an outcropping. I found pieces right on the

RM: That were just gold, sticking out?

CC: Yes, still on the ground; just fell . .

RM: A few feet?

CC: And that was 30 years after they found it, pretty near, I guess.

RM: Why didn't anybody find it earlier? Because there was a lot of activity up there.

CC: I don't know. A lot of them figured that this was the one that was the Breyfogle.

RM: Oh; is that right.

CC: And the gold stuck out there like that. There was another type, like this. I know people who are supposed to have seen that Breyfogle ore, and they claim a lot of it was that cube gold. They figured he'd found it, and you know he went goofy along the valley there, someplace. But Jesus Christ, that number one shaft was sunk right on that thing. It's called the Lost Gazabo vein.

RM: OK, let's take it kind of in steps, on how that mountain was developed in terms of mines. We have the first prospector - Stebbins

CC: Stebbins first, and then Schmidtlein and then Gordon took it from him.

RM: And this was all in a very short period of time. Meanwhile, who else was coming in there?

CC: Well, most of the companies that come in there was formed by Gordon -Round Mountain Mining and Fairview Mining. And then, of course, Blackjack Raymond and those guys came in there in latter years. But I don't know where those claims that he got came from. They called it the Blackjack; I called it just the Jack. But it was a fan there about that thick - richer than hell.

RM: Two-and-a-half inches.

CC: But it'd go in and out on you, it'd get so goddamned small. But I made \$100,000 one time, so I guess that's . . .

RM: Is that right. How did Gordon get so much of the ground? There must've been a lot of guys coming in, staking it.

CC: Well, he was on the ground floor. Slim Morgan got in pretty good, but he kind of went this other way, up to one called the Blue Jacket up and around there, where Gordon went clean over the hill. And then he owned the townsite, too, with assessment claim. Those are called the Gordons today. He went that way, and Slim and [some others] got up around the Fairview Extension and so forth. But he'd take those guys in and form a company and give them so much stock, and he stocked those companies. But eventually he wound up [as] the Round Mountain Mining Company, and then he eventually got the Nevada Porphyry.

RM: OK, so Gordon quickly consolidated. . .

CC: Most of it; yes.

RM: Where was he getting his money to do all that?

CC: Promoting it; stockholders. He'd stock these outfits; it was easy to do in those days. And he'd stick it on the board and sell stock.

RM: By what year do you think he had it pretty well consolidated?

CC: I'd say by 1910 or 1912, somewhere around in there. But they mined for several years and then it started getting pretty lean around there -pretty tough to make it - so he let it open for leasers. It was in 1926 that I went there. This one guy's sister was a friend of my mother's, so we went out there to see him; Eddie Critchfield was his name. He'd been working at this Peavine Ranch. We went there first and they said, "No, he went and moved to Round Mountain He got a lease over there." So we went there and we knew the other fellows - miners - they were neighbors of ours down here [in Tonopah]. And I saw this specimen, but it didn't interest me much in those days. But anyway, they were making money left and right on this stringer there.

RM: On a stringer of gold.

CC: Yes. And they were shipping . . . the mill was there and everything. The miners would make a big stake and they'd be going on these running drunks and big parties and wouldn't work, so Gordon told them, "You either work or you'll lose your lease." And they lost that son of a bitch. They'd have come up rich if they'd have stayed with it. The company came in there and they drifted on that same vein - it's a stringer.

RM: Describe a stringer, Curly.

CC: Well, they're narrow, though they can get some width.

RM: They're narrow by a half inch.

CC: The stringer - yes - will cut across these veins. The veins there are north dippers. There are about 4 or 5 veins in Round Mountain, and these stringers cut across them. Wherever they cut them, then generally the intersections are good; they make bodies of ore in there. I took a fortune out of there. If I told you how much, you'd say, "fuck you," and leave.

RM: [laughs]

CC: They cut down, but I'd get on those and if it didn't go down, I'd go up on it, and hit a flat like that, you see - all 3 of them together. And Jesus, I had gold in . . . Well, most leasers in those days, [if they'd] say, "How'd your ore running?" you'd say, "Oh, \$4 or \$5." They meant a pound, not a ton.

RM: No kidding.

CC: Oh I had a lot of it. On the 800 it was \$14 a pound when I took off that. . . . You don't get the big amounts, but you don't need much, then.

RM: Now, the veins that you said were north dippers were running what direction? East and west?

CC: A lot of east and west; yes. And then these stringers are damn near vertical stringers.

RM: OK, now were the veins ore-bearing?

CC: Oh yes. They were low grade.

RM: How wide were they?

CC: Well, the Lost Gazabo was over 100 foot wide. That's what they're mining today.

RM: What was the typical vein?

CC: Most of them were about 6, 8 feet wide. But there's one called the Automatic vein. A big fault goes through there, and it'll get 50, 60 feet wide, too.

RM: Good lord.

CC: And the placer . . . they were all in and out.

RM: Now what were these veins running typically in terms of values?

CC: Well, nowadays it's good ore, but in those days, if it ran . . . they could mill \$4 rock.

RM: Let's see, that'd be about 20 hundreds?

CC: Well, see at \$20 gold, \$4 is a fifth of an ounce. Let's see, about \$80 rock, now.

RM: What was their range in size of the veins?

CC: From about 4 to 50 feet wide. They were long, strong veins.

RM: And were they quartz?

CC: No, they were in the porphyry - some quartz and hematites. You had stringers of hematites through the . .

RM: OK. And then you had hematite stringers that were cutting these veins?

CC: Yes, hematite and quartz, just like this is a stringer.

RM: OK, this specimen you're showing me.

CC: That was lying right vertical and cut a vein. And the main part was to find that flat.

RM: OK, so these stringers were running quartz and hematite, and they were running values, too?

CC: Oh, Christ.

RM: I mean before they hit the junctions.

CC: Stringers were generally real good all the time, but they weren't big enough - they were so narrow.

RM: What were they running, themselves?

CC: Well, when I was there, stuff like that would be about \$5, \$6 a pound. But you'd stay there damn near all day to get a pound, because you've got this solid rock on each side. But they bared a lot of them, and once in a while they'd hit little pockets out in the country rock and make a little ore, too.

RM: OK, so these stringers are cutting the veins. Now, I don't understand what the flats are.

CC: Well, a fault is what it actually is. This was already there, like this. It needed one more solution to make something. So the solution came up and hit this flat, and then . . .

RM: It's a horizontal fault kind of thing.

CC: Yes. It needed one more ingredient or movement to make this. They can make gold, you know, but it costs them more than it does to mine it. But nature made it, and it's their way of depositing . . . You had to have certain pressures or . .

RM: So basically you got a 3-way junction there and then it really . . Describe the pockets that you would get, Curly.

CC: Well, I traced this one . . . that was called a Harry Hills stringer where Critchfield and the Ewing boys (they're brothers) were on it. I went down in that thing and the company did a lot of glory-holing around there afterwards. But I got up in there and I could see where there was a fault there. This old guy named Harry Hill was a friend of mine; I worked with him on the placer. He was a cable splicer. They set stone boats and derricks down there to handle the boulders, and he did all that. In fact, he built the big tram from the . . . Sierra Gorda - 11 miles of tram. He built all that cable thing. He was a friend of Gordon's, so Gordon got him over there. Gordon was in the Sierra Gorda before he came . .

RM: Where's the Sierra Gorda?

CC: Over up out of Big Pine, at Keeler. That's where their lower bin was - right at Keeler. They'd load on the railroad.

RM: In the Owens Valley.

CC: Yes. It runs up in those hills. But anyway, Gordon got old Harry Hill over there and in those days we never had a road down into the placer pit. Kids worked in the placer - all the young guys - you know, they'd leave work in the summer. Old Harry Hill was going up that hill one day and he showed me where he took a portion, he said, right out of that cut, there. So then I could see it. It faulted down this way from where those guys were. But Harry'd throw it all away. He was working on cables then for Gordon and he said he seen that in old Gordon. But Gordon told me this himself. He said old Harry came up and said, "I'd like to get a lease on that where this Sievers was digging." And Sievers was a miner, but he didn't keep the pan in his hand and check his values all the time. But Harry had seen the ore in the dump, and he was an old miner.

"Ah," [Sievers] said, "the goddamn stuff ain't running very good. I earned about \$20 or something. Just bean money," and all this. So Harry says, "By God," he says, "your dump looks pretty good. . ." "Nah, there's nothing in it." He wouldn't even go look.

So Sievers shipped and then quit his lease, so old Harry asked for his lease and the dump ran over \$100 a ton - and this is \$20 gold. Old Harry said they tried to tell Sievers, even offered him . . . (they lived in Jefferson). He said, "Goddamn, they're up there mining silver." He says, "Cal, come on down and go in with me - anything," because Harry was a good guy. But he took \$750,000 out of that cut. That's in those days, you know.

So old Harry was showing it all to me, and after I grew up I got to looking . . . it faulted down that way. And then there was a little shallow diggings up in here, and it looked like that same crack that comes through there. I got to monkeying around there, and I started getting pannings and I took thousands of dollars out of right there. It was another reverse fault, or a



chunk that looked like these two. The vein was up here, and a big chunk slipped down here. That's what Harry got. But the one that was left up there was a sharp one; then it got all busted up. But I took a lot of money. It'd get 3 or 4 inches thick and it would run \$3 or \$4 a pound all the time.

RM: How far apart were these veins on the mountain, Curly?

CC: Well, this thing here never really had a vein. A lot of them called it the Glory Hole vein, but it really never had any. I've got a lot of maps upstairs of these things.

RM: If you had to just kind of say about how far apart the beds were as they ran . .

CC: Well, about 50 feet . . . like the Placer vein and the Automatic, I guess. But they converged on each other over on one end there.

RM: Which end was that?

CC: The east end. They weren't really that good, but it's where they're getting a hell of a lot of this rich ore now. That's the old Placer vein, and the intersection is down in there and the Neubaumer stringer comes through there, too. And that was the good ore.

RM: So they're 50 feet apart, or something like that?

CC: Yes, 50 to 100.

RM: And they're really not parallel; they're kind of converging.

CC: Yes, they're pointed right in, and then when they go towards the valley they kind of spread out and disappear.

RM: And then about how far apart were these stringers?

CC: Oh, they were about 100 feet apart. The real good ones, like the Neubaumer stringer and the Placer vein stringer and the Indian stringer . .

RM: Not all the stringers were good then? What do you think accounted for that?

CC: It's just the way the solution got right and made in there.

RM: Was there any way to predict which stringer was going to be good?

CC: A lot of it probably was [that] the sulfide maybe at one time got in there and the replacements oxidized out. And some places it's just like this pure gold, and right next to it, you can't get a panning. See, right on that one piece.

RM: Did you have a way to predict which stringers were going to be good and which weren't? What were some more stringers that were good? The Neubaumer, the Placer. . .

CC: There was the Hill stringer, too. They named it after old Harry Mill. That's where it came across in there, too. There were 3 good stringers.

RM: How many good veins were there?

CC: Well, the Mariposa wasn't too good, but it was way on the north side of Stebbins Hill. And it dipped into the south; then they had another one next to it that produced, and it dipped this way.

RM: What was it called?

CC: One was the Mariposa, and another was the Caine vein. But your main one was the Lost Gazabo. Old Stebbins found it. But it's gone down like this. It's dipping to the north and the Mariposa and the Keane dipped to the south, so they figured there'd be an intersection. The intersection's what makes all your ore.

RM: So when these veins intersected, then you got good stuff.

CC: Most of the time, yes. That's [where] they sunk that shaft thing to the 1200 and drifted back in there to get those connections, and it didn't work out. It just wasn't that good of ore. There were some spots, but it had to be where the stringers were. But those stringers . . . the Neubaumer goes clean over through towards town there.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RM: How far apart were the stringers, now?

CC: Oh, they were several hundred feet apart But there were a lot of them that weren't named that would still make ore at times.

RM: Yes. But these 3 that you've mentioned are the main ones, weren't they? Then how far apart were these flats that you got?

CC: They could be any goddamn place. It was hard to tell. They might be 4 feet apart, and then they might be 30 feet, see. That's what hurts the poor guy, you know. If he keeps a-raising on that son of a bitch, or sinking, trying to get that connection, and it isn't always there. I've seen times when I'd make several thousand out of one pocket and put it all back in and never get nothing. But I came off real good there. RM: Now, describe what a pocket would have looked like - when you get this conjunction of 3.

CC: Well, generally it seemed to me like the richest part . . . you'd get that one there [veins] and this one [a stringer]. When you got that flat right in there where the 3 of them converge, you go out there 3 or 4 feet . . . oh, hell, there are some in town here that are that thick of solid gold, going 2 or 3 inches.

RM: So it would be 3 or 4 feet around this thing?

CC: We came off my lease there that was damn near 2 inches thick. A chunk like that weighed 22 ounces of gold. But, then we'd feather out . . . but sometimes you want to keep going. As long as it keeps showing value . . . it'll make little swales like that, sometimes - full of richness, you know. Then sometimes right in the vein part you can get 30, 40 tons maybe . . . get a good mill run out of it. I had a little mill there.

RM: How were they treating the ore initially, when Stebbins and these guys . . .

CC: Well, they had stamp mills - amalgamations - and I used the same thing. I used the ball mill.

RM: Were the mills right there locally, or were they shipping it somewhere?

CC: One was right there. You took out of the NUmber One shaft and dropped in through the crushing system right there. You could throw a rock from the goddamn mine shaft to the mill.

RM: Where was Stebbins' initial discovery in terms of the mountain here?

CC: There was the Number One shaft on the south slope; that's why it was called the Sunnyside - sunny side of the hill. Where the Sunnyside went down the Number One shaft, and he wasn't 40 feet, there's a big glory hole. They took a hell of a lot of ore right out of there. And that's

why the mill was built there. They built the mill right there and they'd tram right out of the big glory hole into the mill. Then they eventually sunk on it and worked underneath. But what I got was that shaft pillar that they needed to support the shaft. Then I followed another pillar back in there, and Jesus, I had wire gold that was that long.

RM: Five inches?

CC: Four or 5 inches. You'd pull it. It'd just squeak whenever . . . it looked like a piece of cable in there. They were hooked together and you could pull them apart. Oh jeez, it was beautiful stuff. A lot of specimens ....

RM: How high up on the mountain was the Sunnyside, initially?

CC: Oh, it was about halfway up from the bottom. They've got it pretty well shaved off now.

RM: Does the country rock run there?

CC: No, not too much. But, they're probably getting the micron gold out of it that those old guys wouldn't even look at.

RM: They can take 4/100ths gold or something, can't they?

CC: Oh, yes. It runs \$10, \$12 a ton to make it.

RM: Would the country rock run 4/100ths there?

CC: No, not all of it. Some of it's barren.

RM: Well now, what was the next development?

CC: Well, they went over around that Number Two shaft.

RM: Where was the Number Two located?

CC: It would have been east. But it was a sheeted zone over there. And the only thing that was of value was in the seams in the rock.

RM: What does the "sheeted zone" mean?

CC: It's just blocks; big blocks.

RM: Oh, OK, there weren't the stringers and so forth?

CC: The stringers were in it, but no veins. They went right up against it within an andesite structure. They went up against it and it just didn't make there. It threw it down the hill, but with the Writer Two, they'd blast it, and then they'd crush it to 2 inch and then screen it, and the screenings were good. Oh, they took tons of ore out of there. Then before they sunk the Number Three, they went down to the one called the Sphinx, and there was a glory hole there where this Automatic in the . . .

RM: Now, the Sphinx is a separate mine?

CC: Yes. But Gordon owned it, too. And then he had the Gordon shaft, and that's on the Gordon vein. There was another vein down there called the Gordon vein. He took quite a bit out of there. And then eventually they were pretty well mined out and they went with a Number Three shaft.

RM: Where was it located?

CC: It was down right at the base of the hill, right below the Sunnyside. But it was on the Placer vein. And the Placer stringer came out of there, too. That's what made it rich; they sunk damn near in the intersection there.

RM: Now, now how deep were these shafts?

CC: Well, the Number One went to 1200. .

RM: That was the Sunnyside.

CC: Yes. And the Number Two shaft . . . they went down about 100 feet and they'd pull all this stuff into the shaft and hoist it. And they had the screening plants and the crushing plants and everything, and they were screened and trammed right to the mill; it wasn't too far from the mill. So they only about 100, 150 feet, but they started sinking, and I think they were damn near to the 300 to get down into where this Placer vein . . . and this stringer came in there, I think. No, the Indian stringer - one of the main ones. (I couldn't think of it :before[.]) The Indian stringer came in there, so they went in under Gordon's house down on the 800, and they hit the top of that son of a bitch and they just sank right on it. They went down 1160 feet. And then they drifted back out of the hill, and it's where they got this big circular shaft that's in the Lost Gazabo, where that big vein is, you see. In places it's a little over 100 feet from foot wall to hanging wall. Oh, it's an awful cavity in there.

But they're sinking a spiral - they're going down 8000 feet with that. It'll take that long to get their depth. And they're right in there where we had to quit, because we hit the sulfides, and [with] amalgamation, you can't handle sulfides, just straight gold. I knew of that being down there all the time. I'm probably one of the only few living who worked in there.

RM: Tell me about it.

CC: I was just a kid . . . oh shit, that was rich.

RM: Was this in the '20s?

CC: No it was '33.

RM: What was it like?

CC: Old Gordon and the others were having a hell of a time till they hit that winze. But he made us a deal (and I was just a kid) that if we stayed with them . . . he said, "We have no money left in the treasury at all." And he had about 30 miners there. (Or maybe less, but my dad was one of them.) But a lot of them left because he said, "We have no money." And he said, "but if we can hit this thing, I don't know how long it's going to take to get in where we figure this other intersection would be." Their geologist had it figured out pretty close what would happen. And he said, "It should make a hell of a pipe of ore in there." A lot of them are just dreams, you know.

RM: And was it a dream?

CC: No. I wasn't doing anything that summer anyway, so I said, "We'll give it a shot." And he said, "In a couple of months we should be in there," and they were in there in around 60 days. You worked every day then - 7 days [a week].

RM: How many hours a day did you work?

CC: Eight. That was a state law even then - 8 hours collar to collar. My dad stayed, and quite a few of the guys stayed. But a lot of them quit, because he said, "If we don't make it, we'll sell all this mill and buildings and machinery off, and we'll get enough to pay you." So you couldn't lose, if you had enough money to carry you over.

The Depression was on, and I thought, "Shit, young kid would have a hell of a time, if he didn't. . . ." If you were 30 and didn't have 12 years' experience underground, you couldn't get a job, hardly, so I stayed there. And that's how I used to get by with murder out there. We'd cuss each other, do everything but come to blows, but all I had to do was show up in the dump. I had a job, you see, because I stayed with them. There were 2 or 3 young guys who are dead now.

RM: OK, you had the Number One here on the Sunnyside, and then the Number Two was farther to the east. Now, where is this big strike you're talking about in relation to those?

CC: We went down the Number One shaft to the 800, to an incline.

RM: Which way did it incline, Curly?

CC: It circled around for over 3000 feet.

RM: Oh.

CC: You got clean back, you hit the Automatic, and you came back this way.

RM: OK, so the incline was going out to the west . .

CC: The incline was sunk to the north and drifted to the west, then you drifted and circled clean around, and they hit this . . . it was an intersection of the Automatic vein, and the Gazabo vein and the Indian stringer. And the Indian hit them there . . . right at the collar of the winze was rich. Oh shit, you'd see them blast her and it'd hang there. There was one called the 800 winze. It was already 800 down. So then they . .

RM: So then they put a winze on that? OK.

CC: And they sunk on that. . . . Of course, it looked like they were sinking away, but they weren't. You got twisted around in that thing there - see where they circle around. So they went down on it and goddamn . . . it went from the 800 to the 975 and they took \$1 million out of that.

RM: Wow. Just out of the sinking's?

CC: Yes. They sunk right in this hot spot, and then it veered off and went more to the east again. There was another station called the 1060 and then the 1165 was the bottom. They were rich as hell, but it didn't bottom out the vein.

The values got poor, but they went into sulfides. In lots of these mines, as soon as you hit the sulfide zone you're done, because the values . . . if it continues with the values, you're good; it'll turn you good for a hell of a thing. But if there were low values in it, then they couldn't recover it. They drifted in there and it went into the sulfide, and that was about the end of her - in 1935. That's when he let A. O. Smith come in there.

RM: Now, what was this stope called?

CC: The 800 winze. But those stations were 975, 1060 and 1165. They were hot, and bad ground son of a bitches. There was no air down in there.

RM: They were dry, too, weren't they?

CC: Yes; no water.

RM: What kind of mining equipment were you using, Curly?

CC: Just regular drifting machines - old crank machines. It was a regular Ingersol drifting machine. But you'd take it out of the shell and put handles on it and it was a jackhammer. I've

got 2 or 3 of them out there in the shed. That's where one of them comes from; I even used it there. In fact it's older than I am. I can't throw it away, it made me a million bucks.

RM: [laughs]

CC: I took over a million out with it.

RM: With that machine?

CC: Pretty close. I probably bought a new one after . . . I've got it yet, too.

RM: There must have been a lot of dust in the mine then.

CC: It was pretty dusty, but I always watched it.

RM: Did you worry about silicosis?

CC: Oh god, I've seen half my family die of that. How do I know I don't have it?

RM: Out of Round Mountain?

CC: Round Mountain wasn't too bad for dust. There's quartz there, but . . .

RM: Not like Tonopah, is it?

CC: Not like Tonopah, no. This is 80 percent silica. But I wouldn't mine here [in Tonopah]. I did a little bit, but I got the hell out.

RM: How did you move your ore underground?

CC: We had mule trains on the 800.

RM: You had mules down . . .

CC: Yes. They lived in there at one time, but then the state law came in, and you had to take them out every night. So they tried those mule raises in there like that . . .

RM: What's a mule raise, Curly?

CC: It's circular, so he can walk up it.

RM: Walk up to the surface?



CC: See, like that. But they'd get into Belmont here . . . I used to see them with one they called 01' Jackrabbit. He'd walk right in the goddamned cage and walk right up to the boards and stand there like that.

RM: Stand on his hind legs? Is that right?

CC: Yes. He had a kind of a cleated board there.

RM: So they'd take him down every day?

CC: Yes, but he was already blind from being down in the darkness. He was around the streets here [in Tonopah] when I was a kid. We'd give him beer and everything.

RM: His name was Jackrabbit?

CC: Yes. He was colored like it - a gray color. He wasn't a very big mule. Jack and Eldred more and I used to (he was an old-timer from an old family from Smoky) . . . and Eldred was on a mule and I was a swamper, and we had [a mule named] old Jack, and he could see. He had a carbide lamp, hanging on his head, but he got so you had to put it on the side and the son of a bitches were hard to put it on him because he'd take it and scratch it off his head like this [nodding his head to the side]. If you weren't watching him, he'd run off in the mine. That mine is riddled with holes. There are miles of [workings]. But he'd knock his lamp off so you couldn't look for a light. We'd have a hell of a time finding him sometimes. He'd be up there and you'd just see . . . it was like that old bastard was smiling. And at other times he'd sneak off and go to that mule raise and go clean up to his barn. He could open the gate of the mule barn. He'd reach clean over there and pull that bolt up with his teeth. A smart son of a gun. They had to put a nut on the other end because he'd open it and let the other mules out and they'd run away down the valley. He was just like a human, that guy.

RM: So a mule raise is a corkscrew affair so that they can walk out? CC: Yes, and they could bring them in. If you went out of the hill on the 800 you'd goddamn near come right out to the surface, so then they'd drive that hole and then he'd come out there and then he had a trail to take them out of the Placer pit right up to his barn.

RM: How far up on the mountain was the Number One shaft?

CC: Number One was about halfway up.

RM: So when you were on the 800 you could just come out horizontal and come out at the foot of hill?

CC: You could at the end, after South African Gold took all that placer out of there. When I brought that ore, I had a hell of a deal on the 800 right in the old 800 station - the main shaft. I

used to tram that out with a 3000-foot tram. I trammed that clean out of the hill in that dump right there.

RM: You had to push a car 3000 feet? Good Lord, how long did it take You?

CC: Oh, quite a while. If you got a couple cars a day you were pretty well worn out. I could get 3. It was a small streak but these are richer than hell. But I made a lot of money there. I took the rich stuff out, you see. And before I fixed those old workings so I could come out the hill, I used to just walk up that 800-foot [incline] shaft. I tried to stay there till I figured I had about \$1000 worth of gold in my pocket, see. Of course everyday you didn't, but then, when you did dead work, you didn't make anything. But the old air lines were still good. I cleaned them out and used them. The goddamned compressor quit on me sometimes, just after you'd start drilling. I'd have to walk all the way up. . . . When my wife was there she could just stay there.

Anyway, I'd wind that, and I must've had 50, 60 tons stored down there. It was good ore, say \$100 rock - middle rock. When I first had that, my mill wasn't even set up. That's when I set the mill up; I had these bunches of ore all over. I got a little batch mill up here, a thing I think I told you about.

RM: Yes, you did.

CC: I'd make that bullion with it. That's all I used. I could make \$100,000 a year with it, no problem.

RM: Curly, was that mountain basically bug-holed then, or how would you describe it?

CC: It's a porphyry and rhyolite thrust that just pushed right up in there. It's a rhyolite plug. And then the porphyry, of course, is damn near the same stuff.

RM: And if you get outside that plug, there's no values?

CC: Not much, no.

RM: What was the country rock that the plug came into?

CC: Mostly andecites. But if you take where the plug drove up in there..... the geologists figure it stuck up 2000 foot higher than it is [now]. It rotted off, that's that rich placer.

RM: OK, tell me about the placer; I don't know anything about that.

CC: Well, it rotted off from that vein. There's still good placer all around the base of the hill.

RM: On all sides of the mountain?

CC: Every side except the one where it goes over on the ridge by the Fairview, because it never got a chance . . . . But on each side . . . there's a little on the town side. The lower end is damn good. I've seen a lot of it \$16 a yard there - that's goddamn placer.

RM: How deep was the placer, there?

CC: Well, that was what stopped them. It's got so damn much overburden it's no good on top.

RM: Oh, there's overburden on the placer?

