

AN INTERVEIW WITH
D.C. AND FAYE DAY

An Oral History conducted and
edited by
Robert D. McCracken

LINCOLN COUNTY TOWN HISTORY PROJECT
LINCOLN COUNTY, NEVADA

CONTENTS

Preface..... 4

Introduction..... 6

CHAPTER ONE..... 1

 D. C. and Fays' parents' backgrounds in Tennessee; growing up during the Depression; D. C.'s service in World War II; the Days leave Tennessee because of D. C.'s allergies; stops in Texas, Oklahoma and Arizona; work in Texas in the doughnut and insurance businesses; learning of land for sale in the Penoyer Valley, and purchasing some land after examining it; a move to Nevada; establishing an alfalfa-growing operation and purchasing more land; Fay and the Days' sons live in Las Vegas in the winter, and on the farm during the summers; Fay returns to Tennessee to care for her parents.

CHAPTER TWO..... 12

 Expenses in the alfalfa operation grow and grow; a corporation is formed; D. C.'s thoughts on subdividing his property; the town of Rachel is begun; the mine at Timpahute is reopened; the Days' struggles with various local, state and federal bureaucracies.

CHAPTER THREE..... 21

 A discussion of well-drilling; the Rachel power supply; activities at the Test Site and rumors of UFOs; selling lots in the Days' subdivision at Rachel; the process of getting a subdivision approved; area alfalfa farming; on opening a store in Rachel; the Little A'Le'Inn bar; tourist traffic in the Rachel area; a great place to retire.

CHAPTER FOUR..... 30

 Life in Rachel, and a comparison of Nevada and Tennessee; the cooperative spirit among Rachel's residents; on air pollution; the climate in Rachel; the rewards of helping travelers; schooling for Rachel's children.

PREFACE

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

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

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

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;
- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;
- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and

- e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

INTRODUCTION

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

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that most of it south of the 38th parallel remained largely unsettled, even unmapped. In 1890 most of southern Nevada - including Lincoln County - remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be so for at least another 20 years.

Even in the 1990s, the frontier can still be found in Lincoln County in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area is also visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

A survey of written sources on Lincoln County's history reveals variability from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Pioche from its first newspaper, beginning in the fall of 1870, to the present. Newspapers from Delamar are available from 1892 to 1906 and Caliente from 1904 to 1868. In contrast, Panaca and Alamo never had newspapers of record. Throughout their histories, all Lincoln County communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities. Most of the history of Lincoln County after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Lincoln County's close ties to our nation's frontier past and the scarcity of written sources on local history (especially after 1920), the Lincoln County Commissioners initiated the Lincoln County Town History Project (LCTHP). The LCTHP is an effort to systematically collect and preserve the history of Lincoln County Nevada. The centerpiece of the LCTHP is a set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Lincoln County libraries, Special Collections in the

James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada.

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

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Lincoln County residents. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories. The oral interviews and written sources served as the basis for histories of the major communities in Lincoln County. These histories have also been archived.

The LCTHP is one component of the Lincoln County program to determine the socioeconomic impact of a federal proposal to build a high-level nuclear waste repository in southern Nye County, Nevada. The repository, which would be inside Yucca Mountain, would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Lincoln County Board of County Commissioners initiated the LCTHP in 1990 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions and quality of life of Lincoln County communities that may be impacted by the repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided in the area. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nevada, material compiled by the LCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--RDM

This is Robert McCracken talking to D. C. and Fay Day at their home in Rachel, Nevada, April 9, 1992.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: D. C., let's start with you. Why don't you give me your name as it reads on your birth certificate.

DD: Delbert Clois Day.

RM: And when and where you were born?

DD: In Weakley County, Tennessee.

RM: Where is Weakley? (I used to live in Memphis.)

DD: Up in the country from Greenville, Tennessee, 100 miles north of Memphis.

RM: What is your birth date?

DD: August 6, 1924.

RM: And what was your dad's name?

DD: William Thomas Day.

RM: Do you know when and where he was born?

DD: He was born in Tennessee also, in the same area.

RM: You don't happen to remember the date, do you?

DD: No.

FD: It would have been 1890-something, but I don't know the exact date.

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

DD: Sophroni Paralee Dunn.

RM: And do you know where she was born?

DD: Same area.

RM: I'll ask you the same thing, Fay. How does your name read on your birth certificate?

FD: Nell Faytane Mount. Now it's Fay M. Day.

RM: And when and where were you born?

FD: I was born April 28, 1925, in Bradford, Tennessee.

RM: Is that also in west Tennessee?

DD: Yes. She was in a town 5 miles [away from mine].

FD: The towns are closer together there than they are in Nevada.

RM: D. C., what was your father's occupation?

DD: He was a farmer.

RM: And Fay, how about your father? What was his occupation?

FD: He was a farmer and a carpenter.

RM: Describe a little bit about growing up in west Tennessee.

DD: We were jerked up instead of . . . [Chuckles]

FD: We were raised during the Depression years.

RM: So you were poor?

FD: We were just like everybody else Ä we were poor and we worked like dogs.

RM: Even as kids?

FD: That's right.

DD: Oh, you bet.
RM: Was it working the cotton fields, or what? Were your folks cotton farmers?
FD: That was their main crop, cotton and corn.
DD: Yes, and potatoes, beans and . . .
RM: What did you do when you got out of school?
DD: I went to the service.
RM: When did you go in?
FD: In April of 1943. It was during World War II.
RM: Did you stay stateside, or did you go overseas?
DD: I was in the States 3 months I believe, and then I went overseas.
RM: Which theater?
DD: I was in the Pacific.
RM: When did you get married?
FD: Right after he got out **Ä** December 20th, 1945.
RM: And did you go back home then to live?
FD: We stayed in Tennessee one year after we got married. D. C. has always been bothered with allergies and he had asthma, so we started coming west, and this is where we ended up.
RM: Where was your first stop going west?
DD: Dennison, Texas.
RM: What took you there?
DD: Two of my brothers were in the doughnut business there. We went across the river to Durant, Oklahoma, and put in a shop.
RM: How long did you stay there?
DD: One year.
RM: Was it successful?
DD: Oh, yes. It was very profitable, except I had asthma.
RM: Oh, and you couldn't take the environment there?
DD: Right. So we started west and we ended up in Phoenix, Arizona.
RM: What year was that?
FD: It was in '48.
RM: What took you to Phoenix?
DD: Climate **Ä** we were hunting a place.
RM: You were looking for a place where you could breathe, and at that time you could breathe in Phoenix?
DD: Well, yes. We stayed long enough to know what it would it do.
RM: What did you do there?
DD: We were in the bakery business.
RM: Did you have another doughnut shop?
DD: No, I just worked for one.
RM: How long did you stay in Phoenix?
DD: Three years.

