Darlene Hooper Dewey

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 046

Oral History Interview by

Norm Cavanaugh
April 10, 2015
Yomba, NV

Great Basin College • Great Basin Indian Archives
1500 College Parkway Elko, Nevada 89801
http://www.gbcnv.edu/gbia/
775.738.8493

Produced in partnership with
Barrick Gold of North America

GBIA 046
Interviewee: Darlene Hooper Dewey
Interviewer: Norm Cavanaugh
Date: April 10, 2015

C: Today, I am out on a trip to Yomba Western Shoshone reservation. And it's out here, in a desolated place in Nevada. And I'm getting close. And today, I will be interviewing an elder out here. But it's a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful landscape, as far as mountains, and open spaces, and—can't ask for any more.

This is a sign alongside the road on the way to Yomba. Getting close to Yomba. Here's another outcropping. Believe it was an old barn or homestead. And what's left of it.

This is downtown Yomba.

D: I'm Darlene Hooper Dewey. I'm from Reese River Valley, the Yomba Shoshone Reservation. And I'm—I've lived here, I'm born and raised here. And my mother and father, Art and Alice Hooper. My grandparents—my *tsoo* and my *toko* is Bill Kawich and Jenny Kawich. My father's mother and father is Joe Hooper and Annie Woods Hooper. And we, Reese River Valley was a luscious valley with a lot of vegetation. The valley was full of meadowgrass, wild grass, and it was really high, above your knees, when they first came in for the reservation. And there was a lot of snow. Snow that lasted until the spring. And there was a lot of different plants here. The Natives here, that lived in this valley, they lived throughout the river, here and there. And that was in, before the ranchers came in. And then, the population started to decline. In 1881, ranchers took over some of the land. They had around eighteen ranches in the valley. The Newe people worked for the ranchers. And in 1936, the land was purchased for a reservation. And we are located central Nevada. And we're between two mountains: Toiyabe Mountain on the east side, and Shoshone Mountain on the west side. And there was a river that flowed northward through the valley, and as of today we don't even have any more water, and so

there's no river. So, I don't say "Reese River," I say "Reese Valley." So, in 1936, the reservation started. They purchased four ranches from the ranchers, and with the help of the Western Agency—Stewart, Nevada. The superintendent was Bowler. And they formed a council to get some equipments, and they went under the IRA. And my mother was a spokesperson, and she was also the interpreter for the ones that didn't understand how to read, or what they were talking about. And she did a lot of traveling. And the first ranch was, the lower district is what they called it, and that was Bowler Ranch, and that was in 1937. And there was twelve families that moved in to Bowler Ranch. And there was a house there, and they put up tents, and they lived there around that house. And the second ranch that came in was the Doyle Ranch, and that was on the upper reservation. So they call it the upper district. And that one had 12,201 acres. And Derringer came in 1940. And in 1941, Worthington Ranch. And that had 957 acres. The Bowler Ranch where they stayed, there was twelve families, but in 1939, the brick homes were coming in at that year. And our family moved down into the lower district. And we lived there for a while. And our family was large family; there's thirteen children counting me, I'm the thirteenth one. And some of the children, they were not born here in the valley. There was four of us that was born here in the valley. One was born at Bowler Ranch, and then another one down at the Bradys, where the Brady Ranch is now. And then the two of us up here at the building that's down here now, that's the—

U1: Derringer.

D: Derringer Ranch. That's where I was born. And my grandmother, she was the one that helped my mom, and so the four younger ones, we were all born here in the valley. And later on—we had moved up to the upper reservation. That's the Doyle Ranch. And that's

where I was raised. And my father did a lot of ranching, so he was—we had to get up early in the morning and get our chores done. At the time, when they started the reservation, there was a school that was—where the children had gone to school, they had six Hooper kids, four Bud Decker kids, two Bobb kids, and two Jackson children. And altogether, with the children from the ranches, there were fifteen children that went to school there. That building is no longer there. And later on, they've gone to the Ione school, which school that I had started to go to school. I think I went there first and second grade. And there, we went to school with some of the white children that lived in that area. And there were also a small village that was there *in* Ione. When you go there now, you can still see some of the structures there. And right now, Ione has only two families that live in that vicinity. In 1939, the brick homes were built. And there may be around twelve brick homes that came in. The first tribal council they formed was: James Bobb—he was the chairman, and Bud Decker, Willie Williams, Willie Bill, Wixon Charlie, and Harry Frank. And my mother was the secretary, Alice Hooper. And they formed the by-laws and constitution. And they were able to secure the reservation land and loans under the IRA, and then, in 1940, they were able to borrow 2,400 to buy cattle and whatever else they needed. In 1940, they purchased three hundred head. In two years, they totalled 1,554 head of cows. And that was in 1944. And they taken them different areas, to Ione, Gabbs Valley, and BLM, and the Forest Service, to graze their cattle. And they also had springs that they had—different springs where the reservation had—and down the years, they started to lose their springs. The BLM was taking over some of the springs. So now, they hardly have any springs left. There may be around thirty-two families here, and they have—we have twenty-four HUD homes, that is rentals. And we

