

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
YANKEE-NEVADAN**

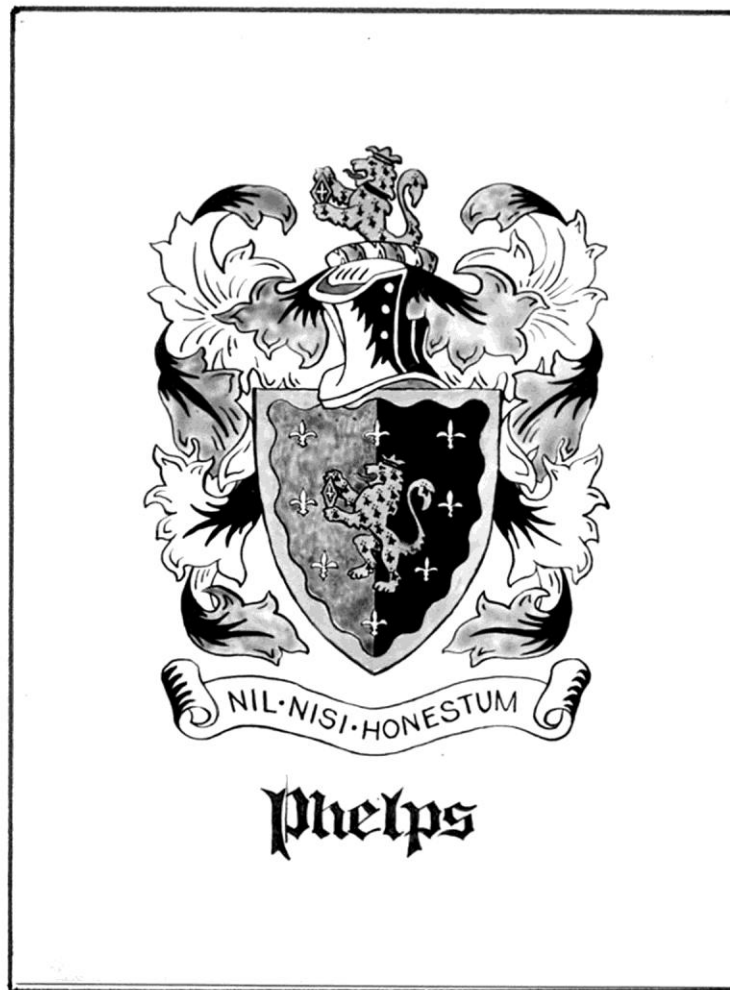
George Alfred Phelps

VOLUME II

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
YANKEE-NEVADAN

George Alfred Phelps

VOLUME II PART 2



Autobiography of a
YANKEE-NEVADAN
George Alfred Phelps

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VOLUME II

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

MORE DEER HUNTING STORIES

Every deer hunt was a unique experience, whether consisting of an hour's side-trip in a Company rig, a one day outing on a weekend, or an overnight campout. Each one provided some element of adventure, surprise, danger or mishap, enough to fuel a tall tale.

Historically "the tale," as told with a modicum of embellishment, has been as much a part of the hunt as the act itself. And though I have neither the time nor the space to detail all of my hunting pursuits, excerpts from a few more of them should be of interest to my readers; even without the customary elaboration.

There was the time in the Currant Creek country (the area of my first deer hunt) when, with the Taelours, our little war-surplus Jeep got locked in a grove of quakies on a canyon sidehill. Unable to get enough traction to back up, we were forced to chop down a few of the saplings so we could push and shove our vehicle down through the patch, turning it with sheer muscle power, squeezing it between tree trunks, not knowing what we might find at the bottom of the canyon or if there were another way back to camp.

Sure enough, it was a case of "out of the frying pan into the fire." Within a hundred yards, after getting free of the trees, we were bogged down in an ancient, silted beaver pond. Undaunted, despite the late hour, one of our party searched for a jack-pole while the rest of us hauled and placed flat rocks under the axles, to be used as fulcrums. But our lever, a twenty-foot-long piece of an old aspen trunk, drove the first of the rocks into the mud and we had to haul more to replace them.

We finally raised both ends of the Jeep, in turn, and built a "roadbed" of boulders, logs and branches underneath it. Dan then climbed in behind the wheel, and with the rest of us pushing, pulling, slipping, falling in the mud and cursing, he drove it onto dry land. To a man we were covered with ooze and grime, resembling, I supposed, a patrol of WW-II soldiers in France. Only there were no bullets

tracing the air over our heads and we could laugh and joke about the incident.

In the fall of 1953, again in the Currant Creek area, a humorous incident took place when Rita and I were deer hunting with her father and brothers (Jim, Stan and John) and niece (Ethel Wise). Since I was unable to shoot a rifle (at the time I was wearing an upper-body cast, the reason for which I will later explain) I was armed with a 35-mm camera loaded with Kodachrome film. It was the start of my continuing use of slide-film. Rita had a deer tag and was hunting with my 30-06.

When the hunt commenced I sat on a convenient knoll to observe while Rita and Jim "dogged" the bottom of a draw, barking and beating on the trees with sticks as they went along. Four deer were thus disturbed, and exited the grove on the opposite side.

Just as the frightened animals cleared the ridge a shot rang out and one of the deer, a small buck, fell to the ground. A few minutes later I saw a stranger, obviously he who had fired the shot, approach the animal. He stood on one foot and then the other, kicked at it, and apparently concluded that this was not a kill to be particularly proud of, certainly not one worth wasting his precious deer tag on.

He was just starting to walk away when Jim come up to him and, perceiving that the guy planned to abandon the game, led him to believe that he was a game warden. This effectively threw a crimp in the hunter's plan, and Jim stood by until the spike buck was thoroughly field-dressed and properly tagged; much to the alleged sportsman's chagrin.

We met at the Jeep at noontime, broke out some bread, cheese and salami, and washed it down with water or beer while standing around in the warm sun. A typical hunter's lunch break.

That afternoon, when I was hiking in the company of Stan, we sighted a buck and agreed that it was a big one, a four-pointer at the very least, and well worth shooting. He made a fine kill but the deer turned out to be a forked-horn. Not a little one, however, but a very mature deer. His unique antlers were widespread and long, and provided a suitable frame for a photo of Stan who squatted down in front and held them proudly.

Rita failed to shoot a deer (a failure for which I was thankful) and when the day came to a close I had experienced all the pleasures of the hunt except the kill, and had no animal to dress and care for.

A couple of years later, a group of telephone men from Reno talked Red Wayman, my boss at the time, into taking them in a Company Jeep on an overnight hunting trip to Currant Creek. Red was reluctant to do so. Not because he was particularly averse to the use of a Company vehicle for hunting, but because the area was a long way from any kind of telephone property. He finally agreed, though, and asked Vic Snow and me to go along.

It was a trial right from the start. On our way up the rugged canyon road, the Jeep's engine overheated. We stopped to investigate the cause and found that it was out of oil. A trail of crankcase oil, in the dry grass between the wheel tracks, led us back some distance until, by mere good fortune, we came upon the plug that had loosened and fallen from the oil-pan. Well, that was a relief. The dropout was

returned to its threaded hole, the oil was replaced (from our spare supply) and we continued to the campsite. But the episode tended to heighten Red's concern, for it was he who held the responsibility for the vehicle.

Darkness soon fell over our creek-side bivouac, but we were comfortable in the light of a roaring campfire. Red brewed a pot of black coffee; two guys set about pitching a small tent nearby; Vic heated his famous shepherder beans in a big iron Dutch oven; the "dudes" broke out a bottle of Jim Beam and passed it around. We finally got to eat, and then prepared for sleep, two in the tent the rest of us, but one, in sleeping bags laid out on the ground around the fire. The one was Jimmy Gore, a vehicle repairman and apparent neophyte to the sport of deer hunting. Against all advice he insisted on making his bed in the back of the station wagon.

"I'm not about to sleep on the cold ground," he said, not believing that the floor of the Jeep would be a lot colder.

I didn't sleep well that night. It was admittedly cold and I was twice disturbed by unusual activity in the camp.

The first interruption occurred around midnight, just after I drifted off to dreamland, in the form of banging and thumping and grumbling in the tent. The occupants finally cast out Vic's bean pot, from which a foul-smelling gas had seeped and filled their cramped quarters.

At three-thirty, long before dawn was scheduled to break, I was again awakened by banging and cursing, this time from the Jeep. Peeking from under cover I saw Jimmy's underwear-clad form emerge from the Jeep and move to the campfire, which was now a bed of dark coals and ash. He poked at it and threw on some sticks in a vain attempt to kindle a flame; and then, still grumbling, he hobbled back to the vehicle.

I closed my eyes, but re-opened them in time to see him return with a small container. Now wide awake, I rose up on one elbow for a better look.

"Hey! Whatcha doin'?" Red shouted, just as Jimmy tossed the pink-tinged liquid contents of a coffee can toward the fire pit. Instantly, as if by magic, a pillar of yellow flame burst into the air. At the same time a wall of fire swept across the ground to Jimmy's stocking-feet, jumped to the can in his hand then singed his long-Johns, the hair on his wrist and arm, his whiskers and eye-brows. Shocked, he threw down the can and performed a fancy Irish jig while stomping the fire out of his socks.

"By God, I'm warm now!" he proclaimed with a sheepish grin.

Well now, since everyone was wide awake there was no alternative to getting up and dressed, even though it was still two hours from daylight. Anyway, we all wanted to get close to the fire, the wonderful fire that our friend had so generously rekindled.

It was cold that morning. The temperature had dropped into the teens. To obtain fresh water for our coffee I was forced to break through a half-inch of ice on the creek.

We were on top of the mountain by daybreak, and spent the day up there looking for deer. But it was not a good hunt for us Elkoites. One of the out-of-towners insisted on taking a flask along, which

didn't set well with anyone, and all of them had to be "mothered." Jimmy was the best of the lot. In spite of the harassment he received over the campfire incident, he listened to good advice and succeeded in shooting a nice young buck.

Red was visibly relieved when we got back to Elko, and vowed to never again take on the job of guide to such a bunch of yahoos.

It was while hunting with Rita's brother Stan, near the head of Stormy Creek not far from Currant Creek, that we saw a most unusual deer. We were standing below the rim-rocks, above a patch of crowded, crooked quakies, when we heard a sound below. We paused, with rifles ready, to listen and watch. But it was not a familiar sound, at least in that environment. It was a great huffing and puffing and snorting and heavy breathing, punctuated by rustling leaves and snapping twigs and branches. Obviously, something was moving around down there, but what?

I whispered to Stan, a few yards to my left, "What d'you make of it?"

"I dunno.... Could be a hunter," he ventured. "But I haven't seen anybody. Must be a deer."

We were soon able to ascertain, by the crashing sounds and quivering bushes, the path of the unknown man or beast as it moved up and across from where we stood. It was no more than fifty yards distant when it broke out into the open. And it was a deer. A big buck deer. But the likes of which I had never seen nor would expect to see again.

Neither of us was a wildlife expert but both Stan and I were convinced that this particular deer must hold the record for old age; probably pushing twenty-or-more years and pushing hard. He was gray in color, with a lot of white across the shoulders. He was swaybacked, with a belly that sagged almost to the ground, and he limped on all four of his crooked legs. Every step he took, and every breath, was obviously a great effort.

I had always believed that an old buck should carry a set of trophy-sized antlers. But Stan explained that the hormones controlling a buck's sexual drive also regulate the growth of his antlers. In that case, this old fellow's once-healthy instinct for mating had long since abandoned him. Instead of a magnificent rack of antlers he was stuck with a set of asymmetrical, grotesque, extruded horns resembling the knurled and knobby fists of an arthritic giant. What a pitiful sight.

When at last he was clear of the trees, the old fellow stopped and looked over his shoulder at Stan and me. He stood there for a long time, pleading with baleful eyes to be put out of his misery.

Both Stan and I were moved by his appearance, and were inclined to put a merciful end to his obvious suffering. But game laws prohibit such benevolence.

Still, he was not a fit candidate for tagging and human consumption so we turned reluctantly away and left the once proud patriarch of the mountain to the devices of nature. Before the next full moon, I reckoned, he'd be a source of nourishment for the region's coyotes, buzzards, hawks, rodents, insects and worms.

Stan moved off to the south while I struck out to the northeast and worked my way through a jumble of granite boulders and tender bitterbrush. I had almost gained the top of a rocky knob when I came upon a prime four-pointer, not seventy-feet away and just rising from his daytime bed. Stopping in my tracks I slowly, cautiously, raised my rifle.

The buck stood erect, his deep black eyes focused in my direction, poised to whirl and make good his escape. As soon as my rifle barrel was level with his lower neck I squeezed the trigger and sent a chunk of hot lead speeding to its mark. He never got to make his move, but fell on the soft warm grass of his recent resting place, never again to be disturbed.

Was it a difficult thing to do, to shoot a deer at such close range? Not really. A hunter could wish for no better opportunity than to make a good clean kill.

I was not always lucky enough to shoot a standing deer. One time, when hunting with Red Wayman in the Pequop Range, not far from where I had missed the mountain lion, I was not nearly so favored.

Conditions were ideal that day, with bare south exposures, six-inches of snow on the north sidehills, and a sky of high thin cirrus clouds. We parked the truck on the west side of a ridge, in the short sagebrush below its crest, and quietly made our way to a point of concealment overlooking a draw that fell away to the east and culminated in a copse of trees a hundred-yards distant. We were familiar with the area, and were not really surprised when a big buck slowly approached from the south. He came steadily toward us but was still some distance away when Red signaled for me to shoot.

I took aim, or started to, when the big guy got suspicious and headed obliquely for cover. Too fast, I decided, for a clean shot. So I waited. And then, to my astonishment, he stopped for a look around before entering the trees. Again I raised my rifle and centered the front ramp in the peep-sight. But he faced away from me and all I could see, beside his white tail, were the back of his head and his antlers. Not a good target at all. At least he was standing still, so I raised my sights a bit, to the base of his antlers, and squeezed off a round.

Missed! My bullet passed between his ears and crashed dead-center into the trunk of a pine not two yards in front of him. Well, I congratulated myself, I didn't hit him in the butt.

Startled by the supersonic crack of the bullet and subsequent exploding bark of the tree, the buck whirled and ran back up the hill to our right. That was all I needed. I kicked another shell into the barrel of my ought-six, realigned the sights to his bobbing front shoulder, and sent a second bullet on its way. This one reached its target right on schedule, and proved fatal.

Elated, I field-dressed the deer while Red walked back to the truck, drove it around to the mouth of the draw and hiked part way up to meet me. I was glad to see him, for even though it was all downhill the snow was slick and my buck was heavy. I sure could use his help. I had fallen twice on the way down this far, the deer ending up on top of me.

It was easier work for the two of us, with one handling the antlered-end and the other holding onto the hind legs.

That buck turned out to be one of the best I ever killed; a big healthy fellow with a set of sturdy, symmetrical, four-point antlers, a picture perfect mule deer.

I tried hard for "none but clean and neat" deer kills, but I must credit my relatively good success to luck as much as skill. Perhaps the worst shot I ever made, the one I least like to tell about, took place while hunting in the foothills south of Swales Mountain. Albert and I came upon a small bunch of deer browsing in the tall bitterbrush. Sensing our presence, they began to mill around and move away. Spotting a good-sized four-pointer in the crowd, I drew a bead on his heaving shoulder and squeezed off a shot. The bullet whizzed through the brush (possibly hitting a twig) and over my intended target to hit a deer beyond.

The result was a messy wound in the upper thigh, and the animal struggled in pain before I got in a position to end his suffering. (Luckily, it was a two-point buck that I had accidentally hit, and not one of the many does in the herd.)

Even a clean shot sometimes produced surprising results. In the Pequop Range, I once shot a running buck and knew that he was fatally wounded. But he ran ahead at full-tilt a hundred yards or more through the mahogany trees before dropping dead. It was then that I realized the power of adrenalin in an animal. My bullet had totally destroyed the critter's heart, but his brain, nerves and muscles carried on as if nothing had happened. At least for a short time.

A few miles east of the Pequops, in the Silver Zone Range west of Pilot Peak, I was on a late-season hunt with some friends. While driving our truck along a faint trail in a sagebrush-and-juniper draw, the bust of a four-pointer suddenly reared up above the brush dead ahead, and not more than fifty-yards away. Without a word I jammed on the brakes, shut off the engine, grabbed my ought-six, opened the door, eased partway out and shot him in the neck. It was swift and sure. The kind of kill that results in good venison.

I have to admit, though, that I usually enjoyed the hunt more than the meat. I'd often go for days without firing a shot, content with the sport of tracking and observing the deer in their natural habitat.

Four or five Californians, acquaintances of Jim, Stan, and Bob Gregory, lived on the flatlands near Gridley above Marysville. They were rice and fruit farmers, and frequently came the 500-miles to Elko County to hunt deer with the boys, and who in return invited them to California to shoot waterfowl over their fields.

I once joined their deer-hunting group, to camp on a small creek northwest of Currant Creek. The weather had been making up for a storm all day, and it began to snow even as the twenty-foot-square army tent was being erected in a grassy area beside a clear-running spring. When dry, the turf made a good floor. But with an eye to the future we carefully cut drainage ditches around the perimeter walls.

This was a well-equipped outfit. Farming must have been a profitable business, for money was apparently no object to these men. They had folding chairs and tables, cots and sleeping bags, a gas range-top for cooking inside, and a small wood-burning stove with a round smokestack sticking through a collared hole in the canvas roof at the rear of the tent.

They had Coleman gas-lanterns and lots of flashlights. (I so admired Bob Gregory's new "Hunter" hand-lantern, which threw the narrowest beam the greatest distance of any flashlight I'd ever seen, that he gave it to me.)

There were crates and boxes of canned goods, fruits, vegetables, meats, breads, juices, booze etc., enough for a month, I figured, were stashed along the inside walls of the tent. (I would revise my estimate of how long the booze might last.

When things were pretty well squared away, those of us who hadn't yet taken to the bottle dressed for the storm and made a foray up the canyon in search of deer. However, it was apparent that the animals had already sought shelter among the rocks and trees. Furthermore, the visibility and audibility were effectively attenuated by falling snow. Still I enjoyed an hour in the wild before returning to the warm-but-noisy comfort of the tent.

The eating arrangements were a bit haphazard that first night. But no one went hungry or thirsty. After putting away a hamburger and some beans I sat by the stove, smoked my pipe and observed the amusing goings-on. The flatlanders, happy to be away from the farm and without a care in the world, contentedly played poker, guzzled whiskey by the water-glass-full, and exchanged dirty jokes.

Meanwhile, the snow was piling up outside.

Heat from the stove melted the snow on the roof above. The water ran down the smokestack and sizzled on the red-glowing iron beside me. After a while I got uncomfortably hot and moved away, to finish my smoke. At last I crawled into my bedroll, tried to ignore the loud talk and hoarse laughter, and watched one of the men carefully place his boots behind the stove to keep them warm during the night. And then I fell asleep.

In the morning, anxious to see how much snow had fallen, I hauled out of bed with the (few) early risers. He who had put his boots behind the stove was dressing, and bragging about his last night's thoughtfulness. Anticipating its warmth, he smiled as he slid a foot into the first one.

"Damn!" he exclaimed, kicking the boot away from a wet-stockinged appendage.

During the night, snow-melt had run down the smoke-stack and into his boots, half-filling them with water. Another great idea gone awry.

Outside, I found the snowfall decreasing. But eight- to ten-inches of the stuff already blanketed our world, including the tent that sagged perceptibly, maybe even dangerously, under its weight. It was an awesome scene. Except for our modern vehicles, I could have sworn that I was a trapper or miner's camp in the 1800s.

There was not much to do that day. The storm abated but the deep snow precluded any but short trips on foot, and the deer were still

holed-up. It was a good time to relax, shoot the bull and enjoy the quiet life. The rowdies were too hung-over to make much noise.

The following day was equally unproductive, and those of us who had to go back to work packed up and left.

The Californians stayed a week or more. They enjoyed a very successful hunt, and spent a night in the city of Wells before packing it in. As usual, on their way back home they stopped off at the Zuninos and left their surplus supplies, of which there were plenty of foods but no booze.

Sometime in the early fifties, Rita and I joined Vernal and Mary Jones, and a friend of theirs, Bob Gourley (a CAA employee), in a hunting-camping trip to the Tennessee Mountain area in northern Elko County. On the second day out, Vernal, Bob and I went up to the high country in Vernal's Studebaker pickup, leaving Rita and Mary to "tend camp" and rest.

That evening, at dusk, the girls built a good campfire, prepared an evening meal, and sat down to await our return; which, as it often happened, would be after dark.

We saw very few deer that morning, low down, so we hunted on up and over, north of the big mountain itself. We still didn't see anything worth shooting, and decided to work our way back. It was sundown when we came over the pass and almost dark when, in a grassy swale a half-mile above camp, a pair of sage hens walked onto the road about forty feet in front of us. They stopped. Vernal stopped. And then, licking his lips, Vernal suggested that "roast sage hen would sure taste good tonight."

Neither Bob nor I showed much enthusiasm for the idea, so he drove on and the birds, probably tough as crows anyway, disappeared in the tall grass.

"It'd be just our luck," I commented in passing, "if we had a sage hen in camp sure as hell there'd be a game warden around." (Sage hens were out of season.)

Meanwhile, back in camp, the sun disappeared beyond the far horizon and a violet twilight descended on the earth. Rita and Mary pumped-up the Coleman lantern and ignited its gossamer filaments. They brewed a pot of fresh coffee and moved close to the campfire, taking comfort in its flickering glow and radiant heat. The shadows deepened and night noises, both real and imagined, closed in about them.

What was out there, they wondered? Could it be coyotes? Or lions? With such thoughts uppermost in their minds it was only natural that they'd be startled to see a pair of glowing points-of-light, staring at them from across the little stream. Could it be the eyes of a wild animal, one bent on a meal of venison? There was a field-dressed deer, from our previous day's hunt, hanging in a nearby quaking aspen.

In hushed voices they discussed the possibilities, and finally concluded that it must be a wildcat, maybe even a mountain lion, crouching on the other side of the creek and waiting for a chance to bound into camp and sample the meat in the tree. It was a frightening prospect, and quite possible.

But scared as they were, they were not about to be robbed. They'd defend the camp to the death, if necessary. While the eyes continued

to stare, unblinking, across the altogether too short distance, they cautiously moved away from the fire. Rita took up a thirty-thirty rifle and prepared it, and herself, for the kill. With Mary at her side, whispering encouragement, she moved into position.

They'd gone but a few paces toward their quarry, though, when the truth of the matter suddenly became evident and they burst out laughing (half hysterically, I suspect). The "wildcat" was, in fact, the shiny end of a coffee can from which the twin mantles of the lantern were brightly reflected.

Vernal, Bob and I heard their story at meal time, when we were all seated around the crackling campfire. We couldn't keep from chuckling, of course, but congratulated the girls on their bravery in the face of danger.

We talked and sipped hot coffee, the fire died down, and then it was bedtime. Rita and I slept in a snug bedroll, but with the temperature hovering around the freezing mark she elected to wear her dungarees.

Dawn broke clear and calm. We enjoyed our breakfast and coffee in luxury, in the warm sun. And then, as Vernal, Bob and I prepared the truck for the day's hunt, and Rita and Mary washed the dishes (using the hub-cap of our Packard as a substitute for the forgotten dishpan), a pickup came grinding up the hill and stopped. It was none other than Earl Dudley the game warden who walked into our camp. He inspected our deer and licenses, and stayed long enough for a friendly visit before going on his dutiful way.

After he'd gone, I looked at Vernal and grinned. "Boy! Aren't you glad we didn't have any feathers or bird-bones in camp? I just knew there'd be a warden around."

In spite of my lofty objective, "to never shoot any but a buck deer," I admit to killing one doe in my hunting career.

It happened in the 1950s. Rita and I were in Battle Mountain, to visit her sister Violet and family, and since the season was still open, possibly go out to look for deer. We were joined by Vernal and Mary Jones, their two girls, Linda and Susan, and my brother Ray (who had recently moved with his family to Nevada).

We decided to venture into the hills west of town, so the seven of us piled into my '51 Packard and headed out, out past the big "BM" on the hill. A few miles beyond I turned onto a steep, switch-backed road in Little Cottonwood Canyon, and drove over the high summit into the head of another canyon. Here we found quakie patches and buck brush along a tiny, leaf-flecked stream called Trout Creek. We went slowly down the road, crossing and re-crossing the creek, enjoying the scenery and half-watching for deer.

By the time we reached the foothills, long shadows stretched across the canyon. Sundown was close at hand. It was then that we saw our first deer, a small herd that I perceived to include only does. I made no effort to stop but Ray persuaded me that his family could "sure use the meat," so I parked the car and got out, followed by Ray and Vern.

The deer were not far away, perhaps 150-yards, and I looked them over carefully hoping to see at least a vestige of antlers on one of

them. But no such luck. I shouldered my rifle, took aim at the biggest doe and squeezed the trigger. The deer fell where it stood.

We hurried over to the animal, for it was now getting dark, and with reluctance I placed my tag on its leg. (I was accustomed to tying my tag to an antler). Ray field-dressed the doe while I went for the Packard. He completed the job "with alacrity," and we loaded the carcass into the car trunk. (Automobile trunks were a lot bigger in those days.)

The way we had come, over the mountain pass, had been long and tedious and I hated the thought of re-tracing those miles. Vernal assured me that this road should come out at Valmy, a way-station on US-40 that consisted of a gas station, restaurant, motel, post office and so on. On the strength of his word, with my six passengers and one deer aboard, I drove toward the distant highway.

Our progress, over what was more a wagon trail than a road - the wheel-tracks straddled a high center ridge that frequently burnished the undercarriage of the car - went from slow to slower. At least, now that it was completely dark, the dips, gullies, hummocks and rocks showed up in relief under the headlights. But we were soon grinding over more boulders than my nerves could tolerate so I "ordered" everyone out of the car; not only to lighten the load but also to clear the roadway of rocks.

Thus our little safari moved down the alluvial slope. We must have gone a quarter-mile before conditions improved, enough that I invited my passengers, somewhat weary but in good spirits, back aboard.

A short time later we reached the highway and Valmy, an oasis whose friendly lights had guided us over five miles of tough going from the deer-kill site.

The Packard easily hauled its half-ton load the rest of the way to Battle Mountain, where Violet fed us a late hot meal before we went our separate ways, tired but happy.

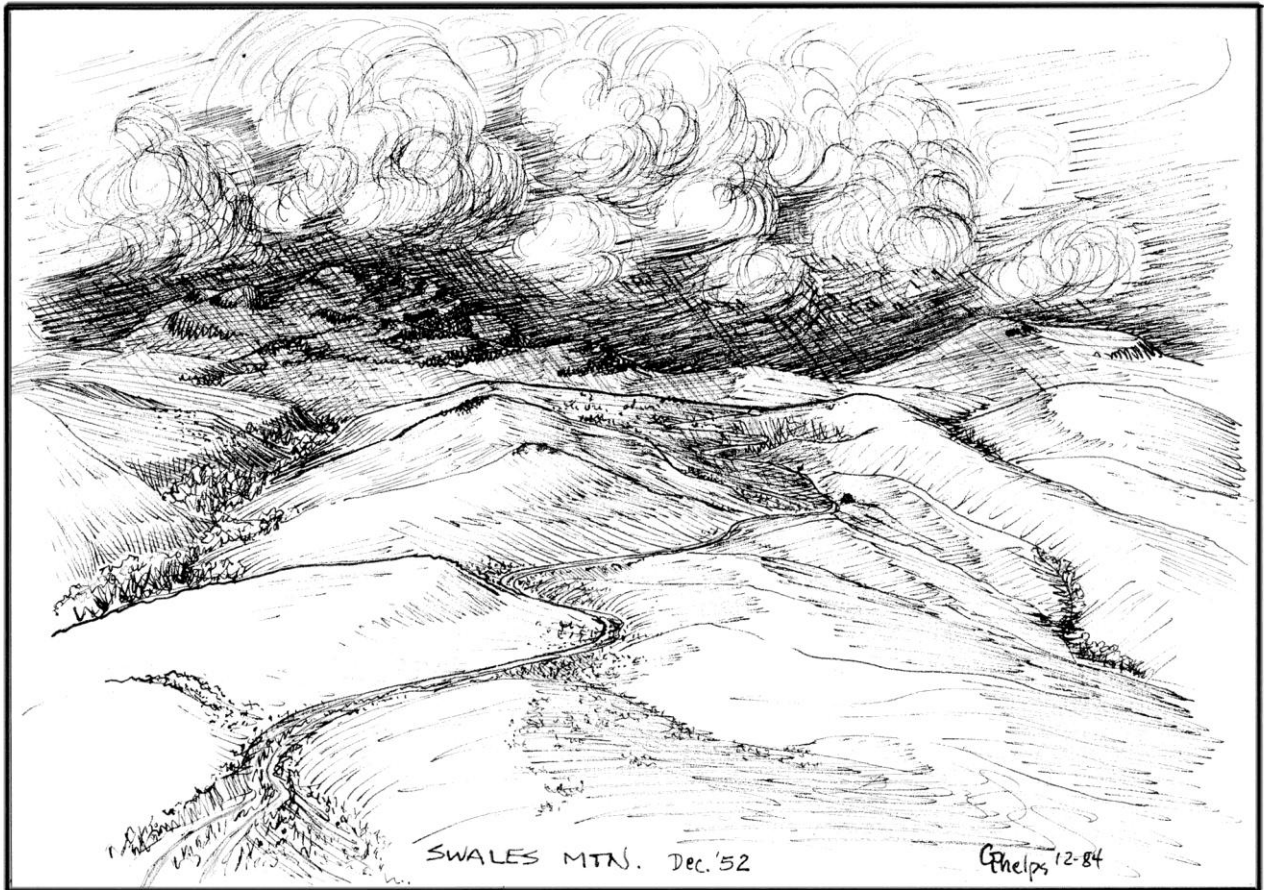
Another memory of that trip, in addition to my shooting a doe, was the shooting star we witnessed on our way to the highway. It was the most spectacular shooting star I had ever seen; a greenish-yellow ball of fire of giant proportion sweeping across the sky leaving a train of sparks in its wake. I was so impressed by the sight of it I half expected to hear a sound as it rushed overhead, before it apparently crashed to earth in the northwest beyond the horizon.

In the late 1950s, the sport of deer hunting in northeastern Nevada changed appreciably; when the merchants of Elko, realizing that there was money to be made from this natural resource, offered discounted hotel rooms and expensive prizes, among other things, to lure out-of-town hunters to the county. Nimrods came by the thousands, overrunning the otherwise quiet wilderness. They came in Jeeps and pickup trucks with fancy tents and giant trailers. They camped wherever they could find some room; in public campgrounds, alongside creeks, in ranchers' fields, even at road intersections. There were many more deer slayers than there were deer to be slain.

Prior to that time, the hunt had been rather a one-on-one contest. Man versus deer. Man had to learn the ways of the deer in its

natural surroundings and react accordingly. With the increased number of hunters, though, the deer, especially bucks, changed their habits. Now the hunter had to guess what the deer was likely to do in his unnatural habitat; that is, in an environment relatively crowded with people. From the first day of hunting season, which they recognized by the staccato of rifle-shots in the canyons, until the last, their actions were predicated on the activities of man. They would go to water and bed down at unusual times and intervals, or move out of their favorite browsing areas entirely. And they got wise to motor vehicles. When moving, a vehicle was not much of a threat; motionless, it could be dangerous. In the past, a deer usually moved away when man approached. Now he might lie concealed in the brush until almost stepped on.

Yes, the sport of deer hunting in the West changed. It was still a good sport, but not as good as it was. I would surely miss the old days.



Swales Mountain - Old Mine Cabin at Center Right

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

WINTER ON THE MOUNTAIN

But back to the job of earning a living. As earlier suggested, a mountaintop was a new kind of workplace. And while the stations and equipment had been engineered and constructed with considerable care, as we worked the sites on a day-to-day basis many obvious and some not-so-obvious defects came to light. Identifying those defects was a part of our job.

A major concern, from a maintenance standpoint, was the routing of power lines and access roads to the sites. Despite the fact that telephone equipment was designed to continue operating (from battery power) in the event of a downed power line, such a power failure could, and often did, result in a serious service interruption.

Another concern was access roads. In winter, poorly aligned roadways contributed to delays in effecting repairs. Events of the first few seasons revealed the need for changes in both roads and power lines at the higher elevations, changes that could prove to be very beneficial in the long run.

For example, the road to our Rocky Point site was undoubtedly engineered to acceptable existing parameters, following the contour of the mountainside and never exceeding a 15% grade. It was a fine road in the summertime but the upper part of it, located as it was on the north side of the ridge, was clogged with snow and unusable throughout the winter. Had it been constructed on the wind-swept backbone of the ridge, it would have exceeded standard grades but would have been much more useful to us. We quickly learned that this ridge, along which a rough trail had been bulldozed when the power line was constructed, provided a suitable detour for four-wheel-drive and over-the-snow vehicles.

The power line itself followed a relatively straight route from the valley to the site, and it, too, had been constructed to existing "standards." But after a summary inspection on a windy, snowy day, Ernie and I concluded that no matter how well those big wooden poles were placed and guyed, they could not long survive the elements.

In March of 1952, our prediction came sadly true. Ernie and I had already unloaded the snow-cat, just off the highway near the Pequop Summit, when the wind, strong and steady from the south, warned of

inclement weather. But there was work to be done and we plunged determinedly ahead, pushing the Fran-Dee through the "horizontal snowstorm," as we called it, toward the site.

We intersected the power line road and followed it, as usual, up the rocky ridge; while over our heads the tough, copper-steel wires bellied-out between the poles, and the telephone cable, suspended beneath the power wires, danced rhythmically in the wind. On the last saddle before reaching the building we stopped, in awe of the sight before us. The aforementioned cable (two-dozen insulated copper pairs enclosed in a one-inch-diameter lead sheath) was vibrating like a giant fiddle string; its sine wave traveling back and forth over at least three spans, its magnitude between six and eight feet.

We stepped out of the snow-cat, pulled our parka-hoods over our heads, tightened our belts and, crouching against the biting wind, sand and snow, made for the nearest pole for a closer look. That pole, even though planted in six feet of almost solid rock, was actually being pulled out of the ground, inch by visible inch, by the gyrating cable.

We knew that something had to be done to protect that cable, but what? Perhaps we could reduce its dancing by tying it down with a hand-line (a hemp rope used by linemen). I worked my way back to the Fran-Dee, found a line and returned to Ernie's side. I coiled the line and cast it toward the cable, which was about fifteen feet above ground at that point, but the loop had scarcely left my hand when it "went north" on the wings of the zephyr. So much for that idea.

"Here," Ernie suggested, handing me a rock the size of a softball, "tie this on."

With the rock secured I heaved the line again, with the same result as before. We replaced the rock with a larger one and this time Ernie did the honors. Like a gaucho with a bola he swung it around and released it toward the cable. It looked like it might work this time, as the rock carried it well up in the air. But it just hung there in the wind and finally fell back on its thrower, who barely missed being hit on the head.

The wind across the ridge was now at gale force, possibly even hurricane force. Time to give up. Facing away from it we pushed and groped our way backward toward the vehicle, all the while being pummeled by snow and sand, and rocks as big as golf balls. But we finally made it to the lee of the rig, got the door open and ourselves inside.

What a relief. Without hesitation I started the engine and drove to the station. By now we were more interested in getting warm than saving the telephone cable.

A microwave equipment building was not unlike a wartime bomb shelter; "cubist" in design, but not one inch of steel, aluminum or concrete for aesthetic reasons. The walls and roof were the sides and top of a window-less, reinforced concrete box. The reinforced concrete floor was glued to the solid rock of the mountain. Overhead, aluminum-and-fiberglass antennas, in the shape of reclining pyramids, were securely attached to a deck of galvanized steel, which in turn was supported above the roof by giant "I" beams. For all its ruggedness,

though, to me it was one of the most beautiful structures in the world. Especially on a cold and stormy day.

It was into this secure cocoon that Ernie and I stumbled that day, stomping snow from our boots and peeling away layers of over-clothes as we went. He started a pot of coffee perking, and the aromatic brew was ready to drink before the feeling returned to our fingers and toes. Until then, I didn't realize that we'd gotten so cold in the short time out of our snow-cat.

We talked on the phone to the guys in Elko, proof that the cable pairs were still intact, and reported the hazardous condition of the pole line. Ernie then recommended that we "get on with our work" so we could get off the mountain as soon as possible, hopefully before the storm worsened. I agreed, for the rumbles and vibrations in the superstructure and air-vents were un-nerving, if harmless. We repaired the defective equipment, the job we had come to do, and took leave of our sanctuary.

Ernie drove down the mountain, carefully picking his way over ledges and between boulders, taking advantage of smooth snow wherever possible. Even though the Fran-Dee was built for traveling on bare ground, the ride was a lot better on snow. And in spite of the poor visibility he did a good job of finding a route. We were not in a white-out, exactly, but the clouds were lowering and pogonip had already begun to form on the windward side of everything, including our little yellow vehicle.

We got to the highway without incident, loaded the snow-cat onto the truck and made for Wells. There, as was our habit, we parked the rig at Dudley's Chevron station, took a warm meal at the cafe across the side street, then holed-up at the Wagon Wheel Hotel, a couple of blocks farther north, for the night.

It was not really a bad room that Ernie and I shared that night, but it was no match for the weather. By morning, a six-inch windrow of powdery snow had accumulated on the floor between our beds, and the water in the toilet had lost its ability to flow.

We hastily dressed and went down to the lobby, where I telephoned the Elko office and learned that the power to Rocky Point had failed during the night. That was not surprising news, the line was about to break when we left. But we'd have to go up and assess the trouble and make certain the emergency power equipment was functioning properly.

So, with a day's work cut out for us, we fired-up the FWD (the flatbed truck that we sometimes used to haul the snow-cat) and pointed its nose to the east once more; stopping long enough at the Four Way Cafe to wolf down hotcakes and coffee, and to pick up a pair of box lunches to go.

From the summit of Moor Hill we could see that the Pequop Range, including Rocky Point, was partly obscured by low lying clouds. We agreed that the bulk of the storm must have passed, though, the wind had died down and those remaining clouds should dissipate before noon. In fact they were mostly gone by the time we started up the mountainside in the Fran-Dee.

There was surprisingly little new snow, and if pressed for an estimate of how much I'd have said there was no way to tell. The lee sidehills held drifts four or more feet deep while the windward sides

were almost bare. It was shockingly bright up on the ridge-top, where sparkling crystals of ice enveloped mahoganies, buck brush, rocks and ledges. And the power lines and cable, each carrying the weight of ten-inches of ice, sagged low between their supports, appearing like ghostly ships' hawsers.

A thousand yards below the station we came to the first broken power pole, the stub of which was sticking out of the rocky ground like a sore thumb. Bright yellow splinters fanned out from its shattered bole, in stark contrast to the surroundings, and the top half of it, ice-encrusted wires still clinging to a mangled cross-arm, lay "dead" beside it. I drove on, carefully avoiding the power wires lest they be "hot" with death-dealing electricity.

From that point on, all the way to the station, we found split and broken poles, limp and coiled and downed wires. Even the telephone cable had been stretched and broken in places; that explained why, when we'd tried to contact the Elko center by radio, earlier, there was no response.

But good tidings awaited us at the site. Even before entering the building we were reassured by the sound of the diesel engine. Our maintenance efforts had not been for naught. There was nothing worse, to a conscientious tollie, than the "sound of silence" when an engine was supposed to be running.

Everything inside was operating properly, but because of the cable failure we could not immediately report that fact to the men in Elko. We had to find a way to get in touch with them. We could use our base transmitter/receiver (of the mobile-radio system) to communicate with a mobile unit, if one were within a reasonable distance, but there were none. Another possibility was to reach the base station at Adobe Hill, using the mobile unit in our Fran-Dee. It was worth a try even though that site stood seventy miles away and behind the north end of the East Humboldt Range.

I drove the snow-cat around the building to the west side, and through trial-and-error eventually found a spot from which I could communicate with the Elko office. It was not a good contact, but with some repetition I got my message through, detailing the extent of the wire and cable damage as well as the condition of our station equipment.

In Elko, arrangements were made to dispatch power and telephone construction crews, along with poles, cross-arms, wire, cable and hardware, to our site for restoration.

Meanwhile, Ernie and I took up residency on the mountain. We would monitor the station equipment, particularly the power plant, and perform routine chores and repair work, whatever was required to earn our pay.

Since our snow-cat radio was our only means of contact with the outside world, we established a schedule of meeting times with the Elko office then settled in for the duration of the commercial power failure.

The living quarters at Rocky Point were not nearly as "posh" as those at Mt. Rose (as alluded to in a previous chapter) but we did have built-in kitchen cabinets, a work counter, a sink (plumbed to an outside sump), a chrome-and-Formica dining table with four matching

chairs, extra folding chairs, a steel-frame double bunk, additional folding cots, mattresses, sheets and woolen blankets.

There was no fresh-water tank or plumbing, so we had to haul our supply from town; potable water in an insulated cask, water for other uses, such as swabbing floors, washing dishes and re-filling batteries, in five-gallon glass jugs. A "closet" off the vestibule contained a portable chemical pot, but we quickly learned to brave the outside elements in preference to using and cleaning that device. Besides, a quite satisfactory two-holer stood within thirty feet of our front door.

We had no refrigerator, but kept a freezer-chest stocked with steaks, chops, ham, bacon, sausage and vegetables. Sugar, flour, salt and pepper, dry cereals, cookies and crackers, and a wide variety of canned goods were stored in cabinets, along with dishes, silverware, pots and pans. A 220-volt, two-burner hot plate served for cooking and heating water, and in the absence of an oven we were spared the chore of baking.

On those rare occasions when we knew beforehand that we'd be staying overnight - such as for a week of routine maintenance chores in the wintertime - we'd take with us fresh eggs, bread and milk, and whatever kind of entree might appeal to our tastes.

A good supply of coffee was of the utmost importance to us, especially when at the station during an emergency situation. But because we also used it when on routine assignments the cost of that commodity came out of our own pockets.

Vic Snow (who would transfer away from Elko in the mid-1950s) was undoubtedly the best guy to be paired with if you had to stay overnight and wanted to eat well. He invariably volunteered to do the cooking, and that suited me just fine. I preferred working on the equipment. After eating, when he couldn't keep from falling asleep, I'd clear the table and wash the dishes.

With Ernie it was different. Neither of us liked to cook so we took turns at the chore. And on that fateful day in March, when the lines were down and we were forced to stay at the site, I won the coin-toss and Old Ern had to prepare our dinner. He fixed a gourmet meal; steaks, mashed potatoes, canned corn, and crackers in lieu of bread. Afterward we leaned back, savored our fresh-brewed, high-altitude coffee, listened to a big-band radio program (on the broadcast receiver that Ernie had donated to the station) and marveled at our good fortune.

Except for an "off duty" six-hour sleep period at night, our pay would be figured at the overtime rate for as long we stayed at the station.

Ernie took the bottom bunk and griped, in his inimitable but harmless fashion, about the noisy, smelly diesel in the adjacent engine room. I managed to ignore the distractions, and his griping, and achieved a comfortable night's sleep on the top one.

In the forenoon of the second day, Art Richards came up the south sidehill in the Tucker. With him were Paul Brown, our boss, and Max Howtz, boss of a power-line construction crew. Together they would inspect and assess the damage, and coordinate restoration plans. Ernie

and I welcomed them, and over hot coffee related our own assessment of the damage.

In contrast to Paul, who was of medium build and claimed to have Indian blood in his veins (a factor which may have explained his coal black hair and quick changing temperament) Max was heavy-set with blond hair; a hard-as-nails, knowledgeable German with a great sense of humor.

When they'd finished their coffee and were satisfied with our report, the two of them walked the line. With his old Kodak, Paul took countless photographs of broken wires and poles and cables and guys, most with snow and ice still clinging to them. A couple of hours later they left the way they had come, via snow-cat to the highway.

Max came back the following day, driving a pickup truck in the wake of a snow-clearing bulldozer, to oversee the pole line reconstruction. As soon as the road was cleared enough that the line trucks and supplies could be brought to the top (the big ones had to be towed by the cat), Max's crew of seven or eight men set to work replacing a half-dozen or more poles and re-stringing or replacing yards of wire and guys.

Meanwhile, a telephone construction crew arrived with a line truck and equipment to repair the cable, which had been literally pulled apart in several places by the wind.

The weather was fine for the next few days, with nothing but bright sunshine falling on the mountain. But in that rarefied air, and with snow on the ground, the sun's ultraviolet rays shone dangerously on the workmen. By the third day one of the linemen - an Indian who had invited our admiration by braving the wind and cold wearing no more than dungarees, boots and a plaid Pendleton shirt - succumbed to snow blindness. Max took him to Elko for treatment, where he spent two or three days in the County Hospital before returning to work. His hard-learned lesson made believers of the rest of us. From that time on, no one ventured out-of-doors in the daytime without wearing his dark glasses.

Restoration of the pole line, wires and cable required long hours and many days to complete. And for the linemen, a lot of hard labor as well. But it was good experience for all of us, especially with regard to the harsh mountain environment.

Later that same year, in the summertime when the weather was quite amenable, the construction crews came back to Rocky Point and buried the last half-mile of power lines and telephone cable to the station. Although the facilities would frequently suffer lightning strikes, they would never again be swept apart by the winds.

Early in my telephone career, I learned to use the word "trip" when referring to an out-of-town tour of duty. And I certainly made a lot of trips in those days, most of them to the microwave stations at Rocky Point and Wendover.

In the wintertime, the word took on extra meaning when the use of a four-wheel-drive or over-the-snow vehicle was required for transportation. Such a trip, while usually of a routine nature, could turn into an adventure on short notice, as it so happened to me on Rocky Point in the early 1950s.

It was a special occasion, when several high-level managers (high level being at least two levels above one's own) from Nevada Bell, Pacific Telephone and AT&T were making a tour of inspection of our microwave stations. (It was not unlike a "captain's inspection" in the Navy.) Included in the group were Paul Brown and his boss Michelson, from Reno; Mike's boss Walt Harms, division-manager from Sacramento; and a division-manager and a vice-president from Denver. Paul was in the position of hosting this important group. I was one of the craftsmen assigned to escort them to our station. Needless to say, I was a bit excited and nervous.

It was a good day for the trip, with sufficient snow on the mountain to allow the use of both snow-cats; the Fran-Dee and the Tucker. Vic Snow would drive the Tucker, which would accommodate most of the group including Brown and Michelson, and I would pilot the Fran-Dee with but one passenger, the vice-president. Since I was more familiar with the trail, now obliterated by a recent snowfall and virtually indistinguishable under a thin overcast, I'd take the lead.

Trailing a small rooster tail of snow, I soon left the Tucker behind. (Any speed above seven mph caused excessive wear and tear on that machine.) So I stopped to wait at the crest of the first ridge, and took advantage of the time to acquaint my passenger with the merits of the Fran-Dee; its ability to crawl over rocks and brush, its high speed over smooth snow.

When Vic caught up with us I drove on down the hill, keeping him in sight in my rear-view mirror. And then he was right on my tail, too close for comfort, so I raced to the bottom and made a quick turn out of the trail.

The Tucker came on fast, an orange blur in the van of a cloud of flying snow. What's gotten into Vic? I wondered. Why is he showing off with dignitaries aboard? And then, when the vehicle neared the bottom of the steepest part of the hill, the front pontoons suddenly dove into the soft snow, the back end rose up in the air, hesitated momentarily, and settled back in the snow.

All was now quiet. No more rattling of cleats, no more high-pitched engine noise. Across the space between our open windows, I shouted to Vic, "What's happening?"

No response. Not until later, in private, did he reveal the story of what had really happened.

It seemed that Vic, on seeing the Fran-Dee flying downhill ahead of him in a flurry of soft white snow, was suddenly seized by an impulse to imitate. His passengers were all securely belted in, the higher-levels on the longitudinal bench-seats in the rear, Brown in the forward-facing seat on his right. He'd show them all that the Tucker could fly as well.

So he disengaged the clutch and allowed the vehicle to coast on its own. (The devil must have made him do it!) But the slope was steeper than he thought and the Tucker rapidly gained speed, over twice the maximum allowable. The tracks rattled against the pontoons, like a ship's runaway anchor chain, and the gearbox screamed like a banshee. The cabin rolled and pitched, and Vic's passengers became, uh, concerned.

Brown, feeling the pressure of responsibility for everyone's safety (and by nature sometimes over-critical), shouted at Vic.

"Slow down, dammit! You're goin' too fast!"

The Tucker, an early model, did not have a foot brake. To slow it down you had to use engine compression; which meant, of course, that the clutch must be engaged. It did have a parking brake, but at the time Vic didn't think of using it. Instead, in quick compliance with the boss's order, he instinctively reengaged the clutch.

It worked. That is, everything came to a halt. The tracks, the transmission, the engine, and when the pontoons dug into the deep snow, the Tucker itself.

But he was not yet out of trouble. When he shrugged off my question and hit the starter button, the cat lurched ahead. He shut it down and tried again, with the same results. It was now obvious that the clutch plate had been "welded," from the friction of its high-speed engagement, to the flywheel. From now on he must choose a gear before starting the engine, for without the ability to disengage the clutch the rig would be off-and-running immediately.

The lack of an operable clutch was not much of an impediment, however, for the Tucker's gear-ratios were so high it could start off in almost any position. So Vic chose an intermediate gear, started the engine again and followed me up the next hill. (Unknown to me, toward my own destiny with embarrassment.)

I angled the Fran-Dee up the south slope with confidence, aiming at the point where I should intersect the summer access road, where I would turn and follow it west and then turn again onto the high ridge route. Employing a recently discovered trick, I gingerly operated the brake of the left, or uphill track, to prevent its spinning and to transfer power to the opposite side. Without this braking maneuver the snow-cat would tend to veer off in the downhill direction. Too heavy a hand on the lever, though, would cause the powered track to dig in and the engine to stall.

I enthusiastically explained all of this to my passenger, adding a few of my thoughts on how the manufacturer could improve the machine. The going got steeper but I skillfully steered the vehicle higher and higher on the mountainside, until we were suddenly face-to-face with the rim rocks.

Only then did I realize the predicament I was in, and quickly throttled-down the Fran-Dee, pulling hard on both brake-levers to keep the rig from rolling backward.

I was in big trouble. We were on the steepest part of the mountain, a good hundred yards above the access road and nowhere up to go. Looking down, I saw the Tucker turn onto the road and stop. No doubt the occupants were wondering what-in-hell I was doing so high up.

More than anything else I was embarrassed. It was without a doubt the most embarrassing moment of my life, but there was no time to think about that now. I had to get us safely down the mountainside, and it was not going to be an easy task.

I noted that my passenger showed signs of apprehension - not nearly as visible as I would have shown in his place - but no anger. I

really admired him for that. So I took a deep breath and admitted to my dumb mistake.

"I was so intent on showing you how I could make it up the hill in this new snow," I explained, "I missed the road."

True, the road was covered by a deep drift but had I been alert I should have recognized it.

I then convinced the VP that, with his help, I could get us back down safely. We only had to avoid sliding off to our right, where the cornice dropped off vertically some thirty feet to the rocks below.

"Just tell me what you want me to do," he offered.

Another of the Fran-Dee's detractions (corrected on later models) was the absence of a parking brake. This was no problem when parked on a level, or near-level surface, you just left the machine in gear with the engine off. But on this steep sidehill, with the engine running and the clutch disengaged, I'd have to use both hands on the brake levers, and all my strength, to hold the cat in place. That's why I needed his help. His job would be to start and stop the engine, and change gears on cue.

Our first order of business was to get turned around, so I laid out my plan: "I'll back downhill a ways to the right...not too close to the edge, then I'll pull forward and steer to the left. We'll keep doin' that till we're headed down hill. And if that doesn't work...?" I shrugged and let it go at that.

While the guys stared up at us from below we set our plan in motion. I operated the clutch, brake-levers and foot throttle and the VP - who proved very capable at his job - controlled the engine runs and shifted gears. After a time, but not without a hairy moment or two, we made a successful turnaround and started down.

That was probably the steepest hillside ever mounted by our Fran-Dee; definitely the steepest one with me at the controls, and I was much relieved when we were safely back on the road.

Paul was highly critical of my action (as I would have been in his place) but Mike laughed and complimented me on my snow-cat demonstration. (It was that, but not by intention.) As for the VP, he professed to having enjoyed the ride. But I noted (without comment) that he readily relinquished his seat to another and accepted Vic's invitation to ride in the Tucker.

Since getting to and from Rocky Point consumed a great deal of our work time in the winter, I am compelled to further describe that aspect of the job.

We had three general types of winter conditions with which to contend:

1) Mostly bare ground with a few deep snowdrifts. Sometimes passable in a 4-W-D with chains, off-road travel possible in the Fran-Dee but slow-going and hard on the vehicle. Tucker un-usable.

2) Mostly snow-covered with some bare ground and hard drifts on the upper ridge. impassible in a 4-W-D vehicle, traversable in the Fran-Dee, marginal in the Tucker.

3) Lots of soft snow. Ideal conditions for either snow-cat, impassible in a 4-W-D vehicle.

In the first situation, and sometimes the second, if there were no signs of an imminent storm we would take our Power Wagon with its snow-plowing blade attached, and clear enough of the five-mile access road to accommodate a 4-W-D vehicle. The job might take half-a-day.

The Dodge Power Wagon (circa 1950) was a civilian copy of the WW-II military model, and was really a workhorse. A true four-wheel-drive vehicle, ours was further equipped with a non-spin differential in the rear, and was modified to carry a straight blade, or plow, that could be hydraulically raised and lowered, by means of controls in the cab, and manually set to plow either right or left.

All four tires were deep-treaded "mudders," usually draped with snug fitting, extra-heavy-duty chains (that I could hardly lift) when off the highway. Two fifty-gallon drums of diesel fuel were carried in the bed; not for fuel for the engine, which was gasoline-powered, but to add weight for traction. A two-foot extension could be added to the blade, to push the snow off the roadside without having to drive too close to the edge. It was not used when dozing hard-packed drifts.

Thus we cleared the road when there was not enough snow for either snow-cat.

In the springtime, when the road was choked with thawing snow and mud, a different plan was called for. Detours. Vic and I did a lot of pioneering those first couple of winters at Rocky Point, and located several good alternate routes.

In 1953, we decided to explore a new one, a ridge that snaked all the way from the Pequop highway summit to a point just south of our station. If feasible, this route, about three miles long, could result in considerable savings in time and snow-cat usage.

I drove the Power Wagon from the highway to the ridge top, above a CAA beacon, and continued along its wind-swept spine of scrubby sagebrush, bunch-grass and reddish soil occasionally interrupted by outcroppings of basalt. It was not yet 10:00am when we came to our first obstacle, a sizeable snowdrift.

Time to go to work. Vic lowered the blade, by means of a hydraulic valve, and I eased the Power Wagon forward to doze away a slice of snow. He raised the blade, using an electric-pump switch, and I backed the Power Wagon away from the drift. Over and over we repeated the operation, until a sizable dent was made in the drift. But because we were facing an uphill grade, we just couldn't move the last of it, a stretch about thirty feet across.

"Let's go around through that draw and come in from the top," I suggested."

"You'll get us stuck," Vic countered, as if it were a matter of fact.

He was undoubtedly right but I hated to admit defeat after having expended so much time and effort already. "We're never goin' to get through from this side," I asserted.

Seeing that I was determined to go around, Vic shrugged. "You get us stuck, you dig us out," he said.

I liked working with Vic, who was probably fifteen years my senior and wiser in many ways. He was rather like the older of the two bulls (in the classic Western tale) standing on a rise out on the range, observing a herd of cows grazing in the meadow below. The

younger one, attracted by their beauty, suggested, "Let's run down there and take on a couple of those cows." Whereupon the older bull, having the advantage of some years' experience, responded, "Let's walk down and take 'em all on." Vic wasn't one to needlessly exert himself.

The snow was shallow in the draw and, after bouncing over some good-sized rocks, I managed to get the rig to the uphill side of the drift. I felt a bit smug about the accomplishment.

By that time the sun was at its zenith, so I stopped the truck and we climbed down, found a dry rock to sit on, and soaked up rays while emptying the contents of our lunch boxes. This was the kind of environment that gave me a good appetite.

A half-hour later, we climbed back into the truck and tackled the drift once more. This time with gravity as our ally. This time with success. We then continued up the ridge, knocked out several more drifts, and by mid-afternoon were headed back toward the highway on the newly-opened road.

But our day was not to end so easily. While driving through the first of our recently plowed cuts, all four wheels of the Power Wagon dropped into a sticky, gooey morass. The wonderful sun, that had warmed us so nicely at lunchtime, had worked its magic on the previously frozen ground. We were, in no uncertain terms, STUCK!

I have always contended that it's no big problem being stuck, so long as it's in snow. It might be cold, and generally is, but at least it's clean. Mud is a horse of a different color. Not only is it hard to work in, but when you're done, un-stuck, both you and the vehicle are filthy dirty. And our Power Wagon, nearly twice the weight of a Jeep Wagon, could sink twice as deep in the stuff.

Discouraged, I got out to survey the situation while Vic "sat his horse." I'd seen worse, but we'd have to work fast to get out before twilight. I uttered a mild epithet and my partner groaned; his way of saying "I told you so."

There were those in the Company who, in a similar situation, would have called on the mobile radio for help, or walked to the highway and flagged down a motorist for a ride to Wells. But we had our pride, or I did. I had been in similar fixes before and there was always some way, given enough time and energy, to get out.

In spite of his earlier prediction, and his aversion to my choice of action, Vic got out to help. We jacked up all four wheels in turn, placed rocks and sagebrush under and in front of them, until we had made a virtual road across the wet area. We then drove a dead-man (in our case an old axle-shaft) into the ground about forty feet ahead of the vehicle, to which we attached the cable from the front-mounted winch of the Power Wagon.

It was time to "pull her through."

Vic stood off to one side to observe and to signal should anything go awry, while I got into the muddy cab, engaged the winch and transmission clutches and revved the engine. I could feel the winch straining in front, and the wheels grabbing at rocks in the mud underneath, and the big machine came free. I breathed a sigh of relief.

After re-winding the cable, gathering in the dead-man, replacing the jacks and shovels in the truck, Vic drove off the mountain and

into Wells where we would spend the night in a motel. It had been a long day, one that included overtime on both ends of our regular shift. And there was no guarantee that our new route would remain clear. Another storm could come along and wipe out our work in an instant. Still, a couple of trips without having to use the Fran-Dee would prove worthwhile.

As a matter of record, we were able to drive a Jeep over that route throughout the remainder of the season, saving countless hours of travel time.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

FROM JARBIDGE TO THE ATLANTIC

It was in 1951 that my brother Raymond emigrated, with Leslae and their children Michelle, Sherri and Stephen, from New Hampshire to Nevada. He obtained employment at the Wildlife Refuge, in remote Ruby Valley, the headquarters of which was located at Cave Creek. Among other duties, he helped with the construction and maintenance of waterways and dikes on the marsh. Since he had always shunned a crowded society and preferred the out-of-doors, the situation was, in my opinion, especially suited to him.

They lived in a rather nice two-story house, one of two or three in the complex supplied by the department, not far from the creek that, emulating its name, gushed from a cave in the solid rock at the base of the Ruby Range. That stream, no small force, carried sufficient water to turn the wheel of an electric generator to supply power, or part of it, to the complex before emptying into the ditches and ponds of the refuge.

While their home was only fifty-miles from Elko, as the crow flies, when Harrison Pass languished under a blanket of snow in the wintertime there were ninety-miles of road to travel, most of them unpaved, through Secret Pass to the city. That was in a normal winter. As luck would have it, their first season in Ruby Valley coincided with one of our worst winters in northeastern Nevada. Roads were rendered impassable all over the county, including most of those in Ruby Valley. Cattle wallowed, and some died, in snow up to their bellies. Air-lifts dropped hay to starving cattle, food and emergency supplies to snowbound ranches and communities.

The folks at the wildlife refuge (three or four families, I think) had to make-do with insufficient meat and vegetable supplies during nature's siege. Ray, motivated by need or appetite, or both, climbed the mountain behind the house to obtain fresh venison.

But when winter's grip was finally broken and spring fell upon the land, Les had had enough. She was a city girl, not a pioneer, and she wanted out of there. So Ray quit his job and they moved to Elko.

I guess it was not entirely Les's fault, their moving, Ray had always been (and always would be) too independent to be content working for another. He knew how a thing should be done and disliked

having to do it someone else's way, especially the government's way. Still, I thought it a shame that he left the refuge for he might have had a good future there.

He went to work for a road-construction outfit near Elko, and whenever possible we got together, with our families, for picnics and so on. One event was particularly memorable, when we travelled to the old mining town of Jarbidge in northern Elko County.

Jarbidge took its name from the deep canyon in which it lay, which, in turn, was named for "Ja-ha-bich," the legendary giant who preyed on Indians, carrying them off in a basket to his home in a cave or crater to eat. (At least half the people in Elko County mispronounced the name as "Jar-bridge.") It was said that the Indians avoided Jarbidge Canyon, but not so the early miners who endured great hardship in their quest for shiny minerals.

In the early 1950s, Jarbidge consisted of a dozen or so old frame houses and cabins crammed into the narrow canyon bottom on both sides of the creek. Probably less than two-thirds of them were inhabited, less than a fourth in the wintertime. The town boasted a saloon, stocked with booze and a few groceries, a gas station that sold fuel at double the price in Elko, and a proliferation of antiquated, rusted-iron mining tools and machinery, trucks and cars.

Every year, the county road crew from Charleston bulldozed the last big snowdrifts from the steep upper canyon, in time for the annual Fourth-of-July Fish Fry. During the long winter, though, the town's only connection with the outside world was a graveled road through southern Idaho. And sometimes even that was blocked by deep snow.

The day we chose for our first visit to Jarbidge, in the early summer, was warm and sunny. I was surprised to see so many trees, and doubly surprised to see, in addition to the myriad patches of yellow-green quakes, an abundance of blue-green spruce and fir. Yes, that rugged, rocky, steep-walled country is one of the few places in Nevada where indigenous conifers, other than pinyon pine and juniper, grow.

Our approach was from the south, across the Bruneau River and over Coon Creek and Bear Creek summits. Before dropping into the canyon, we stopped for a clear view of the two highest peaks in the Jarbidge Range, Matterhorn and Jarbidge Peak, each rising almost 11,000' above-sea-level, each proudly thrusting its hoary head into the clouds.

