

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK YPARRAGUIRRE: A CONTRIBUTION TO A SURVEY OF LIFE IN CARSON VALLEY, FROM FIRST SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE 1950S

Interviewee: Frank Yparraguirre with Raymond Borda

Interviewed: 1984

Published: 1984

Interviewer: R. T. King

UNOHP Catalog #130

Description

Americans of Basque ancestry figure prominently in the history of Nevada. Shepherding and innkeeping are the activities most commonly associated with the state's Basques in the mind of the general public, but that is an excessively narrow interpretation of their role, particularly in Carson Valley.

Frank Yparraguirre was born of Basque parents in San Francisco in 1903. His father was a Sweetwater rancher who had emigrated to America from Echelar, Spain, in 1877 and married a young immigrant from Cilveti in 1892. When only a few weeks old, Frank was taken by rail and stagecoach to the Sweetwater home of the family, where he lived the first ten years of his life. The period 1913 to 1921 was spent in San Francisco during school terms, and back on the ranch when school was out. While still a young man, Mr. Yparraguirre lost his enthusiasm for the life of a rancher, and in 1924 he moved to the Minden-Gardnerville area of Carson Valley.

In this volume, Yparraguirre takes the reader on an expansive journey through time and space. Beginning with family history handed down about mid-nineteenth century life in the Pyrenees villages of his grandparents, he continues with accounts of his father's and mother's early experiences in the New World, his father's efforts to establish himself as a rancher, and his own observations on life in Minden and Gardnerville from the 1920s through the 1950s. Commentary on Basque family and social institutions is interspersed with firsthand accounts of topics that are important in the history of Carson Valley.

Mr. Yparraguirre was in the general store and dry goods business for sixty years, first as a clerk in Minden and then as owner of his own establishment in Gardnerville. He gives a detailed description of the operations of the Farmers Co-op and the Minden Mercantile in the 1920s and 1930s. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II Mr. Yparraguirre purchased his own store. The reader is provided with a valuable account of the changing economy and society of Carson Valley through the eyes of one who was at its oppidan, commercial center.

Frank Yparraguirre also gives attention to both the Basque and Washoe presence in Carson Valley. His testimony is augmented by the comments of Mr. Raymond Borda, which are appended to the interview. These are directed toward the related subjects of the French Hotel (a Basque inn), its attached handball court, and concentrations of Washoe Indians in the vicinity.

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FUNDED WITH A MATCHING GRANT FROM THE
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE
NEVADA DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ARCHEOLOGY

An Oral History Conducted by R. T. King
May 22, 1984

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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<http://www.unr.edu/oralhistory>

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Printed in the United States of America

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (OHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand descriptions of events, people and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

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

It is the policy of the OHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim

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

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

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

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

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered

but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text: they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

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INTRODUCTION

Americans of Basque ancestry figure prominently in the history of Nevada. Sheep herding and inn keeping are the activities most commonly associated with the state's Basques in the mind of the general public, but that is an excessively narrow interpretation of their role, particularly in Carson Valley.

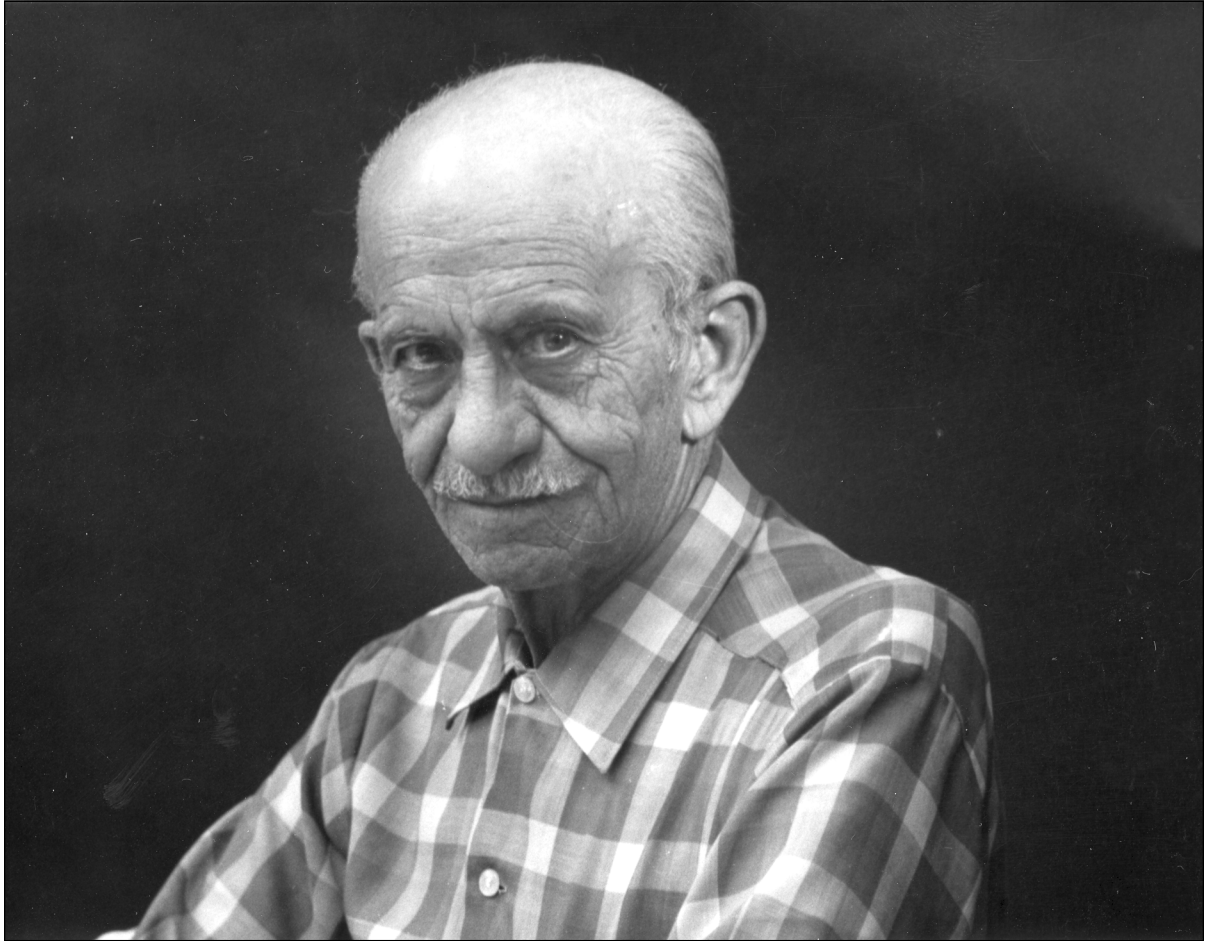
Frank Yparraguirre was born of Basque parents in San Francisco in 1903. His father was a Sweetwater rancher who had emigrated to America from Echalar, Spain in 1877 and married a young immigrant from Cilveti in 1892. When only a few weeks old the infant Frank was taken by rail and stagecoach to the Sweetwater home of the family, where he lived the first 10 years of his life. The period 1913 to 1921 was spent in San Francisco during school terms and back on the ranch when school was out. While still a young man, Mr. Yparraguirre lost his enthusiasm for the life of a rancher, and in 1924 he moved to the Minden-Gardnerville area of Carson Valley where he makes his residence today.

In this 1984 interview, Frank Yparraguirre takes the reader on an expansive journey through time and space. Beginning with family history handed down about mid-nineteenth century life in the Pyrenees villages of his grandparents, he continues with accounts of his father's and mother's early experiences in the New World, his father's efforts to establish himself as a rancher and his own observations on life in Minden and Gardnerville in the 1920s through the 1950s. Commentary on Basque family and social institutions is interspersed with firsthand accounts of topics that are important in the history of Carson Valley.

Mr. Yparraguirre has been in the general store and dry goods business for 60 years, first as a clerk in Minden and then as owner of his own establishment in Gardnerville. In these pages he gives a detailed description of the operations of the Farmers Co-op and the Minden Mercantile in the 1920s and 1930s. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II Mr. Yparraguirre purchased his own

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FRANK YPARRAGUIRRE

1984

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK YPARRAGUIRRE

R. T. King: We're going to be talking this evening [4 May 1984], and in other interviews that we'll conduct over the next couple of weeks, about several different topics. We're interested primarily in the Basque experience in Nevada, and in sheep raising, and finally in urban life here in the Carson Valley in general, over a very lengthy period of time. But this evening I want to start by asking you some questions about your grandparents.

I know that you didn't know any of your grandparents, but I'm sure that your mother and father must have told you something about them. What were the names of your father's parents?

Frank Yparraguirre: On my father's side, his mother's name was Maria, which is Mary in English. Then Dad's name was Francisco. They named 2 sons, the older son and the youngest son, Francisco. So there were actually 3 Franciscos in the same family.

But your grandmother's name was Maria. Do you know what her maiden name was?

I never knew her maiden name.

My father's father's name was Francisco.

Do you know what town and what province Francisco may have been from?

He came from the town of Echalar, which is right on the French-Spanish border. They were born on the Spanish side. He used to tell me that he would look out from their home, watch the *carabineros*, which are border patrol to us, going up and down the French border.

Your father's father was born in Echalar, as well?

I haven't the vaguest idea.

On my mother's side, their father was born not too far from where they lived, where my mother was born. He was born in Elizalde, in the Spanish province of Navarra. Then he met my grandmother at Cilveti, and that's where they got married and lived. My grandmother's maiden name was Podarena.

Let me rehash this. You don't know your grandmother's maiden name on your father's side; you don't know what village she was from, and you don't know what province.

No.

Your grandfather on your father's side, of course, his name also was Yparraguirre; and his [Christian] name was Francisco. Is that correct?

Right.

And he was also from Echalar?

So far as I know. The history of the town goes back...I don't know, he's got some nephews living in there. It goes back many years, so I'm assuming that that's where he was born—the same house that my dad was born in. Because that family has been there for many, many years.

Now let's do the same thing on your mother's side. Your mother's mother was....

Podarena.

Do you know what her first name was?

No, I can't recall [her given name]. I've heard my mother say it many times, but....

Her father's name was Miguel Arriet. And there were 11 members in her family. There's still a lot of that family in Fresno.

On my mother's side, there were 11 children in that family—7 boys and 4 girls. I knew all of her brothers but one.

What was your grandfather Yparraguirre's occupation?

Primarily raising animals: cattle and stuff like that. A farm or a ranch is what they had. *Small*, from what I had explained to me from my folks.

Once in a while, they'd have to go to the border of France in order to sell the animals that they raised. They went whichever way that brought the best market for them.

I understand that a lot of that traffic was illegal.

A lot, yes. There was a lot of that stuff taking place around the border. It was inducement for the people close to the border to do it, I guess. But I never heard my dad say anything about that. The only thing I heard him say is that it would vary where they would take their livestock to sell it. Sometimes they had a better market on the French side than they did on the Spanish side, and vice versa. I guess it depended on what people needed or wanted real bad, where the markets were or where the markets were created. That's the way I have it figured out.

Do you know whether or not your grandfather did any kind of farming other than raising livestock? Did he have agriculture as well?

Yes, they had a farm; they plowed and tilled the soil...raised livestock.1

Did your father ever talk about the sorts of crops your grandfather raised?

No, I never heard him even mention crops.

But my father had a green hand. Anything that guy planted, it grew. And the same thing out at the [Yparraguirre] ranch [in Sweetwater, Nevada]. I used to see him go out and seed the fields with just a sack. He

just knew how to throw the seed and stuff like that—grass, hay and fescue. Even before they had drills, I have seen my father plant grain out there—barley and wheat. Raise enough wheat to feed the chickens and the animals and stuff they raised around the ranch, so they wouldn't have to go out and buy it.

Was your grandfather a prosperous farmer?

Well, they were limited back there [in Navarra]. They had no way to prosper. That's why they left home and went to some other country to make a living. Most of the Basque people that come out of that area, why, there was no future for them. Their thoughts were to go to some foreign country someplace and make a fortune someday and come home, or stay forever.

Do you know about how large the farm was that your grandfather held?

I haven't the vaguest idea.

Of course, it would all pass down to the eldest son, wouldn't it?

Yes. In my mother's case, it passed down to the 3 girls. She did not want her share of it, so she wanted to distribute it to her sisters that stayed there, that were home, that took care of her parents. She never assumed anything from the estate that was left. She felt like they were entitled to it because they stayed home and took care of the family.

What do you know about your grandmother on your father's side?

I've seen pictures of her, but I never met her personally. Of course, I was never back there.

Did your father ever talk about what kind of a life she may have led, what sorts of things she would have done?

I heard him mention certain things about the house and things like that, but....

Try to recall what he told you. What about the house?

She was an immaculate housekeeper, so he used to say. Things had to be kept straightened out, and the kids had to keep straightened out, too. Before they'd come in the house they had to take off their shoes on a little porch they had, and things like this, and leave the crud outside.

And then downstairs they used to tell me they used to take care of livestock. You know, they lived in the same house, but the livestock was downstairs and living quarters were up on the second floor. They had to keep the downstairs clean, too. That was a big chore, to keep the animals clean and keep the floors clean and keep that up. I did hear them talk about it. They mentioned that quite often.

Did your father ever talk about the size of the house—how many rooms it had, what it may have been built from, how old it was?

No. I have a picture here someplace. It wasn't that big. The picture doesn't depict it, either, because it was a straight, face-on picture, so you don't know what's behind it. But the old stables, where they were originally, you can still see the bottom floor and the top floor. The bottom looks modern. When it happened, why... I think there's living quarters downstairs now and living quarters upstairs.

Do you know what kind of livestock your grandfather raised, principally?

Principally, sheep and cattle.

What they used to do is run up in those mountains and pool the different flocks. Somebody would volunteer a certain length of time to go up and take care of them, so that this was kind of a community sort of a thing.

Did your father ever do that?

Yes, oh yes.

He must have been still quite a young boy when he was watching the sheep.

Well, he must have been, because he was 13 years old when he left for the United States.

He lit in November, just a little before December, in San Francisco where his brother had a hotel. He had a Basque hotel with all the trimmings that went with it. It had to have a handball court to play handball with, and the lodging rooms and all this type of thing. Naturally, with all of the herders and people who would come down there, they looked for help from wherever they stayed. In other words, he'd have to be kind of a nursemaid to take them to a dentist to get their teeth fixed or a doctor if they were ill, or.... This was the chore that was relegated to a person who'd run a hotel at that time—take care of the people that stayed there.

What was the name of the hotel?

The Yparraguirre Hotel, is what it was.

Do you know where it was located?

Let's see.. .where was it? I was born in the same house. It was on the southwest corner of Powell and Broadway in San Francisco.

And it was wrecked in the earthquake of 1906?

Fire, too. Yes, that's when he got wiped out. I was born in 1903, and 3 years later he didn't know what was....

All right, I think we'll try to go back a little bit and catch your father at his birth. What was the year of your father's birth?

October 10 was his birthday, 1864. He's 21 days older than the state of Nevada, so that they honored him here when they had the state of Nevada centennial.

What position did he occupy in the family? What was his ranking among brothers and sisters?

Well, he was the ranking member for running the establishment, [ranch and livestock].

I don't mean in terms of status; I'm talking about age. He wasn't the eldest offspring?

He was the youngest of the family.

And how many brothers and sisters were there? How many children were there in the family?

Four. Four brothers.

Can you give me their names?

Yes. There was Pablo; [my father] started in the sheep business with Pablo.

Was Pablo the oldest?

No, I'll take them by age; I think I'll get that right. Francisco, the one in San Francisco who had the hotel, was the oldest. Then there

was Pablo, the second oldest, and then there was León. And then Francisco, my dad.

Arid his sisters...the oldest one was Marie, and she married a Garat. She married Siñon Garat in Riverside, [California]. Then the other sister's name was Josephine. She married a baker by the name of Schabiaga.

And where were they settled?

In San Francisco. I remember it was on Hyde Street, but I don't remember what street was the corner. It's out in the North Beach area.

About when did Pablo come to this country?

Pablo came before my dad. I couldn't tell you the year, though.

Do you know about how old he was?

Well, let's see, maybe we could figure it out. Dad was 13 when he came here in 1877, so it must have preceded that when León and Pablo came. And his sisters came later.

You don't know how old Pablo may have been when he came?

No, I don't have the vaguest idea. But I know that my dad and he started the sheep business.

Francisco is the oldest. He's the first of the family to be here. Pablo came later, and then Le& came later on. My dad was the youngest one; he was the last boy to be here.

Well, [as the eldest son, why did Francisco choose] to come to this country rather than take over the family farm?

He was successful enough that there was no point in going home. That's the assumption

that I have. He had the hotel, owned the hotel and....

Was it common practice, then, for an elder son to leave and come to this country before returning to the old country to take over the farm? I thought that was uncommon; perhaps I'm wrong.

Well, it was common, yes, but not necessarily so.

Since all 4 of the brothers came to this country, who got the family farm?

Well, it reverted to a nephew [of my grandfather]. I know the boy was born in the same house my dad was born in; he's down in Madera, California now—José Sansiñena.

The family that now occupies the Yparraguirre family farm in Navarra is named Sansiñena?

Yes.

So a nephew inherited it.

It's on my father's side.

You don't have any knowledge of the circumstances surrounding that inheritance?

I don't know heads or tails of it.

The big thing from my mother's place was making charcoal. They'd go up in the forest, make these great big mounds of charcoal, and dampen them and wet them down. Then go back at a certain time and put them out. They would take care of anything else, see. Then they would wait till the fall would come, and they'd take all of this charcoal down there and sell it to Roncesvalles. That's a big meadow. There's an old, old monastery there, as

explained to me; it's been there for centuries. Right now they tell me it's a tourist-oriented type of valley.

And the family would sell charcoal to the monastery?

No. At that time, Roncesvalles was a gathering place for kings, queens, dukes, and you name it. All the royalty used to come in there, and they'd chase foxes and all this kind of thing. It was kind of an amusement place for all of the royalty coming from all other countries, too, because it seems like the kings and queens were interlocking somewhere along the family line in all of Europe at one time, from the history that I've gathered, have read in the past. So there must have been some connection with a lot of different countries, different areas, see.

That was the gathering place. There's where they could get the best price and sell the best product to the dukes, kings and queens—the royalty that came to spend their summers in there. In other words, it was an amusement place for them is what it used to be then.

Let's return to your father's brothers now. I'd like to trace the trip across the Atlantic. Francisco is the one who interests me right now because he wound up owning the hotel. I asked you earlier if you know about how old he was when he left the Basque country. I guess you don't know, do you?

No, I haven't the vaguest idea. I do know that he came over here through... [Pedro] Altube.²

What was the connection between Altube and your family?

Well, the connection was back there in Europe, coming out of the same province. [Actually, Guipuzcoa (Pedro Altube's birthplace) are adjacent provinces in the Spanish Basque country.]

Sure, but other than coming out of the same province, was there any relationship between the 2 families?

Not that I know about; not that I know of.

Your family didn't work for the Altube family, or there wasn't some marriage of some distant relatives?

That, I don't know anything about. I don't think so, but...

Well, the old practice years ago [in the Basque country] used to be that neighbors would send their Sons, daughters to work [for other families]. The relationship amongst neighbors was they got 2 pair of socks or 2 pair of shoes or something like this in sort of a barter type of a thing. The parents committed the children to X amount of years or whatever the case may be, whatever they settled on, and they worked for these people. I think they were most of the time acquainted people; they wanted to see their children working for somebody that they knew. In other words, they had a lot more confidence with the children there. So that's the way they operated in that regime and time. Of course, that wouldn't even happen now.

No, but it was still happening in the nineteenth century, I believe.

Yes.

It was still happening at the time that your brothers came to this country.

You're going back in the 1800's, and that was a very predominant thing. When a young member of the family had to leave home, he went to work for somebody around close in. Then, after he got developed, he would take for a foster country outside, where he'd learn something in order to qualify for something to do wherever he was going in some foreign country—like such as herding sheep and herding cows, or what to do with them, how to feed them and all these little minute chores that has to be done. And then when they got to some foreign country, they'd know how to do it, how to take care of it.

So Francisco came directly to the United States, then, I take it?

Yes, he came directly to the coast down around that San Joaquin, Sacramento Valley. Where he got started, it never heard him ever say. Whether he worked for Altubes or...but he was responsible for bringing him over here.

Responsible in what way?

At that time, you had to have somebody vouch for you over here. In other words, there's still the same type of a thing: you know, the Mexican coming in from Mexico, he's got to have somebody that.... You've got to sponsor him; in other words, you've got to stand good for him.

He didn't pay for Francisco's passage, though. Is that correct?

I wouldn't swear by that or verify that at all.

Do you know whether Francisco came directly to California, or did he go first to New York and

then cross the country? Did he come all the way by boat, in other words?

No, my dad came to New York. But he came [to San Francisco] with Miguel [Arburua]. [The Arburua family] were early settlers in the San Joaquin Valley, too, in Los Banos area. Miguel had gone back to [the Basque country] to visit. Francisco told him to pick up [my father] and bring him back when he came back.

That's interesting. [By what route did Francisco arrive in San Francisco?]

He came [first] to San Joaquin Valley.

And do you know what he did in the valley?

Well, he first started working on ranches herding sheep, but he didn't last very long. He was quite an individual, actually, [considering] that he was a foreign type of a person. He was very outspoken and a soft-spoken sort of a guy, and a very good mixer; he could mix with anybody. And I think he was cut out to be in the hotel business. Then he married a lady that was.. .well, she fit in pretty well, too. She was a good cook, could run the hotel and all that kind of thing. So I think they had a good thing going for them.

Did he meet this woman before he owned the hotel?

No. He met her here in the United States, very likely in San Francisco.

But after he had purchased the hotel?

No, before.

Well, tell me something about how he got up to San Francisco. Does anybody know how he finally worked his way up there?

Well, that'd have been before my time. When I was born, he already had the hotel.

And you don't know how he accumulated enough cash to purchase the hotel?

I would say he probably got some financial helping from somebody that went good for him.

The hotel was a well-known one amongst the Basques of the West and all over the western coast, even inland— Montana, Wyoming. Anybody that came to San Francisco, they went to Yparraguirre Hotel.

Was it owned by a Basque before Francisco bought it?

I don't believe so, no. But down Pacific Street a little ways, there were other Basque hotels. I remember one of them—Lugheá brothers. There was 2 brothers.

But there are *still* some Basque hotels down there on Broadway, just between Powell and Stockton—that one block in there. There's always been Basque hotels in there.

So Francisco bought the hotel, and he bought it about what year?

It was preceding 1903. I couldn't tell you what year that he came over.

You said that it was 1877 when your father came.

Yes. And of course, Miguel Arburua, the first place he took [my dad] to was the hotel in San Francisco.

It was running in 1877, if not before?

Right.

You were going to give me some details about the hotel, and I think this would be an excellent place to remember as much as you can about it.

It had a handball court [attached]; it had a lot of rooms, and the big dining room. And it was up on the second or third floor. It seems to me there's 2 or 3 floors in that.

Was it for men only or men and women?

Men and women. He had hotel rooms that he rented out, see, and fed the people there, too. His wife, Maria, had done the cooking. I don't recall what town she come from in Europe either.

If I had been in that damn country or seen it, I could've banked a lot of information, but I've never been back there. But hearing people talk at the ranch...you know, they came from there [the Basque country] as greenhorns to America. You'd go out to the bunkhouse, and I'd hear them telling all of these different tales, see, that come out.

Did the hotel serve Basque food?

Yes.

Did it have another menu? Did it serve American or other kinds of food, as well?

No, they didn't serve American-style; they served Basque-style. Let's look at this perspective: you had Bakersfield with a lot of Basque population. Bakersfield, Fresno— there was quite a large [Basque] population there; Sacramento, there were some; northern California, there were some; inland—again

coming all the way down through San Joaquin, Sacramento valleys and all through there. There's Basque settlements all over that country. And they were probably brought in by.. .like Altube and the Spanish land grants.

Were most of the people who stayed at the hotel Basques, then?

