

INTERVIEW WITH IRA "IKE" GREENE

by Neil Carlson and Elaine Maranise

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BY NEIL CARLSON AND ELAINE MARANISE**

Tape One, Side One
Thursday, May 1, 1997
Jackson, CA.

Information attained prior to recording:

Subjects full name: Ira "Ike" Greene
Address: 204 Bright Avenue, Jackson
Telephone number: 223-1691
Date of birth: 2-12-20
Place of birth: North Lupe, Nebraska
Date of marriage: 3-31-41
Place of marriage: Reno, Nevada
Name of spouse: Kathryn
Date of birth: 9-3-23
Place of birth: Jackson, CA
Name of mother: Ethel
Date of birth: 1800
Place of birth: Arkansas
Name of Father: Leslie
Place of birth: Iowa
Fathers occupation: mechanic
Children and dates of birth:
Patricia 9-28-43
Michael 9-13-46
Siblings:
Irene Ethridge 2-12-20
Donald
Loren

Do you know when Patricia's date of birth is? (Elaine)..Geez, yeah. She was born the 28th of September..doggonit. What year it was though..Hmmm. She is..both of my kids are old (laugh). I don't remember the year. But, uh..I think she's three years older than Mike and he was born in '46. Oh, she was born in '42, I think. '42 or '43, what's a year. (Ike).. Yeah. (Neil)..Then I take it you have a son named Mike? (Elaine)..Yes. Mike (Cofer?). (Ike)..Ok. And do you know when his birthday is? (Elaine).. Yeah. His is on the..let' s see..Kate's is on the 3rd of September..(mumble)..His mother's was on the 13th. (Ike)..OK. (Elaine)..Kate was on the 13th. (Ike).. Of September? (Elaine)..No, no..3. Yeah, Mike was on third, Kate was on 13th, and Pat on the 28th. (Ike)..What month was that? (Elaine).. September..all born in September. (Ike)..Wow, they're all born...(Elaine)..We got all , all..(Ike)..Good planning. (Neil)..All them..all them birthdays in September, except mine. (Ike)..Alright. OK. Do you have any more kids? (Elaine)..Nooooo..(Ike)..Ok, that's enough? (Elaine)..That's it, that was it now. (Ike)..Ok. Do you have any brothers or sisters? (Elaine)..Yes. (Ike)..Ok. I need their names. (Elaine-laughing)..You don't want to know. (Ike)..Oh, that many? (Neil)..No, no. A couple of them died already. (Ike)..That's alright. (Elaine)..I got a twin sister. (Ike)..Alright. What's her name? (Elaine)..Irene. (Ike)..OK. And her birthday obviously would be the same as yours. (Elaine)..Her name is Etheridge. (Ike)..Ok.(Elaine)..She's the same age as me. (Ike).. (Laugh-Neil)..Only she's, uh..I was the first one born. (Ike)..A few minutes older?

(Neil).. Yeah. A couple minutes older. (Ike)..Ok. Do you have any other brothers or sisters? (Elaine).. Yes, I have two more brothers alive. (Ike)..OK. And what are their names? (Elaine)..Uh..Dahl? and Lauren. And they both live in Topeka Kansas. (Ike)..I need to know your primary and secondary education. (Elaine)..Oh, high school was all. That's all you needed in those days. (Ike)..Ok. And do you know what your high school was called? (Elaine).. Oh. Valley Falls High School. (Ike)..And where is that? (Elaine)..Kansas. (Ike) I need to know what your occupation is, or was. (Elaine).. Well, the last one was a logger..equipment operator..for American Forest. Before that, I was a miner. (Ike)..Alright, that's the important part for us, anyway. Ok. Did you ever serve in the military? (Elaine)..Yes. (Ike)..Ok. Were you like..want to tell us a little bit about that? (Elaine)..No, there's not a lot to tell. (Ike)..Like when..(Elaine)..But I was in from '42 to '46. (Ike)..During the war? (Neil) Yeah. (Ike)..Alright. OK. What types of community activities have you been involved in? (Elaine)..None. (Ike) None? (Elaine)..Nope. (Ike)..Alright. Any other information? About your past or..anything that we should know? (Elaine)..I don't think so. (Laugh) (Ike). Alright, well..that's all the questions. (Elaine) Ok? (Neil).. That it?(Ike)

Tape One, Side One

Friday, May 2, 1997

Did you know anyone who worked at the mine? (Elaine)..Oh, yeah. I knew a lot of the miners. It was just like any place else. You always knew who you's workin' with.