CC: Yes, and it just rotted off. Like that Automatic vein, it's a big fault - gets mixed with it - and it's just like this caliche here; a greasy mess and you damn near have to mine it. Well, they mined a lot of it in the Number Two shaft. They drifted right out into the placer and right there. It was as rich as the goddamn veins were there.

RM: What did the placer run?

CC: It was pockety just like the hill, but I've seen. . . . It wasn't very thick on the townsite. It was only about that thick - about 3 feet deep. But over there it gets several hundred feet - on the other side -but there'd be 150 feet that are no good and you've got to do something with that. You can't work it as a bulk unless you take that all off or work it underground.

And if you get right up to that, a lot of it's just granite sands that washed in there. At one time they figured that hill was covered with granite and lime, but I don't think the lime was ever there. I never did see it. But the granite sands came off of the side, and probably had a lot to do with eroding it. It rotted all that stuff down there, and the granite sands probably would wear it and it would stay down low. And then years later, when it quit eroding, the granite sands and so forth built up over it maybe 100 feet or more thick.

RM: And that's how thick the placer is out around the base of the mountain?

CC: Well there're places 30 or 40 foot thick. It isn't all that good, but there are pockets in it, too. There were some awful nuggets taken out of there. I always did say, I've tramped around this world pretty good and seen a lot of diggings in my life, but this is the biggest goddamn mine that I ever seen.

RM: Is that right?

CC: Well, there's gold everywhere. I'd say, "Where in the hell else.. . I don't know whether you've been in the places I've been, but there's 2 or 3 miles around here that I take and I can show you free gold like this." "As long as I could get on Round Mountain (I used to say that all the time) I'll never see a poor day." I never did, either. I'd go in there broke after the big wild wingding, you know, and throw it all away. And I could go in there and in 3 weeks, sometimes, I'd [have] money again. I could always go up and get a few pieces of this, grind it up and take it

to old Blackjack and sell it. I guess that's why I never had shit. I always figured, "Shit, it was gold." Like that's part of the land. But it's still there, there's gold.

RM: Why did your dad work in Tonopah when he could have worked there?

CC: He came here in 1903 as a young miner.

RM: Oh, before.

CC: Yes. Oh, he liked Tonopah. He just didn't want to get out of it. Had a hell of need that wouldn't . . . went to Grass Valley once and he just wouldn't stay. That's where he was heading when he came here; heard about this boom. He and my uncle, Sid Glidden who was in the Belmont fire.

RM: The initial operations on the mountain were hardrock, weren't they?

CC: Yes.

RM: When did they start the placer there? When did they discover it?

CC: Old Drywash Wilson - Tom Wilson - came over there and founded up around the Fairview Extension claim there - a placer mine.

RM: When was that?

CC: I guess about 1908 or something. He got in there and he got some claims right at the base of the hill, too. He located placer over the lode or whatever - I don't know how.

RM: You can do that?

CC: I guess you can do that. I never have done it, but they do it. I think if you're in there first with the placer they can put a lode claim over you or something like that. But if you just take the surface rights . . . . There's one shaft there at my house you can look at. It's a little farther than that one away across the road; it looked right at Drywash Wilson's shaft. He sank a shaft through this poor stuff down into the rich gravel, and then he was mining the placer in there.

RM: It would stand well?

CC: Well, one thing about it . . . if you try to wash it. . . . They had hydraulics in there at times, and it couldn't cut that stuff. But if you blasted it, then he'd take it down and wash it. It'd break up good from the blast. Old Drywash Wilson was a famous placer man around the country - Round Mountain and Manhattan.

RM: Do you know anything about where he came from or anything?

CC: No. His grandson was here a few years ago and wanted to know and I said, "No, I just seen him a few times." He was an enormous man. Eddie Critchfield knew him, he said, when he was a kid. Old Drywash had water over there at the shaft and he said he had a cabin just a ways from me. He would pack his drinking water and cooking water over to the cabin from the mine. Some guy came up there on horseback one time and he said he was asking old Drywash Wilson where something was and Drywash was packing two 5-gallon cans of water like that. "Oh," he said, "right up there." He never even took the cans out of his hands, he was so big and strong. He just pointed right up there with the cans.

RM: Wow! [laughs]

CC: Oh, he could do it all right, I guess. Old Eddie said he was there. He used to work for old Drywash. You didn't know Critchfield, did you?

RM: I don't think so, no.

CC: He was raised around here; his sister lived right there.

RM: Well, other placer miners must have come in pretty quickly, didn't they?

CC: Oh, yes, they. . . . There are some pictures, I think, in this. Those guys up there. They used to do that ground solution up there. You fix up all up your riffles and stuff and let the weather . . . in the winter, your snows and everything. When it melts you get your little ravines built right down into one place. It brings the gold off, and you fix it so there are drop-offs. I had them fixed up there, and every year I'd go up there and clean up. An old guy taught me that when I was just a kid. He was sniping up there; he never even had permission, but they just let him go. They didn't give a damn.

RM: Were the placer people making any money?

CC: Yes, they could do pretty well.

RM: Were they making as much as the guys doing the actual mining?

CC: Well, one thing about placer, it's healthy as hell.

RM: But this couldn't have been healthy; they were underground weren't they?

CC: It's still not as bad, but it's dangerous as hell.

RM: You mean because it can cave in.

CC: Yes. You just hit those pockets of granite sand, and jeez, it'll run like water. That's where it seemed like a lot of that good stuff . . . it isn't always right on the bedrock, sometimes it makes up in that thing there.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

RM: Curly, we were just talking about the Cornish people, and you were telling me they weren't very religious. Why don't you talk a little bit about that?

CC: Most of them worked underground. You see, County Cornwall in England is right on Land's End. The only things there are mines and the sea, so they either wound up as sailors or working in the mines, and it seems the mines paid a little better. That's where most all the miners around the world came from - Cornwall. They worked in the tin mines for years and years back, so they'd ship them all over the world. They were experienced miners. They ran the big mines in South Africa and Australia and here, too, so they got around the world pretty well.

Well, they're not atheists; so they believe, like, in the Ten Commandments. But they figured if everybody lived up to them you wouldn't need anything else.

RM: Do they believe in God?

CC: Well, kind of. It varies.

RM: But they're basically not really Christians.

CC: Well, they believe in what they can see, I guess.

RM: Yes. And you said they weren't big on Christmas.

CC: Oh, no. They just figured, shit, if you can't have a good living all the time, why wait and save up all year for one day. I look at it that way, too. You know, Christmas is such a letdown to me. I see these people get so pumped up, and when it's over they're down.

RM: Yes. You mentioned that one of the reasons they weren't very religious was the Crusades.

CC: Yes, they figured the Crusades took all their young men out of the mines or off ships and such and sent them over to save the Holy Land from the Turks, or some goddamn thing. It was all religious bullshit to them. Leave that in there.

RM: [laughs]

CC: It is to me.

RM: Yes, yes. Curly, last time we were talking about the founding of the Round Mountain mine. I wanted to review it, because when we were talking about it, it was all so new to me. I have a little written account of the founding of the mine. Now, who was the guy who . .

CC: Jack Stebbins.

RM: And the information you're giving me is information that Stebbins gave you, right?

CC: I didn't know Stebbins too well, but I knew Slim Morgan, and he was a friend of Stebbins. He was the one who I was telling you saw that thing against the door up at Stebbins' little stump ranch there in Healey's Park. The ranch is still there in Jefferson Canyon. Morgan asked Stebbins where he got that, and some of it was cube gold. The prospectors would light at those little old stump ranches and stay and maybe help the rancher with his cows or something, and get a grubstake. He'd load up his grub box and . . . Old Slim asked Stebbins where he got that, and he told him, "There's a hill out there sticks up out of the desert." It was just around the corner, about 4 miles from where they were at.

And I guess Slim had noticed it. So he said, "Jesus Christ, that ain't . . ."

But old Stebbins said, "It's iron," because it looked like pyrite cubed. Old Slim was a prospector, and he said, "Hell, that ain't iron. That son of a bitch is gold." So the two of them got some horses and went out there, and when they got there, old Schmidlein was on it. Stebbins had hung paper on it when he found it, and they dug a location hole, and that's where this rock came from.

But Morgan said that on the way over, old Stebbins said, "It ain't going to do us much good, anyway, where I got this, because I traded it off to Schmidlein for that . . ." where the R.O. Ranch is right now. But it was just a stump ranch - nothing, you know. Anyway, they got over there and Schmidlein was there, and he was loading up the ore that old Stebbins dug out of this little hole here. He was supposed to have gotten \$30,000 out of just that one hole. They located around there, but old Schmidlein got the best of the claims.

RM: What kind of a guy was Stebbins, when you knew him? How would you describe him?

CC: He was just an old cowboy. His relatives are still out in there, like Rene Zaval. I think he was their great-uncle.

RM: And how old was he when you knew him? Was he a really old man?

CC: Yes, a real old guy. '26 was the first time I was there. But I think I knew him over here when we had this old ranch and he was riding with Ben Rogers. He was related to the Rogers, too. And Billy Rogers married, I think, Jack Stebbins' sister. And Luther Darrough of the Darrough's Hot Springs - their mother was a Stebbins, too. There are a lot of relatives out there.

But anyway, old Stebbins was riding with Ben Rogers, who was Billy Rogers's son, and he was a pretty old guy then. I think that's where I saw them - out here at the old freighter's wells. But we'd be talking in the early '20s then. I think he might have been gone when I was in Round Mountain. I don't think Stebbins ever realized a hell of a lot out of it, though he got that ranch.

RM: Was it a big ranch?

CC: No, shit, even when I was a kid it wasn't much. Emma Rogers had it, then, but they had all that grazing land. It's still called the R.O. -that's after Rogers. And it still runs way down below



Coaldale and then around back. And it goes way up the valley, clean up to the highway over here - all that country off in there.

RM: Immense.

CC: Oh, yes; grazing land. It's the big one that the Zimmermans got, but now they went bankrupt on it. The banks have it now.

RM: Is that right? I didn't know that.

CC: Yes. They were out to the mine . . . my mill and stuff are on that grazing land. But they don't do anything to . . . I told them they could have the overflow of my spring, and I'd make sure their troughs were full, because there's nobody there in the winter and that's when the cows are down in the desert. But there's no feed there at all, now.

RM: Curly, tell me about Slim Morgan. You knew him better, right?

CC: Well, his wife ran a restaurant there - she and a woman named Josie Feeder.

RM: In Round Mountain?

CC: In Round Mountain.

RM: Do you remember what the restaurant was called?

CC: I think they just called it Josie's.

RM: Oh, you knew him through the restaurant and his wife.

CC: Yes. The restaurant was on the street there on the corner and you'd go . . . I stayed right here [Tonopah] in a rooming house with my dad, and that was the Tippens - [they were related to] the people who have this new gas thing they're starting down here. Do you know Rich's place down here?

RM: Yes.

CC: That's all Tippen Gas, now. And these gas prices are going to hell, but I don't know whether that's a solution or not. But it was this kid down there . . . his grandmother had that. I was just right there, so I knew Slim. He and my dad used to shoot the bull there quite a bit.

RM: Tell me what you know about Slim.

CC: About all I ever saw him do was just prospect and hang around the restaurant there, and then he'd take off. He had an old truck, and I guess he'd get back in the hills, prospecting. He

was awfully friendly with old Blackjack Raymond, who had the Blackjack Mine there at Round Mountain - joined the company. That's where most of the high-grade was bought and sold.

RM: Out of the Blackjack?

CC: Out of the Blackjack, because it was the same type of gold and everything.

RM: Oh, you mean when the high-graders would high-grade out of the company mine they would sell it . . .

CC: Take it to Blackjack, because he could sell it to the Mint. It was the same type of gold, you see. They can take any gold, if it hasn't been melted, and they can tell right where it came from. So there was a good . . . that mine had a production of several million. And shit, I owned it and we're still getting payments from the company from it.

RM: You owned the Blackjack?

CC: Oh, yes. They still make me payments. There's good ore there but it's so damn little that you couldn't produce \$1 million out of that, and you'd have a hole 10,000 foot deep.

RM: [laughs.]

CC: But I've taken some pretty good money out of there.

RM: Was Slim an old man when you knew him?

CC: I'd say he was, maybe, in his 60s.

RM: This would have been in the '20s.

CC: Yes.

RM: Do you remember anything about his character, or anything that stands out?

CC: He was a quiet guy - a big, tall, slim guy. His first name was Luther; Luther Morgan. He was a quiet guy, and he was a pretty serious kind of guy. But I don't think he ever made any big money there. He might have sold some claims to Gordon and [his associates] after they came in there, because the ranchers all had that ground - Dixon and the Rogers and junk like that. Well, Schmidtlein was a rancher, too.

BM: So, they staked it out after . . .

CC: . . . after Schmidtlein. They had it all, and when Gordon saw it. . . Schmidtlein was his real dad, you know.

RM: One account I read said he was allegedly an uncle, but you're convinced he was Gordon's father. What's your source on that, Curly?

CC: I don't know just who told me the story, but I know it probably came from the Rogers.

RM: And you're convinced that that's the case.

CC: Oh yes. They said that apparently the mother died or something, and he couldn't take care of the 2 kids so he adopted them out and these Gordons adopted him.

RM: Where did the Gordons live?

CC: They were back in Virginia, or somewhere. I don't know what they were doing or how they happened to do it, but . . .

RM: So Gordon then came out here where his real father was.

CC: Yes. Well, he went to military schools and such; he was well educated. But he came out there in the Goldfield boom, and he got into promotions. He was out there when Goldfield boomed, and then he found out this old, Schmidtlein . . . you know [how] stories get around. You get near people who knew, and shit. . . . So when Schmidtlein died he left Gordon all that stuff. But Gordon went out there. (And he had a sister, too.) That's a hell of a mine you know, so old Gordon moved right in there then.

RM: After Schmidtlein left it to him.

CC: Yes.

RM: Did you know Schmidtlein at all?

CC: No, but I knew George Schmidtlein, his brother. That's probably where everybody figured . . . he would have been an uncle of Gordon's.

RM: I see.

CC: But old George - I don't think - ever admitted that old Gordon was any relative. Gordon had that military training, and he was pretty surly sort of a guy.

RM: Oh, did he go through VIII?

CC: VMI; yes.

RM: Is that right? You knew Gordon pretty well, didn't you?

CC: Oh, yes.

RM: Tell me about him.

CC: He was a good guy. He was just surly, you know. A lot of it may be related to that military training. But I got along with him. We used to fight like hell, but I didn't give a goddamn - still don't - for anything. If I can't have my way, you go your way and I'll go mine. The way I used to figure then was, "You're young and strong. I'll be inside eating pie when you're licking sweat off the windows."

RM: [laughs]

CC: But, it doesn't always work that way.

RM: Yes. How, old was Gordon when you knew him?

CC: I guess he was about 60 when I first met him. He died when I was out at the mine in 1960 something, and he was 80-something. I knew him in the '30s.

RM: I see. You didn't meet him in the '20s like [Slim Morgan]?

CC: He was around there, but I really didn't know him. But I worked in the mine there when I was just a kid. I was 17 when I really got to know him; that was in 1931. I remember . . . we used to pay a poll tax here; everybody paid \$3 a year. We were in the office, this Indian named Rutabaga Bob and I. Fleming was the bookkeeper and he says, "When was ya born?"

I told him, "1914." I said, "I don't need to make that out anyway. Hell, I'm only 17 and you got to be 21 to . . ."

Old Gordon heard it and he came out from office into the other office there and he said, "You're working underground, ain't you?"

And I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Put him down for taxes, then." So you knew it was either take it, or . .

RM: [laughs] So the employer collected the poll tax?

CC: They had to take your date and place of birth and everything. I remember I was sitting there, and there was this old Indian. I don't know if I was riding him, and we were to go home from the mine. I was waiting and they asked Rutabaga Bob, "When was you born?"

And he said, "In the spring." (He could hardly read or write.)

RM: [laughs]

CC: And they said, "In the spring . . ." That's all he knew, so he wrote something down there. And he said, "Where was you born?"

And he said, "In Smoky Valley." You know, it's 300 miles..... He didn't know where .

CC: But see that was the only tax we had. I think we paid \$1 for industrial insurance.

RM: So in the '20s you moved to Round Mountain with your dad, and you went to school there and he worked in the mines?

CC: Well, when I first went there we'd just visit people. My dad wasn't there till '28, and I think that's when they started Gold Hill. It was a mine on the north side from . . .

RM: And he was working at that mine?

CC: Yes - when they were putting it together, building the benches for the mill and so forth. They needed miners.

RM: How did he happen to go out there? He'd been working in Tonopah, hadn't he?

CC: Well, Tonopah started dying.

RM: Oh, '28. That's when it really was going down, wasn't it?

CC: Yes. It started to go down. The Belmont and the Mizpah went together on that Tonopah Mining and the Tonopah Belmont was a joint venture here in Gold Hill.

RM: Why hadn't Gold Hill been developed earlier?

CC: I don't know. It stuck out like a sore thumb. It was pretty low grade and the veins are narrow, but there's . .

RM: What do you mean by narrow?

CC: Oh, 18 inches. And a couple of the veins went bad. It's like most veins - they're in and out. There were 4 veins there, and the day . . . Well, they just couldn't pit it. They could nowadays, I think, but they couldn't in those days. They had to just take out parts of it. But it ran for 4 years there and it produced quite a little.

RM: Was your dad working for the companies here in town and they just sent him out there?

CC: Well, they all knew him and everybody there was at Tonopah, pretty near

RM: Why did you go with him and not stay in town? Your mother was here, wasn't she?

CC: No, she left here in '28.

RM: Oh, I see - it was just you and your dad

CC: Yes, so that year I worked underground out there. I was only 14. I was just packing samples; it was a simple job.

RM: That would have been in the simmer?

CC: When school time came . . . that was one of Gordon's things - you went to school if you were school aged. I came back that fall and went to school in Tonopah. I lived with the Douglasses down here.

RM: That'd be Billy Douglas.

CC: Yes, but he was gone, then. I think he died that year or next year in the spring. I think he died in the spring of '29. But he wasn't too good then. I stayed here through that winter, and then I tramped around the goddamn country quite a bit.

RM: At 15?

CC: Sixteen. I was in the merchant marines and I sailed all . . . You couldn't go to work, see . . . I think they killed two young guys who were playing on the cage, so they made a law that you had to be 18 with your parents' consent or 21 without it, to work underground. I think that's still in force. And that threw all the young guys out who weren't 18. But my dad give me my choice out there in about '29. I wasn't going to go back to school, and he said, "Well, you got your choice, you can either work, or starve, or go to school." I didn't want to go to school, and I didn't want to starve, so I took off and that's when I joined the merchant marines.

RM: How did you happen to get in the merchant marines?

CC: I went down to San Diego - knew some people down there.

RR: Did you go down there with the intention of going into the merchant marines?

CC: Yes. I knew some of these people from here, so I went down there and got ahold of them. One of them was in an office there - the McCormick Lines was a big line in those days - and I got in there. So I sailed around for about a year. Then when I came back, I was 17. That's when I was out there with the old Indian.

RR: How did you get in then - you were still under 18.

Cr: Well, they didn't know how old I was. But Gordon knew. When I told him 1914, he heard it in there. He said, "You're, working underground, ain't you?" You know, in other words, "You lied about your age." And then, I didn't want to get my dad in trouble, either.

RM: Yes. Which company were you working for then?

CC: Nevada Porphyry. It was about the time, I think, that Nevada Porphyry was formed. It was always Round Mountain Gold or something like that before.

RM: But Gordon still owned it, right?

CC: Oh, yes. He took over all the [other] properties there, but he didn't take over the Blackjack.

RM: Tell me about the operation there when you started.

CC: It was good, efficient mining. The history of it is, every time they went to big open pits and glory holes she went down the tubes. She'd goddamn near close down because their millheads had dropped . . . The chloriders - the guys who take out just the ore and leave the waste - their ore would average around \$57 a ton and that's at \$20 gold. That's pretty near 3-ounce stuff. But Gordon just couldn't say, "I'm paying them \$4 a day to steal my gold." He couldn't stand that. But if you went up and drilled the whole country and shot her down, you couldn't high-grade it, and he lost what little he . . .

RM: So he wanted the open pit to stop the high-graders.

CC: Yes. But he'd lose all his good miners, too. If you're high-grading you take some and leave some, because that company's got to operate. They operated at a profit all the time, because it's a known thing; if you catch a guy stealing more than he's producing, you run him off. You don't wait for the company to catch him.

RM: I see. So a guy has to always make sure that he's producing more than he's stealing.

CC: That's it; take some and leave some. There's a lot of stories here. As I was telling you, the Cousin Jacks, or Cornishmen, are not too religious. My dad never had a religious bone in his body, but he was honest to a fault. I said to him, "You're always pouring this honest bit on me all the time, but you're taking old Gordon's gold, or stealing it."

"Oh, no." He said, "You don't call that stealing, there." He said, "God put that there and, the first one that gets it, it's his."

RM: [laughs] It didn't matter who owned the claim?

CC: No, God put that . . . [but he] said he never believed in him.

RM: Yes. [laughs]

CC: And another [saying was], "Well, you take and you pick it down in the face and jeez, you get a hand . . . I've seen at times - you could hardly raise your hand for the gold weights in it. You take the gold like that in your hand, and you know it's the company's. But you throw it up

against the back of the drift like that, and what stays up there is the company's, and what falls back down is yours. That's the way they used to figure.

RM: When you started there at 17, was it open pit then, for Gordon?

CC: Well, they had one of the gold pits open, but they were just sweetening it with the other. Actually, the chloriders were keeping the goddamn pit running.

But when Gordon was just about down the tubes, he'd turn around and go shut the glory holes down. But you see, when you're chloriding like that, you can't make tonnage a lot of times. It takes a lot of men to keep a 200-ton mill going.

RM: How many men were working there when you started?

CC: I guess in '28 there must have been about 150. But I don't think it got a hell of a lot over 200.

RM: How many acres would you say the mine encompassed then?

CC: At the best part of it there would be about 80 acres in there. There were 4 real good claims. The veins go across like this and then you have streaks that come in, and these are where the richest ore makes. In Round Mountain you've got to have a vein system that comes in like this - the streaks come across like that. And then you've got to hit these flats, and when you hit the flats I've seen gold 2 inches thick - just solid stuff - come out of there. Well, there's some here in town.

RM: And the chloriders were working those?

CC: Oh, yes. And if you're in close contact with it, that's when you get a chance to high-grade it.

RM: I see. And the pits were on the surface?

CC: Well it would start at the top, break it down, and go down in these drop points.

RM: Oh, and they would pull it underground.

CC: They would pull it underground and take it up the shaft. But there's one was right by the Number One shaft where Stebbins found his stuff that they just went from the surface right in, and the mill was built right there. They'd just tram her from that right out to the mill. And they'd glory hole . . . The main vein there - the oldest vein - I don't know it's name . . . he found us where the Indian stringer comes right across it, and that's what made her so damn rich. And then they started to go away from that vein. There were places that were about 10, 12 feet thick, maybe. And then they followed other little stringers that never had names. It was pretty good, but jeez, it was right there. Ten men could pretty nearly keep the mill going. There was a



battery of ten stamps and they eventually got up to 30. But it got so lean that they couldn't . . . Then they sank right on the Gazabo vein and went on down.

RM: How far in were the workings before they sank, do you think?

CC: They were just damn near right there. See, the hill went up like this and they took this whole hill, and that was all milled. And they went off that way . . .

RM: You mean, they bug-holed it?

CC: No, they took the whole thing - all of it. It was just an open pit.

RM: You mean initially?

CC: Yes.

RM: Oh, I didn't realize that.

CC: It was really going good when they were right on the vein and that stringer came across . .

RM: And this would have been before you started.

CC: Oh, yes. This was way back. But when it got lean they came back and sank the Number One shaft.

RM: And how deep did the Number One eventually go?

CC: Twelve hundred feet.

RM: Was it ore in and out all the way?

CC: No. Well, they went out of it, but they were right near it. At the 1200, they had to drift back into it again. And then they ran one cross cut that goes clean out under town.

RM: Did they find anything?

CC: No. The people now figure it's something, but in those days it was no good to the people who were mining it.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CC: They cut 2 veins out in there, and of course they knew the Caine. . . they knew they were there on the surface. The Lost Gazabo and the Placer vein and the Automatic vein and all were north dippers.

RM: They're running east and west and dipping north?

CC: Yes. So the other veins like the Kane vein and the Mariposa were south dippers, you see? So that was the idea of that shaft - to go for that contact, or that intersection of the vein. They were probably made from the same source. They blew up like that and then the cracks in the earth parted them.

RM: And they were going to hit where they junctioned?

CC: That's where they figured they'd do.

RM: What happened?

CC: Well, the Lost Gazabo just didn't go down there; it just feathered out. But the Indian stringer did. I was working back on the 1200 and we sank a shaft back there. The Jeffrey boys here in town - their dad was a hoist man. We sank a winze 60 feet deep there, and they went up over the top of it and found the stringer there where Indian stringer hit her; it was good; it just hit the Kane vein. So we sank, and then we got into sulfides in about 60 feet and the values started to going out.

RM: When you hit sulfides the values were gone?

CC: Pretty well gone. They're good now, for this low-grade stuff. Anyway, they backed up and did a little stoping there. One time a guy named Frank Slate and I were working there; we were drifting. But they shot right in this high-grade. We went back in and a rock damned near as big as your fist was sitting there and just swinging like that; it was hung there with gold. Jeez, it was rich. But small. But they gutted that out, and that was as deep as they went.

RM: Now, when would that have been?

CC: Oh, about 1933.

RM: When you got there, how deep was the NUmber One shaft?

CC: In '28 it was down to 800.

RM: Were there other shafts there?

CC: Oh, yes. The Number Two was down maybe 100 feet or something. And they started the Number Three and the Number Four when I was there, and I worked in both shafts.

RM: And they weren't too deep, either?

CC: No, because they were sunk on the Placer vein. It was another vein down the hill to the south, you know. What made that part rich in there was the Placer stringer.

RM: You mean, there was a Placer vein and a Placer stringer.

CC: Yes, and this was where they junctioned. Way up the hill they had just little minor vein systems, but they cut with a stringer they called the Neubaumer stringer. That went way over into Stebbins'.

RM: Now, where is Stebbins' Hill?

CC: It's to the north and west of the big mountain, or what was a mountain. Both are damn near gone now. But that's what made Stebbins' sell pretty well. But there were a lot of minor veins there.

