



# Vivian Cinnabar

*Great Basin Indian Archive*

GBIA 022



**Oral History Interview by**

**Norm Cavanaugh  
November 24, 2009  
Elko, NV**



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VC: That's how they were. They were enemies. All of them enemies with Paiutes, and all the different tribes. They were enemies. And so, but these Shoshones around this area worked together, and then so, they—

NC: So do you remember what band of Shoshones your family came from?

VC: In this area, we were Western Shoshones. Uh-huh. And then, but my dad was part Bannock. It must have been a big *pokkombe* [1:35] when they got together. What was the question you asked me? I don't know where they came from. Knew it was from that people around there. They just roamed around down in this area. Because those other people were the enemy, you know. And then, so, so most of them, they were settled in Ruby Valley. And all the people out here didn't mind Shoshones. And so when the government made the treaty, and then they talked to the people, the head mans, you know? Do you know that that was, that was the same thing that's going on. They was, they were fighting with the white people—like ranchers that had lands, and everything. They used to have all kinds of businesses. They were fighting with them, and stealing their cattle, and killing the cattle and horses, and families. So that's the reason why—it wasn't only that way here. It was all over. And then so they negotiate. They say they came, and decided to make a treaty, and talk to the people, so that won't be going on. And then, so they had this meeting at Ruby Valley. And some people felt, well, it's good. Government was going to help them. Because lot of people were poor, and they were having hard time. They're just roaming, living off of the land. This is what I'm saying. And they were having hard time, so government told them that they were going to help them if they signed that treaty, and made reservations for them. And some people didn't

like it. They didn't want to go under the government. And some people want it. They said, "Well, good. They're going to help us," live someplace where the government will give them reservation. And so lot of people didn't want to go under government. But my, it would be my great-great-grandpa, Buck. His name was Buck. He was there. And then some of the other men, too, they talked it over. They said, well, it's good idea to make that treaty, this agreement. So that way we won't be killing each other, and stuff like that. And so, so then, Buck... So then, Buck, my dad's—it would be his uncle, I guess. He agreed about the reservation, because his people were just roaming here, and they **were going to die at the time**. So Buck made—and the others, uncle he agreed to sign on it. And they saw the other man come in the area, you know, Shoshones. And then they decided they wanted help, too. Some of the people didn't want to go under the government, so. The people that want to go, they had joined with Buck. With the Western Shoshones. And this was the, they want to go that way. Go under the government. Lot of people in this area didn't want to go under government, so they stayed here. Stayed in the towns, and, like, lived along the tracks, here. So the government gave them land over there, west of Carlin. Over here at Carlin, down here? On the other side of the tunnels, that's where. On, that would be east of the tunnels there. Someplace in the mountains back there. Kind of desert country they said, they went. They couldn't make any living off of that land. What they want the mens to do? And so the men got together, and they say, "No, we didn't, we want a place where we could live off of the land." And you know. "This place is poor. No water, no green grasses," stuff like that for their cattle and horses. And so they talked. They talked **at length**. When they roamed, they know the area. So they sent to that, like where they—it wasn't called Duck Valley at that time. But

anyway, they knew that place, one of the places where they roamed. And they went back and talked to the government. So the government agreed, because they were having hard time out here in Carlin, trying to make a living. So then they got together, so the government agreed to give them that place there, which is Duck Valley now. Because it had all wild animals, and all kinds of game to eat, and fowl, sage hens, and all them kind of... And Owyhee River had lot of fish in it. Salmon, fish coming up from the Snake River. And the mountains. They had lot of trouts and stuff like that. And so they went up to that place, if they could have it. So the government agreed with them. So then, they—that's when they moved to Duck Valley, the people.

NC: So did they move—how many Shoshones were there?

VC: I don't know. Quite a few. Because there are all different kind of Shoshones here. But the whole thing was they called themselves Western Shoshones—but with Buck.

NC: So did they round up all the Shoshone bands in this area and move them up to Owyhee?

VC: Lot of the people didn't want to go with Buck. So that's how it got started in Owyhee. That's how it got, then they moved. Lot of people moved to go to Owyhee and have a good living there. But the others stayed around here. What else?

