



Evelyn Temoke- Roché

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 009A



Oral History Interview by

**Norm Cavanaugh
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Elko, NV**



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Interviewee: Evelyn Temoke Roche

Interviewer: Norm Cavanaugh

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R: History as told by my father was that we, the *Timook* [Shoshone at 1:00] would not be here if, back in the early 1800s, when they were snowed in, the south Ruby Valley, they were starving, there was no food to eat, and one of the little babies died. And the baby was cooked and eaten by my family members. The Temokes would have ceased that winter to survive if this had not happened.

“Temoke” comes from family rope-makers. They made rawhide ropes. That’s the name *Timook*. Original name.

C: So the name itself, *Timook*, is that a Shoshone word?

R: Yes it is.

C: And it means—what type of rope?

R: Rawhide. Or, what you would probably call buckskin. Antelope. Any one of these things that you could make a rope out of, the family made these ropes.

C: And what did the family do with the ropes that they made?

R: I do not remember. But I know that they were a family of ropemakers. This story, I believe, was not told to me.

C: So who named them ropemakers? Was that family named the ropemakers, or was it the non-Indians that named them the ropemakers? Or where did that name come about?

R: The *Timook* is original. See, it was most likely the other Shoshone that named them *Timooks*. Because they did—and I believe at the time, the names were from what the people did, or what they showed. This is where they got the family names. I, at this point, cannot recall any other Indian last names that are left.

C: Okay, so the name Temoke—or *Timook*, as stated in Shoshone—became a word that was accepted by other tribal members, then, and became recognized as a tribal name to recognize this group of Western Shoshones, and that became, or eventually became known, as the Te-Moak Tribe?

R: Yes.

C: So that's how that came about?

R: Yes.

C: Ah, okay.

R: It's been that way since I recall, even at the signing of the Treaty of Ruby Valley.

Timook [Te-Moak] was used. So that was prior to even that, many years prior to that, the name was there.

C: So can you tell us about the Treaty of Ruby Valley? What is the Treaty of Ruby Valley?

R: It was... according to family history, it tells me that it was a time of great grief, because of the way the treaty was signed. The Indian people, the Shoshone people, were invited to [glitch in recording] Ruby Valley, to a great feast. And during this feast, they had three prisoners. And one of the prisoners were killed, cut up, boiled, and prior to the signing of the treaty, the Shoshone people, the chiefs, were made to eat this person. And according to my uncle Bronco Charlie's sister, who was there at the time, the people would go behind shelters and make themselves vomit to rid their bodies of this food. It was a very unnatural act. Although I consider, you know, we having survived because we had eaten a baby. I wonder how that is distinguished. But this was force-feeding. And then the treaty was signed, after this feast of Shoshone people.

C: And what is stated in the treaty? What was the treaty about?

R: Peace.

C: And what was it—

R: My belief is that our land was never given away or sold. It was to be shared.

C: Can you share a little bit about what was stated in the treaty? Or what's stated in the treaty?

R: It is stated that we would allow the people to go through this country. You have to recall that the Shoshone people did not speak English at that time. They spoke Shoshone. So it was difficult for them to know exactly what they were signing. It was pre-written, and then signed by the Shoshone. But their land was never sold or given away. I know I didn't answer your question properly, but—

C: So after the signing of the treaty, what happened to the Shoshone people?

R: They separated and went their ways. And then, at one time, they were told that there was land in Owyhee, purchased in Owyhee, for them to move to. And from Ruby Valley, they were moved to Carlin. The name is Carlin Farms, or Carlin area now. Anyway, my grandfather, Chief Muchach—I'm sorry, my great-grandfather, *Tsikkuttso* [7:01], old man Te-Moak, told them no, he would not leave. He advised them that, "You take my land over there. Then I go with it. If you cannot do that, I stay here on it." And the Temoke chose to stay in Ruby Valley. And that's where we have always been.

C: How many was—in terms of numbers, how many would you say were in the Te-Moak Tribe at that time? Or did he ever say?

R: Prior to that, I believe there was no tribe, such. These are people that mingled together. And I'm going to say, a lot. I'm going to say up to 250. That's a small amount. But my

recollection is that, when the people gathered in the fall, to celebrate the harvest, there were at least 250 that came.

C: So there was different bands like you see today? Like, there's a band in Wells, band in Battle Mountain, various bands. How—were they called by different band names at that time, or how were they known?

