

MARSHALL TRIMBLE
January 19, 1999

Ann Townsend: Anne Andeen and myself, Ann Townsend, interviewers for the Paradise Valley Historical Committee, are privileged today to speak with Marshall Trimble, Arizona's official Historian. Thank you, Mr. Trimble, for allowing us to visit with you today. May we have permission to quote you in part or all of our conversation today?

Marshall Trimble: Anne and Ann, you can quote me any way you want to.

Ann Townsend: Thank you. First of all, I understand you are a native Arizonan.

Marshall Trimble: Yes.

Ann Townsend: What better to have the historian for the state to be a native. Tell me a little bit about your beginning.

Marshall Trimble: I was born on a little ranch south of Tempe where Kyrene is. I went to the old Kyrene School. It's a little confusing because on my birth certificate, it says I was born in Mesa because there was no hospital in Tempe in 1939. It's one of those things where if I'm in Mesa, I tell them I was born there and if I'm in Tempe I tell them I was born there. If I'm in Kyrene speaking, then I tell them I was born in Kyrene. But I've seen myself in every town, mostly I say Ashfork because that's where I lived when I was a kid and grew up.

Anne Andeen: How long did you live in Kyrene?

Marshall Trimble: I think I was four year's old when we moved away from there. We moved to Lehigh in Mesa on another livestock place. We were probably the only non-Mormons in Lehigh.

Anne Andeen: Were your parents in the cattle business?

Marshall Trimble: Yes, we had a few cows. I wouldn't say it was much of a business.

In fact, in 1946 my Dad sold what cows he had. He was sort of in the cattle business with his father and his father died. He went to work for the Santa Fe Railroad then.

Eventually, a year later, we moved to Ashfork. That's where my connection with Ashfork came. Thinking about my father and the cows, in 1926, he and his father were living in Scottsdale, on the corner where Scottsdale and Indian School Road where the Bank One is today. They lived in an old ramshackle house on the corner. Unfortunately, they didn't own it. They used to run cows in Paradise Valley during the winter time, after the rainy season and the grass was up. They'd run their cows out there on that land.

There was a man that owned it, I think my father said his name was O'Donnell. I always wondered if he meant MacDonald, but he said O'Donnell. He said O'Donnell in 1926 offered to sell my grandfather all that land out there that he owned for \$600. My grandfather said what do I need with that worthless piece of desert? It was north of the canal. It was only good when it rained and the grass came up for a short time to graze. That's all he was thinking about was grazing. He turned down a deal to buy what later became McCormick Ranch for \$600. It was 160 acres. I could not believe he could have picked that up for \$600 in 1926.

Ann Townsend: I don't think you can buy a square foot for \$600 today.

Marshall Trimble: So that's my early link to the Paradise Valley area. I moved to the Town of Paradise Valley in June of 1971.

Ann Townsend: I understand you've written 16 books and you have two that will come out this year.

Marshall Trimble: I guess number 17 and 18 are coming out. One is a humor book based loosely on fictional facts about my growing up in the little Town of Ashfork in the 1950's. The characters are just people that I have met around Arizona and I moved them all to Ashfork. They went along willingly. When you're the writer, you can move them and I moved them. Every colorful person I've ever met from Winslow, to Kingman, to Bisbee.

Ann Townsend: The story is fiction but the humor is true?

Marshall Trimble: The humor is based on truth. I wouldn't swear to any of it. It's like "never give a heifer a bum steer." Arizona Highways is doing that book. It was supposed to be released last fall and they're still playing around with it. Maybe they thought they'd tone it down a little. They're more politically correct than I am. Maybe there's something there to delay them. The other one is a millennium history of Arizona, since 1900. Northern Publishing Company out of Flagstaff asked me to do that last spring. I wrote on the decades in Arizona and it turned out to be one of the most fun projects I've ever been involved with as far as writing.

Ann Townsend: It would be wonderful to have for the Paradise Valley library.

Marshall Trimble: It should be coming out in the spring. We just call it the millennium book and I don't even know what title they will give it at this point.

Ann Townsend: I don't know how you got all that done and I read in a newspaper article this past week that you perform 200 or more times a year, and teach at Scottsdale Community College.

Marshall Trimble: It's amazing what you can do if you just like doing it.

Ann Townsend: When you're happy doing it.

