AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF A

YANKEE-NEVADAN

George Alfred Phelps

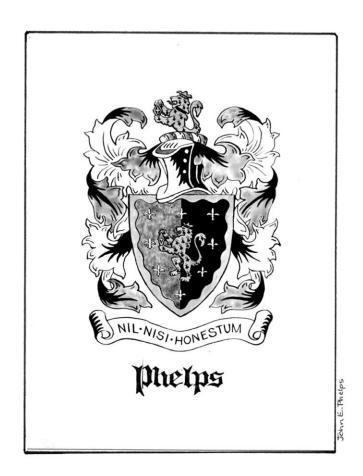
VOLUME III

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VOLUME III - PART 1



Autobiography of a

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PART III

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

Highway Forty across Nevada, after having traveled it for nearly fifteen years, had become very familiar to me. But on this day, the 2nd of January, 1963, its existence took on new meaning. It was leading me to a whole new phase in my life, to a new position with Bell of Nevada, to a new place to live.

I was pleased that I'd been allowed to stay with my chief's job till now. The time had afforded me the opportunity to implement many of my own managerial ideas, within the bounds of Company policy and union rules, of course, and to gain confidence in my ability to supervise people and properly care for the millions of dollars worth of property for which I was responsible.

My old job was now in the capable hands of Bob Ernaut, a native Elkoan and first-generation Basque. Bob was then about thirty years old, and an extremely sharp individual. He had been quick to grasp the technical aspects of the business and, in my opinion, would be a good supervisor.

(He was so intelligent, in fact, that within a couple of years he would leave the Company and go into business for himself. Another well-qualified craftsman of Basque descent, Louie Uriarte, had earlier resigned for the same reason. Both would become successful businessmen.)

The weather in northern Nevada was clear and cold. The temperature had been down to zero that morning, but high clouds signaled an approaching storm. It was not yet dark when I got to the Truckee Meadows, when I drove through the small city of Sparks to Reno and on to the Towne House Motel.

I had stayed at the Towne House before, when in Reno on Company business, so it, too, was familiar to me. Located on the corner of 4th Street and Arlington Avenue, it would be my "home away from home" until the school year ended in Elko, until Rita and I could find a suitable house in the Reno area.

In the morning, I stepped out of the motel onto a wet and slushy pavement. It was the first snow of the season in Reno, just enough to render the climate damp and miserable. At 8:00am sharp, I entered Paul Brown's private office at 328 South Wells Avenue, ready for work. Paul greeted me with a handshake, nodded toward a chair and, after a minute or two of small talk, reiterated what was expected of me in my new assignment. He then showed me to a desk in a cubicle at the very back of the staff office, and left me to my own devices.

I was already acquainted with most of the people in the District Managers' quarters, having spent several months teaching radio-classes at nearby 350 So. Wells Avenue. And I had attended many a meeting in Brown's office, both recently and when it was occupied by Johnny

Ostrom. I had also worked with Florence (Flo) Lyon, the office supervisor, discussing the inevitable paper work associated with my job.

Flo and her four clerks, whose desks and cabinets literally filled the front third of the quarters, actually served two masters: Paul Brown, Maintenance Superintendent-Toll, and W. E. (Ed) Riesbeck, Maintenance Superintendent-Exchange. Their offices were situated just aft of the clerical space.

Both Ed and Paul's staff groups were quartered in the rear. Ed's group consisted of four men at that time; John Jutte and Bob Adams (both of whom would work for me one day), Elson Cox and Tommy Anderson. I joined Paul's existing second-level staff supervisors; Bob Neighbors and Harold ("Hal" or "Red") Pierce, and their first-level supervisors, Bill Doyle and Bob Romans Junior.

Our work spaces were separated by five-foot partitions. Each space had room for a desk, chair and a low bookcase. I immediately took a liking to the location assigned to me, for it was in a back corner away from the flow of office traffic.

As always when starting a new job, I was apprehensive; especially so because I was the "new kid from out of town." In the first few days I couldn't help noting that Bill Doyle, a peer who had more "whiskers" but was now reporting to me, was a bit miffed at having been passed over for the job. To his credit, he would never let his disappointment interfere with his performance.

Red Pierce, whom I suspected was an Irishman, was the old-timer in the room. Like Red Wayman, his red hair was now mostly white. Unlike Red, Hal had a slight paunch under his suit coat.

His was a task that most people considered a thankless one: that of assembling, analyzing and publishing the results for the private-line-services part of the business. Red relished the job, however, and was particularly adept at "chewing out" an errant line chief. Sometimes, when I heard him sounding off on the phone, I'd look across the room to see him leaning back comfortably in his big swivel chair - a position that totally belied his gruff tone - all the while smiling and scolding some poor unfortunate on the line. He'd wink at me and go right on with his tirade.

Red was a well organized man but in his own way. Papers and books were "accumulated" on his desk, in what seemed to me total disarray, yet he knew what was there and just where it could be found. Some people could operate that way but not me. I liked a clean desk, with my paperwork in a semblance of order.

(Red Pierce would retire in a couple of years. I would sorely miss his subtle humor and sage advice, and his desk piled high with books and papers.)

Bob Neighbors, the next-eldest man in our group, was of medium height and build. Also a former tollie, originally from Southern California, Bob had been promoted directly from craft to the staff job in 1959, replacing Phil Hutchinson when that gentleman went to work on Joe Polen's "big staff" in San Francisco.

Bob was an enigma to me. On the one hand he was exceptionally talented, especially with regard to things of a mechanical nature such as engines, motors, generators and so on. On the other hand he tended to be hypersensitive, afraid that someone or some entity might take advantage of him. Often on the offensive, he seemed to enjoy battling with the power company, a car dealer, Sears Roebuck, the city or

county government, anyone whom he thought was trying to get the better of him.

The last member of our toll group was Bob Romans Junior. He had come to Reno from Elko via the SAGE operation at Stead, where he was a first-level supervisor under Vern Horning. Bob was a veritable genius when it came to electronic theory and the teaching of it, and would spend most of his career doing just that: instructing craftsmen in a variety of telephone related subjects.

I immediately assumed the responsibility for a variety of routine tasks. One of them was the compiling of maintenance statistics and failure rates for toll carrier and radio systems in the state. Then I set about preparing for the major thrust of my job, that of representing the plant department in coordinating the installation and testing phases of the new Oakland-Scipio microwave-radio route. Both Doyle and Romans would work with me in this endeavor.

A coordination plan for any new telephone system was essential to its success. There existed numerous plans for the implementation of exchange-type switching offices, but since every microwave-radio system was unique, no such plan was available for our project. We would write our own. Following is a brief summary of those things that had to be accomplished, things that would keep me busy for the next several months:

Early on, some time before the buildings were completed, a coordination committee was established. Represented were members of the engineering department, buildings and equipment; the plant department, staff and field; and Western Electric, engineering and installation. As the plant department representative, I would be responsible for tracking various activities during the installation period, for writing and publishing minutes of the monthly meetings, and for supervising the plant staff and field people involved in the testing phase. The engineers were responsible for seeing that all buildings, heating, air conditioning, AC-power and lighting systems, antenna towers and roads were built to specifications and completed on time (by outside contractors). Western Electric and Bell engineers were responsible for the detailed engineering of the equipment - DCpower plants and batteries, radio bays and ancillary systems - for its installation and initial testing. Plant department construction crews would install the antennas on the towers, place connecting waveguide runs from the antennas to the radio bays, and, under the direction of engineering and plant staff personnel, physically orient the antennas. Once the equipment became operable, Western Electric and Bell craftsmen would work together to make "acceptance tests"; first on the power and associated systems, then on the radio bays.

Finally, the craftsmen would participate in the overall microwave-channel testing, between the main switching terminals at Oakland and Scipio. When all tests proved successful, the equipment would be turned over to us in the plant department, to operate and maintain from that time forward. It was toward that end that our collective efforts were directed.

From the beginning of construction and forever thereafter, a microwave-radio system must conform to strict FCC rules and regulations; both in licensing and operation. One of my duties, shared with Les Hight from engineering, was to ensure that everyone complied

with those rules. I would also see to it that sufficient and proper maintenance sets and tools were supplied by the equipment engineers.

Three new toll maintenance centers were established along the 400-mile route in Nevada. A force of toll transmissionmen was added at each center - reporting to Herb Parker at Hawthorne, Gary Noyes at Tonopah, Howard Wise at Ely - and equipped with motor vehicles. Two sites, Topaz Lake near the California border, and Murray Summit near Ely, were "channel switching" stations, similar to the one at Adobe Hill on the old Denver-Oakland route.

My training and experience in the Elko area, when I helped with the acceptance testing of the first TD-2 microwave-radio system and later supervised its maintenance, stood me in good stead for this new responsibility. The fact that I was away from home and its distractions allowed me to fully concentrate on my work. I'd often spend ten or twelve hours a day poring over paperwork, developing methods-of-procedure, writing letters and summary reports, issuing plans and so on. It was a job I really enjoyed.

At first I spent most of my time in the office. But as the weeks went by, I increasingly took to the field with my engineering and Western Electric counterparts, to observe the installation work and develop solutions to the inevitable problems encountered.

One of the lessons I had learned from Ralph Michelson, years ago, came in handy. "Don't just identify problems," he had counseled, "come up with solutions as well."

Almost anyone can identify problems but not everyone can come up with solutions. One of the satisfying aspects of my job was the latitude I had for effecting solutions; that is, I was relatively free to make changes and improvements, within the parameters of costs and standards, in the way things were to be done.

Every other weekend I made the round trip to Elko, driving home on Friday after work and back on Sunday evening. This gave me almost two full days with Rita and the kids, and time to catch up on at least some of the house and yard chores, those that Rita couldn't manage alone.

Gina was now in the fourth grade, and was actively involved in the Girl Scouts (with her mother as a leader). Tony was a third grader. Glen, at three, was still a "home toddler." Feeding and clothing the children, getting them to school and back every day, shopping, scouting, and shoveling snow when it fell, Rita really had her hands full when I was gone.

On Sunday, the 7th of April, 1963, the Zunino tribe met at the Commercial Hotel, in Elko, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Sam and Antoinette's wedding. It was a grand affair, with plenty of good food, good wine and conversation. No one made a speech, as I recall, but a toast to the couple and wishes for their good health and longevity were extended. After only thirteen years of marriage for Rita and me, fifty seemed a challenging goal indeed.

Later that month and again in May, Rita travelled with me to Reno (at Company expense) to hunt for a new house. Naturally, we looked in all the nicer areas first, the more expensive areas in northwest and southwest Reno, and then found a place for sale in Sparks. On Holman Way, not far from where Vic and Winnie Miller lived, the house was of the same design as theirs.

One of the factors we had to consider, in our search for a suitable place, was space for storing our trailer. You see, in the 1960s, the custom of placing a house lengthwise on a lot - that is, with the narrow side toward the street - had been largely abandoned. Houses now faced broadside to the street, possibly to appear larger than they really were. This plan allowed more space in the front and rear but little on either side.

The Holman Way property was listed at a reasonable price, but there appeared to be insufficient room between the garage and fence for our trailer. A tape measure proved this to be the case. Rita and I really wanted to park the trailer out of sight (we both hated the sight of a camper or trailer perpetually parked in front of a home) so we hesitated to make an offer.

It so happened that, while we were hesitating, the next-door neighbor to the north contracted to have a new fence built across the hitherto unfenced rear of his property. When the property was surveyed it was found that the alignment of the existing fence, between the two homes, was in error by some three feet in the back and a couple of inches at the curb. The owners of the house we were interested in then made arrangements to have that fence moved to the proper boundary, toward the neighbor's garage, and the resultant additional space would allow just room for our trailer. So, with that hurdle providentially overcome, we decided to buy the place.

Rita handled the business of selling our place in Elko, which was appraised at \$17,500, about \$7,000 more than the original price in 1954. It might have seemed a profitable deal, unless you considered the amount of inflation in the intervening years.

The house in Sparks, with a bigger garage but fewer square-feet of living space than we had in Elko, nevertheless represented an upgrade in property. And a substantial increase in monthly payments. But Rita seemed satisfied (at least at the time) and we arranged to make the big move in mid-June.

The Company's allowable moving expenses were compensatory, paying virtually all the costs of transporting our worldly goods, as well as for travel, food and lodging for the entire family until settled in Sparks. Many minor expenses, relative to getting things "in shape" in the new house, were not reimbursable; but all-in-all the treatment was fair. With the salary I was now earning, coupled with our conservative spending habits, I felt that my family should be adequately provided for.

The house on Holman Way was approximately two years old in 1963. The yard had been landscaped by the builder; that is, the front yard had been graded and planted with lawn, shrubs (arborvitae, Pfizer and euonymus) and a sycamore tree. Just like all the others on the block. The sycamore soon died (as would two or three more trees planted on the same spot) and we settled for a treeless front yard. Better without trees, I rationalized, for the kids to play their games.

We transplanted a Queen Anne cherry tree, from Rita's folks' place in Elko, to our back yard. I built a double gate to close the gap between the garage and north side fence, and later dug out the dirt, laid in forms and had a concrete pad poured for the trailer to rest on. Rita and I used the dirt from that project to build up and improve the grade in the back yard, for better drainage. The area south of the house was reserved for a garden; a small garden, much smaller than we had in Elko, but a necessity.

In spite of the previous landscaping, we had to plant some new lawn. And then, remembering our beautiful weeping willow tree in Elko, I planted one midway between the northwest corners of the house and fence.

Within a year or two I would build a low grape-stake fence across the front yard, flush with the face of the garage and extending to the existing south side fence. Although I often joked to Rita that "I never promised you a rose garden," we planted a number of hybrids and teas within the new enclosure, some located interstitially among the shrubs, others alongside the new fence. As in Elko, we planted a climbing rose ("blaze") on either side of the walk in front of the porch. Rita also established flower beds bordering the back yard.

Compared to the garage we had in Elko this one was huge. Big enough for two cars. But I quickly perceived that to park the Jeep Wagon, which would barely fit under the top door sill, alongside the twenty-foot DeSoto was an impractical plan. The second space was relegated to "catch all" of our accumulated things, including, but not limited to, the kids' toys and bicycles.

Before I'd had a chance to purchase lumber to build some much needed shelves along the side of the garage, an incident occurred that resulted in our obtaining most of the material Scot free.

It happened when Rita and I decided to take the kids on an outing to Pyramid Lake. I had been to the southwest shore of that desert lake a couple of times, and Rita once, but it would be a first for the children.

Leaving the Sparks city boundary (then at Wedekind Road) I drove north on the Pyramid Highway through Spanish Springs Valley, a ranchland of meadows, sage and rabbit brush, and past the old Sky Ranch Airport (used by a few light-plane pilots for practicing landings and takeoffs). Twenty-five-miles farther on we entered the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, and topped the hill where the lake first comes into view. I pulled over and parked the Jeep, on a wide shoulder of the highway, while we all got out for a good look at the expanse of turquoise water below.

From this vantage point we could clearly see the "pyramid," a small, tall island formed naturally over the eons by a hot spring, and for which Fremont, when he saw it in 1844, named the lake. (On a cold day steam still emanates from the top of the pyramid.) It stands quite close to the shore, about a fourth of the way up the east side of the lake.

Fremont and his party, including a German artist by the name of Preuss who carefully recorded their camp near the pyramid, had travelled south from present Oregon, stopped off at a hot spring near Gerlach, approached the lake through a difficult canyon from the northeast and stumbled along the steep, rocky, shoreline to the south. It was a journey made more difficult because of the bronze cannon he'd insisted on dragging along "to impress the Indians." Fremont was excited on seeing this expansive body of water, thinking he'd found the long-sought waterway through the mountains to Alta California.

The following day, the pathfinder and his entourage came upon a large encampment of Paiutes and were treated to a meal of native cutthroat trout. From there they travelled south, to the rivers later named Carson (for Kit Carson) and Walker (for Joe Walker, who passed

that way in 1833). They eventually crossed the Sierra Nevada in near disastrous conditions. But that's another story.

Our journey took us up the west shore, through the village of Sutcliff. A man named Crosby (who had married an Indian woman) owned a significant amount of property in Sutcliff, including a store where the needs of both Indians and White Eyes were supplied.

It was a graveled road from there on, a rough road that generally paralleled the seldom used railroad between Wadsworth and Sand Pass. (That railroad is now long gone.) Opposite the north end of the 35-mile lake, I turned onto a road leading to a place known as "The Needles."

During the previous year, several of my fellow tollies had worked on a temporary radio-communication system to The Needles, for the exclusive use of a movie company that was filming parts of the epic "The Greatest Story Ever Told." (It would be released in 1965). The site, I'd been told, was chosen for its similarity to the Middle East desert and sea of Christ's time.

"Let's go see what's left of the movie set," Rita suggested.

I turned the Jeep toward the lake shore.

At about that time, a black wall of cumulonimbus clouds came rolling over the mountain from the west, threatening to dump its contents on our end of the lake. But I calculated we'd have enough time to go the few hundred yards to the shoreline and back before the rain would fall. Indeed, we'd have had plenty of time for the excursion was it not for an unforeseen, unseen deterrent.

We first stopped beside the "sea" to walk upon the small stone wharf, all that remained of the movie set. The company had done a good job of returning the area to its natural state. Or so I thought. We then got back in the Jeep, and I hurriedly drove away from the shore back toward the road from whence we'd come, but by a shortcut. We had gone less than a hundred feet when the Jeep began to complain. I gave it more gas, but to no avail. The wheels sank interminably in the sand.

We were stuck! I made one futile attempt to back out of the sump, then shut down the motor and got out to survey the situation. Luckily, I had been driving the Jeep in two-wheel-drive; otherwise we'd have gotten even farther into the dry-appearing bog. A glance to the northwest showed the thunderstorm now kicking up dust a few hundred yards away. It would be raining on us in a few minutes.

I opened the hatch in the back, unlimbered my trusty shovel and the bumper-jack, and prepared for the work ahead. One shovelful of sand convinced me that digging out was not going to be easy; the water table was a mere ten-inches below the surface.

Rita got out to help, and suggested that she and the kids might gather branches from a copse of trees nearby, to use under the wheels. Off she went, with Gina, Glen (who was but four years old), Tony and his friend Eric Scheetz on her heels. Eric, who lived across the street from us in Sparks, had come along for the ride. Meanwhile, I put my back into the job of digging the wet sand from behind four sunken wheels.

After a while I heard a shout from Rita, and looked to see her "uprooting" a dead cottonwood tree. Its roots, as it turned out, consisted of two-by-fours nailed crossways, like a Christmas tree stand, to the base of the trunk. The movie crew had "planted" those trees for the set, and then covered the roots and surrounding area

with loads of dry sand. When they left, they simply abandoned the trees in situ.

Their leavings would be our salvation. Rita and her gang removed the roots from a half-dozen trees and hauled them back to the Jeep. I jacked-up the wheels, in turn, and together we set about placing the lumber beneath and behind each one.

Now the wind was blowing at gale force and we were pelted by giant drops of cold rain. Still we continued our efforts, until we had built a "road" some eight-feet long behind the Jeep. I quickly engaged the front wheel hubs, got in, and, with fingers crossed, eased the Jeep backward. Success! Supported by the two-by-fours the vehicle was propelled to solid ground.

I called for everyone to get in out of the rain, but Rita was busy gathering up the sand-covered lumber and tossing it into the back of the Jeep. "I'm not leaving this good stuff here," she said, "after all that work gathering it up."

So we loaded the roots from "The Greatest Story Ever Told" and returned to the main road the way we had come. The rain, lightning, thunder and blowing sand combined to provide an exciting end to our adventure. The lumber, two-by-fours, would be put to good use as supporting frames for shelves in our garage.

A short time after completing the shelving job, we noticed an infestation of tiny fleas in the area. I'd never seen the likes of them, especially in such an unlikely place. They were "sand fleas," we concluded, apparently hatched from eggs laid on the hitherto buried lumber. A little bug spray took care of that problem and the shelves would withstand the test of time.

Our first trailer camping experience, that summer, was in the Sierra Nevada Mountains above Doyle, California. I'm not sure how we came to hear about the campground, perhaps from Mary and Arnold who lived just a few miles away in Herlong. Because it overlooked a natural meadow (in the Plumas Forest) it was called Meadow View.

Laid out in a grove of ponderosa pines adjacent to a ranger station (which was occupied by firefighters in the fire season), there was room for five or six campsites, each with its own iron Franklintype stove. A fresh water hydrant stood in the middle of the camp, a one-hole outhouse up in back, but there were no other amenities. None of the things most people look for when camping out, such as hot dog stands, water slides and sunny beaches. We played games, fed the chipmunks and squirrels, watched for deer and coyotes in the meadow, hiked in the forest and hunted for arrowheads. And, of course, ate none but hearty meals.

It was such a nice quiet place, we would return again and again. One of those times (I think in 1966) was quite memorable. Vic and Winnie Miller were with us, and their daughter Kathy. (Gary was not there.) Vic had hauled a tent and a small motorbike to the site in his pickup truck. He erected the tent beside our trailer, and we all shared the stove for cooking and "sitting around." The motorbike he used for exploring and raising dust.

One evening, after a delicious meal of meat and potatoes and vegetables, Vic went to the tent to check on something or other. When he came back around the corner of the trailer, Rita, who had been cleaning up the dishes inside, opened the screen door and emptied a pot of leftover peas into the air. Vic was downwind, and caught the

airborne peas and water right in the face. He'd never forget that episode, nor would he let Rita forget it.

A few more years and Meadow View would become an "improved" campground; the simple outhouse was replaced by a more conveniently located concrete block "duplex," the stoves were replaced by concrete fireplaces with iron grills, and the half-dozen sites were delineated by immovable log barriers. But it was still a quiet place to go, if not with the trailer at least for a picnic.

But back to 1963. It was late summer when a dark side of life appeared over the horizon, when John's daughter Lorrie, who was then about eight years old, was diagnosed as having a cancer. It affected her back, or spine, and reduced the once-lively girl to an invalid in a very short time. John brought her from Elko to Reno, for medical treatment, and when not in the hospital she stayed with us in Sparks. John came down from Elko on weekends (he and Loretta were divorced) and other times to be with her.

It was sad to watch Lorrie's debilitation. In spite of the many painful and side-affecting treatments she received - over a period of eight months or so - she succumbed to the disease in April of 1964, to suffer no more.

Deer season rolled around, and even though I now lived far and away from the "good deer country" I got the urge to go hunting. So, on a Friday afternoon, Rita and I left the kids in someone's care (I forget whose), hitched the trailer behind the Jeep and headed toward Lovelock. It was almost dark by the time we got to Toulon, ten miles southwest of Lovelock, so we elected to stop for the night among some "giant tufas" a mile or so from the highway off to the northwest.

It looked like an ideal place to camp. We'd be alone, it was quiet and we could get a good night's sleep; or so I thought.

There was a chill in the air but we soon had the trailer set up and a light supper on the table. By ten o'clock we were in bed, and I quickly dropped off to sleep. But not Rita. She was restless.

Her restlessness woke me up. "What's the matter, can't you sleep?" I mumbled.

"Not with that bright light shining in, I can't," she complained.

Despite the fact that every curtain in the trailer was pulled shut, the navigational light at Derby Airfield - that periodically swept a white beam in our direction from four miles away - bothered her. I couldn't believe it. That something so insignificant could be so distracting was inconceivable to me. I went back to sleep.

In the morning we travelled through Lovelock, turned east on the Coal Canyon road, climbed over Dago Pass, passed through Dixie and Jersey Valleys, and arrived at Dacey Creek at noon. There we set up the trailer in the mouth of the canyon between the road and a fenceline above the creek, and had lunch.

I was prepared for a few days of good chukar hunting, and had my deer rifle along "just in case" we should see a buck. No matter what was in store for us, I was happy to be camped in this place, far from the nearest town and not likely to be overrun by nimrods.

We did find chukar, in small bunches on the rocky cliffs and talus slopes and grassy ridges above. I shouldered my shotgun and climbed after them. Rita stayed below. If I should shoot one down, she would watch and see where it landed and, if possible, retrieve it. I

was lucky enough to down a couple of the beautiful birds that first afternoon, and together we found them in the rocks.

For the first couple of days, the weather was clear and sunny. Then it clouded up, rained, and eventually turned to snow. With three-to six-inches of the wet stuff on the rocky slopes, I was not about to climb up to look for chukar-birds. So, after breakfast on the third morning, we climbed into the Jeep and headed up-canyon in search of deer.

It was a really nice day. The storm had dissipated; the sky was clear and blue. The going was slick in places, on the steep switchbacks, but with four-wheels pulling we had no problems.

Four or five miles below the FAA site I stopped, got out, walked to the canyon rim and quietly studied its depths. (Rita had wisely stayed in the warm cab.) Nothing moved, and I was not sufficiently motivated to hike the difficult terrain. Instead I returned to the Jeep and drove on up the steep mountainside.

Near the headwaters of Cottonwood Creek (one of dozens in Nevada so named) I stopped again, this time to scan the small basin off to our left. There were very few trees there, just a scattering of mahoganies, so our presence on the road, that made a wide circle around the shallow basin, could be easily observed by deer in the vicinity.

But so, too, could I see them! Three or four does and a beautiful buck, standing about a quarter-mile away. Almost immediately after being spotted they moved away, up the opposite side of the basin. Hastily, I jammed the Jeep in gear and we took off bouncing over the rutted road at a frightful clip.

"Maybe if we hurry we can cut 'em off at the pass," I said, only half believing my own words. It was a long way around, perhaps a half-mile. Furthermore, not having been too optimistic, I had not even unsheathed my ought-six. Rita reached for the case on the back seat, removed the rifle and placed it on my lap, muzzle toward the door.

So there we were: me watching the deer and adjusting my speed with hopes of intersecting them when they crossed the road ahead; Rita dropping a shell into the rifle breech each time I pulled the bolt back, until it was ready for business.

The deer slowed and hesitated. I slowed as well. They moved out again. They were playing right into my hands, as if the whole thing had been programmed. Now the buck - who had hung back at first and sent his harem out ahead as is their custom - ran swiftly to the fore and directly toward a point where, after crossing the road, he could drop over the steep side of the mountain. My heart leaped. He would get away unless I hurried. I romped on the gas to close the distance between us.

Finally, when it was obvious that I could get no closer and still have enough time to get off a shot, I jammed on the brakes. The Jeep skidded to a stop. I turned off the ignition and jumped out, clear of the door. As if by magic the rifle butt found my shoulder; my finger found the trigger; the front sight found the swift-moving buck; the buck's head appeared in the peep-sight; I held it there, moving with it from left to right, then dropped it back to the front of his shoulder and squeezed the trigger.

WHAM!--thunk!

Wow! My ears rang from the noise. I shook my head to clear it, and saw that I'd hit the buck in mid-air when he crossed the road some 150-yards away. However, to my surprise, he never slowed down but continued over the rise out of sight. I was now chagrined. After all my efforts to shoot him on this, the sloping side of the mountain, he had gone over the cliff after all.

I raced the 200-yards to the rim where he'd disappeared, to the top of the steep, snowy, northwest mountainside. I was sure that my worst fear would be confirmed, that the buck had finally run out of life, died and rolled to some unfathomable ledge. And then I saw him. He was a long way down, but fate had grown a small juniper tree right there and it kept him from rolling all the way.

Rita, who had followed me from the Jeep, was now at my side. It was not yet nine o'clock and we had the whole day ahead of us, if necessary, to retrieve the buck. Everything was going to be all right after all.

Together, we picked our way down the slippery side-hill to our quarry. There I shed my jacket and rolled up my sleeves. Although a bit side-hilly, it was a good place to field dress a deer; that is, I had plenty of snow with which to clean the cavity, and to wash away the blood from my hands and arms when I'd completed my task.

On investigation we found that my aim had been perfect. The bullet entered the deer's heart, which explained his going so far after being hit.

The job of getting the buck to the Jeep was not going to be so easy. Not only was it uphill all the way it was a steep uphill. (It would be the toughest deer-haul in my experience.)

I hiked back to the Jeep and brought it to the top of the rim. I dug out my little block-and-tackle (two small pulleys and a tow-cable) and two pieces of rope. I tied them together and attached the upper pulley to the the Jeep, which I had backed as far over the rim as I dared. Still we had to manhandle the deer- carcass a ways before we reached the towrope and tied it on.

Rita and I must have presented a humorous picture, struggling with the dead weight of that deer. I strained at the line with one hand and guided the animal with the other, while she pushed and shoved it from behind. And we were a long time, perhaps a couple of hours including rest periods, getting our prize to the top of the hill and aboard the Jeep. At last, with a sigh of relief and a feeling of great accomplishment, we made our way off the mountain.

Back at the trailer by lunchtime, we gloated (at least I did) over our good fortune. We had had a wonderful time camping, hunting and exploring, and while we didn't have many chukars in the ice-chest, the wrapped-up venison in the back of the Jeep would more than compensate for the void.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE NEVADA CITIES & SAGEBRUSH

That I was actually living in a city, though a small one (the Reno arch over Virginia Street, erected the year I was born, proclaimed it "The Biggest Little City in the World") was somewhat surprising. To a country lad like me even Elko, with a population of some 5,000 people, had seemed a real city, and the biggest one I ever wished to inhabit. Yet here I was in the Truckee Meadows, where the population was roughly 65,000 in the early 1960s (50,000 in Reno and 15,000 in Sparks).

Seven miles wide and fifteen miles long, the Truckee Meadows was once a valley of lush grasses bordered by sagebrush-and-juniper foothills. Now it is dominated by the cities of Reno and Sparks. The climate, discounting the effects of urbanization, is nearly ideal; seldom too hot or too cold, generally sunny and clear. To the west rise the Sierra Nevada Mountains, so high and formidable they effectively block all but a "spittance" of precipitation from reaching the basin. Officially, with an average rainfall of less than eightinches a year, the valley is a desert. But the mountains store lifegiving water in the form of snow. Mt. Rose, 14-miles from downtown Reno, at 10,778-feet, maintains a cap of the white stuff throughout most of the calendar year. And while snow falls in the basin in winter, it usually succumbs to warm sunshine in a matter of hours or days.

The rippling Truckee River is the valley's most dominant natural feature. It is also the lifeline of a water system that begins in the Tahoe basin, runs north and east through Reno and Sparks to Wadsworth, then north again to its repository, Pyramid Lake. It was named, according to the most plausible legend, for the Indian guide who in 1844 led a party of men across the desert from the Humboldt Sink to the stream near present Wadsworth.

The Truckee River from Tahoe to Pyramid is but a hundred miles long, and, except by evaporation, its waters never leave the Great Basin. As with the Humboldt River, it was hard for me, applying eastern standards, to think of it as more than a large brook.

Reno, like Elko, came into being with the railroad. Before that there was naught but a bridge and a hotel at the site of the present Virginia Street Bridge and the Riverside Hotel. A man named Fuller built them both in 1859, to accommodate travelers passing between Virginia City and Carson City in the south and Susanville in the north. The original bridge was washed away but replaced, and Myron Lake bought out Fuller in 1863 (just a hundred years before my arrival on the scene) when Nevada was still a territory. The place became known as Lake's Crossing.

In 1868, having forged its way over the rugged Sierras, the leading edge of the Central Pacific Railroad appeared across the river from Lake's hotel. Being a man of business acumen and foresight, Lake deeded forty acres of land to Charles Crocker, one of the Central Pacific's builders, with the stipulation that a railroad station be

established there. It was inevitable that a city and attendant commerce should follow.

There is no doubt that the city was named for Jesse Lee Reno, a Union Army officer killed at South Mountain in the Civil War, but the name won favor for its brevity more than from a sense of honor. Railroad officials were partial to short, easily spelled and pronounced names. Reno was officially established on May 9, 1868, the United States Post Office four days later.

The community got off to a good start, and quickly became the principle distributing and shipping center for all of northwestern Nevada. It was the major link between the Comstock mines and populous California.

Like most cities in the West, though, Reno had its ups and downs. Among its first problems was the population of "Celestials," the Chinese who had been brought into the country to work, at cheap labor rates, on the railroad. Unlike in Canada, where the majority of Chinese laborers were imported for railroad building with the proviso that they return to the Orient when done, in the United States they remained. It was not a happy situation in Reno, and when disease spread through "Chinatown" the city fathers burned it to the ground.

Reno became the seat of Washoe County in 1871. A new courthouse was completed in 1873, on an acre of ground donated by the ambitious Myron Lake, right next to his hotel.

The landmark hotel - which registered such guests as Thomas Edison and General Ulysses S. Grant in the 1870s - would undergo numerous changes over the years; the result of fires, rebuilds and remodels. In 1880 Lake's Hotel, no longer the property of Reno's first patron, was renamed the Riverside Hotel, and for the next seventy years it continued as the city's most prominent establishment.

Raymond I. "Pappy" Smith, a Vermonter, was largely responsible for the early success of gambling in Nevada. In 1935 he and his son Harold opened Harold's Club in Reno, and changed the "back room vice" to a business of some respectability. But it was not until after World War II that the industry really grew in Reno, when food and entertainment, and sometimes lodging facilities, were combined with gaming. The idea was to provide so many amenities under one roof that the gambler would have no reason to leave. Some already established clubs - Harold's Club, Nevada Club, Cal-Neva, the Golden Hotel, Harrah's Club - had simply expanded, adding restaurants, floor shows, and space for increasing numbers of gaming tables and slot machines, especially slot machines. The Golden, before it burned in 1962, rivaled the Riverside for "big name" entertainment. But none would outdo Bill Harrah, who snapped up the decimated Golden Hotel property and built a 23-story hotel/casino on the site.

The Mapes Hotel, Reno's first skyscraper, was built in 1947 by Charles Mapes, Jr., the son of a longtime Nevadan. About a dozen stories high, located on the north bank of the scenic River, it brought modern hotel luxury to the area. Virtually the whole top floor of this swank new place was surrounded by glass. Named the Sky Room, it was there that swing bands played for dancing couples, and the likes of John Wayne and Harpo Marx appeared to entertain them.

During my many business trips to Reno in the 1950s, it was the Riverside that commanded most of my attention. Its atmosphere was somehow more open and friendly than the others. One could rub elbows with the entertainers right there in the lobby, or peer over the long

bar that separated the casino from the showroom and catch their acts, though it was often difficult to hear the dialogue. It was in this manner that my friends and I watched Goucho Marx, Jimmy Durante, Bob Crosby and others do their stuff, for the meager price of a highball or two apiece.

Durante was a prince of a guy, off as well as on the stage. Between acts he'd come out to the casino area to gamble (virtually all of the entertainers gambled) and mingle with the people. But he was awfully short and hard to see in a crowd, and I almost knocked him over one night on my way to the restroom.

"Scuse me," I apologized.

"Tink nuttin' of it kid," he replied, "My schnoz is always gettin' in da way."

Bob Crosby was something of a disappointment to me. He had a great band, but as a singer he was over the hill. And he drank too much, was prone to losing at the tables, and was often nasty to the dealers.

Nevadans were gamblers by nature. Who but a gambler would become a rancher in a desert country? Who but a gambler would prospect for gold and silver in its harsh mountains? Who but a gambler would defy the "prohibes" and almost openly distill whisky? And Reno led the parade. For many years it held the dubious distinction of being America's gambling Mecca, along with that of being a divorce mill.

Back in 1885, Reno managed to wrest the land-grant University of Nevada from Elko, where it was originally established in 1873. The buildings in Elko were turned over to the county, along with \$20,000 reimbursement "for its initial expenditures," and the university was re-opened on ten acres of land overlooking Reno from the north.

Three names come to mind in connection with the U-of-N: John Mackay (pronounced Mac-kee), one of the "Big Four" of Comstock mining fame and a large donor; James Scrugham, Nevada governor from 1923-1927, for whom the engineering building was named; and Max C. Fleischmann, well known financier, philanthropist and Reno resident from 1935 until his death in 1951. The university was the largest single recipient of the Fleischmann Foundation grants.

In spite of its post war growth, Reno remained a relatively clean city; undoubtedly because the downtown merchants and businessmen cared enough to maintain their sidewalks in an attractive state. City crews, as well, did a fine job of keeping the streets and river clean, and the parks immaculately groomed. But by 1963, new housing subdivisions were springing up, extending outward from downtown Reno (and Sparks) like the inflating fingers of a rubber glove. Even so, the older areas were not allowed to deteriorate and I decided that, for a city, it wasn't all that bad a place to live.

Anyway, we didn't live in Reno but in Sparks. And while most of Reno's characteristics also applied to Sparks, many did not. While it was actually an incorporated city, like Reno, Sparks was truly "small town" in nature. It existed primarily as a residential suburb to Reno. And wouldn't you know, it was spawned by the railroad. Not immediately, like the others along the route, but after the turn of the century in 1905.

When the railroad first came along, when Crocker took advantage of Lake's offer and established Reno in the Truckee Meadows, a maintenance terminal was established thirty miles downstream at "The Bend" on the old emigrant trail. A division point and "jumping off"

place to the desert, it was named Wadsworth in honor of James Samuel Wadsworth, an army officer who had been killed in a battle with the Indians.

For reasons unknown to me, in 1904 the entire town of Wadsworth - station, maintenance shops, homes and all - was loaded onto trains and moved to a new site three miles east of Reno, where the citizens drew lots for lots on which to rebuild their homes. They needed a name for this new town and chose "Sparks" (another short name), in honor of John Sparks who was then governor of Nevada. The name "East Reno" had been proposed, but was rejected because, "It might be mistaken for Reno and interfere with the safe dispatching of trains."

(In my opinion, seeing as how Reno and Sparks have merged virtually into one, East Reno would have been the wiser choice.)

A giant roundhouse capable of handling repair and service of locomotives of any size was quickly constructed. Streets were laid out in a grid to the north of the railroad yard. Railroad officials were housed in fine "mansions" along tree-lined "A" street, business establishments sprang up on the north side of "B" Street, and a cool, grassy common was maintained between the two.

Not until March of 1955 was the common disturbed, when Dick Graves opened a small coffee shop (home of the "Awful Awful" hamburger) and gambling joint between the railroad and "B" Street.

Graves' manager/son-in-law purchased the property in 1960, and "John Asquaga's Nugget" mushroomed to become the single most important business establishment in Sparks.

In the 1970s other casinos would appear nearby, to hang on the Nugget's coattails, but the Nugget retained title to the city's largest hotel/restaurant/casino, and still serves the Awful-Awful hamburger today.

John Asquaga did for Sparks what Pappy Smith and Bill Harrah did for Reno; i.e., provided a new source of revenue for the city's coffer. At the same time, in spite of the millions of visitors to his establishment, he maintained a home-owned environment. Best of all, the big-name entertainers (among them famous Red Skelton) who appeared in the Nugget showrooms performed with talent, decency and respectability.

The Nugget had two unique, permanent attractions: One was a rooster made of solid (not hollow) 18-karat gold, weighing <u>fifteen-pounds!</u> The other was a real live trained elephant. The elephant, named Big Bertha, had her own elaborate home on the premises and performed on the big stage before every act.

Rita remembered seeing Bertha in Elko when the pachyderm, on her way to join the Nugget staff in Sparks, was allowed to take a "breather" from her long train ride from the east. Bertha soon shared the spotlight on the stage with a "teenage" elephant named Tina. But youngsters tend to grow up and Tina would be replaced, perhaps more than once or twice, by new youngsters. (As of this writing, Bertha continues to perform in spite of a tendency to arthritis. And the Nugget continues to grow and expand.)

The Golden Rooster was commissioned in 1958, and in May of that year, housed in a bulletproof glass case, went on display in the casino lobby. It was an outstanding tourist attraction. But in December, the Nugget received notice from the U.S. Treasury Department: the gold rooster would have to be confiscated. It was said to be in violation of the Gold Reserve Act. The Nugget responded that

permission for the creation had been obtained from the U.S. Mint in San Francisco, and the officials seemed satisfied.

Then, in 1960, the Treasury came back with an official complaint: the rooster exceeded the amount of gold (50 ounces) that an individual could have in possession "unless it is an object of art." (The rooster certainly appeared as art to me, and very fine art at that.) It was taken away by the feds and imprisoned. Asquaga had a cheap replica built as a stand-in pending the outcome of the trial.

Finally, after nearly two years, a jury decided that it was indeed an object of art. The rooster was set free (in March of '62) and returned to the Nugget lobby. In the end, the fiasco had not hurt the casino a bit. The nationwide publicity resulted in notoriety for the Nugget, and a wonderful new legend of the West.

Had I the ability to foresee the future of Reno-Sparks, I might not have so readily acceded to the Company move. (What a blessing that we do not possess such prescience.) True, the community was growing in 1963 but it was still seemed small.

I suppose that atmosphere stemmed from the fact that even the biggest hotel-casinos were owned and operated by resident businessmen. Smith (Harold's Club), Fitzgerald (Nevada Club), Bill Harrah and Asquaga, while keenly competitive men, were home-towners. They were active in civic affairs, benevolent to charities, and awarded scholarships to local youngsters.

But all that would change. Within fifteen years, Reno would be transformed into a miniature Las Vegas. Not only would a plethora of high-rise hotel casinos puncture the skyline, almost all of them would be owned and operated by faceless strangers from out of town, strangers with but one goal in mind, big profits. Not that the Smiths and Harrahs had been in business just for kicks, they were in it for the money to be sure, but they also exhibited responsibility to the community. Not so the newcomers.

The metamorphosis was triggered, mainly, by the establishment of the MGM Grand Hotel. In a radical departure from the old city plan, the MGM was allowed to locate outside the downtown casino area. Just a few blocks from the airport, roughly half way between the centers of Reno and Sparks, the hotel-casino was an island unto itself: everything required for human existence was contained under its roof.

The MGM Grand (later Ballys and still later the Hilton) was indeed grand. "Opulent" might be a better descriptive. Brass, marble, crystal and mirrors were everywhere in evidence, reflecting, I supposed, the best of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's movie-making days. Two small but comfortable theaters, with overstuffed seats, were located on the lower level, where "good old movies" were projected.

Leroy Felch (Rita's niece Terry's husband), a hard working, no nonsense master electrician, was a contributor in the construction of this most significant landmark. When it was near completion but before all the interior walls were in place, Leroy gave me a guided tour of the place. I was overwhelmed. Over the main entrance hung the largest crystal chandelier I'd ever seen. The main casino area, covered with lush carpeting, was billed as the largest in the world. It could easily have enclosed a football field. A grand and glittering circular staircase, surrounded by spotless mirrors, tied together the main floors. The showroom stage, while not the largest ever, claimed to have the largest electrical control panel yet installed anywhere.

To me, the MGM Grand was the harbinger of "more." And more, in my humble opinion, is not usually synonymous with better. My secret wish, when I hiked through its palatial halls and climbed its gilded staircase, was that I might be around when the gaming industry folds and the MGM becomes a sightseeing attraction; like the Hearst Castle in California.

But that requires a long look into the future, to the time when Reno will no longer be, despite its erstwhile claim, "The Biggest Little City in the World."

My new job led to my first real visit to Las Vegas, unfortunately, in the heat of the summer. Les Hight, an older, amicable fellow from engineering, and I were to make an FCC compliance check of the microwave-radio stations south of Tonopah, all of which were in Jerry Miller's area of responsibility. (Exchange service in Las Vegas was provided by an independent telephone company.)

In many ways the trip was an eye opener, both off and on the job. On our very first night in town, Jerry, who then held the title of district maintenance superintendent, insisted on showing us the city sights. We popped in and out of two or three clubs on the "Strip," then settled into front row seats at the Flamingo.

I was to learn two important things in Las Vegas: One, that front row seats at a floor show (for which Jerry tipped handsomely) were not as good as those farther back. What I got to see, by craning my neck, was wrinkles and blemishes of under-dressed and over-painted female dancers; nothing of the overall beauty of the act, if indeed there were any. Two, that everything relating to the clubs in that city was ostentatious and overrated. Both downtown Las Vegas and the new "Strip" were garish beyond belief. It was like a circus sideshow with super-expensive trappings.

On the job the next day I felt terrible; from too much to drink and too little of sleep. (Jerry and his men, I would learn, were accustomed to such nights-out.) But I was not so dull as to miss seeing that the Las Vegas microwave-radio sites - five owned by AT&T and as many by Nevada Bell - were not being maintained to our Northern Nevada standards. Nor were all of the FCC records in proper order. I made a mental note of the former, Les and I collaborated on a written report of the latter. Jerry would not be happy, but we could be no less than honest in our appraisals.