R: Okay. I am from the *Wattatekka* [8:29] clan, which is rice-eaters. And then we have the Owyhee people, which are called *Kuchutekka* [8:37]. And then there are the *Tosawihi*, the White Knives, from the Austin area, I believe. There are many clans like this. They have different names. But I'm proud to say I'm from the *Wattatekka* clan.

C: So how many clans were there in the Western Shoshone? Do you know?

R: I haven't got the vaguest idea, how many there would be.

C: Uh-huh. How many would you say in terms of number was in each clan?

R: Now, or then?

C: Back then.

R: *Wattatekka*, I want to say, at least 75? Because I'm really not sure. I've never looked into that portion, or even discussed it with my family.

C: And in terms of the territory, what parts of Nevada or the western region here did the Western Shoshone occupy or travel through, or where were they located in terms of geographics?

R: I have driven with my parents from Ruby Valley to the Golconda Mountains. They have a Shoshone name, but I don't recall that. And it goes up that way, up into Idaho, then down clear into California, along those mountains. And then back up, into Utah, and

around up into Fort Hall area, and then back. It's a large territory. And the Shoshone used to travel here.

C: So the bands roamed in the area that you just described. And then they came together in the fall?

R: They came to Ruby Valley, or wherever they were going to gather, pinenut time. And they—years later, my parents call it “Fandango.” Where every fall, the people would gather in Ruby Valley, at the reservation, and they'd play handgames, they'd do round dances, music... What's that fraternity dance? Can't think of the name. Bear dance. They'd do the bear dance. And that, it's usually lasted three days. I lived in California for many years, and every fall I would travel here just to attend that. Because it was fun. It was—storytelling. They were fun times.

C: Evelyn, can you share with us about how your dad became the chief of his tribe, of Te-Moak and of the Western Shoshone? Was that something that was given to him, or was that something that he was elected to, or—you know, how did he become the chief?

R: That position was inherited from my grandfather, Muchach Temoke. My grandfather Muchach was kidnapped by the Mexican people, and then eventually, when he was in early teens, returned to Ruby Valley. And then, he followed in his father's footsteps. And when he passed on in 1960, it became my dad's position to do this. And I recall meetings about the territory, back when I was a little girl, taking notes for them. It seemed like I was a young girl, but I was the only one that can write at that time. And about how we needed to fight for our land. We cannot give it up. Continued for many years.

C: Okay, Evelyn. At this point, if you could share with us about your grandfather, and how he shared the different types of plants that the Shoshones used for healing.

R: My grandfather Muchach had a medicine man, his own medicine man. He lived with my grandpa for many years. And whenever he'd be ill, he'd doctor him. And we learned about the different medicines of the Shoshone people. There's many, many plants that can be used for doctoring. Sagebrush, for one, can be boiled, and you soak cloth in it, and lay it on whatever injury that you have. And it will increase the body's ability to heal, and it heals. You drink sagebrush. You bathe in sagebrush. It's just totally medicinal. My mother saved a young girl's life one time by sticking sagebrush—you know, the little seed things on it?—down the little girl's throat and pulling out all the phlegm. So it can be used for many different things. *Totsa* is probably one of the most well-known Shoshone medicine. *Totsa* can be smoked; it can be boiled in water and steamed to clear the head; many people drink it, to cure their colds, rheumatism, whatever they've got. These medicines are very important to us. We still use these medicines. There's one called *antapittseh kwana*. I did not include this in that presentation. It's a difficult plant to find. I do not know the English name of it. But it is used to cure—according to the people—liver ailment. And such, as a bladder infection, you drink *antapittseh kwana*, to get rid of this. Are there any other? I know we could go on. My favorite subject.

C: So, in terms of when you were growing up, and you were a little girl, what are some of these things you learned from your grandfather?

R: Actually, Norman, I learned that portion more from my mother, about the Indian medicines. My parents would take us to gather these medicines in the fall. The *toza* is something that grows very tall, and when it dries it crumbles down, and that's where you dig. And you never take the whole plant. Many of these plants are herbs, cooked in with your foods to extend the amount of food that you're going to eat. Many of the foods were

ground, to make flour to mix with your soups, so that your soup isn't so watery. There's Indian carrot, *yampa*; Indian celery, it grows in the mountains; a weed that grows along the top of the ground which is used as a vegetable; there are, the mule's ear, that can be eaten. Mule's ear differs directly from—they look similar, but they're two different plants. There's the other one, I can't recall the name right now. There's, gosh—refer to that tape, because right now I cannot think of those.