don't—during the time the reservation first started, there was a school here. I don't remember exactly how many children were here at the time, but they closed down the school and relocated the children to Gabbs. So, the Gabbs school is around thirty-two miles from here, and they travel on the bus every day back and forth to school, to Gabbs. And over there, they have grammar school and high school.

Fandangos that we used to have, now they call it "powwows." But that's a different way of dancing. Our Fandangos, they did a lot of praying and dancing, different way of dancing, where they took turns singing. And they sang about their, the weather, about their snow and their rain, and their way of living—like, being happy, and having a good time. And we don't have that anymore. I would like to see that come about. Here in the valley, when they first had the reservation going, we did have Fandangos up on the lower district, and that was where *we* lived. And they went four days—well, mainly four nights, dancing. And people from different areas came. And they all took turns singing. And they had games for the children, and games for adults, and handgames. And card games. They all enjoyed each others. And we don't see that anymore. I'm not too sure of the year when they *stopped* the Fandangos. It may be in the late [19]40s, or early [19]50s, was when they stopped that Fandangos for some reason. And they also had rodeo at that time. So, that's how we all got together, and had a good time. And that may be the reason why we don't have our weather. And we are all, should get together and have a good time. And our language has gone away. We don't do our language. We don't, because we were punished for speaking our language when they *did* have the school here. And the children, I believe, would be, from the fifties on down, they've gotten away from the language. When you speak your language, it seems to—if you and your children

understand your language, they seem to listen more. And you don't know how to correct the children, because you don't know how to speak to them anymore. All my children, they don't know. But my grandchildren, I tried to, here and now and then, I speak Shoshone to them, and they say, "What's that? What'd you say?" And I'd tell them what it meant.

I would like to keep teaching the language, which we have. I go down to the tribe twice a week, and I—sometimes I get a little, a few people there that's interested. And the others, they don't seem to be very interested in it. And also, learning about the plants, and the food, and the way people had survived. We're survivors. Our people, our grandparents from way back, they're survivors. And that's reason why we're still here. And that's what I tell them, you know: "You've got to be proud to be who you are. Don't—when someone says something about, 'Hey, you're an Indian,' you know, and say, 'Yes, sure! This is where I'm from, and I've been—I'm from here, and we are survivors!'"

There was a lot of vegetation here at one time. And I tell—when we go up in the mountains, we go up and just take a look at the area, and I'd see what's there—what *I* know. I don't know too much about what all was here at that time, but what's left here, I see that we have four different kinds of sagebrush. Different sagebrush, like, for the sage grouse—we call it sagehens? That's our food. And that's also the sagehen's food. And we use that for medicine. My mother used to use a lot for, like, colds. Put it on your chest, or either—you know, take a good smell of it. It clears your throat. And she also used to use it to put on her head for headaches. And for bites. You could put it on, like, if you got stung by a bee or something, you can chew it and put it on there. And that's what we used for our—sagebrush is good, and they also was good for clothing. You find the

long sagebrush that's tall. You peel off the bark, and you stitch it together. And that was what they used for clothing long time ago when there was no material. And they also made their shoe. And different things you can use to—you can weave with the bark. So that, our sagebrush, is a lot of different things that you can use sagebrush. It is very important that you learn how to use sagebrush, and sometimes you hear people, they get after the sagebrush. I've worked with some people that don't like the sagebrush, because it does grow all over. And we have the rabbitbrush, which you can use—in the fall, they bloom, and you can use the blossoms. And that is also used for medicine. And you can also use that for baskets. Small baskets, whatever kind of basket you need. And then, we have the balsam root, sunflowers. And balsam root is close to the sunflowers. You have the Indian tea. You boil it, and drink it, and that is good for, like, to purify your blood, or whatever illness you have, you can drink your Indian tea. And you have your wild roots. It would be, well, I'll go back to our plants. The mint, the wild mint you have, and the spearmint that grows. You can use that as tea. And then we have stinging nettles, and that's also for medicine. And the stinging nettles, you boil it and drink that as a tea. And you also have your Indian paintbrush, and your lupines, which is good for your colds, and for headaches, or for coughing. You could always use your wild iris. And we have a lot of that; that grows in the fields, or by the streams, by the creeks. And what I was told, I don't know what part you use, but it's good for toothache. And there, you have—we have wild yarrow, wild rose. Use the rose hips. And you can also make, you can also have that as a jelly. And for—and we also have *totsa* that grows in the mountains. And *totsa*, that's good for your cold, and you boil it, and it's also good to purify your system. And you can also smoke it: dry it, shave it, and smoke the *totsa*. We have parsnips, and columbine.