Jerry Miller was typically Irish in character: red haired, red faced, quick tempered, brusque and fun-loving. I liked him. But he could be hard to get along with. I am reminded of the time when, at one of Jim Dodson's all-management meetings in Reno, the subject of accident reporting came up. No one wanted to have an accident in his group, and if he had one he hated the job of filling out the cumbersome report form. The System Instructions were fairly clear on the subject, but it was difficult for Dodson or his staff to accept a report "as written" by a field supervisor. More often than not it had to be rewritten, in the safety supervisor's words, and resubmitted.

Having recently been through just such an exercise, I felt compelled to express my opinion: "An accident report ought to be written in the chief's own words," I said, "just as he believes it happened; after investigating it, of course. If our field reports aren't good enough then they might as well be written here in Reno by the safety supervisor."

"That's right," Jerry chimed in. "It's stupid to waste so much of our time on the phone and sending forms back and forth. We ought to fill out the report form, sign it, and that's that!"

Dodson listened intently to our remarks, and then asked an open question, "How do the rest of you feel about it?"

Silence. No one wanted to get involved in $\underline{\text{that}}$ subject. I was beginning to think that my speaking out, with Jerry's backing, may have done some good. But then, consistent with his style of management, Jim came up with a solution to the problem.

"Okay," he iterated. "Starting today you two (Jerry and me) will be responsible for making sure that every single accident report is done correctly. I don't even want to see one until you've both signed off." Turning to his secretary, Lena, he said, "See that the routing is set up."

Inwardly I groaned, and suspected that Jerry did as well. If we worked in Reno I could see some merit in his order, but we were located about as far apart as possible (I was still working in Elko at the time). We were equally far away from headquarters in Reno. We tried to make light of the trap I'd gotten us into, a trap that there was no getting out of, but it wasn't easy. The Old Man had spoken.

For me it was another lesson well learned. When a subordinate complains about the way something is being done, get him involved. Shift some of the load onto him. The action should either convince him of the error of his ways or result in his finding a better way to do it.

As it turned out, Jerry - who was my senior in age and grade - left the auditing job totally up to me. From that day on I pored over countless accident reports. Many of them included errors in coding, most of the narratives were poorly written. Dodson had proven his point. Field supervisors just couldn't be trusted to do a good job of accident reporting.

We celebrated our first Thanksgiving holiday in Sparks (in 1963) with Rita's cooking dinner for about two-dozen relatives. In attendance were John, Lorrie and Jack; the Wises Woody, Violet, Terry and Denice; the Youngs Arnold, Mary, Judy and her husband Roger Zamboni, Mary Ann, Butch and Debbie; Jim, Janie, and Janie's son Warren; Alan Avery and his wife Angie. Except for our collective empathy for Lorrie, who was still suffering with cancer, it would have been a fine holiday.

Around the first of December, Rita and I took our kids and journeyed to Brunswick Canyon, across the river southeast of Carson City, to find and cut a Christmas tree. The cutting area was about five miles into the canyon. Compared to the forest in the Pequop Range in Elko County, this was a disappointing area; at least with respect to finding a decent tree.

It was either that year or a subsequent one when Gina got lost in Brunswick Canyon. In her quest for the "perfect tree" she somehow became disoriented and separated from the rest of us. (I could relate to that, having been lost in the forest in New Hampshire as a youth.) She didn't panic, however, and made her way downhill to the road ahead of us, none the worse for the experience. We went on to find a fair tree, cut it down and headed for home.

After a few years we would quit cutting our tree in Brunswick Canyon, a pine forest that was, in my estimation, overharvested.

That first winter in Sparks was hard on all of us. Not the weather, but the worsening of Lorrie's condition. John took her home for Christmas, but on the 22nd of January, 1964, by the grace of God she passed away. Lorrie was afforded a proper service at St. Joseph's Church, and was interred near the place where her grandparents would come to rest.

During our first full year of residency in western Nevada we managed several trailer-camping trips, all of them to new and interesting places.

In the spring of '64, while working at the Topaz Lake site, Noble Crew told me about the existence of a giant cedar tree not far away. It was just across the California state line, and Noble took me there to see it for myself. On the way in I was favorably impressed by a grove of quaking aspens, noting that it would be a great place to camp.

So, one weekend in June, I hauled the trailer and family to the spot, which was off the beaten path just a few miles north of Monitor Pass, south of the Topaz microwave station.

The weather was perfect. We had breakfast in the trailer, then Rita and I enjoyed coffee by a campfire while the kids played under the trees. We fished in Mountaineer Creek, a tiny stream just west of the station, and caught enough pan-size trout for supper. We hunted arrowheads in the high meadows, even found a few remnants.

At last we headed for "the big tree," but got sidetracked by a hillside pocked with ground-squirrel holes. Rita insisted on our stopping and showing the kids how, by pouring water into an upper hole, one could force the little devils to vacate their premises before drowning. From a nearby shallow reservoir we hauled dozens, nay hundreds of buckets-full of water to the holes. But our efforts were in vain. Not only did none of the squirrels appear, neither was there any sign of where the water had gone. Tired and disgusted (I had predicted failure) we quit and went our way.

Just west of the small reservoir I took the left fork in the road (the right one led to the headwaters of Mountaineer Creek) and went up a shallow draw to a bare slope north of and below Leviathan Peak. At the edge of the clearing, the noble giant stood off to our right in a grove of other large cedars.

I don't know how tall it was, but it was certainly big around. It would take six men with outstretched arms, fingertips touching, to encircle the trunk, making it roughly thirty-six feet in circumference. I estimated the diameter of the lowest horizontal branch at three feet.

Noble had quoted a forest ranger as saying that that tree was probably the largest of its species in California, possibly in the world. Its location was not shown on any map, nor was there a monument to its size or beauty; possibly to prevent its being "molested" by vandals.

As usual our weekend was altogether too short. After just two days we had to pack up and head for home.

A few months later we were camped with the Millers in a rather unlikely spot; the first bend in the Carson River downstream from the

Brunswick Canyon Bridge. Rita, Glen and I slept in our trailer; Vic and Winnie in their tent; Gina, Kathy, Gary and Tony in sleeping bags under a big cottonwood tree.

The river was pretty sluggish and full of silt, and I figured the fishing would be poor at best. Still we'd have to try it. There was bound to be a big old carp or two lurking in the tepid water, if no trout. Vic and I and the boys, Tony and Gary, baited-up and worked a long stretch of deep pools above an old rock dam, a remnant from the days when ore was milled along the banks of the river. We met with no success, and after a couple of hours I was ready to quit when Tony got a bite.

"Hold on tight," I yelled advice. "Keep your tip up. Don't let him get under the roots."

I was sure he'd hooked a carp, since it hadn't surfaced or jumped as any self-respecting trout should do, but Tony insisted that it was a big trout.

After a while the fish tired and Tony reeled it in close enough to see. Imagine my surprise when I saw that he was right. Not only was it a trout, it was a good-sized German brown, perhaps weighing two-pounds or more. Then I was really excited, afraid it'd throw the hook and escape.

We were standing on a sandy bar so I instructed Tony to "hold on tight and drag him up on the beach."

He did. I grabbed the slippery fellow, held him down on the sand and removed the hook. I had worried for nothing. He could never have spit out that hook; it was firmly embedded in his jaw.

That was all I needed for motivation. I fished diligently for another two hours or more, but in vain. Tony had caught the only game fish of the day, and he was rightfully proud of the fact.

While we were fishing so avidly, Winnie, Rita and the girls had waded in the shallows looking for frogs and crawdads. The place was crawling with the latter. They could have gathered enough for a meal if they had wished to. (The next day, after an hour of "hunting," an old man and a woman went away with a bucket full of the ugly critters.)

Glen found his own amusement. From the scattered parts of an ancient motor vehicle he resurrected a steering wheel, propped it up on a fallen log and made believe he was a race driver.

In the evening, we cooked hotdogs and hamburgers over natural coals in a rock-circle fireplace. After dark, and after the usual campfire amusements, we all turned in to sleep the sleep of the tired but contented, lulled by the sound of rippling water.

It was providential that the moon was full that night, for in the wee hours a small herd of horses came thundering through our camp, barely missing the startled kids in their sleeping bags.

It was our trip through northwestern Nevada, in August, that was most indelibly etched on my mind. Our plan was to travel north (with the trailer in tow behind our DeSoto) through Gerlach to a spot on the map called "Vya," turn to the east and touch Denio, go on south to Winnemucca, and ultimately meet the Joneses and camp with them southeast of Battle Mountain. There must have been some sort of a jinx hanging over us at the time, and over the Joneses too, as I will explain:

All went well on the first leg of our journey, the 110-miles of good paved highways from Sparks to Gerlach. From there on, however, our luck would change.

I topped-off the gas tank at the town's one filling station, then headed north on a graveled road that should take us past a hot spring and a geyser, through a "forest" of petrified stumps, and eventually to Vya Junction in the northwestern-most quadrangle in the state.

Somewhere between the geyser and the forest, while easing the DeSoto through a wash, one of the rear tires let go with a dust-blowing explosion.

It was no big thing. I quickly replaced the defunct wheel-and-tire with the spare, and away we went again, making it to Secret Creek, a couple of miles south of Vya, well before dark.

I don't recall who had told me about this particular creek, but we found the perfect spot for a camp in its narrow canyon, just a mile or so above the county road and the Powers Ranch. Although somewhat drier, it was similar to many a canyon in Elko County. We quickly set up the trailer for an overnight stay, all by ourselves under the "trees of trembling leaves."

(Like so many other fine places in Nevada, Secret Creek has since been posted "NO TRESPASSING.")

It was not yet suppertime, so we decided to explore our surroundings. Gina and Tony climbed up the steep canyon side, where a series of enormous, upside-down cones of red-hued volcanic rock stuck up through the talus slopes. But it was a good habitat for rattlesnakes and, after hearing a rattle and spotting one of the devilish critters, the kids came scurrying back to the trailer.

It was a quiet night, with only an occasional "Who-who-who" of a nearby owl and the distant "Yip-yip-yeeaa" of a coyote to break the silence. As usual we slept well (at least I did), Rita and I on the big gaucho bed, Tony and Glen in the canvas bunk over our heads, Gina on the make-down bed in front.

In the morning, after breakfast, I decided to drive over to Cedarville, California, only 25-miles away, and buy a new tire before attempting the 80-miles of dirt road to Denio. So we left camp and took off in the DeSoto.

Cedarville, an isolated but respectable center of civilization to a number of successful ranchers and farmers, was situated at the eastern base of the Warner Mountains near the northern end of a long, narrow, shallow lake in Surprise Valley (so-named by emigrants on first viewing the verdant oasis after traversing northern Nevada's rugged terrain). It had a population of about 750, boasted of a couple of old hotels, two or three places to eat and a pair of service stations. I pulled in at one of the latter, at the sign of the Chevron, to seek a replacement for our blown-out Atlas tire (the brand sold by Standard Oil Co. at that time). I would also order a tank-full of gas. One never passed up a chance to fill-er-up when traveling in the back country.

The amicable station operator didn't have an Atlas tire of the appropriate size on hand, but sent his kid to a loft in the barn across the street to see what he could find. Lo and behold he came back with a brand-new Goodyear, still in its paper wrapping. I was tickled at my good fortune. Rita and I and the kids then traipsed over to the cafe for lunch, while the tire was being mounted and placed on

the right-rear hub of the car. Within the hour we were on our way back to Nevada.

Before returning to camp, however, out of curiosity we explored the roads north of Vya, passing by two or three good looking ranches on the alluvial slopes west of a big alkali lake in Long Valley. The road veered to the northwest, got rougher and rougher, and finally ended (as far as the DeSoto was concerned) on a hillside of jumbled volcanic rocks. We got out and walked, and came up on the north rim of New Year Lake; a cobalt gem in a rough-and-tumble moonscape.

(According to Helen S. Carlson's *Nevada Place Names*, this lake first appeared, unnamed, on Fremont's map of 1845.)

On our way back to camp we paused at a cowboy line shack, a board-and-bat cabin that was desert stained a rich, reddish brown. The door was unlocked, of course, so in we went. Typically, the cabin was furnished with plain bunks, a table and chairs, a small cook-stove, a bucket of kindling, and shelves stocked with food staples. Outside, a half dozen wrought-iron branding irons hung from spikes on the walls, along with worn horseshoes, a frayed lasso, and sun-shriveled leather bridle and saddle trappings.

When the kids indicated by their actions that they had seen enough of the outback, we returned to camp and spent another quiet night at Secret Creek.

The next day, as I was getting ready to hitch the car to the Shasta, I was startled by the sounds of breaking glass and a mild scream. Rita, while tidying up inside the trailer, had braced her head against the window and shoved the pane right out of its frame. I guess she thought she was leaning against the wall. Anyway, she wasn't hurt. But now there was a two-foot-square opening in the left front corner of our little home on wheels.

It would never do to travel with that hole, not only because of the dust but also the possibility of rain. We'd have to plug it some way. Rita cut a piece of cardboard the size of the opening, I dismantled a peach crate and, using a hacksaw blade from my tool kit, laboriously sawed the boards to size and wedged them into the window frame to support the cardboard. Thus we set out for faraway Denio.

Just prior to entering the Sheldon Antelope Refuge I stopped, unhitched the trailer and drove the DeSoto a short distance to Massacre Lakes. We would not spend much time there, it was too hot. But it was an extremely interesting place. The ground was literally littered with obsidian chips. Of course we looked for arrowheads but in vain. Finding an artifact in that rubble of obsidian would constitute a miracle. A great many of the chips appeared to have been "worked," but not, I was convinced, by man.

From atop a sand dune Rita sighted a lake or a pond off to the southwest. But on closer inspection we discerned that it was merely a "lake of glass." There was not a drop of water in that parched land, only acres of obsidian pebbles and chips reflecting, like the wind-kissed surface of a sea, the sun's bright rays.

It was a great temptation to gather up hands full of the shiny stuff, and indeed we did. But finally, concerned about where to put it all, Rita decreed: "You can only keep it (the obsidian) if you find a piece as big as your head." The kids located a couple of chunks that nearly met the requirement, and they were stowed in the trunk of the car.

Northwestern Nevada contains a bounteous supply of obsidian. More than I've ever seen anywhere else. Even the roads are paved with it. But that, I would find, is not necessarily advantageous.

Not quite half-way to Denio we met a "harvest train," a collection of grain-harvesting machines, trucks and automobiles with its complement of workmen, wives and children. Apparently having come from Idaho, on its way to northern California, the convoy was stalled because of a broken axle on one of the trucks. Right in the middle of the road. Now a harvester takes up more than an ordinary share of a road, which at that place was scarcely wide enough for two cars to pass, so we were effectively brought to a standstill.

I talked to one of the men and learned that a replacement axle was on its way. Probably from Winnemucca. It might be hours before anything could move, so, after making a cursory inspection of the terrain off to the side of the road, I decided to drive through the sagebrush around the train.

In spite of having a trailer in tow, we bounced along at a pretty good rate, knocking down sagebrush for an eighth-of-a-mile before reaching the rear end of the tie-up. And then one of the harvesters, while guiding me back into the roadway, asked rather casually, "Plan on goin' far?"

"Yeah," I answered through my open window, not a little puzzled by his query. "To Denio anyway."

"Mebbe y'better have a look at that tire first." He pointed to the left front one.

I got out to see what he was talking about, and wouldn't you know? The darn thing had grown mumps and was about to explode. It must've been bruised by a hunk of obsidian.

So it was out with the jack and the spare and into another tire changing operation. Twenty minutes later, hot, dusty, sweaty and not just a little annoyed, I climbed in behind the wheel and drove on toward Denio. I hoped to find a new tire there, but from what I remembered of that place I had doubts.

Denio was still a long way off and the day was growing short when I suggested that we might spend the night at the old abandoned Dufferena Ranch, on the Virgin River. Everyone was tired and agreeable, so I pulled the trailer onto a level piece of ground beside one of the old buildings and parked.

Again we were alone. Again it was quiet and peaceful. But unlike at Secret Creek, here we had at least one modern amenity: a shower, of sorts. Running water from a nearby reservoir spilled from a pipe suspended from a rafter onto the crumbling concrete floor of one of the structures. We may have taken advantage of it or maybe not. I don't recall. I do remember the handwritten sign on the decaying wooden door that warned, "WATCH FOR RATTLESNAKES."

Before leaving the Dufferena Ranch, next morning, we went for a ride up the Virgin Valley to where some of the most beautiful opal in the country had been mined. Although the best stuff had already been taken out, one could, if so inclined and for a nominal fee, grub in the dirt for the iridescent mineral. But there was no caretaker in sight that day and we really didn't want to toil in the hot sun for a few baubles anyway.

By the time we got to sleepy Denio it was after noon. I drove directly to the only likely-looking place to buy tires, and my suspicion was confirmed; there wasn't a tire of the right size to be

found. I was not altogether discouraged, though, we had come a long way on dirt roads since our last flat, and only smooth pavement lay ahead.

We had gone but a quarter of the way to Winnemucca, which was some 100-miles to the south, when my complacency was shattered by a loud explosion and accompanying jolt. I brought everything to a stop, got out for a look, and discovered that the right rear tire, the new one that I'd bought in Cedarville, had broken at the bead and come halfway off the rim. There was nothing to do but get the car and trailer off the highway. This I managed, with some difficulty, and parked on the level in the low sagebrush east of the highway.

With this, the third flat tire of the trip, my patience was being sorely tested. I decided to take a break and relax. Sitting in the shade beside the trailer, sipping a cool drink, I racked my brain for a solution to this seeming dilemma. We were in no danger, of course, being well equipped with food and shelter, but there would be few if any travelers on that highway and we could expect little help from that quarter. I had already accepted the premise that we must spend the night right there, right there in the middle of a sagebrush flat.

An unusual thing happened that evening. Something totally unrelated to our predicament, but interesting. A car came slowly up the highway from the south and stopped by the side of the road opposite our trailer. The driver, a middle-aged man, leaned out and asked a most peculiar question. "Have you seen a gray cat and a big white dog around here?"

Suppressing a chuckle, both Rita and I answered in the negative. The man drove away to the north.

About a half-hour passed and the man returned, this time with a big white dog and a gray cat on the seat beside him. He stopped to tell us his story, a sad one but with a good ending.

It seemed that he had had an accident the night before, had driven off the road and his car tipped over. He was uninjured, he said, but his dog and cat were frightened by the experience and ran off in the sagebrush. He (somehow) obtained the services of a tow truck, but when it was time to leave his pets were nowhere to be found. The man, wise to the ways of domesticated animals, left his jacket at the scene. Sometime, during his absence, they had returned to and stayed with the only object in the desert that was familiar to them. Now they were happily reunited.

It was late that afternoon when I finally got an idea. The trailer wheels were much smaller than those of the DeSoto, but if the hub and lugs should fit I could use one of the former to replace one of the latter. I did some measuring and found that it $\underline{\text{might}}$ be possible.

In the morning I put my idea to the test. I first moved the front left wheel of the car to the right rear, in place of the flat-tired one, then removed a trailer wheel and started it onto the empty DeSoto hub. Good! The five wheel-holes matched the lugs. There was a slight problem, though. The axle hub was too big to allow the trailer wheel to seat against the drum. But I was not about to quit now. I managed to screw the lug-nuts on about three turns, enough, I hoped, to hold the wheel in place until I could get to Winnemucca.

With Tony as my co-pilot, I left the others and headed for town, driving no faster than 45 miles-per-hour. The car steered "funny," being low in the front left corner, but the farther we went without

experiencing trouble the bolder I became and the faster I drove. By the time Winnemucca hove into view, we were speeding along at a daring 50-mph.

I bought two new tires in Winnemucca, to replace the blown one and the one with the mumps. (I was unable to get reimbursement for the Goodyear tire there but would, later, in Elko.) Tony and I grabbed a bite to eat, and then made the 75-mile trip back up the highway to retrieve the rest of the family and our trailer.

It was mid-afternoon when we again passed through Winnemucca, on our way to Battle Mountain to meet the Joneses. I was confident, now, that our troubles were finally over.

Not so! Near Valmy, another tire started to go soft. I could hardly believe it. How could anyone suffer so many flat-tires in the course of one trip?

We limped into Battle Mountain and had the leaky tire repaired. But then, rather than head for Hilltop to camp with our friends, Rita and I decided that we'd had enough and proceeded directly to Elko.

That decision turned out to be a wise one, for (we would later learn) the Joneses' experience at Hilltop was far worse than anything we had encountered.

At Hilltop, Vernal, Mary and the kids had set up camp on a familiar spot beside a creek, and then left for a while. On returning they found that in their absence someone or a gang had virtually destroyed their camp. The tent had been split open and their equipment either smashed or stolen. What a terrible thing, that some people can be so malicious.

As for us, in Elko County, we joined forces with the Taelours and set up our trailers among the willows on Columbia Creek, where we enjoyed the climate, the company, and the trout fishing. And, we suffered no further mishap.



CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Work on the new Oakland-Scipio microwave route proceeded at a deliberate pace in 1964. The job now required my spending more time in the field, in addition to hours of paperwork in the office. Our first real involvement, in the plant department, was in the testing and placing of the microwave antennas; the "cornucopia" model to which we'd been introduced at Wendover in 1961. We would begin at Topaz and work our way east.

I was lucky to have a good crew on the job, a team that consisted of Bill Doyle, Noble Crew, Jake Smith, a former Elko lineman and tollie, and "Big Bill" Moffat, a ponderous tollie with an infectious laugh, from Vince Vercoe's crew in Reno. Even Vince came out to observe the operation at Topaz, a site that would eventually fall in his area of maintenance responsibility.

Working on the antennas at Topaz Lake in the wintertime was not an easy task. Not only was the cold extreme, but often deep snow drifted over the roadway making access difficult. As a matter of interest, the decision for the alignment of that road, almost all of it in a pinyon forest on Indian land, had been one of great controversy between the engineers and my bosses, Brown and Dodson.

The resultant compromise route was relatively short but steep, requiring a number of sharp switchbacks. Dodson's preferred alignment would have been less steep but longer, ascending a draw farther north and doubling back over the hill. I found myself in an awkward position during the debate, since I favored the engineer's route which, I firmly believed, would be less susceptible to lingering snowdrifts. But in spite of Dodson's effort to enlist my help in promoting his plan, I maintained a neutral position.

Ironically, within a couple of years, the Continental Telephone Company would construct a switching-office next to our Topaz site, and would build their own access road using the alignment originally proposed by our engineers. There would then be $\underline{\text{two}}$ private roads up the mountainside.

But back to the antennas: Every one of them (there were four to a site) had to be pressure-tested on the ground before being hoisted to the tower top. Predictably, the men ran into problems.

A cornucopia antenna was designed, basically, as follows: Microwave-radio waves were fed from a circular waveguide through a transducer at the base of an aluminum "horn" and reflected through a non-metallic "window" at the top front. This window was made of fiberglass, about a half-inch thick and roughly seven-feet square. Unlike a delay-lens antenna, with its layers of Styrofoam and aluminum strips inside, a cornucopia antenna contained nothing but air. When placed in service, the antenna and associated waveguide would be pressurized with dehydrated air, to mitigate oxidation and other contaminants. The window, being semi-flexible and slick, would resist the buildup of ice on its surface.

Rime ice had always been a serious problem at Mt. Moses, where it frequently formed on the parabolic VHF antennas and attenuated the radio signals to an alarming degree. The ice invariably built up during the night, when weather conditions made it difficult to reach the site. Infrared heat lamps had been installed on those antennas, to warm the metal elements and melt the ice, but it was never a very satisfactory solution.

We had not yet experienced degradation of service on a microwaveradio system due to icing, but it would occur just a few months hence. As a matter of fact, this is as good a place as any to describe that serious event:

It was December of 1964, when a not-so-rare midwinter warm front hit and "dumped" on the Sierra Nevada Range. It rained for several days, melted much of the summer's reservoir of snow and sent it, along with the new rainfall, roaring down the Truckee River through Reno.

An hour before noon on Tuesday the 22nd, while at work in my Wells Avenue office, I received a report that the TD-2 channels at Mt. Rose were failing. Telephone and television services on the Denver-Oakland microwave-radio route were impaired. I immediately headed for the Reno Control Center, to learn more about the situation and help with the failure reporting.

I found the streets littered with debris, fallout from the strong south winds whistling through the valley. The rain was coming down in sheets. The Truckee River, which I hurriedly crossed via the Lake Street Bridge, was running swift and full, laden with mud and flotsam and threatening to flood its banks and nearby streets.

Flooding in Reno was not uncommon in those years, before two additional dams were constructed upstream in California (Stampede, on the Little Truckee River, and Martis Creek, near the town of Truckee), the last one having occurred the previous year. The flood of 1955 may have been the worst in historic times, when the river overflowed its banks from Idlewild Park to Vista. To thwart the rising waters that time, dozens of telephone men piled hundreds of sandbags around the building at 100 North Center Street. Had it not been for their valiant efforts, the city would likely have lost all telephone communication.

In 1964, in preparation for the expected deluge, sandbags were again being placed around the telephone buildings. And city workers with cutting torches were removing the railings on the Lake Street Bridge, to allow water and debris to flow over it unimpeded, even as I walked across it on my way to the office.

I entered the building at 195 East First Street, and went up the stairs two steps at a time to the second floor. There I found a small group of tollies gathered around the alarm-and-control bay. Bells were sounding and lights were flashing, audible and visual indications of the trouble at Mt. Rose. Among the men was Walt Hansen, chief of the radio section, who filled me in on what was happening.

Two men had been dispatched to that site earlier in the day, at the first sign of the failure. They arrived at 8:35am and began looking into the problem. I picked up a headset and talked with them. Based on their observations, the situation was not the least bit encouraging.

It had apparently been raining and snowing on the mountainside for a very long time. The snowpack had become saturated and eroded by the warm air and rainwater. At the site itself, at the 10,000' elevation, the wind was blowing at gale force and the temperature hovered at or near freezing, the temperature at which rainwater is quickly converted to ice. And that's precisely what was happening. The mountaintop was literally shrouded in ice, the kind common in the Northeast but unusual in the West.

After eating a hot lunch, the men braved the elements again and climbed to the antenna deck to inspect, as best they could, the waveguides and antennas for evidence of damage. A sheet of ice up to four-inches thick had formed on each of the west facing delay-lens antennas. They attempted to break it loose, but because of the hazardous conditions they abandoned the plan and climbed down to report their findings.

Late afternoon approached, the time when the television networks should be transmitting news and prime time programs to the West Coast. Up at Mt. Rose the weather, as described by our men, was "terrible!" The high winds, torrential rains and ice buildups continued. By now, microwave radio signal levels in both directions were at or below the threshold of usability.

At about this time we were advised that everything at Cisco Butte, the next microwave station to the west of Mt. Rose, was in good condition. Although it was raining extremely hard there, no buildup of ice was in evidence. V.T. McWhorter, at AT&T's Denver headquarters, advised that all east-to-west service had been rerouted from the Denver-Oakland to other routes. That was welcome news.

Meanwhile, the folks at PT&T headquarters in San Francisco were, to put it mildly, very concerned. They called repeatedly to inquire about the situation, wanting to know what was being done to alleviate the problem. I answered their questions as best I could, and of course they were doing the same with their counterparts at AT&T in New York. No one was content with the circumstances, but no one had yet come up with a good solution.

Among those who called was my erstwhile boss, Ralph Michelson.

I described what was happening. "Remember how the rime ice used to build up at Rocky Point?" I began. "Well, this is similar except that it's not frosty but almost clear and solid, and it's forming in a wedge-shape on the face of each antenna, some four-inches thick at the bottom. I think the ice is deflecting the microwaves downward, out of the line-of-sight to Cisco."

"Is there any way to get some heat up there to melt it?" he asked.

"The guys thought of rigging a drop cord and heater, but it's pretty dangerous up there...lots of ice and wind. The staff guys suggested we haul a heating duct up there and blow hot air through it to the antennas. I guess they thought we could get in and out of there at will."

"What else can we do? You got any ideas?"

"Well," I started then hesitated.

He wasn't going to like my suggestion. I had already mentioned it to others and they'd shrugged it off as unacceptable.

"Go ahead," he prompted.

"Well, in my opinion there's nothing practical or safe that we can do now. Maybe if we'd anticipated this sort of thing a decade ago, some kind of heaters could have been installed. But not now. It's too late. And the men have already spent too much time on that slippery deck. They've looked at the ice from every angle and tried everything within reason. It's a wonder one of them hasn't fallen or been blown off the deck already..."

"I agree," Mike interrupted.

"Anyway," I went on, "I think we should do nothing. It's now almost eight o'clock and I believe the ice will clear by itself before we'd have time to do anything to help it. We should wait till daylight anyway."

Mike seemed satisfied with my suggestion, at least for now.

At 9:00pm, when I returned from the Mapes Hotel where some of us had gone to eat, the guys on the mountain reported that it was still "Blowing hard...raining hard." But an hour later the ice began to melt, just as I had hoped it would.

I was inclined to go home, but my car was on the south side of the river and I'd probably get my feet wet trying to get to it. Most of the bridges were closed to traffic anyway, so I found a chair in the chiefs' office, put my feet up on a desk and slept.

At 5:00am, the men at the site reported: "The top foot-and-a-half of the antennas are clear of ice...it's still three inches thick at the bottom." By 6:40am the antennas were totally clear of ice, and all service was restored to normal on the Denver-Oakland microwave route.

Later that day, out of curiosity, I checked with the folks at the Weather Bureau and learned that the rainfall over the area between Mt. Rose and Cisco Butte had totaled 23-inches in the 24-hour period in which our failure had occurred. It was this unusually dense rainfall, coupled with temperatures conducive to forming ice on the antenna faces, which had caused our radio system to fail.

(To my knowledge, never again did a microwave-radio route fail under similar circumstances; perhaps because the old delay-lens antennas on the Denver-Oakland route were soon replaced by the new cornucopias.

But for all its greater efficiency, the cornucopia antenna was prone to defects. Here we were on the mountaintop at Topaz, making elaborate repairs before even placing the first one on the tower. And

so it would go all along the route. Every single antenna had to be recaulked to make it airtight, and several of the fiberglass "windows" had to be patched (using epoxy) or replaced.

Across the state from Topaz, in old cold Ely, the antennas were tested and repaired in a storage yard before being transported to the nearby mountaintop sites. The temperature was well below zero, and in order to work with the caulking and patching materials the men built a giant bonfire of old tires for heat. It was a stinking operation, all right, but it proved to be successful.

When spring arrived, by the calendar, Western Electric installers were rapidly installing microwave-radio and power equipment in the buildings. I made frequent trips over the 350-mile route from Topaz Lake to Sacramento Pass, stopping to eat and staying overnight in the same restaurants and motels that I had patronized two years before, when with Murphy's site-selection team. In fact, most of the waitresses and desk clerks remembered me.

The tower construction work was completed and the antennas were hoisted and secured by steelworkers of the same ilk as I had met at Wendover in 1961. Nevada Bell construction crews installed the complex runs of waveguide, from the radio equipment inside the building to the antennas on the tower.

This done, each antenna had to be oriented to a precise azimuth and inclination, "aimed" at its corresponding antenna at the adjacent site. This work was also assigned to the Nevada Bell construction crew, working on the tower in cooperation with an engineer and/or a tollie in the station. Don Jayo (whom I first met at the Wendover site restoration) and his boys, most of them in their late teens or early twenties, would become specialists in the above mentioned operations on the towers.

The orientation team enjoyed fair weather, for springtime, as they moved across the state from site to site. And the men held to their schedule. There were periods of frustration, though, such as when they could not agree on the true direction to the next station, and periods of frivolity, when someone became the subject of a practical joke. One of the latter activities was already in progress when I hove-to at the Gilbert site just before noon one day.

It was a lovely day, warm and calm in the sunshine, a good day for eating a picnic lunch out-of-doors. All of us, Noble Crew and Bill Moffat, Don Jayo and his boys, gathered at the warm side of the building, picked our spots and sat down to eat. All, that is, except the engineering representative, Wynn Campbell, whom I observed wandering around his (Company) truck in a sour mood, kicking rocks and mumbling to himself.

"What's with old Wynn?" I asked.

With a straight face Jayo answered, "Oh he's all right. He just can't find his lunch."

I immediately grasped the situation and went back to eating my peanut butter sandwich.

Wynn was a curious sort of an individual, smart enough in his way but the kind of guy who invited harassment. As a consequence he was the target of a great many practical (and impractical) jokes; such as having his tools spirited away and hidden, his test sets maladjusted

when he wasn't looking and so on. He had learned to be extremely cautious around these young construction fellows, but he couldn't keep ahead of them.

On this particular day, while he was occupied in the station, they had gotten into his locked pickup, found his lunch-box, removed the sandwiches and hidden them; drilled holes in the empty box and screwed it to the floorboards - right where he'd left it. He was not only surprised, on trying to remove it, but angry when he found it empty. Not until the rest of us had finished eating was he told where to find his victuals.

Such were the ways of a hard-working, hard-living construction crew.

Later on, I had an opportunity to see those same guys in a totally different light; at Connors Pass east of Ely, the next-to-last site on the schedule for antenna orientation.

A Pacific Company engineer named Saunders came up to Nevada from west of the Sierras, to "match notes" with our antenna orientation project. Bill Doyle and I met him at the Reno airport, and the three of us headed east (on US-50) in the Ford we had rented for Doyle. (There weren't enough Company vehicles to go around.) It was a big sedan and Doyle, a P-51 pilot in World War- II, drove it at near flying speed; as would I when it came my turn at the wheel. This caused our passenger some apprehension and invited a number of caustic remarks. Of course we ignored them, and pushed ahead at 80- and 90-miles-per-hour. After all, he was a flatlander and unaccustomed to traveling in Nevada where there was no maximum-speed limit.

But I had made an error in judgment (really an error of omission) when I neglected to stop for gas back in Eureka. I was used to driving all the way to Ely in my Company Chevrolet without refueling, and failed to realize how much gas the big Ford consumed. And so, on the upgrade to Little Antelope Summit, some 45-miles short of Ely, the engine stuttered and we came to a stop, out of petrol.

"Well!" Saunders smugly exclaimed, "If you hadn't been driving so fast you wouldn't have run out."

There was a lot of truth in what he said, but I wasn't about to admit it. Anyway, I had other concerns at the moment. The car had stalled in a most inappropriate place, on a sharp uphill curve in a cut where high banks of snow prevented my pulling out of the active lane. There was very little traffic in those days, but even one vehicle coming up from behind could hardly avoid crashing into us. Bill got out and walked a ways back down the hill to "flag," while I coasted the Ford back to a more favorable spot, where it could be better seen and hopefully avoided.

I then sat at the wheel and listened to my moaning passenger.

"What're you going to do now?" he inquired.

"We'll wait," says I, "till somebody comes along."

"Then what?"

"Then we'll bum some gasoline."

Both Bill and I had noted the Bell truck when we came through the city of Eureka, and knew that sooner or later its driver, an installer-repairman out of Ely, would be headed for home. If no one else came along in the meantime he'd be our best source for help.

A half-hour passed by, but no cars. I got out and relieved Bill as flagman. A few minutes later the installer-repairman came along, driving a little too fast for conditions but a welcome sight. He saw my signal and the parked Ford, pulled over and stopped. Only then did he recognize us for telephone men.

I asked Saunders to go down the road to flag traffic, then turned to the craftsman. "You don't happen to have a can of gas in there do you?" I asked, motioning to the pickup's covered utility body. It was a good question but the answer was "No."

"Do you have anything we can use for a container?"

"No."

"D'you have a hose?"

"No."

Bill then came up with one suggestion and I another. Bill's was to use his hardhat for a container; mine was to utilize a safety cone for a funnel.

Without a hose it was necessary to disconnect the gas line of the truck and, by cranking the engine with the starter, pump fuel into the hardhat that Bill held under the open-ended line until it was about half full. He then poured the energy-giving fluid into the big end of the safety cone while I held the smaller end in the fill-stem of the Ford. By several times repeating the operation we had enough gas to get us to Ely, and within a few minutes we were all headed in that direction. Our rescuer (who no doubt harbored a feeling of disdain for "stupid supervisors") trailed along behind "just in case."

When I returned to the office a few days later my peers, having heard the story (almost nothing in life involving two or more people can ever remain confidential) presented me with a new type of survival kit. It was a two-piece affair: a hardhat to which was attached, by means of a brass fitting in a hole drilled through its crown, a six-foot neoprene hose. And a brand-new safety cone to go with it. Both pieces of apparatus bore my name in bold black print.

We did make it to Ely that day, and after a sumptuous dinner and a good night's sleep drove on to Connors Pass, where the weather was as inclement as it could possibly be. At work on the orientation gear were Albert Sails and Larry Staley.

Albert, Larry, Ernie Simonsen and Bob Burns, all from my old crew in Elko, had been taking turns working under the supervision of Noble Crew, Bill Moffat and an engineer. Noble was the undisputed team leader.

Jayo's boys were already up on the tower deck when we arrived, but Don soon called them down to warm their hands and feet, and to take on some hot coffee. I savored a cup of the brew myself, while getting filled in on the status of the orientation program. After the break, Albert and I followed the tower men up to the antenna deck.

I wore my warmest coat, a parka, but still cringed in the wind and blowing snow. It can be a lot colder on a fifty-foot tower than on the ground, and I admired those young men for their stamina. They immediately went to work, cranking massive adjusting screws with big wrenches that literally froze to their gloves, as if it were a normal day. I guessed that blizzard conditions, by now, had become the norm for them.

I remained aloft only long enough to get a feel for the job, and to snap a couple of photographs, then climbed down the icy ladder to the heated station. I was more than ever convinced that those antenna workers, who still carried the title "Lineman," were truly unsung heroes.

A week or two after climbing the Connors Pass tower, I ascended one that Noble never climbed. It was not out of necessity that I did so, but because the Stone Cabin tower was the tallest one in Nevada and "it was there." Rising some 250-feet above a sagebrush-covered ridge, it was too much of a temptation to resist. The antenna work had been completed, and there was no one around when I took the bull by the horns and started up, with my camera slung over a shoulder.

I should explain that every tower was equipped with a "ladder," a standard-gage metal ladder with round rungs mounted just inside one of the four legs. Running vertically up the center of the ladder was a safety rail, to which a belt tether could be attached. If one should slip while climbing, the attachment would lock onto the rail and prevent his falling. If he got tired he could pause, lean back in the tethered belt and rest.

I once tried using the belt, had found it to be somewhat of a hindrance, so this day I climbed without it; stopping off at the 100-and 200-foot levels where small decks had been provided for resting. It was an exhilarating climb, and I was just a bit winded when I finally reached the uppermost antenna deck. But the view was so spectacular from that perspective I quickly forgot about being tired.

A stanchion rose from the center of the deck, an I-beam with steps attached and a red navigation lamp (to satisfy FAA requirements) on top. It was the tallest thing on the tower, extending well above the antennas, and from it flew a flag. Not an ordinary flag, but one fashioned from a pair of extra-large silk panties. Like a pennant on Mount Everest it stood out in the wind proclaiming success. "JAYO'S RAIDERS" and "WESTERN ELECTRIC," I read, along with the names of a dozen or more crew members.

(How long the silken pennant weathered the elements I cannot say, for I never had an occasion, or the time, to repeat my climb to the "summit" of Stone Cabin Tower.)

There must be scores of towns in the United States whose citizens insist that they have "only two seasons a year...ten months of winter and two of summer," or words to that effect. Although I never happened to hear it said of Ely, that place could easily meet the criteria. When I returned to Ely in May of 1964, the weather was just as cold and blustery as it had been in March and April.

This time I stayed in the Hotel Nevada, a 110-room hotel in the center of town on Aultman Street, the main thoroughfare. It was still the best place to stay if one wished to eat, sleep and be entertained without having to venture out of doors. My room was on the third floor in front. Not only was it partially illuminated by a neon sign out front, it was also close enough to the lounge below that I could hear the cowboy music, all too well. But it was a warm and comfortable place.

When Friday afternoon came around, I still had work to do in the Ely area. So rather than drive all the way home and back again, I elected to stay over the weekend. I might even get to explore the area, if the weather would cooperate. What I would actually do on Sunday was impossible to envision.

Dawn had not yet broken when I was awakened by the smell of acrid smoke. It was as if I was dreaming at first, then the possibility that the hotel was on fire struck like a bolt of lightning. Clad in my shorts and tee shirt, I sprang out of bed, rushed to the window and peered out onto the dimly-lit street below. It was quiet. But not for long. The sound of a wailing siren welled up to my ears. I made out the lines of a fire truck. It slowed to a stop at the curb directly beneath my window. A chill crept up my spine. I was caught in a burning building for sure.

In great haste I jumped into my pants, slipped on my shoes, donned a shirt and a jacket. I sneaked another look out the window, in time to see a bearded fireman alight from the vintage fire truck and attach a big hose to the hydrant on the corner. (In 1964 it was fashionable for men throughout Nevada to raise a beard, in celebration of the state's centennial.) I flipped the light switch to on, but there was no light. My suspicions were confirmed. If the power was off then the place <u>must</u> be on fire. But then logic cut in and a sensible course of action occurred to me. I picked up the phone and dialed the desk.

The desk clerk, who must have received a dozen similar calls, responded hurriedly, "No...but the Northern's on fire." And she hung up.

The Northern was the other well known Ely hotel, a three-story building one block west of the Nevada.

The Northern Hotel had opened for business back in 1907 and for 22-years, until the six-story Hotel Nevada came upon the scene, reigned as Ely's preferred place to drink, gamble or stay in a room with hot and cold running water. It was built by "Tex" Rickard, a businessman well known to the mining camps of Central Nevada, and who is perhaps best remembered as the man who promoted the world heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey in the 1920s.

(Dempsey fought in Ely in 1916 as "Kid Blackie.")

The Northern was still a popular place with the townsfolk, and I could have been found at its friendly bar the previous evening, sipping a tall one while talking shop "and so forth" with Howard Wise, Sandy Sandstrom and Mac MacCombs.

But why was my hotel filled with smoke? And why was the power off? (The reasons, I would later learn, were that the fresh-air ducts of the Nevada, being downwind of the Northern, had simply inhaled the smoke; the power was off because the highline switch at the end of the street had been purposely thrown, to remove electrical hazard from the burning building.) Of one thing I was now certain. I must get out of the hotel and investigate for myself.

As the door closed behind me I was subjected to another shock. It was pitch black in the hallway. I lit a match and headed for the

stairway, which I knew was close by the now-immovable elevator door. As I approached the stairwell I met another guest, an elderly woman bent on getting out, feeling her way along the corridor.

"I can't stand it," she moaned. "I feel like I'm trapped."

"Follow me," I directed, and lit another match.

Through the doorway and down the stairs I led the way, lighting match after match for illumination. Wouldn't it be terrible, I thought to myself, if by accident I should set $\underline{\text{this}}$ place on fire. I cradled the match more carefully.

It seemed an interminably long way down, and by the time we reached the lobby I had used a whole book of matches.

At least there was light in the lobby, from strategically placed emergency lamps and from a glowing streetlight outside the windows. I left the lady there and went outside, found my car in the parking lot at the rear of the hotel, grabbed my field glasses and headed up the hill toward the main attraction.

The whole area was a hubbub of activity. A hook-and-ladder truck had pulled up in front of the burning hotel and was just now extending its ladder toward the upper floors, where menacing flames shot skyward from the windows. Another fire engine stood nearby, a pumper, and two husky men in hats and slickers struggled to direct a stream of water from a writhing hose toward the rooftop. It was a puny effort, considering the already advanced stage of the fire.

And it was cold. Well below the freezing mark. Icicles were forming in the hotel's downspouts and on the brims of the firefighters' hats. I gasped, then stepped back a pace when a gust of wind blew a shower of water my way.

The street was now bright with firelight, and I hardly noticed when dawn broke over the Schell Range. With the sun came more spectators, hundreds of them, townspeople out to see this latest spoiler in action.

Fires had recently leveled half a block catty-corner across the street from the Northern, and another structure farther up the canyon. Old wooden buildings burned easily, and because of the up-and-down economy (tied as it was to the copper industry) once consumed they were seldom replaced. Now another empty weed-grown lot would be added to the list. It was the way of all old mining towns in rural Nevada; Tonopah, Goldfield, Austin, Eureka, all had lost to ravaging conflagrations.

I circled the building, keeping my distance from the firemen, so as to get a look at it from the south side, the alley side. As I said, the power had been cut and the high-lines were dead. But a telephone cable, the main distribution cable from our switching office a few blocks away, showed signs of stress from the heat of the flames. A telephone repairman at the scene asked a fireman to turn his hose on it. If the cable insulation broke down, he explained, half the city of Ely could be deprived of telephone service. The fireman obliged, and repeatedly hosed it down throughout the day.