RM: Where did you go then?
DD: We went to Lubbock, Texas.
RM: Did you leave Phoenix because of your asthma?
DD: No, I was in good shape. We bought another doughnut shop in Lubbock, and we went back to run it.
RM: How long did you stay in Lubbock?
DD: Eighteen years.
RM: Oh, really. In the doughnut business?
DD: Doughnuts, and the crop hail insurance business.
RM: And why did you leave Lubbock?
DD: Well, I put all of our money up here.
RM: You started buying land here?
DD: Yes.
RM: What was the first you ever heard of Lincoln County, Nevada?
FD: J. B. Earhart told you about this farmland for sale.
RM: Who was J. B. Earhart?
FD: He was a real estate agent in Lubbock, Texas.
RM: Were you were looking for land at that time?
DD: No, there were some farmers in Stanton, Texas, and an agent in Midland that I had insured for several years. They got hailed out down there and they couldn't go through with their permits up here to get the deed to the land, so they were going to lose their land here.
RM: Oh, they had invested here. Right here where you are now in this valley?
DD: Yes.
RM: Now, what do they call this valley?
FD: Penoyer. [It's also known as Sand Spring Valley.]
RM: And they had invested up here?
DD: Yes, they had filed on this land.
RM: Under what, the Desert Land Act?
DD: I think that's right.
RM: When had they filed, do you recall?
FD: They filed in the early '60s undoubtedly, because you came in '65, right?
DD: Yes. It was about '63 or '64.
RM: I wonder how they heard about it up here? It's kind of off the beaten path from Texas.
DD: I guess it was advertised in several newspapers.
RM: But they filed on government land?
DD: Yes.
RM: And they weren't able to carry through with it?
DD: Right. They'd had a lot of hail in Texas, and they weren't going to make a good crop. So the agent approached me and we decided that we would come up and check on it to see if we were interested, because they were going to lose the land.

RM: When did you come up?
DD: The next year Ä '65.
RM: Do you remember what time of year?
DD: Yes, it was in July. In was in summer, I know.
RM: Did you go to Las Vegas first?
DD: Oh, yes, we spent the night in Las Vegas and came on up here. And all we had was a map. We stopped out here on the highway. Of course at that time there was very little traffic.
RM: Was the highway paved then?
DD: Yes. We got out and started looking for these pegs. Well, we found a peg but it was on that side of the highway.
RM: On the other side Ä the north side Ä from where you are now.
DD: Right. So we weren't too impressed. After we got through here we went on over to Tonopah, spent the night, and then we went over to Carson City and checked out the map. Well, come to find out we had gotten on the wrong side of the road. We'd decided if it was on the south side, then we'd be interested. But if it was on the north side we weren't interested because of the sand dunes. But when we got back we found out that the land was on the south side.
RM: Had they done anything with it, improving it in any way?
DD: Oh, they'd fenced a little bit. They had to spend a dollar an acre a year [to prove up on it].
RM: So they had fenced it and . . .
DD: Well, not all of it, just enough to keep it enforced.
RM: Did they have any wells down?
DD: They had one or two.
RM: Were they pumping water or growing anything?
DD: They were trying to grow some alfalfa, and it looked like it would do real good.
RM: How many acres did they have?
DD: Each one of them had 320 acres, and we bought several [parcels].
RM: Was it a family?
DD: No, it was a group of people that thought they wanted to live up here and raise some crops.
RM: So each of them had 320 acres. How many people were there?
DD: About 5.
RM: So we're talking about 1500-plus acres, right?
DD: Yes.
RM: And they hadn't invested that much, had they?
DD: No, they hadn't invested that much, but their time limit was running out to put in a well and so on.
RM: So you took it over from them. How long did you stay here? Did you come back from Carson, or how did that work?

DD: Oh, yes. We came back from Carson and went on back down there and that's when we found out that the land was on the south side of the highway.

RM: What made you think you could grow on this land up here? I mean, it's a lot different from Texas.

DD: Well, we checked everything out in Carson City that we could and we just felt that we could. There were some wells in here.

FD: Didn't you carry some land and water samples back to Lubbock?

DD: Yes, I did. And they were real good.

RM: And then what happened?

DD: Well, we started buying them out.

RM: You didn't have to pay them much, did you?

DD: No. I think we gave them \$100 each, because they were going to lose it all.

RM: So you acquired their rights, in effect, for \$100 apiece?

DD: Yes. Then we bought a couple of well drillers Å rigs and well drillers. We moved them up here and started drilling wells and making sure that we had the [necessary water].

RM: So you brought your own drilling rigs?

DD: Yes, we didn't know any well drillers up here.

RM: How deep were the wells that you had to drill?

DD: We drilled them about 250 feet.

RM: At what depth did you hit water?

DD: Down in the heart of the valley, at 105 feet.

RM: Were they good-flowing wells?

DD: You betcha.

RM: They weren't artesian, were they?

DD: No, they weren't artesian.

RM: How many wells did you drill initially?

DD: About 6, I believe. Then we got a driller out of Panaca and we sold one of the rigs.

RM: Oh, was it Darell Free?

DD: Yes.

RM: Yes, I interviewed him.

DD: He's a real fine guy.

RM: Yes. So he built some wells over here for you. Was that in the first year that you came up?

DD: No, I think that was in the second year. We spent most of our time drilling wells and fencing it all. We had to fence the cattle out because there were cattle on the open range.

RM: Did you have to level the land and all that?

DD: No. There was some of it we could flood irrigate, and some of it we'd have to put under a sprinkler system. We wanted to put in sprinkler systems anyhow.

RM: Did you use pivot sprinklers?

DD: Yes.

RM: Were you familiar with that from Texas?

DD: About halfway. They like to flood irrigate down there.

RM: It was a big change for you, wasn't it? I mean, basically you were going from the bakery business into farming.

DD: Well, I was familiar with the farmer industry because I dealt with it all the time through the insurance, plus I'd grown up on a farm.

RM: When you came up, did you move the whole household and everything?

DD: No, I brought some people to run it for me because I was still in the insurance business.

RM: So you didn't plan to move up here right away.

DD: No, but eventually.

RM: How did it go that first year?

DD: We just spent money on drilling wells and doing tests and trying to put enough crops in. You had to have 40 acres of a growing crop.

RM: And that was 40 acres on each 320-acre parcel?

DD: Yes. We got several on there the first year.

RM: Did you get a good crop that first year?

DD: Oh, no. We were running too close a schedule and we'd do one and then we'd run to the other one and do it before the statute of limitations. We weren't trying to grow crops ~~Ä~~ we wanted to learn, and we found out that it wouldn't grow if you didn't have long growing periods. We can get 4 cuttings of alfalfa.

RM: Wow. What do you get a ton per acre once you got going?

DD: Oh, gosh, I don't know. It's gone up.

FD: At that time [the alfalfa market] wasn't like it's been [recently].

DD: And at that time we didn't have electricity and we were running the wells on propane motors. When we started we were paying 6 cents a gallon, then that kept gradually going up.

RM: So you had a big investment initially with all those wells and the drilling equipment and everything.

DD: Well, you ran up a pretty good fee.

RM: Who was living in the valley when you got here? Was there anybody?

DD: No.

FD: [Laughter] Absolutely nobody.

RM: Who was your nearest neighbor?

DD: Gunderson.

RM: Where was he?

DD: He was west of here about 3 miles.

RM: Did he have an alfalfa operation too?

DD: No, he put in some maize I believe, or oats or barley or something.

RM: But he was acquiring land, too, that way?

DD: Yes.

RM: Was there anybody else then?

DD: Oh, there were several here but they weren't doing anything. They had proved up on their land, and they just quit. It was more expensive than all of us really thought.

RM: What were the terms that you had to follow in order to acquire title?

DD: Well, you'd put it off as long as you could, and you'd usually get a year's extension.

RM: You mean you were getting a year's extension because the original time period had run out on yours?

DD: Right. I don't remember how many years that was -- whether it was 3 or 5 years -- that you had to develop this land.

RM: But you had to drill a well and do 40 acres -- was that it?

DD: Yes, to get a deed.

RM: How much did a deed cost then, when you got it? It was by the acre, wasn't it?

DD: It was very little.

RM: Was it a dollar an acre or something like that?

DD: I think that's right.

RM: So you acquired title to all 1500-plus acres?

DD: Well, at that first go-round, yes.

RM: Did you file for more, then?