RM: Were they milling the ore, Curly, when you got there, and was the same mill still there?

CC: Yes.

RM: How big was it at that time?

CC: When I first went there it was a little over 100 ton. I worked on the bull gang there one time when we put in the last battery - 10 stamps.

RM: And it was in where they had built the original mill?

CC: Yes. Instead of coming out of the hill they went in the hill. They had miners there drilling to make the hole for the foundation. We put quite a block of cement in there. Then they left a hole where they could get down and work in the holes in the blocks of cement - those big nuts and bolts that hold the mortars in there. They cut a hell of a stringer there.

RM: Can you explain what a mortar is?

CC: You've seen hand mortars, haven't you?

RM: Yes.

CC: These are great big ones where the big stamp . . . it's the same principle. There's one up at Bottom's place out in the old Fairview. That big mortar has got to be held solid, and then there

are removable bottoms. It splashes up and they have a splash screen - it lies like this and stuff splashes up and screens it. That is the stamp.

RM: OK, Curly's brought out a book. What's the name of this book, Curly?

CC: This is A Treatise in Metal Mining. (My dad liked to see . . .) This Billy Sharp was the engineer at the Mizpah. He's the one who made this camp - Tonopah - actually. He approved it when all the big shots, geologists from all over the world came here and turned it down. Billy Sharp was just a young engineer, and he saw all the potential, so he went back east. He couldn't get money around here, so he went back east and all this money [in Tonopah] went to Philadelphia.

RM: That's how those Pennsylvania guys got involved, then? They took a chance?

CC: That camp made 100 millionaires.

RM: Curly, let me get the date on this book.

CC: 1899.

RM: Published by the Burr Printing House.

CC: It's probably obsolete. I can't find the thing [I wanted to show you] here. This book shows you how to timber and everything. It's quite a book - you'll have to read it. Now we're getting into the stamps; see, "ore dressing." There's your stamp mills, right there.

RM: So you're talking about a stamp mill when you're talking about this crucible thing.

CC: Yes. That's what you call it - the mortar, or mortar box. There are your stamps, and that's your boss head up there.

RM: OK. And they have bolts into the rock - rock bolts - holding it.

CC: Yes. It holds it here, like this. And those stamps are dropping . . . right here, this is a mortar box - a big, solid iron thing - generally a cast [iron]. There should be a better picture of it here. Yes, that's it right here. This black part goes . . . that's your splash screen, you see. And we dug way down here. See how deep they'd go with that?

RM: I see.

CC: And then these bolts would go in there . . .

RM: Oh, I see.

CC: And then when you change your mortar box, if it gets cracked and you can't patch it . . . they patch hell out of them. They have to go down in there because this gets full of muck. And there's no use mucking it out because it just spills from this feeder here, and it keeps going. . . .

CC: So on the one that I built, after everything was shut down, when I was leasing there to get in here to get that stringer, I was cleaning it out to get it . . . and this ore here . . . some of it was just fabulous that the old-timers just . . .

RM: Well why don't we talk about when you did that. What year was that, Curly?

CC: About '65, I think.

RM: So in '65 you went in where there was some high-grade right under the mill.

CC: Yes. I went there in '63, I think, and stayed about 5-1/2 years. RM: Were you working on that one property?

CC: Yes, on the one property. I had 4 claims - the 2 Sunnysides and the 2 Great Westerns - leased from Gordon. But anyway, I went after this stringer, because I knew it was high-grade as hell. I was just a young guy then, 17 or 18 years old, when we dug this hole [for the mill]. But it was underground work, or classified. That was about the time he told me about this poll tax. So I packed this stuff . . . we'd pack it right around that hill, and it wasn't but 200 feet up to the refinery. It was so rich that we put her right in the refinery.

RM: So when you were a kid, you had dug for the foundations of that mill, so you knew there was high-grade there.

CC: They didn't want to go mine it at that time on account of weakening the foundation of the whole mill; the other part was the other side here, and this was dug kind of in the hill. They didn't want to weaken it, but they went underneath on another level and came up some on it. Hell, you could hear the mill run down there. But I knew this block of ore was there, so I started taking it out. Of course it was on the claim I had leased. But, the word got out . . .

RM: Was the mill still there, Curly?

CC: Yes, the mill was still there but it had been down for years. But they didn't want me to wreck the old mill. Anyway, I went off here to the east. I sank right on the stringer.

RM: Which stringer?

CC: Well, it didn't have a name to it, but it was near the Automatic fault. I sank right down there and the ore wasn't too good, but when I was down there about 20 feet I hit one pocket that was pretty good. So I went down there about 50 feet and I broke into an old stope, that they'd come up on. It was to my benefit, because I didn't need to hoist any waste. I just drifted off

over the top of it, right under the mill. I had to put some timber in, but I got right across the top and headed for here down about 50 feet. I was heading for this stringer here. Oh jeez, I took some good ore out of there.

RM: And did you raise on it then?

CC: Yes, but there wasn't much left.

RM: It didn't go down that far?

CC: Well, I hit another stope in here, and the ground got so damn bad; it was gutted, pretty near. But I did all right with it.

RM: So you were working under the old mill. Was that dangerous?

CC: It was pretty bad; that's one of the reasons I quit. No use being the richest man in the graveyard.

RM: That's right.

CC: But I had ore on the other side of the mill, too. You get those slugs of gold that get about 1/4-inch thick. They look like they came off the surface, but they're down in the mine.

RM: This was many years later and basically everybody had forgotten that they'd put that footing in there?

CC: Hell, they never. . . . They said, "You're just chasing a dream." I said, "No, goddamn, I remember packing that up there." Even guys who were there; there were a few of them living.

RM: So you worked there initially in '28 and then basically they ran you off because you were too young and you went into the merchant marines. When you came back in '31, what was the camp like?

CC: They still wouldn't let me work . . . well, I worked on this project, and then I got to seeing what . . . Gordon was friendly, and he'd give me scholarships to the university and I wouldn't go, but I didn't have a high school degree, or a diploma. I started listening to him some and I went back to school in Round Mountain and he give me a job working nights. And that was 1933. I graduated out there in '32 and '33, from the high school in Round Mountain.

RM: What did you do nights?

CC: I was tramping.

RM: So you were working underground.

CC: Oh, yes. But I was 18 then.

RM: Were they working more than one shift?

CC: Yes - 3 shifts.

RM: Was your dad still working there then?

CC: Yes. He was a timberman, but he he was in pretty bad shape then.

RM: Was there a lot of silica in that ore there?

CC: No, that's the reason I stayed around there. I could have made money here [in Tonopah], too, because the old-timers told me about where there was ore and stuff. I know where there is good ore today up there [in Tonopah]. But with that damn silica . . . it's down at a depth, but when they were running, you could probably have made some kind of a deal with them.

RM: Is it really good ore?

CC: Oh, yes. There's good ore around on the surface now, because a lot of it was put there at 40-cent silver. I had one bucket that I got in here several years ago (sniped it, you know). I got 50-some-odd ounces of silver out of one 5-gallon bucket. I have a little batch mill and I ran it through. We were working there and they were just bulldozing it down those holes -' they built a road across there to sample. It's just like this silver ore I showed you. I think I gave you a piece of that horn silver.

RM: Yes.

CC: You see, people don't know what it is. [If you remember] I showed you those big blocks of silver I have there.

RM: Yes, right.

CC: I told those guys, "Englehardt give me them for this here old gray looking stuff."

RM: Was the silver in Tonopah horn silver?

CC: Yes, a good deal of it was.

RM: What about the other ones?

CC: Well, they had native and polybasite and a lot of rubies [a type of silver]. Both rubies were here, too.

RM Native silver's rare, isn't it?

CC: Well, not too rare. You start getting into it at depth. You've seen those pieces there in the window, haven't you? The high-grade there?

RM: Yes.

CC: That's what I got out of Utah, but I've seen it up here just like that, too - high-grade - wires of it, out of the Belmont.

RM: Curly, what was the mine like when you got back then and were working nights there? Had a lot of work been done since you had left and had it changed much, or . . . ?

CC: Well, a lot of the drifts would be in farther and the stopes would be up more, but they [had to] keep a 200-ton mill going. There was waste, too. We'd throw that over the dumps. But, there just was no tonnage to keep those stamps a-running. You could have shut them down, but amalgamation is not like cyanide. Of course, it looks good for the stockholders if you've got all 30 of those stamps dropping on something. I've seen times when I was tending skip in the mines . . . you ship all the ore to the top. I'd tell them on graveyard shift, "There's no top men up there in the graveyard shift and the bins are full of waste." So they'd have you go up to the top and just change the dump so instead of dumping the waste you're dumping ore.

RM: Over the dump?

CC: No, right in the big ore bins. Then once they get caught up with a little of the tonnage they switch back again.

RM: Were they still working about 150 men in the '30s?

CC: Oh, 200. That was when she hit her peak - I'd say about '33 and '34. Then she run in, then, up into '35.

RM: And all the workings were out of these 4 shafts?

CC: Yes, but the Number Two didn't last too long. They went down on the Number One, drifted away back around and they just pretty near made a circle like this and came back, like the Number One was there. And then they hit the Placer vein where the Indian stringer cut it. And Jesus Christ, it was rich down on the 800. That's this drift that was on the 8[00]. So they sunk from the 8 down and Jesus Christ, in 175 feet of that old 800 winze they took out over \$1 million. And in those days that was a lot of money.

But in the meantime they started sinking the Number TWo. The Number One was there and it came around to this winze here. The Number TWo was sitting right here, to the east of there. So it wasn't far from it, and it was a good vertical shaft. These other were all inclines.



They just started sinking it down so that they could work this right in underneath there. As they were doing it, eventually they got down to the 1160 in this winze.

RM: Out of the Number Two?

CC: No, out of the Number One, because it was sunk from the 800-foot level.

RM: I see.

CC: They went down 360 or 365 feet and they got into a sulfide zone. They went back to the east and got away from the stringer and it went into sulfide. It was still low-grade ore. Of course now, that's where your type 2 ore is out there. That's one of the big things. I told them that whole thing; hell, we knew that was there. It was laid . . . they were like this and this sulfide zone came down like that, and we hit it. But I was leasing up in here; I had done some digging up in there. In the summer I'd try to work placer and stay outside, out of the mine. I was working up in there and I'd seen all that sulfide in there. But you could see the way it lay down in underneath. But they got into that and couldn't handle it, so they shut the Number Two down. They only got down to about 280 feet, but it was straight down.

RM: Which way did those shafts incline?

CC: They dipped with the veins toward the north - north dippers.

RM: So they would sink them on the veins, and the veins were dipping.

CC: They were all north dippers on that side.

RM: All 4 of them, except for the Two?

CC: Yes, the Two was . . . 3 of them were in like this. Two of them on the Placer vein and one up here in the Lost Gazabo. And then this other one was . . .

RM: Why didn't they sink shafts on the other veins that were dipping the other way?

CC: Well, when you went down like this, they figured they'd cut them, and then they could stope up this way and all of it would come out on the sill side, so they wouldn't have to haul around the hill or anything. But it never developed that way.

RM: You say the heydays of the mines were in the early '30s?

CC: Yes. I'd say from '32 to '35 were about the heydays of that . . .

RM: And then what happened in '35 to turn it around?

CC: Well, the end of '35 they sold out to A. O. Smith. [He was part of a] big outfit called Goldfields of America. They had big shots in there like Gene Tunney and Walter Chrysler and . . . but A. O. Smith was in on it, too, and he eventually bought all the rest of them out. They were supposed to have 10 people who put \$1 million apiece to make it a fully open pit. And gold had gone up to \$35 by then. They started by doing a shale year sampling. They were running damn near 200 ton a day, just samples.

RM: No kidding.

CC: Oh, they had enormous assay offices . .

RM: Why did Gordon sell?

CC: Well, he just wasn't making it.

RM: But the price of gold was up; . . . why wasn't he making it?

CC: Well, the ore just wasn't good [enough] to support the mill, that's all. He never wanted to go small and probably got a pretty good offer. But he retained a working part. That's what that company didn't want. When they offered to buy him out completely, he wouldn't let go. I don't know whether it was 5 percent or maybe 10, but he wouldn't let it go and they just walked out. Boy, she just laid dead there. She shut down about the first part of '37.

RM: OK, was it '35 that Gordon sold out to Goldfields of America?

CC: Yes, in '35. But they sampled for a year.

RM: Previous to buying it.

CC: Yes. They figured they could buy it from him, but he wouldn't sell it outright. He retained that. That's the reason the mine stayed there.

RM: So Goldfield didn't buy it?

CC: No; they just had a deal.

RM: Oh, they had a deal and he wouldn't sell it all, so the deal was never completed.

CC: Well, he would have gone for the deal they had but they tried to change it and take him completely out, and he wouldn't go for it.

RM: So he retained ownership.

CC: Yes, because he thought so damn much of that mine, you know.

RM: By then he was an old man, wasn't he?

CC: Oh, he wasn't too old. He was only 88 when he died in about '65 I guess.

RM: Well, what happened then when the Smith deal fell through?

CC: It just laid there, too.

RM: They shut it down.

CC: Yes. It stayed there till '38 and then Dodge Construction got a lease on the placer over on the town side, and I worked for than there.

RM: But there was no work prior to Dodge when they came in. I mean, there was no leasers or bug-holers or anything up there?

CC: Well, just a few snipers like myself. When I'd get hungry I used to go back . . . Of course, I was always friendly with old Blackjack, we used to even live up there. But I had kept a shack there in town. I still have the damn thing. I hung around there and I could always make . . . I could beat wages, but I was always sinking. You know, I tramped around this world pretty good. You always think it's rich over the hill, you know. As soon as I found out there's just more sagebrush, then I stopped right in this dugout for 40 years, because I know what's on the other side of that hill, now. There's no use looking. But you can't tell anybody that, and nobody could tell me. What I live off is Round Mountain That last lease I had there - if I'd hung onto all of it I'd probably have a Rolls Royce.

RM: You mean, the last lease where you came up under the old foundation?

CC: Yes.

RM: You made enough to retire there? Off that one lease?

CC: [Many] times over. But I've made a couple of losers.

RM: Were there any other mines operating after the company shut down there?

CC: No. Gold Hill shut down in about '33, I think.

RM: For lack of good ore?

CC: Lack of ore and depth, and they ran into water. It was expensive. Their mill was nothing but a pile of junk from all these old mills here, see - Millers. And Jefferson was shut out.

RM: Was Blackjack going?

CC: Well, he was just small. His was just a blind, of course. The Reliance was going in Manhattan, and he was buying that gold, too.

RM: Oh, it was just a front.

CC: That's more or less what it was. I had 2 claims there; it was a nuisance claim. [The company had to keep it because they surrounded it, so they bought it, but it was a nuisance.] I remember one time in 1936 his nephew and I leased that and we pumped some good ore. We were baling it - it was a 100-foot shaft and I had about a 20-foot sump in there, and we were baling it out to see if we could get a chunk of ore that was down in the bottom there, because we could get samples on the top. While we were baling that thing, we'd clump it and there was no ripples in it. It was just marks in the old pipe and stuff and Christ, you could see the gold down in there.

RM: By baling you mean you were taking out the water.

CC: Yes. It was muddy, but that mud even had water and that's what that is. A little gouge vein is what . .

RM: Now this was on the Blackjack?

CC: Yes. So he and I went in there and we took quite a little ore out of it. I think our payday was about \$1000 apiece off of it after we shipped it, which in 1936 was a pretty good stake.

But old Blackjack never had the money. He'd gamble it all off when he got to payday from the Mint. So he said, "Well, what I can do is sign the mine over to you 2 guys."

And I thought, "Jesus, I don't want this goddamn thing here. I think we got what was left." I didn't want it.

But, like his nephew said, "Well, we'll take that or nothing."

Old Blackjack was quite a gambler; that's where he got his nickname; he was a blackjack dealer before. His name was Jack, though - Jack Raymond. Old Blackjack eventually made a hit somewhere. He was a tinhorn, you know - he'd get around and make a stake.

RM: What do you mean by "tinhorn?"

CC: A tinhorn gambler. They travel from town to town and see if they can get a poker game going in Austin or Mina or Vegas, or whatever.

RM: How old a guy was he?

CC: He jumped off of an overpass in Vegas in front of a truck and killed himself. He'd lost everything he had. He was about Gordon's age, I'd say.

RM: When did he do that?

CC: Right around wartime - World War II. He must have been in his 70s or up in there pretty good.

RM: Did he stake out that claim originally?

CC: No, he got it through . . . well, Morgan was in on that one.

RM: How many claims were there?

CC: Just 2.

RM: Were they patented?

CC: No, they were open. They were called the Shannon and the Monte Cristo.

RM: Did he acquire them from Morgan?

CC: I think he got them from Morgan.

RM: I wonder what he gave Morgan for them.

CC: Oh, I doubt it was hardly anything. I know Morgan used to say . . .

Well, it's like Stebbins - he got that ranch and eventually, I guess, it wound up better than any of them - he had a place where he could make a living. That's all those old guys wanted, anyway.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

RM: We were talking about how Blackjack Raymond, how he acquired the . .

CC: I don't know just what the story is on that, but I know Morgan was in on it and probably some more of the old-time cowboys from around here.

RM: Did they called it the Blackjack?

CC: Yes, they called it the Blackjack mine.

RM: He probably had acquired it fairly early on hadn't he?

CC: Oh, yes. He was there when I first went to Round Mountain .

RM: Could you describe the workings of the Blackjack when you got there in '28.

CC: Well, they were sinking that shaft, and they were sinking right on the vein. It's just a small . . . they call them gash veins. It's sunk in between 2 formations that are the same, like granite. The gash vein comes up through it, you see. But it was a gouge vein and it was only maybe 2 . .

RM: What do you mean by a gouge vein?

CC: It was all loose clay and stuff. It was easy to dig, you know. The granite was hard, but . .

RM: Did it run?

CC: Oh god, yes. I've seen it a lot of times \$1 a pound, low price gold, paid \$35. [I worked with] young Jack - his name was Raymond, too. Jack Raymond. That was Blackjack's nephew. The ore he and I had averaged \$1 a pound. So, he didn't need much. We only took about a ton or so of rock out of there to get the \$2000 that we made. Of course, we moved a lot of waste and stuff.

RM: What were the workings?

CC: The workings were just that one main shaft and . .

RM: And how deep did that go?

CC: Eventually it went to about 120 feet. If you went 100 feet each way, it was the wrong way. And then they stoped some on it. But . .

RM: How many men were working there in '28, would you say?

CC: Oh, he'd just get guys. Slim Morgan and those guys would go up there and work part-time, or some even 4 or 5 days. There was just no operation, really, at all.

RM: Why was it so small?

CC: The vein was too damn little. And it was pockety, too - it wasn't all \$1 a pound. The last that was worth [anything] down the mine . . . it was bad ground. The hanging wall was that loose, decomposed granite that could] care in any time. And they didn't keep it timbered up well. told old Gordon about it one time. He said, "You're working over there?" He called them "the old high-graders."

I said, "Yeah." And I was telling him, "Jesus, I was down in the stope down there and goddamn," I said, "it's terrible down in there."

"Well," he said, "there's a lot of then old short timbers and stuff down there that we probably wouldn't use." He would use than all right, but he give them to me. I took than and dumped them over at the Blackjack.

RM: Now what are you . . . short timbers?

CC: Short timbers to support the ground, like stulls - short ones. "Well, just take them," he said. "I don't want to see any of those guys get killed over there."

Several of the miners used to go over there and take a shot at it. One guy named George Myers was there. He was one of those guys who had no fear. You don't have any fear if you work underground. The first time, you're gone. Myers was up in there and goddamned if it didn't come in on him. And here all that timber I'd brought was just lying there. He never used any of it. It came in on him and crushed him and broke his back down there. We got him out and had him in the shack and they started to Tonopah with him and he died on the way in. He was just a young miner, maybe 28, 29.

RM: But he wouldn't timber it?

CC: No. He had experience enough and everything, but he just figured. . you know sometimes you figure, "Well, I'll get this out and I'm done in here anyway. Why put in 4, 5 days of timbering." But that night be your last, you know.

RM: It sounds like the biggest thing to be said for the Blackjack was that it was a front for high-graders Blackjack would buy the gold from the high-graders and then say that it came from his mine, and he was buying a lot of gold?

CC: Oh god, yes.

RM: And he would sell it raw to the Mint?

CC: I'd say there were 150 to 200 men there, better than half of them was high-grading. And even out of the mill. Gordon himself . . . of course he wouldn't sell to Blackjack, I guess, but I hear . .

RM: Why was Gordon high-grading? Was it because he was just the president of the company?

CC: Yes. I said, "You don't even need to go in the mine, you can just wait till it's in the bullion form and then take it." He wouldn't even answer that.

RM: [Laughs] That's a great one.

CC: He was quite a guy.

RR: Curly, let's say there were 200 men working there in the middle '30s, and you say probably half of them were high-grading.

CC: Oh, yes.

RM: How much, on average, was a guy high-grading a day.

CC: It's pretty hard to figure that. Sometimes when you're in that ore . . . for instance, when I was leasing there and I was down on the 800, I had a streak . . . it got off pretty near 2 inches of solid stuff. It can down from the top just like a little knife-blade stringer, and it would be solid gold. Even when it was small like that, I used to figure that, "When I got \$1000 (that's at \$35 gold) I'll go home." That's when I was leasing. I had specimen rock and all that. But I never high-graded from them because old Al Silvers and those guys were good friends of my families and old Gordon. . . . I was the only one making anything, so I kept the taxes up and the whole bit. I never did take any. But Jesus, I ground shit up that they'd give a fortune for now.

(To clarify: I didn't high-grade at that time. Those were the 4 richest claims I know of in the world. That's where the Lost Gazabo, the Placer vein and the main stringers - the Placer, Hill, Indian and Neubaumer - all go into the Sunnyside. The claim was called the Great Western Sunnyside Number One. These claims also included placer.)

RM: What was a day's pay in the mine?

CC: Four dollars, but some days you could make \$1000. There was one guy there, Charlie Farrara, who told me one day he figured he took \$22,000 out of there. He'd go back in the mines, and all the other shafts were all connected. You could go around the hill - those stopes and raises come through. He lived in a company house here - the same house I was living in when I was leasing. Old Charlie'd just go over to this bank maybe 300 foot away and crawl down the old mule trail there and go right in the mine. He told me that one time he showed up with this big car; his aunt died or something. But, "Aw," he said, "I never even had an aunt. This is it right here." He told me what he got. He had these buckets that he . . . I think he made it in one trip.



RM: So a guy's making \$4 a day - that's \$20 a week. Let's see, that's . .

CC: He worked 7 days a week, he made \$28. We're talking big bucks.

RM: OK, that's \$100 a month. So a guy's making about \$1200 a year in wages. And what were the guys who were high-grading making a year on high-grading, if you had to average it?

CC: I'd say they made pretty close to 5 times that, anyway.

RM: Is that right. [laughs]

CC: The ore kind of gave out and he started the Sphinx glory hole, as they called it. It was pretty tough then, and this winze gave out. (I was telling you where it went into the sulfides, you know, at the 1100.)

RM: Yes.

CC: It was pretty tough to get any high-grade. This was in '35, just before he closed down, I think. They were going to strike, so we were all in the change room up there and old Gordon was there, and the spokesman we had was a guy named Bill Bennett. He was an old-timer. We wanted our wages raised from \$4 to \$4.50, for muckers, and \$4.50 to \$5 for miners. Gordon said, "Well, we're losing money now. If I raise it it's going to be worse." He said, "We're just barely breaking even," or something like that.

So old Bill Bennett said, "Well, we're losing money working here. So let's just shut this son of a bitch down and all go home." And everybody started filling out.

But we got outside and old Gordon said, "Now wait a minute here." He called us all over and he said, "Now look at this goddamn dump," where a lot of the guys were going to get in their cars. He said, "There's 50 cars in this dump and there isn't one them a year old. They're all brand new and you're starving to death?"

RM: [Laughs]

CC: So they started arguing and he said, "what I'll do, I'll raise the wages, but," he said, "if it goes 3 months, where I'm going behind, we'll shut her down." That's just about what did happen. That was when he made that deal with A. O. Smith.

RM: Why weren't all the miners high-grading?

CC: Well, they didn't know. I could take . . . I was up in the store here one day, and I think I showed you that big chunk of gold I've got.

RM: Yes.

CC: That's 7 ounces; we're saying \$2000. I had it with me and . . . I had a buyer for it one time. We met up there in the Station House but he didn't want to up with the money, so I went to the store. I think my bill was about \$20 and I said, "Would you rather have this \$20 bill or this." She took it, and it was 7 ounces or better. She was weighing it and she could see it's gold.

She said, "I'm afraid I'd have to take the what-you-call-it."

I said, "If this was your store it would still take the \$20 bill."

RM: So there were guys working in the mine who couldn't see . . .

CC: No, and some crackerjack miners, if you say, "Drive that drift," can drive it, but they wouldn't know ore from horse manure.

RM: He wouldn't know gold when it's right there?

CC: Well, no.

RM: No kidding

CC: Hell, I showed . . . Did I ever tell you about this Japanese I had one time out at my mill? He heard about me and he said, "I heard that you mined quite a bit in Round Mountain "

I said, "Yeah." I had some of that cubed gold on the dashboard of my pickup, and I said, "Yeah, that's some of it here," and I showed him. He looked at it and he said, "Hell, this ain't gold."

I said, "Oh yeah, that's gold all right." I had had a lot of it in my time, you know.

"No," he said, "I hate to discourage you, but this isn't gold."

I said, "Wait a minute now, you just say that kind of Easy and pretty low because I've shipped the Mint \$1 million worth of this stuff, and [if] they find out in Fort Knox they got a bunch of goddamn sulfide of iron there, I'm going to be in trouble." He looked at me. He didn't know-what to say, but he didn't believe it till we got home here. I took the piece and showed him. Or, he kept quiet.

RM: If a guy could make 5 times his wages high-grading then were those plum jobs for the area, or . . . ?