It was now quite light so I went to my car, got my camera and climbed the stairs to the roof of the Hotel Nevada. It was worth the effort. From there I had a bird's-eye view of the burning building.

The fire, which had apparently started within the bowels of the building and raced upward through the stairwells before it was discovered, burned with ever increasing intensity, the flames first leaping from upper floor windows, then shooting through the roof, then bursting from the lower floors and so on. Finally, clearly seen through the big plate glass windows on the ground floor, literally hundreds of bottles of booze on the back-bar exploded like Molotov cocktails.

"There's two people trapped in the back," I overheard someone say. But it was impossible for anyone to enter and search for them.

(The local paper would report that one man, a trucker, died in the fire.)

Along about noon, as the fire still raged inside its furnace-like shell, a half-dozen womenfolk appeared; some bearing trays of sandwiches, some carrying big pots of boiling hot coffee, others toting bottles of whiskey and brandy for the cold and tired firemen. I had never witnessed such a generous deed but it made a lot of sense. By late afternoon, even though there was little to be done in the way of fire fighting, the number of volunteers increased dramatically.

From dawn till dark I wandered about, like a man at a county fair. The fact that most of the men wore beards and several of the women were dressed in last century's garb engendered a feeling that this was a play, a re-enactment and not the real thing.

Night fell and the flames died down. But the rubble within the skeletal walls was still too hot, it was said, to conduct any kind of investigation. That would have to wait. The crowd retired, many people to warm homes, others to restaurants and bars.

I returned to my hotel and joined some fellow employees for cocktails and dinner before attempting a good night's sleep. To be sure, it had been a unique and exciting way to spend a Sunday.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN SUCCESS

I divided my work time on the Oakland-Scipio route, between the office and the field; mostly in the office, since the men in my crew were very competent. As usual, though, the closer we got to the inservice date the more things seemed to go wrong. Equipment shortages, design problems, every sort of roadblock impeded our progress.

One such impediment was in the design of the remote alarm and order-wire system, a design completely different from that on the old Denver-Oakland route. Like many things new and sophisticated it was fraught with "bugs." Even the experienced Western Electric installers - McCombs, O'Brien, Ward, Carlos and others who had grown up with the microwave-radio business - were perplexed. So a call was put in for the design engineer, down in Oakland or San Leandro or thereabouts, to come to the field and resolve the problems.

My brief encounters with this engineer were indeed interesting. He was unlike any engineer I had ever been associated with, for he was not an American but a foreigner, a citizen of Pakistan who'd been educated in this country, was working for AT&T to gain experience, and who would return to his homeland one day to help engineer that country's telephone communications network.

I don't remember his whole name; we just called him "Ali," a moniker probably as common in the Far East as is Smith in the West. I first met him in Tonopah, when he arrived in a rental car after the long trip from the Bay Area. His wife was with him, dressed in traditional East Indian garb: a long, flowing, wrap-around gown of silk that covered all of her except her face, and even part of it. She spoke but little English, and after introductions and "Helios," Ali whisked her away to a motel.

I was fascinated by Ali's speech. The words tripped off his tongue in that wonderfully lyrical English so typical in Colonial East India.

"No problem, we fix," was his favorite sing-song response to someone's delineation of a problem with the system. And then he'd fix it.

In his head were the many dozens of circuit diagrams he had earlier drawn. He knew the designated terminal number for each of

hundreds of wires. The trouble, for us, was that we could not read his mind and he had difficulty describing things in our language. And it was not uncommon for him to draw on a napkin, over lunch or at coffee, the changes required to correct some schematic drawing back at the station, changes which then had to be deciphered and the permanent drawings modified by the installers.

But in the end, after he and his wife had buzzed across the full width of our state several times (he drove even faster than we did), the equipment he had engineered worked fine.

Another impediment to the installation and testing schedule was leaky roofs. Every one of the eleven new buildings in Nevada, and probably in California and Utah as well, had a leaky roof. It was some time before the weather brought this particular problem to light, but then we found it to be serious.

One day I followed a storm front - a typical springtime front bringing an abundance of rain to the valleys and wet snow to the upper elevations - all the way from Reno through central Nevada. It was after noon when I drove up the access road to Murray Summit. The clouds had already begun to dissipate, and melting snow dripped profusely from the pinyons and cedars on the hillsides. Muddy rivulets bracketed the roadway, and six-inches of slush stood on the parking area at the site.

I entered the main equipment room, and greeted the two Western Electric installers who were putting the finishing touches on a rack of lead-acid batteries. Rhetorically, I asked, "How's everything going?" It was a question which, because of my timing, invited a vociferous response.

"Don't ask! Just look in the engine room."

So I did, and found a third installer in the act of rolling an empty fifty-gallon drum across the room. A similar drum stood alongside an electric service panel, directly under a ragged stream of water falling from the ceiling above. The second drum was three-fourths full of the dirty liquid.

"Got to dump that barrel while I can still handle it," he said.

Together we moved the wet drum aside, rolled the empty one into place, then "walked" the heavy one to the open doorway, tipped it over and spilled its contents outside.

"That's the fourth one since we got here," he said, "and it's leaking faster all the time." He then added, "If you want to see somethin' cool, climb the ladder and take a look at the roof."

He led the way, stopped at the top of the ladder then moved aside to give me room. What I saw resembled an Olympic-size swimming pool, but with islands of air-conditioning apparatus and tree stumps of vents and pipes.

The walls and roof of this building, like all the others, were of solid, reinforced concrete construction. The roof was flat, with layers of insulation, waterproof paper or plastic, and tar, and was surrounded by metal flashing extending above its surface. Because of the flashing, two inches of water, in this case melted snow, could accumulate on the roof. The leaks occurred around the pipes and ducts that had not been adequately sealed.

Now, I mused, it must be a rule of architecture that an industrial-type building should have a flat roof. If not perfectly flat, nearly so. The stations on our original microwave-radio route had flat roofs, as did those in the Las Vegas area and everywhere else in the state that I knew of. And at some time, every one of them had leaked.

(In our Company, the exception to the flat-roof design was the "J" and "K" repeater stations, which were built in the early 1940s with pitched roofs that never leaked.)

A few days after my visit to Murray Summit, I'd have a chance to discuss, along with my fellow workers, the issue of flat, leaky roofs. Jim Dodson and Jim Rielly (then Nevada Bell's engineering manager) were touring the route with a retinue of subordinates. We would all meet in Tonopah.

Tonopah, as I may have mentioned in an earlier chapter, was served by the independent Nevada Telephone Company. Like Elko, all toll-line connections to the outside world were made through Nevada Bell's facilities, which at that time consisted primarily of "J" carriers on the old "DBR" route.

Incidentally, the acronym DBR stood for "Defense Budget Route," I was told, but the men who worked on the rapidly constructed line were sure it meant "Damn Big Rush." Built just prior to our country's entering WW-II, at the behest of the U.S Government, the route described an almost straight line from Seattle to San Diego east of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Ranges, away from the vulnerable (to Jap attack) seacoast. For some reason, probably having to do with franchise, the Nevada Bell toll station was located in Esmeralda County, about a mile west of the city of Tonopah. It was here that our facilities terminated, in an arrangement almost identical to that in Elko.

This was Gary Noyes' territory. Gary was a native of Colorado and a big husky guy. He and I were of nearly the same age and military background. We had both served on an air base and been trained in the field of meteorology. He had been stationed at the Tonopah Air Base. Both of us had come to Nevada as young men, hired on as tollies with Nevada Bell, and married local girls. He had married Pauline Beko of Tonopah.

Gary, who had recently been promoted to Chief Transmissionman, would inherit the maintenance responsibility for several of the new microwave stations in central Nevada. When we were working in his area he was most helpful to us, providing whatever we needed in the way of transportation, tools or manpower.

Now he was the unofficial host to our Dodson-Rielly conference, which was held at the Silver Queen Motel where most of us had rooms, across the street and up the hill from the old Mizpah Hotel. Since it was an after-hours affair, the informal meeting was "voluntarily" attended by those of us directly involved in the project, all of us managers of one kind or another.

Such meetings were Dodson's favorite way of finding out what was going on in the field: Get everyone together, open up cans of peanuts and smoked oysters, pour a few rounds of drinks, ask a couple of leading questions then listen. He learned a lot that way, especially

since he could drink more than the average man without showing any sign of it.

Representing the plant department, besides Dodson, were Paul Brown, Ed Riesbeck (the district manager in charge of the exchange forces, some of whom, in Hawthorne and Ely, would become tollies and maintain microwave equipment), Noble Crew, Bill Moffitt, Don Jayo, Vince Vercoe, Gary Noyes and me. With Rielly were engineers Bob Zimmerman (supervisor of buildings and roads), Doug Kipp and Walt Penner. From Western Electric there were Sandstrom, Tallman, McCombs (and possibly Carlos and Strieff). It was a crowded room.

The session started off in a light and confident vein, with talk of accomplishments and problems overcome. Before long, however, the conversation turned to more controversial, "meatier" subjects. Someone brought up the usual matter of housekeeping. Western Electric installers were always more interested in getting the equipment placed than in keeping a tidy work area, so it usually fell on us tollies to goad them into cleaning up. They promised to do better.

Then the subject of smoking in the stations arose. Riesbeck, who did not smoke, liked to harass those of us who did. He proposed a total ban on smoking in the microwave stations. It was a silly suggestion, for even if a ban were imposed there was no way to enforce it. Anyway, the men's smoking at remote mountaintop sites was the least of our problems.

It wasn't long before the subject of leaky roofs came up. Both the Western Electric guys and we tollies, we who had to contend with the water, were loud in berating the engineers, whose responsibility it was to see that the roofs were properly designed and constructed. Zimmerman took the brunt of our criticism, criticism encouraged by Dodson who was never very tolerant of engineers, particularly of "Fatso" Zimmerman.

The spirited discussion went on for some time, but Noble made the most salient point on the subject when he suggested that "all roofs should be sloping."

"The Indians were smart enough to build their shelters with pitched roofs," he proclaimed, describing with his hands the shape of a tepee or a hogan, "So the water would run off."

Noble's remark drew applause from the majority of us and caused Zimmerman's face to turn beet red; not because it was an untrue premise, but because it was something over which he, personally, had little or no control. The buildings were designed by AT&T engineers. All he could do was promise to have the leaks fixed.

By now the supplies of liquor and subjects for discussion had both run low. The meeting deteriorated and broke up. In small groups we left the motel and went up the street to a restaurant for dinner. Much too late to suit me.

The get-together had been productive. Most of our problems had been identified, many of them resolved. We would return to our respective tasks with renewed vigor, optimistic that we could meet the rapidly approaching in-service date.

In spite of Murphy's Law, "If it is possible for something to go wrong, it will," with the concerted efforts of the engineers, Western

Electric installers, and plant men from Hawthorne, Tonopah, Ely and Reno, everything fell into place. At last I was able to report that the Oakland-Scipio Microwave Radio Route in Nevada was "turned-up for service on schedule."

There was little time to relax on our laurels. The country's appetite for communications seemed never ending. No sooner was service established on the Oakland-Scipio route when work was begun to add additional microwave-radio channels. Actually, the engineering work had already been done and now it was up to us, essentially the same team, to bring this new equipment on line.

The buildings were ready, of course, having been designed with space for the latest Western Electric microwave-radio system (designated TH-3) and its associated equipment.

The TH-3 was really big stuff, both figuratively and literally speaking. It could carry three times as much service-per-channel as the older TD-2, but was far more complex and required a lot more building space. Its cooling system alone was physically larger than all the TD-2 equipment put together. The good news, for our craftsmen, was that because of the cooling requirements for TH-3, room air-conditioning would be provided at every site.

While I didn't get to the field as often during this phase of the job, I left my office and visited the tollies along the route whenever possible. I enjoyed getting out with them, both on and off the job.

When in Tonopah I bunked at the Silver Queen Motel, and joined the guys after work for drinks and eats at the Mizpah, Bowling Alley or Owl Bar. In Ely we patronized the Hotel Nevada, the Basque Restaurant or the Airport Inn halfway between Ely and McGill. The latter served the best steak dinner around. In Hawthorne there was but one good place to hang out, Smith's El Capitan.

Being particular about food, dining out was always a gamble for me. But I was to find someone even fussier when a group of us settled in at a large table one night at the Airport Inn. We were all pretty hungry, having worked late, and most of us ordered steaks.

Like me, the other fussy eater - a senior engineer from Reno - ordered his steak "well done." Ironically, his came out "rare." He complained, and twice sent it back to the kitchen. At first I was sympathetic, but when he thoroughly berated the waitress, who had tried her best to please him, and sent it back a third time we were all embarrassed. I had never witnessed such behavior in a public place.

At the Mizpah Hotel in Tonopah, one evening when Gary, Noble and I were dining together, I might well have taken a page from the fussy engineer's book. When the ham steak that I had ordered was placed before me I saw that it was old and actually green, beyond redemption.

My stomach rebelled at the sight of it. Of course I sent it back to the kitchen but my appetite had been so totally ruined I refused the waitress's offer of a substitute meal.

One of my worst experiences, though, I brought upon myself. After cleaning up in my room at the El Cap in Hawthorn, again after a tiring day on the mountaintops, I joined the tollies and outside-construction

men at the bar for drinks. Among them were Don Jayo and his boss, Bert Domgaard.

Bert was perhaps the biggest man I ever knew personally. A stubborn but kindly Dutchman, he stood well over six-feet tall and was all muscle. A cocktail glass in his fist resembled a shot glass. Like most big men, he could hold a lot of liquor without becoming inebriated. There was no way that I could keep up (drinking) with the likes of him, nor did I try. Even so, I may have had one too many that evening before we retired to the restaurant at ten.

I ordered a steak and baked potato, but by the time the meal arrived it was too late. The very sight of that T-bone, soaking in its own grease, made me ill. So I gave it to Albert Sails, who was, of course, stone sober. He devoured it eagerly, along with his own, while I ate part of the potato and some French bread. Thus I made it through the meal and, shortly, to my room and bed.

In the morning I met the others at breakfast, still feeling the effects of my previous evening's transgression but cognizant of the rule, "He who dances must pay the piper." After eating, in three vehicles we headed for Wassuk, 25-miles north of Hawthorne. I was with Albert, who drove at his normal (fast) speed up the winding dirt road to the station. We still had a mile to go when my payment came due and I signaled for him to stop. I was embarrassed, but at least I felt better now. And when we got to the station I was up to fulfilling my job obligations.

At noon we all went down the canyon road and over to Schurz Junction for lunch. But for me it was hardly worth the trip. When I saw Big Bert's order of ham-and-eggs (eggs over easy and swimming in a pool of grease) my appetite disappeared. I couldn't eat the grilled cheese sandwich I had ordered.

It was on the road to Wassuk, at a later date, that an amusing incident took place. It occurred during one of the inevitable inspection tours, when upper management folks donned warm outdoor clothing and visited our stations. Jim Dodson and Paul Brown were along, and three or four "higher ups" from AT&T and Pacific Telephone. There were enough of them that we had to use two vehicles; two three-seater Suburbans. I drove one of them, Vercoe the other.

We first went to the Topaz Lake site, and then cut across the back way through Mason Valley toward Wassuk. We were nearing the Wassuk station when Vince's rig broke down and we stopped to investigate.

Vince, by chance the lowest-ranked man in our group, volunteered to crawl under the rig, where he found that the rear drive-shaft U-joint had seized and was broken. It was not a really serious breakdown; the front drive-shaft was still intact. But the rear drive-shaft had dropped to the ground and had to be removed before the vehicle could be moved. Vince proceeded, with tools that we handed down, to do the job.

When he'd completely disconnected the offending part he passed it out from under. "Here," he said, "somebody take this shaft."

One of the men from New York - Perkinpine by name, a personable, white haired gentleman of considerable rank in AT&T - happened to be

standing close by. He took the grimy driveshaft and, not knowing what else to do with it, held it at arm's length. Vince soon crawled out from under. He relieved Perkinpine of his burden and tossed it into the back of the Suburban. We then got under way and successfully completed our tour.

Every year, the Reno Men's Bell Club put on a Wild Game Dinner. Some of the members would donate meat, mostly venison, to make up the major portion of the menu. The dinner was usually held in the Elks Club hall on First Street, until that place was destroyed by a gas explosion, and then it was moved to the club's new quarters on South Virginia Street.

Jim Dodson was one of the affair's biggest boosters. When deer season opened he and his sidekicks - Frank Tolle, Ted Brown and Max Goodman, along with others such as Paul Brown, Bob Bolander, Gene Fagg and Red Wayman - would mount a "safari" to the hills in northern Nevada, there to camp and hunt for several days. They were usually successful, providing enough venison for the two- to three-hundred men at the upcoming dinner.

The affair might better have been called a "Wild Feast" than a "Wild Game Dinner." At least in the early years. At the first one I attended, back in the 1950s, for two hours or more prior to our dinners being served, booze was consumed and spilled by the gallons. It was a contest, especially among the old-timers, to see who could drink the most and tell the tallest tale. Then, at the dinner table, red wine made the rounds with the food. After the meal and a short speech or two, activity at the bar picked up again, with less decorum than before.

Dodson really pushed the Wild Game Dinners. To make it easier for out-of-town managers to attend he would schedule meetings on the Friday and Saturday before the dinner, so that their meal and lodging expenses could be legitimately reimbursed.

It was one of those scheduled Saturday meetings that caused me, one year, to become quite upset with Dodson; or, actually, with his secretary. I was still an out-of-towner then, still living in Elko, and was scheduled for a business trip to San Francisco a couple of days before the Wild Game Dinner. Rita decided to accompany me. She could do some shopping while I was occupied, and afterward we could enjoy the weekend together in the city.

We travelled in our DeSoto, which I parked and left in a lot near the hotel, and took a room on the fourth floor of the Fielding Hotel. I would voucher the single rate and pay the difference for double occupancy, for Thursday and Friday, and pay the total amount for Saturday. We would drive leisurely home on Sunday.

My first shock came when, in the middle of the first night, we were awakened by an earthquake. It was a mild tremor but strong enough to give us cause to wonder what we'd do in a big one.

My second shock came on Friday afternoon, when I received a call from Florence Lyon, Brown's office supervisor, with a message (allegedly) straight from Dodson. My presence, she said, was required at his Saturday morning meeting in Reno. Now that would certainly throw a monkey-wrench into our plans.

I made several attempts to reach Dodson by phone, but failed. All I had to go on then was the word of his office supervisor, Lena Kemp, who insisted that I must attend. "You'd better be there!" she ordered.

And so I broke the news to Rita, who was even more discouraged than I was. We checked out early that evening and headed back over the Sierras; not for Reno but for Herlong, where we would spend the night with Mary and Arnold.

Early Saturday morning, I left Rita in Herlong and drove to Reno for the meeting; which was, as I had suspected, of very little importance. At my first opportunity I approached Dodson. "Why did you insist on my being here for this meeting?" I asked, and went on to explain what I had previously planned for the weekend.

"I didn't insist on your coming," he answered with surprise in his voice. "I didn't even know you were in San Francisco."

It was a case of his "Girl Friday" once again assuming too much authority. She had been instructed to make sure that all of us were advised to attend, but she'd added her own "must" to the advisory.

I sat through the meeting to the end, but refused to attend the Wild Game Dinner on Saturday night.

As the microwave-radio facilities in Nevada and California expanded, and because of constant changes in equipment and maintenance procedures, it was necessary for those of us in the Bell System to frequently exchange information and compare notes. An annual, intercompany conference was established, and since Nevada Bell was geographically sandwiched between the other companies - AT&T on the east and PT&T on the west - it was logical for us to host those meetings. To Jim Dodson, the ideal time for the conference was just prior to the Wild Game Dinner.

It was such a circumstance that had prompted the high-level tour to Topaz and Wassuk (described above) when the driveshaft of the Suburban broke down. The VIPs had arrived a few days early and toured the mountaintop sites prior to attending the annual intercompany microwave-radio conference and the Wild Game Dinner.

The Saturday conference went smoothly, and that evening most of us showed up for the dinner. There was an unusually large crowd but the event proceeded as usual; i.e., with everyone getting acquainted or re-acquainted before dinner. The meal was served by competent and attractive waitresses, and before we were quite through eating Jim Dodson got up and made a pitch to sell some more raffle tickets. He had already sold hundreds of them to willing and not-so-willing attendees, but the club needed more money to defray expenses.

He introduced several of the AT&T and PT&T VIPs, and thanked them for visiting our Company. Among them, of course, was Mr. Perkinpine.

When "Perk" went to the podium to respond, he spoke about the tour to the mountaintops just completed. He said he was pleased with our operations and hoped that we'd keep up the good work, and lastly recounted that part of the tour where the vehicle broke down on the Wassuk road.

The story elicited a lot of applause and loud laughter.

"It was a case," he quipped, "of AT&T finally getting the shaft from Nevada Bell."

With the Oakland-Scipio Route finally turned up for service, I was able to devote more time to other staff duties, which included (as related in a previous chapter) working with Pacific Company and AT&T people to establish microwave-radio restoration equipment and plans. No one wanted to experience a repeat of the 1961 bombings, but if it should happen the Bell System would be prepared. We met periodically in San Francisco to discuss various aspects of the project.

While the restoration equipment was being designed and built by Western Electric, some of us worked on plans for implementation. Les Hight and I visited every microwave-radio station in the state (some 29 of them). At each site we noted the length and condition of the access road; the alignment of the powerline; the distance from the nearest maintenance center and number of managers and craftsmen stationed there; the number and types of Company vehicles available; the location(s) of rail and air transportation terminals; the names and locations of fuel distributors, police and sheriff departments, hotels and restaurants, and a host of other details useful in the event of a disaster. Our objective was to provide sufficient information that anyone with microwave-radio experience could successfully effect the restoration of any site in Nevada.

Back in town I spent untold hours compiling lists and rules, forms, maps and charts, and assembled them into restoration manuals, each one unique to a particular location. It was a time consuming job, but a very interesting one.

In December of 1964, a restoration-coordination conference was scheduled to be held in Kansas City; a meeting in which we would compare notes, discuss problems and devise solutions. It would be a company of very knowledgeable people, Bell System engineers and plant staff technicians from coast-to-coast. However, few of them had been involved in an actual restoration, so I felt that my input would be important. Phil Hutchinson, from San Francisco, would also be in attendance. We arranged to meet at the hotel in Kansas City.

My getting to Kansas City, though, would prove to be somewhat adventurous. As I shall explain:

I flew with United Airlines from Reno to San Francisco, where I transferred to a TWA Lockheed Constellation (the first "Connie" on which I ever travelled). Our flight was over southern Nevada, Lake Mead, the Rockies and on to the Great Plains. And then, because of a raging blizzard, the aircraft was diverted from the Kansas City Municipal airport to one north of the city.

Kansas City was TWA's maintenance and training center. The airport to which we were diverted, a huge field with open approaches and long runways, had recently been constructed out in the country. But there were no facilities, as yet, for handling passengers and baggage; no passenger terminal, no loading ramps, no gates. But I was not aware of that. All I knew was that the aircraft was dropping out of the sky through an eerie abyss. When the wheels touched down I looked out the window, but could see nothing beyond the ground level lights marking the edges of (hopefully) a runway; and they were barely visible through the snow that swirled about the engine nacelles and

wingtips. It was more than a little spooky, as if we had come down on a foreign planet.

The plane, after finally coming to a stop, turned and began to taxi, I supposed to the nearest terminal. It taxied for an interminable length of time, every so often making a turn to the left or right, sometimes stopping altogether before proceeding straight ahead once more, never exceeding a speed of five miles-per-hour.

At some time during the taxi a stewardess made an announcement, the contents of which answered our nagging questions but few of our apprehensions.

"We've landed at an alternate airport north of the city," she explained. "Because of the storm we were not allowed to land at the downtown airport. Please remain seated after the airplane comes to a stop and await further instructions."

How about that. I smiled at the news. This was something new and different. Something to remember the trip by.

At long last, at least 30-minutes after touchdown, our little world came to a stop beside a dark, shadowy building. A hangar of some sort, I judged. There we sat (some stood in the aisle) another 10-minutes or more, while most of the passengers griped and grumbled about the inconvenience. Typical behavior, I thought to myself.

Finally, the word came down that we should prepare to deplane. There was a mad scramble and more crowding into the aisle, and then we made our way from the warm cabin into the cold out-of-doors, down a ladder and onto the snow covered surface below. Fortunately, I was properly attired for the weather.

A man, dressed like a Russian in a down parka, fur-lined hat and boots, waved a heavy mitten toward the open door of a waiting bus. I followed the line of shivering passengers, entered and found a seat.

The bus, a regular street bus that had apparently been called into service rather hastily, as had two more behind it, was cold. There had not been time to warm it up. The windows quickly fogged over from the importation of snow on our garments and boots, and we couldn't see out.

When the seats were all filled a man came aboard, closed the door behind him (a welcome act), occupied the driver's seat and drove away from the airplane. But not very far. On approaching a big chain-link gate he was flagged to a stop by a guard. The driver opened his window and leaned out. I could not hear their words, but when the conversation ended our "pilot" turned the bus around and drove away in another direction, eventually to pass through a different gate and onto what I guessed was a highway.

So far, so good! A feeling of relative security came over the crowd and the griping ceased. We were on our way to the city, albeit still at a slow pace in the blinding snowstorm.

We had gone perhaps two miles when the driver brought the bus to a stop at what appeared to be a road intersection. He turned in his seat and called out, "Anybody aboard from Kansas City? Anybody know this country?"

I grinned. This was unbelievable. Here we were, three-dozen cold and miserable passengers in the hands of a driver who didn't know which way to go. It was funny, except that it could be serious if we

were long delayed. But that was not to happen. A man near the front piped up, "Yeah, I know where we are." He got up and stood by the driver's side.

A soft chuckle rippled through the bus, one that might be construed as a sigh of relief. Under the able direction of our new navigator we made it to the city, where the lights glowed brightly in the falling snow, and made a turn into the airport complex.

But even now we were not "home free." Instead of parking at the front of the terminal, as I expected, our driver went around to the rear and down a taxiway to the gates where airplanes normally dispensed their passengers, passing right in front of a small taxiing aircraft on the way. Had the pilot not slammed on his brakes we would have collided.

Soon the bus was stopped and the door opened. We filed out onto the snowy apron and made for a nearby gate, beyond which was a welcome haven of warmth. And so ended the most memorable part of my trip to Kansas City, Missouri.

I found Phil at the hotel and we got together over a light supper. In the morning, after breakfast, we went together to the meeting place. I was glad that he knew the way for it was awfully cold and windy in the snow-blown city that day.

There were probably two dozen people at the meeting, a fourth of whom I knew from having previously worked with them.

When the conference came to an end I could truthfully say that it had been very productive; something that could not be said about a lot of committee meetings. And then it was time for us to return to our respective offices, each to take care of his own part of the new microwave-radio restoration plan.



TYLE BOY BLUE

Grilled Hamburger Patty, Mashed Potatoes, Buttered Vegetable, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin. Beverage *

90c

SMALL FRY

Howard Johnson's Tendersweet Fried Clams with Potatoes, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin, Beverage *

95c

MISS MUFFET LUNCH

Petite Garden Vegetable Plate, Bacon Strip, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin, Beverage *

75c

JACK HORNER LUNCH

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin Beverage *

65c

GRILLED FRANKFORT -

On Toasted Roll, Potato Chips Baked Beans, Ice Cream, Sherbet or 80c Gelatin, Beverage

THE JACK AND JILL

Golden Brown Fish Fillet, Mashed Potatoes, Buttered Vegetable, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet 85c or Gelatin, Beverage *

TOMMY TUCKER PLATE

Sliced Roast Turkey, Buttered Vegetable, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin, 1.10 Beverage *

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Small Tuna Fish Salad, Egg, on Crisp Lettuce, Tomato and Potato Chip Garnish, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin, 95c Beverage *

SIMPLE SIMON SPECIAL

Roast Beef, Gravy, Buttered Vegetable and Potato, Roll and Butter, Ice Cream, Sherbet or Gelatin, 1.20 Beverage *

* Choice Of:

MILK, CHOCOLATE MILK, HOT CHOCOLATE, ORANGE DRINK FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE - STRAINED BABY FOODS . . . 25c

BREAKFAST WITH SIMPLE SIMON

THE PIEMAN

Chilled Orange Juice, Short Stack of Hot Cakes, Butter - Warm Syrup, Chocolate or Plain Milk

60c

JACK SPRATT'S PLATE

Orange Juice, Poached Egg on Toast, Chocolate or Plain Milk

THREE BEARS BAIT

Orange Juice, Cooked or Dry Cereal with Fresh Milk, Buttered Toast Slice, Chocolate or Plain Milk 55c

MRS. SPRATT'S PLATE

Orange Juice, Boiled or Poached Egg in a Cup, Strip of Crisp Bacon, Buttered Toast Slice, Chocolate or Plain Milk 60c

55c

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT AUTO TOUR ACROSS THE U.S.

It was fifteen long years since I had last driven across the United States, thirteen years since I'd seen my "eastern siblings" and their families. And so, early in 1965, Rita and I made plans for another visit to New England. This time, since by now I had earned four weeks of vacation a year, we would travel by car and give our children the benefit of "seeing the country between here and there."

After researching the specifications of the latest automobiles of the land, on the 15th of February, 1965, we purchased a brand new Chrysler sedan from Kohlenburg Chrysler in Reno. (Rather than trade-in the DeSoto, we decided to sell it to one of Rita's relatives.)

The Chrysler was a Newport, with a 383-cubic-inch V-8 engine under the hood, an automatic transmission in the drive train, and air conditioning in the cabin. The air conditioning was a first for us, a feature that would be indispensable in our future vehicles. Although not quite as long as the DeSoto, overall, the Chrysler was a big car. It easily accommodated six people, on bench-type seats, with plenty of leg room.

I soon found that it had an inordinate number of factory defects, though mostly of a minor nature, and I was convinced, by the "tic-tactoe" game scribbled under the hood, that it had been assembled by less-than-conscientious workers. By June, the defects had all been repaired.

(However, the engine would require new rings and valves before reaching the 50,000-mile mark; fortunately, while still under warranty.)

In preparation for our trip to the East, I made a few modifications to the new car. One was a rod (actually a length of copper pipe) attached to the back of the front bench-seat, to which two TV-trays could be clipped. They resembled the trays in an airliner.

Each one could be supported by a removable pair of legs, or dropped down out of the way when not in use. The kids would use them while playing games, writing or coloring, or to hold their food when at a drive-in restaurant.

For my personal benefit, I installed an earphone jack in the column between the doors on the port side of the car. It was my well-founded intention to stick an earphone in my ear and listen to the radio to drown out, as much as possible, the songs and word games ("A Hundred and One Bottles of Beer on the Wall" ... "I see an A, I see a B," et cetera) that Rita and the kids were fond of playing while touring; and also to muffle the sound of any bickering in the back seat. Both devices were to work well on the trip.

On Friday the 11^{th} of June, 1965, we left home at five in the afternoon, to arrive in Elko, where we would stay the night with Rita's folks, at ten. So far, so good.

In the morning we were up early, enjoyed a hearty breakfast, and at eight o'clock bid the folks farewell and headed east on US-40. Fifty miles out, because Glen was feeling ill, we stopped for a few minutes at Jeanne (Rita's niece) Larson's home in Wells.

In Salt Lake City, I drove by the Mormon Temple just so we could see it, and continued east up Parley's Canyon in the Wasatch Range, arriving at a nice little rest stop in time for a picnic lunch. (Glen was to throw-up a short while later.)

The weather and scenery in the mountains were simply beautiful; clear blue skies over green trees and meadows, typical of late spring in the West. At the top of the hill we left US-40, cutting off to the north to pick up US-30 and intermittent sections of new I-80, the route we would follow through Wyoming.

Roughly 45-miles west of the Green River, giant cumulonimbus clouds obscured the sun. Soon it commenced to rain and we passed from one thundershower to another, each one bigger than the last. And then we were hit by a deluge of hail. It was the grandest hailstorm I'd ever seen. Marble-sized stones fell so thick and fast the highway was soon covered to a depth of six inches. It was similar to snow, but considerably wetter because of the warm temperature. The car roof was pelted, producing a din that made conversation impossible. I slowed the Chrysler to a crawl, and even stopped once to photograph the track left by one of the few cars in front of us.

At last we came to Little America, a collection of gas pumps, motel rooms, a restaurant and gift store. It was a virtual oasis on the high plains, built by a man who'd been caught in a storm in that remote region some years before.

"It'll be good to get in out of the rain," I suggested, "and give the kids a break." But everyone within 50-miles must have had the same idea. In addition to dozens of big trailer trucks, scores of automobiles were lined up on the spacious lot. I found a place to park, but after sizing up the situation we made no attempt to leave the car. People were running through the down pouring rain to the main entrance, only to be repulsed by the spillover crowd inside. At least we were better off in the parking lot than out on the highway.

"Hey," Tony called out from the back seat, "I'm getting all wet back here."

A sizable leak had sprung at the perimeter of the rear window of our new car. There was nothing I could do then, to stop it, so a towel was arranged to absorb as much as possible of the inflow. (At the first opportunity I bought some window sealer and fixed the leak.)

When the storm abated, on we went as far as Rawlins, Wyoming, where we checked in at the West Way Lodge (West on U.S. 30) for a night's rest. It had been a long and trying day.

Sunday (the 13th June) morning broke clear and calm. The city appeared nice and clean. Rita found and attended a Catholic Church, and by ten o'clock we were traveling east once more. We had lunch at a place called Bridger's Ferry, crossed into the southwest corner of South Dakota in the late afternoon, and arrived at our destination, the little city of Custer, just in time to obtain a room at the Custer Motel (on Main Street, west side of town). We had dinner at the Chief Steak House across the street. Both places were very accommodating.

Monday was to be a sightseeing day. After breakfast we left Custer and headed for the Crazy Horse Memorial. I had never before heard of the place, but the folks in the restaurant had said it was worth driving five miles to see. It was different. A sculptor named Korczak Ziolkowski, who had worked briefly with Borgland on the Mt. Rushmore Memorial, was in the process of converting a granite ridge into a likeness of the famous Indian astride his horse. It was to be, when finished, 641-feet high and 563-feet long. So far, the only recognizable part of it, with some imagination, was the top of the Indian's head and an extended forearm. The sculptor had nearly completed blasting a hole through the mountain, the space between the forearm and the horse's neck. An enormous talus slope was testimony to the many tons of rock already removed.

Ziolkowski's home, an "artist's lair" of unusual design and furnishings somewhat removed from the base of the mountain, commanded an excellent view of the project. We took time for a walk in the garden, which contained some of the sculptor's fine life-sized busts and statues, and browsed the gift shop before leaving.

It was my impression that it would be a miracle if the giant sculpture were ever completed. (Ziolkowski has since passed away. The project is being carried on by his children, of whom there were a dozen or so, as I recall, and my original impression has not changed with the passing of time.)

From Crazy Horse we headed toward the real sculpture, the Mt. Rushmore National Memorial. On the way we paused at a lookout point on or near Harney Peak, at 7,242-feet the highest point between the Rockies and the Appalachian Range in the East.

In a corner of Custer State Park, the kids got to see their first live buffalo herd. I think that they, especially Glen, were not overly impressed by the mangy looking, nasty smelling, beady- eyed beasts.

The approach to Mt. Rushmore, through the Black Hills Forest, snaked around ledges and trees, crossed over small bridges, went through underground tunnels, and was wonderfully scenic overall.

But its most unique feature was the tunnels, each one of which had been purposely aligned so that the monument was framed by its opening as you entered from the southeast.

It was noon when we arrived at the visitor center. I guess we found something to eat at the concession building, and then walked to the terrace to observe the granite-faced Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt and Lincoln. What a magnificent piece of

work! The carving was begun in the year I was born, and completed just before our country entered World War II.

In my opinion, Mt. Rushmore is the greatest sculpture in the Western World, perhaps in the whole world, thanks to the talented (though irascible) Gutzon Borglum. Thanks also to the untiring efforts of some of South Dakota's leading citizens, particularly the Honorable Senator Peter Norbeck, without whom the project might never have succeeded.

It was only natural that I should record Mt. Rushmore on film. I took several photos before leaving the observation platform. With reluctance we turned to leave. We were hoping to get at least as far as the Missouri River that day.

Traveling to Rapid City and east on US-16 (now I-90), we made it to Chamberlain, on the east bank of the Big Muddy, well before dark. We checked in at the Hillside Hotel and, at suppertime, the kids and Rita talked me into going to a drive-in restaurant. We finally found one, an A&W, but I'd had to drive seven miles to find it.

June 15th: Glen's sixth birthday. We got an early start. The weather was fine, the road was straight and we made good time; at least until Rita, who was reading the map, insisted on our making a detour to the Corn Palace at Mitchell. It was an unusual edifice all right (actually an auditorium), with Russian "onion spires" on top and exterior walls decorated with last year's harvest: corn cobs, corn shucks, wheat shocks and grasses colorfully assembled in murals depicting scenes of the region. Hungry birds had eaten parts of the pictures, but all-in-all the delicate medium had withstood the winter quite well.

At lunchtime we stopped at the crossroads town of Luverne, in the southwest corner of Minnesota. Nothing to speak of. Afterward I drove south into Iowa, just so the kids could say they'd been there, then returned to US-16 in Minnesota. It was evening when we sighted the Father of Waters, which was in flood at the time, its chocolate-brown water slipping over the banks in places. We crossed into La Crosse, Wisconsin, and found a motel (The Midtown, a nondescript lodging place) for the night.

After sprucing up, we made our way back across the Mississippi to a Holiday Hotel, that we'd spotted earlier, to dine in style in celebration of Glen's birthday. It was a great dinner, topped off with a cake for "Hizzoner."

In Wisconsin the scenery began to change. The flat prairie gave way to forested hills and verdant valleys, not unlike parts of New England. Our route, I-90, ran for a time parallel to the Wisconsin River. In Portage, Gina telephoned her pen pal of many years, a girl named "Pam," in Illinois. We made a slight detour to visit her, and then proceeded to Chicago.

My, how the place had grown since I was last there in 1950. The highways had been widened, I noted, but were still barely able to accommodate the traffic. And the toll booths were a constant impediment to travel. Every few miles, I had to stop and pay for the privilege of going on.

I admit to having been nervous about driving through downtown Chicago (without stopping, much to the regret of my family). What had

once been familiar to me was now a chaotic mess of byways occupied by fast moving cars, bumper-to-bumper and six abreast.

Traffic was heavy all the way around the southern shore of Lake Michigan. And the air was filled with smog, belched from the vast factories and mills thereabouts. But after entering Michigan, on I-94, I did relax a bit when the scenery changed from industrial to agricultural.

Looking ahead on the map we saw "KALAMAZOO" spelled out in big, bold print. Why not make for that unusually-named place, Rita suggested. So we did, and signed-in at the Southgate Motel, at 5630 South Westnedge Avenue, not far off the throughway. (It was the $16^{\rm th}$ of June.) It was a nice new motel. We called my mother from there.

"We're in Kalamazoo," I announced.

"You're where?" she asked, only half believing.

I gave her a brief rundown of our trip so far and an estimated date for our arrival in Massachusetts.

The next morning we took breakfast in our room before heading east, and then made a beeline through dirty Detroit, passed through a tunnel and entered Canada at Windsor.

It was our first time in that country. Our first surprise came very soon, when I stopped to buy gas and noted the high price-pergallon. I had forgotten that there were five quarts to a British gallon. Taken thus the price was not so bad.

Some time back in the States, Rita had made up a friendly sign to put in our car window: "IF YOU CAN READ THIS, WAVE." We had received a lot of waves and smiles over the miles, but now, in this "foreign" country, the message was apparently misunderstood. At least one pair of ladies thought it insulting. They were overheard to say, "Of course we can read it. Who do they think we are?"

Not wishing to hurt the feelings of our good neighbors to the north, we removed the sign.

Motoring across the province from Windsor to Niagara was one of the most pleasurable experiences of the trip. The highway was extremely smooth and straight, and the landscape, of green fields and brightly painted homes and barns, was like a picture-postcard.

But we were puzzled by a certain reoccurring sign; obviously a highway designator. "QEW" it read. What could it mean? After a while Rita found the answer (perhaps on reading the map). It stood for "Queen Elizabeth Way." I guess that made sense but I would never have guessed it.

Right on schedule we entered the United States, by crossing over the Niagara River at its northernmost bridge at Queenston. Turning off at the first exit, I followed a street leading downhill to old Lewiston and Fort Niagara. We stopped for a look at the historic site.

But time was slipping by. I wanted to get to Niagara Falls, the city, before dark if possible. Hard enough finding one's way in a strange city in the daylight, let alone at night. So I hurried the gang back into the car.

It was good that we didn't tarry at the fort, for the freeway in New York was strange and more than a little confusing to me, and to our navigator, Rita, as well. The exit signs, instead of listing the towns or cities to which they led, contained only numbers. They were

apparently numbered consecutively from west to east, but without a map of explanation they meant absolutely nothing. Ultimately, navigating by dead reckoning, we found the city and its center just as darkness fell. We settled for a motel not far from the river, one with the unlikely name of "Alps Motel" on 1st Street. We were a long way from anything resembling the Alps.

It was not an awfully expensive motel, but neither was it bargain priced. Nor was it built for convenience. We had to pack our luggage from the parking lot and up a flight of stairs. Further, I didn't like the looks of the neighborhood. But I was tired and there we were.

After a so-so meal at Mama Mia's, a nearby restaurant also with an unlikely name, we drove across the Rainbow Bridge into Canada to visit the Niagara Falls Museum. It was claimed to be the "Oldest Museum in North America," having been established in 1827.

The museum consisted of four floors and a fifth-story observation tower, all of them connected by old, creaky, wooden stairways. There were some 700,000 exhibits on display, everything from fossils to freaks-of-nature. I recall seeing a giant Indian tepee, and several of the actual devices used by dare-devils over the years to "run the falls." What I remember best about the place, though, was how spooky it was there in the late evening. The fact that we were virtually the only visitors in that ancient, poorly-lit building filled with dusty artifacts, including a half-dozen mummies from Egypt, made us feel a bit uneasy. I think the kids were glad when we found the exit and returned to the U.S.

In the morning the world looked rosy again, a good day to see the fabulous falls. I drove to the Canadian side, for a close up view of the most impressive falls, the Horseshoe, then went around to the area between it and the American Falls for a different perspective. We went downstream to The Whirlpool, in Canada, where some of us rode the tram-car out over that awesome feature (I think Rita stayed behind with Glen).

I was impressed by everything I saw in and around Niagara and would have liked to spend more time sightseeing. But our goal was to reach Massachusetts that day, our seventh on the road. It was also my intention to travel across the state of New York on I-90, a toll highway, to Troy. So I obtained a map, studied it, and noted that the southbound highway from Niagara Falls should intersect 1-90 just north of Buffalo. What a break! I could avoid driving on busy city streets.

Hah! That was an overoptimistic assessment. We sailed down the highway from Niagara Falls, crossed Grand Island and could see the industrial city of Buffalo ahead. But we were getting close to it and still hadn't seen a sign to indicate the throughway. At last I semipanicked and took the next exit down to street level. I had to find someone and ask for direction.

It was just what I'd hoped to avoid. Dark narrow streets between ancient brick buildings, cars and trucks all vying for the right-of-way. I caught a glimpse of a Standard Station and made my way to it. I could both purchase gas and obtain information there. With my new map in hand, I approached the station attendant.

"I'm looking for the freeway...I mean toll way, to Albany...but I must have missed the turn-off. Can you tell me how to get to it?"

The man studied the map for a minute then laughed. "You've been had," he said. "When they printed this map they thought that section of the interstate would be done." He pointed to the clearly marked highway on the map. "But it's not. Here's how you have to go."

It was slow work getting through the old suburbs of Buffalo, and more than a little discouraging since I'd expected to miss it altogether. But once on the throughway we had clear sailing all the way across the state, a distance equivalent to that between Sparks and Elko in Nevada.

Now the countryside took on a look of familiarity. Only the cities, what we could see of them from the highway, had changed to bigger and taller. But once we got beyond Troy it was just like before; small farms and villages, forests and hills. The Berkshires.

Near the summit on the Mohawk Trail, I parked the car so that we could all get out and take in the scenery. The kids were overwhelmed by all the trees. Just as Rita had been in 1952. Once more back in our seats, we virtually coasted the rest of the way to Art and Betty's house on Birnam Road in East Northfield. It was suppertime.