(Ike)..OK. Can you give me any specific names? (Elaine)..What till I get my hearing

aid.....OK. Now. (Ike)..Alright, can you tell me any specific names of people you might

know? (Elaine)..Uh, no..I don't know any of the miners that live around here any

more..they're all gone. (Ike).. The people that you knew that worked in the mines, what

types of jobs did they have? (Elaine)..Oh, well, they were miners same as me. (mumble)

Oh, you know Juicy? He worked in the Argonaut Mine when I worked there. (Ike)..Who's

Juicy? (Neil).. (Laugh) Oh, Geez. Vince, over there in Sutter Creek. (Ike)..Oh, is that

Vince? Oh, Ok. We interviewed him. Ok. I didn't know that was his nickname. He never

said that. (Neil)..Oh, his name was Juicy. He's always chewin' Juicy Fruit. Ha!Ha!

(Ike)..Ok. Do you know how many hours each day the miners worked? (Elaine)..We

worked eight. (Ike).. Any how many days of the week did you worrk, or were expected to

work? (Elaine).. Six. (Ike).. Ok. What were the working conditions like in the Kennedy

and the other mines? (Elaine)..Well, they were pretty good. The only thing in those

mines..they didn't have very good ventilation. And..it was kinda hard, you know...you

sweat and all that good stuff. (Ike)..Was it tough breathing? (Neil)..Yeah, yeah. You

know, the air pressure was tight down in the Argonaut, too. Because it was 6300 feet

deep. Man, go down there with a cold, you know..And they let you down there

like..phew..and if you had a cold your ears plugged up, your sinuses plugged. Boy, it was just like somebody locked your head in a vise, you know? Man, that was hard. (Ike)..OK.

Would you be able to describe a typical working day at the Kennedy mine?

(Elaine)..Yeah, yeah. Well, you got on a skip, you know. Over there they had a bunch of them guys rode in. But over in the Argonaut we had a, we went down in the skip. They had two skips, you know? And they all them loaded in there..took about..I don't know, about just two or three minutes and they had you down to the 5500 foot level. I guess that's why your ears plugged up. But, uh, well..after you got down there, then you went to your working place..there was miners went to the stokes, you know..and the clammers..there were the guys pushed the cars in and out and then they had the timber men in there. I did all them jobs. But, uh..we'd do our work and at lunch time you ate on the company's time there underground..so from the time you went down on the skip in the morning, to go down..till the time you came up, was eight hours. Guy was supposed to be up on top, you know. But, uh..I didn't mind working at them mines. It, uh, course they expect you to work. It ain't like nowadays..you just go put your time in..but,uh,I don't know how to explain it to ya. (Ike)..Ok. Can you tell me what it was like to live in a mining town or in the Coutny? (Elaine)..Oh, it was just like any other town. Only thing was people here didn't know there was a depression. And uh, people in Jackson didn't know there was a depression on 'cause there was always plenty mines..always plenty

work. And then, well..you got another question about sawmills. But, uh..it was all right.