CC: Well, you had to know-what you were doing too. Out of 150 men, I'd say 20 of them were pretty good at it. And you've got your skip tenders and trammels and mule skimmers . . . but I was working on the mule train one time - that was in 1933, with old Eldred Moore. It was during the summer, and I had graduated that what-you-call-it. I was on the train and we were going to the station, and I picked pieces off the top of the goddamn cars there. I bet you I had \$100 in my pocket. That was 20 times your wages, right there. I showed it to Eldred. He was a shit-kicker (a cowboy, you know). And I said, "Jesus Christ this is gold."

"Oh, what are you taking up there. Old Blackjack robs you."

I said, "If he robbed it all but just a little you're still ahead." If you made \$1 over your wages . . . I used to work in that store a lot of times for \$2 a day when I was night shifting the

mines to add to my income. But a lot of people have the idea they don't want to work. They don't want to be bothered with anything.

But I've had miners right with me say, "Aw, that ain't yours for the taking," and all this. I'd say, "Well, shit, you just don't know what to do with it when you get it."

RM: Was Blackjack the main source of disposal of the gold there?

CC: Well, for instance, he'd buy that Reliance stuff, and then old Taylor's son, Murray Taylor, used to do some buying. If he got ahold of some of that Round Mountain stuff, he'd trade Blackjack, because Blackjack could get some of the Reliance stuff. And then they had a lease in Manhattan where they could . .

RM: The Reliance was in Manhattan?

CC: Yes. They dumped that onto the Mint. But in about 1936 (or a little earlier than that, because I sold quite a bit) what made it good was that the Chinese were buying it. That was after gold went up. This gold was only about 650 fine, and \$35 gold was only worth \$20. But the Chinese would give you \$30 and no questions asked with rock on it . .

RM: What did Blackjack pay?

CC: When it was \$35 he'd give you \$12. He was only getting \$20- something out of it.

RM: Oh, he had to sell it to somebody else.

CC: He had to sell it to the Mint, and that's what the Mint would pay you because it's only 600 fine, see. It's only about half gold and the rest was silver. So he got about \$22.50 an ounce. I've got a ton of slips in there that shows you what you got out of it, you know. But when you had, this real high-grade, and were hot, like some there when South African Gold was in that placer and there was a big hit out there. It was hot. I saw 1000 ounces go here one time for \$9000. A thousand ounces. And we're talking 400,000 now - \$400 an ounce for that type of gold.

RM: So Blackjack sold it to the Mint? Did he refine it or just sell it as is?

CC: No, the sponge is what you sell. It was against the law to even melt it then. Sometimes they used to get it too hot . . . When I was retorting to get my quicksilver back, boy you'd hear from them. You're annealing this stuff, and once you anneal it . . . it's not quite so bad annealed, but if you melt it they can't tell where it's from. They figure that's what you're doing.

RM: Annealing is when you take the quick out?

CC: Well, you're retorting. But then when you get it too hot it starts to melt, and [the quick will] just be in the bottom of your sponge. Of course, they don't buy it at all anymore. But where I

made the good money . . . in Round Mountain, when I was leasing, we sold a lot of it in Lebanon. We were getting \$75 an ounce there for it, where it was only \$35 here.

RM: How did you get it to Lebanon?

CC: Well, Gordon had some connection. The guys came to Reno to get it. I'd take it down there (I was getting 80 percent), and I'd wind up with about \$50 an ounce. Where otherwise, I was not even getting \$20-something. They did that in the United States, then finally the Mint just went out of business altogether.

RM: In terms of buying.

CC: Yes. Then you started shipping to smelters here. But of course when it got to [the point] that all the big ones started selling, the Lebanon connection kind of went dead. But they were still paying a hell of a lot more. Well, Nixon turned around and sold all their gold to Iran for \$45 an ounce. Said, "Look at what I'm making."

RM: Stupid, wasn't it?

CC: The next thing you know, it was \$800. We never had anything; they had it all. They don't look at that . . .

RM: Curly, when there were 200 men working at the mine were there a lot of leasers or was it mostly day's pay?

CC: No, it was all day's pay. There were a few over at Fairview, who were connected to the . . . they had a little mill there, too.

RM Was that owned by Gordon?

CC: Oh yes.

RM: Tell me again the claims that Gordon had then when you were there? Or did he have too many to name?

CC: There's were 40-some patents in there, I think.

RM: Did he have any open ones, too, or just . .

CC: The company wasn't much on holding any for assessment; damn near all they had were patents. I think on the upper end they had some called the Blue Jacket and they were held with assessments, but it was no problem, because they were working. The Blackjack wasn't patented, but those right up against it were.

RM: So there were leasers at the Fairview?

CC: Well, they'd leased it out to a guy named Perine for awhile.

RM: Oh, he leased the whole thing.

CC: Yes; the mine and mill and all. But eventually when gold went up their lease ran out, and then he had about 4 or 5 men over there working.

RM: For day's pay.

CC: Yes. They had a little mill there, a little 6-stamp thing. It's up here in Bottom's yard now.

RM: Is that right? Basically leasing was not a big thing in this period of the '30s. Because it was, in Tonopah.

CC: He cut off the leases. Well, when the leasing opened here [in Tonopah], Jesus, half the miners left out there. Because they knew this ore here. Those who knew the silver ore didn't have to high-grade; they could get a lease. So they came in here. [Gordon] lost a lot of good miners then. That was around '32 or '33. But there were still a lot of miners around the country - the Depression was on, you know. But Christ, Round Mountain was booming with the guys high-grading and everything.

There were 8 or 9 saloons there, and they was loaded every night - big poker games and such. It was nothing to take a chunk of high-grade up to old Blackjack, if he was up there and had any money (half the time he gambled it all off, too).

RM: Oh I see - sometimes he didn't have money to give to you.

CC: Sometimes if you'd go up there, if he had money, he'd give you \$10 for a chunk of gold that was probably worth \$100. But you'd do it to get some money to drink on or gamble with or something. I should have had a fortune. But like my dad used to tell me, "Jesus Christ, you're a young kid." You know, I was raised with this goddamn gold business, my stepdad and dad and all. All I ever heard at the dinner table was bore and drilling and so on. I would get ahold of this gold and I'd blow the money. He'd tell me, "[with] your knowledge of this goddamn stuff [and] experience with it," he said, "if you could hold still for 5 or 6 years, you'd never see a poor day the rest of your life." He's talking to a kid who's 16, 18 years old. I could see that, too. And I would start saving my money, and I'd get around \$7-8000, which was a hell of a lot of money. Most people were in bread lines, for Christ's sake.

So I'd see a guy get hurt in the mine my age, or anybody get smashed or killed (they killed 6, 7 around there), and I said "That could be me." And I'd have all this money - had the cash at home, hidden somewhere - generally buried, so fire wouldn't get it. I'd think, "Shit on this," so I'd quit and take off and then I'd blow all that money and come back raggedness broke.

RM: Where would you go?

CC: Oh, I'd go all over. I'd go back east sometimes. And I'd go around Reno and . .

RM: Just live it up.

CC: Oh yes. Hell, the sky was the limit; give it away. I'd come back broke and then I could see, "Goddamn, my dad's right. I've got to just put this away." I figured I was an old man. when I was 25 anyway, you know. I'd see all these young guys dying with this con. Of course I knew the Sunnyside never had much abrasive dust in it.

And this would just keep happening, but I was always nervous as hell; still am as far as that goes. I've got a hell of a time controlling it. So I developed ulcers, and jeez, I was nothing but bones. It Was 1933, I remeMber, when I just got out of school - it was that fall. I got ahold of some good elixir there and so my dad said, "Jesus, you've got to do something with your health here." He said, "Goddamn it, you better just get these ulcers cleaned up." I'd had them treated before but I would still go out and drink this goddamned old rotgut booze they had in those days. It'd eat you up like drinking acid.

I said, "Yeah," because shit, I started getting weak because I couldn't eat.

So he said, "You got any money?"

And I said, "Well, I got quite a bit, I think." I dug it up and I had \$33,000, I remember, in 1933.

RM: Wow.

CC: I didn't know I had that much. I would walk down the street 10 foot tall then, ulcers and all. But I went to California and stayed there and got treatments for it till I was pretty good. Then I started buying gold. That was about the time the Chinese can in there. Christ, I was making more buying, the gold like Blackjack was.

RM: Were you buying in California?

CC: No, here in Round Mountain and what-you-call-it. The Chinese didn't care where it was from or anything else, as long as it was yellow and metal.

There were 2 or 3 big outfits down there and then in '36 the government swooped down on them and wiped them pretty near out. But I remeMber that I had money like that, and now I count 10 times that much and I feel like I'm broke.

CC: I was looking the other day. I said, "That's a terrible goddamn year - I only made \$80,000." Sitting here on my ass, I'll be lucky if I make enough to add to my savings to take care of inflation. I used to add \$10,000 a year, and that would give you, say at 8 percent, that's \$800 a year. But the interest rates are down, so inflation keeps a-crawling. This year I figure I'll have to add maybe \$15,000 to my savings. That's cake you can't eat.

RM: That's right.

CC: That's to make ends meet. Of course, I live on nothing. I get mad as hell if all of my utility bills are \$70. Nobody watches anything, but I always did. My money went for booze, so I'd throw it away. Or like Vic Smith. I've know people who just hated him and here I'm loaning a guy like that money. He's down there in the graveyard - owes me \$50,000. So I go down and relieve myself on his tombstone once in a while.

RM: [Laughs]

CC: That's the only satisfaction I can get out of -Lat. As long as he was living . . . you guys weren't feeding him but I am.

RM: Curly, what happened when Dodge Construction came in?

CC: They were there in '38 and '39, and they just ran placer. They were a construction company, you know. They went over on the town side where it was never pitted or anything and they set up a plant there. Before, it was all worked with hydraulic mining, on the south side of the hill, so they had a lot of water. On this other side the water systems had gone down, so they built a plant that didn't take so much water. Of course, they didn't have the tonnage either, but they did well there. I think they built up \$600,000 to 700,000 worth of gold there.

RM: How big was their pit when they left?

CC: Oh, not real big. It was a fair cut in the hill, but not big - they'd run 1000 ton a day. But it got so that they wasn't making it either. They went right up that gut, where the good ore was. Once it was gone, they were gone, too. And then it laid there for, God . . . all during the war . .

RM: Nobody was doing anything?

CC: Just a few snipers around town. I came back after the war and there was hardly anybody there.

RM: In '46?

CC: Well, I came back in '48. But I used to go out there all the time, because I had that old cabin there.

RM: But there was no activity at all?

CC: No, nothing. I guess there was a watchman living over there.

RM: Did Gordon still own it?

CC: Oh yes. It laid there all through the '40s, and about the end of the '40s or the first part of the '50s, South African Gold came in there. They ran it for 3 or 4 years and then they dumped it back. All they went for was placer, too.

RM: Were they successful?

CC: Oh yes. They took out several million from there.

RM: On the south side?

CC: Yes, on the south side. That was a pretty big pit. You can probably still see a lot of it. They shut it down for awhile and revamped the plant, and then they started up for another couple of years. In '59 they were clean out of there.

RM: And meanwhile, Gordon still owned it?

CC: Oh yes. He wanted to be partners with them but not put up any money. He wanted to go on with this 5 percent and go on and on forever.

RM: He only wanted 5 percent though?

CC: I don't remember whether it was 5 or what - I don't think it would have ever been 10. He made an offer to me one time with a guy I had promoted. I built a tungsten mill out here at Railroad Valley for a cotton farmer. (I never did think much of this tungsten stuff. I look at \$100 an ounce and this is \$100 a ton.) Anyway, I told him, "I know a mine - I think more of that son of a bitchin' mine . . . I think it is one of the best mines in the whole world, to me." It's always been my mainstay. If I needed a buck I knew where to get it. So anyway, I would always tell him about it and he'd say . .



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CC: So he said, "Do you think you could get that mine?"

I said, "Well, I don't know."

He said, "See if you could work some details out." This guy was Like me - no education. You educate yourself. A lot of education is no good if you don't know how to apply yourself, anyway. So anyway, he said, "Work it out and see what you have to come up with . . ." Get in touch with these people or something. So I worked it out. I figured if I had \$600,000 I could build a mill for the whole thing and get going because there were dumps and material that I could get going on; I knew where there were some pretty good ones

RM: Out here?

CC: Out at Round Mountain, yes. I figured I should have \$125,000 for that mill. We're talking 1956, or around there and you could still get a small mill for that amount. Then I wanted a good one; I was going to put in cyanide and so forth so that when I got that ore up in the hill and it hit that tailings pail and there would be nothing left in it. And I knew some of the people who could build a mill like that. I called some of them, and I figured that's what I'd need. So I told old Steve Sturgis (and he was a millionaire, you know), "I'd like to have \$1 million to start with." He said, "Well, I've got this stock deal and stuff and I've made money . . ." and what he could come up with was the \$600,000. But he had told me that before - that it'd be in the neighborhood of that [amount]. So he and I flew up to Reno in his plane one day and had a meeting with Gordon. We were up there in the office and Steve had this old suitcase - I figured there were clothes in it or something. He generally dressed in rags; it was the money that counted. He'd salute you with it.

RM: [Laughs]

CC: Anyway, we were in that office and old Gordon was talking and I said, "This Mr. Sturgis is interested in the mine out there, and he'd like to buy it off you or get a deal going, or whatever. What do you want?"

"Well," he said, "the price is \$800,000."

They take that out every week there, now. They take \$1,300,000 a week. But anyway, he says it was \$800,000. He said, "That's the tag that's on it."

Old Steve said, "I'd want to take you clean out."

And Gordon was getting a little shaky even then. Of course, he lived damned near 10 years after that. So he said, "Well, what kind of a price. . ."

Old Steve said, "We can give you \$475,000 cash for that mine."

"Oh." Gordon said, "Well, I'd have to go through stockholders and this and that." And said, "Where in the hell did you come up with a figure like that?"

And Steve had no education at all, but he knew how to make money. He said, "Coombs says that's all your mine's worth." And Jesus Christ that old man went through the roof, because that mine was his baby, you know.

He said, "Why you Cousin Jack son of a bitch." He said, "You've mined all over the goddamn world and you never seen a mine like that in your life, nowhere," and oh jeez, he started raving.

But I said, "Now wait a minute on this deal." I said, "I just told Mr. Sturgis we've got \$600,000, we need \$125,000 for the mill and that's all we've got left."

So, "Oh, well. But," he said, "goddamn, you didn't say any

I said, "Well . . ." You know, I hated to say that I didn't say it :\*.n front of the money man. But anyway, he cooled down and said to old Sturgis, "amid you figure on paying for this mine?"

He opened that suitcase and there was the \$475,000 in thousand-dollar bills. In those days . .

Jeez, old Gordon's mouth was watering, because that company was having a pretty rough time then. That was after South African Gold got out of there and she was just lying there. We pulled out - I think we stayed in Reno that night - and flew home. A week or so later, old Gordon said, "I'm still interested in that offer."

RM: He'd turned it down, then?

CC: Yes. At that time I was just working out in the field. We'd shut that tungsten mine down out there - dismantled the mill and everything. He got into it with those Meyers brothers. Anyway, I told old Steve about it and he said, "Well, I ain't interested no more. He wouldn't take her when she was there." So that was the end of that. I never forced it, but shit, I think I could have . . . Before that other outfit got in there, that's where I made the mistake. Shit, I was sitting on . . . I never had a million, but I had pretty close to \$800,000 of my own.

RM: You could have bought it yourself.

CC: Yes, I think I could have made a deal with Gordon.

RM: Because you guys went way back.

CC: Yes. And he was getting old - up in years. Well, he died right after that. But even after he died, I think I could have gone to Al Silvers. He was my step-dad's partner out here at Divide, and knew him well.

RM: Was he partners with Gordon?

CC: He took over the Nevada Porphyry when Gordon died. Of course it went into an estate, but I think Gordon's hold on it was pretty small when he died. He had lots of stock, I guess, in Nevada Porphyry, but Silvers took it, and Silvers was an old man, too.

He [Silvers] started to slip, and this guy came in there. I was leasing at Round Mountain at this time, and I was making good money. His name was Elwood Dietrich. He came to the house with his wife, and they had a big dog, I remeMber. I think he was with Pan American

Airways. He had them promoted, [but] Christ, [he and his wife] were broke. They'd been out at Gold Point.

He came there and he wanted to talk about the mine. He wanted to know how many leasers . . . and I think at the time I was probably the only one there. He could see I had old ragged clothes on and so forth. Anyway, we got to talking, he was quite a promoter, a congenial guy. They didn't even have anything to eat; I cooked them some dinner. His shoes were worse than mine and I had a pair that were damn near new that I couldn't wear because they were too tight, so I give him them. We got friendly and I fixed them a bed; they stayed there that night. I bought some groceries and she cooked them up. I took him around the mine and he said, "Goddamn," he said, "a guy could promote this thing."

I don't know why, but I told him quite a bit of the history. I went down there that night, and I had these buckets of high-grade. Jesus Christ, his eyes stuck out like a choked rat's ass when he saw that. -God, I thought that . . ." He said his wife was saying, "Maybe you shouldn't take his shoes" and all that. And shit, I was loaded. But I'm the same today. I don't know how many thousands in cash - gold and silver - I could get ahold of. I don't have any rhodium yet, but I'm working on it.

Anyway, old Dietrich took off and went to Reno, and he met Silvers and I don't know what he told him about me or anything, but he tied it up with a goddamn option of \$20,000.

RM: No kidding?

CC: Al Silvers called me and he said, "Jeez, this Dietrich, Christ, he's got big people behind him," and all that. He said, "He's coming up with \$20,000 . . ."

I says, "Caning up?"

He said, "Yeah, he hasn't got it."

He never had 10 cents. I bought him gas, everything. I says, "Shit, he's just a goddamn shirt tail promoter. He don't have nothing." But he was supposed to have all these people. I said, "A guy that I have to give gas and money to go with, and feed his dog and give him shoes!" And he never had the \$20,000, it was all jawbone. He tied it up for months with just jawbone.

And then he brought his people in, this Pan American Airways outfit. A lot of them were pilots. One of the main ones, who's still in there, is Cal Owens. They're all dead but Cal. But they were all kind of promoters. A couple were Texas oil people. Of course they had lots of stock in Pan American and all that. But jeez, they moved in and took all the lower end of the houses. There were a lot of houses on that side then. I used to talk to Al all the time. I said, "These people don't know ore from horseshit, for Christ's sake. They're up and they're bothering me all the goddamn time." And I said, "You know, what I got wrote up, for 3 years I had that pretty near then." Those were 4 of the best claims there - the 2 Sunnysides and the Great Westerns.

RM: You had leases on those claims then?

CC: Yes, for 3 years.

RM: When did they begin, Curly?

CC: Well, I never went to Round Mountain before because I could always get a jawbone lease. But you can't trust anybody. You say, "Jesus, that guy's digging pure gold out of my place," and all that so you run him off. I could do that myself, but Gordon never could.

RM: Gordon would never do that?

CC: Hell no. He wouldn't get dirty. But anyway, I said, "If I couldn't get a year lease there was no use of me even thinking about it." So when the mine lay so dead finally, in 1963 I think it was, I talked to him and he said, "I'll give you a 3-year written lease." And that's when I went out there.

RM: And that's when you were doing that work . . .

CC: Yes. I could see some of these pockets that I had, like that one. Actually, if I hadn't hit that pocket on the way in, [I could have been] doing 6 months dead work. It runs into money. But, I had several that I took out. He gave me that and I ran it out and he could see, "What the hell, without you this company would be in a hell of a shape." I'm giving him 20 percent of what I make, and say I'm making \$100,000 a year, they wind up . . .

RM: They would get 20 grand. Meanwhile, you had your leases there when this Dietrich was trying to come up with . . .

CC: Yes. He was there at my house and I was living in a company house over on the south side of the hill. Silvers never got the \$20,000 but eventually he said, well, he was going to run them off. So old Dietrich and the others came up with the \$20,000 by the first of 1968, and Jesus Christ, then they thought they owned the whole thing. And I showed them, I had copies. . . .

"Read this. You people are trespassing if you get on this."

"But we bought the mine."

I said, "With \$20,000? I've dug \$600,000 out of this . . ."

RM: You mean they bought it for \$20,000?

CC: They had it tied up. The payments were supposed to be \$10,000 a month. And shit, half the time they couldn't make them and then they were bothering the hell out of me. Then they started taking over the refinery. I have all of the papers in there yet, all written up, [to show that] I had access to the refinery. That last one's a charge of the refinery. I even had charge of the power, because I paid all the power bills, everything. I said, "I could goddamn near run you guys off." And I could have. I had money enough that I could have gone to Silvers and said, "Now wait a minute, what are they in [for]. Here's \$40,000 or something, you get them out of here. This here thing's no goddamn good." And my lease said, "Renewable." I don't know whether could have made it stand up in court or anything, but I don't like to get into litigation. So they kept bothering me; that was in '68.

RM: Trying to get you out of there?

CC: Yes. But I could make such damn fools out of them. These pilots promoted \$250,000, and they put a mill up that was just a joke. And I'm no mill man, but I know I've got to have a mill to keep other people from robbing me, so I put up a mill. When I sell it, I know the weight of what I'm selling; or, what it's worth. So anyway, I was making an ass hole out of them. I can show you pictures around here yet of bullion. This Cal Owens said [one time, pointing to a picture], "How do you like that piece of bullion?"

And I'd smashed one of these hands, I think this one. I had old black tape on it because I couldn't afford the real white Band-Aids. I had it taped up, and I'm holding this piece of bullion, which weighs 57 ounces - this chunk of sponge is what it was. I said, "Who's hand is that?" I saw that old tape on there. Those were my hands. That was my bullion. But he was telling me it was theirs.

But I said, hell, he just took a picture of it that day and forgot where he took the picture. They never had shit, but they'd use that shit to promote. Well I didn't like that either. One day old Dietrich had come up to the house (we were still friends) and I said, "You and this goddamn hay bag are bound and determined to try to push me out of here." I said, "Why the hell don't you buy me out?" (This hay bag was a woman who got mixed up in it.)

He said, "How much do you want?"

I said, "Give me \$50,000 and I'll get out of here." I figured, "Shit, he ain't got 10 cents," you know. I had a couple of years, damn near, to go on this next lease.

RM: How long was your lease for?

CC: Three years. I worked on the first one they made up for a couple of years, and I had the whole goddamn mine tied up. No, I didn't have it all tied up. Gordon had guys coming out there all the time. I said, "What the hell, they could pretty near get in there where I'm digging. There's no designated area that I got." "Well," Gordon said, "I can't do that because of leasers wanting to come in there and then they want this certain block, or something."

I said, "Well, I want a certain block." So he gave me the 4 best claims there. I said, "What I will do, is, I'll sublease these to these people. Because I know miners, and if they ain't miners they don't get it." He could see that, too, because he had a lot of them who'd try it and it was just a joke; they never amounted to anything.

But anyway, Dietrich took off. That's when he got Copper Range interested in it. And he came up to the house with a goddamn check for \$50,000. I said, "Shit, I can't take that."

He said, "I thought so. You're not a man of your word."

I said, "Don't say that or I'll give you troUble." I said, "I don't want the IRS to eat me up with another \$50,000 on top of what I have at the end of the year." So I took \$25,000 then and \$25,000 after. He was going to use my mill and all this, and I just gathered it [the mill] all up. In 3 days you could never tell that I'd ever been over there. I had it all over town [took it over to my property in town]. I've still got it out here. I didn't think he had that kind of money, but I was just ready to get out anyway. As I say I didn't have a million. I think when I left that time there I had \$780,000. And I had this shack, here. I had holdings, though, that weren't even figured in that.

RM: What did Dietrich and these pilots call their operation?

CC: Ordrich Gold Reserves. That was Owens and Rocky and Dixon - O.R.D. Cal Owens, and then this one's name was Rocky - she was a promoter - Camp, so it was O.R., and . .

RM: OK. And then who was the third person?

CC: Dixon.

RM: Do you remember his first name?

CC: I don't think so. They called him Dick, that's all I know. He was a crippled guy; he was a nice guy.

RM: But they were not from around here.

CC: No. And then they took the end of old Dietrich's name. So they called it Ordrich Gold Reserves. That's a pretty name.

RM: And they formed it for this particular property?

CC: Yes.

RM: And basically, they had an option to buy on it from Gordon?

CC: Yes. Then they got Copper Range to pick it up and they took it on payments. I guess they might be paid off by now but jeez, they made several million.

RM: Did they sell their ownership or their option?

CC: Their option.

RM: How much did Ordrich pay Gordon for it?

CC: Five million, but it was all jawbone. They promoted the whole thing.

RM: They paid him off with money they got from Copper Range?

CC: Yes.

RM: What did Copper Range pay for it, do you know?

CC: I'd say \$25 million, maybe.

RM: No kidding'

CC: Oh yes. Shit, Echo Bay paid \$139 million for half of it, of course, look what they take out there.

RM: But that property went from almost worthless - in terms of selling it - to millions.

CC: Yes. Well, that ore was worthless to me. You take a tenth of the values of the ore . . . I would hardly sink money in, even at today's prices. If I was leasing there today I couldn't run one stamp where they can run .018 and make money. I couldn't make it even at today's gold prices - maybe I could break even.

RM: What's happened to make that property so valuable? Is it a technology development since cyaniding?

CC: No, just raising the price of metals. And of course the technical part now is advanced - the recovery systems, you know.

RM: I see. Well, gold was \$35, and when did the government get off of price?

CC: It was about in '68.

RM: OK, it was right at that time. So it was the government control of the price of gold that kept that property at low value.

CC: Yes, that's what I'd say. But South African Gold told them, "You go off this gold standard here and we'll push it down." And they did one time.

RM: What do you mean, push it down?

CC: Push it below \$35 - make it \$34. It scared hell out of a lot of people. They couldn't hold her down because everybody . . . you see, she was turned loose in the world market and goddamn, she just went from there. It went up to 200 and then it dropped back.

I had a 100-ounce bar of 999 here. It was smaller than those silver ones but it weighed the same as the silver bars that are there. I had it, and then this kid of mine needed some money. It had gone up to 200 and it would drop back below 160, and I had this guy coming down, and when he got here it was 160. I sold it to him for \$16,000, and shit, in 3 or 4 months it was \$800 an ounce. I lost a lot of money there. Now I've had a \$10,000 CD down here, and it's drawn me \$8000 in the last 10 years. This son of a bitch hasn't drawn me anything. It just makes you sweat when you watch the gold prices go like this all the time. But they don't, you know. I could give a shit anymore.