And our trees, we have around this area, we have mahogany. Mahogany, you scrape the bark off, and you use that for tea. You can dry it, and use it later on when you need it. And it's—and then, we have our pinenut trees. We have plenty of pinenut trees here. And you can use the pitch, and that's good for, like, if you had a cut, or if you have a cut that doesn't heal, you can put that on it. Or you could use it for your water jugs, to cover the water jugs, to hold the water. And a long time ago, we used to use it as, just pick it off the tree, and chew it, and use it as gum. So, our pine trees is very important, and it also gives us a lot of pinenuts and keep us going. And then, we have the cedar, the juniper. And you pick off the juniper seeds, and that's some, another medicine. Or, you can use it for smudging. And we also have cottonwood trees. And birch, we have birch up in the higher mountains, and we use that for cradleboards, for the frames, because it's nice and strong. Once it dries, we use that for cradleboards. And we have the willows, we have a lot of willows, and we also use that for cradleboards. Or whatever kind of basket you need, like your pinenut cleaning basket, and your big burden baskets—which, you don't see people use it anymore. But a long time ago, this is what our people, our ancestors, used. They used all these supplies because they had to. There's no way they would've survived without using all these different things that we have in the valley. We are surrounded with a lot of things that we don't really, anymore we don't really realize *how* our people have survived. And our wildlife, we have deer, antelopes, fish. Lately, we've had elk. And rabbits. Sage grouse. And I always tell the kids when we go out, everything's alive. Everything has life. Everything was used for our people. And I tell them, this was our grocery store. Our—you know, we didn't have to, they didn't have to go and buy it. It was here. It was here for them to use, and that's how our people have survived. We don't

have anything—clinic, or stores, or school, or—we don't have any of that here. We have to travel to Fallon, and that's like two hours from here. And we have CHRs that will transport, and they have a clinic in Fallon that Yomba Tribe is, they can go to that clinic. When we were growing up, I was not sick too much. But whenever we were ill, my mother took care of us. And she did use her—you know, the way she was taught, and things that she had here she used on us. So, I've never really been to a dentist, or the doctors. And I was so afraid of them. Only time we see the doctors was when they came out to give us our shots. Different—every year, they would come out and give us our shots for, like, smallpox, or—I can't remember what all they had, but that's what they used to do. But I've always been afraid of doctors.

Recently, we had Roger Ike come, and had shown us how to make cradleboards. And one person, she was so excited that she was able to do a cradleboard, and how to start it, and how to get out and look for the willows. She didn't even know what *kind* of willows. And that was one thing that was really good about Mr. Ike coming and showing us how to put a cradleboard together. And when I was young, I was never interested in doing any basketry or sewing, or beadwork. My mother, she did a lot of that. And she tried to show me. But I was never interested. She'd say, "Sit down. I want to show you something." And she'd show me how to split it, but I'd try few times and it would break, and off I'd go. I wasn't a person to sit and try to keep trying it. But I watched her. She showed me how to pick, and *when* to pick, and what to look for. So I used to help her pick the willows. So, later on, when I thought about it, and I seen a lot of willows growing, I go, "Hey! You know, I want to try it." So, I sat down, and I kept at it, kept at it, and now I

can split willows. Not as good, but I can, you know, I know how to do it. And I showed my daughter, and my grandson, and they do willow work.

So I'm still sewing, now and then. Not as much as I used to. When I first started, I was sewing for a small sewing factory. That was in Bishop. And I remember I didn't have a job when we moved to Bishop, and they had an advertisement for when they needed sewers. And I went down and I talked to this lady, and she said, "Well, we have a job for you if you want it." And I said, "Not sewing!" And I was never really into sewing. And then I thought—second thought, I thought, "What am I talking about? I need a job." I said, "I'll take it." So I went to the guy, and he had a little factory going, and it was making covers for computers, and cases for computers. And there was three of us that went there for interview, and he had picked me out. So I started sewing for him. And then, down the few years, my daughter was going to high school and she needed some money to go to—she was selected to go to Hawaii with some of the seniors that was going to Hawaii, and she didn't have any money. So I said, "We can figure something out." And there was a Pendleton in my closet that I didn't use, so I thought, "Oh! I'm going to do something with this." So, I had a hard time cutting it, you know? I couldn't cut it. "I cut it, I might ruin it," because I wouldn't know what to do. Then I thought about making a jacket, a Pendleton jacket. And this was when there was hardly any Pendleton jackets out. So, I made a Pendleton jacket, and we raffled it off. She had more than enough to go on. And the people seen that, and they said, "Can you make me one?" And then, I started making vests instead of jackets because it was taking too much, and the Pendleton is pretty expensive. And then, someone wanted a bag, and so I made a bag to match the jacket. And then, next thing I know, there was everybody wanting bags. And

