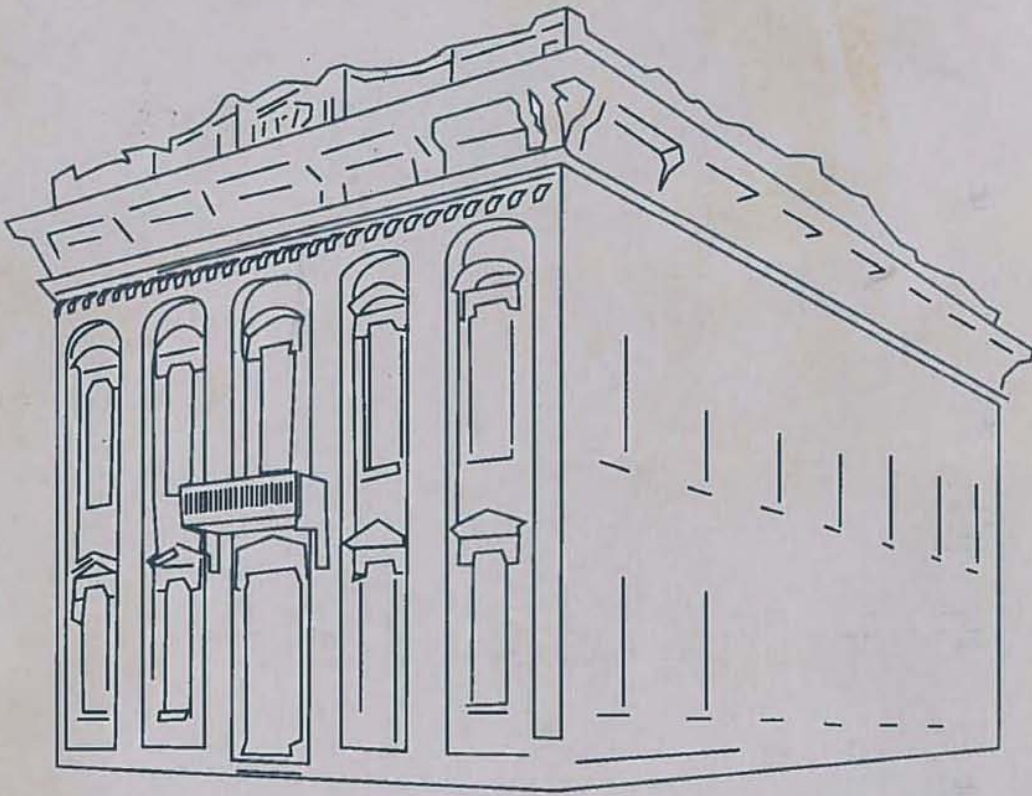


VENT_260

VENT_260

EUREKA MEMORIES



**Eureka County History Project
Eureka County, Nevada
1993**

EUREKA MEMORIES

A Series of Interviews
with Fourteen Individuals and Families
in Eureka, Nevada
1993

Oral histories conducted and edited by Robert D. McCracken
Albert Biale Interview by Susan Gallagher

Eureka County History Project
Eureka County, Nevada
1993

CONTENTS • EUREKA MEMORIES

- An Interview with Walter Baumann
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- The Middle Years, An Interview with Albert Biale
An Oral History conducted by Susan Gallagher
An Interview with Lucille Allison Estella
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- An Interview with Leroy Etchegaray
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- An Interview with Pietrina Damele Etchegaray
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- An Interview with Estelle Gensoli
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
An Interview with Louis Gibellini
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
An Interview with Herbert Hawkins
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
An Interview with Martin Milano
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- An Interview with J. N. Rebaleati
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
An Interview with Isadore Sara, Jr.
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- An Interview with Aileen Mahoney Schlaget
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
Photographs
Interview
- An Interview with Floyd and Charlene Slagowski
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken
An Interview with Marianne Smithwick
An Oral History conducted by Robert D. McCracken

Copyright 1993
Eureka County History Project
Eureka County Commissioners
Eureka, Nevada 89316
First Printing 1994

bered that episode. He said it was a long time ago, but Isacca was turned loose.

Over in Austin the same story was told, only the father waited until the young Indian boy rode by on horseback after seeing his girlfriend, a white girl, and shot him in the back. The girl never knew her father had shot him. She had a nervous breakdown and he sent her to California.

I was the first lady school bus driver in Eureka County. You had to know about cars (like changing tires) and have a driver's license. I stayed down at Sadlers' ranch in the old schoolhouse until Friday and would then come into Eureka. My school kids were Phil and John Brown at the Siri Ranch and Kathleen and Paul Sadler. Leonard Fiorenzi drove the other side of Diamond Valley; he stayed at Ted Thompson's ranch. This was in the days before there were farmers in Diamond Valley.

An Interview with LEROY ETCHEGARAY



Leroy and Mary Jean Etchegaray, Eureka, 1985

*An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken
1993*

RM: OK. One of my typists is a linguist and if you say it a couple of times she can type it out . . . she can write it out phonetically. So just pronounce it a couple of times.

ME: Tarateña. Tarateña.

RM: Say it one more time.

ME: Tarateña.

RM: OK, I think she can do a pretty good job with it. [Laughter]

LE: Well, that language [Basque] is a tongue twister.

RM: Yeah. And when do you think that was taken?

ME: Oh, this was . . . probably in about 1983 also.

RM: '83, OK. That's great. Why don't you put those in with Pietrina's folder right there.

CONTENTS

An Interview with LeRoy Etchegaray

3

CHAPTER ONE
 Background information about LeRoy's father, Fred, who came to Nevada with his twin brother from the Basque region of France to herd sheep; Fred and his brother experience a northern Nevada winter on the range without even a tent; Mary Jean Etchegaray's parents, both of whom came from the Basque region of France; on the sheepherding of the late 1800s and early 1900s; a description of a sheepherder's routine and of his dogs; hostility between cattlemen and sheepmen before the 1930s; remarks on the plants that sheep will eat; the business of sheepshearing; Fred Etchegaray works with the Kitchen brothers, who take him on as a cowboy and teach him English; Fred and his brother join the Damele brothers in a sheep operation; how sheepherders would work until they acquired a herd of their own.

10

CHAPTER TWO
 A sheepherder's bedroll, and surviving a winter in the open —becoming sensitive to "cues" regarding the weather; remarks on the status of sheepherding in Eureka County in 1993; area plants that are poisonous to cattle; how Fred spent 2 years running a stage from Austin to the Monitor Valley Ranch; how Fred and his brother worked to keep sheep alive in a harsh winter; the sheepherder's life at the sheep camp; a discussion of the careers former Basque sheepherders have taken up; how Mary Jean's mother came to Eureka from France to work in a hotel, and a discussion of the Basque hotels in Eureka; different local teas the sheepherder would brew.

17

CHAPTER THREE
 On the food at a Basque sheepherder's camp; the role of the camp tender at the sheep camp; the role of garlic in the life of some immigrant families; Fred and his wife, Pietrina, buy the Santa Fe Ranch just before the Great Depression; LeRoy's school days in Eureka and holidays at the ranch, and a memory of returning to Eureka through heavy snow; the telephone line that connected the Tonkin, Three-Bar and JD ranches in the 1930s and 1940s; recalling the winter of 1948-1949; the post office at the Tonkin Ranch; the unpaved road between Eureka and Carlin.

24

CHAPTER FOUR
 LeRoy recalls his school days, including playing marbles and sledding on the streets of Eureka; remarks on the current climate in Eureka County and the climate of the 1930s; LeRoy and Mary Jean are married; 1951-1952 — another harsh winter, including an aerial hay drop; further memories of Eureka during LeRoy's schooldays, including Eureka's movie theater, the Basque hotels, the grocery stores and Rebaleati's power plant.

CHAPTER FIVE

31 Gas stations in Eureka in the 1940s; irrigation in Diamond Valley; the ranches in Kobeh and Diamond valleys, and how the small ranches have been bought up through the years; an effort to market potatoes from Diamond Valley; the excellent quality of Diamond Valley alfalfa.

CHAPTER SIX

38 Further discussion of Diamond Valley alfalfa; the large gold mine operating in Eureka County in 1993; on LeRoy and Mary Jean's children; selling the Santa Fe Ranch, managing another area ranch, then developing a property in Diamond Valley; feeding cattle in the winter; remarks on the confusing regulations of the BLM and on a philosophy of range usage.

CHAPTER SEVEN

45 Discussing the ranching lifestyle; memories of visiting Eureka in pre-automobile days after spending as long as a year-and-a-half on the ranch; the ice sold in Eureka in the 1930s, and keeping food fresh before refrigerators were available; recalling the Hiskey Stage Line; how local ranchers cooperated on spring and fall roundups in the years before the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934; on rattlesnakes.

ADDENDUM

52 A description of the hog-butcher and sausage-making that took place on the Ferguson Ranch, and how lamb and mutton were preserved during warm weather; recollections of the annual wine-making at the Ferguson Ranch.

This is Robert McCracken talking to LeRoy and Mary Jean Eichegaray at their home in Diamond Valley, Nevada, July 14, 1992.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: LeRoy, would you state your full name as it reads on your birth certificate?

LE: LeRoy Wayne Eichegaray.

RM: What was your place and date of birth?

LE: I was born July 3rd, 1929, in the Elko hospital.

RM: And what was your father's full name?

LE: Fred Jean Eichegaray.

RM: When and where was he born?

LE: He was born in Banca, France, February 24th, 1894.

RM: And he was of Basque descent?

LE: Yes.

RM: And what is your mother's maiden name, and her place and date of birth?

LE: Pietrina Margaret Damele. She was born March 17th, 1904, at the Three-Bar Ranch, in Kobeh Valley, the next valley west from Diamond Valley.

RM: What was your father's occupation?

LE: He was 16 years old when he and his twin brother, John Eichegaray, came to this country, and they came as sheepherders. They came to Monitor Valley, to the people who had the Monitor Ranch there — the Laxagues. When they came over, they had nothing. The Laxagues probably had to forward them money for them to even have their bed; they were broke when they got here. Anyway, they went out to herd sheep. I can remember my dad telling me that this was in the wintertime, and they woke up with a foot of snow on their bed. With the first money they made, they bought a tent.

RM: They didn't even have a tent?

LE: They didn't even have a tent. If I'm not mistaken, tents were \$5 to \$7 — my dad used to say, "First 6 bucks were spent for a tent." [Laughter] Their old tent was the first thing they invested in. They had a good tarp and bedding, but they had to put sagebrush under their beds so the water wouldn't wet the tarp every night. They had to put all their clothes and their shoes under the bed at night to keep everything dry for the next morning.

RM: They put the tarp on sagebrush so that it wasn't directly on the ground?

LE: You might say that sagebrush was their mattress. It kept the tarp off the ground so that the water couldn't run under them.

RM: How was it that your father and his brother happened to come here?

LE: I imagine they were awfully poor. And they were all big families — I think there were 11 in the family. They were the oldest, so they had to go out to work.

RM: And sheepherding was the occupation that they had in Europe?

LE: Well, yes. Back in France, they had a few milk cows and a few sheep, and that was how they made their living. They started doing that as small chil-

They trusted us.

- RM: People were more trustworthy then, weren't they?
LE: Yes. And I know the Eureka Cash Store and Kitchen Brothers Market would haul anything. They'd haul provisions in from Reno and Sacramento in an old International 2-ton truck. You could order a mowing machine and a buck rake and they'd haul that.
- RM: Is that right! How about garages? Were there many garages in town?
LE: There was Frank McBride's shop and garage.
ME: Herrera.
LE: Ciriaco Herrera had the Eureka Garage. Joe Rebaleati had a garage. (Norman is his boy.)
ME: The Rebaleatis also provided the power.
RM: How far back does the Rebaleatis' power company date?
LE: Into the late '30s — I'd say '36 or '37, maybe.
RM: Before that was there power in town or was it kerosene lamps?
PE: We always had power for lights when you went to school.
RM: What about when you went to school, Pietrina?
PE: When I went to school, we didn't have power. We had gas lamps.
RM: So maybe Rebaleatis' was the first electric power in town?
LE: Oh, it was.
ME: Even when I came to Eureka it was still a DC current, though.
RM: And when did you come there?
LE: Nineteen forty-two.
RM: When did they go AC? When they went onto the Mount Wheeler system?
LE: No, way before that — probably '46, '47 or '48. I remember going up there when they installed the big Fairbanks Morse engine to flip to AC power. They brought in a new generating system when they did that?
LE: Oh, yes. A huge, huge Fairbanks engine generator. It was the first one here. I remember when they poured the cement, but I can't remember the exact date — it seems to me it was '46 or '47. Before that, they were running with 2 Caterpillar 44 diesels for DC [direct current]. I used to go down there a lot and tinkered around with them.
RM: Did the power plant run 24 hours a day?
LE: Yes.

CHAPTER FIVE

- LE: In 1952 Highway 50 was closed for a couple of weeks between Eureka and Ely. There was no mail, no groceries or anything. The rotary snowplows couldn't keep the roads open. Joe Kitchen used to haul groceries from Ely to Eureka to keep the town supplied. He had an International truck with a stove in it to keep groceries from freezing. He was an old sheepherder/cowboy, and he just put his bed in there and stayed there and followed the rotaries. When they finally got the road open, he got the groceries to Eureka. He said, "I didn't worry. I was nice and warm. I had plenty to eat, a good place to sleep." And that's how he delivered the groceries to keep the town going.
RM: What a story! That was during one of these big storms?
LE: In 1952.
RM: How about the one in '48-49?
LE: I was going to college in '48, so I'm not sure what all transpired. Joe Kitchen was awfully good friends with my dad. When they were young guys they cowbayed together. And as I said, Joe taught Dad how to speak English.
RM: At one time the Kitchen brothers were providing part of their own beef, weren't they?
LE: That's how they started the store here, but in later years federal inspection came in on the meat thing. By that time they'd dissolved their cattle herd anyway.
RM: What were the gas stations in Eureka during the period we're talking about?
LE: There was Herrera Service — Union 76 — and the Eureka Garage was Chevron. And Frank McBride had Flying A gasoline and Baptista Minoletti had Shell.
RM: Were there any other gas stations in town?
LE: Yes, John Repetto up there had some Shell. He used to sell Shell bulk. Then there was the Standard Oil bulk plant that Bill Holland had.
RM: Where else in the area could you get gas besides in Eureka? Was there anybody in Diamond Valley who sold gas?
LE: No, this valley was all sagebrush, except for the few ranches that are along the foothills.
RM: Do those ranches along the foothills go back a long ways — like, to the founding of Eureka?
LE: Yes.
RM: But out in the center of the valley . . . ?
LE: There was nothing.
RM: Why didn't they have anything out here?
LE: There weren't diesel engines in this area for water pumping.
RM: There wasn't any way to get the water out of the ground?
LE: There wasn't much well drilling or heavy equipment around. There was no equipment even for the county. All they had were a couple of little 2-ton International dump trucks, you know, and an old Gallion solid rubber tire

motor grader and a little D-6 Cat. Sometimes, when they bladed some of the roads, they pulled one of those pull-graders behind the Cat to help the other grader out. If your road got bladed once every 2 or 3 years you were flying high.