But, that's what made that mine. When gold went up, it got so you could run that .04 and .018.

RM: Now, Gordon never really owned the mine. It was the company that owned it, wasn't it?

CC: Yes, it was stock - grade A. But he had full control all the time. He had better than 50 percent I imagine. He was always voted in as president. They knew he was high-grading and everything else, but they couldn't get rid of him.

RM: Who were the other owners?

CC: Just stockholders all around the country.

RM: There weren't any principle stockholders who come to mind?

CC: NO, no real big ones. If they wanted to do a takeover they could have in those days, but nobody wanted the damn things. You'd go out there and see one guy with a little old coffee grinder like I've got, and he was the only one making it. And a lot of those top miners didn't want to live there, either. There weren't many who had the knowledge of the mine that I did that was left. The miners that I knew were good ones and good leasers, too, but they were old and beat up. But very few made a goddamn thing there but me.

RM: When they built the first mill there, where did they get their water?

CC: There was a spring back up there to the east called Kelsey Canyon. It was pretty good water there, and see they could pipe it by gravity.

RM: They piped it down to the mill from Kelsey Canyon?

CC: Yes, maybe a couple of miles. After she got bigger they got Jefferson, and that gravitated clean down. That was a good water flaw in those days. And then they got Jet Canyon across the valley, and that still runs. It furnishes that town . . .

RM: Do you know when they brought in Jefferson Canyon water?

CC: Let's see - 1908, 1910, somewhere around there. Jet was right after it. It was placer mining, and you've got to have a hydraulic system, you see.

RM: Was it gravity flow from Jet Canyon?

CC: Oh yes.

RM: That's on the other side of the valley, isn't it?

CC: Yes, but it's high enough up for it to . . . And they had a dam up Above town there, or toward the mine, and they'd store water in there. But the water flaw started going down in those canyons even when I was a kid. Generally by August they'd lay most of the men off from



the placer because there was no water. They'd keep a few, enough to work one shift or something. So they'd leave it go down.

They took millions out of that thing, but I imagine damn near as much was high-graded as was taken out.

RM: So actually, the official figures on Round Mountain production are very deceptive, aren't they?

CC: Oh, yes. You can't tell with any high-grade gold mine. You don't know how much Gordon got away with, or a lot of the big shots there, guys in the refinery and all along the way.

RM: For every dollar that showed up in official records, how much was high-graded from top to bottom?

CC: I'd say damn near dollar for dollar. What you'd say was that you'd take some and leave some. You ain't going to take what's blasted down and pan it or anything to get the chunks. You just take those big chunks and then . . . or you can pick right in the seam. By the time you pick in 3 or 4 inches as far as you can go - then you've got to drill. They aren't going to drill something with bosses coming around all the time . .

RM: When did Gordon die?

CC: About '65 or '66.

RM: Before Copper Range came in?

CC: Oh yes.

RM: How did Silvers get in it?

CC: He was always kind of a wheel around these mines, and maybe he had a block of stock, too. He was a hell of a millwright. He built most of the mills in this town [Tonopah]. My step-dad and he had the Gold Zone over here, and then he was in with Martin Bradshaw when they took all the ore out of the old Goldfield Con's [Consolidated] mill. And then he had the Millers - he was down here and ran that.

RM: I see. Could you tell me a little bit about him?

CC: He was kind of a small guy, but he was a hell of a mill man.

RM: Where did he learn his mills?

CC: I think he experienced a lot of it after coming here. I don't know whether he was in on the MacNamara mill, but he was in on the West End and the Montana and the Belmont and the Extension. I think he built the Extension.

RM: Another question on Gordon - was he married? Did he have a family and where did he live?

CC: He didn't live in Round Mountain. He had 2 kids - a girl and a boy. He'd been married a couple of times.

RM: Were the kids involved in the mine at all?

CC: No. They'd come out in the summer sometimes, but they were going to school somewhere. I think the boy was going to Reno. They were above the mucker stage; you know, big shots.

RM: Curly, you've shown me a picture of 2 guys who you say sank a 3000 foot drill hole.

CC: Yes, 3600.

RM: What were their names?

CC: Herman Boodleman and old Fred Ninnis. Fred Ninnis was a big shot of the West End and Boodleman was a mining engineer and geologist.

RM: Where was the hole?

CC: Do you know where Bob Williams had the corrals out there?

RM: Yes?

CC: Right off the corner of that corral. Echo Bay drilled the shit out of it out there this year, too. There's a big vein that goes down through there called a green vein.

I asked old Boodleman, "Did they do any good with that?"

He said, "We cut lots of veins." He said, "We quit naming them. We was just numbering them, there were so damn many of them." He said some were ore. He said the green vein was good ore, but . . . There's lots of water out there and it's hot water, too. There's a shaft just above where they sank that. They knew the vein was there but . . . I don't know whether that hole's on an angle or what, but they cut a lot of veins. But the green vein is pretty near a vertical vein.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

RM: Curly, why don't we talk a little bit about how the miners lived, in Round Mountain, and also kind of throw in Tonopah. Let's start with where they lived.

CC: It was a good deal the same all over for miners. If you came into this town, you just figured that you could get a job here at one of the mines. If you did, you had to have a place to stay, of course, so you went to these boardinghouses. These big old houses like the Bryant down here [in Tonopah] and the old McGloughlin . . . there used to be 50 of them around here. Most of them are gone now. You went there and got board and room, for \$30 a month or even less, and the pay was about \$5 a day. If you were married, you generally came by yourself and boarded out till you could get a place for your family. They had schools and so forth there.

RM: What did a room look like?

CC: It was just little - 10-by-10 at the most. Sometimes 2 guys were in there. And they'd have bunk beds or a big double bed.

RM: Two guys would sleep in the same bed?

CC: Well, you had to; wages were poor, you know, so you had to make every nickel count. Of course the goddamn streets were lined with bootlegging joints - you had plenty of places to blow it.

RM: What kind of mattresses did they use?

CC: Oh, most of them were these old horsehair mattresses. They'd just last forever; they'd cover them with canvas. They generally had feather pillows and wool blankets and quilts the women made. They were kind of a home, you know. This one down here - the old Bryant - had 30 or 40 boarders, and they had room for 20 to room there. You got a pretty close-knit group and sometimes you'd work in the same mine as the same guy. Or you [might have] said in the boardinghouse that you didn't like the mine you were working here. Here in Tonopah there were dozens of companies, you know. And a friend you roomed with might say, "Hell, it's better over where I'm at" and whatever, so you went from place to place.

Tramp miners like myself . . . unless you were making damn good money you didn't stay long anywhere. You'd leave here and go to Round Mountain, say. If that didn't suit me I'd go to Austin or Ely or Tybo, sometimes work 10 or 15 mines in one year. You had gotten all that experience, and all of it in a little different kind of ground or with different type machines. The foremen would get so they'd see those tramp miners out in the rustling line and sometimes they'd motion you, and you'd go up and get a job ahead of the rest of than.

RM: How could they tell he was a tramp miner?

CC: Oh, they could generally tell, or he'd been there before or something. Or somebody'd put in a word - say, "I heard he's around town here," and the guy would look for him.

RM: Because they were good men.

CC: Well, they were good men but they wouldn't stay. That used to make some of the foremen skeptical of hiring them. They'd get something going pretty good and then just walk off, so they had the trouble of fitting somebody else in there.

RM: How were the rooms furnished, Curly, that they boarded in?

CC: Well, it was generally a bed and they had a big wash bowl with a pitcher of water in there. You changed at the mines - they had showers. And most of them had outside toilets - old outhouses. Some of them had a shower/bath out in the hallways. Those that did have inside toilets had them in the hallway where everybody used them.

RM: What time did a typical miner go to bed?

CC: Well, the young ones would go down to those damn joints and hang around till pretty late. But you had to work hard to hold your job in those days, so you couldn't keep up with the night life and the job. As they say, "When booze interferes with your work, quit the work."

RM: [Laughs]

CC: That's what a lot of them did, too.

RM: What time would a typical miner turn in?

CC: Oh, he'd go to bed about 9:00. There were no radios in the early days, but when I was coming up there was radios. You'd generally go to bed at 9:00 because you had to get up about 5:00 and get ready to go to work. There wasn't any transportation. You'd eat, and then you might have to walk an hour to work.

RM: An hour's walk to work!

CC: Some of them walked clean to Divide out here - 4 miles - and walk back at night.

RM: Wow.

CC: Or you might be living here and [working at] the Belmont, which was the other side of that hill over there.

RM: They didn't have rides?

CC: Well, there was no transportation much - just horses. Miners were just too damn poor to have a car, and there were no buses or anything. But it was good for the miners to walk and clear their lungs of that damn silica chest.

RM: What did they wear say, to walk to work.

CC: Well, just Levis.

RM: What kind of shirt would he wear?

CC: Well, maybe a blue denim or a wool shirt like this one. This is pretty near old enough; it has a lot of history on it. It's an old Pendleton, and it's 40 years old. I had it when I went to the war, but it lay there for 4 years - nobody wore it.

RM: What about underwear?

CC: There were no T-shirts that I remember then; mostly long underwear. They'd wear the light cotton stuff in the summer and the heavy wools in the winter. I used to see them down in the street, and they never even had a shirt on. They just had that old undershirt on. I remember old Jim Butler himself was that way, down there. Food all over it. It was a little better than this one [pointing to the brown shirt he is wearing].

RM: Why didn't they wear shirts - was it too warm?

CC: I don't know, it didn't bother them. When you get down in those mines, maybe your body temperatures don't demand as much; don't need to be cool. I generally wore just underwear and overalls, and on the top, a T-shirt.

RM: In a lot of the old pictures I see of guys in the restaurants and gambling halls and so forth, they're always dressed up.

CC: Yes, in those days you did. I worked in Grass Valley and those guys had double lockers there. They had their digging clothes in one, and then they had a board - a dry board they called it - where they'd hang all wet clothes from drilling and what-not down in the mine. But one of them was for your good clothes. They even had a looking glass in the door. The guys put that in themselves, I guess. But I've seen guys leave there with a suit on and walk downtown. Yes, everybody dressed pretty good. Women really dolled up - big old hats and bustles and stuff.

RM: The guys wore hats too, didn't they.

CC: Everybody did. We never had hard hats underground. We had just rag hats. You never saw a woman in a bar unless she was a hustler.

RM: Why was that?

CC: Well, they'd cause trouble all the time; they figured guys would get to fighting over them. When I lived [in Australia], this side would be the men's part and over here in the other side would be the women's part. There was no integration there at all. Because when you start doing it, that's when the trouble begins, they figured. If you bring your wife into a joint in those days and same guy was drunk and made a pass at her and insulted her with language or something, you'd be ready to knock hell out of him.

RM: What would happen if you'd try to bring a woman in?

CC: Well, they'd generally tell you not to. You did it at your own risk.

RM: What about the taboo of women underground?

CC: It's just a old Cornish thing. A lot of Cornish (the Irish were that way, too) would never work on Friday the 13th. It was a good day to lay off and get drunk. But if it had been Sunday the 13th they wouldn't have thought nothing of it. I think a lot of that stuff was just an old wives' tale. Those Cornishmen were hell for kidding the young guys underground. They'd hear the muck moving up there and jeez, you'd wonder who was up in the stopes above you. And Round Mountain had automatic stopes, see. Once you cut out for the chute, as long as the air didn't get to it she'd keep caving and go right to the surface from the 800.

RM: It would cave?

CC: Oh yes, by itself. That's why they called it the Automatic. That was as long as the air didn't get to it.

RM: What would happen if the air got to it?

CC: It dried it; spoiled it.

RM: Was it wet?

CC: No, if it was damp it'd swell and cut itself off. You'd keep them pulled down but you didn't pull them plum empty so the air would go in there. But young guys would come in there and they'd hear that noise, and they'd figure somebody was working up in there cause it just sounded like somebody dumping cars or something. (When you heard that you quit drawing.) But the old guys used to tell them, "Oh, that's the Round Mountain kid up there," or some name you'd invent. For a long time I thought there were guys up there. They'd tell you, "You hear that noise, don't go any farther, cause . . ." if you didn't want the air to go through.

RM: I see. Did all the stopes in Round Mountain cave naturally?

CC: No. Just one called the Automatic. There was a big fault went through there. That's what made that ore. It brought the ore up along the fault, but in places it would get 30, 40 feet wide. It was good mill feed - it wasn't high-grade. But once in awhile there were high-grade streaks that would go across it. But that was their savior there, a lot of times. They could keep the mill running [with that tonnage] and if they got \$4 heads, they could make it. That old Automatic would generally go right around that.

RM: Was it a mine or a stope in a mine?

CC: It was just a stope in the old Round Mountain Mine - the old Sunnyside.

RM: Which shaft did they pull the ore out of?

CC: Mostly out of the old Number One. They had to, because that's where it went up to the mill. They'd take it around clean out in the hill, and then take it off to that Number One shaft. When I had a lease on the 800 there, that's where it went into that shaft. My lease was right on the 800 station and I had to tram 3000 feet to get out of the hill, because of shafts and everything that were obsolete then - getting caved and so forth. I'd tram it clean out of the hill, but in the early days, they trammed it the other way.

[Curly shows a picture to the interviewer.] Here's one of those miners. You see, they wore a hat like that.

RM: It's kind of like a skullcap.

CC: It's a skullcap and it's full of waste. It was a cotton batting kind of that they used to put in bearings in those days and then fill with oil, and it would drip off. Those old guys would go into the storerooms or someplace, get a big gob of that and put it in their hat, and then that protected their head when they bumped their head or something. If you're drilling an upper, you're like this, but you put your head right against the face and it gives you a good brace.

RM: Oh, so that padded it.

CC: That old hat served a purpose there.

RM: Well when did they start going to hard hats?

CC: The first I saw was in about 1933 down in Grass Valley.

RM: Why did they make the switch?

CC: Well, it'll give you better protection. The old kind never had a brim or anything on it. They look like a coal skuttle - that's that the miners called them. They looked like a big old coal skuttle on your head. They had a beak and [a bill] back here, but most of the miners would cut that back one off. In a lot of [mines] you couldn't get on the cage unless you had that hard hat

because the safety first men were there. But those old guys had, down in the hole or hid in their clothes, a soft one like that. Once they got down there they'd take the hard hat off. They were heavy and you lost your hair through them, too.

RM: My grandfather claimed that he lost his hair from a hard hat.

CC: Well it's heavy, you know, and it shuts off the circulation. But I believe that, because when I'd work in a certain type . . . maybe a hot mine, I could see my hair start coming out. So it's from that, I think. RM: So there was a resistance to the hard hat when it first came in? CC: Oh yes, I'd be up in those stopes as tool nipper, and you wouldn't see anybody with a hard hat on - miners or drillers or muckers, even down levels. If you'd see a light start coming down the drifts and you were a trammer you'd go to one of the raises and try to flash somebody up there, or hammer on the pipes. That meant, "The safety first men [are] coming," and everybody'd slip their hard hats on. But I've seen trammers the same way. They'd have [their hat] on top of their car, and when they'd see a light coning they'd put it on, and hide their other one.

RM: Did it really make that much difference in safety, you think?

CC: Well, it's hard to wear something as light as a rag hat and then put that goddamn heavy thing on. In most of the jobs I had I had to have it because you run across safety men - I was tool nipping, and I was skip tender for a long time around there. Up in the stopes it was better, because you generally got that warning from guys hammering on the pipe or something.

RM: How did the guys see underground?

CC: Carbide lamps - calcium carbide.

RM: Well, when they were wearing that skull cap, how did they handle the light?

CC: They let you have a hand lamp.

RM: So you'd have to set the hand lamp down.

CC: But then the hard ones, and even our old rag hats had a thing on than [to hook] the carbide lamp on it or the hat lamp.

RM: Initially they used candles, didn't they?

CC: Oh yes.

RM: When did the carbide core in?

CC: I really wouldn't know that. But it was a long time ago. Old Wes Watson, an old-timer around here, one of the main guys from Goldfield, said he was out here and the goddamn



Indians were going to rob him, you know. He was out at 5-Mile in those springs and he saw a lot of Indians and he said, "If you could get something to divert their attention from your bedroll and your food and stuff . . ." So he had some carbide. He'd show the Indians this rock, and he'd throw it out there and then he'd a throw a little water on it and then throw a match in, and Jesus Christ, they'd jump back. They said, "Jeez, they got rocks that burn." They thought it was something. That was in the early 1900s.

RM: So they had it then?

CC: Yes. I think they had it in the old country, too.

RM: So a guy would wear his street clothes to the mine and would change there. Tell me a little bit about the change room. What were they like?

CC: They were big long rooms with benches where you could sit and pull your clothes off. As I said, they had that dry board, and when you went to work you let it down, and then you took your street clothes out and put them in a locker and then you'd lock it, because you'd probably have your money with you. And some of them had a double locker. They had big showers and a place where you could wash your clothes, or scrub the old muck out of them. A lot of guys did that every night. You'd get mud all over you from drilling, especially going up in raises. I've seen oldtimers throw all their clothes in these big old tubs, rinse them out good, and then wring them out some and hang them on those dry boards and in the morning they were all dry. It wasn't the idea they were clean, but they weren't full of muck, you know.

RM: What kind of clothes did a guy wear for his digging clothes?

CC: Generally denims. Pretty near all of it was Levis in those days, and denim shirts or wool shirts. If it was wet you had rubber clothes -rubber boots.

RM: Did they wear rubber boots most of the time?

CC: Well, that was when you were drilling after water came in. In the early days here it was all just leather stuff. They filled the graveyards up with guys [when they were drilling dry]. They finally started using water then. But you'd get pretty, wet, especially going up in raises.

RM: How early would a guy get to the change room before he had to go on shift?

CC: Well, generally they'd blow the whistle at 8:00 to start loading the cage. In the early days everybody was down the mine by 8:00, and then we got a 8-hour collar to collar law. But like my dad said, "Hell, back in Michigan [and] those mines back there in the old country you worked 12 hours underground." And he said when he first came to Bingham Canyon they had 10-hour shifts.

RM: And how many days a week?

CC: Seven days a week.

RM: Seven days. And how many days a week did they work here?

CC: Mostly 7.

RM: How can a guy work 7 days a week, week in and week out, Curly?

CC: I worked 11 months in Round Mountain and missed 2 days' work one time.

RM: Didn't you get exhausted?

CC; You get exhausted, but you go to bed early, you get rest enough; it makes a good dog out of you. You haven't got any pep left to go out and play with. But some of those young guys did. I was one of them. Shit, I didn't know what the word tired meant.

RM: When did the practice of days off come in?

CC: Well, some mines finally started giving them Sundays, and some of them every other Sunday. The next thing you knew they had that 40-hour work week, and everybody got lazy and nobody had nothing to eat. That's the trouble - people won't work anymore. It's like I tell my grandkids. They wanted a rowing machine or something, and I said, "Come here, I got a exercise machine."

They said, "Jesus, have you?" And I went over and I showed them a pick and shovel.

And I said, "Look at these arms, and stuff, and I'm an old man." It don't kill you.

RM: So you're for a 7 day work week?

CC: Well, the way I looked at it . . . I was at Round Mountain 6 years the last time and I'll bet you'd be lucky to count 3 weeks that I took off in 6 years. I saw my dad work in the Ohio down here; he never missed a shift for 11 years.

RM: He worked 11 years continuously, without a day off?

CC: Without a day off.

RM: What about Christmas and . .

CC: No, you'd work on the pumps or something all Christmas day.

RM: Good lord.

CC: But when he quit after that, he never worked for 3 years. He didn't have to; he had money enough.

RM: He saved his money.

CC: Sure. They went to the old country - my mother and all of them - and he had the time of his life, I guess. But that's what I figured at Round Mountain. That 6 years I put in there - I'll never see another poor day. So take 6 years out of my life then, against 76. But when you got 2 days off . . . Yes, I was leasing. But even when I was working for the company I worked 11 months once. My dad worked 18 months out there one time with no time off. There are always pumps to run or something to do when everybody wants to be off, like the 4th of July. You can pick up jobs like that or even [relieve] the watchman.

RM: So it wasn't a company requirement, it was something that those who wanted to work would do. What was the typical miner's work week?

CC: About 6 days. But in Round Mountain it was always 7. If you laid off, Christ, you were generally done. He might stand it once, without a hell of a good excuse.

RM: That didn't leave time for anything, did it?

CC: No. That's why I say why not work steady and build up a stake and then you can take some time. What the hell can you do in one or two days? I like to take a year off. See, I've been off now for 20-some odd years. I figure I might take another 20 and if I'm still here I might have to go back to work. No, I don't think I ever would. But you never know, the goddamn juggling you've got to do to keep your money, drawing interest. I never built up any . . . only the Social Security and they even tax me on that son of a bitch. I was going over that - got the wrong figures there a while ago - and I was ready to go down and start a revolution. They give you a nice pension, then take it away from you.

RM: It was under Roosevelt that the 40-hour work week came in, wasn't it?

CC: Yes. I first saw it in Manhattan. We were working on the dredge and we started getting time and a half for that 6 days, then time and a half for Sunday. But you got straight time for 5 days. Out there they generally worked 6, though. They paid you time and a half for Saturday, but they started laying off Sunday. I'd heard a lot of those old foremen say, "I ain't got near the men I used to have." You take a guy like myself. You'd go down, if you could stand it, for a couple of weeks and save your money, then you'd get all this time off, so you'd go down and get drunk, or it gave you time to go to another mine somewhere and see if you could get on there or something, so the next thing, the guy is gone.

But I always felt better working 7 days. I knew what my job was, I had to drive this tunnel in there, say 100 feet or something, so that was my goal. But if I worked 5 days and laid off and went downtown and got to drinking and chasing women and whatever goes with it, I

didn't even feel like coming back. It was about Wednesday before you'd get oriented again and ready to highball it. Oh, I could see it in the mines. The production just went down the tube.

It was the same with that dredge here. You couldn't even remember where you put your tools half the time, or somebody else would move them or something. If you're there all the time, you know. But, nowadays that's the name of the game. Fun and games. And down the tube we're going.

RM: How many hours a day did a guy work when you first started in the mines here as a kid?

CC: They pretty much had 8 hours collar to collar when I was there. But they started this contracting [leasing] - what I used to work in - you stayed. They could run you out of there if they wanted, but they wouldn't. Maybe you couldn't make your blast because you couldn't get your holes in due to machine trouble or something. You could stay a little extra and get it in. But if you were on day's pay you had to get the hell out. And you didn't give a damn anyway. It's like out here [at Mercury] - you can sleep at the base or work, it all pays the same. RM: That was a saying when I was out there, "It all pays the same." CC: You went to work and you had so much . . . at Round Mountain they had a deal that if you mucked out a good size round, you could go on home. Young guys like myself would pour it on, and in 4 or 5 hours you were home, so there was plenty of time to play around then.

But, generally if you were underground . . . say you were working in the Sunnyside on the 1200. You're on the top, you hear that whistle blow at 8:00 so you get on the man trucks [that's a car in which a man can ride down an incline shaft, also called a "go-devil." They also sent long timbers on these cars] to take you down in the mine. By the time you got down there it was 8:15 or maybe 8:30, and then you had to walk 1000 feet back to your working place. You were lucky to work 6 hours of the 8.

RM: And how long was your lunch hour?

CC: Oh, you just took it whenever you could. That was just for guys like the skip tenders and people like that. Everything went on right through noon.

RM: Guys didn't take their lunch together?

CC: You had quotas to get, and if you were behind you just ate a sandwich right out of your lunchbucket. There was more interesting work then. When a guy walked down the street and [someone would] say, "Goddamn, he's a good worker," if that guy could hear you he'd walk 10 feet tall. Now, he's an ass hole: "Fruit son of a bitch. Probably a homosexual or something."

RM: What did a guy typically eat for lunch?

CC: You had a couple of dry sandwiches, generally.

RM: Made of what?

CC: Oh, cheese, bologna, horsecock (put that in there).

RM: [Laughs]

CC: Cheese, some jam sandwich, maybe a piece of pie and piece of fruit. And then thermos of hot tea or coffee.

RM: What did they carry it in?

CC: They used to have those old 2-tier lunch buckets - they looked like a bucket. The bottom had your lunch and then the top had the coffee. And then they got these others, the ones you've seen - you've probably tried them. Those old bastards, you'd bump them and the coffee'd spill down in on your other stuff.

RM: Did they call them dinner pails?

CC: Yes, dinner pails. There's a couple of them around here somewhere.

RM: Where did a guy get his lunch?

CC: At the boardinghouse; they made it up for you. And if you wanted more sandwiches or less or whatever, you told them. They kind of frowned on throwing garbage around the mine.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

RM: OK, you would work your shift in the mine and then how did you know when it was quitting time?

CC: Oh, we had watches and there were generally shift bosses around or something. But you could damn near tell by the amount of muck you moved or the amount of drillholes you had to . . . with mucking you never had trouble, generally, [unless] your car might get off the track or something. But drilling you could have trouble. But if your shift was an even drilling shift you could goddamn near tell them, "It's 10 minutes after 12:00," or whatever. Then miners, like the drillers - machine men - who drilled the face of a drift off, would try to get all of the upper holes they could, and then just leave the lifters for after dinner. Then they'd go and eat, no matter what time it was, then they'd come in and clean all that drilling muck away from the face. Sometimes they'd do that before they left and let it dry out, and then they'd swing under the bar and drill the lifters, they had it clean there. Then they'd tear the machines down and clean it up and load the holes; it would give you a lot of time to do that.

RM: What were the brands of the machines that you were using for drilling?

CC: They were mostly Ingersols and Gardner Denvers. And the stopers were these old Waugh type. Widowmakers, they called them. I've got one in the shed out there. But I have water on this one. Some of them had just a spray that was on the outside and you turned it on.

RM: Oh, I see, and it would spray the outside.

CC: It would spray right up, where the dust came out of the holes.

RM: I see. Rather than drilling water through the steel.

CC: Yes. Well, there was no hole in the steel in the old days. They called it red steel, and it was the best steel ever made.

RM: Well was the water just sprayed on the outside of the hole?

CC: Yes. If you're drilling up here and your hole's colored right there, you fix your drill handle like that . . . this kind is called a wiggle-tail, because that's what you had to do. There was no rotation here's the rotation.

RM: You rotated it.