X: [inaudible question in background]

R: Oh, it is one. That's the—yeah, should I?

C: How about the willow? Was the willow ever used for anything? You hear about people talk about the willow.

R: The willow is, I believe, has to do with the heart. Now, my mother was a willow person. She split willows, she made *kohmos* [cradleboards], all that. And for years, she never had any heart problems. And I believe that's because she always gripped the willow in her teeth. And I'm sure her body absorbed it. So she was a healthy woman. It would have a lot to do with the system. But I've never seen her eat or chew on it, other than that she split willows.

C: So in terms of when you were growing up, Evelyn, what are some of the things that you recall as a child?

R: Some of the things I recall as a child... Traveling to Goshute in a wagon is one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. It took us forever—because I was a little girl, it took forever. And it was a bouncy ride. Dusty. Dry. But it was fun, because it was a gathering of people. Hundreds and hundreds of people, it seemed to me that were there. My friend Judy **Glasson** has pictures of the old times, when the cameras first came out.

And I recall laying on my tummy, through a little hole, on the ground, watching what's called a *Takowanna* [18:51], which is a Cry Dance, which we weren't allowed to attend. And watching the people through there. And it was as though they'd get into a frenzied type of stage. Or maybe—but these are the little memories that I recall. Then, before we came home, there was a food celebration. And we came back home—another, I don't know, hundreds of hours to get home. Come back to Ruby Valley. Rest. And one of my fondest memories is traveling to what is called the Rock House out in Ruby Valley, in a wagon, on Sundays. We'd always get a treat of candy. That was fun. And also, by then we had a car. And this is when I began to learn about all the streams, the creeks, the springs, the rocks, the mountain, why the things are there, from my parents. And I'm really not going to discuss that right now, because I'm writing a book about it. My grandpa one time taught me about life. Watching a robin, whose nest was about two feet from the ground, on a wooden fence that was behind the house. This robin would come back here every year and nest there. One day, he asked me to watch what the robin was going to do. And do you know that that the robin pushed the babies out of the nest, the same as we do? That was an awesome—I recall that, all the time. And taking walks with my grandpa, down a road. He'd be holding my hand, and we'd walk along, just talking about different things. I cannot really remember what we discussed, but... My grandpa was an awesome man, and after he had a stroke—I was in high school—I had to go visit him. And I had to give him a picture of myself. Whenever I'd walk in, he'd put his head like this, letting me know that that was me. He couldn't talk. He passed away in 1960, which is when my dad took over as the chief. Now, my dad was an awesome person. He trained draft horses. And it was exciting and frightening at the same time. He had a

wooden wagon, with metal around the wheel. And he'd hitch these horses onto this. One team horse, and one wild one. And he'd take it through the fields. I swear, he went six feet up in the air, and came back down into that wagon every time. It was frightening. But I enjoyed watching it, because it was exciting! [Laughter] These memories of childhood are exciting. And I remember going and gathering willows with my mother. Learning about willows. Splitting. Drying. In the wintertime, she made her *tsokkohnos* [cradleboard hoods] and *kohnos* [cradleboards]. She made these from scratch. And they're everywhere. They're around the world. People from England, Australia, have purchased her *konos*. And there were times such as when my dad broke his ankle, and I had to put the harnesses on the draft horses to feed the cattle. Can you imagine that? [Laughter] Was so hard. I climbed on the edge of the—what is it they called, stalls?—and put those on the horses. And the horses knew it. They stood still. He trained them well. Other childhood memories, let me see... I recall a time when I was probably in the first grade. A winter storm coming up. And my brother Buster and I were at school. And he wanted to go home. I did not want him to go home, the teacher said to stay here. But we went home. I was in the saddle. He walked. I must have gone to sleep, or passed out, but I guess dad found us, and took us back to the barn, and had built a fire. And I still have little curly toes from frostbite. And another memory of the same place, is that there was this big mountain like this, right behind the house. And we were getting ready to school, and I could hear my mom yelling at Dad, "Look at the wolves! The wolves!" *Pia ittsa!*" They were coming off the mountain. And not long after that, she found out that her aunt had passed away. And it was a message. The Shoshone people believed in this type of a message. But those are the last time wolves were ever seen in Ruby Valley. Another