- RM: In other words, the county was so poor that they just didn't really have anything?
- LE: Right, they didn't have anything.
- RM: Why wouldn't somebody come out here in the valley and sink a little well and put a windmill on it?
- LE: They did that for stock water, but there was no farming here till at least 1958.
- RM: How did the various people acquire that land?
- LE: Under the Desert Land Act.
- RM: Who is a good person to talk to about how agriculture got started in the valley with the Desert Land Act?
- LE: I'd say talk to Don Palmore or Don Morrison. They farm in the area, and they were some of the first ones here.
- RM: The next valley over is Kobeh. Were the ranches on the periphery of that one also, or were they out in the center of it?
- LE: They were more out on the periphery.
- RM: Was it the same in Newark Valley, where your grandmother lived?
- LE: That was the same story.
- RM: It was also around the periphery?
- LE: Yes.
- RM: Then technology only enabled them to live and make a living on the periphery.
- ME: That's because of the snow, I think.
- RM: That's really interesting. Did the centers of all these valleys develop because of the Desert Land Act?
- LE: Right.
- RM: That made a big difference in terms of the economic development of the county, didn't it?
- LE: Right. Only a very few of the ones who started here are still here, though. I guess those men I mentioned are the 2 originals.
- ME: And Ruth Martin.
- RM: Let's go over to Kobeh Valley — tell me about the original ranches. Were there a lot of them or were there just the ones you've been talking about?
- LE: There were just the Three-Bar, the Santa Fe and the Ferguson, which her folks purchased, and Dry Creek and Ackerman and the Grubb Flat and Bean Flat and Roberts Creek above Wood Ranch.
- RM: Was the Tonkin one of them?
- LE: No, there's a little summit you go over. Tonkin is in Garden Valley.
- RM: Oh, OK. And then what about the original ranches of Diamond Valley? Or are there too many to do that?
- LE: Do you want the old names or the names as of now?

- RM: Well, actually both, if you've got them. [Laughs]
- PE: There's Sadlers'.
- ME: Well, start over here.
- RM: What's this ranch over here called?
- LE: Sulfur. We have to start right about due northwest of here. That's where Grandpa started.

- RM: Who?
- LE: My great-grandfather.
- RM: What was his name?
- PE: John — Giovanni — Damele.
- PE: He just leased it. He only had a few cows — I don't know, 12 or something. They didn't stay there very long. And he chopped wood up here in McCullough.
- RM: Where?
- PE: McCullough Spring. That's up Spring Valley near Eureka. And he chopped wood over here in Black Point.
- LE: And he had his family at Sulfur.
- RM: What's that ranch called now, or does it have a name?
- LE: It belongs to the Buffhams — James Buffham. We used to call it the old Romano Ranch.
- RM: What would be the next ranch up?
- LE: Baileys'. Some of the family is still there. Then there's the Sadler Ranch, it's a good ranch.
- PE: And the Siris.
- LE: Oh, and Flynn, that's right. There are 2 more — Flynn and the Siri Ranch.
- RM: Basically, do you have a ranch everywhere there's a canyon with water?
- LE: Yes, on this side of the valley. There are some springs and snow water over here.
- RM: But in any canyon over there where you've got water, whether it's a running stream or a spring, you get a ranch. Is that basically how it works?
- LE: Pretty much. In other words, they settled where there was water.
- PE: Let me tell you a story: Dante Siri's dad owned the ranch over here. Dante grew up and he did most of the work on the ranch, but he and his dad couldn't get along. He wanted to leave and he didn't want his dad to know where he was going. In those days, he didn't have a car — all he had was a horse. So he took his horse and put shoes on it, but he put them on backwards so that his dad couldn't track him. [Laughs]
- RM: That would make a good episode for a novel, wouldn't it? [Laughter] That's a good one.
- PE: He came over to Tonkin to my dad and one of the stage drivers, Andy Pastorino, brought the mail over. He was telling them about it, and he asked them if they had seen Dante, and Dante was over there. [Laughs]
- LE: He didn't go very far. Then he went back.
- RM: Would that horseshoe trick really work?

LE: I don't think he could fool his dad. His dad probably had it all figured out. [Laughter]

RM: That's a good one.

ME: Then you come on this [east] side of the valley. What are the ranches over here?

RM: This is north right here?

LE: Yes, from north to south.

RM: And this mountain range is known as the . . .

LE: Diamond Range. They call [the first ranch] the old Mau Ranch. Right now it belongs to Milton Thompson.

PE: I think O. R. Mau was an uncle to my mother. They were cousins to me. O. R. had the store in Eureka.

ME: Your mother always said they were cousins.

PE: They had this place down here, too. He used to rent the range to sheepmen. But he had the store in Eureka where he had dry goods.

LE: I forgot to tell you about the dry goods store.

RM: Were there other dry goods stores, as long as we're on it?

LE: Yes, the Eureka Cash Store.

RM: And they carried a general line of dry goods?

LE: Oh, yes — and clothing.

ME: Kitchens did too, by the time I got to Eureka.

LE: That was afterwards, though. Earlier, those were the only clothing stores.

ME: When I came to Eureka, there was also Evelyn Rattazzi.

LE: Oh, I forgot about that. That's right!

ME: She had a beauty parlor and a dress shop and a variety shop. I forgot about her too, till now. Anyway, the next ranch after Mau coming south is Cox.

LE: I'm not too sure about that. There was another little place in there, but I can't tell you who it belonged to. Then the main ranch, where Thompson is . . . Thompson owns all those grounds, but prior to Thompson, Martin owned that.

LE: Prior to Martin, Jacobsen owned it. Mary Jean's dad was partners with Jacobsen with his sheep.

RM: Coming on down, what's the next one?

LE: Louie Maggini and his mother. And there was one homestead south . . . there are little ranches all the way up this valley here in these canyons. You have Walthers', Minolettis' and the Cottonwood, owned by Handleys. And later there were different owners — Palmas, Hildebrand, the Bank Ranch, Williams, 4-Eyed Nicks, the DePaoli ranch (which is now Hunters'), to name a few.

RM: Going clear down to the highway to Eureka?

LE: Handley to Eureka. But the 2 biggest ones were the Hunter Ranch and the Handley Ranch. LaBarry owned the Handley Ranch later, and it's had several owners since then. They've all changed hands. In fact, Jim Baumann has the Hunter Ranch now. I guess Russell has the old Handley

Ranch in Cottonwood. LaBarrys had it.

RM: Basically these ranches were probably originally established when Eureka got going, because that way people could make a living here.

LE: As I said, they raised fruit and vegetables when Eureka was a booming mining camp.

PE: They'd sell their vegetables and things in town and they'd always have milk cows and they'd take milk to town.

RM: And each one of these little ranches would support at least one family?

LE: I could show you places that raised 10 and 12 kids, but there's nothing anymore. They don't even have any water there today.

RM: In line with the change in the climate since '57 or so, are a lot of the old springs drying up and so on?

LE: I think so, yes. A lot of the weaker ones are.

RM: But you could take me to places where they raised big families, and there's not even any water there now?

LE: I could take you up Pastorino Canyon. They raised 11 kids there. And I'll bet you this year you could hardly even water a cow there. I don't know how they survived. There were creeks coming out of those canyons.

RM: How about on the other side of this mountain range?

LE: There are a lot of springs over in there. There are canyons that have runoff, too.

RM: Is that still in Eureka County?

LE: No, that would be in White Pine County.

RM: Are most of the ranches along the canyon still functioning, or are most of them kind of defunct?

LE: The only ones that are functioning are the Thompson Ranch that Milton has now, and the Cottonwood and the Hunter place.

RM: Why aren't the other ones functioning?

LE: They were just all small acreages, later purchased by larger operators. Just guys eking out a living?

RM: Yes, eking out a living during the mining camp boom days.

LE: When would these ranches have folded?

LE: It was before my time.

RM: Were these ranches still going when you were a kid, Pietrina?

PE: Some of them were still there when I was in high school, because some of the kids used to come to the school with a horse and buggy.

RM: They would come in every day on a horse and buggy?

PE: Yes, or horseback.

RM: That would be a long ride, wouldn't it?

PE: For some of them, that was. Where is Hildebrands', for instance?

LE: It's north of Hunters' maybe 3 to 4 miles. So you're looking at 6 or 7 miles [one way].

RM: What caused them to fold?

LE: It's the economics.

RM: They were just too marginal?
 LE: They were too small, too marginal. And they started bringing food in on the railroad.

RM: By about what time were most of these ranches kind of defunct?
 PE: There weren't very many left during the '20s. Probably the Depression [was a factor], then.

RM: What happened to the land, then? Was it incorporated into some of the larger operations?
 LE: Yes. For instance, the Cottonwood and the Handley place bought the Minoletti place and the old Hildebrand place.

ME: Palmas. They bought them out.
 LE: So these little ones were no longer supporting a family, but were part of a larger operation.
 LE: Yes.

RM: And then with the Desert Land Act, you got development of the centers of these valleys?
 LE: Yes. Most of the people who started here on that went broke, too. A lot of them came in here and they had to beat all the brush down and drill wells, which is expensive, and level the land, which is expensive and takes a lot of equipment.

RM: They started out raising potatoes; they built the potato sheds over here. Stiemle and Mel Bailey, I think, built the potato sheds, and then they got all the guys in the desert entries in here to raise potatoes. Well, they couldn't get the crops in on time. They couldn't deliver the crops, and some of them were outside — they were frozen — so they couldn't get them transported. Then maybe the market was bad in L.A. They were going to go to L.A. with all these potatoes, and a lot of them just fizzed out.

RM: Some of them went into grain and they sold grain wherever they could, but it wasn't economical. Gradually, different people bought portions of the farms and started to raise hay.
 LE: So it's mainly hay now?
 LE: It's mainly alfalfa. The grain would freeze in June and July. Potatoes can be raised here, but . . .

RM: Why don't they raise them?
 LE: The market. When I was managing for DV Ranch, we planted 34 acres of seed potatoes. [Laughs] One lot of 17 acres did real well. The other lot did well, but we got a disease in the seed — they call it black leg — so they would have to be transported for eating potatoes. It didn't hurt them to eat. It was very expensive to plant seed potatoes and fertilize them and everything. We did well on 17 acres. On the other 17 acres, we couldn't afford the transportation to L.A. to put them on the grocery market. Potatoes are a crop where they say if you have a good year one out of every 5 or 7 years, you'll make money.

RM: That'll carry you over for the bad years?
 LE: Yes.
 RM: Is the hay successful here?
 LE: It's very touchy. You've got to raise top quality hay, because it's got to go as dairy hay in order to make it. You've got to get that top price.

RM: You've got to get the top protein?
 LE: Top protein, top TDN (total digestible nutrients), and it can't get rained on, because it costs \$35 to \$38 a ton in freight to the California dairies. With Mount Wheeler Power raising their rates, it's getting to be a touchy thing.

RM: How do you see the future of farming in the valleys?
 LE: If the power rates don't run us out, we might be able to survive — if transportation costs don't get too bad. It's all a matter of economics.

RM: Is there pretty good demand in L.A. for the dairy hay?
 LE: There's good demand for top quality, but you have to spray, you have to get your weeds and your grasses out. There's a little demand for Timothy hay here now — that goes to the horse people in Las Vegas and L.A. [Laughter] Now they even sell it in the Bay Area.

ME: A lot of our hay goes to Petaluma, California, not only to Southern California.

RM: Where is Petaluma?
 LE: It's on the coast down by Santa Rosa.

RM: It probably isn't that much farther there than it is to L.A., is it?
 LE: Oh, it's further to L.A. I think Petaluma is crowded by the surrounding towns, so they don't raise any hay there. They have to import everything. In Southern California I guess they probably raise some alfalfa off and on as a spare crop.

RM: What kind of protein content do you get here?
 LE: We're looking at 17 to 20 percent.

**An Interview with
ESTELLE GENSOLI**



Estelle Gensoli, 1992

*An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken
1993*

CONTENTS
An Interview with Estelle Gensoli

CHAPTER ONE	2
On Estelle's Italian-born parents — James Rogantini, who came to Eureka to work in the charcoal industry, and Annetta, who came to Eureka with her parents as a young girl; how Estelle boarded in Eureka, and her mother's low regard for ranch schools; Estelle recalls her first day of school; how young girls amused themselves in Eureka in the early 1900s, and the clothes they wore; Indians on the Rogantinis' Pinto Creek Ranch.	
CHAPTER TWO	8
The Chinese population in Eureka in the early 1900s; early ranches in Diamond Valley; cutting ice at the DePaoli Ranch; trips to Duckwater; recalling A. C. Florio; remembering the high school in Eureka, and the town's dances and music; discussion of the Basques in Eureka; health care in Eureka in the early 1900s.	
CHAPTER THREE	14
Estelle's husband, Augustus, serves in World War I; how Estelle and Augustus met; Estelle helps a sister raise her family; Augustus's life work as a miner; recollections of a Eureka hotel, the movie theater, and the <i>Eureka Sentinel</i> and its editor, E. A. Skillman, and his wife, Etta; remarks on the Depression years in Eureka; the red-light district in Eureka; Estelle's work clerking for the Kitchen brothers.	
CHAPTER FOUR	21
Further discussion of clerking at the Kitchen brothers' store; Estelle's second job, cleaning the bank, and her third job, writing a column for the <i>Eureka Sentinel</i> ; Estelle's membership in various Eureka service and social organizations; the last illness of Estelle's father and his death; on Italians coming to Eureka to work in the charcoal industry; on baking bread; Eureka's small library; the friendliness of Eureka's people.	
CHAPTER FIVE	28
Memories of winters and a red wig and comfortable chairs, and of some Eureka women.	