Yes, they were practically all Basques that stayed at the hotel, unless they brought some friends or something along with them; then they stayed there. But it was a common thing for the Basques to congregate together just to have a good time. Every Saturday night in the city of San Francisco the Basque hotels were all...made their festivities at the end of the week. There was a lot of people living in the city, and they all gathered at these hotels just to get together and enjoy themselves and have a good time—have a few drinks and dance the *jota*, and this kind of stuff.

What sorts of things were the urban Basques in San Francisco doing?

Well, most of them were out working. There was an enormous amount of Basque people that came from the old country that were gardeners, maintenance people, and taking care of the wealthier properties and things like this. There's an awful lot of them there in San Francisco now.

What sorts of services did your uncle, Francisco, provide other than just having rooms for people?

Well, he had a bar.

And you said he had a handball court. Was it a single room, or did he have several handball courts within the...?

No, there was just one big handball court, is all. But it was closed in, and had daylight on the top. It was kind of a skylight thing.

Did he act as a banker or as an interpreter or provide any other services?

This was understood: if you had a greenhorn Basque, you had to go to the bank, negotiate things. Of course, I've done that for countless people myself. You still have to go to the bank to be the interpreter in case they want to send money home or cash a check or open up an account, a deposit, or all this kind of thing. You had to be there with the gentleman or lady or man or whoever it was to be an interlocutor, interpreter. My concept of life was this: somebody helped *my* dad when he came here, and I helped a terrible lot of Basque people—not only Basque, but Spanish. And I put in a hitch even in 1942 with all these *braceros* they brought in from Mexico—the strong-arm boys to work on farms, when our American boys went to war. Why, hell, I volunteered my services through the extension service, University of Nevada.

Otto Schulz was down there at the agricultural extension. He knew me because he was born and raised right down here where the state prison is, on a farm down here, the Schulz ranch. His sister married an attorney; live right in back of the house down here.

And I worked with George Montrose. His wife was a Schulz girl, Otto's sister. I worked with George Montrose on the town board of Gardnerville and helped with a lot of legal things, too, when these Basque people and French people or whatever they be...Spanish. Why, if they'd have legal work and things like this, this was expected from whoever the landlord was in the Basque hotel. They took this for granted.

So your father, then, -came when he was 13 years old, and he went directly to your uncle's hotel in San Francisco?

Yes.

I would imagine he must have traveled across the United States.

They came by rail.

I'll tell you what happened to him! [laughs] He got off the ship in New York. He came with this Miguel Arburua.

So they got off the ship together in New York City?

Yes, New York City, and they were going to go to some hotel.

Do you know which one?

I don't know which one, but they were going to a Basque hotel that had something to do with the Basque people there. There's an Aguirre there that's got a hotel and a travel agency, too, down in New York. A lot of them made contact the same way, see—the people that were coming a few years back.

Anyway, they got on the train. I know they were coming on a train. The first place they got off, the train stopped at Elko. And at that time my dad was out in the street, and he said to Miguel, "What is all these people running around here with all these pigtailed?"

There were Chinese coolies that worked on the mines and railroad and things like this.

He says, "I know people used to come home; they used to tell me about these people—they're Chinamen, see."

Chinos, they'd call them—*Chinos* that had the long hair, see. He thought he was in China. That's the first thing he asked Miguel,

he says, "Are we in China? Have to get on the railroad."

He said, "No, those are people that work around these different areas."

How much of an education did your father have before he came to this country?

Not too much. He couldn't've had too much. Oh, I suppose what he learned, he learned at home. But he had a good scribe; he had a very plain scribe.

Do you mean that he wrote well?

He wrote well.

Do you think that most of his education came from the home, or was it customary to send the children out to school in the Basque country?

They had some school, but not that much. Like what you and I are looking at here, they didn't have those types of education. When they were husky and healthy enough to go to work, that was the main inducement to put them to work. If they didn't have work enough at home, they'd send them out someplace else to work until they would reach a certain limitation or a certain age, so that they could go away from home.

Would the family object to someone who wanted to gain an education rather than to work at manual labor?

I think so. I think it was more important to learn how to live than it would have been to be educated. I think that was the major concept.

And would the same attitude apply to the female members of the family?

Yes. Those small places that they had would always sustain just so much, and that's it. If they couldn't sustain it, they would take the children or something and put them with a neighbor or somebody that they knew. They would find employment and make a deal for a year or something like this, or 2 years—whatever the case may be. And they supplied the necessities like socks and shoes, such as there was. Like my mother said, they wore wooden shoes when they were kids—*eskalopiña*, they called their wooden shoes.

How old were they when they would quit wearing them?

I don't know. They were just kids when they had to wear them. Their father made the shoes for them.

When your father arrived in San Francisco, I would imagine he worked at the hotel for your uncle.

Not very long. They found work for him down in the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento Valley; places like Fresno and different areas—Tranquility, and places like that.

What kind of work?

Herding sheep and grazing sheep and all this kind of a thing.

Did he know how to herd sheep before he came to this country?

Well, they had a little experience because they had livestock at home. Then they would go to the mountains, too, with a certain season of the year to the grazing lands, like I was telling you. Certain groups would put a band

of sheep together with entities of different kinds, see. I think the Irish practice that the same, up at Klamath Falls, Oregon.

I remember my dad went out on a buying mission once. He was going to buy yearling sheep that he was looking for, and by the time he got through, there was 40, 45 people that owned the band of sheep that he looked at. He didn't want no part of it because he'd have to deal with 40, 45 people! That's up in Klamath Falls, see.

This reminded me of the way they function up there: they'd band the bands together, and then take them up in the hills. And then somebody would either volunteer or... pretty much on a barter system, I think, is the way they worked.

Did your father ever talk to you about his experiences in his early teens when he was working in the San Joaquin Valley?

Yes. He told me of one experience I never will forget. It was out of Fresno. They used to go up to Kings Canyon up the Kings River—that's where the Kings River originates. They used to come up for the summer, and they'd drive sheep up Kings Canyon. But to cross the river they had to make their own bridges and tumble their own logs over the top of the river, so they could cross the sheep from one place to the other, wherever they had to, and get them up here in what is now the Conway Summit and Deadman's area. It's Deadman's Pass and Benton and that mountain range in through that area. That's where they grazed them in the summer...from the valleys.

He started doing this when he was 13, I take it?

Oh, yes. Shortly after he was 13. Maybe he spent maybe a month or 2 down with his brother; then they found him a place to go to

work, and he started working then, about 13, 13 1/2, 14 years old on his own.

Do you know who paid for his passage to this country?

I haven't the vaguest idea, but I assume his brother Francisco did—the one that had the hotel.

Would that mean that your father was paying back his brother, then...?

Oh, he worked it out, yes. They all worked it out over a period of time.

Did he ever talk about what kind of money he was making as a sheepherder when he was...?

No, he never mentioned it, but I think when you're looking at the realities of things, you're looking somewhere around about \$20, \$25 a month.

And paying off his brother simultaneously, so it must have taken some time for him to accumulate any...

Yes, but then it didn't cost him the fare that it does now.

Did he have someone who would look after him when he first started working as a sheepherder?

He was out on his own, but.... Well, of course, they'd naturally write. He'd probably write to his brother or contact his folks or write back to his folks and things like this. But that's the contacts that he had. Miguel Arburua, who brought him over here... I think he thought a lot of him, too. Whatever contacts they made, they held. this is the big thing.

How long did he go on living and working down in the San Joaquin Valley, then?

It was quite a few years before he bought the Sweetwater ranch. There was 5 years there in California of consecutive drought. Then all of the livestock men—sheep men, cattlemen, and everybody else who had livestock—worked inland towards Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, and the Southwest down in Arizona, New Mexico and that country, to find the feed. Where the feed grew, that's where they went. They were forced to do it; they had to get out of the state of California.

Did your father own his own flock by that time?

No, he didn't own that till way later on. I couldn't tell you what year it was, but Pablo and he started the sheep business together. Then they had sheep, and those are the years that they lit over here.

They started in California?

Yes, somewhere in California. But then, too, in years back, instead and in lieu of wages, you would get [sheep]. The owner of the sheep.. you'd become a sort of a partner, and you would be paid off X head of sheep or stock of comparable value, and you would become a part owner in the business. So this was how most of these people got started. When they got big enough, they would branch off. But Pablo and my dad, after those drought years they had, they lit over here at [Tuscarora, Nevada], northeast of Elko. It's a ghost town now.

Eighteen-eighty, you know, there used to be what they called tramp sheep men. And a good many years ago they'd just tramp wherever the feed was, the big ones as well as the small ones.

But anyway, they got their first privilege, or right, up here at Monitor Pass. That's the first right they had. So that was somewhere in the eighties, 1880 or 1881. That's when he saw the Sweetwater ranch, and that's when he bought it. Then the Sweetwater ranch was owned by the guy that built the ranch house and all there by the name of Williams; I think it was Henry Williams.

Do you know how large the ranch was?

Yes. It had over 2,300, 2,400 acres. It was a big place, quite a good sized place. But there was a lot of development that had to be done on it. There was natural meadows, too; there was a lot of that.

What kind of structures were on the property when your father bought it?

There was a hill; then there was 3 big barns up there. One of the barns was used for shearing. It faced west. They'd shear sheep, see, facing to the west because the day was longer when the sun was setting in the west. That was the reason for doing that—long days! [laughs]

There was 32 rooms in the house. There was a big front room downstairs. Then there was a big men's room downstairs and a big office in there. The rooms, in other words, were all off the periphery of the large rooms. And there was 2 stories, so there was a great big hall in the front end of the gabled part and a big deck that looked out. You could see all over the ranch from the porch.

They used to have dances and get-togethers when people used to come there from Bridgeport, mining camps—Goldfield, Hawthorne, Mina, and all these places where the mines were. I can remember that, when I was just a kid.

There's a big kitchen; there was a dining room went right down the center of the place. And there were 4 chimneys...4 fireplaces. It is a big place, a monstrosity of a place.

Were your father and his brother partners in that?

Yes, Dad's brother [León] and Pablo were partners when they bought it.

Were both of them married at the time that they bought the ranch?

No, Pablo never married.

But your father had already gotten married by then, had he?

No, they weren't married when they bought the place. That was later on. My folks got married along about 1902.

Were there any women on the ranch?

No. There weren't till my mother actually came on the ranch.

So who stayed in that huge 32-room house?

Well, Bodie was going at that time. That used to be quite a stopping place. At that time they didn't have cars and trucks, things like we have now; we're talking in a different era. We're talking about the era when there was jerk-line teams and maybe 2 and 4, 6-horse teams, and buggy teams with double horses—mostly people riding saddle or saddle horses. And that used to be quite a stopping station there.

Did your dad rent the rooms?

Oh, yes. He used to rent the rooms. But most of the...well, like the teamsters, they

brought their own beds with them; bed come along with the wagon. Then they had bunks up in the barn; they had regular bunks where they could put their beds, stack them 2 and 3 high.

Who did your dad have working for him at that time—your dad and your uncle? Was it primarily Basques?

Yes, they were all Basque—either French or Spanish. Basque is French and Spanish both combined. A lot of those people spoke 3 languages, just for the simple reason that those people born on the Spanish side were tutored in Spanish, and those on the French side were tutored in French; but the common language in the 5 provinces was Basque—So they had to have either 2 or 3 tongues. Naturally, they were born into this; let's put it that way.

As I understand it, your father and his brother bought the Sweetwater ranch about 1887.

Eighteen eighty-six, eighty-seven, somewhere.

That would have made your father about 23 or 24 years old at that time. Is that correct?

Yes.

He had managed to accumulate a fairly sizable fortune, then in a very brief period of time—in about 10 years, from the time he was 13 until the time he was 23. If he got together enough money to buy a ranch of, what did you tell me, 2,300 acres...?

They were in hock for a long time before it got paid off.

Was anybody else involved in the partnership, or was it just your...?

This Francisco we talked about that had the hotel... he couldn't be of much help, because he got wiped out in the earthquake and the problems they had in the city at that time.

But that [ranch] was quite a stopping station. There was Aurora, Masonic, Bodie and all of these mining camps at that time—were a lot of camps, and they were all working. And this used to be a stopping station for all the type of stages and so forth. Capacity-wise for horses, they had big horse barns, and these other 4 or 5 barns, they were all to be converted to teams and things. But during the lambing season, they used most of them, with exception of the horse barn.

If I understand what you're telling me, he was earning some income off of the use of the buildings as well as off of grazing sheep.

The buildings, as well as raising sheep.

About how many head of sheep were they running at that time?

Well, in the early 1880s I'd have to make a guess of it. But they eventually developed up to where they were running close to 28,000, 30,000 head of sheep. Let us say that I was 10 years old. That's about the time, in 1913, when we moved to San Francisco to go to school. And I should say that they were probably running 18,000 sheep then. Then when we got up in the twenties, they were running close to 30,000 head of sheep off that place.

How did your father and your uncle, Pablo, divide the labor?

Well, Pablo died when he was quite young. Dad lost his right arm when he lost him.

The other brother, León, was in Tres Pinos, California. Tres Pinos in Spanish means “3 pines.” Tres Pinos is still a small town; it’s down there around Gilroy and Hollister and through that country there.

León passed away. León’s family constituted 3 girls and 2 boys—Matilda, Emily, Bea, Frank and Paul. The widow couldn’t handle the 5 after he passed away, so Dad took the 2 boys and brought them up to the ranch. And after losing Pablo, too, it helped quite a little to have the 2 boys there. So he educated them and sent them to school—business college, and things like this. And they were at the ranch for a good, long time, see.

How did Pablo die?

I was quite young when Pablo died at the ranch at Sweetwater, I think, and Leon died in Tres Pinos.

Did your father and your uncle, Pablo, have separate herds which they combined when they bought the Sweetwater property, or had they always been partners? What was the situation?

It was a joint partnership deal. They started in the San Joaquin valley and then [they took their sheep to Eastern Nevada when drought struck the California sheep country]. They lived at Six-Mile Canyon; that’s northeast of Elko. I’ve heard him talk about that a million times; that’s where they lived—Six-Mile Canyon.

Did they have a house over there?

No. Lived in the open; used tents, I guess. Those were the things that were available then.

All shepherders at that time had tents. But they never had a trailer house, like you do now, in those years. It was all outside living.

They had the jackass and they moved apartments or houses. Every time they moved the sheep, why, there was a new bedding ground. [laughter] Both for sheep and humans! [laughing]

When they finally bought that property in Sweetwater, did they enter into any kind of partnership with any other Basques?

They did. There was Manuel Yregoyen and his brother, Miguel. Then there was another close relationship there of Sansbero. Those 3 boys, in lieu of wages and things like this, got an interest in the business.

Did they bring any sheep into the business themselves?

They didn’t bring any sheep into the business at all. But then when they’d go through the sheep and things like this, whatever they had...whatever amount of sheep— 20, 40, 60, whatever the case may be—they were branded by a certain type of brand. And then the offspring and things like this...they worked that out between them, whatever it was. I don’t know how they arranged this, because I was too young to know how they took care of that arrangement.

Later on come another boy, Jacinto “Chapo” Agerabero, that used to tend camp. He went up to northern California up around that Susanville and Alturas country. He’s been dead for years.

Martin Qarriet, who was my mother’s brother, also worked for Dad for a good many years. He also got in this sheep deal, exchanging barter...sheep for wages and employment. The

psychology or reasoning behind this whole thing was to get these people interested in the sheep business— they were working for one another and helping one another.

As one of the shearers began to accumulate a few head of sheep of his own, would he continue to graze those sheep on your father's property?

Well, he would have the permits, too. That was all settled in the accounting. Like, [Dad would] have the permits for certain areas; they weren't able to get permits because they weren't citizens, see?

I see. And so who would get the permits for them, then?

Well, my dad would.

But nobody put up money or sheep in 1887 when the ranch was bought?

No. See, the barter exchange...money didn't mean anything. Like, let us say, for instance, your neighbors needed some help. They say, "Well, Joe, I need 5 men to do this or to do that." Maybe it's haying, maybe getting in wood or some menial chore, something like this. You go from one to the other: "Well, here. Here's 5 men; when do you need them?" So next time *you'd* need some help, you'd go to your neighbor, and he'd send you some help. So there was no monetary exchange. It was all kind of a barter system type of a thing.

What sorts of livestock other than sheep did your father and uncle run in Sweetwater?

Well, they grew quite fast. He bought a stud...I think from George Wingfield, who was one of the big race horse people.

About what year would that be?

I'd say that'd be about 1906, 1910. They were still using horses. They used to have workhorses on the ranch, too. They developed quite a few horses that grew with the ranch. Of course, everything was done horse-wise then; there was no mechanical type of tractors and things like this around at that time. Then they had to have horses for the jerk-line teams, the big freight teams, and had to have horses to hay with or run mowing machines and rakes and all this type of a thing. So the horse was the main work animal at that time.

They had a jackass stud, and they had a heavy workhorse stud. And then they had this saddle stud, too. So that they had 3 studs. In other words, they bred the mares with the jack to come up with the mules. And then they bred the buggy teams for buggy horses, and saddle horses they bred to the stud horse. Then the workhorse type, they would breed to the workhorse stud. You'd pick your mares that you wanted as heavy workhorses, see, or whatever. If it was a buggy team horse, you would breed that. You had to know what you were breeding. And they all kept a log on them.

I remember as kids, we'd go out there. We had a special field where we kept all the brood mares. It was anywheres from 60 to 70 mares we'd have to round up and bring in.

During haying season, the same thing was true. The evenings, we'd turn the colts in with the mares and take them out into the pastures and let them feed. Early before sunrise, we'd go out there as kids, round these things up. Sometimes they'd get in the willows and we'd lose a few; we didn't bring home all the horses, and we had to go back and get them before breakfast! [laughter] And so, that entailed a lot of stuff in the dark when you went out.

Was your father raising horses for sale?

Oh, yes, he raised horses for sale. He raised donkeys for sale, and he raised driving horses for buggy teams and drayage horses and mules for pack and for drayage, you know—for team mules.

Did he ever have any race horses?

No. But this was a race horse stud, the one he bought from Wingfield.

What about cattle and hogs? Did your father and your uncle raise them?

Yes. They had a regular dairy there at the ranch. They made their own cheese; they made their own butter. That's what the cellar was for—to keep the milk. After they got through milking, they put it in this cellar.

Was it a commercial dairy?

No, it wasn't commercialized—just for the ranch use. Just like sometimes they'd churn some ice cream or something like this.

Did they keep any cattle for sale?

They sold cattle, yes.

Do you have any idea about what ratio of cattle to sheep? Do you know about how many cattle they were running?

Well, they didn't run that much in cattle. Although we had a small bunch we used to take up to Bridgeport in the summertime for the summer meadows...give the hay fields and the grass fields a rest in the summer.

Can you remember what kind of cattle?

They were Durhams. They didn't have all these Holsteins and stuff around at that time. And they were mostly horned cattle, too.

He had about 2,300 acres of land, I think you told me. What were you putting all that acreage to use for?

Well, you had to cut hay to lamb with. You cut the hay that you raised in the summertime, and used that for haying. If you didn't have enough for haying, you'd have to take like they used to...when they had so many sheep, they used to take some of those sheep they lambled to Mason Valley, due to the hay. Wherever you purchased the hay, you had the place to lamb, see. This was the agreement you would have with the guy that sold you the hay. He'd give you the right and the privilege to lamb at his place, and when you got through, you moved out. But like I say, it was mostly all barter. People worked back and forth. You've heard the old saying—if your neighbor's barn burned down, you went over and helped him put his barn back up. And there's no monetary exchange in there. This is the concept that I see in this country here. If this country ever progresses again, this is the way we grew: people helping people. No monetary exchange.

As I understand it, your mother and father were married in 1902. We haven't talked at all about your mother up to this point. Before we begin talking about the twentieth century, let's spend a couple of minutes and talk about your mom. Earlier on you gave me her maiden name....

Arriet.

And you told me that her family made charcoal.

Charcoal, yes.

Was that their sole source of income, or did they have a farm? What else were they doing?

They had a few livestock; not too much, though. She always claimed that her family had to get out and work early in life. They *would* with a family that size—11 kids, with 7 boys and 4 girls. They were up towards foothills, too.

When was your mother born?

Let's see.... She was 12 years younger than my dad. That would mean she was born in 1876.

About how far was your mother's village from the village of your father?

I don't know. They always pointed in the metric system. I would say maybe 30, 40 miles. They never met one another till they got here in the states.

You told me, I think, that your mother left because it was necessary for her other 2 sisters to be supported by the family farm, and she felt that she ought to leave. How old was she when she left?

I think she was 23 when she first came here in mid-1895 or 1896. This is where she met my dad, in his brother's hotel there. And she worked for Rudolf Spreckles, the sugar king. She worked for the Spreckles family out on Pacific Avenue in San Francisco.

Did she come into New York?

Yes, she came to New York, too.

And who had sponsored her?

One of her brothers from Fresno.

Did he meet her in New York?

No. She came with some other people, I think, from New York to the coast, and then later on went down to Fresno to her oldest brother, Pete. He had a ranch over there in Coalinga where that earthquake happened here awhile back. He was running sheep there.

What was there for her in Coalinga? Did she have any employment there?

No, she didn't. There was...well, most of the Basque girls used to start in Basque restaurants at one time. Primarily to try to learn the English language was the purpose of that service, see.

Is that what your mom did?

No. She helped out at the San Francisco place, but not for very long because she found work right away. Mrs. Rudolf Spreckles could speak French, and my mother spoke good French, so this is the way they communicated.

So your mom worked in what capacity, then?

Well, taking care of kids and doing chores and things like this around the house. It's quite a big mansion that's out there on Pacific Avenue in San Francisco; I think that the building is still there.

How long did your mother work for the Spreckles family?

She worked there for several years. And she used to tell that.. .at that time they had a great big spread down in San Mateo. Wealthy

people at one time lived in San Mateo—some people of wealth that lived down along the coastal peninsula. I wouldn't know how long she worked there; I think she said 3 or 4 years.

Now, how did she wind up at...? You say she was at Francisco's hotel in San Francisco. Is that where she met your father?

That's where she met him, yes, from naturally the Basque congregating there. It didn't make any difference where you were in the city of San Francisco; the Basques would congregate to that one place.

Of course, by this time, your father had this big ranch in Sweetwater.

He and Pablo did.

I remember my mother telling me, too, that Pablo was still alive when they got married. He was a heavy smoker. At that time, they used to roll their own, you know. Any kind of tobacco, they had the papers, and rolled them in papers. She said when he was sick she'd have to roll some cigarettes and leave them on the bed table at night when he was in bed, when he was sick.

Dad never smoked. He never smoked, never packed matches. But if he ever caught a herder with any matches not in a tin container, he'd just have to fire him.

Why is that?

Because in those years they used to have what they called Chinese matches. They'd come in blocks, painted blue. They used to come from China. All they were was sulfur matches; and all they'd have to do is rub together, and they'd ignite. Put them in your pocket, and they'd rub together and ignite,

burn a hole in your pocket! [laughs] He insisted they put them in a tin can. Tin cans were hard to come by, but he'd find them someplace...like baking powder, see; baking powder used to come in tin cans. Put those matches in there and put that lid on and screw it. It had kind of a little screw jig deal on the side of it. So, if he caught those matches outside in the pack bags without being in that tin can....

Another thing was he insisted that every herder have his shells, too. They bought the shells and furnished the shotgun or the rifle. That was to beat off the coyotes.

Did your mother and father ever talk about how they met?

Yes, they met in San Francisco in Dad's brother's hotel. They never knew one another when they were in Europe.

Tell me how that kind of courtship is handled away from the old country. I know that back in the Basque country, there would be all the ritual associated with the courtship of meeting one another and going through the various stages before you finally become well acquainted.

Yes, screen them through different sorts of.... No, they were on their own here.

Nobody took that role for them?

Apparently not.

How long after they met were they married?

It was several years, I think; just about the turn of the century. I think it was either 1900 or 1901. I think he got his citizenship in 1900, somewhere along that era. The judge that he

mentioned to me...that Goldarecena wasn't a judge; he was an attorney in San Francisco. Through him his brother, Francisco, got his citizenship papers.

Was this gentleman a Basque?

I don't think so. I know that he had an office down on Kearney Street in San Francisco. That I can recall as a youngster; I was down there with my dad.

Did he look after your dad's legal affairs?