I breathed a sigh of relief, pleased with our trip across the U.S. We had made good time, experienced no problems with the car (other than the leaky window) and seen many interesting and memorable sights along the way.

Betty and Arthur's century-old house was a big one; at least by my standards. Situated just below "The Ridge," it was two-and-a-half stories high, topped by a slate-covered gabled roof, with a porch around the southeast corner. Art said that it had been moved, many years before, from the downtown area. While it was on a steep sidehill there was ample space for a lawn in front, a sloping garden in back, and a garage on the north side. Were it not for the trees it would have commanded a grand view of the Connecticut Valley. Mother occupied an apartment upstairs on the second floor. We would be staying there for a while.

Saturday, June 19: Over a week since we'd left home and time to do the laundry. I drove the family to Winchester, New Hampshire, where we used a Laundromat. While we were waiting, the kids shopped for some Father's Day gifts; a harmonica, a necktie and some maple sugar.

Later, I took Rita and the kids to see some of the familiar places of my youth, with Mother along to help out as guide: in Greenfield, to the Western Mass. Electric Company's buildings on Federal Street, where I had rehearsed with the Young People's Symphony and later reported for work; to the theaters and restaurants I had frequented on Main Street; up the winding road to Poet's Seat, the landmark tower overlooking the town. We went to Laurel Lake (not much more than a pond) where the kids went swimming and afterward picnicked on hamburgers or hotdogs and watermelon.

One evening, at Mother's behest, Betty accompanied Carol and me in a violin duet. Carol performed very well. I was very rusty. Betty, of course, played superbly.

Paul, now a quiet but personable lad of sixteen, often dropped in to visit with us at Mother's apartment, and to see if there was anything he could do for her. Paul was learning the carpenter's trade

from his father. Donald, a wiry lad, seemed to be interested in animal husbandry.

On Betty's birthday, the 23rd of June, she went with us to visit Dot and Elly in Shutesbury, where they had settled on returning from California. It was located way out in the woods not far from the northwest tip of Quabbin Reservoir. It was a beautiful place, especially now with the aromatic mountain laurel in bloom in the back yard, but Elly complained that, in the wintertime, it was too cold and snowy and windy. He was still pining for sunny southern California.

Late that afternoon, a sudden thunderstorm came up and dumped a passel of rain on Shutesbury. And then, rather impulsively, we decided to stay overnight.

One day the kids, Betty's and ours, went for a hike to Garnet Rock, an ancient outcropping located a mile or so above the ridge northeast of her place on Birnam Road. Betty and I had gone there sometimes when we were youngsters. The place had lost some of its charm, she said, when (after the hurricane) tall trees grew back and virtually obscured the view. Carol, with Susan and Gina, lost the trail temporarily on the way up but found it again and made their way to the rock and back safely.

Charlie and Florence's home was not easy to find, I was told, being way out in the woods above Warwick, Massachusetts, near the northern state border. So Bob, with his new wife Bette and stepson Dave, agreed to show us the way. We followed them to Winchester, New Hampshire, then south on a dirt road across the state line to the "Hilltop Farm." Charlie and Florence had moved there when he quit farming as an occupation and went to work full time at the Erving Paper Mill.

There were about eight acres, half of them in trees. The house stood on a south-facing slope overlooking a field and woods beyond. Originally a carriage house, it had been converted (before Charlie bought it) into a simple but comfortable abode when the main house and barn were set afire by lightning and burned. They raised vegetables, a few chickens, some pigs and a couple of beeves, all for home consumption. But Charlie's favorite hobby was making syrup. Every spring he tapped scores of sugar maples, then distilled the sap in his sugar house, using wood to fuel the evaporator.

After showing us around, Charlie lit a pile of charcoal in a grill and broiled steaks, from his own steers, for the lot of us. Meanwhile, Florence busied herself in the kitchen with the rest of the meal, a feast fit for a king.

And then, for the piéce de occasion, he and Florence surprised us with my favorite New England dish. Sugar-on-snow. But in the summertime? Back in the spring, when he learned that we were coming east, Charlie had filled several pie-tins with pure, fresh snow and stored them in his freezer. Now he brought them out and set one in front of each of us, while Florence boiled a portion of maple syrup to "candy" consistency and served it, still hot, in individual side dishes.

Sugar on snow is one of the many fine dishes learned from the Indians. I suppose they packed the new wet snow onto a piece of bark or into a shallow basket, and gathered up the sweet sticky candy with

a stick. We used forks, after pouring the hot syrup in a running pattern over the snow, to pick it up. Florence also served homemade doughnuts, and for those who wished to cut the sweetness, pickles.

It was the best sugar-on-snow I could remember having eaten. But then, it had been a long time, over twenty years since I had partaken of the delicacy.

A day or two later found us at Stan and Elsie's in Walpole, New Hampshire. They had moved to a different place since we last visited them, south of town on the Old Keene Road. Like Charlie's, it was once a small farm. The house, an old white clapboard building with a conventional woodshed attached, stood above the road surrounded by huge sugar maples and a cedar or two. I think the original barn, like so many in New England, had succumbed to fire. In its place a big garage had been built.

A garden and orchard occupied a fairly level bench above the garage. Beyond that were a field, a grove of conifers, (which Stan had planted) and a woods of natural oak, birch and ash, all on land that sloped upward to the eastern boundary. I think there were six or seven acres in all.

Stan's "farm" was typical of Old New England. Water came from a well up in the woods. The cellar offered a cool place to store the winter's supply of fruits and vegetables. A wood-fired, hot-air furnace supplied heat, augmented by a wood burning range in the kitchen and a free standing oil-fired heater in the living room. The upstairs got whatever heat escaped from below.

Stanley was working for Johnson, a John Deere farm implement dealer in Walpole. Before that he had been a herdsman on one of Johnson's farms (as I may have related in a previous chapter) but had quit, after becoming allergic to cows, and gone to repairing and demonstrating farm machinery.

Stan and Elsie's two girls, Lois and June, were now both married (Lois to Howard "Hack" Haskell, June to David Houghton) and raising families of their own. The four boys, Dennis, Curtis, Gary and Doug, were still living at home.

From Walpole we went to Keene, New Hampshire, where I drove by my grandparents' old house at 80 North Lincoln Street, and through the cemetery where Grandpa and Grandma lay buried.

We visited Dick and Audrey in Bernardston. Their two children, Abbie and Edward, had both married (Abbie to Robert Hatton, Edward to Caroline Sage) since our last visit. Dick was happy to show us his garden and yard, and home movies of their cross-continent tours.

John and Gladys's three boys were now big fellows; Jason and Joel were out of school, Vernon was about fourteen years old "and still growing." Their home was in the eastern part of Springfield, near a wooded area with a brook running through it.

Raymond was living in New England at the time. After being divorced from Leslae (in Elko) he had returned to New Hampshire. We found him at work, at the Dartmouth College in Hanover.

On Saturday the 26th of June, Rita and I attended the reunion of the Northfield High School Class of '45; which was held in a restaurant in the township of Gill. I remembered the place as a farmhouse.

Of our graduating class of eleven, the following were in attendance that night: Rua (Jones) Morgan, William "Bill" Shattuck, Ralph Bently, Neil Churchill and me. Spouses attending were, Edmund Morgan, Muriel Shattuck, Norma Churchill, Ralph's wife (whose name I've forgotten) and Rita. Ruth (Dawe) Johnson, a classmate until our final year, came with her husband, Robert. We were an even dozen. I don't remember what we had for dinner, but cocktails were served before and during the meal, and the good old days were fondly remembered.

And then, at ten o'clock, when the restaurant people gave us the "when are you people going to leave?" look, the party suddenly ended. Rita hinted that we should meet somewhere else and continue the festivities, but the natives apparently wished to go home. And so we parted, with good wishes and handshakes all around.

Rita and I, somewhat at a loss as to where to go or what to do at this early hour, drove by Bob and Bette's apartment, upstairs in the Proctor Block in Northfield. They must have been out for the evening so there was no place to go but home.

Three days after that reunion, I came down with a terrible sore throat. I had felt it coming on but was still surprised by its severity. The pain was excruciating. The worst I'd experienced in years. The worst since I was in the Navy. So I stayed in bed (in Mother's upstairs apartment in Betty's house) while Rita and the kids attempted to amuse themselves. One thing I was sure of: our plan to drive to the Atlantic Coast would be scrubbed.

I went to see a doctor in Greenfield, who diagnosed my malady as tonsillitis. He prescribed penicillin, in the form of pills, as a cure. I returned to bed and stayed there for three more days, too sick to care what happened.

But Rita cared. She was really frustrated to see her vacation going "down the tube," and I suppose she worried that she might have to drive the car back to Nevada.

Anyway, on July the 3^{rd} , I forced myself to get out of bed, dress and prepare for the long trip home. We said our goodbyes and headed south on I-91. I was thankful for that, the interstate highway, for it was a much easier drive than the old route had been.

It was our goal, though I was not altogether in favor of it, to go to New York City and the World's Fair. It was a terrible time to attend the fair, during the holidays, and I hated the thought of having to drive through the crowded city. We stopped an hour short of the "Big Apple" and spent the night in Woodbridge, Connecticut, at D'Andrea's Motel. (I remember nothing about it.)

In the morning we crossed the East River, from the Bronx to Queens, followed the signs on the Whitestone Expressway to Flushing Meadows, parked on the east lot and entered via gate number eight. The crowd was barely tolerable.

It was a fair day (no pun intended) albeit a bit on the warm and humid side. The grounds and exhibits showed to good advantage. By coincidence, the first building we came to was that of the Bell System. I was proud of the Company's technological exhibits.

From the Bell building we wandered around and through an astounding array of fountains and gardens, to view and/or visit exhibits from all over the World. Perhaps the most impressive thing on the grounds was the huge theme sculpture. Dubbed the Unisphere, it was Planet Earth represented by solid land masses and see-through oceans. It virtually floated above a pool and dancing fountains.

Of special interest, worth standing in a long line for, was the Chrysler exhibit. That company's prototype jet-powered automobile (a vehicle doomed to failure, probably because of its hot and obnoxious rearward blast) was on display and "fired up." I envied the lucky visitors who won a chance for a test drive. Also at the Chrysler pavilion were some unique sculptures; giant, imaginary animals and beasts constructed of new automobile parts, fenders, bumpers, headlights etc.

I recall our visiting the United States Pavilion and General Motors Building as well. But attending the fair was, for me, more a chore than a pleasure. My throat ached incessantly. I sipped water and somehow forced down a mouthful or two of ice cream, but even the act of swallowing my own saliva was difficult. I wished to be delivered of this crowded, noisy place.

At long last (sooner than Rita and the kids desired) we left the fairgrounds and headed back to Connecticut, to Stamford, where we obtained lodging at the Roger Smith Motor Hotel. This hostelry consisted of two distinct sections: a new motel and an old hotel. Our room was in the old six-story brick hotel. It was cheaper than the motel, and in many ways better. It was actually palatial. We had a two-room suite with commodious beds and two baths. Because of my illness the others consented to our "eating in," food that they fetched from a nearby Dairy Queen.

The next day we made our way to the lower tip of Manhattan, getting a good look at several big ocean liners tied up at their berths. Among them was the Queen Mary, which was nearing the end of many years of service. At the Battery, we boarded a ferry bound for the Statue of Liberty.

"Where are the life-jackets?" Rita wanted to know, and when shown where they were stowed she remarked, "I bet they don't have enough in there for everyone."

We could tell when the ferry neared the monument, by its listing when everyone rushed to the starboard rail. A crowd had already assembled on the tiny island, even though it was still quite early in the day. One reason for the long line, we found, was that the elevator was inoperative and only so-many people were allowed on the stairway at one time.

We were an hour getting to the top of the pedestal, to the proud lady's feet. It was then that we decided, because of the heat and the amount of time required to get to the top, to turn around. It was a disappointment, but a wise decision in the circumstance.

So we climbed down and wandered around until we could board the next ferry back to the Battery. The return trip, because of a wind, was rather rough. Rita worried (again) about the number of life-jackets provided. But the scenery was good and I managed to snap a few "tourist" photographs from the rolling deck.

Once more on land, I chose the fastest route out of the city, via the Brooklyn Tunnel and the Verrazano Bridge to Staten Island. I wondered why the bridge seemed unfamiliar to me; it had been in use for only a year.

Billed as the longest suspension bridge in the World it was named for the early explorer, John Verrazano, who first entered the harbor in 1524. Even though my attention was on driving, I was certainly impressed by the height, length and width of that marvel of man's ingenuity.

We soon crossed another, older bridge into New Jersey, and headed down the pike to visit Rita's friend Rosalie (Berkowitz) and Al Galner, who resided in Bridgeton in the southern part of the state.

Bridgeton is located in the center of an agricultural area and we passed acres of tomato farms where the round, red globes were being harvested and trucked to nearby canning factories. In Bridgeton we called the Galners' home, and learned that they were attending some kind of a group function. But they soon came to get us and insisted on our joining them and their friends at the feed, which featured some kind of seafood whose smell I could hardly tolerate much less eat. Rita appeared to enjoy it. Afterward we spent a pleasant evening with the Galners at their home, and accepted their kind invitation to stay overnight.

I was really anxious to head for home. My throat hurt terribly in spite of the medication, and I was weak from lack of food. Both factors contributed to my bad disposition. But Rita and the kids, understandably, wanted to see more of the East, and they prevailed. We headed toward Washington, D.C.

After crossing the Delaware River and the northern neck of Delaware we entered Maryland. We passed near Bainbridge, where I had taken boot training in the Navy, and ultimately approached the District of Columbia from the northeast. What a disappointment. Block after block of rundown tenement buildings lined the highway. It was a sight that made us ashamed of our nation's Capital.

By early afternoon on the 6th of July, I was so sick I could hardly drive. Certainly not safely. It's a wonder I didn't cause an accident on the busy and confusing streets of Washington. But since we'd come this far we should at least see the capitol, so I drove around the mall and past that splendid building before turning to the northwest "out of town." There was still a lot of daylight left when, an hour out of Washington, we came to Frederick, Maryland.

I could go no farther. We spied a Holiday Inn not far away and I drove straight to it. Rita signed the register. When we got to our room I immediately went to bed, with the hope that rest would be the cure I needed. I was soon fast asleep.

I hardly stirred all night, except for an attempt at drinking a glass of water. In the morning, I knew that there was but one course of action to take; I must see a doctor. I think Rita checked with someone at the desk, obtained the name and address of an ear, nose and throat doctor, and to him we went post haste.

After his inevitable probing with a stick and peering down my throat, thumping my chest and back and listening with a cold

stethoscope, the doctor asked about my illness and the medication I had been taking.

"Aha," he came to a conclusion, "your tonsils have improved but you now have an inflamed throat because the penicillin killed the natural bacteria in your mouth."

I had never heard of such a thing, but he was the doctor.

"You should quit taking the penicillin," he advised. "And to restore the good bacteria you need to take in foods that contain them, such as buttermilk and cottage cheese. Go to a store and pick up some to take with you."

I grimaced. "Isn't there some foul-tasting medicine you can prescribe instead? I can't stand the taste of buttermilk or cottage cheese."

He chuckled, but insisted that I must take one or the other. However, he gave me a small bottle of some kind of red medicine with instructions to "sip it if necessary to relieve the pain." We returned to the hotel, gathered up our baggage, checked out, located a market, bought some buttermilk (I knew that I could never swallow cottage cheese) and once more headed westward.

(It would be several years before I'd learn that my Great-grandfather, Timothy Messer, while serving with the Army of the Potomac in the Civil War, spent much of his tour of duty, some of it while suffering from dysentery and other wartime illnesses, in the vicinity of Frederick, Maryland.)

Somewhere in the Appalachians we left US-40, which we'd taken out of Frederick, and went north to access the Pennsylvania Turnpike (the first divided highway in the U.S.) near Bedford, a small town in the scenic mountains. What a relief to travel a relatively straight highway again, and to make good time from one point to the next.

At a comfortable rest area, where we had stopped for a picnic lunch, one of only two or three Nevada vehicles we'd seen east of the Mississippi drove in beside us. It turned out that the occupants were also from the Reno area, so we had many things of mutual interest to chat about.

I was determined to make it to Ohio that day, and did, to the Holiday Inn in Boardman just south of Youngstown. There I got a good night's sleep, awakening only when my throat dictated the need for a taste of medicine; which was a kind of "surface anesthetic" like dentists use. It had a good flavor, rather like cinnamon, and effectively killed the pain, at least for a few hours.

A few miles out of Boardman, our highway became the Ohio Turnpike and, coincidentally, I-80, although there were stretches that were not yet completed. Still it was easy driving compared to what I'd experienced on the eastern seaboard. We zipped past the southern tips of Lakes Erie and Michigan, and then travelled in a more-or-less straight line across the state of Illinois.

Our next two overnight stops were both memorable, but for totally different reasons. The first, Geneseo, not far from Moline, is best remembered for its neatness and friendliness.

After checking in at the Royal Motel, a nice little hostelry at the edge of town, we went to a band concert in the park. A small but exceedingly good band performed in the square's gazebo, like in old

times, while the townsfolk milled about or stood and chatted in animated conversation. No one seemed to mind that we were out-of-towners, and we spent a pleasant time in the arms of Geneseo.

The next evening, having crossed the entire state of Iowa and most of Nebraska, I reined in at the Jones Motel in North Platte. It was not the best motel in town, may well have been the worst, but at that particular time it was "the best port in a storm."

And what a storm. A monster thunderstorm! It was already in progress when we arrived. But then it grew in stature and reigned supreme. There is no other way to put it. Rain came down in sheets and by the buckets-full. Hail pounded the roof over our heads. The wind blew at gale force. Lightning flashed, at times continuously, and thunder boomed and rumbled for hours. And then, at about two in the morning when I thought it had gone away, it reared up again and bedeviled us till dawn.

To make matters worse we had uninvited company; a tribe of Midwest cockroaches whose presence could be felt in the dark, and who could be seen scampering over the walls and furniture whenever the lightning flashed. What a night!

But, as usual after one of Mother Nature's demonstrations, the morning dawned bright and remarkably clear. Soon the baggage was loaded into the Chrysler, the kids took their respective positions (as in musical chairs, they were required to shift one seat after every stop, so that no one would be "stuck forever" in the middle), Rita and I climbed aboard and we were on our way once more. As a matter of fact, we were more than halfway home.

Just past Ogallala I turned southwest, and proudly pointed out the place where, in 1950, I had slept overnight and then driven all the way to Elko in one day. As before, the great Rocky Mountains loomed up in all their majesty, and for the first time in over two weeks I began to feel well again. Perhaps it was the sight of those mountains that did it.

We continued on through Denver, which, because of the burgeoning skyscrapers that had sprouted in the intervening years, was hardly recognizable. It was no longer a pristine high-altitude city, but one shrouded in smog. Alas! My secret desire to transfer to that place was effectively squelched.

Leaving the bustling citadel, in no time at all it seemed, we gained the summit at Berthoud Pass, where a flood of reminiscences came over me. As Yogi Berra would have said, "It's deja-vu all over again."

It was a fine day and a fine place for a picnic, so we found a wooden table and had lunch. I was ecstatic. Being in the real West once again, the West that had seemed so far away just a few days ago was truly therapeutic.

But all good things must come to an end. Reluctantly, at least on my part, we climbed back into the car and headed down the highway; passing through Granby, Kremmling, and Steamboat Springs - where I had found fair-haven in 1948 - and Hayden, finally crossing into "Dinosaur Land" in Utah. The kids, and Rita of course, urged me to stop and look around but it was already Saturday, and I had to be at work on Monday.

So we travelled as far as Vernal before stopping for food and lodging in that quiet and peaceful town in eastern Utah. On the following day, Sunday, after pausing at the shores of Great Salt Lake just long enough for the family to dangle their toes in the saline waters, we reached our former home-city of Elko. It was 1:30 in the afternoon.

There we found a little excitement. Rita's brother Ben - who would celebrate his 50th-birthday that evening - and some other men had been working in the alley behind his house on Oak Street, placing a new sewer line, when their backhoe found and broke an underground natural-gas line. I arrived in time to watch with curiosity as the gas company repairmen put it back together, without even shutting off the supply. They simply applied glue to the plastic pipe-fittings and shoved it together. I was impressed. And so was Ben, who was embarrassed by the incident and would be billed for the expense of the repairs.

The last leg of our journey from Elko to Sparks must have been inconsequential, for I made neither mental nor written note of it. As for the tour as a whole, except for the ten days when I was under the weather, it was a great success. The Chrysler operated virtually without flaw; we saw a good cross-section of the continent; the kids behaved well, and got to meet some of their eastern aunts, uncles and cousins.

The rewards were well worth the expenditure of time, a whole month, and money, who remembers? I would do it again.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE ANTIQUITIES

My job kept me rather busy after our return from the East. But we, the family, managed at least one outing in the trailer that fall, to the Toiyabe Range south of Austin. We camped right beside the creek in the campground halfway up Kingston Canyon. It was a primitive place then, before land speculators moved in and built a dam above the campground, to supply water for a housing development at the mouth of the canyon.

A tiny meadow at the head of the creek, enclosed by a fence and posted "NO FISHING," was a natural spawning ground that the Fish and Game Department had taken advantage of and managed. Thousands of trout fingerlings were visible in the clear spring water. Closer to our campsite, the riffling creek yielded enough brook trout for a rewarding meal or two.

One morning, when Tony and I were fishing in the shade of the trees just downstream, we spied an unusual-looking rock beneath the surface of the water. It was in the shape of a cube, roughly one-foot on a side. My curiosity got the better of me and, with Tony's help, I raised it from its watery bed to the dry bank. Now I was really excited, for I recognized it for what it was; a grinding stone. A large dimple on one side, about an inch deep and four-inches across, was obviously once used by Indians to grind seeds or crack pine-nuts. In spite of its weight, we got the thing up to the roadside and later into the trunk of the car. It was a fine addition to our collection of artifacts. (Because of the thick grass and brush in the ravine, we found no arrowheads.)

That afternoon, we took an exploratory ride up the canyon in the Chrysler. It would be great, I speculated, if we could tow the trailer over the summit and down the west side, to camp and fish on Big Creek. The road was a reasonably good one, but any thought of taking the Shasta over the top dissolved at the first switchback; which was so steep and sharp I had to back and turn the car three times to make it around the corner. We went up to the top of the pass anyway, to take advantage of the view from its 8,600' elevation. The Big Creek campground lay virtually at our feet, just a few miles below. But to get to it with the trailer in tow would require our traveling 50-miles, back around through Austin and down the Reese River Valley.

Content to remain camped on Kingston Creek we took a ride through Smoky Valley to Manhattan and Belmont, some 60-miles away to the southeast. It was the kids' first visit to Belmont, the one-time seat of Nye County, but obviously not Rita's. While exploring the old brick courthouse with its creaking floors and decrepit stairways, we wound

up in the jail cell at the rear. It had been partially destroyed by vandals but there, on a residual plaster wall, apparently written with charcoal picked up from partly burned boards nearby, we found the names of a number of earlier visitors. Among the names were: "RITA," "Catherine Zunino" and "Ethel Wise," and the date of their inscriptions, "July 7, 1940." (There <u>is</u> some value in graffiti; we could tell where those girls were on that particular day twenty-five years before.)

Belmont came into being in the 1860s, when rich silver deposits were discovered nearby. It was named the seat of Nye County in 1867, when, according to estimates, the population ranged from 2,000 to 4,000 (some said up to 10,000). The large two-story brick courthouse was not completed until 1874.

By the turn of the century, however, after a couple of booms that produced upwards of \$20-million worth of ore, Belmont went into decline. To the new boomtown of Tonopah went the county seat. The brick building remained behind. In the years to follow, there were several small mining and milling revivals in the Belmont area, but none of significance after 1922.

Not long after our visit, in 1965, the courthouse windows were boarded over, the doors were secured and the roof was repaired, an act that went a long way toward preserving one of Nevada's most famous ghost town structures.

As for the rest of Belmont, the few old-timers still living there, no doubt awaiting the next revival, watched over the slowly decaying buildings with staunch possessiveness. You were welcome at the flimsy general store/gas station, you could walk the streets and photograph the once-lavish Cosmopolitan Hotel and other places of business and abode, but if you ventured too far off the dusty streets they demanded to know your "business."

It was that way in Manhattan, too. There, when we were hiking through the sparse sagebrush above the street that ran up past the old schoolhouse to the little abandoned church on the sidehill that overlooked the town in the canyon, a resident shouted after us, "Hey you! Where you goin'?"

Only after being assured that we were just "lookin' around" did the self-appointed guardian back off, but not without a stern reminder that we were treading on private property.

There had been mining activity in the Manhattan Gulch since the 1860s. But it was not until 1905, when major discoveries were made, that the town took off. Before long the residents could boast of hotels, saloons, schools, telegraph and telephone service, banks and a Wells Fargo office, newspapers, and even crimes of passion. Like every other mining community, it weathered a number of ups and downs. And then, in 1939, the Manhattan Gold Dredge was built and floated, in its own pond, in the gulch at the lower end of town. It operated throughout the period of World War II and beyond, until, in the fall of 1947, the rich gold ore ran out.

(In the 1950s, the monster dredge was disassembled, moved to Copper Canyon west of Battle Mountain, reassembled, re-floated, and put to work recovering gold from the streambed of tiny Willow Creek.)

When the dredge ceased operating in the Manhattan Gulch the majority of residents moved away, leaving the predominantly wooden buildings to succumb to fire, theft, wind, rain and snow. It was then that Rita's folks retired to their home on Fir Street in Elko.

The little church on the hill, moved there from Belmont around the turn of the century, served the Catholic citizens of Manhattan for over forty years; albeit a few at a time, as there couldn't have been room for more than a score of them within.

In 1965, the once-white church was weathered and silent. With desert-tanned clapboard walls interrupted by Gothic windows, a miniature bell-tower supporting a sand-blasted wooden cross above a recently applied tin roof, a pair of ordinary wood-paneled doors set in a Gothic frame at the south end of the structure; it was the subject of thousands of photographs and paintings. We climbed the dozen or so plank steps to a stoop, opened the unlocked doors and entered the sanctuary, which was devoid of anything but dust and spirit, the pews and alter and anything else movable having long since disappeared.

For Rita, our visit was more than one of curiosity. She had attended summer services there in the 1940s, when in Manhattan with her folks during school vacation. She must have had mixed emotions; joy, on revisiting a place significant in her early life, sadness, for the condition of the once proud place of worship.

It was comforting to know that the townspeople, what few there were, still kept an eye on things, for we were Manhattan property owners ourselves "in absentia."

Back in 1963, when Rita expressed a desire to own some old, rundown property in Virginia City, I suggested that if she really wanted to buy such a thing, why not take her father's Manhattan property off his hands. He had already half-promised to sell it to old Sam Siri, who resided in an old house on Manhattan's main street, but of course he agreed to turn it over to Rita instead. And so it came about that she acquired several properties: A large, falling-down, weather-beaten commercial structure on the south side of the main street, a garage (or shed) situated a block to the north of the main street, behind what had been the Zunino's Downtown Bar and Grocery Store, and four small lots on the hillside there.

Together we poked into and around the big building, which may have served as a store, restaurant, bar, gas station, or all four at some time or other. We "rescued" the staves and hoops of a wine cask from the small cellar, but there was nothing of value to be found. And then, after photographing the exterior of the building, we left the sleepy town to its reverie.

(In hindsight, because Manhattan is so far away and I never had an interest in restoring or remodeling old buildings, it was probably a poor investment. Not only did the taxes steadily increase over time but, in the 1980s, the properties came under litigation and lawyer's fees were added to the overall cost.)

Ever since my first attack of hay fever, back in Elko County, I suffered from sneezing and runny eyes, particularly when in a dusty environment or around sagebrush in bloom. To control the malady, I at

first used a pill prescribed by a doctor, and later found that a non-prescription drug worked just as well. Of course, the best medicine is prevention, so I learned to avoid exposure to those deleterious elements. For example, I would not drive a motor vehicle, especially off the pavement, with the windows open.

As for my old neck injury, it, too, gave me a bit of trouble, in the form of recurring neck pain. At first the incidents were infrequent, maybe every two or three months. But in the mid-1960s the intervals between neck-aches were shorter, sometimes less than two weeks. However, the pain could be alleviated by aspirin.

But I couldn't forget that terrible bout with tonsillitis, when on our trip to New England, and I was determined to do something about it. I visited Dr. Elia, in Reno, and made arrangements for a tonsillectomy.

Medical practices have varied greatly over the years. There was a time, back in the '30s and '40s, when it was common practice to remove a youngster's tonsils, often whether he needed it or not. Providing, of course, the parents could afford it. The pendulum then swung the opposite way and, as in my case, the infection was treated with sulfur or penicillin and the tonsils left in place.

In hindsight, I felt that my tonsils should have been removed when I was in the Navy. Perhaps I would then have enjoyed better overall health. Furthermore, at my present age the operation would likely be harder on me. I dreaded the thought of going through it, but it must be done.

Dr. Elia performed the tonsillectomy at St. Mary's Hospital, in Reno. The result was successful. Though I experienced the usual pain, it was not nearly as bad as when I'd had tonsillitis. I received a lot of comfort from Rita, and sympathy from my friends and associates in the Company. With that I recuperated rapidly and was back to work in almost no time.

As a hobby, Rita and I enjoyed searching for and collecting Indian arrowheads and artifacts. We really began back in 1961, when Noble Crew had come to Elko to help set up a temporary microwave-radio link from Adobe Hill to the Commercial Hotel. One evening, when he came to supper, he showed us some arrowheads that he had found just off the highway east of town. Our interest was ignited.

After we moved to Sparks, Noble and I worked together and became good friends, both on and off the job. It followed that our families became friends as well. Noble's pretty wife, Taffy (whose given name was Jeanne), was as devoted to the avocation of hunting arrowheads as he was. Their two young boys, Brian and Marty, who were about the same ages as Tony and Glen, were also interested in the hunt; if not for artifacts, at least for lizards and such.

At Easter time, in 1966, we, the Crews and Phelpses, began what was to become an almost-annual ritual; a trip to a Nevada desert to camp and hunt for arrowheads. We decided to go to the Black Rock Desert, a giant expanse of perfectly level alkali dust and sand, once the silty bottom of a portion of prehistoric Lake Lahontan. Noble towed a rented "pop-up" camp trailer, with canvas sides and top that

cranked-up to form a spacious tent-on-wheels, and I towed our Shasta trailer. Both of us were driving Jeep Station Wagons.

Twelve miles out of the little railroad town of Gerlach, we left the relatively good road (then SR-34) for a numberless road through the sagebrush (the Summit Lake road) headed northeast. As we travelled toward it, the black feature for which the desert had been named loomed larger.

This dark promontory, the remnant of some prehistoric volcanic eruption of basalt, had guided the 1840s emigrants on the Applegate Cutoff, and later Lassen's Cutoff, from the Humboldt Trail near Imlay to northern California. They had endured tough going. While no longer apparent, the flat was strewn with the bleached bones of scores of horses, oxen and mules, and perhaps a few human beings, who were unable to make it across the parched land to water.

Noble had gotten directions to our objective from a fellow Nevada Bell employee, Jimmy Scrugham. (Jim, the son of former Governor James Scrugham, was also an amateur archeologist.) Now we watched for a "rusty old overturned car at a fork in the road," then turned "sharp right" and soon arrived at the "tie-barn and corral." It was there that we set up camp.

Our kids immediately took off to explore the area; Rita and I leveled our trailer; Noble and Taffy leveled theirs, and cranked-up the canvas top. It was a lovely afternoon, ideally suited to walking the dunes and searching for bits of chert, agate and obsidian, hopefully in the shape of projectile points. We found a plethora of chips lying on the sands, quite a number of broken points, and a few perfectly whole ones. It was more than enough to whet my appetite for more.

Late that afternoon, when we adults were seated on our folding aluminum chairs, sipping cool drinks and recounting the events of the day, the boys, who had been roaming around the area picking up old horseshoes, nails, purple glass and so on, came running toward us shouting, "Rattler! There's a rattler over there!"

"No way," said Noble, scarcely looking up from tending the chicken he was broiling on his heavy iron grill.

I agreed with him. "You don't see rattlesnakes this far from water."

"We know a rattler when we see one," Brian insisted. And when Taffy and Rita more-or-less demanded that we should check out the sighting, we did. Sure enough, in the rabbit brush not 50-feet from the barn, a medium sized rattlesnake lay coiled and alert. With a willow stick Noble "snaked" him out into the open, and with instinctive vengeance we dispatched the reptile to the nether world.

It was fortunate that one of the kids had not inadvertently stepped on the viper, for a bite could have been very serious out there, 125-miles from a doctor. Since no one had been bitten, we could "stay put," savor a tasty meal and enjoy a happy campfire, and drink black coffee and tell stories until the embers entirely gave up their glow.

In the morning, we piled into our respective Jeeps and explored the area the fast way, stopping whenever someone saw, or thought he

saw, an artifact. If someone other than the driver spied a "maybe" he'd bang on the outside of the door to signal "stop."

It was great fun making tracks in the soft alkali dirt and sand, and only occasionally did one of us get stuck. One of those occasions was when I drove the Jeep into a dry creek bed and buried its tailpipe in the dirt bank. The engine stalled and would not restart. I used my shovel to clear the tail-pipe, then, with the rest of the gang in position at the rear to push, I fired up the motor with a roar. The exhaust blew dust all over my helpers, particularly Noble, who just happened to be standing right above the pipe, and I drove free of the ditch; providentially, far away from an irate Noble.

By mid-afternoon, the clear sky had given way to cumulonimbus clouds. We were in for a rainstorm for sure. When it appeared about ready to dump on us, we hurriedly drove back to the trailers. An alkali flat is no place to be when it rains, the powdery dust rapidly turns to slick, greasy mud.

Safely ensconced in our trailers, adults in the Shasta, kids in the rental, we played our own games while the storm heightened and the wind increased to gale force. I became nervous when I saw that the walls were "breathing" with the wind. Would the trailer blow over? To be on the safe side, I tackled the tempest (it was more wind than rain) and moved our Jeep to the windward side as a windbreak. At least I felt safer after that.

Noble decided to check on his trailer and the kids. It was a good move. When he opened the door, a part of the metal framework came apart in his hands. He stuck it back together and tied it with a piece of rope, otherwise the canvas would surely have torn loose and tangled everyone in its folds.

In spite of our apprehensions we weathered the storm in good shape, and even got a good night's sleep before breaking camp in the morning.

Two years would pass before we returned to the tie barn site, to enjoy another few days of hunting and collecting arrowheads. This time we positioned our trailers (Noble had rented a solid one) closer to the old tie barn, which promised to afford a degree of protection against the ubiquitous wind.

Right on cue a big storm came up, a down-pouring, thunder-and-lightning, gully-washing storm. But the biggest part of it veered to the south and east of us, over the main desert, and even though we considered moving to higher ground we stayed. Anyway, our site was above the most recent historic shoreline, at least a foot or two above the dry lake bed.

At dusk the storm dissipated. We took to our chairs around the campfire. Everything was wonderfully clean and calm. As the sky grew darker I noticed a line of lights in the distance, across the desert.

Surprised, I queried, "Is there a town over there?" and nodded toward the east.

Without looking up from his coffee, Noble, who was much more familiar with the country than I was, answered, "There's not a town in that direction for 75-miles."

"Then what are all those lights?"

Now everyone studied the strange apparition, a dotted-line of lights stretching horizontally for a mile or more. It appeared to be slowly moving from north to south.

"Maybe there's a railroad over there. Maybe it's a passenger train," someone suggested. But it was way too far from any known railroad for that.

The most logical explanation was that they were headlights. But for what reason would dozens of cars, all traveling in the same direction and close in line, be out there on the desert at this time of night?

The origin of the line-of-lights remained a mystery until morning, when, in our Jeeps, we headed across the desert to the east, aiming in general for the Black Rock itself.

At the base of the alluvial slope below the black "peninsula" was a tiny oasis of grass and tules surrounding some springs. It was known as Double Hot Springs. It was here that emigrant wagon trains had stopped, after crossing the barren eastern arm of the desert, to regroup, feed their animals and replenish their water supplies. And for eons before the emigrants came, the area had been home to countless Indians.

"That's a good place to hunt arrowheads," Noble offered, "and maybe we can find out what those lights were all about."

Sure enough. As we wound around the sand dunes and approached the springs, we saw what appeared to be a small town. Trailers and campertrucks by the dozens were parked in the vicinity. A score of people and dogs were milling about, most of them staring at us.

We stopped at the camp perimeter and struck up a conversation with an "older" couple. "We're rock-hunters from Oregon," they replied in answer to our inquiry. "The rest of our gang is out looking for gemstones."

The area was a prime location for finding and gathering semiprecious stones (agate, quartz, chert, opalite et cetera), and they were spending the Easter weekend in that occupation.

"But what was all the activity last night?" Noble asked.

"Oh that," the man chuckled. "Those were the chicken members of our club. They got scared off by the storm...thought the flat was going to flood and we'd all be stranded here...so they pulled out and headed for Gerlach."

So much for our getting away from people and civilization. At least we were alone at our camp, but only because it was dry. To augment our water supply we had to drive a quarter-mile to an artesian well-pipe that had been sunk by a rancher. It was good water though, and unlike that at Double Hot Springs, icy cold.

Our stay that year proved very rewarding, in artifacts and camping pleasure. But all too soon the time came when we must head for home. We elected to take the long, straight trail across the alkali flat, the one we had used on the way out. Because we could drive at speeds up to 50-mph, it was much faster than the Summit Lake road through the sagebrush.

We had gone barely a mile before meeting with a surprise. Before us, right where the road should be, a straight strip of water extended as far as the eye could see. We pulled our Jeeps to a stop and got out for a better look at this anomaly, and to decide whether to proceed or turn back to the high road.

Rainfall from the storm, the one that had driven some of the rock hunters from Double Hot Springs, had by now mostly percolated into the ancient lake bottom; except, that is, where over the years hundreds of wagons and automobiles had left their collective impressions in the dust; the so-called road that we had earlier followed to our campsite. This road, some four- to six-inches below the natural surface, was now filled to the brim with water.

Neither of us looked forward to getting stuck, but neither did we want to take the long way around. So we plunged ahead, driving some 50-feet to the side and parallel to the "canal." Noble took the lead and I followed, at a respectable distance in case he should get bogged down, and to avoid breathing the cloud of dust he stirred up. It is amazing how dry the ground can be so close to water in the desert.

We travelled thus for several miles, sometimes being slowed to 10-mph by the spongy alkali dust, sometimes reaching a speed of forty-five. At last, having come to the apparent end of the water, we stopped to stretch our legs and drink a cool one.

"I'll bet that's the only lake of its kind in the world." I remarked. "Six miles long...six feet wide...six inches deep."

The high desert is hard to beat. Alkali flats and sand dunes. Rattlesnakes, lizards and mice. Meandering dry washes, occasional muddy sumps (If it's white, it's all right...if it's brown, go 'round). Immaculate sunrises, dust red sunsets. Sudden showers, torrential rains, gale force winds. Best of all, the predominant serenity. Our visits to the Black Rock desert were incomparable.

The outings also resulted in our collecting a fair number of fine artifacts; projectile points, metates (grinding stones) and manos (pestles) of a desolate country's previous citizens.

Meanwhile (in 1966) things were changing at Nevada Bell. Paul Brown, on whose staff I'd been working, accepted a job in southern California "to broaden his experience." A man by the name of Chet Bramlett took over the district technical staff. Jerry Miller, the second-level manager in Las Vegas, was promoted to district-level over the Toll and Exchange operations in southern Nevada.

W.G. "Bill" Nelson, an exchange-telephone man by experience, left the position of manager of Jim Dodson's plant staff, to head up the Northern Nevada Toll District. I was promoted to the position vacated by Bill, which was a sub-district-level job.

Located in Nevada Bell's headquarters building at 645 East Plumb Lane (Reno), there were twenty four people on the staff, including four second-level and nine first-level managers. Women made up half the total force.

I was not particularly happy about the move, despite the fact that it was a promotion. I was a died-in-the-wool tollie and my new responsibilities would relate to everything in plant except toll; that

is, telephone exchange and outside construction, personnel, safety, budgets and results.

Furthermore, I had not yet completed my part of the Oakland-Scipio route coordination project. I talked to Jim Dodson and got his permission to stay on the technical staff another month or so, long enough to tie up loose ends. His staff would have to function without my leadership for a while.

I remained at my old desk (but with a new title and an increase in salary) and worked diligently, often on my own time, to wrap things up. But I was to hit a snag in the form of a misunderstanding with Chet Bramlett - the ambitious Californian with an abundance of new management theories to practice.

When Chet took over the staff, his first act was to call the men together and tell them what was expected of them. "There'll be some changes made," he said. "You will write down your goals and objectives and keep a detailed log of everything you do. I'll want to know what each one of you is doing at any given time."

Chet would hold a meeting every Monday morning, without exception, and attendance by his second-level managers was a must. It was this that caused our rift. First of all, I didn't consider myself one of his subordinates; second, I didn't have time to sit around listening to recitations. I absented myself from his Monday morning "show and tell."

It was only a matter of minutes till he sent Flo Lyons, the office supervisor, back to "request my presence."

Annoyed, I nevertheless joined the group. Afterward, I had a chat with Chet.

"Just why do you want me to sit in on your meeting?" I asked. "I'm only here till I complete this coordination job, and the sooner I'm done with it the better for the company."

"Well," he answered, obviously miffed, "as long as you're in these quarters and working on technical matters you're working for me. And I have to know what you're doing."

We exchanged a few more words, and in the end I acceded to his wishes. But it was a terrible waste of my time; just as it was, in my opinion, a waste of his subordinate's time. The group was small enough that he could keep track of individual activities on a daily basis, just as Paul Brown had done, just as I would do.

Though I never admitted it openly, I was more than a little envious of Bramlett. Not because his was a full district-level position, but because it was a toll job. Happily, once I got to my new staff job, Chet and I got along well. Off-the-job we shared a common interest in the history and archeology of Nevada.

It was late summer or early fall of 1967 when Noble advised me of a new group being formed, a society of amateur archeologists dedicated to the study and preservation of Indian prehistory. Rita and I joined him and Taffy in attending one of the society's first meetings, thus becoming charter members. (The dues were \$4.00 for a family membership.) The meeting was held in the former SAGE center at the old Stead Air Base north of Reno. This huge, bomb proof concrete building (abandoned by the department of defense) had recently been adopted by

the Desert Research Institute, an off-shoot of the University of Nevada. Part of the building was being used by professional archeologists as a laboratory.

The club's first elected president was Peter Ting, a soft-spoken man then in his fifties who, as an avocation, had for years been actively studying Indian and early-man campsites. Like the Crews, Peter had collected thousands of artifacts, some, especially those from the Pyramid Lake area, of significance.

The other officers were Ethel Hesterlee, Marvel Guisti and Alma Smith, all of them strangers to me. The board of directors consisted of about a dozen members, including the above mentioned officers and a professional archeologist, Dr. Robert L. Stephenson. It was he who was largely responsible for the birth of the society, a non-profit organization named "AM-ARCS of NEVADA."

Peter introduced Dr. Stephenson, chairman of the Nevada Archeological Survey, and Donald R. Tuohy, the Nevada State Museum archeologist. Both would act as professional advisors to the club. Stephenson spoke of the important contributions amateurs had made to the science, and pleaded for "increased trust and cooperation between the professionals and amateurs." (There were those among us who mistrusted some of the professionals, and vice versa.)

The group would meet once a month, for a short business meeting followed by a lecture or a slide show on a subject related to archeology. Field trips would be scheduled, and archeological digs arranged for those who wished to participate in actual work.

Rita and I would become involved in a couple of digs; one in 1969, in the hills northeast of Sparks, and another in 1970, on the Dangberg Ranch in Carson Valley. The latter dig, in the summertime, proved too hot for Rita but I stuck it out with the Crews and a handful of others. Don Tuohy, who was present at both digs, taught us the rudiments of professional field archeology, emphasizing at every turn the necessity for noting and recording everything, no matter how seemingly inconsequential.

Working in the field fascinated me, especially the surveying and laying-out of the site, photographing and sketching artifacts in-situ. The discovery of artifacts, even fragments, was always important, for they could contribute to the overall story of prehistory. To discover a whole arrowhead, for example, was cause for celebration.