CHAPTER TWO

- RM: Were there any black people living in Eureka that you recall?
 EG: Yes. A girl named Jessie and her family lived next door to the school. [Jessie] used to help take care of my sister Mayme's clothes.
 RM: That they were ironed right and everything?
 EG: Yes. [There was also] a black man that I can very faintly recall who used to go around and sing, "I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up in the morning." But that was when I was pretty well grown and we had moved up to Spring Street.
 RM: You mentioned there was a Chinese cook in town. Were there any other Chinese people there?
 EG: Oh, yes. They had a Chinatown; the second street from Main Street.
 RM: Going up the hill?
 EG: Yes.
 RM: Was it quite large?
 EG: Yes, it was. I remember going to one Chinese funeral when I was pretty good sized. They streamed papers along the way. And they had a Chinese graveyard. Everybody walked in those days, and I just happened to see when the funeral went by.
 RM: Was there a large Chinese population?
 EG: There used to be quite a few Chinese. They didn't have families in those days; it was mostly just the men. Before my time, they used to celebrate Chinese New Year's because they had a joss house.
 RM: Where was the joss house located?
 EG: Next door to the Sentinel building. I was never in it, though. Oh, I went in it when I was grown, but there was nothing left by that time. The scroungers around town had pretty well cleaned it out.
 RM: How did the Chinese men earn a living there?
 EG: They used to wash clothes perhaps, or something like that. Some of them used to cut wood. You know, you could smell the drugs. I imagine it was opium.
 RM: You remember smelling it?
 EG: Yes, the [Chinese part of] town smelled like that. Also, during Prohibition, they had underground sort of tunnels where they would gamble; they were all good gamblers. And some of the boys from Eureka would be in there. And of course, they'd lose their money.
 RM: You mean they'd go into the joss house?
 EG: Go into the back of their homes — their little hovels.
 RM: And they would gamble in there?
 EG: Yes, in the back. So that attracted the young people. They made their money that way.
 RM: There was probably gambling in the bars too, wasn't there, in Eureka during Prohibition?

- EG: Oh, yes.
 RM: They had gambling all over Nevada. Even though it was illegal, they all did it, didn't they?
 EG: Yes, they did.
 RM: When you were growing up, was there any activity in Diamond Valley? I mean, there were no farms out in the middle of the valley, were there?
 EG: Oh, no. That all came later.
 RM: Yes. But I understand that there were some little farms around the edge of the valley in the canyons around the mountain.
 EG: Oh, yes. Some nice ranches — very, very lucrative ranches too.
 RM: Do you remember any of them in particular?
 EG: There was the ex-governor Sadler's ranch. He owned Sadler's Ranch until his kids grew up and the boys died and so forth; then he sold out. And then across the valley, there was Aponds'. Oh and another one — I don't recall their name, but one of them was popular in politics just a few years ago.
 RM: Yes. They supplied milk and produce to town, didn't they?
 EG: Yes. Just produce; milk had to come from closer. Although sometimes they would bring over some cottage cheese or something like that, when they would come in from not so far away that it would last.
 RM: Do you remember anything about Pine Valley?
 EG: No, I was never out in Pine Valley.
 RM: Were you ever associated with Beowawe?
 EG: No. Oh! I was going to tell you about ice-cutting. On our ranch we had a small reservoir, but the wind blew so much all the time that the water never really froze hard enough. But not too far away [from home], when we wanted ice cream, we always stopped in at the DePaolis', where they sold ice, and bought a chunk of it so we could have ice cream for home — whenever we had company or something like that. Or for ourselves.
 RM: Did the DePaolis have an ice pond?
 EG: Yes, they did have the ice pond down there, and they sold it.
 RM: And they would cut it out of the pond?
 EG: Yes. I was never in it till after I grew up, but I think they stored chunks of ice in straw. They used to peddle ice around Eureka.
 RM: They made money that way?
 EG: Oh, yes.
 RM: Did they have had a very big ice house?
 EG: It wasn't so big. It was stored in blocks. Refrigerators had come in about that time; the wooden ones — ice boxes. I remember my sister had an ice box that she used to use until electricity came to town.
 RM: Before that you kept your things cold with water running over a gunny sack on a barrel?
 EG: Yes. I did that too.
 RM: Did you do that in Eureka?
 EG: Yes. I remember I had one so that flies wouldn't get in it. It had a mosquito

bar, and then you had drip sacks on it and that way you kept things cool.

RM: Did you ever go down to Duckwater at all?

EG: No, but my father used to go down once a year from the ranch to buy produce for the winter, because it was a warmer climate.

RM: He couldn't grow produce on his ranch?

EG: No, not enough for everybody for the winter. And I recall my oldest sister went along with him one time, and this lady had chickens in the house. They had one hen that was in the kitchen and she was laying an egg. And when she got up out of the cupboard, she scared the life out of them. [Laughs] I can imagine.

RM: That was down in Duckwater?

EG: Yes. [Laughter] When you came back, you had to pass Pogue Station.

RM: And what was that?

EG: That was just a way place for people from Duckwater. And Pogue was supposed to be a very dirty man. So when he was taken to the hospital—such as we had—the so-called nurse made a joke of it and she said that he died from his first bath. [Laughter] If you read the Sentinel book, they credit that to my grandfather. Now, my grandfather was anything but dirty.

RM: But the book miscredits him with “dying from his first bath.” Maybe this will help to set the record straight!

EG: Yes.

RM: Did you know A. C. Florio?

EG: Oh, yes, I knew him well.

RM: Tell me about him.

EG: He had this big ranch down in Duckwater where they now have the Indian reservation.

RM: Eventually they sold it to the government for the reservation, yes.

EG: He died in the meantime and so his wife went down to Fallon. She died down there. She had a nice home.

RM: Did they have quite a bit of money?

EG: Well, they were supposed to. They had a very nice house that they lived in.

RM: Did A. C. live down at the ranch at Duckwater?

EG: No, they always came to town. He was kind of a notorious man in a way.

RM: In what way?

EG: Well, he was a sheriff for a while. But [he was notorious] even in Eureka before my time.

RM: In what way was he notorious?

EG: Because he had the Naples temper—you know, they're hot-blooded people.

RM: You mean Naples, Italy, temper?

EG: Yes.

RM: Is that a saying, that the Neapolitans have a temper?

EG: Yes. They're from southern Italy too. Anyway, he would pull his gun for no reason at all.

RM: Is that right? When he was sheriff?

EG: Yes. And even before that, he's supposed to have carried a gun, but whether he did or whether he didn't, I don't know. He's buried in Eureka.

RM: Who were some other people that stand out in your mind from when you were growing up in those early years, or from these times in Eureka?

EG: When I grew up the Rattazzi boys had grown up in the meantime and one of those was the sheriff.

RM: What was his name?

EG: James Rattazzi. And he was a large man, so they always said he didn't even have to carry a gun, his looks scared them.

RM: How big was he?

EG: Well, he was just an ordinary person. He just happened to be large-built—husky. Anyhow, he was a good sheriff.

RM: Was there much crime in Eureka?

EG: Not during my time.

RM: You went all the way through school in Eureka, didn't you?

EG: Oh, yes. I graduated there.

RM: Tell me about going to high school in Eureka. You would have been going to high school in the early 1920s?

EG: Yes. It was a good school. We got just exactly what they may get now. And we had French, of course. The little bit of French I did remember has left me a long time ago. But I took 2 years of that, and [had courses] in grammar and language and so forth.

RM: What kind of activities did you have?

EG: They said that to play basketball we had to stand out in the gravel because we didn't have a gymnasium. But I was never good at that type of thing anyway.

RM: Did you have dances and parties and things like that?

EG: Oh, yes. And as we got older, my friend used to play the piano. The piano was already worn out, but she used to play it and we'd dance to that. Do you remember this fellow Kay—when we first had jazz? He came to town with a cowbell and stuff like that to make noise that sounded like jazz.

RM: When did radio come into Eureka?

EG: Well, I remember when we had the first demonstration. Everybody stood outside on the street waiting for this demonstration, which never showed up. It never happened?

RM: No.

EG: What year would that have been, approximately?

RM: I don't remember. We all had phonographs before that.

RM: Did your family have a phonograph?

EG: Yes, we had a Victrola.

RM: Was it the round discs—cylinders—or flat records?

EG: My friend had the round one—Victrola, I think it was called. But everybody got to play their [records].

RM: Was that a big thing in people's lives?

EG: Oh, sure. You always had to have music. We also had a town band. It was considered a very good band in those days.

RM: Do you remember what it was called?

EG: Eureka Lobster Club Band.

RM: I wonder why they called it that.

EG: I don't know. But they used to play for marches and stuff like that.

RM: Did they have parades in Eureka ever?

EG: Oh, yes. Memorial Day they used to have a big-time [parade]. And I remember we always dressed in our finery and marched all the way to the cemetery.

RM: Did the Italians live in their own section of town or were they just everywhere?

EG: No, they assimilated.

RM: And the Chinese had their own section, didn't they?

EG: Yes.

RM: How about the Basques?

EG: The Basques had the sheep, of course, out in the country.

RM: They weren't in town?

EG: No, and when they came to town, they lived it up, to tell you the truth. They did?

EG: Yes. And they had their own eating house and so forth.

RM: So the Basques were kind of segregated then?

EG: Oh, yes.

RM: What did people think of the Basques?

EG: They thought they were perfectly all right.

RM: There wasn't any discrimination against Basques?

EG: No. They were the people that had the sheep. And when they came to town, the boys were flush, so you could imagine they would live it up.

RM: And then spend all their money and then go back to the hills?

EG: That's right. [Laughter] But there was always somebody there to take their wad or whatever they'd bring in.

RM: Were there a lot of Basque sheepherders in those days?

EG: Well, that's all there were — just Basques for sheepherders.

RM: It was big sheep country, wasn't it?

EG: Yes.

RM: Was sheepherding important for the Eureka economy?

EG: Yes.

RM: Where did the sheepherders get their supplies?

EG: At Biale's market. And what they didn't have there at Biale's market, they [bought in] Elko. Ely wasn't much of a town in those days, but Elko was, because it was on the main road.

RM: What did you do for health care, when people got sick?

EG: We had a doctor.

RM: Was there a hospital there?

EG: Well, there was a makeshift hospital that nobody went to except when people got too old and they had to be confined or something like that. Otherwise, you took care of yourself.

RM: So, they just didn't hospitalize people in those days?

EG: No.

RM: Babies were born at home, weren't they?

EG: Yes.

RM: Was there a midwife, or did the doctor deliver the babies?

EG: The doctor delivered them. There were some women who used to go around to take care of the woman. My mother did that.

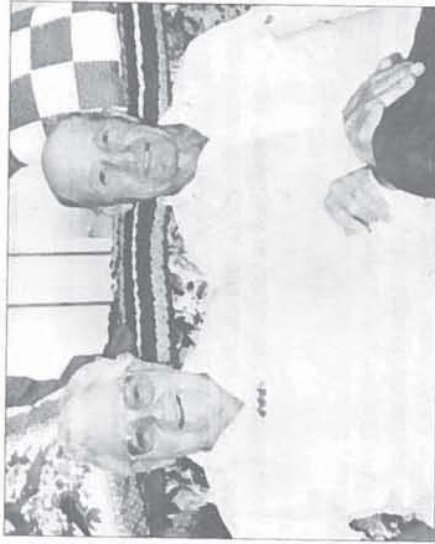
RM: What would happen if a person broke their leg or something and had to be in the hospital?

EG: Well, I guess you went to Elko. They had a good hospital there.

RM: How did you get there?

EG: You went by car.

**An Interview with
FLOYD & CHARLENE SLAGOWSKI**



Charlene and Floyd Slagowski
Pine Valley, Eureka County, 1992

*An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken
1993*

CONTENTS

An Interview with Floyd and Charlene Slagowski

- CHAPTER ONE 4
Background information on Charlene's parents and the early loss of her father; Charlene is brought up in Pine Valley by her grandparents, Charles and Molly Rand; Charles works with bull teams hauling wood, and his later career in carpentry in Mineral Hill and Palisade; hardships the Rands survived through the years, including deaths, an earthquake and a grasshopper infestation; describing an infestation of Mormon crickets; recollections of the rabies epidemic in Pine Valley coyotes from 1915 to 1935.
- CHAPTER TWO 12
Further recollections concerning the rabies epidemic; remembering a scabies infestation, and discussing tularemia in the local rabbit population; Charlene's travels to attend school; background information on Floyd's parents and Floyd's youth on a Wyoming farm; Floyd moves to Nevada and finds work on various ranches, then lands a job on the Sadler Ranch in Diamond Valley; remembering the Sadler Ranch; moving cattle using horses; a night spent at Joe Flynn's ranch — typical Nevada hospitality.
- CHAPTER THREE .20
The hard work of feeding cattle in the winter on the Sadler Ranch; more discussion of the Sadler family; on cleaning ditches and haying using horses; remarks on breaking horses; how to choose a good horse; driving cattle from the Sadler Ranch to the railroad at Palisade — animals that had never seen more than a mud hole were suddenly presented with railroad tracks, traffic and a river.
- CHAPTER FOUR 28
Rounding up cattle in Pine Valley in the fall; the geography of Pine Valley and the quality of the feed there; availability of stock water in Pine Valley; remarks on the presence of the BLM in Eureka County, and some background on the tramp sheepmen in the county who helped overgraze the range prior to the 1930s.
- CHAPTER FIVE 35
Further remarks on the BLM, and observations on the future of the ranching industry and ranching as a way of life; breeds of cattle in Pine Valley; the winter of 1889-1890; the importance of the freight teams of the 1870s to the region between Eureka and Palisade; the merits of oxen, horses and mules as freight animals; remembering Charlene's cousin Joe Flynn, a freighter and rancher; the size of William Pritchard's freight company in Palisade; an extensive description of the intricate work of driving a large freight team.