They didn't have too much legal affairs in those years. They stayed clear of doctors and lawyers. There weren't too many lawyers around, actually either; not like you see today. There was very few lawyers around.

After your mother and father got married, what sorts of things did your mother do on the ranch?

She done all of the cooking for hay crews and lambing crews. That gal worked!

You didn't have a ranch cook? You didn't have a Chinese cook or something?

They did later on.

But not when they got married?

No, she done the work. Well, she done a lot of it even later. Of course, having a family and stuff, why, they would have a Chinese cook and things like that. But then they had Basque girls, even. One girl that would do the servicing—serving the tables and things like this. And my mother used to do the cooking. Later years, of course, having families and things like this, they took her out of the

kitchen. Then we had Chinese cooks; we had some Basque women cooks, too.

Were there any women employed on the ranch before your mother and father got married?

No.

Was there any prohibition against women being on the ranch, if the men were all unmarried? What was the reason for not employing women prior to...?

I think it had some bearing, because it's human for feminine-masculine type of things, and it created animosity amongst men. Let's face it: that's human nature.

Sure. One thing we've not talked about up to this point has been religion. Was your father's family a religious family?

Yes, they were religious Catholics.

And what about himself when he came to this country—did he maintain the faith?

Well, he never had time to go to church; he never stayed in town long enough to go to church. [laughs] I remember my mother said once she talked him into going to church; and he sat in the church and sat in a wet pew—some kid pissed in the pew. [laughter]

What about the other hands? Was there any kind of church activity at all on the ranch before your mother arrived or even afterwards?

There was no way to associate yourself with any churches when you're completely out of the way, that far. You used to look at 72 miles from here to Sweetwater ranch, and you look at 25

miles to Bridgeport, the other way. You look 46 miles to Hawthorne. And there weren't too many preachers and ministers in those areas at that time, either. The closest church would have been here or Bishop; I don't think there was too many churches in Bishop. But they were born and raised Catholics.

When did you first start going to church? Couldn't have been anything nearby, either, when you were young, was there?

No. I think I was about 12 or 13 years old before I was even.... Well, I was baptized in the church in San Francisco—church of Guadalupe—I know that; I had to run my birth certificate down on it. I was about 13 before I was confirmed. But then I had to go through all this catechism and all this kind of stuff before [confirmation], and we didn't have any of that out there at the ranch, for sure.

You were born in San Francisco and not in Sweetwater?

Yes.

How did that come to pass?

There was no medical people around then.

Well, it wasn't that uncommon for midwives to deliver children.

Well, it wasn't that uncommon, yes, for a midwife or something.... My mother insisted on it, for some reason or other. I was born in that hotel. There was a Basque doctor by the name of Echeverria.

And how long did you remain there before returning to Sweetwater?

I was 6 weeks old when I left there. Originally, they started by rail; that was the only way to get over the summit from San Francisco to Reno. There was no stages running, there was no airplanes running and this kind of a thing; it was the railroad. So from there to Carson and on down was a horse-drawn buggy team, a coach. That was the stage, and she stopped at Walley Springs.

Most of these buggy teams had bear skin robes and stuff like this—some heavy robe of some kind. She put that on the bottom of a box, and she'd warm some bricks and put them in the bottom and then cover them—keep a kid from smothering, you know. She wouldn't use charcoal; they used charcoal burners, most of the buggy teams and things like this, but she learned back in Europe from burning that stuff that it was dangerous stuff to use, because it threw off this gas, see, which is [carbon] monoxide gas by our present educated type of a thing. [chuckles] She wouldn't burn that gas, but she'd warm those bricks and set me on that brick and then cover me over.

What time of the year was this?

I was 6 weeks old, born on November 17. It was in December, dead of winter, in the buggy ride from Reno to Carson City. From Carson City to Walley Springs over here; went from here to Wellington—that's around south. And from Wellington to Sweetwater was a ride on a sleigh.

You arrived in Sweetwater, then, in the middle of the winter in 1903?

Middle of winter, yes.

My folks got married in December sometime, December 20, and that's the first

time my mother saw the ranch in Sweetwater, too, was right in the dead of winter.

Did they get married at Sweetwater or in San Francisco?

San Francisco. My cousin, Vera, came with them on their honeymoon. She often brings that up! [laughter]

I can think of little coincidences.... After my dad and mother got established (and my cousins, both Frank and Paul, who my dad did take over from his brother, León) [people] used to come over to the ranch there, you know, that had that great big hail. They'd get the music and everything else and have weekend dances. At that time, Mono County (which is in California) was dry, and Nevada was still wet—the saloons were open. The bars...liquor and wines and stuff was open, see. So they'd come over there and have a good time and then stay all night long and maybe a day or so afterwards, and then go back to wherever they were. This used to be kind of common.

They had these social affairs there. And they'd come from Masonic, from Aurora, Bodie.... And the same thing— they'd reciprocate, and go from one place to the other and throw these dances.

Sometimes they'd have shows; they had these traveling shows. They'd either stop at Sweetwater or they'd stop at Bridgeport or they'd stop at Bodie, or they'd stop at Aurora or Hawthorne or something like that. People would congregate, and they'd make a hayride deal Out of it...like get 4 horses on the team, see, and the whole neighborhood.... We had Atchesons as neighbors and Roaches were our neighbors, and we had Conways as neighbors, and.... Several of the ranches, and Jones, right in the Sweetwater area. You'd go around and pick them up one by one as you went on

through, and take in the celebration. The kids would be put under the piano someplace, and that's where they'd light.

Was your house a big gathering place for Basques?

Do you mean at the ranch?

Yes.

Well, practically all the employees were either French or Basque. There's exceptions during the haying season and stuff like that. We used to have crews that come in for the haying season, like people that knew something about mowing machines and buck rakes and this kind of a thing. They knew just about when to come and they'd inquire. And very seldom we'd have to go out and get a crew; they'd come at a certain season after July 4 to get in the haying. Then when the haying season was over with, we got in the rain periods, and either went out and got wood or fixed fence or something like this, and so there wasn't any time lost. There's a lot of fence repair jobs on a ranch that size. It went all the way up in the foothills, across on down....

What are your earliest memories of the Sweetwater ranch?

Oh, there were a lot of memories. As I grew up, the funny thing that... I didn't speak English, because either Basque, Spanish or French was the common tongue amongst most of the people working on the ranch. But to communicate with other people was something else!

The first time I went to school I was about 6 years old. My cousin, Emily, had finished Normal School at the University of Nevada; that's what they had for school at that time.

Her first assignment was to teach out there in Sweetwater. It was a one-room schoolhouse down the road between 3 and 4 miles.

We rode horseback. I had a gray and white donkey [laughing] that I rode, and in the winter, why, he was a stinker! Sometimes he'd come up to this puddle of water or he'd come up to this ice and he'd jump; and other times when he got ready to jump, he'd walk across. And when he jumped, I went out between his ears, off the saddle! [laughter]

I can remember one particular incident. They used to "sharp shoe" horses—what they called sharp shoe on the bottom of the hoof. They'd screw in these pegs like football cleats, very similar to them, and they're metal. Well, we tried to get our cousin's horse into the barn at the schoolhouse, and she says, "Get behind there and spook him." so I did; I took my hat or cap, or whatever I had, I hit him in the rear end, and this horse made a lunge. [laughing] He lit in the barn with both front feet, but he didn't get the whole body in there. But she had just bought a new pair of boots [chuckling] about 12 inches high, and when that horse jumped with his front hoofs, one of those cleats went right through her shoe, right between her big toe and.... That was close. Lucky she didn't get a good puncture wound from it. That was the first incident I remember going to school.

What was Emily's last name?

Emily Yparraguirre. She never married. She's my first cousin, Dad's brother Leon's daughter. Her sister, Bea, never got married either.

Was Emily the eldest sister of the family?

No, she was the third oldest. [In order: Marie, Frank, Emily, Bea, Paul, Matilda.]

How did the family feel about her going off to the University of Nevada?

Well, she was still in Nevada. You see, at that time Sweetwater was in Nevada. It was in Esmeralda County.³

Tell me some more about this school. Approximately how many children attended it when you went?

It went from the first grade to eighth grade. And let's see...there was the Conway girls from the Conway ranch, and there was the Fulstones; there was [several] Indians; Roaches; Ruth Atcheson.... I'd say about 14, 15 kids.

You say there were Indian children, as well?

Well, there was about 5 or 6 Indians.

They were Washo?

No. They were from a Paiute tribe. The Washo Indians, as we know them here, their borderline was up here at Holbrook Junction. That is about as far south as the [Washo] tribe ever went in that direction. Anything south of that were Paiutes, and they still are Paiutes. Topaz and through that area, and the Sweetwater and Bridgeport area, were all Paiutes.

You told me that you grew up not speaking English, that you were speaking Basque or French or Spanish. When you began attending school, what language were the lessons taught in?

Well, this cousin, Emily, when we got home at night, she'd have a lot of papers and things like this to correct and work on. And

then [I would] sit down with her and we'd go through a lot of English parables and all type of readers and this kind of thing. That was my first indoctrination of school.

So she would teach you English at home?

Yes. But she was only there about 9 or 10 months, and then she got a school in the Washoe County area. She went to teach over there the following year.

Did another Basque replace her?

No. She was replaced [by] an Irish girl... although I didn't go to school then.

So you stopped attending school at the same time that your cousin, Emily, left?

Yes.

That's very interesting. Why?

Well, I don't... But this gal stayed at the ranch then that was teaching there. She was one of these health food crackpots, you know, on natural grains and all this kind of stuff. She made whole grain muffins and this kind of thing, and she lived on that stuff, I think. Of course, that was her idea of living; everybody's entitled to their own thoughts. But she lived at the ranch.

But you stopped going to school after your first year?

Yes.

Did you stop entirely?

No. About then my mother decided, "Well, these children got to have an education;

they got to have a religious background..." and things like this. She had some awful harrowing experiences. She lost 2 sons; they died a minute apart in 1910, 1911. This one boy, Johnny, was a year younger than myself, and Miguel was a year and 3 months or something like that older than myself. But they died a minute apart.

What happened?

I don't know. It's what they called the black plague. I don't know what...just like diphtheria would be, because people that had diphtheria, if they'd get bad enough, they'd turn into a kind of bluish-purple color; so I assume maybe that's what they called the black plague then.

Dad wanted to bury the kids on the ranch, right on his property, but that wasn't to be done. So they took both of the children and they buried them in Aurora. They had to be in the county seat or a town within that sphere of the county, which was Esmeralda County at that time. But then after they got all the borderlines and everything squared away, why, they took those bodies and moved them down here to Reno, down at that cemetery right across the street from the university; it used to be in there.

I know about it. Do you know what it is now?

They exercised eminent domain on that thing...the state did. Then it was taken over, and all the bodies were taken out. A parking lot, and then that big dormitory— Nye Hall.

And where are the bodies now?

At Mother of Sorrows. That's up where Sierra and Virginia Street come together, just past McCarran Lane.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I had an older brother; Miguel is the older brother.

You were the second one, then?

Then Johnny, and then Ramon, and then my sister, Juanita.

And Miguel was about 9 years old when he died?

He was born a year and a half before I was, so it'd make him around about 1902, somewhere in there. I'd say somewhere around 7 1/2, 8 years old. Johnny was a year and a half younger than I, so that'd put Johnny in about a 5-year bracket, see.

Was it at the time of their death that you were withdrawn from school?

Well, this is what encouraged my mother to take the family and the kids to give them an education; that's what she had in mind, more so than anything else. So about 1912, 1913, we went as a family to San Francisco and rented an apartment.

But you hadn't been in school between the time that you dropped out at the end of your first year...?

No, between about... I was pretty near 9 or 10 years old before I got into grammar school.

Were you still not speaking English at that time? You were still speaking Basque?

I was still speaking the 3 tongue—I kept those; I still use those out of habit.

You were speaking those 3 at home, though?

Pretty much so. My mother spoke good French. I used to talk French with her, keep the tongue up. She spoke good French.

At that time there was nothing written in the Basque language, was there?

Oh, yes, there was letters written in it at that time. I can remember...yes. I can remember shepherders hearing from home. That's where I picked up some of mine, too.

We had a chore boy that worked there at the ranch. He'd done the milking and chores around the ranch; that's all he'd done—helping the cooks out, splitting the wood, and taking care of the dairy cows, feeding animals around the ranch, saddle horses and all this kind of stuff; feeding them hay, and going after the hay and hauling hay in from different stack yards and around the ranch. But anyway, he left Spain; he couldn't live in Spain on account of his health, and he got down to South America, and he was having the same trouble. So when he got up there to the ranch, I used to go up there in the bunkhouse, sit in the bunkhouse with him at night. He had some primers and stuff that he had brought from Spain or South America—I don't know where they came from, I was too young then to look and see who the hell the publishers were or anything else. But nevertheless, that's where I got a good lead on the Spanish language.

Later on, when we went to San Francisco, my brother and I, we both went to the Washington Grammar School in San Francisco. It's on Jones Street. A cable car barn is right straight across the street from where we went to school; it's still there.

I would still like to spend a little bit more time talking about those early years on the

Sweetwater ranch. As you told me, your memory doesn't go back beyond about the age of 5. I asked you what your earliest memories were, and you said that going to school was your earliest memory. Can you remember anything prior to that, have any memories...?

Well, we grew up, and we all had chores to do on the ranch.... The loss of my 2 brothers.

All right, what sort of chores did you and the other brothers and sisters have to do?

It was more or less a stopping station for all of the teams and things like this. Most of the teamsters brought their own beds with them. They had a place to sleep in the barn; they had bunks in the barn. There was either 6 or 8 bunks. They never had to worry about room. But the stagecoach people didn't have their beds. They used to rent rooms, and travelers that were coming through (miners, primarily, most of them, and stockmen, too—cattlemen, sheep men, and all of this kind of a thing) as long as the transportation would be on the stagecoaches, horse-drawn.

We used to make it kind of a habit to go up when the teams'd pull into the yard, see, and we'd go help these teamsters. We knew those teamsters like a second brother. We got familiar with them, and we'd go help them uncouple the animals from the tugs and take them up to the barn and put them in the stables. When we were small, they'd take the harness off; but later on when we grew up, we could handle a harness. We just helped them along.

They let those animals sit there, the horses and stuff, about an hour and a half. They'd never water them, on account of the colic. They'd be heated, you know, from pulling and things like this; the animal itself would have to be cooled off. When they got ready to cool

them off, and being in a strange place, the teamster would take the lead horses in the team and take them by a rope down to the watering trough and water them. He'd have 2 other horses that would follow these 2. Then we took the ones that he was skeptical about and led them down, 2 horses at a time, to the trough to water, then put them back in the stable.

We had mangers that would take 2 horses, and they were generally big horses—Percheron type; big, stocky horses. You'd always put the 2 pair in one stall; in other words, there was room for 2 big horses in this stall. Then on the left-hand corner there was always a box where you would put the grain in...took it out there in buckets and give them each so much. The teamster would tell you what to give them, what not to give them, and which ones to give the grain to and which ones not to.

They put the hayloft right square in the middle of the barn. As kids, we'd go up there in the top and just push it off down into the manger. The gable of the barn comes down, and then you had the uprights to hold the barn and things like this. Right between in the middle you had all this hay, so you'd just give it a shove and it'd fall right down in the manger on both sides of the barn.

Did you have any other kinds of chores other than helping the teamsters?

Yes. Everybody had chores to do. There was sometimes chopping wood....

What were you doing during the day during those 2 years that you weren't in school?

Well, we always had something to do, especially in the summertime. When we were kids, they'd bring in all the horses during

haying season. They would bring colts and everything else, and they'd separate the colts from the mares that they worked. We'd have to go out early in the morning, go get those out of the field and get them back to the ranch.

The people who were going to use those horses would get up about 5:00 in the morning; 6:00 was the chow bell in the morning. Well, they'd have to harness those horses before 6:00. Then, after they got through eating at 6:00, they'd go out to work.

But then we used to go out as kids—I never will forget this—sometimes we'd miss some of them; it was still dark, and some of them would get in the willows and stuff like that. And we'd come home and somebody'd say, "Well, where's my horses? You didn't bring them in!" So we'd have to chase back out there and bring them in.

Did your sister help you do this sort of thing, too, or was it just you and your brothers?

Well, no. Juanita grew up in a different era. Yes, she was a worker; she'd work, but she'd help sometimes do certain things. Mom generally kept her in the house doing certain things.

Did you do anything with the sheep?

Yes, at lambing time. We used to lamb quite a few sheep. At lambing time, we used to get the chores to take all the leppies.

I don't know whether you know what a leppy is or not? It's when...sometimes they take a ewe that had twin lambs, they'd take one away from her because she didn't have enough bag to carry and didn't have enough milk. They'd have sort of a pen to keep those in for backup.

Now, you'd have a ewe give birth to a dead lamb. You take the hide off of that lamb that

died from this ewe, and you'd go in the pen where you're raising these leppies that you fed out of a bottle with a nipple on it. The herder or whoever was working during lambing would take that skin off and then put it right over the top of this other lamb that come out of the pen where you kept the leppies for a graft. That's grafting on...is what they mean by joining this lamb with this ewe. Due to the smell of the skin, she'd accept it. But if you didn't have some blood or something like this, that ewe wouldn't even accept that lamb.

I remember at that time the beer used to come in quart bottles; you never saw it in small bottles like you've got now, in small cans, but it came in quart bottles. We had big nipples that we'd shove over the top of those things; then we'd go around and feed these lambs. Where we got the milk was from a dairy. See, the folks always had a dairy on the ranch, too. They milked anywheres from 15 to 25 cows sometimes. We'd warm that milk up so it was just tepid, like—not too hot and not too cold, to feed to these leppy lambs.

At that time they didn't have canned milk and all this kind of stuff, but they had goats. When the goats were lambing, we'd take them down the creek or out in the pasture someplace, and we'd pin them down in a certain area right along the creek where they could eat and have food and drink. We'd go out there maybe twice a day and milk those ewes out on the ground. And even if there was a dry ewe, she lost her goat, we'd still maintain that thing. The theory behind that was when [the shepherders] went out in the spring of the year, they'd take these goats—not only for markers and leaders and things like this, but they'd pack the milk supply along.

The herder had his milk supply with his goats. They used to have a lot of those Swiss goats—they have 2 tassels down on the cheek and they have a name for them, but I don't

recall what they are. When Dad got ready in the spring of the year to send the dams out, he would allot so many goats with kids to each band, so that the herder would have milk. In later years they went to canned milk and things like this, but when I was a kid, that's the way they got their milk.

Did they ever make goat's milk cheese?

Oh, yes. They did it there at the ranch, some of the chore people that were there.

They had a good basement cellar to keep this stuff, too. They used to keep their big milk pans around, and they'd skim the cream off. They had racks right in the basement for those. And then they had the racks on one side of the cellar... They had that big trough where they had the salt-cured ham and bacons, and then they had other smoked stuff hanging off the ceiling...from nails off the rafters. And they had areas where they had the cheese— shelves.

During this 2-year period when you were out of school, were you being tutored in any lessons?

No, we weren't exactly tutored. Well, I tell you, when I went to San Francisco and started school there, I was way down at the bottom, and I started right from first grade. But I skipped several grades, for some reason or other—I don't know why—but I took to it, I guess, and was able to get up there.

I went to school in 1913. I would've been 10 years old. I went through grammar school and through high school; and in 1921 graduated from school.

Were your mother and father teaching you any lessons at home?

I'll tell you what happened. My mother was quite a brilliant woman in her own way. She used to get out there on the table and study with us, although she could read and write French and Basque and Spanish. Of course, she was born on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees. Both my dad and her come from the same province.

Did your dad ever help you with your lessons?

No, no. But...well, he taught us things on the outside, such as how to handle animals and what to do with a horse and what not to do; and how to handle the horses by treating them right. The animal gets attached to you if you treat them right, and if you show any fear, they sense it, an animal does—that's what he always used to tell us, you know. "If you show any fear for that saddle horse you've got there, you're never going to get along with him. Or some other type of animal like a pack mule, if he senses any fear, he's going to take advantage of you every time. But if you don't show any sense of fear...why, go at him like he's one of your friends." These are little things just like that.

One of the things that he always told me, and I had to go through it the hard way to learn a real rough lesson.... When we were kids, we'd go out, see? You sit on a saddle horse and then you got 3 or 4 pack mules behind you, and you have a rope attached to the first one behind you. And he always told us, "Never put a loop over that saddle horn, because if something happens back there, you're going to be in trouble."

I don't know why in the world I ever done it, but I was about 18, 19 years old when the thing happened to me. I always threw the rope across my lap, the way he instructed me to. But I was packing and I had 3 mules: 2 mules with salt for the sheep, and then

one mule for the provisions and a bed. They would be 50-pound bags of salt, and we had big mules—good, husky mules for things like this. You could put 6 to 7 bags [on one] so you're looking at a lot of weight; when you say 7 bags, 50 pounds, you're looking at 350 pounds. But they were good, sturdy mules. Couldn't do that with a lot of them. I learned that later on in life.

But this one particular time, I must have been about 18, 19 years old. I was going up to what they called the dry wash out in Nine-Mile Flat, and I was heading for Powell Canyon. It was hot that day, and I was winding up this damned old trail. What really happened, there was a snake—an adder is what it was; finally found out what it was—right up between the horse's rear end and the first mule behind him. Well, that mule jerked back, and I was kind of sluggish...and I threw a loop over the top of that horn! These other mules, when they jerked back there, they just pulled that saddle over and right in underneath the horse's belly. It's a good thing I didn't fall off and hit a rock or something, but I lit on top of a soft chunk of tall sagebrush! [chuckling]

These 3 animals that I had with the pack stuff all went jumping down that damned hill; they unloaded everything they had on them! So that left me afoot. Even the horse took off with them. So I kind of gathered.... Well, the first thing I thought of, I said, "Dad told me never to put a loop over that horn." I learned right here.

He was teaching things about how to be a rancher, then?

How to be a rancher and how to do certain things—how to pack animals; how to handle horses. As kids, we used to even break horses. They had a breaking cart, like for teams. They

had what they called a "running W." It would generally be a man [who broke teams], but as we grew older, then we got into these chores, too.

There was just a flat board here for a seat with wheels on it: a "breaking cart" is what they called it. You'd put a running W from up in through the rings and down to the leg. It was kind of a hobble type of thing, so [if] these horses started running away, all you'd have to do is just time yourself—you'd pull that rope back up here and pull that one foot. A horse can't run too fast on 3 legs, so he'd slow down. If it gets too tough, you pull it harder, pull the leg up. That's what a running W is.

But it's things like this that he taught us. As we grew older, we broke a lot of horses. We learned a little at a time.

How did your dad feel about your mom taking all the kids and going to San Francisco to school?

I think he saw eye-to-eye on that, for the simple reason that he realized that the kids had to have an education...but my mother really insisted on it.

And they couldn't get the education in Sweetwater?

No, not the type of an education he felt we should have. My mother thought that way, and I think my dad realized it later on, too. [Sweetwater] was a country school, and I don't think at that time the schools were what they are. When I went to school in San Francisco, I could see quite a difference right there in the school system.

That must have been quite an expense to the family.

It was, yes. We lived in an apartment, and whenever there was vacations and things like this, why, we'd come over here and go to the ranch. Like during the summer, all summer we'd be there at the ranch...help hay and stuff like that.

What was a .hard thing for me...and this was true in all agricultural communities and right here in this valley—I've seen that happen with youngsters that come from the ranches: why, they couldn't start school until such time as they all had their crops in, period! That was more important than it was to have school. That's the way it worked here, and that's the way my dad worked it. But I remember when I went to high school it was tough on me, because they never wound things up until September. Well, the city schools opened up 2 months earlier than these country schools, so when I went back to school, I was a month and a half, 2 months late, and I had a heck of a lot of catching up to do when I went back.

I had to dig for it. It's like you're taking classes.... I remember algebra and stuff like this, and you start off any kind of math—trig or any of this—you sit back here and lose 2 months, the start of the program, you've lost something. So you have to get down and dig to get up there and equalize yourself with how far the students have come in that 2 months.

You told me last week that your mom was cooking on the ranch; that she was cooking for everybody.