CC: Yes, wiggle-tails. The spray would fit on there, but you could fit it so that it would goddamn near hit that all the time. They worked pretty fair, but sometimes they didn't.

RM: And that was the Waugh.

CC: Yes, Waugh stopers. But there were a lot of those Ingersols, too. I think the one I have is an Ingersol. And one of them was a Gardner, and there was a Cochise. There were several brands, but the main ones were Ingersol and Gardner Denver.

RM: And a stoper is for drilling up, right?

CC: Yes.

RM: What did you call the others?

CC: Drifting machines. They were the same as a jackhammer, only they had them in shells, and you had to crank.

RM: And it was on a bar that went horizontal across the face wasn't it?

CC: Yes, you had a bar come down like this and then an arm went out like this. And then a cradle fit on that. And the thing that the jackhammer was in . . . but it fit right up in that cradle, and then you tightened the bolt. You had a swing bolt and a dump. And you couldn't hear . . . like when you tend chuck, as they called it (changing steel and so forth), you couldn't hear shit in there. There sometimes would be 2 or 3 machines going at once. So your signals was, one for swing and 2 for dump.

RM: What did "dump" mean?

CC: To dump the machine so he could tip down and drill the hole like that or tip up. And the one for swing was to swing this way.

RM: Who usually tended chuck? Young guys?

CC: Yes. That's where they learn how to drill.

RM: Did you always have a chuck tender?

CC: No, not always. You did it yourself. They had those old type machines they called the old sluggers . . . I forget the name of them now. But it was so long from where you were cranking to the face that the guy stood up there where he could change that steel for you.

RM: How deep was a typical round?

CC: They generally wanted 5 feet. In real tough rock they might drop it to 4 and in real good rock they might want a little more. But generally when guys start pulling those long rounds (they called them long steel men, you know) they were contractors. They'd get paid maybe a day's pay for 4 feet, and then anything over that you got a bonus - generally 5.

RM: What was a Leyner?

CC: Well, that was the name of those old type machines. Everybody thought it was like liner, like a liner for something, but it was L-E-Y-N-E-R. That was the name of the guy who invented it. And they'd say "Leyner men." Well, all the round steel were generally called Leyners, but some of them were Ingersols and Gardners or whatever.

RM: What kind of bits did you use?

CC: They had star bits, but they were sharpened in a drill sharpener.

RM: A star bit is with 4 cutting heads, isn't it?

CC: Yes. They were conventional bits. They were locked - permanent - on the end of the steel. Now they got those knock-on bits.

RM: Yes, that you screw on.

CC: They went back to conventional a lot when they got that Swede steel. It was a tungsten bit and a tungsten insert and just a chisel bit, most of them. That Swede steel, as they called it, just revolutionized . . . RM: It was from Sweden?

CC: Oh, yes. Atlas Copco. But they've got machine shops in the United States now.

RM: A man didn't sharpen his own bits, did he?

CC: Oh no. But you could. I've got an old rig out there and it sharpens everything. I've got a lot of steel out there, but nobody ever does anything with anything anymore.

RM: There aren't many guys doing this now, are there?

CC: No. Like the old Leyner steel, I don't think they ever use . . . They're round steel with the lugs on it. Two lugs stick out and that's what catches it to turn it to get up in the chucks. And the others are hex steel. That fits in the chuck and makes it so you can turn it with that. But, as I say, nobody uses it much.

RM: When did the jackleg come in?

CC: I guess right after the war. The first one I got ahold of was up in Washington or someplace. I guess it was about '47, '48.

RM: Those old Leyners must have been a son of a bitch to manhandle.



CC: They took you so damn long to set up. I was over here at the Los Amigos, a mine out of Mina. This one company owned a tunnel that I had a contract in (there were 2 old-timers and I knew them both; they were both from here when I was a kid), and they had Leyners. Those guys wouldn't monkey with a jackleg at all. The guy wanted to know what they wanted, so he got them old drifting machines, old Leyners. Of course, they had the tungsten star bits on it. But I remember when I took that thing out of the case, they just laughed. They said, "Jesus Christ, it looks like a goddamn stopper, or something." They couldn't imagine - you know, it bends in the middle I had a lot of experience on than then - with a couple years around them, drilling is the same.

RM: Did it revolutionize drilling at all?

CC: Oh, shit! I was there alone. I had a mucking machine, but I had the contract and the whole thing. There were 3 of them - they had a young guy come out and run the mucking machine for them. There were times when I'd come out of that tunnel and they'd say (they used to call me "Cutting Jack"), "What's the matter, Cutting Jack? You broke down or something? That plaything bust up or something?"

I'd say, "No." And I'd go over where they were and they'd be getting ready and setting up and all that. And it looked like a crow's nest to set up, because they had bad ground. They'd be in there farting around and I'd be watching them and pretty quick I could hear my round going off. I'd already had a round in. I had a round in before they even got set up. All I had to do was drag that to the face, connect 2 hoses, and start drilling. I didn't care if it was 40 feet to the back.

But Jesus, they had to protect themselves. Of course I used to do that, too, if it was real bad. But with what I had, I could keep it small.

RM: What did they say when you were making so much faster . .

CC: Well, they . . . but they'd come in and they'd watch it.

I'd been using the burn cut a long time, too. I got on to them up north. And this old Jimmy McKenna would say, "God, that ain't going to pull nothing." And we'd go out and I'd load it.

I said, "Here's that burn cut now I was telling you about." There's no problem with drilling down like that or up because when you ravel a hole it's tough to get that stuff out of there - especially down. Mine are all straight in, you see.

Every hole there was straight in. I'd generally use a 3-hole burn, and the 2 of them would go off at once. And Jesus, the roar of that would pretty near knock you down out there. And they'd laugh like hell. "Jeez, there's probably more fuse than muck in there," you know. But it'd get down where the lifters and you could just see the smoke moving like this.

RM: What kind of a cut were they using?

CC: Oh, they'd use toe cuts or hammer cuts. They'd drill them down with those big old Leyners. You had to have your hand clean up against the back - you had to stand in the powder box to

reach it - to crank or swing under, and then you'd go way down here. It just revolutionized mining. I'd seen them a long time before I ever started using them myself. You hated to experiment with stuff when you were contracting because you knew the other method would hold if you could get it in.

But before I got onto it I'd see them use what they call baby cuts, instead of using a 6-foot cut hole like that.

RM: Coming in at an angle?

CC: You didn't need to have all that angle on it, if you put a baby cut in front of them in there. You'd put one in there 3 feet and then the next one you've got to pull that 3. So I could see that - it made sense. It just pulverizes a hole, about 12 inches across. For tougher ground, put more relievers around it. But it's actually only a 3-hole burn - the main ones. Get those 3 and then scatter that around it.

RM: Ed [Slavin] was telling me if you used a burn here [in Tonopah] they'd can you.

CC: They didn't even }mow what a burn was. These guys [out at Mina] were from here, worked for years, and both of them died right here with the con. But they wouldn't change. They were some of the guys who wouldn't go for that change. Old Kirk Willis came up to me one time. He had a contract out here and he wanted to know . . . "It'll work anywhere," I said.

He said, "Well the middle is so goddamn tore up."

I said, "When it's tore up you hardly need a cut. Just break to it." But if you think you need to, put it in the side here. If this was a drift, put it here. But it's better if you get the center out.

RM: Just put it in the center; yes.

CC: You get so you know where those holes go.

RM: What you're saying is that you can put the burn anywhere on the face that you need it.

CC: Yes, just so you shatter the main hole in there for it to break to.

RM: What kind of powder did you use when you first started?

CC: Well, generally . . . it was about the same as Hercules or Giant powder. It was 40, 45 percent nitroglycerine; gelatin powder.

RM: What did you do about the powder smoke and the gas?

CC: Well, you had to get it out of there. If you shot in the face in a big mine, nobody worked in there the next shift; they worked somewhere else in the mine. Sometimes it was pretty gassy, but they had blowers. And when you did blast you generally fixed your air hose or your air lines

so that When you got your hole spit you'd open that air line. They'd leave the compressors run until after quitting time, because in some of the big mines, the next shift might be . . . you'd go home at 4:00 and they came on at 6:00. Of course, some of the more extensive mines . . . had good blowers. But you'd put it on the suction for instance, I put those tunnels out of Divide that I drove on the suction. So in the morning if I went back . . . or I'd fire that up and then reverse the thing and it would blow fresh air in. But they've got fans now - well, you've seen them in Mercury. Jesus Christ, in 15 minutes you can go in there.

RM: What did you do about powder headaches?

CC: Well, you used ammonia, mostly. You'd keep a capsule or something with you. You generally got them from loading the holes or handling the powder more than anything.

RM: Did you always use rubber gloves?

CC: No.

RM: You'd handle it with your bare hands?

CC: Yes. If you have gloves, the first thing, you're wiping or you're getting it on you someplace.

Oh, I've had headaches . . . they go down in your neck and these cords here would just be like rocks. I'd try to get it to relax, you know. But if you've got ammonia you generally can . . . onion'll do it, too.

RM: Eat an onion?

CC: No, just smell it. The tears come in your eyes.

RM: I didn't know that.

CC: Yes, when they were sinking the Number Four over there at Round Mountain this old guy would bring an onion right down there in the mine with him. He'd rub it against the rock like that, and get it juicy and take a whiff of that son of a bitch. And then you could smell it in the air

RM: And that would knock it out?

CC: It helps, you know. It isn't as good as ammonia, I don't think. But he was one of the old guys who's now dead, so I guess he was using them before they had ammonia.

RM: How many shifts were they working at Round Mountain, Curly?

CC: Well, the miners and muckers were generally on the 2 shifts - days and swing.

RM: And the days were 8:00 to 4:00?

CC: Yes. And the swing was generally from 4:00 to 12:00. The graveyard was generally mule trains moving the muck out of the mine - skip tenders and muckers, but no drillers down there. Once in a while there'd be timbermen.

RM: They had mules underground there, didn't they?

CC: Oh yes. There were 3 out there - one on each shift. Boy, they were smart animals.

RM: How many cars could they pull?

CC: They'd pull about 25 there.

RM: Twenty-five cars? One mule?

CC: Oh, yes. The tracks were mostly downhill towards the pockets, you know - of the stations. In fact, a lot of times he'd be holding back on it. You'd go up against his rump and pull back, you know . . . And those mules could count the cars. He knew how many bumps it took before he got her where he could start out again without going too fast. It was dangerous if you got going too fast, and had a wreck, or tripped . . . he was done for. Those cars would go right over him and smash him all up.

RM: Did you have a brake on the cars?

CC: Oh yes. I used to ride the brake car.

RM: Mould that hold it back?

CC: Pretty well. Same of those places were pretty steep. I'd hit them slow and he'd back up and let those cars bump up against him and then he'd take off slow and then I'd drag the brake car. All 4 wheels were dragging, and then that stopped pretty well.

RM: How long did a mule last?

CC: Oh, old Jack was in there for 12 years, I guess. They never used to bring them out, and then the law came that you had to take them out to daylight every night. They had a raise they called the mule raise which was a spiral; you could walk right down it. But up at the Belmont, when they started taking the mules out, there was one they called Rabbit. When I was a kid I used to watch him. He'd come out of his barn and walk over to the cage, and they had a board with cleats on it and he'd walk right up those cleats.

RM: And stand on his hind feet?

CC: Yes. We had several who would do it. It was the only way they could get them up and down. But eventually motors come in.

But I remember that old Jack; Jesus, he was smart. He'd come in the 800 winze and it sank . . . 360 feet from the 8 down and there were a lot of miners in there in the stopes. They'd all come up to the station where it was warm and eat. If you weren't careful . . . old Jack would eat too at that time. Sometimes he'd take his thing off over there and come over and listen to the guys talk as if he was listening to you. He'd stand around and some of those guys - the old-timers - would let you find out for yourself. They'd be eating and bullshitting and have their sandwich there and boy he'd just come over and . . .

RM: He'd grab the sandwich? [laughs]

CC: Oh yes. Also, they used to have a lamp on his head - a leather thing. They'd unhook him and he'd be standing around with that thing on, and he'd wander off. He'd go up some old blind drift where nobody was working, but he'd take his head and he'd knock that lamp out and they'd have a hell of a time finding him. One old mule skinner was telling me, "I think that son-of-a-bitch is smiling sometimes when I find him."

RM: [laughs]

CC: He was a smart old guy. You could turn him loose in the mine and say, "Let's go home, Jack." They'd put the lamp on his side where he couldn't beat it off, and he'd take off. Just turn around and just hook his tugs up. But you'd say, "Let's go home," and boy, away he'd go. He'd be up there standing by the gate, sometimes. But he got wise to that; he got so he wasn't there. He'd run off down the valley and you'd have a hell of a time finding him.

RM: What were the shifts that they worked in the big mines in Tonopah?

CC: They worked 3, but generally the miners and the muckers worked 2 shifts, and then the other trammers . . .

RM: Yes. So here it was 8:00 to 4:00, and 4:00 to 12:00, and 12:00 to 8:00?

CC: Yes. Graveyard shift, yeah. But here the swing shift would go to work at 6:00 in the evening, and work till 2:00 in the morning. But there were always a lot of people in the mine; even on days off . . .

RM: This is Round Mountain?

CC: Here [in Tonopah] or even Round Mountain

RM: So when they worked 2, it was 6:00 to 2:00?

CC: Yes.

RM: Did a man rotate shifts?

CC: Oh yes. You worked 2 weeks each shift. But the drillers changed from days to swing, and swing back to days. If you were on the skips or the mule trains or jobs like that, you went from, like, graveyard to swing, and then swing to days, and days back to graveyard again.

RM: And all of this with no day off.

CC: No. Well, a little time was [lost] on the change, but you never missed a shift.

RM: Guys didn't get to spend a lot of time with their families then, did they?

CC: Well you got 12 hours; figure that's something. Nowadays if you got . .

RM: Well you mean 12 hours because they were working 12?

CC: Well, in the old days. I asked my mother. She said, my dad was like a stranger. Especially if he'd stop in the saloon and sit there and shoot the bull with his friends for 2 or 3 hours. But like my dad said, "Generally in those days when you got done you was goddamn glad to go home." They wanted a lot of work.

RM: Then later . . . he would . . . it was 8 hours collar to collar. And then once he came out of the shaft he would go to the change room, right?

CC: Yes. You'd shower and change clothes and make your time slips out. Then you were done for the day - go home. But generally you were a mile from town.

RM: So then you had to walk home. It would be 5:00 at least before you got home, wouldn't it?

CC: It generally was. The boardinghouses would start eating about 5:30 or 6:00. By the time you got done with that you were damn near ready for bed. There was no entertainment other than drinking, and there were not Mary. You might listen to a news program, and that was about it. But you would generally go to bed early.

But even when I was leasing there, I had plenty of time. I used to watch the tube once in a while at noon; I'd come home for lunch. That was Round Mountain, too. But I was just off the hill. I'd be down there an hour or something, but of course I'd work . . . go back and work 5 or 6 hours in the mine after dinner. I used to think, "What the hell's the use of going home? Maybe one program. I'm ready to go to bed anyway, so. . ." You get to digging and it your entertainment.

RM: What was a typical meal in a boardinghouse?

CC: Oh, they were hell on the meat and potatoes. But breakfast was mostly heart attack on a plate. You know, sausage and eggs, french fries or hash browns or something - toast - coffee . .

RM: They called that heart attack on a plate because they knew it caused heart attacks then?

CC: Oh yes. In those days you never valued life at all. You knew goddamn well that you were going to die in 10 years. And here you're a young guy. I'd hear guys say, "Well, after I'm gone" and he'd be 20 years old. I hope I can stash away enough so my kids won't go hungry. But some guys never give a goddamn; they live for themselves. Well, that's like when I told you I fixed that wall out there: I said, "Thirty years, shit, I'll be long gone." I fixed it so it would last 30 years. And here I'm an old man now, so I fixed her for another 30. So now I know I'm not going to .

RM: So, at 30 you just knew you weren't going to live to be 60?

CC: No way. I know I got silicosis, you know. Of course 40 years . .

RM: It isn't bad silicosis though, is it, Curly?

CC: Well, it's bad today.

RM: How does it affect you?

CC: It's like you have that damn phlegm in there all the time and you can't get rid of it. But my spots are on the tips of my lungs. That's what saves me - when I try to stifle coughs it doesn't tear your lungs.

RM: Oh, you don't want to cough, then?

CC: Oh no. But that's why that phlegm builds up. Sometimes you have to [cough], but it gets so damn thick.

RM: Does it burn, Curly?

CC: Well, it hurts when you cough. And Pat [Chiatovich's], too, . . . is in the tips of our lungs and it's good when it's down in there. That shows that you're a deep breather when you're working, so it'll go way down. Everybody used to think that was bad. But if you get it up here, it's always irritating when you cough. So this stuff will probably never kill me. I'll probably die from eating poor food. (No money, you know.)

RM: I think I've got a little silicosis from working at Reveille.

CC: Well, they can't tell one from the other. Like Pat, they put a cut like that over here and took one of his ribs out and reached in there and cut out one of those spots. And they said, "Jeez it

wasn't cancer, it was silica." I don't want nobody cutting me because I put a lot longer than he did underground, but I was careful.

RM: You always tried to have water?

CC: Water and a mask too.

RM: Did you wear a sponge or a respirator?

CC: I wore a sponge, too. This old doctor down there, old Craig, said, "A lot of that dampness you're sucking down in your lungs is no good either - with those sponges." He said, "You're better off with the dry filters." But I think they got a lot of the dust . . . I worked in crushers where you couldn't even see.

RM: In Round Mountain?

CC: Yes, Round Mountain.

RM: And you were wearing a sponge, but . . .

CC: Yes, but it would plug up so bad you had to just get outside and wash it out and go back in and do it. You can't wet that goddamn muck because it plugs up the crushers and the big belts and everything, so it's got to go through dry. Even when they had wet ore in the mine they probably had to mix it like it was on the skips.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

RM: So the guys who were working just knew that they weren't going to have a very long life expectancy.

CC: Well, when you see guys your age dropping dead around you, you know, from doing the same kind of work . . . I used to wonder, "Why in the hell do you stay with it, or why won't you use water? I said, "This is suicide." It's like a lot of people drinking and smoking; it's slow suicide and they know it, too.

RM: So why do they do it?

CC: Just to commit suicide. They're suicide prone, I think. Like I used to say to my dad, "Why in the hell . . . I know you enjoy life." (He was a happy old guy.)

"Well," he said, "you had a couple kids. And goddamn it was hard to get money enough to move." He used every excuse in the book.

I said, "None of that's any excuse." Because some of them did move; some of them quit altogether. They got the hell out of it. They stayed here just long enough to get a road stake, and the next thing, you might see them down there in Tichley pitching hay or something. Some of those guys are still around. Or like those masks - they used to kid the hell out of me, "Christ, what you look like a goddamn lizard or some goddamn thing." Nowadays they'd say you look like you're from outer space. But I wore them. I still do.

RM: Why did guys like you and my dad survive, when everybody else died?

CC: Well, your dad was pretty careful, too - used lots of water, and so forth.

RM: So it was a matter of being conscientious?

CC: Yes, that's it. Self-preservation. Put her any way you want, but that's . . . I just wasn't suicide prone. I'm still not. [You've got to have a will to live.]

RM: What kind of mine cars did they use in the Round Mountain mines?

CC: Most of them were pretty close to a ton car. Some of the stopes had smaller ones - 1000 pounds, wheelbarrows . . . But most of them - like on the mule train - were ton cars.

RM: So that mule was pulling 25 tons out there?

CC: Yes. But, when you've got good tramming, you can go downhill pretty well. But coming back, he had a pretty good pull with those empties. Some places were pretty steep.

RM: You never did your own track work did you?

CC: No, we had a track and pipe man.

RM: Would bring the air and water lines in and . .

CC: Yes - keep them up to your face. But with a contract you generally did all that yourself.

RM: Now, back to your meals. You had the heart attack plate for breakfast.

CC: Yes. That was generally sausage and eggs, then of course there was bacon and ham, and some of them had steak, too. You got fed good. You had to, to work that hard; you've got to have fuel. Then you grabbed your lunch after you got through and headed for the mine.

RM: And then when you got home you would have a meat-and-potatoes dinner . . . what kind of meat?

CC: Mostly beef, and some pork.

RM: How was it usually prepared?

CC: Generally roasted or fried, and sometimes boiled. They'd make big stews, you know. You ate well.

RM: What was board and room?

CC: When I first started it was around \$35 a month, but generally they'd say board, room, and washing- they'd do your laundry. And then in latter years in Round Mountain it was \$45 a month - 50 cents a meal. If you ate just one meal in there it'd cost you 50 cents.

RM: Were there a number of boardinghouses in Round Mountain, too?

CC: Oh, yes, there were about 5 or 6. And then a lot of families would take in a couple of boarders. That supplemented their pay a little.

RM: But not room - just boarders?

CC: Well, sometimes if they had a little cabin, my dad and I would generally bach. We'd cook breakfast and lunch at home and then go over to the hotel or one of the boardinghouses for dinner. It was hard, even in those days, to cook a good steak and everything for 50 cents. It was good solid food, though. But we'd make stews and of course those Cousin Jack pasties. They've got a lot of nutrients in them.

RM: Tell me about the cabin that you would bach in. How big was it, typically?

CC: Well, I still own the one in Round Mountain where we lived in '26 up till . . . I bought it about 30 years ago or a little more. It was 2 rooms and we slept in the one room and then we had another old guy or 2 stay with us. (I've done the same.) We'd all pitch in and pay for the store bill. It was a company store in those days - the Mine Worker's Mercantile. All the checks came through that store; that's where you got your pay.

RM: Oh. You picked your check up there.

CC: Then if you had a bill they'd take it out.

RM: Were the prices high at the store?

CC: High enough. Of course you could live pretty well for \$45 a month. And if you batched, you could beat that. Then there were guys who delivered eggs and there was a little meat store there. You had to pay for it, generally, as you got it; you'd buy bacon or ham or meat. I worked in the company store for a while. It was hard to keep anything -the refrigeration wasn't much. So they finally just had dry goods; cans and things like that. But you could even live well out of the store out of the canned stuff. A lot of guys used to do that and then every once in awhile when they felt like eating downtown they'd go out and eat.

RM: What were the restaurants in Round Mountain at that time? Do you recall any names?

CC: Well, the hotel was the Tabor Hotel. They had a pretty good sized restaurant and a short order counter, too, where you could eat and order fried stuff. Or most of them had that. Then Menckens was across the street, and there was another one down there . . . Four-Day Jack, they called him, then Josie's Cafe. And as I said, there were several families who took in people, too. Some of them would have 5 or 6 boarders - just enough to make a few bucks.

RM: And this is in the late 1920s and early '30s?

CC: Yes, through most of the 30s; it was pretty well shut down by 1937. But from '28 till then she was a pretty good camp.

RM: I think you told me that a lot of miners from Tonopah went to Round Mountain when they opened. Is that right?

CC: Oh, yes. You see, silver went to hell here in about '28, so Round Mountain got most of those guys. Gold Hill opened up a mine and they had about 150 men there, I guess - better than 100, anyway. It was a joint project between the Tonopah Belmont and the Tonopah Mining; they went in together on it. They gathered up all their old junk and put it to work out there and she ran for 4 years.

But when gold 'moved up in about '33, Gold Hill shut down so all them miners moved [to the Sunnyside]. Of course most of them were from Tonopah. But see, Tonopah opened for leasing all lot of them came back here.

RM: Because they thought they knew where some good ore was.

CC: Oh, they did. A lot of them made fortunes here. But a lot of them, they died in the attempt, too. Oh, I know where there's a lot of ore there today. But, what the hell's the use of being the richest man in the graveyard?

RM: What would the ore you know run?

CC: Well, see it was about 70-ounce stuff, so it would be about \$350 a ton. Where in those days

RM: How big is it?

CC: It's only about 12 to 14 inches wide, but you get chloride, and it's going down there underneath this track, and they'd stoped up above and got it, but . . . [But near where I was] there were guys drawing those goddamn gobs around there and they're dry; they just filled the mine full of dust

RM: Oh, drawing the gobs out of the chutes?

CC: Yes. Then some of them would take it out and dump it on the dump, and wet it and sort it and get the ore out of it. There was dust all through that mine. Christ, you can't see the rails half the time, even today.

RM: Which mine is this?

CC: The Mizpah. But the ore I had was between the Silver Top, Mizpah, and the 400. You'd never get it. Well, the shaft's OK in the Mizpah, I guess, but you'd never get it. Well, what are you going to do with ore? Where are you going to ship it?

RM: San Francisco or El Paso, I guess.

CC: San Francisco won't take it anymore - all that's down. The environmentalists shutting all that . . . Shelby is all down.

RM: How about AS&R in El Paso?

CC: You might. McGill is down . . . But at the end there, if you didn't have 1000 ton they couldn't see it, so you take a 14-inch streak, shit, where you going to get 1000 ton out of it? But I could take that and mill it myself and put it into bullion like the stuff I showed you. Or - not that refined stuff, but . . . Then you can ship that . . .

RM: Curly, were the miners at all interested in politics?

CC: Some of them, yes.

RM: What were they, liberals or conservatives or . . . ?

CC: Mostly democratic - a liberal type of people. Pretty radical bunch, though. When you're here today and gone tomorrow, you don't worry much about any future. A lot of guys cared about their families, but those who really did, moved them the hell out of here. They tried every way to get me out of here. I went to military schools and everything - Masonic . . . but I'd keep coming back, so I guess they finally gave up. After I got of age there was nothing they could do.

RM: What about conversations among miners - did they tend to focus on any particular subjects?

CC: Well, I don't think you could put it on tape. The old saying there, for most of them was: They'd done their mining in the whorehouse and their fucking in the mine.

RM: Yes, I've heard that.

CC: Best to do your fucking both places if you can.

RM: So they talked about sex a lot.

CC: Oh, a lot, yes. Well, most of them were single.

RM: There weren't that many family men, then?

CC: Oh, no. You take 6000 miners underground . . . say they were married, you'd've had a big town here. But shit, I bet you 4000 of them were single. In the early days, goddamn, every street had a big place like that on it. Jesus, over here to the south and east of my house there were 3 or 4, and then north and east, up and around that place. But all around the mines . . . there was a great big boardinghouse with little cabins way over by the Victor where miners lived.

RM: Were there 6000 miners working here, Curly?