DD: Well, no. By that time some of the others wanted to sell theirs. There was a fellow from Texas who had 2 sections down in a part of the valley with wells on it, and he got killed when a pickup rolled over, so I wound up buying his field too.

RM: Did you buy other people out more than once?

DD: Oh, yes.

RM: How much did you finally end up with?

DD: A little over 4000 acres.

RM: And was most of it in alfalfa?

DD: No, most of it was idle. We had the deed to it but of course we still had to develop the water. But we had spent the required amount of money on it, and we had some extensions.

RM: Where did you live initially when you came up here?

DD: We had a bunkhouse down there.

RM: Did both of you come up here at this time?

FD: No, I did not stay at first. We moved into Las Vegas in 1968 because we had 2 boys that we had to have in school.

RM: How old were they?

FD: About 9 and 12.

RM: What are their names?

FD: David Charles Day is the oldest one, and Donald Craig is the youngest.

RM: They're all D. C.?

FD: Yes, all D. C.s. And we have a new grandson, and he's also a D. C.

RM: That's nice. Where did you locate in Vegas?

FD: Aberdeen Lane, but I don't remember the number.

DD: Just past Jones.

FD: It was a new addition in 1968.

DD: Then we spent a summer up here.

FD: Yes, before we definitely moved to Las Vegas, the boys and I came and stayed a summer down on the farm. That was quite an experience -- out of the city and no electricity . . .

RM: Tell me about it.

FD: Well, the boys enjoyed it. [Laughs] But Mother had her times, washing on a washboard and . . .

RM: Do you remember what summer that would have been?

DD: It was '66, wasn't it?

FD: Thereabouts, yes. By this time D. C. had moved some trailer houses in down there for people who were working for him, so we lived in one of those.

RM: Did you have a hard time getting help?

DD: We always have a hard time getting good help.

FD: Not everybody wanted to live out in the boondocks, either.

RM: What did you think about living out here? This is about as isolated as you get in the United States.

FD: That's right. As I say, the boys enjoyed it.

DD: We thought it was a good thing -- if we were ever going to be able to retire we had to start somewhere, and it just looked good to us.

RM: How did you experience the isolation?

DD: The roughest part on that was that we'd go to Las Vegas and try to buy enough to do for a week. [Chuckles] It was kind of hard on her.

FD: I learned to make a list. When you ran out of something, you wrote it down immediately, because you couldn't run around the corner.

RM: What was it like living without lights?

DD: Well, we had propane lamps.

FD: Of course the boys and I were here in the summertime -- during the long days. And they had run and followed their dad all day, so they were usually ready to go to bed about dark anyway.

RM: So you came up from Lubbock one summer and lived here. Was that when you moved to Vegas?

FD: That was a couple of years later. We moved to Las Vegas in November of 1968.

RM: And did you spend your time up here most of the time?
DD: She was in Vegas and I was up every month checking on things.
RM: But you were staying in Vegas?
FD: Oh, when we moved to Vegas, you were up here more than you were at home.
DD: I know, but I was up here every month.
FD: Even in Lubbock.
RM: Oh, even in Lubbock you were coming up every month to see how things were going?
DD: Right.
RM: You had people working here?
DD: I had 3 families.
RM: Was one of them the foreman Ä did you have somebody kind of in charge?
DD: Oh, yes. Of course, we had to leave them my pickup and equipment to farm with and fencing to fence with.
RM: Did you have any problems that way?
DD: Well, you always have problems. You fire some of them, and then you hire some of them. You need to be around an operation like this if you want to make it go.
RM: So you moved your household to Las Vegas in '68?
FD: Well, this is a long personal story. I was an only child, and my parents were getting old and they had to have somebody to take care of them. We could not bring them out here, and they really didn't want to leave their home and their doctor. So the boys and I went back to Tennessee in 1970 to take care of my folks, and then we'd come out in the summer and back and forth. (I don't think either of us would do all this over again.) We would come out here in the summer and stay with D. C. He had moved a trailer into Ash Spring, there by the pool in that trailer park.
RM: So you were commuting, in effect, from Ash Springs?
DD: Yes.
FD: This went on for 10 years until my folks both died. And in 1980 I came out permanently.
RM: Oh, I see. And by then the boys were grown.
FD: Yes. The youngest one graduated from high school in 1980.
RM: Do a lot of the people who work on your farm live over in the Pahrnagat Valley as opposed to living here in this valley?
FD: We don't even have the farm anymore.
RM: Oh, you don't? At that time, did they?
DD: Most of them would move to Ash Springs or Alamo.
RM: Were you hiring people who were natives of the Pahrnagat Valley, or were they from somewhere else?
DD: They were people who had farmed around Lubbock. We had 3 families who came from down there, and one is still here.

FD: The Gordon Baker family still lives here in Ash Springs.
DD: Yes, we had that family. We had 3 to 4 families out here
most all the time.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: When did you have the maximum amount of land cultivated here when you had ownership?

DD: We had 2 sections that we really put in, and then the rest of the time we were just going to have to take our time on it.

FD: We started running short on money, after all this time.

DD: Propane and everything else went so high that we had to produce a good crop or we weren't going to make it.

RM: What did propane go to? From 6 cents to what?

DD: Twenty-something.

RM: That's a big jump. And you were using a lot, weren't you?

DD: Yes.

RM: Give me an idea of how much you were using. What did it take to run one well, say, for a summer?

DD: Oh, I don't even know, but it was tremendous.

RM: Thousands of gallons?

DD: Yes. And I'd have 6 or 8 pumps running at one time.

RM: Where were you getting your propane?

DD: Tonopah, from Cavanaugh.

RM: He'd bring it out here?

DD: And they'd set those tanks around the motors.

RM: Oh Å he had a big tank at each pump? Where were you selling your alfalfa?

DD: I never did have enough to really sell, but we could have sold whatever we could raise. We were just trying to get deeds to these lands, but still I sold around 1000 bales. We found out how good the alfalfa was, and then we ran out of money.

RM: When was that?

DD: I'd say 1969.

FD: It was just before I went to Tennessee with the boys Å late '69, I guess. It was about the time that Watergate came on. That brought loans and everything to a standstill.

RM: Watergate did?

FD: You bet. You think Watergate didn't affect this United States, you'd just better think again.

RM: Is that right. Watergate dried up your ability to get loans out here?

FD: Well, that was one of the things.

RM: That's really interesting.

DD: The big man in with me was worth lots of money.

RM: Oh, you weren't the sole owner?

DD: No. I formed a corporation. And the man who put most of the money into it came out and I met him in Las Vegas. He came up here and spent the night, and I took him back into the airport the next morning.

RM: When was that?
DD: In about '65.
FD: It was between '65 and '70.
RM: So you came up here initially on your own to nail it down all for yourself.
DD: Well, the two of us. At first the insurance agent was in with me.
RM: What was his name?
DD: J. D. Crawford. He was my agent in Midland. And when this thing with the loans hit, it hurt him just like it did all of us.
RM: You mean in '70.
FD: You're going to have to excuse us on these dates. That's a lot of years ago.
RM: Sure.
FD: But it was in the late '60s. When did Watergate . . . ?
RM: Watergate began in '72.
FD: Well, that's when it came to a grinding halt.
DD: We kept it going. We formed this corporation and this one wealthy fellow called me and I went down to Dallas, Texas, to meet with him. (I already had an investor out of Austin.) Being in the insurance business, I did have some contacts. This fellow came up and looked it over and he said, "I'll tell you what. I'm gonna put \$2 million." We sat down and figured out how much money we were going to need to do it right.
RM: What figure did you come up with?
DD: Not quite \$2 million. And he said, "Well, let's put \$2 million in it and then we'll go from there. If that's not enough then we'll put some more in it." He said, "I'll send the papers up to you next week," because he had to go to Florida.
Well, he went to Florida and went in and had a transfusion of sheep's blood that was supposed to make you younger and all this good stuff. He and another fellow right behind him took it and they had spoiled blood, and they died in less than 24 hours.
RM: No kidding. So there goes your contact.
DD: That's right. And we had it all to ourself until . . .
RM: You mean you and your other partner.
DD: And Fay, mostly.
RM: The two of you plus this other partner.
DD: Yes.
RM: So that was a big blow for you.
DD: Oh, it was a tremendous blow. So I had to cut it out.
RM: But when you came up initially you had a partner.
DD: I had an insurance guy, but I bought him out.
RM: Early on?