Yes, she did cook there. She cooked for big crews. They used to have a lot of people on the ranch in the summertime. Well, they had a dining room table that was a family table; just the family members sat there. And then in here was an elongated table, kind of lengthwise, and there was 45, 50 people sit in this long table in here.

Is this a T-shaped arrangement we're describing for the tape?

Very similar to a T, on an open....

Open space between the 2 tables?

For service and things like this. But she would cook for quite a few people. During shearing season, later on in years, it got a little bit too much for my mother, too, so they had a Chinese cook.

Well, of course, she wasn't even there, though; she was in San Francisco for a long time, right?

Yes, well.. .during that time, too, they had a Chinese cook there and sometimes a helper.

When your mother was cooking, was it Basque food that she was cooking?

She was cooking Basque food, and it didn't make any difference; there was no hours. Any hour during the day or night they'd show up there. She even got out of bed to go out and cook meals for people that showed up way late at night. You never knew when they were going to come in. They wanted lodging, anyway, and they generally wanted food before they went to bed.

I think we need to emphasize that. I'm not sure that we've talked about that so much before—the fact that what was actually going on was a combination sheep ranch and an inn, almost.

Well, it was a stopping place. It's where the teamsters and stagecoaches and.... When I was a youngster, Bodie was just on the way out; it was just starting to go. And Bodie was quite a mining camp.

Yes, I know. Were there any other economic activities on your father's ranch? Was he making money any other ways that you can remember?

Well, they bred a lot of mares, raised their own horses. There were somewhere around 60 to 72 or 74 brood mares, and he had that Percheron work stud and had a quarterhorse stud and had a jackass stud. To raise mules, they crossed horses with a jackass stud to get mules. And then the buggy teams, for the quarterhorse; and then the heavier horses—the drayage horses—they used for teams and stuff for.. .the larger stock that they had.

In 1917 I can remember some government man was out looking for mules, and somebody sent him out there to the ranch. We had a lot of mules that had what they called “halter broke”—just a halter put on them, and then turned loose. They were halter broke, but some of them never even had a halter on them.

But anyway, this government man was looking for mules for the army. He finally made a deal, but the government man was looking at the mules, and somebody there said that he knew something about mules and he'd picked out all pairs. And the old man [my dad] said, “Geez, he is taking all the best mules I got on the place! I didn't agree. I didn't agree to let you pick out all your mules.”

I think the agreement that he had with him... what he was trying to do is age group them out, see. In other words, this mule here was a certain age and this one was a certain age, what he was trying to do; but he wasn't looking for these people to buy all these pairs of mules. In other words, take the choice in the flock.

So they got into a sort of...well, not an argument; it was kind of a peaceful type of a thing talking about it. And he conceded that if they were going to go through the herd of

mules that was there, that there would have to be a different concession made up on the price of them. So they worked that out.

But the funny part of it was in 1917 there was a Wise family living in Yerington. I think they had 4 boys in the family, either 4 or 5. They lived right close to Yerington there; I knew them. One was a government trapper. I knew him real well. They called up to the house and wanted to know when my dad was coming down. So we got a letter from Dad, and he just coincidentally had prepared to make a trip and come down there. But anyway, one of these Wise boys says to me, “When your dad comes down, *if* he comes down, why, you come down here; we're breaking those mules that he sold to the government.” That's down at the Presidio in San Francisco.

So Dad showed up, and we got up way early in the morning when all the streetcars weren't even running. Nothing was running. So we got a taxicab, went to the gates of the Presidio. Taxicab couldn't drive inside the Presidio because it's a government entity, see. So we didn't know where to go. There was a lot of barracks around there in the Presidio where the bigger officers lived in officers' quarters and all this stuff. Then we got down to this drill field, [laughing] and we just sort of sat there till daylight! Well, I was just 14 years old then; it was 1917, World War I.

Anyway, Dad inquired to start talking to somebody [who] felt like he was insulted by having [Dad] talk to him, so he wouldn't have anything to do with him. The way I figured out later on, he was either a major or a sergeant or something that had a job on his hands where these guys were all out there in the exercise yard and going through maneuvers and all this kind of stuff.

Pretty soon somebody else come along—he was in civilian clothes—and [Dad] asked

him where the horse stables were. He pointed them out to us; he told us right where they were because he was familiar with the Presidio, so he told us what road to take. We walked all the way from the gate on Van Ness Avenue all the way through that Presidio down to where these stables were. They were right down by a great big patch of trees; there's a heck of a pile of eucalyptus trees like there is in San Francisco, you know. And we finally found the Wise boys, and they were out there breaking them and working on all those mules. You could tell them, because.... When they got them at the ranch, they put the government stamp on their necks, but down on the left flank was a block Y. That was the [Yparraguirre] ranch brand, the registered brand. They all had it on the left thigh right up here on the outside. That's one incident there that.... Those were a beautiful bunch of mules.

Did your dad speak English well?

He didn't speak... well, I couldn't say for his first years here, but then he got along very well; he spoke good English. He used to sit down and he'd say he'd get newspapers and books and things like that, like his brother sent him. He had a Spanish dictionary. He showed me the book that he learned it from. Half was Spanish to English and half was English to Spanish—half the book, in other words, maybe around the middle someplace.

You went to school in San Francisco until 1921. At that time you would have been 18 years old, is that correct?

Yes.

So probably, in a sense, a man; by the time you were 18, you were on the edge of manhood.

Close to it, yes.

Did you then return to the ranch at Sweetwater after you graduated from high school?

Yes, I went back to Sweetwater.

What were your plans?

Well, the plans were for me to go to work out at Sweetwater. But I tried to talk Dad into it—to go to college. I had a 3.7, 3.8 average in school. And he says, “No. I sent you to school.” He says, “You're big enough and husky enough to start out like I did. I was 13 years old when I first came here.” And he says, “I got my start that way. I had to learn everything the hard way. All I had were other people to show me.”

But the thing I thought of in all of my years, the fact that my dad got along real well with people. He was a good mixer, and he wasn't the type of person who wanted to take advantage of anybody. Now, he used to hear about the sheep and the cattle wars. But he never had any problems with the cattlemen. He was always around the cattlemen feeding the stock and running ranges and things right around the periphery. He never packed a rifle in his life. But then on the other hand, if he had a sheepherder who didn't have bullets and didn't have a gun, he'd fire him.

And what were the bullets and the gun for?

They're to protect the sheep from the coyotes.

Not from anything else?

Nothing else. That's all they were for. He says, “If you ever get mixed up with somebody else and use a gun on somebody, you're done.” That's the first instructions he'd give them.

The other instruction was...they used to have Chinese block matches. Those matches would rub, and they'd ignite. They put them in the pack bags, and they'd do the same thing, see. He'd always give them a tin can when they'd leave the ranch, and he said, "Keep those matches in that tin can all the time. That's it!" And if he saw them without that tin can and matches, he'd fire the man right there on the spot because he'd lost a few mules and a few pack outfits that way, too, you know.

So, your father had decided that you were not to go on to college? Had you earned any money by working part-time while you were in high school, so that you could have a head start on college?

Well, I worked half a block from the house, in what they used to call the neighborhood stores.

That's in San Francisco.

Yes. Well, I worked in 2 places, whenever they had a job. One of them was a grocery and vegetable place. The other one was just about a block and a half away from there, and it was sort of an apartment house area type of a store. They'd call from the apartments, and then you'd have to go deliver stuff to the apartments. Sometimes people were being chauffeured; there'd be street traffic, too, but most of his business was...I think he was a Greek, but I can't even recall his name. It was kind of complex; it was worse than Yparraguirre, I guess! [laughter]

Anyway, he had all groceries. I learned the neighborhood that way. They would send the address, naturally, but to find the apartment, how to get in there—some places had elevators, other places didn't. Other places had stairways. They weren't so quite sophisticated as they are

today, you know. So I found my way around the neighborhood that way.

Tell me what you would do with the money you earned. Would you keep it, or would you put it in a bank, or would you turn it over to your mother and father to hold it for you?

I put it in the bank.

In your own name?

Yes, my own name. Then during the war we got salaries. In World War I when they had Liberty Bonds, they would give us, you know, like a day's work.. .whatever it was. And you didn't get a big salary; it wasn't too much, but I know one year in World War I there, I accumulated something like \$80 in Liberty Bonds.

You went back to the ranch, then, after your senior year, after graduation. Did your father come to your graduation?

No, Dad didn't get there; my mother got there, though.

Oh, by that time she was living back on the ranch again, and you were by yourself in San Francisco?

No. After I graduated, then my mother came and lived in Gardnerville. My brother and Juanita went to school here.

And you went back to Sweetwater?

And I went back to Sweetwater, yes. I was there about 3 years.

Doing what?

Doing everything there was to be done.

Was your father getting you ready to take over the ranch?

Well, he hadn't got that far. But...like in lambing time and stuff like that, I used to get the worst shift of the lot—the midnight shift. I don't know why the hell I got it, but that's where I wound up. And I couldn't sleep in the daytime, so they were long days. Yes.

I had one incident. I was down in the desert—that's down there in Pamlico; it's down the other side of Hawthorne. I went out to make a camp. My dad was with me, too. What happened was we had a herder, or a camp tender, that had the base camp down in Pamlico, and he got sick and had pneumonia. So we left the ranch with...it took us almost 2 days to get down there. We come down, pushed snow with the car 23, 24 miles from Sweetwater to Wellington, and then there was no snow from there on down.

We got way down there in Pamlico, and we got stuck in a cut in the road with our car. No way we could get out of there. So we had to walk about 6 or 8 miles that night, and the wind was blowing fierce—geez, it was terrible! My dad went out there in this dry lake, Pamlico Lake, and he tried to walk on it and couldn't walk on it. The man we were going to take down to replace this camp tender and I were...we told him, I said, "Let's go around the lake. You can't walk on that thing because it's like soap; it's just like grease."

"Well," he says, "I walked on it before." So he started to cross here, and we were going around the periphery. We'd yell to see if he was still coming or out there. He finally cut across when he got our voice, and went out around the periphery of this damn lake and wound up in a circle. Of course, he want to take a straight cut like this, see. But it was fierce, the wind was.

We got down to that camp, and [the herder] was in pretty bad shape. What we had to do is get this guy to the railhead, because we knew he was terribly sick. Got down there, and the people that we knew was F.H. Baker... quite an important person. He was a sheep man, too, in Mina—that's the other side of Hawthorne. He thought that the man was quite ill. Some of the train crew come around there; they said, "That man's got pneumonia."

So what we done, I got ahold of.. Frank Baker was the father's name; Fay Baker was his son. So I got ahold of Fay Baker, and I asked if he'd go to Reno; I said, "We've got a car stuck and everything else. It's kind of hard to cut through. We have got to make camp for this herder and all this to take care of the herders."

"Well," he says, "yes, I'll gladly take him to Reno and get him in the hospital." Which he did do. We put a cot right on the baggage car right alongside the stove, and that's how the guy got to Reno, and he lived it out.

But then the question was to go make camp. Because he was ill so long, nobody made camp for the herders with the sheep. My dad went one way, and I went the other. So I was going to make the 2 camps, and he was going to make the one, and then we were going to pick up the others the following day. It was storming like crazy. It started to snow, and I was anxious; he knew it. He said to me, too, "Now, when you make the first camp, if the weather's bad, stay with the second herder."

But I made pretty good time, see. I made the first camp; then I made the second camp, and I said, "I've still got time to get home." And the storm just turned out...it was stinking. Drive you mad.

So, the neat experience, I just turned the reins loose to the horse, because most of these camp horses will take you home.. but never in the wind. A horse always turns his butt to the wind, he'll never face the wind.

I wound up and done what they called the Douglas mine up there. It was right directly behind Luning, looking right up at the top of the hill...the Douglas mine was there. A couple of cabins...and geez, I didn't have any bed. I didn't take it because I was going to stay with the other herder in the second bed, see, but I figured I had enough time to get back. Well, I didn't make it.

So anyway, I got up in that cabin, and I take those saddle blankets off the.. well, it was kind of a lean-to shed; put the horses in that lean-to shed. And then I decided to take the blankets in and try to sleep in the cabin. There was an old stove there, but no firewood around. If there is something you never want to try in your life it is just try to sleep between blankets that are sweated up to no end with horse sweat! That I couldn't quite go! Every time I'd breathe, I'd get a mouthful of horsehair! [laughing]

I got out bright and early that morning and hit for home. My dad was kind of concerned. He was out looking. He knew that the horses that I had and the mules, if anything happened to me, they would come home, come back to the camp... which they do; these camp horses will do that if any accident or anything happened.

Well, he started out to look for me. He'd only rode out of the base camp there for about a mile or so. He spotted me, saw me coming in. I still got his field glasses. He always packed a pair of field glasses; he always had them tied in back of his saddle. He used them for spotting sheep, animals or things like that.

During this 3-year period after you got out of high school, when you were working back on the ranch again with your father, did he ever talk to you about the possibility of your taking over the ranch at some point?

No, he never mentioned it to me. But he and his brother got together and said that there is a possibility that Frank would be.. that's the understanding they had between the 2 of them—there is a possibility that Frank can work *into* the ranch facet of it. But....

Did the other brothers have sons, as well?

There was only 2 boys there on the ranch when I went there; that was Leon's boys—Frank and Paul.

Were they as old as you?

Oh, yes, they were quite a little older.

Would they have been considered for taking over the ranch, too? Or was your father the principal partner in the whole deal?

He was the principal partner.

So it would have fallen to you as the eldest son, then, I take it?

Yes. I wasn't the eldest son, but I was the eldest son alive. See, Miguel was a year and a half older than I, but he passed away in 1910.

If I understand this correctly, then, your father and his brother had decided that it was a possibility that if you worked at it, you would be the one who would take over the ranch later on. So what happened? Now come you decided not to go on ranching?

Well, I don't know. One of the things that impressed me was at that time they started putting on restrictions. The Taylor Grazing Act 4, which come in...you had to drive livestock something like 5 or 6 miles a day. [Before], you'd just let them graze

themselves; you didn't drive them. Where you drive them for 6, 8, 10 miles a day, you're pushing the hell out of them; they're not eating. They're pushing on the road. So that's not doing the animals any good. I could see it: the handwriting was on the wall. Then you had the Forest Service restrictions coming in. And...well, it didn't look like there was any future in the sheep business to me.

I told my dad about it. "Oh, Frank," he says, "don't worry about that." He says, "There's going to be sheep here. There was sheep on the earth when Christ was born, and there's going to be sheep here after you and I are gone." That's just the way he put it to me, which is the truth. They had the shepherd on the mount when Christ was born, see. That much I did know or learn. But not the end of it.

You look at the sheep industry from *this* point right now: in the state of Nevada you were looking at something like 2, 2 1/2 million head of sheep in 1917-1918. Right in the state of Nevada. Today, including the Desert Land and Sheep Company, which is Reid Culp... This is the Mormon setup from Utah. They go right up through the northeastern corner of Nevada up into Montana, Wyoming, and through that country, and they make it a regular cycle down south for the winter, summer, spring and fall ranges. Well, other than that outfit...I guess they are the largest sheep company in the state today, that goes through the state. I think Fred Fulstone out here in Smith Valley is the next largest sheep outfit. But relatively speaking in numbers, I don't think that the University [of Nevada] can catalog over 125,000-130,000 head of sheep in the state of Nevada. From 2 million sheep to less than 110,000 head: that's peanuts.

What about the life you were leading at that time? If tending sheep had been profitable,

would you have been interested in continuing to do that and becoming the rancher yourself?

Well, it didn't look like there was much future. Things went kind of haywire. In 1921 there was a recession; the livestock went down the tube, weren't worth anything. And then you got to 1929—the big slide happened in New York when stock went to hell.

But you were off the ranch by that time, weren't you?

I was off the ranch by then, but it affected me just the same, whether I was there or whether I wasn't. That's the point I'm getting at. Things went from bad to worse.

Yes, well...what I was trying to get at was your decision not to continue in the family ranching business.

I used to talk even to the forest rangers and things like this, and the higher-ups were pushing from Washington to reduce the livestock industry. I've always had it in my mind that as long as the sheep people got squeezed out this way, eventually it was going to happen to cattle. And the same thing happened with the cattle people. You don't see the cattle growers in the state that there used to be either.

Now, the Garat people over in Elko... they're related to my dad, too; my dad's sister was married to a Garat. There's George, John and Henry. I remember when I was a little tot meeting them and seeing them. They ran sheep and cattle, but they eventually cut sheep out completely and went all cattle. That was a determining factor, too. And there were so many sheep men then who were gradually getting out of the business. They were moved, like into California, and they'd go rent pasture

and feed and things like this. Then the prices kept climbing, climbing, climbing, and these people in California were going out of the sheep business just like flies..., because sheep were getting too expensive to feed, and no range with the proper incentive to develop [herds].

When you had finally made the decision that you weren't going to go on in the family ranching enterprise, did you sit down with your father and discuss it and tell him that you had decided not to?

Well, we discussed it quite a little, too....

How did he take it?

Well, he didn't like it. He used to tell me, "Now I saw that you got through school...."

I put it to him; I says, "The one thing I'm grateful for is that you put us through school, give us an education, and all this kind of a thing," see. If I didn't mention it, he'd have rapped it to me, but I beat him to the punch, being more realistic of it.

But like many a time, I cited instances.. he helped a lot of people, too; he started a lot of people out in the sheep business.

A lot of Basque people?

Well, not so many Basques, but a lot of American people that he started out in the sheep business. He started Jones out in the sheep business; he started Comptons out in the sheep business. Then the question was did he give them the sheep to run and pay for them as you make it? He was fortunate to have people to deal with that were honest people then. Most of them did pay up, pay out, with exception of one; I think there was one outfit that didn't work out.

But around 1924 we were cutting cattle. And, I don't know, I was.. there's kind of a triangle corner, like this here, in the field. My dad was cutting cattle, and we had another guy—there was 4 of us there trying to cut these cattle. I had a cow cornered down there in that triangular corner and I tried to swing the gate. I got the gate partially open, and I was pushing with my leg. And then they run a cow through, and I come back this way and had my leg out. This other guy went right over the top. Hell, it was just forcing the ankle down there like....

The guy did it with his horse. Run right over the top of me; the horse stepped on my foot. Oh, it raised hell; it swelled up like a damn balloon.

Logan's building here in Gardnerville, that used to be the hospital. There's a lot of kids in this valley born in there. Matthew Settlemeier's were all born in there, I think—Marvin Settlemeier twins. There's quite a few people here born there.

I no sooner got there on this thing, this Dr. Thompson put some kind of a hot liniment on there. I don't know what the heck it was, but it sure burnt.

He sent Dad up there to the general store—I think Jensen had it then—to get this compressed linseed oil cloth they used to use on tables. No air circulates out of it; it's got petroleum oil. Dad told me that he got a room for me to stay at the East Fork Hotel (it's the East Fork Hotel now) , and had a room upstairs. Mrs. Borda used to bring up the meals for me. But then they used to have a porch out there, and there's a door so you can walk in and out of bedrooms right out to the porch and look right down the street.

So I got over that thing. But I was going to say that he put this hot liniment in there, and Jesus, I thought I had my foot in a roasting oven! *Hot!* That thing up there, this

cloth wrapped around it; I couldn't stand it! Couldn't bear to stand it. And then I'd take it off, and geez, it'd feel funny...and hell, I don't know which is the worse of 2 ills.

So I fought the thing down, and it finally got healed up, and then I went back to the ranch. And it wasn't maybe 6 or 8 months, we were down in the southwest pasture down there, and the same damn thing happened to me down there!

We were up on top of kind of a semi-ridge in the meadow down here. I was riding a pretty fast horse, too. But where this fall came down, I was cutting off this cow, and I was trying to stay up above the ridge. There was a spring down here; I was trying to keep him above the spring where it was dry, see, and the damn horse pulled below the spring. His feet went right out from under him, and I threw my hand the opposite way, uphill, thinking that I wouldn't get rolled on by the horse. And so help me God, I got down in there, and the horse rolled right over the top of me. I had my shoulders...like these clavicles, they're still bent from it yet. Just my shoulders were moved in. Then I went to the hospital again.

Oh, to get back to that liniment deal, I had to go back down to San Francisco to the French Hospital, and they had to reset all these [ankle] bones—had to break them and reset them again.

The doctor here hadn't done a very good job?

He didn't do a very good job. I think he just wrapped it up in hot liniment and trusted to God they'd come back.

But anyway, to get back to this other story, why, I damn near had both my shoulders over here, and finally got those bones straightened around. I still got a bow in the darn things.

After I went through a few of those miserable deals, I said, "Well, maybe I don't

belong on a ranch." So I came to Gardnerville shortly....

You weren't married yet?

No, I wasn't married then. We got married in 1927 or 1928.

And you came to Gardnerville in what year?

Nineteen twenty-four, somewhere in there.

Did you just tell your dad you were going to go?

Yes, I told him that I thought it would best for me to leave, and he could carry on with his 2 nephews and things like this. One nephew got into the sheep business; Paul did, and he lost his butt. Then Frank started drinking, and he left the ranch and went to work for the power company. He stayed there for about 3 or 4 years, just isolated from everybody so he couldn't get anything to drink. [laughs]

The first job I had here was with the Standard Oil Company. The tank station's still there, the same place. I worked in the office just as an office boy and then took care of the paper work for the truckers and things like this that brought in all other sales; made up cash receipts and all that type of stuff—that was my job—and took care of the warehouse. That's what it was—stock and inventory paper work.

Did you drive a truck? I believe you told me you wound up driving one.

Well, yes, [laughing] strange coincidence. We had a guy that liked to play the fiddle. Like, every weekend they'd have some dances over in Genoa; he invariably got involved.

Where would they hold the dances?

Dance hall. They'd go over to practice on Saturdays, and Saturday evening they'd have the dances. And surer than heck, when he was gone, somebody'd call; I think he left a lot of customers go just so they would call on Saturday! [laughing] Then I had to jockey the truck out of the plant down there, and.... Like, Markleeville would call up, see, or Bridgeport or Topaz or someplace. But the guy was kind of neglecting his job; eventually they let him go! I was just saving somebody's neck, is all I was doing. Filling in for him.

Who owned the Standard place where you worked?

Well, it wasn't a franchise; it was kind of an agency. He was a distributing agent at that time; Larry Wright, I think, was his name.

He's not from an old established family here, is he?

No. He was an outsider. He had an uncle who had the Los Angeles district. And he moved from here down there, so he jumped up pretty high with Standard Oil after he left here. He pushed him right up the ladder down there.

At that time, the mid-1920s, how many service stations were there in Gardnerville and Minden? Of course, we know there was the C.O.D. Garage.

Yes, the C.O.D. Garage was there. That was the only one in Minden. There was 2 suppliers, though—one was Union Oil, and the other was Standard—the only 2 gasoline places here, storage agency deals.

They wouldn't pump gas there, though, would they?

No, it was illegal to pump any gas at all out of the stations.

So what stations were you servicing out of the Standard one?

Well, they used to service a lot of farms, too. Standard used to service everything from here clean out to Bridgeport. They went up 395 and over to Wellington, from Wellington to Bridgeport, and Bridgeport to come back 395 coming north. Of course, they're mostly empty.

And you were mostly going to farms?

Yes, they serviced the farms.

There used to be a lot of kerosene. There was 4 storage tanks back here full of kerosene and-gasoline. What they were mostly burning was kerosene, and then later on came diesel. And then later on came along stove oil, which was a 28 specific gravity oil. There isn't too much difference between diesel and stove oil. The kerosene was energy for the tractors and things like this. They would burn kerosene—coal oil, they used to call it.

But no service stations in here?

Yes, there was one service station right in the middle of town, about up where that tin shop is right in the center of [Gardnerville]. Do you know where the French Hotel is? It's right on the opposite side of the street. It's kind of sunken in, the building is. That was Standard. Then it had a Union just up the street a little ways, over there by the J and T, right on the corner.

Who owned that Standard station at that time?

Let's see, it was guys by the names of Aldax and Garro. Preceding Aldax and Garro

were John Dittier and Herman Springmeyer. Herman Springmeyer was born and raised here in the valley. John Dittier came from the outside, but he started the garage first. He was primarily interested in mines, but he was a good mechanic. Springmeyer didn't have too much experience in mechanics, but he could take care of the outside work, like servicing customers and things like this. But mechanical work, John Dittier done all of that; he was a good mechanic.