incident is what dad used to love to tell, is about a bear. He didn't know what it was, he'd never seen one before—he was a little boy. And he was walking up the [**Shoshone at 24:56**], which is Harrison Pass. He saw this thing running. He said the fur was just glistening and moving with the body. And he watched it. And it was years later that he discovered that it was a bear that he had seen, out in Ruby Valley. To me, that was one of the most awesome stories. Dad tells of times when he was out picking, what are they called—*kenke*, wild onion. And to—don't ask me where they got the fire. Maybe the flints or whatever. But he built a fire in a depression like this. The rock got very hot. He put water in it. And this is where he would cook his *kenke*. Just boil a little, and eat it that way. And I'm sure that many of the people have survived this way. There are stories of the people pinenut harvesting in the fall, and forgetting, like, those squirrels when they forget where they buried them. They'd forget where they buried them. Their food. It just... There is so much to tell. Another book.

C: So in terms of stories, was there any creation stories that your dad ever shared, of, during the wintertime?

R: No, not really. But my Uncle Willie did. Willie Temoke. He shared the creation stories, about how we became to be. How the *Itsappe*, or Coyote, was given a basket to carry, and to never put that basket down. But being Coyote, he one day set it down by some hot springs, and went to sleep. And the people got out and scattered everywhere. And thus we became being. That one's always been my favorite one. And then the one about the bear. It's kind of a funny story, but anyway, the bear. There were no streams and no creeks, or anything at one time. And the bear had never urinated in his entire life. And he drank too

much water and he went—oh, what did he drink? Anyway, he had to urinate. So he went to the highest spot, sat down and urinated. And thus became the springs and the creeks.

C: Evelyn, you mentioned your grandfather had a traditional healer or medicine person that he had, that he could go to to get healed. Can you share about the medicine men, or how a person became a medicine man with the Shoshone people years back?

R: A medicine man is a person—it can not just be a man, it could be a woman. They possess within them the ability to heal. It is not something that can be faked. It's, I believe, an inherited right, where it comes to you. You're able to feel these things. They touch. They feel. And they gain the knowledge of what healing is. They may go away for days, and heal. My uncle Bronco Charlie, too, was a medicine man. He had his own cave out in Ruby Valley where he prayed. And he'd mark on the wall how many days and nights he had spent there. In this, he gained his strength from doing this. A medicine man is a very sincere person. He never takes money for what he has done. He may be given a gift. But that's all that he's allowed—I want to say “allowed,” because this is what he's doing for himself. He's allowing it to happen. He's not going to sell his gift. If he should take money, it's selling. He's keeping his gift to be able to heal. It—medicine men, I do not know of how many people have heard of the Ruby Valley antelope corrals. They have antelope corrals out there. Up to about ten years ago, they still existed. You can only see them from a plane, because they were so large. But a medicine man would stand at the head of a antelope corral, and somehow mesmerize the antelope to come into the corral. Corrals were no higher than this, because antelope do not jump. And they would not go over the corrals, they stayed within. And thus the people gathered their food. Because the medicine man somehow mesmerized the antelope to come into the corral. These men

were so great, that I've seen things that they have done, happen. I will tell you of an incident, where my father was being doctored. And, as the medicine man doctored him, I literally saw something jump into his hand. And he quick put it away. But my dad began to heal after that. So this is, these people have a power. Maybe it's mind over matter, which is what I believe it is. And they take great pride in what they do. I've shared something that most people don't share. But it needs to be known that this is possible.

C: These medicine men, and women, early in their years of childhood, is there an indication, or some indication, that they are given that they are gonna become a healer?

R: According to my mother, yes. It is the way they act. It's the way they treat things. It's the way they talk. They may talk in their sleep. They may wander around in their sleep. They may see things, or perceive things, that we do not. They have... It's an ability that I don't know if it can be told, because it's in with themselves.

C: So in terms of healers, men and women, are there still any out there today?

R: Yeah, I believe so. I believe so. But they have not—because of our fast life now, it's, they may *have* that, but they don't know what it is, and it frightens them. It... Are there times when you touch someone, that you could almost feel something coming from them? I think that's their ability to heal.

C: So, for the Shoshone people here in this area, or the Te-Moak tribal members, is there a medicine or healing person that is well-known today that people go to, or can go to?

R: I don't know of one. But there is one thing that is very important. And that is, when my brother Buster, years ago, got hit in the head in Stewart, with a potato—they were required to go to Stewart. They *had* to go. Anyway, when dad went to pick him up, he brought him back. The family gathered. And they prayed for *hour upon hour upon hour*.