(Much of the Jarbidge Range is now a "wilderness area"; that is, it is out-of-bounds to all but those few healthy and strong individuals with the ability to hike, climb and pack a load.)

We paused in the tiny town just long enough to look around and buy gas, then drove down-canyon into Idaho and back around via the Strickland Ranch. At lunchtime we stopped and spread a picnic lunch at the side of the road, near a bob-wire fence, sat cross-legged on a blanket and munched happily while a pair of meadowlarks exchanged tunes on the ryegrass tufted slope beyond. Twenty miles of dusty road later we passed the Gold Creek Ranger Station, and five miles after that were on the wonderfully smooth highway to Elko. It is remarkable how smooth a paved road appears after having bounced over dirt roads for hours.

Raymond would subsequently move with his family to Oregon, and then back to Nevada. He and Leslae had a fourth child, Derek, in 1953, and later still, some time in the early 1960s, they became estranged and she obtained a divorce. Ray was saddened by and bitter about the whole affair. He would eventually return to the woods as a "timber-faller," the trade he had taken up in New Hampshire, mostly in Oregon.

Every spring, like clockwork, I got the urge to go fishing. But in 1952, the long hours at work, a new baby and home chores kept getting in the way. Finally, however, in May, the feel of the out-of-doors was irresistible. Rita and I made plans for a fishing and camping trip with Dan and Pat Taelour. We would travel to the O'Neil Basin in northeastern Nevada, west of the old mining town of Contact. We would take bedrolls (affordable sleeping bags were not yet available), a tent, food and other gear. But my '48 Packard was not really appropriate for a trek to the wilderness, and Dan's old '40 Ford sedan couldn't possibly contain all of our supplies, so we talked Stan and Pop into going along. They would take the bulk of our supplies in the Jeep pickup, and the four of us would travel in Dan's car.

Dan's old Ford was a thing of beauty. Bright red in color, it appeared to have been painted with a broom. The hood was kept in place by a rope tied to the front bumper ever since it blew open one time while Dan was driving "seventy" down the highway. It was one of those vehicles that would keep on going in spite of gross neglect, which was the only kind of attention either Dan or Ted gave their cars in those days (although Ted was by far the most lackadaisical of the two). They never engaged in any kind of preventive maintenance. It was either "go or no-go."

The primary cargo in the pickup was our bedrolls. The bedroll had been in use in the West for years, by cowboys, sheepherders, miners and early-day campers. Rita's father was very familiar with the contrivance, having used one since first coming to Nevada, sometimes for extended periods of time while prospecting or mining in the hills.

The most important feature of a bedroll was the cover. It should be of a good grade of heavy canvas, about eight-by-sixteen feet in size and equipped with peripheral grommets for tying. The mattress was an ordinary cotton one, 72-inches long by 42-inches wide and four-inches thick. Several layers of woolen blankets or quilts completed the bed. Sheets and pillows were optional.

A bedroll was assembled in the following manner: The canvas tarp (tarpaulin) was first spread out on the ground and the mattress placed upon it, with the foot near the center. The bed was "made" in the normal manner, carefully tucking the blankets under the mattress. The sides of the tarp were then folded over the bed and laced together with a small line, the remaining half pulled up over the foot and either tucked under on three sides or staked to the ground at intervals. The extra canvas under the head-end could be brought up over the pillow and allowed to rest slack, or tied to stakes to form of a small lean-to to keep rain, frost or snow from falling on the sleeper's head. (When used inside a tent, preparation was much simpler than this under-the-stars method.)

Sleeping with some of your clothes on was permissible, advisable in a cold climate, while outer garments and boots, and sometimes a pistol or a rifle, were kept dry and handy under the flap in case of sudden need. It was an extremely efficient bed, even in inclement weather.

With our bedrolls, tent, fishing gear and miscellaneous supplies on board the Jeep, with most of the food, drinks and other necessities in the trunk of the Red Ford, the six of us headed out of town. (Our babies, Gina and Sandy, stayed behind with their respective grandmothers.) I felt good. It was a relief to get away from the job for a while.

We travelled through Deeth and Wells on US-40, then north on US-93 to a point about 12-miles south of Contact, where a graveled road turned off to the west. Stan led the way in the Jeep. Dan followed, too closely to suit me because of the choking dust.

The O'Neil Basin was typical of the high desert with which I was fast becoming familiar; rolling hills and shallow draws supporting sparse bunch grass and sagebrush, and scattered juniper trees. Ahead lay the east flank of the Jarbidge Mountains, whose tops still wore a mantle of white. They were seldom entirely free of snow, and had no doubt served as a landmark for early trappers in the Snake River Valley, to the north of us in present Idaho.

It was a wild and remote part of the country in the 1950s, but not nearly so wild as when old man O'Neil had arrived in the early 1870s. According to historical accounts, he and his boys (R.C. Jr., William, Charles and James) were outlaws who built a sheep ranching business in the area, and who eventually earned a measure of respectability in that isolated corner of the state.

After twenty miles or so of dodging dusty potholes we dropped into the valley of the South Fork of Salmon Falls Creek, a tributary to the Snake River whose waters flow, eventually, into the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. After crossing a narrow wooden bridge over the swollen muddy stream, we turned to the south, upstream, past greening meadows on our left and sagebrush covered knolls on our right.

There were few signposts on the back roads of Nevada in those days, none on this particular one. But Stan and Pop had prospected, hunted and fished the area, and were quite familiar with the lay of the land. As was Dan, having grown up and worked nearby. Even so we almost missed the turnoff that led, when we finally got onto it, along a fence-line to a point where Sun Creek tumbled out of the mountains. There, in a patch of quakies where the last vestiges of winter were more apparent than any sign of spring, 70-line-of-sight miles from Elko, 140-miles the way we had come, we would make camp.

The sun had already slipped behind the great wall of the Jarbidge Range, and a cool breeze caused me to replace the jacket I had shed in the car. Sam quickly gathered an arm-load of deadwood and made a campfire in one of several existing fireplaces, whose blackened rocks must have encircled the warm and friendly fires of scores of cowboys, miners, hunters and fishermen, and countless Indians, before us.

We checked the creek and concluded that, because it was running swift and thick with mud from rapidly melting snow above, the fishing

would be poor at best. No matter, we would enjoy the evening and see what came with the morning. At least we were out of the city. As a matter of fact, we'd seen but three other vehicles since leaving the highway, and they were occupied by ranch-folks.

The bedrolls were laid out and the girls got a meal started over the fire. Stan fetched a pot of clean water, from a nearby spring, and soon the aroma of fresh-brewing coffee mingled with the sweet smell of the woods. But there was one element of distraction. Mosquitoes! And even though they couldn't possibly be hungry - the one I flattened on the back of my hand left a puddle of blood the size of a dime - the devils were a terrible nuisance.

"No worry, I'll fix 'em," Pop volunteered, and with that he picked up a set of deer antlers, still green from the winter shedding, and tossed them onto the red-hot coals.

Success! The pesky insects were quickly driven off. But the horribly repugnant odor nearly drove the rest of us off as well.

In the dark of the moon we slept well that night, after Stan sneaked the antlers out of the fire and tossed them into the creek. I was tranquilized by the sounds of rushing water and wild noises, that almost but not quite drowned out the not so mild snoring of someone in our camp.

Sam was up at first light and stoked the coals to life. Soon the rest of us stirred, dressed, yawned, and one by one approached to circle the campfire, hands outstretched to its radiant heat. It was a ritual nearly as old as mankind.

After downing bacon, eggs and coffee we were raring to go. So we piled into our vehicles, forded the creek and drove a mile or so upstream, hoping to find a stretch of less-muddy water for fishing. We stopped to investigate a tiny tributary. And I mean tiny. It was an arm's length in width and you could touch the bottom, anywhere, without wetting a rolled-up sleeve. But the water, trickling quietly over embedded boulders between green turf and dandelions, was only slightly murky. Stan suggested that it was a good place for spawners, up from the river on their annual egg-and-sperm-laying tour. Pop and Dan agreed, so we ambled on up the trail (which was pocked with fresh deer tracks and spoor). Suddenly, Stan crouched down by the stream where it had undercut the sod, rolled-up his sleeve, slowly immersed his arm in the icy water and felt along the bank.

Splash! With a sweep of his arm he flipped a squirming, 12-inch trout onto the grass. Was I surprised? You bet. I thought only an Indian could perform that trick. Dan and I soon joined in the sport. He caught a couple of trout but I, although I got a feel of one, was unsuccessful.

"You have to slip up on them from the rear, your hand under the belly," it was explained. But I couldn't get the hang of it. I hurried back to the car and fetched our tackle. We might as well try angling in a legal manner.

In the next half-hour we landed several fine, ten- to fifteen-inch trout. But as the sun climbed higher in the sky they grew wary, "spooky," and we called it quits. Besides, the stream petered out to nothing but a trickle a few hundred yards from where we started.

We explored the main stream, Sun Creek, toward its source, hoping to find a beaver dam or other quiet pool. But it was all fast and muddy. If there were any trout up there, they yielded not to our baited hooks. The creek finally pinched out in a narrow, steep, rocky canyon, so we reeled in and returned to camp.

"What a day for a picnic," I commented as we sat around the smoldering campfire eating lunch. A few scattered cumulus clouds relieved the deep blue of the sky. The sun shone through the budding quakies overhead, casting long, snaky shadows on last year's carpet of leaves. Between bites we discussed our situation, specifically the fishing conditions.

We could remain camped at Sun Creek and scout the area, but since all the neighboring streams flowed from the same steep slopes they must be equally high and muddy. Dan suggested a move to Tabor Creek, twenty-five miles to the southeast. Since it drained toward the south, he reasoned, it could well be past the high water stage. Without further debate we struck camp and headed for Tabor, traveling the dusty road along the east side of Mary's River.

It was mid-afternoon when we found a likely place to camp at Tabor Creek, a mile or so into the canyon, and immediately erected the tent in case the fluffy white clouds should grow heavy and dark and wet. That done, we went a'fishing. Dan's assessment had been correct. Unlike Sun Creek, this one was at just the right stage for fishing, or, putting it a better way, for catching. The high water had passed. It was just murky enough to shield the fish but clear enough that they could see the bait. Within an hour we had a nice batch of trout for supper.

The flour-whitened, pan-sized trout sizzled appetizingly in the big iron skillet carefully balanced over a bed of red coals. A loaf of bread, wrapped securely in aluminum foil, and a pot of vegetables, beans I think, warmed at the side. Contented, we stood by the fire and sipped hot coffee, some of it laced with whiskey or brandy "against the sudden chill." For the sky was about to fall.

That it was going to rain had been a certainty; still we were unprepared for the deluge when it came, along with wind, lightning and thunder. At first we were pelted by a few big round drops that raised little bomb-bursts of dust at our feet, and sputtered on the hot rocks by the fire and the grease in the pan. But soon the round drops of rain turned to round balls of hail and the pelting took on a whole new aspect, prompting a mad scramble to get the food under cover in the tent. Except for the trout, which in a few minutes were being parboiled instead of fried. I suppose they eventually cooked through but they never did turn brown. Ah well, such is life in the outback.

Unruffled and snug in his Mackinaw, a stream of water cascading off the brim of his old felt hat, Pop took his plate and sat on a stump to eat. We tried to convince him to move into the tent.

"Hah, this is nothin,'" he said, waving us away. "You fellas go in the tent."

We finally prevailed, though, and found a dry spot for him near the fly where it was light enough that he could see to eat. The thunderhead was directly over us now, and it was so dark inside you could hardly find your plate with a fork. Unfortunately, none of us

had thought to break out a lantern or a flashlight, all of which were packed away in the back of the Jeep.

In hindsight, we should have waited until after the storm to dine. Within an hour it dissipated, leaving us with a dustless camp and the clean smell of washed earth, sage and willows.

Few events in life are as exhilarating as a thunderstorm in the high desert, especially with the sure knowledge that even if you get soaking wet you will soon dry out.

Dawn broke the following morning to a cloudless sky over a bright earth. The creek was muddy, from the shower of the night before, but it cleared in a few hours and yielded another batch of trout, over forty of the firm beauties, as I recall.

It had been a fine weekend, with two nights under the stars and several hours of good fishing. But all good things must end, so that afternoon we folded the tent, rolled the beds, boxed the supplies, loaded everything in the vehicles and moved out, Stan and Pop in the lead.

The graveled road to Deeth, the shortest way home from that location, was mostly dry but rutted from previous use. Dan was an old hand at driving on such roads, and maintained a rapid pace as the Red Ford careened from side-to-side and threw rocks into the sagebrush at every turn. We might have been as comfortable in an early western stagecoach.

We had put some ten miles behind us when the girls, seated in the back, complained of an unpleasant odor. "Something's burning," they said.

"Ah," I hollered above the noise, "you're always smelling smoke."

Then Pat began to laugh (as only she could laugh, loud and unrestrained) and announced that the smell must be coming from the sheepherder beans in the iron pot in the trunk. It was a well known fact that sheepherder beans were capable of producing an odious gas, so we bought her explanation without question.

However, the farther down the road we went the stronger the smell; less like garlic and onions and more like burning rubber. Rubber? Perhaps their first assessment had been correct. Perhaps something was burning.

Now Dan complained that he was having trouble keeping the car on the road. He decided to stop, and was slowing down when there came an ear-shattering explosion and a jolt from the rear: "Right under my butt!" one of the girls exclaimed.

The old familiar thump-a-thump-a-thump signaled a flat tire, and when we stopped, piled out of the car and peered through the dust-filled air it was confirmed. A wisp of stinking smoke curled up from under the right-rear fender. A few hot, twisted tatters of rubber and cord were all that remained of a tire that was now more off than on its rim.

Of course we had to unload all of the grub (including the innocent beans) and other gear from the trunk in order to get at the jack and the spare tire. But before long we had the half-naked wheel off the ground and replaced with a well-endowed one. Not, I might add, without a few "I told you sos" from Pat and Rita.

Without much difficulty now, we deduced the cause of the flat. Somewhere along the way a six-inch railroad spike, probably flipped up by the front tire, had found its way into the tread of the rear tire. There it remained embedded while the air leaked away and the rubber got hotter and hotter. That explained the burning smell. When the tire finally exploded, it threw the spike against the inside of the fender well where it had stuck, like a bolt from a crossbow, in the metal. That accounted for the loud noise and the jolt.

Stan and Pop, whose Jeep had been raising a thick trail of dust way ahead of us, arrived at Deeth and wondered where we were. So they waited at the first gate of the railroad loading-corral, and were about to come back to look for us when our own cloud of dust marked our approach.

When we'd driven both vehicles through and closed the gates behind us, we got out to stretch and quench our collective thirst; and to relate how a pot of aromatic sheepherder beans temporarily took the blame for a burning tire.

The last leg of our journey, on US-40, was smooth as silk.

I am reminded of another episode in which Dan's Old Red Ford played a part. A key part, as a matter of fact. It was before Rita and I were married when, because my green Dodge had a problem with the transmission, I borrowed Dan's car to take her out for a day of fishing.

I gathered up the gear and the bait, she fixed a picnic lunch, and away we went; up past the Dinner Station, through Taylor Canyon - then a narrow, winding, rough, dusty, graveled road - and on into Independence Valley. We passed the headquarters of the Ellison Ranching Company, an assemblage the size of a small village, to a small Basque ranch a mile or so below the Jack Creek Bar and Gas Station.

Following Dan's instructions, I turned to the right off the main road and drove through a gate and up a winding trail through the sagebrush to a stream known as Marsh Creek. There, I had been told, the fishing was outstanding at this time of the year.

We would not be disappointed.

The creek was bordered by quakies, whose bright new leaves quivered in the morning breeze. Beneath our feet, tender shoots pushed up through last year's stubble. The small stream, tumbling out of a narrow canyon of the Independence Range (sometimes called the North Fork Range) was fairly teeming with pan-sized brookies. Angling with small garden worms, by early afternoon we had caught a good number of the lively fellows. And then we returned to the glen where the car was parked, to enjoy a leisurely lunch.

Meanwhile, the friendly white clouds of midday commenced to billow and grow and darken. A shower was imminent. We laid out the contents of our creels, counted the trout, and then fished for and caught enough more to round out two limits, minus one, before the rains came. I hurriedly cleaned our catch, wrapped them in a wet rag, placed the bundle in my creel, the creel in the trunk of the car, then climbed into the front seat with Rita.

It was now raining hard but we really didn't care. In fact it was rather enjoyable there under the trees, with the wonders of spring around us. All too soon the shower wore itself out, though, and we left our rain-washed haven, via the now slick trail, for the dusty road below.

There was not a car in sight, and we made good time on the twelve-mile straightaway through the valley. But when I slowed for the populated area - the bar, cabins and ranch house at the mouth of Taylor Canyon - I was startled by the sudden appearance of a pickup truck in my rear-view mirror.

"Why is he in such a hurry?" I wondered aloud, at the same time steering as far to the right as possible to let him pass. Maybe he was going to a fire...or a hospital.

I slowed a bit more as the road narrowed on a sweeping curve, and kept an eye on the truck in my mirror.

Again I was startled; this time when the pickup swung around to our left, bounced through the borrow-pit, careened off a banking and back onto the road ahead of us. I braked to a sudden stop and the pickup stopped, right in front of the Ford. When the dust cleared, a tall lanky man under a cowboy hat approached.

"Been fishing?" he asked through my rolled-down window.

"Yup," I responded curtly, still trying to figure out what he was up to.

"Lemme see your fish!" he demanded. I hesitated, so the man shifted his Levi jacket to reveal a badge and added, "I'm the game warden. Earl Dudley."

I had heard of Earl Dudley. Everybody in Elko County had heard of Earl Dudley. But this was the first time I'd ever seen him.

Dudley had earned a reputation befitting a Canadian Mountie; diligent, persistent, and seemingly capable of being everywhere in his area of responsibility at once. Rumor had it that he would arrest his own grandmother if he caught her breaking a fish and game law, but I would never have expected him to risk life and limb, and that of his wife (who was in the truck) just to see my catch of the day.

And then I had an inspiration. A possible explanation for his running us down. It must be the Red Ford that had drawn his attention. Dan was not above catching a couple of extra trout if he was having good luck, and he would never have thrown the surplus away or wasted them. Perhaps Earl had thought I was Dan.

Whatever his motive he wanted to see our fish and I obliged, dumping the contents of my creel onto the grass at the side of the road. His eyes lit up when he saw them.

"You've got over a limit here!" he announced with obvious satisfaction.

"There's two limits there," I volunteered, motioning toward Rita, "hers and mine...minus one. I put 'em together so they'd keep better."

"You're supposed to have only one limit in possession...each of you," he said while counting.

"Thirty-one, thirty-two.... Ha! You've got over two limits.

By now I was becoming annoyed. I could feel the red creeping over my face. Still I kept my composure. "Maybe we should count 'em again," I suggested.

We did, together, and this time came up with twenty-nine.

He then inspected both our licenses, made a cursory inspection of our fishing tackle, and for want of anything else to be critical of warned, "Carrying two limits in one creel is unlawful. I'll let it go this time," he added, "but don't let it happen again."

With that he straightened up, turned on his heel, strode to his truck and left.

Still bewildered but relieved I repacked our trout, stowed them in the trunk, got back in the car and drove on home.

Fate would forge a strange link between Dudley and me: In all my years of hunting and fishing in Nevada I was "checked" by a game warden but a half-dozen times. In every instance, the warden was none but Earl Dudley. He never found me to be in violation of the law, and except for that encounter, when I thought he acted in a "reckless and imprudent manner," I admired him for his conscientiousness. With the high number of poachers and cheaters in the field, more wardens of his caliber were needed.

Dudley's demeanor would mellow as time rolled on, a fact that was proven when, some ten or more years later, our paths again converged; this time at the Ruby Marsh in southern Elko County.

It had taken an awful lot of persuasion, but Rita and I convinced her father to join us on a trip to that place, to fish for bass. Stan went with us as well, and also our next-door neighbor, Stack Madigan.

Fifteen miles out of Elko, Pop suddenly remembered that he'd left his fishing license at home. He was past 80-years of age and entitled to a free license, but of course the law required that it be "in possession" when fishing. Pop, once a game warden himself, was concerned about the omission, and I considered returning for it. But the others convinced me that "no game warden would press charges for such a minor infraction against so well-known a citizen as Sam Zunino." Pop insisted on our going ahead, even though he wouldn't fish.

"You young fellas fish," he said. "It don' matter to me."

"You can fish," we assured him, "No one will bother you."

The pavement ended at Jiggs and we entered the twenty-five mile stretch of dusty, seldom-maintained road to the marsh; a twisting mountain road that followed Toyne Creek to its head just below Harrison Pass. It then dropped sharply down the east side, passing through a little mining community - a half-dozen small dwellings, cabins and shacks, a decrepit ore loading chute and several weathered cars and trucks, some in "running" condition - nestled in the canyon halfway to the valley floor. In Ruby Valley, just beyond the rearing ponds of the state fish hatchery, I turned to the left, drove through a meadow to the Brown Dike and parked.

I had barely brought the car to a halt when a second vehicle pulled up alongside and stopped. And my heart skipped a beat when I recognized its driver. It was Earl Dudley. I guessed that Pop would not be fishing after all. But I would be wrong.

Earl was "out of uniform" (he said it was his day off) and it was just a matter of minutes till he and Sam were walking toward the dike, side by side, rods in hand, chatting like long lost buddies. Earl even

volunteered advice on how and where the biggest bass might be caught. If Pop was uncomfortable with the prospect of fishing without a license, he showed no sign of it. And Dudley's harsh reputation, at least in my opinion, had fallen by the wayside.

Little Gina Kaye was not yet six months old when, in 1952, she was to take her first airplane ride. None of my family, except father, had met Rita or our baby, so we planned a get-acquainted visit to New England. We assumed, correctly as it turned out, that traveling would be easier when Gina was a wee infant than later when she was ambulatory.

It was a fine summer morning when we checked in at the United Airlines terminal. It was still early when we climbed aboard our aircraft and up to our seats. We literally climbed to our seats for this aircraft, a DC-3, was a "tail-dragger" (one that when on the ground rests on a tail-wheel) and it was all uphill from the rear cabin door. Furthermore, this particular DC-3 was one, if not the last, of the famous DC-3s used by United Airlines.

(A twin-engine, propeller-driven craft designed and first produced in the 1930s, the DC-3 had been a workhorse for the military throughout World War II. After the war it served the civilian field, carrying passengers and freight for many, many years.)

There were about 30 of us aboard, including Gina who fit nicely on Rita's or my lap. The flight from Elko to a landing at Salt Lake City took about an hour and fifteen minutes.

From Salt Lake City we flew in a "big" airplane; a four-engine DC-6 (also propeller driven) that carried over a hundred passengers and cruised at 300-mph at 20,000' above-sea-level. The stewardesses were young and pretty, and were especially attentive to Rita and Gina's every need; providing a pillow, warming a bottle and so on. What a way to go!

The approach to Chicago's Midway Airport (O'Hare was not yet in existence) proved to be especially exciting. I might say "hair-raising," for a big, black, bulging thundercloud, typical of those occurring in the Midwest, was there to meet us, venting its fury over the city, unleashing gale winds, lightning and torrents of rain on everything and everyone in its way. As a result our airplane was forced to circle for an hour while awaiting clearance to land, all the while bouncing like a cork on water, its wings (measuring 120-foot tip-to-tip) flexing like an eagle's. For an added attraction an orange ball-of-fire (St. Elmo's) danced off one of the propellers, landed on the wing, travelled to the tip and disappeared into the maelstrom.

The pilot finally got us down safely, and after a short wait in the crowded terminal we took off again, to land at Bradley Field in Connecticut, halfway between Hartford and Springfield. Dot and Elly met us at the air terminal - which then consisted of a half-dozen military hangars and buildings one of which now belonged to United Airlines - and Elly drove us to their home in Florence, Massachusetts, a few miles west of Northampton.

Using their place as a terminus, in a borrowed car we made whirlwind visits to my other brothers and sisters. Right from the start Rita was overwhelmed by the trees. Everywhere we went, from one

home to another, we were surrounded by trees. Just outside of Walpole, New Hampshire, I saw a sign that read "SCENIC VIEW" so I pulled over and parked the car on the narrow shoulder.

"Well, where is it?" she asked, peering through a gap in the pines at a meadow in the misty valley below.

"That's it," I shrugged.

"Now I know," she observed, "What they mean when they say 'You can't see the forest for the trees.'"

With so many siblings it is hard for me to remember where they were all living and what they were doing at that time. But I believe that John, Gladys and family (with a new son, Vernon) had moved to Springfield. Charlie, Florence and family were on a farm in Westfield, eight miles west of Springfield. Ruth and Roy, with their eight-year-olds, now lived in Granby, Massachusetts. Betty and Arthur (with a new youngster, Paul) had moved from the little house on Main Street to a big one on Birnam Road (still in East Northfield).

We found Dick, Audrey and family at the same place in south Bernardston; Stan, Elsie and family (of five children) on a farm in Walpole.

Mother still occupied the apartment at 79 Main Street, that from which I departed in 1948. How long it seemed since that tearful day. Bob's possessions were there but he was somewhere at sea with the Navy.

We travelled across southern New Hampshire to Maine and the coast, so that Rita could see the Atlantic, and were met by a deluge of rain. The ocean was virtually obscured from view and the little we could see of it was gray and foreboding.

"It's certainly not as pretty as the Pacific," Rita observed.

(At least she could boast of having seen it.)

We eventually returned to Florence, to spend a couple of days with Dot and Elly at their place. Mother was there too so she had a chance to get better acquainted with Rita and Gina. But I didn't just sit around visiting. Elly put me to work helping him shingle the roof of his garage.

And then it was time to say good bye.

Our hosts took us to the airport, saw us off at the gate, and our little family returned to the West the way we had come, through Chicago and Salt Lake City.

Not until we crossed the snowcapped Rockies did I get over being homesick for the land of my youth. But when we were once more in our cozy trailer home I felt as if we'd hardly been away.

CHAPTER FORTY

WENDOVER

It was 105-years since the intrepid Captain Fremont, accompanied by scouts Kit Carson and Joe Walker, crossed the Great Salt Desert from present day Utah into Nevada; forty years since a resolute crew of Western Pacific Company workers spanned that flat white table with rails; thirty-five years since the hard-drinking, hard-working men of the Bell System tied the last splice in the first transcontinental telephone line at the states' border.

It was less than a decade since, in September of 1944, the 509th Composite Bomber Group was formed and began secretly training at remote Wendover, Utah, just across the line from Elko County, Nevada.

Bitterly cold in winter, searing hot in summer, the airmen found the place desolate beyond belief. At that time, even tourists were nonexistent; the few overnight accommodations mostly empty. But the infinitely flat terrain nearby, and the paucity of human distractions in town, rendered Wendover the ideal location for its intended purpose.

Colonel Tibbets moved in with 225 officers and 1500 men, swelling the area's population some threefold, and in the spring of 1945, specially modified B-29s were delivered to the base. Soon the airmen were far too busy flying, repairing, loading the big planes, dropping dummy flour or concrete bombs on targets drawn on the valley floor to think of anything else. The temperature soared from frigid to searing hot, and both men and machines suffered. (The B-29 had a chronic overheating problem.) But still they labored to perfect their skills, skills for what they knew not, only that they must be without flaw.

It was some time before the citizens of Wendover learned what the activity was all about. Not until the names "Colonel Tibbets," "Enola Gay" and "Boxcars" were flashed across the front pages, in August of 1945, did they know how close they had been to the project that would signal the end of the worst war in our history. And then not much was made of the fact in their small town.

In the early 1950s, when I first got acquainted with Wendover, the Bomber Group's bright insignia, painted on the rock outcropping above town, was the only memorial to its fame. And within a few years

even that small memorial would be overshadowed by the graffiti of the unimportant.

It was now a quiet town. A number of businesses - motels, gas stations, restaurants, a grocery store, a general store - lined the mile or so of highway east of the state line. South of the main street (the highway) there existed a community of residents, most of whom lived in railroad or government houses, and a school. Beyond that, the giant airfield sprawled onto the desert itself.

When the Air Force cut back its operations, except for the Western Pacific Railroad - that maintained a yard, station, hotel, and a restaurant known as the Beanery at the east end of town - there was little to sustain the economy.

But Wendover would soon regain its place as an oasis for hot and weary, cross-country travelers, and would become the host city to the Bonneville Speedway, out on the Great Salt Desert, where world land-speed records would ultimately be established.

A couple of casino/bars, whose patrons were mostly Utahns of non-Mormon persuasion, were located on the Nevada side of the border. One of them, by far the most significant, was the State Line Hotel, owned and operated by a man named Smith. As its name implied, it was situated astraddle the state line. It boasted good accommodations, a fine restaurant, a bar or two and a casino; the latter on the west, or legal, side of a line painted on the floor. Adjacent to the hotel was a gas station and repair facility.

Smith's complex was uniquely self-sufficient. It provided its own diesel-generated power, and hauled its water by tanker-truck some 25-miles from the Pequop Range. Several other businesses in town, including the railroad company, supplied their own power as well. But some of them, and most of the residents, bought power and water from the Air Force, which still owned the base and produced electricity (using diesel generators) and maintained a water line from the Pequops.

Ernie and I would get to know the border town as a place to eat and sleep during our off-hours from routine work at the nearby microwave-radio site; a site nestled in the "notch" of a basalt hill, three miles west of town, with the credible name of Wendover Notch.

From there, from the antenna deck, one could peek over the rocky up-thrust and follow the twin streaks of the railroad and US-40 across the white salt to infinity. So wide and so flat was that desert there, the earth's curvature was easily delineated by those manmade lines.

Since there was very little commercial power available in Wendover, not nearly enough to supply the needs of our microwave-radio station, our site was equipped with an AC generating plant; two six-cylinder, twenty-kilowatt, Hercules diesel engine-alternators. The units "took turns" providing power; that is, once a week, under the control of automatic timers and switches, the station load was transferred from one to the other allowing the relieved engine to rest. Each engine would run a total of 4,400- hours a year, roughly equivalent to 200,000 motor vehicle miles.

I had already become familiar with the Company's small engines, those which supplied regular and emergency power in the K-carrier

huts. They were four- and six-cylinder gas engines, not unlike the one in my old Dodge coupe but designed for stationary use.

Bill Bellinger had performed virtually all of the major maintenance work on those engines, and I had sometimes assisted when he reinstalled and fine tuned them on site. As a matter of fact, just about everything I ever learned about internal-combustion engines I learned from Bill, who was not only an outstanding mechanic but also a capable and willing instructor.

Working around engines was never a bad job, although some of my peers thought otherwise. But in the summertime it was a job to make a guy sweat, especially at Wendover Notch where one or the other of the two engines must always be running. And it was noisy! We wore no ear protection in those days and my ears would ring for hours after leaving the site.

At that, the sound of a barking diesel then was no more harmful, based on loudness measurements, than that of a loud "rock band," and far less detrimental to the soul. We only worried when there was silence, for that meant that something had failed. "Silence" at Wendover Notch was never "Golden."

When the desert heat finally gave way to cold that first year, and the furnace was enabled, what followed became a source of intrigue to Ernie and me. It was an oil-fired furnace, located in the engine room, and we regularly found it out of order, rendered inoperable by the smoke-stack safety-switch. Furthermore, its failure was almost always accompanied by an inordinate amount of soot in the room. But we could never find a source of trouble.

Until one day it "blew" when Ernie was present in the engine room. Wide-eyed, pale-faced and mad as a hornet he stumbled into the equipment room where I was working and shouted, "That son-of-a-bitch tried to kill me! "

Breathless, he explained what happened:

"I was leaning over engine number one, wiping the stupid oil off the injector pump and I heard this rumbling and chuffing like a freight train...and the furnace exploded and blew the fire out its door and knocked the front cover off and up against the wall." Disgusted, he added, "The fire went out but the engine room's full o' smoke and soot.

Together we sought a cause for the explosion and subsequent shutdown, but with no success. In the weeks that followed, more shutdowns occurred. Until finally old Bob Romans - who worked the evening shift in our Elko office and who moonlighted as a furnace repairman in the daytime - was sent to the site to investigate.

After extensive testing, Bob concluded that the furnace was being robbed of its combustion air. The engines' large radiator fans, that blew air from the engine room through ducts to the outside, were literally stealing oxygen from the furnace. This caused the burner to flame-out, unburned fuel to collect in the pot and then, when sufficient oxygen returned, an explosion.

To correct the problem a separate duct was installed from the outside of the building directly to the furnace cabinet, to bring fresh air directly to the burner unit. It was an effective cure.

While not on a par with Ernie's experience in the engine room, I received a scare of the first order, at the same site, the following spring. We were doing routine work, replacing engine oil and filters, and I left Ernie up to his elbows in cleaning chores while I went out to answer a call of nature.

The outhouse, which was situated at the rear of the site, was built to Bell System standards: two holes, a padlocking door, cedar siding and an asphalt-shingled roof. (Hard-headed woodpeckers loved the cedar and literally perforated the walls under the eaves. It would be necessary, after a few years, to cover the siding with sheets of aluminum.)

That morning I propped the door open, to let the sun shine in and to provide a view of the salt desert, took a seat, absent mindedly packed a load of Briggs into my pipe, struck a match and lit the tobacco, blew a cloud of blue-gray smoke through the doorway, watched it curl and dissipate into thin air and, by habit, dropped the match through the hole behind me.

What a life, I mused. All this and getting paid besides.

The sun warmed my feet. I felt warm all over. In fact I felt hot. And then I smelled smoke. But not tobacco smoke, and that got my immediate attention. No doubt about it there was "fire in the hole."

Clutching at my pants I stood up, lost my balance and fell through the doorway. I got to my feet and looked back to see yellow flames and black smoke pouring up through the hole where I'd been seated. "How will I explain this to the boss?" I groaned.

"Hey, Ernie!" I hollered. But of course he couldn't hear me over the engine noise. I frantically dug at the dirt with my hands and gathered fists-full, mostly pebbles, and threw them down the hole. It was an effort in futility. So I pulled up my pants and ran to the front of the building, entered the vestibule, grabbed a fire-extinguisher, hollered "FIRE!" in the direction of a bewildered Ernie and raced back to the "hot house." One carefully aimed charge of CO-2 doused the flames. What a relief!

Ernie, on observing the last act of my play, muttered dryly, "Well that beats all. I'm in there workin' like a slave and you're out here tryin' to burn down the most important thing on the premises."

"Okay," I said. "That's one on me."

The next one would be on him, some months later, when he and Vic Miller and I had several days of work to do at Wendover Notch, and had taken rooms in town.

Frank Victor (Vic) Miller was a relative newcomer to our group of tollies, having come to work in Elko from Reno. Like Bob Burns and Jim Redford, Vic started with the Company as a cable splicer. But during the Korean conflict he took leave and served a second tour of duty with the U.S. Navy. (He originally served in WW-II.) After being discharged he was assigned to the toll district and wound up in Elko, probably in December of 1953. He and his wife, Winnie, and their two young children, Gary and Cathy, first lived in a big house on Oak Street. But because it was too hard to heat they moved to a small one on Fifth Street, until such time as they might find something better.

Although the toll part of the business was new to him, Vic was a sharp craftsman and quick to learn. He was well organized and thorough by nature, congenial in personality, and willing to do his share of work and more. In short, he was a good man to know and to work with.

This was a particularly hot summer day at Wendover Notch, over a hundred-degrees outside, much hotter inside the station where an engine and hundreds of vacuum tubes were giving off therms by the thousands. We were doing a variety of jobs, filling batteries with water, adjusting voltage rectifiers and so on, when the Elko control office called with the "release" we had asked for; authority to work on a pair of radio channels.

Ernie, welcoming the change-of-pace, took a screwdriver in hand, lowered his big frame cross-legged to the floor and began removing a component near the bottom of one of the bays. Within a few minutes, suffering from the heat, he stood up and stripped down to his baggy boxer shorts, then returned to his job.

"Might as well be comfortable," I heard him grumble.

I think it was Vic who, when he went to fetch another jug of water from the anteroom noticed, through the open door, a sedan on its way up the access road. It was not unusual to have visitors at this site, located as it was within three miles of town, a half-mile off the highway and in plain sight, but he thought he should alert us of their coming.

I had already seen the car, but Ernie was deeply engrossed in his work.

"Hey Ern...y'better get your pants on we've got company," Vic shouted to him.

"Sure," he grunted, assuming that Vic was pulling his leg.

I got to the front door in time to join Vic in greeting two smiling young ladies. We recognized them as waitresses from the State Line restaurant, and invited them in for a "tour" of the station.

We walked into the equipment room and down the first aisle. One of the girls admired our calendar with its photo of beautiful Vivien Leigh in living color, but they were not too impressed with our mysterious electronic equipment. We were just rounding the end of the bay to the next aisle when I caught sight of a blurry form scurrying to get behind the battery racks. I chuckled to myself and resisted the temptation to guide the girls through that area. Instead we went through the engine room, then escorted them to their car and said good bye.

I couldn't wait to find our shadowy partner and to hear what he had to say about our visitors.

"Fine buddies you are," he accused, pulling up the pants he'd only now retrieved. "Why didn't you tell me they were coming?"

After more than a year of service, the diesel engines at Wendover Notch began using, and leaking, large quantities of lube oil. A lot of our time was spent routinely wiping it from the linoleum floor. By the five-gallon can we hauled it from Elko, five or six cans every week. It was summertime, in 1952, when the decision was made to overhaul them. Bill Bellinger would do the job, and because of the size and weight of the engines (compared to gas engines) he elected to do it on

site. Ernie and I, and sometimes others, would help with the work. I was more than a little excited by the prospect. For months we had nursed and coddled, oiled and wiped those babies, now we'd get to know them inside as well as out.

Piece by piece the first engine was taken apart - cowlings, piping, injectors, heads, pistons, pumps, shafts - and all of them had to be cleaned. For two long days we sweltered at that task, chipping away black carbon (the stuff of diamonds), wire-brushing, dowsing and wiping the parts. Then we spent three more back-breaking days, under Bill's close direction, putting them all together again.

Bill was a hard worker and expected those around him to follow suit. We stopped only at noon when we went to town for lunch, and at dark when, tired and hungry, we headed for the State Line Hotel for dinner and a good night's sleep. By week's end I was totally exhausted and more than happy to return to Elko.

One month later we were back at Wendover Notch for a repeat performance on the second engine. Bill was his usual self; never resting, gently prodding, joking, explaining why we had to do this or that. His helpers were more experienced now and the week ended with feelings of satisfaction all around. Once again our "HerCs" purred, like African lions after a good meal, and Ernie and I had no more bad oil leaks to wipe up.

In August of 1953, the Wendover Notch engines came due for a second overhaul. This time, Bill Bellinger decided to do the work under better conditions and with better help, in his shop in Elko. Ernie and I set up a backup engine-generator at the site, so the permanent ones could be removed, one at a time, and hauled to town to be rebuilt by his diesel mechanic, Frank Carrillo.

Bill had the ideal vehicle for the job of hauling: a four-wheel-drive Dodge truck equipped with a long steel I-beam extending over the cab in the front, and past the frame in the back. This I-beam was supported by two steel arches; one just behind the cab, the other at the rear end of the truck bed. A traveling winch or hoist was suspended from the beam.

Bill called this machine a "wrecker." It was really a slightly modified WW-II bomb carrier. Instead of deadly bombs it was now used to lift and transport engines and other heavy equipment.

Ernie was on vacation and Albert Sails was assigned with me to the job at Wendover Notch. We met Bill and Frank there, and together we stripped the number one engine of its peripheral gear, lifted the block from its mountings (using a special A-frame of Bill's design) and rolled it across the floor to the front landing for loading. It was mid-afternoon by the time Bill and Frank drove away with the engine, leaving Albert and me to clean up the mess. At least we'd not have to chip carbon and wash parts this time.

More than a week later, on Thursday the 20th, the overhauled engine was ready to be replaced. I climbed out of bed at an early hour and met Vic Snow and Albert at our Eighth Street office. It was 4:30 when the three of us left town in a Company car, 4:45 when we overtook Frank, who was driving the wrecker with our freshly painted, battleship-gray engine chained down on the back. We slowed and followed him to Wells, where we all stopped to buy gas and to eat

breakfast. One-and-a-half hours after finishing our last cup of coffee, we arrived at Wendover Notch.

Twenty-seven years old, round-faced and perpetually smiling Frank Carrillo was about my height but a lot heavier and stronger. And he was not averse to hard work. He had worked late the night before, and then gotten up in the wee morning hours to reinstall our engine, the responsibility for which Bill had entrusted to him. He would prove equal to the task.

We made good progress that morning, with the engine block in place and aligned, and some of the external parts attached before noon. Someone then suggested "let's go eat" so we slipped away to Wendover for a sandwich. We also drank lots of iced-tea and water, for the temperature had already reached 100-degrees.

Back on the job, an hour later, it was 115-degrees-hot in the engine room. And from that time on we frequently tapped the water cask and licked salt to keep from dehydrating.

We hoped to accomplish our task that day and head for home, but the clock moved faster than we did. It was after sundown (8:00pm our time, an hour later in Wendover) and we envisioned several more hours of work before the engine could be turned up for service. So back to Wendover we went, this time for a hearty meal of steak, potato, salad and rolls, washed down with cool water and black coffee. (We must have seriously depleted the State Line's water supply.)

Now, after eating and unwinding, we hated the thought of going back to work. Logically, we should have holed-up in a motel for the night and returned to the job, well rested, in the morning. Instead, because the odds of our obtaining a room at that hour were slim to none, we dragged ourselves back up the hill to the Notch. At least it was comfortable now, the temperature having dropped to the nineties.

By midnight, our reconditioned engine was up-and-running. At about one-thirty, having successfully completed our final tests, we picked up our tools, wiped everything clean and checked out of the station.

It had been a rough day. None of us had slept in over twenty hours. Frank had enjoyed but four hours of sleep in the last forty. Now we were faced with the long drive to Elko.

Just before leaving, I asked Frank if he was going to be okay. "Oh yeah, George," he shrugged, "I'll make it."

With that he climbed into the wrecker and drove away. Vic took the wheel of our Company car, for the first leg of our trip home, while Albert and I dozed or slept as much as possible.

Wells was a ghost town. There was no one in sight and nothing moving on the highway or streets. At Dudley's, we had to awaken the sleepy attendant to fill our gas tanks.

We were worried about Frank, driving alone in the wrecker. It is difficult enough staying awake in an ordinary vehicle, harder in a truck with a top speed of 48-mph.

"How're you doin'?" I asked.

"Oh, I'll make it." he said, echoing his earlier optimism.

Frank looked awfully tired. His eyes were watery and bloodshot, his face expressionless. I felt that one of us should relieve him at the wheel but it was against Company policy for an employee to drive a

non-Company vehicle. Still, how could we in good conscience allow him to go on alone?

"Let me drive the rest of the way," I said, trying to sound authoritative.

"Naw," he said. "That wouldn't be right. It's my job."

If he won't let me drive, I decided, at least I'll ride with him. So I tossed Company rules to the winds, signaled my intention to the other guys and climbed into the wrecker. "Maybe I can keep you awake," I said hopefully.

With a grunt, Frank fired-up the engine and headed for Elko.

For twenty miles I made small talk - not an easy thing to do over the rattling and grinding of the old truck - trying to synchronize my most cogent remarks with his drooping eyelids and nodding head.

Frank said hardly a word. He was either too sleepy to respond or couldn't hear what I was saying. I suspected the first. Several times I volunteered to take over the driving. Each time he forced his eyes wide open and avowed, "I can make it, George, I can make it."

We crossed the Humboldt River and I remarked, "Only thirty miles to go, Frank."

I must have relaxed then, for I soon jerked to attention with blinking eyes. Feeling guilty I sneaked a look at Frank. His eyes were open. Good! I really ought to say something, though, anything to break the monotony.

"How's it going?" My voice sounded far away.

"Unh-h-h."

We'd seen but two other vehicles since leaving Wells, and now even the red taillights of the Company car had disappeared. The guys must have gotten sick of hanging back.

It was peaceful. Even the loud grinding noise of the truck didn't bother me anymore. I recalled the events of the preceding hours, thought of things we could have done differently, things we should have done and did not. I smiled at the memory of our meals at the State Line, of the laughs we'd had recounting the "dumb" things that happened when we were putting the engine back together, things that inevitably happen on a job having anything to do with machinery or electronics: like when "someone" forgot to tighten an oil-line fitting and we had to swab-up a gallon of oil, and the overlooked wire-connection that thwarted our attempts to start the newly overhauled engine.

Once again I snapped to attention, this time by a change in the pitch of the road noise. And then I saw that it was not pavement in front of us but gravel...a gravel shoulder...the shoulder on the left side of the road!

"Damn!!!"

Frank's chin was on his chest and his eyes were closed.

"FRANK!" I hollered, my eyes transfixed to a roadside post dead ahead.

My mind raced, predicting the possible future. The culvert marker would be sheared off at ground level by the front bumper and go spinning through the glare of the headlights. The front wheels would drop into the deep ditch, burying the radiator in the soft dirt. The rear of the rig would vault into the air, roll end-over-end and land

in a swirl of dust and sagebrush. Would I pass through the windshield? Most likely!

Frank, suddenly wide awake, instinctively steered right to avoid the ditch and get us back on the highway. Sand and gravel sprayed from under the left front wheel as it bit into the turn, and somehow the truck missed the post and the ditch, and returned to the pavement. But its center of gravity was so high it couldn't take the change in direction and leaned precariously to the left. Frank fought to straighten it out but it was too late. The wrecker was committed, and so were we, to rolling over on the highway and into the sagebrush.

I braced myself as best I could and waited for the inevitable; waited for the nightmarish event to play itself out. Paradoxically, everything seemed to be happening in an instant yet slowly. My side of the truck rose up in the air. The headlight beams stabbed the night like searchlights. The white center line rolled clockwise through my field of vision. My eyes recorded a blinding flash...then nothing.

"George...wake up, George."

I couldn't place the voice and I didn't want to wake up.

A hand gripped my shoulder. Was it the hand of death? The hand of an angel? The devil come to take me away?

"Hey...you okay?"

"I think so," I responded, relieved at hearing those words. Surely an angel or the devil would know the answer to that question. It was Frank. I wiggled my fingers and toes to make sure they still worked.

"Climb out...there's a car comin'...I'm gonna flag it down," he said. And then he was gone.

I slumped back down to sleep. Oh, how good it felt to sleep. Even the continuing spinning of the right front wheel, somewhere overhead, was no distraction. It only proved that the truck was lying on the driver's side.

"Come on, George!" Frank shouted. "I've got a ride here."

This time I pulled myself upright, shoved my arms through the open window and started to climb out. Frank reached in, just in time to keep me from slipping once more into oblivion, then lifted me through the opening and got me to the highway, some fifty feet away, and lowered my limp body to the pavement. It was good, the warm black tarmac, but I shivered uncontrollably and recognized the symptom as shock. Damn! I cursed to myself.

Vaguely I heard someone talking; mumblings that I could not quite make out. I wished for a blanket. Pretty soon Frank helped me to my feet and through the door of a Chevy coupe onto the back seat. "They'll take you in," he said reassuringly as the door slammed and the car moved ahead.

Shaking uncontrollably I sat in silence, a hand to each side of my head "to hold it on." I felt little pain, but since I could not hold my head up I knew there was something wrong with my neck. The young couple in the front seat said nothing. Or if they did I was oblivious to it. I only remembered arriving at the hospital twenty minutes later, at the rear door on the east side.

I felt better when we stopped. The driver got out and pounded on the door under the light until it was finally opened by a woman in

white. More inaudible conversation. I assumed the guy was explaining his mission to the nurse. But why did it take so long?

"Let me out," I said, and the girl helped me from the car to the doorway where the nurse was interrogating the man: "What happened? Where? Is he hurt? Who are you and where are you going?" It was obvious the couple didn't want to get further "involved" and I didn't blame them. They had stopped on the lonely highway, transported me to Elko, now they wanted to get on with their own lives.

Fearing that I was about to faint, and more than a little annoyed at the way the nurse was handling the situation, I blurted out, "D'you mind if I go sit down?" I then thanked the Good Samaritans, who disappeared into the night never again to be seen or heard from, turned and walked past the nurse into the building.

The nurse motioned to a chair and left me, presumably to find a doctor. I sat down and cradled my head in my hands and wished for a bed. Oh how I wished for a bed.

It was perhaps twenty minutes before Doctor Moren (the Company doctor) showed up. And by that time I was more unconscious than conscious. I remember the nurse being criticized for the way she had received me and I remember lying on a cold stainless-steel table while awaiting the X-ray technician. He was an eternity getting there, then took another eternity taking the necessary X-rays. Or so it seemed to me.

My next recollection was of awakening in bed, in a bright semi-circular room in the east wing of the old Elko County Hospital (since torn down and replaced).

My wish for a bed had finally been granted but I felt worse than ever. I discovered that I was being "stretched," like a rope of taffy, by a clothesline attached to a sling under my chin and threaded over a pulley at the head of the bed and tied to an eight-pound sash weight.

My stomach signaled that it wanted to upchuck and, luckily, a nurse was at the ready with a basin for the purpose. But it wasn't easy, throwing-up while lying on my back with a sling under my jaw. (I would find that performing other more routine bodily functions was equally awkward.)

I remembered having asked the nurse to call Rita, earlier, and wondered why she was not yet at my bedside. When she did arrive she seemed surprised at my condition. She'd been told of the accident but that it was not serious. Anyway, it had taken time to dress little Gina and leave her in someone's care, and there was little that she could do for me at the hospital other than provide moral support; which she did very well.

Albert was the first of my fellow workers to look in on me, to offer sympathy and condolence. (A few days later he presented me with a get-well gift; a long-bow and hunting arrows.)

Paul Brown and George Elmore came to see me that first morning, to sympathize and to gather information for the Company accident report. Since I could hardly talk with my jaw in a sling, they went away without much detail. They'd get the story from other sources and bring the papers to me to sign.

That same day, the following account appeared on page one of the Elko Daily Free Press:

"Two Elko Men Are Injured as Wrecker Wrecked

Frank Carrillo And Geo. Phelps Hurt In Mishap. Two Elko men were injured in the wreck of a wrecker early this morning, one seriously, according to a report made by State Patrolman Ronald Smithers.

Frank Carrillo, 27, employee of Bellinger Motors and George Phelps, 25, Bell Telephone Company employee, were involved in the mishap, which occurred 22 miles east of Elko on Highway 40, at 3:45 a.m.

Phelps was hospitalized with the most serious injuries, particularly to vertebra in his neck and he was put in traction by attending physicians. Carrillo was badly bruised and cut about the face.

The two men had taken a re-conditioned motor to Wendover for the Bell Telephone Company. Carrillo said he dozed and the wrecker went out of control. Patrolman Smithers said the wrecker turned over three and a half times, one and one half times on the highway before going into the brush. He believed the boom on the wrecker protected the men in the cab or they might have been injured worse. They were traveling about 50 miles an hour when the wreck occurred, which damaged the wrecker extensively."

On my second or third day in the hospital, Father and Ruth came to see me. He had been to see the wrecker, he said, on the vacant lot behind Bellinger's shop, and taken some snapshots of it. I could tell by his demeanor that the memory of Frank's death had been rekindled.

There were other well-wishing visitors, but I was in no mood for them. (I've always contended that a hospital is a place for healing, not visiting.) Besides, the pain in my jaw from the constant pull of the sling was becoming unbearable, and I so told the doctor. "I think I'm getting lockjaw."

"Well," Doc Moren explained. "You have a fractured vertebra in the neck area and we need to keep it under tension and immobile for two to three weeks, until we put a cast on. There is another way, but we were hoping this would work. I'll talk to Tom and Hugh". (Colleagues, Doctors Tom Hood and Hugh Collett.)

They must have agreed to an alternative to the sling, for the next morning I was wheeled into a small operating room and prepared for minor surgery. A nurse shaved the hair above my ears, while the good doctors assembled the tools of their trade. I was intrigued by their tools, which looked like ordinary carpenter's tools but were made of stainless steel. Still seated in a wheelchair, I was given a local anesthetic.

One of the doctors held my head in a vise-like grip while the other took up a hand-drill and proceeded to make a hole through my skull, about an inch above my right ear. The feel of it, and the sound, was not unlike the boring of a hole in a pine board and my thoughts raced ahead to when the bit should break through. I didn't want to appear scared, but my lips formed the question and out it came. "How do you keep from drilling too deep?"

"Don't worry," I was assured, "your brain's not that big."

I smiled weakly, and the Doc went on to explain that there was a "stop" attached to the drill. "Besides," he added, "there's a cavity between your outer and inner skulls, filled with fluid that will act as a buffer."

I relaxed...a little.

I suppose the sound of the drill biting into bone was magnified because of the closeness to my ear. Anyway, it seemed awfully loud and the final "break-through" was like a small explosion. But I was still alert and guessed that my brain was still intact.

After removing the drill a snug-fitting, dowel-shaped steel device was introduced into the hole. The whole process was repeated on the opposite side of my head, and they were done. It had been both painless and interesting, the doctors having carried on a continuous and entertaining chatter as they worked.

Back in my hospital bed, a set of "tongs" was attached to the dowels in my skull, to which the rope with the suspended weight was tied. All of this to replace the sling. It would be a great relief to be able to eat, speak and sleep once more, and for the first time since the accident to rest in complete comfort; although the pain in the hinge of my jaw would persist for many days.

Less than an hour passed before I heard footsteps in the tiled hallway. Turning slightly, I looked up as a visitor drew close and stopped at my bedside. It was one of my co-workers, Al Fialdini. But without so much as a word to me he paled, turned, and retraced his steps. The sight of the medieval-looking contraption on my head was apparently too much for him.

Disturbed, I asked for a hand mirror to see for myself what had so shocked my good friend. Now it was clear. I, too, would have been shocked. It appeared for all the world as if a rod had been shoved through my skull and an ore-bucket handle slipped over the ends of it. Worst of all was the blood, which had oozed from around the pins and run down and matted the hair on the back of my head.

Rita, when she arrived that day, was really upset by my appearance and immediately fetched a nurse to remedy it.

I believe there were two other beds in the room. One of them was occupied by a congenial rancher named Emerson Neff, from Ruby Valley, who had broken a leg or something. An "older" fellow he was great company, with dozens of tales to tell about ranch life in the twentieth century. I gathered that he had been a cowboy-rancher all his life, and his father before him.

After two weeks "on the rack," the doctors agreed it was time to remove the tongs and fit me with a cast. I could then leave the hospital, go home and recuperate. Since the implantation of the pins had been so painless I fostered no apprehension about their removal. But I was in for a rude awakening.

A nurse wheeled me to the same little room in the basement, injected a local anesthetic and readied me for the job. The doctors soon arrived and the nurse, a sweet young Indian girl, positioned my hands over my chest (as if I were in a casket) and held them tight. From one side Doctor Moren took my head in his hands, while Doctor Hood grasped the pin on the other side and pulled. Expecting the

device to slip easily out of the hole I was surprised when it didn't budge. Tom pulled harder and applied a twisting motion.

Pain! Pain! The most excruciating pain I'd ever known. Were I a prisoner in the hands of an enemy I'd have told them anything they wanted to know, even if I had to make up something. I clamped my jaws shut, to keep from biting my tongue (now I knew why they used to "bite the bullet") and gripped the nurse's hands hard; so hard I hurt her, I would later learn.

I moaned involuntarily and the Doc quit pulling on the pin. "Can you take it?" he asked.

Not wanting to appear a coward, I answered "Yes."

I was reminded of the sound of a rung being removed from an old wooden chair, squeaking and grating as it was twisted back and forth and "chunk," when it finally gave way. That's what it was like when first one and then the other pin was removed. The bone of my skull, you see, had "mended" around the pins and held them tight.

When it was over I relaxed, and noted for the first time the ashen look on the nurse's face. During the whole operation she had not let go of my hands, nor even winced as my fingernails cut into her skin. I could have kissed her but I was incapable of performing the act.

I was then raised to a sitting position and stripped to the waist so that a plaster cast, extending from below my rib cage to my head, could be laboriously applied. When completed, the top of it formed a line from the point of my chin, under each ear-lobe, to the center of my skull in the back. My arms stuck out from this sleeveless straight-jacket and were free to move, but my head, except for the restricted movement of my jaw, was immobilized.

Finally, I was ready to go home. But before leaving the hospital, Rita and I stopped by to visit the 15-year-old girl, Frances Settle, of California, who had been admitted after a tragic motor-vehicle accident east of Wells. Three adults were killed in that accident (apparently a head-on collision), one of them the poor girl's mother. A girl friend was also injured and since moved to her hometown, while her six-year-old sister came through unhurt.

Rita had previously looked in on Frances, to cheer her up, but I was not prepared for the sight. Not only had she suffered a fractured neck but also a crushed chest, fractured left leg and pelvis. She had been outfitted with dowels in her head (like mine), another set in her leg, a brace to hold both legs apart and elevated, all connected to pulleys and weights. And yet, in spite of her traumatic situation, there was a smile on her pretty face.

On our way out of the hospital I suggested to the staff that, when the time came to remove the pins from Frances's skull, they might want to administer more than just a local anesthetic.

The next several weeks were different from any I had ever experienced. I learned the meaning of "leisure time." Of course I was not at liberty to do just anything I wanted to, but I could read, take short walks, listen to the radio (television had not yet come to Elko), and best of all enjoy the company of Rita and Gina.

Gina was at the age, between eighteen-months and two-years, when little girls are irresistibly beautiful, the epitome of every man's

dream. With bright eyes and smiling face, shining blond hair falling lightly to her shoulders or braided and tied halo-like at the top of her head, she was an angel.

Together, in our car, we'd go downtown and watch the people come and go. Or park alongside the airport west of town and watch the airplanes land and takeoff. Sometimes I drove slowly up the old Adobe Hill road, to observe the jackrabbits, hawks and other things of nature away from the city. But mostly we stayed at home, where I got to watch her at play in our tidy little house or out in the yard.

We had a really nice yard. Rita and I had planted grass, put in a brick walkway (utilizing old fire-bricks gleaned from the ruins of the abandoned oil-shale plant south of the river) and built a white picket fence across the back by the alley. Thus enclosed it was a great place for Gina, and for the mid-sized black-and-white dog named Kelly that Rita had recently acquired.

My time with Gina was priceless. A good example of the old proverb, "Something good comes of everything."

While I suffered very little pain during my period of recuperation, I had to endure a ration of discomfort as a result of the plaster cast. As a matter of fact, there was absolutely no way to bathe those parts of my body enveloped in the cast and after a few days my skin, shedding cells to make way for new growth, caused no end of irritation. It was torturous, and there were times when I complained. Too loudly, perhaps.

To relieve the itching I fashioned a back-scratcher from a wire coat hanger, to fit between the plaster and my body. To neutralize the odor I dumped copious amounts of cologne into the top of the cast, but it was never a viable solution.

I was able to shave around my mouth and upper cheeks, but beneath the plaster my beard grew unchecked; slowly but surely filling the space. I thought about Dumas's "Man in the Iron Mask" and only half-joked about the possibility of strangling to death. I could really appreciate that poor fellow's predicament.

As the weeks marched slowly by I learned to adapt to my situation, but I grew tired of so much leisure time and looked forward to the day when I could once again report to work.

In The News

NEW YORK, Aug. 20 (UP)—Adlai E. Stevenson, former governor of Illinois and Democratic presidential candidate in 1952, arrived here today from a five and a half month trip around the world.

Elko

Free Press

Largest Circulation

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AUGUST 20, 1953

Grammar Schools To Open In Elko On September

Complete Staff Is Announced by Byron Stetler

New Section Of Kindergarten To Be Started

The Elko Grammar School will open for the 1953-54 school term on Tuesday, Sept. 8 at 9 a.m. according to an announcement today by Superintendent Byron Stetler.

Grades one, six, seven and eight report to Building No. 1 at Eighth and Court streets. Grades two, three, four and five will meet for their first classes in Building No. 2 at Seventh and 7th streets. School will convene at 9 a.m. in each building.

Kindergarten registration for those pupils who were not registered last spring or who were registered but did not present a birth certificate, will be held in room 3, building No. 1, Thursday, Sept. 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Pupils entering the kindergarten or first grade must present a birth certificate.

All parents of grammar school children who were not enrolled in the Elko grammar school last year are requested to register their children Sept. 8 at building No. 2 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Pupils who were enrolled in this school last year need not register.

Pupils eligible to ride on the bus are those living south of the Humboldt river; those whose residences are located from Cave hotel west along highway 40; those who live west of Second street in the southwestern section of town; those in the Western Pacific Roundhouse area.

A new section of the kindergarten is to be started this year. It will be taught by Mrs. Mary Kornbrust who taught the first grade last year. Mrs. Kornbrust

Two Elko Men Are Injured as Wrecker Wrecked

Frank Carrillo And Geo. Phelps Hurt In Mishap

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Phelps was hospitalized with the most serious injuries, particularly to vertebra in his neck and he was put in traction by attending physicians. Carrillo was badly bruised and cut about the face.

The two men had taken a reconditioned motor to Wendover for the Bell Telephone company. Carrillo said he dozed and the wrecker went out of control. Patrolman Smithers said the wrecker turned over three and a half times, one and one half times on the highway before going into the brush. He believed the boom on the wrecker protected the men in the cab or they might have been injured worse. They were traveling about 50 miles an hour when the wreck occurred, which damaged the wrecker extensively.

DIRECTORS C MEET WITH I

Directors of the Elko Chamber of Commerce today decided that c

'Abuses' of In Drought Air Is Charged To

Administrative Feed Program Re Tightened

persons obtained during the drive. SEP 2 8, 1953

Four Convair Flights Now Available Here

Substitution of new Mainliner Convairs for DC-3 equipment at Elko was completed by United Air Lines here yesterday, it was announced today by George Sutherland, station manager.

Under the new schedule, passengers will be offered two Mainliner Convair flights eastbound, leaving Elko at 12:30 p.m. and 7:50 p.m. and two westbound, at 10:35 a.m. and 6:40 p.m. each day.

United's Mainliner Convairs cruise at 270-miles-per-hour with 44-passenger capacity as compared with the 180-mile-an-hour cruising speed with 21-passenger capacity of the DC-3. In addition, Mainliner Convairs feature cabin pressurization for living room comfort at high altitudes.