I've been told that back in the horse-drawn era blacksmith shops here in Gardnerville and in Minden served almost as social meeting places, as well as just blacksmith shops.

That's very true. That was a collecting place. To describe the one in Gardnerville, it's right on what used to be called School Street; it goes west, and it's called Gilman now. In the northwest corner where Sharkey's parking lot is was a blacksmith, originally.

What was the name of that blacksmith shop?

Krummes. Krummes had a mortuary, and he was kind of a justice of peace, too, at the time, I think, and afterwards for a good many years. But it changed hands. There was a fellow by the name of George Heidtman that used to do quite a lot of blacksmithing in there; he was a good blacksmith.

And when did he buy it?

He never bought it.

oh. You said it changed hands....

Sundays, when there wasn't anybody working, that's where the Indians used to

collect. They'd play these stick games. You know, they'd pass the stick around the back, and whoever catches the stick, or something to this effect.... But they all gathered around that blacksmith shop, because they were closed on Sundays.

Would you find them out there on working days?

No, they were too busy.

The other blacksmith shop that I remember was down here at Miller's, right where you go in the cemetery gate; it was the first place to the right, right on that spot. The old blacksmith shop was standing there, as I recall it. That's what they named Millerville, which is Centertown now.

When did it finally close?

It closed as the horse era went out. The mill trucks started running south. That was the Minden Milling Company.

In the twenties when I was out at the ranch, they were running trucks then. Preceding that, they were running jerk-line teams. They had 2 teams on the road most of the time. They'd go all the way out from here and service the...well, grain, flour, and all this type of thing clean to Bodie. And [Highway], 95, as we know it now, going east down through Walker Lake, was never in there. So they went the long route; well, it's the shortest route, actually. But they went out through the Nine-Mile Road up over Lucky Boy Grade and down to Hawthorne. Some of those jerk-line teams went down as far as Rhyolite, about 75 miles this side of Las Vegas. They went that far; then down to Mojave and all that country in there.

That's a considerable distance for a team.

Long ways for teams, yes.

The original concept of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, when they put that in here and they brought it as far as Carson City, theoretically they were working to go out south. This went out through Sweetwater, Lyon County, out through Wellington, and it was headed down to meet with the Southern Pacific up at Laws (that's close to Bishop). That was the original concept of the Virginia & Truckee, to go through here to have its inland piece of transportation for livestock and farm crops and things like this...miners.

But it never materialized. Now what had happened there was the fact that the Dangberg company give them the right to come through their land. The understanding was that they were to come as far as Minden, and that would be the end of the track. But that's the reservations that they had on the easement right-of-way through there.

Well, let's get back to the subject of service stations and blacksmith shops—because in some ways they're related. They both wind up...

Well, there was another blacksmith shop right across from the Richford Hotel. At that time that was the biggest and best hotel in town. It was very luxurious, too. They served good food, had good rooms, and took pride. Mrs. Richford and her husband were quite the hosts.

[The blacksmith shop was right next to] that brick building that you see there; that was the old Pop Starke saloon, right straight across from the Richford on the east side of the street. Pop Starke was a notorious Dutch boy in town! [laughs] That was quite a hangout for a lot of the German people. Anybody that had any time off, why, they wound up at Pop Starke's, and he had all kinds of gimmicks for them to come in for. If he couldn't find it one

way, he'd find some kind of an excuse to get them in. [laughs]

Can you give me some examples?

Well, he'd cook different types of meals that they would like, see, and things like this. Then he opened a bakery, and they had to come in there and had to buy bakery goods. And when he run the bar and saloon, he always had a snack sitting on the bar someplace. Something like shrimp or mackerel, such as they mix up for kind of a snack type of a thing. It was quite a gathering place for a lot of them. And he was quite a character himself.

Where was the principal Basque hangout in town?

Well, the French Hotel was there quite early. And then the Overland Hotel—at that time, John Etchemendy had it, and preceding John Etchemendy was a fellow by the name of Aldax. He later on sold that and left here, and Etchemendy bought it from him. He opened up the clothing store on Center Street in Reno.

The French and the Overland were the only 2 places, actually, where there were Basque hotels. But at one time they had a handball court in back of the French Hotel, where they used to play handball.

Is there any remains of that back there now?

No. There's a jail in that area now—the city jail.

Did they have that handball court when you were a youth?

Oh, yes. I remember playing in it. Used to go out there once in a while and play handball.

It was right directly behind the French Hotel, between there and the alley way. It was a big *fronton*; that's what they call the big wall, you know, in *jai alai*. The *fronton* means the front panel that you bounce the ball off of; and that was cement.

When did that fronton get torn down?

I don't think there was enough people, actually, to sustain it. The people that come to town didn't stay here very long; they'd just stay long enough to have a repose or get their teeth fixed or maybe a few little things they had to get done—maybe 2, 3, 4 days or a week, and then they'd get back to work.

But these are shepherders that would do this?

Yes. But then as they got older, some of them would come to town and stay in town. They'd board and room at one of the hotels. And they were a fixture of wherever they stayed.

But you say that the handball court didn't get a whole lot of use?

Only one here, yes. But in Reno, there was 2 of them. There was one down on Lake Street, and there was one over there across the tracks on the north side of the old Hotel Espanol; they had a handball court there. The one on Lake Street was closed in. The one on the tracks, north of the railroad tracks, was open.

If you went to play handball did you have to provide your own equipment?

No. Well, some of them would have their own paletas. It's like a paddle that's built square out of a piece of hard oak; it had

a handle on it. This they had as their own equipment. Most of the time the house had the equipment, and the house furnished the balls. What they done, they'd play the game for drinks or something like this, is the way the game went. They'd pair off, 2 pair, singles or whatever kind of game they were going to play. But eventually, they would bring in some better players—in Reno, especially, not out here. Some of the better players, like out of Bakersfield, Fresno, San Francisco, and different areas around the country would come up just as a challenge.

Was there any gambling associated with it?

Oh, yes. They'd get amongst friends and bid up \$5, \$10 who was going to win, and all this kind of stuff. But not in a big way, I would say. But the bigger games, there was money put on those bigger games.

What about just the casual games, such as the ones that you might be involved in?

They just played just for amusement, just casual games.

What was the fee for the use of the court?

Most of the time you just bought a drink at the house. There was no fee or charge, but it's something that attracts people to come there. That's the purpose the court served, was to bring people there. That was the enticement in that work.

As I've told you, I'm from Florida. Jai alai is played professionally down there, of course. There are very few Americans who have ever played the game; there are 1 or 2 of them now in Florida. What was it like out here in Nevada? Were there ever any non-Basques who

would go down to, let's say, the French Hotel and play?

There were a few, but not too many. But when you compare the games, Irish handball, which is a hard, black ball—it's got an air bubble in the center of it, but it's made out of hard rubber—and the Basque handball was tight woven, just like a baseball but smaller. It's really hard. But most of the Americans couldn't hack that. They used a tennis ball, see. I know when we were kids when we went to school, that's what we used in San Francisco. And they had courts—one wall handball courts, maybe 5 or 6 in a row. so at recess you would go out and play handball. But they used tennis balls then.

Then they used some of those little Irish handballs, too, those black Irish handballs. But the game was very similar to the old Irish handball.

Of course, the Irish one is just played with the hand and not with a paddle, though. The Basques played this with a paddle, didn't they?

No, they played that by hand, by paddle, and by txistera, which is the big hoop. That's the big basket that they called it. And there were some made out of rawhide also, the scoop made of rawhide. The wicker was the original... txistera,, they call that in Basque. It's the *jai alai* wicker type of a scoop, handball scoop. And you've got to know how to use those things.

The same thing is true with what they call the *paletas*. The *paletas* was made out of solid oak. And that thing there, when you hit that ball, it went by your ear just went like a bullet. If you'd move out and get in front of it, it'd knock you cold if they ever hit you with one of them. Then sometimes, some guy'd get a little bit loose and let it go out of his hands,

see, and they were heavy. They'd really floor you.

Did they have a place there for an audience?

Yes, most of them did, out in back.

Tell me about the one at French's.

Well, they didn't have any seats at the French, but they lined up right towards the back of the court. The better courts had an upstairs, because they used the wall in back to bounce the ball off of to make a legal play. But then they were elevated up for spectators so they could see down, looking right down on the whole court. These balls would be up about 12, 14 feet high, because they kicked the ball up there and hit the wall. They'd pick that up on a bounce, and a player hit it back. They didn't go that far in these smaller handball courts out in the country.

Tell me something about the composition of the audience. Were women allowed to watch these things? Would they be a part of it?

Some women watched it, but most of the time the women were busy doing something else—either cooking or doing some other chores around. It's more or less enjoyment for men; I don't think the women actually understood the games, knew much about them.

Did you ever know a woman who played?

Never seen one play.

Anybody ever ask?

I don't know! [laughing] You know, in all my time I've never seen a woman play

handball, because it was too rough on the hands, to start with. That ball's hard. I mean, I played it myself as a kid, and my hands'd swell up like a pumpkin. My fingers'd almost bond together from swelling.

What about the Washo Indians? Did any of them ever show any interest in handball here?

No, I don't think they were much interested in that particular facet. But they always were interested in baseball.

Were there baseball teams here in Gardnerville?

Yes. Dresslerville had baseball teams; they still have to this day—softball teams, hardball teams, basketball teams. of course, they come up with the educational cycle. If you go back to the older type of Indians, that wasn't their thing at all.

Yes. You say they were playing baseball in the 1920s, though?

Yes. They were in 1923, '24, '25, up in there; they were playing baseball then. I played on the Gardnerville baseball team, and we had Indian boys on the baseball team then. Of course, there wasn't enough Indians actually to make their own teams at that time, but now there is.

We were talking about Basques, and we kind of got off on a tangent. You told me that the French Hotel and Overland Hotel were the 2 major Basque collecting places. Were there any other Basque-owned businesses here in Gardnerville or in Minden?

There were a few bars owned by Basque people, but not too many. Well, at one time I think there was 13 bars in the town of

Gardnerville—and that included Minden—and 1 or 2 in Genoa. I think there was 15 bars in Carson Valley at that time, in those 3 places.

And how many of them would have been owned by Basques?

Just the 2 here.

We had a bar at the ranch over at Sweetwater. They used to gather quite a few people. They used to come in from Mono County. In the twenties when Prohibition come in, they couldn't have liquor and stuff, so they'd bond together from Bridgeport and Masonic and Aurora and Bodie, and they'd come to Sweetwater over the state line—that was in Nevada, see—and they'd throw a great big shindig up there. One solid floor upstairs was a dance floor— a pretty good size floor, clean the length of that building there. I never saw anybody out of place, actually. I think the older people years ago...there used to be a few sots; you found that in any time, any place, but people used to control their liquor a lot better than they do now.

Federal Prohibition came in later on. Of course, they folded the bar up at the ranch during Prohibition. It didn't run then. But that was preceding Prohibition.

I see. So it was a dry county over there in California?

Mono County was dry, so they come out and would come over to Esmeralda County, then, to a place that was wet. But the Basques always had wine, irrespective of Prohibition or no Prohibition. Of course, there was a lot of homemade beer, then, too, [laughing] Prohibition bootlegging.

Was there any other distinctly Basque drink that would be served at the Overland Hotel or

the French Hotel? Anything that would set that bar apart from other bars that weren't owned by Basques?

Well, I think it's the attitude. I've always claimed this, and I still think it's a true factor. The food was one thing that'd attract them. They talk about a drink of *picon*, for instance; this they don't serve in any other American bars.

The *picon* is an aperitif. It's a French derivative— an appetizer—just as the name would imply. It's supposed to increase your appetite for food, which it does. Now it has a lot of herbs, bitters, *quinina* root, and all this type of thing, mixed in today. It comes in what they call a *picon* mix. But years ago, I used to watch my uncle, Dad's brother. He'd set up a pile of little bottles and jiggers with his herbs and everything else, and he'd set his glass up on there, and he'd reach over here and put in a drop of this, put in a drop of this, put in a drop of that. And then he'd put in his...well, they used to use Three Star Hennessy then, which was a good grade of brandy. They never used cheap liquor; they used the best of the liquor. Like today, you can go to a bar in a Basque place, they use Christian Brothers brandy, which is a good brand of brandy, actually, in comparison with a lot of other brandies.

That's one of the things, but the sociability is the thing that I always maintained, brought these people together, for the simple reason you had to set a family table out here. Everybody sat down at the table. You didn't know Joe Doe from Adam, but you socialized with them, talked to them, just like a big family group would. And I think *this* is what people liked. They didn't admit it, but it's the truth. People are funny, you know. They'll run away from the city and come up here in the country, and they band together like a bunch of sheep up in the hills, in the mountains! And

then they come to town, and the same things they get together with a group of people. I think they can enjoy themselves from the sociability of it alone. Be talking to a stranger and get certain responses:

"Well, what do you do?"

"I herd cattle," or "I'm a cowboy," or "I'm a shepherd."

"What do you do when you're a shepherd?" and things like this.

It's kind of an amiable type of a thing; people are anxious to communicate with one another. And in everyday life, you know what American people would be like. They're always running, you know; they haven't got time to talk or things like this. It takes them out of the pressure system, is what I'm trying to say.

Of course, people tend to socialize generally with their own, as well. I know the Basques are a tight-knit group and so are some of the other groups here in the valley. What are some of the other things that you remember that might have distinguished the Basque people here from the other people in the valley; that set them apart in some way from the Germans or the English or the Washo or any of the others?

I don't...well, just their avocation is enough to.... Well, I wouldn't say that either. The average stockman, for instance—let us say it was a farmer here in the valley. And like my father, he was a stockman; he had sheep, he had cattle and he had hogs; he raised horses, he had donkeys and.... They had something in common, because they were both working with the sod. They had to get their hay crops in, do their seeding, and they had something in common with one another.

They'd learn from one another, too. Like, this one here had a system to pick up his hay, why, he'd go out there and say, "why don't you

come out and see how I'm doing my job?" So they'd go out there and they'd get a lot of ideas and apply it to their own system of doing things.

They talk about the cattle and sheep wars.. .my dad always got along; he never packed a rod or packed a gun. He got along with cattlemen as well as he did the sheep men. The sheep and the cattle industry for the farmers were compatible in those years. In other words, they would take the cattle up to the [summer alpine] ranges, and that same man would have sheep, too. But he'd take the sheep, and he'd run the ranges and take the high country where the cattle never got into to clean up some of the high country that cattle never cleaned up.

They were compatible. I say that because the Dangberg company run both cattle and sheep. Parks run cattle and sheep—the Park ranch people. Dresslers had the sheep ranch. They had a special ranch just on the east side of the west fork of the Carson River over there; maybe Fred told you about that. It is now the Los Gatos ranch. That's where they done all their lambing and everything else on the west side of the river.

Of course, a lot of the ranchers here in the valley hired Basque shepherders to work for them. Which ranch was thought to be the best one to work for?

Well, I don't know. There's a few of them worked out there at Dangberg's Sheep Company for ranch work. But I don't think Fred [Dressler] had too many ranch people out there on their place. They run sheep then; don't think as many, though. Beltran Bidart was a shepherder, and he rode cattle ranges for Fred for a long time, too.. .quite a few years.

Which of these ranchers would have been best to work for, for the Basque shepherder here

in Carson Valley? There must have been some talk about that.

Primarily the bigger bunch of...the biggest operator of sheep was the Dangberg company. They're major operators in numbers of sheep. And there was a lot of people that worked for Dangbergs, like Peter Chango, Ben Aldax and his brother, Gene. When they first started developing that ground in the Hayborn tract area, the Changos and the Aldaxes bought ranches down there and helped scrub off the sagebrush or dig the sagebrush off the land to start the farm operation.

You told me that the Basques who had sheep and would hire other Basques to work for them would very often pay them in kind—would give them sheep and help them build up their own herds. What kind of payment would Basque shepherders get who worked for non-Basque owners, people like the Dangbergs or the Dresslers or the Parks? How were they paid?

Well, they were paid by check, most of those people were. There was a standard wage. They had that pretty well in control; about \$25 a month is what you're looking at. And if you worked on a ranch, maybe \$30 a month was top money. Dollar a day. But you could go out and work in the mines for maybe \$4, \$4.50 a day.

I worked on the ranch for \$25 a month. Sweetwater ranch. Those are long days.

I can imagine.

Before we leave this topic of Basques in the Carson Valley, is there anything else you can tell me about how their presence here had an effect on the valley? You've mentioned they had 2 hotels; and they had the handball game here and they worked as shepherders. What other things did the Basques bring to the valley?

Well, I don't know. They brought a heritage from Europe—there's no question about that—but they took jobs that nobody else wanted or nobody else could handle. It could be some of the harder jobs, and they'd pick it up and get it done. The Basques are kind of a proud people. More or less in all of the things that maybe you've seen them working in—like lifting weights, using an axe, chopping a tree, this type of a thing—this is a competitive thing. It's a hard job to do any one of them, like pack a certain weight for a certain distance and see who can take it the farthest.

I've seen them even up there at the ranch on a Sunday, if they didn't have anything to do and there was a steep hill or mountain right in back of the ranch.. .well, they'd get together and get grain sacks; they weighed maybe 100, 125 pounds. They'd see who could pack that up that hill the farthest. They'd make a mound of rocks up there, and whoever it was would have to beat that certain height. It's a big pack. Other times they had the platform scales. They put a chain underneath that, and then they'd take the gross weight and pull against this bar with the chain—against the weight of the beam. It's a lift, just to see what weight you could lift. But there was nothing else for amusement; it was just something else to do.

Now, another thing—they used to take these great big railroad bars; you know, they're taller than I am. But they used to take this railroad bar and put it right in their hands and swing it and pitch it out flat. Wherever that bar would stick.. .it's the same thing that you have like a javelin. This is part of the games they played...competitive, see.

You said that a lot of the Basque men would take jobs that nobody else would take.

That's right. Who could you get to go out and herd sheep? Nobody else but a Basque

would go out and do it, and do a good job of it. They were dedicated to the job. They used to be, then, but I don't think the later ones were that dedicated.

Here in the Carson Valley, did any of the Basque women work outside of the home?

Quite a few of them, I think.

What kinds of things would they do?

Let's use my mother's case, for instance; she'd be a good one. She came from Europe and came to San Francisco, and Dad's brother, Francisco, found her a job with the Rudolf Spreckles sugar people. And I knew people in Reno that worked for wealthier people.

The biggest problem the younger Basques had was to be able to communicate with their employers. But after they were here for a while and learned the language, then it was a little bit easier.

So women would work in other homes?

They would work in other homes and work in the Basque restaurants serving and cooking and all of these kinds of things.

As long as we're talking about different ethnic groups here in the valley, we might as well go ahead and cover practically all of them as quickly as we can. I know that there were some Chinese who were, here working as cooks, primarily, as I understand it. Do you have any personal knowledge of any Chinese families that lived in either Gardnerville or Minden?

Yes, I know a fellow by the name of Sam Leon. He came from Bodie, where they used to have a lot of Chinamen. The Chinamen up there in Bodie—and this is true in all of the

Virginia City mines and any of the mines that were around the country—they would go out and cut mine shoring. They used these timbers overhead and up and down in tunnels and things like this. The Chinamen actually went out and got the wood and the material for it.

Were there any of them doing that here in the Pine Nut Range?

Oh, yes. I was up here in Genoa Canyon a good many years ago, and they cut trees up there, I'd say they're anywheres from 10 to 12 [feet] above the ground. That only told me one thing, that there was snow on that country there when they cut those damn trees off up that high.

It was Chinese doing it?

Yes. They were Chinese. I was out there with my brother-in-law and found a handmade auger. You know, some blacksmith that put in the twist...it was a little bit crude, but it was a handmade auger to bore holes in the wood and timber when they were getting the stuff out. They'd drill a hole, and they'd.... I found a square black powder can, which told me right then and there that that must have come from England. The American 4-F powder was in round cans. England imported things in square cans. But I left them both up there, and I never did go back after them to get them.

Let's get back to Sam Leon.

He run a gaming casino and a bar and a card place. It would be right straight across from where that hardware store is today on Main Street. [It was on the west side of Main Street, across from that hardware store with the silver front that used to be the old mercantile store.]

What was the name of the place?

Just Sam Leon's.

Then that was the main hall in Gardnerville, was the Valhalla Hall, where they had the shows and all the entertainment and dances and all this type of thing. It was a flat floor; it didn't have a slanting floor, like most show houses.

Can you describe Sam Leon's place to me?

He was quite a guy. He got his indoctrination up in Bodie, I guess. Older people that used to talk about Bodie, they'd talk about a Chinaman for breakfast every morning. This has a certain psychology behind it. The Chinaman was never to be caught in town after dark in Bodie; they had their own China camp to go to. But if he was ever caught there early in the morning, why, that's what they meant by shooting down a Chinaman, "Chinaman for breakfast." They had their own camps, see, so they were.... And it was true with the Indians, too. Even right here in this valley, most of the Indians had to be in their teepees or in their camps and not hanging around the town in the evening.

What would happen to them if they did?

They might be in trouble.

Did you ever know of one to get caught in town?

No, but I can remember the days when the white people wouldn't eat with the Indians. If you run a farm or ranch, you had to have separate tables to feed the Indians, separate dining room. We did out at the ranch. We had a lot of Paiutes.

Out at Sweetwater?

We had a lot of Paiutes out there. They ate separately from the white people. The white people didn't want...like colored folks, you know. A lot of people don't want to eat with colored folks; well, they didn't want to eat with the Indians. So they had to be separated from the white people.

Tell me some more about Sam Leon, now.

Well, Sam Leon was quite a gambler. He used to like to gamble up there in Bodie before he ever came to Gardnerville. I think that's what enticed a lot of people to go there, because Sam knew how to make money, you know. And he had money to lose, so....

When did he come here?

He must have come here in the early 1920s, I'd say. That's when he came down from Bodie.

How long did his establishment last?

Bodie, preceding that, was on the way out, but he was there maybe 15 to 20 years. (And a guy by the name of Tony Detling had a bar down the street a little ways right where Magoo's is now. There used to be kind of a triangular building in there.) But Leon made it attractive. He put a little money out, and people always had a tendency to go back in there and play cards, because there was a lot of loose money running around.

What do you mean by "loose money"?

Well, just [what] the name implies. Send out winners, and you get players. That's the simple thing. I think that psychology applies to all gaming. You've got to have winners to get losers.

What kind of gambling did he have? Was it only cards?

Card games, yes. Mostly poker—stud poker, draw poker and "21" once in a while. And dice—poker dice or pair dice or whatever you want to call it; they could name their own game and play that.

Were there other Chinese here in Gardnerville and Minden?

Oh, yes. There was a few Chinese cooking. Dangbergs had Chinese cooks out at...well, practically all ranches. They had a Chinese cook at sheep camp down below. [The Dangberg] Home Ranch over there where the girls [Margaret McDonald and Ruth Achard] are now had a Chinese cook there; Buckeye had a Chinese cook; Klauber had a Chinese cook. I can recall them because I was working at the Co-op store in Minden, then.

Were there any Chinese you can remember who did anything other than cook around here?

No, the only one I ever remember is another Chinese...Long Tom, we called him; he come out of Bodie. We had him take care of our lower ranch down on the East Walker. He took care of the irrigating and done the outside shoveling and ditch repair and this type of thing. That's the only Chinaman I ever saw working for anybody on the outside, actually doing manual labor.

Earlier, we were talking about the Laverone family. I told you that we had found the site of the Laverone ranch and found a lot of things that were associated with it there. What can you tell me about the Laverone family? What do you remember about them? Did you

personally know any of the Laverones who lived on what is now the Dressler land?

No, no. They were gone when I first was ever on that ranch; the Dresslers had it then. But I used to go up there fishing with a guy by the name of Howard Detling. His father had a saloon on the same block as Sam Leon's place in Gardnerville. The family was Swiss; there were a few Swiss milkers in the valley. And we used to go up there [to the Laverone site] fishing. Used to like to fly fish, and then spin fishing, things like this. There's a lot of good fishing in there and some nice fish from the Dressler ranch on up towards the California line.