(Ike) Um, something Vince said was that there wasn't much law. I mean not hter were a lot of criminals, but that there were only a few law enforcement people. (Neil)..That's right. They had a chief of police, they had a Lucca sheriff, and, uh..they had a constable and a jailkeeper in Jackson. That's what we had, but it was pretty..people wasn't, uh..there's a lot of different brands of people there. But, uh..we didn't have much law enforcement. Usually (Ratto?) was in the law business too. Yep. (Ike)..OK. Can you describe what a typical day would be like for a child or a teenager or an adult during a workweek? (Elaine)..No, I couldn't. I was working underground. (Ike)..Ummm. What was it like to travel from one town to the next? (Elaine)..Well, we had cars then. Yep, it didn't take long. (Ike) ..OK. About ow long would it take to get from Jackson to Sutter Creek?(Elaine)..Oh, 15 or 20 minutes. We had highways then. (Ike)..OK. How long would it take you to get to Sacramento, Stockton, San Francisco or Lake Tahoe? (Elaine)..Uh..'bout an hour, maybe a little more. Maybe a little bit more to get to Sacramento or Stockton. It'll take 4 hours to go to San Francisco, 3 hours to go to Tahoe, I guess. (Ike)..So just about the same, then? (Neil).. Yeah, yeah..we, they had 55 mile speed limits in them days..and then after, later, then they had 65 mile an hour speed limits. That was on these highways around here. It was kinda wild. (Ike)..When you go to, like, the other cities, were those people, could you tell they were more affected by the

depression? (Neil)..No, well..up along here you couldn't,but down in the Valley where all them people were migratin' in..you know, from the middle west. There was a..you know, mostly farm people..they had it kinda rough, those people down there in, uh..Salinas, and then, uh..and then uh..they had it a lot tougher than these people, uh..uh.. nowadays.

(Ike)..How about in Tahoe? (Neil)..Oh, I don't know. We used to go up there once in a while, do a little gambling, but..(Ike) It wasn't too bad up there? (Neil)..No, it was pretty much the same as it was around here, 'cause we had the gambling and everythings..the same as up there. So, it wasn't much different. (Ike)..OK. Can you tell me, during the time when the mining was going on, what types of experiences people would have, with like, what they would see or what types of smells there would be? If it was different, if the type of environment would be different at all? (Elaine)..No, I don't think so. I, uh..I really don't know whatcha. (Ike)..Like if..(Elaine).. Just kinda the environment. How would it be different from now? (Neil)..No, they weren't any different than they are now. (Ike)..So, like when the mines were running there..if you were close to the area where the mines were running..just like the smell of the air because of the mines running..if there would be, like..(Elaine) No, they wasn't that much exhaust coming out of those mines. (Ike)..What kind of entertainment was there in Amador County? And can you remember any specific events? (Elaine)..Yeah, they, uh..they, uh..they used to have, uh..well, we had a theater down here. We used to go see, go see a, give a show every week. (Laugh)

And then they had dances down at that Krabbenhoft hall, you know the one. You know where Krabbenhoft Hall is? Down there big hall? They use to have dances there, and they had the Italian Picnic, parades, all that stuff. Yeah, the Kit Carson Mountain Men used to have a big parade down here every year, too. Maybe, you guys probably saw 'em. (Ike)..

Well, just like the Italian Picnic Parade? (Neil).. Yeah, yeah..but, uh..oh, we had entertainment, I guess. (Laugh). Not like they got today. But we got along. (Ike).. Alright.

What were the other main industries in Amador County at this time? (Elaine).. There was the sawmill. Sawmill that's there..that was before, just before the war they opened up down there. That was, uh..Winton Logging Company. Anderson Log there got 'em started, and, uh.. Winton Logging Company. They were from back East there, Minnesota someplace. And, uh..they sold 'em to American Forest. And you know the rest (laughs), as they said. But, uh..that was, uh.. that was one of the big employees, you know, in Amador County. And now its shuttin' it down. (Ike).. OK. Were there many different ethnic groups in Amador County, like..(Elaine).. Yeah, there was a lot of 'em. Them Italians, had a lot of restaurants and, uh, boarding houses out on Jackson Gate. Man they had, they had all kinds of restaurants out there. And they all had good food, too. (Laughs) (Ike)..Pretty friendly people, though? (Neil)..Oh yeah, oh yeah. Everybody knew you when you come in, you know, off the street. That was one thing about livin' up there, everybody knew everybody. But now all the increase in the population..all the foreigners

are movin' in. It ain't like what it used to be. Yeah, everybody used to know everybody.