NC: So is that, is Buck, is he the same person they used to call Captain Buck?

VC: At that time they signed the treaty, they went there, but just headmen in the tribe. But his name wasn't Buck. But later on, when they went under the government, they had to work with the government. And so, different men worked under the government as scouts. Scouts. **Found them all** over there in Owyhee. Yeah, the scouts that went with the government. And that's when they changed his name to Captain Buck. If you go to the

cemetery, you'll find lot of the mens there, lot of the men's names, "Captain." Like Captain Charles and all those guys. So he was one of those headmen over there.

NC: Did you want to go ahead and read what you have written down?

VC: That's about all I have it wrote down... Oh, yes! Another thing that these people around here, when we used to go to the Shoshone meetings, they kept **blaming**—it says now, "Why did they get these men to sign on the treaty, when they don't even know how to write?" [Laughter] Nobody was educated at that time, they didn't like that, these people around here. Because nobody knew how to do it. And the people, the men that sign the, name, Indian names, they were long Indian names. [\_\_inaudible at 12:54\_\_]. So they thumb print, they had to make thumb prints, that's how they sign on it. These are on somebody, fixed it. But Earl Crum and Beverly, they have those names. They know how to pronounce a lot of them. I don't even know how to pronounce it, put that name. That's long Indian names and stuff. I thought they wrote down what their names, was thumb prints. And the man, the government mans in Washington, they signed on the treaty, too. Because they're all there.

NC: Do you remember what the treaty said, or what the agreements were?

VC: I don't know. I can't remember. But it says, what do they call that...? Peace—what's the other one?

NC: Peace and Friendship Treaty?

VC: Yeah. Peace and Friendship, because they get together now. Then they won't be fighting anymore. So the Indians agreed with the white guys that they could go ahead and be free to do whatever they want, like mining, and live in towns and whatever. **So, and then there's—they don't make happen.** They having trouble. They agreed on that one. So

they call it “Friendship.” It made peace. Peace among each other. And then, so later on, yeah, the government did help them with their food, and living too. Yeah. Yeah, they, I don’t know why they brought the supplies in, but the supplies come out, to come here, and different men from Owyhee, they had army wagons. They gave them army wagons to come on, and they come after the supplies. Pick up the supplies, food supplies, and took it back to Owyhee to distribute among the Indians. It took three days. Three days to get here from there. My dad was one of them, with some other guys. I think the men took turns going after supplies here. And out to Mountain Home too. But I don’t know where the supplies come from. But that’s what they used to do. And then, different men, different people said how their grandparent tell them that if they were going to go off the reservation, they had to get permission. At that time, if they want to go to Mountain Home, they had to get permission from the agency, or wherever they want to go—go off the reservation, they had to get permission. Because they were under government. That’s when they got those scouts. They called them “scouts.”

NC: So the scouts worked with the Indian people there in Duck Valley? The scouts worked with them in helping them get permission if they wanted to go someplace?

VC: Yes. That’s what the scout **does**. Scouts, you know, they were kind of protecting the people from enemies, too. Mmhm.

NC: So, do you remember what year that was, when Duck Valley or the Owyhee reservation was set up?

VC: No. No, no. I don’t remember then. Mm-mm.

NC: So was the reservation first set up for just the Western Shoshone?

VC: Mmhm. There were a lot of Shoshones, but that's what the Western Shoshones... Long time ago, they used to go to Shoshone meetings here and there. And the people, committee, or whatever they are, they decided to call our area "Western Shoshone." But later on, it spread to here. So when people in this area, they have different dialects, Shoshones, they're all Shoshones, but that changed. Some of the words, different pronunciation, some of the people that don't hear it don't understand that. Different words that they don't use. Yeah.

NC: So did your family just speak Shoshone in your household when you were small, growing up?