Sutherland said United's revised systemwide passenger-cargo cargo schedules will provide the greatest Fall and Winter capacity per cent more than a year ago. In maintaining such expanded schedules, United will be operating 171 four-engine and twin engine Mainliners, including 40 of a total order of 55 Convair 440's.

NOTICE DUCK HUNTERS

Membership meeting, FRANKLIN LAKE GUN CLUB, Inc.

Friday, Oct. 2, 7:30 p.m. Oreana Room, Ranchinn

was not known the interior and 1 considerably damaged smoke and water window was broken rugs were damaged chief reported. Local firefighting call at approximately 10:30 p.m. and extinguished at approximately 11:30 p.m.

District Attorney Seeks Extra On Leo Fre

District Attorney will leave for tomorrow morning to California where he will file the papers in an accused embezzler man back to Elko. Sawyer announced he will file the papers if the governor signs them, he will file the papers to California where he will file the papers of California.

Freeman is being held in the Mesas, Calif., on charges of embezzling \$3,000 from the Warren Motor Co. earlier this year for that firm as Freeman was arrested in California community indicated he will file to Elko.

A hearing has been set for Oct. 22, 1953, in a San Francisco court. Carleson is expected to appear.

Carleson (As Repres

Bob Carleson, Carleson Motor elected by the Carleson Nevada as their representative on the National Cadillac Association of the National Dealers Association.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

CHANGES

It was three days till Thanksgiving and I had great cause to celebrate. My "cocoon" had been cut away and replaced by a removable metal-and-leather brace. Immediately after returning home from the doctor's office, Rita asked me to put on a white shirt, tie and suit coat, and she then took my picture with Gina and Kelly. Thus she obtained a permanent record of my beard, a beard thick and dark and curly from having been confined and unexposed to the sun for three months.

A day or two later I visited my friend and barber, Joe Bell, and got a real shave and a haircut; my first professional haircut since he had come to the hospital to cut it, back in September. (Rita trimmed it in the interim.) I seriously considered retaining the beard but thought better of it. In those days, a young man with a beard was a bit out of place. Besides, the brace that I'd have to wear for months would be enough of a nuisance without having to contend with a beard.

The holiday arrived, and the Zunino family gathered for the traditional dinner. As always, Mom and Pop sat at the head of the expanded table, the rest of us, more or less in order of seniority, along the sides. The grandchildren, at least the littlest of them, occupied small tables set up in the living room.

When nearly everyone was settled down, Sam raised his glass and pronounced, "Salut," whereupon we returned the toast.

It was apparent the folks were thankful for their relative prosperity in these United States. Like so many who had lived and raised families in the first half of the century (my own parents included) they had managed in extremely difficult times. But Sam and Antoinette succeeded despite a bit of a handicap, that of being immigrants and unfamiliar with the language of the land.

Born in Varazze, Italy (near Genoa) on the 14th of November, 1877, Sam Zunino immigrated to the United States in 1901, traveling by ship to Ellis Island, New York, and by train across the continent to Nevada. The fact that he could speak very little English caused him some difficulty right from the start.

As the story goes: Westward bound on the train, Sam handed a vendor a dollar bill and pointed to some appetizing doughnuts. The merchant, unable to understand how many doughnuts Sam wanted (or perhaps recognizing an opportunity to take advantage of a little Italian immigrant), kept the bill and gave him a whole dollar's worth. Probably several dozen in those days. Sam shrugged, accepted the lot and shared them with his fellow travelers.

When he arrived in Elko, Sam went to work as a hired hand and sheepherder for his second cousin, on the Zunino Ranch near Jiggs. But tending sheep was not his idea of "the good life," so before long he quit and found employment in and around, among other places, Goldfield, Hawthorne, Yerington and Rawhide, before moving to Bullion in 1912. He worked at a variety of jobs and occupations in his productive life; as a laborer, prospector, teamster, miner, freight contractor, road contractor, owner-operator of the Manhattan (Nevada) Bar-and-Grocery Store.

Twelve years after Sam arrived in this country, Antoinette Verdino, who was born February 18, 1890, in Piampaludo, Italy, also in the vicinity of Genoa, crossed the ocean and continent alone. They met in the town of Palisade, then a thriving stage and rail terminus in the Palisade Canyon of the Humboldt River west of Carlin, and were married on April 7, 1913.

Sam and Antoinette first set up housekeeping in the primitive town of Bullion, and at various times lived there or in Palisade until 1930.

I remember Sam's telling about working in a mine high on the hillside above Bullion. In the wintertime he'd haul his eight-foot skis up to the site. At the end of the workday, holding a single long pole between his legs to use as a brake, he'd ski straight down the mountainside to home. I remember Mom telling about how she cooked on a tiny, wood-burning stove for a dozen or more miners.

Less than two weeks after Rita was born, in Palisade, the Zuninos moved into a brand new house in Elko. From that time until 1938, while maintaining their "city home" in Elko, the folks sometimes lived in the mining camps of Tuscarora, Tenabo, Buckhorn and, of course, Palisade. From 1938 to 1946 they lived in Manhattan.

All of those mining towns were in northeastern Nevada. None of them, except Tuscarora and Manhattan, is still in existence. (Based on what I have heard about the Zunino's early homes, by comparison our place on Huckle Hill was a mansion.)

Sam was seventy-one years old when I first met him, and was, except for prospecting and mining activities, retired. Throughout the years, in addition to whatever primary job he was engaged in, he had searched the hills and canyons of Nevada for minerals. He bought and sold and traded interests in numerous mining properties, but because of hard times, wrong timing or unfortunate deals, he was seldom adequately compensated for his efforts.

While never privy to Sam's personal business, I suspect that he'd have known greater financial success, from his mining ventures, had he a better command of the English language. Both he and Antoinette were longtime U.S. citizens, both had taught themselves to read and write English, and both spoke in English virtually all the time. (They

insisted on their children's speaking English as well.) Even so, Sam was surely at a disadvantage when dealing with mining companies and their silver-tongued lawyers.

But it was now Thanksgiving Day, 1953. Sam and Antoinette, as well they should be, were thankful for and proud of their children, whom I will briefly introduce below:

Angelina (Angie) Savina, the eldest, was born on February 14, 1914, in Palisade. To me she appeared quieter than the others, possibly because of the hardships she had shared with the folks in those early years. When grown to adulthood she married Charles (Charlie) Avery, a likeable fellow who now held a good job with the railroad. Like many men in Nevada, he was addicted to the lure of gold and silver, and spent a great deal of time prospecting in the hills. He and Angie had three boys and a girl; Alan, Clifford, Phillip and Dolores.

Bernard (Ben) Jacomo, the eldest son, was, in the tradition of the old country, accorded an extra degree of honor. He was born in Palisade on July 11, 1915. Ben served in the Navy in World War II, and was now a carpenter in the employ of the Western Pacific Railroad Company. He and his wife had a boy, Bernard (also called Ben), and Lois was pregnant at the time. She would give birth to a girl, Nancy Ellen, nine days later.

Violet, the second daughter, was born in the little mining town of Bullion, south of Carlin, on October 25, 1916. A generous woman, she lived through tough times of her own and still shared whatever she had with others. Married to Wilford (Woody) Wise, they bounced from town to town and mining camp to mining camp, for he too, in addition to working at other jobs, was a prospector. They had four girls - Ethel, Janet, Jeanne and Theresa - at that time, and Violet was again pregnant. A boy, Samuel, would arrive the following month.

Another girl, Mary Louise, was born in Bullion on April 27, 1918. Her husband, Arnold Young, had served in the Navy in WW-II, in the Pacific area. He was now employed as a civilian worker at Herlong, California. Mary had a daughter, Judy (from a previous marriage) and a boy, Arnold, called "Butch."

John Wilson, the second son, was born in Bullion in 1919 (by coincidence, twelve years to the day, October 12th, after my own brother John was born.) While serving in the Army in the Mediterranean Theater in WW-II, he was wounded and shipped back to the States. As mentioned above, John was a master mechanic. Married to Loretta Hansen, they had a boy, Jack, and a girl, Lorrie.

Stanley (Stan) Alexander was born in Bullion on April 11, 1923. Not married, he had worked for an automobile dealer and was now in the business, with Bob Gregory, of distributing gasoline and fuel-oil under the "Flying A" emblem. While all the brothers were good hunters and fishermen, Stan was, in my opinion, the easiest to hunt with.

The youngest of the boys was James (Jim) Charles, who was born in Palisade on November 15, 1924. Also unmarried, he was a heavy-equipment operator and had worked on several highway jobs in the area. (He may have been away from home with the Army at this time, in either the U.S. or Japan.)

June Catherine (Katie) was born in Palisade, June 13, 1927. She and Ted Taelour (introduced above) had three boys, Thomas (Tad), Richard and Michael, and were living in Fontana, California, where he worked for Kaiser Steel.

Rita was next in line. She was born in Palisade on August 16, just before the family moved to Elko in 1930.

Ruby (Tiny) Mae, the youngest of the family, was born on July 21, 1933, the only native of Elko. She was not yet married.

The bounteous feast laid out before us included traditional turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, baked yams, salads and rolls, cranberry sauce and so on, plus ravioli. In spite of the large crowd there was too much food to consume at one sitting, even of pumpkin pies.

After dessert, the little kids played games while the bigger ones went downtown to a movie. Most of the adults pitched in for the cleanup, and to visit over coffee or play cards until the evening wore out and everyone left for their homes.

Before the year was ended, a new baby came to live with us. Rita assumed the role of surrogate mother to Nancy Ellen, Ben and Lois's baby. Sadly, Lois passed away when Nancy was but two-weeks old, and Rita willingly took on the job of caring for the sweet little girl.

In the summer before Nancy came to live with us, a potentially dangerous situation developed at our trailer-home. Rita and Gina were there alone. Gina was sitting in her highchair. Rita answered the telephone. The call was for Loretta (I guess they didn't have a phone at the time) and she hurried over to the big house with the message. No one was at home, so Rita returned to the trailer.

On the way back she saw through the big window, beside the door, a smiling Gina standing in the highchair and tapping on the glass. Obviously worried, Rita rushed to get inside. But Gina, in her newfound activities, had accidentally flipped the door lock. Having no key with her, Rita was on the horns of a dilemma. She couldn't call me on the phone. She dared not leave the yard and walk to a phone. So she stood by the window, tried to coax Gina to sit down, and waited for me to come home for lunch.

Small children have a knack for innocently causing their parents to worry.

Not far into the New Year, Rita entered into her second pregnancy; another cause for concern. With Gina, Nancy and another newcomer, we'd be a family of five in extremely cramped quarters. No doubt about it, we'd have to find a larger place to live.

But I am getting ahead of my story. After three months of recuperating (loafing with pay) I returned to work after the Thanksgiving holiday. This time I worked at the test bench in the Elko office. There was very little competition for that job, which consisted of repairing microwave-radio components brought in from the mountain-tops. Most of the guys, including me, preferred to work out of town. But since I was wearing a neck brace and limited to light duty, I had no choice in the matter.

Fate, once again, redirected my career. Instead of pounding the roads to remote sites I got involved in the electronics end of the

business, delving deep into the guts of the equipment. I would miss the driving, the out of doors, the mountain-tops, working on radios and carriers and engines, but I felt not the least deprived with respect to the miserable battery plants.

There was an abundance of test-bench work in those days. When an assembled component became faulty at the site, it was replaced by a spare and the defective unit brought to the bench in Elko. There it was repaired, realigned and sent back to the field. With seven sites in our maintenance area, there was always a backlog of components stacked up in the corner. And while the job was not physically difficult, it was demanding. Every unit returned to the field had better be in A-one condition.

Much of the test-bench work was caused by a particular type of capacitor, the size of a shirt-button, which tended to fail after a couple of years in service. One of them would "short out," and invariably take a half-dozen others with it. It was not feasible to replace the "defective" parts in the field. (Electrical parts never went "bad," Paul Brown would insist, only people could go bad, objects were "defective"). Additionally, a microwave transmitter, consisting of coupled vacuum-tube cavities, had to be periodically disassembled, cleaned, reassembled and realigned. In the end, I gained a wealth of experience working at the bench.

Another part of my indoor job was that of maintaining the inventory of vacuum tubes, parts and supplies, and of ordering replacements from the Western Electric Company, the Bell System's manufacturing arm. A most critical item was the 416-type tube (the gold-plated, close-tolerance vacuum tube described in a previous chapter). This tube was in such demand, because of its susceptibility to failure, it was a challenge to avoid coming up with a short supply, a factor which led to widespread hoarding throughout the country. Some years later I would learn, from a chief in Salt Lake City, that he'd stored a case of the expensive jewels in his garage at home. I never succumbed to that temptation, but I did keep a few hidden away in the office in Elko.

Test bench work was never dull. Occasionally it was downright exciting; such as the time when I inadvertently reversed the leads on a power supply. Too late I heard the "frying" sound followed by a loud explosion that brought everyone in the room to my location. An oil-filled capacitor - sealed in an aluminum can roughly three inches tall and one inch in diameter - had exploded with the force of a giant firecracker, spraying hot oil over me and everything in the immediate area. I stood there with a sheepish grin and oil on my face, too embarrassed to speak. It was obvious to all what had happened, for I was not the first tollie to cause an electrolytic capacitor to blow. I chalked it up to good experience.

I am reminded of Doug McVae (the fellow whose car we impaired on his wedding day) who seemed always to get in trouble when working at the bench. He never shied from taking apart an unfamiliar piece of equipment, even if it was unnecessary, but he'd invariably get sidetracked, forget how to reassemble it, and leave the thing in a state of disrepair, an act that caused the boss a great deal of consternation.

It was no surprise, then, when Paul Brown found a drawn-and-quartered oscilloscope lying on a shelf in the corner, and laid the blame on Doug. Of course he was to blame, and Paul gave him a thirty minute dressing-down.

The unfortunate aspect of this case, for me, was the boss's confronting him in front of me, an unwilling witness. I made a mental note then, that if I should ever become a supervisor I'd never reprimand a subordinate in the presence of his peer(s).

Doug was smart enough to take advantage of an opportunity when it knocked, and within a year he transferred to Reno, to the engineering department.

Back in 1950, Father and Ruth moved from the tiny house at 1107½ Court Street to a large place on the corner of Fourth and Cedar Streets. It was a nice looking place, with gabled roofs and white clapboard siding. Originally a single-family residence, my father modified it to three apartments and he (or more precisely Ruth) became a landlord, renting two small units while living in the third.

In the summer of 1954, they decided to sell the property and move to Pomona, California, I supposed to take advantage of southern California's warm climate. As a favor to them I assumed the management responsibilities after they moved until the sale was completed. It was a short stint, only a few months, but enough to give me valuable insight into the hassles of renting a property. I would never have believed, were I not thus involved, how totally irresponsible and niggardly some tenants can be.

Answering their frequent calls, many of them trivial - to fix a leaky faucet, relight a heater-pilot, replace a light bulb - was most inconvenient. And the matter of collecting rent or re-renting an apartment was downright discouraging. One young couple had to be dunned continually, but eventually paid the bill; another skipped out after six weeks of habitation without paying any rent at all. It was a great relief when the property was sold, and I resolved right then to never become a landlord.

It was about that time when Rita and I finalized plans to buy a home in a new housing area on the bluff at the west edge of town, above the Mountain City Highway. We paid to the Elko Development Company the sum of \$1,118 in down payments, approximately 10% of the total price, for a house at 1050 Sewell Drive. Several other Bell employees had the same idea, including Bob Burns, Jack Murphy, Larry Staley and Vic Miller. The latter two chose homes across the street from ours. We were scheduled to move in September, but of course a housing project is never completed on time.

The contractor (Meyers) constructed the homes on a plan previously used in Reno, slightly modified to suit our climate. Most innovative, for Elko, was the piping of propane fuel from a large above-ground tank located over the brow of the hill to all fifty houses in the project. It was a far-sighted plan, for natural gas was to be brought in from Idaho in the not too distant future.

Sometime in the late summer, a sub-contractor began digging trenches for the gas lines. All went well until he came to the main trench, near the big tank. There, finding the digging extra hard and

thinking it to be hardpan, he took a good bite with his backhoe and came up with a shovel full of what appeared to be large tree roots. But there were no trees anywhere around and what he had was our telephone cable. Cables, actually, for there were two of them, one for each direction of transmission on the transcontinental "K" carrier route.

This was not the first time the cable had been inadvertently cut, nor would it be the last. But a severed cable was a serious thing in those days, because a variety of important communications passed through the wires inside those lead sheaths; network radio programs, television-audio, news and facsimile circuits, military and defense information in addition to hundreds of long-distance telephone conversations.

To deal with cable breaks the Company had provided special equipment, and plans that we rehearsed two or three times a year. In the event of an actual failure, cable-repairmen were dispatched to the fault location and tollies to the adjacent "K" stations, to effect restoration. It was not an easy task. The test equipment was often found with weak batteries, broken wires or defective tubes, and communication between the crews was usually difficult to establish. (Ironically, though we had mobile radios in our vehicles at the time, federal regulations prohibited our talking car-to-car. We had to communicate through a base station.) No matter how hard we tried, rarely was the first cable circuit restored in less than three hours, and the rest of them might take anywhere from five to eight hours.

The restoration of the Elko cable cut of 1954, though, was an unparalleled success. It was completed in fewer than four hours. There were a number of contributory factors to this success, not least of which was the location, only a mile or so from our main office. Also, because it had recently been tested and used in a restoration exercise, our equipment was in good order.

But the most important factor was that we had, in our group of Elko tollies, some of the best former cable splicers in the Company; notably Jim Redford, Bob Burns and Vic Miller. Disregarding union jurisdiction (splicers belonged to a different organization) they went immediately to the break, cleared away the dirt in the hole and commenced splicing. By the time the regular splicers had travelled across northern Nevada to the scene, our boys had the job about wrapped up.

An opinion was later voiced, by some wag, that the success was largely due to the paucity of managers at the location; a statement with which, after observing other restoration efforts where bosses seemed to come out of nowhere and hover over the craftsmen, often with poor advice, I tended to agree. One supervisor, Red Wayman, with his overall telephone experience and ability to see what was needed, was the catalyst that assured our speedy restoration.

September arrived on the heels of the first frost. Rita grew heavy with child, and still our house was not ready for occupancy. But early the following month, after purchasing a Norge refrigerator and a Norge clothes washer from Paul Walther, who sold and repaired appliances in addition to working for the Company, we moved in. I

think we paid \$180 for the washer. (I don't remember what the refrigerator cost, but as of this writing it is still working as an "extra" in our garage.) A gas range came with the house.

It was opening day of duck-hunting season, the 9th of October, when I took Rita to the Elko General Hospital to have her baby. Of course Dr. Moren was not available. He was out somewhere in a blind waiting for the ducks to fly closer. So Dr. Hood, who rarely did so, delivered our second child; a fair skinned, blue eyed, healthy baby boy named James Anthony. I was pleased.

We sold our trailer home and I helped the buyer (Paul Vertz, of Winnemucca) remove it from John's back yard. With the money, Rita and I travelled to Salt Lake City (Sugarhouse) and ordered furniture, which was promptly delivered to our address in Elko.

We had a house at last. A real house with a garage. A permanent home for, I hoped, the rest of my lifetime. Mortgaged for \$11,500 it was a well built structure on an average sized city lot. There was a spacious living room/dining area in the front, opening onto a kitchen big enough for a table and chairs. There were three fair sized bedrooms, one off the hall behind the living room and two more at the rear of the house. It was sufficient space for the five of us, including Nancy, but we'd have to take turns in the only bathroom.

Our first winter on Sewell Drive was not really warm and cozy, however, it was more like cold and bleak. And dusty. When the contractor prepared the area for the housing project he cleared the ridge of its topsoil, scooped out trenches for the foundations, and later "rough graded" the soil around them. As a consequence of our taking possession in the fall of the year, there was no grass to hold the soil in place and winter winds swept over the bluff and kept the "real estate" in constant motion. Powdery dust found its way into the house, around the door and window sills, even under the baseboard in the front room. So it was not only cold but also hard to keep clean. Carpeting would have been more practical than beautiful hardwood floors, but that option was unaffordable at the time.

The heating system, poorly designed for Elko's climate, consisted of a propane furnace centrally located off the hallway, with a cold air return at the base of the hall wall. A fan forced hot air through ducts to the rooms, through vents located just below the ceiling. And since hot air doesn't sink, when the fan was off the temperature at floor level was uncomfortably cold; not a good situation with babies in the house. (A lot better, though, than either Rita or I grew up with.) After a period of trial and error, I reduced the blower-fan speed so it would run longer and maintain a more constant temperature throughout the house.

To compound our situation, it was one of the coldest winters Mother Nature had to offer, with temperatures way below zero as a rule and down to minus-38 at one time. The water supply-lines didn't freeze, but the sink drain, of all things, did. The drain had been installed in a sloppy manner and the carpenter simply cut a slot in the outside wall to accommodate it. The asbestos siding covered the mistake but provided no insulation against the cold. In spite of the fact that the waste water was relatively warm and falling vertically, it froze in the drain.

To correct the problem I braved the cold, loosened the siding, thawed the pipe, and then stuffed several thicknesses of newspaper behind the siding. It never froze again.

We were not so affluent that we could afford a clothes drier, so the first item of necessity was a clothesline. Rita's brother Jim custom made a pair of T-shaped stanchions, by welding two-inch iron pipes, drilled to take the line holders, to the tops of four-inch, iron pipe uprights. Since the lines would be abnormally low - shoulder height to me, reachable for Rita - they would have to be stretched awfully tight to avoid sagging. This required a sizable pour of concrete at the base of each upright. When completed, I figured the clothesline should stand forever (and may still be in place). I later hung a "very short" swing from one of the cross arms for the kids.

Every man should build a fence, once, and plant a lawn, once, and pour a concrete patio, once. I did all of those things, with help, in Elko. The fence and gates took first priority on account of the kids, so I borrowed a manual posthole digger and a digging bar and went to work. Because of the hardpan indigenous to that part of Elko, digging the holes was the toughest part of the job. When that was done, we planted square redwood posts, tamped them in with sand, and nailed half-inch redwood boards (six-inches wide by eight-feet long) in a basket-weave pattern between them. It was a good fence for our wind-prone area; the weave allowed air to pass through thus decreasing its resistance.

If it weren't for Rita's brothers' help, though, I would never have gotten the job done. As it was I hurt a lot, particularly in that part of my anatomy that was injured in the accident.

After a time I decided to apply a preservative to the fence. I collected a lot of used motor oil, most of it waste from the Company's engines, mixed a red-ochre powder with it and brushed it on. The fallacy of my plan was that the pigment came off at the slightest touch. One dared not lean on the fence lest he turn red.

When I was a youngster, I was taught to not climb on fences. I passed that philosophy along to our kids but the neighbor's children weren't aware of the rule. Nor were they aware of my attitude toward little "fence climbers" until they went home to their mother literally red-handed. So my concocted preservative worked, but in a way that I really hadn't anticipated.

Rita was anxious for a lawn, to alleviate the dust problem, and it was still winter when I borrowed a two-wheeled, Briggs-and-Stratton powered, walk-behind tractor and tackled the job of planting one. With a three-foot wide blade attached to the front of the tractor I graded the yard to my liking; mainly so that water would drain without puddling. Next I borrowed a pickup truck, found a helper, and drove to the Landa Ranch east of Elko for a load of seasoned sheep manure.

"The elixir of fertilizers," I was told. I was not, however, apprised of the fact that the stuff contained more native weed seed than I could match with grass seed. Never again would I fall for that crap.

I next plowed the whole front yard, again using the tractor but with a soil-turning blade. Following that beast around caused me to marvel at the stamina of my predecessors, the "sod busters" on the

Great Plains turning centuries-old grass in preparation for planting. Those were the days of truly rugged men.

Finally the ground was ready. I sowed the seed and covered it, at no small expense, with peat moss to hold the moisture and help the germination process. It is axiomatic, in Nevada, that "if you put down a layer of seed-and-peat the wind will blow." Sure enough, within a couple of days it came, blowing at speeds up to 30-mph. I was fortunate that it happened when I was at home. I donned a warm jacket, pulled a hat down over my ears, and manned the water hose for hours, soaking the peat to keep my work, and dollars, from blowing away.

It's an ill wind that blows no good, some wise man once said, a proverb certainly true in this case. My neighbor to the north had planted his lawn at the same time and in the same way that I had; that is, with a covering of peat over seed. So when the wind came across from the northwest it blew a lot of his dry peat and seed my way, where I caught it with my wet spray. So I not only saved my lawn from destruction but gained about half of my neighbor's in the bargain. The fact that by evening I was plastered with peat moss, dust and seed was incidental.

Even before planting a back lawn I started a vegetable garden, the first of a continuing string of gardens ever since. Never a very big garden, like my folks used to have, or Rita's, it was more a "sampler," enough of our favorite vegetables to afford the taste of truly fresh edibles; peas, radishes, cucumbers, carrots, beets, tomatoes and sweet corn. If nothing else, the tomatoes and corn were worth the effort, for they could never be duplicated at the market. The growing season was rather compressed in Elko, but in spite of that we had some very good crops.

Rita planted sweet peas along the north fence, producing the loveliest mass of color I'd ever seen; and roses, iris, daffodils and so on around the perimeters of the yard and house. All of them bloomed profusely.

In the autumn of 1955, I graded the area behind the garage, south of the house, and with Rita's help manhandled the concrete step away from the door (no simple task) preparatory to making a patio. To serve as forms and permanent dividers I placed redwood two-by-fours on the gently sloping surface, in a pattern radiating like the sun from an 18-inch circle in the center.

The easy part of the job done, the Zunino brothers devoted a day to the hard part, pouring and finishing the concrete. We all worked as hard and fast as possible but time was running out before the job was anywhere near done.

That was when Vic Miller just happened to come across the street to see what was going on. He quickly sized up the situation, went home, changed into his work clothes, returned and volunteered his services. Vic appeared to have worked concrete before, and it was largely due to his help that we finished the job that evening.

Would you believe it? It was Vic's birthday. He had given up whatever plans he had to work with us. For that, and for countless other reasons in the years to follow, I would number him among my closest friends. As soon as practicable, when the concrete was cured

we invited Vic and his family to join us for a cook-out on our beautiful new patio.

I poured the final concrete, in the center circle, around a pipe that would accept a flagpole. And while the stuff was still green I installed copper wires that I had formed into letters, in the following order in a circle:

THE PHELPSSES GAP REP GKP JAP

With a southeast exposure, ours was one of the best patios ever. It was warm and bright in the morning sun, shaded and cool on a hot summer evening. We had provided for flower beds next to the house and garage walls, and a grape arbor in front of the south fence. In the far corner was a shallow, quarter-circle depression in the concrete, originally intended as a sandbox for the kids but was filled with water instead, for goldfish.

When I found the time, I constructed a frame of iron pipe over the patio, to support a canvas tarp that could be rolled in or out, depending on the weather, by means of a pulley-and-rope arrangement. It was a wonderful shade, but if there were even a hint of wind it had to be rolled back against the house. More than once I waited too long and found myself frantically tugging at the ropes like a sailor reefing a sail in a gale. And one time, after I forgot to roll it back, Rita called me at work to say the wind had blown the canvas up over the edge the roof.

I was dissatisfied with the common design for a picnic-table; the all-in-one unit with seats attached to crossed-end supports, and determined to build a better one. Above all, I decided, it must be unencumbered; that is, with no legs in the way when you went to sit down. That meant a table with separate benches.

I could use some old, seven-foot bed rails as longitudinal supports for the table top, and 1½-inch iron pipes for legs. But I had no lumber material for the top and benches. One day, when I mentioned my plan to Vic, he offered an idea and also the lumber.

"I've got something that might work," he said. "You know the sub-flooring they used when building our houses? Well, I came by when they were trimming off the ends, and since they were throwing it away I gathered up a lot of them. They're yours."

Those "ends" were almost two-inches thick, nine-inches wide and roughly a yard long. The shortest piece, at 32-inches, determined the width of my table. I cut the others to match it. I drilled holes in the bed rails (a tough job even with my new, quarter-inch electric drill) and placed the boards side by side on the floor. The rails were then attached to the boards with big screws, and the pipe legs screwed into collars bolted to the bottom-side of the end boards.

I felt that there was an inherent weakness in my design, since all the weight of the table and its contents would be supported by those two end boards. But my fears would prove to be unfounded.

I had to break down and actually buy some 2"x12" planking and metal angle braces, to construct two benches eight-feet long and twenty-inches high.

The end result was quite satisfactory. We could easily seat five people on each side and one on either end (on chairs) at the table. And no one had to straddle a leg. The only drawback to this furniture was its need for repeated maintenance; sanding and refinishing on an annual basis. I would try numerous varnishes and plastic coatings, none of which would last, before Rita learned of a two-to-one mixture of turpentine and linseed oil. It was the cheapest, most effective and easiest to apply of any wood preservative ever discovered.

For a variety of reasons, I spent a great deal of time in the yard and on the patio of our 1050 Sewell Drive home. For one thing, I was frequently on call on evenings and weekends and had to stay near a phone. For another, I enjoyed tending the lawn and garden and making such landscape improvements as we could afford. I was never bored.

A footnote: In addition to their helping me with my fence and patio, Rita's brothers, and Sam, cut us in for a share in their Comstock Uranium & Tungsten claims, located on the east bench above Kings River Valley, sixteen miles northwest of Orovada, Nevada. That the venture proved worthless was beside the point. My only contribution, back when I was still wearing a neck-brace, was to help with staking out the claims. So much for my mining career.

CHAPTER FORTY TWO

MOBILE RADIOS, REUNIONS, BIRD HUNTING

J.C. "Jess" Harris, like his father Joe before him, was the elected sheriff of Elko County. It was a demanding job, with regard to both law enforcement and politics, and Jess was just the man to fulfill those requirements. He actually looked like a sheriff. Not the flamboyant, swaggering, gun-totin' kind often depicted in the movies, but the kind whose very demeanor commanded respect. And he could be gruff or smooth and compromising as the situation required.

It was largely due to his farsightedness and powers of persuasion that the county, in partnership with the city, contracted Bell of Nevada (in the mid-1950s) to provide and maintain its radio communications system. Since we already had a radio shop in Elko, for use with our Company mobile system, it was a relatively simple matter to assume the added work.

The police radio system, operating in the VHF band, utilized modern-technology equipment. An operator console and base transmitter/receiver were located in the county courthouse, across the hall from the booking desk and jail; mobile units were installed in the law enforcement vehicles. The female dispatchers, who manned the console around-the-clock, were on the county's payroll. The overall cost of the system was somehow prorated between the two government entities.

We maintained the base station equipment, installed and maintained the mobile units, all in strict compliance with FCC Rules and Regulations. It was a pleasant diversion, working on this conventional-type radio, and I got to know the dispatchers, officers and undersheriffs rather well. But it was Jess whom we had to satisfy and we worked hard at the job.

Jess Harris drove a big powerful car (a Mercury, as I recall) furnished by the County; one that would cover his vast area of jurisdiction in the swiftest possible time. And he insisted on its being unmarked, with no distinguishing features such as insignia, lights or siren on the outside.

"I don't want people to know who I am when I'm still a mile away," he said without smiling. "Don't want 'em shootin' at me or slipping out the back way when I'm fixin' to serve a warrant."

He was happy with the little 20-inch whip antenna the new system utilized, especially as compared to the previous fly-rod-sized one. Even so, he insisted on our mounting it on the trunk-lid of his car instead of the roof, and had us show him how to remove it in case he preferred total anonymity to communication.

When Jess wasn't flying down the road 90-mph in his car, he was apt to be soaring overhead in a small airplane. He would land almost anywhere - a rancher's field, a grassy bluff or a desert roadway - to carry out his work, and survived a half-dozen minor mishaps and a couple of major wrecks in the line of duty.

(Until, many years later and on the threshold of retirement, Jess crashed into a mountain near Star Peak, south of Winnemucca, while transporting a prisoner from Elko to Carson City. With the aid of his unwilling passenger he survived his injuries but was sadly crippled for the rest of his life.)

Coincidental to providing the law with its new VHF system, we inherited the maintenance responsibility for an existing antiquated police radio, which was housed in the maintenance shop off 9th Street on the right bank of the Humboldt River. Operating in the low-frequency band, around 1,400-kc (now kHz), the old radio was used, when conditions were right, to communicate with police agencies in Winnemucca, Ely and Reno.

In terms of electrical potential that was the most hazardous piece of equipment I ever worked on. The transmitter's huge output tube glowed with cherry-red power, and a lightning-blue arc frequently coursed across the final tuning coil. It was a required practice to work with a buddy at that location, and with an extra pound of caution. I was ever mindful of the danger and kept one hand in my pocket to avoid accidentally touching ground and taking a charge through my body.

That was a good rule when working around any high voltage. A man can survive a considerable shock to one of his extremities, an arm or a leg, but if a charge flows through his torso and his heart it can be fatal. Injury as a result of a shock while following the "one hand" rule was usually limited to abrasions, from flinching and hitting a hand or elbow on some piece of metal.

The most annoying kind of shock, in our business, came from an "RF" (radio frequency) source. It might leave only a tiny flesh wound on the surface but it burned deep (the same principle used in a microwave oven). It was painful, and required an abnormally long time to heal. All power and radio devices were equipped with safety interlocks but there were times when, in order to locate a stubborn case of trouble, one had to cheat them. Of course you did so at your own peril, and were extra mindful of the hazard.

While safety devices are useful, too many of them can lull a craftsman into a false sense of security, robbing him of the power to "think" when danger is present. It is smart for a business or a company to safeguard against real hazards, but it is physically and economically infeasible to try to provide a totally safe environment. In short, every living individual should be responsible for his own safety, both on and off the job.

Not long after we began providing mobile radio service to the Elko law enforcement agencies, another customer came along; Wells Cargo Inc., one of the biggest trucking outfits in northern Nevada. (It was a good name for a Western business, trading on its similarity to Wells Fargo, the famous stage line and banking firm.) The Wells Cargo fleet consisted of two basic kinds of trucks: those used for hauling gravel and ore, and those used for transporting livestock.

Our involvement was with the former, which were then operating out of Battle Mountain and the Getchell Mine (the latter north of Golconda.) A base station had to be constructed at each location, and we would install mobile sets in several of the diesel-powered, truck tractors.

A Bell construction crew from Winnemucca planted an 80-foot "stick" just outside the Wells Cargo building in Battle Mountain, ran a coaxial transmission line and mounted a vertical antenna on the top of it. My partner, Vic Miller, who was skilled in the art of pole climbing, made the critical line-to-antenna connection and then I, out of curiosity but only after observing that the pole was stepped, voluntarily climbed to the top see what it was like.

I found it to be extremely cold and windy. The tip of the pole swayed dizzyingly, describing a circle five-feet in diameter. How could a lineman adapt to such an environment? I'd prefer a more stable place to work. (It was the highest thing without branches I'd ever climbed.)

Because the Wells Cargo operations were far from Elko (75-miles to Battle Mountain, 140-miles to Getchell), all of the installation and repair work was performed at the customer locations. We had to cope with the exigencies of the hinterlands, working out of doors in freezing cold or sweltering heat. And the trucks, it seemed, were always covered with either powdery dust or sticky mud. It was some different from what we were used to, the pristine interior of a Company station.

One spring day, in answer to yet another in a series of calls from the mine, Vic and I headed for Getchell determined to find and fix a chronic but elusive case of trouble in one of the truck radios. It was a long trip; we had lots of time to discuss the subject on the way, and arrived at a whole list of possible cures.

We always carried a lunch, to be on the safe side, but knew from prior experience that if our timing was good, if we arrived at the mine any time before noon, we'd likely be invited to a hot meal in the commissary.

Our schedule worked out fine. After stopping for gas at Sam Rounds' Chevron station in Battle Mountain (Sam's was our routine filling station west of Elko) we drove into the Getchell Mine compound at 11:30. Loyd DeNui, the Wells Cargo boss with whom we worked, met us in his dusty office and described the nature of the trouble he'd reported, then insisted on our joining him for lunch. We beamed. Especially Vic, who invariably had a ravenous appetite.

Loyd was a giant of a man, with a heart and a voice to match. He was most amiable and helpful to us but I'd hate to cross him, for he could be tough and unrelenting; as we were soon to learn.

Seated at one of a couple-dozen long tables, over a meal of steak and potatoes, green beans and fresh-baked bread, we chatted with our host. Loyd explained how his trucks hauled ore from the mines to the mill, and how the gold was removed by the cyanide process. But while the Getchell was an old established operation it was not now working at full scale. A few geologists were busily exploring, in preparation for an increase in activity as a result of an anticipated rise in the price of gold. It was a story as old as Nevada.

Wells Cargo was the licensee of its radio system, which meant that it, not our Company, was held responsible (by the FCC) for the operation of the station, including the maintenance of appropriate licenses and logs and such technical aspects as proper transmitter power and frequency.

But Loyd took a different view of the whole thing. As far as he was concerned, it was our job to maintain the radios. That's what we were being paid to do, he said. All he wanted was a good communications system. So he was more than a little annoyed when, a few days prior to our arrival, a young man in a gray suit, narrow tie and snap-brim hat drove up to the office, entered, and announced that he was the FCC Inspector.

"I must have your license and logs," the man demanded, "to see if you're in compliance with regulations."

"Something about that little S.O.B. rubbed me the wrong way," Loyd grinned at the memory. "Who'd he think he was? Coming in my office uninvited...telling me what he was going to do. Well I don't have to take that crap...I told him to get out."

Apparently the FCC officer, trying to do his job but without sufficient diplomacy, decided to argue the point. Whereupon Loyd put an end to the interview.

"I just got up and grabbed him by the collar and belt and whirled him around and sent him sailing through the door. You know what? He got right in his car and drove down the road and I haven't seen him since."

Raising a cup in salute to his own prowess, Loyd gulped a mouthful of coffee and chuckled. We laughed too, but I made a mental note to stay on the good side of the big guy.

Our stomachs full, Vic and I went to work on the troublesome radio. It had rained the day before, when the trouble was reported, and everything including the truck was still damp. Maybe we'd get lucky.

The problem, it seemed, was a low supply voltage. We looked for the battery, and found it in an unhandy hole under the driver's seat, under a two-inch layer of slick mud. Aha! It was not unusual to find alkali dust in the compartment, but this stuff had a unique consistency. Perhaps it was significant. With a voltmeter we proved that the mud was actually conductive (probably rich with minerals) and every time the transmitter was keyed-up the mud shorted the voltage to ground and robbed the radio of power. Before cleaning it up we called Loyd over and showed him the mud. He immediately issued orders instructing his mechanic to build a better battery case for each truck.

We left the mine with all the radios in good working order. New battery cases were installed and there were no further trouble reports of that kind.

Paul Brown figured that Vic and I were having too much fun on our trips to Getchell, and so, on our next scheduled visit he went along for the ride, and to check on our work no doubt.

While eating lunch in the commissary he recognized one of the mine employees, and introduced us to him. It was Reeve Fagg, brother of Gene Fagg the telephone installation-and-repair foreman in Winnemucca. We struck up a conversation and, after lunch, Reeve gave us a guided tour of the mill.

It was my first time inside a working mill and I was fascinated by the enormous ore bins, menacing crushers, snaking conveyor belts and sinister cyanide tanks.

After the tour six of us (Fagg and a partner, Paul, Loyd, Vic and I) squeezed into our Company Jeep and I drove, under Fagg's direction, to the top of a high peak west of camp. This was the site they'd chosen for a television repeater, he said. It would pick up a weak signal from Slide Mountain, some 200-miles over the horizon near Reno, amplify and send it to the campsite below for the benefit of the workers. The picture would be poor at best, but a far cry from the kind of entertainment a mining town enjoyed in the previous century. (Satellite repeatered television was still many years away.)

It was a noble idea but I was ready to bet that no ordinary antenna would stand against the snow, ice and wind of that barren summit. Even then, on a relatively warm spring day, the wind succeeded in driving us off the mountain.

I guess Paul was satisfied that we were doing a good job for Wells Cargo, for he had no specific criticism or advice for us on the way home.

Mobile radio was a good business for the Bell System to be engaged in. Bell was, after all, a communications company, and mobile radio handled nothing but communication. There were, however, people in the United States who wanted the mobile business all to themselves. They filed an antitrust suit and won, driving the Bell System out of the mobile radio business and depriving us of an interesting communication field.

The Elko County Telephone Company took over the police radio system. I don't recall who inherited that of Wells Cargo. All that we had left, in the VHS band, was our own maintenance radio.

Although difficult to conceive of now, back in the mid-1950s Nevada Bell's Elko force numbered thirty people, including three supervisors; Paul Brown, Red Wayman and George Elmore. We were a busy and progressive unit, with plenty of work and challenges.

In June, Paul Brown went to a training assignment in Reno, on Jim Dodson's staff. Dodson was then a third level manager, with responsibility for all plant operations in Nevada; except toll which was still under the aegis of the old Inland Division in Sacramento. Michelson was now in Sacramento, under Walt Harms, and would move on up the promotional ladder. It appeared that Brown would follow in his footsteps.

Paul's move, while temporary, was a knock of opportunity for me. More than half of my peers had longer whiskers, both in age and job seniority, yet I was given a temporary title and supervisory responsibility for his "east maintenance" job. (I was not yet earning top craft wages and was one of the youngest supervisors in the Company.) Wayman had the "west maintenance" crew, and Elmore supervised the three shifts in the Elko office.

It was not a bad position for me. I was familiar with the people, with the sites, with what had to be done and when. The men in my crew were aware of my temporary status, and were cooperative. Of course I was not really a manager. I could make no definitive changes in local policy or procedures. My duties consisted mainly of shuffling paper, seeing that routine work was completed on time and in a quality manner, monitoring the payroll, and making unpopular overtime decisions. It was a good way to ease into management, but before long I felt a bit frustrated at merely doing Paul's job with no authority to implement ideas of my own.

There are (or were) two schools of thought relative to promotion to a first-level management job. One holds that a new boss's first assignment should be in a totally new environment, where his subordinates are virtual strangers to him. There are advantages to this; that is, he is not apt to have trouble with a subordinate who thinks he was unfairly "passed over" for the job, nor is he in the position of having to deal with a good friend on the crew. The second school believes that a new boss should be assigned to supervise his former crew, thus taking advantage of his experience in that particular job and his knowledge of the capabilities of the individuals reporting to him.

I believed that neither method should be governing, but I was certainly happy when, in my case, I was not required to move to a strange environment. Just learning to be a good boss is difficult enough without having to deal with new faces, new sites and new procedures.

I worked hard at being a supervisor, if only a temporary one, following the time-tested credos that apply to any position: "A job worth doing is worth doing well." "Eight hours work for eight hours pay." And the most important of all: "Do the best you can on the job you have and don't be concerned with seeking promotion." (I may have made up that last one.)

With regard to recommending subordinates for promotion, I subscribed to the philosophy that it was the supervisor's duty to determine who was best qualified, and to set aside personal feelings or affiliations. In the overall scheme of things, advancement in any occupation or pursuit, whether in business, in the military, in sports or whatever, is contingent on timing. And since we humans have little control over that commodity, one is well advised to do his best at all times "to be ready."

As in every group, there were those in Elko who yearned for advancement; those who made loud noises and sought the limelight instead of demonstrating ability. There were some who believed (ofttimes correctly) that "it's who you know not what you know that counts."

I accepted the supervisory job not because I had sought it but because I was asked to do it. I wished for more experience, more maturity, but those could come only with age. Having had no management training, I searched the Bell System Instructions (a compendium of procedures, methods and policies covering everything from preparing time sheets to making service awards) for answers. If I failed to find them there I turned to Red for help, or to George Elmore who was our expert on bills and vouchers.

One time, after forwarding some document or other to Dodson's office in Reno, his secretary, Lena Kemp, called and commenced to tell me, in un-minced words, just how it should have been done. Confident that I was right, having painstakingly researched the instructions before sending the paper along, I argued the point; even quoted scripture-and-verse from the book.

But Lena (an old maid) was Jim Dodson's Girl Friday. All of her energies were devoted to the job, and she'd had many years of experience dealing with policies, procedures, clerks and supervisors. Regardless of what I may have read in the S.I., it would be done her way. Period!

When I finally replaced the phone on its cradle, Wayman, who had listened with great interest to my side of the conversation, laughed aloud. "Boy, you're in trouble now," he advised. "Nobody argues with Lena and gets away with it. From now on everything with your name on it will come under her special scrutiny."

"But I was right," I said, uncontrolled agitation showing on my face.

Red was right, too. From that time on I received little constructive help and lots of adverse criticism from Lena, a fact that caused me no little consternation. It was a hard lesson learned: One could ill afford to alienate the Plant Manager's "alter ego."

On the Fourth of July, 1955, the Zunino family met at the Indian Ranch, on the South Fork of the Humboldt River downstream from the village of Lee, for a picnic. We may have gathered there on previous Fourths, but this particular outing seemed to constitute our first official reunion, a reunion that would become, like the Phelps reunion in New England, an annual affair.

It was a wonderful place for the event. There was shade from giant cottonwood trees, soft grass to lie on, cool, clear water for the kids to wade in, or for water fights (in which some of the more adventurous, including John and Ted, engaged). The womenfolk had prepared a feast of hamburgers, hot dogs, salads, beans, fruit and cakes, and there was watermelon and beer a-plenty. When we finished eating some of us went fishing, for the Indian Ranch straddled one of the best stretches of trout habitat on the South Fork. And then it was time to pack up, clean up and go home.

Earlier that same year, Dorothy and Elly had joined the postwar migration to the "land of promise" in southern California. Although a native of New England, Elly claimed that he never liked the cold weather and the lure of the West Coast's sunny climate was irresistible. And Dottie, being adventurous by nature, and in spite of

the sadness involved in disbanding her household in Florence, was apparently enthusiastic about the move. (I think they settled in West Covina, and would later move to La Puente.)

On their first visit to Elko, that summer, we decided to hold a mini-reunion of "Western Phelps," Dorothy, Raymond and I with our respective families, and drove to Thomas Creek in Lamoille Canyon. There we spread our lunch on a rickety, wooden picnic table in the primitive camp, near the center of what is now a fancy campground. Before long the kids, Michelle, Sherri, Derek, Gina and Tony, kicked off their shoes and waded in the fast-flowing stream. But not for long. The water was very cold even at that time in late July.

After a while we got into our cars and drove up the road to the head of Lamoille Canyon, to the loop, where Ray, Elly, Kelly (the dog) and I hiked to Lamoille Lake. It was spring up there, with patches of alpine flowers in full bloom against a rich brown earth, and tufts of grass squelching last year's faded gray. In some places, snowmelt had turned the dust to mud, and farther up, the trail frequently disappeared under patches of old snow.

The annual ice-field still clung to the southeast cliffs above the lake, so the three of us dug our heels into its grainy surface, climbed to an outcropping of rock, surveyed the canyon below, then "skied" back down on the soles of our shoes. Even Kelly enjoyed the recreation, and we had to call him repeatedly when it was time to return to the loop.

On our way back down the canyon we parked our cars beside the road above the busy-beaver ponds. Below us, in the crystal clear stream leading to a pool, we counted dozens of brook trout lying head-to in the current. Farther down, near the ranger station (since replaced by picnic tables and an outhouse) we spotted a half-dozen mule deer standing motionless among the quakies, their big black eyes staring at us in wonder.

They bounded away, the canyon's shadow closed over us, the day was nearly spent. Our pleasant reunion was coming to an end.

August heralded the first hunting season of the year. It was a strange time for any kind of hunt, I thought, in the heat of summer, but that was the designated time for taking sage hens.

And so, armed with my Winchester Model-12 (that I purchased new in 1952 for \$93.85) I joined a small group of guys to hunt just off the Charleston road north of Halleck. It was an area of low, gently rolling, sagebrush covered hills, from which a dozen clear but tiny springs flowed the year round, nurturing narrow margins of grass and providing ideal habitat for small game and birds, including the indigenous sage grouse.

It was an ideal day for the hunt, partly cloudy, relatively cool with a westerly breeze. I thumbed a half-dozen number-five shells into my shotgun and moved upwind toward the springs with my partners. The pungent aroma of *Artemisia Tridientia* (our native sagebrush) filled my nostrils. How I loved the smell of sagebrush, particularly after a rain, or when disturbed by brushing against its foliage. I had no idea what misery it could cause.

In a rough line thirty paces abreast, we had not gone fifty yards when I began to sneeze. A hundred yards farther on, with still no birds in sight, my sneezing became fitful and I dropped back from the group, wiping tears from my eyes with an already saturated handkerchief. I rested awhile, and then caught up with the others. But it was no use. Cursing to myself I turned aside, found a patch of soft grass by a water hole, squatted down and cradled my face in my hands. What was happening to me? To what horrible malady had I suddenly been subjected?

Cool water might help ease my distress, I decided, so I took a sip and buried my head in the pool. It was therapeutic. I raised my dripping face to the wind, relished its cooling effect, and soon felt fit enough to return to the hunt. But my relief was short lived. The sneezing returned, my eyes swelled and wept, my nose dripped incessantly. I wiped them with my soggy handkerchief, with my shirt sleeve, but I couldn't stem the tide. In a daze I went from pool to pool, dowsing my face in every one for comfort.

I was tired. Tired from sneezing so long and so hard. My Winchester metamorphosed from a neat sporting machine to a heavy nuisance. Were I to stumble over a sage hen now, I could not have mustered the energy to shoot.

After a while my partners returned to the cars and found me sitting on a fender. They asked how I was doing, offered oblique sympathy and bizarre remedies, and then left me to my misery. When they had gone I stretched out on the back seat of the car, closed my bloodshot eyes and tried to sleep.

My brother Dick used to suffer from hay fever, I remembered, perhaps that's what I had, although there was precious little hay in this county. I had never had any sign of hay fever in the East, nor in the seven years I had wandered through Nevada. So why, if that's what it was, why now?

A couple of hours went by and I felt better. The guys came back, after bagging two of the only four birds around, and we headed for town. It was good to feel more normal again, but I vowed to see a doctor first thing in the morning.

Doc Secor was a crusty old fossil. On the verge of retirement he had ministered to several generations of Elko citizens, as had his father, I think, before him.

"What's your problem?" he inquired, motioning me into a high, leather-and-chrome swivel chair. Rather like a barber chair, I was thinking as I climbed up on the seat.

"Sneezing and runny eyes," I responded to his question.

The doctor ritualistically peered into my eyes and ears, up my nose and down my throat. I recounted my miserable weekend hunting trip.

"So you never got a shot at a bird," he sympathized, for he, like everybody who was anybody in Elko, was a seasoned hunter.

At last he straightened up, clasped his big hands over the roundness of his belly and postulated, as if he'd just made an important medical discovery; "My boy...you've got the damndest case of hay fever I've seen in years!" Suspicions confirmed.

He prescribed some kind of medicine and set up an appointment for me to take a "patch test," to determine just what it was that I was allergic to.

In the end, the tests proved that I was most sensitive to, of all things, sagebrush pollen, Russian thistle (common tumbleweed) and dust; all of them in plentiful supply in the Great Basin. Secor explained the reason for my sudden attack; I had reached the threshold beyond which my anti-allergic facilities could not cope.

A serum was formulated and I was to receive a shot twice a week, the frequency to be reduced to once a week as my immunity built up. I experienced no adverse reaction to the first two shots and was confident that my troubles would soon be over. But the result of the third one was shocking.

I had barely left the clinic when a knot formed on my upper arm, where the shot had been administered, and rapidly expanded to half the size of a baseball. Rather than return to work I drove home, and barely made it into the house before the muscles in my throat constricted and I could hardly breathe. It was as if I were being strangled by an unseen hand.

Rita, on observing my condition, immediately phoned the clinic for advice and was told that it was probably not serious but to have me lie down and relax. As if that were possible. But it turned out to be good advice, and within fifteen minutes I breathed easier and the swelling in my arm went down.

I never returned for another shot! Better to sneeze than choke to death, I reasoned, and from that time on I suffered, in various degrees, whenever subjected to dust or pollens. I was particularly susceptible to sagebrush when it was in bloom, from August till after the rains came in September. The doctor prescribed a pill that helped control the effects and I learned to steer clear of those things that triggered an allergic reaction. That is, I didn't walk through the sagebrush in late summer, nor ride in a vehicle with the windows open at any time of the year.

Being allergic is a much more serious affliction than many people realize. Besides the embarrassment, and the hindrance to work and other activities, it is debilitating to one's health and mental attitude. My tolerance had been sorely tested.

I would put my Winchester to good use later in the year, though, when the pollens had been pretty well washed away by autumn rains. Then I hunted the migratory birds - doves, ducks and geese - and the elusive chukar partridge that had been brought from somewhere in the Himalayas and introduced in Nevada.

I tired of the goose hunt after about three frustrating times. The Canada goose has to be the most intelligent bird on earth. How else could it have such a long life expectancy? It is virtually impossible to get within shooting distance of one (except in the city where shooting is prohibited) so you have to sit in a blind or behind cover and wait for him to fly over. And that's far too cold, uncomfortable and boring to suit me.

One particular experience put an end to my goose hunting forever. It was December, and Jim and I went to the lower Mary's River where it

was said that migrating geese landed every day to feed. We spotted the flock all right, about thirty individuals in the middle of a hayfield, and decided to sneak up on them. I went one way and he the other.

I must have been an hour creeping on my hands and knees, sometimes on my belly, behind a tumbleweed-infested fence line, in the bottom of a muddy ditch, to the riverbank on the downwind side of the field. But I was still out of range for a shot. My only hope was that they would fly, and fly my way. Under a gray sky I waited and shivered another hour, until Jim, sensing that they were not going to move on their own, gave the signal to rush them.

In unison we got up and ran toward the geese. They flew, of course, but long before we were close enough to shoot. Even so, as they gained altitude and passed almost overhead, in desperation I filled the air with number-2 shot. They gracefully wheeled away to the south without a sign of fright.

I never bagged a goose, and don't know if I could have eaten one of the tough greasy birds if I had.

Jump-shooting ducks over a creek was a more worthy sport. In the company of Stan and Jim, and often Sam, I walked the banks of Pine Creek south of Palisade, Pie Creek north of Dinner Station, and the Humboldt River near Halleck. I liked it best when it was raining or snowing, when the wind was blowing and lousy visibility gave me an edge. Then I could surprise a duck within close range.

One time Stan, Sam and I went in the Jeep to hunt on Mary's River, not far from where Bill Wright had run me "off de property" with the Taelours. This time there were no cattle in the meadows.

Stan and I would work our way downstream, Sam would drive the Jeep down the road a mile or so, take a side trail to the river, park and hunt upstream to meet us.

That was the plan. Away we went. Stan shot two or three young mallards and I got one. But when we reached the appointed meeting place Sam was nowhere to be seen. Nor was his Jeep. So we hiked toward the county road and soon met the old man walking toward us. That didn't augur well.

"Where's the Jeep?" asked Stan.

"Huh," Sam said in a tone of disgust. "Stuck."

He didn't bother to elaborate. Not until we got to the Jeep did we learn what had happened.

It seemed that he overshot the side road and had to back the Jeep in order to make the turn. But he backed it off the right side of the graveled road, which by coincidence was also the side of a tie bridge with a three-foot drop to a dry wash. Luckily, an iron marker post was enough to keep the vehicle from sliding all the way over. The right rear wheel, however, was "high and dry."

Sam had a habit of never looking behind when he backed up (no one who knew him ever parked behind his Jeep at home) and nine times out of ten he got away with it. This time he had not.

"Just missed th' road," he chuckled. "You fellas get it up."

Stan, ever patient, never said a word. Nor did I. We jacked-up the rear axle and soon had the rig back on the road, just as Sam had suggested. Except for a new dent in the fender it was none the worse for the accident.

Stan drove us back to the river. Sam limbered his well-worn old shotgun and joined us to hunt a stretch of the quiet river. We each then downed a bird and were back in Elko shortly after dark.

The wily chukar partridge is just perhaps the most challenging of all game birds to hunt, successfully. They seem to thrive on the roughest, steepest, rockiest canyon sides and ridges, sometimes far from water. Well camouflaged, wary and smart, it is a good hunter who can outmaneuver a chukar in his own realm. He seldom, if ever, flies uphill. He can walk almost unnoticed up a steep hill faster than a man can climb. If a hunter succeeds in following him to the top, the little devil will invariably take wing when still out of range and fly in a long glide to the bottom. He will never call when you are nearby, but another will call from the opposite side of the canyon. Enticed, you hike down and up that side only to hear a call originating from the very spot you left.

If you are good enough, or lucky enough, to shoot down a chukar he is extremely hard to find on the ground, even if dead on arrival. If only wounded he'll walk away and hide in the simplest of bushes, in a rock crevice, or in a badger hole. Without a dog, and without snow on the ground, you may never find him.

Since I didn't hunt with a dog (they are otherwise too much trouble) it paid to shoot but one chukar at a time, and to keep an eye on him at all costs. Even that was no guarantee of success.

A great habitat for chukar was the southern Tuscarora Mountain Range. And it was not unusual to surprise a bird or two on one of our repeater station access roads on Emigrant Pass. So I made it a habit, when alone on Company business, to carry my shotgun in the car. If I saw a chukar, in just a few minutes I could stop, shoot, field-dress him and be on my way. It was a good method of obtaining one or two of the delicious tasting birds.

The canyons north of the pass were great for hunting chukar "off the job" as well. And with friends or relatives I enjoyed many a weekend foray there. But alas, as time went by and droves of hunters (under the auspices of the Elko hotels) harvested more than their share, whatever birds they missed apparently abandoned the area and moved away to quieter pastures.

Never again would chukar hunting be so good.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

POLITICS, TEACHING, AND A CATTLE BARON

The first half of the fifties decade had been challenging to me in many ways, both good and not so good. I got married, acquired a family, became a homeowner, suffered a fractured neck, and succumbed to terrible allergies. Financially, life was a continuing struggle. I got a raise every six months, but after my accident I didn't work much overtime. And without that extra pay we barely made ends meet.

Still, we had a fine home and enough money for the necessities of family life. In point of fact, with due credit to Rita, I had already accomplished more than I'd anticipated ten years earlier.

The country as a whole was in good shape, grinding out new goods and providing new services to satisfy the needs (the wants) of society. I worried about the nationwide rise in wages and the inflationary trend that followed, and predicted (to anyone who might listen) that the powerful unions' demands would result in their pricing themselves out of the labor market within ten years. Only my timing was off. Not until the 1970s would a significant number of Americans (ironically, a majority of them union members) turn to buying goods from non-union countries in Europe, Asia and Central America. One reason for the delay, in my opinion, was the inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower to the presidency in 1953.

Ike was the first Republican to hold that office since Herbert Hoover's term ended in 1932. Only two men, both Democrats, had lived in the White House in the intervening years. Eisenhower, a dedicated soldier and statesman, proved to be one of the best of presidents. While he was very much a human being and prone to errors in political judgment, he acted with a deep seated sense of duty to God, country and mankind. And in spite of the liberals on Capitol Hill, he helped put a halter on at least some of the creeping, crawling socialist tendencies of the times.

Unlike many who came to the presidency before and after him, Ike appeared to be more interested in results than fanfare. And while he would be long remembered as one of the greatest military leaders of all time, he would never receive due credit for his presidential accomplishments.

The Zuninos, except for Rita who registered as an Independent and voted accordingly, were staunch Democrats. They seldom agreed with the politics of any Republican, including Eisenhower.

Historically, Nevada had belonged to the Republicans, the state having been admitted to the Union during Lincoln's tour in office during the Civil War. But Nevadans were traditionally independent and readily voted across party lines "for the best man." My fellow workers were probably evenly split in their politics; the more avid union members leaning toward the Democratic Party's principles of quasi-socialism, the more conservative of us to Republicanism. There was no question of Red Wayman's allegiance, for a picture of Eisenhower hung on the wall beside his desk, where it would remain until he retired.

I held my position as "temporary" chief testboardman for six months, and in spite of my receiving no formal management training I learned a lot in that time. Then, in December, I was offered the assignment permanently.

I suffered mixed emotions. I had really enjoyed the job of craftsman, working at remote sites, investigating and correcting electronic and mechanical problems, and though many of my peers hated the long hours and miles of driving I had loved it. But managing a crew was very different. I would soon be weaned away from the technological aspects of the job, the "nuts and bolts" of the business, and that was a factor that I found hard to accept. For it was my nature to work with both head and hands.

Still, I felt a certain responsibility to my superiors, who must have had faith in my abilities or they'd not have selected me for the task. And with a wife and children to support I knew that I should take advantage of any opportunity leading to higher wages and (theoretically) better living,

I lay awake at night thinking about the many ramifications of being a supervisor; dealing with subordinates, being responsible for their actions, even their lives, making decisions affecting the Company's service and costs. It was a big step for a young man only in his twenties.

(I hadn't thought about the many younger non-coms and officers who, in the military, were responsible for whole platoons or companies of men.)

In the end, I couldn't refuse the offer. My permanent promotion to chief transmissionman was effective on January 1, 1956. (The craft title "testboardman" had by then been changed to "transmissionman," supposedly to better describe the job of maintaining communication-transmission equipment and plant.)

Ironically, in moving from craft to management I took a substantial cut in pay. My starting salary, as a chief, was about ten-percent above the basic wage (\$112 per week) of a craftsman, but as a supervisor I had little opportunity for extra time and that was reimbursed at the hourly rate, not at time-and-a-half.

I accepted the matter as fact but it still hurt a little when, at the end of the year, my total earnings were much lower than those of most of my subordinates. It would be three years before I'd earn appreciably more than the senior craftsman on my crew.

The size of my crew was consistent with that of other first-level supervisors in the toll force; ten craftsmen and a clerk. There was a time when all three Elko chiefs shared the services of one clerk, Mary Perry, but now there were two. Mary worked almost exclusively for her brother, George Elmore. The new girl, Mitzie Burns, worked for both Red and me.

It wasn't long before Louie Uriarte married the competent, young and attractive Mitzie, and we had to look for a replacement. It was a chore that Red, being the senior chief, undertook with pleasure. I remember one particularly good looking applicant whose interview I observed with eagerness from across the room. I naturally anticipated Red's hiring her, on the basis of looks if nothing more.

"Well?" I asked when she'd gone, "When does she start?"

"She won't do," he shrugged. "She's too good looking. The guys'll hang around the office and we won't get anything done. One o' them will marry her and then we'll have to hire another. Better to find one who's not so cute but can type."