(Ike)..OK. Where did people live, and what jobs or services did they provide?

(Elaine)..Who was that? (Ike).. The ethnic groups. (Elaine)..Well, ummm..the Serbs, they was pretty near all miners. And, uh..I didn't know too many Frenchmen. But, uh.. I would say they was miners, too. And the Chinese, there was Chinese here. They had restaurants, you know. A couple of restaurants around. And, uh.. that's about it, I guess. (Ike).. Were there like housing areas like, were they separated? Did one ethnic group live in one area of the City or County? Were they kinda grouped together or was everybody just kinda mixed together? (Neil).. Yeah, they were, it was all kinda mixed together. There used to be a boarding house down her on the Broadway, too. And they were, uh..Serbians. There was a bunch of Serbians out on Jackson Gate. And uh, Poletta's was out the..and the Wheel Inn was out there and Teresa's is still out there. That's Italian. But, uh, then, over in Sutter Creek some way. They had a lot of boarding houses over there because the Central Eureka Mine was over there. So they took care of the tramp miners (laugh). Yep. (Ike)..Do you remember the gambling halls and other businesses that were in Jackson before 1942 when the mines were closed down? (Elaine)..Yeah. That used to be our..that used to be where we had our fun, them gambling joints. You know, gosh darnit. When I first came to Jackson, for twenty dollars..those wages were awful low then anyhow. But for twenty dollars you could go to town and get drunk, and get all your friends drunk..for

twenty dollars. (laughs). Yeah, it was pretty good. (Ike)..So they were pretty popular then, the gambling halls and...(Neil)..Oh, yeah. Yeah. Every other joint down there on Main Street was gambling or a bar. Man, there was a lot of them. (Ike)..OK. Did you know anyone who worked in the halls, the gambling halls? (Elaine)..In the..yeah,yeah. Some of our best friends was uh..worked in them. This one old..you know Darryl Mattley? Her mother? His mother? He was an interest..ya know he had an interest in one of them Luberts(?) down there in Jackson. But, uh..they was a lot of gambling joints. Man! 'Course I wasn't much of a gambler. I couldn't afford it. But a lot of them guys, they gambled. (Ike)..Do you think that the mining industry helped keep the gambling halls in business? (Elaine)..Oh, sure. Absolutely! (Ike).. Where did you buy your groceries? (Elaine)..Well, Cassinelli had a store down there. Then uh..the Chinamen had a store down there in the Krabbenhof Hall. Way down there in that big..the top, the biggest building down there. I remember the Chinamen used to have a store down there. And then there was a Matulich. He had a store down there. Let me think..that other store that was uh..right in there by..oh, forgot the name of that one. But, uh..Cassinelli's was, you know, was the biggest one there. (Ike)..OK. Where did you buy your gas? (Elaine)..The gas, well there used to be, you know where that uh..that pots and pans store is there at the end of Main Street? Used to be a Shell Station there. And then there was another one over here on Water Street..and we used to buy in there. And I don't remember whether