VC: Yeah. We used Shoshone. Well, they had a Presbyterian church there in Owyhee for a long time. And that's only one church, the Presbyterian church, which is still there. And they helped the people. Just, like, going to school, teaching, teaching them people who go to church. There's quite a few people there from Owyhee that go to church, and they taught them, taught the children, how to talk English and all that stuff. Educate them. Then, that's long time ago, they had schools. They call it boarding schools, where the kids, children went to school, up there where the Mormon church is sitting now. That was where the children went to boarding school, there. They'd go home summertime, you know just like the regular schools. Had vacations. My mother was the cook up there. [Laughter] Yeah, and the children, that's where they went. That's where they learned their school. They didn't have the, like, Beginners, Head Start, and all that stuff. You just went to school. First grader. You know, went to first grade. Because they had teachers, teachers coming and teaching them. Some of these children that live in Owyhee, they go home. They get to go home weekends, too. Vacation times.

NC: But they stayed at the school? Is that why they called it a boarding school?

VC: Yes. And that's where they stay...

NC: Did you stay at the school?

VC: Long time ago. [Laughter]

NC: So did you learn English at the school, or did you already know how to speak English?

VC: Yeah, I did. You know, like I said, Presbyterian church. That's where we went. We almost *lived* there! [Laughter] Almost living there.

NC: So did a lot of Indian children go to school, at the boarding school? Or, just some of them?

VC: No, **they're all there.**

NC: And how far up did they go to school there? How long did they go to school? Was there, like, a high school?

VC: Just like, no, they went, there was no high school. I think they went to sixth grade. They had day schools, they called it. After there was no more boarding schools, they go to, they called it day school. They had schools in different areas. Like, in our area, they went to school, our school was Number 2. We went, we had to walk to school. Rain or shine, wintertime. We had to go and walk to school. Go around the school, like this. And then the people around the Boney Lane now, they call it, that area, they went to, theirs was Number 1 school. And they walked to school, too, right there. That school was where **Nathan Bacon**'s house is. In that area. And where the Thomases live. The Toms, they call it Thomases now. And Number 1 was built down there at Miller Creek. That's where they went, the Paiutes. Yeah. That's how they did it after they closed the other thing. But it only went to fifth grade there. First to fifth grade. You had to walk, walk to school. And



then later on, I don't know, maybe 19—early 1920s, I think—somewhere in there, they build a public school, they called it, and it was built over there where the main office is. I mean, it used to be, because they built that tribal building down there. That's where the public school. Then some of the employees' children went to the school there. And then some of the other people, like Elaine **Ethan**—I know where it is, it was way down where **George Rocher's** house is. Down in there, it's close to the—that's where she came to school. Sometimes she walked to school, sometimes she rode on horse to school. And then, on our side is, I guess the Premos was the ones last. Like Laura, and all her family. Tom Premo's children. They went just to public schools. Because I guess maybe their parents thought that that was a better school than the day schools. And then they used to walk to school—they walked to town. That's where the, where is that, now? That big building across the road from—it used to be the courthouse. That big building there. That's where they go to public school. That's where they went. Some of them.

NC: So did the public school have a high school?

VC: I think, I don't know, maybe to the eighth grade. Yes. Because several of the children were sent to Stewart Indian School in Carson City, and some to Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. And some went to—what did they call it?—[the] Indian school in Phoenix, Arizona. That's where they went. And so, I guess maybe the day school went as far as the sixth grade. But when they took the day schools away, and people were going into town where the old school was, right there by that tribal gym—by the *old* tribal gym, in that building. Right in there is where the school was. That's where we got transferred to, after they closed the day schools. And first, when it started, when we went over there, we went to the eighth grade. And we didn't have any transportation to go over there to go

to school. And we rode on trucks. [Laughter] We rode, went to school on trucks! Until they finally got us buses. And then, we went with them. So we all went there. It was like a T, that building. From first to eighth grade, it went. And then in eighth grade, [\_\_inaudible at 29:08\_\_] school. Lot of us, lot of the children went. Most of them went to Stewart, at Carson City. But I went to Sherman Institute, in Riverside, California. Few of us did. Me, and Marie, and **Pietra**. We finished eighth grade, and so we went to Sherman Institute to go to school. Until we graduated in twelfth grade down there.

NC: What was that experience like going to Riverside or to Sherman Institute, moving from the reservation to a larger place?