I supposed he was right, but she would certainly have added a lot to the office environment. He next interviewed a married woman, Clarice Slatter, and hired her. She reported to me on paper but worked for both of us, mostly at typing, filing, processing bills and vouchers. Mary still took care of the daily time sheets and personnel forms.

Having mentioned that Mary worked for George, her brother, let me dispose of my views on the practice of nepotism.

The Bell System boasted of a high incidence of families working in the Company. Many employees' sons and daughters were preferentially hired, as were brothers and sisters, and overall the practice resulted in more good than harm. But I came to believe that relatives should not be assigned to the same crew or organizational group. The situation could be sad in spite of good intentions.

For example, a father who supervises a crew that includes his son might be inclined to treat him favorably. Conversely, to avoid the appearance of favoritism he might be too demanding of the boy. I have witnessed both kinds of situations. When close relatives work together the result is usually either too much fellowship or too much friction, depending on the personalities involved. Even if neither occurs, if it is so perceived by fellow workers the boss is in a difficult position.

While George, the boss, and Mary, the subordinate, did their jobs well, there was the appearance of too much togetherness. In fairness to all, in my opinion, Mary should have been assigned to work for a different supervisor.

The relationship of two craftsmen named Bob Romans, senior and junior, was quite dissimilar. They worked different shifts, seldom spoke to one another on the job, and never let family ties interfere with their work. (This was especially true during the union strike, during which Senior honored the picket line but Junior did not.)

Not long after my promotion was made permanent, I journeyed to Sacramento for a week of informal management training. There, literally at the right hand of the Inland Toll Division's top manager, I would get the "big picture" of the telephone business and learn how it was run. At least the toll part of it. It was a real break for me.

Walt Harms' office was located in the downtown area, not far from the park east of the Capitol Building. At lunch time Walt (as I was told to address him) and I would walk to a nearby restaurant, have a quick meal, then stroll through the tree-studded park. He was well versed in horticulture and could name most of the trees and flowers, many of them exotic imports, on sight. He was also on a virtual first name basis with the bushy-tailed gray squirrels, which came down from on high for a cracker or crumb dug from the recesses of his big suit-pocket.

Walt was a broad shouldered, barrel chested, heavy jowled man with a deep, resonant voice. He appeared healthy to me, but had some kind of a heart ailment for which he routinely took medication; more than once I saw him slip a nitroglycerin tablet under his tongue. Our noon walks seemed a panacea to him, clearing his mind of the worries of the job. Between pointing out features in the park and responding to friendly "Hellos" of acquaintances met on the path, he inquired about my background and family, and quizzed me regarding my job in Elko. He may have once worked in Nevada. He was quite familiar with its toll facilities and people.

I studied Pacific Company organization charts, which named the management hierarchy and groups and their responsibilities. I analyzed monthly service indexes, budgets and expense costs; collated quarterly work-units-per-hour (a measurement of craft efficiency) forms for the division; checked daily telephone-trunk and open-wire outage reports; and gathered field information as necessary.

Walt had a regular staff that normally did those things, and my involvement was meant to be educational. It was that. More, perhaps, than the formal management-induction training I would eventually be subjected to in San Francisco.

When it was over with, I would not have traded my week with Walt Harms for any amount of money.

Within a few months of my stint in Sacramento, most of the toll-related responsibilities handled by the Inland Division were shifted to Nevada and inherited by Jim Dodson, who already had responsibility for plant construction, exchange switching, installation and repair. Jim increased the size of his staff to take care of the added workload.

At about the same time, we experienced another increase in the number of microwave-radio channels, with an attendant need for more licensed craftsmen. Only about half of our force in Elko held radio licenses (albeit a higher percentage than most toll groups) but they were working most of the extra hours at overtime pay.

The Union wanted additional radio training and licenses for its members, so that the extra work assignments could be distributed more equitably. And the Company wanted a larger pool of licensed men, to facilitate the scheduling of routine maintenance work. Radio license schools were being taught in Sacramento, but Jim Dodson wanted the job done closer to home, in Reno. He instructed Ted Brown, his staff training coordinator, to arrange for radio license training.

Ted Brown was a colorful old lineman, and had been an outside construction foreman prior to moving to the staff. Over the years, Ted worked in northeastern California and all over Nevada, and was

acquainted with virtually every rancher in the Great Basin having helped them construct and maintain their so-called farmer lines.

(A farmer line consisted of a single wire strung on poles, trees, fence-posts or sagebrush, often using the top strand of a barbed-wire fence in lieu of telephone wire, and the ground to complete the circuit.)

When traveling across the outback on Company business, Ted always managed to be in the vicinity of a ranch at noontime. He'd stop by to see how things were working and leave with a full stomach. He was, in fact, Bell of Nevada's unofficial "cow-county" ambassador.

Ted was also Dodson's scout, or spy, and would cruise around the state on one pretext or another to observe plant facilities and employees, and return with information and recommendations for Dodson. It was the wise employee who treated Ted with deference; otherwise he might find himself in an unpleasant assignment. But he was a likeable guy, albeit brusque, and I got along right well with him.

One spring morning I returned a call from Ted, who invited me to Reno to set up and teach a radio-license school. I laughed at the notion. I barely had my job under control as it was. "Besides," I said, parroting a phrase my father had used, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach."

The only teaching I had ever done was when, the previous year, I taught a bunch of tollies (from Reno and Elko) a course on the Western Electric "0" carrier system. It had been a real chore. In the first place, I hadn't had any prior training or experience in teaching. In the second place, half the class was always tired and/or hung-over from too much partying the night before.

Someone must have been impressed with the results, however, enough to want me to try again. But a radio-license course was some different than a carrier school. It was, at that time, the most complex and difficult subject being taught within the Company.

"Thanks, but no thanks," I told Ted, wanting no part of such an undertaking.

I thought the matter settled. But within a couple of days I received another call, this time from Mr. Dodson himself.

"Why did you tell Ted Brown you weren't going to teach a radio class?" he wanted to know.

"Well," I fumbled for words. "I didn't think he was serious. I thought he was looking for a volunteer."

I went on to explain why I didn't want to leave my crew; that I had a lot of "irons in the fire"; that I was not really the instructor type; that I didn't want to be away from my family; that there must be several better candidates in the Reno area; I even repeated my father's sage saying.

Jim listened patiently (listening was one of his great attributes) but was not impressed. He commenced to tell me why I'd been chosen for the job, that he was confident in my ability to do well, that it would be beneficial to my career and so on. And if I could not come up with a really good excuse, I'd better plan on being in Reno soon.

In the end there was no question of my decision. Dodson was the boss and he was asking me to do a job. I accepted the assignment but with great reluctance.

And that's how I became a teacher, in the loosest sense of the word. I would be away for at least three months, probably more, though I insisted on returning home on weekends. Predictably, Rita was not happy about my assignment. With three kids to care for she had her hands full even when I was around. It would be even more difficult alone.

With a packed suitcase and a company car I headed for Reno, then almost exactly 300-miles away. (In the future I would use my personal car, to save time, and voucher the expense.) On arrival I checked in at the Nevada Inn on East Second Street, to a clean, spacious room overlooking the Truckee River.

As a matter of interest, the motel was located on the old Virginia and Truckee Railroad right-of-way, on the remains of the north bridge abutment. From my window I could see the other abutment across the water. Both had been constructed of granite blocks that were still solidly in place.

There was hardly a time, in the fifties, when there were no Bell employees staying at the Nevada Inn, and the management was good to us. As well they should have been, for I expect it was our patronage that kept them in business throughout the slack winter months. It was a convenient place to stay, though, just a couple of blocks from our downtown office building and fairly close to a variety of restaurants and theaters.

Dodson's office and staff were located in the Triune Building at 10 State Street, above our General Manager's quarters. When I reported there on a Monday morning Ted could not refrain from razzing me about my "change of heart and decision to take the teaching job." We then talked in general terms about the project and he gave me some course material that he had obtained, which amounted to next to nothing. I would have to prepare my own teaching outline, order books and supplies and set up the classroom. A formidable job, it seemed to me.

New training rooms had been recently completed, on the second deck of the plant operations center at 350 South Wells Avenue. I immediately moved in and went to work, and because there was so much to do I often stayed there late in the evening. Anyway, staying there was preferable to hanging out in a bar or casino and a lot easier on the pocketbook. Not that I got extra pay for working late, just that I saved money.

In putting together the course, I drew heavily on my past experience in the Navy electronics school at Great Lakes. I tried to emulate the Navy's methods and procedures, including the use of radio-related hardware and materials for demonstration purposes. At the end of two weeks I was ready, as ready as possible, to face my first radiotelephone-license class.

My students were twelve fellow employees, all drawing their regular pay while in class. For the next several weeks, in addition to seeing that they received a sufficient dose of smarts to enable them to pass the F.C.C. radiotelephone 2nd-class license exam, I would be

responsible for their time, their expense vouchers and, to an extent, their behavior.

At the sight of those faces turned toward me I was reminded of my youth when, violin in hand, I stood before an audience knowing that I must not be nervous but unable to avoid it. As then, I must at least pretend to be confident or else my efforts would be ineffective. Fortunately, my nerves calmed after a few minutes and I was "off and running."

In many ways, I had it better than most professional teachers. While not all of my students had the necessary educational background or aptitude for the subject, almost to a man they were well-motivated, anxious to learn. Some were quiet, some were outspoken, some would drink too much in the evening, others would not drink a drop, most had a sense of humor, and there wasn't a "deadbeat" among them. All of which made my job easier.

The weekly commute between Elko and Reno got to be a routine thing. However, by the end of the school day on Friday I was really tired. I'd dismiss the class at four-thirty and be on the road by five. The freeway had not yet been constructed, and there were five towns and a half-dozen winding canyons to pass through, but I soon learned every mile of the highway and could make the trip in about four hours, with only one stop for gas. At least the long drive gave me a chance to unwind a bit.

I would be three months, maybe more, following this pattern; five days in Reno, two at home. During that time I'd teach two consecutive classes, and in the final analysis three of every four of my students would pass the license exam, a success ratio equal to that of California's Company schools.

When our '51 Packard had racked-up a significant number of miles, I looked around for a suitable replacement for it. I talked to Dick Gillenwater - a friend of John Zunino's who was selling DeSotos and Plymouths for Bill Bellinger - and jokingly suggested that I might buy one if he'd let me drive his new Plymouth Fury, touted as the hottest thing on the market, to Reno and back. Surprisingly, in spite of the fact that I'd be gone a couple of days, he took me up on the proposition. The next day, I piloted his bright red Fury to "The Biggest Little City in the World."

On the way down, out on the Valmy flats, I shoved the throttle to the boards for a test. The Fury was doing 120-mph and still accelerating when I slacked off. It was a fast car, all right, but too lightweight. It felt as if it were floating, as if it were air-borne, a rather disquieting feeling to me accustomed as I was to the stable ride of a heavy Packard. From then on I drove slower, around 85-mph, and when I returned the car to Dick a few days later, I told him a Fury was not for me.

I have always had an aversion to car salesmen. Most of them cause me to turn-tail as soon as they open their mouths. Some folks might be fooled by their rhetoric but I am only irritated by it; that and their inability to answer even the simplest of technical questions.

Dick was not like that. He was the kind who could sell to the likes of me. Never once, in all of our dealings, did he try to

convince me that I must buy this or that car. He just showed me what he had to offer and let me sell myself.

So, he was not the least bit discouraged when I turned down his Fury, but suggested a trial run in a DeSoto, a much heavier car. As a result of that test run, and Dick's helpfulness, Rita and I purchased our first brand new car; a white-over-blue, four door, 1956 DeSoto Sedan. It was equipped with a 330-cubic-inch "Firedome" V-8 engine (possibly the finest internal-combustion gasoline engine ever mass produced) and a manual transmission with overdrive. Its only weakness, I would learn, was a carrier-bearing in the overdrive line that was prone to wearing out prematurely.

The DeSoto was big, roomy, comfortable and stylish. And the fact that it was equipped as ordered from the factory made it an object of pride to me. And it was good with respect to gas mileage, getting 18-mpg at speeds of 75-mph, though I usually drove faster than that on long trips.

On the subject of speed, there were few activities in life that ever excited me as much as driving a fast car. Fast starts didn't thrill me - I couldn't care less about going from zero-to-sixty in less than a minute and I hate the sound of squealing tires - but I liked covering the ground in fast comfort.

I achieved a personal speed record in that DeSoto one evening, alone and without witnesses, in a race against the clock. I marked the time as I passed the KELK radio station (at the east edge of the city), drove out US-40 to the Deeth turnoff, turned around and drove back, again marking the time at KELK (both times at 25-mph). I made the round trip measured distance of 64 miles in 32-minutes. Which, if my arithmetic is correct, equates to an average speed of 120-mph. I'd have to admit, though, that traffic on US-40 at that particular time was virtually non-existent.

I later established another personal speed record when I drove the 300-miles from Reno to Elko, portal to portal, in 3-hours and 15-minutes for an overall average of 95-mph; again, without a single witness.

Legend has it that Warren "Snowy" Monroe - owner of the Elko Independent newspaper and sometimes Nevada state assemblyman and senator - once travelled from Carson City to Elko, a distance of 325 miles, in 3 hours and 15 minutes. However, by the time he made his run several sections of highway had been converted to freeway.

Sometimes one or two of the guys from Elko, either attending my class or on other Company business in Reno, rode with me. On one such occasion, George Elmore was my passenger. On the return trip we were late getting away from Reno, and it was quite dark by the time we neared the outskirts of Lovelock. Suddenly a dark form appeared in the middle of the highway ahead, an unlighted, immobile automobile. There wasn't room to brake to a stop and an oncoming car prevented my passing to the left. So I steered to the right, went off the shoulder and along the broad ditch between the pavement and sagebrush, and back onto the highway in front of the dead vehicle.

When the dust cleared I backed the DeSoto, stopped beside the car and shouted through my open window to a man standing there.

"What's the trouble?"

The man, obviously drunk as a skunk, mumbled something incoherent and staggered forward.

"I'll park and we'll push you off the road." I said.

"Ever'thing okay...just restin'...mind yer own business." I caught at least some of the words.

"You've got no lights," I butted in, opening the door to get out. "You'll get hit. We've gotta get you off the road."

Suddenly he straightened up and became belligerent. "Don' you touch my car...jus' get outta here," he yelled from behind a raised fist.

I was never very patient when dealing with drunks, and after a few seconds of argument I offered something like "turn on your damn lights and get the hell off the road!" and drove away.

Five minutes later, at the Two Stiffs gas station in Lovelock, and with a still pale Elmore at my side, I got the county sheriff on the phone and described the situation.

"I'll get right on it!" he said and hung up. We heard a siren wailing through town and I quit worrying about the whole thing.

While the gas tank was being filled, I took George into the cafe and bought him a cup of coffee. His color returned and he even started to talk again. "Don't you think you should drive a little slower?" he ventured.

"You're right," I admitted.

In May of 1956, Stanley's eldest boy, Dennis, arrived in Elko to visit. Then a young man of twenty-two, he had left New Hampshire and was touring the country alone. Among the "sights" we took him to see were the Beowawe Geysers, five miles west of the little town of Beowawe. Ever since the first pioneers travelled west on the nearby Humboldt Trail, folks had been attracted to those spouting fountains of water, going out of their way to picnic alongside the tiny pools, as we now did with Dennis.

A scattering of small hot springs, most of them too hot to hold your hand in, bubbled up through a crust of calcium formed at the base of a steep hillside. One of the geysers erupted periodically, every six minutes on average, like a miniature Old Faithful, thrusting hot water and steam six feet or more into the air. We were quite impressed.

But the geysers would cease to gush when, sometime in the late fifties, a drilling outfit moved in and bored through the crust and installed casings and valves to "harness" the springs preparatory to building an experimental geothermal power plant.

And that was the condition we found them in 1960, when we visited the place with another nephew, Ruth's boy Jim Patnode. The super heated water and steam was now being released, roaring like a jet engine, through gigantic rust-colored iron valves and pipes. The steam cloud could still be seen from far-off US-40, but the gurgling, hissing geysers no longer erupted for our pleasure.

The outfit responsible for the demise of the geysers was the MacMillan Oil Company, which had bought the picturesque Horseshoe Ranch at Beowawe. It was in connection with my job that I came to know one of the new owners, Mr. Gordon MacMillan, when he took over the

management of the ranch and immediately insisted on improved telephone service.

The Horseshoe was an old established ranch. Its holdings included most of the Humboldt River Valley around Beowawe. I suppose it was named for the cottonwood-lined irrigation ditch that curved around an alfalfa field just north of ranch headquarters. The headquarters included a "big house," a barn, outbuildings and corrals, all shaded by more big trees at the open end of the horseshoe.

For many years, the people of Beowawe had been content with minimal telephone service, consisting of a coin phone at Abe and Sue's Bar and a couple of private telephones (if a multi-party telephone can be considered a private phone), one of them at the ranch. All utilized the same leased line, from the Western Union Company, alongside the railroad. Calls were made to the outside world by turning a magneto crank to alert an operator in Winnemucca. Like all such telephone facilities, this one was usually noisy and often dead.

Such service was quite unsuitable for Mr. MacMillan, who waged a campaign for a new system and eventually got the attention of Bell of Nevada's General Manager, Paul Garwood. As a consequence of Gordon's going to the top, the Company installed a Lynch carrier system on the existing open-wire line, buried a cable to the ranch, and set up a dial-operated key system in the house.

Our new carrier terminal was not in the best of locations. It was mounted in a cabinet attached to a Western Union pole between the two railroad tracks; one of which carried traffic to the east, the other to the west. Not only would we be subjected to the elements of weather, while working there, but also to the noise, shaking and breathtaking winds of trains rushing past a scant 20-feet away.

Through the combined efforts of Gene Fagg's Winnemucca crew and my Elko tollies the new system was turned up for service. However, it was still not good enough to suit MacMillan, who, like so many who move from the city to the country, wanted urban service out there in the hinterlands.

So, in what seemed to me a too-common practice, we expended a great deal of extra expense "fine tuning" the equipment; much more than would ever be recovered in revenues.

I shall never forget my first visit to the Horseshoe Ranch.

At the front gate I met Chuck Hamilton, Fagg's lead craftsman from Winnemucca, who had installed the new key system. Together we climbed the broad steps, crossed a wide veranda, and approached an ornate door at the south end of the freshly-painted, big white ranch house. Chuck pulled on the great brass handle in the middle of the door. We heard a loud ring on the other side, and before long the sound of approaching footsteps. The heavy door opened slowly, revealing a diminutive lady with slightly graying hair, dressed in a long satin gown and wearing white gloves. It was a scene right out of an old western movie.

Chuck and I announced ourselves and our business, and were directed to go around to the rear entrance. The front door was reserved for guests, she said, not workmen. But she welcomed us at the rear, led us down a dark hallway to a spacious office, nodded to its

occupant and took her leave; allowing us to enter into what appeared like yet another movie set.

The room was lavishly decorated in Victorian style. Impressive oil paintings hung on velvet-papered walls; enormous, exotic vases stood on polished marble stands; volumes of gold-embossed leather-bound books occupied floor-to-ceiling cases.

A great oak desk with a black-leather surface dominated the room. At one end of the desk, a tan wide-brimmed Stetson of at least ten-gallon size covered a stack of papers. At the other end, beside a pair of shiny black-leather gloves, was a silver-studded, black-leather gun belt from whose holsters extended the ivory handles of two big six-guns.

Enthroned on a black-leather swivel chair was the big man himself, the reincarnation of a great cattle baron of the 1800s. As befitting a cattle baron, he wore a long-sleeved white silk shirt under a dark leather vest.

MacMillan's attitude, I would learn, matched his appearance; that of omnipotence. After a long moment "unaware" of our presence he looked up from his papers, stared impatiently, then asked in a gruff voice, "Well?"

I was awed by his demeanor (obviously the reaction he desired) and was definitely nervous when stating the purpose of our visit. In no time at all, though, it became apparent that MacMillan was more actor than ogre, and he seemed pleased that we'd made a personal appearance relative to his telephone service. And noting our appraisal of his office he shrugged away the ostentatiousness of it all.

"I like this life," he volunteered. "Like the old days, eh?"

We grinned. MacMillan then got up from his desk and took us outside, all the while explaining, in great detail, his plan to build a power plant at the Geysers. As he showed us around the ranch complex he got on the subject of his motor vehicle fleet, of which every one was a General Motors product (including a big Cadillac for himself and one for his wife), and grumbled about his latest acquisition, a rear-engine Chevy pickup.

"It draws alkali dust into the engine compartment," he said, "and chokes it to death. More than once I've been stranded out on the flats."

"I've talked to those GM execs ten times," he went on, "and they finally sent some young punks out to investigate. But they never did come up with a cure."

I didn't say anything, but thought it a poor choice of vehicle to use on a ranch.

In the days that followed we fine-tuned his telephone system even more, and the frequency of trouble calls decreased. I doubt if he received anywhere near as much satisfaction from the General Motors Company.

For another decade, Gordon and Mrs. MacMillan would live on the Horseshoe Ranch, playing their 19th-century roles to the hilt while restoring the old property to a semblance of its former self. And then, in 1968, he came to the end of the script and died.

Former Resident Austin Phelps, Dies In California

Death of former resident Austin Phelps, 69, in Pamona, California on New Year's day was disclosed in Elko this morning. Mr. Phelps, according to the information received here, was struck by an automobile while he was riding a bicycle near his home in Pamona.

The mishap occurred at approximately two o'clock in the afternoon and he died four hours later.

Two sons of Mr. Phelps, Geo. and Raymond, left from Elko this morning to attend the funeral services scheduled for tomorrow morning at Pamona. The services will be held from the Todd Memorial Chapel.

In addition to his two sons who reside in Elko, Mr. Phelps is survived by his wife Ruth of Pamona; three daughters, and five other sons who live in California, Nevada, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, respectively.

The deceased moved from Elko approximately four years ago to California. He worked as a carpenter and painter in this city for 15 years before moving to California.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

HI-FI, TOURING, SURVEYING

January, 1955: We were still living in the age of radio and phonograph (television was still a ways off for us) but now that we had a house and more room we could do with some new components. Since the war, vast improvements had been made in the realm of home entertainment. And while the vacuum-tube still reigned supreme, I wanted the best. However, the cost of store-bought units capable of high fidelity audio reproduction was beyond our financial means. So I decided to put together my own system. Anyway, I was anxious to learn more about electronics, and building audio equipment would be a good experience.

I started by buying an AM broadcast radio receiver (FM was still uncommon) and a Garrard record changer, both sans-cabinet. I obtained a schematic diagram of the popular Ultra-linear audio amplifier (designed around a Williamson output transformer and 6550-type tubes), gathered up the other necessary parts and hardware, fabricated a chassis from a piece of sheet steel, and put everything together. I paid the exorbitant sum of \$35 for the output transformer, the most expensive item, which I sent away for along with other vital parts.

When completed it was a thing of pure beauty, the epitome of technology for the times. (It would still be in perfect working condition when, in the 1960s, the family insisted on my retiring it in favor of a stereo system.)

For a preamplifier I first used one given to me by a lab technician at the hospital (a chance acquaintance who happened to have an extra) but I soon sent away to the Heath Company for a preamp kit, the construction of which was, by comparison to my main amplifier, a cinch.

Now I entered the field of cabinet making, to build a piece of furniture to house the system. It was of contemporary design, constructed of inexpensive fir plywood. There were three units: one, about five-feet long and three-feet high, housed the radio receiver, preamp, amplifier and records behind a fold-down door, with shelves above for books and objects; two, a glass-fronted, hinge-topped enclosure for the phonograph; and three, a bench that stood 15-inches off the floor, on which the first two rested.

The amplifier would drive a 15-inch, permanent-magnet coaxial speaker, which I purchased from a catalog source for \$25.00. Now I had to build an acoustical speaker cabinet, and chose a plan (found in an electronics magazine) designed by an engineer named Carlson. The three-quarter-inch plywood required for the job cost fifteen dollars. (By the time of its completion, however, the total expenditure would be considerably more.)

Armed with the plywood and a piece of paper with the dimensions, I moved to the basement of the Zunino home where, since my inventory of woodworking tools was limited to a hand saw, hammer, square, chisel, screwdriver, electric drill, bits and little else, I would use Ben's table saw and dado-blades.

All went well at first. I cut the sides, top, bottom and baffles square and true, replaced the saw blade with an appropriate dado, and began to cut a groove in one of the baffles. It was about two-feet long and four-inches wide. All I had to do was hold it against a fence and run it across the dado. But halfway through, the piece flipped back toward me and fell to the basement floor. Instinctively, I bent down and picked it up.

Strange, I thought, that it should feel so sticky; so I examined it in the dim light and saw that it was virtually covered with dark red blood! My blood!

"Damn!" I muttered. And then I noticed that with every beat of my heart blood squirted from a deep gash at the base of my right thumb, a two-inch gash that was open to the bone. I grasped my right forearm with my left hand and squeezed hard. The spurting stopped. Good. At least I wouldn't bleed to death. I nudged the switch on the table-saw to "off," then climbed the stairs from the basement.

Rita, who happened to be in the kitchen and had heard the unusual racket below, was on her way to investigate. She met me at the head of the stairs, sized up the situation, went for a towel and wrapped it around my bloody fist. And while I maintained a death grip on my wrist she drove me to the hospital.

I marveled at the speed with which I was attended to. I had scarcely gotten comfortable on the table when no less than three doctors appeared at my side. I was given a local anesthetic, which allowed me to watch the operation performed by Doctors Collette, Hood and Moren. For three hours they worked, tying muscles, nerves and flesh back together with a variety of sutures.

"Will I be able to play the violin?" I asked. (Parroting the old joke where the doctor answers "Yes" and the patient says, "Oh, good...I could never play before.") They laughed.

It was some time before I got back to completing the speaker cabinet. And when my medical costs were added to the original cost of lumber and glue, its price totaled about six times my original estimate.

For several days thereafter, my handwriting in Company log books reflected a handicap. But my sinister handwriting improved to near legibility in six weeks' time, when the last of the casts and bandages were finally removed from my right hand.

In hindsight I realized how extremely fortunate I was; not only that the injury was comparatively minor - I could easily have lost the thumb - but also to have received such competent medical attention.

Ted Taelour left Elko in the early 1950s, with Katie and their kids, transferring to a CAA job in Arizona. However, unlike Vernal Jones, Ted was not destined for a career in that administration and before long he quit the outfit. In 1954 they moved to Fontana, California, where he landed a job with the Kaiser Steel Company.

From that time on, Rita, our kids and I made an almost annual trek across the desert from Elko to southern California, to visit the Taelours and my relatives. Dorothy was already there, Ruth and Father would soon move to the area as well. (I believe Ruth and Roy and family also moved to the West in 1956.)

It was a good day's journey from Elko, cruising the 675-miles at 85- to 90-mph. There was never a lot of traffic on those remote north-south highways, and we'd often travel a hundred miles without seeing more than a half-dozen other vehicles.

Our trip in the summer of 1956, in our brand new DeSoto, was a memorable one. Getting an early start, we went west to Battle Mountain, south on SR-8A (now SR-361) to US-50 and Austin, over the mountain and south through Great Smoky Valley. It was almost lunchtime when we neared the southern end of the valley, so I turned off the highway and drove seven miles up to the town of Manhattan. There we slowly cruised up and back the deserted Main Street, showing Gina and Tony what was left of the place where their grandparents had lived and worked in the early 1940s.

Sam and Antoinette (and some of the older children) operated the Manhattan Bar and Grocery Store throughout the war years, retiring to their Elko home in 1946. Rita lived in Elko during that period, with her older sisters and Tiny, but had spent some of her summers with the folks in Manhattan.

Gina and Tony were not impressed by the tour. They were hungry. Of course there was no such thing as a cafe in Manhattan so we found a shady spot in the juniper-pinyon forest just south of town for a picnic lunch. But in a few minutes shade seemed an unimportant factor. It started to rain. Tony, who was seated on a blanket on the ground, complained that he was getting "all wet." And then, when I put him in the car-trunk with Gina under its protective lid, he griped about that. I thought it a cozy place for a picnic but for some reason Tony did not. The shower quickly passed over, we finished eating and resumed our journey south, leaving the sweet smell of damp dust and sagebrush behind.

Normally, after stopping for gas at Tonopah, I'd have taken US-95 south through Goldfield and Beatty, turned at Lathrop Wells, gone through Death Valley Junction to Baker, then onto the main highway, US-91, to San Bernardino and Fontana.

But this time we took a diversionary route from Tonopah, going west on US-6, the Grand Army of the Republic Highway, and over Montgomery Pass just north of Boundary Peak (Nevada's highest). A few miles beyond I turned toward Benton and beyond on a little-used paved road that roller-coastered across fifty miles of moonscape. The kids

enjoyed it immensely. The road ultimately intersected with US-395 near Mono Lake. It had all been new and different territory for us, and worth the extra travel time to see.

Near the little town with the unusual name of Lee Vining, we chose to take another relatively deserted road. It was uphill all the way to 10,000' Tioga Pass. What a road! I had been on some impressive mountain roads before - Mt. Washington in New Hampshire, Angel Lake in the Ruby Mountains - but none would ever compare with the steep, narrow, twisting pathway up the east slope of the Sierra above Lee Vining. In places it had been literally carved out of sheer cliffs, with solid rock jutting out overhead. I was reminded of a mountain road in a movie cartoon, where there was never enough room for the characters to pass and one of them invariably fell off the edge.

The worst vertigo-inducing stretches boasted of stone masonry walls on the down side. Turn-outs and turn-ins, wide enough for one car to inch past another if one of them stopped, appeared at infrequent intervals. We met but one or two cars in the whole distance, which caused Rita to remark that anyone familiar with it would likely avoid Tioga Pass.

(It would be thirty years before Rita and I had occasion to retrace that route; this time on a new wide highway that swept gracefully from top to bottom. It was still a very long and steep grade, but much less severe than the old one it replaced.)

Going south down the west side was far more gradual (typical of the Sierra Nevada Range) and the environment less barren. We passed small glacial tarns and groves of fragrant evergreens, and delicate alpine flowers in full bloom. In the distance, massive walls of granite reflected the sunlight. Then we dropped down through a forest and eventually passed through a couple of tunnels. On emerging from the second one, the great Yosemite Valley - where thin wispy falls plumbed its depths and dribbled into now-quiescent Merced River - caused our eyes to open wide.

We drove along the loop road, stopped to observe Bridal Veil and Yosemite Falls, took a short hike to the lake - that mirrored Half Dome as in Ansel Adams' renowned photograph - paused briefly at the village, photographed El Capitan, then left the park. We were impressed, but not nearly as much as we could have been were it springtime.

At El Portal, just outside Yosemite Valley, we found a nice motel and stopped for the night. In the morning we returned to the park and journeyed south to see the big trees in Mariposa Grove. A tunnel had been carved in the base of one of the giant sequoias, so, after taking a photo, I drove right through it, just as thousands of tourists before me had done; some of them back in the days of the horse and buggy.

And that pretty much ended the sightseeing part of the trip, the first of many side tours we would take to National Parks and other "points of interest" with our kids. From there it was on to the Los Angeles area, to spend a few days with relatives.

It was Tuesday, January 1, 1957, twenty years to the day after experiencing the first death in our immediate family, that of my

brother Frank, when I learned of my Father's dying. Ironically, also as a result of an accident.

Dorothy called from her home in La Puente with the sad news. It seemed that Father, who had taken to riding a bicycle in his "old age," was headed back from the Mt. Baldy area when the accident happened, shortly before 2:00pm. According to witnesses he was south-bound on Mills Avenue and turned left (east) onto Foothill Boulevard when he was hit by a west-bound car and fatally injured. He died a few hours later in the Pomona Valley hospital.

I took time off from work and, with Raymond, who was then living in Elko, travelled to Pomona on the 2nd.

While driving I had time for reflection. The news had come as a surprise as well as shock. I had expected Father to live on into his eighties as had his father before him. Except for some bouts with pleurisy, and surgery for a hernia, he had seldom been ill. So I was not expecting him to leave us so soon, six months short of his seventieth birthday.

The usual regrets passed through my mind. I should have spent more time with him. I should have written more often. I should have shared my successes with him. On the other hand, I was very thankful that I had come west to see him, and that I'd had a chance to get to know him better.

Dorothy helped take care of the arrangements after his death, though I expect that Stepmother Ruth made most of the decisions. (As I recall, Sister Ruth and family, who were in the San Fernando area, had not yet been located.) The funeral service was held in a chapel of Spanish design surrounded by green grass and tall swaying palms. A great many friends of Father and Ruth were in attendance, a remarkable number considering the relatively short time they had resided in Pomona.

I couldn't help thinking how plain was the Pomona cemetery, especially as compared to the resting place of Father's folks in Keene, New Hampshire, where tall standing memorials of granite or marble are (or were) the rule. His site is marked by a small flat granite stone bearing his name and dates of birth and death; one of thousands of like stones, row upon row, inlaid flush with the lawn. I suppose it's as good a place as any to be after death.

[The gravesite coordinates are: N34°06'25.17" W117°42'25.45"]

At Richard's bequest, Father's name was added to the back of the A. Clayton and Nettie Phelps grave marker in Keene, New Hampshire.

We went to see Nana Ruth (as she was known to Gina and Tony) at home at 11212 Kadota Avenue, Pomona. It was a comfortable place, and I was reminded of our recent visit when Father had proudly showed off the modifications he'd made to the house. A large grape arbor (Father loved grapes) shaded a flagstone patio; fruit trees, a vegetable garden and chicken pens occupied the rear of the sizeable lot. He had taken to raising chickens, each one in its own cage, and sold eggs to his friends and neighbors. As expected, everything on the property was neat and well organized.

The kids were fascinated by the goldfish, of all sizes and colors, some eight inches long, in a round pond by the patio. The fish would come to the edge and take food from one's hand. And of course

there were cats. Ruth always had cats. They then numbered only two or three but in her later years she'd cater to a dozen of them at a time.

I assumed that Ruth had financed the house, furnishings and property and that they belonged to her. Father's contribution to their marriage (I guessed) was in the form of labor and companionship; she took care of the financial and social planning, he maintained the house and yard and so forth.

Now he was gone. All that remained as reminders were his work car, gardening and carpentering tools, a few letters, clothes and small items. At Ruth's request we got together and went through his personal effects, those that she pointed out to us, but there wasn't much. We found very few things from back East, and he had apparently accumulated little in the West.

I don't recall which items may have gone to Dorothy, Ruth or Raymond, or what may have been sent back east. I know that Ray took one of the two hand-tool carrying boxes (and would later sell or swap most of its contents).

I took the second tool box, a table saw (but not the stand as it wouldn't fit in the DeSoto trunk), a silver ring with gold inlay and moss-agate stone, a well used pocket knife, an electric shaver, a shaving mug and brush (that I remembered him using when I was but a lad), a checkerboard box with checkers, and a wooden C-clamp. (The last two items were hand-made by his father). Oh yes, and a small smooth pebble about the size of a crow's egg, a "worry stone" that he'd carried in his pocket "forever."

We found about thirty silver dollars (from Nevada) stashed in one of Father's tool boxes - he loved the feel of silver and had advocated the return to coinage in place of paper currency - but I do not remember how the cartwheels were disposed of.

We missed finding another treasure among his effects that day. It was some time after I had returned home when, motivated by an unexplainable curiosity, I lifted the cloth lining of his electric-shaver case and found a crisp, neatly folded hundred-dollar bill, a cache for some time of need.

Although Father died prematurely, it was the way he lived out the last years of his life that saddened me most; that is, the fact that he had very little contact with family and kin. While those years were the result of his own actions, and though he may not have had any regrets, I always felt that he must have missed being near his children; especially the older ones whom he had known so well. Except for the four of us, Dorothy, Ruth, Raymond and me, he had not seen his children since the early 1940s.

People's lives are never predictable. Often unexplainable.

1950s: Things were changing all around the world. The first manmade satellite to successfully orbit the Earth was launched by the Russians. Our country went all-out in the "space race" and soon there were objects stamped "MADE IN U.S.A." in orbit.

The territory of Alaska, loaded with natural resources, was easily voted in as the 49th state. The U.S.S. Nautilus, America's first atomic submarine, passed comfortably under the vast ice cap of the North Pole, technology finally conquering the elusive Northwest

Passage. At President Eisenhower's urging, a new interstate highway system was inaugurated, barely in time to accommodate the plethora of postwar automobiles.

Three of my co-workers, Ivan Miers, Louie Uriarte and Roger Duarte, headed off to the North Country to participate in the building of the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line, a chain of radar sites to reach across the North American continent from Alaska to Greenland, to guard against an invasion by the Russians.

I envied those guys. I had always been intrigued by the prospect of spending time in the arctic, and were I in better physical condition and less concerned for my little family I would have volunteered for the duty. (Another undone thing in my life.)

I did get involved, to a minor degree, in another big defense project. It was known as the SAGE System. (That acronym, like so many others, made little sense but stood for "Semi Automatic Ground Environment.) A network of radar sites topographically located across the "lower forty-eight," it was designed to detect and identify enemy aircraft in U.S. air space. It was the electronic equivalent to the World War II "Volunteer Aircraft Spotters System." Like the DEW Line, it was very sophisticated and expensive but it helped to give our country a sense of security against an atom bomb attack.

Information, gathered by numerous remote radar sites, was fed to various centralized locations called "command centers," where Air Force personnel, working around the clock, were prepared to take immediate action if necessary. One such center was located at the Stead Air Base north of Reno (since deactivated). The digital data and switching facilities at Stead were provided by the Bell System, and many of my buddies were transferred to that area. Among them was Vic Miller, who moved with his family to Sparks.

During the initial stages of the SAGE system implementation, I was temporarily assigned to work with a group of field engineers from Reno and San Francisco locating radio sites in the remote regions of northwestern Nevada. Specifically, our survey included areas near Quinn River Crossing, 35-miles northwest of Winnemucca; Bald Mountain, 10-miles south of Denio, and Catnip Mountain, 35-miles west of Denio.

There were only two highways in that part of Nevada, US-95 and (present) SR-140, part of a route to be touted as the "Winnemucca to the Sea Highway." One could, if not in a big hurry, reach the Pacific Ocean that way. But it would be some time before it was paved all the way through the back country.

There were five or six of us on the survey team, as I recall, under the supervision of Gene Conley, senior radio engineer from Reno. Our task was to select possible sites and make line-of-sight tests. If we could "see" from one mountaintop to another, the path would likely be suitable for radio.

We met at Winnemucca and caravanned to Denio in two Jeep Wagons and my Company sedan, the latter to be used as a backup vehicle. As we dropped over Denio Summit, in the late afternoon, I could barely make out a small cluster of buildings in the shadow of a steep escarpment. Denio!

On arriving in town, we saw but few cars and fewer people. On our left were a couple of low slung, weather beaten structures, and a

rather nice looking white, two story building. Neat but simple block letters, painted above its front veranda, proclaimed "GROVE HOTEL." The center of town lay ahead; more faded dwellings on both sides of the main road, a back street or two, a few false-fronted, half empty commercial buildings, and the traditional general store-gas station-garage. And then the pavement ended, giving way to a graveled road that stretched northward to infinity. That edge of town was also the edge of Nevada. Sagebrush and sand marked the beginning of Oregon, denoted by a simple sign.

The Grove Hotel would be our home for the next several days. We lined up our vehicles at the front rail, not unlike a bunch of cowboys' horses, and ascended the steps. The front door opened into a hallway, which in turn led to a comfortable parlor. A wide arch separated it from a spacious dining room. The latter appeared to have been enlarged at some time, to include what was once a porch, the outer, north wall of which consisted of multi-paned windows and a door. In addition to a number of other potted plants, there was a philodendron of humongous proportions with serpentine vines extending three-quarters of the way around the large room. Long, cloth-covered tables were set, boarding house style, with heavy china and silverware.

The seven or eight rooms in the hotel, most of them on the second floor, were spacious, clean and furnished with depression era furniture. There was one bathroom at the end of the hall on the second floor, for the upstairs guests, and another on the first floor. Except for a handful of "regulars," we would be the only guests. The prices for rooms and meals were very conservative. Our hosts were pleasant and extraordinarily solicitous of our needs. My stay at the Grove Hotel would be an unforgettable experience.

Our work was nothing if not fun. Every day, after an early, hearty breakfast, we'd take our lunches (prepared by the cook), split into two or three groups and head for our pre-assigned mountain-tops. We planned to return to the hotel in time for dinner at six, but were not always prompt in that regard.

The weather was better than expected for a spring season, with temperatures freezing cold in the mornings but warming under mostly blue skies, and we would encounter no storms.

In those days, that part of the state had not been thoroughly surveyed. There were few detailed maps in existence so we had to feel our way around. Passable roads to the high places were scarce, and we were often forced to break our own trail. We'd pick out a good looking slope or ridge, drive through hood-high sagebrush as far as possible, then go by shank's mare to our destination, a particular peak a couple of miles beyond, packing lunches and survey equipment on our backs.

I used my old fishing creel as a back pack, loaded with sandwiches and something to drink. The wicker construction worked well at keeping things cool in the mountain air, but I took a lot of ribbing for carrying a creel so far from water.

Once on top, we'd pull out a map and locate our test points, translate that information into azimuths, set up the transit and zero in on them one by one. Sometimes our hand-held radios were adequate for making contact with the distant party, 30- to 50-miles away.

Sometimes it was necessary to return to the vehicle and use the mobile radio. When we had established communications, or even if we had not, we "flashed" the other party with a mirror, reflecting the sun's rays in that direction. With binoculars they would locate our flash, aim their transit or theodolite at it, and record the azimuth and declination from their position. We'd then reverse the procedure. Our objective, of course, was to locate sites with direct light-paths between them.

Of secondary concern, but important, was site accessibility. The best radio location in the world was no good if you couldn't get to it, both in summer and winter. So we tried to stick as close as possible to existing roads.

One day, Doug and his partner headed for Catnip Mountain while my teammate and I hiked to the top of Bald Peak. We made contact with them, but the sun disappeared behind a cloud and we began a waiting game. Not until mid-afternoon did the sun return, when we re-established communication, completed our task and headed down the mountainside to the Jeep.

In the meantime, while we were awaiting the sunshine, Doug left his partner and hiked around the mountain looking for (he would claim) the best place to build a road. When he failed to return at a reasonable time, his partner drove around the area and glassed the hillsides with binoculars looking for him. He continued to search till after sundown.

The rest of us, unaware of the missing McVae, returned to Denio on schedule, cleaned up and sat down to the evening meal. Naturally, the absence of the two men was of great concern to Gene, who nervously sought our advice.

"We'll find them in the morning," we joked, but that didn't lessen his worries one bit.

We had finished our apple pie a-la-mode and were relaxing over strong coffee when the more responsible half of the team showed up.

"Doug took off this afternoon," he reported, "headed down over the ridge to the northeast. I haven't seen him since but I covered the whole mountain looking."

It was just about dark when we then took off, in two rigs, headed toward the last place the sun had shone that day. The roads were mostly unpaved but still we made pretty good time. At the base of Catnip Mountain we separated, to drive up and down every primitive road we could find. We figured that sooner or later, unless he'd fallen and broken a leg or something, Doug would stumble onto a trail or Jeep road and follow it downhill. If we were lucky, we'd find his forlorn and tired figure slumped by the wayside, waiting to be rescued.

Well, our wandering partner may have been short on orientation skills that afternoon but he was not short on luck. Almost before he realized he was lost, he came upon a small cabin tucked away in a canyon. Observing signs of habitation he walked up to the door, knocked, and was invited in.

It was a sheep camp, and the shepherd (as is their custom) sat him down, wine and dined and engaged him in conversation. All the while Doug's partner was searching for the poor soul.

It was Gene who first noted the dim glow of a lamp in the cabin window when we drove up, and it was he who inquired of the man who answered the knock on the door. "Have you seen a stranger wandering around these parts?"

Right then, as the rest of us gathered around our leader, who should appear at the sheepherder's side but Doug, grinning from ear to ear and obviously none the worse for wear. We were relieved to find him safe and sound. Even so, Gene criticized him for his actions. Not that it bothered him, criticism didn't bother Doug.

The survey went along smoothly after that, and I got to see a lot of new country. Of particular interest was Virgin Valley. There was an old ranch at the north end of it, the Dufferena Ranch, whose buildings had been constructed of local, rose-colored sandstone. Wayne Herberth, one of our Reno engineers, took me to see the quarry where the stone (which is relatively soft in situ) was cut by means of a cable drawn across it by a motor-and-winch. Cut into blocks and exposed to the air, the stone hardened and made an excellent building material. The ranch house, bunk house, pump house and several out buildings, as well as low fences and small bridges, were constructed of this stone.

Once a fine ranch it was now a part of the Sheldon Antelope Range, its ponds maintained for wildfowl, the main yard set aside as a sort of campground.

It was with considerable reluctance that I returned to my regular job in Elko, I'd like to have stayed in Denio, surveying and exploring that remote corner of Nevada. However ironically the Defense Department, convinced that the site near Quinn River Crossing would provide sufficient coverage, would never build a radar station on Catnip Mountain. And then, just when the Quinn River site was completed, the government decided that it, too, was unnecessary, and it was abandoned.

But our work was not a total loss. Within a couple of years, the Company would provide improved telephone service to the little community of Denio, and the information gathered by our survey would be used in designing the new radio system.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

FIRES & WIRES, FISHING

Every so often, with intervals ranging from a few weeks to several years, a thunderstorm of gigantic proportions, spawned by a north-sweeping warm air mass from the Gulf of California, builds up over the Great Basin, slams against a mountain and dumps great quantities of water and hail on the high desert. The dry, barren hillsides cannot readily absorb the deluge, and huge walls of water go rushing down draws and canyons, propelling trees and boulders along like twigs and pebbles in a gutter.

But it is not uncommon, in the summer, for many weeks to pass without even a sign of a cloud in the sky. Those periods are often interrupted by thundershowers containing more wind and electrical potential than water. They sweep across rolling hills and valleys with forked tongues darting hungrily at tinder dry sagebrush and cheat grass, setting the earth ablaze. With insufficient rainfall to quench the incendiaries, they flare and grow and merge to form long serpentine lines of fire, rapidly consuming everything flammable and driving small animals from their habitat.

By virtue of their green irrigated fields, ranch complexes are seldom caught up in these conflagrations, although outbuildings and valuable haystacks are often consumed. But forest and range fires are Mother Nature's own device, giving the lie to the oft-repeated phrase: "Only you can prevent fires."

In the old days, Nevadans protected their ranch property but otherwise let the fires burn out. From practical experience, they knew that a wildfire would continue on its course until turned by the wind, and burn until denied a new supply of fuel when it would die of its own accord.

Range and forest fires are, for all practical purposes, unstoppable by man. While it makes good sense to protect dwellings and structures, it is extremely wasteful to expend great sums of money on manpower, machinery and chemicals trying to put out wildfires in unpopulated areas.

It was such a range fire that swept through Welch's Canyon, northwest of Carlin, in July of 1957; a fire of particular interest to me because its path coincided with the route of the Company's open-

wire telephone line. As it raced along the lead at over four miles an hour, poles and cross-arms took fire and the facility was rendered totally inoperable; a significant impairment to toll telephone service between Elko and Winnemucca.

When we learned of the blaze, Red Wayman and I quickly rounded up as many of our men as possible and dispatched them in a couple of repair trucks loaded with tools to the scene. They had Indian pumps - six-gallon "back pack" tanks with hand-pumps filled with water and used to extinguish small fires - spare wire and hardware. Red went along with them. I followed in a short while.

Meanwhile a construction crew, and Ted Brown, the inveterate lineman who happened to be in town at the time, were dispatched from Winnemucca.

Red and his boys were the first to arrive at the fire, the main front of which had by then veered away from our telephone lead to the north. Many of the poles were still burning vigorously, however, and the men went to work with the pumps. I got there a few minutes later, in time to witness the guys squirting water on the flames, with about the same effect as a small boy peeing on a campfire.

The sandy earth was hot and scorched from the sun and flames. Random stumps of sagebrush smoldered, sending up tiny plumes of blue-gray smoke. Black and white patches of ash lay in wait for dust devils to waft aloft. Every man that moved did so in a cloud of dust and ash, which covered his clothes, hair and skin until all were of one color.

To see for myself what had happened, I drove my Company Jeep over the burn from east to west down through the canyon. It was the first time I'd been personally involved in a telephone wire-line fire, and I was amazed by the amount of destruction wrought. Some poles had been burned completely through at the base. Others were only charred at the bottom but totally disintegrated above, leaving severed cross-arms hanging in mid-air, suspended by the copper wires.

Where a pole had been completely consumed, wires and hardware lay in a tangled mass on the ground. Since each pole was equipped with four cross-arms, and each cross-arm with five pairs of wire, each heap involved forty copper wires and a complement of glass insulators. Not so bad on a straightaway, but a nightmare on a corner. The wires would have to be separated, where possible, and temporary pairs strung around the worst messes. At least by now, most of the lingering fires had been extinguished.

I found the Winnemucca folks at the mouth of the canyon, where the fire had begun its race across the mountain. Gene Fagg and Ted were listening to a cat-skinner, from a nearby ranch, telling how he had tried to stop the blaze with his bulldozer and barely escaped with his life after being engulfed by the fast-moving flames. Scorched paint on the cat and his singed clothes and hair were ample proof of his story.

By now there were a dozen men spread along the length of the damaged line. They would work all afternoon and far into the night, effecting temporary repairs.

As in all such emergencies, fiscal conservatism was temporarily suspended in favor of expedient restoration. Also, as usual, everyone involved turned-to with eagerness. Within a few hours, five circuits

were "up and working." By evening, when I left the site (open-wire plant was Red's area of responsibility) several more pairs of wire had been restored.

It was several days before permanent repairs were completed, which included the replacement of dozens of poles and hundreds of cross-arms, insulators, braces, bolts and nuts. Most of the copper wires had been reused but all of the lines, old and new, had to be re-strung and re-sagged as if it were a new facility.

As a result of the Welch Canyon fire, and a couple of other damaging burns that year, Jim Dodson authorized the expenditure of maintenance money for the clearing of sagebrush and grass from telephone line rights-of-way. Under the main toll lead, a 20-foot-wide strip was bull-dozed all the way across Nevada.

(It was probably the last of such clearings, for the importance of open-wire leads was giving way to more modern transmission systems.)

As a matter of interest, Red Wayman and Gene Fagg were members of a gang of men who, in 1927, had replaced the original transcontinental telephone line (in Nevada) with new poles and wire. Theirs was a hard life, working in extremes of heat and cold, wind and rain, dust and mud, living in flimsy tents or smelly railroad cars along the way.

No wonder they were experts in the field. Red could detect a case of wire trouble several hundred yards away. We'd be traveling along US-40, idly talking, when he'd remark, "There's a floater over there, check the mileage." A "floater" was a wire that had come loose from its insulator. Or he'd spot a wrap in mid-span: two wires wrapped around each other, usually the result of a passing dust-devil. Broken insulators (shooters used the bright glass objects for target practice); cracked cross-arms and loose braces were as plain to him as was a pothole in the road to me.

Open wire facilities were subject to many vagaries of nature. During the winter months pogonip formed on the wires, causing an increase in resistance to telephone transmissions, sometimes total failures. In the springtime, nesting time, crows and ravens built their giant nurseries on the cross-arms. A nest was not much of a bother in dry weather but when the rains came and it got soggy, the wires were effectively "shorted out." And if a lineman removed a nest before the eggs were hatched, the persistent birds (if allowed to live) simply rebuilt and laid another batch.

Speaking of crows, I was once indirectly involved in a unique problem with those birds. I had the weekend duty (that included responsibility for the Winnemucca and Ely areas) and an operator called to report that the toll circuits from Winnemucca to Oroville and McDermitt were failing. I immediately dispatched a lineman to investigate the impairment that had begun at sundown but by the time he found the cause the town of McDermitt was completely out of service.

It seemed that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of crows had come to roost, in the absence of trees, on our telephone wires. As they gathered on the topmost wires, their combined weight caused them to

sag into those beneath, whereupon the birds clutched those wires as well as the top ones, shorting them all together. What a deal.

The problem was new to me but not to the Winnemucca linemen. It happened every spring and fall, they said, when the pesky black birds migrated between their winter and summer habitats. They'd stop overnight and leave at daylight, but while they were resting, upcountry citizens were forced to do without toll service. Gene Fagg and his men had tried a variety of cures, most of them ineffective. The best prescription, according to Gene, was the shotgun, a tool that every knowledgeable lineman carried. The lineman furnished the gun; the Company "surreptitiously" furnished the shells.

The folks at the General Administration Report Center, in San Francisco, could never quite bring themselves to accept my explanation of the failure, which read: "McDermitt isolated and Oroville toll service impaired due to crows on the line."

But back to the subject of fires: Four months before the wildfire struck our Welch Canyon telephone line, a fire of a different nature struck in the city of Elko.

On March 22nd, 1957, a couple of hours after sundown, a fire started in the kitchen of the Stockmen's Hotel. And within three hours it totally destroyed that landmark. Whether we heard about it on the radio, or saw the light in the sky, it seemed imperative that we drive downtown for a look-see. I parked on the hill above Court Street and from there we observed the conflagration.

Hungry flames were devouring everything behind the big, front, plate-glass windows, where the lobby and coffee shop were located. Smoke and sparks poured out over the roof, curling around and almost obscuring the still-lit sign: "STOCKMEN'S HOTEL, WORLD FAMOUS STEAKS."

Just inside the main entrance, the giant Alaskan Kodiak bear (a major attraction to the hotel) stood for a long time in his big glass cage, outlined dark against the bright inferno, defiant to the end, till the building came down around him. (The good news was that there were no human casualties.)

Even before the fire was put out, Dan Bilbao (who had bought the Stockmen's from Ellis and Bigham in 1952) promised to rebuild. But I was saddened to see the original go up in flames, for it was the site of my first real introduction to Elko, where I made my first acquaintances, where I first landed a job, where I enjoyed some of the finest entertainment of my life.

The Western Phelps held another mini-reunion in August of 1957. We had a cook-out on our patio, after which the kids played on the back lawn while the rest of us swapped tall tales. The next day, except for Ray, we took a picnic to the country, to a remote spot on the North Fork of the Humboldt River a few miles north of US-40. It was a sandy beach on the bank of the trickling stream near Devil's Gate, where clumps of giraffe-high willows afforded a degree of shade and where the kids could wade in the shallow water.

After consuming our share of hot-dogs, hamburgers and salads, Roy, Elly and I left the young ones with their mothers and hiked upstream through the steep-walled canyon (the gate for which the place

was named), coming out on a wide flat valley beyond. Being strangers to cow country, my companions were especially interested in the desert's flora and fauna; high sagebrush, hardy bunch-grass, speedy lizards, curious ground squirrels, and the artifacts discarded by earlier passers-by. In fact, they stopped to examine each and every rusty can, wagon strap and horseshoe we came across.

I knew that Devil's Gate was famous for its rattlesnakes, and hoped we'd come across one. But the devil's precious pets must have been sleeping in the shadows that day for we neither saw nor heard one.

A half-buried skeleton caught Elly's eye, and there was no leaving until he had dug some well-bleached bones from the sandy soil. It had been a big animal, probably a Hereford bull. Although the skull was missing he insisted on packing away two upper leg bones, which he planned to use as bases for a pair of table lamps.

Back at our dusty picnic ground, the women and children were hot and tired and vocally anxious to leave. So we packed up and left.

Elko, being a small city and remotely located, was slow in receiving the benefit "?" of that modern innovation, television. As a matter of fact, until 1948 it didn't even have a radio station. We were able to receive a couple of Salt Lake City stations in the daytime, and KELK went on the air within a couple of months of my arrival. But television broadcast frequencies like to travel in a straight line, and both mountains and earth-curvature precluded our receiving even the semblance of a TV signal.

Sometime in the mid-1950s, a handful of enterprising young men launched Elko's first "Cable-TV system." They installed a receiver and transmitter on Spruce Mountain - 125 miles west of Salt Lake City's broadcast transmitters and 60 miles east of Elko - a repeater station on Elko Mountain, and a terminal in downtown Elko. The signals were distributed by cable throughout the central part of the city. Picture quality was poor at best, but it was a picture nonetheless. Later on an additional repeater site was added on a low hill north of Wells, and the signal was somewhat improved.

We were not among the first to subscribe to this new service, not only because of the lousy reception but also because of the expense. At \$135 for the initial hook-up and \$6.35 per month thereafter, we thought it a bit expensive.

It must have been Christmas time, 1957, when we joined our peer group and bought our first TV set; a 21-inch Zenith (black-and-white of course) for which we paid Hesson's Hardware Store a total of \$260, in installments, over the next year. The picture was so bad I had to maintain the set in optimum condition. Every two or three months I'd check all the tubes and replace those not performing at peak value.

It was a high price to pay to "keep up with the Joneses," but I had to admit that the programming was entertaining.

After more than a decade in the Great Basin, I had become familiar with the country, particularly Elko County, and felt like a native. So I was particularly pleased when Dick and Audrey included our place on their cross-country tour itinerary.

They arrived in July, 1958, with their camping necessities, including a neat little tent for sleeping, stowed in the trunk of a Ford sedan. To record the highlights of the trip, Audrey carried a fine new 35-mm camera, Dick an 8-mm movie camera. Of course Dick had his favorite fly-fishing gear aboard, and had put it to good use along the way.

Rita and I decided to take them to see Angel Lake, 12-miles southwest of Wells in the East Humboldt Range. Before starting up the hill, though, I asked Audrey if traveling on mountain roads bothered her. She allowed that she'd been on about every possible kind of road across the continent, and this one should be no particular challenge to her senses. With that assurance I forged ahead.

It was actually a pretty good road (built by the CCCs in the 1930s) but was carved out of a precipitous sidehill, had a lot of sharp switch-backs and no guard rails. Part way up I noticed, on glancing in my rear-view mirror, that Audrey sat very still and averted her eyes from the wonderful view off to our right, where the ground dropped sharply away to the valley floor some 2,000-feet below.

As we approached the quakies below the lake, a pair of tawny mule deer crossed in front of us. A moment later we entered the giant cirque, where Angel Lake reposed like a sparkling jewel beneath near-vertical cliffs reaching to the sky above.

I maneuvered the DeSoto between two granite boulders, close by a well-weathered picnic table provided by the Forest Service, and parked. It was not an "improved" campground in those days, only thick patches of buck-brush and willows through which paths had been beaten by animals and people. And one outhouse.

I got out, stretched, and drank in the beauty of the place. A gentle breeze blew across the surface of the water, modifying the reflected images of peaks and cataracts like an impressionistic painting. Lunch was served.

Protected from the sun by the great mountain's shoulder, a deep bank of snow extended from the water's edge to the high cliffs on our left. So when we'd had our fill of food and drink, Dick and I took Gina and Tony for a hike around the shoreline, for a closer look at the quasi-glacier.

The snow was very hard underneath, and grainy, but the kids found that the stuff on top, softened by a warm zephyr, made excellent snowballs. Tony, typically, pitched them as far as he could toward the lake, but judging distance in the thin air was difficult and he was over-optimistic of his strength.

We climbed to the top of the large granite face that stands guard over the southwestern corner of the lake, and from there we could see far into the depths of the pristine water. Several trout, some a foot or more in length, moved slowly about, apparently unaware of our presence. Dick had an urge to fish for them, but we had left our gear behind.

When we got back to the car, though, Dick and I tried our luck at angling; him with flies, me with small spinners and salmon eggs. Although it was early afternoon, Dick met with immediate success. And when it was time to leave, he had caught and returned to the water five or six small trout while I had not one bite.

On our way home, I suggested a fishing trip to the Owyhee River, below Wildhorse Dam. And since our guests were already well equipped we could make it a camping trip.

Rita and I borrowed her father's bedroll, the one we'd used at Tabor Creek, and his Jeep pickup to pack it in. We stowed a few groceries and our fishing gear aboard, and with Dick and Audrey following in their car, we headed north.

Three miles below Wildhorse Dam, in the steep, winding canyon, we came to Wildhorse Crossing. There a narrow bridge allowed us to cross over the Owyhee River to a tiny meadow and creek on the west side. It was called a campground, and it was a good one, having been used as such by a good many people over the years; but it was still primitive, unmarred by signposts, barriers or tarmac. There were nine or ten places suitable for pitching a tent, accessible by means of a simple dirt road through the tall grass and willows. As at Angel Lake, the Forest Service had provided a single outhouse. Water was available from the creek or from a small spring on the hillside above.

We chose a clean area under some quakies at the south side of the creek, perhaps fifty yards from where it joined the river. The bare ground was a little rough, as compared to some of the locations below, but I'd learned from experience that no matter how comfortable it might appear, tall grass was a haven for mosquitoes. Besides, the sky boded a storm. Better to be on the high ground.

Not many people camped-out in those days, before the age of "An RV in Every Driveway," and we had the place to ourselves. Dick and Audrey, who had become very proficient in the art of pitching a tent, had their shelter in place long before Rita and I finished laying out our tarpaulin and bedroll.

Dick and I then rounded-up some deadwood for a fire, and lit one in the circle of smoke-blackened rocks already in place. Dinner was soon served, and after that we sat in the flickering firelight and talked till long after the birds ceased their twilight calling.

How lucky I am - I thought to myself while pulling on my pipe and adding its smoke to that of the campfire - to have this chance to visit with kin in my adopted country.

There would be no moon or starlight that night. A layer of clouds formed a ceiling over the canyon. The temperature dropped and dampness permeated the air. Our fire died down, signaling the time for sleep, and we retired to our respective beds. I pulled the tarp over our heads, in case it should rain, and quickly fell into the arms of Morpheus.

Sometime in the wee dark hours of morning, I was awakened by the soft patter of raindrops on canvas.

"Is that what I think it is?" Rita had heard it too.

"Yup," I answered, and lay there thinking how cozy it was in our snug bedroll.

At dawn I gingerly lifted a corner of the tarp and peeked out. There was little but mist in the air, and what I could see of the ground was wet and shiny. The canvas seemed unusually stiff, too, and sure enough it was covered with a thin sheet of ice. (And this, in July!) Dick was up and about and had already kindled a fire in the fireplace.

A new day, a new fire, and fresh coffee. It is almost impossible to describe the satisfaction derived from a campfire and camp coffee on a cool morning. (As I may have previously noted, coffee was considered a staple in the meager supplies of early trappers and explorers.)