CC: I believe so. You look at the miles of tunnel here in this thing and the dumps; all that was moved by hand. Her heyday was 20 years, she was done. My mother said she had figured it never got really rolling well till after she came here, and she came here in 1911. But my dad said most of it was pretty small till then. Then the machines and stuff came in and . . . say from 1910 till about 1925 or so - 15 years - she was done. So there's a lot of muck on these dumps. Yes, I believe there were that many.

RM: What were the miners talking about when they were talking about sex? The girls at the cathouses, or . . . ?

CC: Who was good fucking and who wasn't. Who would give you a jump . . . and I speak mildly. I'm not religious or pious or anything, but I speak mildly. Most miners use rougher language than that. Or who you met at a dance or some fucking thing. Oh, and then when it got so you could afford a car, you know, you'd talk about . . . the regular things, you know.

At lunch time you might bullshit, but you'd generally eat and go on back to work; a half hour was . . . and the shift bosses were generally there and generally wanted you to get back. But they didn't care. If you drilled your round or put in your set of timber or mucked your round out . . . As I say, for a long time there were good places in Round Mountain where it was easy tramming. In 3 hours I was back in town. That hurts you, though. Then you're burning yourself up. You never look back till you got that fucking round out or drilled it out. But if the round you were mucking didn't break and there were 6 or 7 cars, they'd put you somewhere else or [send you to] help somebody. But you had plenty of time, I thought, to play around.

RM: When did the mucking machines come in, Curly?

CC: I never saw them much till 1933 or '34.

RM: They never had them around here?

CC: No. By the time they were invented these mines were damn near all ready to go down. I don't think there ever was one in this camp. They had them out at Divide down at the Mexican Mine and a few places like that.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about the kind of hoists they used? CC: They had those big double drum hoists, generally.

RM: What is a double drum hoist?

CC: One's going down and one's coming up. The weight of the one going down helps you with the one coming up. And then some of them had just a single one with a counterbalance that helped. The weight of that counterbalance going down would . .

RM: Where was the counterbalance?

CC: They had a special compartment for it. It only needed to be this wide. It was a big, cast steel thing a big weight . . .

RM: Was it on a separate cable?

CC: Yes.

RM: So it was really kind of a double drum, too.

CC: They were all double drums.

RM: Were they electric?

CC: Yes, steam had gone out, pretty well, by then. In Butte, they've kept steam for years. Steam was all first motion, you know. And then, like electric, they had a little second motion. But to run those big steam . . . goddamn, man, they moved. You had to be a top hoist man.

RM: Because they were so powerful?

CC: Powerful, yes. But the electrics they had here were big, especially the Victor.

RM: Do you remember any brand names of hoists?

CC: I can't recall right off hand just what they were, but some of the big manufacturing firms.....the ones down at the Victor, I think, were Nordbergs.

RM: Nordberg hoists?

CC: Yes. They made the pumps and everything, too.

RM: Most of the mines in Round Mountain didn't have to have pumps, did they?

CC: Oh, no. It was all dry over there.

RM: And then, what about hand tools underground? A guy always had a pick, didn't he?

CC: Yes, a pick and a shovel.

RM: It was a little sharp, pointed pick, right?

CC: Well, you had 2 kinds there, generally. Stope picks have a flat so you can pick in like this instead of the curve. Then you had bars, and that was the old saying underground, "The first thing you do is bar down, wet down, then set down."

RM: OK. That was before you started putting in your round?

CC: Before you did anything else you barred down, yes.

RM: What exactly did a bar look like?

CC: It just had a chisel hit on it.

RM: It was just what, 5 feet long?

CC: Oh, 5 or 6 feet. Generally just the end was a sharpened steel and the rest of it was pipe so it wouldn't be so heavy. But some of them were all iron.

RM: What kind of shovels did you find underground?

CC: Well, generally a number 2 round point or square point. When you were on a flat you used a square point, and some of them used bigger shovels - number 4s - but most of the round points were number 2s.

RM: Did the miners read much?

CC: Some of them did. They'd read old western stories or detective magazines or something like that. But they got daily papers. Some of them would read those.

RM: In Round Mountain and Tonopah, what papers were you getting?

CC: Well, we'd get the San Francisco Examiner, but it was generally about a day late. Then these were dailies - these old Tonopah Times, Tonopah Bonanza, and Tonopah Miner. Round Mountain had a paper but it was gone when I got there. I think they called it Round Mountain Record or something. It might have been The Nugget. Manhattan had one, too. RM: Manhattan also had one?

CC: Well, that was the guy that owned the Tonopah Times - Garside. He had bought this one out here, the Tonopah Times. I think he bought the old Tonopah Miner out. He eventually bought the Bonanza, too.

RM: When you were at Round Mountain did you go up to Darroughs Hot Springs much?

CC: Oh yes, quite a bit. We'd go up there and boil out. It was good.

RM: Did boiling out help you feel better?

CC: Yes, I think so.

RM: My dad always maintained that. From the gas and from the . .

CC: It took the poisons out of your skin, too.

RM: So you'd go up there for a sweat?

CC: Yes; go up there and get in that hot bath.



RM: Did many of the guys do that?

CC: Quite a few. The thing was, not many guys had cars. It was kind of hard to get a ride. I generally always had a car, and I'd take my dad and the old guys who lived with us. If you had a car, you never went down there empty.

RM: Did you get to know the Darroughs?

CC: Yes.

RM: What do you recall about them?

CC: They were a pretty big family. They were a good family; good people. They were related to Stebbins, one of the guys who found it. Mrs. Darrough was a Stebbins I guess old man Darrough had been married before to a squaw or something. There was an Indian Jimmy Darrough and a white Jimmy Darrough.

RM: He had 2 sons named Jimmy?

CC: Yes. And his name was Jim, too - the old man. He ran the roost with a pretty iron hand there. I don't know how he got ahold of that spring, but they ran it pretty well. There were about 4 boys there and a couple of girls, I think. I knew the twins well, Lawrence and . . . (I forget the other one's name now). Their birthday is the same as mine, only they were 18 years older than me. They'd be 94 if they were living, but they're both dead. The only one living is Luther, I think, now. I think both Jimmys are gone.

RM: Did you know any of the other ranchers or people there?

CC: Oh yes.

RM: Can you recall any of them?

CC: When you first went down the valley you went through one that was once called the Woods Ranch and now that belongs to Kielhack or somebody. But the road wound right through there. It wasn't a straight shot like it is now. It wound down through the Woods ranch and then you came into Turners; that's where Carver's [Station] is now. You see, Carver's came here in latter years.

RM: Do you remEMber anything about the Turners?

CC: Old Butch Turner was a butcher. He had a butcher shop up town, and that little ranch, and he sold fresh meat up town. His grandson is Wally Bird. Do you know Wally?

RM: Oh, yes.

CC: They were all butchers. His mother was a Turner. Old Butch had 2 daughters and one of them married Joe Bird and then the other one married a miner here called Lucas [Turner] was a good old guy. I used to go down there and stay and learn how to skin and butcher and stuff. In the latter years I learned to butcher down here . . . his son-in-law was Joe Bird - Wally's dad. He was a butcher too, but he learned it through Butch.

And then the next ranch down was the Rogers. That was the old Moore ranch for years back. Moore's Creek was named after them. Rogers bought it. Then the next one was the It springs and the next one was the Birds. And the Turk ranch, and on down. I used to know all of them clear to Austin.

RM: Was there a lot of interaction between the ranch families and the miners in town?

CC: Yes. They'd have big dances and everybody would show up at Darroughs, or . . .

RM: They had dances at Darroughs?

CC: There was a big dancehall there. This was in the '20s and '30s. Then there were a couple of dancehalls uptown, and Manhattan had one. Whenever you had a dance, most of them didn't come clean in here unless it was an Elks charity ball or something, because transportation was rough then. I remember when we used to come in to Tonopah from Round Mountain, you figured it was a day's trip, damn near, just coming in. And it sure as hell was to come in and out.

RM: Oh, just to come in was a day?

CC: Yes, because the roads were terrible. And tires weren't too good, you know. If you had a little tire trouble or something, you generally had to stay here overnight. But cars did have lights on them.

RM: It was a dirt road, too, wasn't it?

CC: Oh yes, dirt all the way. Dirt streets down here, too. It was pretty tough. I've seen times you'd get up early, like in the summer. It was light, and you'd make it all the way in and go back that night.

RM: Did the road go out like it does now and then turn up 8A?

CC: No. You came down Smoky and then turned clean uptown to Round Mountain - went through the back end of the town. That old road was just like this all the way to Manhattan for about 11 miles.

RM: Oh, you went to Manhattan and then to Round Mountain.

CC: No, from Carver's (or Turners) to Round Mountain, and then you went up through the back of the town and over that rough road into Manhattan. Then you turned when you got uptown in Manhattan. Instead of going right up the main drag you'd turn and go up the Pipe Springs road. Then you went over the hump down into Pipe Springs and down into Spanish, they called it. There was a little water at Pipe Spring if you needed it. Then you got down to the old cowboy's rest deal they had there; you could get water there. And then you followed the Monitor on down into Rye Patch. That was way on the other side. And then you followed it down and hit the road and came up into town.

RM: So the road was a lot different then.

CC: Oh yes. You were really farther down in the valley where you hit the Ely road. And then you'd turn and come up here. But you always carried a lot of water with you, and everything. You had to. It was a pretty rough trip. Cordouroy - Jesus, them roads were terrible. Now, when I go to Round Mountain I leave here at 10:00 and I'm there at 11:00 - no problem.

RM: There it was what - a 3 or 4 hour trip?

CC: A good 4 hours.

RM: Four hours on that windy . . .

CC: Well, they went up through Manhattan, that goddamn road going up over Pipe Springs Summit. Jeez, that was terrible. You couldn't go fast. You'd hit these rocks and blow your . . . tires weren't nearly the things they are now, and a lot of times that was what stopped you. Some of the people would run in on the rim. There wasn't much traffic; you had to catch a ride with somebody or they'd go into town and get you a tire. People helped more than they do now. They'd see you on the road, they'd get the size of your tire and you'd tell them where to go and get a tire, or give them the money to buy you one. If they didn't bring it when they came back they'd send somebody. A lot of times you were out there all the day and night. You'd just stay there till you got a tire. Either that or wreck your rim.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

RM: Curly, tell me a little bit about Manhattan as you recall it in those days.

CC: Well, it was a good deal like Round Mountain, but the mines there were wet. The White Caps was the big mine. In latter years they got that one they called the Reliance. It came in the '30s and lasted till about the '40s. They get a lot of ore there yet today.

RM: What were the characteristics of the White Caps. Was it a shaft?

CC: Yes; it was pretty deep. They went down 800 in one lift and then went over and went down to the 13 - another 500 feet - on an incline. That was a tough mine. It was all complex metals - gold and silver and lead and animony and arsenic . . . I think there were 8 different metals.

RM: And tough to treat?

CC: Yes. Hard to treat. So they had quite an elaborate plant there - roasters and stuff. But she produced a lot of money. But the damn arsenic would get into your hide, and you'd see the miners there with sores an inch across.

RM: Is that right?

CC: Oh, I had one on my shoulder here. I had it for 2 months after I left there before it went away. That arsenic would just eat holes in your . . . it gets in your system, too.

RM: Was the ore in veins?

CC: Yes; big veins. There's a lot of ore at depth there yet, but the water was a hell of a problem. I don't think they'd have that now, but nobody mines underground - at 1300 feet, for instance.

RM: What was the country rock there?

CC: Mostly limes and granites; sediments.

RM: And then the ore came in veins of . . .

CC: Veins right in the lime, generally.

RM: What did it run?

CC: Well, you had to have pretty near a good ounce of ore, so in those days it was \$35. If they mined it now it'd be high, but you still couldn't afford it, I guess (if you could find the miners to go down there). But they always kept pretty good ore. I imagine a lot of it would beat an ounce in gold, and then of course they get the silver content.

RM: How did they treat this complex ore?

CC: They were roasting it. I think they got rid of most of the lead and zinc and quicksilver, but they recovered some of the quick - mercury, you know. And then they sometimes just shipped the concentrates from that mill to some smelter.

In the latter years it was all shipped to smelters. It was just too expensive to try to mill it there.

RM: Were they working a lot of men at the White Caps?

CC: Oh yes, there were 100 or 150 there at one time. It was a pretty good sized mill. They mined for quite a few years there. They had quite a plant up there, and there were a lot of people living around it.

RM: Were they pumping the water out of it?

CC: Oh yes; it ran right down through the main street of town. That goddamn stuff was poison, pretty near. It was the arsenic in it. The animals got so they wouldn't touch it. They'd try it. There wasn't anything in it to kill them outright, and they wouldn't try it anymore. And it was hot, too. It was still warm when it got downtown, which was 2 or 3 miles from the mine.

RM: Was it too hot to work in?

CC: Oh, no. You could work in it. That 13[00 foot level], I guess, was bad. When I was a kid the 13 was shut down and I worked with some old-timers up in the 9 and there were some down on 11, yet. It was miserable down there, I guess. They really had good ore, but the water got you; that was the expense. Everybody who worked in the winze had to put in [money] to pump that water out of the winze to the 800. And the other miners had to help put in some of the expense of pumping it out for the leasers. The company-would do it, too, but they'd take it out of your pay. Instead of giving you 50 percent they'd give you 40. So it was too expensive, and eventually . . .

RM: How much water were they pumping a day?

CC: Probably 1000 gallons a minute. These in Tonopah were 5000.

RM: Coming out of the Victor?

CC: The Victor and then the Halifax over here, too. They made a lot of water.

RM: You mentioned another mine. Was it called the Reliance?

CC: It was . . . started in the latter years - about 1932 or '33. It ran till war time, I guess - about 1940 some. They had good ore, but they were right in the middle of the gulch there. They used to mill right there in the old War Eagle mill. Then below the White Cap there was another one - the Manhattan Consolidated. It had, maybe, 15 or 20 men. Then below that one was one called the Amalgamated, and then the Big Four and then the Reliance, and then farther down there were 2 or 3 small ones, and then the Manhattan Gold apparently had 10 men over there, too.

RM: Was that a mine or a placer operation?

CC: They were all underground mines. The placer came in later on when Natomas came in and took all the placer. They started way out to the end of the gulch, almost out in the valley.

RM: When did they care in?

CC: About 1937 or '38.

RM: So before that it was underground?

CC: Oh, there was a lot of placer going on, but it was all just small guys. There were a couple hundred men who made a living out of that gulch. When Natomas came in there and gutted that thing that was the end of it, but see, the most they ever employed was maybe 18, 20 men. They used a big pontoon dredge; floated her all the way from the mouth of the canyon clean up below town. They went right over the top of the Reliance Shaft. Of course, [the Reliance was] shut down by the time they reached there. Just after I came back from the war they was shut down and they started moving it to Battle Mountain. They ran during the war I guess.

RM: Did they get quite a bit of gold?

CC: Oh yes. They took several million dollars out of there at \$35 gold. Oh, they made a profit on it, all right. The big expense, I guess, was getting water from Peavine up to the Manhattan gulch, where the ore was.

RM: Were all the mines shut down when the big placer began?

CC: Yes, there was hardly anybody there.

RM: Was the White Caps the big mine?

CC: Yeah, that was the biggest.

RM: You worked there, didn't you.

CC: For leasers, yes. The first time, I guess, was before the war, about '38, '39 - somewhere around there; I know Round Mountain was shut down. I worked over there with some leasers,

and I worked in there afterward; took a shipment of animony out for a guy after the war. It was up on the upper level, but the shaft was open there till, oh, I'd say in the '50s. And then they burned it, you know.

RM: Deliberately?

CC: Well, it was supposed to have been an accident, but . . . A guy hung his lamp up there and started a timber and it . . . there's a swivel head on it, and it turned and . .

RM: . . . turned and started the timber going?

CC: That's what they claim happened. But they were doing some shaft repair then below the 500. The animony that I got was up above the 5; or, it was up above the 4 but I dropped it down and had to take it out from the 5.

RM: What were the characteristics of the town when you knew it?

CC: It was another one a good deal like any of these mining towns - it had boardinghouses and a lot of shacks where miners lived.

RM: Was it as big as Round Mountain?

CC: About the same size. It was long. It was stretched out way up that canyon, whereas Round Mountain was spread out. A lot of the miners' shacks were just one room. There's some of them standing there yet that aren't even 8-by-8. There's a little cot in there and a little stove. Well, this thing's only 7 feet right here.

RM: Your kitchen?

CC: Yes. But it's 15 this way. But you've got plenty of room if you wanted to it a bed here. The smaller it is, the easier it is to heat, too.

RM: And then they would probably board somewhere?

CC: Yes. Part-time, you see. In the summer you'd say, "Well how in the hell could they . . . " They cooked outside in the summer. I've seen some of them even take their old stove outside, but most of them just used a couple of irons; they'd fry up that heart attack on a plate -bacon and eggs, all greasy

RM: Did you avoid fatty foods when you were young?

CC: I tried to.

RM: How did you know about it?

CC: My mother was quite a nurse, and she seemed to know.

RM: She knew that those fatty foods were bad?

CC: Yes. I remember she'd cut all the fat out of fat foods because she made soap out of it. My dad liked the fat - she'd leave some on there for him - but she'd chew him out for eating so damn much of it. She'd say, "There's nothing in it. Just grease." It's just the flavor from the cooking of it, you know. So she kind of made him watch it. There were a lot of things that she . . . Jesus, she was deathly against smoking. She said, "In the old country" (if you notice, they were mostly miners there, too) "they come back from Africa with the con." And she said, "Yeah, and they come back with a cigarette habit, too." Maybe the young guys picked it up when they went over there, and they'd sign up for 5 years. They'd start that smoking, and the 2 of them together would finish them off.

[My dad spent 5 years in South Africa before he came to America. He worked selecting timber for the mines there - timber which was hauled by India elephants. He was 18 years old when he went there, and after 5 years he went home to Cornwall, then went to Bingham Canyon, Utah, in 1902. In 1903 he was in Elko, on his way to Grass Valley, California -the Mother Lode - when he heard about the boom in Tonopah and came here.]

RM: So she encouraged you not to smoke?

CC: Oh God, yes. She thought it was terrible. You'd be with kids, underneath some guy's basement or something in there smoking. Boy, she could smell you coming, pretty near. And she'd chew you out real good for it. She was right, though, so none of us really had the . . . I smoke, but not enough for it to bother me. What I have [in my lungs] is dust, but shit, you'd probably go down there and get the mail at noon and somebody'd hit you with a car - some guy full of dope and cigarettes, full of booze.

RM: Curly, do you think the dust that blows when the wind blows in Tonopah has silica in it?

CC: Oh yes. Well, it did more in the early days. I had an aunt die down here and they claimed that's what was wrong with her. Her house was right at the edge of that old West End tailing dump. In those days, they'd let it dry out good, but they let the water come up in a precipitate, and then they could scrape the ponds and get values out of them. And man, when they were doing that, it was just like sweeping them. They were sweeping it. They had horses pull them and the dust would raise and blow it over in there and they claimed . . . and she was out in the yard a lot. She had a cow and . . .

RM: So she got silicosis.

CC: They figure with that flu in 1923 she didn't have anything to fight with. Her lungs were shot.

RM: Do you think people here in town are getting any dust now?



CC: I think anything from the mines is pretty well settled, but there's bound to be silica in just the top soil. But you know, they holier about aluminum. I guess you've heard how aluminum will kill you? You know, the most abundant mineral in the earth is aluminum.

RM: More than iron?

CC: Oh, yes; it's everywhere. See, like Divide out here. A lot of that is hard, it's a cynacide, you see [that's a zinc or aluminum ore that cyanide won't work on]. It's hard to treat your ores unless you neutralize that aluminum. I remember a change room up in Chelan, Washington; they'd blow it in the change rooms. They figured the aluminum was good to coat the silica.

RM: Wow.

[tape is turned off for a while]

RM: They take out more, Curly, at the Round Mountain Mine . . . they take nearly 1100 ounces a day; that comes to over \$3 million a week. So in half a year they've taken out more than we produced in a lifetime - from 1906 to 1937, say.

CC: The only thing that might have beat them is when I was leasing her. [laughs]

RM: Well does that count what was high-graded? [chuckles]

CC: Oh, no.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

RM: Curly, I wanted to talk a little bit more about miners, and particularly Cornish miners. Could you talk about the Cornish miners' philosophy of life?

CC: They never really cared too much about life - nobody would who worked underground. You know how dangerous it is. You can't have much value for life and go down in that place in the first place. So they didn't think anything of death.

RM: They didn't?

CC: No. You'd see guys die - your friends . . . I worked in Grass Valley amongst those Cousin Jacks (their nickname is "Cousin Jack"). And shit, they just allowed the ones who were the pallbearers and the immediate family go to a [miner's] funeral. The rest of them didn't even lay off or anything. So they didn't think too much of it. Most of them would be lucky to make 40. If you didn't get killed by accidents, the goddamn dust'd kill you. And it's in all the mines - there's a certain amount of silica [everywhere].

RM: Oh - it's just worse in some mines than other mines?

CC: Yes. They figure the town rock right up here in Tonopah is 80 percent silica. It's all full of silica, even where we are right here. And then there are other things you get like lead poisoning, quicksilver poisoning, bad air, all the things in the ground . . . Christ, you could name a dozen things that could finish you off.

RM: Why did they stay in mining?

CC: I don't know; you just get so you like it. I was raised around it, but actually -0—t's all could ever think about - getting old enough to work in these dam mines. But lots of guys were never raised around it and they'd get the taste of it and like it. It's interesting as hell, you know. In the gold mines you'd handling that rich ore, and it's something. Yes, it's fascinating.

RM: You mentioned, the last time I saw you, that you'd seen guys who would lose an arm or something in a mine and they would refuse medical attention. Could you talk about that a bit?

CC: Well, they just wouldn't go [to a doctor] and they'd lose it through blood poisoning or something.

RM: Why wouldn't they go to a doctor?

CC: I don't know. The way it was with me, when I've been hurt and had broken fingers and stuff, I'd fix them myself because when you go to a doctor, most of the time they told you to lay off and you couldn't work on account of the insurance. But you could work with a broken finger or something. Or if a guy was cut or something like that, they should have laid off and had it fixed

up and cleaned out but they didn't do it. In the days when I was young, you were lucky to even eat on the industrial insurance because it was so low. Of course, it didn't cost you that much either. I've seen a lot of them who were hurt real bad, but they'd try to work that way.

RM: You said that sometimes they would rather die than be a cripple.

CC: Oh, yes. They knew they were hurt badly enough so that they were going to be crippled, so they just didn't do anything about it; they just died. My dad was that way. He had that consumption - miner's con. And when the doctor told him he couldn't work anymore that was it - he was just ready to go. He crawled down that shaft and died. That's all. I knew a lot of them who were that way, and they weren't old men.

It was easy to get cyanide here because these were all cyanide mills. You knew the solution men or you'd go down into the goddamn mill and get it yourself. (Some of the buildings here are made out of those old cyanide cans.)

RM: How did they take it?

CC: Well, if you just touch your tongue with it, you're dead. You'd get those pellets. Those solution rooms were supposed to have been locked tight. That was on the level where the big solution tanks were. And solution men would charge those tanks up and sometimes wouldn't lock the doors, and the guys could get in there. All you'd need was one pellet and you'd just touch it on your tongue. Some of them would grind it and take the powder. The minute it hits your tongue, you're done for.

RM: Does cyanide deteriorate or does it stay strong?

CC: It'll deteriorate in time because it's a chemical, you know. But if you drop some cyanide on the floor as a liquid after you've diluted it, just throw Clorox on it and it kills it right now. That's all they used to have - a chlorine drip system to neutralize the tailings where they discharged the cyanide solution.

RM: Oh. Dripping chlorine in it.

CC: But they'd corrode up and wouldn't be working, and then some of the tailing ponds would kill the birds and livestock. They were way down below town, and in the early days none of it was fenced. But even as they fenced it those ponds would build up and break and go outside the fence. We lost cattle down here. But you never heard of kids [dying from it]. Christ, we used to play right in the damn stuff. It was mud, you know. We'd jump in it. I don't remember anybody ever getting killed from it. But I've seen burros - and they're a pretty smart animal - get in there and be killed.

But cyanide is an easy way to find gold on a rock, or out of your ore. I generally use amalgamation because I had that little dog for so long, and I didn't want her getting into it. So I did away with the cyanide and just used quicksilver. It's not dangerous if you watch yourself. But it can be bad if you don't - when you're retorting, anyway.

RM: What other things do you recall about the Cornish miners and their way of life?

CC: Well, they were plain people. They ate good food, because you have to, to keep your strength up. They were awfully small people, but they claim what made them so goddamn small was that they'd go to work when they were 8 or 9 or 10 years old, and they think that stunted them. Of course most of them drank, too.

RM: They were heavy drinkers?

CC: Yes, heavy drinkers and so forth. So dissipation might have had a lot to do with it. But my dad was a twin, and my mother was a triplet, and they were both little. My brother was a bigger man than I.

The Cornish people who were raised in this country were called "galvanized" by the Cousin Jacks. I'm a Galvanized Cousin Jack because I was born here. That was just a saying - like galvanized iron.

RM: Did it mean that they were tougher?

CC: Well, they were just born away from home - from Cornwall.

RM: What was the Cornish complexion?

CC: A lot of them were dark haired, but some of them were awfully light skinned. My dad was kind of darkish skinned and black haired. You see, they bred in with the Normans. They claim that when the Normans came over all of the Cornishmen were Saxons. They were little. And then when they . . . my mother was from the Norman side. It happened way back, of course. But that's where I got my name - from the Normans. And then they'd mix with people from the beaches of Normandy. My great-grandmother couldn't speak a word of English - it was all French. So they're a mixed-up breed too, I guess. But the real old Cousin Jacks . . . my dad was a real old Saxon. He could trace them back a couple thousand years. And they worked in the mines there, too.

RM: Is that right? All that time.

CC: Yes. That's all there was there - the mines and clay pits. Of course, there was some fishing. And they'd go to sea because Cornwall was right on the sea. Yes, they're quite an outfit; they didn't give a shit for anything. They'd just go through life laughing and all of a sudden they were gone.

RM: Was that typically a Cornishman's attitude?