VC: [\_\_inaudible at 30:03\_\_] the government. That was in California, and most of the children went there from California. And others, other people, other tribes. Not too many. Like Navajo, and Hopi, and lot of northern tribes went there. Few Paiutes, **some** Shoshones from Owyhee and Fort Hall. We went there. And then, and there was a college in Riverside, in the town. City of Riverside. A lot of them people that got through and graduated from 12<sup>th</sup>, they went there to go to college. Yeah, lot of the Indians. Most were California children, went there to college.

NC: Can you describe what the school was like at Riverside? At the school? What was it like?

I mean, can you tell us of your personal experience?

VC: Well, it was good. I liked it. Went there four years.

NC: Did you have to wear uniforms, or...?

VC: No. They used to, at first they did. They used wear uniforms. But later on, they quit that. They didn't put them in the uniforms anymore. But, this was Sherman Institute. After the second World War, the Navajo veterans got together and they wanted good things to be

done for their children. So they asked for Sherman Institute. They want that school for Navajos only. So that's what happened, later. And then they tried—that's what they used that, instead of using Sherman Institute, they call it "Indian School" now. Some people go there yet, but mostly they're Navajos and Hopis, those people from the south, down south, go there now. Not like what it used to be. Lot of the people from other places, they have to find someplace else to go to school. When the veterans did that, they took the school only for the Navajos.

NC: So what did you do after you graduated from Riverside?

VC: We just stayed home, mostly. Once in a while, I got some kind of a day work job, like washing, and helping them in the kitchen, where they feed the kids. And other things later on. Then, I got a job at Portland, Oregon. [Laughter] I went to work there as a housekeeper. That's what they had employees doing, was that kind of working. Yeah, I spent few years in Portland, and then came back to Owyhee. Owyhee was the best! [Laughter] Then, later on, I didn't do too much in Owyhee. I done little. Then, when they built the hospital—which is closed down now—during second World War, it's where I worked. Down in the basement as engineer. Because they were taking the boys out, and they couldn't find any more boys to work down there. Taking care of boilers; they didn't have electricity then. They had that under the hospital, they had boiler room, running the boilers, and all that stuff. And, it was a man's job. We had to go out, mow the lawn every day, shovel snow, and all that stuff. [Laughter] That's when I worked there for five years. Until I got sick. I got sick, and had to go to sanitarium to get well. I had tuberculosis. And they had to break somebody else in, and there was a man, two men come out of Salt Lake City to check on us that were working down there in the basement, in the boiler room.

And they said that I was doing a good job. So they said, they want to move me up. They want me to get higher pay, and they want me to go to Salt Lake to work. [Laughter] And I told them, “No, I don’t want to go, because I live here and I have a little girl to take care of.” So I didn’t want to go away from there. [Laughter] So, I turned their job down.

That’s before I got sick, this is. Yeah, I liked that. During the Second World War, they were strict on payments. We couldn’t go on annual leave, just like they did before. We just had twenty-day leave. And that’s including sick leave and all that stuff. And so, we just had twenty days. And then we had to buy war bonds every month. That taken out of our checks during Second World War. And other things that, whatever the president requested, that we had to do that because we were under the government. And then, when I got sick, all these vacation things going, and no raise, and stuff like that. They considered all that, and paid me for my vacation time that I missed, and sick leave, and all that stuff. They counted all that, too. Five months after I got sick, after I was in the sanatorium, they paid me for what I missed out on.

NC: So after you got well, did you return back to work, or...?

VC: No. No, I didn’t. Not steady job like one I had at the hospital. And we had to, there was no electricity. No telephone. Just only two telephones there in Owyhee when I was working at the hospital. And there was the one at the—that would be three—at the agency. And at the one at the hospital. Sometimes, we had to answer the telephone, if a nurse wasn’t there. And then one, there was one down at Miller Creek. At **Jessie Little’s** house. That’s in case of emergencies, that they could have you telephone. At **Jessie Little’s, Eleanor Little’s** mother. At her house, they had that. And they just had this one sedan to use, and we deliver messages, or go up and pick up sick people, and stuff. That’s

when they build the airport out there. And sometimes at nighttime, we had to go deliver messages out there, when they were building that airport. You couldn't see anything. Just dust, real thick. When they—they even worked nighttime. Oh, the dirt! And groundwork that they were doing disturbed lot of dust. So we went out together, deliver messages to their boss down there. I don't know where their people were from who were building that airport. Sometimes we was kind of scared to go out during the nighttime, so we asked, let's pick this place around his—what's his name? Earl Crum's dad.