CHAPTER SIX

43

A continuation of how freight teams are connected and managed; some differences between horses and mules as dray animals; feeding and watering teams of freight animals; how to tell when an animal is faking pulling its load; Floyd enters the U.S. Army in 1942 and, in Hawaii, becomes a mule handler and then a farrier; spending his last army days in Colorado.

CHAPTER SEVEN

50

How Charlene's grandfather Charles Rand came to Nevada while transporting some mules; Charles meets his wife, Mary Booth, at Mineral Hill and, after some years in Mineral Hill and Palisade, they buy a ranch in Pine Valley; the settlement of Pine Valley and the building of Eureka and Palisade; a description of the mountains bordering Pine Valley and the creeks that flow into and through it; winters in Pine Valley.

CHAPTER EIGHT

56

The seasons in Pine Valley; more history of the early settlement of Pine Valley; The Emigrant Trail and the mail route from Salt Lake City to Sacramento in 1851; remarks on Joe Flynn, his talents with horses, and how he freighted from 1910 to 1912, when the Eureka and Palisade Railroad was washed out; memories of other Mineral Hill pioneers; Charlene's memories of school days in Palisade in the late 1920s.

CHAPTER NINE

63

A description of the railroads in Palisade; the confluence of Pine Creek and the Humboldt River; early phone line in Palisade; recollections of the school in Palisade, and of riding the narrow gauge between Palisade and the Rand Ranch each week; further memories of epidemics in the 1930s; some of the men who served in the armed forces from Pine Valley; Floyd and Charlene are married.

CHAPTER TEN

71

Economic improvements in ranching in the 1940s compared with the early 1930s, especially the winter of 1931-1932; how people lost ranches in the 1930s; a discussion of the various ages at which cattle have been sold through the years, and the types of cattle preferred at different times; the era of sheepherding in Eureka County.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

79

The 1950s --- a new highway and a new phone system enter Pine Valley; living on the Slagowski's ranch; running water and power come late to the valley; Floyd and Charlene's children attend high school in Elko, and some of the challenges of boarding youngsters away from home; how Floyd began to hay with machinery in the 1950s; on working hard and creating a fine ranch; the school on the Slagowski's ranch; the iron mine in the Cortez Range; mail delivery in Pine Valley through the years.

CHAPTER TWELVE

87

Remarks on the cattle business in the 1960s; moving a house and a vault door from the Mount Hope Mine to the Slagowski's ranch; starting the school at the ranch in the 1950s; the Slagowski's move to the Pony Creek Ranch in the 1970s, and their children move onto various local ranches; Floyd builds their new home in the late 1970s; remarks on the oil wells in Pine Valley and on the Carlin and other area gold mines; a true story of driving a bull 90 miles in one day --- on horseback.

ADDENDUM

95

A detailed account of the art and science of hitching, driving and managing freight teams.

CHAPTER TWO

- FS: I recall Reinhold Sadler telling me one time he went to catch his wrangle horse to wrangle the horses in. He said when he put the bridle up to him, he just dropped everything and left, because the horse had been bitten with a rabid coyote in the night sometime.
- RM: Wow. So he probably went and got his gun and shot him?
- FS: I suppose he had to destroy him.
- CS: Now, another plague was the rabbits. They ate you out of house and home. We've had several infestations of rabbits; I remember the folks did.
- FS: They weren't that bad. They'd get bad, but they'd die off. A more important one would be to tell about the scabies that they had when they had to dip all the cattle.
- CS: Yes, that was bad too. That was when I was about 15. So you see, it was one thing after another.
- RM: Tell us about the scabies. What is scabies, to begin with?
- FS: It's an infestation of tiny mites the cows get, a skin mite disease. They lose their hair. It's a pretty risky thing, and they have to dip the cattle in a solution to kill it in order to stop it. They had to build a dipping bath to put the cattle through the solution, and that's all an added expense and added time and trouble.
- CS: I think a bunch of them went together and they built a cement floor in the corral and then it went down into a big cement chute and then underneath this they had a furnace-like thing where they chucked in wood and stuff to keep [the dipping solution] warm through the night. I remember walking over there with Grandpa to fire it up at night. And it was always the awfulest-smelling stuff — it must have had a lot of sulfur in it. It smelled like rotten eggs plus other things. I remember I used to take sagebrush in my hand, rub it in my palm, and put it over my face, and smell the sagebrush. Of course, I just had to go over with Grandpa to see this. [Laughs] I was just a young teenager. But that was all an expense. All the different ranchers brought their cattle there. They would come out of this chute, and you had poles with these "S"-shaped things to poke their heads down in the solution.
- RM: Oh, they had to get their head down in it, didn't they?
- CS: They had really to be baptized in that stuff. [Laughter] They'd come back up and then they had a drain pen where they'd stand and drip and they had little ditches in this cement so it would run back down in the vat. It was quite an operation. I can't remember who brought their cattle there to do it, but the different ranchers in the valley came and put them through that. Did they only have to be put through that once?
- I believe so.
- RM: Was there just one serious outbreak of scabies, or have there been others?
- FS: There have been other light outbreaks throughout the years, but if they handle

it immediately, they get it stopped. But this one kind of got a hold and all the people in the valley had to dip to get rid of it.

The reason we talk about these things is to more or less give an idea of the troubles and setbacks and the problems and expenses they had trying to establish a ranch.

Yes — it's part of the life here.

That's right.

What about the rabbits? They rise and fall, don't they?

Yes so many years. They're starting to become quite prevalent now.

What causes the cycle?

It's a natural thing. It'll take them a few years to build up to a real problem. And at that time, they'll eat alfalfa fields and alfalfa stacks. They're a nuisance; they do a lot of damage. After they get to a certain point, they'll get tularemia — rabbit fever disease — and they'll all die off. It's just a natural cycle and they're gone and you don't see any more for many years.

- CS: Nature takes care of it.
- RM: Is the tularemia in the population all the time or does it just come in now and then?
- FS: It must be there all the time. But when they get so thick, that will take them.
- CS: Tularemia is a disease in humans too, you know.
- RM: Yes. We used to call it rabbit fever.
- FS: That's what kills them off — they get too numerous and the disease takes over and they die off.
- CS: It's a swelling of the glands and . . .
- RM: We were told never to touch their blood, especially in a month without an "r."
- FS: I don't know about that. We always leave them alone — won't touch them.
- CS: We still don't. If there's a dead rabbit around, we're careful of how we dispose of it. Floyd's brother had tularemia.
- RM: So you grew up on your grandparents' ranch?
- CS: I sure did. But every time I had to go to school, I had to be sent away. I went to Elko and stayed with my aunt — she taught school over there. I stayed with her to go to first and second grade. Then her son died; that was another blow. He was only 13 or so when he died. Then I was sent back down to Palisade to school. And that's when we used to ride on the old train. You'd go in on a Sunday afternoon on the old train or in the little motor car and then come back out Saturday morning. That was a short weekend, as far I was concerned.
- RM: Right — very short.
- CS: I hated it. [Laughs] Then my uncle started a school out on the ranch. He had the place the Bispos have now.
- RM: What would the ranch be called?
- CS: I guess they call it the Raines' place; Bob Raines had it years ago. And so I went to school in Diamond Valley too. In those days it took 5 to start a

school and 3 to hold it out here in these boonies. So I was a pretty good candidate for holding a school. [Laughter] And that's about all I was. I wasn't much of a student, I can tell you. Then I went to Reno to high school and graduated from there.

RM: I see. So you went to a lot of different schools?

CS: Oh, yes. They couldn't stand me very long. [Laughs]

RM: Floyd, why don't we back up a bit and get your name and everything like we did with Charlene. Why don't you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

FS: It's Floyd Carl Slagowski.

RM: And when and where were you born?

FS: I was born in Burnt Fork, Wyoming, April 24, 1916.

RM: And what was your father's name?

FS: Eli Slagowski.

RM: And do you know when and where he was born?

FS: He was born in St. George, Utah.

RM: Was he a Mormon?

FS: Yes, they were Mormon people. He moved from there up into the Bridger Valley, where he and my mother homesteaded in 1900. And that's where the family was raised. They added some to the homestead, but that's where we were raised.

RM: Whereabouts in Wyoming is the Bridger Valley?

FS: It's in the southwestern corner of the state.

RM: What nationality is Slagowski?

FS: Polish.

RM: Was his family converted to LDS in Poland?

FS: Supposedly the old grandfather was to be a priest in the Catholic Church. I don't know what happened, but he left that to come to this country. He came over here and then he got converted somehow, I guess.

RM: I see. And then ended up in St. George? And was your father a rancher by occupation?

FS: That's right.

RM: And what was your mother's name?

FS: My mother's name was Susan Merchant, and her folks came from Australia.

RM: Is that right? What was her place and date of birth?

FS: I can't tell you exactly, but it was about 1878.

RM: And was she born in Australia?

FS: No, she was born down in St. George, Utah, too.

RM: Were her parents converted to LDS in Australia and moved here?

FS: I don't think they ever were converted; they weren't Mormon. But that's where they met.

RM: And then where did you grow up?

FS: I grew up there on Henry's Fork, where Dad homesteaded.

RM: How did you get out to this country?

14 SLAGOWSKI

FS: They had a large family — I was one of 9 children. And naturally, on a small ranch, the older children moved out and found work in different areas, because there wasn't enough for everyone.

CS: And his mother died when he was young.

FS: My mother died young and after Mother died, Dad leased the place to my brother-in-law and my sister, who had just been married. Three of us younger kids stayed with them to finish the eighth grade in the school there. I finished the eighth grade right at the beginning of the hard Depression. There was plenty of hardship right then and I wasn't able to go out to high school. That was the end of my schooling right there. So we moved out to find work throughout those hard times. My brothers and I did various things — worked around various ranches and whatnot before I ever came here.

RM: When did you first come here?

FS: In the spring of 1937. A friend of mine wanted to come down here because he said wages were better. The work was more plentiful and he had a brother in Ely, so we took my old Model A '28 Ford and headed for Ely.

RM: What kind of wages were you getting before you got here as opposed to when you got here?

FS: I had been fortunate enough to have a job on a ranch up there at \$30 a month and found.

RM: "And found?" What does that mean?

FS: That means board and room. That's the way they spoke of it at that time. If you had a job with board and room, it was a job for a certain wage and found.

CS: And the board and room wasn't any Conrad Hilton. [Laughter] Sometimes it was just the sky.

RM: Is that right?

FS: Oh, yes. [Laughter] When I come to Nevada, my first job was \$45 a month.

RM: So you had a 50 percent increase in pay.

FS: Right. That's a lot.

RM: Where was your first job?

FS: I went to work for Frank Callaway in Currant, at his ranch there.

RM: Tell me about Frank Callaway at Currant.

FS: He had the ranch and he hired a lot of Indian help from the Duckwater Reservation there. Most of his help were Indians. But he also had the post office and the little store there.

RM: That would be where the restaurant is now?

FS: That's the present Currant restaurant. He also had race horses. And it amused me at the time — he had a parimutuel betting system setup; he could get [the races] over radio and his help would come in and bet on these parimutuel bettings on the race horses, and I don't think it cost him too much for wages because he was getting it back through the betting on those horses. I wasn't used to this type of thing, so he didn't get any of mine back. I was only there a short time. [Laughter]

SLAGOWSKI

15

I got sick and had to leave. It was a kind of a different operation. He had a pretty good ranch and ran a lot of cattle there.

RM: How big was his ranch?

RM: I don't recall. That's been a long time ago and I only helped him for about a week. We branded up some calves and got some cattle out while I was there, and I got sick. He wanted me to start irrigating and I didn't savvy that too good, and I got the flu and I left there and went back to Ely. So I was there a short time. He had a good ranch there.

RM: Was there quite a bit of traffic on the road from Tonopah to Ely?

FS: As I recall, when I went from Ely to Callaway's ranch at Currant, it was all gravel road. With that Model A '28, I fixed about 3 tires, I think, on the way there. [Laughter] It took about all day to get there. So there wasn't much traffic on that road.

CS: There wasn't much traffic period, then.

RM: Did you ever get on down Railroad Valley or up to Duckwater or anything?

FS: No. That's as far down in there as I got. When I got sick, I went back to Ely.

RM: When I got over my sickness, I came on west and tried to find work at old Pop Moorman's place, and he didn't need help. Then I wound up in Eureka.

RM: Where was Pop Moorman's place?

FS: He was about 30 miles west of Ely on Highway 50.

RM: OK. And was that a big ranch?

CS: I didn't think it was big.

RM: It was nice outfit.

RM: And what happened in Eureka then? What was Eureka like?

FS: There was not much going on, really. It was pretty quiet. And when I came into Eureka, I was 500 miles from home or anyone that I knew too well and I had about \$5 in my pocket and I was out of a job and things were looking a little bleak. I went into Pete Laborde's saloon; he had the old Eureka Hotel. Old Pete had been a sheepman and a rancher, and he knew all of the ranchers in the area. I asked him about finding work because I told him I was about out of money — I told him my circumstances. Pete said, "Yes, I think I know where you can get work." He said, "Pat O'Shea just left the Sadlers. It's been a hard winter. They're out of hay. They're trying to get their cattle out and I think you could find work if you went there." So that was a good lead from a fellow who knew. I immediately got in my old car and drove down to Sadlers.

RM: Where was Sadler's place?

FS: At the Big Spring, 35 miles north of Eureka in Diamond Valley.

RM: And what happened there?

FS: I went to work for them and I worked there about 4 years.

RM: Till the Depression was basically over?

FS: It was beginning to come out of it a little bit, but they were still in trouble. But it was improving, and I liked the people so well. It was a wonderful family. I had had enough hard knocks that I was glad to have a good job and

stay there, and they were so good to me.