A field trip was less tedious than a dig. It was scheduled on a weekend, and could be shared by the whole family. We'd meet at a prearranged location at the edge of town and caravan to the destination. Following are the accounts of a few of the interesting sites we visited as AM-ARCS.

Winnemucca Lake Petroglyph Site: located just west of the Gerlach highway, about twenty miles north of Nixon, where dozens of petroglyphs have been incised on tufa-covered basalt rocks.

Once, when we were there with the Crews and while Rita and Noble were exploring a small cave, Rita's hand fell upon a really fine artifact, a black, basalt arrow-shaft straightener. The size of an orange, it was high up in a crevice, doubtless placed there by its owner many years before for "safe keeping." Her find was enough to

make Noble jealous; even though he admitted that he'd probably never have put his hand in an area likely to harbor a rattlesnake.

A half-mile or so farther north is a large rock shelter, where a number of interesting artifacts were earlier removed by professional archeologists. Red-ochre pictographs may still be seen near the smoke blackened walls and sloping ceiling.

Toquima Cave Site: Near Pete's Summit, thirty-miles east of Austin, containing pictographs.

In the summer of 1970, about two dozen of us AM-ARCS, including the Crews, travelled to this site. We set up our trailers in the Forest Service campground, and hiked the 500-yards to the cave, whose entrance, to thwart vandalism, was secured by a chain-link fence and a locked gate. A Forest Service ranger guided us, a few at a time, through the room-sized, soot-darkened cavern, where we viewed and photographed (without a flash) several pastel pictographs.

That evening, back at camp, as the sun slowly worked its way toward the Toyabe Range, we fraternized with our fellow club members and joined the Crews in a meal of steaks and potatoes broiled over a hot charcoal fire.

As usual, I had spread an old rug in front of our trailer, to limit the amount of dirt and pine needles tracked inside, and wouldn't you know? The Crews' dog claimed ownership of it. Whenever a stranger (to the dog) came by she growled an admonition. It is strange but true that a dog will often adopt someone who doesn't even like him. (Dogs are all right, as long as they don't bark, lick or otherwise make a nuisance of themselves.)

In the morning, the main body of AM-ARCS left for home. But we and the Crews moved on over the mountain to Stoneberger Creek, where we had a great time fishing with the kids.

That afternoon the Crews headed for Reno. Rita and I stayed, with our kids, to explore the long, remote Monitor Valley. About 10-miles south of Stoneberger Creek, near the center of the table-smooth valley floor, we came to Diana's Punch Bowl; a spring where hot, subterranean water wells-up in a cavernous tube whose upper rim is 50-feet in diameter and whose depth, according to legend, is unfathomable. A hundred feet away from the rim, the overflowing water was still too hot to put your hand in.

Black Mountain Site: A dozen miles southeast of Yerington, contains numerous rock-circles and petroglyphs, few arrowheads.

Leo Pistone, who had "discovered" it, led a group of AM-ARCS to this site, located just a few miles from ground that I had covered back in 1962 while surveying for the Wassuk microwave-radio site. There was plenty of evidence that Indians had lived in that steep, walled, pinyon-forested canyon. Many petroglyphs were found on the patinaed basalt ledges and free-standing rocks.

As recorded in the society's newsletter, we made a second trip to this site after the name had been changed to the Pistone Site, in honor of Leo, who had suffered a heart attack and died.

The AM-ARCS society was still in its infancy when the board decided to put out a newsletter, under the masthead "Chippings." Individual board members took turns producing it. The first edition was written and distributed in October, 1967 by Art and Dorothy Champagne; the second, in December, by Noble and Taffy Crew.

In 1969, when the new slate of officers was elected, Noble was almost unanimously elected president. I was vice-president; Doris Cerveri, an avid amateur archeologist and beginning author, was secretary; Kitty Rose, another dedicated member, was treasurer. The board of directors, originally consisting of a dozen people, was reduced to five; Peter Ting, J. Sloan Olin, Louis Sabini, Jean Myles and John Brooks.

I thought it might be more efficient if one person were to edit and produce the newsletter, and I volunteered for the job. I redesigned the cover page, incorporating images of projectile points and fetishes and the society's logo. The logo included the words "NEVADA AM-ARCS WE PRESERVE" surrounding a copy of a Dat-So-La-Lee (Queen of the Washo Basketmakers) design and the outline of the state of Nevada.

I also retyped the society's constitution and lists of charter officers, board members and members at large, copied them and produced books (courtesy of Nevada Bell) for the membership. We were really getting organized.

In fact, we now obtained permission to meet in the cafeteria at Nevada Bell's Plumb Lane building. It would prove to be the most convenient place ever for our meetings. (Board meetings, always interesting, were held at an officer or board member's home.)

The following year, Noble was reelected to the presidency and Jean Myles, the energetic wife of Doctor Robert Myles, was elected vice-president. I moved to the board of directors, a position that I favored. It was there that the activities and direction of the society were decided.

Don Tuohy, a staunch supporter of the group since its inception, was still our club advisor; along with, at times, a couple of other professionals. Three of us from Nevada Bell - Noble, Chet and I - were on the board, a factor that should ensure, I thought, the continued use of the cafeteria as a meeting place. However, because of the rise in vandalism, particularly with respect to utility properties, tightened company security forced us to find another venue.

Phil Hutchinson was elected to the presidency in 1972. Gary Noyes, who had moved to Reno to work in my district, was president in 1974. Other officers that year were Doris Folsom, an outgoing native of Bodie (the ghost town), California, vice-president; Phil Hutchinson, secretary; and Rita, treasurer. I was on the board, as was Taffy. Rita and Doris Folsom edited the "Chippings."

Rita and I took part in at least two more good field trips with the AM-ARCS. One was to the Last Supper Cave, in northwestern Nevada. There must have been two-dozen of us in the group, including Phil and Loretta, Noble, Taffy and Marty. We rendezvoused at Cedarville.

From there, with Jean Myles in the lead, we caravanned to the old Dufferena Ranch, up the Virgin River, through part of the old Virgin Valley Ranch, and on to the "end of road" where we parked our vehicles

in an opening in the sagebrush by a trickling creek. On foot, we followed the stream up-canyon on a fair trail, about three-quarters of a mile to the front of the cave.

A deep, irregular depression in the base of a steep, south-facing sidehill, it was more a shelter than a cave. For some weeks Jonathan Davis, a stereotypical young archeologist (that is, long-haired and unkempt yet knowledgeable) had been excavating the site with a crew of students and museum staff members. They had erected a protective fence in front of the shelter, and we were not allowed to inspect the dig at close range. But Jonathan did give us a good lecture. Some of the artifacts found, he said, were dated (through carbon associated material) to 9,000-years before the present. He also pointed out a dark layer in the vertical strata: ash from the Mt. Mazama (now Crater Lake) that erupted 7,500-years ago.

Dusk fell over us like a cloak, and it was time to head back to our cars. It was impossible to keep from stumbling over pitfalls on the downhill trail but we made it in good time, the last part with the help of those members thoughtful enough to have brought their flashlights along.

Some of the party, wanting to see more of the cave the following day, camped overnight near the Virgin Valley Ranch. The rest of us returned to Cedarville, bent on enjoying a few cocktails, a hot meal and a warm bed in the only hostelry in town. We were not to be disappointed.

In March of 1974, Don Tuohy led a group of interested AM-ARCS to the Marble Bluff dig, between the promontory of that name and the south end of Pyramid Lake. The federal government was about to embark on a project to establish a fish-way in an existing canal; which was dug in the 1930s to connect Pyramid with Winnemucca Lake when the latter began to dry up. The fish-way would allow cutthroat trout and cui oui suckers from Pyramid Lake to bypass the silted delta on their way up the Truckee River to spawn.

The reason for an archeological dig was soon apparent, when Don showed us the unearthed remains of early Indians. With a group of Indians for helpers he had been examining and documenting the graves, whose contents would be re-interred away from the ditch. According to Don, the blow sand area on which we stood contained hundreds or more of burial sites. None were marked, of course, in true Indian fashion.

It was an interesting dig, though not of any particular significance. What I was most interested in, and unsympathetic with, was the fish-way, which would lead to a new dam on the Truckee River below Nixon. At a cost of millions-of-dollars the project seemed, to me, a less than practical way to spend taxpayers' money.

(And so it would prove in future years. The majority of fish shunned the artificial stream and had to be transported from below the dam to the impounded pool above. But this was only one of several projects where federal money was wasted there.)

The AM-ARCS Society got involved in promoting an archeology bill (AB-210) before the Nevada Legislature. The bill would combine Nevada's archeological units (the Survey, the Museum, the State Universities north and south, and the Desert Research) under the aegis

of the Nevada Archeological Survey. That department would coordinate all archeological work in Nevada. Additionally, passage of the bill along with similar federal bills would ensure that artifacts found in Nevada would remain in Nevada.

The laws, known as "antiquity laws," were indeed enacted at both state and federal levels. In addition to increased policing of the back country against collectors, the laws required that the cost of any contract work - such as for a highway, an underground cable or a mine - must include a percentage for an archeological survey, to be completed prior to any land disturbance. And if the Survey pronounced an area "significant," it was to be bypassed and preserved.

At one time it had seemed like worthwhile legislation. But the question of who would pay for it was never addressed, as so often happens with special interest legislation.

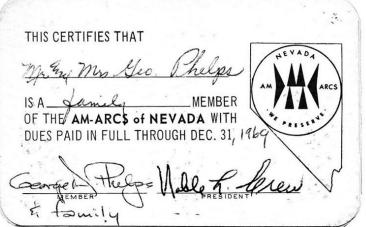
Ironically, the Bell System, through whose benevolence our AM-ARCS had thrived, was to be one of the first "victims" of the antiquity laws, when it planned to construct a new underground cable across northern Nevada in the 1970s. Every foot of the way had to be surveyed by professional archeologists before any digging could begin, at no small cost to the Company and, ultimately, the public. For what purpose? To my knowledge, nothing of significance came out of the survey, although it provided jobs for a number of archeologists.

It was largely due to the new laws, which we had unwittingly helped to forge, that my interest in the AM-ARCS Society waned. In just a few years the number of professional archeologists in the state increased to an astounding number; from but two or three in the early 1960s to scores by the mid 1970s. Not only did free-lance archeologists abound, but dozens were added to the payrolls of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Furthermore, every employee of those federal entities was charged with policing the public lands. One couldn't stoop to pick up a rock without feeling that "big brother" was watching.

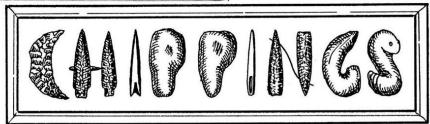
When a representative of the BLM came to the AM-ARCS, to solicit our help in controlling the practice of "collecting," I was outraged. As if the collecting of surface artifacts could in any way hurt the study of prehistory. The picking up of surface artifacts by non-Indians had been going on since the first explorers crossed the Great Basin. Anything found on the surface now was but a tiny part of the whole, and its significance to the science of archeology was minuscule at best. In fact, I have never known of a professional archeologist's assigning much, if any, credibility to a surface find.

As I wrote at the time: "The provisions in the recent laws that decree a virtual ban on surface artifact collecting should be overturned.... Instead, emphasis should be directed to the preservation of sub-surface and truly significant sites."

Of course I was whistling in the wind. Once a law is enacted it is seldom retracted, especially if it contributes to a bureaucracy; in this case the State and Federal Park Services, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.







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CHAPTER SIXTY POTPOURRI

"Keep the tip up...don't jerk it...reel 'im in," we advised, and Glen finally brought his catch to the surface. Then, because he was reeling so fast, it broke water and flew through the air and landed on the rocks at the edge of the lake.

He panicked. "It's a giant spider!" he cried, and in desperation threw his rod away. "I don't like spiders!"

Rita and I both rushed to his side and I made a lunge for the fishing gear that was about to go under in the deep water. The "giant spider" was actually a good-sized crawdad, but because of its almost black hue it did rather resemble an arachnid. In spite of Rita's and my assurances, that it was not a spider and harmless, it spelled the end of Glen's fishing for the day.

The fishing wasn't very good anyway. Nothing in my bag-of-tricks worked. Even Tony, usually an eager angler, was bored.

It was springtime, 1966, and we were camped with our trailer at Walker Lake. It was a nice new campground. Each site was equipped with a table on a concrete pad, with a fiberglass cabana over it for shade. We really didn't need the shade, but could remember the summer when it would have been welcome.

The sun was almost overhead when a strong northeast wind came up, as it often did on the desert lake. We had already shouldered our gear, and were walking back to the trailer when Rita observed a small boat coming out of the shadows under the high cliff at the southwest side of the lake.

It was the sound that had first attracted her attention, the rhythmic, drum-beat of an aluminum hull crashing down on the water. The boater couldn't go ashore nearby, because of the rocks, but he might have run with the waves to a sandy beach south of the cliffs. Instead, he drove right into the wind, obviously intent on returning to the boat ramp below the campground. At about this time, we recognized that the lone boater, in the stern at the tiller, was not a "he" but a "she."

It was a small boat, perhaps ten-feet long, propelled by a small outboard motor. As it came ever-so-slowly closer the bow was

repeatedly raised dangerously high by the wind and waves. I expected to see it flip over backward at any moment.

There were no other boats on the lake - not surprising considering the high wind - and the thought raced through my mind that if it should capsize there was no one to go to the lady's aid. But soon, as we anxiously watched, she drove the bow up onto the sandy beach, leapt over the gunwale, pulled it to high ground, quickly removed her gear and the motor, and all by herself loaded it onto her pickup truck. Stout woman, that one, even if a bit foolhardy.

We went on to enjoy our stay at Walker Lake. At least Rita and I did. (You never know whether or not your kids share your enthusiasm for such things.) When not fishing we sat in the warm sun and fed the sea gulls and squirrels, or hiked the ancient lakeshore, or climbed into our car and explored the country around Hawthorne.

Later that same month, I spent an interesting half-day with Gene (Eugene) Gull, our neighbor across the street. Gene was about my size and build but was probably 20-years older than me. His lovely wife, Nina, was about my age, and their daughter, Gracie, was Glen's age. Gene and Nina had come from Utah, so I guess it followed that they were Mormons. They would join us for a cup of coffee or a cocktail on occasion.

Gene was nearing the end of a long career with the FAA. An old-timer in the industry, he had grown up with "rag-covered" airplanes in the '20s and '30s, some of the time in far away Alaska. One of his current duties was flight testing would-be pilots for licensing. Outwardly quiet and unassuming, he nevertheless had a reputation for being a stickler for competency. He insisted that every potential pilot should satisfactorily perform the required maneuvers, including recovering from a stall and a spin, before he could be pronounced certifiable.

Another of Gene's responsibilities was investigating plane crashes. Often an unpleasant task. He was discouraged by the high rate of light-plane accidents, and was convinced that the majority of them could be blamed on "drunken flying."

A case in point was an accident just south of the Reno airport, when a pilot took off "for a spin" in the middle of the night with an overload of teenaged passengers. The plane never achieved sufficient airspeed and crash-landed in the front yard of a ranch. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured. But before Gene arrived at the scene, the folks at the ranch, perhaps trying to be helpful, had served the pilot a good stiff drink. Now there was no way of telling whether or not the man had been under the influence of alcohol before taking off.

Recently, Gene had learned to pilot a helicopter. In order to retain proficiency in the aircraft, he periodically took one up for practice. One day he invited me to go along. As always when offered a chance to fly, I accepted.

The chopper was based at the Minden airport, so we flew there from Reno in a Cessna: a two-engine (push-pull) craft with the cabin and engines slung beneath the wing between twin booms. It was a routine flight to Minden, and soon we were up and away in the

helicopter: a Hughes two-seater similar to that in which I had flown with Ernie Boswell.

"Where shall we go?" he asked.

"Anywhere is fine with me," I responded, then added, "How about down by Topaz Lake?" It would be great to see our microwave station from above.

We followed US-395 south, flying like a dragon fly just above the pinyon-forested hills. Gene circled the concrete building and steel tower at the Topaz microwave site, then dropped down over the boat-pocked lake. From there we followed the West Walker River to Wellington, and turned south toward the Sweetwater Ranch and Bodie.

We would never see Bodie that day. Above Long Doctor Spring, Gene tapped the instrument panel. He appeared to be a little concerned, though he said nothing. Over the Sweetwater Ranch (near where I had taken my first helicopter ride with Ernie) he tapped it again, apparently came to a conclusion and made a 180-degree turn.

"There's no reason for concern," he said matter-of-factly, "but the fuel gage isn't operating properly. Shows low and I don't like to take chances."

Gene went on to explain that he had physically checked the fuel tanks (I remembered seeing him do that) before we left the airport, but a leak could have developed without our knowing it. I was pleased that we were going back. Even though there was every reason to believe that in an emergency he could make a safe landing, I didn't relish the thought of being stranded on a barren, desolate hillside near Bodie.

We did not run out of gas, and we did have a pleasant flight back to the airport. Along the way I spotted a large herd of deer on a hillside, and Gene obligingly dropped down so I could get a picture of them. East of Minden he circled an abandoned lumber mill, giving a carload of spooning teenagers an unexpected thrill.

After landing, Gene talked to the flight station operator, rather harshly I thought, about the defective fuel gage. And then he prepared for our flight back to Reno.

"Ever flown a plane?" he asked, as he taxied the Cessna to the south end of the runway.

Surprised, I answered truthfully, "Yes, but only when high in the sky."

"Well, now's your chance to show what you can do."

Without further conversation my first (and only) real flight instruction was begun. Many times, as a passenger, I had observed the procedures involved in taking off an airplane. Now Gene carefully explained every step in the procedure, and why, before giving the word, "Let's go."

While holding the wheel firmly in my right hand, I shoved the paired-throttles forward with my left. The engines roared and I released the foot brake. With a great deal of vibration (the skin and doors and windows of light aircraft always sound like they're about to disintegrate) the craft literally jumped forward. Halfway down the runway, at Gene's signal, I eased back on the wheel. It was comforting to know that Gene was poised to take over at my least goof. The nose rose perceptibly above the horizon, and the vibrations lessened as the wheels left the tarmac. We were airborne, albeit not exactly straight

and level. Instinctively I corrected with the wheel, and instinctively over-corrected. I could feel Gene grinning at my uneasiness.

When we had gained sufficient altitude to suit my instructor, somewhere over the Dangberg Ranch, he advised me to slack off on the throttles. At the same time he trimmed the flaps and tabs, or whatever it was that was supposed to be done at that stage. I was too busy trying to maintain equilibrium to pay much attention. Anyway, the ride was smoother now, except when we hit and bounced through an occasional air pocket (as they used to say).

High over Eagle Valley we flew, climbing steadily toward the Virginia Range and Virginia City. I was happy that Gene operated the radio. I wouldn't have known what to say. We were instructed, by a voice from the Reno tower, to fly a downwind leg to Sparks, make a 180-degree-turn and land on runway One-Six (southbound.) So far, so good. I followed instructions and waited for the time when Gene would take over and land the aircraft.

He operated the landing-gear switch and I heard the wheels lock into place. I guess he must have lowered the flaps at that time as well. On his cue, I slacked back on the throttles, not too much, and went into the turn, rather sloppily. Gene quietly admonished, "A little more left rudder...not so much...level up a bit...a little more bank...now straighten up and drop your nose."

To my amazement I was on final approach, heading, too fast I thought, right for the fence at the near end of the runway.

"Good," Gene said in an even voice. "Hold 'er there."

When I was sure that we were on a collision course with the fence, he said, "Okay, pull up a bit." Now everything was fine.

"Throttle back and hold off...keep her straight and level," Gene monotoned.

We were over the skid-marked runway, about thirty feet above it I judged, drifting a bit to the left. Come back to center, I said to myself. I was now confident that, having come this far, I could grease the Cessna onto the tarmac like a pro. But the plane wasn't dropping like it should even though it was slowing rapidly.

Damn! I thought to myself, perspiration running down my temples, we're going to stall.

"I've got it," I heard Gene say, just as the obnoxious stall-alarm blared in our ears.

Be advised that I immediately turned loose of the wheel and took $\ensuremath{\mathsf{my}}$ feet off the rudder pedals.

From then on it was smooth sailing. Gene applied throttle and pitched the nose down slightly and accomplished what I'd thought I was going to do; greased the airplane onto the runway.

I guess he knew that I was discouraged, and quickly explained what had happened. "It's hot today...lots of convection." I knew that, from the bumpy ride we'd had from Minden. "Especially over the black runway. That makes it tricky landing. But you did okay. You'll have no trouble learning to fly, you understand the physics of flight and you're careful. And you know about weather. That's in your favor too."

By now he had taxied the aircraft to the apron in front of the flight-service building and stopped. We were back, safe and sound.

To become an airplane pilot, though, was one of many things that I would never accomplish. To own an airplane, even to just fly one, was much too expensive a hobby for me.

On the first day of July, 1966, I hooked up the trailer and took the family to Elko for the holidays. (Gina was not with us but her dog Gio was.) As always, before Ben installed an eight-foot fence along the alley, I parked the trailer next to the chicken coop at Rita's folks' place.

On Monday, The Fourth, we joined the rest of the Zuninos at the picnic area below the bridge on Lamoille Creek, downstream from the old powerhouse, for the annual reunion.

It was a great place for a picnic in those days. You could fish, wade in the cold creek or play games, all without interference from outsiders. And we always had plenty to eat and drink.

Early the following day, Rita and I eagerly hitched up our trailer and moved to the campground at Wildhorse Crossing, where we fished the Owyhee River, with little success, and stayed overnight.

But the campground was crowded and the traffic was noisy, so early the next day we pulled out and moved around to the north and west, over Maggie Summit, to one of our favorite havens in Columbia Basin.

There I backed the Shasta into the willows on the east side of Columbia Creek, about 200-yards north of the bridge, opposite the long-since abandoned site of Aura, and we settled in for a stay.

The fishing was great! Using worms for bait we worked both up and down the creek and were rewarded with trout varying in size from eight- to fourteen-inches.

That afternoon we had unexpected visitors when Rita's father, her brother Stan and Stan's prospecting partner, Louie, dropped in to see us. They were on their way to (or from) a mining claim in the Bull Run Mountains.

Our second visitor was, not surprisingly, a thunderstorm. Of giant proportions, it quickly sent us all scurrying to the trailer for refuge. Before long, however, the rainfall diminished and a brilliant rainbow appeared. A good omen.

Before the bushes and undergrowth had shed their water, Tony and I lit out upstream again to fish. The creek was now wild and murky, and alive with food washed from the banks. The trout were ravenous. In less than an hour we had filled our creels with "big ones," and coincidentally got soaked to the skin in the brush.

Being successful at fishing is, after all, more a matter of being in the right place at the right time than, as many people believe, being equipped with fancy and expensive gear. If conditions are right, fish will bite at almost anything. The trouble is, conditions are more often wrong than right.

Rita and I never seemed to tire of camping out. A few weeks after returning from Elko County we took the trailer and the kids, including Tony's friend, Eric Scheetz (who lived diagonally across the street from us), for a weekend outing at a campground northwest of Dog

Valley, 18-miles northwest of Reno. (It is now called Lookout Campground.)

In the heart of the forest, an area that had escaped the devastating Dog Valley fire of 1962, the kids could run and play and explore without getting into too much trouble. Together we hiked to an abandoned crystal mine not far away, a virtual mountain of white quartz containing countless pure crystals. (An acquaintance once showed me a perfect specimen two-feet long and eight-inches in diameter.) Although the best ones had been quarried or carried away, we found a few finger-sized crystals for souvenirs.

One day I led the kids, Gina, Tony, Glen and Eric, through the chaparral and mahogany trees to a rocky peak above the camp. It was a steep climb, and near the top we had to assist each other up and over lichen-covered granite boulders and ledges. The granite reminded me of New Hampshire although all else - trees, vegetation, terrain - was somewhat different. And what a grand view we had, over Dog Valley to lonely Peavine Mountain.

In September, traveling in two cars with the Crews, we drove to the Icthyosour Site east of Gabbs, just above the ghost town of Berlin. It was our first time there. The fossilized bones of the colossal prehistoric mammals were embedded in the brown sedimentary rock of an ancient seabed. The skeletal remains were recognizable but, being the color of the surrounding matrix, were not all that distinctive. Only recently exposed, the site was protected by a newly constructed, open-ended gable roof.

Below the ichthyosaur site, near a tiny creek, stood a brown-stained, weather beaten cabin. It was here that the scientist(s) had lived while excavating the bones. Hanging on, leaning against and lying around the cabin was a collection of rusty artifacts — axes, shovels, pots and pans, lanterns, drill rods, sledge hammers, car parts and so on — the likes of which I had never seen.

Adjacent to the cabin was a unique bathing facility. A Rube Goldberg contraption if ever I saw one. (No longer in existence, it is preserved in my mind's eye and on film.) An antique once-white, four-legged porcelain bathtub sat on a brick foundation near the south side of the building. Behind and above it, a water-heater tank, half-blackened with soot, was mounted horizontally over a brick-and-stone fireplace. A length of old pipe ran between the tank and the faucet on the tub. Another pipe, rusted and bent and suspended by its own connections, was attached between the tank and two weathered oil drums flimsily mounted on the south-facing roof of the cabin.

It was plain to see how the device should work: Water, piped from the creek upstream, was fed into the drums, preheated by the sun, gravity fed to the tank below where it was superheated by flames in the fire pit, and drained into the tub as needed.

I was more impressed by those living quarters than by the main attraction on the hill above.

The next thing that impressed me was an old house alongside the narrow road, between Berlin and the above mentioned cabin. It was an adobe brick building, with a gable roof over the main part, a low, sloping roof over a room on one side, and a less esthetic, shingle

sided addition on the other. Most of the shingles had long since taken leave of the roof. Doors and windows were missing. But the old place still had character. (I would learn that it was once occupied by a school teacher.)

A half-mile farther back down the road was the abandoned town of Berlin, what was left of it, a town that once boasted of a population of 1,400. We saw the remnants of a mine head-frame, the shell of a good sized ore processing mill, a workshop, an assay office, and a half-dozen small homes, all constructed of wood now richly brown-stained by the elements. A few of the hardiest Lombardy poplars had survived, and the area was strewn with rusty junk, cars and parts.

For the trip home that day, a couple of our kids traded cars. Glen rode with the Crews and Marty (I think) came with us. When we got to Middlegate, I stopped and waited for the Crews. When they didn't show up, thinking they might have had car trouble, I drove back to Gabbs. Still no sign of them. They must have gotten around us, though I didn't know how. I again headed north, this time proceeding toward home on US-50. At Fallon we looked for their car, never found it, and finally stopped at the drive-in west of town for something to eat.

Only after we got to Sparks, well after dark, was the mystery of the Crews' whereabouts resolved. Noble and I, having neglected to communicate our intentions, had turned in opposite directions at the highway junction near Gabbs. He drove southwest to US-95; I went north to US-50. Since it was farther the other way around through Hawthorne, I never considered it an option. But he did.

The irony of the episode was that Glen got to enjoy a fine meal with the Crews in Hawthorne, while Marty, because we'd spent so much time looking around, got short shrift at a drive-in.

Rita and I would return to Berlin several times. But perhaps our most interesting visit was when, in 1988, we were once again with the Crews.

The town and fossil site was now classified a Nevada State Monument, and a number of changes were in evidence. A fancy campground had been built a couple of miles to the east, on a slope in a sparse juniper-pinyon grove. The shelter over the Ichthyosaur fossils was now entirely enclosed and secured, to be entered only in the company of a ranger. My favorite cabin was still there by the creek, but the priceless artifacts and bathing facility were gone.

In Berlin itself, the big mill had been shored up and its roof re-shingled. A good thing. The houses had also been re-roofed, but were otherwise left in their weathered state. I noted that many of the rusty artifacts had disappeared from the grounds, apparently removed by pot hunters or moved by the rangers.

Our reason for our being in Berlin this time was of particular importance. The Park Service was observing the 100th anniversary of the town, and we were among a hundred or so interested visitors who had come to the celebration. One of two or three rangers herded us together in the hot sun in front of the mill, and introduced the guest of honor, Firmin Bruner, who just happened to be the grandfather of Marty Crew's wife, Anna.

Firmin Ascargorta was born a Spanish-Basque, and had come to the United States and Nevada when he was but three years old. He had lived and worked in old Berlin back in the early part of the century, and at some time along the way adopted the name Bruner. Now 85 years old, his memory was filled with fascinating stories of the old days, and he was eager to share them with anyone who would listen.

Part of the festivities included a conducted tour of the town, which, in turn, included at least one humorous incident. One of the rangers, a girl, unlocked the huge padlock on the door of the assay building preparatory to leading a small group of us inside. As she stepped through the doorway into the room - which was fairly dark behind small, dirty windows - her flashlight beam fell on the coiled form of a rattlesnake and she heard the startled creature's warning signal.

There followed a moment or two of confusion, when the girl-ranger shushed the sightseers behind her and called to a nearby man-ranger for help. He quickly shoved his way through the doorway and, assuming command of the situation, stood guard over the poor rattler as it slithered across the room to a dark corner.

The girl-ranger then carried on her guide duties, describing, to those inclined to enter the building and listen, the various artifacts once used in the job of assaying.

As our group was leaving for the next stop on the tour, I overheard someone ask, "What're ya gonna do about that rattler?"

I was mildly amused by the answer; it would be caught and transported some distance away from town and released.

I had an idea how the situation could have been handled, and in a manner much more fitting for a western ghost town.

"She should have whipped out her six-shooter and blasted that reptile across the floor," I said. "That's how they would have done it in the old days."

Polite chuckles from the nearest bystanders. Nevadans had gone soft.

Before we left town, Firmin Breuner kindly autographed our copy of his book about central Nevada mining camps (published by the Nevada State Park Natural History Association). Berlin, Nevada, will live on in history, partly because of Firmin and his stories.

But back to 1966 and another camping trip: The grass had turned to the color of mocha and was dry as tinder. The sky wore a veil of cirrus. The air was decidedly crisp. Autumn had arrived in Elko County.

We'd been camped below the Willow Creek Dam a couple of nights already, just the two of us, while hunting arrowheads, chukar partridge and rabbits in the area. It was a fine place to camp, on the grassy clearing in the sagebrush a respectable distance from the small creek flowing out of the reservoir.

I had spent several hours the first day, hunting the elusive chukar along the creek and rocky outcroppings west of our camp, but without success. At the same time, Rita had found an abundance of chips and broken arrowheads. The next day I switched to that sport.

On the third day, we took the Jeep and expanded our horizons, going around the east end of the reservoir to the north side of it, all the while keeping our eyes out for both arrowheads and game birds. In a steep canyon near a spring, I flushed a couple of wayward chukars and fired at them. Unruffled, they flew away.

We went through a bob-wire gate and, after a bit of searching, relocated the petrified wood site where we'd collected some very fine specimens a few years before. Now there was only fist-sized stuff in sight.

A half-dozen sage hens got up and, lumbering, flew away downhill. Out of season! But neither the sight nor sound of a chukar-bird disturbed the windless afternoon.

It was quite late in the day and starting to cool when, on our way back to camp, just after shifting to a low-low gear to ford a creek, I heard a very loud and very disturbing clunk beneath the floorboards of the Jeep.

"What was that?" Rita asked.

"I dunno," I responded. She was always asking that question before I'd had a chance to evaluate the situation.

We were still moving and I hoped "it," whatever it was, was not serious. However, before we made it all the way back to the trailer the noise was twice repeated, each time accompanied by the Jeep's hesitating. So it was serious.

Several thoughts passed through my mind, probably similar to those going through Rita's. We were 20-miles from Midas, a decaying mining town to the west; 25-miles from Tuscarora, the nearest community to the east. So much for the geographical aspect of the situation.

I next pondered the mechanics of the problem. Was it something I could fix? Or was it so bad the Jeep could not be driven at all? Anyway there was no big worry. We had our trailer, and sooner or later someone was bound to come by. At least three pickups had gone by that day. If necessary I would walk to Tuscarora, where I knew there was a telephone, and it was only 50-miles from Elko.

I parked the Jeep beside the trailer and decided to do nothing about the problem till morning. It was dusk at any rate, and turning cold. We donned our warm jackets, Rita took a rifle and I my shotgun, and together we walked up the creek toward the base of the dam. She could shoot a rabbit if she saw one, and I still had illusions of bagging a chukar.

Rita soon spied a little furry cottontail, sitting under a bush not 20-feet away. I saw the rifle-butt come up to her cheek, saw her take aim, saw her finger on the trigger, saw her hesitate.

"Shoot," I half whispered.

Br'er Rabbit never moved an eyelash. He just sat there.

"I can't," she muttered, and lowered the rifle barrel. And then she went "Shoo...shoo...shoo," and waved in an almost futile attempt to frighten the silly cottontail out of range.

"I give up," I said in disgust. "No more hunting licenses for you." (I think she never again purchased one.)

I led the way alongside a tiny stream, a tributary to the main creek and not more than a foot wide, toward the right face of the concrete dam.

"Where's this water coming from?" Rita wanted to know.

There was no sign of a spring nearby and, judging by the look on her face, she must have realized the truth before I answered.

"Well," I said, "It's coming from the crack."

"What crack?"

"That little one there." I pointed to a jagged line barely visible in the waning light, in the concrete face of the dam. A tiny stream flowed out of it, as if from a leaky watering trough only more so.

"You mean we're camped below a dam with a crack in it?" Rita wanted to know.

I told her the story that I had heard second-hand many years before, which alleged that some disgruntled fishermen, having had no luck with conventional lures, resorted to dynamite, exploded a couple of sticks in the water near the dam, picked up the stunned fish that floated to the top, and left the scene undetected.

But that was years ago. The dam had since been declared safe, and time had proven the assessment correct. Rita was not comforted by such facts.

We returned to the trailer, dined indoors, and spent the remainder of the evening with our thoughts; Rita, no doubt worrying that the dam might break, I, about how to tackle the problem with the Jeep.

It was cold on the ground in the morning, even though I was warmly dressed and lying on a piece of canvas. I found nothing on the underside of the Jeep to indicate trouble, so I climbed inside, removed the floor mat and the top of the transmission housing, and took a look there. Again I found nothing wrong, a fact that pretty much confirmed my belief that the problem was in the transfer case. There was no easy way to inspect its insides, so I looked no further. I'd been stalling for time anyway, hoping to see a trail of dust coming down the road. But none was visible.

I couldn't stand the thought of just sitting around waiting for help to come by, and so, with Rita's help, I readied the trailer and hitched it to the Jeep. I had considered leaving it there, but figured if the Jeep would run at all we might as well be towing the Shasta. Then if we broke down halfway to town, we'd still have food and shelter. And so we began what was to be a very long...very tedious...very slow journey to Tuscarora.

I started out driving the Jeep in second gear, high range, at a conservative speed of 25-mph. Five-miles down the road, where it turned away from Willow Creek, we were cruising along in low gear, high range at 20-mph, occasionally interrupted - when a gear skipped over a broken tooth - by a thump and a jerk. I then shifted to four-wheel-drive, low range and second gear. Another five miles farther, at the turnoff at Soldier Creek, we had been slowed to 10-mph, and even slower where the road was winding and hilly.

Not a car had we seen all morning, and now it was past noon. I pulled off the road and stopped; might as well have lunch and relax a

while. Rita went back to the trailer and fixed a couple of sandwiches, which we ate outside in the clear autumn air. If someone should come along I was in a position to flag him down, though anyone in that country would have stopped anyway.

And then it was back to the same old grind. Literally. We went over a rise and down alongside Summit Creek, crossing the almost dry stream three times before the road turned uphill to the north. It was a hard pull for the Jeep, even in low range, low gear (the lowest available). And the thumping and jerking was, to say the least, disconcerting. At the top of the hill I stopped again, this time so that we could discuss our options.

In the distance was Independence Valley, stretching away to infinity. Somewhere beyond the low hills to our left was Tuscarora. We checked the topo-map, and found that it was only seven-miles away. Should I leave the rigs, and Rita, and walk? It would be easy going, mostly downhill. But if it was downhill, then the Jeep ought to make it. So I drove on, coasting in neutral whenever possible.

"The pioneer wagons made better time than this," Rita commented, noting that we were moving at walking speed. My nerves grated in sympathy with the laboring gears under the floorboards. If there had been one broken gear-tooth when we started, there must be a bunch of them now, loose and swirling around in the grease and getting in the way of the good ones.

From McCann Creek to Tuscarora was uphill, though a gentle enough grade. Just past the turnoff to the Quarter-Circle Ranch we met a rancher in a pickup. He stopped opposite my open window and asked, "Can I help?"

I explained my troubles and said, "We've come this far, I think we can make it to Tuscarora. Thanks anyway."

We did make it, to the center of town where I pulled off the graveled street onto a weed-lot next to the old stone building that housed, in addition to a general store and bar, Mr. Butters' telephone company headquarters (the Nevada Telephone Company). It was midafternoon. I felt a tremendous sense of relief.

Together, Rita and I walked around to the front of the building, pushed the big oak door open and entered the dimly lit store. We bought something to drink at the bar, then I went to the pay-phone, called the Zunino number in Elko and asked for help. Now we could relax for a while.

I guess it was almost dark when John (or Stan) arrived in a Jeep with a tow chain. Anyway, we left the trailer and towed our Jeep to Elko. Within the hour we were comfortably ensconced in the Zunino kitchen, the broken-down Jeep Wagon at the curb outside.

In the morning, John located a used transfer case for my Jeep, which I bought for fifty dollars. With considerable advice and some help from John and Stan, and after a couple of days of lying on the cold pavement, I had replaced the transfer case and our Jeep was ready for service again.

Since we had to go to Tuscarora anyway, to get the trailer, Rita and I decided to make a day of it and do some deer hunting. Sam, Jim and Janie, in Sam's red Jeep, joined us.

Tuscarora was still asleep when we drove through town. It was still early when I followed the pickup up the old mine road that curved around the northeast side of Mt. Blitzen.

We didn't see any deer but all of the other requirements for a hunt were there; groves of half-naked quakies, lush bitterbrush, rocky crags and deep ravines. When the sun signaled noon we parked by a small spring and spread our lunch on the dry grass beside a fallen log under an aspen tree. A red-tailed hawk circled overhead, perhaps eyeing the cold chicken that we were eating. We did see a few deer that afternoon, but not one buck.

Darkness was approaching by the time we'd found our way off the mountain and back to Tuscarora, where Pop insisted on buying refreshments all around. Of course he knew the folks in the store (he knew almost everyone in northeastern Nevada towns) and while he and the others visited, Rita and I hitched up the trailer. It was totally dark when we took off for Elko.

That night we stayed with the Zuninos, and returned to Sparks the next day; happily, without further mishap. It had been another fine adventure, even though we arrived home with no game and very few arrowheads to show for it.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE UNFORGETTABLE TIMES

Our block on Holman Way was actually about four normal blocks long. It was inhabited by an exceptionally good class of people, mostly young adults with growing kids; there must have been about fifty of the latter. Rita, being around home more, was better acquainted with our neighbors than I was. But late in 1966, a close friendship sprouted between me and Russ McOmber, the good-looking, personable young man who lived in the third house up the street. It was in November, when Rita's folks were visiting over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Fishing for something for her father to do (no pun intended) Rita asked Russ, who owned a good-sized boat, if he'd like to take Sam out to Pyramid Lake one day. Russ, being an avid fisherman who loved the out-of-doors, readily agreed to the proposition. I got to go along with them.

Russ's boat, which he had obtained from his father-in-law, was made of fiberglass. It was about 15-feet long and seven abeam, with high gunwales and an enclosed bow, and was powered by a 75-horse Mercury outboard motor. It was big and comfortable, Russ pointed out, yet handled nicely on the water.

We headed for Sutcliffe, the only place on Pyramid Lake where one could launch a trailered boat. The boat ramp was actually downhill from the village.

Sutcliffe (as I may have mentioned before) was originally a stage station, built by James Sutcliffe in 1885. In turn the place was then a trading post, a resort (called The Willows) and a railroad station.

In the 1960s there were Crosby's and Sutcliffe bars, a couple of trailer home parks, a boat storage compound, a handful of small houses and shacks, and a dozen or more Indian homes. An old black water tower stood rusting at the northern edge of town, the only reminder of the steam engine era.

At the top of the boat ramp, Russ parked briefly while we transferred our fishing gear and lunch from the car to the boat. He then backed the trailer into the water until the boat floated free. I was not versed in the launching procedure but, following his "orders,"

I stood on the pier with the bow line in hand and brought the boat close in to the dock as he pulled the trailer out of the water.

After a few false starts, the motor took off with a roar and we were under way. Russ stood at the helm, a steering wheel just aft of the cabin on the starboard side, Sam was seated opposite him, and I occupied the bench in the stern.

I liked the idea of a big boat, a seaworthy one not likely to be swamped by a rogue wave. Over the years a number of unfortunate souls had gone to a watery grave as a result of being dunked in Pyramid Lake. Even those who could swim had trouble surviving its frigid waters, where hypothermia could set in within 20-minutes.

(A plaque, high on a tufa rock on the northwest shore of the lake, commemorates a fishing party of seven people from Herlong who drowned in 1946.)

But today, conditions were perfect; cold but relatively calm. Russ steered toward the south shore, and opened the throttle to warm the motor and put us on one of his favorite fishing areas. This one was known as "The Blockhouse," for an old concrete-block building (abandoned by the Navy after WW-II) on the bluff.

(Tony and his friend Eric would one day uncover a navy battle-lantern on the sandy shore not far from the Blockhouse.)

Russ slowed the boat to trolling speed. He and I rigged the rods and reels, and then the three of us let out line and waited.

Trolling for trout is a game of patience. I had never been very fond of the method, being more inclined toward walking and angling, but I would come to enjoy it, especially with Russ in his boat.

In those days, Pyramid Lake fishing was slow at best. It was very unusual to get more than a dozen strikes in a six hour period; sometimes you could go all day without a single strike. But when you did hook into a trout it was generally a big fellow, which made the waiting well worthwhile. All this, and more, Russ told us while we trolled.

We were to be lucky that day. It was not yet noon when the tip of Sam's rod bent down and he began to reel in. Russ shut down the motor, he and I reeled in to avoid tangling our lines, then he got the big net ready for the catch. In his inimitable style, Sam allowed the fish no slack and quickly brought him to the boat. It was indeed a nice one, a cutthroat.

"He'll go three- or four-pounds," Russ said, weighing it in his mind when he deftly hauled the squirming fish aboard.

Sam was tickled with his catch, and proud to have been first.

After a while, with all three lines trailing silently astern, we broke out the sandwiches and coffee. (Russ preferred beer.) And while we lunched Sam had another strike. Only this time, when setting the hook, he jerked the lure out of the fish's mouth and clear of the water.

"No matter," he chuckled, as I helped him straighten out the tangled line, "I'll get another one."

Russ turned the boat around and passed over the area again. This time I was the lucky guy, and ultimately boated a trout somewhat smaller than Sam's.

Turn around and try again. Sure enough, another strike for Sam.

"Hey," Russ hollered with a grin, "it's my turn.

This one was almost a twin to Sam's first catch, and again the old man's face lit up with pride. I was reminded of our tour on Yellowstone Lake when he'd out-fished both Vernal and me, and recounted the tale for Russ's benefit.

We trolled for another hour or more, until the cirrus-veiled sun sank low in the southwest and the chilled air permeated our inactive bodies. At last Russ observed, "Must be time to head back."

He and I disassembled the gear; I hoisted the chain of heavy trout out of the water and laid the still-squirming mess on the deck. We then assumed our respective positions, Russ shoved the throttle forward and the boat leapt to a speedy return to the dock. There, reversing the morning's routine, we loaded the boat on its trailer and headed up the road.

But our tour was not yet complete. "It's traditional," said our guide as he pulled in and parked alongside the bar/restaurant at the top of the hill, "to check in at Crosby's before leaving for home."

It sounded like a swell idea to me, and to Sam as well.

As we entered the bar from the rear, through the door nearest the parking lot, I surveyed the surroundings; A bulletin board to my right was papered with Polaroids of big trout, either being held by proud fishermen or lying on a scale. The backs of three or four men were silhouetted against a panoramic view of Pyramid Lake beyond the bar. Two guys were shooting pool under a green-shaded, low-hanging lamp. The old man himself, Fred Crosby, was standing at ease behind the mahogany slab, at the moment mechanically wiping clean a drink glass.

As we crossed the room he looked up. "Get a big one toady?" he

"Naw," Russ answered, "just out for a ride." (A good fisherman never brags right away...lets 'em draw it out.) "But we do need to warm up."