NC: Jim Crum?

VC: Yeah, Jim Crum! We got him to take us out when we had to deliver messages or something like that. And those were the men's jobs back then.

NC: What kind of lighting did they use in the hospital at that time? Was it kerosene lamps? Gas lamps? What type of lighting did they have?

VC: Oh, you mean like office work?

NC: No, for lamps. Like, at night. What type of light did they have? Or was it just completely dark?

VC: I guess just doctor and the nurses, and did their usual work.

NC: Uh-huh. But no, what kind of *lighting* did they have? Did they have candles, or did they have lamps?

VC: Oh, lighting? No, they had electricity then. That's when the power plant came in. Plant was right across from the old tribal office there. Right next to where they have a, I think maybe—I haven't been there for quite a bit of a while. But, that's where the men were working until they were under the government, too. We had to run them electricity. And

that's why we, we had to [\_\_inaudible at 43:41\_\_] we mow the lawn. I went there to get my gas, and the oil, and all that stuff. And lawnmower. [Laughter]

NC: So in terms of doctors, where were the doctors from? Were they government doctors, or where did they come in from?

VC: I don't know where they're from. I don't know. But all that area in there is where the doctors lived. Doctors and their families, and nurses. Nurses' quarters. Some lived over there, where they tore that building down, back out there. That's a gymnasium now, where some of them lived. And a few of the Indian men. Nurses lived at home. But, maybe they was under the government, too. I don't know.

NC: So what were you saying—?

VC: And they called it the Western Shoshone Indian Reservation, when they opened that reservation for the Shoshones. And then, I don't know how many years after that—I wasn't here then, I was in school in Sherman—but, they had councilmen. They had three councilmen. My brother **Roger** was one of the councilmen, and Evan Harney, and [\_\_inaudible at 45:40\_\_], was other councilman. And then, the one **worker** from up north... I couldn't remember the name of the reservation up there... Wasson. His name's Tommy Wasson. He was their secretary that worked at the agency there. He was their secretary. And they decided that, somebody brought it up that they should include the Paiutes someplace in there, because everything was Western Shoshone. And they didn't like that they wanted to be included, I guess, those Paiutes. So when those people were councilmen—I don't know if they were elected, or how they were, but anyway, that's what happened. And everyone, well, they said, "Well, there's so many Paiutes here on the reservation, being born here, and coming here, and getting enrolled, and we should

change the name from “Western Shoshone” to “Shoshone-Paiute Reservation.” And then, and so, that’s how it was. But later on, they were coming from someplace in Idaho, coming into Mountain Home, **Raymond** and I, and on the, you know, those signs on the sides of the roads—about the towns, different towns? And had “Duck Valley Indian Reservation” on there. That’s the first time I saw that change. They changed it from Western Shoshone. So now—and then some people call that Duck Valley Indian Reservation, some people call it—hardly anybody uses the Western Shoshone Indian Reservation anymore. But at the beginning, when they had the reservation going already, some of the Paiutes were coming in from Pyramid Lake, all over, from over there, they coming in. Because they had the relatives and friends here in Owyhee. And the Shoshones tried tell them, “No, you can’t stay here. You’re a Paiute. This reservation is for the Shoshones. That’s the Paiutes coming in!” [Laughter] Because they said, “There’s lot of intermarriages.” Of intermarriages. And other tribes, too. Like some Bannocks from Fort Hall come. But there not as many Bannocks. There’s definitely a few of them, but it’s mostly Paiutes. And so... That’s how many times it changed its name. So now, I see on lot of the papers, say “Duck Valley Indian Reservation.” It was only for Western Shoshone. Got rid of that, gone. I guess those [\_\_inaudible at 49:30\_\_] women at that time, were Shoshones, I guess they like the Paiute woman! [Laughter] They like ‘em better, mmhm. Yeah, that’s how come the tribes are all mixed up now.

