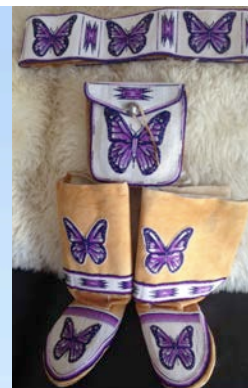




Doris Allison

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 049



Oral History Interview by

**Norm Cavanaugh
April 22, 2016
Duckwater, NV**



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Interviewee: Doris Allison

Interviewer: Norm Cavanaugh

Date: April 22, 2016

A: My name is Doris Millett Allison. I was born in Austin, Nevada. But basically, I lived in Round Mountain, Nevada, where I grew up until I was eight years old—when we moved to Duckwater. My family originally are from the, what they call the *Ete Pah Newene* [Hot Water People/Shoshones] in Smoky Valley. That's my grandfather's birthplace. His land. And on my maternal side, my grandparents were Mamie and Bill Birchum. They're from the *Mahakua*, they're *Mahakuatekka'a* [Mahakua-eaters]. And my *huttsi*, my father's mother, is a *Yampatekka'a* [Wild Carrot-Eaters]. She's from Yomba. Years ago, when she was a little girl, she always said that the government were picking their little kids, and they picked up her sister, and she never knew what became of her. I don't know why; she didn't know why they were doing this. But I suppose it's because they were—the government were intending to educate, civilize, Christianize young Indian people. And that went on here in Duckwater, also. After the reservation was established, 1940, we moved here from Round Mountain. My dad had a good job in the Round Mountain mines. He was a miner. He gave that up, and we moved here, supposedly to become ranchers and farmers. And my—we left my great-great-grandfather, John **Sunday**. He told my people that he was not leaving his homeland. That he was going to stay there. And a week before we moved, he passed away. And his grave is the only grave that is marked right now, today. He said he was not moving away from his homeland, because that's where his family were. And we moved. We moved here, where there was nothing. I know for a fact my grandparents, my *kunu* and my *huttsi*, my dad, my mother, grieved for their country. We were not really "homeless." "Landless." My grandfather and my dad had a mine, which they worked. They had a ranch, which we called the Apple Ranch. We

had a home there on the ranch in Smoky Valley. Then they were—they supported themselves by doing—hauling wood, and working in the mines. But we had to leave. And we moved here to Duckwater. There was nothing here for us. We lived in a makeshift tent. We had no drinking water, except the water that flowed. There was no jobs. Eventually, the government came in and built homes, later. And we became ranchers and farmers. They had a program where they gave each family members ten head of cattle, and then—they were called “repays”: at the end of the year, they would give back to the Repay Program one or two calves, so that some other family on another reservation could start their cattle herd. That was our life in Duckwater. Then as the years went by, we grew up and moved away. When my dad was killed in an automobile accident when I was thirteen, we moved away. We moved to Austin, where we lived with our grandparents. Our maternal grandparents. And we attended the school there. I quit school when I was fourteen, because there’s no way that my mother could take care of all of us. So I added on to the income by working. I worked, **seeing those** jobs for people as a young adult. When I was eighteen, I came to Duckwater to visit my grandparents, and I met my husband. He had a ranch—the ranch that we still live on now. He had a few head of cattle. And my life as a mother started then. I’ve worked so hard all my life. Then, after I raised my children—I had seven children—then *both* of us worked. We had to support our children, help put them through school. And then, after they left, we were foster parents for a long time. We had five foster children; not all at once, but as time went on, we had one or two. Then, after they were grown up, after my last child left home, I went back to school. I went back to—I attended White Pine High School. Got my diploma there. Then, my husband allowed me to go to Great Basin for two semesters. I

left him here. I thank him for that. Then, after I received my education, I became tribal judge. And I attended the judicial college in Reno for three years. Then my youngest daughter was killed in a car crash. We took her two younger children into our home and raised them. They're still here. And my granddaughter has a little girl. And she comes and helps me a lot on weekends. But my granddaughter helps different—they call on her to help them when they need help in daycare, or help them cook, or whatever. She's available to help around the reservation. And my grandson is a full-time student at Great Basin. Years ago, when we were living in Smoky Valley, I remember they—Newene used to get together, and they congregated at a ranch down on the valley. Newene all got together, and they played handgames, and played cards, and us kids played together. And they had a dinner that the ladies prepared. We did that every Sunday. We all got together every Sunday, and visited with one another. And that way, we still communicated with each other to see if anyone needed any help, or if they needed any assistance with anything. I remember them coming to my *kunu*'s ranch, and helping. He had a big bunkhouse where the people passing through would stop there and help him. Also at our home in Round Mountain, where they had a big bunkhouse. We were never allowed to go in there. But they had a woodcutting business, where they needed all these extra hands. And then he paid them, and whenever they needed money, they would come and help. I was told that my *kunu* was the first Indian to ever have a brand-new car. And people kind of looked up to him, because he was kind of a—sort of like a leader. My *kunu* was a half-breed. He had a white father, which he—because of that, he rejected that part of his life, his family. And he rejected the English language. And he was instrumental in acquiring these ranches. In fact, I have a picture. I have a picture of the times when they were