DD: No, later on. And then I went to the guy in Austin and this one in Dallas. They wanted some stock.

RM: Did you acquire title to the initial 5 parcels yourself, or was it the corporation that did it?

DD: It all ended up in the corporation.

RM: Corporations could acquire land under that law, right?

DD: Right.

FD: Then you acquired it personally and later on it went into a corporation.

RM: When you came up here initially, did you think that it was going to be so expensive?

DD: No. I thought that I'd be able to handle it, and I would have. I have no doubt in my mind but that we were on the edge of everything.

RM: Why couldn't you, then?

FD: Money. [Laughs]

RM: You mean the Watergate thing.

FD: That was one of the things. And it cost more than we had ever dreamed.

DD: Everything was like propane. You start off with 6 cents a gallon, and then before you know it, it's up to 20-something. And everything just started going up.

FD: Well bless his heart, he is stubborn, I guess is the word. He's got guts. He just hung in.

RM: That's the only way you can do it out here.

FD: And I'll be quite frank. I begged him many times to declare bankruptcy and get out of here. Because let me tell you, it wasn't easy. Neither of us would do it again.

DD: No. I wouldn't advise anybody else to.

FD: It was too hard.

DD: I kept saying and I kept thinking and I kept planning that we had something. But we weren't getting anywhere. So I had a friend in Post, Texas, and Lubbock, who had filed on this 200 acres right here.

RM: Where your house sits?

DD: Where this is. And . . .

FD: Well, he died, and you bought this from his widow.

DD: I bought this from his widow, and everybody said, "Well, what do you want with that piece of land?" I said, "I don't know, but I'm going to figure out something." So we spent several hours planning; I already had it thought out. Everybody called me a fool and an idiot and everything else because I decided I was going to divide this up into parcels and I was going to start something. We're the only ones who have deeded property along the highway.

RM: Oh. The rest is all government land?

DD: The rest of it is either privately owned or government land. I got an engineer who would do it on credit, and I spent the rest of that year getting approval for the subdivisions. I broke it out in 5-acre parcels at 5 percent interest. Let's see, how much . . .

FD: You sold the first one for \$4995.

DD: It was \$4995 with 5 percent down, 5 percent interest until you got it paid for. Well, everybody just laughed about this, but they started selling. Then they opened the mine up at Timpahute, so we called our place Timpahute Village. Then little Rachel's father delivered her here, so we named it Rachel.

RM: What year was it that you acquired this 200-acre parcel where Rachel sits now?

DD: I believe it was 1973.

RM: By then had you divested yourself of the farmland?

DD: No, I still had it.

RM: You were still going on that, but it was in a corporation?

DD: Yes.

RM: And who did you buy the 200 acres from, again?

DD: From the one who had originally proved up on it -- George Tracy.

RM: Would you mind saying how much you paid for it?

DD: I gave his widow \$2000 for it.

RM: [Whistles] At that time there was nothing here, was there?

DD: No. I had helped him put in alfalfa up here and we experimented on some walnut trees. When he died his wife said, "George would want you to have it," because I'd helped him.

RM: Had he moved up here from Texas?

FD: Oh, no. He had a little tiny trailer sitting out here, and he just came up when he wanted to.

RM: Was he an older man?

DD: Yes.

RM: So that was really the beginnings of the town of Rachel.

DD: That was the beginning.

RM: And what year did you say that was?

DD: I believe it was '73. It took about a year or 9 months to . . .

RM: So you acquired it in the middle '70s, with the idea of subdividing it. But people laughed at you and said it would never go?

DD: That's right.

FD: Well, would you have thought a subdivision in the middle of the desert would have gone?

RM: You wouldn't, but then again you might; I don't know. Who were your first purchasers?

DD: Ed and Laura Fallis.

RM: Where did he work?

DD: He was working at a mine over in Bishop with Union Carbide.
RM: And living here?
DD: No, he was living over there. But Union Carbide was in the process of buying this mine up here at Timpahute. He wanted to transfer over here from Bishop, and I helped him do that.
RM: Who did Union Carbide buy it from? Wah Chang?
FD: Or his heirs or something.
RM: And Wah Chang acquired it from Wesley Koyn, who had originally developed it.
DD: I guess. It was closed when I came here.
RM: Was there any mining going on here when you got here?
DD: Yes, they were hauling ore down to the ball mill here.
RM: The little mill across the road?
DD: Right.
RM: That was Koyn's operation, wasn't it?
DD: Yes. But he had leased it out to somebody else.
RM: Where were they hauling the ore from?
DD: Up here in the hill.
RM: Do you remember what the name of the mine is?
FD: I don't know that we ever heard a name.
RM: What was the guy's name who he had leased it from?
DD: I don't remember. They had some trailers sitting over by the mill. There's a highway well there.
RM: Meanwhile there was activity about reopening Timpahute by Union Carbide?
DD: Well, that was a little later, after I had filed on this. I really didn't plan on that mine being opened up. And they can close overnight.
RM: Right.
DD: I didn't subdivide it for that at all; I just felt that we had something here. But the mine did help.
RM: Did most of your sales then come from the mine?
DD: No way.
FD: Lots of the people who bought are still here. They weren't even connected with the mine.
RM: Where did most of the people who bought come from?
DD: Las Vegas.
RM: And what was their motive for buying up here?
DD: Their future. And they'd come at deer hunting season. Lord, we had a beautiful season to hunt deer. And then your quail and everything else come too. People want to get away from the city. Of course, Las Vegas has tripled 4 times from what it was then.
RM: Did people start moving in immediately?
DD: No. Very few.
RM: Could you name some of the families that moved in initially?

DD: Well, the Fallises.
FD: And one of the Fallises' sons, Pat, bought a lot.
DD: Yes. And the people that opened the bar up.
RM: The Little A'Le'Inn bar down here?
DD: Yes.
RM: What was their name?
FD: Tom Spears.
RM: What was his thinking in opening a bar?
DD: By this time they'd decided they were really going to get this mine going up here. [Chuckles] I had sold my drilling rigs and I bought one so the Fallises could drill their own well. Then Tom Spear wanted to drill his own well. He had a beautiful well. Well, the state came down and stopped it and made him fill it full of concrete and get a well driller with a license before they would accept it.
RM: They made him plug his well so somebody with a license could drill it? So you guys get the bureaucracy on you out here, too.
FD: Definitely.
DD: Oh, you talk about . . . Every time we turned a shovel of dirt up out here they'd try to stop us.
RM: Really. The state?
DD: Well, they'd turn in complaints to the state.
RM: Who would?
DD: I guess there was somebody who worked around the mine. I don't know.
FD: They didn't want anybody in Rachel, I guess.
RM: What were their complaints?
DD: Well, like putting the trailer park here.
RM: You mean on these 5-acre parcels.
DD: Yes. For instance, we were using Schedule 80 PVC, and all it required was Schedule 40. We were using double that.
RM: And that's heavier?
DD: The 80 is twice as heavy as the 40.
RM: Yes.
DD: And they sent a guy out from Las Vegas to come up here and stop us from using [the heavier PVC].
FD: It was just harassment.
DD: You bet. They came out one day, and I said, "I'm going to get you if it's the last thing I do."
RM: The guy from Vegas.
DD: That's right. He was a state man. I got in my pickup, and I went to Carson City [to the health department]. And I hadn't cooled off any. The next morning when they opened I was the first person there. I went in and saw the big boy. I said, "Now, I came up here to get you. You're going to go with me. We're going to start at one end of Lincoln

County and we're going out the top end. The next time you shut us down or try to shut us down, you're going to have some real problems."