We had only just finished our bacon-and-eggs when Brother Raymond showed up, to join us for the day. The bushes and rocks were still wet and slippery but we three brothers headed up-river to try our luck at fishing. Ray and I took spinners, flatfish and angleworms; Dick had a vest-full of artificial flies, and a fiberglass rod with which to cast them. The water was perfect, fast flowing and just a bit murky. I fished hard, seeking out old familiar holes, hoping that my previous knowledge of the stream would help me to outdo my elders. But the fishing was poor. I had very few strikes and landed only one or two trout.

We were separated along the river banks and I was concerned that Dick, after my having touted the wonders of the Owyhee, might be disappointed. I caught up with Ray, whose attention was totally directed toward a wily rainbow in a deep pool, and asked how he was doing.

"Not too good," he responded without looking up.

I left him to his own devices and fished on upstream, keeping an eye out for Dick.

When I finally caught a glimpse of him he was headed back downstream; so I reeled in my line, extricated myself from the brush and went to meet him. He was grinning sheepishly as he approached, and explained that he'd slipped on a rock and fallen, bruising his thigh and hip.

"But I didn't break anything," he added, "I'm just not as quick as I used to be."

We made our way on a boulder-strewn trail, found Ray still angling in the hole where I'd left him, and we all returned to camp.

I should have expected as much. Dick had out-fished us both. Together we had five rainbows. Ray's and mine averaged eight to ten inches in length. Dick produced two big ones, each weighing about three pounds.

In spite of the pain from his injuries, Dick beamed with pride at having bested his younger brothers in their own backyard. And while I was surprised to see such fine trout (I had yet to catch one as big on that river), I was happy that we'd introduced him to the Owyhee.

The following month, Albert Salls and I decided to hike in to Steele Lake, an alpine lake located on the east side of the East Humboldt Range above Clover Valley. We had not been together in the mountains for ages, so it would be like old times. I invited Ray to go along, and he volunteered to supply the transportation; his old 1936 Ford sedan. It was to be a quick trip in and out, unencumbered by overnight gear. Each of us had a small supply of food, drinks and fishing tackle, and we packed our one-man raft along as well.

Arriving at the base of the mountain at sunrise, Ray pushed his straining Ford as far as she'd go up an old wagon trail. We quickly shouldered our packs and hurried on, hoping to get the jump on the

heat of the day. It was our plan to alternate packing the raft, but Albert, as usual, carried it most of the way.

We had gained but 500-feet in elevation when something happened that shook my self confidence. I thought I was doing right well, winding through the brush and granite boulders on the steep sidehill only a short distance behind Albert, who was always in the lead it seemed, when all of a sudden I felt sick. I got a cramp in my stomach and my chest and lungs ached. My heart pounded and I gasped for breath with every step. I must be really out of shape, I concluded, for I had never felt this bad while climbing. (Except for that high-altitude headache I'd experienced at Liberty Lake.)

I stood in my tracks to rest. I seldom sat down on the trail, it's too hard to get up and going again. But the pain persisted. I had to sit down. I found a clear space between a rock and some low brush, put my head between my knees to keep from passing out, and remained in that position for several minutes. Although the pounding in my heart slowed, the pain in my chest persisted.

Disgusted, I muttered to myself, "Am I having a heart attack or what?"

Albert and Ray, who were now far above, called down to me.

"I'm just resting," I lied. I didn't want to admit, not even to myself, that the mountain was getting the best of me, especially so early in the day.

I sat there quietly for some time, trying to decide on a logical course of action. At last I stood up, shed my fishing creel and jacket, and took several long, deep breaths in hopes that extra oxygen might affect a cure. I broke out in a cold sweat, shivered, and wondered if this was the beginning of the end for me.

As if to make my fears appear sensible, I decided that this was as good a place as any to go, if that were God's plan. And then I walked to a nearby service-berry bush and performed my "morning constitutional." It was a panacea. Almost immediately the chills dissipated, the pain was gone. Once again I could breathe normally. I was like a man reincarnated. "Nothing can stop me now," I said to myself, and within minutes I'd caught up with my partners.

I may have already described the steep slopes characteristic of the east side of the Ruby and East Humboldt Ranges. If not, I hereby go on record: the way to Steele Lake is virtually straight up. There were no sophisticated "hiking trails" in those days, but by following deer and cattle paths one could easily find the way. Those paths, however, tended to traverse the sidehills in horizontal veins, and to rapidly gain elevation you had to climb from one to another as on a ladder.

It was our good fortune to find a number of giant conifers, spaced at convenient intervals, where we could rest in the shade. They were magnificent trees, two or more feet in diameter, true survivors in a hostile environment. At last we broke over a shelf of jumbled rocks and boulders, and there was the lake.

Steele Lake, named for a man who settled in the valley in the 1860s, is a typical alpine lake; a gem set in an ancient, glacier-carved hanging valley nearly surrounded by vertical cliffs and towering peaks. The lake was smooth as glass when we arrived, its

surface mirroring the sun's red hues from the opposite rock walls. Tiny silver threads fell, like spider webs, from snowmelt above.

Turning around I filled my pipe, lit it, and gazed across Snow Water Lake, a mere alkali flat in the far off valley. Beyond it a shining line, the Western Pacific Railroad, stretched across the Independence Valley to infinity. Pilot Peak, some 60-miles away and purple in its own shadow, was easily recognizable. Although I was not the first to take in this scene, I was surely among a privileged few.

The shrill whistle of a pika brought me back to the present. Time to get a'fishin'. Albert and I took turns using the rubber raft while Ray fished from the shoreline. We were having a great time and I hated to see the gray shadows creep across the water, signaling it was time to go. But go we must, and we were soon trundling down the steep slope, our creels heavy with clean mountain trout encased in green grass and cold snow.

This time, as I looked off to the east, the sun was shining on the west side of Pilot Peak; dust devils, those dervishes of the hot desert, whirled across the valley floor; we were on the shadow side of the mountain where it was cool.

I was a tired but happy man when I climbed into the old Ford with Albert and Ray. But I would never, unfortunately, return to that wonderful lake named Steele.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

TOURS, WORK, & MOTHER'S VISIT

As the years progressed, I grew increasingly confident in my job as a supervisor. Time and experience were working to my advantage. Off the job, with growing children to direct and amuse, my lifestyle changed appreciably. Their activities and demands took precedence over many of my hobbies.

As a family we travelled more, particularly to California. In 1958 our annual tour began in northern California, at Ruth and Roy's place in Carmel Valley, where they had moved in 1957 with their four youngsters Jim, Dianne, Joanne and Rosanne (the last two born in 1953 and 1955).

It was our introduction to the Monterey area: Carmel, a quaint city of tiny cottage industries and live-oak trees in the middle of the main thoroughfare; the old Spanish Mission with its hallowed halls and flowering gardens; the white beaches; the coastal bluffs aglow with ice-plant; downtown Monterey with its wharves, marina and historic buildings; decaying Cannery Row (made famous in 1945 by John Steinbeck's book) that smelled to high heaven of rotten sardines.

From there we travelled south, to Dot and Elly's California style home in La Puente. They took us up the mountain to Santa Claus Village where Gina, Tony and Darlene (Dot and Elly's adopted daughter, who was about Gina's age) posed for an unseasonable photo with the red-suited, fat-bellied old fellow himself.

We went to see Nana Ruth, in Pomona, who appeared to be happy to see us and who patronized our kids no end. She showed off her pretty household things, her cats, and the goldfish in the pond on the patio. She had gotten rid of Father's chickens.

It was always great fun to visit Ted and Katie in Fontana. Ted had a good job at the Kaiser Steel plant, and the new house they had bought was in a neat neighborhood at the north edge of the city near a large, sweet smelling orange grove. Ted was in the process of building a covered patio, complete with a brick broiler pit. The pit was ready enough for use so Ted and Katie fixed a lavish meal for us, and for a few extra kids in the neighborhood. The Taelour boys were always bringing friends home with them, to eat, sleep and hang around, often for several days at a time. Katie never refused them anything.

(No one realized what was in the cards for that neighborhood. Within 20-years it would be transformed into a haven for thieves, drug addicts, alien-smugglers and other societal misfits.)

Disneyland was quite new (two years old) when we visited it for the first time that year. It was unique. The first such "theme" park in the world, it was extremely well organized and maintained. Even then, however, one had to stand in line to see or do almost anything, but the waits were not long and the rides and exhibits well worth the time spent.

One of the rides, the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, consisted of giant cups on saucers that whirled and jerked around in a horizontal plane. As I recall, each cup was big enough to accommodate a child. Of course our children wanted to go, and even though I was somewhat against the idea they were soon aboard. Ten seconds into the ride, Tony decided it wasn't such a fun thing after all. He screwed up his face and started to bawl and there was nothing that we could do for him from the sidelines, except worry. Luckily, a kindly young patron took pity on Tony, crawled into the cup with him and offered solace until the ordeal was over.

Tom Sawyer's Island was more to his liking. He investigated every hill, trail, cave, tree house, nook and cranny. I thought it one of the nicer places for little kids, much better than the wild and scary rides.

Gina enjoyed everything at Disneyland, but particularly a journey by boat through a mock jungle - where Tony was frightened by a yawning hippo just off the port bow - past exotic tropical villages. Perhaps it was then that the seeds were planted which later matured and took her to faraway places around the world.

Knott's Berry Farm was also on our itinerary. What had once been just that, a berry farm, was now a tourist attraction. Jams and jellies were still being sold, in an expensive gift shop, but mostly it was a museum of early twentieth century artifacts in replicated buildings. Of particular interest to me was the blacksmith shop, with its forge, anvils, hammers, tongs, horseshoes and other wrought items, and a real live blacksmith showing how the work was done. I was reminded of the time my father took me to the smithy in Bernardston.

A train ride should provide the kids with a good feel for the early West, we decided, and climbed aboard one of the long coaches behind a steam engine. We were right. The bouncing and chugging and whistle blowing and clickety clack of wheels-on-rails was about as close to reality as one could get at an amusement park.

But there was more. A holdup! We were all really surprised when the bad men appeared, but Tony showed more astonishment than anyone. He straightened up in his seat and gasped when the masked bandit kicked open the door at the end of our car, and was aghast when the rascal came down the aisle holding a six-gun in each hand, leveled them and growled, "Put up yer hands an' ya won't get hurt!"

Among the first to react Tony's arms shot up, parenthetically bracketing his ever-widening blue eyes. The man and his accomplice came on, and as he passed by we all lowered our hands. All, that is, but Tony.

"You can put your hands down now," Rita whispered to him.

But the bandit's words were still fresh and plain in his young mind. He was not about to lower them.

"I don't wanna get hurt," he said with sincerity.

Most of us thought it a clever and humorous enactment, but Tony didn't think it a bit funny and told us so in so many words. It took a lot of explaining to convince him that it was only make believe.

On our way home that year, traveling through the desert from Baker, California, to the north, we began what was to become a sort of ritual. Just out of Goldfield, US-95 ascended a small arroyo sparsely populated with Joshua trees, some of them 15-feet high.

A lot of so-called "trees" in the West would be laughed at by an Easterner, the Joshua among them. But on the hot face of the desert anything big enough to cast a shadow is welcome.

I parked the car on a clear space off the east side of the highway and we got out to stretch. I saw a particularly large, well-shaped Joshua tree about a hundred-feet away and, since we were stopped anyway, took my camera and prepared to snap a picture of it. In order to provide some scale and perspective, I asked the kids to stand beside it. Because of the intense heat of the noonday sun, they wisely stood on the shady side.

The picture turned out so well, every time we passed that way thereafter Rita insisted on my stopping and shooting a sequel. As a consequence, we assembled a series of photos of our children "growing up" under that same giant plant. But then the highway was reconstructed, taking a slightly different path, and I could no longer find our landmark.

The third (and last) of our three fine children arrived a week before the summer solstice in 1959. I can't say that Rita and I deliberately planned the arrival dates of any of our children, but they were fairly well distributed throughout the calendar year. We had tacitly agreed, early on, that our family should be limited to two or three children.

(It is my personal philosophy, in spite of the fact that I came from a large family, that in today's world no couple should have more than three children; two to replace themselves and a third, perhaps, to make up for those who never bear fruit. Civilization would be incalculably better off if the rate of human reproduction were curtailed, for it is quite obvious that those who have the most babies are also, by a large majority, the least capable of providing for them.)

I was well pleased with our third child, and thanked God for blessing us with another handsome, perfectly formed and healthy boy. We named him Glen Alexander.

I believe that the naming of a child deserves a lot of consideration. A name should have some meaning, and it should not be awkward or subject to ridicule. While I think we named our second son "Glen" primarily because it sounded good, the fact that a glen connotes "a secluded place where one can escape the mundane and reflect on the higher things in life" had a bearing on my part of the decision. His middle name was also that of an uncle, Stanley Alexander

Zunino, and of my mentor, Harold Alexander Leslie, not to mention the Old Persian, "Alexander the Great."

With the exception of my own and very few other babies, I have never been fond of newborns. All are pitifully helpless; few are very attractive. And so, consistent with my early relations with Gina, Nancy and Tony, I had little contact with Glen until he was old enough to respond to my attentions. In hindsight, though, I probably had more to do with Glen as an infant than with any of the others; perhaps because I was not working such long hours then, and could take a more relaxed interest in them.

Glen was only three months old when my mother took one of the biggest steps of her life, one that took her all the way across the continent. We had coaxed her for some time to come west, suggesting that she travel by air, but there was no convincing her that that was a good idea. After all, if you were born 15-years before man first flew, and half a century before the first viable airliner, you, too, might consider flying an unreliable way to go. Passenger trains, on the other hand, had been around since before she was born. She would take the train.

Mother was seventy years of age. She had raised the equivalent of two families, could boast of a score or more grandchildren, and was retired from her career as a librarian. She seemed old and fragile, to me, but had another quarter-century of life yet to live. It was good having her stay with us, especially for the kids' sake, although Glen was too young to appreciate the significance of her presence.

Although I was quite busy with my work, we still found time to get out and around the countryside that summer. Like Audrey (and later Elsie), Mother found the West altogether too barren and desolate to suit her, and the people more than a little uncouth (by Puritan standards).

"There are," she said, "too many saloons and too few churches, too much dust and too few trees." But she took it all in stride and politely ignored the crude phrases common among my western friends.

She did enjoy seeing the many wildflowers and animals along the way to the Ruby Marsh, when we travelled there to picnic by the ponds with Rita's father, and showed a great deal of interest in the mountains. "At least you have trees up here," she brightened.

In September, when Mother was with us, another hurricane-force windstorm struck Elko. It was similar to the one I experienced soon after my arrival in 1948. Rita was out somewhere with Glen, Tony was at home with his grandmother when the ominous storm appeared over the hill and a cloud of dust engulfed our street and home. Mother, doubtless remembering the 1938 hurricane back home, scurried around from room to room, fighting to close the unfamiliar hinged-windows.

"Here Gramma," Tony volunteered. "I'll help you." Tony was quite perceptive of the way things worked, was always a helpful boy, and together they secured the house against the elements.

Typically, the storm raged with lightning, thunder, dust and rain, and dissipated within an hour or so. The wind, which had reached a peak velocity of 108 mph at the airport, wreaked some havoc in the city. Several large cottonwoods were uprooted near the library and courthouse; many a home lost shingles, some even parts of the roof.

One end of the building where Stan (Zunino) and Bob Gregory operated the Tidewater Oil Company distributorship was opened up like a tin can. The wind tore the roof off, rafters and all. Except for a few loose shingles, our house was unaffected by the storm. The yard, however, was drifted with sand, cluttered with debris, and inundated by giant tumbleweeds.

Not long after the "big wind" in September it was time to take Mother to her next port of call, to Ruth and Roy's place in Carmel Valley. To show her as much as possible of the countryside we went through Reno, Virginia City, Carson City, then back over Mt. Rose summit to Lake Tahoe. She was really impressed by the scope and beauty of the lake, as viewed from the grade above Incline Village where we stopped to rest before proceeding around the north shore to Tahoe City, California.

Leaving the Tahoe basin, we travelled down the Truckee River Canyon to Squaw Valley, the site of the upcoming winter Olympics, where there was a flurry of activity as workmen rushed to complete ski lifts, ski jumps, an ice skating rink and barracks before the snows and contestants should arrive.

On US-40, I drove up the narrow, winding highway to the popular viewpoint just below Donner Summit. From there we had a grand view of Donner Lake and I pointed out the restaurant in the trees on the north shore, where we had stopped for lunch a few minutes earlier.

The village had been quiet that day, the summer folks having gone back to the city and the winter crowd not yet arrived. A handful of cottages could be seen on the south shore, amongst the pines and firs under the brow of the mountain. They seemed deserted as well, apparently boarded-up for the winter.

We were about the only people in the restaurant, and had received outstanding attention and service. The friendly waitress took little Glen in her arms when he began to fuss and soothed him while we ate our modest meal.

(Old US-40 by Donner Lake is now a busy service road, lined with a plethora of residences, restaurants, motels and shops, and with motor vehicles parked in every conceivable, and inconceivable, place imaginable. In the wintertime, three to nine feet of snow is common and those parking places disappear. Even so, it is hard to conceive of what it was like when the ill fated Donner Party was trapped nearby, under twenty-plus feet of the stuff.)

It was a pleasant drive down the western slope of the Sierra, across the great San Joaquin Valley and over the Coast Range to Monterey and Carmel Valley. Ruth and her family were glad to see us. The kids were really excited, knowing that their Grandma had come to stay for a while.

Ruth and Roy had designed and built a fine new house high on the north side of the canyon, high enough that it would normally be above the prevailing sea fog, remote enough that the surrounding live-oaks and low bushes harbored deer, rabbits and other wildlife. It was in that new and different environment that we left Mother, three-thousand miles from her native New England; farther, I suspect, than she'd ever dreamed of being.

One of the best special assignments I had with the Company was in the Rio King Valley, north of Winnemucca, when new telephone service was being established there. The cost to build an open-wire line was prohibitive, so the engineers elected to go with a carrier-on-radio system, establishing a path from Winnemucca Mountain to the Rio King home ranch, an airline distance of about 55-miles. I was not involved in the preliminary planning of this system, or its installation, but since there were no experienced radio technicians in Winnemucca, I was asked to supervise the job of testing the equipment prior to turning it up for service.

I jumped at the chance, and took Gary Murphy with me. He was the youngest craftsman in Elko, in seniority, but had been quick to learn the radio business. And he was innovative, an attribute that I figured (correctly) we'd need out there in the country, 75-miles from town. It was not exactly a pioneering project, but different from anything we had had in northern Nevada up to that time.

We took rooms (at \$20/night) at the Sonoma Inn in Winnemucca, the best hotel in town, and planned to stay a week or so if things went well; longer if we ran into unforeseen problems, as was likely the case.

For transportation we had my Company vehicle, an American Rambler sedan. It was small but rugged and we could carry our test gear on the back seat, to keep it from shaking apart when traveling over the rough road. The last 25-mile stretch to the Rio King Ranch was unpaved.

The Rio King Ranch holdings included practically the whole valley. Its headquarters complex was located near the upper-middle of it. The land had been subdivided into parcels, to be sold or leased as farms where crops such as alfalfa could be raised. The underground water had been tapped, and diesel-powered pumps would pull the life-giving fluid to the surface to irrigate the fields. It was this increased activity in the valley that prompted the need for improved (over the old magneto-phone) telephone service.

Gene Fagg was with Gary and me the first day, to show the way and introduce us to the ranch foreman. We also met the mechanic and the old cook. The latter, typically, insisted on serving coffee and doughnuts before we even looked at the radio gear.

When I did get a look at the equipment I was shocked. It was the worst installation I had ever seen, in a pump house (of all places) in a space no bigger than six-feet wide by eight-feet long and six-feet high. There was barely room left over for two people to stand upright. The floor was concrete, and I shuddered to think what might happen if the pump's water line broke or developed a leak.

The radio (by Dumont) had been removed from service at Cactus Flat (or Peak), a government reserve in southern Nevada. Alleged to have been in working condition when removed, it was not only used but obsolete.

The toll carrier (by Lenkurt) was in similar condition. With this equipment we were to provide a half-dozen telephone circuits, to the main and outlying ranches and a phone in a standard booth adjacent to the pump house.

Beside the phone booth, a plant construction crew had erected a triangular tower and platform of poles and timbers, and mounted a "dish" antenna oriented toward Winnemucca Mountain.

Without further ado, Gary and I went to work. Our job was to make the system "ring and talk" (a euphemism used by old-time telephone repairmen) but it was obvious that a lot of effort would be required in that occupation. Wires had been improperly connected; options set in wrong modes; components were defective.

In the days that followed we pored over drawings and manuals, found and corrected each fault in order, but it was a time consuming task for sure.

As anticipated, working on radio equipment out there on the ranch was like maintaining a Model-T Ford: make-do and haywire. After two weeks of fixing minor problems, in order to get the main transmitter on the air when we couldn't obtain a replacement part from the city, Gary and I resorted to string and glue to repair a high-frequency tuning coil. Fortunately, although not the least of them, it was the last of our problems.

It was during the first week of our assignment that a problem of a different nature arose, one related to our transportation. We arrived at the ranch around 9:30 one morning, and I had just parked the car by the pump house when the ranch mechanic, on his way to the cookhouse from the garage, hailed me.

"You plannin' to drive back to town in that?"

Puzzled, I asked, "What d'ya mean?"

"Wall," he motioned toward the back of the car, "Y'might not make it w'thout gas."

After noting the trail of gasoline in the dust behind the car, I got on my knees and peered at the gas-tank; a large, flat, rectangular tank that hung down beneath the trunk behind the axle. Precious fuel was still dripping from a gaping hole on the leading edge of it, from a gash that looked like it was made by a cold-chisel. Over an inch long and an eighth-inch wide, the hole (probably caused by a sharp rock thrown by one of the wheels) was a quarter of the way up from the bottom. Had it been much lower we'd have then been trudging toward the ranch on foot.

There would be no problem getting enough gas for the trip back to Winnemucca, Nevada ranchers were notoriously generous in that regard. But first we'd have to find a way to plug the hole. So we followed the mechanic into the cookhouse where we could talk, over coffee, about a possible solution.

All ranch cooks and mine cooks came from the same mold, or so it seemed to me. They may all have been trained in the army or the navy, but if so had forgotten the military policy of cleanliness. In spite of that, they were usually good cooks and generous, and the old boy at Rio King was no exception to the rule. He was probably in his late fifties, very lean (skinny) and wore a dirty tee-shirt and an even dirtier white apron over striped "Uncle Sam" pants. The customary cigarette dangled, as if by magnetism, from his lower lip.

He poured our coffee, hauled out a tray of fresh-made doughnuts and sat down at our table. On hearing about our problem he offered to find a bar of soap to fix the tank. I had heard that you could stop a

gasoline seep with soap, but this was no ordinary seep. It seemed too much of a challenge for such a simple cure. We'd have to think of something else. But then our new friend came back from the kitchen, brandishing a big new bar of Ivory.

"This'll do the trick," he promised with a toothless grin, and followed up with a lengthy, unsolicited testimonial of the time when, 50-miles north of Bozeman, Montana, a similar bar had saved his life. "Ivory's the best," he ended. "Take my word on it."

The end of his story coincided with the last of our savory doughnuts and coffee, so Gary went to work on the carrier-radio equipment and I, after the ranch mechanic obliged with a jack to lift the car, went to work on the hole in the tank. I applied soap to the wound, stuffed a rag in it with a stick, and laid on more soap. When I was done, the mechanic filled the tank with gas (at no charge to the Company) and not a drop seeped through the patch.

"That ought to get us to Winnemucca," I said to myself, thankful for the old cook's advice and soap.

Not only did we get to Winnemucca that evening without mishap, we would successfully make a half-dozen more trips to the ranch and back before completing our project.

Service to Rio King was finally established and I turned the site over to Fagg, whose people would maintain it from then on. Gary and I headed for home. It had been an interesting interlude, both on the job at the ranch and off the job in the lively town of Winnemucca. But there is more to the gas tank story.

In the late fifties, Jim Dodson decided to provide more control over the inspection and maintenance of Company vehicles, and promoted one Bill Shaffer - a cocky, egotistical individual who had once been a cable splicer - to a position of responsibility for the fleet. From that time on Red and I, along with every other field supervisor in the state, were obliged to obtain authorization from Shaffer's office before contracting for any motor vehicle work. We eventually found ourselves arguing with him for "permission" to have even basic repairs made. He was, in the words of the English, "Penny wise and pound foolish."

Such was his attitude when I suggested that a metal plate be installed under the gas tank of the Rambler, to guard against flying rocks. He refused my request, even though the cost of adding such a plate would be less expensive than to repair another ruptured tank.

We discussed the subject several times over the phone, until I'd had enough of his terse remarks and pompous attitude and took it upon myself to have the guard installed. I would argue the point later.

And that's just what I had to do. But Johnny Ostrom, my boss in Reno, a former tollie who had retained his practical view of field operations and expenses, backed my action. The argument was finally settled in my favor, by Dodson himself.

Gina celebrated her eighth birthday in January of 1960, with a half-dozen of her school chums in attendance at a lively party arranged by her mother. Tony "graduated" from kindergarten in June, in a ceremony made impressive by the kids' wearing mortar-board caps. A short time later, Mother returned from California, having spent the

winter months with Ruth in Carmel Valley, and Dorothy in La Puente. She was in good health and appeared to be enjoying her stay in the West.

Glen, now a year old, was at the age when little tykes are especially entertaining. He was learning to walk, he was curious and into everything within reach. He was also fond of lying down for a nap in the most unlikely places, such as behind the couch or in the middle of the hallway, and of playing with the nozzle on the end of the garden hose. Mother spent a lot of time with him, and laughed heartily at his antics.

I was sad when she finally took her leave and headed east. From that time on our kids would have little contact with her, although she would always be interested in knowing of their activities and accomplishments, and would always remember their birthdays with a card or letter.

Toward the end of July - the nineteenth, to be exact - there was to be a big celebration in Ruby Valley. Rita and I loaded the kids into the DeSoto and headed over Harrison Pass to witness the event, the commemoration of the site of a Pony Express Station. On the way over the pass, just a few miles below the summit, we met a herd of Herefords. The canyon was wall-to-wall with white-faces and the brush was so thick I couldn't pull the car off the road, so there was nothing to do but stop and wait for the animals to continue on their deliberate way.

The mass of moving beeves flowed by in an endless flood of undulating heads and backs, their hooves churning up great clouds of dust. With our car windows rolled up, we sat uncomfortably in the sweltering heat (there was no air-conditioning in the DeSoto) choking from the smell of dirt and manure, worrying that we'd be too late to join the festivities still twenty-five miles ahead.

The cattle took but thirty or forty minutes to pass, but it seemed much longer. At any rate, we were relieved to see the tail-riders looming tall in their saddles, and watched with interest as they approached. With eyes squinting beneath soiled, broad-brimmed Stetsons, with shouts of "Hei-yah...Hei-yah" muffled by bandanas pulled up over their noses, they waved to us and passed.

Cowboy! What a job that would be for a guy with allergies.

I drove on over the mountain, and as soon as we hit the well-graded road in the valley turned south and made haste. From the junction with the Overland Pass road, just past the site of old Fort Ruby, we could see a gathering of automobiles out on the flat. I drove toward them on what was little more than a wagon track (the former pony trail) through foot-deep, talcum-powdery alkali dust, and parked the car alongside the others. Rita hustled the kids out and we hurried to see the ceremony.

What a day for an outing. A few fleecy clouds on the horizon were all that marred an otherwise totally blue sky. The air was calm and warm, but not uncomfortably so. About fifty people, some of them seated on folding wooden chairs, others casually standing about, were listening with rapt attention to the distinguished speaker, Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Now I must write a few words about our Nation's then number-one justice: Earl Warren was a native of California and eventually became its governor. In 1953 he was named, by President Eisenhower, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. It was one of the few mistakes ever made by my favorite president, for it was the Warren Court that was largely responsible for decisions leading to the deterioration of many aspects of our society. It was his court that struck down community laws controlling standards of decency and morality, resulting in a proliferation of obscenity in language and visual media. It was his court that mandated increased protection for outlaws, and better living conditions for prisoners than many law-abiding citizens enjoy. It was his court that encouraged civil libertarians to sue for the most inane of so-called "individual rights," at the expense of the majority of the people. It was his court that pandered to those whose actions, often in the form of disrupting protests against legitimate government institutions, bordered on anarchy. It was while the Warren Court held sway that we were led inexorably toward socialism in the United States.

But he was a student of history, especially of the West, and it was impressive to see our country's highest jurist standing under the hot sun in one of the most remote places in Nevada (let alone in the United States) speaking to what may have been the smallest crowd he ever addressed.

Because we were late, we missed nearly all of his speech (some good comes of everything), arriving within earshot just in time to hear, "... And with that I hereby dedicate this monument to the memory of those brave lads who carried the mail through this barren place a hundred years ago." End of speech. Applause.

The formalities over, everyone picnicked and/or socialized for an hour or so. We spoke with some of our acquaintances, wandered around the site, found the small spring that had supplied water for the men and horses at the station, and inspected the new bronze plaque atop its stone cairn where the cabin had stood.

The drive home, after having come 75-miles for less than two hours of entertainment, was uneventful.

(Note: The original Ruby Valley Pony Express station, a sod-roofed log cabin, had recently been removed to Elko where it was reconstructed in front of the Northeastern Nevada Historical Society's modern museum.)

Rita's maternal uncle, Tony Verdino, came from Italy to visit that summer (1960). A quiet man of small physical stature, he had been a school teacher and was, among other things, very knowledgeable of nature's ways. At the annual Zunino reunion, in the canyon at the confluence of Thomas and Lamoille Creeks, he eagerly studied the birds, chipmunks and wildflowers, and fearlessly plucked a honeybee from a lupine to show the children. I yearned to question him about his country and to know what he thought of ours, but although he knew and spoke some English I found it difficult to talk with him. However, his friendly personality and obvious enthusiasm for everything in sight made up for our inability to converse.

Elko County's canyons and creeks were a powerful invitation to those who loved the out-of-doors, and up until the early 1960s there was not a lot of competition for campsites; though I sensed that that would change in the near future.

Rita and I came to the conclusion that, with three kids and the possibility of her folks joining us occasionally, we should get a camp-trailer. It would be much more comfortable than a tent or a bedroll, and should also provide savings in time and effort preparing for a trip; that is, it would be practically "ready to go" at a moment's notice. Furthermore, the amenities of a trailer would make things easier for Rita.

In Mid-August of 1960, we somehow heard about a slightly used Shasta trailer, owned by one George Aiazzi of Carlin. Rita and I went to see him, looked over the trailer, decided it would do the job and bought it (for \$1,215).

The Shasta was 16-feet long overall, had an aluminum exterior, and came equipped with a gas range and an ice box. It would sleep six people; two on a large gaucho bed in the back, two up front on benches converted into a bed, and two more (little ones) on a canvas bunk over the gaucho bed. There was a propane-gas lamp above the table in front, for light and to take away the chill on a cool evening, and a battery operated lamp in the back. There was no heater, but I would purchase and install a small floor furnace.

I bought a trailer hitch, bolted it to the rear bumper of the DeSoto, and drove to Carlin to pick up our new purchase. On the way home I learned two things about the DeSoto; that it would tow the trailer with ease, and that it "bottomed-out" when crossing a shallow ditch or gutter. It was necessary to install a pair of coaxial helper-springs to the rear shock absorbers of the car.

The trailer was equipped with electric brakes and lights, so I wired the DeSoto with an interconnecting plug and mounted a hand operated brake control to the left of the steering column. Rita outfitted the interior with life's necessities; bedding, kitchenware and food, and our new little home-on-wheels was about ready for a shakedown cruise.

Before taking the final plunge, however, Rita suggested that someone (Gina, Tony and I were elected) should spend a night in the trailer on the driveway "to see how cold it might get." It was a good suggestion, for we learned another important lesson. Without a pad on the canvas bunk the kids about froze in the middle of the night and we retreated to our beds in the house. Sleeping bags for the kids was a must.

Now, with the new bags stowed neatly under the seats, with our clothes in suitcases (we would learn better) in the closet, with the refrigerator stuffed full of ice and perishable foods, we were ready for the big time, an extended tour into southern Idaho.

It was a wonderful feeling for me, driving a nice big car with a trailer behind. The two were so compatible that, after topping Adobe Summit, I throttled-up to 60- and 70-mph with no adverse effects.

We would camp at Wildhorse Crossing that first night. It was a familiar campground and relatively close to home in case there were more to learn about this new type of touring. On crossing over the

Owyhee River I was aware of recent changes. The bridge itself had been either beefed-up or replaced; the driveway and sites were paved with clean gravel, and a brand new outhouse stood where the old dilapidated one had been. Some contrast to when we were there with Dick and Audrey and Ray two years before. Only one thing had not changed; it was still almost deserted.

We picked a spot just past the bridge by the willows; I unhitched the trailer and leveled it, on jacks that I had made from heavy aluminum conduit. (A 3½-inch and a 4-inch section that telescoped and bolted together at appropriate heights.) Our doorstep was a solid wooden box that we kept inside the trailer while traveling.

In order to conserve our main supply of water for drinking and cooking, the kids and I walked up the trail to a hydrant and hauled a bucket full of tap-water back to the trailer. We then scrounged up some deadwood and lit a campfire in a circle of rocks. We were camping out at last, and in much more comfort than ever before.

Gina and Tony occupied the new sleeping bags, Glen slept with Rita and me in the big bed. (We would later invest in sleeping bags for our bed as well, ridding ourselves of the daily chore of bed making.)

In the morning we had breakfast indoors where it was warm, after which we hitched-up and proceeded northward. At Mountain City I stopped to top-off the gas tank, for a long stretch of remote country lay ahead.

The pavement ended within a few miles of Mountain City, but a graded-gravel highway took us across the Owyhee Desert and almost to the outskirts of Mountain Home, Idaho. We made good time, and got to a shady spot on the Snake River in time for lunch. It would have been preferable to stop somewhere in the desert, because little Glen became the favorite target of a horde of mosquitoes. He was particularly susceptible to the little buggers' bites, and lived in discomfort for several days thereafter, scratching throughout the night and keeping the rest of us awake.

It was late afternoon when we came to McCall, and there was little time to search for the best campground. We found a private one just a short distance from town, on the east side of Payette Lake, right next to a state campground. Since the private camp advertised "showers" we elected to stay there. I think the fee was a couple of dollars for the night.

We should have saved our money. The shower house was filthy dirty and I'm not sure that any of us used it. First thing in the morning, I towed our trailer a few-hundred yards around the fence line and set it up in the public camp, on a lovely spot under a big pine a short distance from the shoreline. Not only was it free, it was better.

Trailer camping was all it was cracked up to be. We fished the clear waters of the lake, skipped stones across its calm surface, hiked through the surrounding woods, picnicked at noon, had a campfire in the evening and cooked hotdogs, hamburgers and "s'mores." We were warm and cozy at night, and we had a generous supply of good, clean water.

Aha! All of our efforts to conserve Elko water for drinking came to naught. Rita noted telltale signs of dirt around the fill stem of

the water tank, and on further investigation we found twigs and pine needles under the cap. No Sherlock Holmes was needed to determine who was responsible; Glen had been happy as a lark the day before, playing in the dirt with his toy bucket and shovel near that corner of the trailer. So much for our clean water supply.

I think we spent two or three nights at Payette Lake, but our time was limited and we wanted to see more country, so we finally broke camp and headed west.

We travelled through the little town of New Meadows, turned south to Payette (the town), crossed the Snake River to Ontario, Oregon, a small city on the west bank, and went on to Burns, an even smaller city in the east-central part of the state.

The terrain from there to northern California (along US-395) reminded me of parts of Nevada; dry, barren and covered with sagebrush and lava rock. When it was time to stop for the night we were halfway between somewhere and nowhere, with no way to get off the pavement. The highway was straight and level but bounded on either side by a deep borrow pit. We went for miles before finding a place to turn off, at a highway-department sand cache. It was a desolate place but I was tired of driving and it would soon be dark. To me it was paradise.

Next to a mountainous pile of sand, I parked the trailer on the opposite side from the highway. It was so close to level I did not bother with the jacks and we were soon eating a hearty supper inside. Afterward, with an ample supply of missiles on hand, Tony used the remaining twilight throwing stones, his favorite sport, while the rest of us prepared for bed.

But wouldn't you know, a car pulled off the highway and parked nearby to spend the night. No doubt its occupants, like us, felt lucky to find such an oasis.

Finally, thankfully, all was quiet and we slept.

Next day, rested and eager to go again, we journeyed south past Goose Lake (California) and through Alturas to Herlong, where we paused to say "Hello" to Rita's sister and family. From there we went on to Reno, visited with her brother Jim and Janie, and then headed home on US-40.

The thousand-mile tour had been tiring, but I quickly forgot that aspect of it. Instead I remembered the good luck we'd had, the new places we'd been, and the camps we'd enjoyed. It was the first of many family outings in our camp trailer.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

CAMPING, HUNTING, SPECIAL JOBS

When the crisp, autumn days of 1960 descended, it seemed imperative that we should take advantage of them, if only for a weekend. The temperature would be near freezing at night, but since I had installed a new floor furnace we'd be snug in our trailer. So Rita and I packed up and, with our three kids, headed out for Jack Creek.

The Jack Creek campground, like so many others of that period, consisted of a few weathered tables and rock-circle fireplaces in the quakies. Now the leaves were turning brilliant gold and the tall grass and weeds, dried to a shade of brown, stood stiff and erect, tendering their seeds to the wild birds. Nearby, cowboys rode the high ridges, rounding up strays and driving them to the winter range. Doe deer and young bucks moved silently through the foothills, browsing, while the big fellows clung to their bachelorhood in the rim rocks above.

We were right in the midst of it, exploring the myriad wonders of nature, gathering bright wildflowers and colorful stones, fishing for lively pan-sized brookies in the clear water creek.

Our weather was actually quite mild, the temperature dropping to only 35-degrees at night. Still we got uncomfortably cold before morning and I wondered why, until I discovered that the flame in our nice new furnace had gone out. At sunup I hurriedly dressed and went outside to check the propane supply. There was plenty of fuel, but it sure wasn't getting to the burner.

At about that time the morning sun reached the tank, the gas began to flow and I was able to relight the stove and heater. The gas regulator had frozen, I concluded, and then thawed in the sunshine. (It was the only glitch in an otherwise perfect weekend)

At the first opportunity after returning home, I thoroughly checked the gas system but could find nothing amiss. I then went to see Mr. McCuistion, the propane distributor at the east edge of Elko, and described my problem.

"You've got water in your tank," he chuckled knowingly. "Somebody left the valve open when it was empty, didn't they?"

I told him that the tank had come with the trailer and that it was only recently filled at his establishment.

"So why did it fail?" I asked. "The temperature never got down to freezing the whole weekend."

He explained: "When liquid gas expands it gives up heat. It could lose five or six degrees. If there's water in the gas and the air temperature is close to thirty-two it'll freeze in the regulator, just like an airplane's carburetor ices up."

So that's what happened, I mused, and then aloud, "What could I have done to fix it?"

"We-e-ll," he drawled, "you drink brandy don't you?"

"Yeah...some."

"Have any with you?"

"No."

"Keep a bottle in your trailer," he advised, "but don't drink it all. If the gas line freezes, pour a little brandy into the regulator and the alcohol will carry the water on through."

(From that time on we made certain that there was always a supply of Brandy in the trailer. Luckily, I never had to use it for so mundane a purpose.)

"But we still have to get the water out of your tank," he went on, and suggested two or three methods. "The surest way is to blow it out, pour in some methane...it works even better than brandy...and fill it up again."

I went home for my tank and was back in a few minutes, to grit my teeth as I watched almost five gallons of propane blasting out of its opened nozzle; right there on his loading dock. It cost me a few bucks for the methane and five more gallons of propane, but if it worked I'd be happy.

Within a month I had an opportunity to test the system under actual conditions. Deer season opened, and Stan and I planned a trip to the Independence Range. We would take the trailer, camp at Ganz Creek (or Gaunce Creek, after the old man who had lived there) above the Saval Ranch. We would hunt from there with the Jeep pickup.

Sam was getting on in his eighties but still liked to get out in the country, so we asked him to join us. He said no. Said he didn't want to bother us. "You young fellas go."

But on the appointed day, when it appeared that he actually wished to go, we asked him again. Again he said no, and Stan and I went about preparing for our trip. The sun lowered in the sky and we were about ready to leave, but we still hoped the old man would change his mind. Then I started to get nervous. It was really late, and as much as I wanted him to go with us I hated the thought of our trying to find a good place to camp after dark.

At last he agreed. We loaded his gear and left town, trailing the Shasta behind the red Jeep.

As I turned off the Mountain City highway onto a graveled road to the west, 35-miles north of Elko, in the last faint glow of twilight, I could barely make out the mountain peaks above. From the first gate, which Stan opened then closed behind us, it was six miles to the ranch house, whose night lamps were already aglow in the windows. Alongside the house we came to a corral, with a gate of peeled aspen logs laid horizontally between ladder-like posts. Again Stan did the honors,

removing the poles one-by-one and waiting while I drove through. (It pays to be the driver in ranch country.) We proceeded up the canyon on a narrow road through head-high sagebrush. At the sound of that brush scraping the trailer sides I shuddered, knowing that it would likely get worse the farther we went.

The headlight beams bored ahead like a train's in a tunnel, illuminating two wheel-tracks and a hedgerow of axle-trimmed grass. How would we ever find a place to park in this confounded darkness? And while I didn't wish to appear distrustful, I suspected that Stan wasn't as familiar with the canyon as he'd led me to believe.

Reading my mind he volunteered, "I know there's a spot along here some place."

A couple of miles above the ranch he got out and walked ahead, stabbing at bushes and trees with the beam of a flashlight, searching for an area big enough to get the trailer off the roadway. I worried some more, afraid we'd get boxed-in and I'd have to back the trailer down this narrow crooked road in the dark. At last Stan motioned for me to stop, and stop I did.

Sam stayed in the pickup - he'd done his share of selecting campsites over the years - but I got out for a look-see. There was a fairly level grassy area between the road and the creek, probably the best place we'd find that night. While Stan stood on the spot, I maneuvered the trailer back between the sagebrush toward his light, alert for the "far enough" signal. At last it came.

"Well," I said to Sam when we walked past the trailer to the rear, "let's see how it looks."

There was Stan, shining his light into a shallow pool of water less than three feet from the back bumper.

"Looking for fish," he remarked above the gentle sound of cascading water. Then he asked, "How's this for a camp?"

"Looks great to me," I said, thinking that any place would look good at this stage in the game.

In no time at all we had the trailer chocked, unhitched and leveled. I lit the heater and the range, and put a pot of coffee on to brew. Sam allowed that it was some different from the old days, the days of setting-up a tent and making-down a bedroll. Coffee, laced with brandy, put us in a relaxed mood in short order. I opened and heated a can of beans, another of Dinty Moore's stew, and Stan sliced some of his mother's fresh bread. We ate good, then hit the bunks and slept soundly.

At first light we were all three wide awake, anxious to hunt the wily buck. We fixed a quick breakfast of toast and coffee, stuffed some salami, cheese and bread into a brown bag for lunch, then ventured forth into the frosty morning.

Now, in the breaking dawn, I was able to see what Stan had chosen for a campsite. It was perfect! The trailer rested on the bank of a small beaver pond surrounded by ten-foot clumps of willows. Just upstream, the canyon narrowed and pinched off. In the dark he had found the only place on the whole creek suitable for camping. Not just suitable. Ideal.

We spent the whole day in the high country, new to me yet similar to many other canyons-and-ridges in northeastern Nevada. Sagebrush and

bunch grass covered the sidehills, quakies bounded the trickling streams and bubbling springs, rim rocks and mahoganies lined the high horizon. We saw a few deer, but none close enough or big enough to shoot at.

A second night on Ganz Creek was a copy of the first, and a second day in the hills ended without our bagging a deer. Still, I deemed our first hunting trip with the trailer a huge success. Some of my apprehension, about towing it over a rough canyon road, had evaporated; and everything, including the propane system, operated properly.

Every year, like clockwork, members of Elko's B.P.O.E. Lodge 1472 met, in its second-floor hall on Idaho Street across from the Court House, for a wild game feed. Most of the men were ardent hunters, and contributed venison and ducks (mostly ducks) for the meal.

I was never a "joiner," but had become a member of that fraternal organization back in 1957, primarily because Sam and the Zunino boys belonged. Club meetings were very formal and ritualistic, but otherwise it was an extremely social bunch. I attended regular meetings when not out of town; took Rita to the annual Charity Ball (Elko's social event of the year) and the Christmas Party; and in 1962 proudly escorted Gina to Father and Daughter's Night. But not until I helped procure the ducks would I attend one of the wild game dinners.

On the weekend before the dinner I went with Stan, Jim, Bob Gregory and a couple of others to the South Fork of the Owyhee River, where it meanders through the fields of the Spanish Ranch, to "jump shoot" ducks along the banks. While it seemed a good day for it, there was a scarcity of waterfowl and the shooting was sporadic. I hadn't yet taken a shot when I spied a lone duck swimming on a quiet stretch of water. I looked around, saw that I, too, was alone, and considered the duck to be mine.

I sneaked closer to the bank and, when in range, stood up with my gun at the ready. But the bird didn't fly. Because it would be unsportsmanlike to shoot a duck on the water, I picked up a stick and threw it toward the lazy bird. It simply swam farther away. It was a duck, I could tell by the cut of its head and bill, though not a common mallard and I wasn't sure what kind it was. I threw another stick after it, noisily crashed about in the brush, and the bird finally took wing.

Not wanting to miss the only chance I'd had all day, as soon as it was airborne I let fly a shot and watched with satisfaction when it fell dead.

The bird fit nicely in my vest, and I proceeded to hunt along the waterway, bagging a couple of mallards before rejoining the others at the cars where I proudly added my birds to the pile. But instead of a compliment or a thank you for my contribution, Stan admonished, "Hey...you shot our decoy!"

Puzzled, I asked, "What're you talkin' about?"

The other guys, in chorus, repeated the accusation, "Yeah, that's our decoy. What's the matter with you?"

Now I was embarrassed, although I didn't know why.

When the chiding died down, Stan explained:

"That little duck you got there is a butterball." (His term, it was most likely a buffle-head or a ruddy duck.) "They don't fly much and they're too small to eat so we leave 'em for decoys for the other ducks."

And then someone piped up and accused me of "sluicing" it on the water; to which I replied that I did have a hard time getting it to fly.

The laugh was on me, though I didn't think it too funny, and we packed up and headed for town.

The dinner (a stag affair) was held as scheduled. It was a rollicking occasion, with plenty of booze to enhance the mood of the hundred or so Elks in attendance. When it was time to eat, we sat down at long tables and Dutch Stenovich, the Exalted Ruler (sometimes referred to as the Exhausted Rooster) made the customary salutations and related a couple of off-color jokes. He then began a lengthy introduction of a young member who was there for the first time; one who, having worked hard at securing game birds for the feed, deserved special honor. After that eloquent preface he motioned and a waitress brought forth a large plate under a silver warming cover.

"Under this cover," he said, "is the very best wild duck ever shot by a member of this lodge. And it has been especially prepared for that member. I therefore present it," he went on, removing the cover with a flourish to reveal a miniature roasted duck, "with our congratulations to Elko's greatest duck hunter, George Phelps."

When the laughter died down and I got to taste this epicurean delight (the butterball "decoy" that I had killed) it was the tastiest, most tender wild fowl I'd ever eaten. Unfortunately, my embarrassment lasted longer than the meal.

A few weeks later (still 1960) I loaded my Company Rambler with test equipment and headed for Jerry Munk's area (out of Lovelock) to help with a toll service problem his crew was having.

While on this project I would stay in Lovelock, putting up at the Two Stiff's Motel. It was a convenient place, in the middle of the city, across the street from a drug store with a genuine soda fountain, next door to a hotel with a bar and casino.

A native of Lovelock, Jerry had recently been promoted to chief. Like me, he was responsible for the maintenance of three microwave-radio sites and a half-dozen "K" carrier sites. He was a good manager and a competent technician, but had no experience with VHF- or UHF-radios.

A new carrier-and-radio system (similar to that at Rio King) had just been installed, to provide improved telephone service between Reno and Austin, Nevada. Austin had previously been served by open-wire carrier by way of Ely.

This new system consisted of Lenkurt carriers "riding" on underground cable between Reno and Stillwater (an AT&T microwave-radio station) and on radio from there to the central office in Austin. The radio path was at least 70-miles long, so the overall signal quality was marginal at best, unusable at times. I would make five or six trips from Elko to the Stillwater location and at least one to Austin before completing that assignment.

The one-way travel distance from Elko to Stillwater, by way of US-40 to Lovelock and back east to the site, was about 240-miles; the last 25-miles on graveled roads. By turning off US-40 at Battle Mountain and following the underground cable route southwest to McCoy (by coincidence the flight path of the first transcontinental U.S. Air Mail planes) and over McKinney Pass, it was only 165-miles. Sixty-five miles of this route was unpaved, unimproved and unpopulated, but I was undaunted by those factors.

The first time I opted to take this shortcut, starting from the Stillwater end, I decided to shorten the mileage even more (by 30-miles) by going down the east side of the Stillwater Range instead of traveling around through McKinney Pass. It was a decision that could have proven extremely embarrassing had my luck run out, but She was with me and I suffered only a few bad moments.

This was the ultimate shortcut. Gouged out of the mountainside by a bulldozer to facilitate the burying of the underground cable in 1940, it was never intended as a roadway, especially not for automobiles. Since that time, almost no one but cable repairmen had used it, and then in a 4-W-D vehicle. However, I knew that Jim Dodson and his staff, Ted Brown, Max Goodman and Frank Tolle, had recently gone down the shortcut, so why not me? The fact that I had but a small two-wheel-drive car shouldn't matter, it was downhill all the way.

"The Burma Road" (as it was aptly nicknamed) dropped, by means of sharp switch-backs, 2,000-feet in one-and-a-half miles. As one might guess the "average" percent-grade was extreme, and even it was grossly exceeded in places.

The weather was good and the ground was dry as I nosed the Rambler over the side of the Stillwater access road that afternoon. There were still-visible tracks in the weeds and dust (probably those of Dodson's 4-W-D Bronco) and that was always a good sign on a little used trail. But right from the start I knew this was going to be a challenge. There would be no turning back. I'd have to ride it out to the bottom.

I had taken the precaution of tying down the equipment on the back seat, using a combination of seat belts and short ropes, and it proved to be a wise move. While descending the steepest grades I was forced to stand on the brake-pedal in a near vertical position. And then, about a third of the way down, conditions deteriorated rapidly. A recent rainstorm, obviously having occurred after that last vehicle descended, had deposited rock and debris on the shelf-like roadway. I had to stop, nosing the car against the bank for security, and clear the way.

I was becoming apprehensive. The sun was slipping over the hill behind my back, and I was still a long way from the bottom. I looked out to the east, upon the twelve miles of perfectly flat and straight road that marked the cable route in Dixie Valley, and wished that I were there already.

But one important factor, the impossibility of turning back, nagged at me and provided the necessary motivation to go forward. I'd have to make it even if I had to rebuild the road. And very soon that became a reality. A section of the downhill side of the trail had sloughed away, leaving it too narrow for my car to pass.

I must have spent a half-hour at it, hacking away the hard gravel and rock on the uphill side and shoving it over the other, until I had widened the path by two feet over a distance of eight. Finally, gritting my teeth in determination, I got back behind the steering wheel, gunned the motor and bounced across the narrows with a clatter of flying rocks and gravel.

There were several more obstacles to overcome, more brush to remove, more rocks to roll out of the way, some so heavy I could barely move them, but persevere I did and success I had, arriving at the base of the mountain just before dark. What a relief. Not that I feared for my safety but, as always, for the embarrassment of being stranded. And then there was the fact that, contrary to Company rules, I had neglected to notify anyone of my plan to take the shortcut; a bad example for my subordinates. If I ever caught one of them in a similar situation he'd be subjected to a severe reprimand.

But it all worked out fine. The rest of the trip was routine and I arrived home, albeit rather late (so much for shortcuts) to spend a happy weekend with my family.

A couple of weeks later, again on a Friday after working at Stillwater, I turned toward home; this time, by way of McKinney Pass on the county road.

A warm, wet air mass hung over the Great Basin. It had rained steadily all week and the whole countryside was saturated, what I could see of it through the rain and fog, and the road was so slick it was hard to keep the car from sliding into the deep ditches on either side of it. I finally resorted to letting the wheels find their own way, in previously worn ruts. Every depression was filled with muddy water that came crashing over the hood like waves over the bow of a ship at sea, at times reducing my visibility to zero. And there was no sign of a change in the weather.

It was dusk before I reached Jersey Valley and dark when I passed the McCoy repeater station, where the road dropped slightly toward the valley floor. I was making good time, though, until what was the road was now a canal, delineated by a row of rabbit-brush on either side. Except for that brush there was nothing in sight but water. And it was raining harder than ever.

I stopped to contemplate the situation, trying to remember the normal line of the road. I knew it was fairly straight and cut below the natural level of the terrain, a condition quite common after years of grading the alkali dirt. I also remembered that, at the lowest point, a usually dry creek ran through a large culvert under the road.

What to do?

If I were to proceed and miss the roadway I'd wind up in the drink and in an untenable fix. I could back the car a couple-of-hundred yards, in the total darkness, turn around and either go back over the pass to US-40 near Lovelock, or north through Pleasant Valley and Grass Valley to Winnemucca. Since I was near the halfway point I was loathe to turn around. Anyway, I believed that once past this hurdle the going would be good all the way to Battle Mountain. So I decided to plunge ahead. Literally.

But first I opened the car door and stepped out into the rain, to test the road beneath the flood. I jabbed a shovel into the muddy

water, which was about two inches deep at that point, and determined that the base was solid. I drove ahead, slowly, so the engine wouldn't flood and die yet fast enough to maintain headway.

As I neared the dreaded culvert area, recognizable by a current flowing from left to right, I stopped once more. This time, on opening the door, a river of muddy water spilled over the sill. I quickly closed it again.

"Damn!" I muttered, "Now I've got wet feet."

I had to get through, or abandon the Rambler and wade back to the McCoy station. That last option didn't appeal to me at all so I drove on, centering the car between the bushes that marked, I hoped, the sides of the road.

Because of the Rambler's integrity, and because there were no unexpected pitfalls, I arrived at the other side, 150-yards away, safe and sound. Now the road dipped and climbed like a long roller coaster, across a half-dozen alluvial fans and washes on the way to Dacey's Pass. I never knew what to expect in the dips, whether or not they were washed out, and had to slow down for each one. Luckily, they were only slightly eroded.

I finally got to Buffalo Valley, where the road was always in better condition than in Jersey Valley, even boasting a graveled surface in some places. And in spite of the fact that it was still raining hard I speeded up to 40- and 50-mph, more than double my average speed since leaving the Stillwater station, hoping to make up for lost time. I was in for a big surprise.

A frightful scene abruptly loomed in my path. Not 100-yards away a raging stream of muddy water flowed from south to north across the road. Unconsciously my foot shot from the accelerator to the brake pedal and pushed hard. There wasn't room to stop, so I consciously released the brake and hit the throttle again, hoping to "fly" over the gap. It was a trick I'd learned from my father many years before: "Never hit a hole or a ditch in the road with your brakes on," he'd said, "it'll knock the front wheels cockeyed."

In any event I didn't want to come to an abrupt stop in the gully, for the fifty-pound test set on the rear seat could break loose and come crashing through the back of my seat, or my head. So I held the steering wheel straight and the throttle down.

My teeth rattled from the horrendous jolt. A blinding sheet of water poured over the windshield. The seatbelt cut painfully into my pelvis and hips. But the car continued on its forward path, proving that it had cleared the washout.

After such a jarring event, I decided to stop and assess the damages. I found my flashlight on the floor, under the brake pedal, and with it I checked the test set. It had slipped its tether and flipped upside down on the seat cushion. Good thing I hadn't tried to stop fast. Next I got out and examined the front end of the car. There was no evidence of serious damage, although the splash guard was bent up under the radiator. The bumper was level and at a normal height above ground, the wheels seemed to be inline. Not even a broken spring. I could hardly believe my good fortune.

Now, thoroughly wet but thankful, I started the car and moved on. There were twenty miles of unpaved county road and ten more of paved

highway between me and Battle Mountain. Almost immediately conditions improved. When I passed the Buffalo Valley station, off to my left somewhere in the dark, I considered myself "home free." Until I heard and felt the unmistakable signs of a flat tire.

Now I was more than a little discouraged. I stopped the car in the middle of the road, confident that since I had come 75-miles without seeing another soul or motor vehicle it was not apt to be run into. With my flashlight in hand I stepped out into the pouring rain (again), walked to the rear of the car, opened the trunk, removed the jack, wrench and spare tire, and prepared to go to work.

That was when my flashlight dimmed and went out, its battery dead. What next?

I had to have some kind of a light, even to see the wheel much less the lug-nuts. "Aha!" I exclaimed aloud. "No problem...I'll use an emergency flare."

By groping around in the trunk I located four red flares, took one out and tried to strike it afire. No luck. I tried lighting it with a match. Still no luck. I removed a second one and couldn't light it either. Alas, the rain had leaked into the trunk and all of the fuses were wet. "Okay," I went on talking to myself, "I'll build a fire."

I found some dry rags and paper in the back of the car, wadded them into a loose ball, placed it near the left rear wheel (the one with the flat) and stacked three of the flares on top like kindling wood. My third match ignited the paper; the rags took fire and then the flares. It was like the Fourth-of-July. I had more light than I needed and it was too close to the car. I thought I might be asphyxiated before getting the flat-tired wheel replaced, so I kicked the fuming bonfire aside before completing the job.

At long last, soaking-wet from head to toe, mud up to my knees and elbows, wheezing from the effects of the smoke, I tossed the impaired wheel into the trunk, slammed the lid, climbed wearily back into the car, slumped over the wheel and fell fast asleep.

A horn honked loudly and I jerked upright, wide awake. It was the Rambler's horn. I'd leaned too hard on the horn ring. Oh well, it was time to move on anyway.

The lights of Battle Mountain, the first lights I'd seen since leaving Stillwater, were a truly welcome sight. I drove the Rambler right into Sam Rounds' garage and, while the flat tire was being repaired, wolfed down a hot meal at The Owl Cafe across the street.

It was an easy 75-miles from Battle Mountain to Elko, and I had plenty of time to reflect on my trip across the outback that evening. In spite of what had happened, it was as nothing compared to Rita's father's experiences when he'd hauled hay up Dixie Valley to Winnemucca in the early 1900s, alone on the high seat of a big freight wagon behind a four-horse team, in the winter time. It had taken him not just a few hours but several days to get through. How the times had changed.

With perseverance and the help of Jerry Munk and his men, the Stillwater-Austin radio system was finally in working order. The citizens of Austin were a step ahead with respect to telephone communication. (The next step, a few years off, would be a microwave-

radio system.) My horizons had been broadened with respect to the technical aspects of telephone work, and I was tested in the art of survival in a lonely, remote desert country.

That fall and winter, the FAA was in the process of building a navigational aid on Mt. Moses, some 45-five miles southwest of Battle Mountain. The site, a VOR (for VHF-Omni-Range), was on the very lip of a sharp precipice 8,600' above sea level and 4,000' above the floor of Jersey Valley.

It was accessed via 14-miles of dirt road up the least-steep side of the mountain, the northeast side. The lower half of this road, an existing one that the FAA improved, snaked up the canyon alongside tiny Dacey Creek; the upper half was new, built with a series of switchbacks to gain the necessary elevation. Both the road and the site were subject to adverse snow and wind conditions in the winter months, and winter came early to Mt. Moses that first year.

Bell of Nevada's job was to provide a voice-and-data communication link between the site and the FAA's central location in Reno. A radio system (in the 450-mHz band) was engineered to beam between Mt. Moses and an existing Bell site at Ragged Top, about 70-miles to the west-southwest. Once again our engineers had provided a very long radio path, one that would afford little margin for equipment or atmospheric deterioration. We'd have a tough time getting the facility to work initially, and an equally tough time maintaining it in the future.

I should explain that we considered the FAA one of our most important customers. The lives of thousands of pilots and passengers were dependent on the reliability of facilities leased to the FAA by the Bell System, and we treated every circuit in a "special" manner. Although Mt. Moses was but one of many locations where we interfaced with the aeronautics administration, it was one of the most difficult to maintain.

Some FAA administrators wanted none but perfect communication facilities; noise free and unfailing around the clock, day after day, year after year, even from mountain tops. It was a noble objective, and upper-echelon managers from both the FAA and the Bell Companies met periodically to discuss ways and means of providing that level of service. But there was never any doubt in my mind, that our costs to ensure such a high degree of reliability to the FAA, in rural Nevada, far exceeded the revenues. Such was the "Spirit of Service" in the old Bell System.

Everyone has seen an FAA VOR site at one time or another, but perhaps not knowingly. They are found in fields and on deserts, in suburban areas and on mountaintops. The antenna assembly resembles a large white ice-cream cone inverted on the center of a giant saucer. Its associated equipment building might be situated beneath the saucer, or off to one side. At Mt. Moses, the antenna sat on the highest point and the building just under the brow of the hill beside it.

Due to the nature of the Mt. Moses site, it was a spawning ground for stories, true stories, running the gamut from serious to adventurous to comic. One such incident occurred in the early stages

of construction, before I first came on the scene. It was actually a rather bizarre accident, one that was costly in both time and money but resulted in no injuries.

A large fuel tank, probably of 5,000-gallon capacity, was to be placed underground on the mountaintop. As it was being unloaded from a low-boy trailer, using winch, blocks and chocks in a manner consistent with normal practices, something went awry. Perhaps one of the chocks slipped. At any rate, the big drum rolled off onto the ground...and kept right on rolling over the edge of the cliff and down the mountainside. Dumbfounded and helpless the workmen watched in awe as the giant tin-can bounced over ledges, mashed bushes and leveled trees on its downhill charge, finally coming to a battered rest a thousand feet below.

How embarrassing! So much for that tank. I never knew who had to make good the loss, the contractor or the government. Probably, in the end, us taxpayers.

Due to the site's elevation and susceptibility to inclement weather, an innovative (and expensive) all-electric indoor toilet was installed in a closet in the middle of the building. It operated as follows: When seated, one's body-weight activated a switch that energized an incinerator to "cook" the solid wastes; a powerful fan exhausted the resultant smoke and odor. The real objective, aside from comfort, was to dispose of waste without harming the environment. In the end, more money was wasted than anything else.