RM: What was your pay there?

FS: Forty-five and found.

RM: So you were still way ahead of what you had in Wyoming.

FS: It was an improvement.

RM: What was life like on the Sadler Ranch?

FS: It was very good for me. They had just come through some hard times with the Depression, naturally. They were buying the place from an estate. Edgar and Ethel were the old folks there on the ranch. Edgar was the son of old Governor Reinhold Sadler. They lived in the big house there. Young Reinhold Sadler had just got married to Verna — Chris, we called her. She was a schoolteacher. And they were in the big house too. Tiny Sadler — Floyd — was down in the western part of the state somewhere, working with a survey outfit, and the youngest girl, Violet, was in Reno in high school at that time. They had this good ranch operation there and needed help and they liked my work and I liked the family and Riney as a boss, so we got along well.

RM: How many hands did they have there?

FS: They only had one other man hired.

RM: What was going on in Diamond Valley at that time? There was no irrigation then, was there?

FS: No. The jackrabbits up there were carrying their lunch across the flat where those hayfields are now.

RM: Is that right? [Laughs] Were they running cattle in Diamond Valley?

FS: They ran cattle north. There were other ranchers in there. At that time, of course, they didn't have a stock truck, so you didn't truck the horses out to do your work. Everything was done with horses — the haying operation was all horses, your work with the cattle was all horses. Wherever you went, it was with horses at that time. There was a lot of work for me. That's the kind of work I liked and they didn't especially care for the riding part of it, so I did 90 percent of that.

RM: How many miles can you make on a reasonable day?

FS: It depends on various things, of course. I might tell you about one incident that would be typical. They had cattle at the Young Ranch in Jiggs and they sent me to get them. It was in late November or early December — it was late and there was snow on the ground. I left the Sadlers' ranch and rode to Jiggs in one day; that's 55 miles. I got there just a little after dark. Mrs. Young fixed me a nice supper while I took care of my horse in the barn and she gave me a good bed.

The next morning the 2 boys helped get the cattle rounded up out of the field. It was about 10 below that morning. We saddled up just before daylight and went down into the field and gathered the Sadler cattle out of their bunch and I got started. I got into the lower end of Diamond Valley that night with those cattle and I dropped them at dark and rode on in to Joe Flynn's ranch and stayed with him all night. I went back the next day, got

my cattle and went on. So it was 3-day trip.

RM: Wow — 110 miles. That's faster than I thought you could go on a horse.

FS: Three days was crowding things, but it was typical of the work that had to be done.

CS: But remember, it was cold. He was trying to get to the fire. [Laughs]

FS: When I left them in the lower end of Diamond Valley that night, I think it was about 10 below when I got into Flynn's. It was a cold winter.

RM: How do you stay out in that kind of cold?

FS: You just saddle up and get right with it.

CS: You do a job.

FS: You hump up and take it.

RM: Do you get used to it?

FS: Oh, yes.

CS: You might tell about how you got to Joe Flynn's — how it was different in those days. You could go into somebody's house and feel at home.

FS: I had met Joe Flynn several times and he was a fine outstanding man. And I had stayed at his place a couple of times, taking cattle or bringing them back if it was a distance where you couldn't get home. If you'd come to a ranch you'd stay overnight and you were welcome. Joe Flynn was very good. And he had told me, "Anytime you come here, I want you to stay over; you're welcome anytime."

Well, when I came in that night after dark, there was no one home. And Joe Flynn had had trouble with people stealing groceries out of his cellar and things at various times, so he locked everything up when he left. He was riding for cattle over the mountain and I didn't know that. That time of year, he generally came down here to Pine Valley, because he bought hay and fed his cattle. So I thought he was gone, and I didn't know he'd be back. And it was so cold and I was so tired from the ride, driving those cattle from Jiggs that day.

I thought, "Well, I'm going to go see if I can get in past his lock." He had just a nail driven in his window to hold it from swinging out and he'd open it to get air in the house. Well, I picked that nail out and crawled through the window, unlocked his door and went back out and put the window back like I found it and had the door open. [Laughs] I went in, built a fire, got warm and cooked myself some supper.

And about the time I was finishing my supper, I heard a noise outside and went out on the porch and it was Joe Flynn. Joe said, "Hello, who's there?" [Laughs]

I told him who it was and I said, "If you'd hurried up a little bit, you'd have been on time for supper." [Laughs]

Joe said, "You wait till I put my horse away." He put the horses away — his and his hired man's — and he came back and fixed a meal. We went to bed and next morning he fixed a good breakfast about daylight. I had to go back and get my cattle but before I left, Joe said, "I want you to tell me how you

got into the house, 'cause I had it locked up."

So I said, "Well, come out and I'll show you." And I picked that nail out in the window and, I said "I crawled in and opened it." [Laughs] I said, "I wouldn't normally do that but you told me I welcome."

He said, "I'm glad you done it. I think a lot more of you that instead of fighting the cold for another 10-mile hard ride . . . I think more of you for doing what you did." He said, "I'm not locking my house against people like you. It's [locked] against people who want to steal."

RM: That's a great story.

FS: It's typical of the hospitality out here.

RM: Is the hospitality like that now?

FS: In places, but very few.

CHAPTER THREE

- RM: What other recollections do you have of the Sadler place?
 FS: Mr. Sadler was in the legislature at the time. Edgar and Ethel were more or less retired, and Edgar was in the legislature. They were down there in the winter months some and we were there on the ranch. Reinhold, their son, had taken over the operation of the ranch.
- CS: And Tiny.
 FS: Well, Tiny wasn't there yet. My first winter there [I did] some of the hardest work I ever did. Reinhold was building his new house, and they had the foundation all made and they were just putting a floor on it.
 CS: He had been married to Chris for not very long.
 FS: Yes. That was the fall of '37. That winter, Floyd Sadler came home and the 2 of them, Floyd and Reinhold, were building on that house to finish it up for Riney. They fed the weaner calves and then worked on the house each day throughout the winter. The other hired man had left and I was the only hired man, so I had to feed the rest of the cattle. And as I recall there were about 800 head of grown cattle to be fed — mostly dry stock and one bunch of cows and calves. I had to harness up my horses in the morning before breakfast, and in the wintertime, during the short days, breakfast was just about daylight. I'd have my horses harnessed and fed by then and I would have to work 4 head of horses on my feed rig. So immediately after breakfast I'd take a lunch and I would go up by the spring and out to what they called the John's field — I think that's 4 miles. There I fed 3 big loads of hay.
- CS: He pitched it off the wagon.
 FS: Yes, I would pitch loose hay. And a load was a ton of hay; a ton would feed 100 cows.
- RM: So you'd have to make 3 trips?
 FS: Yes. I'd pitch it on the wagon, haul it out in the field and pitch it off for the cows to eat, then come back and get another load, until they were fed. Then I would load a load and haul it back into the next field, where I fed that load and 2 more that I pitched there, which would make the 6 loads I fed there. Then I would load a load of hay there and haul it back up above the spring, where there was a bunch of cows and calves, and feed a load there. Then I would have to go back by the house and down in the field 2 more miles to get a load of hay and bring it back to finish feeding the cows and calves. When I unhooked my team at night in those short days, it was just about dark. So I had spent the whole day working as hard as I could pitching hay.
- RM: How did you do it?
 CS: He was young. [Laughter]
 FS: My lunch, when I took it, would be frozen ice at noon. Those mornings were very cold. Many mornings when I went out, it was 10, 20 to 25 degrees below zero when I'd leave there. Driving 4 head of horses is a little bit cold on the fingers.

- RM: You got gloves, I assume?
 FS: Yes, but holding to those lines in that penetrating cold was hard. I'd tie my lines up to the Jacob's staff and beat my fingers to keep them warm and let the team go by themselves. Those horses were pretty well trained and when I would have a load of hay to pitch off to the cows, they were trained to go in a huge circle while I'd pitch it off. They knew how to follow the feed ground. I worked some with a bobsled when the snow was good. When the snow melted it would get down into that alkali and mud and get wet, so I'd still use the sled; a wagon would bog in too deep. All we had then was a big wooden wheeled wagon, so it was better to pull the sled with 4 head of horses in the mud. That's what I used most of the winter. In the spring, of course, on the higher ground, I had to use the wagon. But I fed those cows for them that winter and I was a little bit weary by spring.
 RM: You were earning your money, weren't you?
 FS: I think so.
 CS: But they were good to him. He always felt they were just like home.
 FS: Mrs. Sadler was just like a mother to me. As I was telling you [off the tape], I lacked education. She would give me material to read. Being a teacher, she could see my shortcomings, and she liked me. So she would give me material to read and then she'd question me to see if I read it. After supper at night while she was washing the dishes, she'd have me read to her to see how I was improving, and she helped me with my words and my understanding. I thought that was pretty wonderful. The main thing I regret is that I never told her how much I appreciated it.
- CS: Oh, you did too, Pa.
 RM: Tell me some more about the daily work on the ranch.
 FS: Well, on that ranch there's a big spring — lots of water — and you have to irrigate to raise a hay crop. Reinhold did all the irrigating and he worked hard at it. He was a hard worker. He knew how to get the best use of the water. We had to clean those ditches in the spring to clean the moss out so the water would run free to the patches he irrigated. And we were limited on machinery to work with. These huge ditches with the water coming out would be mossed up and have silt and mud in them, and we'd have to clean that out. Riney would take 6 head of horses and he would ride one horse and drive these horses, and I would ride a Martin ditcher and keep it in the ditch to throw that muck out.
 RM: What is a ditcher?
 FS: The Martin ditcher is a iron V-shaped thing that's straight on one side and has a blade on the other. This blade throws the dirt out to make a ditch.
 RM: Oh, it actually makes a ditch. How deep does it go?
 FS: Well, it's pretty limited. It'd make the ditch about a foot deep; I think the blade was about 6 feet long. And on an angle it would make it 3 or 4 feet wide. But these ditches were way bigger than that. They'd been made with a team and slip scraper. All we could do with that was go down to the

bottom to knock the silt and the moss out, to clean them with this ditcher. As the moss and silt were loosened, they would be flushed down the ditch and out by the water.

CS: That was warm water too. That probably created more moss.

FS: Yes. They have big ditches out from this huge spring. It's a big spring — about 12 second feet of water. That's a lot of water.

CS: That was Floyd's big bathtub. He'd go up there and take a bath in the winter just the same as in the summer.

RM: Does the spring still flow?

FS: Oh, yes.

RM: The pumping hasn't stopped its flow?

FS: I don't think so — not that they know of yet. They keep a check on it.

RM: What are some more details of the work that went on there?

FS: Well, I had to work in the hayfield too, and when we put up the hay he had a small crew, but they ran a long time.

CS: What do you call a small crew?

FS: A small crew was 2 mowing machines, 2 buck rakes, one 14-foot hay rake and a stacker team — 6 men and the stacker. It takes 7 men for the crew.

RM: And quite a number of horses.

FS: Oh, yes. Each teamster changed horses at noon.

RM: Oh, you only worked a horse a half a day?

FS: That's right. It's hard work. The first 2 years I was there in the haying season, Floyd Sadler and I drove the mowing machines. One year I recall we mowed 70 days without a break. I mowed hay without a stop 7 days a week.

RM: That's a lot of hay.

FS: That's a lot of hay and a lot of time. The next year, I ran a buckrake in the hayfield, and the next year I stacked for him. I did all the stacking. I was trying to gain a little more experience in the various phases of ranching.

CS: And then you rode in the fall and you broke horses.

FS: Oh, I didn't break any horses for Sadlers.

CS: I thought you broke horses.

FS: One work horse is all I broke for Sadlers. I didn't break any horses there.

RM: You've broke horses though?

FS: Oh, I've broke horses.

CS: Oh, land!

RM: Tell me about breaking horses.

FS: It was a whole lot different than today because all the horses that we broke in those days were raised out on the range, and we didn't break them until they were 4 or 5 years old. So they were wild. It involved quite a little hassle to get them gentled enough that you could get on or off them or put your saddle on or whatever you needed to do. It was hard work and dangerous work. It was a different process. Now most of the horses are gentled from a baby colt so they're not afraid. Half of your problem in the early days was getting a

horse gentle enough to not be afraid of you.

RM: What are the steps you went through to take a horse off a range and break it?
FS: When we'd bring them in off the range, we'd have to cut them out away from the others and get them in a small corral. We'd catch them by the front feet and throw them down and hogtie them so they couldn't get up. Then we'd put a hackamore on them. We'd let them up and tie them up high to a solid post with quite a long rope so they couldn't hurt themselves as they hung back. We'd just leave them alone there and let them sit for a while. They'd fight that rope until they would learn to give to it. They'd hang back and fight it, but they'd eventually give to it. Then we'd untie them and work with them to get them to come to the pull of the rope.

But you couldn't get up to them; you couldn't touch them, because they were scared to death. They would kick or strike at everything that came near. Some of them would even fight you. So you had to work with them a lot. And we would throw them down quite a lot that way and hobble their feet so they'd stand, and then you'd work them gentle with a gunny sack. When they'd get so they weren't afraid you'd tie up a hind leg and work with them so they couldn't get away from you but yet you could touch them. Once they got so they knew you wouldn't harm them, then you could saddle them up to get them used to the saddle. Sometimes you'd turn them loose then and tie their head around to one side so that the horse would learn to give to that rope a little, and then to the other side. You'd work with them that way until you got them gentle enough. With the hind leg tied up, you could get on and off. They would scare and caper around a bit, but they couldn't get away. Then they'd get used to the sight of you on their back. And from there on, when you've got them so you can get on them, it was just get on and ride.

RM: Did they buck?

FS: You bet. About 90 percent of them did. And when you first rode outside, they would stampe and run because they were scared to death.

RM: You couldn't hold them?

FS: Oh, no. You didn't have that much control.

RM: You just had a hackamore on them?

FS: Well, I always used the snaffle bit to break one. But whether you used the snaffle bit or a hackamore, you didn't have much control to begin with. That would come with a little use day by day as you used them.

RM: What do you do when a horse just runs with you?