"Oh," he said, "You're exaggerating this."

I said, "No, I'm not exaggerating."

And he said, "Well, I'll see what I can do." So he did. We stopped him.

RM: Why did the guy in Vegas want to shut you down?

FD: We could never prove it, but Union Carbide had started a subdivision in Alamo. They wanted their employees to buy or live in Alamo. That's politics.

RM: That's the way the world works.

DD: They told the people who went to work for them . . . I had sold some land in the subdivision to a friend of mine down at Alamo and they told him, "If you buy land down in Penoyer Valley, look for another job."

RM: No kidding! Union Carbide told him that?

DD: Yes, sir.

FD: Not Union Carbide itself. Some employee.

DD: I got up one morning at 6:30 our time, and I called Union Carbide in New York. I had a direct phone number and I called.

RM: Was this the same time that you went to the state office in Carson?

DD: Just a little later. I told the man at Union Carbide who I was and I told him what was happening out here.

And he said, "Well, Mr. Day, I was told that there wasn't any land closer than Alamo."

I said, "They lied to you, didn't they?"

And he said, "Well, you know we're dedicating the mill up there." (I think he told me they put over \$28 million on that mill.) He said, "By the way, I'll visit with you in a little over a week. I'm coming out because of that and . . ." you know, checking on everything up and down. He said, "I want to, [and] I'll see you up there when they have this [dedication]."

I said, "No, you won't see me. If you want to talk to me, I'll be down in the valley and I'll be available." And I said, "And I want this harassment stopped." He stopped it.

RM: Is that right. That's to the corporation's credit. So it was apparently not coming from New York?

DD: It was not coming from New York.

RM: It was a local thing. But they apparently had some kind of influence on the state?

DD: You bet.

RM: What other kinds of challenges did you have to face in making this subdivision?

DD: Everything. I fought everything.

RM: Tell me about it.
DD: I don't even know where to start. Take the garbage dump, for instance. It took 3 years for me to get a trash dump down here.
RM: My god.
DD: Every Thursday or Friday I'd be in Las Vegas. When I'd come in they'd say, "We'll have it ready for you next week." Then they would transfer that person somewhere else and they'd have to start all over again.
RM: Was this the BLM?
DD: Oh, yes.
RM: So it was a big struggle to get a garbage dump on BLM land.
DD: It was big. I went as far to the top as I could get and finally got it approved \AA 20 acres.
RM: When did you finally get it approved?
DD: Oh, gosh, when the mine got in up here, in the late '70s.
RM: What would have happened if you'd put a dump on your land?
DD: I didn't want to because that's too valuable. You know, you get out here in a desert and sell land for \$100 an acre.
RM: Right. I just wondered if you would have had to get a permit for that. I guess you would have.
DD: I would have gone through the same thing.
FD: I'm quite sure.
DD: Between that and all the governmental agencies, it's something else.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: What were some of the other problems you faced in starting a community in rural Nevada? You've got to get a permit to drill a well, don't you?

DD: Right.

RM: Is it hard to do?

DD: Well, you've got to have a licensed well driller because they've got to make some money. In other words, it stops me . . .

RM: You can't save money by drilling your own well.

DD: You bet you can't.

DD: But in general you've got to have some push. What were you paying a foot to get a well?

DD: I think about \$10 a foot.

RM: How far is it to water right here on the townsite?

DD: A hundred and fifteen feet. I called this well driller in Las Vegas and he had twin diesel engines. We had run into some water over there on a well, and we were getting some noise from it. I don't know whether it was in a river under there or a lake or what. But anyhow, I had him come out and we drilled a well, and he said he could test it. It tested 4410 gallons a minute, and the minute they cut the motor off the electric thing cut off. So our draw down was 60-something feet, at that 4400 gallons a minute.

RM: That's amazing. What other problems did you encounter?

FD: Well, it took a long time to get electricity and telephones.

RM: How did you get electricity out here?

DD: From the mine. They brought the power in and then we formed our own electric co-op. The contractor that was putting in that mill up there was a big outfit out of Tucson, Arizona. And we formed our own electric company and they ran it from the mine.

RM: Who financed that?

DD: Lincoln County. They got a loan.

RM: And was that to run the power line from the mine to here?

DD: To run the power line from the junction down there.

FD: We are still paying for that line, right?

DD: Oh, yes.

RM: Are your rates here high?

DD: No, our rates are very, very reasonable.

RM: Your power comes off Boulder Dam, doesn't it?

DD: Most of it.

RM: What year did power come in?

FD: In '77.

RM: Was it a challenge to get a telephone line?

DD: We got it at the same time.

FD: We had one phone booth at first. There was a booth up at the mine and there was one here.

DD: It wasn't too long till they ran it through the trailer park and then it started running here.

RM: How long did you have to work to get power and phone in here, from beginning to the end?

FD: Well, we didn't have a chance until the mine came in, really.

DD: Either that or more farming had to go on or something.

RM: I guess when they closed the mine down, the power just stayed, didn't it?

DD: Yes.

RM: How long did the mine operate under Union Carbide?

FD: I'd say 4 or 5 years; I'm not sure.

DD: I took my tractor up there and moved a lot of pipe for them while snow was on the ground, and that was in '78 or '79.

FD: I can't remember how many years it was in operation. But the closing of the mine did not affect us as much as you would think because so many of their employees lived in Alamo. It really must have affected Alamo economically more than it did us.

DD: Oh, lord, yes.

FD: We have several people who work at the Test Site, so the closing of the mine did not affect them.

RM: Was the Test Site a big source of initial purchase here?

DD: Yes.

RM: You're really close to that one Test Site gate, aren't you?

DD: Oh, about 7 or 8 miles.

FD: They have one here and then one towards Tonopah.

RM: And it's that area . . .

FD: Well, Area 51 is in the next valley. That's where they see the UFOs and these strange things.

RM: Oh, it's in the next valley over Ä out there on that dry lake, Groom Lake?

DD: Yes, that's over in the next valley.

RM: This big white mountain out here is Bald Mountain, isn't it?

DD: Yes. East of us from Bald Mountain is over in the next valley.

RM: Are there still quite a few people working at the Test Site in this community?

DD: I would say there are 7 or 8.

FD: Probably.

DD: People are wanting to get out of Las Vegas.

RM: I can certainly understand that.

DD: We've got people who are buying land and moving here from Arizona.

RM: So you're still selling land?

DD: Well, now I've sold out until I can get another subdivision approved.

RM: Have you sold out the initial 200 acres?

DD: Oh, yes. A long time ago.

RM: Where did you get more land, then?

DD: I bought it up.

RM: Oh, there was more land in close to the road that you had bought up?

DD: Well, let's see. The 200 acres and the 240 right behind it are the only ones close to the highway. Then I've got some in the heart of the valley and some on the other side of the valley.