"Hot brandies. Right?"

That sounded good. We nodded in assent.

As soon as we'd settled onto a trio of stools, the other patrons wanted to know how we'd done. Now Russ admitted that, although he hadn't caught anything, his partners had.

"Sam, here, he's the fisherman. I guess he's had a few years' experience. Eh, Sam?"

Sam chuckled. "Take me with you an' I' catch all you want."

Russ raised his hot brandy-mug. "Salute!"

"Saluta!" "Salute!" Sam and I followed suit.

The liquid felt warm and soothing on the way down, and in a matter of seconds I was warm again.

As I sat there, idly staring through the window at the lake and far-off Virginia Range, now diffused in twilight, my attention was drawn to the windmill across the street, that Russ had pointed out that morning. "There's my wind signal," he'd explained. "When you can't count the vanes you don't put in."

The poor-man's anemometer was now dead still.

An hour or so later, in total darkness, we arrived at our respective homes to the inevitable "How come you're so late?" from our wives. Not Sam's, of course, for she belonged to an earlier generation

of wives who understood man's fishing and hunting instincts, and who would care for the fish and game he brought home, cleaning, picking, skinning, whatever was required. I recorded our catch on film, cleaned the trout (there was no convenient place to do so at the lake) and within minutes we were seated at the table with a hot meal before us.

I think Sam was pleased with his day at Pyramid Lake. I know I was. For him it had been one more of many lifetime days of fishing; for me it was the first of dozens of wintertime trips to Pyramid Lake.

As a matter of record: In all the times Russ and I fished Pyramid Lake, I never caught a trout weighing over five-pounds (everything under 19-inches had to be released). But in spite of our low rate of "success," just being there after a week of tedium on the job was worthwhile and rewarding. Sometimes we made small talk. Sometimes we launched into profound discussion. Sometimes we reflected on the good things in life. Sometimes we sat for long periods of time without saying a word. I think Russ would agree, that out there was about as "close to heaven" as one could get.

Russ McOmber was a few years my junior. He was about six-feet tall, trim and athletic, had an easy manner and a wonderful sense of humor. Then the principal of a grade school in Reno, he had begun his career in education, along with his wife Mary, teaching in Green River, Utah. I do not recall the circumstances of their coming to Nevada.

Since he, too, held a management position, we often discussed the similarities and differences in our jobs. It was of great interest to me when the teachers, of all people, became unionized. An "association," I think it was called. Dealing with a union was new to Russ, so I tried to forewarn him of some of the pitfalls he'd encounter. Not that there was anything he could do about them.

Russ was a confident but careful skipper and would not even entertain the idea of crossing the lake if there were the possibility of high winds. A calm day, though, often found us trolling off of Hell's Kitchen, 15-miles from Sutcliffe where the rocky cliffs above were reflected in the deep dark water. It was the most awesome part of the lake, but we seldom caught any trout there. And in spite of our keeping a careful watch on the weather - if we observed dust rising around The Needles at the north end of the lake we immediately headed for Sutcliffe - once or twice we had to beat our way through rough seas back to the dock. It was times like that when I really appreciated Russ's skill at the helm.

Perhaps the worst weather we ever got caught in was north of Sutcliffe while trolling along the west shoreline, when a strong southwest wind came up unexpectedly. Russ steered close in to the shore, to take advantage of the bluffs' protection, but when it was impossible to keep our lines straight in the rough water we reeled them in. At Warrior Point he turned the boat around and headed back toward Sutcliffe.

Soon we were caught by gale force winds on our starboard beam. Three-foot waves crashed over the bow and spattered the windshield with alkaline water. Russ steered to starboard and closed in on the shoreline, where, in the lee of the banking, the water was less

excited. But now we were covered with dust that quickly turned to mud, and tumbleweeds. We discussed the advisability of beaching the boat, but, because of the rocks, ruled out that option.

Slowly, with a sure hand, Russ piloted us safely back to the dock at Sutcliffe. It was no easy task loading the boat onto its trailer but we somehow managed. And then, since it was still early in the afternoon, we retired to Crosby's to critique our adventure.

One time, in February, while warming up at Crosby's after an extremely cold day on Pyramid lake, Russ and I were treated to a bit of spontaneous entertainment I scarcely noticed the Volkswagen Beetle coming up the hill, dragging a fair sized boat-and-trailer behind it, nor did I see it park alongside Russ's rig outside. My first clue to the pending story was when a soaking-wet man entered the bar. He was wearing coveralls, and knee-high boots that sloshed with his every step.

The room went silent and all eyes turned to the stranger when he "waded" up to the bar and demanded, "Gimme a double-shot o' Beam and a Bud." With pursed lips he stood there, looking to his left and right, just waiting for someone to make a derogatory remark.

It was Crosby who broke the spell by asking, rather dramatically, "What in hell happened to you?"

Down went the double-shot and a quaff of brew before an answer came forth.

"You see that Volkswagen out there? You see that %#\$\$*# woman sitting in it? I'll tell you what happened!"

On he went with the story, warming to the vernacular as he proceeded.

When he and his wife (the woman in the Beetle) returned to the dock after a day's fishing, she went for the car-and-trailer while he prepared the boat for loading. She backed the rig down the ramp, until the trailer was in the water and the rear bumper of the car was at the surface. He climbed onto the trailer tongue, bow-rope in hand, and pulled the boat partway onto the trailer.

So far, so good. It was the way it should be done. But the boat was stuck on the trailer and the man shouted to his wife to back it a little farther. Good. This, too, worked okay. The boat was now resting in its cradle. It was time to pull out.

"Okay," the man ordered, making sure of his foothold on the tongue at water level, "let's go!"

Whereupon the Volkswagen's engine roared with power and the whole contraption began to move rapidly, and gurgling, in the wrong direction!

By the time the woman figured out how to stop it, the car was in deep water. Well, not too deep, only up to the floorboards under her feet. But there were three serious consequences of her actions. One, the engine, being in the rear, flooded and stalled; two, the man lost his balance and fell into the lake; three, the boat floated free. The only good thing was that the guy still had a hold on the bow line.

A helpful bystander came to the rescue, tied onto the Volkswagen bumper and, after the owner waded around and pushed his boat onto the trailer again, towed them ashore.

Miraculously, the engine started again (another fine testimonial to Hitler's car) and the little bug pulled the boat and its trailer up the steep hill to Crosby's.

"Damn," Russ sympathetically observed at the end of the story. "I suppose your crankcase is full of water and now you'll have to get a new engine."

The man gulped down another shot and the last of his beer, shook his head slowly and deliberately and replied, "No, sir, not a new engine...a new wife!" With that he slammed down the bottle, turned and made his exit.

The last we saw was the Volkswagen backing away from the bar, an angry man at the wheel and a subdued, perhaps even cowering, woman in the passenger seat. We could only wonder about the rest of the story.

Another, similar event took place at Pyramid Lake one day when Russ and I were trolling peacefully off the southeast shore. There, a sandy bluff ran along for a quarter-mile or more, at the base of which was a strip of narrow beach perhaps ten-feet wide. We were moving easterly, about five boat-lengths offshore. Russ was at the wheel. I was facing astern, watching our lines move gently up and down with the swells.

Disinterestedly, I observed a sedan drive down off the hill, turn and come toward us along the beach. As it approached, I noted that there were two people in it; probably a young couple seeking a secluded spot for necking.

"Look at that jerk," I alerted Russ. "He's goin' to get stuck for sure."

I should know I'd been there (stuck, that is) myself.

About that time, the sedan reversed direction and backed rapidly down the beach. And then, to our complete surprise, it turned and backed right into the lake. Now that took a lot of "dumb." It came to rest some three carlengths from dry land in two-feet of water, obviously stalled.

We chuckled and minded our own business. A few minutes later, though, while trolling in that direction, Russ steered close to the stranded vehicle. The couple was now standing on the beach. The man (or boy) cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted to us, but we could not hear him until Russ cut the motor.

"Hey, we need help?"

"Sorry...can't help," Russ shouted. "Too shallow. Can't come inshore."

Neither of them seemed terribly disappointed and walked away among the sand dunes, each with an arm around the other.

More often than not, it was very cold at Pyramid Lake in the wintertime; definitely long-underwear and down-jacket weather. Soon after my first trip with Russ, I learned to spike my thermos of coffee with brandy before heading out. Then, when I felt particularly cold or thirsty, I would tap the jug for relief and comfort.

Russ, on the other hand, always took a six-pack of beer along. It made me shiver to watch him drink that cold stuff. And another thing;

while my bladder begged to be emptied frequently in cold weather, Russ could go for hours without relief, even after downing several beers.

One day he ran out of beer early, and when he got thirsty I offered him a cup of my coffee.

"I never could understand your drinking that cold beer out here." I said, while pouring a cupful of the steaming stuff.

He took the cup in both hands and swallowed a big mouthful. "You devil, you," he grinned, "and all this time you had me believing you were drinking coffee." I shrugged.

From that time on, Russ often carried a thermos of "coffee" as well.

While fishing at Hell's Kitchen (Pyramid Lake) Russ and I had often searched the land above the extreme northeast shore with our eyes, and vowed to hunt for arrowheads there one day. But it was Ted Taelour who got us going, in the summer of 1969.

It was a difficult place to approach by land, so Russ agreed to take us in his boat. Under a blazing sun we put ashore south of Fox Bay, about halfway between Hell's Kitchen and Sweetwater Canyon. Once ashore, the three of us separated and combed the narrow beach and rocky ledges above. Knowing that we'd been preceded by hundreds of archeologists, both amateur and professional, I held out little hope of our finding anything worthwhile.

Surprisingly, we found quite a few chips and broken artifacts among the rocks. High above the lake, when I pulled a pack-rat's nest of sticks from under a ledge, I found, along with ubiquitous bits of bone and broken glass, a perfect point. It was approximately one-inch by two-and-a-half-inches in size, napped from a hunk of coarse agate. I guessed it to have been used as a projectile point or a hafted knife. Nearby, on a bench 100-feet above the lake, I found more broken parts and a couple of whole arrowheads.

Meanwhile, Ted was making finds of his own, chips and broken arrowheads, on a lower bench. (Ted was not about to climb higher than he had to.) I couldn't see Russ, but heard his call and made my way toward him. It was tough going, climbing first up then down over a precipice. He pointed to a way around a rock abutment, and I finally reached the ledge where he sat, in the shade, nursing the last drops of beer from a Coors can.

"I've got something here," he motioned to a small cave behind him, "see what you think of it."

It took a while for my eyes to adjust to the dim light of the north-facing cave, but then I made out a packrat's nest and some "sticks" tied together.

"It's a basket," I observed aloud. "Part of an Indian basket."

"I didn't take it out," Russ said. "Thought you might want a picture of it 'in situ'."

So I snapped a photo of it, and another of the shelter with the lake in the background before removing three or four basket fragments which we decided were parts of a winnowing tray.

"I wonder how it was missed before." Russ mused.

"Probably because it was out of sight and the rats only recently brought it to light," I volunteered. But who could say?

Seated comfortably in the shade of an overhanging rock, we pondered the advisability of our taking the artifacts away with us. But we decided that, just as with the stone points we had already collected, the woven fragments, most likely produced after Fremont passed that way in 1844, could be of little or no significance to the study of pre-history of the area. Professional archeologists had already removed hundreds of similar artifacts from like caves.

And so, after noting the location for the record, we picked up the fragments, climbed painstakingly down off the cliff and joined Ted back at the boat.

Our next port-of-call was farther north, at a point where the lake shore curved away from the steep mountain range. It was too shallow there to reach the sandy beach by boat, so we dropped anchor some 50-feet offshore. By now the air was so stifling hot I didn't mind having to wade ashore.

This was a poor place to hunt artifacts, primarily because a recent thunderstorm had washed a wall of mud, rocks and debris from the canyon a mile out onto the alluvial slope. Resembling a glacier or a volcanic flow 500-yards wide, its leading edge some ten-feet deep, it was a graphic example of Mother Nature's force. Of course, out there the example went virtually unnoticed. Had a similar flow occurred in, say, Gold Hill or Virginia City, homes would have been wiped out, people injured or killed, and it would have been front-page news.

The slide had not yet completely dried out, and walking on it proved to be most unsatisfactory. Besides, it was decidedly HOT! I estimated the temperature above the sand and rocks in that sunbathed corner of the world at 120-degrees Fahrenheit.

By the time I got back to the beach, Russ and Ted had stripped to their shorts and were up to their necks in the water, wallowing like African animals. Except for his wide-brimmed straw hat, Ted could have passed for a water buffalo.

The lake there was exceptionally clear above a sandy bottom, and devoid of its usual bloom of summer algae. So, despite my aversion to water, I joined them. It was the perfect ending for a "summer safari."

Then there was the time, a few years later, when Russ and his father and I narrowly escaped disaster on the lake. It was in the spring of the year, when Russ's folks, Mac and Adelaide, were in Sparks for a visit. Russ and Mac had already been to the lake once that week, and on this, their second trip, I got to go along.

It was a great day for an outing. There was a breeze blowing, but not too hard, the sun was out, but not too hot. We picked up the boat-and-trailer from the enclosed lot behind Crosby's bar — where Russ stored it to avoid having to haul it back and forth from Sparks — and together we launched it alongside the dock.

While Russ parked the rigs, Mac organized our gear in the boat and I installed the battery that Russ had taken to Sparks for recharging. In a matter of minutes our skipper was at the helm, his hand on the throttle/starter lever. Not surprisingly, the Mercury coughed and sputtered and didn't start right away. Russ cranked it again and again, with periodic rests, for five-minutes or more.

"You know," I said, by way of making conversation, "that's a unique motor there. It always sounds like that, like it's never going to start, but it always does."

However, today it was "no go."

At last Russ went ashore and brought his truck (a Chevrolet Suburban) down to the dock. We removed its battery and jumpered it to the boat's as a booster. Once again he engaged the starter. Once again the motor sputtered. Once again it resisted.

"Always starts, eh?" Mac said with a tinge of sarcasm.

I sensed that he, a very meticulous and well-organized individual, was somewhat critical of his son's maintenance methods. And so much for my earlier praise of the Mercury.

"Well," said Russ, "I guess we'll have to pull her out and see what's wrong."

We all turned to. The truck battery was replaced, Russ backed the trailer into the water under the boat, secured the boat and prepared to haul it up on dry land. I remained on board while Mac stood by on the dock.

The trailer had just cleared the water when Mac pointed at the underside of the bow and asked, "Where's that water coming from?"

I leaned over the side for a look. Sure enough, a stream the size of my little finger jetted from the bottom.

Water poured out for about ten minutes, during which time the three of us stood around discussing the problem. How did the hole come to be there? Why hadn't we noticed it before launching? How come we weren't aware of the leak when we were on board and the motor wouldn't start?

Now that was something to ponder, the motor's not starting, for it was the first time ever that it had not; at least when I was aboard. I prayerfully thanked God for that malfunction. Indeed, we all considered it divine providence for we had planned to cross the lake that day and fish along the east shore. We would have been near the middle of the lake before noticing anything untoward, and though we might have made it ashore before sinking, it would have been a disconcerting affair.

What had made the hole in the hull? Russ remembered that two days ago, after fishing with his dad and while loading the bouncing boat onto its trailer in a rough sea, it had come down hard on one of the guide rods. They hadn't noticed the hole then, but that must have been when the hull was punctured.

As to why we were unaware of water entering the bilge, it was because the deck was several inches above the keel, high enough to allow a lot of water to occupy the bilge space.

So ended our outing. Russ towed the boat back to Sparks, and got someone to patch the hole in the hull. But the fact that the fiberglass hull had become brittle with age led to his ultimately getting rid of the old yellow boat. And that was that.

In the late sixties and early seventies, Rita and I, with some or all of our kids, shared many a pleasant excursion with Russ and Mary and their kids. One such time was when we travelled with them, in separate vehicles, to Pinedale, Wyoming, to visit Mary's folks.

Pinedale, nestled below Fremont Lake at the western base of the Wind River Range, was (and probably still is) a typically western town. Mary's parents, Mark and May Routh, who were then either semior wholly-retired, owned a cabin there. It was more a house than a cabin, though its wood stoves and rustic appurtenances lent an upcountry atmosphere.

During our stay, Mary's father proudly took us to several fishing streams and attractions in that part of the state, among them a pristine lake in the foothills of the Wind River Range.

We drove to the magnificent upper reaches of the Green River, passing hundreds of grazing antelope along the way, to fish for trout. They were not biting at the Green River Lake, so we backtracked down the river, a wide stream that flowed, at that time of year, crystal clear over shallows of river rock and gravel.

At one of the few bridges across the river, Russ and I and the boys waded out with our lures, but caught very few of the wary rainbows. It would have been an ideal place to fly-fish at dawn or at dusk. After eating a picnic lunch beside one of the tributary creeks, we found the pan-sized brookies easier to attract.

Except for the conifer forests, that part of Wyoming was much like northern Nevada. The earth was dry and the smell of sage predominant. Herds of white-faced cattle grazed in lush meadows alongside clear-water streams. And there were very few people around to bother us.

We were almost back to Pinedale, traveling the paved highway after covering over 60-miles of graveled roads, when an oncoming truck threw a rock against the windshield of our Travelall (which I had purchased in 1967, more about that later). Not only did the missile startle me, it left a golf ball-sized blemish in the glass.

(In spite of that, and future blasting by sandstorms, that windshield would remain intact for well over 25-years. A fine testimonial to the glass of the period.)

The following day we took off in the general direction of Jackson Hole, turned off onto a good graveled road and wound up at a natural hot spring. Only the water was natural. A concrete pool had been constructed to accommodate swimmers. The gang, all but me, donned swimming suits and splashed around in the tepid water for an hour or more

While enjoying a picnic lunch at a table in a nearby shady grove, Rita, with surprise in her voice asked, "What is that?"

I looked up in time to see an ugly cow moose (is there any other kind?) crossing the driveway nearby, and raised my camera for a snapshot before she wandered off, apparently unconcerned by the presence of humanoids in her habitat.

Of particular interest to me, in the Pinedale country, was the "rendezvous" site; a grassy bluff above a bend in the Green River where, in the last century, fearless traders met with Indians to barter white man's goods for furs. Standing on a knoll, I pictured the scene as follows:

"Dozens of trappers have pitched their tents, apart from the scores of Indian tepees; smoke from hundreds of campfires curl upward in the chilled air, to merge and hang in a canopy over the low

meadows; restless horses and ponies, yapping dogs and chattering Indian women and children contribute to the general chaos; men of both races are engaged in drinking, carousing, fighting and merrymaking; and some time, when the time is right, they will get down to some serious trading. All of this will last (according to the journals of the times) for several days or weeks, and will be repeated next year, either here or at another chosen site somewhere in the intermountain west."

I looked around for an artifact, a remnant of those days of activity, but the ground had been picked clean of any vestige of man, red or white, over the intervening years from then to now.

One evening, at the bar in town, Rita and Mary tried to purchase an "appropriate" wine for dinner. But Pinedale had not yet evolved to that degree of sophistication. You had to drink whiskey or beer like the cowboys, or nothing at all.

The Rouths were outstanding hosts and it was with great reluctance that we left for home.

Before long, the McOmbers bought a camp-trailer like ours and together we went fishing, hunting, arrowhead collecting, and just plain camping. One of our first destinations was Frenchman Reservoir, in Plumas County, California. We set up our trailers in the pines near the head of a secluded bay on the southwest corner of the lake, in an area that would later be organized and reserved for group camping only. But then it was informal and un-confining, a great place for the kids to play and hike in the woods.

But no matter where they are, kids are likely candidates for accidents. Tony was lucky to escape serious injury, above our camp, when a good-sized boulder over which he was climbing came loose and fell on his leg. His bones were resilient and none was broken, but the impression left by the heavy boulder remained long after he was freed by his young companions.

On another occasion, we all camped by Ninemile Bay at Pyramid Lake. It was before the Washoe County Park Department built a marina and campground at nearby Warrior Point, on land leased from the Indians. Before we had even set up our trailers, Marilee, the eldest of the two McOmber girls, found an arrowhead in the sand. Of course we all set about looking for more but to no avail. She was the lucky one that day.

Another favorite camping place was the pinyon forest near Sweetwater Creek, northwest of the Sweetwater Ranch. It was a site that, judging by the bare ground and abundance of rock fireplaces, had been used for that purpose, by both Indians and white-eyes, for years. A ditch, diverting water from the main creek, had been in existence so long its banks had grown up with willows, a fact that at first led me to believe it was a natural stream.

In the fall we harvested pine nuts and looked for arrowheads in a wide area around the camp, and actually discovered several rock-circles, the kind put together by Indians for hunting blinds, and some very good petroglyphs.

It was a springtime trip to Sweetwater, though, again with the McOmbers, which proved to be the most memorable for a variety of reasons. It was the season of Easter, 1971. Our kids were out of school, and it seemed like a good time to take them all out camping. In order to make the most of our time, we left town on Friday afternoon, late, but well before dark.

It was 70-miles south to Wellington, twenty more to the upper Desert Creek turnoff, at which point we stopped while Russ and I discussed the merits of attempting that road or proceed to the familiar site at Sweetwater Creek. From where we stood the graveled road to Desert Creek appeared to be dry, so we agreed to go for it.

"You lead the way," Russ announced with confidence, "I'll follow you anywhere."

And so began another adventure.

The sun was now low in the sky, but the weather was clear and we should approach the creek, some six-miles in, in time to pick a suitable campsite before nightfall. We had gone less than five miles when I came to a sparse grove of pinyon pines and a steep hill. To avoid having to change gears in mid-hill, at the foot of the slope I shifted the Travelall into four-wheel-drive and a lower gear, then applied full power.

But I had not anticipated the true condition of the road. We were but a hundred-yards up the hill when I noted snowdrifts in the shadows off to my left. Coincidentally I felt the wheels beneath us sink into the mud. The Travelall slowed perceptibly, in spite of my floor-boarding the accelerator, and I shifted to a lower gear (rather nicely I thought) in order to maintain headway. If I could just coax it another 200-yards we'd be on top. I sure didn't want to be stopped on this steep, muddy, narrow, sidling place.

The road veered slightly to the right and both Travelall and trailer began to slide sideways. Fortunately, I was ready for it and immediately jammed the clutch and brake pedals with both feet. Hard!

Everything came to a halt. We weren't going over the side after all.

For the first time since beginning our climb I looked in my rearview mirror, and was relieved to see that Russ had wisely waited at the bottom of the hill.

"Now what?!" Rita asked.

I shrugged. "We'll figure out something."

As I recall, we had previously traded some of our kid passengers. I think Mark and little Johnny were riding with us. I do know that Glen had gone with Russ. I know, because Glen often remarked that he thought it was fun to get stuck, and now he wasn't with us to enjoy it.

Rita stepped out into the mud and, carrying Johnny, who was but two or three years old at the time, led the other kids down to the McOmbers' vehicle.

Meanwhile, Russ had slogged his way up the hill. Together we surveyed the situation. It was now almost dark. We had to come up with a sensible course of action, quickly.

The trailer sat precariously close to the downhill edge of the roadway. Below it a steep, tree-studded slope dropped a hundred-feet

or more before leveling out. I silently thanked God for the big pine tree just over the side; it would provide a convenient barrier if the Shasta should happen to slip that way. There was more room on the opposite side of the road, the ditch side.

"Well," I at last suggested, "if we unhitch the trailer I think I can get the Travelall up to the summit."

"And then what?" asked my friend.

A good question. There was no obvious way of then getting the trailer to the top.

I tried another suggestion. "If I turn around up there, maybe I can get it (the Travelall) past the trailer here." I indicated the space between it and the ditch.

"Then what?"

"Then we'll turn the trailer around in its tracks, hitch it up to the Travelall again and get-the-hell out of this place."

Russ shook his head in doubtful agreement.

After blocking the main wheels of the trailer, I placed the castor-wheel under the tongue and jacked it clear of the hitch. I was then able to drive the Travelall, slipping and sliding all the way, to the summit and back. Now came the first big hurdle, to pass beside the trailer without ending up in the ditch.

The first attempt failed, because I couldn't steer it out of the old wheel-ruts. The second attempt failed, when the front wheels suddenly climbed out of the ruts and pulled toward the deep ditch.

At last, with Russ, Rita, Tony and Mark all pushing against the side of the Travelall to keep it from slipping sideways, I eased the big four-wheel-drive safely past the trailer. What a relief.

Now we had to turn the trailer end-for-end. This was not an easy task on smooth, level pavement; could we accomplish it here on a muddy, sloping sidehill?

With my shovel I dug through a six-inch layer of gumbo to frozen ground, and then cut a semi-circular trench for the "nose wheel" to run in. I then shoveled the mud clear of the left wheel, and dug another trench for the right wheel to track. With the five of us pushing and pulling, after a couple of starts and stops we succeeded in turning the Shasta halfway around, crossways of the road. At this point we attached a rope between the trailer tongue and the Travelall. We'd let the machine do the rest of our work.

Voila! Success! All that remained was to mate the trailer to the Travelall and drive away to somewhere else. Anywhere else would do.

It was now well after ten o'clock and as dark as pitch. I drove to the bottom of the hill, stopped, and got out to help Russ turn his rig around.

Only then did I learn that the McOmbers had suffered a loss. While the rest of us were up on the hill, getting the Travelall and trailer turned around, Mary, Marilee, Karen, Glen and Johnny, along with a dog and a pet bird, had stayed in the McOmbers1 Suburban. Sometime during that time the bird expired, probably from exposure to the cold.

We now drove back down the road to the highway, and south to the Sweetwater Creek site. It was nearly eleven o'clock by the time we got there, and then, much to our chagrin, we found the place occupied by a

dozen or more campers with trailers, tents and Jeeps. When we stopped at the edge of their circle of firelight, a couple of men approached and we learned that they were from Placerville, California. They said they were members of a "Jeep Posse," out for the holiday weekend.

"You're welcome to camp up above," they offered. But we neither wished to search for a suitable site in the dark, nor share the pine grove with a bunch of latter-day cowboys. So we turned around, drove a mile back down the road, pulled off into the sagebrush and prepared to spend the night.

Rita heated a big pot of soup, which she had prepared earlier, but none of us was really hungry, having passed that stage a long time ago. I guess the rest of the gang ate, but I just hit the sack and went out like a light.

In the morning, when the sun found its way through the pinyon trees, our group of hitherto unhappy campers came astir. Rita and Mary prepared breakfast, and after eating we felt up to returning to the occupied campsite for a look around. Sure enough, by the light of day the situation appeared better. There was room to drive past the Californians, and we could camp in the trees a hundred yards above them.

Within a half hour we were ready to move our trailers. I said to Russ, "You lead the way today...I'll follow you!"

The ground was dry in the occupied campsite, which was mostly out in the open, but up above the trees were close together and there were signs of recent snowdrifts in the shadows. Russ found a likely-looking place to park, and made a turn to the left ahead of me. I drove on, intending to circle around and place our trailer parallel to his, door-to-door. But halfway around, the Travelall dropped into a mud hole and came to a stop. After a couple of futile attempts to move on, and not being in a mood to shovel mud to gain a few more feet, I said, "This looks like a good place to stop."

The area in front of the trailer door was dry. It would do just fine. I unhitched the Travelall and, with a lot of help and several flat rocks, leveled the trailer right there where it was. Time to quit fooling around and get to doing the things we had come to do.

That day we drove up the canyon along Sweetwater Creek, not quite to its source in California (our camp was less than a mile from the border), explored old mine diggings and new, fished for trout and hunted for Indian artifacts. It was while exploring the bluff above the original creekbed that we discovered the petroglyphs, about 200-yards south of our campsite. Mary wanted to haul one of the incised boulders away but we dissuaded her, citing its weight as at least one good reason for not doing so.

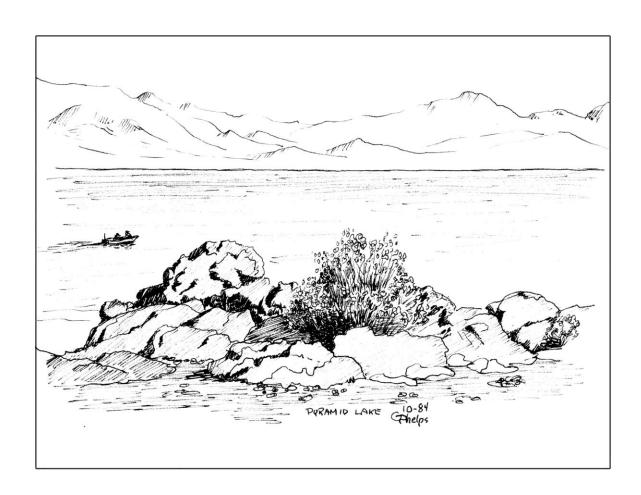
In addition to our again getting stuck in the mud when leaving the campsite, another incident made this particular trip unforgettable. It began one morning, when the weather was fine. One could not have ordered better weather for camping. By nine-thirty we were all outside in the bright sunlight, setting up tables and chairs in preparation for an outdoor breakfast of hotcakes and bacon that Russ had already started on his Coleman gas stove. Although our view was admittedly limited, there was not a cloud to be seen in the sky.

A few minutes later, when we sat down to eat, a bank of cumulus clouds appeared above the high (over 11,000') mountains to the west. Less than an hour later we were scrambling to put chairs, tables and boxes of goods under cover, for it was snowing!

People in many parts of the country brag about how fast their weather can change. "If you don't like it," they say, "wait five minutes and it'll change." But never before (or since) had I witnessed such a sudden transformation from shirt-sleeve to down-jacket conditions.

But our spirits were not the least bit dampened. It was to cope with such things, after all, that we camped with the luxury of modern conveniences; snug little trailers, dependable vehicles, plenty of food and clothing, heaters to take off the chill. The fast-moving storm quickly blew away and soon we were out and about enjoying the holiday weekend.

Come to think of it, no matter when the holiday fell, no matter what the calendar date, it was more than likely to be stormy in the Great Basin at Easter time.



CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO THE PLANT STAFF JOB

Meanwhile, back on the job. It was September of 1966 before I completed my work on the technical staff, when the new TH-radio channels were turned up for service on the Oakland-Scipio route. The circuit carrying capacity of the route, including the initial TD-2 and later the TH Radio systems, had been increased to 11,800. Not so much when compared to the fiber-optic route capacities of today, but impressive in those days.

My involvement in the Oakland-Scipio route - from the time of our locating the sites in 1962 to the establishment of service in 1964 and the addition of channels in 1966 - had always been challenging, ofttimes frustrating, never dull or boring. Its completion marked the end of my career in the technical, equipment maintenance side of the business. Now I would leave my fellow tollies and enter a foreign world, one dominated by exchange-telephone people. It, too, would be a challenging job but of a totally different sort, one in which I would be dealing almost exclusively with personnel problems and statistical figures. Never again would I really get my hands on a piece of electronic equipment, except as a hobbyist.

And so, leaving behind the job that I cherished most of all in my career, I packed my books and papers and moved out of 328 South Wells. My predecessor, Bill Nelson, had long since vacated the office at 645 East Plumb Lane so I moved in, ready to assume the duties commensurate with my title of "Plant Supervisor."

Such moves "come with the territory." It was one of the prices paid, especially when employed by a large company, in return for the security of a steady paycheck and future stability. I was now earning a salary of \$14,400 per annum (but no extra pay for working overtime) and had no right to complain.

A word about Bell System titles: Many of them were rather non-descriptive or misleading. My new title might lead you to believe that I would supervise the whole Plant Department, not just the plant manager's staff, as was the case.

This was my first private office and it was a beauty. Located on the second floor of the rear wing, it offered a fine view of the

courtyard below and, over the roof of the south wing to lofty Mt. Rose in the distance. It would become a habit of mine, when the need arose to break the tedium, to turn my chair toward the window and drink in the scenery.

But right now there were more important things to do. My first order of business was to get acquainted with the plant staff. It was their job, and now mine, to coordinate various aspects of the plant maintenance effort, particularly with respect to methods and procedures, practices and results.

I had four immediate subordinates, second-level supervisors, as follows:

Frank Tolle, plant operating assistant, was an old-timer from the construction group and was responsible for things dealing with outside plant, open wire and cable facilities. Frank's two first-levels were Max Goodman and Don Olds. Max watched over the aerial and underground cable plant. It was he who had trained me and my peers, in Elko, on "K" cable restoration procedures. Don was responsible for outside plant methods and results. On his previous assignment in public relations, Don had done the news story of our microwave-site selection project in 1962.

Harold Doig, plant staff supervisor, was responsible for the exchange plant methods and results. His helpers at the time were Ev Weller and Bob Whittey, and later George Riolo, all three of whom were of my generation of Bell employees but were, of course, exchange-telephone types.

Jack Overton, plant staff supervisor, a former cable splicer, headed up the personnel and safety group. He had three first-levels in his group: Ruth Morrison and Lois Fisher, each with five or six non-management clerks, and Dewey Carroll, a construction supervisor with whom I'd become acquainted back in the 1950s, when he worked on our antenna towers out of Elko.

Howard Guinn, plant staff supervisor, formerly a telephone installation/repair man, was in charge of overall plant results and, most importantly, the plant department forecasts and budgets. Working for him were Hap Snelling and Al Fialdini. Al, my third-trick companion in Elko, was the only tollie in the group.

I now had two dozen people to look after, half of them (pardon the expression) girls. The latter would be a challenge to my patience, but my biggest challenge lay in another direction, on the opposite side of the west wall of my office. It would be no easy task dispatching my obligations in a manner to suit Jim Dodson, the plant manager.

There was another important person in Dodson's staff quarters, his secretary. Barbara Carlson occupied the desk just outside Jim's door, and reported directly to him. However, she sometimes helped with my letter-writing chores.

Barbara was new in the position, since Lena Kemp (my erstwhile nemesis) had recently retired. How fortunate for me, that Lena had gone before I arrived on the scene. Barbara was quite her opposite in temperament; efficient but not overbearing.

I called a meeting of my new second-levels, all of whom I already knew by association. They made me feel welcome, freely discussed their

responsibilities with me, and reviewed their current projects and problems. But it would take them a while, after losing a supervisor with whom they'd had such good relations, to get to know and accept me as their boss, especially since I knew virtually nothing about their jobs.

I could see right off that it was the personnel side of the house that would be the most frustrating. I'd have to deal with grievances of all kinds, real and imagined, many of them involving new governmental edicts and rulings. (Bad enough having to deal with union demands; worse to be saddled with illogical federal requirements.)

It wouldn't be all bad, though. I would learn a great deal about the telephone business, things that I previously had no need to know. Nor was it an officious and stuffy environment. In addition to their being competent, most of my subordinates were endowed with a sense of humor, especially the old-timers Tolle and Doig.

Frank, who had been a plant construction man his entire career (a career now nearing its end), was a big man and independent. He made his own decisions and bothered me as little as possible with details. He made it a habit to take most of his vacation days one or two at a time throughout the calendar year, with little or no prior notice. It was virtually impossible for the payroll clerk (and me) to keep track of him. When I half-seriously accused him of being gone more than he was on the job, he chuckled, "You'll have whiskers some day." But he did his job well, and kept me and Dodson out of trouble. What more could I ask of him?

Harold was a small man, physically (with mustache and glasses he somewhat resembled Groucho Marx), but was a giant when it came to knowledge of the installation and repair side of the business. He was more open than Frank, and filled me in on things that he thought I should know even if I didn't particularly want to hear about them. He, too, was near retirement age, but maintained an unusually high energy level.

Jack, a brusque sort of a guy, wisely let his people manage their own jobs. He didn't get very involved in personnel matters, but showed a lot of interest in safety and accident-prevention rules and procedures.

Howard was different from the others. While he had worked in the exchange world, his background included very little time as a field supervisor. He would have had, in my opinion, a hard time bossing a crew. But in the position of "budgeter" he was very well suited.

Every division plant manager in California had a staff like Dodson's, but with a district-level manager in each discipline; personnel, methods, results, budgets and safety. Since those same disciplines in Nevada were managed by second-level supervisors, it was my job to attend all of their conferences, some of which were held every six months or so in San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego or Reno. Because I was not very conversant with exchange-telephone systems, I took my appropriate second-level supervisor with me to those conferences, or sent him to represent me in my absence. One of them, Harold Doig, was well known by the California district-levels and was accepted as one of their rank. They respected him for his knowledge of the business and listened advisedly

to his remarks, recognizing the fact that Nevada Bell, because of its relatively small size, often got the jump on Pacific Company with respect to new methods and practices.

When it was my turn to host the conference (they loved to meet in Reno, where they could visit the casinos after hours) I'd make the introductions then turn over the meeting to Harold.

Most of the conferences lasted three or four days, and always included cocktails in the evenings before dinner. It was then that many agenda items were really decided, in the informal and relaxed atmosphere of one of the conferees' rooms.

I hated to lose Harold but he retired, after forty-four years of dedicated service, in November of 1968. At his request we had only a small dinner for him, attended by a handful of his closest associates and wives.

But I was not to be left in the lurch when Harold retired. Vic Miller agreed to take his place, bringing his own brand of expertise, organizational ability, experience and exchange background with him. (It is a fortunate manager who can surround himself with competent people.)

Perhaps the most interesting part of my new job was sitting with my peers in Jim Dodson's staff meetings, which he held almost weekly. Included were Jerry Miller, from southern Nevada; Bill Nelson, who now had the toll group in northern Nevada; Ed Riesbeck, manager of the exchange forces in all of Nevada except the south; Bob Bolander, in charge of outside plant construction in the state; Chet Bramlett, head of the technical staff; and Bill Shaffer (the antagonist), head of building maintenance and motor vehicles. Together we ran the state of Nevada's plant department.

Jim's meetings were semiformal but businesslike. The old man always let us know what was happening "above," and demanded our utmost attention to, and ingenuity in, coming up with ways to improve our operations. He asked pointed, often loaded questions. When I responded, I found my opinions sometimes in alliance with others, sometimes in total disagreement. Not surprisingly, I generally sided with Bill Nelson and Jerry Miller, whose toll organizations were relatively small but familiar to me.

When it came to matters relating to buildings and vehicles, though, it was "all of us versus Shaffer," he who invariably "stumbled over a dime to pick up a penny." For example, he wanted to use only retreaded tires on Company vehicles. It was an impractical practice in mainly rural Nevada where a flat tire could cost our technicians (whose loaded hourly-wage-rate exceeded the price of a new factory tire) hours of lost time. Dodson sided with us in that particular matter, but finally decreed a test evaluation of retreads. As one might expect, the results of the test, compiled by Shaffer, were slanted in favor of his recommendation.

It is axiomatic of test evaluations that figures can be made to mislead. "Do I want to prove it in or prove it out?" is a question often asked by staff and engineering folks.

In the end, the guys in the hinterlands would get the better of Shaffer. When a tire blew they'd purchase a new one at the nearest Standard Station, and charge it against the Company's credit card.

Such an action was sure to invite a mild reprimand from one's boss ("You know you shouldn't have done that") but it saved time and money in the long run.

Dodson was a master of analogies, and he frequently used a grease pencil and easel when speaking. He would punctuate each salient point by stabbing it with his crayon, coming back to it again and again for emphasis. Often, like a cartoonist, he'd continue the story on the following sheet or sheets.

Contrary to popular belief, in the business world there never seemed to be a time of prosperity. Even when the Company was making a reasonable profit (as allowed by the PSC) our operations were in a mode of cost constraint. Oh sometimes, near the end of the year, if our expenses were coming in under budget, we'd hurriedly spend money on those maintenance items previously postponed. But for the most part we operated as if in a recession.

One year, when it appeared that the guys in the field were squandering dollars, Dodson came up with some wonderful analogies. One of them was his "Hotel Chain Story." He drew a big hotel on the easel, surrounded by a dozen smaller ones across the United States.

"The corporation is making money," he said, encircling the whole with his big crayon. "These three are well managed and doing just great...these (the majority) are doing okay. But this one is not doing well. It receives money from the corporation and stays in business, and to an outsider it appears to be just as viable as the rest. But it's not contributing its share. Now, if you were running the business what would you do?"

The answer, of course, was obvious.

"Now let's assume that this big hotel is AT&T, the rest are the Bell Operating Companies, and this non-contributor is Nevada Bell. We've got to run this little company just as profitably as the rest. Sure we're different. We have a lot of unusual circumstances...a small base...lots of miles between exchanges...high operating costs. But we've got to compete with the big boys."

His point was understood and well taken.

Another of his analogies was the "Leaky Water Tank." He drew a big tank full of water at the top of the easel. Leading from the tank were several pipelines, each with a valve or "spigot" to control the flow. One of the pipelines had a leak, illustrated by water "dripping" from the tap. As it leaked the level of water in the tank lowered appreciably.

"In January, this tank was full of expense money," he said, "enough to last the year. But one or more of you has a leaky tap.

The money's running out and we still have three months to go. Now I want you all to go out of here and identify that leaky tap and fix it. And if you can't fix it...I'll find somebody who can!"

Throughout the remainder of the year a popular phrase around the plant department was, "Don't bother me with your problems, I'm fixing a leaky spigot."

A favorite of mine was Jim's "Truck Driver" analogy. It seems a truck driver pulled over to the side of the road and stopped, got out, and with a long pole started beating the sides of his enclosed van. A

stranger, seeing this unusual behavior, approached him and asked, "I say, what in the devil are you beating on the sides of that truck for?"

"Well," the driver responded without pause, "I'm haulin' two tons o' canaries in this one-ton truck so I gotta keep half of 'em flyin' all the time."

As a manager, with sometimes twice as many things to do as I had time for, I could relate that story.

I think Dodson appreciated my being on his staff, because the toll maintenance portion of the business, what with a number of new Nevada Bell microwave-radio routes in addition to those of the AT&T Company, was significant. He would frequently enter my office, or call me into his, and ask questions relating to a toll problem or procedure.

Part of Dodson's genius was the way he utilized the brains of a subordinate. He would "describe" an idea to me - such as a planned change in policy, organization or personnel - then ask my opinion. It was my nature to respond candidly and truthfully.

I particularly remember one such incident: Before his staff meeting, to "test the wind" Jim discussed several agenda subjects with me. It so happened that I took an opposing view to every one of them. Later, toward the end of his meeting, after laying out a new scheme for reorganizing one of the maintenance groups, he decided to take a poll.

"What's your opinion?" he asked each of us in turn.

When it was my turn I answered matter-of-factly, "Sounds like a good plan to me."

Jim did a double-take, drew himself up straight in his chair and said with emphasis, "Well! That's the first time today you've agreed with me!"

When the meeting was over and the others had gone Jim came to my office, took a seat and talked about the plan (the subject of which I've forgotten) for some time. When he got up to leave, he said, "By the way, much as I like my men to agree with me, don't ever say you do if you don't." I think most good bosses believe in that maxim.

Slowly but surely I learned my new job. Among other things, I found that dealing with the budget was a never-ending process. Adjustments to forecasts and spending had to be made every quarter, based on current costs and results, and in the last quarter of the year when the annual department budget was due to be forwarded to the parent company (PT&T), the process became downright grueling.

This budget, consisting of estimates of future material costs and forecasts of workload requirements, the latter expressed in work-units-per-hour, was the product of Howard Guinn and his apprentice, Al Fialdini. However, every supervisor in the state was to some extent involved. Everyone was required to forward reams of paper proving how much work was to be done, routine and other, in the upcoming year. This information was collated, studied, pondered and corrected when necessary (the man in the field was typically less interested in paperwork than in getting the day-to-day job done, and his figures

often reflected the fact) by Howard and Al in working out the department forecast, which was matched against wages and overhead costs to come up with the multi-millions of dollars required.

Howard had had several years' experience in forecasting and budgeting, but Al was a fast learner. In fact, Al would rise above his teacher in certain aspects of the job, particularly with respect to the toll side of it, of which AT&T's portion was significant.

While Jim Dodson, in my opinion a one-of-a-kind outstanding manager, did harbor a couple of peculiar quirks. For one, he could hold a grudge against a certain individual forever. When a repair foreman in Reno allegedly shirked his responsibilities, Jim had him banished to Ely and never had an approving word for him thereafter.

On the other hand, he had a heart of gold. He could hardly bring himself to discipline or fire a crony. He'd see to it that the old friend maintained his position, even if that individual had outlived a capacity for productivity. An example sticks in my memory, as it adversely affected my staff group.