ther was any mor service stations around here or not. 'Bout two was 'bout all they needed 'cause there wasn't too many cars in Jackson in them days. I had a Model A Ford. Now that was a good car, boy. Model A was a good car in them days. (Ike)..All right. Who was the doctor and where was he located? (Elaine)..Um..when I was working over there in Sutter Creek, we had Wakefield, and uh..for a doctor. And we had..you won't believe this, but in those days each one of the miners that worked in the mines you put in 50 cents a month. That was the same as your insurance is now. And you could go to Wakefield there and he never sent you a bill. Fifty cents a month ol' Wakefield. (Ike).. That's a good deal! (Elaine-laughing)..That's about ...(expletive deleted) 6 bucks a year. That's all they could afford then. We only got 3..I think 3 and a half a day when I worked in uh..over there at Central Eureka and it was 2 and a half workin' in the Argonaut..for 8 hours. (Ike)..All right. Where did you buy your clothes? (Elaine)..Oh, uh.. there was a, oh..I forgot the story now. Freddie Cuneo down there..I gotta ask Kate. She knows all them names. Told ya I couldn't remember. Then the Layman's and Workman's store down there on Main Street. (Ike).. Layman's and Workman's? (Elaine)..Yeah. (Ike)..Were the boarding houses operating when you were here and where were they located? (Elaine)..Yeah, there were quite a few of them when I was working there. This one..uh..ah, I forgot. But I used to eat over there in Sutter Creek and then out here on..ah..on, ah, I forgot (laughs). But, uh..hmmm..Buscaglia's, that's what it was,

Buscaglia's and The Wheel Inn and all them places. They all had boarding houses in 'em. I'd eat there once in a while but, uh..most of the boarding houses I ate at were in Butte. Those were good places to eat. (Ike)..Butte?..Where? (Neil)..Montana. That's before I moved to California. (Ike).. Oh, OK. (Neil and Elaine)..How much did ,um, the boarding houses charge and what types of things did you expect there? (Elaine).. You could get your meals out there for 50 cents per day. (Ike)..So your meals cost about as much as your insurance did, then? (Neil).. You're right. (Ike)..Well, that's a wierd way of looking at it. (Neil)..Did most men and their families have a car? (Elaine)..Yeah, most of the people I knew had a car. All the guys I used to run around with. (Ike)..Were ranching and farming big in Amador County? (Elaine)..Ranching was, yeah. But not too much..I don't know..you know, Jackson Valley was about the only place in Amador County where they could do any farming. But, uh..ranching was big and all the Bamert's and Allen's and all them guys over there, they had land from here clear over into Hope Valley. Uh..And my wife's uncle, he used to be all a part of that Hope Valley up there, but then he sold out (laughing) years ago. (Ike)..Was the timber industry large in Amador County? (Elaine).. Yeah, it was pretty..pretty big. It ah..we did a lot of loggin' up there, boy. (Ike)..Who were the main loggers? (Elaine)..Ah, well, I already told ya..American Forest and Winton. But you know, over in Calaveras they had uh..there was a lot more companies over there than there was over here, because they has Associated and

Stockton Box, American Forest (laughs). They were big over there in Calaveras

(Ike)..What do you remember about the Argonaut Mine Fire? (Elaine)..It was before my time. (Ike)..Ok. What do you remember about the labor strikes against the mine owners?

(Elaine)..Not much. There was only one time I remember that they were up here kind of organized..I was working on Central Eureka at the time, but, uh..they didn't get any place. I guess the miners didn't want it. (Ike).. OK. What else can you remember about the Kennedy Mine? (Elaine)..I never worked there. (Ike)..OK. What other memories do you have about living in Amador County or Jackson? (Elaine)..What did you say?

(Ike)..(Elaine repeats question)..Oh, I don't know..I probably got lost (laughs), but, uh..anyhow, I don't really remember anything specific, except that I liked to hunt and I liked to fish. It was a nice place to live. We've got a hell of a good temperature here year round. (Ike)..So, it was pretty good for most people? (Neil)..Oh, yeah. That's why all the people in the Valley tried to move up here, while all this real estate was being sold. My kids moved up here from Pacifica in the past couple years. Too much city down there for them. (Ike)..All right. (Elaine)..It expanded. (Ike).. I don't have any more questions.

(Elaine)..Well, good. (Ike-laughs)..Do you have anything else you want to add on anything? (Neil)..No, I don't think so..It's uh..I just like to hunt and fish and you know..I don't like the city. I just can't stand being on that city. (Ike)..Alright. (Elaine)..OK. I guess that will do it. (Neil)..