I happened to be at the site when that exotic toilet was first (and probably last) put to use. Everyone in the building was forced to leave, in favor of the cold but clean out-of-doors. (A farm-fresh manure pile smells like a rose compared to the stench of burning crap.) When the smoke cleared and we returned to work, the FAA chief wisely posted a "DO NOT USE" sign on the toilet door, locked it, and threw away the key.

Soon after that incident, a self-contained trailer was towed to the site, parked and tied down. Now the FAA men, who might stay on the mountain for days at a time, had many amenities including TV. Compared to our Company's quarters theirs were elaborate.

When it came to over-the-snow travel, though, our equipment was better than theirs. The Thiokol Trackmaster (descendant of the first Sno-Shu) was far superior to their Bombardier.

The Bombardier had a body made of fiberglass that resembled the fuselage of a small airplane. It had bucket seats, two of them mounted in tandem, but very little space for equipment other than tools and survival gear. It was a lightweight vehicle and quite maneuverable, especially on shallow snow, but was mechanically unreliable. The operators experienced frequent breakdowns of one kind or another.

For the most part, we tollies relied on 4-W-D vehicles to get to the Mt. Moses site, keeping to windblown ridges and circumnavigating deep snowdrifts wherever possible. Although we were often mired in the mud or snow, and forced to walk the last 300-yards to the VOR. Still it was faster, easier and more economical than hauling a snow-cat the 120-miles from Elko. But sometimes it was necessary to resort to the snow-cat.

One time, while coaxing our Trackmaster up the last steep slope to the VOR, I suddenly noticed a dark blur in the blowing snow ahead. I drove up alongside the immobile thing, saw that it was the FAA Bombardier and stopped. One man was sitting inside at the controls while another, wearing a down parka, was bent over in front of the rig, his head protected by the raised cowling. He was not aware of our presence until I got out of the Sno-Shu and went to his side.

"Troubles?" I shouted over the wind.

Startled, he whirled around, recognized me, flashed a grin from under his frosted hood, and with a mittened hand waved a giant screwdriver in greeting.

"Gotta problem?" I seconded my own question.

"Nothin' serious," he explained, "just shiftin' gears."

It seemed they had a chronic problem with the Bombardier's shifting mechanism, and to change gears one had to stop and get out, lift the cowling, remove the gear-box cover (at least it was conveniently located) and move a gear, or gears, into proper mesh with a screwdriver. The deftness with which he accomplished the task led me to believe he'd done it many times before. In a matter of minutes the job was done, the transmission cover replaced and the cowling battened down. I was impressed.

And then I thought, for less than the cost of the electric toilet, which had proven to be impractical, the government could have purchased a decent snow-cat.

While installing the equipment in the VOR building, before the trailer was brought up to the site, the men used a small two-burner hotplate to heat water, beans or soup, and to make hot sandwiches. There was one man among them (I'll call him Bill) with whom, because of his eating habits, I could relate.

Bill was a wiry little guy, probably in his fifties, with a grizzled visage and graying hair. He was in the kitchen area one day, grilling a cheese sandwich for lunch, while three or four of us were working in the equipment room. Suddenly the building was filled with a blue haze.

"Somethin's burning," there came a shout, and all hands rushed to the source. The old man was calmly standing over the hotplate, fork in hand, gently stabbing at his sandwich as smoke curled up from the pan.

"Hey, it's burnin'!" someone pointed out.

"Nope," said Bill, and coined a phrase that stuck in my mind. "When it's smokin' it's cookin'...when it's burned it's done."

The others turned away in disgust but I, thinking the guy's feelings might have been hurt, volunteered the opinion that his sandwich looked pretty good to me.

"Here," he offered, "you take half."

It was one of the best grilled-cheese sandwiches I ever ate.

My craftsmen made an inordinate number of trips to Mt. Moses that winter (as did I), at various times of the day or night and in every kind of weather, until our difficulties were overcome and the system was turned over to the customer. I got to know the FAA folks quite well.

Concurrent with the implementation of the Mt. Moses site, a similar VOR was being assembled in east-central Nevada, on Mt. Wilson.

It was outside Bell of Nevada's territory and was the responsibility of the small, independent, Lincoln County Telephone Company. With headquarters in the old mining town of Pioche, that company was owned and operated by the Christians, John Senior and Junior, who were prominent citizens and, incidentally, Mormons.

Up until 1960, Pioche's only toll-telephone connections with the outside world were via a Bell of Nevada open-wire carrier facility to Ely, and a single pair of wires to Cedar City, Utah. Now, with the FAA in their own backyard, the Christians had a need for additional and more reliable circuits. They elected to use Western Electric "O" carriers for the purpose, and arranged with Bell of Nevada to engineer, furnish and install the system.

And that's when I got involved, at the end of December when it was ready for testing and service turn-up. I had never been in that part of the state and eagerly looked forward to the job. One of George Elmore's men, Bob Harrison, a toll transmissionman who was familiar with "O" carrier equipment, would accompany me.

I celebrated Christmas in the traditional manner on Saturday, rested up on Sunday, and prepared to leave for Pioche on Monday, the 27th; which, by coincidence, was Rita's and my tenth wedding anniversary. She wasn't happy about my leaving but the road of life sometimes takes inconvenient turns.

With our necessities loaded into the Rambler, Bob and I began the 300-mile, all day trip to Pioche. We stopped in Ely for gas and lunch, and to see Howard Wise, who had been recently promoted to chief, before proceeding to our destination. (Howard had been a student in one of my radio-license classes in 1956.)

Arriving well before dark, as I drove along the old road into town I recognized, having seen pictures of it, the famous "Million Dollar Courthouse." A rather plain, brick-and-stone edifice, built in the 1870s, it was originally to have cost \$30,000. But shady deals resulted in a final bill to the taxpayers of \$1,000,000.

I turned up the main business street and, within a block or so, found the telephone office and a place to park. Inside, Bob and I were greeted by young John Christian, and since it was close to quitting time he led us to a bar next door for cocktails; or more precisely, "drinks." We talked about the job, and then he turned us loose on the town.

We headed for the cafe on the northwest corner of Main and Lacour Streets, a traditional prewar restaurant with the homey, friendly atmosphere common in small towns throughout the United States at that time. At the rear of the big room was a horseshoe-shaped counter, with stools screwed more-or-less firmly to a linoleum floor. Seven or eight padded booths and an equal number of tables with chairs filled the front. The food was very good and the service excellent, in spite of the fact that it was "the only store in town."

Bob and I took rooms at a tiny motel at the north end of town. It was a most unique hostelry, having been converted from an early Pioche home. My room was undoubtedly a parlor at one time. The furnishings were antiques; an overstuffed divan and a matching chair; silk-shaded, brass floor lamps; walnut bookcases; an iron bedstead; and an ancient floral-print carpet, the kind that covers all but the outer perimeter

of the floor. An adjacent room, originally a sitting room or a bedroom, had been transformed into a commodious bathroom.

The rate for this extravagant suite? Three-fifty a night. They'd never believe that when auditing my voucher in Reno.

In the morning, after a fine breakfast of hotcakes and bacon, we met John at the telephone office. He gave us a quick tour of the facility, and then drove us to the Mt. Wilson FAA site, 25-miles away to the northeast. The radio link was just like the one from Mt. Moses but with a much shorter radio path, a factor that should contribute to a better signal-to-noise ratio.

From Pioche to the outside world, the circuits would occupy channels on new "O" carriers to Cedar City. Getting those carriers to work would prove to be no easy task.

We worked with diligence the next few days, sometimes on into the evenings, which was a good thing because it reduced our time at the bar. (Bob loved to drink.) But Friday came around all too fast and the system was far from ready for service. Since it would be wasteful to drive to Elko and back over the weekend, even though Saturday was New Year's Day we stayed in Pioche.

John, a slim, handsome young man in his thirties (I guessed), invited us to his house on New Year's Eve, where he and his wife hosted a lively party for friends and acquaintances. We sampled the buffet, met and chatted with some of the locals, finished a couple of drinks, then excused ourselves and went uptown.

Except for the occasional laughter of a local drunk, the saloon we chose for our "celebration" was relatively quiet, occupied by no more than a dozen people, hardly in keeping with the town's 19th-century reputation as the rowdiest mining camp in Nevada. At midnight, Bob and I saluted the New Year and returned to our rooms.

By Wednesday of the second week we had worked out the usual, and some unusual, problems in the new radio and carrier systems, and the FAA circuits were ready for service. We turned them over to the Christians, thanked them for their hospitality and headed for Elko. Unknown to us at the time, we would return.

In the spring, at the Christian's request, Bob and I were back in Pioche to assist with the testing of additional telephone circuits and to train some of the craftsmen. Our work was much easier this time, and in the off-hours we managed some recreation.

Leaving the job a little early one afternoon, we headed for the recently created Beaver Dam State Park. It was not really by chance that we had our fishing gear along. But the 50-mile drive, over half of it on dirt roads, took longer than we'd anticipated, and the sun was ready to set by the time we located the manmade lake in Beaver Dam Wash.

Bob, an expert fly-fisherman, soon had a couple of fine trout in his creel. I started out with a small flatfish, switched to a fly, but had very little success with either lure. Twilight gave way to darkness. I could hear the fish splashing and rising for flies but could neither see them nor where my fly was landing. Along with my temper, I lost several flies in the brush before making what sounded

like a pretty good cast. And then I got a strike. "Aha!" I shouted. "I've got one."

Bob had a strike at the same time, and we both reeled in. My elation gave way to disgust, though, when our lines grew taught and hung like a clothesline between the tips of our rods. In the dark we had hooked each other's lure. We eventually saw some humor in the situation, untangled the mess, folded our gear, fired-up the Rambler and made our tedious way back to Pioche.

In a day or two we satisfactorily completed this phase of our assignment, said good-bye to the Christians, who thanked us for the help, and turned toward Elko.

Along the way we made a couple of stops; at Ely for gas and lunch, and at Currie for refreshment. Currie, then as now, was an almost deserted railroad stop on the Nevada Northern Short Line. Roughly halfway between Ely and Wells, it consisted of a freight station, a maintenance shack, a gas station/general store, a dozen houses, some sheds and an old hotel, all of them weather-beaten. But it was a great place to stop for coffee or a cold drink.

We walked into the dusty store, pulled ourselves up on stools in front of a worn counter and ordered root beers. While seated there, chatting with the leathery-faced proprietor, Bob came up with a question. "Any water in that spring across the tracks?"

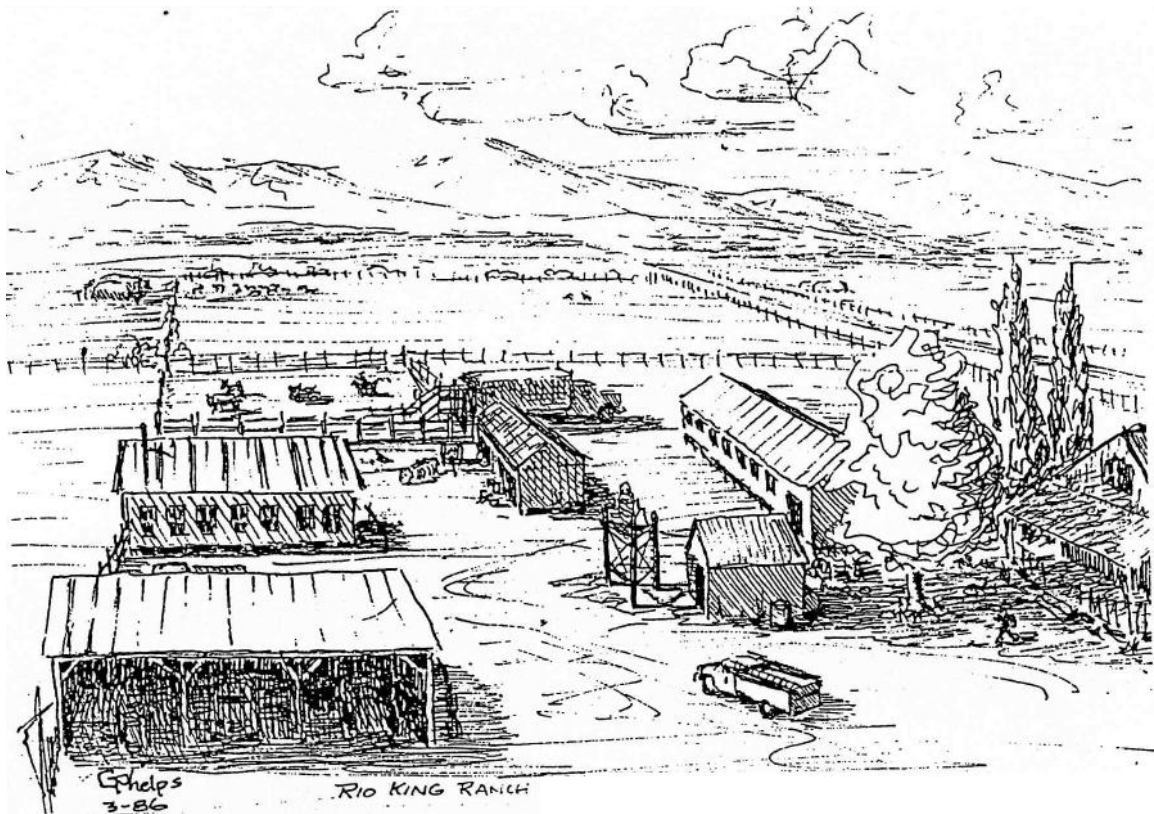
The man acted surprised that Bob knew about the place, but answered, "Yup, far as I know."

When we'd finished our drinks and Bob was driving us to the spring, just around the hill south of town, he offered additional exciting information. "Hardly anybody knows it but that spring is full of giant trout." And so it was that I was introduced to another "secret fishing hole."

We found the springs, some open water and tule patches between the railroad bed and a sagebrush flat, and Bob was right about the big trout. There were lots of them, swimming above the clean sand between the water weeds. But I, not being clever at laying down a fly on smooth water, never came close to catching one. Bob landed three German browns, each one tipping the scale at three pounds or more.

Were I successful we might have stayed there until dark, but since that was not the case I persuaded my companion to leave. Moreover, I was anxious to get home to my family, for I had been away a lot in the past few months.

That was the last of my business trips, with pleasure thrown in, to Pioche, Nevada.



CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

THE WENDOVER BLAST

Nearly two decades had passed since the start of the Big War. It was a period of great change, worldwide, in politics, science, economics and social behavior. The Space Age was born and growing fast. Alan Shepard made the United States' first space flight, not long after Yuri Gagarin of Russia became the first human to orbit the Earth.

In the U.S. of A., not only was there a chicken in every pot there was a car in every garage, sometimes two, and a television set in every living room. Recreational activity was emerging as a necessity of life, not just an adjunct to it.

But all was not rosy. We were caught in a cold war with our former ally, the U.S.S.R. Wage demands fueled spiraling prices and fed inflation (I wondered how long things could go on like this) and there was civil strife as well. Martin Luther King, an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, preached non-violence but stirred unrest among the blacks, and the number of black-vs-white confrontations increased, particularly in the South and East.

John F. Kennedy, a liberal but charismatic Democrat, was elected to the presidency and took office in 1961. While he and Khrushchev rattled sabers from opposite sides of the planet, Castro was setting up shop in Cuba, just across the narrows from Florida. Our president backed an ill-fated revolutionary effort against Castro (the Bay of Pigs debacle) that left Fidel more confident than ever in his communist regime. He openly wooed Khrushchev, his newfound friend, and suddenly we were on the brink of another war.

While it turned out not to be part of a large conspiracy, a serious and costly act of sabotage took place in our own back yard, in the Great Basin of Nevada and Utah. Three American Telephone & Telegraph Company facilities - two microwave stations and a cable-repeater station on the transcontinental communications routes - were blown up.

One of them, called Wendover Notch, was located in Nevada; the others, Cedar Mountain and Knolls, were in Utah.

I had spent a large part of my early career at Wendover Notch as a craftsman, and now it was within my area of management responsibility. But it was more than just a site to me; it was an old and familiar artifact, one that I would miss.

Curiously, while other Bell System disasters (fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, ice storms) and restoration efforts have been well documented, I have found no such information relating to the Great Basin bombings of 1961.

The following is my account of the events prior to the bombings; the bombings; the damage done; the restoration effort and success:

Saturday, May 27, 1961:

With our camp trailer in tow behind the '56 DeSoto, Rita and I, with her folks and our three children, left Elko on vacation; destination, Lehman Caves, in the Snake Range east of Ely, Nevada. By late afternoon we had arrived at the Lehman Creek Campground, selected a site and settled in, planning to rest and relax through the weekend, the Memorial Day holiday and beyond.

It was a fine camp, of almost idyllic proportions, nestled in a patch of quakies rimmed by steep canyon walls and with a grand view across a wide alluvial fan to the alkali valleys and barren mountains of Utah. Behind us, five miles away as the eagle flies but not visible from our camp, the second highest point in Nevada, Wheeler Peak, thrust its white head up to the sky. We were at the 7,500' elevation, where the snow-fed creek tumbled noisily from pool to pool past our campsite on its downhill race to the playa, where it would ultimately evaporate into the thin desert air.

No sooner was the trailer un-hitched and leveled than Sam had a campfire started in the rock-and-concrete fireplace. And almost as quickly, Rita and her mother had the fixin's ready for supper. After eating our grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, the kids and Rita enacted their "ritual of the burning marshmallows," combining the resultant hot, dripping sugar-puffs with Hershey's chocolate and grahams and chanting, "S'more...S'more."

It appeared as if we were in for a fine time in that far-off part of the country, away from the job, away from home chores, away from the city. Our enjoyment would turn out to be real enough, but brief.

Sunday dawned clear and bright. Rita cooked bacon and eggs for breakfast that we savored at the wooden picnic table under gently quaking aspen leaves. Afterward Sam, Gina, Tony and I threaded some fresh garden-worms onto hooks, dangled them in the small creek, and were rewarded with several pan-sized brook trout. Sam, of course, caught most of them. Later, after lunch, we piled into our car, went down to the Caves, joined a small group of "tourists" and were guided through one of Nevada's great natural wonders.

It was my first time there and I was favorably impressed. Some years before I had visited an underground cave in upper New York state (Howe Caverns), but Lehman's cave was far superior, both in size and in beauty. Magnificently colored limestone flows, pillars, stalactites and stalagmites of a hundred sizes, shapes and hues, all graced the low-ceilinged "rooms." There were unimaginable pools of clear water, narrow corridors, some of which we had to squeeze through, and a ballroom-sized chamber where early explorers had left their names in candle smoke. (The authorities since closed the big room to the public, allegedly for fear of falling rocks.) It was a near-perfect day. All was right with the world. Or so I thought. Unbeknownst to us,

while we were sleeping so peace-fully that Sunday morning, a small force of evil was busy just 130-miles to the north.

It may have worked as follows:

It is shortly after 1:00am Pacific Time. Near a pass in the range of mountains just west of the Great Salt Lake, a car with its lone occupant turns south off the highway (US-40) onto a canyon road and proceeds to a saddle on the ridge above. The driver, a young man, turns the vehicle around and parks it near a shadowy, concrete-block building. He sits there for a moment and stares in silence through the open window, studying the silhouette of a tall steel tower, on top of which are mounted four, pyramid-shaped microwave antennas, two facing in each direction of east and west.

(This is AT&T's Cedar Mountain microwave site.)

With a small flashlight in one hand and a bag-of-tricks in the other, the man sets about his sinister work, that of planting the means to destroy the place. He first prepares four explosive charges (of a type first used in World War II), then climbs to the twenty-foot level of the tower and secures them to the main supporting legs, each with a fuse wire attached. Back on the ground he fixes two more bombs and sets them against the south and north walls of the building. Gathering the ends of the fuse wires together, he connects them to a master detonator, consisting of a clock, contacts and batteries, and sets the timer device to close the circuit at 4:40 am.

Done! He breathes a sigh of satisfaction, tosses his lightened satchel into the car, climbs in and speeds away toward the highway, the rear wheels kicking gravel from the curves in his haste. But there is much work yet to be done. More destruction to engineer. More explosives to plant. And you can't waste time when you're in the employ of the devil.

There is no traffic in sight on the highway when he heads west toward the Great Salt Desert and his next target. Twenty minutes later, off to his right, the outline of a rooftop shows clearly in the moonlight. "This is it," he decides. "Knolls." He switches off the headlights, proceeds slowly along a narrow drive outlined by white sage and stops near the building.

(This is an AT&T, underground-cable repeater station.)

It is a neat brick structure with a pitched roof of slate, situated well back from the highway. It is necessary to blow this site, or another one just like it, not only to effectively sever America's major trans-continental communications, but also to make the Company's restoration efforts more difficult.

It takes but a few minutes to arrange the charges at Knolls and then he is off again, still traveling west. The nearly full moon hangs low in the sky, its light reflecting off the smooth surface of salt as if from a frozen sea. However, the ambient temperature quickly dispels that illusion, and he steps down on the throttle. He'll have to hurry, for he must complete his work and put as much distance as possible between himself and his planned, pre-dawn explosions.

Ten miles out onto the flat desert, he passes another microwave station (AT&T's Barro). Only 150-feet off the highway, it is much too close. Too much of a chance of being observed.

Twenty-five more miles of absolutely straight, absolutely flat highway brings him to the sleeping town of Wendover. He crosses the Nevada state line. Three miles farther on, at the top of a steep hill, he slows his vehicle and turns north onto a graveled access road. It is only a few hundred yards to the station, a bunker-like building crouched at the edge of a rocky precipice. He has already cased the site, as indeed he had the others, and knows that this one will present a real challenge.

(This is AT&T's Wendover Notch microwave repeater site.)

It is a window-less structure of reinforced concrete in the shape of two contiguous blocks; the larger, rear section is some three or four feet higher than the front. A battery plant and electronic equipment are housed in the main block, two Hercules Diesel engine-alternators in the smaller one. A steel deck, twice as high as the roof and supported by bridge-like beams and trusses, provides a platform for the microwave antennas, two of them facing the desert, two looking toward the Pequop Range to the northwest.

Once again the car is parked for a quick get-away. Once again the bombs are prepared, three of them this time, from materials in the man's bag. He climbs onto the roof and up a ladder to the deck, where he places one of the charges directly beneath a pair of antennas and attaches the fuse. Re-tracing his steps to the lower roof, he sets a second charge against the face of the four-foot wall of the main building block. Back at ground level, he puts the third and last bomb on a concrete pad, directly over the fuel tank and against the west wall of the building. As before, the fuse wires are connected to the clock and the timer set for 4:40am.

Finished! And just in time. The moon has set and the stars are already giving way to dawn's early light. With a sigh of relief at having escaped detection somewhere along the line, the saboteur drives away, soon to appear as just another inconspicuous traveler on the highway, but bound for a rendezvous with his leader.

No one actually witnessed the explosions that morning, although several people in the town of Wendover were aroused by the tremendous blast. The thunderous boom rudely awakened a driver, asleep in the cab of his truck parked near the driveway below Wendover Notch. A few seconds later, rubbing sleep from unbelieving eyes, he saw a shower of white particles (bits of Styrofoam from the exploding antennas) floating down like snowflakes.

At exactly 4:42am, Evard Van Welch, transmissionman on duty in the Elko toll-repeater office, was alerted by a signal from the Wendover Notch station. The alarm codes indicated a "total failure."

He notified his boss, George Elmore, who had the weekend duty and who in turn advised Red Wayman, the Supervising Wire Chief. (Had I been at home, I too would have been notified.)

Having barely hung up the phone with Elmore, Van was hit with a "Christmas tree" of alarms from the east underground-cable repeaters,

a sure sign of a major failure. Now he had his hands full. All communications to the east, including the Company's maintenance circuits, were down. Men at the radio and carrier control offices to the west - Reno, Sacramento and Oakland - all phoned at once trying to find out what had happened.

Red and George came to Van's relief at 5:20am. A three-man crew, Albert Sails, Ernie Simonsen and Larry Staley, was quickly dispatched to Wendover. (At the same time, although unknown to the Elko men, crews were being sent from Salt Lake City to Cedar Mountain and Knolls.) A preliminary report was sent to the General Administration Center at PT&T Headquarters in San Francisco.

By 6:00am, the process of notifying successive levels of management was well under way: Wayman to Paul Brown (maintenance superintendent), to Jim Dodson (Nevada plant manager), to Bob McAdam (assistant to the Vice President and General Manager), all in Reno. The Company's chief special agent in Sacramento, Knopp, was also notified, while east of the Nevada state line similar calls were being made in AT&T Long Lines territory.

From San Francisco to New York, telephone men of all ranks were busy assessing the situation, re-routing as many circuits as possible and initiating emergency restoration procedures. By noon, hundreds of people in the Long Lines area were involved, and virtually every toll man - as well as dozens of engineers and exchange maintenance employees - in Nevada and California.

Portable microwave-radio equipment and operating personnel were flown from San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, in an Air Force Globemaster and civilian transport planes, to the Wendover Air Base; the first arriving that very evening. Long Lines airlifts landed at Salt Lake City's airport.

As the Bell System geared for action, so too did National Guards, local law enforcement agencies and the FBI. Even the Pentagon became involved, for in addition to long distance telephone, television and national news circuits, important military communications were in jeopardy.

No one knew, or could even guess, who was responsible for the bombings. Was it done by an enemy nation, testing our communications network? Was it a subversive plot? Or was it the work of vandals?

Elko County Sheriff Jess Harris, alerted at 6:45am, sent deputies out to guard the underground cable stations. Brigadier General James May, commander of the Nevada National Guard, ordered out 32 officers and men in Elko, to patrol the microwave stations in the northeastern part of the state. Utah's National Guard commander, Major General Maxwell E. Rich, was quoted as saying, "We do not feel it is the work of pranksters because the stations are so completely damaged." He, too, took the path of caution, calling out troops to guard telephone company facilities, as did commanders in nine other states.

All of the "professionals" would be relieved the following morning, when our own craftsmen took over the job of site surveillance. It was a lucrative but nerve wracking task, alone at remote locations, not knowing just who or what to fear, or if the reason for concern had passed.

The first men on the scene at Wendover Notch, the crew dispatched at 5:20am, after overcoming an initial sense of shock entered the bombed-out building to find small fires still burning in the battery area. They dug out fire extinguishers from the rubble and quenched the flames, and disconnected some of the heavy electrical conductors to prevent short-circuiting and the possibility of explosions. Beyond that there was little to be done, so complete was the destruction.

Art Richards, among the second group of tollies at the scene, noted bits of a clay-like substance scattered about the area, some of it still wrapped in olive drab material.

"This must be what they used," he remarked.

Later, Ernie Simonsen picked up a fragment of the stuff and, deciding to "test" it, was in the process of hitting it with a hammer when Knopp and the FBI agent from Elko, Eric Meale, showed up.

"Hold it!" they warned. "That stuff is so dangerous it could blow your foot off if you step on it."

The building and outside perimeter were immediately cleared of personnel while they conducted an investigation. By mid-afternoon - after a military demolition team removed the remnants of the unexploded bomb, the one over the fuel tank, the only one that had not properly detonated - our crews were allowed to return.

Within an hour of his learning the news that morning, Paul Brown (in Reno) had chartered an airplane and was on his way across the state. At the Elko airport he arranged to have his old friend, Ralph Scott, fly him and Red Wayman to Wendover. They were on site by 12:30pm.

Meanwhile, back at Lehman Creek, having returned to our campsite from the Cave, Rita prepared the evening meal. There was a chill in the air so we elected to eat in the comfort of the trailer. I settled down at the table and, out of habit, turned on my battery-powered radio, tuning it to Salt Lake City's KSL, the only station receivable in that remote place. It was five o'clock (six in Utah) and time for the news. Supper was served and I began to eat.

Suddenly I stopped, a fork full of food halfway to my mouth, as I caught the phrase "AT&T" in the newscast. Quickly I reached around and turned up the volume.

"Three microwave stations in Western Utah were blown up this morning," the announcer said, and went on to state that coast-to-coast communications were seriously impaired by the blasts. "The National Guard has been activated...the military and the FBI alerted...telephone company personnel are working diligently to restore service...as yet there is no clue to the identity of the bomber, or bombers, or a motive." And that's all there was to the report.

I was dumbfounded. Recalling as many of the key words as possible, I tried to figure out what had happened. "Three microwave stations," he had said. "In "Western Utah." That would be Stansbury Island, Cedar Mountain and Barro, the only three microwave stations west of the city in Utah. Or could the newsman be mistaken? Could he have considered Wendover Notch in Utah?

Why did something like this have to happen when I was vacationing? Why did it happen at all? Anyway, there was no question of my responsibility; I had to return to Elko as quickly as possible.

But Elko was six hours away. I had a trailer-full of family to think of, and darkness was already approaching. I tried another line of thinking. If we were to pack up and leave immediately we'd arrive home in the middle of the night. What could I possibly accomplish then? What could I accomplish in Elko anyway? My place was at Wendover, if indeed it had been bombed. I cursed to myself as those thoughts and others raced through my troubled mind.

The first course of action, I decided, was to get to a telephone, call my office and find out what really happened. Leaving the kids with their grandparents, Rita and I went to Baker, a village of 120 souls at the foot of the hill. I didn't know where but I was sure there was a telephone in town as I remembered seeing a single-wire line alongside the highway.

At the most likely place to look, the grocery store-general store-gas station, I learned that there was a phone at the U.S. Forest Ranger's office. I was in luck. He was at home. (Where else would he be on a Sunday evening in Baker?) I introduced myself, told him about the bombings and asked to use the phone. He led me into a small office where a black, candlestick telephone stood on an old oaken desk. I lifted the receiver off the hook, reached for the handle at the side of the magneto housing, and cranked it vigorously while praying that the current would make it all the way to Ely.

"Operator." There came the familiar voice, low in volume but audible.

"This is George Phelps, chief transmissionman from Elko," I said by way of identification. "Can you hear me all right?"

"Yes," she responded, "Barely."

I talked a little louder, "Will you please connect me with the Elko toll testboard?" It was a routine request and toll free.

"One moment, please." Silence. Then clicking noises and, "Go ahead, sir, they're on the line."

"Hello, Elko, this is Phelps. Do you read me?"

No answer. Only the hum of the grounded wire and an occasional static pop. After a while, the operator came back on the line. At least I still had communication with her.

"I can't hear him at all," I explained. "You'll have to be a repeater for us." She agreed.

"Ask him if Wendover Notch was blown up," I enunciated, then waited for what seemed an eternity.

"The answer is, 'Yes'."

"Tell him I'll be at Wendover in the morning."

I held on while she conveyed the message, thanked her for the help, re-hung the receiver on its hook and rang off.

I thanked the ranger and, muttering to myself, left.

Dawn arrived bright and clear, and early, at Lehman Creek the next morning. I had been awake most of the night, feeling guilty about not being on the scene at Wendover Notch and annoyed that our family holiday was shot. We were all up and dressed when the sun appeared over the Confusion Range, in Utah.

(No one then knew that within two years this would be the path of a new, AT&T microwave-radio route, to be chosen largely for its remoteness and strategic separation from the existing route up north.)

Rita made breakfast while I prepared the DeSoto and trailer for departure. We were all rather quiet, each with his own thoughts and imaginations about the bombings, wondering if there were more to come, and if so when and where.

Reluctantly, and with a promise to return, I eased the car-and-trailer down the grade. We were nearly an hour-and-a-half on the 62-mile road to Ely, having to cross over two high summits on the way.

At the Standard Station, while he was filling our gas tank I questioned the man about the bombings. But he could furnish no news beyond that which I'd heard on the radio.

The highway to Wendover was - and still is - relatively smooth and level. The DeSoto pulled the trailer easily at 75-mph over most of the 120-mile distance, and, after stopping for gas and lunch at the State Line Hotel in Wendover, we arrived at the site before noon. I un-hitched the trailer on a level spot about 300-yards below the station, then drove the car up the driveway so we could all get a closer look at the destruction.

How many times had I made that approach over the past ten years, always with a sense of pride. The station had become a permanent part of the landscape, inextricably merged with the jutting volcanic rocks of the hillside; its concrete, once a glaring white, had taken on the subdued gray and brown of the desert. Even the constant, rhythmic, melodic sound of the diesel engines had become, after a decade, an integral part of the environment.

Now all of that was changed. It looked as if an aerial bomb had been dropped on the place, the twisted deck reminiscent of the superstructure of a war-torn ship. The yard was strewn with debris; chunks of concrete, shards of flashing, twisted bits of aluminum, and Styrofoam by the bushel. Two of the antennas had been torn completely loose, their parts thrown over the whole surrounding area; the remaining two were battered and torn but still clung tenaciously to their mountings.

Perhaps I should explain about the Styrofoam. The Bell Labs' delay-lens antenna was designed to direct radio frequency microwaves into a "beam," much as a glass lens concentrates light waves. The microwave lens, at the large end of a pyramid-shaped aluminum horn, consisted of a block of Styrofoam about ten-feet square by three-feet thick in which were embedded hundreds of narrow aluminum strips. When the antennas were blown apart, about four-dozen cubic yards of the snow-white stuff was scattered to the winds, some of it in breadboard-sized wafers, some no bigger than a silver dollar.

A gaping, six-foot hole in the roof, at the junction of the equipment and engine rooms, revealed a concentration of spaghetti like reinforcing steel. Soot-black stripes mottled the exterior concrete walls, evidence of the searing heat from the explosions and fires. I could almost hear the blasts and the crackling of flames and the lingering rustle of falling materials, and then total silence as the erstwhile sound of the diesel was throttled forever.

A half-dozen green, Bell System cars and trucks cluttered the parking area, along with as many "civilian" vehicles. Some men scurried about carrying things like two-by-fours, toolboxes and radio equipment; others (obviously managers) stood around with cameras to their faces, or conversed in small, tense groups.

Red Wayman observed me getting out of the car, came over, welcomed me heartily and said hello to my family. I said good-bye to them and Rita drove our kids and her folks home in the DeSoto, without the trailer. And with that my holiday was officially over.

Talking as we walked, Red filled me in on what had transpired up to that time. Paul Brown was the site restoration coordinator; Stu Purcell and Mel Sparks, PT&T Headquarters staff technicians from San Francisco, would provide liaison assistance. We found all of them in the anteroom, the only place relatively free of dust, discussing plans and personnel assignments.

Western Electric made TE-2 microwave-radio gear would be used for the temporary restoration of the TD-2 channels, and would be operated, with help from our Elko and Reno tollies, by the men from San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego who were most familiar with it. (TE-2 equipment was normally employed in the cities for remote television pickups.) They would work in two, twelve-hour shifts per day, each crew consisting of from six to ten men. George Spellman, an installation foreman, would oversee the day crew of predominantly Bay Area people. Frank Moore, from Los Angeles, would supervise the night shift, a mix of mostly Southern California craftsmen. I would be on site every day, working with schedules, vouchers, time reports and so on, and assisting the various equipment and building engineers, plant engineers, line crews, outside contractors and Western Electric people, until the site was permanently restored.

I walked around to the rear of the building. Two wooden platforms had already been constructed; the higher one, atop a point of rocks, virtually bristled with antenna dishes; sixteen of them, eight facing in each direction of transmission. Bill Ponder and a helper, Hank, had done a whale of a job with saw and hammer. Now they were building a framework over the lower staging, where the first temporary radio gear was being set up, to support a tarpaulin roof and walls, for the wind whistled through the notch and a storm appeared imminent.

I came upon Vince Vercoe, chief transmissionman from Reno. He was a unique individual with clothes that hung loosely from his tall, skinny frame, and he was a good supervisor, with integrity and dedication to the job. Pumping my hand vigorously he chided, "I hear you've been hiding out in a cave somewhere."

"Yeah...and I would've stayed there if I'd known you were here."

Vince and one of his able tollies, Noble Crew, had arrived on Sunday. It so happened that Noble was already on the job in Reno, working on microwave equipment serving the Reno Cable-TV company, when he was "drafted" to fly to Wendover Notch. He and Vince were both aboard Bill Painter's airplane by 8:00am, with Noble complaining that he hadn't had time to get any spending money. Painter owned a flying service in California and had a contract with PT&T. He would transport a lot of people and materials to Wendover in those first few days.

Noble was still chuckling about an incident that occurred the night before I arrived, when he'd been sent to meet an aircraft at the Wendover Air Field.

"Vince sent me down to meet this Air Force Globemaster full of men and gear," he said. "You know how big a Globemaster is? How was I supposed to get all those guys in a Company pickup?"

Somehow they all got to the site.

I learned that microwave-channel continuity had already been established between Rocky Point, to the west, and Barro, to the east. However, until the temporary facility at Cedar Mountain was in working order the Oakland-Salt Lake Junction route was still inoperable. And the job of restoration at Cedar Mountain was much more difficult than ours; a 200' tower must be erected to enable the antennas to "see" over the shoulder of the mountain.

Nearby, a guy with a big impressive-looking camera composed and shot a photo of the bombed-out building. When he turned, I discovered that it was not a press photographer but my friend Phillip Hutchinson. I was more than a little surprised to see him.

Phil, whom I had gotten to know while attending one of his telephone carrier classes in Reno some years before, now worked at PT&T headquarters in San Francisco, along with Stu Purcell and Mel Sparks, in H.H. (Joe) Polen's organization. In many respects Phil worked directly for Mr. Polen, who held the title of "Plant Operating Engineer" but was really "Mr. Toll" of the whole Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Joe had quickly recognized Phil's varied capabilities and boundless enthusiasm, and assigned all sorts of special projects to him. Phil was an accomplished photographer and Joe knew that too. So it was only natural that Phil would be sent to Wendover for a firsthand look, he'd undoubtedly take his camera along and get some good pictures. And that's how Phil came to be at Wendover Notch, after what he described as a "damned rough, low level, death defying flight" (in yet another small chartered plane).

Paul Brown wanted to keep Phil around to help, but Joe had other ideas and ordered him to "get his — back to the City." So Phil made the return trip to the Bay Area the next day, Tuesday, by automobile to Elko, via United Airlines from there, arriving home in the early morning. After a few hours' sleep he developed the film, made a set of 8X10" prints, went over to the New Montgomery Street office and presented them to Mr. Polen. Joe immediately took them "upstairs" to the vice presidents' conference.

"Where did you get these photos?" came the question, for they were fine prints and graphically portrayed the bombed-out building.

"My boy Phil took 'em," was the proud response.

Back in '58 or '59, I'd been successful in having a metal "shed" constructed at Wendover Notch, about a hundred feet from the main building, to store our portable (meaning "on wheels") engine-alternator. That machine, formerly garaged in Elko, could then serve as an alternate source of AC power when the station's primary engines were being overhauled. Now, even though the corrugated steel roof and walls had partly collapsed from the force of the blast, the 20-kw

plant was virtually intact, and Paul Walther got it running and on-line.

Paul, a tall, quiet, hard-working man (I suppose of German descent), was an Elko transmissionman and also an experienced electrician. He was a good man to have around when working with AC power, especially if multi-phased transformers and switches were involved.

We would need a lot of electricity, to power the temporary radio gear and tools of the construction workers, so Bill Bellinger towed our second portable engine-alternator from Elko, and he and Paul now added that unit, of 30-kw capacity, to the supply line.

When Bill left the site, as a personal favor to me he towed my trailer back to Elko. I was relieved to get it away from the vicinity as I worried that it might become damaged in some way. (Ironically, soon after Bill parked it at the curb in front of our house, a neighbor kid threw a ball through its front window.)

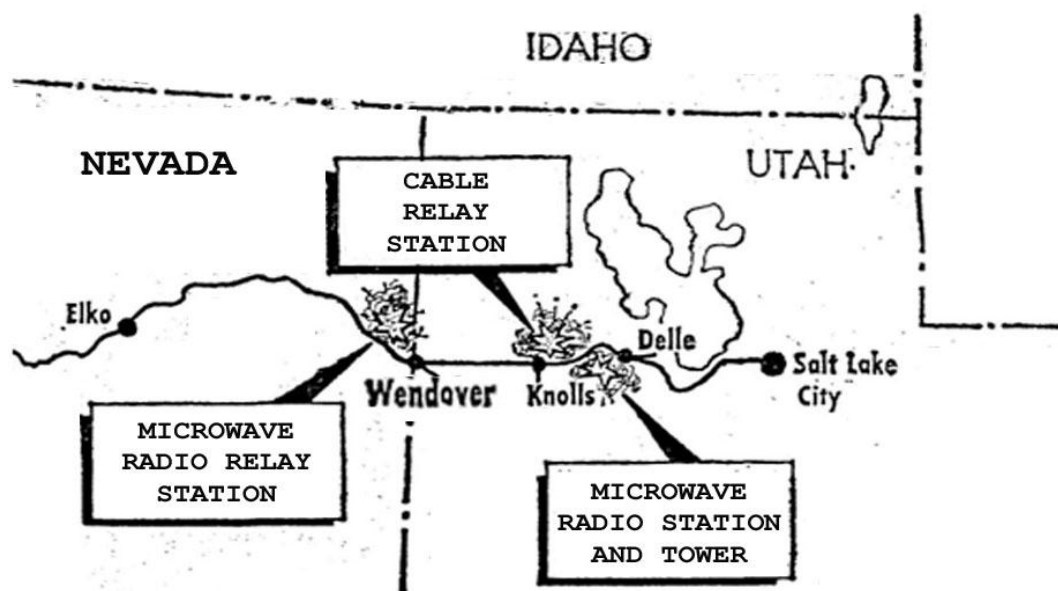
Inside the station, I looked around and shot some photographs. I had never been in a war zone, but reckoned this was a good example of the aftermath of a bombing. A strong odor of battery acid and cement dust permeated the air, and even those items not originally Western Electric gray were now of that color; exceptions being the wide, copper bus-bars, brass fire extinguishers, and a calendar-nude smiling up from her new position on the floor.

The main equipment room was torn from south to north, as if by an artillery shell's passing through it. The tall microwave-radio channels had taken the brunt of the blast; several were shoved up against the back wall like toppled dominoes. A portable test bay on wheels - seven feet tall and weighing 300-pounds - had traveled clear across the room and was literally flattened against the wall. A number of battery cells, some the size of a foot locker, had been cracked or totally broken, spilling hydrochloric acid and shards of glass all over the place.

The same explosive that demolished the equipment room had penetrated the engine room as well, damaging the AC switch gear and diesel engines. I couldn't help feeling sad, remembering the many hours we'd spent with those babies, fueling them, watering them, changing their oil, diagnosing and curing their idiosyncratic maladies. And no matter how hot we'd been, or how late in the day it was, we never left the station without wiping them clean of dust and oil.

What a mess! What motive could possibly drive someone to so despoil the works of other men? What could he, or they, gain from such a deed? Does a saboteur's pride of accomplishment override any feeling of guilt for his act?

Who would know?



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

THE WENDOVER RESTORATION

People were crawling all over Wendover Notch, from the tent on the ledge to the flat where a junk-pile grew. Two men, Walt Penner and Bob McQuaid, had "hit the ground running" on Sunday, armed with blueprints, transits and tapes. Penner, an architect, was a Bell of Nevada building engineer. McQuaid, formerly a plant operations man, was an equipment engineer. Both were now busily surveying the site, deciding where temporary structures could be erected and not interfere with the rebuilding of the station. Bill Ponder, of the contracting firm of Glen C. Williams, Reno, was there to put the new station together, working with and around everyone else on the site.

Elsewhere, many of our Elko transmissionmen (tollies) had by now been assigned as guards at our microwave facilities. They, too, would work twelve-hour shifts; some of them, because of the limited number of available craftsmen, two or three days before being relieved. While it was not officially condoned a couple of the guys, Julian Jayo and Bob Burns at least, took their personal firearms along for protection. It was a good time for strangers and visitors to stand clear of Bell System property.

I checked in at the State Line Hotel. My room over the lobby was a familiar one. I'd spent many a night there in the past while on out-of-town maintenance duty, listening to the incessant groaning outside the window. Every time the 50-foot metal-and-neon cowboy "Wendover Will" waved in greeting, his joints grated in metronomic fashion. As on previous occasions I was ultimately lulled to sleep.

(A quarter-century later, Rita and I would stop at the hotel for a meal and find that everything had changed except the noisy cowboy.)

Now we were fortunate to have the advantage of Wendover's amenities. It was easy for us to get away from the site for a bite to eat and a good night's sleep, whereas the Long Lines men working at Cedar Mountain had to drive to Grantsville or Salt Lake City for relief.

By mid-week, 25 Bell System employees, including Western Electric installers, and 40 outside contractor's men were at work at Wendover Notch. It was apparent that there were too many of us, but better too many than too few; easier to defend the cost of manpower (after the

fact) than to explain a poor job of restoration. And almost everyone kept busy. Regardless of title or position we would pull wires, haul equipment or tidy-up an area. The union members graciously ignored jurisdictional boundaries, for a while at least, and did not complain when supervisors physically labored. Not once was I admonished for using a broom or a shovel, or for packing a load of equipment up the hill. (Although later, when things slowed down, I'd be "reported" for making a screwdriver-adjustment on a piece of equipment, a charge too ridiculous to be taken seriously.)

After careful examination, the building engineers decided to remove the original structure and erect a new one right on the old concrete floor. Workmen with cutting torches climbed to the upper deck and cut loose the remaining antennas and steel. A crane, imported from Salt Lake City, lifted the biggest pieces and lowered them to the ground. The hardest part of the job, or so it appeared to me, was knocking down the reinforced concrete building, using a combination of acetylene torches and a giant ball.

As soon as the roof was opened up, bay after bay of dirty, twisted equipment was hoisted through the hole. All of this material - electronic devices, batteries, charging plants, antennas and structural iron - was now the property of a Wendover reclamation outfit. It was moved to a barren area below the site, out of the way. What an ignoble end, for some of the most sophisticated radio and power circuitry the Bell System, the nation, ever produced.

As the men were cutting away the walls a hot smoky fire erupted. Of course we had no running-water at the site, only Bill Ponder's water supply; a trailer-mounted tank that he periodically re-filled at Wendover. Ponder quickly opened the valve on the tank, then directed a crane operator to hoist the whole thing up and suspend it overhead, allowing the stream to put out the fire. Simple!

Man's curiosity is as basic to his nature as breathing and eating; and disasters, whether natural or manmade, beg to be seen. As soon as the opportunity presented itself, Paul, Red, Stu and I headed east, to view the effects of the blasts at Knolls and Cedar Mountain.

When the bomb went off at knolls, the K-carrier hut on the salt flat, the walls blew outward and the roof settled like an umbrella over the stuff inside. By the time we arrived, the roof had already been removed, uncovering equipment bays still standing upright. A dozen men were salvaging as many repeater amplifiers as possible, to augment those borrowed from various locations around the country, to get that system back up to service. It looked like an uphill battle.

It was noon by the time we reached the Cedar Mountain site. It too was a beehive of activity, but we managed to find a place to park. A hot, upslope wind took my breath away as we walked toward a group of conversing men. We recognized one of them, a Long Lines staff man named V.T. McWhorter. (Because of his initials, Paul nicknamed him "Vacuum Tube.") He introduced us to the others, and then gave us a quick tour of the facility.

The blasted building had already been converted to a pile of rubble over the bank; a van, with a tent-like room attached, housed their portable radio gear; a temporary "snap-together" tower of orange and white (FAA colors) stood some distance away; additional staging

lay on the ground, horizontally, forming a bridge to carry waveguide from the tower to the van and vice versa.

We paused for coffee and rolls, and discussed the procedures to be used during our coordinated "cutover" to new TD-2 equipment, that we hoped to accomplish by week's end.

Perhaps the most memorable of sights at Cedar Mountain was the original steel tower. Miraculously, it was still standing. The bomber's explosives had all detonated, had severed all four legs and dropped it twenty-feet straight down, but it did not tip over. Instead, it drove itself into the earth and remained upright, albeit tilted slightly to the east, with its antennas still in place. Like the leaning tower of Pisa it defied the forces of wind and gravity. Did the saboteur plan it that way? I should have thought he'd cut away three of the supports, allowing the tower to teeter and sway and fall to one side, to twist and bend along its full length and crash in a cloud of dust. Whether by accident or design, the fact that it didn't fall made the job of salvage a difficult and precarious one. On the other hand, the steel was almost totally reusable.

With that unusual picture etched in our minds we took our leave. A big white-topped, black-bottomed cloud reared over the edge of the flat, a sheet of rain spilling from its base and evaporating before reaching the ground; a good thing for us, for we had opened the car windows in an attempt to get cool.

As always when crossing the salt flats, I thought of the forty-niners wending their way over that dry, fearful part of the country, some doubtless wondering if they could make it to the promised water at the base of Pilot Peak before dying of thirst. The Great Salt Desert was ever a formidable obstacle to our country's westward communication, and not until the coming of steel - initially in the form of a railroad and then the automobile - was the crossing viable.

It was 1915 when the first pair of shiny copper wires spanned the salt flat, the final link in the first coast-to-coast telephone facility. In 1942, not long after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, two cables of lead-sheathed copper conductors were laid beneath the surface, for the "K" Carrier system. In 1951, invisible microwaves skipped unnoticed over this same wide expanse, by far the fastest, and theoretically the least vulnerable, of all.

Throughout the years, natural forces had found ways to interfere with man's flow of traffic across the desert - flooding the rails, washing away the highway, knocking down wires and poles, severing the cables - but this most recent impediment had been wrought not by nature but by human hands. Whose hands, was still a mystery.

June 1, 1961: The Californians, with a little help from our Nevada tollies, were doing a valiant job at Wendover Notch. Three channels had been made good on Western Electric type TE-2 gear, and were working through the break. But it was my opinion then (reinforced in hindsight) that the degree of success was far less than optimum. The TE-2 equipment was great stuff for short-haul transmission work, but as a substitute for TD-2 it fell far short. It was incapable of handling a full complement of circuits.

I was quick to admit, though, that the decision to bring in the TE-2 equipment and men was a good one. Operating at partial capacity was better than not at all. Furthermore, it demonstrated the Bell System's commitment to service "come hell or sabotage." But I was anxious to see the TD-2 channels set up and working. Only then would I consider the service truly restored.

A wood-frame building, to temporarily house the TD-2 equipment for this second phase of restoration, was rapidly being assembled below the bombed-out site. Gaylord Crosby's construction linemen - Don Jayo, Roger Christ, Al Gonzalez, E.B. Barber and R.H. McDonald - had brought a truck, poles, cross-arms and hardware from Winnemucca. They were putting up a 90-foot wooden tower alongside the building to hold four, eight-foot "dish" antennas.

Powder monkeys drilled through tough bedrock, in preparation for the permanent tower footings, and when it came time to "shoot" everything came to a standstill. From a safe distance I photographed the plumes of rock and dust forced up by the explosion, a tiny sample of the saboteur's earlier blasts.

By sundown that evening, except for a part of the roof through which some of the equipment was being lowered, the plywood-sheathed building was virtually completed. It was 28-feet long, 24-feet wide and roughly 16-feet tall. It had a low-pitch, tarpaper gable roof, a doorway at the northwest corner, and one window. The men who would be manning the station insisted on the window, so that they could observe anyone coming up the road.

The engine-alternators were relocated to a convenient spot next to this building. Paul Walther, Dick Babcock and others wired them to the new power switches and circuit-breaker panels. Later on, a shed was constructed over the engines, for protection against the weather that was, for some reason, being rather nasty that season.

While all of this was taking place, Western Electric's crack installers - R.R. "Sandy" Sandstrom, Jim Tallman, "Mac" McCombs, Ralph Streiff, Dave Miner, Warren O'Brien, Ernie Carlos - were inventorying and assembling the new equipment. These men were experts in their craft, having worked with TD-2 equipment since the original route was built in 1951. They were highly skilled in standard installation techniques, and also masters of innovation as well. They would be responsible for all aspects of the equipment installation, from procurement to final testing.

Until needed, most of their material was stored in one of the hangars at the airfield; according to the Air Force Colonel in charge, not nearly as neatly as it should have been. He strongly suggested that an effort be made to clean up the place but with the press of business his warning went unheeded. Until, that is, he caught Jim Tallman and Ernie Carlos there one evening. They toiled and sweated half the night before the piles of equipment met with the colonel's approval. Shades of old army days!

Heavy set, jocular Jim Tallman was one of the Western Electric "in charge" men (a supervisor). He shared the responsibility with tall, lean Sandy Sandstrom. Together with Mac McCombs, a slender lad from Boston who never lost his Yankee twang, they were an inseparable trio. When on the job they worked hard and long hours; off the job

they contributed unselfishly to Wendover's social life. I doubt if there were another three in the country who could have done as well at either occupation.

Our immediate objective was to effect total restoration of the route facilities (all twelve radio channels) in less than one week from the blast. The result would be a complete, albeit temporary, microwave station; that is, transmitters, receivers, waveguides, antennas, power supplies, even a surveillance-and-alarm system.

Engineers, transmissionmen, linemen, repairmen, Western Electric installers and non-company contract people worked side by side toward that goal.

We were coming down to the wire when things got really hectic. Two of the twelve necessary TD-2 bays, all of them borrowed from pending jobs throughout the United States, were lost. After hours of telephone calling they were located in, of all places, Twin Falls, Idaho. By Saturday evening, though, an hour or so after their arrival, they were in place.

But TD-2 transmitter tubes, because they generated a lot of heat, had to be air-cooled. And a new blower could not be found. It was Paul Walther, as I recall, who reclaimed the old one from the junk pile, dusted it off and got it working. And it was Warren O'Brien, a big, Western Electric installer who always wore a long-sleeved white shirt, usually with the tails out, who fashioned an old inner tube to work as a duct from the blower to the TD-2 bays.

A vital waveguide filter was also tardy in arriving. But that same evening a helicopter from Salt Lake City landed, virtually on our doorstep, and ten minutes later the filter was in place. That was the last expedited piece of material to arrive, and only just in time.

Old Sol edged toward the Silver Zone Range, and four runs of waveguide had yet to be built from the radio bays to the antennas. Dozens of sections must be selected from the stockpile, measured and assembled in a race against the clock.

Crosby's linemen and our Elko repairmen, Pat Sullivan and Gary Cox, worked on the tower. The rest of us - Brown, Wayman, Penner, McQuaid, Walther, Babcock, Jim Redford, Gary Murphy and others whose names I don't remember - worked below on the ground or on step ladders, fitting pieces together, installing them in horizontal runs at shoulder level, passing them to those above. The whole waveguide job, that normally required many days to engineer and construct, was completed in three hours.

Just as we were finishing, someone noted that a local diamondback had taken up residency under the building. Luckily, none of us had stepped on him or otherwise incurred his displeasure so he was tossed over the nearest cliff. Some wag suggested that he should be put in a carton and mailed to the saboteur, if and when that rogue should be apprehended.

At 9:30pm, in accordance with our prearranged plan, the men at Salt Lake Junction and Oakland re-routed all services, allowing the TE-2 radios to be turned off, clearing the spectrum for TD-2 channel frequency and power tests. A half-hour later, our temporary station was "on the air."

So far, so good!

Those of us who were supposed to be supervisors rolled down our sleeves and relaxed around a big pot of fresh black coffee, to recount the many crises of the past few days. The Western Electric installers and our transmissionmen continued to work, installing the final nuts and bolts, studying meters and oscilloscope traces and fine-tuning channels. Everyone was physically exhausted.

I soon found myself wandering about observing the engines, the power supplies, the air blowers and other ancillary equipment. All were in good order. For something else to do I climbed a ladder and helped to install screws in the waveguides. There were literally hundreds of them, screws that had been left out during assembly to save time.

When I returned to the coffee urn - its lowering level of brew measuring time almost as effectively as an ancient water clock - it was 4:25am. Two television channels, one in each direction of transmission, were turned up for service. At 4:29am, two message channels were made good. But there was no time for cheering.

A quarter-hour later, at 4:46am to be exact, just four minutes past one week from the blast, the last channels were turned up for normal service. Our goal, give or take a few minutes, had been met!

If anyone had asked me when I arrived at Wendover Notch on Monday if our microwave route, or any microwave route, could be restored in one week's time, I'd have answered unequivocally, "It's impossible!" But it had been done. It was an accomplishment that ranked on a par with, possibly exceeded, the greatest restoration effort in the annals of the Bell System.

Later that day we learned that we had a problem of cross-talk; interference between radio channels. Although not harmful enough to preclude service, it caused the circuits to be a bit noisy. The trouble stemmed from our temporary antenna arrangement.

While the parabolic antennas were of standard design, they were not nearly as efficient as the delay-lens antennas; and, because they were so close together on the tower, some of the radio energy from the transmitters was being "fed back" to the receivers. What to do?

One possible cure would be to further separate the antennas, but the tower was not big enough for that. Other solutions, ranging from the impractical to the bizarre, were discussed and discarded. In the end it was up to the engineers, the guys with the charts, slide rules and crystal balls, to find a fix.

And then a message came from the East, from a Long Lines engineer in Denver (who shall remain nameless), with the answer.

"Chicken wire!" he said. Of course it had to be tried. We had to do something, as the saying goes, even if it's wrong.

The clerk at the general store in Wendover raised his eyebrows in wonder at Crosby's request. Luckily, he had some of the stuff in stock and Crosby bought it.

Back at the site, Ponder constructed two large, wooden frames and attached the wire. The units were then hoisted to the top of the tower and installed, vertically, between adjacent antennas; one on the east and one on the west sides. This chicken-wire shielding was not a perfect solution, but since there was a measurable improvement the silly looking devices were left in place. And the phrase "chicken

wire" immediately gained popularity throughout the site. Anyone with a problem, any kind of problem, was advised, "Get some chicken wire... that'll fix it."

We experienced but one serious failure while operating at the temporary site, and it was of short duration. It happened when our AC power was being switched so that the primary engine could be shut down and serviced. Noble and Ernie had the privilege of being on duty that night.

Ernie was a nervous man. He believed, not without good reason, that if something were to go wrong it would do so with him. Noble, a fatalist, figured "if it happens, it happens, the job has to be done." Noble would throw the switch.

It was a make-before-break device and the operation should have been a simple one, resulting in no more than a glitch, if anything, on the TD-2 system. So Noble got on the phone and explained the situation to the man at the control office, at Salt Lake Junction, and received his reluctant permission to go ahead. There was, however, a gremlin lurking in the works. When Noble pulled the handle downward it stuck half way, killing all of the power to the building.

"I knew it!" Ernie yelled over the cacophony of alarms. "I knew it!"

Noble immediately threw the switch back to its previous position; the lights came on again and the voltage rectifiers went back to work. But the damage was done. Once the power was interrupted there was a one-minute time delay before the voltage would be re-applied to the TD-2 bays. It was a protective feature, and there was absolutely nothing that could be done to hurry the process.

The radios were inevitably restored to normal but the guy at Salt Lake Junction was irate. "Have you any idea how many thousands of failure tickets I have to write?" he wailed.

The trouble turned out to be a bolt, or lag screw, that protruded unnoticed from the wall and was in the way of the handle. The obstruction was removed and Noble called the control office to say he was ready to throw the switch again.

"No, sir!" the man was adamant. "Not on my shift, you don't!"

Noble eventually got permission from a supervisor, the switch worked properly, the second engine took the load, the big diesel was shut down, its oil changed and coolant replenished. Not until everything was back to normal did Ernie quit sweating, when he and Noble could lean back and relax for a few minutes in the wee hours of early morning.

The next few days were rather anticlimactic. There was no further evidence of sabotage around the country, and our tollies were relieved of the tedious chore of guard duty. The Californians dismantled their TE-2 gear and headed back to the cities. Ponder and his men, as soon as the old walls had been tumbled down, began work on the permanent building, which was to be constructed on a plan recently used for new microwave sites in southern Nevada, with walls of concrete-block and a flat roof supported by steel trusses; a much faster method than reinforced concrete.

Footings for the permanent tower were poured, and when they had sufficiently cured my man Murphy operated our John Deere (a small

dozer that proved invaluable during the rebuilding period) and leveled the gravel around them.

The steel for the antenna tower arrived, and to erect it a crew of intrepid iron-workers. It was the Flint Steel outfit from Tulsa Oklahoma. Without the use of belts or nets they climbed and walked the steel, working with amazing speed and dexterity. Some different from the way we operated in the Bell System, I mused, still I could see the logic in their working unencumbered by so-called safety devices.

The foreman, who appeared at least as tough as the others, directed the job from a vantage point on the ground, occasionally barking terse orders to the men aloft or hand signaling to the crane operator. I asked him about the odds of an accident, of a man's falling and the likelihood of a fatality.

"Never had a guy killed on the job," he said, not taking his eyes off the men above. "I watch 'em like a hawk.... I see a guy fall, I holler 'You're fired' b'fore he hits the ground."

The iron-workers' "act" was truly the "greatest show on earth," for it had many of the attributes of a circus yet resulted in a valuable product.

In town, after dark, in one or another of the local bistros, the steelworkers and Western Electric installers (and some of our more robust tollies) engaged in get-acquainted sessions, the hidden agenda being to determine which group could more nearly deplete the town's supply of booze. (One place actually ran out of beer.) No one judged those contests, nor did anyone receive a trophy for outstanding achievement.

Jim Tallman looked like one of the losers when he showed up at the site one morning, and his demeanor didn't improve when a steelworker slipped the big crane-hook under the back of his belt and motioned "away." Jim was hoisted aloft, kicking and yelling obscenities, until he voiced the magic expletive and was lowered to the ground. He picked himself up, apparently none the worse for the ride, and began another grueling day of work.

There were other moments on the lighter side, comic relief from the seriousness of the situation. The temporary outhouse, for example, was always good for a laugh. Unlike in today's world, where the first edifice at a construction site must be the now-familiar blue portable toilet, our "comfort station" consisted of three pieces of plywood nailed together to form three walls around a bench with a hole in the center. There was no door, but a fourth panel partially shielded the user from public view. Situated conveniently beyond the driveway, a stone's throw from the scene of activity, more than one occupant got the daylight's scared out of him by a rock lobbed at the outhouse. Not funny, however, was the possibility of being surprised by a desert rattlesnake, some of which had discovered it was a good place to rest in the shade.

I found time to pick up a few souvenirs, among them the metal nameplates from two of the antennas (serial numbers 420 and 421) that read as follows:

Western Electric Made in U.S.A.
KS - 5759
10 X 10 DELAY LENS ANTENNA
Pat. Pend.
HANOVIA CHEMICAL & MFG. CO.
NEWARK, N.J. U.S.A.