The subject was an experienced telephone man, and was once an expert in the field of teletype. But over the years he succumbed to the influence of John Barleycorn. As a result, he could no longer adequately function as a field supervisor. The logical but hard thing to do would have been to insist on his early retirement, demote him, or at least see that he enlisted in an AA program. Instead, Jim had him moved to my staff, reporting to Harold Doig. I wasn't a bit happy with the arrangement and neither was Doig, who had no room in his group, organizationally or physically, for an add. So Harold and I agreed to set up a desk for the man in the middle of the staff area, which just happened to be in line-of-sight from Dodson's desk.

Jim could not avoid seeing his old associate there, shuffling papers, chain-smoking foul-smelling cigarettes. Further, the man had an annoying habit of slowly and deliberately snuffing out his cigarette butts and stacking them, like cordwood, in an ashtray.

"Can't you find something better for him to do?" Jim asked me one day, "and a corner for him to do it in?"

It was a question best left unanswered.

While heading-up Dodson's staff I inherited one job almost beyond the call of duty; that of representing him in his absence at the Vice President and General Manager's staff meeting. This meeting was held every Monday morning without fail, and was attended by Bob McAdam, Garwood's assistant, the heads of the various departments, accounting, commercial, engineering, plant, traffic and treasury, and usually one or more district and/or lower-level managers involved in the day's agenda.

The board room at 645 Plumb Lane was a comfortable place for a meeting. A long, slightly elliptical, mahogany conference table occupied the center of the room, surrounded by enough cushioned swivel rockers to seat Garwood, all of the department heads and more. The ceiling and walls were done in beige acoustical board, the latter a backdrop for a dozen or more original Nevada scenes painted by Lyle Ball.

(A prominent local artist, Ball had been commissioned to do the pictures, depicting historical events or places, for the covers of

Nevada Bell's annual telephone directory. For example, one of them depicted Lake's Crossing, the first bridge across the Truckee River in Reno.)

At first I felt constrained in the company of all those high-level managers. But after a while I learned that while they were smart about many things they had their faults just like the rest of us. My job was to carry Dodson's messages (if any) to the meeting, gather information to take back to him, and to make no serious commitments in his behalf.

Garwood and Dodson shared one important characteristic: Each, in his own way, was dedicated to the success of Nevada Bell. But there the similarity ended. Garwood, a formally educated man, knew little about the workings of telephone plant. He was more attuned to business, financial and public relations matters. Dodson, on the other hand, was an up-from-the-ranks, self trained, self made man. And while he had a really good head for business, he was not one to "back and fill" around people of rank or political stature. Fortunately, each was in a position to utilize his skills to the best advantage of the Company.

However, although few people knew the extent of it, Dodson harbored a terrible antipathy toward his boss. Whenever possible he would find a way to be "otherwise occupied" on Monday mornings, so he wouldn't have to communicate with Garwood in the meeting. It was a shameful situation, and embarrassing to me when Paul would look over his half-moon spectacles and ask, "Well, where's Jim this morning?"

If he was out of town it was easy to answer, but sometimes Jim would advise me of his intentions just before meeting-time. "You're it, Buck," he'd say, pumping my hand in mock congratulation. "Tell the old buzzard I've got more important things to do."

As if I'd repeat that message!

Sitting in on Garwood's staff meetings was very educational. It was there that I learned how the telephone business was really run. (Was run; I suspect that it is operated quite differently nowadays.") Matters of public relations, telephone rates and tariffs were always high on the agenda, service results and customer complaints were not far down the list.

I usually maintained a low profile in the meetings, but was often called upon to explain a service outage or respond to a particular customer complaint. Garwood encouraged people with problems to call him directly, bypassing the standard lines of organization. The practice made the customer feel good but often actually slowed the process of correcting the trouble.

I had never become involved in politics, beyond the voting booth, and was really soured on the subject when, after joining Dodson's staff, I went to an election year "command performance" at Garwood's home. It was a management-oriented political meeting, apparently within the law as long as it was not held on Company premises. And attendance by all third-level managers and above was mandatory.

Cocktails and hors d'œuvres were served, then Paul Garwood and Bob McAdam took the floor and explained why the election of certain candidates was important to our Company's future success. Toward the

end of the session, the names of the candidates running for top offices (federal and state of both parties) were listed on an easel. We were then individually polled, and expected to name the candidate(s) of our choice and pledge a certain amount of money to his campaign. I was appalled. I had no idea that such a meeting could take place in these United States. (As in the future it could not, legally.)

Peer pressure - or, as in this case superior pressure - is a powerful thing and I was extremely nervous. Still, I decided that when it came my turn to respond I would name the candidates of my choice (most of them Republicans) and add that I'd prefer to make my contributions in private, directly to the individuals. It was a relief to learn that I was not alone in that decision. Several of my associates were of the same persuasion.

That meeting was not the first of its kind, but it was the last. The following year, even before PACs (Political Action Committees) came into being, the job of raising funds for political candidates was accomplished in a more discrete manner.

Jim Dodson had always worked hard on behalf of his plant department subordinates, particularly in the areas of position titles and salaries. He firmly believed that Nevada's managers were being short-changed. (No doubt he had his own salary in mind as well.) But it was in the last year of his stewardship that he took his campaign to the extreme. It was a battle eventually lost, but one which indirectly contributed to the betterment of us all. At the time of its waging, however, that battle proved to be a source of embarrassment to Jim, and to those of us directly involved.

The episode began when an article appeared in the Pacific Telephone Magazine describing a Southern California toll district as being "the largest...sprawled over 44,225 square miles of desert country." Jim took immediate exception to the story, and set about to both discredit it and blow the horn for Nevada's even bigger toll job. His "ultimate weapon" consisted of a ten-page, spiral-bound, pseudo p.t.m. (Pacific Telephone Magazine) with the following cover words:

p.t.m. "NEVADA SUPPLEMENT"

By: NEVADA PLANT Assisted by: Bill Shakespeare & Lucretia

Jim wisely added the words, "COMPANY CONFIDENTIAL." The gist of the whole production, to which my staff and I contributed the statistical facts and figures, was a comparison of our North Nevada Toll district (Bill Nelson's), whose territory encompassed nearly 95,000 square miles, to the San Bernardino Toll district, which was only half as big. The S.B. district had a few more people (173 vs. 162), but in almost every other category Bill Nelson's numbers were greater; i.e., bigger geographical area, more radio and carrier routes and sites, more test facilities, more vehicles and tools, even more exchange facilities. (The latter, in Nevada's remote small towns, were included in the toll district's responsibilities.) Even Nelson's district productivity results were better than San Bernardino's.

To emphasize his point, and to gain the desired attention of his superiors, Jim likened Nevada to the damsel in Shakespeare's "Rape of Lucrece."

"Unsuspecting Nevada," he wrote, "like the heroine in that famous poem, was similarly plucked and potted like an innocent dove."

He went on to quote several verses of the classic piece, ending with, "Lucrece 'sheathed a stiletto in her harmless breast.' But no stiletto for Nevada. We want...recognition, that's all."

He then proceeded to compare the two districts' salaries. At the time of his study, the California district man was receiving a salary roughly 14-percent higher than Nevada's, for what equated to fewer responsibilities. (All of California's district-levels were higher paid.)

The article ended with a plea to have Nevada's district positions immediately upgraded, without raises, followed by evaluation and salary increases commensurate with those in California.

But Dodson neglected to acquaint Paul Garwood with his intentions and took the production directly to the Vice President (toll) in San Francisco. Whereupon the "Fit hit the Shan."

I could only guess at the executive officer's reaction. Those of us close to the booklet's author speculated that Mobratten and staff concluded that the old man had finally flipped his lid. At any rate, like a bolt of lightning the order came down to "destroy all copies of the production." (There were probably no more than six in existence. At least one of them, addressed in Jim's handwriting to, "Mr. Phelps, Personal," has been preserved for posterity.)

As indicated above, Dodson's epistle may have done more good than harm, even without the widespread distribution he might have hoped for. Though Nevada's management positions would never be raised to the level of California's, they were soon re-evaluated and upgraded.

I was a beneficiary of that evaluation. In October of 1968, a few months after Jim's retirement, I was promoted "in situ." That is, my job responsibilities remained the same but my title was upgraded from "plant supervisor" to "division plant supervisor." I received no raise in pay at the time but was now a full district-level manager.

For the record, almost twenty years to the day after beginning my career with Nevada Bell, I was earning, and I do mean earning, \$16,400 per year.

Paul Garwood would retire in 1971, after 44-years of Bell System service, twenty-five of them in Nevada. At the ceremony he was lauded not only for his accomplishments in behalf of the Company but also for his civic achievements. He had once been named "Man of the Year" by the Reno Chamber of Commerce, and "Garwood Drive," northwest of the airport off Terminal Way, was named in his honor.

When Jim Dodson approached the age of sixty-five, in 1968, he had been a telephone man for 46-years, beginning as a lineman in Placerville. Jim had no wish to retire but in those days mandatory retirement at age-65 was a Company policy. He fought the rule but of course he had to go, even though he appeared to be in the prime of his life.

It was traditional for a retiring employee's supervisor to arrange the ceremony. In Jim's case, because of his dislike for the boss, it was with great reluctance that he agreed to have a party at all, and then on condition that Garwood not attend. So the job of arranging the celebration fell to Bob McAdam, Garwood's right-hand man, and most of the legwork was done by Dodson's longtime associates; Ted Brown and Bill Nelson in particular, and my staff.

In the end it all worked out quite well. A sit-down dinner, followed by accolades and presentations, it was probably one of the biggest and best retirement parties ever held in Nevada Bell. Pacific Company Vice President William Mobratten, a capable leader who would go on to bigger and better positions with AT&T, and with whom Jim had worked closely on plant matters in recent years, made a complimentary speech and presented the service pin and retirement I.D. card. Other presentations were made on behalf of the Telephone Company and the Telephone Pioneers of America.

Among the gifts was a unique lamp, crafted by Al Pellegrini (a construction foreman) from parts of an ancient telephone pole and with purple-glass insulators. It was a work of art. Frank Tolle and Max Goodman recounted stories of Jim's past, some of them bordering on the unmentionable; stories of wild, impromptu parties in remote Nevada towns. Jim's final speech was a classic, incorporating his usual mix of anecdotes, "needles" and accolades.

I captured the audio on a tape recorder, and later made a copy for myself and gave the original to Dodson. (My copy eventually went to Phil Hutchinson, when he was active in the Telephone Pioneers club, but was recently returned to my archives.)

A man by the name of Roy Powers moved in behind Jim Dodson. Roy, with whom I had been acquainted when he worked on Joe Polen's staff in San Francisco, was a gentleman of medium height and stout build who wore a perpetual smile. He had a strong background in toll operations, got along well with people and, during his tenure in Nevada, virtually eliminated an inherent rift between our plant and engineering forces. He was one of the best bosses I ever worked for.

Our winter conditions were still new to Roy, a flatlander, when an incident opened his eyes to one of the obstacles Nevada tollies had to encounter: Snow! It occurred in the early morning hours of January 29, 1969, on the access road below the Topaz Lake microwave station; an accident that turned out all right but that could easily have resulted in tragedy.

Roy joined Bob Krebs (who had replaced Overton as my safety supervisor) and me when we went to the scene to investigate.

It was mid-morning by the time we got there. Roger Duarte and Dale Fowler (first-level supervisors at Topaz Lake) and Ed Riesbeck (the district-level then responsible for that territory) were on hand to meet us. We walked the short distance to the accident site, where we hoped to learn what had happened and decide how it might have been avoided. The following story unfolded:

Snow had fallen thick and heavy all night on the mountaintop, accumulating to a depth of two-feet on top of the old pack with four-foot drifts in places, and it was still snowing at 4:00 am, the time

for a shift change. It showed no signs of letting up. But it was only a couple of miles to the bottom of the hill and the highway, so the men whose shift was ending started down; two of them in an International Travelall, the other two following in a Frandee snow-cat. The four-wheel-drive vehicle was being taken down lest it be snowed-in on the hilltop.

The two vehicles were roughly three-fourths of the way to the snow-cat garage, had just negotiated the last sharp switchback on the steepest part of the sidehill, a few-hundred-yards from their goal, when the accident happened:

AVALANCHE!

In the words of the snow-cat driver: "The snow was whipping around us and the wipers barely kept a hole clear to see through. I was right behind the truck...maybe thirty feet...and goin' along good when all of a sudden everything turned blank and I lost sight of the truck...and we were sliding off to the right like something was pushing us."

Something was pushing them. Tons of snow and debris from the mountain above.

"When I realized what was happening...I pulled hard on the brakes and froze...scared to make a move. The snow was packed up against the window and the windshield. We figured we'd had it...buried for sure. Then the engine stalled and I knew we'd had it."

Most likely the engine stalled when starved of air, when the snow clogged the exhaust pipe and/or air-intake openings.

He went on: "I asked my partner if he could get out his side, but he couldn't budge the door. We sat there and waited, wondering what had happened to the other guys and what we oughtta do."

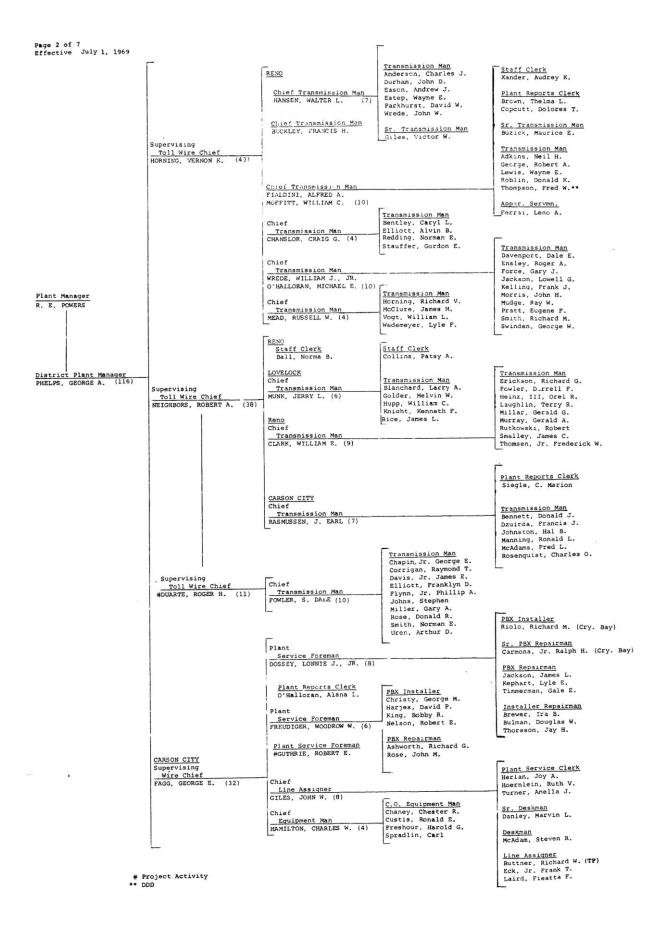
The Travelall, though stopped by the slide as well, was not quite enveloped in snow; the top of the hood and front part of the roof were clear. The men managed to get the right-side door open, and gingerly stepped out into the dark and silent, except for the muffled sound of wind-blown snow, night.

Concerned for their partners in the snow-cat they waded back toward it, sounding the deep snow with shovel-handles as they went. With a flashlight they located a big pile of snow and ice, then a small patch of orange, part of the right side of the machine. Carefully, so as not to cause another slide, they cleared the snow away from the door of the cat, opened it and freed the guys inside. Together then, half sliding, half walking, they made the quarter-mile trip to the vehicle shed, telephoned the news to the alarm center in Reno, warmed up another truck and motored to their Gardnerville headquarters garage.

In summarizing our investigation we concluded that the men should have remained at the station until better weather conditions prevailed. (It's easy to find fault in hindsight.) Further, it was our recommendation that a contractor be hired at once, to doze away the avalanche and all the loose snow above it, and to scarify the hillside in the hope that it would better hold snow in the future.

Roy was impressed with what he had seen, and readily agreed to spend the money to help prevent another avalanche.

The fact that the avalanche occurred at all was not surprising to me, it only proved that the decision to build the access road on that particular sidehill (the subject of so much controversy back in 1963) had indeed been a poor one. But neither Dodson nor Brown, both of whom had been at the vanguard of that fray, were around to see the results.



CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE TRYING TIMES

"Squeeze my hand," the doctor instructed, proffering his right one. I did so, with a hearty grasp. "Now squeeze my left hand with your left," he continued. I squeezed, but not very hard I felt.

Dr. Albert Peterman was the Reno neurologist to whom I had been directed by Dr. Alexander, our Company Medical Director in San Francisco.

The recurring pain in my neck had been with me for several years. But recently the incidence of pain occurred more frequently. Twice within the past month I'd been brought up short by a sudden sharp twinge, accompanied by a lightning-like flash and momentary blackout. Both times, after taking aspirin, the pain had gone away.

Those flashes had caused me some worry, but because I was already scheduled for an annual physical in San Francisco (district-level and higher managers received exams at Company expense) I took no immediate action.

And then I flew to The City and went through a routine examination, conducted by Dr. Ralph Alexander himself. Sometime during the course of the physical I told him of my malady.

"Why did you wait until now?" he asked disapprovingly, "You should have seen a doctor right away."

I had no good answer for that question, but went on to say that I had also been suffering from stomach aches, something I had seldom experienced before.

"Could I have an ulcer?" I asked. "Maybe the job is getting to me after all."

We talked a while longer, then the doctor handed me a slip of paper and sent me to a medical office up near Union Square. There I was subjected to the dreaded "upper ${\sf GI}"$ series of tests.

When the "picture taking" was over, the day was effectively shot so I returned to my room at the Hilton Hotel and relaxed. By early evening I felt better, well enough to enjoy dinner with a Company associate in the hotel's fancy dining room.

Back in my Reno office the following day, I received the results of the test. The good news was that I did not have a stomach ulcer. The bad news was that the stomach aches were caused by the pain in my

neck, which had slowly increased in intensity over time. The doctor said that my mind had become inured to the pain but my stomach had not.

Dr. Alexander suspected a pinched nerve, possibly related to my earlier accident, and advised me to consult the neurologist "as soon as possible." And that's why I was in Dr. Peterman's office now, squeezing his hands and wondering what lay ahead for me.

He handed me a spring-loaded device, much like a jumper-cable clip only with a pounds-scale attached. "Try squeezing this," he said, and placed the tester in my right hand. I gripped it and watched the pointer indicate twenty pounds or so. "Now the left."

I was astonished! Try as I would, I could not move the pointer off of zero. What had happened to my hand?

After a great deal of conversation, wherein I related the circumstances of my motor-vehicle accident and subsequent treatment in Elko County, Dr. Peterman rendered a diagnosis.

"In my opinion you have a pinched nerve in the cervical section of your spine, pinched where the disc between two vertebrae has been damaged. It's the nerve that controls the muscles in your left arm, and without control those muscles have begun to atrophy. That's why you've lost strength in your left hand."

"If you weren't on a desk job," he went on jokingly, "lifting nothing heavier than paper you'd have noticed the loss."

The next step was an appointment with the neurosurgeon, Dr. Ralph Rosenauer, who performed a myeolography test. I had been advised by a friend, who had once taken this test, that it would be painful; if not during then afterward when I might experience a splitting headache. Thus forewarned I found that the procedure (the introduction of a radio-opaque substance into the spine) was not too uncomfortable. Of course I followed instructions, and made no attempt to move from the horizontal position until told to do so several hours after the picture taking.

The myeologram tended to prove Dr. Peterman's diagnoses, but before Drs. Rosenauer and C. F. McCusky, the orthopedic surgeon, would operate, they wanted more specific information. Rosenauer would perform another test, called (I believe) a "disco-gram." Now that would turn out to be a horse of a different color.

Dr. Rosenauer, a small man in stature, was quiet and unpretentious. When he spoke it was with a considerable accent. (Austrian, I assumed.) Before beginning the disco-gram, in concise language he explained how it would be performed. I can't describe the procedure in detail, only that a long slender needle would be inserted and some kind of fluid injected - from the front - into the cervical area of my spine.

To me, the test was analogous to an electronics technician's using a volt-ohmeter to isolate a case of circuit trouble. Like a defective wire in a telephone cable, the defective nerve in the spinal cord could be identified.

Puzzled, I asked why he would work from the front rather than the

"It is easier to get at the nerves from the front," he responded. "They are well protected from the back by the bones...better from the

front." And then with a hint of a grin he added, "You are afraid I'll hit your jugular vein, right? No, I will not do that."

With one admonition, "This will hurt," he went to work.

Only then, on seeing the size and length of the needle in his hand, did a sense of fear come over me. In my imagination the doctor was transformed into an assassin coming at me with a stiletto, straight for the jugular vein.

But I remained stoic - at least for a while.

And then, "Damn!" I shouted aloud without thinking. The needle had found a nerve. It was like an electric shock.

"That's it," the good doctor announced. "That's the bad one."

Twice more I felt the shock. Twice more I grimaced, but held my tongue.

In the end, Dr. Rosenauer seemed satisfied.

A few days later my Reno doctors conferred with Dr. Alexander, Dr. Alexander conferred with my boss, who conferred with me, and I of course conferred with Rita, who was perhaps more concerned than anyone about the news. A date for the operation was established, in April, and I prepared my subordinates to carry on in my absence.

In the meantime, since I would be away from the job for some weeks anyway, during and after surgery, and because there was always the chance that I might not survive (one cannot help thinking such thoughts) I decided to take a week's vacation and travel, solo, to New England. It had been four years since I'd seen Mother, whose 80th birthday was coming up on Friday, the 7th of March. I would help celebrate the occasion.

I flew with United Airlines to San Francisco and New York, Eastern Airlines to the Hartford/Springfield airport. (I would return via Chicago on United Airlines, always my favorite carrier.) From the airport I went to Betty and Art's place, and Mother's, on Birnam Road in East Northfield. How serenely beautiful it was. The winter had been a good one in terms of snowfall, and nature's white comforter still lay two-feet deep on the land, chest high in places alongside the streets and walkways.

The birthday party was a huge success. Held in the familiar Alexander Hall at the old high school, there was ample room for visiting, standing or seated. The womenfolk (bless their hearts) served snacks and punch, and a cake worthy of the occasion. Mother enjoyed it immensely, and so did I.

The maple season was a little late that year, because of the heavy snows, but I got to "observe" as Donald, Betty's 16-year-old boy, methodically tapped the trees in the immediate neighborhood. He tapped them the old fashioned way, as I remembered doing it, by boring the holes with a brace-and-bit. To collect the sap he used spigots and buckets of galvanized steel, and lids to keep out the rain.

Charlie was just starting to tap his trees when I went to see him in Warwick. He left the boring job (pun intended) to Malcolm, his 15-year-old son, while showing me the improvements he'd made on the farm since 1965.

From a high peg in his shed he removed a dust covered wooden shoulder-yoke, the one that had belonged to Grandpa Phelps, and

demonstrated its use in carrying sap buckets. It was a long, long time since I had observed that mode of conveyance.

It was a very cold and very blustery day when Dick took me, by Jeep, to his "cabin" in the back country near Halifax, Vermont. The snow was deeper there than anywhere else, and was even then drifting higher behind the ridges and stonewalls.

While visiting with John and Gladys, in Springfield, John drove me to Wisteriahurst, the museum in Holyoke where he was both artist and assistant director. He had recently completed a series of dioramas, then on display, depicting the history of Holyoke from the days of the first settlers through the industrial age of the middle 1800s. Observing his outstanding works of art, I was at once proud and envious of my talented eldest brother.

By week's end I had accomplished my objectives, to see and visit with my aging mother and eastern siblings, and then it was time to head west again.

High above the Great Plains, whose patchwork-quilt was just now showing spring green, in the restful arms of the jetliner's overstuffed seat I recollected the past and pondered the future. A score of years had passed since I went to work for the telephone company. Would I be of service to Nevada Bell for another score? Would I even be around, a couple of months hence, to care?

It was up to God, with the able help of Doctors Rosenauer and McCusky.

The month of March flew by and then, just a few days prior to my checking in at St. Mary's Hospital, Roy Powers called me into his office.

"I've been doing some reorganization planning," he said.

This news surprised me a bit, since it was common practice for a plant manager to consult with his staff supervisor on such matters, and he had not. Anyway, he went on to briefly describe his plan, which I noted, would have a profound effect on my job. In essence, district-level changes would be made as follows:

A man by the name of Ken Anderson, a Californian being groomed for higher management, would take over the exchange district in the Reno/Sparks area, replacing Bill Nelson. Bill would again assume responsibility for the plant manager's staff.

My job was as manager of a new district, to be formed, called the Suburban District. It would include the toll maintenance responsibilities in Western Nevada, plus the exchange maintenance and repair responsibilities in Carson City and Incline Village. Ed Riesbeck would have the responsibility for both toll and exchange in the rest of the state, including the Las Vegas toll area and the Nevada Atomic Test Site at Mercury.

Ed inherited those southern Nevada responsibilities because Paul Webb, the bright young man from southern California who had moved into the job a couple of years before (when Jerry Miller was killed in an automobile accident) was moving to New York City on temporary assignment with AT&T.

Roy's plan was consistent with a new Company policy; to move middle-management people from jobs they had experience in to different

jobs for "learning purposes." For example, Riesbeck knew little or nothing about toll facilities; I knew nothing about exchange installation and repair. Each of us would learn the other's discipline, much of it the hard way.

"What do you think of it?" Roy asked politely. "Of heading up a brand new district?"

"I don't know," I responded hesitantly.

It was not something I would have chosen. As I've frequently stated, my real devotion was to the toll side of the business. Yet I was slowly being weaned away from it. Furthermore, I had always believed in maintaining a distinction between the toll and exchange functions, for the two were very different in scope. However, he was the boss. If he wanted to manage a set of bastard districts (part toll and part exchange) then that was his prerogative.

But right now I didn't want to think about it. My neck hurt and I was due for surgery in a couple of days. I couldn't care less what happened. My only concern was to have a job at the same level of pay when I returned.

"I don't care," I finally responded. "Whatever's right."

"Okay then," he ended the discussion...which had not really been a discussion at all, "I just wanted to tell you before you left for the hospital. I didn't want you to wake up and find out your job was changed without your knowledge of it."

"Try to relax. Don't worry about anything; we'll take care of it. And good luck, George."

We stood, shook hands, and I left.

It was Wednesday, April the second, when I took up temporary residency in Room 208 at St. Mary's Hospital. I recall being loaded onto a gurney the following morning, and starting down a long corridor, but from that time on for the next two days my story is, as far as I'm concerned, hearsay. I was lost somewhere in nether land.

"How're you feeling now?" the question came from afar. It was Rita's voice, and it was her hand that was gently squeezing mine.

I felt good. As a matter of fact, I felt better than I had in years. But then I reasoned that I must be full of sedative. When I tried to respond I could not, beyond an incoherent whisper, and my breathing seemed to be forced.

Instinctively I reached a hand to my throat, and felt something strange; a patch of gauze and some kind of a tube. Indeed my breathing $\underline{\text{was}}$ forced, rhythmically, by a machine at the other end of the tube. It was an apparatus designed to augment one's natural breathing and add moisture to the throat and lungs. The near end of the tube was in my esophagus and that's how I was getting life-sustaining air, through the tube. It would be some time before I knew the whole story of my operation and subsequent events, which went something like this:

The objective of the operation was to "fuse" two contiguous vertebrae, to relieve the pinched nerve and alleviate the possibility of further damage. In time, a few weeks, the bones would grow together. The result would be similar to that obtained in 1953, when I wore a brace to allow the fractured vertebrae in my neck to fuse; only

this way was a lot faster. But I would surely be "stiff necked" with two pairs of welded vertebrae in that area.

On the operating table, when the applied anesthetic had taken effect, a neat horizontal slit was made in the skin of my lower neck, about three inches long, just below the Adam's apple. It was through that opening that the doctors would work on my spine.

Another incision was made over the right portion of my pelvis, from which a core of bone the size of a small bottle cork was removed. The spine was then extended by traction, and, after preparing the two objective vertebrae to receive it, the core, or "plug," was inserted between them. The traction was then removed and the spinal column allowed to return to its normal compression.

After a period of recovery from the anesthetic I was returned to my room, where (I was told) I responded to the voices of Rita and the nurse before dropping off to sleep for the night.

The morning sun was not yet risen, on the fourth, when Dr. Rosenauer arrived at the hospital to make his morning visitations. On entering my room he found me in a deathly state of being; un-moving, un-breathing, and with skin of ashen hue. He immediately summoned a nurse and performed a tracheotomy, reopening the central part of his earlier incision for access.

My lungs once more filled with air and I crossed back over the threshold of death; without, as in popular belief, any conscious knowledge of having crossed it in the other direction. That is, my whole life had not flashed before me.

Even when my breathing was restored (albeit mechanically) and my color returned, I was not aware of anything or anyone around me. It was not until near the end of the second day, when I heard and responded to Rita's voice, that I would know what was going on.

As I slowly came around, it seemed that everyone but me was worried. The big question was, "How come he stopped breathing?" At that point in time I wasn't much interested. It was up to the doctors to find the answer. My job, now that I had a second lease on life, was to concentrate on recuperating.

Dr. Rosenauer and the other doctors involved in the operation held a "post mortem" conference, much as we in the Company did after a telephone facility failure. They concluded that the problem stemmed from the anesthetic, that I was allergic to it or unable to handle the dosage. Rosenauer was critical of the night nurse, whom he believed should have more closely monitored my vital signs.

In the next few days I got to feeling quite good. But because of the tube in my throat it was difficult to communicate with anyone. And then, after the tube was removed, I had to cope with a problem of another sort, one that was more comical than serious. Whenever I started to say something, the air, instead of passing over my vocal cords, escaped through the hole in my throat — like air from a leaky tire. After a while I learned to "stop" the hole with my finger while speaking.

Had everything gone as originally planned I should have been released from the hospital within a week. But an incision in the trachea, I found out, cannot be sutured and must grow together unaided. So I remained hospitalized an additional five days, until the

doctors were satisfied that the opening was healing properly. It would be another ten days before the opening completely closed and I could talk without a hand at my throat.

While lying there in the hospital I received over a dozen cards and letters from friends and family, and was visited by as many relatives and associates. My group at Plumb Lane, the staff I was leaving, gave me a mantel clock; its hours enumerated by real silver coins - halves, quarters and dimes - an act of sympathy and appreciation that brought a lump to my deformed throat.

The most difficult part of my recuperation was coping with a sore hip, the one from which the plug of bone was removed. I limped a lot and had to use a cane for a couple of weeks. As for the pain in my neck, it was gone and would not return for several years to come.

Something happened less than a week after I'd returned home which proved, to me at least, the success of the surgery. I had driven to the Plumb Lane office, picked up my paycheck, visited with friends, and returned to the parking lot. When I went to climb into the Travelall, a fairly high step, out of habit I grasped the steering wheel and half pulled, half sprang up to the seat. But in the act my head struck the top of the door-jamb, with such force I was sent to the pavement on my buttocks.

"Damn!" I swore to myself. "Now I've gone and done it, probably fouled up the whole operation."

A lump formed under the abrasion on the top of my head, my backside was pretty sore, but I felt no pain in my neck. It was a miracle. My spine was stronger than ever.

As a matter of record, from the time of the pinched nerve diagnosis there was a question of whether my malady was in any way related to my on-the-job injury of 1953. After all, more than 15-years had elapsed since that accident. The problem could have been brought on by something totally unrelated to the job, could even have resulted from a congenital defect.

There was no employer-sponsored insurance plan then in effect, the Company assumed responsibility for job related injuries. If not job related, then the Company was not obligated to pay the medical expenses. And I carried no private health insurance.

I made no claim one way or the other. But I was certainly relieved when Dr. Alexander ruled that the recent trauma was indeed "job related." I felt that his ruling may have been influenced by the fact that I was a middle-management employee. Had I been represented by the union it might have been different.

I returned to work around the first of May, scarcely a month from the time of my operation. Roy responded to the routine form from the personnel department as follows: "He is back to work, he can do his job both physically and intellectually without any difficulty."

Now that was a clean bill of health.

From time to time, Mr. Powers and the Benefit Committee reviewed my case. In July of 1971, 18-years after my original on-the-job injury, either out of a sense of obligation or to "close the book," the Company resolved to pay me "... in a lump sum, the amount of \$3,000.00." I gratefully accepted it.

The position of district manager, Suburban District, in many ways appeared regressive to me. My new office environment did nothing to alleviate that feeling, located, as it was, in the basement of the headquarters building on Plumb Lane. It was a small dark room in a corner of Bramlett's staff quarters, three floors beneath my former room-with-a-view. I was further discouraged by the fact that I had to rely on Bramlett's clerical force to handle my district's paper work; the processing of bills, vouchers, letters, payroll information and so on.

If one's number of subordinate employees contributes to his prestige, though, it was a step up. I now had responsibility for four second-level supervisors, Horning, Neighbors, Duarte and Fagg, fifteen at first-level and 97 non-management people for a total of 116.

(At the time, the summer of 1969, Roy Powers' plant department force numbered 716; Bell of Nevada's total population, under Paul Garwood, was just over 1,600.)

Vernon (Vern) Horning was in charge of our downtown toll office, the largest toll office in Nevada Bell. Through this office passed all of the toll traffic in Nevada except Las Vegas.

Vern was several years my senior, both in age and telephone service. Of German descent, he was a master craftsman by nature and a knowledgeable technician by acquisition. He held both a radiotelephone and a "ham" operator's license.

He had previously worked as a tollie in Elko, Lovelock and Reno, and as a supervisor in California before returning to Nevada in 1966. Most recently he had supervised the outside toll groups in Lovelock, Stead, Hawthorne and Reno.

Bob Neighbors, with whom I had worked on the technical staff, took over the responsibility for the outside toll groups from Vern.

Roger Duarte had worked with me in Elko, before doing a stint with Western Electric in the Arctic when the U.S. Department of Defense established its Distant Early Warning system up there. He returned to Nevada Bell in the 1960s and was now supervising our piece of the AUTOVON System; the Department of Defense telephone-switching network at the Topaz Lake site. (We would provide the long-haul facilities and surveillance administration; an independent telephone company would own and operate the switching machine, located next to our site.)

Gene Fagg supervised the exchange side of my district, with the responsibility for exchange switching, installation and repair functions in Carson City, Virginia City, Dayton, Crystal Bay and Incline Village.

With one exception I was pleased with my new immediate subordinates; even though, being away, I had had no say in their selection. The exception was Bob Neighbors, who, though an extremely capable technician, came to the job with no prior experience in supervising people.

Knowing that Bob was unhappy with his new assignment, I offered to find a job for him in the engineering group. He refused my offer, preferring instead to "tough it out." It was a decision that would lead to difficulties for both of us in the future.

Within a short time Bramlett's staff outgrew his space, and together we moved to leased quarters in a shopping center off of Kietzke Lane, at 1450 Vassar Street. It was a much more suitable location for me, for two reasons. I was geographically removed from my boss's office, and once again I could look up from my desk and see daylight.

Carson City, despite the fact that it was still one of the smallest capital cities in the U.S., was growing fast. Its population had increased from 5,200 in 1960 to 15,000 in 1969, or nearly threefold. So, too, the rest of Gene's area was growing.

I considered myself fortunate that Gene was my exchange supervisor, for he, as iterated in a previous chapter, was an old timer in the business. He had transferred to Carson City from Winnemucca in the mid-1960s, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to the job. He knew how to provide good service at least expense, and could always match his results figures to the numbers forecasted by the staff "gurus."

Carson City was an extremely sensitive area, a virtual "fish bowl" under the very noses of the governor, the legislators and Noel Clark of the Nevada Public Service Commission.

Every two years, when the legislators were in session, it fell to Gene to provide them with their specialized custom service. It was largely due to his conscientious efforts, and those of his able foremen and installer/repairmen, that Nevada Bell maintained a respectable image in the eyes of state officials and politicians. Paul Garwood was pleased.

Our Carson City operations were in every way exemplary, but meeting objectives at Incline Village was a losing proposition, especially during the winter season, which, at 6,200', seemed to last forever. To add to our problems there, community regulations required utility wires and cables, even residential drops, to be placed underground. Every winter, from the time of the first major snowstorm, in order to provide and maintain service our installer-repairmen had to string temporary wires through the trees and over the snow. Then, when the snow finally melted, they had to return to those locations and make permanent connections underground.

If ever there were an environment where above-ground utilities should have been allowed, it was at Incline Village where they could be effectively hidden in the trees.

During my tenure as manager of the Suburban District, our most significant effort (beyond the routine work) was the implementation of the AUTOVON Center at Topaz Lake.

The AUTOVON network, while virtually unknown to the general public, was a very modern, very complex telephone system whose magnitude rivaled that of the Bell System's civilian long-distance network; from which it was totally independent. Our involvement was the result of a nationwide reconfiguration. The Topaz facility was one of seven new switching centers to be added to some three-score existing centers.

Continental Telephone Company, through political maneuvering, had won the right to provide the switching machine at the Topaz Lake site. Still in the construction stage when I became involved, their building was located 240-yards southwest of our microwave-radio station.

The "cold war" with the U.S.S.R. was barely benign. Many folks in the U.S., and probably in the U.S.S.R. as well, took to "digging in," building not just bomb-proof shelters, as in WW-II, but atom-bomb-proof shelters for protection against blasts and radiation exposure.

Far more sophisticated, however, were the buildings designed and constructed to house the equipment serving the AUTOVON network. Our existing Topaz Lake building was being enlarged and "hardened" to withstand virtually any but a ground-zero atomic blast.

The original station, of 4,000-sq-ft, was literally enveloped by the expansion, which resulted in 20,400-sq-ft of space in all, including an underground floor. At \$903,000, I thought the price of the first building had been enormous; the cost of the modification was \$1.5 million!

The new building, with foot-thick, steel-reinforced concrete walls, was designed to withstand four pounds/square inch of pressure, as from a bomb blast, and was rated 100:1 radiation proof. Heavy steel doors replaced the original ones. A decontamination shower occupied a space in the entryway, between the outer and inner doorways. Hatches in the air-supply ducts were equipped to close immediately, automatically, at the first sensing of a blast. The antenna tower was bedecked with additional steel reinforcement, to protect the antennas and waveguides from damage.

There were living quarters in the basement sufficient to house around-the-clock duty personnel. A well, drilled under the floor, would supply water for drinking and engine-cooling needs.

A non-hardened garage was provided at the site, to shelter snow-cats and wheeled-vehicles from the elements. A second garage (alluded to in the previous chapter) was constructed at the base of the mountain.

The living quarters at Topaz Lake were similar to those at Mt. Rose, but larger. Included were a modern kitchen range, microwave oven, refrigerator, freezer, dining furniture, overstuffed sofa and chairs, comfortable beds (bunks and folding types) and bedding. Since it was assumed that, in the event of a blast, no one could enter or leave the building for a period of several days or weeks, additional drinking water (contained in dozens of plastic five-gallon jugs) and food (frozen, canned and military-type rations) were stored in a locked room; as were a Geiger Counter, medicinal drugs and first-aid supplies. Also provided was a variety of games and books for entertainment.

I often wondered how the shelter might be utilized in the event of an actual nuclear blast. I had visions of our employees, caught at work and worried about their loved ones, trying to smuggle wives and children into the building. Or of nearby residents, with knowledge of the protected facility, attempting to gain entrance by force. How fortunate that my imaginings were never put to the test.

The emergency provisions at Topaz Lake were the source of recurring concern. Not only were they costly, representing a

significant part of our material budget, but a nuisance as well. Most of the items had to be replaced on a routine basis: potable water every few months, frozen foods at least annually, canned foods and dried rations every couple of years. At first the discarded foods were divided among the on-site employees, if they wanted them, or donated to charitable organizations. But when medical and personnel staff people in San Francisco got wind of it, they issued a "cease and desist" order.

"Someone might get sick from the food and sue the Company," I was advised. "From now on the old food must be destroyed." So much for trying to be charitable in a sue-happy world.

The building construction phase of our new AUTOVON facility, begun in 1968, was completed sometime in 1969. But the final "service cutover" was not made until 1970, in the spring of the year. I made it a point to be there on that significant night. Not merely because I was interested in observing the operation, but also to add a measure of distinction to the otherwise unpublicized (by design) event. By contrast, cutovers of exchange switching offices were gala affairs, attended by scores of telephone employees and their families, civic leaders and news reporters.

A dozen men had worked toward this night. Among them, in addition to supervisors Roger and Dale, were Ray Corrigan, with whom I had worked as a craftsman in Elko, Gary Miller, Vic's son, and Ken Geisinger, an extremely bright craftsman who was destined for promotion in the near future. Now they were checking and rechecking equipment, plugging and unplugging patch cords, operating switches and monitoring devices in accordance with pre-planned cutover procedures.

As time allowed, individuals drifted downstairs for a cup of coffee and to reminisce on the many incidents and events, some of them now seemingly humorous, that had led to this moment.

At 10:00pm sharp, a voice from Network Control announced, in a rather off-hand manner, "Okay, Topaz, you're now part of the network. Congratulations and good luck."

It was with great pride that I added my own congratulations, then took my leave and drove a weary 75-miles home.

Sometime prior to our Topaz cutover, I motored to Mojave, California, to see firsthand an existing AUTOVON center. That site was owned and operated by the Continental Telephone Company, whose headquarters was located in nearby Lancaster. The main purpose of my visit was to represent Nevada Bell in a cutover coordination meeting. When our business was concluded, the Mojave manager gave me a guided tour of the place.

Except for a small, lonely entrance hut on the desert surface, the facility was entirely underground. The living quarters and protective devices were similar to those at our Topaz site, but most of the telephone equipment was different (underground cable rather than microwave-radio equipment). And they had a larger work force.

I had driven to Mojave and stayed at a motel the night before the meeting, and immediately after my personal tour I headed for home. There was a lot of daylight left, so, in the Owens Valley, I made a side trip into the Sierra foothills. Before getting back to the

pavement, though, my Company car ran out of gas. (Would I never learn?)

It was but a short walk to the highway, and I had scarcely stepped onto the pavement when a school bus — whose driver had observed my stalled car back on the side-road and concluded that I was its driver — stopped and opened the door.

"That your car back there?" he asked.

"Yup," I answered sheepishly. "Ran outta gas."

"That's what I figured. Get in and I'll take you to Lone Pine. It's only seven miles up the road."

Having already gotten rid of his little charges, the driver and I held an amiable conversation on the way to town. In that brief time span I learned, among other things, the reason why the valley was so dry.

Back in the early 1900s, he said, to quench the thirst of its growing population the city of Los Angeles bought up practically all of the water rights in Owens Valley. A giant aqueduct was built to carry it off, and as a consequence, Owens Lake was now just a dust bowl.

I wondered what Los Angeles would be like without that water.

The driver took time out to stop the bus and point out Mt. Whitney. I was glad he did, for it's impossible for a stranger to locate the highest point among those peaks. As seen from the valley floor, that which appears the highest is not.

In Lone Pine, a service station attendant filled a can with gas, and a helpful south-bound patron gave it and me a lift back to my car. Before long I returned to town, had the gas tank filled to the brim and was on my way again. This time with no detours.

And that's the end of that story.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR WINDING DOWN THE SIXTIES

It was back in the fall of 1967 that our need arose for a new four-wheel-drive vehicle. The old Jeep Wagon had "done me well," despite a recurring problem of a leaky head-gasket, and when it did give up, it did so just a few miles from home rather than way out in the hills somewhere.

Russ McOmber and I had taken the Jeep and gone deer hunting north of Reno, above the Red Rock area. It was late October or early November, my favorite time of the year and ideal for hunting. The air was just cold enough to make us want to stay in the rig, the ground was just dry enough that we had little trouble getting around in four-wheel-drive.

The area, known as Seven Hills, for obvious reasons, was a compendium of juniper swales, grass and sagebrush draws and cool-water springs. There was only one drawback; of deer there were few. And those few were far between. We sighted a handful of does, but no buck showed his head to us all day.

Of course we cared little about the scarcity of deer, our time was well spent just looking around and visiting with one another while the Jeep crawled along in low gear, low range, mile after pleasant mile. When dusk was nigh we came off the hill and headed for the highway, just across the border in California.

It was but 45-five miles from there to home, and, being in no particular hurry (except that we'd be late for dinner) I drove at a conservative speed. We had just topped the hill west of Stead and were near the Red Rock turnoff when, coincidentally with a dreadful CLUNK! under the hood, the Jeep gave a violent lurch. I immediately shoved the clutch pedal to the floor and steered to the right, off the edge of the pavement.