And he actually got better. And I really feel that the power of prayer is also a medicine. It's a strong medicine. We do not have a god that we worship, but we know that it's—there is that mind over matter again. We can do it. It can be done, I'm sure. I watch a lot of science fiction, too. [Laughter] I've always believed this, that it's—such as, you're out walking, and you can feel something. You're alone, but there's something there. Maybe we should just sit down and accepted it at that time. But we go forward, and just forget about that feeling that we had. This may the beginnings of a medicine person who didn't take the time to sit and learn.

C: Okay, in terms of your father, Evelyn, when he served as the chief of the Shoshone people, were there things that he felt in terms of where he wanted to go with being the leader of the tribe?

R: He had one purpose in his mind, and that is to maintain the six miles square of Shoshone land out in Ruby Valley. He fought for that land for many, many years. My dad also ran his cattle on the mountains, and never once has he paid for it. He'd gone to federal court for it, but he always won. Always. "This is my land, I can run my cattle where I want." He was never fined. Any one of these things he felt—he fought for the hunting rights, was our right to hunt deer in the summer, when the deer is at the best. Fought for the land, until he died. "Take no money for your land. And this is where we stand, with that. It's not for sale," is what he's always said. And he sent his father, Muchach, the chief, to Washington three times to fight for the land. It broke Dad, but he did it. Came out of his pocket to do this. And he was always very proud of that. My dad was a little man who walked tall. He had many friends, he had many enemies, but he shook his enemies' hand. He withstood insults, nameslinging. And always for the land. This is—[37:35] *Aishen*

tammen sokoppe, kai nanatewenakate, kai himbi malatta makate. “It’s our land, it’s not for sale.”

C: In your years of high school, Evelyn, can you go ahead and move into what your recollections are of going to high school, or when you started school again?

R: When I went to elementary school, I did not speak any English at all. Nothing. I only spoke Shoshone. I remember her name; her name was Miss Mott. She spanked my hands, because I couldn’t speak English. I became determined as a little four-year-old to conquer this language. Hopefully, I have. And by the time I entered high school, my English was good. I recall being kicked out of a history class because I spoke up for the Shoshone people. The history teacher sit up there and said, “The Shoshone people did not speak; they uttered sounds.” I got—[Laughter] I got very angry. And I told him off. I was asked not to come back to the class. I had friends in high school here. I did go back to class. They fought for me. And these were white kids. That was back in 1958. That was still happening back then! And then, I’ve totally enjoyed my education. It’s been fun learning. I moved to California, got a degree in hairstyling, and decide to get married—big mistake! And then, I went into, I was with the children at **William Lawn** Park one day. And this young girl who was on vacation from another country started to put me down. And that type of thing, being a Shoshone, makes me very angry. I told her that I wasn’t—she asked me what I was. My dad has always taught us to never say you’re Indian. Always say you’re Shoshone. And I have never said that I was an Indian; I’m a Shoshone. All the way down the line. So, an argument ensued. Finally, I asked her, “What is *your* nationality?” She couldn’t answer me. But she was putting me down, because I’m of a color. You know, my skin is of color, whereas, she, I guess, thought she

was white. I'm sorry! [Laughter] But, I've always fought for being a Shoshone. I've endured a lot. Used to go into a store shopping, and my sons were all in a cradleboard. People were awed that in California I would be carrying my sons, the children, in a cradleboard. They'd come up and touch it. And I'd proudly explain to them that my mother had made that. It's, all in all, educationwise, it's been fun. And yes, I could have been very defiant. I was, I belonged to AIM. American Indian Movement. It had all those people—Russell Means, and... All of them stayed in my apartment at one time, because they had no place to stay while they stayed in California. My husband and I just invited them into our home. It's been a wonderful life.

C: Okay, Evelyn. To summarize, what would you like people to remember, in terms of the history you told today? Let's say, your grandchildren, like, fifty years or so from now. What would you say to them, if you were to share with them your story and what you feel is important?

R: It is important they remember their great-grandfather, Chief Frank Temoke, and Muchach Temoke, with the pride that these two men carried themselves. They never hung their heads as they walked. Their heads were always held erect. They always knew where they were going to step next. The children need to have *great pride*. Get a *good* education. *Learn* from the earth. They also need to learn to respect other people, and accept them for being who and what they are. They also need, in this point in life—which I've noticed, is that, young people are not respecting the elders as they should be. And families also need not to teach their children to dislike a person. And love is very important, and we need to continue through life that way. This world would be a great place to live.

[End of recording]