Marshall Trimble: It's something I really enjoy. I especially like the school kids, the little guys in the fourth grade and under. They still believe adults are kind of neat. They get a little older and they become a little jaded. Although, I went through that experience with my own son who was born in the Hummingbird property where we lived. All those years when he was going through pre-school, then Kiva School, he would bring me to school to show me off. I would do a little presentation to all the classes and all the kids. Then about the sixth grade, he stopped inviting me. I said, "You don't invite me anymore." He said, "Dad, I still think you're funny but my friends don't." Those same kids when they were juniors and seniors in high school used our house as a study hall in math because my son was real good in math. The Chaparral High kids would come here to study and there it was again, "Mr. Trimble, will you do your quick draw for us?" All of a sudden, I was cool again. Don't think I wasn't aware of it.

Anne Andeen: It's interesting how you change.

Marshall Trimble: That's right. We all did that in our own lives so they didn't discover anything and they didn't fool me either.

Anne Andeen: Were you ever involved in the Town committees?

Marshall Trimble: No, and the reason I wasn't involved with committees is that I was always teaching on nights the Council met or the P&Z met. For years I taught on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. It just didn't allow me to be involved. I did get involved in some community things. One thing I remember was in the '80's when they wanted to cluster those homes. I think we met in a house to try to stop them.

Anne Andeen: We won the battle but lost the war.

Marshall Trimble: I was involved in a personal one that I was really proud of when they wanted to built the cul-de-sac on Hummingbird. I kept them from building another road across the mountain. It was easier for everybody – the developer, the Town, and cheaper to build the road and more aesthetically pleasing. I had selfish reasons for it, too. I didn't want the road up above my house. My son was small, and I thought the best place for this road for all parties concerned was not behind my house. The Town was behind me, too, to put the road down there. Every time I drive by there, I think that could have been a much longer road which would have gone across the mountain and quite a ways back to make a much longer cul-de-sac. I thought I saved the mountain a little bit of scarring.

Anne Andeen: Did you by chance know my uncle, Charlie Mieg?

Marshall Trimble: No, I don't believe I did. Although I did meet a lot people over the years.

Anne Andeen: Jim Fallas was not far from you. He lives just east of you on Hummingbird, where the Allisons live now.

Marshall Trimble: I knew all the people who lived there over the years. I think there were three or four different people who lived in that house before the Allisons' moved in. There has been a big turnover. I remember when little Annie was that big.

Anne Andeen: They've been there a long while now. Their oldest one is our youngest one's age.

Marshall Trimble: They were all just little kids. But for a time, people didn't live there very long. One couple died. I think they were the owners just before the Allisons came in. When I moved to the Hummingbird property, it was 1971. Below the house,

there were no houses all the way to Mockingbird Lane. Mrs. Matilda Wilson had just died and I picked up that property by sheer luck. I had a friend who was selling real estate. I was renting a little bungalow from her in Paradise Valley. Her name was Thora Borakowski. Do you know her?

Anne Andeen: I have seen her name. She still is in real estate, isn't she?

Marshall Trimble: Maybe her daughter because I think Thora is dead now because she was old. I met her daughter at one time. Thora had a little home with several cottages on it over near Palo Cristi, on Camino del Contendo, where Bill Frieder lives. (I've been to his home.) It was a beautiful, old Spanish style house. I lived in that little cottage because I had just come off another divorce. So I've lived in Paradise Valley a little over a year before I moved into this house. I mentioned to her one day that I was looking for a house. For the first time in my life, I'm going to settle down and buy a house. It wasn't a week later she said, "I have to show you this place. It's part of an estate and it just opened up." We drove up Hummingbird Lane which was a little narrow road, not looking at all like it looks today. As soon as I hit that road, I said, "This is where I'm going to be." We pulled into the driveway, the house was abandoned, the windows were broken out. It was a guest house for the Wilson estate. The only thing was that house, the main house which is still there, and stables down below. Everything down to the church was open land. I stood out there and watched the coyotes run across. I pulled in and said, "What do they want for this?" She said they were asking \$33,000. I thought, "My gosh, I don't think I could afford that."

Anne Andeen: It was one acre?

Marshall Trimble: Yes, it was one acre. I had a friend down on Cheney who was an attorney and college classmate, Rich Myers, who said, "Marshall, buy it. Whatever you have to do, buy it." I told her I would buy it. I had no idea about points and closing costs because I had never bought anything like that before. I was just coming off a divorce and teaching at Coronado High School.