negotiating with the government. 1942, they had series of meetings in different places, and they didn't want to leave Smoky Valley, but they were told that the Smoky Valley didn't have enough water, and they couldn't raise crops there, it wasn't feasible for cattle. And so, they were told they should go down to Beatty. They wanted all the Indians to go down to Beatty. And they said no, they didn't want to go to Beatty. But Duckwater at that time was bankrupt to the bank, and it was purchased to become a reservation. That's how we arrived here. And on my grandfather's side, on Bill Birchum's side, Bill and Mamie, my grandparents have lot of relatives all over. And my *toko* was a constable for the town of Austin, where he was appointed to be overseeing the Native Americans there, the Shoshone people. And he broke horses for the cavalry. But when I was growing up in Austin, I used to see horses there. He had a corral, and he used to ride horses. I guess he was still breaking horses at that time. And he was, he made rawhide ropes. He was always making ropes. From morning 'til night, he was up there with his rawhide. And my grandma worked for people who were—throughout the town. When they work for people, they don't really work from eight to five. They work when they get home, too: they bring their clothes home and mend it, or patch it, whatever. So, they're constantly work. And I don't know how much they were *paid*, but I think they should've been paid *more* for overtime. Because my grandmother was always darning socks, and sewing for people, even after—at night. But she never said—she never complained about anything. I liked to talk to the old people. I was always talking to the old people. I used to visit with Harlan Jackson a lot. He was my *huttisi*'s family. He said that Newene really don't realize, nor do they appreciate, being who they are: Newene. He said he felt that came from the *taipos*. That we really didn't live up to our full potential. And we should. He

said we should. We should respect ourselves more. Because we're God's chosen people. "Aishen [**Shoshone at 19:15**]," he said. Respect yourselves more, respect who you are, and respect around you—whatever, probably environment. And he said that's—he feels that we have lost our battle. We have given up. And he said, "[**Shoshone at 19:59**]"

There's so much advice out there. Now the young people have lost that. And it's sad to see that. A lot of them have rejected our—their Native background. Then, who are they? I think it's good to have an education. I think it's good to be assimilated into this society. I think it's good to be your own self, too. Be proud of who you are. And we've lost that. We've lost the old people who used to advise. I remember my *toko*. When you did something, he looked at you: that was enough. He didn't have to say anything. I grew up in their home. I saw how they treated people. He had an old Model T Ford that we used to drive down to Battle Mountain, and stay with his relatives. Go down to Battle Mountain and stay with his relatives, and they talk way into the night. Tell stories, and—so, I'm related to almost everybody in Battle Mountain. And he, the last words he said to me was that not to forget what he had told me. He said, "We're related to the Hall family, up in Owyhee and Idaho." He said, [22:22] "***Kai sekke noose watsi. Aisen nanewene.***"

And he said, "***Kai naneweni nasuwatsih. Kai Newene sunni naat,***" he said. And he said, "You should be happy, whatever you do. You should be happy with—"[**Shoshone at 22:50**]," he said. "[**Shoshone at 22:52**]," he said, "[**Shoshone at 23:02**]" The humanness in our Newe culture should be revived. That was their way of life. There was no material things. We work so hard for material things, and it's nothing. Because we worked so hard to be human beings. And when we do these things now, it's really basically for monetary purposes, or for show.

[Break in recording]

In conclusion with the latter part of my life, in addition to my getting an education, raising my family, and becoming a foster parent, and getting involved with Tribal programs, politics, I wished I had the foresight to see the problems as they had existed at that time. And been more involved. I think that life is interesting. I think that life has to be lived to its fullest. And that we have a world of gems, which are our children, our families, and with the experiences that the Native American people—Native American Shoshones—have experienced, is important to our well-being. Now that I have been involved in all these things, I appreciate my Newe culture. I appreciate all my Newe relatives. And also, I'm thankful that I was able to gain an education, and to learn the non-Indian culture, and all that it had to offer. We live in this society, and this is now the dominant society. But we should always remain who we are, and be true to our Newe selves. I would like the young people to be more receptive to our Indian inheritance. I would like the young Indian people to be proud of who they are, yet embrace the non-Indian culture. I want them to be in a society where they are educated in both cultures. With that, I would like to thank everyone who made my life complete.

[End of recording]