In a more practical vein, I obtained the double-decked steel stand that once held the tube-cooling air blowers (for which I paid the junkie one dollar to make it legal). It would serve as a fine work bench.

At the end of two weeks I took my first leave and went home to relax with my family, and to celebrate Glen's second birthday.

On Monday the 19th, we received the first news of the saboteurs. A 47-foot ketch, the "Monsoon," was boarded at Ensenada, Mexico, for a routine inspection, and four people (three men and a woman) were arrested for possessing "several machine guns, rifles, shotguns, a large quantity of grenades and other paraphernalia." A subsequent check with the FBI linked them with the Nevada-Utah bombings.

The two accused of the crime were Bernard J. Brous, 51, and Dale C. Jensen, 33. Both were American citizens, the latter from Reno. (Unknowningly we had been referring to the unknown saboteur as "Benny the Bomber.") The others were Brous's wife, Minnie, a former dancer-model, and a Reno dealer named Bartoli.

Brous admitted to being the "leader" of what he called the "American Republican Army," which, he said, advocated the political overthrow of the United States. He claimed (according to reports) that AT&T, by refusing him a contract some three years before in Texas, had driven him to financial ruin.

The size of this so-called "army" was still unknown, but it turned out to consist of just the four, of whom only Brous and Jensen were charged.

From a copy of the Salt Lake Tribune I clipped the report, including a photograph of the leader and his ace demolition expert, and posted it on the bulletin board in our temporary building. But there was something lacking. I looked around for a more suitable way to display the picture and spotted, far down over the bluff, the perfect frame for the infamous pair: a toilet seat.

While climbing back up to the station with the smooth seat cradled in the crook of my arm like a wreath, I remembered the time when, after accidentally setting a fire in the outhouse, I had extinguished the blaze and saved the outhouse and this very seat; providentially, as it turned out, for this singular purpose.

With a grease pencil I inscribed an epitaph, "THE REMAINS OF WENDOVER No. 1," on the margin. As an added touch, someone suspended a brass doorknob from the bottom of it, perhaps as an indicator of the two men's attitude.

(The trophy was later moved to a prominent place in the permanent building, where it would remain for many years.)

The new station, while not built as quickly as the wooden one, was nevertheless constructed in record time. The Western Electric men

moved in to install the ironwork, battery charging plants and batteries preparatory to moving the TD-2 bays, the ones in use in the temporary building, to their final positions. The equipment floor plans had not yet arrived so a set was sent up from Reno by helicopter. The pilot landed on the bench, leaned down to hand-off the prints to an anxious installer, and an ill wind tore them from his clutch. An extensive search was made of the hillside but the plans were never found. The installation went ahead, the men working from memory!

A new diesel engine-alternator was installed, and a second one as a backup, to provide AC-power until commercial power could be provided sometime in the not too distant future. The backup unit was located in a wooden appendage at one side of the building.

As mentioned above, in the first days of the restoration cost was not a factor. But now, effective with the construction and outfitting of the permanent station, the emergency phase was over and the purse strings were tightened perceptibly.

Except for the new tower, the antennas (latest state-of-the-art cornucopias) and TD-2 equipment, reconstruction was relatively cheap. The new building, while quite serviceable, was not as large or convenient as the original. Nor were the engine-alternators as reliable as our old Hercules Diesels. And when it came to equipping the site with tools and test equipment I had a tough time getting approval for the barest necessities. How I wished for some, just a small fraction of, the money wasted at the beginning.

Several of us, including Brown, Wayman and McQuaid, went to Salt Lake City for a conference with our Long Lines coordinates. We met and stayed at the Hotel Utah. There was a lot of discussion concerning reconstruction and we outlined plans for the final service cutover to the permanent TD-2 station. After the session we relaxed over cocktails and dinner, the latter provided by our AT&T hosts. It was a time for making new acquaintances and renewing old ones.

A funny thing happened in the hotel lounge, where we retired for after dinner conversation. Every so often we were interrupted by the unique (raucous) sound of a peacock, half hidden beneath a potted palm beside an artificial pool that seemed to be calling out, "McQua-a-a-aid...McQua-a-a-aid." From that time on we jokingly addressed our engineering friend in "mock peacock."

July arrived: The date for final restoration was set for the 7th, but to a man we wanted to be done with it by the 4th. A wooden raceway was thrown up, extending from the steel tower to the new building (it would later be replaced with steel), and Don Jayo, Pat Sullivan and Roger Christ assembled the copper waveguide runs. Unlike our earlier, temporary assemblies, these must be cut and soldered to specific lengths, a job similar to a plumber's except that it had to be done with extreme precision.

A cutover crew was assembled and "phase three" was begun. In turn, the service on each radio channel was re-routed (at the control offices), a bay was disconnected, un-bolted and removed from the temporary building and carried - gingerly, like an occupied coffin - up the hill from the temporary to the permanent building. There it was

bolted in place, re-wired, powered-up and thoroughly tested by both installers and tollies.

Duane Kern (who would ultimately become an Elko chief with responsibility for the site) and Bob Ernaut did the final tuning, then the service was restored. This procedure was followed for each of the twelve bays, and required more than one night to complete.

Finally, early in the morning on the 3rd of July, 37-days after the blast, the last bay was successfully moved to its permanent position. Service on the Denver-Oakland TD-2 Microwave Route was back to normal!

A half-hour later, the whole lot of us was bellied-up to the State Line Bar in well deserved celebration.

Only the Elko guys returned to the station with me later that morning, to tie up a few loose ends. By mid-afternoon we were all winding down, but there was a case of trouble in the alarm sending system that had to be cleared before we could leave the station unattended. At last, Duane, Ernie and Pat found and fixed the problem and it was time to go. Just enough daylight remained that we'd have to drive into the sun going home, but no matter, we had done that dozens of times before.

I waited for the junkie, who had hauled away the last bit of salvage earlier in the afternoon, to return for his hoisting-rig: an old ton-and-a-half truck equipped with an A-frame boom and a winch. A car finally arrived, dropped off the man and left. I went over and spoke with him, offering congratulations on the fine job of cleaning up he'd done. He thanked me, climbed into the truck and drove away. I absentmindedly watched.

And then I stared in disbelief. A couple-hundred yards down the driveway the truck suddenly swerved, its front-end raised up off the ground and it rolled over on its side in a swirl of dust. Behind me, the station-alarm bell clanged loudly. It was an ominous sound. I was, to say the least, disheartened.

During the whole restoration effort, a period abounding with opportunity for mishap, up to now there had been but one mechanical accident: A crane's winch-brake failed and dropped the boom on its cab. Luckily, the cab had been vacated just moments before. There were two minor injuries: George Elmore, while "touring" the site, was bruised when hit by a wind-blown square of ply-wood, and Andy Anderson, of San Diego, received a cut on his hand that became badly infected. Now this!

The truck had rolled over so easily I believed the driver could not have been injured. Anyway, I ran down to make sure. Grinning sheepishly he climbed out through the passenger-side window. And he, too, was disgusted; with himself for having forgotten the low-hanging telephone cable that angled across the road at that point. The sheave at the top of the boom had caught just enough of it to tip the truck over.

The cable, with its dozens of copper wires for alarm and maintenance circuits, now hung from the steel messenger with its lead sheath open and wire-ends protruding.

Pat went to the break and, working from a ladder, began to clear and splice the broken pairs. But it would take a while, and we'd have to stay at the station until all was in working order again.

I gave the junkie a ride to town, to get a rig to right his truck, and decided, while there, to report the incident to my boss, Paul Brown, in Reno. Using the pay phone in the hallway at the hotel I made the call, charging it to the Elko testboard number. That was a smart move because, as it would turn out, there probably weren't enough coins in the place to pay the toll.

The general facts of the matter were fresh in my mind. The times and details of the damage I had scribbled on a piece of paper. But I was unprepared for what was to be one of the longest "dressing downs" of my life. It never occurred to me that the company, least of all Paul, would hold that the salvage contractor's accident was somehow my fault. Already tired from my long tour of duty, discouraged that I was not then on my way home, I believed that his criticism was unjust.

Our rather one-sided conversation went on for nearly an hour. I felt like exploding into the mouthpiece and hanging up the receiver, but my respect for the boss prevailed.

Finally, after almost an hour on the phone, Paul's attitude mellowed and he said, "You better go on back up there...help the boys finish up and go home.... You deserve a rest."

Paul was like that. He seemed to delight in scolding his subordinates but always stood by them in the end.

And that, as they say, was that.

Brous and Jensen were returned to the United States by the Mexican authorities (to Reno via San Diego) to face charges. Brous took credit for masterminding the bombings "as a step in destroying certain types of businesses...cartels such as the AT&T Company." Jensen admitted to planting the bombs. The Company, after totaling the damages (not including the loss of circuit usage during the outage), filed a new suit against the men seeking \$2,000,000.

Both Brous and Jensen were charged with "ordering high explosives in Beverly Hills" in March. And Jensen was charged with "setting off the explosives with timing devices at each of the stations." They were held in the Washoe County Jail in lieu of \$100,000 bail each.

On November 2, 1961, the Elko Daily Free Press reported that Brous and Jensen "were sentenced to eight years in federal prison." (I believe the pair was also charged and tried in Utah but I am unaware of the outcome.)

The last I read about Brous, he was back in business in the state of Texas as a consultant. I could never imagine what kind of counsel he might be in a position to sell.

The actions of Brous' "army" exposed the vulnerability of our communications network in the 1960s, and the Bell System would spend millions of dollars over the next several years providing new, alternate routes, sophisticated equipment, elaborate emergency plans and ongoing restoration exercises. It was rather like a very expensive insurance policy, and like most insurance policies it would pay off indirectly. Never again would AT&T or its Bell subsidiaries be faced with a like catastrophe.

Following is a copy of the AP & UPI news clip of
the Saboteurs' apprehension:

JUNE 19, 1961
**Leaders
Boast of
Sabotage**

**Mexico Holds 'Arsenal Yacht'
(Photo on Page 52)**

By The Associated Press and United
Press International

ENSENADA (Mexico), June 18.

A bearded self-styled
revolutionary and a bomb planting,
co-conspirator were arrested today
for blowing up three microwave
communication towers on May 28 in a
sabotage campaign.

Motive for the explosions
was not disclosed by the Federal
Bureau of Investigation, but one of
the men arrested said it was done on
behalf of the "American Republican
Army," which he said advocates the
political overthrow of the United
States.

The two accused in the case are
Bernard Jerome Brous, 51, alias
Robert Hill, and Dale Chris Jensen,
33, both American citizens.

WIFE SEIZED

Taken into custody with
them aboard a schooner here
were Brous' 40-year-old wife,
Minnie, a former dancer and
model, and Robert Gerald
Bortoli, a gambling house
dealer from Reno, Nev.

Mexican officials said
the
four were being taken to the
border tonight to be handed
over to U. S. authorities.

Sporting a Castro-type
grey
beard, Brous admitted freely
that he masterminded the
bombings. He said it was done
as a step in destroying
certain types of business
"cartels" such as the
American Telephone and
Telegraph Company.

CHAPTER FIFTY

DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

After all that had taken place since the Memorial Day weekend, I was really in need of a vacation. In August, Rita and I decided to ready the trailer and take our kids and her folks to Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park. We got in touch with our old friends, the Joneses, in Sheridan, Wyoming, where Vernal was stationed, and they agreed to meet us at the Park.

After the usual hectic period of preparation, we finally got under way, with the DeSoto full of people (four adults and three children) and the Shasta in tow. Despite the heat of summer, the going was good and we made our way well into the state of Idaho before nightfall, when we stopped at a small campground near Massacre Rocks, on the Snake River.

I thought it a great idea to sit outside and experience the calm of the riverside environment before dark, but very quickly learned it was folly. The air was polluted with flying insects, voracious mosquitoes that competed with some kind of tiny gnats for my blood. Remembering our last experience with Snake River mosquitoes, we kept Glen in the trailer under close-hauled conditions. Gina and Tony went for a walk through the willows to the river, but cut short their foray and came running back to relative safety. From then on we stayed inside.

While seated in our sanctuary, having dinner, we were treated to an interesting spectacle outside. It was almost dark, and a big station wagon pulled in at the next campsite. From the wagon poured a good-sized family; a couple in their thirties and a half-dozen kids ranging in age from about five to fifteen.

We were immediately struck by how efficiently they made camp. The father and kids moved swiftly, each carrying out a specific task, while the mother put together the evening meal. In less than fifteen minutes they erected a middle-sized wall tent, cooked and laid out dinner on the wooden table, where a bright Coleman lantern provided illumination. It was like a "How To" film on camping.

But alas, the scene disintegrated into chaos when they sat down to eat. First one and then another grabbed his plate and took refuge in the tent. And even there, judging by the extraordinarily fast-

moving silhouettes on the canvas walls, they were not secure from the ravenous insects.

Our trailer was not entirely secure from the tiny gnats, who penetrated the screens and forced us to turn out the light and go to bed. I wondered, as I lay there half awake, if our neighbors would get any sleep at all that night. I also chided myself for choosing this campground, for I should have known better than to camp amongst green willows and grass alongside a slow, meandering river.

When we got to Yellowstone, acting on the (free) advice of friends back home, I drove straight to the West Thumb campground, in the very heart of the park. It was fairly close to Yellowstone Lake and seemed a good base from which to tour. It was listed as a "rustic" campground, and there was no fee (as I recall) for occupancy. Just as well. There was also no pavement, nor rocks, nor rails to mark where to park or set up a tent, only dusty clearings between the tall pines. I chose a likely-looking spot not too far from an outhouse, and parked.

We were not even settled when droves of campers moved in close around us; couples and families with a variety of tents and trailers. In no time at all, the place was transformed from a scenic pine grove to an urban community, replete with yapping dogs and yelling kids. But the weather was good, and there was a heady aroma of earth and forest and campfire smoke. I guessed that we could be content for a few days at least.

A bit of excitement interrupted our breakfast next morning. I was sitting at the table in the trailer, downing a portion of hotcakes, when I heard a commotion outside.

"Oh, no!" Rita exclaimed.

I turned and looked out the window, in time to see a couple of kids scrambling from the middle one of three tents that had been pitched in a semi-circle not twenty feet from our doorway.

Shouts of "FIRE! GET OUT! HURRY UP!" rang loud and clear.

Snatching our fire-extinguisher from its hanger, I raced outside. At the same time a man came out of the tent, carrying a Coleman gas-stove with an iron skillet on top of it. Both the stove and the skillet were on fire. Orange flames leaped two-feet in the air, licking hungrily at the guy's arms and face, and at the tent-flap as he passed through the doorway. Still he held fast to the stove.

When close enough, I aimed a blast of powdery extinguisher at the base of the flames and they went dead. I triggered a second shot for good measure, and the show was over. The man had gotten his hair singed, but he was all right.

"You're lucky your tent didn't catch fire," I remarked, then left the somber group and returned to our trailer. What a marvelous device, I thought, fondling our little red fire-extinguisher, to put out such an ominous fire so quickly.

The Joneses, traveling in two cars, arrived from Sheridan. Together we decided to move to Old Faithful Campground, 17-miles away to the west. It was a definite improvement. Here the drives were paved and the sites delineated, to avoid encroachment by a neighboring camper. Located just southeast of Old Faithful Lodge, perhaps 200-

yards from the Firehole River, we were within easy walking distance of the famous geyser and Inn.

(Old Faithful Village has radically changed since 1961. The main highway has been realigned, roadways, parking lots and buildings have been rearranged and new ones added.)

Not long after we'd settled in, it was time for supper. Coincidentally, it was time for a sudden, torrential downpour, complete with flashing lightning, raucous thunder and marble-sized hail. When we had all taken refuge in the trailer, I counted noses. There were thirteen of us: Our family of five, Mom and Pop Zunino, Vernal and Mary Jones and their three girls, Linda, Susan and Kathy, and Mary's mother, Ruth Howard. Somehow everyone found a space in our little home-on-wheels.

The Joneses were moving from Sheridan, Wyoming, to Douglas, Arizona. Vernal was actually climbing the FAA ladder. Its rungs were represented by jobs at various locations around the country. Their household goods had been shipped by moving-van, and they were taking the leisurely way to their new home on the Mexican border.

Together we enjoyed the park. We visited dozens of bubbling hot springs, viewed the magnificent Yellowstone River canyon and falls, like the other tourists, from Inspiration Point; drove to the Continental Divide, delineated by a water-lily pond draining to the Atlantic from one end and to the Pacific from the other. Nearer to camp, Old Faithful Geyser performed on cue for our ever-ready cameras.

Stationed every few miles along the highways, ubiquitous bears begged for food, posed for pictures and presented a terrible nuisance to traffic. At the divide, while Pop was watching one of them on my side of the car, another, seeking a handout, started to reach through his open window by Pop's shoulder. That startled the old man.

"Huh!" he chuckled. "Go 'way. No grub for you today."

(Not long after our visit, to alleviate the obvious problem of too many bears, including grizzlies, Park Rangers would haul many of them away to less accessible areas.)

Of more interest to me, in the way of wildlife, were the elk (wapiti) that grazed unconcernedly a safe distance from the road. What a proud and regal-appearing animal. And what a lot of meat they must have provided for hungry explorers and trappers in an earlier time.

Sam wanted to go fishing, so Vernal and I took him over to Yellowstone Lake, where we rented a rowboat and put out to sea. We young fellows took turns providing the motive power. Sam and the "off duty" oarsman fished. As expected, Sam caught the most and biggest trout, and laughed at our apparent ineptness.

Back at camp that afternoon we hungered for a feast. Vernal insisted on cooking the fresh trout over a campfire, while Rita and Mary fixed side dishes.

But first we had to have a fire. It was against our principles to buy wood for it, so Vernal, Sam and I hiked toward the river in search of deadwood. It was an optimistic venture, so close to the village, but we did find a half-hidden snag, in a tight stand of firs, knocked it down and hauled it back to camp. It should easily last as long as we stayed. Vernal and I, again taking turns, began to chop it into fireplace lengths. Sam couldn't stand to watch and took over the job.

"I' show you how," he insisted.

While he was thus occupied, while the rest of us stood around in silent observance, the lady at the trailer in the neighboring campsite came over with an armload of sawed chunks of pine.

"That old man shouldn't be working so hard," she scolded. "You take this."

We tried to convince her that we didn't need the wood, but she insisted and we accepted it with thanks. The chunks came in handy as fireside campstools, and on leaving we returned them to her site.

Vernal prepared the trout in his own unique way; first applying a "secret" sauce, then wrapping them individually in aluminum foil. When the fire was hot enough (too hot, it would turn out) he placed the packages above the coals and tended them, turning and shoving the shiny pods around on the grill, all the while whistling and singing and licking his lips in anticipation.

At some point, Rita advised Vernal that the fish must be done. But he thought otherwise and paid no heed to her council.

At last he declared them done, and served them up to the waiting crowd. They seemed awfully light, and when we opened our individually wrapped, gourmet trout dinners, we found that they had virtually disintegrated.

"I told you!" Rita scolded.

Vernal had erected a small canvas tent under the trees, not far from our trailer, to provide additional sleeping space. One morning, when Rita went to close the tent-fly which was tied back to a lodge pole pine, just as she reached for the rope a curious bear came around from behind it and they met face to face. They were both startled by the encounter, but Rita recovered first.

"Shoo! Shoo!" she yelled, half in anger, half in fear, gesturing, "go away!"

The beast couldn't stand up to that kind of treatment and left the way it had come.

(Later, when we broke camp, Vernal gave us the tent to keep. It was made of good old canvas and served us well for many years.)

The black bears (actually brown) were regulars in the campground. They hung around the trash cans, bummed handouts, climbed trees. One mother tried to get her twin cubs out of a pine, but the little devils climbed higher still and stayed out of reach. While not dangerous, the bears were a terrible nuisance. Anything that remotely resembled food had to be stored out of sight or smell or reach. I left an empty ice chest under the back of our trailer, and during our absence one of the brown fellows, sensing there was food inside, dragged it out and got the lid open. Fortunately, the nice lady next door caught him in the act and chased him away before any damage was done.

We were able to return the favor when the same bear (or one just like it), apparently lured by the lingering aroma of bacon, began tearing at a window screen in her trailer. The rascal didn't seem to be afraid of us, but he did turn tail and run away.

Yellowstone National Park and surrounding area is situated in a geologically unstable area, as evidenced by its numerous geysers, springs of bubbling hot water, landslides and earthquake faults. Perhaps the most impressive recent earthquake was the one that shook

the area near the northwest corner of the park, in Montana, just two years before our visit. That temblor triggered a gigantic earth slide in the Madison River Canyon, a slide that dammed the river and formed a brand new lake behind it. (It was appropriately named "Earthquake Lake.") Several people lost their lives, buried in the mud or drowned in the flood when the highway and a campground were inundated.

The enormity of the disaster was made real to us on the day we visited the canyon, when we stood where the once-scenic highway disappeared beneath the lake. Above, the sky was black with thunderheads. In front, strong winds roiled the deep dark waters. I could almost feel the fear in the hearts of the erstwhile campers, when they were suddenly enveloped by mud and rocks and water.

It was a depressing scene, and none of us was very talkative on the way back to our Old Faithful campsite.

Before leaving the park, the next day, we stopped for a few moments beside a prettier lake, Lewis Lake, not far from the southern gate of Yellowstone Park. In contrast to Earthquake Lake this one reflected a clear blue sky. What a difference the day makes.

Farther on, the countryside opened up to a magnificent valley. The valley of the upper Snake River. With the lazy river meandering through a broad expanse of green and tan it was certainly a sight to behold.

We passed a sign beside the roadway that identified the high peaks off to our right, and I heard Rita's father speaking in a low voice to her mother. He chuckled, then repeated aloud (so we could all hear), "That's a good name, 'Grand Tetons,' means 'big tits' in French."

The peaks had been well named by the early fur trappers.

Another sign denoted the winter range for native elk. It was mostly rolling grassland and we could see for miles, but only a few cows and calves were in evidence on that warm, summer day.

A long, low hill up ahead resembled a reclining figure, a human figure with a larger-than-normal belly. The Indian name for it, and for the tribe that inhabited the vicinity, had been interpreted by the French as "Gros Ventre," or "Big Belly."

Before long we came to a campground with the same name. It was really a stone-age campground, even by the standards of the day. It was situated in a once-grassy meadow alongside a tiny creek surrounded by cottonwoods. The grass had been laid bare by the tires of thousands of cars and trailers, and by the shoes of four times as many people. A couple-of-dozen rock fireplaces and one lonely outhouse, at the edge of the meadow, were the extent of manmade improvements.

But the Gros Ventre campground was ideal for our gang. There was plenty of room to park our three vehicles and the trailer, and wide open spaces where the kids could play. In jig time we had a fire going and hot-dogs sizzling over red-hot embers.

Later, in the evening, while seated on logs around the campfire swapping stories, someone noted an eerie glow emanating from the roof of the outhouse. On investigation we found that the glow originated from a flashlight that someone had dropped through the hole. It was undoubtedly powered by "Eveready" batteries, for it would shine

unfailingly the whole night through (consistent with the "never fail" claims of the company's advertisements). None of us was interested in making a salvage effort.

At Jackson's Hole, we stopped to replenish our perishable food supplies. It was a great little city, clean, neat and relatively quiet. Probably quite the opposite from when Jackson and his company rendezvoused there with the Indians, in the mid-1800s, to trade white-man goods for furs, and drink and fight and carouse for days before returning to their own trap lines.

On second thought, maybe it wasn't so different after all. Today's "scalpers" had plenty of goods to trade, liquor to drink, and places to carouse. Although the number of drunken brawls might be fewer.

With Vernal following in the chair behind us, Rita and I rode the lift to the top of Snow King Mountain for an indescribable, panoramic view of the valley and mountains from the south. Later, in the early afternoon, the Joneses headed south and we headed west toward Teton Pass.

The DeSoto had no trouble pulling the grades, but the turns were exceptionally sharp and steep. Suspecting that something might have come loose in the trailer, I stopped on the summit to check. Sure enough, the closet door had opened and spilled its contents, our hanging clothes and Pop's leather satchel, all over the floor. We straightened everything out before proceeding down the west side of the mountain range into Idaho.

I was impressed by the fact that the pass was about 8,700' above-sea-level, whereas the great Snake River cut through the mountain only 25-miles away.

We traveled to the Craters of the Moon National Monument that afternoon, to make camp for the night. How different it was from the country we'd left behind. Forested mountains and grassy meadows had given way to barren lava-rock, the residue of volcanic flows that once spilled over the landscape (northeast of present Twin Falls). It was a fascinating environment, though, with a surprising number of wildflowers in bloom and an abundance of birds and squirrels around for our pleasure. Furthermore, the campground was amazingly clean and neat. (I wonder if it is still the same today.)

We took advantage of the trails, which wound among the jumbled mounds of brown or black lava and over wind-blown sand, to stretch our legs and get acquainted with the moonscape. Of course we had seen lava flows before, in Nevada, but never so many or in such strange configurations. The most unusual, perhaps, were pipe-like casings - formed when outer layers of flowing lava cooled and the hot stuff inside ran out to lower ground - in sizes ranging from a few inches to several feet in diameter; some large enough for a man to walk through upright.

I think we all enjoyed our short stay at the Craters, relaxing in the quiet after our busy tour of Yellowstone with the Joneses. When we packed up and pulled away, the next morning, our vacation was essentially over. From there on it was simply a matter of getting home safe and sound, which, with good luck, we did.

Over the years, as a family, we visited a great many points of interest in the Western United States. Although we toured with the trailer a few times outside Nevada, for the most part we used it for camping inside our home state.

Rita and I both enjoyed camping. But aside from the sheer fun of it we agreed that it was a wholesome, educational thing to do with our children. By exposing them to the great out-of-doors, we hoped they would learn about, accept and appreciate the ways of the world outside the city.

A short time after returning from Wyoming, we towed our Shasta to upper Lamoille Canyon where the scenery, in my opinion, rivaled parts of Yellowstone itself. It was a good thing we chose to go up there that summer, for camping in that particular area would soon be prohibited.

We set up camp about a half-mile below the loop end of the canyon road, at the 8,700' elevation where the picture perfect valley is cradled by glacier carved walls rising 1,500' to 2,000' above the floor.

Our trailer was nestled in a copse of quakies in the alpine meadow, next to the creek where beaver and trout abounded. Although the grass was quite green, for so late in the year, the ground was dry and there were few obnoxious insects around to bug us. Best of all, we had the place all to ourselves. Except for the steady rushing noise of the stream, the occasional splash of a feeding trout, the rare sound of automobile tires on the graveled roadway, there was silence.

Tony was then nearly seven and Jack, John's boy, who had come with us, was a little older. They were both full of energy and mischief so, the weather being clear with only a few cumulus clouds over the peaks, I thought it a good time to take them to Lamoille Lake for a day of fishing.

I was not in as good shape as I would have liked, and had to breathe extra hard to sustain a reasonable pace. To conceal my apparent weakness from the boys, I stopped often to point out interesting geographical features, animals and unusual plants.

At the lake, we climbed up and stood on an enormous boulder on the shoreline. From that high vantage point we could see the fish at rest in the deep, clear water, and eagerly rigged our rods and reels to try our luck at hooking them.

Both of the boys caught fish, and I was glad. There's nothing like success to breed a love for the sport. I was reminded of the time when Tony was about four and we (as a family) introduced him to fishing. Sam was with us, on the South Fork above Lee. But Tony was snagging more roots and rocks than trout, and both Rita and I were getting sick of retrieving his hook. So we removed it and let him dangle a lead weight in the stream. He apparently enjoyed the sport as much as ever, until his grandfather chanced to come by.

"Huh, the boy lost his hook," he said to me, or to Rita. "You tie another hook on. How's he gonna catch a fish with no hook?"

Now he was old enough to tie on his own hook, bait it and catch fish too. And so could Jack. Between the three of us we managed to put several trout in our creels before lunchtime.

We stopped fishing then, found a warm rocky ledge and shared our victuals. But I kept a weather eye out, often glancing at the cumulus clouds that had begun to boil and expand and thicken over our heads. We might be in for a thunderstorm, I thought, and looked around for a likely shelter. Not far away, an overhanging cliff-rock formed a shallow cave. That might do in a pinch.

Sure enough, by mid-afternoon the fluffy white clouds of morning had evolved into thunderheads. I directed the boys to reel in (a steel fishing pole is very attractive to lightning) and we hurried toward the quasi-cave, gathering up pieces of deadwood along the way.

The storm broke with sudden fury. We were halfway to the cave when startled by the first bright flash of lightning, and were then shaken by the thunderous boom that followed. Another flash! Another boom! The canyon walls reverberated interminably after each sonic blast. And then, with an extra loud clap of thunder, a trapdoor overhead was unlatched and the rain came down in sheets. Inspired, we made it to the safe haven in a matter of seconds.

Huddled together, we shivered from the wet and cold until the storm eased a little, then I got a fire going at the edge of our too-small shelter. Smoke got in our eyes, water dripped down our necks, but we held our position.

Our situation was not altogether unpleasant, though, and we took a measure of comfort from the welcome heat and sweet aroma of burning limber pine. And we had a ringside seat to a stupendous show: "The Mountain Storm King in Glorious Color."

The whole performance consumed less than an hour, giving way to sunshine as suddenly as it had begun. Within a few minutes of its ending we were dry and on our way down the trail, which was now pungent with the smell of wilderness. While I reveled in the beauty of the canyon, the boys' attention was drawn toward things more appealing to youngsters; such as mud puddles to jump over, chipmunks and squirrels to throw stones at.

One day, I hoped, both Jack and Tony would recall the sights and sounds and activities of that day with me in Lamoille Canyon.

Meanwhile, Rita and Gina observed butterflies, frogs and other wonders in the immediate vicinity of the trailer. Glen entertained himself by pushing a toy dump-truck through the soft dirt; until he discovered that it was even more fun pushing it through the cold black ashes in the fireplace.

By the time we got back to camp, Glen was covered with soot and resembled a pickaninny. We all thought it funny until it came time to bathe him.

That night, our sleep was several times interrupted by thumping noises overhead. It was Spooky, our cat, on the roof of the trailer. There was a full moon and she was out and about hunting nocturnal creatures. She was quite successful, too, judging by the number of mouse and mole bodies lying around camp in the morning. Spooky was a good hunter, but in other respects she was a rather stupid feline. (Her most despicable trait would be that of living too long.)

The weekend passed quickly and we had to abandon the idyllic life for that in the city. If not the last, we were undoubtedly among the

last people to utilize that perfect campsite. New Forest Service rules would prohibit camping in any but an "approved campground," and the closest one of that description was at Thomas Creek, three miles downstream.

Within a few days of our being entertained by the storm in Lamoille Canyon, a cloudburst of gigantic dimensions was unleashed some hundred miles to the west, on and around the top of Mount Moses. While not a witness to the storm itself, and probably lucky in that respect, I was in the area the morning after, before the mud had had a chance to dry. Judging by the evidence it was one of those storms which occur in a given place but once in a lifetime, or every hundred years, the kind that dumps great volumes of water in a very short time.

The area involved was uninhabited, except for one small ranch; the old home station of the McCoy Ranch, far away in the valley. Were it populated there surely would have been casualties. As it was, I knew of only one man who suffered any ill, a recently hired cowhand at the above mentioned ranch who packed his gear to leave as soon as possible after the storm.

Murphy and I had gone to survey the storm damage around McCoy. As is most often the case in Nevada, the water had quickly soaked in or evaporated but much of the road had been washed out. In its place were gullies ten to fifteen feet deep and hundreds of feet across. By picking a way around boulders and through the gravelly washes, we were able to cross Jersey Valley in our Jeep Wagon.

There we came upon the poor cowhand and offered him a ride back to Battle Mountain. For this small act of kindness we were rewarded with 60-miles of non-stop talk; a description of the "granddaddy" of all thunderstorms punctuated, at frequent intervals, with, "It was hell! Pure hell!"

He'd been awake all night in that house, he said, while the hail and rain came down in sheets and the lightning and thunder never ceased. Doors slammed in the wind; the smokestack blew over; the roof and every window leaked water. He was concerned about the cattle in the canyon above the ranch, but when he donned a slicker and went to saddle his horse, the poor beast had lit out from the corral. So much for that plan. At dawn, when he found that his supply of water had been cut off, he realized the true seriousness of the situation.

It was still raining hard, he continued, when he set out on foot to repair the water line that ran parallel to the road from a canyon several miles to the east. It was a hopeless task. Not only was the pipeline broken, but hundreds of feet of it had been washed away. It was then that despair set in. He returned to the ranch, decided this was no fit place to live, packed his few belongings (cowboys didn't have much to pack), walked the 200-yards to the mailbox and waited for a ride out. He had been there half-a-day when we came along, and was overjoyed to see us.

On our way to Battle Mountain we stopped to chat with one of the cable repair crews. They had inspected the underground cable route and found several places where the sheaths had been exposed by the flood. Luckily, there were no bad breaks.

By drawing on my knowledge of meteorology and studying the residual signs, I reconstructed the storm in my mind: The main cumulonimbus cloud must have been fifteen or twenty miles in diameter, ten miles high and centered almost directly over Mt. Moses proper. The majority of torrential rain appeared to have fallen on the top and northwest slope of the main ridge, then cascaded down several canyons and far out onto the Jersey Valley flat, ending up some ten miles from the mountaintop.

Of immediate concern, to us, was the fact that three miles of the Mt. Moses access road, that portion along Dacey Creek, had been totally annihilated. Where it had followed and often crossed the small creek it was now cut by twenty-foot chasms and blocked by slides of dirt and boulders. Many of those boulders were half as big as a pickup truck. We were unable, even with our Jeep, to go more than 100-yards into the canyon, and the VOR site was ten miles beyond.

Not until the next day, after a contractor had bulldozed a rough trail through the rubble, were we able to see the effects of the storm above. When we did, I was amazed to find that even the relatively flat ridge-tops were eroded. The rain left a pattern of grooves three or more inches deep in the ground.

Standing on the VOR site, near the point where the fuel tank had rolled over the precipice, I looked into the valley bottom below. From the base of the mountain, where the waters of Jersey and Butcher Canyons combine with those of Water Canyon, for a distance of four miles was a brand new fan-shaped alluvial wash.

It was there that the Home Station's six-inch water pipe had been decimated. It was also there that the county road, which we had previously seen up close, had given way to new terrain. And where a line cabin once stood now there were but a few splinters buried in gravel. Whole corrals and fence lines had been uprooted and stretched aside. The face of the earth, at least that portion of it, had been changed in the twinkling of an eye, a job that would have taken man, even with modern machinery, years to effect.

It would be weeks before repairs to the county and FAA roads were completed, when the road in Dacey Canyon was realigned to hug the hillside as far from the creek bed as possible, and with only two crossings on concrete fords instead of bridges. It was built to withstand another such torrential downpour, even though the odds were about a hundred-to-one against its happening in the next century.

Since that time I have seen the results of other such storms in the Great Basin, most notably one that occurred in Northumberland Canyon, north of Belmont, Nevada, in the 1970s, but none came close to matching, in terms of area affected and earth washed away, the one over Mt. Moses.

Anyone planning to erect a building in the basin-and-range country of Nevada (or anywhere else for that matter) should first consider the geography, then avoid placing it in the bottom of a canyon or on an alluvial fan. Early Nevadans apparently used good judgment in that respect, for most of their structures have survived over a hundred years. Contemporary builders, on the other hand, often show little regard for the lay of the land and the laws of Mother Nature.

The Humboldt River is one of the least impressive rivers I've known. It appears more a muddy slough than the most significant river in the Great Basin, but every spring it takes on a serious mien. Its meandering oxbows overflow and the lowland fields play host to shallow-but-vast pools. Sometimes it even rises to what could be called a flood.

The last flood of major proportion occurred in February of 1962. It was caused by a maritime storm that swept up the east side of the Sierra Nevada Range and dumped on northeastern Nevada. The warm rains prematurely melted the snow-pack in the East Humboldt and Ruby Mountain Ranges. When it reached Elko, the runoff spilled over the dikes and inundated several shacks and cabins where the poor people lived.

A fourth of Elko's citizens went to see the flood, to watch the murky waters rise and swirl through that part of town upstream of the Fifth Street Bridge. There were then two bridges connecting the main and south sides of the city; one at Fifth Street, made of sturdy concrete, the second at Ninth Street, an old, narrow, steel-truss affair. The floodwaters reached the bottom of the arch of the concrete bridge, and were forced around the east side of it. Debris piled up against the upper one, the steel one, and it was feared that the stream would be diverted into the city streets.

Another worry was for the north-side dike which, being on the outer curve of the river, was rapidly eroding away. City crews brought a dozen junk cars to the site and slid them into the raging waters for rip-rap. It was an operation that drew a lot of attention and "advice" from the sidelines, but much to our surprise it worked. The dike held.

Later, after the river subsided, the Ninth Street Bridge was actually removed "because it was a flood hazard." I figured it was done for political reasons, to get rid of the old structure and to make way for a new one. But a replacement would be a long time coming and we were left with only one river crossing for many years.

(In the 1970s, a highly controversial and expensive project modified the Humboldt River channel through Elko. The two railroads were moved from the downtown area to a new manmade river bank. a high concrete bridge was erected at Eleventh Street. A second one replaced the old Fifth Street Bridge. These new bridges now spanned both the river and the railroads.

An amusing sidelight resulted from this project: The bordellos, which had forever been on the "wrong side of the tracks," were now on the "right side.")

But back to the flood: Downstream from Elko, the South Fork swelled and joined the Humboldt. The flood surged through Carlin Canyon, through the city of Carlin, through deserted Palisade and on to Beowawe. There, the main street and most of the dwellings north of the railroad were inundated. Martin and Babe's, the most prominent establishment in town, where drinks and sometimes food were available at almost any hour, was forced to suspend operations when the water rose half-way up the barstools.

A day or two later, when the river receded, Fagg's repairmen dried out the telephone equipment and restored service to Martin and Babe's, and to the community's only outside coin booth.

In the fall of 1961, Rita and I had a novel experience. With our kids, we first went to Carmel Valley and spent a couple of days visiting with Ruth and her bunch. It was shirtsleeve weather. The Carmel beaches were warm and sunny and we had an enjoyable time.

And then, immediately after returning from the seacoast, Rita and I borrowed John's red pickup truck and towed it to the Pequop Range, to spend a couple of days deer hunting.

Alert to signs of an impending storm, and not wanting to put ourselves in a tenuous position (John's Ford was not a 4-W-D), we chose to camp among the junipers and pinyons in the foothills on the west side of the mountain. It was a short uphill drive, about 300-yards, out of sight and sound of the highway, and we were soon settled in. But not before the wind and snow struck with the force of a blizzard. It was a real contrast to Carmel Beach, where we had recently basked in warm sunshine.

It was our first time out with the trailer in a real storm, but it was great. Not only were we snug and warm, but alone (a rare occurrence in those years). Rita cooked up a hot meal and we relaxed while the world turned dark-but-white outside.

The storm spent itself during the night, putting down about eight inches of sparkling new snow. By morning it was quite cold inside the trailer, in spite of the heat from our little furnace, so as soon as possible after rising we brewed a pot of coffee.

The sun had not yet reached our camp when we sat down at the table by the front window, and almost immediately a novel scene unfolded before our eyes.

Not 50-feet from our trailer, a fleet-footed jackrabbit came suddenly into view. He was obviously in a hurry, bounding over and dodging between knee-high sagebrush. A moment later we saw the reason for his haste. A hungry coyote - as ragged and skinny and mangy an individual as I'd ever seen - burst through the bushes, his nose on the trail of the jack. Both prey and predator seemed oblivious to our truck and trailer, and went "on with the show."

Rabbit stopped, then immediately doubled back around Coyote's flank, crossing over behind him stage right. Coyote turned to the rear and would surely have seen Rabbit had he looked up. But his nose was to the ground and he was so intent on sensing the track he did not. Rabbit reappeared, moving in ever widening circles around the pursuer. I was reminded of Br'er Rabbit, who invariably eluded the fox. But this was for real.

Finally, Coyote tired of what he must have perceived as a losing proposition. His pace slowed...his tail drooped...his tongue hung out of his mouth. He was the picture of abject despair.

Meanwhile, having spread his tracks and scent over the area in a confusing pattern, Rabbit took off to the north and out of sight.

Now Coyote, with a last puzzled look around, ambled back to the center of the arena and sat down to rest.

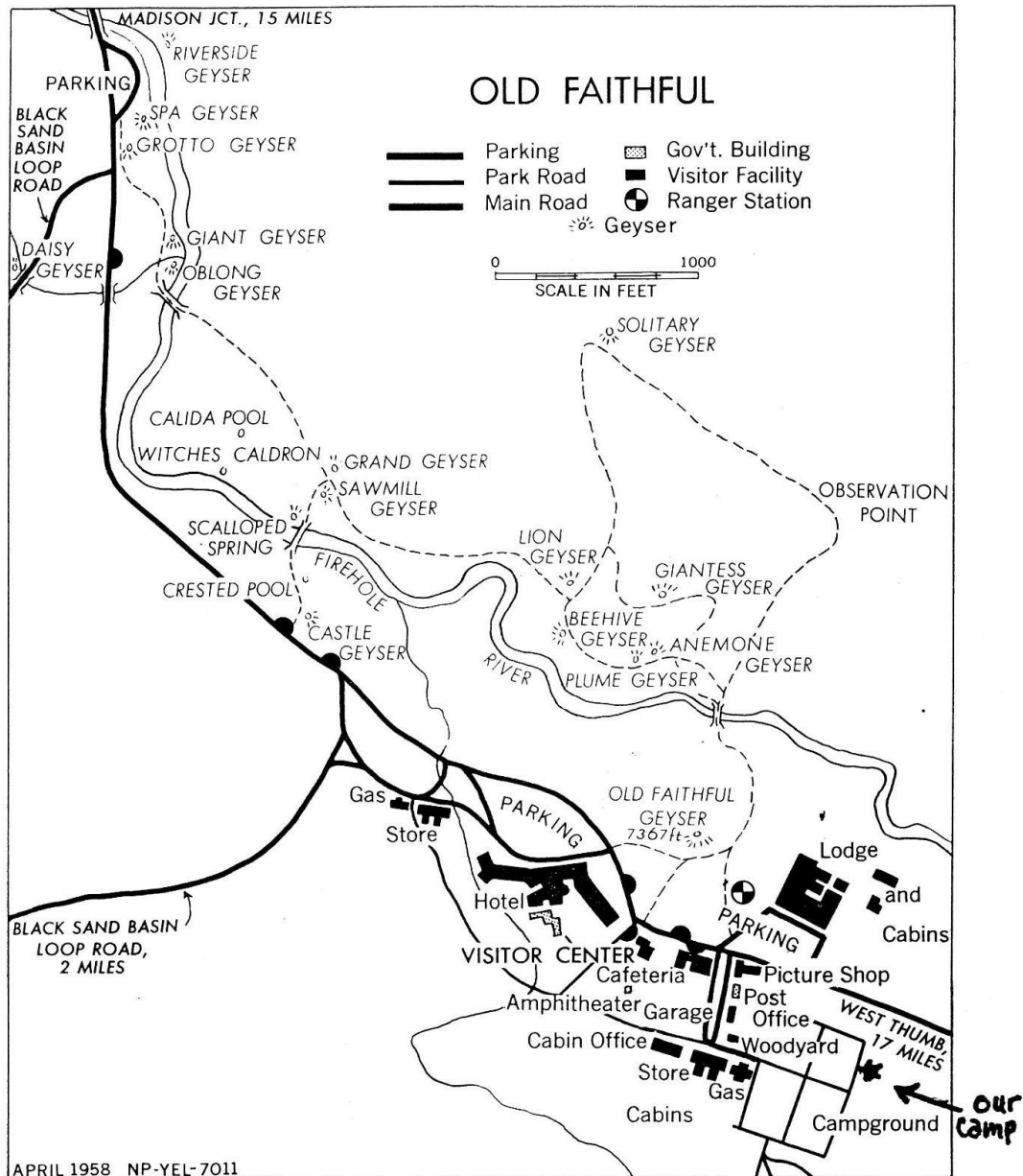
To Coyote, of course, this was not simply the end of a game. It was the serious loss of breakfast, and it might be some time before another potential meal presented itself. But even though we had to sympathize with him, we chuckled at the way he had been deceived by Rabbit.

The sun's rays now found our camp and the coyote, somewhat composed again, trotted away in the direction from which he'd come. The show was over. Rita and I finished our meal, bundled up and took the Red Ford into the woods to make our own tracks.

However, we dared not venture too far afield in the pickup, nor did I feel like doing much hiking in the post-storm cold. As a consequence, we saw no bucks at which to shoot and it was early afternoon when we returned to the comfort of our trailer. (I must have been getting soft, or compassionate for my hunting partner.)

The next morning broke with a clear blue sky above, but a vast sea of fog extended far to the north and south in Independence Valley. The temperature was well below zero. The world around us was perfectly still. After breakfast, I took a short hike up the hill to hunt for deer but returned with empty hands and cold feet.

I was ready, and so was Rita, to hitch-up the trailer and head for home.



CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

MICROWAVE-RADIO ROUTE SURVEY

From the time of my promotion to management, I had several times been assigned to projects apart from my regular duties; specifically, to teach radio classes in Reno, in 1956, to help a radio-site selection team in northwestern Nevada, in 1957, to troubleshoot the Stillwater-Austin radio system, in 1960, to assist the Lincoln County Telephone Company turn up new radio and carrier systems, also in 1960.

In March of 1962, I was about to embark on another special project. This one would be the most interesting and rewarding of all.

Jim Dodson, Nevada's plant manager, was forever trying to coax me into moving to Reno, to a lateral position. "It will be a good experience for you," he said. But I liked living and working in Elko and could see no advantage in making a costly and disruptive move to a similar job, at the same pay scale, in Reno. Paul Brown had made such a move, and had been promoted to a second level job within a couple of months. But it didn't always work that way. Lots of guys moved to Reno and waited years for advancement, if at all. So I continued to reject Dodson's "invitations" to transfer, although I willingly took on temporary out of town assignments.

The first I heard of this latest project was when Red got up from his desk one morning, came over to mine, pulled up a chair and sat down to talk. By his actions I knew something was up, so I put aside some paperwork and gave him my undivided attention.

"How'd you like to take on another temporary job?" he asked.

Never one to appear overeager, I responded, "Oh, I don't know...what is it? Where? For how long?"

He explained that AT&T was planning another microwave-radio route across Nevada, parallel to the existing route but spanning the central part of the state. This time, Nevada Bell engineers would be given the responsibility for route and site selection, subject to AT&T Company's approval, and the plant department would provide one member to the selection team.

"Would you be the one?" Red asked.

"You bet I will," I replied without hesitation.

The team leader had already been chosen. It was Milton S. Murphy, senior engineer in Reno. I was to report to him in Hawthorne, some

350-miles southwest of Elko, the following Monday, and would travel home on weekends on my own time. Beyond that, and the fact that the project should last about six weeks, I knew very little about the assignment. But enough.

A temporary chief was assigned to run my job in Elko, and I prepared to leave. I packed a week's worth of clean clothes in a suitcase, and loaded it into my Company Rambler, along with a brand new fur-collared parka, binoculars, briefcase, portable radio, field boots and a lunch box.

It was before sunup of a frosty morning when I headed out, traveling west to Battle Mountain, south to US-50, over Carroll Summit to Middlegate, an old Pony Express station, through the mining town of Gabbs to tiny Luning, on US-95, then west to my destination, Hawthorne. Only twice did I stop along the way; once, under a spreading cottonwood tree near the wash east of Middlegate, to eat my boxed lunch, and again at Gabbs where I had the gas tank filled to "insure" that I'd make it. It was late afternoon when I finally pulled into the quiet community of Hawthorne, so I went immediately to the El Capitan Motel and registered for my previously reserved room.

The "El Cap" occupied most of two city blocks in the heart of town, and was the most important establishment for miles around. It boasted of clean modern rooms, a fine restaurant, an ample bar and a big casino.

Murphy and the others were apparently out in the field somewhere, so I relaxed in my room until they returned. It was over cocktails and dinner that evening that I met the guys with whom I'd be working the next few weeks.

Milt Murphy, a second level manager, was raised and educated in Nevada. As intelligent and honest an individual as I ever met or worked with, he was unusually conscientious about his job. If he had one fault, it was impatience with men addicted to sloppy work habits. In a word, Milt was a perfectionist.

I shared his love of perfection (though not, perhaps, to the same degree) and would learn a lot from Milt; among other things, the basics of surveying, how to properly use a compass, transit and theodolite (I was familiar with the latter), how to read a geodetic survey map, how to find a bench mark and so on.

With Murphy were two of his radio engineers; Al (Alvin) Glass, who had been an engineer at a Reno broadcast-radio station before coming to work as a tollie at Bell of Nevada, and a young, part-time college student (whose name I've conveniently forgotten). The college kid was an exasperation for Milt, and would be sent back to Reno after a couple of weeks in the field.

Walt Penner, whom I'd gotten to know at Wendover Notch, was the building engineer, and Doug Kipp was the right-of-way engineer. They would evaluate potential sites for feasibility with regard to the construction of roads, buildings and power-lines.

As the non-engineer of the group, I would keep an eye out for locations or situations which might present maintenance problems in the future. Also, when the final site locations were approved, I would make recommendations for the establishment of maintenance centers along the route.

There were others involved with the project, but the six of us constituted the ongoing field team that would work together (except for the college kid) from start to finish.

Nevada's piece of the proposed microwave route, the so-called Oakland-Scipio Route, would cross central Nevada in a south-looping arc, passing near Hawthorne, Tonopah and Ely. It would connect with California's portion south of Lake Tahoe, and with Utah's east of Baker, Nevada.

AT&T and Pacific Company folks already referred to the route as the "Highway Fifty" route, but from Hawthorne to Ely it followed US-6, the "Grand Army of the Republic Highway."

With Hawthorne as our first base, we began our survey at the western edge of the state using two, 4-W-D International-Harvester Scouts and a 4-W-D Chevrolet Suburban for transportation. (I did not intend to use my company Rambler in the back country.) Our first efforts were directed toward finding a radio path from Leviathan Peak, in California, to Bald Mountain near Sweetwater, Nevada. From there we hoped to find a path south of Mt. Grant, a formidable peak rising abruptly from the west shore of Walker Lake, and on to Kinkaid.

Walt Penner and I started off in a Scout, climbing Lucky Boy Pass on a county road. (I would later learn that Rita's father had worked at the Lucky Boy Mine, long since abandoned, soon after he arrived in this country.) At the summit we turned north, up a steep mountain road recently built to provide access to a television-translator on Cory Peak, at some 10,500' in elevation.

I was pretty good with a 4-W-D in snow, having had over ten years' experience, but could drive the Scout no farther than the 9,500' level where, even with its southern exposure, some of the snowdrifts were over three feet deep and hard packed. We left the rig and hiked to a wind-blown saddle. From there we could see the small TV hut, hugging the shoulder of the mountain a quarter-mile away. We could also see that, while Cory Peak might be a great site with respect to radio propagation, it was no place for a station requiring year-round access. So Walt and I made some notes, mostly mental (it was too cold to do much writing), worked our way back to the Scout and, having literally spun our wheels all day, returned to Hawthorne.

Meanwhile, others of our team searched for a way up to Kinkaid Mesa, east of Hawthorne, and to Bald Mountain, west of Cory Peak. Kinkaid had posed no problem, and the men waited on top for hours anticipating our signal. But there was no apparent way up Bald Mountain and those two guys, like us, came back with nothing good to report.

And that's pretty much how we spent our first week. We'd pair off, each pair taking a vehicle and attempt to gain the top of a predetermined hill or a peak. If successful, radio and/or visual contact was then established with the other teams.

Visual contacts were made by "flashing" with mirrors (as I had learned when working in the Denio area). A standard mirror was about two feet square, but I fashioned a small two-sided mirror with a see-through cross in the center, the kind used by downed Navy fliers. It could be aimed more accurately and I could carry it in my pocket. The

man on the receiving end would measure the declination and azimuth to the flash, and record the information for later study.

Our progress was extremely slow that first week, primarily because we had to fight snowdrifts at the higher elevations. As often as not, by the time we reached a destination the sun was obscured by clouds, making flashing impossible. We were getting nowhere fast. By week's end, Murphy was discouraged. He discussed the situation with his boss in Reno, and they decided to contract a helicopter service.

A few days later the helicopter was scheduled to arrive in Hawthorne, flying in from Stockton, California, headquarters of the "Calicopters" firm. Murphy made reservations at the El Cap for the pilot, Ernie Boswell, and for his mechanic (whom I will call Bill). And then we all went to the airport north of town to meet them. It was early afternoon.

We hadn't long to wait, there on the apron in the brisk spring air, before the beating of rotors heralded the helicopter's arrival. We were excited. Not only would the helicopter ease our burden, it should also add a degree of romance to the job. Even Milt grinned as the chopper made its approach.

And then, when it was finally on the ground and close up, we were wide-eyed and silent. Ernie, as we could plainly see, was black. Murphy's face went blank.

It might be difficult (now) to fully appreciate Murphy's concern. But those were racially sensitive years and many people, including some in Hawthorne, had not yet subscribed to the idea of integration; at least where private business was concerned.

The city of Hawthorne, with a population of about 2,500, was virtually surrounded by a U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot, the location having been chosen back in 1926 for its remoteness. Commissioned in 1930, the depot had since grown, particularly during WW-II, until it was proclaimed "The World's Largest." That's what the sign at the boundary read.

Many of the civil-service employees, most of whom lived in Babbitt, a federal housing area two miles northwest of Hawthorne, were black, and I'd have thought the townspeople were accustomed to them. But the owner of the biggest business around maintained a policy of "No blacks in the El Cap."

And that is precisely what Milt was thinking about; that it might well be embarrassing when Ernie went to check in. Outwardly, Murphy was composed when we approached the chopper, crouching instinctively under the slow-rotating blades, to welcome the pilot. We introduced ourselves and shook the hand of the man in gray fatigues, leather jacket and soft cap. He untied a military duffle bag from a wire "basket" on the starboard landing runner, tossed it into the back of our Scout and climbed into the passenger seat.

Back at the El Cap, the girl behind the desk did a double-take when we entered, but quickly recovered from the shock. Ignoring the fact that Murphy had reserved a room in Boswell's name, she said there was some problem about which she must consult the manager, and prepared to retreat to a rear office. Before leaving, though, she suggested that we might enjoy a cup of coffee in the lobby. We all,

including Ernie, knew the nature of her "problem," and headed for Murphy's room to await a resolution.

We "white folks" were too embarrassed to bring up the subject but Ernie put us at ease.

"I've run into this before," he said matter-of-factly. "No problem...we'll find another place."

His "we" included Bill, who had driven their ground support vehicle from Stockton and met us at the airport and who, by the way, was white.

We sat around and chatted and got somewhat acquainted, and finally the phone rang. Murphy answered it.

"Sorry," the clerk reported, "but we have no room for Mr. Boswell."

When Milt asked if it was because he was black, she responded in the affirmative.

Ernie gave us a look of "I told you so" and shrugged. Within a half-hour, he and Bill found a very nice motel at the east edge of town; which, as it happened, was better suited to their needs. They could park the chopper on an adjacent lot and keep an eye on it. Furthermore, Ernie could receive any blacks with whom he might become acquainted.

I admired Ernie for the quiet way in which he dealt with the lodging situation. And I would come to appreciate his flying skill and conscientious attitude. He was a no-nonsense conservative pilot, the kind I like to have at the controls when I'm aboard.

I kidded Ernie about his having to spend time in Nevada, for he was, by his own admission, a dedicated "city boy." Brought up in New York City, he had learned to fly while serving in the military, and had spent considerable time over Korea.

Every morning, before leaving town, Ernie bought a copy of every available newspaper, and perhaps a magazine or two, to take along. And no matter where he landed, he never strayed beyond the radius of his chopper's rotors. He was concerned for its safety, he said, and he didn't much like wilderness country. So he would sit in the cockpit or on the luggage-basket and read while we went about our business.

My first flight with Ernie, coincidentally my first time in a helicopter, was from Hawthorne over Lucky Boy Pass to the Sweetwater Ranch, about 35-miles away. The weather was clear and calm when he set the chopper down on a patch of bare ground just off the graveled road north of the Walker River Bridge, to await the arrival of Murphy in the Scout. We had barely settled back in our seats, to read the news, when the desert silence was interrupted by the sound of a motor. We both looked up in time to catch the beginning of a unique scenario.

A machine of an earlier era, that I identified as a Model-A Ford from the 1930s, black and dusty but "hitting on all four" (as they used to say) came slowly down the road toward us. Behind the wheel, dressed in a white shirt, black suit coat and black, wide-brimmed felt hat, sat a leather-faced old Indian. I could hardly believe my eyes. It was a Rockwell Saturday Evening Post illustration in real life.

Without a doubt, this was the very first helicopter to ever land in that unspoiled part of Nevada. Very few trucks or cars even passed that way, and our shiny aircraft must have seemed a little out of

place. So, anticipating a look of disbelief on the Indian's face, I raised my hand and waved a friendly greeting.

But the Indian stared straight ahead, unblinking, upright as a mannequin, his hands squarely on the steering wheel of the Ford. When directly opposite our chopper, and only then, he turned his head slowly toward us and back again. Like Jack Benny, he showed no change of expression or trace of emotion. He was not the least bit impressed by our presence. It was as if he'd seen a helicopter there every day. "Eh! So what!"

I had to laugh. "Did you see that?" I cried out, slapping my newspaper down.

Ernie, who had seen very few American Indians in his lifetime, chuckled. "Is he fo' real?"

I admitted to his being genuine, though I had never seen anyone quite like him, myself.

We sat, and read, and downed several cups of strong thermos-coffee before a dust cloud off to the southeast moved closer and revealed the Scout. Walt, who was driving, crossed the bridge over the Walker River and parked beside the chopper. He and Doug and Milt got out, stretched their weary legs and joined us for coffee.

Milt, Walt and I got into the chopper then, and Ernie flew us toward a point on the south side of Bald Mountain. Doug, meanwhile, took off in the Scout to search for a road or trail up.

It was still relatively early in the day, and the calm air was perfect for a helicopter flight. Murphy, alluding to the map on his lap, pointed to where he'd like to go. Ernie circled over the spot, on a juniper-and-pinyon ridge south of the main peak. At first it looked as though he'd find no suitable place to land, but finally a small opening appeared on the edge of a cliff. He descended, set the chopper down without a jar, and attended to his "shut down" procedures while the rest of us got out and prepared to go to work.

The ridge on which we found ourselves ran mostly north and south. On the west side it sloped gently under a cover of trees, but to the east, just a few dozen feet in front of the helicopter, a precipitous cliff fell away into a deep canyon. Any access road would have to come in from the west, for sure.

We took our gear - binoculars, compass, transit, altimeter/barometer, mirrors, maps, walkie-talkie radios and lunches - and went off around the mountain to the northwest, hoping to find a location from which we could see both Leviathan and Cory Peaks. We did find such a spot, about a mile from where we'd landed, but the terrain was undesirable from the standpoint of accessibility, especially in the winter season. However, we took some measurements and established the coordinates on Murphy's map, then sat under a friendly tree to eat our lunches before returning to our flying machine.

As we walked back, we noticed that the west wind had come up and was blowing 15- to 20-mph and gusting. At the landing site, we saw that Ernie had tied down the helicopter's rotor, to keep it from spinning wantonly, and was sitting in the cockpit, reading. He saw us, got down and began to ready the chopper for flight, but it was obvious the wind made him nervous. He walked to the edge of the cliff, kicked some dirt into the air, watched it disappear and returned.

"Too much wind to take off over the canyon," he announced. "We'll have to turn "round."

Earlier that morning, in answer to my question, Ernie told me that helicopters were not generally flown in winds over 30-mph, at least not by choice, and none were well suited to taking off downwind. I began to appreciate the situation. The air moving up the slope from behind would spill over the cliff and form a vortex that would surely slam the aircraft onto the rocks below.

But Ernie had a plan.

We loaded the gear, Milt and Walt climbed into the cockpit with Ernie, and I was instructed to stand off to one side and hold a length of orange surveyor's ribbon above my head. In other words, I was to "make like a wind sock." He started the engine and, with the rotor feathered and spinning overhead, allowed it to reach operating temperature. He watched my wind sock, and when it dipped perceptibly - indicating a lessening of the wind's force - he lifted the helicopter three feet off the ground, rotated it 180-degrees then set it down again on the same spot. With a grin he motioned to me to get aboard.

Believe me, I was glad to do just that. I stuffed the ribbon into my pocket, held onto my hat, climbed into the bubble and secured the door.

"Did you think maybe I'd leave you up here?" Ernie asked. The thought had fleetingly entered my mind.

He made a textbook takeoff, circled for a last look around, then found the Scout and landed to rendezvous with Doug.

It was now mid-afternoon, and I volunteered to drive the Scout back to town while the others rode in style in the helicopter.

Fifteen miles down the road I came to a junction where an old, wind eroded sign appealed to my sense of exploration. "AURORA, 7 MI," it beckoned, and "BODIE, 14 MI." The arrow pointed south. I'd always wanted to visit those historic places, now was my chance. They were not far out of my way and I could easily make it back to town in time for dinner. So I turned to the right and made my way up the canyon by Bodie Creek.

I had gone about six miles when, at the top of a hill, a rusty barbed-wire fence caught my attention. Behind it was a cemetery, Aurora's boot hill, overgrown with sagebrush and juniper trees. I took a quick look around, read some of the faded epitaphs, then proceeded downhill to what was left of the old mining town. It was a disappointment. Except for the shell of a mill and three or four tumble-down shanties, there was nothing left but weedy streets and half filled cellar holes, broken bottles and rusty cans. This was a town once so prominent, 100-years before, it boasted of seventeen mills and 5,000 inhabitants (among them a man named Samuel Clemens, who would wind up in Virginia City) and was the seat of Esmeralda county.

The headstones in the cemetery above had provided more evidence of Aurora's glorious past than anything I could find in the town site. Man, the great scavenger, and Mother Nature, the great eradicator, had removed most signs of habitation, and it was difficult to visualize what might have been.

I then turned toward Bodie, the more recently abandoned town just across the once disputed California-Nevada border. Up a narrow canyon road I went; up past the old Chesbrough Mill where giant, laminated wooden pulleys lay amongst rotting timbers, concrete and other debris. But trouble lay just ahead. Beyond a sharp uphill curve, I unexpectedly came to a drift of old snow. Hoping to drive on over it I pressed hard on the accelerator and made it halfway through. And then I wished I hadn't tried. Fifty-feet ahead there was another, bigger drift. Furthermore, the downhill shoulder of the road was a spongy mass of mud.