Even before we had come to a complete stop, there was little doubt in my mind that the motor would never run again. So, after a cursory look under the hood, I locked the doors and we walked to the nearest phone; which, by good chance, was located in a tavern less than a hundred-yards away.

We telephoned Rita or Mary, explained that we were broke down, gave instructions as to our whereabouts and suggested we'd like a ride home. With the knowledge that we were waiting in a bar, they were prompt in coming to our rescue. Even so, we had time to down a shot of brandy before they appeared at the door.

After removing our guns and stuff from the Jeep, we left it there and went on home with our wives. In the morning, a friend helped me tow the hapless vehicle to Roger Zamboni's muffler shop, on Fourth

Street in Reno. Roger, Rita's niece Judy's husband, offered to check the engine to see if it was worth fixing.

He ultimately confirmed my suspicion, that it had "thrown a rod," so I left the lifeless machine on the front of his lot with a "FOR SALE" sign in the window. I was not terribly disappointed by the failure of the Jeep, we needed a replacement anyway. Even when the engine had worked at peak it could never tow our trailer "at speed" up the hills on the highway.

In my spare time I shopped around for a new or slightly-used 4 WD vehicle. As usual I met a lot of bad-mannered salesmen, until I chanced upon Gene Choquette at the International Harvester place on Glendale Avenue in Sparks.

Gene was without doubt the most helpful, courteous and patient salesman in the country. He listened attentively to my story (of the Jeep) and within a day or two came up with a vehicle to suit our needs; a 1967 I-H Travelall, which was then sitting on a lot at South Lake Tahoe. We worked out a tentative deal and Gene had the vehicle brought to town.

On seeing the Travelall (white on top and almost Bell System green below) I was somewhat taken aback by its size. How could I ever maneuver such a monster through the rocks and trees? As I had the Jeep Wagon. (I'd find its advantages more than outweighed any size disadvantage, I could go anywhere I wanted to get to.)

The Travelall was rated at a half-ton. It had a big, 345-cubic-inch truck engine under the hood, a four-speed manual transmission and two-speed transfer case behind it, front and back bench seats, each wide enough to accommodate three adults with ample room, and a four-by-five-foot clear space in back for cargo. It was equipped with "split-ring" wheel rims, but at my request Gene had them replaced by a set of conventional wheels.

The deal was consummated on the 23rd of November. The bill came to \$4,138.54. It was, as time would prove, a bargain.

The whole winter season passed by before I sold the Jeep, to a man from California who spotted it, for the sum of \$600.

(As of this writing, the Travelall is over a quarter-century old, still going strong after covering nearly 200-thousand miles of paved highways, graveled byways, dirt roads, no roads, and parts of the earth where roads were never envisioned.)

A month or so after purchasing the Travelall, after Christmas, Rita and I loaded the kids in our Chrysler and went south on winter vacation. We would wind up at Ted and Katie's place in Fontana, but took the long way around; via Boulder City and Hoover Dam. I believe we stayed overnight in Boulder City.

It was a worthwhile plan. The guided tour into the damp (but perfectly safe, we were assured) bowels of the dam and past the tremendous, whining, electricity-generating turbines was both fascinating and educational. And the monument, above, at the west end of the dam — an artistic melding of granite and marble, brass and bronze depicting heavenly bodies in the universe — awakened within me a sense of pride for the brilliant, hard-working engineers,

technicians, foremen and laborers of the 1930s, who produced this "wonder of the world" in record time and low cost.

Because of certain societal attitudes of today - extreme environmentalism and worker protectionism in particular - any achievement to match the successful construction of Hoover Dam would be impossible.

From Hoover Dam we went south again, through the crossroads hamlet of Searchlight and across the Colorado River to Arizona on Davis Dam. (Upstream from today's gambling Mecca, Laughlin. Where there was then nothing but sagebrush and cactus, lizards and jackrabbits, and where multi-million-dollar casinos now rise from the banks of the Colorado River. Ah, progress!)

The southwest desert on the east side of the big river, in Arizona, mirrored that of the west side; dry, dusty, scrubby and hot. We reentered California near Needles, and then motored on a part of "Route Sixty-Six," the highway made famous by the popular ballad of the fifties; over 120-miles of the most desolate sand-and-cactus country ever. By comparison, the area between Barstow and Cajon Pass was downright civilized.

Our time with the Taelours was well spent. Ted, now a licensed flight instructor in his off-time from his regular job at Kaiser Steel, taught flying at Flabob Airport, a tiny field outside of Riverside.

One day he flew Glen, Tony and me (in a Cessna) over the smog-shrouded Los Angeles basin. He circled over Anaheim, and through the thick haze we could make out newly-established Disneyland. He then flew over Long Beach, to see the world-renowned Queen Mary, which was then anchored offshore in the harbor after having recently made her final ocean crossing from England. She would eventually become one of the most popular tourist attractions in southern California.

Another day, as a result of Ted's unabashed entreating, Art Scholl, world famous acrobatic flyer who made Flabob his home base, agreed to take Tony up in his "Chipmunk," the very plane he flew in Europe and Russia to win a title. It was an extremely blustery day, one on which most pilots would not fly at all.

The wind was so strong that on takeoff, with Tony belted into the second open cockpit, Art took the aircraft off the ground almost vertically. It had run no more than a hundred-yards when it was airborne and rising like an elevator. Art put the plane through a series of loops and rolls, a chandelle or two and then landed, again with a very short roll on the ground.

"I don't like to wear out the tires," he joked in response to someone's comment.

Before leaving, Art signed off on the appropriate line in a pilot's log that Ted had bought, proving that Tony had made the flight, when, and for how long.

Next day, it was the girls' turn for an airplane ride. So Ted flew Katie, Rita, Gina (and me) to Santa Barbara for breakfast. It was the "thing to do" for small-plane pilots, to fly to a small airport for breakfast. And Santa Barbara was a good place to go.

Santa Barbara, nestled on an apron between the sharply rising Coast Range and the infinite ocean, was a beautiful city as viewed from the air. Ted circled over it, and made a smooth landing at the airport. We walked a short distance from the parked airplane to the restaurant, where we had one of the best meals ever served.

Once our appetites were satiated we took off again, this time to fly north along the crisp Pacific coastline. Over San Simeon, Ted banked the aircraft and slowly circled Randolph Hearst's unique castle. Standing guard on a verdant shoulder of the mountain, a few miles above the shoreline on a site chosen because it is above the ubiquitous coastal fog the year-round, it looked for all the world like a European castle.

Over the mountain to the east we went, and beyond, rounding out the trip by flying above the California Aqueduct, a great navigational aid in clear weather as it was that day, to drop into the L.A. basin, into its layer of thick brown pollution again.

It was a bit unusual that Katie went with us. For as long as Ted had been a pilot, and a good one, Katie disliked flying. Perhaps it was the near perfect weather that contributed to her having an enjoyable flight that day, as it had the rest of us.

Ted took me to see the Kaiser mill. It was another of my most memorable experiences. Places where tangible things are produced are more interesting, to me, than are tourist traps or malls.

We first visited the rolling-mill, a vast open hall where long sheets of rolled-steel were unwound, fed through rollers to reduce their thickness, and rewound again. These giant rolls were moved about by cranes and dollies and railroad cars. Ted currently worked there as a crane operator.

The giant crane was high above our heads. Its cab resembled an upside-down Toonerville Trolley. I expect the driver would have a good field of view below, a necessity for maneuvering the rig from one end of the mill to the other, dropping its hook on target to pick up a roll here and put it down there. As a crane operator, Ted made good money. (I think everyone at Kaiser made good money.) And while working the night shift he could find time for catnaps, which helped make it possible to address his extracurricular career in the daytime, his favorite pastime, flying.

(Ted would one day suffer an accident while on the job, when an aerosol can exploded within the cab of his crane and a fire ensued. Luckily, he was not badly injured.)

I had never seen a blast furnace, so I was really excited when one of Ted's friends, a foreman, led us on a tour of the smelter area. The devastating heat, the ear-shattering noise and the nose-biting smell of sulphur made me think of Dante's Inferno.

A man, wearing protective gear and goggles, peered through a small porthole at the bubbling liquid in one of the huge furnaces, apparently checking to see how the "soup" was brewing.

A few minutes later our guide handed each of us a pair of goggles (like a welder's) and with hand signals, because of the ambient noise, led the way between two furnaces to a narrow catwalk behind. Below us, a pattern of rails like the veins of a tree leaf curved and joined a main stem leading away. A pumpkin-shaped "kettle" was being moved up

one of the veins, to a position just below and in front of where we stood; our guide in front, me at his elbow and Ted in back.

Wondering what I should be looking for I shouted in Ted's ear, "What's happening?"

My words were lost in mid-air.

On the catwalk in front of our guide, another man in protective gear was working hard to shove a rod of some kind into the base of the cauldron. And then, without warning, there was a horrendous explosion and blast of heat. I threw up my hand to shield my face and took a step backward, bumping into Ted who, I saw on turning around, was grinning from ear to ear.

Sheepishly I faced forward again, in time to see the white-hot liquid steel flow from the hole just blasted by the steelworker. It rushed from the furnace down a chute to the kettle below, and when the vessel was full it was trundled off down the track, the still-fluid brew to be dumped into molds to form ingots.

Away from the devil's firepots I collected my wits and downed a cool Coke with my companions, who chuckled at the fright I had exhibited behind the furnace.

Ted then took me to another noisy mill, where the still-glowing ingots were being lifted, rolled, turned and rolled repeatedly, by remote controlled devices, until converted into material for I-beams and/or sheet-steel.

The pipe mill was equally impressive. A ribbon of red-hot steel entered a machine that gradually rolled its edges up to form an endless hollow pipe, complete with welded seam. (The pipe I observed being produced was two-inches in diameter.) From that machine it went to another, where it was cut to 20-foot lengths. I guessed that the pipe was being produced at the rate of one length every second, moving at 14-mph or faster. At that rate of manufacture, 24-four hours a day ad-infinitum, it was hard to conceive of a market for so much pipe. And Kaiser was only one such producer.

We now went to the tin mill, where an extremely thin, yard-wide ribbon of cold-rolled steel was fed by rollers through tanks of high-priced molten tin. When it emerged from this electrolytic bath, the sheet was covered with an incredibly thin layer of tin and was ready to be made into "tin cans." Such containers were used mostly in the food industry, I was told, for fruits and vegetables and pet foods.

Because a microscopic-sized "holiday" in the tin deposit could cause the steel to corrode, and result in spoilage when used as a food container, the tin-plating process was monitored closely and inspected thoroughly throughout the process. Ted had worked in the tin mill as one of those inspectors.

All areas of the mill were of interest to me, but I'd not care to work there. It was far too dirty, too noisy and too smelly a place for me.

Ted was a wonderful vacation host. He was forever suggesting new and different places to go, things to do, and wonders to see, sometimes to the point of insistence. One of his acquaintances, a flight student whom he'd gotten to know quite well, was a middle-aged businessman by the name of Jim Wilton. Jim was an inventor. Among

other things he'd invented a pump of some kind, from the sale of which he received a comfortable income. He owned a single-engine Cessna (Model 210, I believe) and sometimes, with Ted along to help with the flying and navigation, as well as for companionship, he flew to distant parts of the country.

Jim invited Ted, Katie, Rita and me to accompany him and his wife on a flight to Apple Valley for lunch. The weather was bright and clear, but the landing at Apple Valley was a bit disconcerting. A very strong crosswind forced Jim to make his approach at a wide angle to the runway, and for a time it appeared that we might end up in a ball of bones and aluminum. However, with Ted coaching and the rest of us praying we were safely landed.

After lunch, at Roy and Dale Rogers' Ranch (where Trigger, preserved by taxidermy, stood stiffly in perpetuity) we toured their museum of interesting western artifacts before leaving the clean, high-desert air, only slightly more calm than when we had arrived, for the smoggy stuff back in Fontana.

Over the years, Ted had become a very careful pilot. Before taking off he would thoroughly check the aircraft, make sure it was properly fueled and in perfect flying condition.

But not all pilots were so fussy about their airplanes. One time, as a favor, Ted flew a friend of his (whom I shall call Bill) from Flabob to a small airport at Perris, a town about 14-miles to the south. Bill was to pick up his old Navion, that someone had borrowed earlier, and fly it back to Flabob. I went along for the ride.

Perris was a popular base for sky-jumpers. The surrounding area, being sparsely populated, afforded lots of space and open fields for parachute landings. When we entered the airport lounge, Ted recognized some of the pilots who ferried the jumpers skyward, so we joined them for coffee at the Formica counter. I listened, fascinated, to their stories.

Finally, Ted and Bill were ready to go.

"You go with Bill," Ted said to me.

I didn't know why until later. It was to test my courage.

The Navion was an aircraft familiar to me. I had flown with Paul Brown in his, back in the 1950s out of Elko. But Paul's was a thing of beauty compared to this one, which appeared ready for the scrap heap. It was even rattier than Ted and Dan's old BT when they abandoned it. Its navy-blue paint was scratched, sand-blasted and peeled. Its tires were smooth from a hundred too many landings. Oil seeped from the engine nacelle. The Plexiglas canopy, crazed after years of exposure to the sun's rays, would not close completely and latch.

"Don't worry about it," Bill said assuredly, "she meets FAA standards of airworthiness...and we're not goin' far."

As he coaxed the engine to start, I was again reminded of the old BT: "Pop...cough...belch, pop and cough." And smoke! Then, when it finally got to running and he revved it up, every part of the aircraft vibrated alarmingly. Bill allowed the engine to come up to temperature, and then taxied onto the short narrow runway for takeoff.

We had barely left the tarmac when I felt two thumps under my feet. Ah yes, I consoled myself, remembering that I'd seen Bill

operate a pair of switches just seconds before, to retract the landing gear. The flight wasn't so bad, now that we were airborne and some of the noise and vibration had diminished.

I doubt if we climbed higher than 500-feet above the ground; too low to use a parachute, if I had one, too high to survive a crash. Bill made his downwind run over Flabob, reached over and flicked the landing gear switches to "down," and waited:

"Thunk!" The nose of the plane pitched down with the added drag. But only the left "GEAR DOWN & LOCKED" indicator glowed.

Bill pulled up and out of the landing pattern, at the same time mumbling and exercising the right-gear toggle switch.

"Damn gear," he swore, "gotta fix that one of these days."

We were in no immediate danger but sooner or later we'd have to land; and that thought caused a shiver to run up my spine.

"Hang on!" Bill advised, "I'm gonna lock in the right gear."

With that brief warning he pulled the Navion up into a sharp turning climb. At the top he shoved the wheel forward, put it into a steep dive and pulled out about halfway to the up-rushing ground. I heard and felt the wheel-strut flopping around, but saw no reassuring indicator light.

Up and over again we went, this time to a higher apogee and longer dive before pulling out. And this time Bill achieved the desired result; the right gear locked in with a loud "Bump!" And the appropriate indicator lamp showed on the instrument panel.

"Let's go in," the wizened old Navy flyer grinned, and greased the rickety Navion onto the runway.

"Thanks a lot," I cracked to Ted, who had landed long before us and watched our acrobatics from the apron. "Did you think I was getting bored or something?"

It had been a fun morning and not the least bit boring.

In contrast to the way Ted religiously attended to his aircraft, he was complacent about the condition of his automobiles. He'd fill the gas tank, check the oil level, if he thought of it, and so long as the engine started and ran it was good enough.

One time, when Rita and the kids coerced me into taking them into Los Angeles for some reason, I borrowed Ted's Chevrolet station wagon for the trip. It was a successful day, and nothing untoward happened during the long drive to the metropolis and back on crowded freeways. But it could have turned out otherwise.

That evening, while chatting with Ted on his patio, he remarked, "I guess you didn't need the spare, eh?"

"No," I said. "Why?"

"Well, I've been meaning to get that tire fixed. It blew out a month ago and I haven't got around to it."

"You're kidding aren't you?"

"No," he laughed.

I jumped up and went to the car to see for myself. Sure enough the spare was flat, damaged beyond repair. Furthermore, there was not a lug-wrench or tool of any kind in the vehicle.

Ted was to drive that Chevy almost a 100-thousand miles before trading it in on a new, two-wheel-drive Travelall. By his account, in all that time he had changed the oil but two or three times and the

spark plugs no more often. There's no accounting for some peoples luck.

The sixties decade was a period of turbulence and civil disobedience in the United States. It was very discouraging, in that so many youngsters of impressionable age, including our own, were subjected to so many kinds of harmful thoughts and habits.

Good things were happening, it is true. In the field of aeronautics and space, Major White flew the X-15 to the fringe of the atmosphere and recorded a speed of over 4,000 miles-per-hour. AT&T, with the launching of the Telstar satellite, launched an era of global communications. John Glenn was the first of many Americans to orbit the Earth in space, traveling around it three times before splashing down safely in the Atlantic. And then, after dozens of flights of various spacecraft, one dreadful accident occured in which three astronauts were burned to death on the launch pad. On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin walked on our Moon. On the ground, Craig Breedlove established a new land-speed record, traveling near the speed of sound (actually 600.601 mph) in a jet-engine-propelled vehicle on the Great Salt Desert, Utah.

But any list of good things from the sixties is much shorter than that of bad things.

Prayer was banned from the nation's schoolrooms, by a liberal Supreme Court. It was still proper in the halls of congress.

The art of protest, a weapon long-used against established authority, was perfected by dissident factions across the land, especially ultra-liberal-inspired college students.

As if to accentuate the negative, on the 22nd of November, 1963, while passing in review in a motorcade in downtown Dallas, Texas, President Kennedy was fatally wounded by a lone gunman. It is impossible to assess whether Kennedy, had he lived, would have gone down in history as a good or merely mediocre president. But because of his assassination (I believe) he was relegated to a position among the former.

Martin Luther King, who professed a belief in peace, actually kindled unrest among the Negroes in our country. The cause of desegregation turned into a crusade, its goal being the lightning-like integration of society, often at the expense of responsible whites who themselves had nothing to do with the institution of segregation in the first place. Sons, in my opinion, should not be expected to pay for the sins of their fathers — nor of their grandfathers adinfinitum.

Toward the end of the decade, King, too, was assassinated. It was a wanton and irresponsible act, which further aroused the black community and frightened government into enacting several unwise equal-rights programs; such as forced across-town busing of black and white schoolchildren, forced hiring by employers of blacks regardless of their job qualifications.

While we, in Sparks, were not involved in the school busing business, I had first-hand knowledge of the "quota system" of hiring and job placement. The Bell System, in a futile attempt to preserve its integrity against government "trust-busters," succumbed to

pressure and signed a "Consent Decree" with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Over the next several years I would become well acquainted with the new minority-hiring rules, which, by the way, had been expanded to cover all so-called minority groups; including women, who have always been in the majority. Sadly, a number of minorities failed in their new assignments. Not because they were minorities (it had nothing to do with race, creed, color-of-skin or sex) but because the Company, forced to abandon its hitherto successful method of hiring and placing employees based on experience and/or potential ability, was forced to employ and promote minorities in such numbers and ratios as would satisfy the requirements of the Consent Decree.

It was a sorry program. And it was obviously discriminatory, despite what many people liked to believe. To match "the numbers" a lot of well-qualified whites and minorities were bypassed in favor of less-qualified minorities. In summary, the Consent Decree was neither good for the business, nor good for its employees, nor good for the country on the whole.

The sixties decade also spawned the "Hippie." (A bum with really bad habits.) Theirs was a culture which advocated little or nothing of a productive nature. Their credo was "work only if you want to work, dress (or undress) any way you wish, make love whenever and wherever you choose, use drugs and beg for subsistence, paint graffiti and mumble "Peace" while in a perpetual stupor.

The use of drugs, predominantly by the young, grew like Topsy. As with so many things harmful to a society, rather than shun the practice and nip it in the bud it was largely condoned by those in a position of authority. Near the end of the decade, hippies from all over the country, aided and abetted by so-called "rock music" personalities, came together at Woodstock in an orgy of 400,000. It made "good copy" for irresponsible journalists and reporters.

Many years were to pass before the use of drugs would become epidemic and virtually impossible to control, before its use would be condemned by people with responsibility and authority, including the president of the United States, and action taken to thwart the practice. But by then it would be too late. A frightfully large segment of a generation of potentially good citizens was already lost.

Concurrent with the so-named "civil rights" movement here at home, was the unfortunate involvement of the United States in an Asian civil war; a war being fought between northern (Communist) and southern Vietnamese. In the beginning, under President Kennedy, our role was an advisory one to "aid the cause of human rights and democracy." But then President Johnson escalated our involvement from "advisory" to "active." I would never understand why. Even if we were to win the war for the South Vietnamese, which seemed unlikely considering the way it was being managed, there was nothing, as far as I could see, to be gained by our fighting in that remote part of the world.

On the other hand, once the fighting was begun the "never declared war" should have been pressed with all our might, manpower and war machines. Instead, it was a war of procrastination and

stumbling. Whenever an advantage was gained the fighting was put on hold, allowing the enemy to regroup and take the offensive. Our losses were staggering.

The majority of citizens in the United States, the "silent majority" as it was known, felt as I did; that we should never have gotten involved in the first place. But a highly visible minority (activists and dissidents, among them a future president of the United States) protested loudly against the use of military force in Vietnam and, among other things, encouraged thousands of our young men to dodge their patriotic duty.

Our country was divided. Patriotic veterans and responsible citizens, most of whom had lived through the World War II era, on the one side; mostly young socialist-inspired college students on the other. The community of journalists — which, in my opinion controls the destiny of a democratic society — in its reporting played into the hands of unpatriotic figures such as Marlon Brando and Jane Fonda, who used their influence to sway the impressionable.

It was a bloody war. War is a bloody form of dialogue. Except for its primary but grievous benefit, to alleviate overpopulation, there is not much to be said for it. Even so, "Once begun a war is better won."

Alas, the Vietnam War would drag on for many years, through Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations and into President Nixon's second term.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Things were going pretty well on the job after my surgery, in spite of the fact that managing a field-district organization was new to me. I was picking up on the exchange side of the business, from Gene Fagg and his people, while Horning, Neighbors and Duarte kept the toll side of my ship on an even keel.

Telecommunications technology was changing rapidly. I was already superannuated with respect to toll equipment, which was now dominated by solid-state devices, and found that management methods were taking on a new look as well. The latest fancy, from the minds of the personnel department's young dandies, was a program called "Management by Objectives." Managers at all levels had to fill out reams of forms reflecting their projected goals and objectives for the coming year. Periodically, then, actual results were compared to objectives and the manager's salary was (allegedly) tied to those numbers. What it amounted to was a paper mill. (I learned that my boss and his boss delegated the chore.)

Everyone should have goals. Everyone should be held accountable for his accomplishments, good and bad. Everyone's wage should relate to his performance. In theory. But in actual practice there are so many variables, so many intangibles, that a given job cannot be adequately measured by statistical factors alone. Additionally, sad to say, there are those who will stoop to "tilting" the words and numbers in their own favor.

The Management by Objectives program was, in my opinion, a terrible waste of effort. My part alone consumed not days but weeks of valuable time every year, both in preparing my package for submission to my boss and in evaluating those of my subordinates "in great detail." It was time that would have been better spent in the field with my people, evaluating their actual work and seeing to their needs, such as tools, equipment, technical help, training or manpower.

The implementation of the tedious MBO program, in 1970, coupled with a changed outlook on life after my brush with death the previous year, prompted me to set down my own personal management objectives, as follows:

TO BALANCE THE FACTORS OF SERVICE, COST AND MORALE IN ORDER TO ATTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE.

TO VIEW MEASUREMENTS AS A MEANS TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE, NOT AS THE END RESULT.

TO MANAGE IN A MANNER THAT WILL BEST INSURE
THAT NO ONE IN MY GROUP SHOULD EVER HATE TO REPORT FOR WORK,
ALWAYS REMEMBERING THAT EACH OF US HAS A JOB TO DO AND ONLY ONE LIFE
TO LIVE.

Now on to Atlanta:

Trees! Endless forest, trees and more trees. Below, the undulating carpet of green, dark and light, suddenly appeared through a break in the clouds. To me it was a wilderness. If there really were villages and settlements down there they were effectively hidden from above.

We were flying over a part of the Piedmont Plateau, and I was about to set foot on it for the first time. I twisted around in my narrow seat and pressed my forehead against the windowpane for a better look. But we had left the setting sun above the clouds and everything was dull and murky below. "Smoky," they call it there.

The big Delta Airliner (a Boeing 707) circled and I lost my sense of direction. So, when at last I saw the city, unmistakably Atlanta, I knew not from which point of the compass we were approaching. Ah well, it was the pilot's job to know.

This Sunday in 1970 had been a long one, starting from the time Rita left me, with my bag and a briefcase full of papers, at the Reno airport. From there I had flown to Los Angeles via United Airlines, changed planes and crossed the continent on a Delta.

From the magazine in the pocket in front of me I had learned that Atlanta was Delta's home port. I had also learned that Delta was the first commercial airline to use jets. From the looks of the one I was in, I figured it must have been the very first. Compared to what I was used to with United the cabin was dull, cramped and noisy. And the food was not nearly as good as United's. Offsetting those factors, though, were the stewardesses, all of whom were extremely pretty and pleasant.

The time between the screeching of tires on touchdown and the parking of the big jet at the gate seemed an eternity. Then came the inevitable rush to deplane, everyone wanting to be first off.

I waited in the lobby for my bag, and then waited some more in front of the terminal building for a cab. Wearily, I crawled into the back seat. "Executive Park Hotel," I directed the black driver, without the least idea where it might be.

"You with the telephone company?" he asked.

"Yeah," I responded, wondering how in the world he could tell, and then guessed that I was probably one of dozens of Bell System district managers with briefcases headed for that particular address that evening.

Past the new baseball/football stadium, past the Coca-Cola headquarters building, past a dozen new high-rises in the heart of downtown Atlanta, it was 15-miles from the airport, south of the city,

to my destination in Executive Park; a neat suburb to the northeast either in or near De Kalb (pronounced De-cab) County.

The hotel was brand-spanking new; a rectangular box with lots of windows looking out from seven or eight stories. I paid off the cab driver, found the desk and a room registered in my name. Later, I would learn that the place was almost totally occupied by telephone people.

After a shower, I relaxed in a big overstuffed chair in front of a picture window and pondered the long chain of events that had led me to this location.

In these fast-changing times, large numbers of Bell System district managers, like me, were being placed in positions either totally or partially new to them. Recognizing this fact the "head honchos" at AT&T, New York, had set up a Plant Operations Training Center here in this campus-like suburb of Atlanta. Patterned after a small college, the curriculum had been designed specifically for district-level managers, who would come from Bell Companies all over the United States.

Unlike earlier management classes and seminars, which had dealt primarily with people problems — personnel matters, union grievances and so on — this was a school of plant operations. The student who had never actually worked as a craftsman in a specific discipline would learn the nuts-and-bolts of the job. At least, as more than one craftsman would put it, "enough to be dangerous." He would learn how tasks should be done, how to improve efficiency, how to decipher results indexes, how to forecast workloads and budgets, and more.

When the center had opened, just a few weeks before, about six different courses were offered, each consisting of a week of classroom training plus "homework." The week was a $\underline{\text{full}}$ week, beginning with a Sunday evening get-acquainted session at the hotel and ending on Friday afternoon.

The instructors, district-levels all, were recruited from AT&T Long Lines and Bell Operating Companies, each chosen for his background and experience in a specific discipline. For example, my friend Paul Webb, who had come from New York to Atlanta as a charter member of the faculty, was well-qualified to teach the Toll Maintenance Operations course.

But I had not been particularly enthusiastic about attending this class, about General Plant Operations. I had had to do a lot of preliminary homework, and now I would be away from my job a whole week. But the boss had insisted and here I was, 2,400-miles from home in a strange hotel, tired and nervous.

(Unknown to me at the time, I would tally four more sessions at the $\mbox{Training Center}$ in the next three years.)

After that brief moment of relaxation I hastened to the conference room; without, I might add, having eaten. It was an omission I'd regret after sipping some cocktails with my peers.

All were strangers to me but one, Paul Webb, who sought me out in the crowd and, before the evening was over, introduced me to several other staff members including the instructor of the class I was about to attend. I also fell into conversation with an old-timer from

Massachusetts, whose Yankee drawl made me feel at home even though I was now a Nevadan.

I slept soundly that night, after a late meal in the coffee shop. In the morning I joined the Yankee at breakfast, and then we made our way, following the instructions on a previously provided chart, along a tree-lined paved footpath over rolling lawns to the center, about a half-mile away.

Again we were assembled, this time for a pep-talk by an AT&T Vice President from New York, one of the "founders" of the training center. An hour later we were in the classroom. It was a bright, spacious room, outfitted with enough large desks to accommodate about twenty students.

For me, for all of us, this was the beginning of a grueling week of study. The training center was run in high gear, with absolutely no fooling around. Classes started at 8:00am sharp; lunch break was a half-hour long; coffee breaks lasted ten-minutes, no more. On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday there was an hour's break at 5:00pm, for dinner, then more class work until 9:00pm; sooner if you were fast enough to complete the assignment before that time. Wednesday was a short school day, ending at five o'clock. Those who wished to could then go to town and "live it up." Unless one planned to spend a weekend in Atlanta (at his own expense) the schedule left very little time for being a tourist.

I had the advantage of most of my classmates in the Plant Operations Course, since it dealt primarily with statistical information: workloads, labor hours, budgets, results et cetera, subjects with which I had become quite familiar when managing Dodson's staff.

Still, there was much to learn and it was interesting to compare our Nevada practices with those of other companies. I was to find that, while plant results were measured on a nationwide basis, many of them were quite meaningless. More than one manager admitted to "fudging" to produce a bottom-line acceptable to his boss. There were some heated discussions on that subject.

Even though we were all Americans, there was a wide variety of dialects being spoken. One afternoon, my friend from Massachusetts came to class carrying a large bag. Curious, someone asked what it was that he'd bought.

"Pee cans," he replied.

"Pee cans?"

"Yeah, pee cans."

I guess I was the only guy in the room who knew what he was talking about. Anyone else would have called them "pe-cahns."

As a class we visited an exchange switching office in downtown Atlanta. There we were instructed to meet with certain supervisors and craftsmen, to ask questions, look over the equipment and peruse the office records, as if it were an office in our own jurisdiction back home. Then, after returning to the classroom, we discussed our findings, compared notes and made recommendations for improvement.

Everyone knows that "if you're looking for faults you will find them," even in a well-run operation. In Atlanta we would find them by the buckets-full. But that's as far as it went. When the training

staff set up the school, in return for the privilege of invading Southern Bell's locations, it was agreed to keep findings and recommendations, except safety violations, confidential.

As always when one is busy, time passed quickly. Almost before I knew it I was on an airplane on my way home. Back in my office on Monday morning I found a stack of paperwork waiting to be handled, and it would be weeks before I completed my post-course homework. I didn't worry much about it, any benefit to come from the course I had already assimilated. The homework was for the boss's benefit.

In the fall of that year, 1970, I was back in the "city that Sherman took by storm," this time to study Central Office Maintenance Operations. I appreciated this course more than the last one, since it would help a great deal in managing my exchange offices. As before, most of one day was spent in downtown Atlanta, in an exchange-switching office, the rest of the time getting acquainted with equipment and maintenance procedures. And then it was over.

Following a spring and fall pattern, I attended three more classes at the Training Center: namely Repair Service, Installation Service, and Toll Maintenance. The last was by far the easiest for me, an old tollie, so I relaxed and enjoyed it. The repair and installation courses were less formidable than I'd anticipated, and my days with the field craftsmen were eye-openers.

It was while riding and working with an installer or repairman for eight hours that I got to see and experience parts of the city not listed in any tourist brochure; that is, hole-in-the-wall businesses, back alleys and antiquated buildings. Most of the older homes downtown, some dating from the time of Reconstruction when they were owned by wealthy merchants, were now apartment houses. The stair-wells were dark and musty, the rooms small and cluttered with stuff, and everywhere wallpaper was peeling from the plaster.

The sight of the telephone wiring, both inside and outside the old places, if not such a serious problem would have been amusing. Many of the wires were bare, the insulation having frayed and fallen off. Further, so many wires had been installed and cut loose over the years it was virtually impossible to know which were alive or dead.

Both the installation and repair operations in Atlanta were nightmarish, and I gained a great deal of respect for the men I accompanied, each of whom, when faced with a dilemma, relied on his own good judgment to provide service in a timely manner.

I learned something else while in the field in Southern Bell; that while their official motor vehicle safety record was better than ours in Nevada, their trucks were the most dented and damaged I'd ever seen. Was there some kind of difference in the reporting of accidents? My craftsman-escort merely chuckled in response to that question.

As expected, there were more black folks than whites in old Atlanta, most of them apparently poor. All of those we encountered, though, either in their homes or at the coffee shop where we had lunch, were courteous and unassuming, which was more than I could say for some of the whites in the area.

My times in Atlanta were not all work and no play, and while I cannot remember when I did what, I will chronicle a few of my off-the-job activities.

It was during my first week that Paul Webb took me to his home in Decatur, to meet his family and go to dinner with him and his wife. Their place was right out of "Better Homes and Gardens." A two story, steep roofed, white clapboard house set among deciduous trees in a former forest. His property, one of dozens in a fairly new subdivision, was probably 100' by 150' in size, with a small lawn area around the house and the rest au naturel; that is, carpeted with leaves. I was reminded of New England.

One evening, Paul took four of us students to a restaurant somewhere out in the country northwest of Atlanta. (The roads back there were particularly narrow and winding, the weather was always overcast or raining, and I could never keep track of my compass directions.) Called "Aunt Fanny's Cabin," this unique eatery was a compendium of low rambling rooms, brick and board lean-tos added one to another and connected by small doorways. The brick floor was so uneven the checkered-cloth-covered wooden tables were propped up with ashtrays to keep them level. Of course it was dark inside, the only light provided by candles on the tables, which added to the nineteenth-century atmosphere. (Besides, it would never do to illuminate such a dirty place.)

According to legend the original building, situated near a crossroads, was the home of a freed slave named Fannie, who, to eke out a living, offered meals to hungry passersby. The combination of location, the good woman's cooking and outgoing personality led to the popular eatery's expansion, which was now capable of seating hundreds of patrons.

There were no menus per se but a grinning young darkie, about ten-years old, walked around with a sandwich-board slung over his shoulders on which was scribbled the fare. I opted for steak, baked potato and salad; the others chose stuff like catfish, prawns and gumbo. When our meal arrived, I was surprised to see that the potato, giant by any standard, was wrapped in some kind of parchment. Paul explained that it was a house specialty, and was "baked" in the following manner:

The potato is first placed in a special heavy paper, which is twisted on the ends like a candy-kiss wrapper, then dropped into a vat of boiling pine-pitch. Pitch, of course, boils at a very high temperature, as high as or higher than a hot oven. As a result, the process is fast and thorough.

"But won't it taste like pine pitch?" I inquired of Paul.

"No," he chuckled, "for some reason the pitch flavor never permeates the potato." $\,$

I must say that my dinner at Aunt Fanny's, in addition to being a unique experience, was one of the best I'd ever eaten.

Atlanta's Civil War history was well known, and the merchants were making the most of it. In the older part of the city, that which had been constructed atop the rubble after the war, an attraction called "Atlanta Underground" had been recently opened to the tourist trade. It was the original city excavated and restored, replete with bars, saloons, jazz musicians and ubiquitous souvenir shops. Alas, the

place had also attracted all kinds of riff-raff, derelicts, drunks and drug addicts.

Of far more interest was Pittypat's Porch, a swank antebellum restaurant just off famous Peachtree Street. It was allegedly named for the talkative scene-stealing character in "Gone With The Wind." In stark contrast to Aunt Fanny's Kitchen, Pittypat's, with its high ceiling and balcony, was spacious and bright.

My friends were delighted with the cuisine, which began with a brass warming-cart loaded with all-you-can-eat oysters on the half shell. Linen-clothed tables were set with heavy silver and china, much as they would have been, I supposed, when gentlemen plantation owners entertained in the old days. The service was overwhelming, but the food was too spicy. Uncharacteristically, to top off the evening I bought a souvenir mug filled with hot coffee and liqueur.

Another evening, in the company of several "rounders," I visited a place called "The Braves, Falcons, Flames." Never much of a sports fan, I did not appreciate the significance of the name until someone pointed out that many of the patrons were big, tall, athletic guys, members of Atlanta's baseball, football and basketball teams.

A new high-rise hotel stood well above the rest of downtown Atlanta, at the top of which was a round, glass-enclosed rotating restaurant. The lights of the burgeoning city made a complete circle around us while we enjoyed an expensive meal (too expensive to be reimbursed by the Company).

But the highlight of my sightseeing experiences was when, in May of 1971, I stayed an extra day after class, rented a car and drove to Georgia's Stone Mountain. It was fascinating. A great dome-shaped rock up-thrust some 825-feet above the surrounding forested plain, the largest exposed granite monolith in the world. I rode the tram to the top and roamed about on its bare, seamless surface, which in many ways reminded me of Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire. I could just make out the city of Atlanta in the hazy distance, 15-miles away to the west.

Far below, on the sheer north face of the mountain and unseen from the top, the sculpting of the South's most impressive monument to its Civil War heroes, Jefferson Davis, "Stonewall" Jackson and Robert E. Lee, was nearing completion.

The monument was begun, so the story goes, in the 1920s, as the original creation of sculptor Gutzon Borglum (of subsequent Mt. Rushmore fame). But he, being more a great artist than politician, had a falling out with the monument commission and quit the project in a huff. After a lapse of time another sculptor, Lukeman, was commissioned to take over the job. He obliterated Borglum's initial grandiose design — which in addition to the principle heroes envisioned a host of the Confederate army in the background — and concentrated on the three mounted figures.

In 1971, under the direction of a third sculptor - a northerner by the name of Walker Hancock of Gloucester, Massachusetts - the finishing touches were being applied by a handful of workmen on a scaffold.

The magnificent bas-relief carving is gigantic in scope, measuring 90- by 190-feet and recessed 42-feet into the side of the mountain. I was told that were it possible to get it up there, a

Greyhound bus would fit on the rump of Robert E. Lee's horse. It was believable, for I could hardly make out the workmen from the observation point near the lodge.

In addition to the "rock" there was a beautiful park. Pleasant walkways led me through the trees to quiet ponds and waterways. A stunning carillon (transpositioned from the New York World's Fair) stood on a point of land where the smooth water reflected its image as its melodic notes resounded from the opposite shore. A steam railway encircled the scenic mountain; picnic grounds had been provided for tourists; and a colonial style two-story inn graced the slope before the sculpture.

Georgia's Stone Mountain, in my opinion, is one of the most significant attractions in all of the United States.

In September of 1972, after completing another week of study in Atlanta, I took advantage of my being in the East and, instead of flying straight home, detoured to New England (again at my own expense). In contrast to my last trip, in 1969, this time I was in good health and spent several happy days visiting family, friends and familiar points of interest before taking an uneventful flight back to Nevada.

In the course of one of my Atlanta peregrinations, I almost missed two important sessions. I had flown from Reno to San Francisco to Chicago, where I was to change planes for the last leg of the trip. But my plane was late getting to O'Hare and when I asked an attendant the way to my connecting flight I was taken aback.

"I'm sorry, sir," the kind lady said, "that flight has already taken off." $\ensuremath{\text{1}}$

She quickly thumbed through a book of schedules and found another flight, with a different airline, to Atlanta. However, it was due to depart in ten minutes.

"It'll take that long or longer," she explained, "to get to the gate. If you want to take it"

"You bet!" I interrupted. And at my elbow I heard my words twice echoed. Two nuns, also headed for Atlanta, were faced with the same dilemma.

The airline lady picked up a phone and called someone, then came out from behind the counter and personally escorted the three of us through a side door, down a flight of stairs and onto the tarmac. A van appeared from nowhere and screeched to a stop in front of us. The nuns and I clambered aboard and the driver sped away, past a dozen airliners at their gates, to the opposite end of the terminal where our aircraft was waiting, engines running and the door at the top of a portable stair ajar. In a matter of seconds, almost, we were airborne and I was once more relaxed. I would not miss the Sunday night introductory meeting after all.

I got to the meeting only slightly late, dressed in wrinkled traveling garb because my suitcase was delayed. It <u>did</u> arrive that night, delivered to the hotel by a taxi driver about midnight. I was lucky that it had not been lost, for I had not yet learned to pack my electric shaver in my carry-on briefcase.

That was Sunday. On Monday morning I went through an experience so trying I swore to never repeat it. It began when I awoke with a start after oversleeping (an unusual transgression for me).

It was a rule, at the Center, that if you were going to be late for the Vice President's Monday morning welcoming speech, then you must not attend at all. Once the door was closed, no one was allowed to enter. You would be properly embarrassed, later, when you got to the classroom; but at least the VP would not have observed your dereliction.

It was ten-minutes to eight when I jumped out of bed. The conference room door would be closed, I knew from experience, at eight o'clock sharp. Could I possibly shave, dress and make the half-mile trek to the center in ten minutes? In the rain? I was certain I could not, but I'd make a valiant effort.

Wet weather was not the exception in Atlanta. More than once I sat in my room and watched with childlike fascination as the rain came down in sheets and lightning stitched low-lying clouds to the city's skyline. Often, when the power was interrupted, there was little to do \underline{but} watch. One night, the wind-driven rain pounded my window from dark until dawn.

Nor was Atlanta immune from wintry weather. On one occasion I arrived to find downed trees, limbs and wires, and several bent-fendered automobiles littering the streets, the aftermath of a devastating wind and ice storm the day before.

But it was a warm rain that fell this worrisome morning, after having drizzled all night long. With only a few minutes to go I stuffed my glasses into a shirt pocket, to keep them dry, and began the most important run of my life.

The walkway was uneven and slick. I winced when unseen tree branches struck me in the face. I cursed at every unavoidable puddle of water along the way. Because I wore a raincoat (virtually the uniform-of-the-day in the south) and held my briefcase over my head I arrived at the Center relatively dry.

The miracle, though, was that I got there just as the door to the conference room was being closed, and made it inside. I was never so tired and out of breath in my life as when I slumped into a back seat and heard the vice president's welcoming remarks. But it was not for his words that I had expended so much effort, it was to avoid the embarrassment of being late or absent.

As alluded to above, the last of my Atlanta training classes, the Toll Maintenance Operations course, was the most enjoyable and least taxing of the lot. I was disappointed that Paul Webb was no longer the instructor (he had transferred to another position with AT&T) but the fellow who took his place was equally knowledgeable of toll fundamentals. As for me, I both learned from and contributed to the class.

Before leaving the subject of the South, I must report that I was quite pleased with the food there; at least that which I found in and around Atlanta. New England menus, in the main, lean toward stews, chowders and seafoods. Westerners, naturally enough since most of the country was wrested from Spanish-Mexicans, can't seem to survive without hot and spicy dishes. But everywhere I dined in the South,

except in the most expensive restaurants, I was able to find dishes to suit my taste: potatoes, yams, plain but well-cooked vegetables, biscuits, even macaroni-and-cheese. The latter, if not a main entree, was almost always served as a side dish. Hominy grits were all right too.

Steak is steak anywhere you go, except that it tends to be sweeter in the East. Chicken is almost always palatable (if you can forget how it looks in the raw). But southern sugar-cured bacon is undoubtedly the finest in the world. (Watch out for the salt-cured ham, though, unless you're prepared to drink a gallon of water with your meal.)

Sugar-cured Bacon or ham, packaged in a kind of netting, could be found hanging in the gift shop at the Atlanta airport. More than once I bought a hunk of bacon and carried it home in my briefcase.

The formal training I received at the Atlanta Center was useful to me. But more important, I thought, was the knowledge gained from talking with my peers from other parts of the United States, from other Bell Companies.

The undesirable feature of the courses was the homework. Before every session, each of us was required to collect and record pages of data relative to his particular job. Then, in Atlanta, the information was reported out, discussed and disseminated at great length.

Back home, after the session, we were expected to complete another set of homework — as it pertained to our jobs — and submit the results to the boss for his perusal and "acceptance."

I always did a thorough job on the pre-class assignments, to be properly prepared, and conscientiously completed my post-class work when Roy Powers was my boss. But when Bud Jones replaced Roy, for one reason and another I let the homework go by the board. Bud hounded me to complete my last two assignments, but in the end he signed my certificates (which were of no significance anyway) with a shrug.

Thus ended my involvement with the Atlanta Training Center. I was happy to be done with them. Not that I was too old to learn from classroom exercises, just that on-the-job experience was, in my opinion, far more valuable.

END OF VOLUME III - PART 1