FS: The best thing to do is just let him run — although there are so many fences now. And then there were washouts. When we were starting colts, we generally liked to have someone come along with us to haze and turn them away from ditches and fences and things, if they ran.

RM: How far will a horse run?

FS: Generally a quarter of a mile to half a mile. They run out of air a little and they start to slow down. They'll go further than that, but not at full steam. It

- took a lot of time and a lot of hard work to break those wild horses.
- RM:** How long would it take from the time you would start until the time you had them so that they were a decent horse?
- FS:** I always figured it takes about 3 years to get a horse into the bridle and working well.
- RM:** So it was a lot of work.
- CS:** It depends on the horse, too.
- FS:** But you'd be riding a horse within a day or two — you'd be on his back for short times. Then you worked along in the snaffle bit — you'd ride him in the snaffle bit for, say, a year.
- RM:** Now, the snaffle bit has got a hinge on it in the middle?
- FS:** Right. You'd ride him in that for a year before you'd have him handling well enough that you felt you could put him in the hackamore. Then you'd put him in the hackamore and you'd ride him for almost a year and get him to handle real well with the hackamore. By that time, he's getting more experience and working better all the time and you can control him with that. Once he handles well, then you put him into a 2-rein with a hackamore nosepiece with your bridle and a curb bit. He won't like it at first, but you can still handle him with the hackamore. So you've got him in 2 reins. Then he gradually learns to handle with the bridle and pretty soon you've got him straight in the bridle. You have to ride him in that for almost a year before you feel he's really broke.
- RM:** So you have a 3-year process in breaking a horse.
- FS:** That's what I think.
- CS:** Well, that's the Floyd Slagowski way. He puts his heart right in it.
- FS:** A lot of people do it differently. They go into it a little faster and sometimes it doesn't work. You can spoil a horse awfully easily; you can give him bad habits by trying to go too fast.
- RM:** What makes a good cow horse out here?
- FS:** Work.
- CS:** Work and TLC. [Laughs]
- FS:** A horse is an animal that has a lot of energy, a lot of stamina, and enough work to give him exercise is a lot of work. If you give him enough work to keep him in good shape he learns by habit, and the more work you give him of the right kind, showing him the right thing day after day after day, the better he gets at it.
- RM:** Can you look at a colt and tell whether he's going to be better than average or anything like that?
- FS:** Not necessarily. Definitely you want a horse with good conformation.
- RM:** Why?
- FS:** Because they are more active and they can handle themselves better. Their legs are straight.
- RM:** What exactly is good conformation?
- FS:** I don't know how to describe good conformation. You want straight legs

and you want them to be deep through the girth. The first thing you look at in a horse is his feet. If a horse has got good feet, you can look on from there. If he hasn't got good feet, you might as well just discard him.

- RM:** What do good feet look like?
- FS:** They're good solid hooves. They're not split, not broke, they're straight. And he can carry himself. You want good feet, good straight legs. You want a fairly short back but you want a long sloping hip — muscular. You look for the muscle.
- CS:** A quarter horse, in other words.
- FS:** You like a long neck — trim, slender, not too coarse, and you want a nice, fine head that's wide between the eyes and short between the eyes and the muzzle — a smooth head and neck that blend into his body smoothly. You take horses of that kind, and a bigger percentage of them are good. But you can get a perfect conformation and have a horse that doesn't amount to a great lot.
- RM:** What about personality and heart and that kind of thing?
- FS:** They're all different — as different as humans are. A person who breaks lots of horses, rides lots of horses, handles lots of horses, will find that all horses are different. You have to overlook a lot of their little faults and pick out the good quality and build on that.
- RM:** What do you look for in personality to make a good one?
- FS:** You like a horse that's alert and sensitive and responds to your rein — a horse with a light mouth.
- RM:** What does a light mouth mean?
- FS:** That you don't have to pull hard. When you touch the rein or if you touch him with a foot, you want him to respond immediately. A lot of that is developed and a lot of it is in the horse. Some horses are just logy and you don't want that response.
- CS:** You want their trust too. [That has to do with] the way you behave with them. He has one now that he's having a little problem with. Boy, that horse has got a beautiful personality. I love it. He loves me too. I walk down there and he always comes and nuzzles me around. And next thing I know, he pulls my hair net off. [Laughs]
- FS:** But your horses are as different as people.
- RM:** Does a cowman develop a relationship with his horse, so to speak?
- CS:** Oh, yes, you trust them.
- FS:** Yes. I think you find that more in people who do all their work on only one horse. They become a little closer to that horse and depend on him a little more. Years ago when I was riding with outfits, we had from 8 to 10 or 12 head of horses in our string. You rode those different horses — maybe you changed at noon. And you had a lot of different horses that you rode. If you went from one outfit to another, you got a whole new bunch of horses. Would there be one horse you would prefer? "Oh, boy, I'm going to be riding him this afternoon," rather than, "Oh, god, I got old so-and-so."

FS: [Laughter] You're right. You have certain horses that you use for certain jobs because some are better. You have some horses that you can trust that do your work a lot better than others. You have some horses that you have a pretty hard time getting your work done on. You learn the particular work that you have for that day and you choose the horse that you can do that on. CS: Yes, or you choose the one that has the most miles in him and will stand up under it. I've heard Floyd say that.

FS: Yes. And some horses have more endurance than others. Now, like that trip that I told you I made to Jiggs . . . You have a 3-day ride, one day right after the other of long rides like that, it tires him out. He's got to be tough.

RM: You couldn't do that on just any horse, then.

FS: No. That 55-mile ride had snow, and mud under the snow. That's hard.

CS: The reason he knows so much about hoofs is that he learned to be a farrier in the army.

RM: Oh, so you went into the army after you were down here.

FS: [Laughs] When I worked for Sadlers there we came through Pine Valley every fall taking the cattle to Palisade to put them on the railroad. When they sold cattle in the fall then, they didn't come with trucks to get them. You got what you had for sale and drove them to the railroad and put them on the railroad cars and the buyer took them wherever he wanted them to go — to his feedlot. So it was kind of a hard deal.

Those cattle down there were more or less wild and when you brought them into the railroad, they had never seen more water than that little spring over there or a mudhole to drink out of. They didn't know about crossing water. They wouldn't cross a bridge — they'd never been driven across a bridge. When you peeked over that hill to Palisade and heard the train whistle down that canyon and it echoed up and down that canyon, they just milled and were scared to death. And your horses were scared of that too. We would drive the cattle into a ranch where all the ranchers had got together and put a set of scales. They all weighed at the old Blair Ranch. Then it was a mile from there into the stockyards at Palisade.

We'd take those wild cattle, and after we got them weighed, we had to go down and cross the river. Well, the cows wouldn't cross the bridge nor would they ford the river — we had a hard time getting them to ford it. Of course at that time of the year, the river was low and that was our best bet. So we'd have to force them to cross the river (it was only about belly deep). And then when we crossed the river, we crossed the narrow gauge E&N [Eureka Nevada Railroad] tracks, and we'd gone over both tunnels. We crossed in and were on the north side of the tracks then. We had to cross back over the Southern Pacific tracks, go down between the E&N tracks and the Southern Pacific tracks about a quarter of mile to the stockyards. And at that time there were probably 30 or 40 people in Palisade. And the dogs were barking and the trains were whistling up and down the canyon and I tell you, it was a nightmare getting those cattle into those stockyards before

a train came along and scared them back up over the hills. It was one of the worst places I ever found to put cattle into the stockyards to ship them off the ranch. So that was one of the problems we had. If we had 150 or 200 head of cattle, 4 men could handle them. Five hundred head would have to be taken in 3 drives to avoid greater problems.

CHAPTER FOUR

- CS: You say, Floyd, that it was very hard to corral those wild horses.
- FS: Oh, yes. It was a lot harder than cattle.
- RM: I've been told that in the early days here they kept the cattle on the range all year. Down south of Austin, down toward Tonopah, they keep them on the range all year, but here you feed them in the winter now. Could you discuss that?
- FS: In this country the winters are severe enough that they have to feed hay through about 3 to 4 months of the winter. The Taylor Grazing Act was formed in 1934 and, after that time, all the ranchers in this country had to have a permit to run cattle out on the range. They turned the cattle out in the spring and used the outside range; then they had to be gathered in. In Pine Valley, in the fall of the year, we would start at the southern end down at the old Plumber place.
- RM: How far would that be south of here?
- FS: That's 8 miles. (If you go beyond that there are other ranches down there, but they never were involved with the roundup on this end.) Right after haying time, they would all get their saddle horses in, get the shoes on them, and start to gather the cattle that were sold for beef—the steers and heifers and the dry cows. And each rancher from Palisade up to here would send a representative—one man—to ride with the group. When they rode out of Plumbers' ranch, Plumber would be the boss. He would spread the men out on the rides and he would be the boss of the riders in that area for about 4 days' ride out of there. And they would gather all the cattle they could. We'd ride out and hold roundups high in the mountains and gather the steers and anything for beef. When we brought the beef that had been sold in, we'd leave the others out there. The rancher [whose ranch we were working out of] kept his cattle there and we'd move the rest of the cattle and the horses to the next ranch—say here. We'd ride about 3 days out of here. Then we'd move the cattle and the horses and strays onto the next ranch and ride out of there, and so on all the way down the valley. Each rancher would take over as boss at his ranch. It would take about 30 days to ride the valley, and by then everyone would have their beef in on good pasture, all but a few. Then each rancher would ride to gather in any little stragglers that we had missed and get their beef prepared and ready to take to the railroad. Everyone had to drive to the railroad then and ship their beef.
- CS: Remember, the cooks were cooking for 15 to 20 cowboys.
- FS: Yes, the women at each ranch there would cook for the crews. And of course when you had that many and each man had 5 to 8 head of saddle horses, you had quite a cavvy to wrangle each morning. And each of the cowboys would take a turn wrangling these horses in to use in the morning for each to catch his horse. After the beef was gathered and shipped in about the first of November, we would start the ride to gather everything. They'd gather all

the cattle off of the range and bring them into the fields and hold them on their meadow pasture until they had to start feeding. Then in the winter months they would feed until spring and when spring came and the grass started, they'd go back to range again.

- RM: How far would you go?
- FS: In this valley we would ride as far as the crest of the range. There were also cattle coming into this valley from Cortez Valley.
- CS: Yes, that's west. They call it Crescent Valley now.
- FS: They would drift over into this valley so they would send a couple of representatives from the ranches over there to gather those cattle. There would also be cattle coming from Jiggs, that area in Mound Valley, over into this valley, and they would send 2 or 3 or 4 representatives. So they would ride with us here and, when we finished, they would take their cattle and go back home.
- RM: Now, Mound Valley is the next valley to the east?
- FS: Yes.
- RM: And where is the town of Cortez?
- FS: The old mine was right on the west side of Mount Tenabo, just on the west slope of it. The old town was very near to the Eureka and Lander county line.
- RM: What is this range to the west called?
- FS: That's the Cortez Range.
- RM: Describe Pine Valley. Where does it begin and where does it end and what does it consist of?
- FS: I would have to call Pine Valley all the drainage of Pine Creek. Now they call this up here on Henderson Creek Garden Valley. They used to call that other one over there Denay [sounds like Daney] Valley; it's part of the drainage. They are just mini-valleys, you might say, within Pine Valley. I see. And Pine Creek runs north and drains into the Humboldt?
- RM: Right. Pine Creek starts up here at the little pass to the south of Horse Creek off of Mount Tenabo. Horse Creek is the main tributary off the head of it. Garden Creek and Denay Creek run into it, but they come in from the south. Pine Creek runs a little bit north of east until it comes to Blackburn. There's a big bend in the creek there that goes north. Then it goes north to the Green Springs down there. And at Green Springs it turns almost due west into that little narrow canyon and it makes a circle to the north and then another circle back to the west. That's almost a little "S" shape through Pine Creek Canyon. And that's just a mile from where it empties into the Humboldt.
- RM: Does Pine Creek run all year?
- FS: Oh, yes.
- RM: And how about the tributaries?
- FS: Most of the tributaries dry up, but not our creek. Hot Creek here runs constantly. All of the tributaries from the south eventually dry before they get here. This is the first live water that runs all the time. Then Trout Creek runs

the year round, and Padelford Creek runs quite well.

CS: But not all the year round.

FS: No, not all year. Hot Creek and Trout Creek make most of the hay meadows down through here. And there's Big Springs in the bottom down here — Big Springs at the Stone house.

RM: Where are those big springs? What's feeding them, I wonder?

FS: In the old Rand place down there and the Stone house. . . . years ago they used to call that Stone house the tulle lands. And there are a lot of tules there, but there are sump holes — springs that come up — and they're deep. I don't think anyone knows the source, really.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about what the cattle feed on when they're out on the range?

FS: Well, so many people who travel through on the highway think that this is a very desolate area — that there is nothing. But when you get away from the highways, away from main travel route, and go back through these hills, you find a lot of good grass and a lot of springs, especially in this northeastern part of the state. And there are a variety of grasses. I'm not well enough informed to tell you just all of the types of grasses, but there are many different native grasses that are good and a good strong feed. This is typical and good livestock country — livestock do very well here.

The old cow buyers years ago used to come in here to buy these dry cows because of the hard fat they had on them — they slaughtered out better. It was far better than the cattle they could get in California that were on lush-appearing grass. They liked them much better because this feed is strong. It's a better fat.

RM: I wonder why that is.

FS: It's the higher altitude; it's stressed a little more. And the more stress it has to [undergo] to get its growth, the better quality it seems to be.

RM: Is that right?

FS: That's what I find. On a good rainy year, when we have more rainfall than normal, the grass will be taller.

RM: How tall will it get?

FS: Oh, up to 1 or 2 feet. But it's not as good a quality sometimes as it is when it's down at about 8 inches. The cattle will be fatter and stronger. And the ranchers have known that all through the years. This is good stock country. It is not what I call farming country, because you're limited on what crops you can grow. You grow hay for the cattle and that's about the limit.

RM: Why are you limited on the others?

FS: The seasons are too short; too much frost.

RM: What is your growing season here?

FS: From about the middle of June to the 1st of September.