Anne Andeen: I didn't know you taught at Coronado.

Marshall Trimble: Yes. I was only making about \$10,000 a year and I didn't know how I was going to do it, but I figured I could manage it. When my name came up with Southwest Savings, I discovered later, they were discussing it saying here is this \$33,000 house on Mummy Mountain and this fellow is making \$10,000 a year as a high school teacher. The guy looked at the name and said, "Marshall Trimble. Didn't he play baseball for West High?" Somebody else said, "Yeh, I think he did, and his brother played there too." And he said very good. Just on that, when the word got back to me said that an old friend who was sitting on the review thing remembered you from West High. I thought if they think I'm good, I better be good. All of a sudden, they're dropping a thousand here and a thousand dollars there and I hardly had two nickels to rub together at that time. I had been a folk singer. I quickly put together an act, went down and hired out at one of Box Carl's bars. Mr. Lucky's and Bobby McGees now replace it. He had a little restaurant and a bar on 16th Street called the Captain's Beef Rigger. I hired out singing in the lounge five nights a week, singing until one o'clock, doing a show at 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 and 12:00, 45 minutes a set. I would go home, get in bed and asleep maybe at 2:00, and get up at 6:00 and going to teach all day at Coronado. I was dragging but I determined that I was going to keep this house. I may be nothing else, but I am

persistent. It's the Capricorn, I guess, in me. I came up with the \$4,000 to hand over to Thora for closing. I immediately told the Beef Rigger that I couldn't do it anymore. I resumed my teaching career. It was after that I went to Scottsdale and Mesa Community College teaching Arizona history. It was after that that I wrote a book and made enough money that I could afford to live a little better.

Ann Townsend: Was that your first book?

Marshall Trimble: The Doubleday/New York book was my first book. Then I felt secure.

Anne Andeen: Then you remodeled, didn't you?

Marshall Trimble: Yes, in 1990, we tore down the old house and rebuilt it.

Anne Andeen: Did you tear it down completely or keep some of it?

Marshall Trimble: No, we didn't do that game. I guess we could have because it probably could have saved us a lot of headaches but we just torn down the whole thing. Here's another story that might be interesting for those who believe in such things and being Irish, I'm open-minded about everything. One night in that old house, there was a strange noise that woke us up in the middle of the night. I went carefully through the house to the other end of the house and found the blender had been turned on and it took two switches to turn it on. It was on Christmas Eve. There had been some bad feelings with my wife's family and we hadn't gone home for Christmas. That thing went off. It was the strangest thing how it went off. I thought maybe somebody had turned it on, hit both switches to turn it on, to distract me to pull me in there to make a robbery because we had been robbed once. My guitar got taken in that one. This was just a few years after that. We remembered the incident because it was so bizarre. This blender creating

this evil-sounding noise of a blender going on at night. We thought it was the ghost of my wife's mother that she was mad at us for not going home for Christmas to see the family in Reno. We sort of dismissed it and thought maybe she was just turning on the blender just to let us know she was angry. In 1990, about seven years later, we torn the house down. The night before the demolition crew was to come, we had gutted the house, everything was gone. The walls were bare and there was nothing to identify what it had been and what was in what room. I had a native American friend who I wanted to come and bless the house because my son was born there, my books were all written there and it was a neat, neat house. I had mixed feelings about wanting to let it go. I thought the best way I can let this go is to have a blessing ceremony with a good friend. He was not really a holy man but was well-respected in the native American community. We came up and stayed outside and he went from room to room and blessed all the rooms. When he came out he said, "Now I need to talk to you about a couple of things and tell you a little bit about what I found in the house." He said, "Let me take you to this one room. I found real tranquility and happiness in this room." He took us to my son's room when my son was living. Actually, it was where the son was conceived because that was the only bedroom in the house until we added another bedroom. I thought that makes sense to me. He said, "Now, I have to tell you there is a dark side in this house and I sense real evil here." Now he really had my attention and I said, "Show me." He led me into the kitchen into the exact corner where the electrical outlet was where the blender had been plugged in. He had no way of knowing what had happened because it was several years later. I deal with the bizarre all the time in my work of

Arizona studies because of all the ethnic groups here. I deal with it all the time and had witnessed other things to make me at least keep an open mind.

Ann Townsend: And respect that concept.