CC: Yes. I've seen them. They used to go up behind the old hospital here. (Of course there were a lot of them here in those days.) They were up there dying in the pest houses. They had

pestilence houses behind the hospital because sometimes that silicosis would go into TB [tuberculosis]. But you'd go over there and jeez, you didn't think you were in a place where people were getting ready to die; they'd be laughing and joking and everything.

They never believed much in schooling either; a lot of them were illiterate. But they knew how to mine - that's all they ever knew. There are a lot of these holes right here that are full of timber that they put in there that is still standing. That's true for Virginia City, too. They were quite a bunch of guys, though. There's just none of them anymore. They're all gone.

RM: What about the Cornish women? What were they like?

CC: They lived a long time. My mother was 86 and most of her sisters lived to way up near 90. My dad's twin sister was 98 [when she died], and he was only 53. I've got an aunt buried down here - she died pretty young. She got that flu in 1922 here. God, it killed a lot of people - killed a lot of miners. God damn it. I can remember them going by my house. They were stacked up like cordwood on those wagons.

RM: Really Curly? Right here in Tonopah?

CC: Yes, just coffins this way and then this way - tiered right up. Dying on the goddamn street and everything else. They'd get that flu with those weakened lungs. Some of them died right in the restaurants sitting there eating, or in the bars.

RM: Did your dad have favorite stories he would tell?

CC: I can't remember a lot of the stories he used to tell. Some of the ones he did, you couldn't put on tape. It would just burn that son of a bitch right up. There was an old Cousin Jack [named Bill Bennett] who used to live with us in Round Mountain - I think I might have told you this one.

RM: I don't know.

CC: He was born in Virginia City way back in the 1870s. And I remember I was there in about 1934. I think I was working in Grass Valley, but I came up to see my dad all the time. I'd tell [my dad and Bill Bennett], "Jesus Christ, times are tough. God damn." I guess I was down there in the Murchee Mine. It was a tough mine to work in. There were 300 working there and 400 rustling.

RM: Is that right?

CC: I was on the skips there every day. You could see it - the yard was full. And an old Cousin Jack was the foreman. He was a mean old son of a bitch. He was the foreman of this Belmont Mine years back, too. They called him Pappa Cole - his name was Ernie Cole. I used to tell him, "Cod damn, there's some of those rustlers out there, that haven't had a job for months and got 2 or 3 kids."

"I don't give a goddamn " He said, "I didn't make the goddamn kids," you know. But pretty quick he would start to eat his lunch and finally he'd say, "Aw, take this out and give it to them." And he'd go without.

RM: He was good natured.

CC: Yes, they just had that rough way. But old Bill Bennett used to tell me . . . I said, "It's rough down there, goddamn it."

"Aw, Christ," he said, "I remember in 1932, that was a rough son of a bitch of year, too. It got so goddamn bad some of us had to fuck our own wives."

RM: [laughs]

CC: I thought that was pretty good. My dad was full of stories of Africa and such, but I can't recall them.

RM: Were there Cousin Jack stories? I mean, insulting stories . . . the Cousin Jack joke was that he was stupid, wasn't it?

CC: Yes. He was illiterate. But he was looking at your hole cards. That's the main philosophy I've had in life. Keep a low profile. It gives me a chance to look at your hole card. You'll tell me something. And I'm thinking all the time, "Why, fuck. I could buy and sell you." May be true . . . [chuckles]

RM: Did they take offense at the jokes?

CC: Oh, no. They'd absorb them. And they had some fighters - Fitzsimmons was a Cousin Jack.

RM: Oh was he? I didn't know that.

CC: He wasn't a big man; he was little. He held middleweight, light-heavyweight and heavyweight [titles]. They thought he was just nothing and he'd act dumber than shit and man, he could shoot a punch out there and the fist'd come clean through you. A lot of [the men] that he beat just weren't prepared for a guy like that. He was oddly built. His arms were long; he never had a lower torso at all. He was a blacksmith by trade - a Cornish blacksmith.

There were a lot of them in Australia. I have a lot of relatives there yet. One of them wants to come over here now. He's got money, and I said, "Shit, you ain't going to beat no taxes here. It's worse here. . . ." I don't know whether it's worse, but he's coning anyway for a trip.

RM: Did you know Johnny Sudenberg, the fighter who was here?

CC: No, that was before my time. My dad saw the fight he had with Jack Dempsey, though, from the West End dump. We had a place where the convention center is now that was called the Air Dome. It was a big dome with no sides - you could look right in it. My dad said the mining

company had them pull all the men out, because it was too late to go to the change 40 n. (Somehow the time got screwed up.) So they pulled them up to the upper dump level and they walked right out on that dump. You could look right off the West End dump and see the fight, so they sat there in their digging clothes.

RM: Is that right? And your dad saw that fight.

CC: Yes. My dad and an uncle.

RM: Dempsey said those 2 fights with Sudenberg were the 2 toughest he ever had.

CC: Johnny Sudenberg beat him here. And the old Cousin Jack . . . Dempsey boarded with my aunt in Bingham Canyon.

RM: Oh, he did?

CC: Yes. He had a brother called Harry. He was just a tough son of a bitch, that Dempsey. He wouldn't train or anything, but shit . . .

RM: He wouldn't train?

CC: Not in those days. I guess he did in latter years, after he became champion. But he was staying there [where there were] mostly Cornishmen. And he was Irish and Indian, or something, from Mannassa, Colorado. But his mother lived in Murray [Utah]. So anyway, he got a fight with Fireman Jim Flynn. And all the Cousin Jacks went down and they all put their money on old Dempsey. This one Cousin Jack said he turned around (there were mostly all men there, and he turned around to take a leak) and when he turned back old Dempsey was lying on the canvas. They lost their ass. And my aunt said, jeez, they had a hell of a time. They about threw him out of the boarding house.

RM: [laughs]

CC: That's probably haw he wound up here in the early days - all those Bingham miners were here.

RM: Why did the Bingham Canyon people come down here?

CC: Well, it was better money. And that place was a hell-hole. I used to visit up there with my aunt. I had a cousin who put 50 years in there. Do you remember old Al, the barber down here?

RM: Yes.

CC: My cousin brought him here in 1926. But my cousin and old Al worked together for 50 years in the same machine shop there at the Highland Boy, one of the big mines there.

RM: Do you know when the Bingham Canyon people came down here?

CC: It was way back. My dad was here in 1903, so most of them, I guess, came here by about 1910. My mother come here about 1910 or '11. My brother who was buried down here was born in Bingham. He was only 6 months old and he died here; that was in 1911. I think about that time a lot of them came here because the big mines there were kind of shutting down and letting men go. Probably copper went down. A lot of them were leaded, too, there. But it was booming here. They'd pay \$6 where most camps were paying \$4.

RM: Why were they paying \$6 here?

CC: So they could get the men.

RM: Oh. They had trouble getting them otherwise?

CC: Yes. And then they cut the wages here. In about 1921 they had a hell of a strike and they killed several people around here. At the mine where my dad worked, the West End Consolidated down here at the Ohio, none of them went on strike. It paid \$5.50, I think, and then Borax Smith raised it to \$6 and he had all the good miners. Finally, the Extension and the others had to raise their wages, but I don't think they ever did get to \$6. The West End was always the best-paying company.

RM: That was old Borax Smith's operation, wasn't it?

CC: Yes.

RM: And his motive was that he could get better men that way?

CC: Oh yes. He'd get the tough miners. That's the way to do it, too. For instance, in Butte it was all one company, but the mines that had the good contracts had the good miners. You know, what's the use of working for \$6 a day if you can get \$10? That the way I always looked at it anyway. Maybe that's why I'm poor. I was going backwards.

RM: Yes, hell. You're just broke, Curly. [Laughs] Tell me that story - while I'm thinking of it - about the person out at Round Mountain telling you you'd missed all the gold.

CC: Oh, yes. This guy was going with Judy's daughter (next door) and I was sitting there when they showed up. Pat said, "Coombs here worked in Round Mountain a lot of years."

"Oh," he said. "You work there quite a while?"

And I said, "Yeah, at the last of it."

He said, "When was you there last?"

And I told him, "Well, just before that company that you're working for moved in there." I said, "I had a little mill and I had a lease. So I was there about 6 years."



And he says, 'Well Jesus Christ, you was there 6 years, you ought to be rich, with your own mill.'

I said, "I am." And I was, too - at that time.

Did I tell you the one about the Japanese geologist who was looking at that cube gold one time?

RM: I don't know whether you did or not.

CC: Some of that gold is cubed; it's kind of brassy looking. So we were out where my mill is now at Orizaba (he was looking at that property). He wanted to know if I had any of that Round Mountain stuff and I said, "Yeah." We got to talking about cube gold so I told him,

"I've got some." And I had it in the truck. So I got it - I had it in a bottle. I showed it to him, and god damn, he'd look at it and he had a big powerful glass and he was throwing [i.e., looking at] it on her.

"By God," he said, "I hate to throw cold water on this, but this ain't gold."

RM: [Laughing]

CC: I said, "Oh yeah, it's gold all right." And he looked at it some more and he'd wash it and rub it and everything . . . scratch it.

"No," he said, "you're mistaken. That ain't gold."

I said, "Just came it down there - don't say this too loud. I sold the goddamn Mint \$1 million worth of this stuff and if they find out I sold them all this goddamn iron, I'm going to be in trouble."

And he looked at me and didn't know what to think. I don't think he really believed it till we got home here. I had invited him up and I took him out there and poured acid on it and shit, not even a bubble'd come off it. Then he believed. I've seen it get damn near like dice. They get about that big, some of them.

RM: About 3/8 of an inch?

CC: Yes. And damn near square. And a jeweler would bore a hole in and put a link in between 2 of them and make . . . In some of them he'd bore markings of the dice; it looked pretty good. He put a black dot of paint, I guess, or something in there. They'd make them for watch chains And then I've seen smaller ones he made for earrings. A lot of people thought they weren't natural, but they were. I dug them out myself.

RM: Curly, do you remember many miners here from Cripple Creek, Colorado?

CC: Oh, yes. There were a lot of them.

RM: Tell me a little bit about how they came out here.

CC: Probably the same way. They had a big strike back there in Cripple Creek years ago, and a lot of them just couldn't work so they'd come out here. Our chief of police here at one time,

Tom Easton, was from there. And the Lydon family was from Cripple Creek. Old man Tim, Freck's dad, was a cop here. And the Jennings brothers . . . shit, I knew a lot of them. Walter Ball, who was an old carpenter, timber framer and so forth, was from Cripple Creek. And Ed Slavin's family too, next door here. A lot of them came here during that strike and they got a bad name. We called them Cripple Creek Scabs.

RM: Oh, they were scabbing?

CC: Well, they had. They came here broke; their goddamn town had been striking.

RM: You mean in '21?

CC: Yes, '21. And a lot of them got kind of a bad name. When Cripple Creek settled the strike, the scabs were all out. Then they came up in this country. But the ones that broke the strike were Missouriian - Mizooks. I remember they had a big camp below the Number Two Extension. Most of them were Missouriians. Back there they were probably getting \$3 a day and they'd get \$5 here, even though they were striking.

RM: What did you call them - Mazooks?

CC: Yes, Missouriians. We had several types. There were the Okies, Arkies, Mazook and Tex. They used to say, Okie, Arkie, Mazook and Tex, Come West and scabbed on the Mex.

RM: [chuckles] Were there a lot of Mexicans in town?

CC: Oh yes. They came here to work in the Victor when they got down deep where it was hot. But I used to hear old Johnnie Franks . . . I used to shower over there. My dad was mucking those Tybo concentrates and we lived right by the Victor. You know Bob Franks, don't you?

RM: Yes.

CC: His dad was the foreman of the Victor. And old Johnnie used to say, "Shit, the Finlanders were better in them hot mines than the Mexicans, and they're from where it's cold."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR.

CC: There's very little material on the Blackjack. And that [paper I was looking at] was [about] the Monte Cristo and Shannon. Those were their names when I got them, too.

RM: The mining companies really resisted safety in the early days, didn't they? They wouldn't put in water, for instance.

CC: Yes. Well, it costs money to do it.

RM: And then they called the miners who struck for safety un-American. What were some of the safety innovations that the mining companies resisted, besides the water?

CC: Mostly [they resisted the] timber. They'd try to short on timber. You could see it in the shafts - instead of being fully lagged they'd have spaces. Sometimes [the area] didn't really need it but they'd make than put it in all of them so no rock could come loose. If a rock came loose and the cage was coming up or something . .

RM: You're supposed to lag the whole shaft?

CC: Yes; tight. And then the same with the stulls in those big stopes. Instead of 10 stulls they'd try to get by with 5 to hold it. They'd short things that way. And they were bad in getting the air vent pipe back to people, too.

Of course water was one of the main things here. But when I was a kid there in Round Mountain, I was on the skips. An inspector came right there and he just raised hell. Now, I've [still] got 2 of those old Waugh stopers. You can drill like hell with them, you know. They were just a good machine. They called them widow-makers; they were dry buzzys. [The inspector gave me] the order to get a couple other young guys, tool nippers, and take every goddamn one of those old machines out of there - the ones that never had any water fittings on them. They were fixed with a spray but nobody'd ever used it. The other [stoper had] a regular water hose that went right to the connection. (I think I've got one of them, too.) I put them in the shed alongside the change room out there and they locked than in there. Within 2 or 3 weeks, those old miners had them all back down there. They'd break in that shed and get them.

RM: Why did they do that?

CC: Because they could drill their round twice as fast. And after they'd get the con they didn't want to get wet, because they knew if they caught cold they Were done for. I was up in a stope with Bill Bennett one time. I'd been up there getting steel - I was a tool nipper then. So he came up to the mine inspector, old Charlie Huber. Old Charlie knew pretty near everybody - he'd been an old miner, and he had the con himself. But old Charlie came up there and Bill was there and Jesus Christ, it was damp all over in the stope, and he was all set up, with this machine and the water hose and the whole thing. Charlie looked and said, "You got her all wet down, Bill?"

"Yeah, I use a lot of water, keep the dust down and everything." So he got over by the manway and he said, "There's one thing you forgot, Bill. There ain't any water line coming up here."

RM: [Laughs]

CC: The hoses were lying down like they'd been hooked up, but they weren't hooked. It wasn't a water line.

RM: Well, how did he get it wet? With a bucket?

CC: He just took his canteen or a bucket or something and threw it around. Because they knew he was coming. But it was just like in the early days, when they had the Pro-his arrest those bootleggers. You knew it when they left Carson; somebody had a spy in the office. And it was the same with the mine inspector.

RM: Why did they do that, Curly? I mean, they knew they were killing themselves. It's like people smoking now, I suppose.

CC: I guess it is. But it was your livelihood, you see. But Christ, they paid just the same to get wet. But as I say, after you got that con they didn't want the water. They made it a prison offense in this state to be drilling dry. You can get a year in prison for it. They had to do it to stop them.

RM: When did they do that?

CC: Way back about 1934, I guess.

RM: Oh, it was that late?

CC: Oh, yes.

RM: But the unions . . . in the strike of 1921, that was one of their demands, that they wanted water. And the newspapers were ragging on them, calling them Bolsheviks and disloyal. Why did people put up, with that?

CC: I don't know. But that's what gave the unions a good name. They fought for good things in these days. I used to be a strong union man. One time I was recording secretary for Local Number One in Butte. But the goddamn Mafia and others moved in on the union, because it's a big payday. It was a big money thing, like prostitution and dope and labor. They all rank right in there. And they're rampant with it. I was just reading a big piece on it - the son of a bitching . . . they were the people's champion, you know. The IWW was a pretty communist . . . I was recording secretary for them one time in Bishop [California] at the Vanadium [mine].

RM: What year was that?

CC: That was as late as '39, I guess.

RM: So they were still active even in '39?

CC: Yes; '40 was the last time I worked up there, I think; and it was still there then. They were more of a local union, but it was IWW.

RM: I'll be darned.

CC: When I was working in Mercury, that was one of [the government's] big questions. Shit, I've seen times when I'd just sit in the office and bullshit with the girls and be getting paid because [they thought] I was a communist.

RM: They were checking you out because of that IWW background?

CC: Right. But it never went anywhere. They even used to say, "That's just shit." They said, "Christ, you went through the war," and I've had 4 or 5 secret things tougher than that to get [on]. But yet they'd just . . . it makes a job for some government asshole.

RM: Sure. [laughter]

CC: But I liked it. I said, "Well, if I want to rest and get paid for it I just try to get a job at Mercury." I could generally get on there. Old Saylor Ryan was . . .

RM: He was OK, wasn't he?

CC: Yes. We were kids together over in Ely, you know.

RM: Oh, you were?

CC: Oh yes. He got started with labor over in Ely but he didn't tell me about it. This labor's a big thing, but I don't want anything to do with it.

RM: He saved our ass one time out there on the flats. The old man and I were working out there in November, pouring cement, and it was cold. We had a boss - a white-haired guy - and he'd come along and say, "You sons of bitches better get to work or there's going to be some new faces tomorrow." We put up, with this for a couple of weeks, and then we called the union and told them about it. The next day at about 11:30, Saylor Ryan showed up on the job site out there at the flats. He went in and talked to the superintendent and he said, "I want that old white haired son of a bitch out of here or I'm shutting this son of a bitch down at noon."  
[laughs] They got rid of him and made the old man the foreman.

CC: The hell they did. Yes, these young guys over in Ely . . . there was another one there and he was an insurance man - I forget his name. Three of us used to run around together there. But if I wanted to go down there, just call Ryan and he'd say, "Just bring your goddamn lunch bucket and go to work."

RM: Did you know Ed Kirchen?

CC: Yes. Do you mean the main one who ran these mines [in Tonopah]?

RM: Yes.

CC: That was John. His brother Ed was the mill foreman. And then young Bill Kirchen and I worked together a lot over here. He died here not too long ago. He was about 77 or 78, I guess. Old John G. Kirchen was . . . well, those guys were like kings in those days.

RM: They were?

CC: If you'd see them you would just stiffen right up at attention, because they were your livelihood - your bread and butter. If they told you to get out of town, you were dead. But he created a lot of work in this town. You know, he built the Extension Company. He just started with the NUmber One and NUmber Two Extension, and he eventually acquired the Victor, the Caine and the West Tonopah, and he made a big thing out of it. Right today, of known underground mines, I'll bet you that's one of the richest silver mines in the country. But it's so damn deep and hot and full of a lot of water.

RM: How big is the ore down there, Curly?

CC: Well, that Murray Vein, at one time, was 100 feet from wall to wall. But my dad said you just made segments. And the one that he was in . . . like, where I was born, it was right here, and you could throw a rock right there - that's where that ore body was. And then it ran towards the graveyard. It faulted and then that's where the last were - where that statue thing is alongside the road. That's where old John G. Kirchen's ashes were thrown.

RM: You mean right there on the ground?

CC: Yes. You've seen that monument, haven't you?

RM: Yes.

CC: That's where the ore body is - straight down on the 2500-foot level. I think they figured it . . . it was below the 2000 but a lot of it was blocked out. But they never took much of it out because silver kept dropping all the time. And they were keeping the mill running with just development work, developing that ore body. My dad said the one that was just over there north and kind of west - towards the Cashboy - was another one of their . . .

RM: That's be north of there?

CC: Not where that statue is, but where the trestle used to be. There was an old wooden trestle and I was born right alongside it.

RM: Is it this side of the Victor?

CC: Yes. It's kind of this way towards the Extension. You know where the Cashboy is - where old Merlie has all those old cars?

RM: Yes.

CC: The Cashboy was right there. They sank the Victor to the 1800-and-something, then went over and connected with the Cashboy shaft. They raised and put the air shaft there, and they used to pump the air down. So when they sank a winze they went right on that 1800-foot station and sank clean to the 2600, I think it is. (I showed you that shaft depth thing earlier.)

RM: Yes. Right.

CC: I think it's 2595 or whatever, but anyway, they developed that ore body. But on the other one, they went from the 1800 up to the 1500, and they stoped it out from the 1800. But my dad said it was 100 feet from wall to wall and 100 feet long and ran \$100 a ton when silver was about 4 bits a goddamn ounce. So it'd be rich ore today.

RM: And it's still there? You said it faulted?

CC: Well, it went along and they took that segment out, and then they finally found out that it faulted a little bit. And then they developed this other one, but it was below there. I suppose they might have done some drilling or something and found out the son of a bitch cut off there, and then what it did was step over.

But a lot of the geologists think the Murray vein and the Mizpah vein are the same vein. All it did was go over here, fault, and then when it got down there they called it the Murray vein. But it changed to an oxide down into the sulfides; that happens when you get in the zones. But here the big flat fault cut it off - the Mizpah fault. They don't know what happened to it going down. They claim they found pieces of it in some of this old shaft out here. It was the same type of ore.

RM: Which shaft is that?

CC: I don't know the name of it. It's right behind this mountain here.

RM: You mean on the other side over there?

CC: Yes, on this mountain right here.

RM: Over by where the dump used to be?

CC: Yes; they still dump right in it. It's full of garbage.

RM: And they claim they found pieces of that vein over there?

CC: Yes. They figure they don't know which way it was faulting or anything. They never did find anything in place, but they did a lot of work. That was kind of a joint venture there. Of course, they had a joint venture on the other side of the hill, too, trying to pick it up.

There were several veins here, you know. But the big ones are the Mizpah and the Murray.

RM: Were there many Slavic miners by the time you got on the scene here in Tonopah?

CC: Oh, shit.

RM: How, were they?

CC: Oh, they're good, hard-working people. They had mines in the old country and they had some knowledge of it when they got here. But God, it killed them. They went down before anybody - some of them were 18 or 19 years old. My dad said when they got here they weren't used to this high living and good money. In those days, over there, they probably worked for 50 cents a day. And they were heavy drinkers and this nightlife - like the Big Casino, 3 or 4 streets of whorehouses . . .

He said they'd stay up all night partying, and instead of tramping one car at a time they could push 2. They were big, strong men. He said over here on the West End they had a tally. If you [filled] so many cars from back in a certain stope, that's all you needed to do. So you got your tally but they wouldn't let you go home. So they'd lie down there on those cold turn sheets and catch cold, because they were worn out from partying. That's the only rest they got, probably. He said in no time, you wouldn't see them. And most of them never learned the language. RM: Is that right? They were dead before they learned the language. CC: Yes. Then you had bohunk [Slavic] boardinghouses here. I lived in the one down here in Hell's Half Acre. That's why I'm such a nice person - I was raised right there in Hell's Half Acre. Boy, she was a rough son of a bitch, I'll tell you.

RM: In what way?

CC: Fights . . . and everybody bootlegged.

RM: Where was it located, Curly?

CC: Just up in back of the Valley Bank. Do you remember the depot?



RM: Oh, OK. North of the Valley Bank.

CC: Well, all that ridge up there was called Hell's Half Acre. A lot of people said the depot fenced that off to keep people from going through there. They said the fence was built so the kids and young people wouldn't get up in there next to those miners. It was a big fence all the way around built of big . . . it must have been 7 or 8 feet high. But people kicked boards out of it and . . . But anyway, there were several boardinghouses up in there. We were about the only Cornishmen there.

RM: Why were you boarding over there?

CC: Because it was close to our old house, and we slept down at the house.

RM: Curly, did the hookers who came to town stay, or how did that work?

CC: They generally stayed. Some of them had dinner-pail pimps. Of course if they'd catch pimps at that time, they'd generally run than off. That was no place for a full-time pimp.

RM: Did they last long, though, with disease and everything?

CC: No, they died quick too. They live dissipated to beat hell. It's a hell of a life, really. You see a woman of 40. How in the hell is she going to peddle ass alongside some young chick of 20? She's stoped out. [laughter]

RM: [Laughs] That's a good one. So, what happened to them? Did they die or did they marry? Did many of them marry local guys?

CC: Oh, yes. There was George Barra - the sheriff here. Babe had her feet stuck in the window down here. And Bob Marker's wife and . . . Al Silvers was a partner of my stepdad's. God, he built most of the mills in this town. He was married to one - old Gerri. She outlived him, t. I bet you she was 80 when she died.

RM: And what did people think of that - marrying a girl off the line?

CC: Well, they didn't cotton to it in those days. In fact, if they saw a woman smoking, she was just no fucking good. She was just trash, you know. They never went for it - especially in public. The hookers weren't allowed to come uptown at all. They could come up and go to the clothing stores, I think, but they couldn't even go to the cafes [because] they had cafes down there.

RM: How many hookers would you say there were in town?

CC: There were 300 at one time, they claim. There were 3 streets of them down there. But that was all boarded away from the town, too -there was a wooden fence around it. We kids used

to peddle papers (Audi' there, and they'd stop you at the gate. There was a cop there all the time. He'd generally sit right around in there. We kids would get there and start talking to this old guy - Dan Corbett. He was a pretty old conned-up miner, and he was the guard at this one end. Lenny Mushu was at the other end, and he was a gunman for the Extension. That end went pretty near onto the Extension property. But somebody would get old Dan to bullshitting and finally, when he'd be paying attention to the kids, there'd be about 10 of us and we'd just dart right by him while he was talking to the others. Then if he went chasing you, there was nobody at the gate and . . . we had had it all figured out. You'd get down there and lots of times you could sell a paper for one of those little \$1 gold pieces.

RM: What did a hooker's room like? She slept in her room, didn't she?

CC: Yes, some of them stayed right in it. It was just a room with an old wash basin and a bed - just a frigging scaffold. They'd just jump right in there. She got you out quickly, to make room for another one. RM: What was the price back in the '20s?

CC: About \$1. Then it got up to \$2.

RM: Did they just do regular sex or did they have any variations?

CC: Well, most miners would go in there and get their dick hard and they'd be telling her, "Blow on this steel. I think it's plugged up."

RM: So, it was \$1?

CC: Yes.

RM: Was it anything a guy wanted in those days?

CC: Yes. If you didn't want that kinky stuff, then there was the other. but most people liked the kinky stuff.

RM: Did the hookers stay long?

CC: No. They moved on.

RM: Was there a circuit?

CC: If the business was good, some of them got a clientele. But they'd die out - the miners would die or get fired or something. So then they'd go . . . some of them would follow the tramp miners to Ely or Reno or wherever. So there were new faces. [You'd hear,] "There's a new whore in town," and right away you'd go down there.

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Rogers, Ben,  
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(A) Treatise in Metal Mining,  
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