RM: So you can't really have a garden here?

CS: Oh, yes. We have a garden. This year, remember, spring was so early. We never plant spuds, squash, beans or corn before the 10th of June because

you're going to get that frost in June, usually. But this year we went ahead; we got with the program. We got stung, too.

FS: Yes. [Laughs]

CS: We had to replant the corn and the squash and the beans. The spuds survived somewhat, but they're pretty sorry — kind of anemic looking. But we garden. We have a big garden all over up here.

FS: In some of the more protected areas back in these canyons they don't get that much frost, and some of them grow some fruit and a few other things. But overall, it is livestock country.

RM: How many cuttings of hay do you get?

FS: We get 2 cuttings of alfalfa and one of native hay.

RM: And about how many tons of alfalfa do you get to the acre here, would you say?

FS: I don't really know.

RM: Would you get less than Diamond Valley or would it be about the same?

FS: I think a little less, because they let the hay mature a little more here and they figure on 2 crops. Over there they cut it a little early but they figure on 3 crops. They might get a little better production per crop; I don't know.

RM: I'm fascinated by the stressed plant being more nutritious than the one that isn't. Would stressed alfalfa be better?

FS: I think that's why the quality of alfalfa in Diamond Valley is as good as it is — the high elevation and the cooler temperatures add a little stress.

RM: So Diamond Valley has good quality hay?

FS: They have top quality hay there.

RM: And yours would be as good here?

FS: Oh, yes.

RM: Are most of the people here in alfalfa or grass?

FS: Well, the ranchers here mainly have grass. Although I shouldn't say native, because it's been planted in timothy and redbud and various grasses.

RM: But you only get one cutting of it?

FS: That's right.

RM: When they originally started planting hay, did they have to do a lot of working of the land to get it level and everything, or was it in pretty good shape to begin with?

FS: Years ago I'm sure that it was rough and had to be worked some. The old-timers talk about all of the wonderful rye grass that was in the bottom lands here along these creeks. And it's been written in some history how wonderful it was then and the good grass and everything. But I think they didn't take enough into consideration. I fully believe that the rye grass was that good through the bottom lands and up through here. But now they say in their writings that it has deteriorated throughout the years, and I don't believe that is true, because they've irrigated it. If you over-irrigate rye grass, it will die out. They'd give it too much water and it would die out, but they've gone in and plowed this land up and leveled it and planted timothy

and redtop and a better quality of hay. So I think the overall bottom land through here which they said is deteriorated is actually better, because of the better quality feed.

RM: You mean, it's producing more feed than it was originally?

FS: Right, it produces better and more.

RM: Are there any grasses that the cows do better on?

FS: Oh, sure. There are some that are more palatable and that they eat better because they like it better. And there are some that are better quality that they do better on.

RM: Are different areas known for one type of grass versus another?

FS: Oh, yes. In different areas, different types grow better than other ones. But it's all good. And this country is well watered, if the water is taken care of right.

RM: There's enough water for everybody?

FS: Well, for stock water. I'm talking about stock water. All along in these hills there are lots of little springs.

CS: Well, it's having its problems with the drought right now. But the other day when Floyd was up in the hills, he said actually that old dried feed is there and it's good; it's water that's a little problem.

FS: People in the BLM come out here and look out through and see this short, dry feed, and they think the cattle will starve to death. But they just look at that little old dry feed that they can see from the road and they don't look at the cows. And the cattle are fat on this dry feed. As long as they can get water, they're in good shape. They have good flesh and they're contented and doing real well healthwise. That's a better way to measure feed and its quality.

CS: But the water's getting to be a little problem on the range.

FS: Yes, but not too bad in this area right here.

RM: You mean for the water for the cows?

FS: Yes, stock water.

RM: Could you talk about how things were in the days of open range when the Taylor Grazing Act came in '34? The BLM just is gradually tightening its grip, isn't it?

FS: Yes. They've built up throughout the years and they've gradually got a bigger staff in there. And they come out through here and look the country over a little more and check it. One of the big changes that I see in this particular area is that years ago, when I first came here in the late '30s and early '40s, there were lots of sheep in this country. And there were more cattle than there should have been. It was overstocked.

RM: It was overgrazed?

FS: I'm sure it was overgrazed. When the BLM came with the old Taylor Grazing Act, there were a lot of tramp sheepmen in the country. What I mean by tramp sheepmen — the sheepmen here would bring in a fellow from the old country and have him herd sheep and he'd take his wages in sheep. Pretty

soon he'd have a band, but he wouldn't have any base property, and he would just go from place to place. He'd winter in the south and come north in the summer, and just trail where he wanted to. And there was quite a number of them. One of the [Taylor Grazing Act] regulations was that people should have base property in order to have a range permit, so they stopped all of the tramp sheepmen.

Then they limited each ranch's range according to the amount of hay it could produce. If he had 1000 head of cows in the winter months, then he could develop range for 1000 head out on the range. That's the way they determined their [allotments].

So that brought things more into order. You have to give the BLM credit for that. I don't give them a lot of credit [laughter], but for that I will. You can't take away what's right. So that helped the range quite a bit.

Then in the early days here, the sheep used to come in in the springs; they'd shear them just before they'd come in. And in the spring months, in early April, you get a lot of blizzards and cold winds and they'd be sheared. Well, those sheep would get cold. And in those blizzards, they would just run — and they'd turn them back. They'd go one way and then turn them back; they'd have to herd them. So they were in bunches running back and forth. And in lambing time, they'd have a terrible time controlling them in these storms. They tromped more feed than they ate — they tromped the early feed so badly that they hurt it.

They tried to keep the coyote population down, but one spring up here the Sallaberrys had sheep running up on this range. They had a government trapper with them in the spring to trap coyotes and hunt dens and try to keep the coyotes out of their lambs, but the coyotes took so many of their lambs that they told me they lost nearly 50 percent of their lambs one year. Well, with the coyotes being that bad and various things, they sold their sheep and changed to cattle, and there were a number of other people who also sold their sheep and changed to cattle.

RM: What time frame are we talking about here?

FS: We're talking about the mid and late '50s. As we got away from that early tromping by the sheep in the spring, and as the cattle numbers went down a little bit, that helped the range; and the range has increased by leaps and bounds. We also had better control on the waters and things — we did that ourselves, more or less. The range is far better now than I've ever seen it. They try to tell you, some of them, that the range is decreasing, but that's not right. I've watched it over a 50-year period of time and I've seen a big increase in the feed — everything is just in better shape.

RM: How do you see the BLM's role in maintenance of the range now?

FS: The BLM's role in it is not favorable. They have a big staff over here at Elko and also at Battle Mountain, but they have young people who have gone through range classes in college. Well, those young people are all taught one principle, one thing, one way. And they try to base their knowledge on what

they've been taught; their knowledge is not based on common sense. And they won't accept the knowledge of the ranchers who have been here for many, many years and seen these changes.

RM: What is the base of the knowledge that these young college guys are trying to put out?

FS: They talk about range improvement and what they've done, but the only range improvement they did was to plant some crested wheat fields around the various countries. That has increased the feed no end, and it was a good project. One of the things that I have wanted them to do for years and years was improve water. And of course, I'm just as glad they didn't now, but they wouldn't do that. Now, that's one thing we do individually here that has improved the range a lot — we have developed springs for stock water and we have that water taken care of so it's in troughs and it's good clean water for them to drink.

CS: But they want to intervene in that.

FS: The BLM is trying very hard to get the water away from the state, which shouldn't be done. I don't like that.

RM: Oh. The state controls the water now, don't they?

FS: Yes. And they should. I hope it stays that way. Now the BLM works with the Wildlife Service and they're allowing them to ship in antelope, elk and everything. They're putting on more of this for the sportsman and they're trying to cut us back on AUMs [animal unit months] to accommodate the game animals. Well, that's a wrong principle. And they've let the environmentalists, to a certain point, influence them in the notion that the cattle are harming the range. And we don't believe that; we can prove otherwise. Tell him about the riparian situation.

CS: They're trying to fence off the creeks for one thing or another because they think the stock are doing so much damage to it. Well, that's a costly program that's not worth the effort. I feel that we people who are using this range have bought this range with our money. It's a part of the ranch, but they're trying to take us off of this. And their principles are all wrong. Every rancher in this country, I would say, is trying to better the range, because we've got sons and grandsons coming up. We're not trying to ruin it. We try to take care of it. Of course, you're going to have a percentage — probably 10 percent of those ranchers could care less and they're greedy and they'll take off everything they can get, and they abuse their privileges. But I'm talking about the majority, probably 90 percent, who take better care of the range and the water and the grass and everything else than they can out of that BLM office.

FS: For instance, these young people that they bring into the BLM to administer will come out here to check the riparian areas and whatnot. They don't want the cows grazing along these creeks because they're afraid all the bugs and things along the creek will die. Anyhow, they send these people out into the field here. They've had a little schooling and they maybe spend an hour to a half a day out here on one of these areas, and they'll say that it's deteriorating, it's going to rot, they're overusing it. They have nothing to compare it with — no time limit to compare it to. We, out here, who have lived here for 50 years, have a better comparison for it. We know what we're talking about, but they won't accept this. Instead of being public servants, they try, and sometimes do, dictate their erroneous ways.

RM: How do you see the outcome of this?

FS: Oh, I wish I knew.

RM: Some people I've talked to say that this is going to be the end of ranching, and that that's the real intent of the BLM.

CS: Well, they'd better not get to thinking that way or it will be.

FS: That is the real intent, and I do believe that they're going to ruin the ranching industry, almost, before they come to their senses and have to change. I do believe that they will in time come back. Livestock raising has been in effect since the beginning of man, and it has always been a good industry. If you work at it right, livestock will take care of you as well as you take care of it. It always has throughout the years. I think we're going to have some bad times, some ups and downs and hard knocks here, but I think we'll weather the storm.

RM: One of the things I think the people in the BLM don't consider is the fact that they're also dealing with a way of life out here which is worth preserving too. It's as much a part of the environment out here as some of the plants and so on.

CS: Yes, and a lot of these good ranches are changing hands, getting into the hands of some fellow who's loaded with money but doesn't have that much experience or doesn't care about the area. They're taking them over and those ranches are just going right downhill. You ought to see that ranch where Floyd started up — Sadler Ranch.

RM: Is that right?

FS: Oh, yes. It's terrible. This one fellow has bought ranches all over the country, and he just put a caretaker there. The caretaker takes care of his cattle and the things around there, but he's limited and he doesn't care. And the ranch property itself has gone down.

CS: The people who are on there right now are some good conscientious people, but they're still just working.

FS: They don't care.

RM: You're saying that the family rancher here has a long-term investment in the

area, whereas the big guy doesn't have an attachment to the land.

- FS: Oh, definitely.
- CS: I don't mean to snuff out somebody's lights so ours will burn brighter. But we had a holding down here, my grandfather's old ranch. When we were disposing of it, we had a chance to sell it to some Arabian. We could have, but Floyd said, "No way." We're preserving our friendships in this valley and their interest in livestock, and you'd better sell to somebody like that. So we did. We had a chance to sell to Dameles, who in turn sold to Tomeras. This is rancher to rancher, so therefore the ranch is upgraded.
- RM: Are the ranches hard to sell when a person wants to?
- FS: Not really.
- CS: We could have sold for more.
- FS: You talk about the family ranches, and I want to say a thing or two about that. It's been proven throughout all of the years that your good strong family unit, and your family operation, is the backbone of any country.
- RM: That's right.
- FS: When it fails, everything falls apart. And it's the same way with the ranches. The family takes care of the family ranch for a future purpose as well.
- RM: Yes. He also takes care of it because he loves it.
- FS: That's right.
- CS: It's part of your life. You're part of it and it's part of you.
- FS: I know nothing about city life. I've never lived in a city. [Laughter] I have no idea...
- CS: You know enough about it to know that you don't want to be there. [Laughs]
- FS: I'd be completely lost. If I didn't have this, I wouldn't know where to go and what to do. And there are other people like me — it's just what you like.
- CS: It's the same way with our boys; they've stayed right with it. They could have gone and gotten the big money in the mines, but money wasn't the main purpose. They like their family life. And thankfully they're living good family lives, raising their kids here. They have a different outlook on things.
- RM: That's great. Tell me about the different breeds of cows. Are there any differences in terms of how well they thrive or in their qualities or anything else?
- FS: That's an individual preference, of course. But years ago, when I first came into this country, I would say 90 percent of the cattle were the Hereford breed. And there were at that time a lot of Shorthorn cross in them.
- RM: Why were they crossing into Shorthorn then?
- FS: That, again, was an individual preference. I think they thought they got a little bigger cattle and that they felt they got cows that milked better and raised a little bigger calf. That was the purpose of that cross. And some people liked them real well. I never liked the Shorthorn cross with the Hereford, because those old cows always look like they're ready to die. They're poor and scrawny. They raise a beautiful calf, but the cow herself is always

poor, so I never cared for them. I think we started in this valley probably first of all to crossbreed, and I started to crossbreed with Angus in my first calf heifers, because you get a better survival of your calves.

- RM: You breed the Angus bull to the first calf heifer?
- FS: Right. And that cross has proven to be one of the best feeders in the feedlots, and all of the buyers like them. They've done real well for us. And we've stopped with just the one cross. Many of the other people started to crossbreed, and they've picked up with these new exotic breeds. And they never stopped with one breeding. A fellow at [Reno], Bill Barrens, was the cattle specialist at the university. He had a meeting up here one time, and I asked him, "Now, I've crossed with the Angus, but I've got some heifer calves that I'm keeping out of that cross." And I said, "What do I do now?" He said, "Go to a third breed." Well, I didn't believe that was right and I didn't do it. Many of the other people did — they went to a third breed and a fourth breed and a fifth breed. I didn't like that idea and I never did do it. And I'm glad I didn't, because I've seen so many of the others go through a third and a fourth and a fifth breed, and they're mixed up to where they're just more or less mongrelized. And they're not a good-type cattle. Now they're trying to get back to a better cross. But it's all individual feeling on that.

The original cattle in here were Longhorn cattle. This ranch we've got down here was the first ranch developed in this valley.