NC: So, can you tell us a little more about your brothers and your family up in Owyhee? Who your brothers were, and—you mentioned *one* of your brothers.

VC: Yeah, he was a councilman. He went to school in Riverside, too. Sherman Institute. There is—how many of us are there, **Don**? Twelve? Eleven or twelve, but most of them

died when they were young. The tuberculosis. Lot of people had tuberculosis. That's what—I don't know why, I get to thinking about it sometime. Why did they get tuberculosis? And I read in different places where cows had tuberculosis. And we always had milk cow. We drank milk and everything. My dad always had big garden. I still would like that, too. I don't know. I guess that, when I went to school down in Sherman Institute, I got the tuberculosis there. That's what I think. And my mother and dad were, were both, had their turns as tribal judges for several years. I don't know how many years my dad was a tribal judge. And then he lost his hearing, and then he got the phone—it runs with battery—hearing aid. He used to hear with it, and he couldn't hear good in certain buildings. Something in the building, his battery wouldn't work good. He was a judge there for several **years**. And when he lost his hearing, then my mother took over. And she was a tribal judge there for, I don't know how many years, too. Yeah, so finally, my dad retired. Later on, my mother did too. Other man took over.

NC: But you didn't take over, huh?

VC: [Laughter] No! I'm too dumb! They asked me. They asked me, the council at that time. I said, "No. I'm forgetful! I will forget things." So, I didn't try it.

NC: Well, I think you would have done pretty good.

VC: [Laughter]

NC: So, you mentioned your dad was Bannock, or from Fort Hall. Do you remember what his name was, your grandpa? You mentioned one of your family members was from Fort Hall, or a Bannock?

VC: Oh, that was, would have been my grandpa. Great-grandpa. Yeah. My great-grandfather'd be, um... His name was, first name was... *Papitsi Sambo*. *Papatsi* means



“older brother.” I didn’t know how to spell it, so... The way I spell it was B-A-B-A-S-C-H. That means older brother. That’s among his own people in [\_\_inaudible at 54:23\_\_], I guess they called him that. That’s what his Indian name was. *Papatsi Sambo*. But, later on, these younger people, but I don’t know why, they changed it—they call it, I can’t say it, *Pavitsi*. Instead of *Papatsi*. “*Pavitsi*.” They spell it with a “p” now. I think that’s what they use now. Yeah older brother, that meant then. They changed that. And Buck was his brother. Yeah. That’s who, Captain Buck was his brother. But Captain Buck didn’t go back to Fort Hall. He stayed in Owyhee. But that was what they named—they use Duck Valley quite a bit, because there was, on the—they had *lots* of ducks long time ago. That’s why they knew that there was food there, and all the edibles, that they could get at all. So that was what I think it—that’s why they call it Duck Valley.

NC: So, do you have family in Fort Hall, then? Relatives living in Fort Hall?

VC: What?

NC: Do you have relatives in Fort Hall?

VC: Yes. Now there’s a few of us living.

NC: What’s their names? Do you know their family names?

VC: Most of them are cousins, or... My cousin, she went to Sherman Institute. She was in my same grade. She used to use *Papitsi Sambo* for her dad’s name. But later on, when the other people changed it to *pavitsi*, that’s what they there for the pronunciation. I don’t know why they changed it, like that. She had several children. Some of them are still living. And her daughter and her brother, I knew them personally, but those other people, I don’t know them *too* well. But they’re still living. And she told me, she told me that they used to go up there for the festivals. And she told me that, when they were younger,

and the children were small, her and her husband, they used to drink quite a bit. She said, "We used to drink all the time and get drunk." **Of course**, get their children, everything. And see, that's when they took their children away from the welfare. Took her children away from her. So it's just that some of them hold that against her, for leaving them. Or separating. Whatever. But several of them came to her brother's funeral, and they were up there. Yeah. But younger people, I don't know.

[End of recording]