Marshall Trimble: And I do. But that happened exactly as I told you. I never had Tonki come back to the new house to see if he sensed anything. But I was hoping whatever that evil thing was that it went with the demolition. Ghosts are supposed to be in places where they haven't been able to move because there is some unfinished business. Whatever ghost was in that house that was unhappy, I hope he's moved on. I will always wish I had gotten him back to the new house to see if we exorcised this thing or what. I will never know now.

Ann Townsend: There was no way to know any history about who lived in the house or if anything happened in that house prior to your purchasing it?

Marshall Trimble: No, I didn't know. I was curious. I know Mrs. Wilson had it. She was a Dodge before she was a Wilson.

Anne Andeen: She was a good friend of my uncle, Charlie Mieg.

Marshall Trimble: I didn't know much about her history except some friends from the Steiner family told me. (Stops to answer the phone.) I had a call from a reporter this morning from the Salt Lake City Tribune, a lady named Kelly Kennedy. I'm assuming she's Irish and trying to get the best of another Irishman. I got the recording and have been trying to call her back. She said they had found a skeleton that is about 100 years old. The people up there thought that I might know something about it. I thought, "How do they even know who I am up there in Salt Lake City. For one thing, I have no ties to

Salt Lake City that I know of." I wondered what was going on. I called back just a few minutes ago and she was out. I'm just curious as can be.

Ann Townsend: Well, you're more famous than you realize.

Marshall Trimble: Well, I'm not archeologist and what would I know about a skeleton in Salt Lake City? (Stops to answer the phone again.)

Ann Townsend: You can make even common things sound fascinating. You have such a wonderful gift for storytelling. We would like to see any kind of information you've gathered through your years of studying and listening to others. What can you tell us about Paradise Valley and the Paradise Valley area, like how Mummy Mountain got its name?

Marshall Trimble: The story I always heard on that was that from one angle coming in, it looks like a Mummy. Some of the names are derived from physical forms. (Like Camelback and Praying Monk) That's how Mummy Mountain got its name. I don't know who gets credit for it. It is interesting how the names of the streets got their name. I would like to see somebody get a little booklet out on the names like "Cheney." Those are just family names.

Anne Andeen: I know where the "Cheney" one came from. They owned the water company on Mockingbird.

Marshall Trimble: They've gotten immortality here because they were lucky enough to have a street named after them. Where did "Invergordon" come from? All kinds of names in the Town.

Ann Townsend: Where did it come from? It's an Irish word, isn't it?

Anne Andeen: No, Scottish.

Marshall Trimble: I can't remember now. I think I'd call one of the old Scottsdale people. The Town of Paradise Valley is so new and it was an extension of the Scottsdale city limits. The people that grew up in Scottsdale can really tell you.

Ann Townsend: Who did you talk to?

Marshall Trimble: Lebula Mowrey is a good one. Dick Lynch is a good one. Dick wrote the history of Winfield Scott. He's a professional historian and consultant. He's the one that told me about Invergordon. I have a phone number for him over at the college. He's a person you definitely ought to talk to. They were kids in Scottsdale in the 1920's and '30's. Another one is Thelma Hollback, who is Lebula's sister. They're getting old. They were the Steiners. The Steiners were an early, early family. Their old ranch was down where Ambrosino's in Scottsdale is. My grandfather and grandmother and their kids all lived there and worked at the Steiner place in the 1920's. That's the Trimble's connection with them. The Trimbles are actually from Tempe and moved over to Scottsdale.

Anne Andeen: Did you by chance know Dorothy Patterson? She had the Riding Rock Ranch.

Marshall Trimble: I used to play the guitar in there. I played guitar in there before there was a McCormick Ranch. In fact, when I first moved into the Hummingbird property, that was another place where I was earning extra money playing guitar at the Riding Rock Bar.

Anne Andeen: It was a guest ranch.

Marshall Trimble: Yes, and Dobin and Karen Shupe had horses back there. Did you know them? (No) They later moved the horse operation to Wickenburg. They had the horses at the Riding Rock.

Anne Andeen: We will be interviewing Dorothy Patterson later on.

Marshall Trimble: I'm trying to think of other people that might be of help to you. You won't find too many people in the Town of Paradise Valley that will offer much history except personal reminisces like I have and those are only from the '70's. My first in-laws were the Willises from the '60's. They lived on Casa Blanca, the old house was all alone out there in the 1960's. I was married the first time in that house. Dole and Juanita Willis were living in that house. It was later owned by other people. Dole died a few years ago. Mrs. Willis later remarried to an attorney named Campbell and they lived in Paradise Valley, too. He just died the other day. They lived over by the camel's head. I stayed friends with her over the years. She was more like a real mother to me. Even though the marriage didn't work out, her and I got along great. She had the auto dealership.