- RM: Which ranch is that?
- FS: Right down across the road. That was the old original Cross Ranch. And that was their brand — a cross. It was established by Lewis Bradley, the governor of the state. He established that ranch and brought Longhorn cattle in there in 1864. He was the first cattle rancher in this country. He developed ranches in Jiggs and the Mary River country over there; he had cattle all over. He had a huge outfit. And they tell me he brought in some of the first Shorthorn cattle from the East to upbreed them.
- RM: When would that be — the 1870s or '80s?
- FS: That would have probably been in the mid-'70s. At about that time some of the other ranchers began to ship in a few Herefords, and they knew that a better quality cattle was needed. So it was along about the 1870s when they brought in the first Herefords.
- RM: Why did they know that a better quality of cow was needed?
- FS: They were furnishing beef to these mines around this country and those old Longhorn cattle were tough. They could stand this country all right, but those steers didn't mature till they were 8 or 9 years old.
- RM: Is that right?
- FS: Yes. A yearling Longhorn wouldn't be as big as a weaner calf. It took those critters forever to mature. And that's what they were selling for beef here. And they knew that these others would mature faster. And the Longhorn was tough meat.

- RM: Were they tough because they were older when they were butchered, or just because they were naturally tougher?
- FS: I think it was a variety of things. They were a thin, skinny cow with stringy meat, and they were older and whatnot. I think people wanted a little better beef.
- RM: That's really interesting. So the bottom line was that they could make more money with another breed here besides the Longhorns.
- FS: They felt they could, but when they brought those others in and then those hard winters hit, they lost more of them too. They weren't as hardy — they couldn't stand the hard winters and rustle as well. So you had other problems.
- RM: So it was a tradeoff. Somebody told me that the winter of 1890 was really bad.
- FS: Eighteen eighty-nine and '90 killed a lot of cattle.
- RM: Did it kill the Longhorns too?
- FS: Yes, it killed a lot of them too. But these other cattle are not as hardy and it killed more of them. And they weren't putting up hay yet.
- RM: And is it true that 1890 was when they decided they should be putting up the hay?
- FS: That's when they started in this country, although they put up a little hay before that throughout the year. But it was just enough for their saddle horses; they were using a lot of saddle horses. They had to ride them in this winter-time to watch these cattle.
- RM: So 1890 was kind of a watershed year here in terms of switching from a little bit of hay to a lot of emphasis on hay.
- FS: After that winter, they brought in machinery and started to irrigate and put up hay.
- RM: And that became a really major focus of the whole work, didn't it? Because obviously there's a lot of work in putting up all that hay.
- FS: Yes. However, in this valley they were putting up hay down here as early as 1870 on the Cross Ranch and on the old Hay Ranch and down through the valley. All of these ranches were putting up hay in the early '70s because of the freight teams that were going through here. They'd feed those freight teams, and they were putting up hay for them, not for the cattle; the cattle ran on the range.
- RM: The freight teams were going to Eureka.
- FS: Right; and Palisade. It's a little hard to believe, and hard to fathom in the mind, that they used the freight hauled out of Palisade to Mineral Hill to build a town of 500 people and they built [Eureka] from 1870 to '75 to 6000 or 7000 people. And that was before the railroad. All the material to build those towns and develop those mines and all came out of Palisade.
- RM: It came down this valley?
- FS: By freight team. Can you imagine how many freight wagons and teams that took?

- RM: Incredible. What kind of animals were they using?
- FS: They used a lot of bull teams to start with. Then after Pritchard started his freight out of there, he shipped in a lot of mules from Missouri and he used mostly mules.
- RM: Why were they initially using oxen?
- FS: The oxen's a good freight animal. They were tougher, they were slower, but they would pull a heavier load. They maintained better than horses did on a long hard pull, and especially through mud; they could handle the mud and the slow going better with the heavier load than horses could. Now, I don't know how they rested bull teams, but a cow has to have time to eat and chew her cud and rest. How they managed that I don't know, but those old things maintained better, they said, than horses did.
- RM: Would they be able to chew their cud while they were pulling?
- FS: Not too easily. They generally have to lie and rest to do that. So it was always a mystery to me just how they maintained.
- RM: What were the advantages of mules in hauling freight?
- FS: Mules could live on scantier rations than the horse, and they're tough. They do a lot of hard work. There's quite a difference between your mule team and your horse team. Joe Flynn freighted a lot with teams, and he told me that a mule team can lug any load they'll start. If they've got a heavy load and they can start it, they can just keep right on walking. They can maintain and keep going where a horse can't. The horse will start a lot heavier load than he can lug. And you have to stop and rest a horse team more often.
- RM: Oh. But if a mule can start it off, you don't have to stop and rest him?
- FS: That's what he claimed. Once they're broke in right and know how to take care of themselves, they will lug along with a load that they can start — that is, in normal conditions.
- RM: So a horse has got more torque, I guess, on the initial pull?
- FS: Yes. They can start a heavier load, but they can't maintain it.
- RM: Where do the ox fit into that?
- FS: An old ox team is just plain tough. When they lean into a load, it's going to move. [Laughs] Especially in mud. They can be in mud clear to their knee joints and still just keep a-plugging along, where a horse will flounder and quit. A mule won't hardly go into it, but an old ox team just keeps going on.
- CS: Maybe that's what they mean when they say dumber than an ox team. [Laughs]
- FS: I don't know about that — he didn't know about that.
- RM: You've mentioned the name Joe Flynn. Who was that?
- FS: Old Joe Flynn was Charlene's mother's cousin. He was born and raised here in Mineral Hill. He was a great guy. He finally had a ranch up here in his later years, but in his younger days he freighted out of Mineral Hill to the railroad, and he freighted over from Buckhorn to Blackburn and over out of Bullion down to the Padelford Ranch. So he savvyed freight teams.
- RM: Was he using mules?

FS: No, he used horses. The old freight company that came into Palisade owned by William Pritchard had the biggest number of freight teams of any in the state — or in the whole country, as far as that's concerned. They figured that when he got started out of Palisade he had over 500 wagons and over 2000 head of work animals.

RM: Really? That was a big operation.

FS: That's right. And he was the one who built the railroad grade from Palisade to Alpha.

RM: Oh. And there must have been other freighters as well?

FS: Yes, there were many individual teamsters. But he was one big company — he freighted from Eureka to Hamilton and Pioche and from Eureka to Belmont, and he carried on from there. But think of hauling all the food and the clothing and the material to build those stores and mills and mines and everything; everything was hauled by freight team from Palisade to Eureka. They said there was a constant string of dust down this valley both ways, hauling the ore back and so on.

[After reviewing this manuscript, I realized the highly technical material on freight teams needed further elaboration. I have provided an addendum for the reader who is interested in this topic; it begins on page 95.]

RM: How large were the teams?

FS: They used from 12 to 20. Back in the Midwest, in the farming country, they worked bigger teams than that on some of the combines and things — you maybe had 40 head. But they had them as many as 10 animals wide and only 4 long. Out here in this brush country, in the rough terrain, all they had was just a little 2-track wagon road, so they had to string them out. It required a good skinner to handle them.

RM: And they were pulling 2 wagons, weren't they?

FS: Oh, they pulled 2 and 3 wagons, with the commissary wagon behind that. If they came to a right steep grade, they had to drop their wagons and take one wagon up and take the team back and bring another wagon up; it was slow. Or if it was muddy and bad and they got stuck in the mud, they had to drop all but one wagon.

RM: Do you know anything about the skinner's skills? I don't know how a person could handle a 20-head team! [Laughter]

FS: I know how they hooked them up and how they drove them. Say on the wagon of a 20-mule team, they used a big stout team for the wheel team. That was their best team — one that could hold the load a little without using the brake.

RM: What do you mean by hold the load a little?

FS: Well, if he happened to go down a little downgrade, they could hold back some on it. Of course they used a brake, but if it was just a little, the team could handle that. So they used the big team there.

And the skinner rode the left or near wheeler. (They called them the wheelers.) He had a saddle on it and he rode him. Then immediately ahead of

them were what they called the pointers. They were hooked right to the tongue of the wagon. Their stretchers were hooked right to the end of the tongue. The wheelers didn't guide the wagon, but the pointers did. When these pointers turned, they pulled the tongue of the wagon. The tongue of the wagon was rigid. The wheelers didn't have to hold that up — it was built rigid. It had to be rigid and held itself up because there was too much weight — it would make sores on their neck and bother them.

So the pointers guided the wagon, and immediately ahead of them were the swing teams. Right in the lead were what they called the leaders — the first ones, way out on lead. All in between them and the point team were swing teams, as they called them. And they all worked with just a cross-check to hold them from spreading apart.

The wheelers had lines on them — cross-checks where the skinner could drive them — hold them or turn them or whatever he needed to do. He had a long jerk line that went right up along those horses, right through the high ring in the hame on the left side of every left-hand animal to the left bit ring of the left leader. And they had cross-checks on the leaders. He had a check from his bridle bit back to the lower hame ring on the off horse. And from his hame ring to the off leader, it went by and unhooked to the outside, the right ring on his bit that didn't hook to the right. He also had one on the left one, but he had a jockey stick that worked on the hame ring to that off ring. When the skinner wanted to turn to the left, he gave a command of "Ha." That meant left. And he would pull on this jerk line, and that would pull on the left bit of this horse, and as he turned the check rein over here would pull the left horse with him and they would turn. And if he wanted to go to the right, he'd give a jerk on that jerk line and that horse would throw his head up and that would pull on this check and turn him to the right. And he'd call "Gee," and as he threw his head and hit that check rein, it would turn him to the right. As he turned to the right, that jockey stick would push the other horse to the right and they'd turn to the right. Now, these horses, as they worked, would follow the roads. They learned to follow that road all the time, so they didn't have to turn them that much.

But the road was crooked and if they had a sharp turn to make, those leaders would come around that turn and when they did that, they'd pull a long chain that would pull across. When it would hit the leg on that next swing team horse or mule, he would jump over the chain and pull to the outside. And then when they came around, he'd be pulling to the outside, pulling that chain. The chain would swing back and hit the next one, and he would jump that chain. All these swing teams would jump that chain and they would pull out to keep the chain in a half circle so that they wouldn't pull the wagon off the road. So all of them, clear back to the pointers, would jump over that on a sharp turn and they'd be pulling out. And they were just tied with cross-checks to hold them together; nobody was doing anything with them. They just jumped that chain. Then as the leaders would come

out straight and that chain would crowd him, he'd jump back over it.

RM: How high off the ground was the chain?

FS: About a foot off the ground.

RM: That's very impressive.

FS: It was a quite an art for a skinner to do that. And he had a swamper to help him with all those horses. It was nothing but hard work.

RM: Did they unharness them at night?

FS: Oh, yes. They unharnessed them and turned them loose to graze. Now, all of these pointers and swing teams and the leaders had light harnesses. All they had was a collar and the tugs and they had a back band that came back to a crouper, and they had lazy straps that come off the side and carried their tugs so they didn't step over the tugs. It was just a light harness; they had no breast straps or holdback straps or anything. All they were doing was pulling. Now, your back team had pull straps that they hooked to the neck yolk so they could hold back on them, britching on their harness and the whole works.

CS: You say he had a saddle on that horse.

FS: Yes. They had a light saddle that they put on.

CS: Even though they had the harness on?

FS: Yes, they had their harness rigged . . . well, they wouldn't ride bareback, as many miles as those guys rode. [Laughs]

RM: How many miles were they making a day?

FS: That varied, depending on the terrain and the weather and the load and country and everything.

RM: What would be a good day?

FS: Generally I think a team with a heavy load would make around 20 to 25 miles.

RM: And how long of a day was that?

FS: That'd be pretty long day — about 10 hours. They had to stop at noon and let the horses rest a little and water them. They had to have their rest.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: How did you learn so much about this? Did you ever drive teams, or was it through talking to old-timers?

FS: I drove a lot of teams but I've talked to a lot of old-timers and I've read a lot. With a long team, they would be pulling 3 heavy wagons, with the commissary wagon behind with their horse feed and their own feed and their beds and all of that. They had to have a light wagon for that, you see.

The wagons had to be coupled right, too. You had that long chain between all of the horses clear back to the wagon. But between the wagons, you had a coupling — they had a chain that came back past the tongue to the horses, and then from the back of that axle it hooked to a link in there. The front of the axle was hooked there and the back of it hooked here. All this pulled from the chain and the axles of your wagons, so there'd be a pull all through there. Then from there back they had a rod back to the back of the wagon — what they called a fingerlink hook. That hooked into a chain under the tongue of the trail wagon and the trail wagon had a sharp tongue, but it had a clevis on the end of that tongue and it hooked onto a horn on the reach of the lead wagon — just a loop that hooked over it. And this horn was about 18 inches long. So this thing that hooked over it hooked into your chain down under here and pulled the load of that wagon by the chain underneath. But it would slide up on the horn when they stopped.

They'd bring their team to a stop on a slight downgrade if they could, or if they were going upgrade, they'd lock the hind brake and then your lead wagons would roll back. But this clevis on the hookup would slide up on this horn on each wagon and then when your team started, they only had one wagon to start. They'd start that wagon and it would get to rolling before this one came tight. Then they'd start the second wagon. That slack would give them a chance to just start one wagon at a time. Once they got rolling, they could keep going.

RM: Yes. They couldn't start the whole thing as a dead weight, could they?

FS: No, the whole thing would be too hard to get started rolling. And then when it was on a steep hill going up, they rough-locked the last wagon and then the others would come back on that hook. So they had to start just one, come again, and start the next one. And with the rough-lock system they had brakes on and the driver who rode his horse had a rope back to a brake right behind him. He could pull that rope to brake that wagon, but his swamper had to brake the others. He'd climb up on the side and lock his brake in a lock system they had there.

And if it was so steep that the brakes were just dragging along and wouldn't hold it back, they had to rough-lock. They all had a rough-lock system. It was a chain fastened to the bed of the wagon that went down to a long shoe with angle irons up on the sides of it. They'd drop that down on this chain and let the wagon roll into that. When the wagon got into that, the chain