RM: How long did it take you to sell out that initial 200 acres?

DD: About 2 years.

RM: And then you subdivided another 240 acres?

DD: I subdivided another 160 out of 240.

RM: How long did it take you to sell that out?

DD: A couple of years.

RM: So they move right along.

FD: Over the weekend we sold the last lot of the last [160-acre parcel we had subdivided]. We had 32 lots and over the weekend we sold the last one of those. A lot of the people who want to live here live in Las Vegas but they're planning for retirement.

RM: What do the lots sell for now? You still sell them in 5-acre plots?

DD: Yes. That's all we're going to deal with. We don't want people to be jammed up in apartments and everything.

RM: What do they sell for now?

DD: Right around \$6495. But we've got electricity to every parcel.

RM: So additional parcels will be on down the valley?

DD: Either in the heart of the valley or across it.

RM: Have you got those subdivided?

DD: Not yet. The engineer's working on it. They say that it won't take very long to put it through the state. They say they're going to get it in 6 weeks. It's always taken them a year.

FD: Hopefully by the end of the year we'll be ready.

RM: It takes a year to get a subdivision through?

DD: Yes, to meet all the requirements.

FD: We have to meet all the requirements they meet in Las Vegas.

RM: What are some of the requirements?

FD: First you have to pass the county planning board. Then it has to pass the county commissioners, and then it has to go to the state real estate division.

DD: And the water division.
FD: And the health department. It has to go through all these agencies before you are cleared to start selling.
RM: And that takes about a year?
FD: At least.
DD: But now they say that they can clear it out of Carson City within 6 weeks.
FD: But we haven't got to that point yet.
DD: No, we haven't got there.
FD: We've got these other things to do.
DD: Well, the planning board.
FD: And we're working on the zoning right now. As I said, we have to go through everything they go through in downtown Las Vegas.
RM: Does Lincoln County have a building code?
DD: Yes.
RM: An owner can build anything he wants in Nye County.
DD: We can build, but they want that money.
FD: We have to have a permit for anything that's over a certain square footage.
RM: How big is the population of Rachel now?
FD: We have about 100 people. It fluctuates a bit. Of course through the years we've missed . . . D. C. sold the initial farm that was the corporation. And the people who own it are big alfalfa farmers, so they employ quite a few people down here.
RM: When did you sell the farm?
FD: It was in 1981.
RM: And you got out of that because you couldn't handle it financially?
DD: I couldn't handle it financially, but I didn't want it because I saw what we could do here. I'd rather spend my time doing the subdividing.
RM: Was it the corporation that sold the farm?
DD: I sold it, but it was still in the corporation.
RM: Did you sell it all in one lump piece?
FD: Wasn't it 2800 acres?
DD: It was close.
FD: Yes, I'd say 2800 acres or thereabouts.
RM: You held back some, then?
DD: Right. I held back 200. We had 4008 acres in the farm.
FD: We sold off 3 360-acre parcels.
DD: We've still got 440, then I've got 25 acres across the highway from the bar, and then 7.8 across the highway here.
RM: So you've got a little under 500 acres yourself, and you sold the rest?
DD: Yes.
RM: Who did you sell it to?

FD: The farm was sold to Neil Brown out of Idaho Falls first.
DD: Yes, a corporation.
RM: Can you say how much you sold the farm for?
DD: It was \$300 an acre. That was in '81.
RM: And are they farming it now?
DD: They sure are. And they're making money hand over fist.
RM: Where are they selling their alfalfa?
DD: To the dairies in California. This is the highest protein alfalfa anywhere in the state. The dairy people already have it contracted for next year.
RM: Do they make pellets out of it, or how do they do it?
DD: No, they just bale.
RM: Are they regular little bales, or those huge bales?
DD: They started out with some of the huge ones, but they had to have extra equipment, even the dairy people. And so they quit doing that.
RM: And they truck it down to California?
DD: Yes.
RM: Do they go through Tonopah?
DD: No, they go this way ^A to the interstate.
FD: What's the name of that place? El Chino, California.
RM: And they get 4 cuttings a year? Did you say how many tons they get an acre, now?
DD: No, and I don't remember. But anyhow, it's very good.
FD: The name of it now is Caselton. It's a family corporation.
RM: They bought it from the Idaho outfit?
DD: Well, they were in on the original sale to this corporation that they had in Idaho.
RM: How many men are working on the farms now, would you say?
DD: I'd say about 6 or 8.
RM: Do they live here in Rachel?
DD: Yes, they live down there.
RM: Are they seasonal labor, or are they full time there?
DD: There are 3 of them that are owners now. They just bought their dad out of the corporation.
FD: They're Caseltons too, but the sons bought their dad out.
RM: How many different farms are there down there now?
FD: Well, the Dirk Agees. It's not part of the big farm, but they are ranchers and they have a farm. How many acres do they cover?
DD: It's 320 acres down there.
RM: Are they growing alfalfa too?
DD: Yes.
RM: Who else is down there?
DD: They are the only 2 farmers.
RM: And they're all growing alfalfa?
DD: Yes. That's where the money is.
RM: I wonder how many acres are in cultivation down there.

DD: Everything that we sold them.
RM: It sounds like you sold them 3500 acres.
DD: That and probably more. They bought a section that joins another section.
FD: Yes, they bought some land from some other people.
RM: The Agees don't sound like that big of an operation.
DD: No, they're 320 and they're trying to get some more.
FD: But the Agees are also ranchers. That's what they originally came to this valley for. They had the grazing rights with BLM.
RM: Is the headquarters of that ranch down there?
DD: Yes.
RM: Have they been there a while?
FD: No, just about 5 years. They came about the time we opened the store.
RM: When did you open the store, and what prompted that?
FD: We opened the store in February of 1986.
RM: What was your thinking in opening that?
FD: We thought it would help the valley and help to sell our lots. And it has. People would not want to come here if there were no place to buy a few groceries and some gas.
RM: Does it make money, or do you kind of subsidize it?
FD: Well, a little of both. [Laughs]
DD: It makes money if you want to run it yourself.
RM: But if you have to hire help, it doesn't?
FD: That's right.
RM: How about the bar? Does it make money?
FD: I think so. They have good business down there.
RM: Has it always been known as the Little A'Le'Inn?
DD: No.
FD: Just the last year or two it was changed from Rachel Bar and Grill. I guess you've seen the advertisements about the little aliens and the UFOs.
RM: Well, yes. As long as you mention it, I wanted to talk about that. How do you feel about this UFO thing?
FD: I think the government knows exactly what it is. We think they're experimenting with different things.
RM: So you think there's something going on that makes people think there are aliens there?
DD: Let's put it this way: They've been there for a long time, and they kept that Stealth [aircraft] a secret.
FD: That's what I meant. I think it's some experiment the government's doing.
DD: They're experimenting with a new naval plane right now.
RM: Over there?
DD: That's what I've heard.

FD: Let me put it this way: I would have to see the flying saucer and the little green men before I'd believe it.
[Laughter]

DD: But they come by the bus loads from California.

RM: To see them? What do they do when they get here?

FD: They gather at the bar and all have a ball and then they go over to the next valley with all this fancy equipment and they look for the [UFOs].

RM: Is this pretty common? Do quite a few bus loads come in?

FD: I'd say once every 3 months or so.

RM: When did you first hear these alien stories out here?

FD: Oh, they really got popular the last 2 or 3 years. The Little A'Le'Inn even made national T.V., on some program. It wasn't "Sixty Minutes," but it was some show like that.

DD: CBS News ran it on their channel quite a few times.