So did Detling tell you something about the Laverone family when you went up there fishing?

Detling?

How did you find out about them?

Well, I knew they called it the Laverone ranch or the "milk ranch."

They had a dairy there, you thought?

Dairy, yes. My understanding was that they did. I'll tell you who told me that: it was one of the Cordeses, and they were born and raised here in the valley. It was one of the older Cordes family.

But the Laverones were gone by the time you came here in the 1920s?

Yes, they were gone. I think Dressler owned it by that time.

They used to have a foot bridge, too, just below the ranch there. It went across the river,

if I remember correctly. You know, one of these cable bridges that...

A little suspension bridge?

Suspension bridge. I remember we used to go up to that cable bridge to get from one side of the river to the other when it was high water in the spring of the year, to fish either side of the river.

Did anybody ever tell you why the Laverones left?

No, I never heard of anything about what happened to them.

There was an old stone cutter who lived on the remains of the Laverone ranch after they had left—an Italian stone cutter who had a quarry, which is also on the Dressler property. I understand that he moved onto what remained of the Laverone ranch after they had gone. Do you know anything about him? Has anybody ever talked to you about that?

No, I never heard it mentioned. I know they used to call it the "milk ranch." As a matter of fact, Dresslers had a dairy there, and then they had one in Bridgeport and one in Smith Valley at the Plymouth ranch. I do know that they used to call it the "milk ranch," the Laverone place.

I never knew a stone cutter out there. I know what a stone cutter is; you'd see traces of granite and stuff scattered all over the cockeyed earth wherever they worked, that's for sure. I don't ever recall seeing that. I can remember the old stone cellar there, though; that I can remember.

Was that piece of property being used for anything else?

Primarily for grazing, so far as I know.

We were talking earlier about Chinese. Do you know of any Chinese activity in the Pine Nut Range over here to the east?

I've heard a lot of talk of finding kilns that the Chinese people... I've heard that from talk only. But I don't ever recall seeing any kilns of any sort. With all the territory that I run around on, I've never seen kilns.

Were there any Chinese camps here in the Carson Valley where the Chinese would have congregated?

No, the closest one I ever heard of was the one that's down in Carson. I think that there was a colony there, and they had all kinds of tunnels and everything else in the small area in which they lived. I think it's right around where the Capitol is, the assembly and the senate building, in that area. But they had tunnels excavated underneath the ground and going every which way. And I recall having a lot of Chinese eating places; there were 2 or 3 Chinese eating places down there in that area at one time, going way back to 1923-1924.

You don't know about the Chinese charcoal burners around here having camps on the...?

I've never seen one in these hills. I've seen them other places, but I've never seen any in the state of Nevada. I know what they are because you can see the round charcoal beddings around where they built the pyramid or whatever you call it—comes.

In your own lifetime here in the Carson Valley, was charcoal being put to any use in houses or in businesses?

Oh, I think they used it sometimes as a starter. In other words, when they put out a fire a lot of times they'd have charcoal pieces sitting around; there'd be the coals. All they'd have to do is dry those out in the sun and bring them in. Paper wasn't so plentiful as we have it today, see, so you have to have your starter sometimes. That either had to be dry limbs or something, and I've seen them pick up these coals; even the old sheep camps, they do that. They find a place where they had a camp before to pick up all those charcoals, pile them up there, and get some dry brush and put it on like we do briquettes, and it starts a fire real fast.

Yes, but charcoal wasn't being sold commercially here in Minden and Gardnerville when you were a young man?

No. I can remember them selling coal, wood...most of the people went out and got their own firewood, actually.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the jobs that you held when you left the fuel company, the Standard Oil Company in Gardnerville.

Then I was transferred to Standard Oil at Carson City. I stayed with one of the older people down there who had a rooming house directly behind the supreme court in Carson City. Kings were their names; one of the old-timers in Carson history. Then Alma [my wife, nee Marquat] used to come down there once in a while; that's where we started more or less.

Then I come back up here, and I got a job at the old Farmers Cooperative store, general store. [It stood where the service station and Bently shed are now, across the road from Valley Hardware in Minden.] They had

everything from nuts and bolts to bread and butter. That had a basement underneath of it, and then had a high platform that you walked on. The sidewalk stood about 3 feet high; then it had steps leading up into it. The store part was up there, and then it had a basement down underneath where the station is now. There was a big monstrosity of a basement. Kept all of their groceries and all the perishables and everything else downstairs, when they had that long warehouse for the salt, sugar, flour.

You went there in what year?

Nineteen twenty-four, '25. I was there 8 years and worked for the Minden Merc for 7, so there's 15 years there between the 2, and no vacations. [laughs] They didn't believe in vacations then! I remember we'd take time off to go to Reno to get...well, you couldn't buy kids' clothes anywhere here, so we'd take a trip to Reno, and you got docked for the day that you took off.

Henry Mack was running the Co-op. But it was a deal with a staff of officers and board of directors and all this kind of stock operation along with it. Then they had a subsidiary store in Smith Valley, which was the Farmers Co-op also. It was tied into this one here.

In 1928, '29 I think they had a fire, and it burnt the store down. So I went to work out at Smith Valley Co-op at that time. There was a guy by the name of Charlie Williams and John Newmarker running the store out there. And a guy by the name of Harold Mann was working there at the store, too, and myself. I spent a year and a half or 2 years out there. Then I come back with....

Henry Mack had started a store down here where Jimmy Miller's is today. He bought a hardware store in Carson; it belonged to one of the Welches. I remember they had a big sale down there, so we had to go down there

as employees and help them clean up a lot of that stuff, and what was left we hauled it all up here in trucks. We hauled a great big safe up here, and had to start rolling it across the floor, and it went through the floor! [laughing] It had big 2-by-12 planks to roll it around, and it slipped off of the planks; went through the floor. That was when that store was first built, so that must have been about 1927, '28, somewhere in there.

I worked there several years, and then I left there and took a vacation for a little while and then went to work for the Minden Mercantile in Minden, right next to the CVIC Hall. That was owned by Rood and Heidtman. And I think I was there 7 years.

Why don't we return to the Farmers Co-op; I'd like to get a description of it if I can. Tell me what you know about how it was organized.

The first organizer of the Farmers Co-op was George Myers from Carson City. That Myers store is still there, right across from the Capitol on the west side. There's a George Myers there now; I think his grandfather was the one that opened it. So George Myers started the store down there, and finally I guess Henry Mack got interested in it.

How was it decided to start a co-op here rather than just a privately owned enterprise?

Well, the theory of the Co-op was to operate in a cooperative way to hold prices of commodities down. That's the theory of any co-op: to work on a very small margin or short margin type of a thing. Along with that came the fact that there was a lot of barter. Like, the people would raise eggs and stuff; they'd bring the eggs into the Co-op store, and they'd be given credit. Well, there used to be 30 dozen eggs in a case, and half a case was

15 dozen. They'd be given the credit on the case on market prices. As progress developed, pretty soon it got to the point where they had to candle the eggs for sizes and for fertility and all this kind of stuff, where you put them right through the process. This, the clerks had to do in their spare time.

You had to do this, too?

Yes. You made a ticket out for Joe Blow—he come in here and he brought in 30 dozen eggs; you give him credit for 30 dozen eggs, and out of that he'd eventually buy groceries and trade it out and things like this. That's the barter system.

What sorts of things other than eggs were being used in barter?

The mill took grain, ground it into flour. The farmer that raised the grain got a certain amount of flour back from the grain that he brought, and he'd get credit for the rest of it.

And the mill was part of the Co-op?

No, it wasn't part of the Co-op. That's a different entity completely.

The Co-op itself was a general store; they had everything from nuts to bolts, bread to butter... They got into farming instruments, farm machinery, and all this kind of stuff—powder for miners, fuses, caps, and a general layout of hardware; housewares, dishes, crockery; vegetables, groceries.

At the time that you worked in the Co-op, who were the stockholders? Were there a great number of them?

Well, there was quite a few of them, yes. There was the Heise family in there, and the

Dangbergs were involved and Dresslers were involved in that thing—numerous farmers.

Could anybody buy the shares?

No. They just made certain offerings to certain people, I think, who actually put up money and were issued stock. I know that because it worked that way with my own personal deal.

After the place burnt down and they got squared away on the thing, I remember Henry Mack coming to me; he says, "Frank, I'm going to leave your stock with you, and when these people come in, they're going to call for their stock. You be sure and give it to them and give them the right one." I can recall that there. He had turned that over to me. He had to go someplace; I don't know where he went, but he left town for some business reason. So I know that that's the way it was handled.

What was your responsibility there? What was your position?

I was a clerk when I first started. And I drove a delivery truck and delivered around town both to Gardnerville and down to Minden. We didn't go out of the 2 towns. We had certain hours of delivery; I think 9:00 or 10:00. See, we opened some mornings... summer, we opened at 6:00 in the morning, got half an hour's lunch if you got it [chuckles], worked till 6:00, [laughing] and later on you had to go back and candle eggs after 6:00.

You had to candle eggs every night, then?

Not every night...quite a few nights, because they accumulated a lot of eggs. That was quite a chore, when you had to go through those eggs. Of course, at that time the

mechanical part of it was crude; it wasn't so far advanced as a lot of the technical stuff we have today, like you push a button and you've got 6 ounces over there, or 4 ounces here. Eggs had to be weighed. We'd classify them as small, medium, large or extra large by kind of a hit-and-miss proposition. You gained a certain amount of knowledge just by looking at these eggs where they belonged. But then after you'd get them all segregated, you'd scale them out. You had to put a certain weight on one end, like a balance scale. And what didn't meet that prime, went to the next one, so you'd put these eggs in all different cases by weight and mark the grades on the case.

What would the Co-op do with the eggs that it had taken in?

Well, they got so that they had more eggs than they could handle; they didn't know what the heck to do with them! There used to be eggs all wrapped up out in the back of the warehouse there, and Nevada Packing Company in Reno would take a lot of the surplus eggs off their hands... something like, say, 125 to 150 cases. And you're looking at 30 dozen eggs in each case—that's a lot of cackleberries! [laughter] But they become a glut on the market; you'd have to find a market to get them out to.

Why would the Co-op keep taking them, then, in exchange?

Well, that was part of the business. It was just part of the business; that's what it was. That's what the farmers, when they brought them in, they anticipated. Later on right alongside the creamery they created the regular poultry setup. Then they took the egg business over there. So it got too much for the actual stores to handle them.

There were stores here—the Arendt Jensen store up here, and then there was Howard Brothers, and they were collecting eggs, too, and this was a surplus commodity for them. They didn't know where to go with them to get rid of them. Most of them were shipped to Reno, and I don't think they were shipped too far away because those years they were considered a perishable commodity. They had no refrigeration and all this kind of stuff like they have today.

During the time that you were at the Farmers Coop, did they take barter throughout that entire period, or at some point did they finally draw a line and say, "We're only going to accept cash"?

Well, I don't think they ever truly got out of the barter system. I think it got worse. The reason I say this is that the cash system we see today was nonexistent then. In other words, you have maybe the capital stock outlay here of \$50,000 stock; in those days that was big stock. But over here on accounts receivable, maybe you'd be carrying \$155,000 or \$160,000. So as the old farm lingo goes, the fall crops were making them. Then they were able to pay because they could see some of their commodities. Some of them cleaned up; some of them didn't. That's the way the thing was handled.

Did any Basque shepherders shop there?

Oh, yes. When I worked for the Co-op store, they had clothing, too. Practically all of the Basque people used to come in there because I was able to communicate with them; none of the rest of the people could communicate with them. This is one thing, when I started my own business, that stood me well in hand, because I was bilingual—

speak Basque, Spanish and several languages along with it.

Did the Basques who came in to buy clothing bring anything in for barter?

Never. They never brought in anything for barter because they didn't have anything to barter with, if you get what I mean. Like, a sheep man or a shepherd who's interested in sheep, they'd pool all the wool crops, and those sold; when they got ready to separate the lambs, they parted all the lambs, and they were sold in group blocks. So they didn't have anything to barter.

But you talk about barter...during McKinley's administration, I can recall my dad saying that they sold wethers. In other words, a wether was a male sheep they used to breed the females. He's anywhere from 15 to 18 months old. They never sold lambs like they do now—80, 90-pound lambs—but they were all up in that 145 to 155...they used to call them mutton then. It seems to me like he told me they sold something like 3,000 head of wethers, and these were over a year and a half old. They got 75¢ per head for those wethers, and they had to accept scrip. And this scrip, you couldn't cash it before 6 months; you had to wait for 6 months before they would redeem it.

There wasn't any scrip being used in the Farmers Co-op, was there?

No, there was no scrip there. That was all charge, practically.. .very little cash, because hardly anybody packed any money around then. Well, there was gold around, but even sheep shearers, I know we used to pay them all in silver and gold out there at the ranch when they sheared sheep.

Any Washo Indians shopping at the Co-op?

Oh yes, quite a few.

What can you remember about the way they shopped?

One of them comes to mind—Benny James, who took care of the Keller estates up here. That's Hidden Valley ski run. That's the territory or the ground that Keller owned at that time. He would come into the Co-op store down there. At that time, if you spent \$300 or \$400 for groceries and food and stuff like that, you would have one heck of a lot of food. And they'd come into Minden in the fall of the year and go up there in the spring of the year; why, when they'd come out, they'd come up with the payroll that they were paid for an all-winter job. They'd come down to the store; the first place they'd come, to pay off the bill that they got last fall. They'd occasionally buy pills; they'd buy everything that went with the groceries—hams, bacons, beans, macaroni, and all kinds of canned stuff, such as there was then. There wasn't too many varieties. Milk was one thing.. .canned milk; there was canned milk around then.

Did any of the Washo women ever trade any baskets or anything for...?

Not that I know of. I think I remember seeing the Washo women.. .they'd go out to Pyramid [Lake], I think it was in the spring of the year when the fish were running. They'd go out and get some of those cutthroat trout. When they'd come here to town, they'd go all over peddling these fish. They'd come from Pyramid; they were running up towards the river, and they'd get them out there on the sandbars and throw them in the back end of cars or buggies or horse and wagon, whatever they had, and bring them to town to peddle.

They didn't use that as barter or anything, though, with the Co-op?

No. That was too perishable for anybody to fool around with. But Alma tells me she can recall the butchers coming around the valley here in the meat wagon. They collected all the flies in the valley! They had to keep the flies off, so they covered the meat. [laughing] And Walt Frey was one of them; I knew Walt.

The old Co-op store had the only scale in town. The reason the scales were so useful was because they had to weigh the gross and the net. In other words, they'd pull in with a horse and uncouple the horses and just leave the wagon sit on the scales and weigh the scale, so that would be the tare weight. Most of the wagons had it marked right on the side what they weighed, see. Whoever was at the scales generally knew, too. They'd get the gross and the tare and the net weight that way. And that was hay—it was grain, like barley; and of course, flour was put up in 24 1/2-pound sacks, 49-pound sacks, 89-pound sacks—not 100, not 50, not 25, see! [chuckles]

Was that a public scale?

No, it wasn't a public scale. I think you had to pay a quarter. They didn't pay any attention to nickels and dimes and pennies then. A quarter was about the smallest medium of change they used—2 bits. A bit is 12 1/2¢.

Something that's just come to my mind; the Indians, when they bought commodities and stuff like that, the only thing they know is "2-bitty," see? They'd have a pocketful of money, and as you had to go get each commodity, 2-bitty this, 2-bitty that; 2-bitty this, 2-bitty that; and that's the way they bought stuff. But then they knew how far

they could go with the money that they had. When they'd run out of money, then they were out of "2-bitty."

Does "2-bitty" mean 2 bits?

Yes, 2 bits.

So 2 bits worth of each thing that they bought?

Each commodity. And he'd pay for each commodity— just laid it on the table.

Was it the men who did the shopping?

Well, the women were more or less backwards, the squaws were, but the men would do the shopping primarily.

Would the women come into the store with the men?

They'd come in.

Would they tell the men what they wanted?

They'd tell the men what they wanted. She'd always be behind, and he'd always be in front, even if they walked up the street. There'd be a squaw behind and the chief up front! [laughter]

Were there any particular things that they...?

I remember Susie with the... Cut-Lip Susie used to walk up here with her husband. Susie Dick. They'd walk up the street here; you could see it right out the window— he'd be in the lead, and she'd be behind him.

She was pretty famous as a basket maker, wasn't she?

Yes. See, they had an Indian camp right down in the willows, down in back of the Ankers', down in that area. That's the road that goes to Buckeye. I think that Leonard Anker owns that ground now. He bought that field down there, I think, or a piece of that field.

That's interesting. I know Susie Dick did some work for the Dangbergs. Apparently she worked over on that Dangberg Home Ranch for a long time.

Yes, that Susie Dick worked there and so did Minnie Kaiser. [Kyser?]

When the Indians came in to shop at the Co-op, was there any particular item that they were especially fond of?

Yes, they had a heck of a time trying to buy liquor and things like this. But then they started working this thing and buying extracts...see, they'd get extracts to get high on.

Oh, vanilla extract and stuff like that?

Vanilla extracts and stuff like that. They're no better than the cooks; the cooks in all the darned restaurants were using that to get high on, too. So they cut them off—no extracts to Indians. Then they'd come in and they'd buy Sterno for heat. And they'd take that God darned stinking Sterno, and they'd press the alcohol out of it, and they'd get high on that stuff! [laughs] So they cut the Sterno off. That come in a little Sterno can; you've seen Sterno, haven't you? You just light a match to it, and it throws a flame just like alcohol. They'd sift that stuff through a silk handkerchief and squeeze the sap out of it. They got high on that.

What else were they fond of?

The squaws used to wear big bandanas over their head. They always kept them in the store, too. They're darn near big enough to be a shawl. When I was up at the Smith Valley Co-op, they carried yardage. They'd come in there, and you'd have a heck of a time trying to size them up. At that time it took 5 or 6 yards to make a squaw dress. The bigger the squaw, the more yardage! [laughing] So you'd get some of these bigger squaws, you'd need 7 or 8 yards to make a dress, and they're a great big, full...like being in a tent! [laughter] So that's one of the things that impressed me. Those silk scarves, they always got different patterns and things like this. They'd go for anything that was silk. I don't know why, but they took to silk.

Were there any particular foods that they were especially fond of?

Well, I think they went for fruit a little bit. But the question is they never made enough to buy fruits with the wage scale that they were working for. So their major food would be peas, maybe, and macaroni and things like this; potatoes or down in that line—rice and things like that—which'd be the more common food and the cheaper food to use.

You said they were on foot most of the time, is that correct?

Most of the time. Well, a lot of them'd run around in little buggies then. They had a buggy just enough for a man and a woman or something like this, and if they had any kids they'd ride in the back; there was probably a little space in back. Most of the time, just a one-horse shay type of a thing—one horse

and a shaft, you know. A few of them, very few of them, had 2 horses as a team.

Most of the Indians, if they worked, they generally lived on the ranches that they worked for. Like, the Macks used to have this ranch down here, the Springmeyer ranch here; they had a tepee and camp set up there—you know, their own camp. The working Indians... if they fed them on the ranch, they had to feed them separately from the white people. And sometimes they would do their own cooking for their own families.

The peculiar part of Indians in their camps, if they had a death in that particular camp, especially the Washo Indians, they moved camp. They'd move out completely if they had a death in a certain place. They think that certain area or place has a certain ill omen or something, so they get out of there and go find a spot someplace else.

Those of them who had to walk back to their camps obviously had to carry the groceries and stuff. How did they accomplish that?

Well, sometimes they'd put them in a carriage or if they come on horseback or something like that they'd have a knapsack or a barley sack. Most of the time barley sacks were where they packed it.

They weren't using those pack baskets any more by the time that you were working there, I take it?

No, I don't think there was any pack baskets around. But they would ask you for a barley sack, and they'd put it in the barley sack. Sometimes they'd bring their own sacks, like flour sacks, and they'd put small commodities in those—say, your 49- and 50-pound flour sacks. And there was a lot of sacks at that time that used to be used for shipping seed. And

they were good, tight woven. Chicken feed or feeds of different types were in bags [with prints on them] . They used to even make women's dresses out of that, and kids' dresses and things like this.

Flour sacks were used for a lot of underwear making.

Mrs. Yparraguirre: Yes, the miller'd give one to you for 2 bits, 50¢.

Now if you go to look for burlap, you don't even see it on the back of a carpet. If you want to buy a good carpet, you won't find burlap under it. It's got completely out of rhyme or reason, price-wise.

You went to the Minden Mercantile about what year?

Well, it had to be in the 1930s, I guess—in the early thirties.

Was the Depression already on? Was it really under way by the time you went to work at the Minden Mercantile, or was that before the Depression?

Yes, it was; it was tough picking along those times.

In 1921 we had a recession, too. I can remember that because I remember my dad squawking, hollering like hell because he couldn't get anything for the livestock—wool or anything else. My dad contracted his wool—I never will forget it—to the Kosland rug people. It was a very popular rug at one time. He sold to this company for 25 consecutive years; and when they bought his wool, they knew what type of wool he had. He'd generally sent the wool buyer a sample. It was a special wool buyer named George Callahan who used to buy

the wool for Kosland. He always sold to this Kosland outfit, and he always got a pretty good price.

What happened that particular time was Arendt Jensen had a son, Russel, who was in Reno; he got into the sheep business, too. So [Arendt Jensen], the banker here, and his son, Babe, both started buying wool. My dad told me to take the wool guy down to see them. So I took George Callahan down to see Arendt Jensen, Sr. And he had an offer of 60¢ for that guy; he offered him 60¢ a pound for his wool. But he says, “No soap. If you can come up to 64¢, we might negotiate it.”

We come back to the ranch, and George Callahan had a telegram sitting there at the ranch: “Withdraw all buying. Well, that wool in that time went down to 12¢, and it broke Arendt Jensen, who had the bank here in Gardnerville. And it broke it; it really took him. That’s what finished him commercially. He had a big mercantile store in town here, and he had the bank, too, in Gardnerville—the Carson Valley Bank.

Well, that’s interesting. So it’s the 1921 depression, then, that did him in?

Yes.

Well, what led you to get a job at the Minden Mercantile?

I don’t know. I left the Co-op and I withdrew all my stock and things like that.. I took a rest in between there. You know, you work for 6, 7, 8 years, you don’t get a vacation, you get a little bit stale on the job if you don’t get some change, time off.

The only recreation I had if I could find any time at all was to go out fishing or something like this, just to get a change. The funny thing about fishing—you go out and

you go fishing, you could build a great big mound of mountains [of troubles] here, and you go out there and you get it all off your mind and you concentrate on the fishing. You come back with a clean mind, and you feel relaxed then.

You decided after your vacation that you wanted to go back to work?

Yes. But then they asked me to come to work for them before I’d even taken a vacation. So when I got back from taking my vacation, I went to work down there.

Did you bring the Basque clientele with you?

Yes, they pretty well followed me around. And the main thing was that they were able to communicate with somebody. This was the whole thing in a nutshell. They could talk in their own tongue and kid and josh and things like that. Well, it’s like being home.

How did things differ at the Minden Mercantile from what they had been like in the Co-op?

There’s quite a little difference. They had a general store, but they weren’t as broad as the Co-op. You see, when I was there, they didn’t have farming machinery and equipment. They just had groceries and paints and hardware. They carried shoes and they carried clothing, but they didn’t have the heavy stuff like mowing machines and hay rakes and all the farm implements and things.

They had groceries, too, though?

They had groceries, yes.

What was your job there at Minden Mercantile?

I was clerking there, too, and I was also the produce buyer. A lot of the time the bosses would take off and say, "Frank, you take over." There were 3 of us working there. Then when the 2 bosses were there, there was 5 of us.

Were you the only Basque?

Yes.

I don't think I've run across any other Basques who were involved in the dry goods business. Is that an unusual profession for Basques in this country?

Yes and no. I knew a guy by the name of Mike [Claverie] in Fresno; he was born and raised in Europe, and he had a clothing store down there in Fresno. The Basques always settled right close to the railroad depots around the country, so they wouldn't have far to go to a hotel; and the hotels were there, too! [laughing]

There was another guy down in Stockton. He was a Basque boy, born and raised in Europe; he had a clothing store in Stockton. In Bakersfield there was another one; he was of Basque origin. And there's a guy by the name of Aldax in Reno down on Center Street. That's where the Golden Hotel used to be there. He had a clothing store there, too; he was born and raised in Europe. I don't think it's too uncommon, actually. If you go up and down the San Joaquin Valley, I think there's quite a few different Basques that....