A glance at the western sky confirmed that it was later than I thought, and I scratched Bodie off my itinerary. Perhaps I should not have taken this little side trip after all. Oh well, enough of self remonstrations. I'd better just get "outta" that uninhabited country and back to Hawthorne.

The part of the road not covered with snow was too narrow and muddy for a turn around, so I'd have to back the Scout over the drift to dry ground. But when about half way back through the rotten, grainy snow, the Scout slid to the edge and hung precariously in the soup. Out with the shovel!

It took me a good half-hour to make a path in the mud for the downside wheels, and by the time I got the vehicle out, turned it around and headed toward Hawthorne it was twilight. I was worried. The incident at Denio - when we had to go out in the dark and search for Doug McVae - weighed on my mind. I was bound to be in trouble with Murphy, and deservedly so.

I covered the last 30-miles of dirt road in record time, went immediately to my room, cleaned up, and then found the rest of our team in the restaurant at the El Cap. They were just wiping their lips after dinner.

At least I had arrived before Murphy organized a search party, but just barely. He was obviously displeased with me, but listened patiently to my explanation for being late.

After I'd eaten, in private, Milt gave me a good talking-to. Like any good supervisor he was not so concerned with what I had done, as with what I had not done; that is, that I failed to inform him of my intentions. Of course it was never my intention ahead of time to take a side trip, but that was beside the point. I felt badly about letting him down. I humbly accepted the reprimand and apologized.

As many times as I had gotten stuck in the mud or snow, one would think I'd steer clear of the stuff. I guess my sense of optimism outweighed a sense of reality. Anyway, within a week I was in the middle of another, similar predicament.

It was Friday afternoon and I got an early start for home. This time I did inform Murphy, that I planned to go by way of Gabbs and might take a look at Table Mountain, a location some nine miles northeast of Luning that he'd mentioned as a likely repeater site. An existing road up there, leading to an FAA VOR station, made it an attractive possibility. We planned to survey the area the following week, so why not get a sneak preview of it.

About ten miles out of Luning, I turned off the Gabbs highway and drove up a graveled road toward the FAA site. About five miles in and 1,500' higher, I encountered snow and considered turning back. But only for a moment. Instead I drove on, on the hard-packed tracks made by the FAA snow-cat. In a short time I came to the top of a rise and stopped, for a sizable drift lay dead ahead. It was sagebrush-deep and 50-yards long, but the road beyond was clear to the fenced-in VOR station, which stood on a slight rise above.

Once again I considered turning back. My objective had been to "see" the mountain and I had already accomplished that goal. But some hidden compulsion urged me to go on, hopefully all the way to the fence. The Rambler had performed well so far, and as long as I stayed on the old snow-cat tracks I should make it. So I backed the car a ways, slapped it into forward gear and hit the drift full speed ahead.

(Lest you wonder why I didn't put the chains on, it was because I'd learned from experience that good snow tires work better, except on ice, than chains. Chains tend to bite too deeply in snow, increasing the chance of getting high centered.)

The little car floated over the surface like a toboggan and I was two-thirds of the way across before it slowed down, mushed and stalled. It was an old familiar feeling. I was stuck! To make sure, I started the engine and tried to drive forward and backward, but it was no-go. In fact, the snowdrift was so deep I had a hard time opening the door to get out.

It is human to remember best those times when we pressed on and failed. Those times when we went on and succeeded are usually forgotten, written off as commonplace, the normal course of events. This was one of the former; an incident that I'd never forget. And if I had turned back when it was possible and prudent to do so, I would not now be writing about it at all. But my story is, as yet, only half told.

With a long-handled shovel I "sounded" the drift. It was roughly two-feet deep. Until the Rambler stalled, the tires had never been closer to the ground than a foot. Now, after spinning out, there were still four inches of packed snow under the tires. As usual in such a circumstance, the car rested on a bed of grainy snow, all of which had to be removed, shovel by tedious shovelful, until the axles were clear and the tires on the ground.

In the waning light of day I considered my options: I could dig a trail behind the Rambler and back it out, or I could dig out the remaining drift ahead, drive forward and circle back around it. (A third option, to abandon the car and walk to the highway for help never occurred to me.) The second option would require only half as much digging as the first, so, after surveying the windblown sagebrush ridge alongside the drift to make sure it could be traversed, I went to work.

The hardest part of the job was moving the snow from under the vehicle. I must have been a good half-hour at that. Then I spent another half-hour clearing a "driveway," about three car-lengths long, ahead of the Rambler. While I was engrossed in that occupation the sky turned from dusky blue to dark gray. Only the spired crests of the bushes remained visible, in silhouette against the horizon.

At last I settled in behind the steering wheel, weary from my recent exertion. I could easily have gone to sleep but it was a long way to Elko and I was not yet "out of the woods." I still had to get beyond the drift and negotiate a way back through the brush to firm ground.

I started the engine, snapped on the headlights, rocked the car back and forth gingerly, and then drove resolutely forward. The little car dodged from side to side like a toboggan in a chute, and finally came out on the smooth snowless road beyond the nasty drift. Without hesitating I swung it around to the south, steering from one clump of sagebrush to the next for traction. It was uncomfortable, bouncing from bush to bush that way, but as long as I was moving I was happy.

The Rambler made it without complaining, back to the safe side of the drift. Nor did I hesitate there but headed down the hill to the highway and home for the weekend.

But there's a sequel to the story.

On Monday morning, back in Hawthorne, I reported my observations of Table Mountain to Murphy. I emphasized the amount of snow up there, omitting any reference to my getting stuck, and recommended against its use as a microwave-radio site.

Later on we scouted an alternate area that he had in mind, and found a much more suitable site at a lower elevation right next to the county road, 13-miles east of Mina. It was near enough to Table Mountain to be so named.

On Friday, anxious to return home for the weekend, I hurriedly filled the Rambler's gas tank, picked up some snacks to stave off hunger, and headed up the highway. By now I was familiar with the route and could cover it in a little over four-and-a-half hours. Normally.

It was clear and cool that evening and I rolled along at a good clip, arriving at the International Hotel, in Austin, by six o'clock. There I downed some hot coffee and a piece of pie, then headed east again on US-50. Three miles west of Eureka, I turned north toward Carlin. In those days there were only a handful of ranches in Diamond Valley. It had not yet been subdivided into farms, to be irrigated by subsurface water and transformed from brown to green. The few ranches in existence were dark that night, and except for rabbits, and one slow-moving pickup truck in the upper end of Pine Valley, the 90-mile stretch of highway was deserted.

I was just getting used to the dark again, after passing the pickup, and was cruising up the incline ten miles out of Carlin. I looked forward to seeing the lights of the city from the top of the hill, knowing that Elko was only 22-miles beyond. But I was still a quarter-mile from the top when the Rambler's smooth purring gave way to coughing and sputtering. I quickly concluded that it was "outta gas," even though the fuel gage registered well above the empty mark.

The engine quit entirely, so I disengaged the clutch and let the car coast, unconsciously raising my butt up off the seat as if to reduce the weight. I really wanted to make it to the top of the hill, because there was a mile or more of downhill from there and I could

coast that much closer to Carlin. But 200-yards short of that goal, the car came to a dead stop and my world grew deathly quiet.

The temperature had dropped to near freezing. It was pitch black under a moonless but clear sky. Not one manmade light could be seen in any direction. To conserve the battery I turned off the headlights, then quickly switched on the parking lights; not out of fear of being hit by another vehicle, but so I could see my way around.

I was determined to reach that summit. I opened the car door wide, got out of the car, put my back against the door-frame, released the handbrake, pressed my shoes against the pavement and strained. Surprisingly, despite the uphill grade, the Rambler moved quite easily (this was one time I appreciated a small car) and I never stopped pushing until I figured it was on the level. It was not quite on the level, but by using the starter-motor for power I inched it over the top and started my downhill run.

Gravity was finally working for me instead of against me. The car picked up speed. I saw the Carlin lights and coasted almost two miles closer to them, to the flats along the Humboldt River, before having to pull off the pavement and park. It was "shank's mare" from then on.

By my estimate, only five miles of level highway lay between me and the Standard Station in Carlin, and it was actually exhilarating hiking in the crisp cold air. But before I'd gone a mile once again Dame Fortune smiled on me. A 1½-ton hay truck, only the second motor vehicle I'd seen in an hour-and-a-half, came up from behind, slowed and stopped. I climbed aboard.

The driver, an amiable young fellow on his way from Fallen to Tampa, Idaho with a load of baled alfalfa, had seen my parked car and then concluded, since few people were in the habit of hiking alone on the highway in the dark of night, I must be its hapless driver. I introduced myself and told him I'd run out of gas. Beyond that we had very little conversation. He drove me directly to the gas station, where I thanked him, held out a five-dollar bill (that he refused), got out and waved him on his way.

All was quiet at the station and I went inside. Startled, the young man in attendance looked up from his dime-novel, then glanced out the window, wondering, I supposed, where was my car.

"I ran outta gas on the Eureka highway and got a ride in," I explained. "Could you lend me a can and maybe give me a lift back to my car?"

"How far out are you?" he asked.

"About five miles," I responded, adding that I was with Bell of Nevada, on my way home to Elko.

The guy was very helpful (typical of small town folks) and agreed to give me a ride, in his own car, if I'd wait until closing time in fifteen minutes. Relieved, I cozied up to the heater and downed a cup of stale but hot coffee.

From then on everything was easy. The fellow filled a GI-can with gas, entered the amount on a credit slip, closed the station and took me to the Rambler. He poured the gas into the tank for me, waited to make sure the engine started okay, and followed me in to town. There, he powered-up one of the gas pumps, filled the car tank and completed

the paperwork. I shoved a five-dollar bill into his hand, thanked him and took off for home.

Later, on investigation, I discovered the reason for my running out of fuel. The bottom of the gas tank had been pushed up when I'd gotten stuck on the snowdrift the previous week, reducing its capacity. The gage had not registered "empty" because the float, resting on the raised bottom of the tank, was higher than it would otherwise have been.

And that's the rest of that story.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

SURVEY COMPLETE

The Oakland-Scipio site survey work proceeded in high gear. We moved a lot faster now, with the helicopter to cart us up and down the more inaccessible mountains. We explored a different, more northerly (than the Leviathan Peak-Bald Mountain) route from the west, and found a favorable location just inside the California state line, about three miles northwest of Topaz Lake. (And so it was named.) From there we had a good radio path to a pass in the Wassuk Range, from where, according to the topographical map, we should be able to see Kinkaid.

Interestingly, our map (dated 1947) showed a road going up the Walker Lake side of the pass through a steep narrow canyon, but everything about it was incongruous. On the map it was designated as "Highway 2-C" when in fact there was no highway there at all; only an intermittent road snaking through the gravel in the canyon bottom. And the canyon was named "Reese River Canyon," while the Reese River, that runs 125-miles through the central part of the state, was 75-miles away at its closest point.

It was too much for me to fathom.

For a distance of almost a mile, the creek bed doubled for a road. Although there were abundant signs that copious amounts of water surged through the narrows at times, it was usually dry. In any event, one of our teams was able to negotiate the canyon in a 4-W-D vehicle, and to gain the proposed Wassuk site above.

On Tuesday, the third of April, I went in a Scout with Walt Penner to the Kinkaid bench, where we hoped to communicate with the men at Wassuk and prove-in a viable radio path. I am precise about the date by referring to an event that occurred in Reno, the details of which we received on my portable radio.

Because the sky was partly cloudy our flashing activities were rather intermittent, so we decided to relax and listen to the radio. The first words we heard that morning were as follows:

"We are witnessing a fire of possibly disastrous proportions. Although it is still too early to tell, we believe there are more than twenty people yet un-accounted for.... The fire started in the basement at seven this morning...apparently an explosion of some type...all the fire companies available are at the scene. At this time

huge columns of smoke and flames are shooting skyward through the top of this four-story building."

Since my radio was tuned to a Reno station (KOH) we assumed that the fire, then about three hours old, was in that city; but it was several minutes before we learned that it was the Golden Hotel that was burning.

The Golden was a Reno landmark hotel. Built in 1906, it had recently been expanded and modernized, and contained some of the best restaurants, casinos and show-rooms in the city, rivaled only by those of the Riverside and Mapes hotels. Located on the west side of North Center Street, north of Second Street, it was said to be a two-million-dollar property. (Harrah's Hotel/Casino now stands where the Golden Hotel had stood.)

Later in the day we heard a report of "one dead and twenty missing, out of a total of 143 guests and half that number of employees." Most of the missing would be accounted for in the next few days.

Meanwhile, back on our mountaintop, we finally got enough sunlight to prove that we did indeed have a line-of-sight between us and our compatriots at Wassuk. It would be a good microwave-radio path, with suitable low hills at either end to shield against reflections off the intervening lake.

At about the same time, the path from Wassuk to the Topaz Lake site was re-confirmed, and we felt as if we were making progress. Well, most of us felt that way. Murphy, counting only three usable sites so far and with ten or more to go, wished we would move at a faster pace.

In the next few days we surveyed the Table Mountain site (mentioned above) and crossed Gilbert Dry Lake to establish a site named "Gilbert," 20-miles northwest of Tonopah.

We moved our base of operations to Tonopah then, and Ernie, who experienced no further problems with motel accommodations, parked his chopper at the airport, seven miles east of town in Ralston Valley, north of Mud Lake.

The airport, now the Tonopah Municipal Airport, had been a busy training base during World War-II. Under construction in 1940, the "Tonopah Army Air Field" was occupied in 1942, its initial charter being to train young pilots in the P-39 Airacobra. Among those early trainees was Chuck Yeager, who would, after the war, become the first human to break the sonic speed barrier. In 1943, after a major expansion project, the base became a high-altitude bombing school, and the B-24 Liberator reigned supreme until 1945, with 66 of the big planes available for training at one time. In 1948, the field was deactivated and sold.

In 1962, except for its exceptionally long runways, a couple of big hangars and a few deserted barracks, there were few reminders of the airfield's proud heritage. But you could still sense a ghostly aura, perhaps because of the many men who, while training in the service of their country, died in nearby desert crashes.

In 1962, an air service operation, of sorts, was manned on an intermittent basis. When unattended, an incoming pilot seeking service, usually fuel, must first buzz the town of Tonopah then land

and wait for someone, if he were lucky, to drive to the airport. But it was a great place for Ernie's helicopter. It could be stored in a hangar out of the wind, and Bill could obtain high-octane fuel right there.

In the immediate area around Tonopah, the central portion of our intended route, we were presented with an additional challenge. A military radar was located on a point just a half-dozen miles north of town. In contrast to our microwave frequencies, which were transmitted in narrow beams and at low power (as explained in a previous chapter), the military radar, used to locate, identify and track military aircraft, not only transmitted them to all points of the compass but at very high power.

To avoid the radar's interfering with our microwave system, three of our sites (Gilbert, mentioned above; Booker Mountain, a couple of miles northeast of Tonopah; and Stone Cabin, 26-miles farther east) had to be chosen such that the antennas could be hidden from the radar's sight; i.e., by an intervening mountain or hill.

We were successful in meeting that criterion, but not without a lot of trial-and-error.

As we drove, flew over and worked on various mountaintops across the state, I was particularly impressed by the ever present signs of man's having been there before. Even the most rugged and remote niche contained some artifact(s); an old tobacco can with a lapsed mining claim enclosed; a small dump of rusted bean cans and broken whiskey bottles; a sheepherder's wine jug; a length of baling wire; a tarnished brass rifle casing. Rock cairns, erected as landmarks by early explorers, miners and geodetic survey crews, were found on every prominent hilltop, high and low. And almost everywhere, though not as often at the highest elevations, there were scatterings of flaked obsidian, quartz and chert, left by Indians and earlier man.

One warm day, when Walt and I sat on a slope a few miles south of the Stone Cabin Ranch, munching on soggy sandwiches and discussing the probable activities of "those who went before," I spied a piece of broken glass nearby. It was probably part of an old automobile tail-light lens, the frosted white part that illuminated the license plate. I picked it up and studied its roughly triangular shape.

"Looks a little like an arrowhead, doesn't it," I commented, and was struck by a sudden impulse. I picked up a chunk of quartz, and with it began to chip away at the glass to form a reasonable facsimile (I thought) of a projectile point. When I was done, Walt agreed that it "might resemble an arrowhead," so I decided to test it on our friends that evening.

Nearly every northern Nevada town had at least one Basque restaurant. Tonopah was no exception. I was never fond of Basque food, but most people just couldn't wait to sit down to one of the family style dinners where there was always a plentiful supply of victuals and wine. A typical meal featured a tureen of spicy soup, a large bowl of spaghetti, hot vegetables (usually green beans), French fries, bread and cheese, a main entree of beef or lamb (all too often lamb) and lots of dark red wine.

That night at the Basque restaurant in Tonopah I passed up the soup, made a meal of the preliminary dishes and declined the entree as

usual. When everyone had had his fill and was relaxing over strong black coffee, I nonchalantly introduced my arrowhead. It was passed around the table, triggering only mild interest until it reached Milt Murphy. Turning it over in his hand he studied it briefly, and then opined, "It's shaped like an arrowhead." And that's all he could say for it. I'd have to do better next time.

The following day I was teamed up with Murphy, in the chopper, in search of a location east of the Stone Cabin site (named for the ranch). We were flying over the Kawich Range, a rugged, rocky, tree-and-brush terrain above 7,000' in elevation, when a herd of mustangs, startled by our alien presence, kicked up dust in their haste to make a getaway. I pointed to where they were headed, toward a large chimney-rock of reddish hue some fifty-feet high, and facetiously suggested it would be an ideal location for a microwave-radio station. Milt laughed.

"Not even a tollie could climb that rock," he said.

He motioned to Ernie, who put us down on a more accessible ridge a short distance away.

While our pilot read the morning papers, Murphy and I set up a transit and took some sightings. We then decided to scout the area, he to the north and I to the south. It was a wonderful mountaintop. New green grass edged last year's brown thatch aside; tiny bluettes bloomed in "throw rug" patterns; junipers gave off a pungent aroma.

On my way back to the chopper I spotted an unnatural object lying on the ground; which, on inspection, proved to be a steel cable about five-millimeters in diameter. Not one to pass up an item of possible future use, I pulled at it, intending to roll up a few feet of it to take home with me. But I could find no end to the cable. It was apparently of infinite length.

I returned to the helicopter, told Ernie of my find and asked if there were some kind of tool on board that I might use to cut it. He had none, but volunteered information relating to my new found treasure.

"It's probably a tow cable," he said, "for trailing a target behind an aircraft for gunnery practice." And then he added, "That thing's probably a mile long."

No wonder I couldn't find an end.

I had to resort to stone-age tools, two hard rocks, to sever the cable, and took about a hundred feet of the tough stuff away with me. (I suppose the rest of it is still draped over the Kawich Range.)

The "cable ridge" proved too steep and inaccessible for our purpose, and we settled for a site closer to US-6 in a notch just west of the Warm Springs Ranch.

At one time, in the early 1900s, Warm Springs was a small but viable community with a Post Office and "everything." Motorists came from far away, especially from California, to soak in its healing springs.

In 1962, the country east of Tonopah was not only relatively untravelled but also sparsely populated. The first inhabited place you came to, when headed toward Ely, was Warm Springs. It then consisted of an old ranch house, a stone-and-willow corral, a few rundown cabins, and one impressive building with a restaurant/bar and some

grocery staples; and a pair of gasoline pumps out front. Because it was situated 50-miles from Tonopah, 40-miles from the next gas station to the east, and at the junction with the Hiko Highway (present SR-25), it was best known as a fuel stop. Its business may have been enhanced by a large sign at the Hiko turnoff that warned, "NEXT GAS 98 MILES," though there was even less traffic in that direction than toward Ely.

One cool morning, while enroute from Tonopah to Ely, I passed the Warm Springs way-station at about nine o'clock. Some four miles beyond, a Ford sedan with Illinois license plates was parked off the pavement, facing me. Out of habit, I took a good look at the car as I went by and saw, to my surprise, that it was occupied. It was not unusual to find someone in trouble out there, but these folks, an elderly couple, showed no sign that they needed help. They were just sitting there with the doors closed and the windows rolled up. I slowed to a stop, backed up and parked across the road from the car.

"You got troubles?" I called out as I walked toward the car.

The driver, a man, lowered his window a few inches and mumbled that they were okay; but the woman appeared cold and frightened. Then, I suppose after convincing themselves that, since I was driving a Bell-marked car I was really a Bell Telephone employee, they told me their story.

The man had recently retired. He and his wife were touring the United States for the first time. They had crossed the Great Salt Desert, stopped at Wendover for gas, then turned south to Ely and US-6, intending to drive across Nevada and enter California near Bishop. It was well after noon when they left Ely the previous day, expecting to reach Tonopah (170 miles away) by nightfall. But they had no idea that Nevada, especially this part of it, was so primitive. They had seen only three or four habitations and even fewer vehicles since leaving Ely, and visions of renegade Indians and outlaws came to dominate their thoughts.

Their anxiety increased when, nearing the end of the 20-mile, perfectly straight road across Hot Creek Valley, daylight was waning and there was not a sign of civilization anywhere. Not even a telephone line. It was then that the motor coughed, sputtered and quit, apparently out of gas. Afraid to leave the security of their car, unaware that from the rise 200-yards ahead the Warm Springs station could be seen, they decided to sit and wait for help.

So the poor couple had sat there, watched the sun disappear and night fall. In the darkness one vehicle passed by, they said, headed east. It didn't stop, apparently believing the car to be abandoned since there were no lights or people in evidence. The springtime temperature dropped to 45-degrees before sunup, and they shivered and waited until now when I found them.

I took them to Warm Springs, explained their plight to the owner, who offered to take them and some gasoline back to their car after they'd eaten, and bid them farewell.

The old folks were lucky. They might have died from exposure had it gotten much colder, for they had no blankets and only light jackets for protection.

It was while surveying in the Pancake Range, near the highway summit at Black Rock, that Doug Kipp and I experienced an unusual and frustrating incident of nature. Ernie Boswell deposited us on the sidehill at ten o'clock, at the 7,000' level, and then flew away toward Currant Creek to meet Milt Murphy. Equipped with the usual surveying tools and light jackets, because the weather was warm and calm, we looked forward to an easy day; a picnic, so to speak. And that's the way it began. Within fifteen minutes of our landing we had set up the transit and zeroed-in on the adjacent test sites. There was nothing to do then but wait for a signal from one of the other teams.

We chose a dry place on the sagebrush slope to sit, leaned our backs against an outcropping of sun-warmed lava rock, leisurely packed our pipes with aromatic tobacco and relaxed.

"What a way to live," I observed between puffs, "Here we are relaxing in the sun, our transportation and food provided by the Company, and getting paid to boot." Absentmindedly, I flicked an annoying bug away from my ear.

Doug grunted in agreement, and waved at something flying around his nose.

A couple of minutes went by and then, aware that we were being attacked by voracious insects, he blurted out, "Hey! What have we here? I can't see 'em but one just took a chunk out of my ear."

We were surrounded by a horde of barely-visible but highly-audible flying demons, which, on close examination, proved to be some kind of gnat (perhaps related to the infamous no-see-ums of the far north). Something about us must have seemed attractive to them, for they swarmed around us humming and biting until their presence went from annoying to downright disagreeable. They invested our shirts and pants, nipped at our wrists, ankles, faces, necks and ears.

Tobacco smoke is usually a deterrent to insects, but now, thinking perhaps the scent was an attractant instead, we knocked out our pipes. It was to no avail. The rascals came on in ever increasing numbers. We got to our feet, skipped and danced and slapped and fanned ourselves in a manner reminiscent of a ritualistic Indian dance. (Perhaps the Indian dance was inspired by the ancestors of these very gnats.)

Finally, in desperation, I tied my pants' cuffs tight around my ankles, buttoned the collar of my shirt close under my chin, pulled my jacket over my head and held it from the inside. Doug took similar action.

For two hours we suffered, coming out from under cover only when necessary to work with our distant teammates. Not until afternoon, when a light wind came up from the west, did the invaders disappear, borne away as mysteriously as they'd arrived. We concluded that the gnats must have hatched on the marsh, some eight miles to the east in the valley, and been wafted to the mountaintop by convective currents as the valley warmed in the sun. Luckily, their bites were not seriously toxic, but we would carry their tiny itchy wounds for several days.

I was never as eager for the chopper's return as I was that day. When Ernie picked us up, it was more a rescue mission than a simple ride home after a day's work. And then, after all of that, a different

location was chosen for the microwave site; on a ridge just north of the highway. It was given the name of "Lockes," after the way-station in nearby Railroad Valley.

Speaking of Railroad Valley; I saw no evidence of a railroad's ever having been there, either on the map or on the earth. So I asked Milt how it came to be so named. No one knew for sure, he said, but one explanation held that since the flat would be ideal for that purpose and a railroad would in all likelihood be built there someday, it might as well have the designation.

We moved our base of operations to Ely, checking in at the Main Motel, east of the high school on Aultman Street. We would consider it our home-away-from-home while selecting the last four Nevada sites on the route.

I noted that the mountains in this part of Nevada were quite different from those we had just left. Instead of sediment plateaus and lava cones under sagebrush and juniper, there were steep limestone formations hosting vast forests of pine and cedar. The mean elevation was higher, too, and we'd encounter many areas where snow still lay in the shadows.

Ely, and her little sister McGill, had a history of ups and downs, their economies dependent on the viability of the copper mining and milling industry. Times were pretty good in 1962, and the hotels and restaurants were busy. One of those institutions, the Nevada Hotel, featured live entertainment. We would make it a habit to meet there for cocktails, after a long hard day in the field, and then, usually later than I liked, either repair to the dining room in the hotel, walk on down the street to the Basque restaurant, or drive to a steak-house between Ely and McGill, the Airport Inn, for dinner.

By any standard, Bell System employees ate well when away from home. Since the total cost of meals and tips was reimbursed, many of the guys took advantage of the situation and ordered a steak every day of the week. Having a small appetite, I usually ate less expensive meals.

As in Hawthorne and Tonopah, while we were eating breakfast, box lunches were prepared for us by the cooks and waitresses. Only once did I go hungry at noon, when I found a tuna-fish sandwich in my lunchbox in place of the cheese I had ordered.

Except for thick forests that hindered accessibility, the two sites west of Ely - one near Murray Summit, the other on the ridge above Currant Station - presented few problems. But an interesting anecdote originated on Murray Summit when Paul Brown, Jim Dodson and Russ Zimmerman (a Nevada Bell engineer often referred to by Jim as "Fatso") visited the location.

The site was on a knob in the trees and was accessible only by helicopter. So Ernie met everyone on the road above the Ruth copper pit and shuttled them in at out, one or two at a time.

It was Paul who furnished the excitement that day, when he found a rattler at the site, killed the poor fellow, and put him in his empty lunch sack to take back (unbeknownst to Ernie) to the group. He intended to flop it down in front of Zimmerman, hoping to scare the wits out of the big guy.

But when the chopper was airborne the reptile slid from its temporary conveyance to the floor of the cabin. Ernie was more than a little perturbed on seeing it, but maintained control of himself and the aircraft. (Paul should have kicked the rattler out the open hatch right then and there.)

After landing, Paul went ahead with his plan. But like most practical jokes this one turned out to be impractical. He fumbled the sack and the snake fell out prematurely, obviously dead and not very formidable-looking. Zimmerman verbally lashed out at Paul, in particular, and the plant department, in general, for horseplay on the job. (He was right in doing so.) And Ernie Boswell made it very clear that no more wild animals (including reptiles) would be allowed on his airship, dead or alive!

The planned route alignment over the Schell Creek Range, north of McGill, would prove to be challenging and fruitless; challenging in regard to the terrain, fruitless because it would be abandoned in favor of a route closer to US-6.

But exploring that northern segment was also very interesting. We somehow found time to investigate old Schellbourne (or Schell Creek) Station, an overland stage and mail stop established in 1859, in the foothills below Schellbourne Pass. Murphy, who was well versed in Nevada history, pointed it out to the rest of us.

A low, log cabin had served the Pony Express in 1860-61. Its sod roof was now half caved-in on a giant bellows and forge. A long adobe building, resembling a modern motel, probably housed tired over-nighters after a hard day on a dusty stage, and more recently housed weary automobile travelers on the first transcontinental highway, the so-called Lincoln Highway, from the east. Stone walls and tall, iron doors remained of the old express office, and we found parts of ancient cedar poles in the nearby woods, remnants of the first Postal Telegraph line constructed in 1863.

Stately Lombardy poplars lined the old thoroughfare. A tiny creek issued from a warm spring and cut deep through the sod, its waters ensuring a small supply of perpetually green grass in the meadow above a corral. Many years ago, Milt said, common goldfish were introduced into the warm stream. Their descendents were still alive and thriving, and I observed one at least eight-inches long.

A day or two after our first tour of Schellbourne, we returned with Don Olds who shot some photographs for a story in the "Nevada Bell News." One picture, with the shiny helicopter against a backdrop of dusty ruins, was unique. (The story was good for publicity, even though our route was not destined to follow the trail of the pioneers through Schellbourne Pass.)

But back to work. We had several tentative sites to survey, and began in the pass itself, just a few miles above the old stage stop. The road was a pretty good one, dirt, of course, with only a few persistent drifts of snow remaining in the shadows. Al Glass and I took to the woods in a Scout, to explore a pair of locations about a mile apart northeast of the summit. We took a slow and circuitous route, off the road in the juniper and pinyon trees, over rocks and ledges and through the brush.

When we'd gone as far as possible in the scout, I either won the coin toss (to determine who would hike to the distant hill) or lost, depending on how one looked at it. Anyway, I donned my parka, stuffed my lunch, my new Brunton compass and other "necessaries" in the pockets, slung one of two Heathkit "walkie-talkies" (that I had recently assembled) and a transit over my shoulders, and hiked off through the pines.

Al remained with the vehicle. He would communicate with me, using my second walkie-talkie, and relay messages to and from the other teams via the high-powered mobile radio in the Scout.

It proved to be a pleasant day for me, but unproductive to our cause. The forest was so thick and high I had to stop frequently and climb a tree to get my bearings. And when I did reach my objective I couldn't contact Al. I assumed it was because of the hilly terrain. So I found a soft cushion of needles under a pine and sat down, leisurely ate my lunch, sipped a cup of hot coffee and smoked a pipe before trying again to reach my partner.

No one knew exactly where I was in the trees, nor did I know where the others were located. And without a means of communication there was nothing useful that I could do. So I shouldered my gear and trudged back to the Scout.

It was then that I learned the reason for our loss of radio contact. When Al responded to a call on the mobile radio, the antenna of his walkie-talkie got caught by the car door and broken. He tried to jury-rig a substitute antenna but was unsuccessful in the attempt. No antenna, no communication.

When he told me what happened I reacted in a manner that, I am ashamed to report, was not only unprofessional but uncalled for. I was upset that he had been so careless, and my feelings must have shown. He apologized for the accident, even promised to buy a replacement antenna, but I was still reticent.

When I thought about it later, I was sorry for the way I had acted. After all, it was my idea to use a personal radio on Company business, and I could just as easily have broken an antenna myself.

The following day, Murphy and I took an exploratory ride in the chopper with Ernie. We flew to the east and north up Spring Valley, toward what was left of a town named Tippet, another stop on the old Lincoln Highway some 25-miles east of Lages Station. Our objective was to determine whether or not exploration in that direction was warranted, a decision best made by flying over it.

In Antelope Valley, beyond Tippet, a score of prong horns appeared below and we coned Ernie into flying low over them. Sensing danger, the fleet-footed animals took off with amazing speed, appearing, from our perspective, to be borne by the wind. (Antelope were rare in Nevada in those days, and it was a treat to see them.) We made a great circle, came to US-50 and followed it back to town.

When we got to the motel that afternoon, Red Wayman was waiting for us. He had come to check on plant operations (Ely was his area of responsibility) and to talk about the new microwave route. Over drinks and dinner that evening we convinced him, without much arm-twisting, that he should fly over our potential sites in the helicopter. Having worked in Spring Valley as a lineman years before he was eager to go.

And so, in the morning, Doug and Al drove to Murray Summit, Walt and I went to Schellbourne Pass, and Red, after dispatching his supervisory duties in town, boarded the chopper with Ernie and Milt and flew to old Schellbourne. They made a quick tour of the place, then joined us on the pass for lunch. Afterward, Ernie took off with Red and headed for Tippet and Boone Springs.

Not long after they left, the clouds overhead thickened and a southerly breeze changed to a strong wind, eventually reaching gale force and filling the air with dust. A storm, undoubtedly a dry one, was on its way.

Even in the sheltering trees we were inconvenienced, to the point that Milt suspended operations for the day. We left the pass and took sanctuary in the watering-hole down on the highway, there to await the return of our friends in the helicopter.

To reiterate: the alternate valleys and ranges of Nevada are generally aligned in a north-northeast, south-southwest direction, the valleys being relatively flat, devoid of trees and extending many miles lengthwise. The prevailing westerlies, slowed by the mountains, seldom kick up much dust, but the winds that sweep in from the south, in advance of a storm, rush unimpeded between the ranges, often reaching velocities over 75-mph. The Schellbourne gas station/bar, where we had come to wash the dust from our throats, was located in the path of just such a wind.

But we were not thinking of ourselves as we sipped our coffee. We were concerned about Red and Ernie. We knew they'd have to buck headwinds coming back, winds which I estimated were blowing 70-mph at the time, and that the chopper's air-speed was approximately 85-mph. Would Ernie try to fly down the valley? Would he land somewhere and out-wait the wind? We could not know, of course, and continued to worry as blowing sand blotted out the sun and tumbling tumbleweeds sailed past the restaurant windows.

At last, above the roaring of the wind, we heard the familiar "chop-chop-chop" of the helicopter. We rushed outside. It was moving, but only barely. Finally, above the parking area in front, it hovered briefly, nose into the wind, then set down with a bounce. Ernie quickly feathered the rotor, cut the engine, jumped down and, with a rope, tied one end of the long blade to the tail-brace. Red, with a grin on his ruddy face and his hair standing on end, climbed down more slowly. (Because of the warm weather they had flown with the doors removed that day.) Leaning into the wind, he and Ernie made their way to the building.

"How 'bout a drink!" Red shouted (a statement not a question.)

Relieved that they were safe, we led the way to the bar where my erstwhile boss smothered a tiny glass in his fist and downed a shot of whiskey. Only then did he respond to our many questions.

Ernie, whose concern was for his airship, gulped down a mug of hot coffee, made a phone call to Bill at Yelland Field in Ely, and directed him to drive out with a load of fuel.

"We were way past Boone Springs when the wind picked up," Red said, "and we've been fighting it over two hours just to get back this far."

I calculated their speed in my head. At over two-hours flying time to Schellbourne, a distance of roughly 40-miles, their ground speed was less than 20-mph. A Model-T could do as well.

There were times, Ernie said, when their indicated air-speed was 85-mph and they were almost standing still. He also admitted that the craft had been "a little hard to control" and the ride was "bumpy."

"You sure got that right!" Red agreed. "Even a telephone line-truck rides better than that."

"But," Ernie went on. "I was mostly thinkin' about fuel. We were usin' up four times as much as usual and I knew there wasn't any hundred-octane short of Ely."

In fact, had they continued toward Ely they would likely have run out of gas before reaching the airport, in which case they'd have had to land in the middle of the road or in the sagebrush.

Within a half-hour, Ernie's partner arrived and filled the helicopter's fuel tank. Together, he and Ernie checked the craft for possible wind damage, and then Ernie took off for Ely. This time he flew alone, for Red, having reverted to the habits of a "land creature," would ride to town with us in the Scout.

What a day it had been! We were all keyed up that evening. I sensed a party coming on. Red hosted us to drinks in his motel room, and after a while we invaded the nearby Basque restaurant. Mutton (always referred to as "lamb") was the entree of the day, so I dined on beans, bread and cheese, and washed them down with red wine. Typically, the conversation turned to business and, with the help of the grape, we solved a number of unsolvable problems. After dinner we gravitated uptown, to conclude our evening before the bar in the Nevada Hotel.

After a good night's sleep, we again took up the discussion of the previous night, this time in a more subdued manner. The question was: in what direction should the microwave route take east of Ely? It was eventually agreed that, in spite of the fact that we'd spent so much time surveying it, the country to the northeast was not really suitable. For one thing, the cost to build roads and power lines would be very high. For another, because of the bombings on the Denver-Oakland route in 1961, AT&T believed that further separation between the routes would be desirable, if not mandatory.

So we turned our attention away from the Schell Range and focused on US-6. One site was established just south of the highway on Connor's Pass, and so named, and another, the easternmost one in Nevada, was established a few miles north of Wheeler Peak in the Snake Range. This last one was called Sacramento Pass, after the highway summit of that name even though it was much closer to the old mining town of Osceola (which would have seemed a more logical designation). From that point the route would cross into Utah, to connect with a site in the Confusion Mountains.

Our "sightseeing" activities were now somewhat curtailed, as Murphy pushed hard to make up for the time lost in the North Country. He couldn't resist pointing out historic features, though, such as the barren gulch below Osceola that had been scoured of vegetation by early-day hydraulic mining practices, and the town's cemetery, literally "boot hill," on the brow of a prominent ridge. There were a

few remnant buildings in the town itself, the most significant of them a structure of stone masonry with iron bars on the windows, which may have been the jail or an express office.

One afternoon, on my way to Ely from Elko after a weekend at home, I was afforded an opportunity to help a young damsel in distress. After turning south at Lages Junction, and driving about three miles beyond, I came upon a car with a medium-sized cargo trailer attached, stopped on the right-hand shoulder of the highway. Noting that the hood was raised, and that a woman with a troubled look on her face was standing by, I slowed, stopped and offered my services.

I introduced myself and the lady explained that she was moving, with her son of about six, to an Air Force base in New Mexico; to be reunited with her husband who had recently been transferred from Mountain Home, Idaho. Her car, a big station wagon, and the trailer were loaded to capacity with household goods and personal belongings. The engine had quit and would not start again.

If it were out of gas, I could have remedied the situation by driving to Lages station for fuel. But there was plenty of fuel in the tank. In fact, the fuel pump had "gone sour."

Well, well. It was getting late. Ely, the nearest place where a replacement fuel-pump could likely be found, was 60-miles away. But the highway was virtually flat all the way so I proposed to tow her to that city.

The young lady was pretty calm, considering her plight, and readily agreed to my plan. What else could she do? I took the 100-foot length of hemp rope (that I carried in case I needed a tow) from the trunk of the Rambler, doubled it for strength, and tied it between the two vehicles. I explained that I would drive not over fifty miles-an-hour, and advised her to gently apply the brakes of her car if the rope grew slack. I'd stop at Schellbourne, 15-miles down the road, on the off-chance that we might obtain a fuel-pump there, and also to see how the rope was holding up.

The little Rambler strained to get that "train" a'moving, but once it was rolling I was able to maintain a speed of 45-mph with no trouble. Not surprisingly, the attendant at Schellbourne didn't have a fuel-pump that would fit, but everything else was fine so we headed for Ely. I was anxious to make it before dark if possible.

Along the way a number of thoughts crossed my mind, not least of which was the fact that I was in violation of a cardinal rule: "A Company vehicle shall not be towed by, or used to tow, another vehicle." It was a good rule to follow (because of the liability involved) in the city, but was often impractical in the country. Anyway, I had gotten away with rules infringement before, and probably would again. Nevertheless, visions of dented fenders, bumpers and grills kept me on my toes. And the woman, who was likely an Idaho farm girl with experience in operating machinery, did a magnificent job of driving while under tow.

Daylight was gone when I pulled in at a garage in Ely, where I unhitched the car-and-trailer while the woman made arrangements for repairs. I then took her and the boy, who spoke not a word the whole

time, to a cafe for supper. They had obviously not eaten for some time, and even the boy perked up after downing a hamburger.

I really admired this woman, who was virtually alone and carried such a load of responsibility on her shoulders, and told her so when I said good bye at an inexpensive hotel on Aultman Street. She seemed genuinely appreciative of my help.

Once again everything turned out all right. Not only had I gotten away with bending the rules, but I had also upheld the tollie tradition of helping those in trouble by the wayside.

(I don't remember the name of the woman whose path crossed mine so fleetingly that day, even though, after arriving safely at her destination, she sent me a thank-you note.)

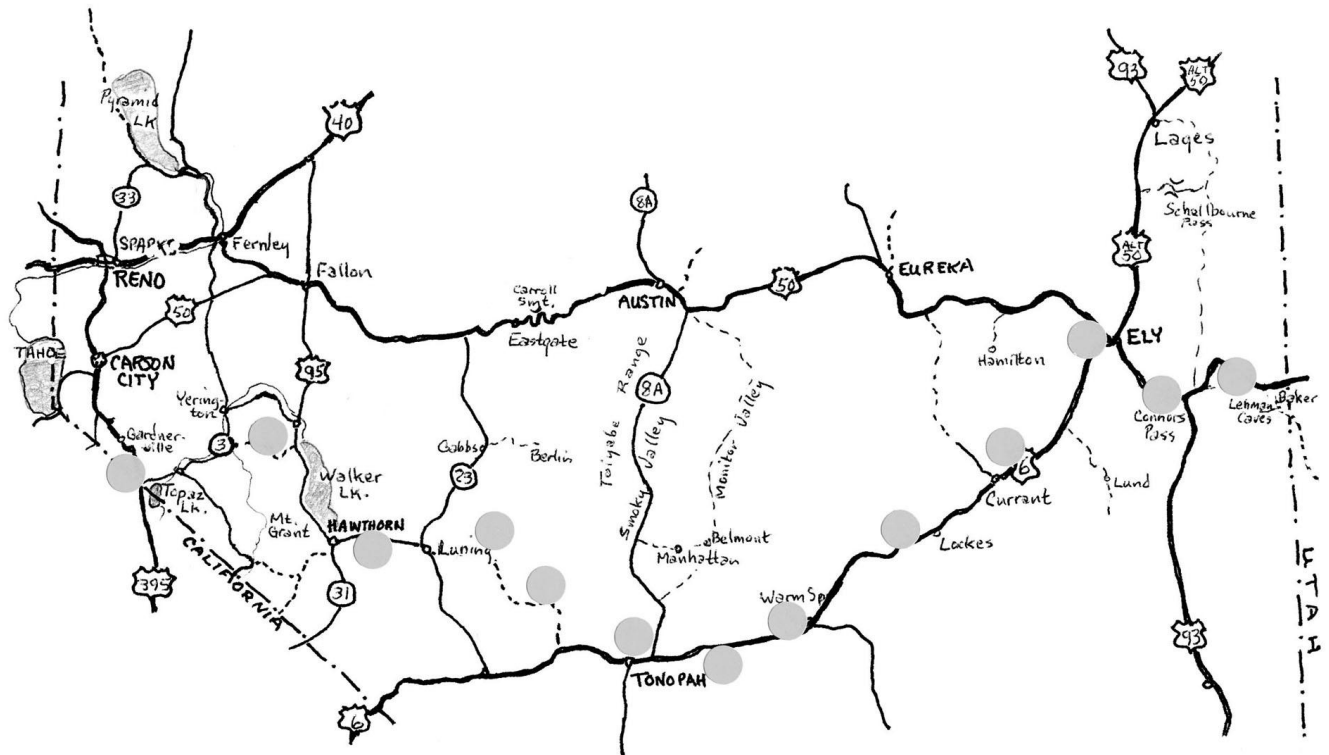
Our site selection team spent several more days driving up and down the highways and roads of eastern White Pine County; flying to otherwise inaccessible locations, reflecting the sun's rays from one mountain to another, staring through transits at survey rods and stadia lines, marking charts, making logs, placing appropriate stakes to indicate road, building and tower locations.

By the end of April our work was done. The route we had chosen was close to existing roads or highways, alleviating the need for long access roads. It was a trade off; shorter roads for taller antenna towers. The costs for new power lines, though, would be expensive. The longest, a line extension from Tonopah to Lockes (at Black Rock Summit) was 85-miles, equivalent to the distance across the state of Connecticut. Overall, it was a great route!

I was sad when bidding farewell to my engineering teammates, and rather envied them their jobs; until I remembered that this had been an uncommon experience for them, too, for they were usually chained to their desks in Reno.

It would take a week or two to get the pine and sagebrush out of my system, to readjust to supervising people and wrestling with paperwork. But I would never get rid of the memories of that special assignment. Nor would I try.

CENTRAL NEVADA



The Oakland Scipio Route across Nevada
(Gray Dots)

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

FINAL DAYS IN ELKO COUNTY

Although unknown to me at the time, 1962 was to be my last year of residency in Elko County. It was also the year that I bought my first four-wheel-drive vehicle. I had wanted to own one for years, and it became a reality that spring, by coincidence right after I got our little Studebaker "seriously stuck" when Rita was with me.

It was a nice day, so I took her for a short drive across the Humboldt River and up a back road beyond the (present) dumpsite. It was not much of a road, just wheel tracks through the sagebrush, and it quickly petered out in a shallow draw. But I could see where it commenced again on the other side and drove ahead through the weeds.

On our left was a low earthen dam, recently thrown up to form a catch basin for water runoff. But it hadn't rained for some time and only a small puddle of water remained behind the dam. I steered to the right, well above it, where the ground appeared to be dry. But it was not. The Studebaker came to a mushy halt and stalled.

I got out to investigate, and immediately sank to my ankles in gooey mud. The car was up to its hubs in the same stuff, with the undercarriage resting on the surface. Since we were very close to town, I gave no thought to digging it out. Instead, I helped Rita (who was rather irate at the moment) to firm ground and we walked back to Elko for help.

I left Rita at her mother's house and enlisted the aid of her brother, John, to retrieve the car. It was a relatively easy job, after all. He simply backed his pickup to the edge of the muddy ground, attached a line to the rear bumper of the coupe and pulled it out.

In the days that followed, I kept an eye out for a 4-W-D Jeep Utility Wagon. (Because we'd had such good luck with our Company Jeep Wagons, I was partial to that model.) When a blue-and-white 1959 Wagon appeared on Dick Wright's used car lot, around the corner from our office, I wandered by and looked it over. It appeared to be in fair shape; that is, it wasn't much dented, the paint was good and the upholstery was intact. And though the engine, a six-cylinder, inline L-head Continental, was not much for power, it should be adequate.

The only suggestion of possible future problems with this particular Jeep was the odometer reading. It had a lot of miles on it. But then, if it weren't for that I couldn't afford to buy it. Even so it cost me almost two-months' salary, approximately \$1,500, in addition to trading in the Studebaker.

John welded a good solid trailer-hitch under the rear bumper of our "new" Jeep, and I wired-in the necessary electrical connections. It was now ready for use in the back country. We invited Dot, Elly and Darlene to come to Elko County and join our family on a camping trip to the O'Neil Basin.

It was July when the Russells came up from southern California. We stocked the trailer with a week's supply of ice, food, water and clothing. I loaded the fishing gear, the small canvas tent, and an extra GI-can full of gasoline into the Jeep. Since there were too many of us to fit comfortably in one vehicle, we would take two. I decided to tow the trailer with the DeSoto, and Elly would drive the Jeep.

Instead of taking the shortest route, the rough graveled road from Deeth, we went through Wells and up US-93, stopping at Thousand Springs to top off the gas tanks before turning toward O'Neil Basin and our destination, Camp Creek.

Camp Creek, just north of Sun Creek, is one of five streams originating in the Jarbidge Mountains that flow easterly into the North Fork of the Salmon Falls Creek, which in turn flows into the Snake River in Idaho.

We made camp in a sylvan glade surrounded by quaking aspens, 50-feet from the south bank of the creek. Above us, to the west, rose the majestic snowcapped peaks of the Jarbidge Range. To the east, almost exactly six miles downstream, was the Gilmer Ranch. (The Gilmers, a fine old couple, had recently retired and moved to the house across the street from ours in Elko.)

We found the customary rock-circle fireplace, proof that we were preceded by others, but judging by the signs we were among the first this season. Elly and I erected the tent near the trailer, where he, Dot and (possibly) Darlene would sleep like real campers.

When all was organized we took a closer look at the stream. It was just right for fishing. The spring runoff had passed, but there was still a good flow of water. Without hesitation we rigged for rainbows, and were soon rewarded with several 12-inch beauties.

That evening, and on every one that followed, we sat around a campfire amply fueled by seasoned aspen-wood and friendliness. The rushing water played music for our ears. Once again, I found myself dreaming of the first white folks, fur trappers, who camped by this creek in the mid-1800s. I doubt if they could have imagined, then, that in just over a century people like us would ride up in rubber-tired tin boxes on a road, where they had to urge weary ponies up an Indian trail. Nor could they have envisioned anyone sleeping in a metal house-on-wheels in preference to a bedroll under the stars.

One morning, with a tote full of food and a gallon-thermos of cool-aid, we all piled into the Jeep to go exploring. I followed a road leading north along the base of the mountains, a good 4-W-D road, from which we had a fine view of the river basin to the east. We crossed one after another brush-covered ridge and rocky ravine, bridged pristine Cottonwood Creek, wound through sparse groves of mountain mahogany and lush stands of quaking aspen. And we stopped often, to get out and stretch and look around, to study the many wildflowers and to watch the squirrels at play.

When the sun neared its zenith, we looked for and found an ideal place for a picnic; a quakie-patch on the northeast slope of the mountain. I backed the jeep to the edge of the trees, for the shade, got out and dropped the tailgate for a serving shelf. It was not unlike a chuck-wagon. Meanwhile, Elly busied himself with making a fire, to roast hotdogs and hamburgers, and to warm a can of Campbell's pork-and-beans.

The grass underfoot was still tall and green at that elevation; good for preventing a wildfire, bad for our comfort. A hatch of hungry mosquitoes (or gnats) zeroed-in on the tender-skinned kids and shortened our stay in the glade.

We observed a few cottontail rabbits and at least one bunch of deer on our way up to the Pole Creek ranger station (then unoccupied) where we had an unobstructed view of the plains of southern Idaho. The border was less than ten miles away.

The kids and Rita just had to get out and romp on a bank of residual snow, and before long we were all there. It's a wonderful thing, especially if you were born and raised in New England, to play on a bank of snow in the month of July.

On our way back to camp we stopped off at Cottonwood Creek, where the younger ones amused themselves by feeding golden-mantled squirrels and we adults angled for trout. But the trout, four- and five-inch brookies, were too small to keep. When the shadows of the Jarbidge giant fell on us, we returned to base camp.

That night, as I lay in our snug little trailer, I reflected on the day just spent. This was the best of times, I decided, and one of the best places to be. We were, for all practical purposes, in the middle of a vast wilderness, yet the existence of reasonably good ranch-roads afforded access to many of its wonders. Without those roads we could not have been there. If they were very much improved, we could not have been there alone.

As noble a premise as it may be, designated "wilderness" areas effectively lock-out all but a minute segment of the populace. Only those with available time and the physical ability to pack in - a few young adults and a handful of older people - are in a position to enjoy those restricted parts of our wild America.

After a couple of days of fishing, our supply of angleworms was seriously depleted. So I dug for more in a likely looking spot near the creek, at the roots of a wild rosebush. The rich loamy soil gave up dozens of dark, red, medium-sized worms - and then a surprise. An artifact! It caught my attention because of its shape. Seldom does nature produce an object with perfectly parallel lines or right-angle corners, so when one encounters such a thing he can bet it's a manmade object. An artifact. This one, roughly an inch long, a half-inch wide and three-sixteenths of an inch thick, was perfectly rectangular in shape.

But the most fascinating thing about this particular artifact was that I immediately recognized it for what it was; a carbon protector block used exclusively by the telephone industry. But we were miles away from the nearest telephone line. How, then, had the device come to the bank of Camp Creek?

(The most likely explanation evolved after we returned home when, during a conversation with Red Wayman, he admitted that it was possible some one of the "older" telephone men - a category that included such worthies as Michelson, Snow, and Red himself - after working on Bill Wright's telephone system "just might have taken a side trip to Camp Creek." And the carbon block "just might have dropped from a tool-box or a pocket while digging for worms.")

That find, of an uncommon object in an unlikely location, did a lot to confirm my long standing conviction; that archeologists' sometimes definite explanations of early human cultures, based on found artifacts, are largely conjectural.

One day Mother Nature, in order to provide us with variety, sent a rainstorm tumbling over the mountain and down on our camp. To make it a memorable affair she held off till evening when our campfire was hot, and when fresh trout were sizzling in a cast-iron pan. And then it rained! It was reminiscent of Rita's and my experience at Tabor Creek, and with the same result; it was virtually impossible to brown the fish. But Elly, the volunteer cook, and Tony, his volunteer partner, remained steadfastly by the fire, protected from the deluge by a small card-table held over their heads.

Our camp was dampened that evening but not our spirits. We simply dined in comfort in the trailer.

As usual, all was bright and clean in the morning. The rain had washed away the dust, brought forth new wildflowers, and so enhanced that part of the world we hated the thought of leaving. But our days in O'Neil Basin, numbered by reasons of employment, must come to an end. We broke camp and moved out.

In August, when Ted and his family were vacationing in Elko, he borrowed Dan's gear and the two of us went to Wildhorse for a day of fishing. Ted seldom had any gear of his own, but Dan kept several rods and reels on hand for friends and relatives. We also borrowed Dan's boat, a roomy fiberglass hull with an outboard motor, which he kept moored at the reservoir in the summertime.

It was a beautiful day, but the fishing was slow to say the least. While leisurely trolling around the lake, Ted told me a bizarre fish story:

A couple of weeks before, he and Dan had brought a dealer, from one of the Elko hotels, to this very lake for a day's fishing. The man had done very little fishing in his lifetime, but the Taelours had built his expectations to an extreme high. So he was really excited when a sizable trout hit his lure. "Hey! I've got one!" he announced.

Dan, who was driving the boat, shut down the motor and joined Ted in shouting encouragement and advice to the lucky one. Eventually, after playing the fish like a veteran, the man brought it close to the boat.

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "He's a big one."

Whereupon Dan leaned over the side, grabbed the line, lifted the trout to the surface (Ted said it was at least a four-pounder), looked it over briefly then said matter-of-factly to Ted, "It's a little one. Hand me a knife."

Ted obliged and Dan quickly reached out and cut the line just above the lure. "We don't keep little ones here," he said, folding the knife and restarting the boat-motor.

Their guest was flabbergasted. He was irate. "How could you do such a thing?" he wanted to know.

The Taelours just shrugged.

It was several hours and a few beers, according to Ted, before the guy relaxed a bit and started talking to his hosts again, even admitting to the humor of it all. They caught six or seven nice trout after that, but none were anywhere near as big as the one that Dan cut loose.

Nor did Ted or I catch anything approaching four pounds on our outing. We each landed two average-sized trout, though, enough to name the day a success.

Rita and I were late heading south to California with our kids in 1962. It must have been prior to the schools opening in the fall, but past the usual summer vacation period. For a change of scenery we turned off at Scotty's Junction, south of Tonopah, and made for Scotty's Castle and Death Valley.

It didn't look much like a castle, like you'd expect to see, but in the desert perhaps that's the best way to describe it. Built as a sort of retreat, by a wealthy man, it resembled a Spanish hacienda of beige adobe. The interior was spacious, with a number of rooms furnished with unusual and interesting 19th-century items. The kids might best remember the pipe-organ, in a large paneled room that could have been used in a horror movie.

I was particularly impressed by an enormous "shotgun" with a six-foot barrel and an eight-gage (or larger) bore, the kind used in the last century for harvesting wildfowl for the market. More a cannon than a fowling piece, this one had (allegedly) been installed to defend against marauders; though I suspect it would have hurt the man who pulled the trigger more than the intended target.

From Scotty's we went on south past long mountainous dunes into the main valley, where we stopped to visit the old Eagle Borax works (of "Twenty-Mule-Team" fame) and the museum. From a distance we noted the Furnace Creek Inn but I drove on by it to Artists' Drive, where the earth's pastel shades of yellow, red, brown and purple gave credence to its name. It was a hot day, for that season, but we braved the heat long enough to stand on the lowest ground in the United States, at 382-feet below-sea-level, before turning back to the north.

The Inn was far too fancy for our budget, even in the off-season, so we went on to Stovepipe Wells on the west side of the valley and found what was called a motel but was in fact an old barrack-building converted for that purpose. It stood above ground on wooden pilings, and to reach our room we had to climb a set of rickety wooden steps. The room had an "airy" aspect about it; that is, light showed through cracks in the walls and around the door. Bare rafters and boards of a gable roof served as the only ceiling. A bathroom occupied one corner, with head-high board walls providing a modicum of privacy.

I knew the place was equipped with electricity, for I could hear the incessant droning of a motor-generator somewhere outside. Rita

pointed to a hanging string just out of her reach. I pulled it, and smiled with satisfaction when the bare bulb above came to life, glowing and pulsating in unison with the beat of the power plant. A matching fixture hung from a twisted cord over the toilet.

But the place was neat and clean, if you discounted the layer of desert blow-sand on the floor and sills. So I lost no time in hauling our suitcases in from the DeSoto.

Rita and I opted for one of the two double beds; the three kids would share the second one. I don't know about the others but I slept well that night. Even the possibility of uninvited guests, in the form of scorpions, did not deter me from my appointment with Morpheus. (Fortunately, no such guests showed up.)

The village of Stovepipe Wells consisted of a service station or two, a dozen modest homes, the motel where we stayed and a tiny restaurant. All of which were the only ones for miles around. In the morning, after breakfast, having seen enough of Death Valley for the time being, we packed our bags and left, headed for US-395 and Southern California.

We spent a number of pleasant days there with Dot, Elly and Darlene in La Puente, and with Ted, Katie, and family in Fontana.

One day we drove to Mt. Palomar, where I was surprised to find that the observatory, which had been dedicated in 1948 and housed the world's largest (200-inch) optical telescope, was located so relatively close to the big city lights. It was on a beautiful, forested mountaintop.

Another day we visited the famous mission San Juan Capistrano. Having been restored to its former beauty, it was worth seeing. But the swallows had already left for Central America and the place was overrun with people and pigeons; the former crowding around and snapping pictures of every conceivable thing from every conceivable angle, the latter, seduced by birdseed conveniently sold by the bags-full, underfoot and in our hair. Tony and Glen were annoyed by the birds' familiarity. Gina thought they were "neat."

On the way home from Fontana, back in Nevada, we found another place worth visiting; Rhyolite, a ghost mining town a few miles west of Beatty. Well, almost a ghost town. A handful of diehard old prospectors were still in residence.

Among the remnants of once substantial buildings there stood a house constructed of liquor bottles and mortar, the bottles laid like bricks with their bases exposed to the outside, necks to the inside. The man who built it, and his wife (I think), were still living there. Anyway, when we drove up the old man was sitting on a bench just outside the front door, willing and able to fascinate would be listeners with tales of the "good old days."

The only structure of worth in town was the depot; all that remained of the Las Vegas-Tonopah Railroad. It too was occupied, and was in very good condition considering the environment.

Rhyolite was the last of our sight-seeing objectives. And a good thing, too, for we were all getting tired and a bit testy. From there all the way to Elko the scenery went by in a blur.

Winter approached, and with it the Christmas season. Dot and Elly came to spend the holidays with us, in spite of the fact that Elly hated cold weather. It was then that we learned that Elly might be interested in moving to Nevada, perhaps to Fallon, to open a welding shop. He liked the climate in southern California but it was becoming overpopulated down there.

It was probably Dottie who really wanted to move, but more likely back to Massachusetts where she would be closer to former friends and family, particularly our aging mother.

But that was all speculation. In the meantime we took in the annual Christmas parade, that featured a few hastily constructed floats, a Santa Claus riding in on one of the city's fire engines, and cold nasty weather.

On Christmas day, Rita prepared a sumptuous dinner replete with ornamental tablecloth and red candles in shiny silver holders. Gifts were exchanged and we had a merry time. It was good to share the festivities with some of my family.

But the big news at the time, as far as I was concerned, was my pending job move to Reno. I had finally succumbed to the urging of Dodson, and others, and agreed to make the change. Although I hated the thought of pulling up stakes in Elko, my adopted city, it was an opportunity I could not resist. I would leave my line job for one on a technical staff, with a promotion and accompanying increase in salary to \$880 per month.

Back in 1959, when Red Wayman was promoted to the second-level job in Elko (as supervisor over Gene Fagg in Winnemucca, Emerson Heinan in Lovelock, Gerry Fisher in Ely, Elmore and me in Elko) I looked on that position as one I might someday achieve without having to move away. The Elko maintenance force had grown at a steady pace, and I fully expected the trend to continue.

But there were other factors not so favorable to my getting that job. The need for additional telephone circuits was rising, and so was the cost of labor. As a consequence, scientists at Bell Labs were working hard to improve all kinds of telephone systems and equipment, improvements that would result in facilities carrying more circuits, more reliably and with less maintenance. While we were not yet there, the age of solid-state electronics was on the horizon.

The first of the factors alluded to above, the need for more telephone circuits, was already being addressed. The Oakland-Scipio Microwave Radio Route across Nevada (that we had recently surveyed) was about to go into the construction phase, and was scheduled for service in 1963.

Paul Brown, who had served on a variety of assignments since transferring to Reno, now had the maintenance responsibility for all toll operations in Nevada; in addition to exchange installation and repair functions in the outlying towns of Winnemucca, Ely and Hawthorne.

It was a big job. His force consisted of five second-level supervisors (of whom Red was one), 36 first-level chiefs, over 200 non-management craftsmen and clerks, and a small technical staff of three. Paul had received the green light to increase the size of his staff, and three of the new total would be second-levels.

I was in line for one of those second-level positions. It was what I'd always wanted, a job dealing with problems of a technical, rather than human, nature. My first assignment would be as plant coordinator during the implementation of the Oakland-Scipio route. What an opportunity!

Other factors influenced my decision, most important of which was concern for the future of my family. Not only would the increase in pay benefit our standard of living, but living in the Reno area would make it easier for the kids to attend the University of Nevada, should they elect to do so.

Rita appeared ambivalent to the move, but registered no strenuous objection (that I recall).

The paperwork relative to my promotion, which was to become effective January 1, 1963, was completed near the end of December. Just in time that I could announce the news to Dot and Elly before they returned to La Puente.

The die was cast, marking with finality the end of the second major phase in my life.

END OF VOLUME II - PART 2