RM: When you first came here, you didn't hear those alien stories, did you?

DD: No.

RM: I wonder what got it started?

DD: I don't know. [Chuckles] That beats anything I've ever heard of.

FD: Anyway, it's good for business. [Laughs]

RM: Have you sold any lots with it?

FD: No, not through UFOers.

RM: And the people who primarily buy your lots now are out of Vegas?

DD: Yes, retired people out of Vegas. They're afraid.

RM: What are they afraid of?

DD: Of getting shot walking down the street. And rape. That's terrible.

FD: A lot of the lots that we're selling are to people who are planning to retire here.

RM: Do most of the people who plan to retire here do so?

FD: Most of them aren't old enough yet. Over the weekend we had a couple ^A he is a mail carrier in Las Vegas and his wife's a registered nurse and they moved a new double-wide in. They have several years yet before retirement, but that's what they're planning on.

FD: And there's Jack Bickle, who works on the Test Site. He's just moved in.

DD: In a new double-wide.

RM: If they were to shut the Test Site down, how would it affect Rachel?

DD: I think it would affect us very little.

FD: Well, I'm sure it would some. Everybody you have around helps. And through the summer we have quite a few tourists through here. Some are people from foreign countries. They fly to California, and then they rent a car or a motor

home and go to Yosemite and then they come through here to Bryce and Zion.

RM: Yes, you're on the road from Yosemite to Bryce and Zion.

DD: Oh, I think we could survive with anything.

RM: How do you see the valley down the road a decade or two?

DD: I think it will be real good. Our winters aren't really that bad, and our summers are about as ideal as you can get. You sleep under a blanket every night in the summer. It's just ideal. I think that we'll grow whether the people from Las Vegas are going to be coming out here and living or not.

RM: Do you see a city here some day?

DD: Not a city, no. That's the farthest thing from my mind, but I think you'll see another 3 or 4 subdivisions put in. We've got 2 more to go. And now I understand Gunderson's has been sold to some foreign people.

RM: Who is Gunderson, again?

DD: He was one of the first ones in the valley looking for land.

FD: He was the first one who subdivided, wasn't he?

DD: Yes, but he's never done anything with it. Or he did there for a while and then he just quit. But we've been told he sold it out 2 or 3 months ago.

FD: We got some stop signs last week, finally.

RM: The first stop signs?

FD: Yes. We've got 31 or 32 kids going to school. They are bussed into Alamo.

CHAPTER FOUR

- RM: How would you describe life here?
- DD: Beautiful. We take a tour once in a while, and when we come back over that hill there's just something there that's ours. And we're the most reasonable place anywhere in the States. We see these lights all over the valley here -- they have lights on the sprinkler systems -- and it's just home to us.
- FD: Let me tell you my side of the story. We ran into so many problems, financially and in everything else through the earlier years, that the desert was not my favorite place to live. I just had all these heartaches stored up that we had gone through, getting this thing going. Two years ago we finally got time to go back to Tennessee and we went on to Florida, and it was in July. That humidity nearly killed us both. And I decided Rachel was where I wanted to live, so I haven't complained about the desert for 2 years. That was good for me.
- RM: Yes. I grew up in the West, and I'll never forget -- I left St. Louis and followed the river down to Memphis and I couldn't believe it. I felt like I was going into a steam bath. It was in August.
- DD: [Chuckles] It's terrible, isn't it?
- RM: Yes. I'd never experienced that before. Another thing that got me about Memphis was that when you got on an overpass in the city you had a vista. I'd never lived in a place where you couldn't see mountains at least in one direction. [Chuckles] Now, how do you get the word out on your lots?
- FD: Word of mouth.
- RM: You don't do any advertising.
- DD: Never. I had a sign down here across on that vacant land that sat up there for quite a while. Finally the wind blew it down and I just left it alone. And there's a little thing on Quick Pick, and that sign there in front of the store -- that's all we do.
- RM: And word of mouth does it?
- FD: One person will come out and buy a lot and they put up a little trailer and come out weekends and they tell a friend. Well, then the next weekend the friend's out, and it's so nice and quiet . . . Word of mouth is our advertisement.
- DD: And be honest with the people. Don't lie.
- RM: What are the key things in the development of the community that we haven't talked about? Probably when they built the bar that helped, didn't it?
- DD: Oh, yes.

FD: It's like a little neighborhood community center. People can gather there to visit or go have a sandwich if they want. Naturally it helped.

RM: How often do you go into town?

DD: Every week.

FD: We pick up supplies for the store in Vegas.

RM: Is there anything that we haven't touched on?

FD: [Laughs] I think we've about told you everything we know. We've got a lot of good people in Rachel. As a rule they're cooperative and . . .

RM: It sounds like the struggle of getting the whole thing, particularly with the bureaucracy, has been one of the toughest things.

DD: Yes. We have a cemetery with 4 people in it already.

RM: Is that right. Residents of Rachel?

FD: Yes.

RM: You've got to get it certified for that, don't you?

DD: Oh, yes.

FD: Through BLM.

DD: You've got to do something. Oh, boy, it's a mess.

FD: Little Rachel is not buried here, but we have a little memorial down there in her honor.

RM: Did I hear you say that her father delivered her?

DD: Yes. It was on the phone.

RM: Couldn't they get to the doctor?

DD: They wanted to [deliver her at home]. They had a couple or 3 other children, and he was on the line with the doctor.

RM: Oh, the doctor told him what to do? I'll be darned.

FD: Had I known you, I would have invited you over for Rachel Day last Saturday.

RM: Oh, I wish I'd known.

FD: I wish you had, too.

RM: Was it a success?

FD: Yes. We had a lot of people here Ä a lot of old-timers and a lot of newcomers.

RM: That's great.

DD: On Rachel Day a little old circus deal was down there, and we had several people from Caliente, Panaca, Pioche and Alamo.

RM: Is there a church in town?

DD: Yes, a Baptist church.

RM: Who presides over that?

DD: The pastor is in Pioche. He comes down every 2 weeks for services.

RM: Is it a pretty good-sized congregation?

DD: Oh, at times. It just depends on the mood of the people. We can seat, I think, 30-something in that little old trailer.

RM: How about TV? Does everybody have a satellite dish?
DD: Most of them have satellites. We get one channel off the mountain up there, CBS in Las Vegas. It went out last night so we're trying to get 2 more channels to come in. We can get it, and I think it will be better for us.
RM: But with satellite people can pick up all kinds of things, can't they?
DD: Yes.
RM: Do you have a dish?
DD: No. I figured there were people here who couldn't afford to have a dish, so why not keep this translator station going up here. We use Hi-C cans, and that's what keeps our
. . .
FD: Yes, everybody saves their pop cans.
RM: And that pays for it?
DD: That pays for it.
RM: That's a neat idea.
DD: You bet. And we've got Ä I think she said Ä \$1700 in the bank from the cans.
RM: Is that right?
FD: Well, now, we've been doing this a long time.
DD: Ever since we've been out here.
RM: That's great. So that was a way of paying for the translator.
FD: Every once in a while we have to buy new batteries or get some repair work done.
DD: So everybody chips in. It's a real good bunch of people. If you need them, there's always somebody here to help. And we have some EMTs, some real good people out here. They really are good and they're dedicated.
RM: Do you get many defaults by people who buy lots? People who turn it back?
DD: No. So far I've only got 2 who are even in doubt out of 32. (That is, they're getting behind.)
RM: How many parcels have you sold all together up to now?
DD: Well, 32 and 26, and let's see, 8, plus this extra stuff around here. There are 10 acres here where this building is and across the highway. So it's about 80 parcels.
[Tape recorder is turned off for a while.]
RM: Your asthma doesn't bother you out here? It must have been allergies, then.
DD: Yes. But I've had that all my life. And that's what got us to leave Lubbock, Texas Ä I was getting so bad with it.
RM: Do you have to take medication up here?
DD: No, nothing. And I was taking 2 shots a week and tablets 3 times a day.
RM: That's a major difference, isn't it?