Ann Townsend: Do you mean Linda Brock?

Marshall Trimble: Yes, Linda Brock. Sometimes you go blank. I think she might still live there, I'm not sure. That big house on Casa Blanca is surrounded by houses now, but at that time, there was just the big house that Vic Swanson lived in.

Anne Andeen: You know the Rubacons lived by there?

Marshall Trimble: I don't know if I knew them. There was a horse track and a barn. It was the original Pretty Penny Ranch. When Dole Willis bought the place, I was dating the daughter in 1963. When I first met her, they were living on Exeter and then they

moved in the big house on Casa Blanca. I lived there off and on, too. That was in the '60's. You used to get on horses and ride up Camelback Mountain and not be crossing through anything but desert.

Anne Andeen: There was a cook-out thing on Mummy Mountain. There was a trail up from Camelback Inn that went up to the saddle of the mountain and there was a brick barbecue and hitching posts for the horses.

Marshall Trimble: Was it further on down the mountain? (Stopped to answer phone)
On the skeleton, she had written a story earlier. It was found in Utah. Somebody saw the story and called and said to call Marshall Trimble, he would probably know. They found the body of a boy who was thirteen to sixteen years old. He was dressed in cowboy clothes and they came to the conclusion that he had come from Arizona. He was riding through there and somehow or rather was accidentally killed. They just came across the body that had been there all that time. I hope she sends me the story. She said that they had also heard that Bill Leverton had done something on that in *Arizona Roads*. I have no idea who it could be and I hope she sends me the story.

Anne Andeen: Are you connected in any way to the Arizona Historical Society?

Marshall Trimble: Only as a member. I've been a member since the 1950's. I do serve on the Board for the Arizona Historical Foundation which was Barry Goldwater's organization. In fact, I just came from meeting there this morning. I stay pretty active on the Board of Directors on that one.

Ann Townsend: What are some of the plans or are there any for Barry Goldwater and his memory?

Marshall Trimble: I heard talk this morning in the legislature that there have been a couple of bills introduced. One for a statue down at the Capitol which I think would be nice. (Stopped to answer the phone).

Ann Townsend: I really appreciate all that you've shared with us today. It's just fascinating and I could sit forever and listen.

Marshall Trimble: It's amazing what you can remember. Paradise Valley was just outside of Scottsdale and they had picnics out there. The old timers in Scottsdale, the few that are left, they're going quickly. The ones I know are all quite elderly now. The new rush came in the '50's. In the 1940's, Scottsdale had a population of about 400 people. It jumped between 1940 and 1950 to 2000 people. Between 1950 and 1960, it went to 10,000. Then it really began to go crazy. Why I give you these numbers is that very few of those people are now living or they're getting quite elderly who can really remember that area in Paradise Valley and Scottsdale. The way it was during World War II and earlier.

Ann Townsend: Did you know Adobe Pete? We hear remarks about Adobe Pete but we haven't been able to find anyone who can explain? He sounds like quite a character.

Marshall Trimble: Where did he hang out?

Anne Andeen: In Scottsdale.

Ann Townsend: Was he the one who had camels and gave people rides on them on the east end of Mummy Mountain? Maybe I'm getting two different stories confused.

Marshall Trimble: No, I never heard that one.

Ann Townsend: I just wondered if you knew Adobe Pete, what his real name was, and what he did.

Marshall Trimble: When Dick Lynch was putting the Winfield biography together, he did interviews and you might ask him some of the names.

Anne Andeen: Wasn't there a Shat-ka Bearstep? He was more Scottsdale, wasn't he?

Marshall Trimble: Oh yes. He used to do the Lord's Prayer in sign language at the different events. He had a little store downtown. It wasn't too long ago, it was probably in the '70's. I think some of those old timers could really help you out. You might check with the Scottsdale Historical Society because they have a lot of the oral interviews in their files. I'm on the Board of Directors or Board of Advisors, or something. I get all of their mail and information. I think that might be a good place to look.

Ann Townsend: Thank you very, very much. We really appreciate it.

Marshall Trimble: It's my pleasure.