then, I thought about, "What am I going to—am I going to have a little business making bags?" And so, my friends and I, we got together and we thought about, "What can I name my little business?" So, one morning, I woke up, and it kept coming to me: "Kawich." I go, "Oh, yeah! I'll use that." Because he was a chief that was not really recognized. So I used it. So that's one I'm still using, Kawich, on my bags. And it got where I got too busy making bags, and it just got too much time putting in. And I got tired of it. So, I kind of cut back on it. But I still, you know, people still now and then, they said, "Hey, I want a Kawich bag. Can you make me a bag?" I go, "Oh, I'll see."

[Laughter]

Chief Kawich was my great-grandfather. He comes from down at the Kawich Range. That's down on Nellis Air Force Base. And at that time, when they lived there, there was no base. They lived down there freely. And he had a band in, I don't even know what year it was. But when the settlers came, they'd taken his band, his people, out of that area. It was probably already, they wanted it as a base. I don't know why, what the reason was. But they were taking his people into California, taking them out of that area. And he had turned them around and brought some back, and they were—it was the cavalry that taken them out of there. And at that time, there was a river, down—Owens River. And now it's dry, because the water, there's a water piping down into lower California, down into the southern California. But anyway, they had them crossing that lake. But he had taken some of his people back towards his land. My mother's from that area. And now, it's in 19—late 1940s, the Nellis Air Force Base had taken over, and there were several other families that lived in that area. So, they had to move. They moved them out of there and fenced the area. And we're unable to go in that area. You have to have permission to

go in there. And he was the chief for that area. And, so, once they came and made a map of that location, so now there's a mountain, valley, springs, different areas that's named after him. And that was his only—that was his, all he had as a name. He didn't have any other name. And his son is Bill Kawich. After he passed away, he was the younger chief. And he was my grandfather. And the old man, the Chief Kawich, he's buried there somewhere near that mountain or on the mountain, of Kawich Mountain. I was able to go in that area, the Nellis Air Force Base, because there was an archaeologist that the base has. And he kept running into all these artifacts—baskets, whatever he was seeing—and he asked different ones to come in and explain why these things were there. All the grinding rocks and different things that's there, and there's rock caves. They call it the rock shelters. And most of the rock shelters are up higher. And they always say, "Well, why did they want to live so high?" It was because there was water. There was plenty of water that was in the valleys. So, I've had chance to go down into Nellis. But whenever we go into Nellis Air Force Base, they always have guides. They never leave you alone. You're unable to take pictures, you can't take cameras. We've gone to different shelters—I know this one shelter, it was facing toward the east, the opening. And there was several baskets, maybe four or five different baskets in there. And they had, looked like it was cedar branches put over it, and they were all mashed, so you couldn't tell what kind of basket it was. But you can tell they were different kind of baskets—you know, different shapes. And it was kind of sad there. There was a, like—to me, they asked, "What do you think, why this is here?" And to me, I said, "I think the person is buried under there." Just the feeling that *I* had. And the baskets that's there was her belongings. And that's what our people, that's what they did. They break up your baskets, whatever

you used, that way someone else won't use it after they pass on. And that's how I pictured it. But there's a lot of things there, and one area was where they had the grinding rocks turned over, and it was another rock shelter. And you can see the little rock circle there where they had fire going. But they had these different rocks where they turn them over. And the way I see it, someone of the family would come along, and when they're going through, they would use it, and just leave it there again and go on. So, it's really interesting in there. You don't see people coming in there and collecting, because it's all fenced-in. That's one thing I see about Nellis Air Force Base is, it's protected. But only thing, it's kind of bad and it's kind of good. But that was how we, different of our Native people got to go into Nellis to look at the things that's there, because that archaeologist wanted to know why they were there.

This song was originated—my uncle, his name was Dave Clifford. He used to sing this song, and what I was told was that you're not to sing this song until he passed on. So ever since he passed on, this song was sung at different things like rodeos, and maybe at the powwows, or the language conferences. This song was started at the beginning.

[Singing and drumming from 44:45-45:33]

[End of recording]