I see. Tell me some more things about the Minden Mercantile. You said that it was different. It's obviously smaller in scale and doesn't have as many articles for sale there. What about the clientele, was it any different?

Well, the strange thing...in those years, I know all the working people used to go to

Gardnerville, and there weren't too many working people actually would come down to Minden.

Now, what do you mean by working people?

People who worked on ranches and things like this. They used to collect up here in Gardnerville more so than they would in Minden.

So who was coming to Minden, then?

When I was working in the stores, the Basque people and working people and all of these people were coming in here. A lot of people worked in Buckeye...why, I knew most of them. And we used to go out sometimes at nighttime just to give the boys some entertainment and stuff out in Buckeye; we'd go out there and play poker with them! [laughter] Kept friendly ties in. Like in having men's clothes and stuff like that, why, we made contacts that way from one to the other, see. And we'd go out there and play poker even with the foreman; his brother, Lou Falletti and Andy Falletti'd get in the game! [laughs]

But you said that most of the working people were shopping here in Gardnerville?

Would come to Gardnerville, yes. But there was a dry goods store in Minden, and they were competitive with the Co-op stores, too, in work clothes. Chris Christoffersen was his name. When I was going to start business here after I left the Minden Merc, I went over to talk to him. He was getting pretty well along in years, and he was thinking about selling. So I said to him, "Chris, I'd like to take over your business if you're getting ready to retire."

He says, "Well, Frank, sometimes I feel like it; sometimes I don't." I kept getting after

him maybe a year and a half, 2 years, and he never could make up his mind, so I figured, well, no use waiting for you.

So you decided to go out on your own then?

Yes, after I left the Minden Merc, I couldn't see too much future for the Minden Merc down there either. What happened was this: Rood and Bill Heidtman got tangled up in the business end of it. Rood left, and Heidtman took it over. And then Heidtman wanted to get out, and Heidtman said, "Well, Frank, you ought to take over this establishment here."

That was about what year?

That must have been 1936, '37 somewhere in there.

Finally, I said to myself, "I'm going to go try and see if I can talk to old Chris to see if he wants to get out of the store business again." So I made one last effort.

Then I was looking around and found the bank folded up, and I was figuring on getting the bank [building] up here in Gardnerville. At that time it belonged to Arendt Jensen, and the board of directors had taken it over and they were liquidating—they were selling all the assets that they had and putting them in the bank up here. Of course, that's where Sharkey's Bar is right now, the one on Main Street. That used to be a drugstore there, and there used to be another drugstore down below there where that whole Sharkey complex has taken that over.

Old Bill Graunke was heading up the board of directors at the bank there at that time. Dill Dressler, Fred's father, owned that corner where Sharkey is now.

And you say that was drugstores at that time?

Yes, and the first door going south was where I had my store when I originally started. There used to be a harness shop in there. It belonged to "Louie" Arouze. On the corner was the Corner Saloon; there's a bar right next door to it.

They were liquidating the bank, and I couldn't negotiate to get the bank. So then I went hunting around looking for a location, and I come over to here to where Bill Dressler owned this building. That was a harness shop in that particular place at that time or prior.

Was Louie Arouze, the owner, a Basque?

No. He was part French.

And did his business fail? Is that why the thing became available?

Yes. He moved across street next to the East Fork Hotel.

Of course, horses are on the way out; it's the end of the Depression, too.

He pulled out, and it stunk like a goddamn [laughs] harness shop, too! That old oil and stuff is all over the floor and out in back in sheds and stuff.

So you moved into the harness shop, then, in the late 1930s?

Yes.

And you started your own dry goods store there?

Yes. And how we got in the "dry goods" was the bar was next door, and that was "wet goods." [laughing]

When I started, there was hotels and places around used sheets and bedding. And

we used to sell a lot of bedding and canvas and bedrolls and cots and all this kind of stuff for shepherders.

Did you have a lot of Basque customers?

Oh, yes. Every Basque come to town, practically, come there; and then a lot of outsiders that come from any area in the country'd drop in there and buy stuff. Like, people come up from the central valleys, come up from Mono Lake when they brought the sheep up in the summertime to Bridgeport and up to Bodie hills, run the sheep through there. And they'd either come in themselves or buy stuff for the herders and things like this all the way to Bishop; some down to Inyokern.

Were you providing any other services for the Basques, other than just selling them dry goods?

I'd help them out with a lot of things. I'd help them out, and I'd never charge them a dime. In other words, if they want to go to a dentist or make arrangements for the doctor or dentist, or maybe do some little chores for them or something like this.... The attitude I took was this: that somebody helped my dad along the way for a good many years. And in return for that I felt obligated that I should help these people, the same way my dad was helped by the American people when he first came here.

Were you instrumental in bringing any other Basques over to this country?

No. My dad was, though. But I knew a John Bidegarry in Fresno; we went to school together in San Francisco. He was sent by the Wool Growers Association, state of California, to bring these Basques in and make the contracts and everything else, going to the

different areas in the Basque country. John got sick once, and he told the head of the Wool Growers—he knew my father real well, too—but he said, “I can't go,” and he suggested to him that he come up to Nevada and get a hold of me to go in his place, see. About that time our family was coming along, so I couldn't find time to go hunting for shepherders in Europe! [laughing] I had a lot of unfinished business.

When did you finally move out of that harness shop and into the building that you occupy now?

The building I occupy now belonged to the Ole Haugner family. I don't know whether he was a Swede or a Dane...one of the 2.

I had a 5-year lease on the harness shop place there. I think it was Collard's...Collard owned the building. He had 2 sons, and he took over the bar on the corner there from George Norris. He got the idea he wanted to put a casino in there. And then he sent me a registered piece of mail about getting me to vacate. And I didn't feel like I should have to vacate, because I still had an expiration time coming up on my lease.. unless they wanted to buy the rent to terminate the lease. About 2 or 3 years is what I had coming.

But I just happened to walk down, and I bumped into one of the Haugner boys. I heard some rumors that they wanted to sell. So I went and talked to him, and he said, “Well, we're thinking about it.” He had a brother by the name of Robert, who was in San Francisco, and he got a hold of him on the phone—and he had a sister in Los Angeles— so they decided they wanted to sell. We negotiated, and I moved from that place down to where I am now.

That was about what year, do you think?

Actually, I've been in business 46 years; either 42 or 43 years in this present place I'm in now.

What do you know about the building?

The back part of the building was the old Gardner home set down years ago; that used to be called School Street. Gilman Street, that goes west over to route 156 to Centerville, used to be School Street, then. But it's changed to Gilman because they had 2 School Streets—one just half a block up here, on account of the high school. There used to be a grammar school down on the end by the river down there. So they tore that all out of there. That's why the name School Street. Then the high school came later.

There was conflicting... they had 2 School Streets in town. I happened to be sitting on the town board there; I put in 30-some-odd years in the town board and fire department as secretary treasurer. The town board and volunteer fire department was all one entity at that time.

The back part of the Perry's Dry Goods building was the Gardner home?

Yes, it's the old Gardner home. I think some of this real estate was part of the Gardner holding, the Gardner ranch; that's the Hussman part over here. But later on the subdivisions come in. Dr. Hawkins had this subdivision right in back here; that was one of his projects.

When was the Gardner home built—that portion of the building you're in?

I haven't the vaguest idea. Gardnerville last year, or a year and a half ago, was 100 years old, so that building has got to go back more than 100 years. A wild guess—maybe 104 or 105 years. That home set down there in the Gardner ranch; then Haugner bought the Gardner home and moved it down here to the present location.

There was a fellow by the name of Tom Fowler from Genoa—he's got all this data and dates and everything else up on the rafters; I don't try to memorize it!—but anyway he put this 2-story building [part of Yparraguirre's Perry's Dry Goods] in because he had 5 boys and 1 girl. The front part he used for a shoe store, and the back part was living quarters.

When did Fowler build that 2-story structure that's part of your store floor?

It's written right on the rafters up on the attic. I don't try to memorize....

I knew Tom Fowler. He was a builder, and also he was quite good at striping vehicles and wagon stuff like this. He used to put all fancy striping on the wheels and on the sides, the same thing like they used to do with the original cars that came out. Somebody wanted a custom job, why, they done this filigree type of painting on cars and all. Well, like Conestoga wagons and buggies and all this type of stuff used to be worked over by artisans. He was one of those types, as well as a builder.

You were going to tell me a little bit more about your store building.

Well, when I moved down, this thing here was sitting on pine stumps like this here....

We're talking about the back part of the building. The old Gardner house was sitting up on posts, then?

Yes, sitting up on posts.

About how tall were the posts?

Well, they were about 8 or 10 inches high, put on the bare ground. They were worm eaten and everything else. You could get over in one

corner of the building, the building would rock this way [chuckling] and it'd rock that way! In the front part here they put great big stones underneath for foundations, and then they put wood blocks. Termites and stuff had eaten all that crud out, so the building is so tall, when you got the west winds blowing, why, it would rock like this here! I decided to jack this thing up and put a foundation under it. So I went down 36 inches to get down below the frost line and put the cement foundation on this. Well, while I was doing that, I raised the back portion and put foundation underneath that.

Then, this had 12-inch boards that went up just like that wash house out there in back. It had 3 1/2-inch lapping where the 12-inch boards butted together. Rough boards... full inch, inch and an eighth thickness. This is on the old Gardner house.

So Fritz Neddenriep—he's still alive—he and I went to work, decided to stud the thing out. We jacked the damn building up. Well, before I put down this building here, I put new plates on it and everything else, set down the foundations. Then we decided that we'd have to take those walls out and put studding walls in there. So we studded the north side, the back side, and then the south side. And it's all insulated. It has good insulation; it's stuccoed inside and stuccoed out. It's a good building. The only thing we saved was the ceiling and the floor. But then we covered the floors... Then we took this old timber, this 1-by-12s, and we put it in at 45° for sheeting; cut it up and put it in as sheeting. So it's good, sturdy, well built.

The front part is a balloon-type structure. It's as it was, unchanged. It was a balloon structure.... And that's the whole history of the thing.

I'm curious as to how your business may have changed over the years since the Second World War, after you moved into the building that you

now occupy. I gather that the kinds of things that you sold have changed, and I suspect that your clientele may have changed, as well.

Yes, there's a lot of things have changed. One time when we started in, I had hats all the way around the store—pretty near as bad as I've got them right now, but not quite that bad. People wore dress hats, and everybody'd buy hats. So it got to the point...there's a cycle and time when they got into that facet of it; then they got away from hats completely, so we had to bring down the hats. Well, there was a time and age when we got into ties and dress clothing and stuff like this, and gradually got away from a lot of this shepherd stuff, as the shepherd and the sheep business were on the way out. The economics of these things here, we had to change with it. There was a time when we carried cobbler shoes, a hobble nail and all this stuff. We had to get away from that, change....

About when did you have to get away from that, about what period?

Oh, it's when the sheep business started downhill. Then we get to the cow man, as a lot of people were converted from sheep to cattle men. So we got into the cowboy end of it, like jeans and shirts and this type of stuff, and got away from handling blankets and quilts and pillows and pillowcases and cotton blankets, sheep blankets, and all this type of thing. So there's been a complete change in the commodities that we've handled.

And then of recent vintage was the idea of the...what do you call those western cowboy deals they're having? Disco deals; drugstore cowboys. Everybody had to have a pair of boots, a pair of jeans, or a fancy shirt or a western shirt or something like this. And gradually economics [drove] us out of that. I

was glad to see it happen, because in that era so many things changed in the western style that it lost its identity completely.

How long did the Basques remain an important part of your clientele?

Right up to this day I still have Basque people come. They'll come up from down below in the San Joaquin, Sacramento Valley, Fresno, Bakersfield, almost anywhere. They'll come in and chew the fat. And there's a few sheep men still come up to Bridgeport, Mono Lake, and bring sheep in the summertime. Like Joe Mendiburu, he's one of the old families from Bakersfield, too. Louie Pruchet, he's running the sheep for Harold Mendiburu. And Joe Mendiburu has a big ranch down close to Mojave.

I would imagine, though, that the whole Basque network of customers and associates has probably declined somewhat as the...

Well, my father had so many connections and knew so many people, and this all reverted back to me, too. The fact that he was an old resident in the state of Nevada, as well as an uncle that had ties all over the state of California, in the older generations.... But as older generations passed and newer generations come, then things change.

I put in a few nights shepherding, too. You know, when you have shepherders and all of a sudden some guy decides to quit or he's got a toothache or some damn thing—he has to go to town—why, somebody's got to take his place. And so I've had my indoctrination there, too—not for long, but until they got a new man to replace him or something like this. It didn't hurt me. I don't know, I sometimes think the hard way is.. .people learn something from it.

I think that there are so many people in this cycle of age that lean on somebody else, or they expect the government to take care of them or feed them or support them. You take like in ranching, there was a day and age that people would work with their own resources, not somebody else's handouts, is what I'm trying to say.

I remember once when I was quite a youngster, we went to Dick Kirman's bank in Reno, and we were downstairs talking with the head cashier, who was Gordon Harris, Sr. at the time—that's the Stock Growers; later on it was the First National Bank. Harris says to my dad, "Dick wants to see you upstairs." Dick Kirman, see.

We went up there. I remember sitting down, and he says, "Have a chair, kid; sit down over there. Your dad and I got a lot to talk about."

He had his desk cluttered with papers, and he said, "Look at all this God darned paper!" only he didn't use that kind of language. He says, "There was a time and age you and I didn't look at this paper; we shook hands and we made a deal." He says, "Frank, do you remember the day that you borrowed \$75,000 to buy some sheep.. .and there was just a shake of hands? And you honestly paid it all back; nobody lost anything, and we're still good friends." So that's living see?

He said, "Look at this." [Indicating the mass of paper on his desk.] I'll never forget it. I must have been about maybe 10 or 12 years old.

NOTES

1. After reviewing the transcript of this interview, Mr. Yparraguirre added the information that his grandfather was a stonemason as well as a small farmer. The grandfather had also made 2 trips to South America, but the destination and purpose of these trips was not noted.

2. According to a biographical sketch provided by the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada-Reno, Pedro Altube was born in 1827 in the Spanish Basque province of Guipuzcoa and came to California in 1850 to participate in the Gold Rush. Subsequently in 1860, Pedro and his brother, Bernardo, developed a cattle business in Santa Barbara County, California; and in 1870 they drove their cattle to Independence Valley in Elko County, Nevada, where they established the Spanish Ranch. Here the Altube brothers engaged in the sheep business as well as the cattle business.

Pedro Altube acquired the nickname “Palo Alto” or “Tall Pole” on account of his height—6’8”.

3. The Nevada-California boundary dispute resulted from vague wording in the 1861 Act of Congress which created the Territory of Nevada (Thompson and West, 1881, p. 100). Both Nevada and California claimed Aurora as county seat in 2 newly created counties: Esmeralda in Nevada and Mono in California.

In 1862, a federal survey by John F. Kidder and Butler Ives determined that Aurora was in Nevada; California declined to recognize this boundary line. In 1863, Kidder and Ives ran another boundary, again determining that Aurora was within the Territory of Nevada. California recognized the boundary in 1864. After the survey of 1863, the Mono County seat was moved from Aurora to Bodie and subsequently to Bridgeport.

The Kidder-Ives boundary of 1863 was considered correct until 1873, when the U.S. Surveyor-General asked Congress to appoint another boundary survey. Conducted by Alex von Schmidt, this 1873 survey gave some one million additional acres to Nevada. California’s protests on the von Schmidt

survey resulted in a 6-year U.S. Coast and Geodetic survey which established the present boundary between Nevada and California, and placing Aurora in Nevada.

The county seat of Esmeralda was transferred from Aurora to Hawthorne in 1883 and then to Goldfield in 1907. Mineral County was created in 1911 out of northern Esmeralda; Hawthorne became the county seat. Nye County, created from Esmeralda in 1864, subsequently underwent several boundary and county seat changes with Tonopah becoming Nye County's permanent seat in 1905.

4. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 restricted grazing on public lands. What had once been unappropriated public domain, open to all users, was: formed into grazing districts, added to national forests, or sold, leased or exchanged with private or state owned lands.

This impeded the sheep's grazing, for lands approved for grazing districts were interspersed with other lands such as private lands and national forests. So, the sheep had to be driven from one grazing district to another as they could not graze on lands not appropriated for that purpose.

CORRECTIONS

Frank Yparraguirre Interview
with R. T. King, May 1984

There are several incorrect comments, observations and dates in Frank's interview. He also gives the impression that his father, Francisco, owned the Sweetwater ranch. He did not. He was a partner with his oldest brother and others. Following are additions, corrections and back up information.

1. Frank says his father, grandfather and uncle had the same name. Frank's father was Francisco, born in 1864. His grandfather, born May 1816 and uncle (Francisco's oldest brother) born May 1851 both had the same name - Juan Francisco. Verification - church birth record and family records. Frank's paternal grandmother's maiden name was Maria Cruz Irigoyen-Iturria.

2. Grandfather's name and background. Juan Francisco Yparraguirre, born in Etxalar, in 1816. Birth records of predecessors being born in Etxalar go back to 1715.

3. Frank says that the name of the hotel his uncle ran in San Francisco was the "Yparraguirre". The name was "Hotel Vasco" Reference: "Home Away from Home" J. Echeverria pages 89 - 93. Frank placed the hotel at the corner of Powell and Broadway, it was in the middle of the block at 1347 Powell.

4. Brothers and Sisters of Francisco. There were four brothers and three sisters, all four brothers emigrated as did two sisters. The family home, Zamateluá, became the home of the remaining sister and her husband. The children and birthdates are Manuela, 18??; Juan Francisco, 1851; Leon, 1854; Pablo, 18??, Maria Augustina, 1857; Maria Cruz 1862; Francisco 1864. Reference: Family Tree

5. Juan Francisco Coming to the US. Juan Francisco came to California around South America on a sailing vessel at the age of 19 or 20. His job was to take care of some breeding bulls being shipped to a large California livestock firm. This was probably in 1870 or 71. He herded sheep for several years from

San Diego north to the central valley and then became involved with a Basque partner in a San Francisco hotel. This was prior to 1877. His brother, Francisco came to the hotel from Etxalar in that year. Reference: Verbal from his daughters (my mother and aunts.)

Juan Francisco married in 1886 and continued the operation of the "Hotel Vasco" as a single proprietor until the earthquake and fire in San Francisco in 1906. His German insurance company defaulted on his fire insurance policy and he did not rebuild again.

Hotel Vasco was on Powell just south of Broadway. Juan Miguel Aguirre's hotel, the first Basque hotel in San Francisco was built in 1866. He had his 22 year old nephew from Etxalar come to the San Francisco to help him build it. The hotel was on Powell Street just north of Broadway. Reference: "Home A way from Home"

The nephew's name was Juan Miguel Arburua. He was from Etxalar, the same small village that was home to the Yparraguirres. It is obvious that JF and Miguel knew each other and there is also an indication of an Aburua in the Yparraguirre family tree a few generations earlier. Earlier than that there is an Aguirre.

The name of the family home is Zamatelua. The earliest written civil records for Etxalar are from 1625. There were 155 structures in 1625 and Zamatelua was included in that number.

6. Frank's Recalling the Hotel. Frank was born in November 1903. the San Francisco earthquake and fire took place in April 1906. It is doubtful that he could recount the details about a hotel that was totally destroyed 2.5 years after he was born.

7. Who paid for Francisco to come over? Juan Francisco assisted all of his siblings. He had a purse that was sent to Etxalar to cover

the travel. When the travel expenses were paid back the money went into a purse to cover the next traveler. Reference: Family talk plus the purse

8. When Francisco bought the Sweetwater Ranch. The ranch was not-purchased in 1880 or 1881. The records show that on August 19, 1901 the property was transferred to John Arambide of San Francisco, and Francisco M, Pablo, and Juan F. Yparraguirre for the sum \$8000 gold coins, 3114.44 acres in Mono county California plus three lots totaling 127.44 acres plus water rights. Reference Book 1 page 83, Vol.4-300 Esmeralda County Transcript. This was the Williams Ranch and the transferring agent was George Atchison who undoubtedly was acting for Henry Williams.

9. Leon and Pablo were partners. Leon was never a partner. He was helping his brother in San Francisco in 1900 and operating a Basque hotel in Tres Pinos, CA. in 1903. Reference "Home Away from Home"

Francisco and Pablo were starting their own spread in Tuscarora in 1886. There are two names on the property transfer that Frank did not bringing up, Juan Francisco and John Arambide both of whom probably put up the \$8000 in gold coin. Francisco and Pablo probably contributed their sheep and a modest amount of money.

Juan Francisco, as a hotel man and sheep man could undoubtedly see the potential of operating a combination hotel and sheep ranch located on the main road to Bodie, Aurora and Masonic.

10. Juan Francisco was wiped out by the 1906 SF quake. He was, at minimum, a 25% owner of the ranch and possibly the 50% owner by this time. He moved his family to

Reno where his daughters went to school. He devoted his time to the ranch. He moved his family back to San Francisco after 2 or 3 years but spent time at the ranch each year.

11. Juan Francisco dies in San Francisco, May 10, 1923

12. On July 31, 1924 Maria Yparraguirre (Juan Francisco's widow) buys out Francisco and Josephine Yparraguirre's 50% interest in the Sweetwater Ranch, Mineral County; Elbow Ranch, Mineral County; Revenelle Ranch, Mineral County; and Boerlin Ranch, Mineral County. Reference: Page 152 Mineral County Transcription, Volume 6-325 July 31, 1924 . Francisco probably was willed Pablo's interest (Pablo had died earlier) and Maria Yparraguirre is obviously a 50% owner.

Corrections provided by Lloyd Root

See following pages for reference materials used in making these corrections.

1979 ETXALAR CHURCH RECORD

Juan Francisco de Iparraguirre, nació en Echalar el día
 26 de mayo de 1851, hijo de Juan Francisco de Iparraguirre y
 Maria de la Cruz de Irigoyen, naturales, vecinos y dueños de la
 casa Zamatelua de Echalar.

JUAN FRANCISCO

(MY FATHER)

ELENA

ELVIRA (ME)

CATHERINE

EMILY

PABLO

NO CHILDREN

LEON

6 CHILDREN

FRANK

THIS IS THE ONE
 IN RENO. HE HAD
 5 CHILDREN

152

Notarial Seal.

G. H. Moore, Notary Public.

16034- Filed for record at request of Geo. S. Green, June 13, 1924, at 9 A.M.

Malvina Nicolas, Recorder.

Vol. 6--325.

DEED

ORIGINAL

\$16.00 U.S. Int. Rev. Stamps
affixed to deed and duly cancelled.

This Indenture made this 31st day of July 1924 by and between Frank Yparraguirre and Josephine Yparraguirre, his wife, both of Sweetwater, County of Mineral, State of Nevada, the parties of the first part and Maria Yparraguirre, a widow of the City and County of San Francisco, State of California, the party of the second part, Witnesseth:

That for and in consideration of the sum of ten dollars (\$10.00) lawful money of the United States in hand paid to the parties of the first part by the party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the parties of the first part have granted, bargained and sold and by these presents do grant, bargain and sell unto the said party of the second part, her heirs and assigns forever, all of their undivided one-half interest in and to the following real property, lying and being in the County of Mineral, State of Nevada, more particularly described as follows, to-wit:

WILLIAMS OR YPARRAGUIRRE RANCH:

E. half of section 7; NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7; E half of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7; S half of Section 8; All of section 9; SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10; W half of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 15; N half of Section 16; N half of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 16; SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 16; All of section 17; N half of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18; SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18; Lots 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 of section 18, township 7 north, Range 25 east, M.D.B. & M. situated in the County of Mineral, State of Nevada; together with all water, water rights, ditches and ditch rights appendant or appurtenant to said lands and premises and particularly the water rights adjudged and decreed as appurtenant to said lands by a certain final decree of the District Court of the United States for the District of Nevada, made and entered in said Court on the 22nd day of March, 1919, in a certain action wherein PACIFIC LIVESTOCK COMPANY, a corporation (substituted for Miller & Lux, a corporation) was complainant, and ANTELOPE VALLEY LAND & CATTLE COMPANY, a corporation (substituted for Thomas B. Rickey) et al. were defendants.