DD: Oh, lord. That's why we came west. But I can be driving down the road and run by a maize field and start sneezing in Texas.

RM: I flew down to San Diego the other day, and there was haze, smog, whatever, clear from Vegas to San Diego from the air. And there's a lot of haze in the air even coming up here. Is this the kind of thing you used to see here, or is this new? Does it blow in from other places?

DD: It blows in. If the wind comes from the southeast or almost due south, then it's bound to be coming from Las Vegas.

RM: So this haze that I see between here and Las Vegas . . .

DD: We didn't used to see any of that when we first came out here.

RM: So it's air pollution coming from Vegas and L.A.

DD: It's got to be. It's coming from somewhere.

RM: You even see it in Tonopah now. We were out in Reveille Valley in the 1950s, and I don't remember seeing it back then.

DD: Well, you didn't. We didn't have anything like that out here when I came.

RM: And now I think it even comes from San Francisco into Tonopah.

DD: I wouldn't doubt it. And this is why I say that we stand a good chance. People are going to get out of Las Vegas . . . not only there, but all the cities. They're going to get out away from it if they can. And we get some wind in here sometimes that will push it on out.

RM: When you have a north wind you don't get it, do you?

DD: No.

RM: The air is really clear, isn't it? I wouldn't call it smoggy now.

DD: Oh, no.

RM: But it doesn't look like the old days out in rural Nevada, does it?

DD: There's a haze.

RM: Yes. Has the drought affected you here?

DD: The last 5 years we went from 5.8 inches of average rainfall to 2.7. I kept records for 5 years down there at the farm for the government because I wanted to know how much rainfall we had and the temperatures and all that. And it's just down.

RM: From 5.8 to 2.7 Å that's less than half. What's the coldest you've ever seen it here?

DD: 24 below.

RM: And what's the warmest?

DD: Three times out of 5 years it went to 101. That's why I'm keeping it down there.

RM: Do you know what the elevation is here?
DD: It's 4970 feet right out there.
[Tape is turned off for a while.]
RM: Do your sons live in the area?
FD: One son and his wife are here, and they operate the store now. The other son and his wife live in Las Vegas and they both work for the Mirage.
[Tape is turned off for a while.]
RM: How do you get your mail here?
FD: Our mail is delivered out of the Alamo post office. We have delivery 5 days a week.
RM: When did they start that kind of delivery?
FD: Well, at first we didn't have mail delivery. We had to go into Alamo to pick up the mail. I don't remember exactly what year, but it was along about the time they got electricity and so forth, about '78 or thereabouts.
RM: And they deliver into a mailbox?
FD: Everybody has their own mailbox. They're in a group down on the frontage road.
[Tape is turned off for a while.]
RM: That's a good story.
FD: [Laughs] D. C. was at the store and this work-worn pickup and a little trailer drove in and the fellow drove to the pumps. He did not pump any gasoline until he came in and told D. C. his story. He had a job in Las Vegas, but he didn't have enough money to buy gasoline to get there. Could he trade some tools for some gasoline? So D. C. went out and looked at the tools. They were work worn, and besides, the man would need them when he got his job. So D. C. told him, "I won't take your tools, but I'm going to give you enough gas to get to Las Vegas. And when you get your job, you can repay me someday." Well, he has done this before and he never got repaid, but this particular fellow . . . about 3 weeks later, we suppose, he got his first paycheck. We looked out and here came this little pickup and trailer, and the man walked straight to him and paid him for the gasoline.
RM: Isn't that great.
FD: So that renewed our faith in human nature.
RM: At other times you haven't been repaid?
DD: No. But tell him about the belt.
FD: A few times we have not been repaid, yes. But another time a couple came through and they had broken a fan belt. And D. C. saves all these things, you know, and they come in handy way out here. He went with the fellow up to the shed and found a fan belt that would fit their car and they got it on. They started to leave (they were going towards Tonopah). And he said, "Mr. Day, what do I owe you?"

D. C. said, "I'll tell you what. If this fan belt gets you to Tonopah, you can put \$5 in an envelope and mail it back to me."

And the fellow said, "That's fair enough." About a week or 10 days later we get this package. They had made it to Tonopah and they had made it all on their vacation on that one fan belt. They sent us \$5 in an envelope plus a new fan belt. A said some other tourist may need this fan belt.

RM: That's a great story.

FD: And then we got a Christmas card from them. So we have met a lot of sweet people.

RM: Rural Nevadans are great people, I think.

FD: Oh, you get help better on this road than you would on an interstate.

RM: I bet you would.

[Tape is turned off for a while.]

RM: Oh, do you? Whole groups of motorcyclists?

DD: Oh, boy. They have to hit us because they can't carry enough fuel most of the time.

FD: Our attitude has changed, though, about motorcyclists.

RM: Because they're really nice?

FD: Before the store we thought they all had their chains and knives, but this is not true. Most of them are couples.

DD: This club is down below San Francisco. We have gotten more advertising from those people than any advertising we've ever done. Some of them ran out of gas, and I drove 26 miles over there and carried the gas to them and they came in here.

FD: One of the fellows in the group has a motorcycle sale and repair shop in some town in California, and he tells everybody that goes in his shop, "If you're going through Nevada, stop in Rachel." [Chuckles] We've got a lot of business from that.

RM: That's great.

[Tape is turned off for a while.]

FD: We had a school here for about 5 years, just an elementary school.

RM: When did it open?

DD: It was here in '77, I believe.

RM: Why did it close?

FD: We ran into a lot of problems. You know, not every school-teacher wants to come to an out-of-the-way place. They found this young man who had just gotten out of college and he was single, and he just wasn't happy here. He got in with the wrong crowd and it just didn't work out. After that the school board decided to close our school, which was sad for us. We would love to have a kindergarten. We have several little kindergarten kids and they go into

Alamo and they're in kindergarten half a day and then the parents have to have a baby sitter for the afternoon until the bus comes back.

RM: That's a long day for a little kid.

FD: Yes. So we would love to have a kindergarten here. Maybe some day.

[Tape is turned off for a while.]

RM: I was saying that if you've got an old car it's a little bit intimidating driving from Tonopah over to Cedar City.

DD: And I don't go along with that at all, because people out here on these roads will help you a lot quicker than people on the interstate will. And you're not afraid most of the time of being shot or beat up.

RM: That's a really good point.

DD: You bet.

FD: We find that to be true. People are good to stop.

RM: Well, the old Nevada code is in effect out here. It used to be that you didn't leave a person out on the desert if they were along the road. But now people will, because you don't know who you're picking up or what's going to happen.

FD: That's true.

DD: They have tried to stop us on the way home on the interstate, what, twice?

FD: Yes.

RM: People have?

DD: Yes, sir.

RM: Oh, how?

DD: Well, I started to pass a van loaded with Mexicans, from what we could see. And when I started to go around Fay said, "He's hollering." The wind was terrible. She said, "He's hollering at you and pointing down towards the tires."

I said, "Uh-huh, oh, good, because we are going to race him." I changed gear and went on around him. Well, we were on the interstate and a big truck got between us and we turned off on 93. He either didn't see us or missed us or something. But they were trying to push us over. There wasn't anything wrong with the car. So I'll take these back roads any time.