ELBOW RANCH:

SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 26; NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 35; SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 35; N. half of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 36; SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 36, in township 7 North, Range 28 East, M.D.B. & M., situate in Mineral County, Nevada, together with the water, water rights, ditches and ditch rights appendant or appurtenant thereto, and therewith usually had and enjoyed.

REVENELLE RANCH:

E half of the W half of Section 30, Township 7 north, range 27 East, M.D.B. & M., situate in Mineral County, Nevada, together with all water, water rights, ditches and ditch rights appendant or appurtenant thereto and particularly the water rights adjudged and decreed as appurtenant to said lands by a certain final decree of the District Court of the United States for the District of Nevada, made and entered in said Court on the 22nd day of March, 1919, in a certain action wherein Pacific

annexed instrument, and who duly acknowledged to me that he executed the same freely and voluntarily, and for the uses and purposes therein mentioned. In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal, in said County, the day and year in this Certificate above written.

J. G. Atchison County Recorder.

Recorded at the request of George Atchison May 2nd 1901 at 10 oclock A. M.

J. G. Atchison Co. Recorder.

VCL. 4-300

7.25
Int. Rev.
Stamp
cancelled

THIS INDENTURE, Made the Nineteenth day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and one. Between George Atchison of Esmeralda County, State of Nevada, the party of the first part, and John B. Arambido of the City and County of San Francisco, State of California, and Francisco M. Yparraguirre, Pablo Yparraguirre and Juan F. Yparraguirre, of the County of Esmeralda State of Nevada, the parties of the second part, Witnesseth: That the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of Eight Thousand Dollars, Gold Coin of the United States, of America, to him in hand paid by the said parties of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, does by these presents, grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the said parties of the second part, and to their heirs and assigns forever, all those certain pieces of land situate lying and being in the County of Esmeralda, State of Nevada, and more particularly described as follows to wit:

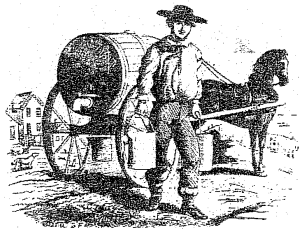
Part of Section	Section	Township North	Range East.
North half	7	7	25
East half of South West Quarter	7	7	25
South East Quarter	7	7	25
South Half	8	7	25
All of	9	7	25
Southwest quarter of Southwest quarter	10	7	25
West half of North west quarter	15	7	25
North half	16	7	25
South West quarter	16	7	25
North Half of Southeast quarter	16	7	25
All of	17	7	25
Lots Numbered 9,10,11,12,13,14 & 15.	18	7	25
North half of Northeast quarter	18	7	25
Southeast quarter of Northeast quarter	18	7	25

Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, containing Three Thousand one hundred and fourteen and 44/100 acres more or less, also the following described land situated lying and being in the County of Mono, State of California, and more particularly described as follows to wit:

Part of Section	Section	Township North	Range East.
Lots Numbered one and two	19	7	25
Lot Numbered Four	18	7	25
Southeast quarter of southwest quarter.	18	7	25

Mount Diablo Base and meridian containing one hundred and twenty seven and 44/100 acres more or less. And also all water water rights, and water ditches thereunto belonging, or in anywise appertaining to said land, Together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances, thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining, and the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders, issues, and profits thereof. To Have and to Hold all and singular the said premises, together with the appurtenances, unto the said parties of the second part, and their heirs and assigns, forever. In Witness Whereof, the said party

THE PIONEER 4/1977



Juan Miguel Aguirre

This is the second historical portrait prepared by Hobart M. Lovett for publication in "The Pioneer." In his first article, published in the July 1976 edition, he brought insight into the beleaguered life of Eliza W. Farnham. The following story recalls activities of an early member of The Society and touches on the timely subject of water.

By Hobart M. Lovett

Horace Greeley had not yet written his famous admonition to the youth of our land, but Juan Miguel Aguirre must have had foreknowledge, because in 1845 he left his native Navarra in Spain and sailed west (and south) to Montevideo. There he engaged successfully in the hide and tallow business—and married Maria Martina Labayon. When he heard about the California Gold Rush, he lost no time. He and his wife took passage on *Le Bon Pere* and arrived in San Francisco September 27, 1849.

Contrary to popular belief, all Basques are not sheepherders, nor have they ever exclusively so been. Nor was Aguirre to be tempted to search the Sierra creeks for the elusive metal. Fortunately for him, his business sense told him quickly that the immediate need in the new city was not gold, but water. So, he bought a burro, two barrels, and a bucket and unwittingly became the forerunner of the Hetch Hetchy project. It is reported that his first source of supply was Mountain Lake in the Presidio. Later, he used a spring on Washington Street near Montgomery, downhill a few blocks from the present Spring Valley School. Aguirre made a success of the venture, peddling water at a dollar a bucket in the area we now know as North Beach. It is said that he made thirty dollars a day. When we consider that miners in the Mother Lode were lucky to make an ounce, or sixteen dollars, by back-breaking labor (and that it cost an ounce a day to live), we realize that this Basco had made the right decision. By the end of a year others were competing and Aguirre sold his business to an Irishman who, according to a story in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, "... delivered water from a 2-wheel cart drawn by a bay horse. In the rear hung 2 buckets on hooks with a large brass faucet in the center." This may well have been the inspiration for the lettersheet reproduced on the cover.

The *Bulletin* goes on to say that later Aguirre built the first handball court on his own property at No. 2 Dupont Place with lumber imported from Spain where a historic game was played between a Spanish Basque and an Irishman for a stake of \$1,000, which was won by the Basque. Dupont Place was later renamed Ashburton Avenue and Dupont Street became Grant Avenue. Aguirre's *cancha*, or handball court, was in the center of the block where even-

tually stood the White House, and was reached by three entrances: Gardner Alley, site of Mozart Hall, Dupont Place, and the main entrance diagonally through the Center Market at the corner of Sutter and Dupont Streets.

Aguirre promoted a movement to erect a Spanish church in San Francisco with a liberal donation. The Rev. Father Andres Garriga, Pastor at the time, thus encouraged, pushed the project to completion, and the beautiful Church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe on Broadway near Mason was erected. With all the buildings in the neighborhood, it went up in smoke in 1906. But, it was rebuilt, serves the local Spanish Basques, and is a credit to the man who initiated its construction.

The records of The Society of California Pioneers show that Aguirre was born in Navarra February 20, 1835, and on August 3, 1885, was admitted to The Society, still housed in the first Pioneer Hall on Montgomery at Gold Street.

His life was full of adventure on three continents. He was honored and esteemed by all who knew him, especially the Spanish and Basque people, who called him El Patriarca, and was for years entrusted by them with their affairs and made their financial agent.

Aguirre died August 30, 1897, and it was announced that The "Society of Pioneers would take charge of his funeral from his residence at 1312 Powell Street, thence to the church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe." He left his wife, three sons, and a daughter, Catalina A. Trescony of Monterey County.

Henry Yrigoyen, himself a descendant of Spanish Basques, and for many years owner of Hotel de España at 781 Broadway, told the writer in 1955 that he had known Aguirre's son, Ramon, who became official court interpreter in San Francisco for several years after the Fire. Also, his brother, Martin, who was in the candy business in North Beach, and Pedro, who succeeded Ramon as court interpreter.

Aguirre is not an uncommon name in the Basque country, but it may be of interest to observe that while there was only one Aguirre in San Francisco in 1849, the current telephone directory lists no less than forty.

(This family tree was given to me by Carolyn Sansinena of Madera, CA. Her father-in-law worked at the Sweetwater ranch at one time, there are some names missing under our Great Grandfather I believe. Any info to share I will pass on to her) m. Gloistein 2003

Descendants of Juan Yparraguirre

Generation No. 1

1. JUAN¹ YPARRAGUIRRE He married MARIA BAZTERRECHE.

Child of JUAN YPARRAGUIRRE and MARIA BAZTERRECHE is:

2. i. PEDRO² YPARRAGUIRRE-BAZTERRECHE.

Generation No. 2

2. PEDRO² YPARRAGUIRRE-BAZTERRECHE (*JUAN¹ YPARRAGUIRRE*) He married AGUSTINA MICHELENA-AGUIRRE, daughter of MIGUEL MICHELENA and MARIA AGUIRRE.

Child of PEDRO YPARRAGUIRRE-BAZTERRECHE and AGUSTINA MICHELENA-AGUIRRE is:

3. i. JUAN MARTIN³ YPARRAGUIRRE-MICHELENA, b. March 02, 1715, Echalar, Spain.

Generation No. 3

3. JUAN MARTIN³ YPARRAGUIRRE-MICHELENA (*PEDRO² YPARRAGUIRRE-BAZTERRECHE, JUAN¹ YPARRAGUIRRE*) was born March 02, 1715 in Echalar, Spain. He married (1) MARIA JOSEPHA MARTICORENA-CHAPARE, daughter of MARTIN MARTICORENA and FRANCISCA CHAPARE. He married (2) MARIA JOSEPHA MARTICORENA-CHAPARE, daughter of MARTIN MARTICORENA and FRANCISCA CHAPARE.

Child of JUAN YPARRAGUIRRE-MICHELENA and MARIA MARTICORENA-CHAPARE is:

4. i. CATHALINA JOSEPHA⁴ YPARRAGUIRRE-MARTICORENA, b. May 21, 1741, Echalar, Spain.

Child of JUAN YPARRAGUIRRE-MICHELENA and MARIA MARTICORENA-CHAPARE is:

5. ii. JUAN MARTIN⁴ YPARRAGUIRRE-MARTICORENA.

Generation No. 4

4. CATHALINA JOSEPHA⁴ YPARRAGUIRRE-MARTICORENA (*JUAN MARTIN³ YPARRAGUIRRE-MICHELENA, PEDRO² YPARRAGUIRRE-BAZTERRECHE, JUAN¹ YPARRAGUIRRE*) was born May 21, 1741 in Echalar, Spain. She married LORENZO GOYENECHÉ-MARISQUIRENA, son of JACINTO GOYENECHÉ-ANACHURRI and MARIA MARISQUIRENA-YRIBARREN. He was born April 23, 1737 in Echalar, Spain.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Basque restaurant in the Rabeck Hotel, Gardnerville, 1927.

Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library
Beatrice Jones collection.



The Farmers Co-op in Minden, ca. 1910.

Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library
Achard-McDonald collection.

APPENDIX: RAYMOND BORDA DISCUSSES FRENCH HOTEL, JUNE 21, 1984

R.T. King: Today I'm interested primarily in talking with you about the place that the French Hotel occupied in the society of Gardnerville early in this century and the place that it occupied in Washo society. I understand that it was not only a Basque hotel but that there were also a lot of Washo families that used to camp behind your hotel, and even come here for what might be termed almost social occasions. Can you remember any of this from your own youth, or have your parents ever discussed it with you?

Raymond B. Borda: I remember they [Washo Indians] used to have stick games out in back, and they used to help my mother in the kitchen; and there used to be a few squabbles.

What kind of squabbles?

B: You know how kids are—they always fight each other, like rock fights, fist fights and whatever. But they weren't allowed to go to school at our school here. They always went to Stewart, and that's the way it was.

But they would show up here every now and then?

B: They'd always come with the families when they had the stick games. There used to be a handball court out here, and in back of that, that's where they had their stick game.

How far back was the handball court?

B: Right next to the county jail. That [a big green structure approximately 40 yards behind the French Hotel] used to be a county jail back there.

You say the handball court was next to it?

B: It would be on the right side of this parking lot and would go to the end of the lot there, where the pavement is. Then it would come this way about 30 feet. How wide is a handball court? Thirty feet?

I don't know.

Gene Hattori: Was it a regular handball court or a full court?

B: No, this is the one that they had in the old country. This is with the high walls with the line up in front there, and you had to hit it over the line. They were long, pretty long.

It was still there in your youth?

B: Oh, yes. I took that handball court down after the Second World War because of age, and people climbing all over it. [I was] afraid somebody might get hurt. They used to play *pala*, they used to call it, with a hardwood back, and hit the handball [with it] instead of by your hand.

I'm interested in the construction of the handball court. What was it made of?

B: The construction of the handball court was concrete in front, I'd say about a foot wide. The floor was concrete with wings on it; maybe a 45 degree angle would come down, and then there would be planks on the side. They'd have standing room on the side that they could watch the games, and bleachers on the end.

They'd challenge like Cedarville, California, San Francisco. Some games went for \$1,000, which was pretty good at that time. They had some great games, and then they'd have a big dinner afterwards. That's all gone when they [the previous generations of Basques] started dying off.

H: Was this all associated with the hotel, or was it a larger group that...?

B: No, my dad would do this. He'd have balls, sneakers, and everything like that. I had cousins that would play, and you have a family in Reno—Cordovas—used to play. I

don't know if there's any Cordovas in Reno any more.

So your father would furnish the equipment? People wouldn't have to bring their own?

B: That's right. Well, most of them were shepherders or worked with sheep. They came from the old country and could play ball, but they had no other jobs except herding sheep.

H: Was there a lot of betting on the side on these games, in addition to the prize money?

B: Quite a bit. Yes, they would bet. Like I say, the exchange would be about \$1,000, and we're talking about 1934-35. That was quite a bit of money.

Do you know when the fronton...would you call it a fronton, or did it have some other name?

B: *Cancha*.

When was it built?

B: I'd say my uncle built it before 1918. It was here when I was young.

What was your uncle's name?

B: Peter Borda.

Did he own the French Hotel at that time?

B: He owned the French. He has 3 daughters living in Reno now—Marie Swanson, Anita Etchemendy and Lucille Rose. The son passed away.

Was there any sort of a handball facility here before that structure was built?

B: I doubt it. That I don't know.

How old is the French Hotel? When was it constructed?

B: I don't know. Mr. Syll owned this property, and there was one party that I can't recall the name. Juchترز in Genoa are related to them, but I don't know how or when they started this. But I think my uncle bought this in the early teens.

It was not a Basque hotel prior to your uncle purchasing it, then?

B: I doubt it. That's when [Basques] started coming in the area.

H: Was the name the same, or did your uncle rename it when he bought it?

B: My uncle renamed it—Peter did. Then my aunt ran it, and then my dad bought it in 1929.

Did your uncle ever talk to you about why he decided to call it the French Hotel?

B: Well, he passed away before I was born. He died in 1918. But see that's where they came from. They were [from] Biarritz, come from Navarra, and he was the first one that came over here. That's probably why he named it the French. The name was Syll before that.

And the handball court was already there, then when your father purchased it?

B: Right.

I'm curious about how it was used. You mentioned that there were spectator stands there.

B: We had bleachers in the rear—just seats, like regular bleachers.

The kids used to always use it. We used it with tennis racquets like they have this racquet ball today. It's the same idea, but we used a tennis ball. And a lot of them used to play handball out there. It was good exercise. We had nothing else to do, really. Very few tennis courts around at that time.

Did anybody other than Basques play the game, play it well enough to play in front of spectators?

B: Some of the kids got to be pretty good. The ones that were in high school got to be pretty good players, but then they moved on.

Would you say that it was primarily Basques who used it, though?

B: The grown-ups, yes—Basque or Spanish.

Did any of the other ethnic groups here in the valley ever show any interest in learning how to play the game?

B: No. Except the kids in school, like high school or grammar school.

Were the spectators mostly Basques?

B: No, I recall some other people that were there—the ones that were interested in it. This valley always was good for sports; no matter what it was, they'd always show up.

Did the Indians show any interest in it—the Washos?

B: No, they weren't around. They didn't stick around. They couldn't drink at that time...although they used to get their booze.

But you can't have that association there because somebody's going to get in trouble.

What do you mean by couldn't stick around?

B: Well, if you have a guy there, and he's not supposed to drink and he gets half loaded, what are you going to do?

I understand there was also a curfew for Washos in the 1920s and the 1930s.

B: I don't believe there was any curfews.

I've heard from a lot of people, both Indian and non-Indian, that when the whistle blew...

B: Well, maybe sort of an unwritten law, maybe something like that, but I don't remember any curfew. They would leave town early—I remember that—because if they didn't they'd end up in that little pokey over there. They'd leave them out about 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning, and they would just take off like a dog [that] was cooped up for 2 days. They'd just leave town.

Did they put them in there every night?

B: No, I don't believe so. They weren't that bad. I mean, they were all right. You know, a human being is a human being.

I'm still interested about the composition of the spectators. Apparently, it was not just Basques who would come in and watch the...

B: They'd all show up for the games.

Were there any admission prices?

B: No.

I gather that the idea was to both provide the recreation for Basques who were coming in from out of the hills, and also to act as a magnet for the bar and hotel. Is that correct?

B: Yes.

Did your father ever talk to you about the part that the handball court played in the total business of the hotel and bar?

B: No, I was too young.

You mentioned betting before. Was that just informal betting among spectators, or was there some organized...?

B: That would be people in this area. Like if they would come from San Francisco, they would bet against the people from San Francisco—put up a lump sum plus a dinner.

There was no sports book being run here at the time?

B: That I don't know, but I doubt it. You know, they would make bets. They're never going to stop that; they will always have betting, gambling.

What about women and children? Were they part of the audience as well?

B: Yes. We always took our...even like at that time I always went with my parents. They would bring their kids just like today. You don't go to a function unless you take your children—especially when they're small.

How often would the large games that you've been describing be held?

B: I can only recall maybe 2 of them because we came here...my dad died around '34 or '35. That's when my cousins and some of the other guys come in from the old country.

But were the courts used during the rest of the week, or the rest of the year? Were they used by patrons?

B: They would practice. Like us, we would use it. It should have been used more than it was used. I don't suppose we used it as much as it should've been.

Do you have any photographs of the handball...?

B: All of those were my sister's—Rose McAllister. She lives out here. She has all the old pictures.

I do want to talk to you some about the Washos. I've heard from a number of Washo Indians and also from non-Indians here in the community that this was one of the principal gathering places—your back area back here. Can you recall from your childhood what it would look like back here normally, when the Washo Indians were here?

B: Well, like I said when we first started, the handball court was out this way, and then there was a long shed that way to the end of the property.

Shed toward the north of the property?

B: Right, parallel to the park around there, just that little strip in there. That's where most of them went. There used to be a shed on this side, and then there would be some bare ground over there. They'd go over there,

too. But all I can recall is the...like stick games that they would play.

Men and women alike?

B: Sometimes...they would join in.

Were they there every day?

B: I think that depends on...certain times they would be there every day because usually it would seem to me like [if] there'd be a function going on or something like that, they would play every day. But like just a normal day, they wouldn't be there every day.

Was there a particular time of the year when you would find them...?

B: There would be maybe in the early summer or something like that when there was no work to be done. Because a lot of them worked out in the hay fields.

When they were here—when it was common for them to be here—can you give me an approximation of about how many could be found out there at any one time?

B: You'd have about 10 or 12 played, I guess. What is it, 5 or 6 in a team? You have the one line, and you have another...must be 5 or 6. Then they would be huddled around, so let's see, about a dozen or 2 dozen...I don't know, 2 to 3 dozen. There could be more, too. I remember I've gone back, there would be more than that. Maybe I shouldn't say it, but maybe if they could have something to drink maybe there was more around. Put it that way. [chuckles]

Would there be children back there, too?

B: Yes.

Women, children, men...?

B: Yes.

Any range in age? Would the older Indians be there as well as the young ones?

B: Oh, yes. You've got to have the chief there like our superintendents, you would call them.

I believe they still play those stick games in Bishop, but those are Shoshones down there. I don't know if there's any Washos or not.

I know they used to hide bottles back there. [Mr. Borda is referring to the practice of buying alcohol for Indians and then leaving it at a predetermined location for them to pick up.] You just drop off a bottle and pretty soon it's gone. People have done that.

Could they ever buy anything here at the French Hotel?

B: No.

Did they ever try?

B: Oh, certainly they'd try. They even tried after the second World War to do it. In fact, I gave some to fellows that were in the service. I'd give them a drink, which is illegal, but I did it. I figured if they could go over there, by God they can drink! [laughs]

Other than playing the stick games and the other gambling games that the Washo would play back here, what other sorts of activity took place that you can recall?

B: That's all I can remember. We would have beefs with them. I don't remember of anything else going on back there.

H: You mentioned that your mother was a cook for the hotel and that the hotel used to have a restaurant?

B: Yes, she used to cook right in this room here.

H: Did the Washo get food from the kitchen?

B: She'd give them food, yes. She had Indians work for her when she needed help.

H: Did the Indians pay for it?

B: That I don't know. I doubt it because they were like us; nobody had any money at that time. Just like after the Depression, and I think we're in that right now.

H: Do you recall the names of any of the Washo women that used to work here?

B: That I don't. Maybe my sis [Rose McAllister] does. She may recall some of their names.

Can you remember anything about the feeding? Would they come inside?

B: They wouldn't eat with us, no. They may sit in the corner over here.

The corner in the kitchen?

B: Yes or else outside.

How were they served, then, if they came to eat?

B: Just like what we ate.

If they didn't sit down to eat at a dining table, then how were they served? Did they bring their own plates? Did you provide them for them?

B: No, no. They got everything right here.

And just handed out the back door?

B: I was going to say if you can get a hold of Lucille Rose—she's the oldest cousin; she's about 71 or 72—and she may know more about it. Because I was only 13 when my father died, and I was 7 when we came here. It's pretty hard to recall the things that went on.

It seems apparent that the Washo felt very comfortable with your family.

B: We've always got along, yes.

And, of course, they were on your land back here when they gathered. Do you have any idea what the relationship may have been between your family and the Washos that was different from the relationship that they had with other people here in the valley? Why did they feel so comfortable with the Bordas?

B: I don't know. I really don't have the answer to that. I get along with them today—they respect me; I respect them. If they get out of line they've got to go, just like anyone else. And they know that.

Were there any other gathering places here in Gardnerville that are worthy of mention?

B: They used to go to the Joyland Cafe over here. Wally Kwan ran it. He used to have a back room affair, which [was] strictly illegal,

but nobody ever bothered them. He would keep control of them, and Wally would be a good guy to talk to, too.

H: He's still in town?

B: Yes, he's still here. He's a real fine gentleman. He's Chinese.

Well, I hope we'll be able to talk with him before the end of this project, and we'll make every effort to.

B: Then the rest of them that were involved in it, they're all gone. They passed away.

You say that the back room thing was strictly illegal. What was illegal about it?

B: Well, it was just like when they used to put bottles out in the back yard, it was illegal.

Oh, it was alcohol.

B: Alcohol, gambling, whatever.

That was in the 1930s?

B: It was in the late forties. I don't know what happened in the thirties. You see, sometimes they'd have a certain person you could trust—the guy controls himself— you can go ahead and give him something. But if he ever gets out of control—that doesn't mean it's just because he's an Indian—no matter who he is, you know, then you stop.

I understand that there were some Indian families that lived very close to your property here and that they lived back behind where the county jail once was and back behind where the....

B: There used to be a barn or home or whatever it was. They burned down. There were some [Washo families] down in Minden, right across that field in the willows. There used to be Indians lived in there.

Can you remember the names of any of the families or any of the people?

B: No, my sis probably would know. I remember one Indian woman, though—Susie was her name.

Susie Dick?

B: I guess at was. Did they [other people in Carson Valley] ever mention her?

Yes, that's why I wondered if this is the one you're talking about. What can you tell me about Susie Dick? What do you remember about her?

B: She was a fine woman. She was always helping. They probably told you all. She was a great gal.

I understand that she lived nearby, either behind Minden or back here [behind the French Hotel].

B: That's behind Minden, by the old slaughterhouse down....

Would you happen to know if any of the sites upon which the Washo lived are still unoccupied? Are any of them in open ground where no buildings have yet been put up?

B: This is all private back here. It's always been private. I don't recall of any of them staying back here, really.

You think most of them are down around Minden?

B: In that willow patch. Unless they're counting that green building there [the county jail]. [laughter]

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