

# BACK STORY

## NOT ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

BY PATTY CAFFERATA, ESQ.

Photos by Treat Cafferata

An appointment with a judge is never a casual event. I was comfortably but professionally dressed in a navy blue knit suit to spend hours sitting in the car on my way to meet the judges in the Fifth Judicial District Court.

On April 14 at 9:15 a.m., under sunny skies, my husband, Treat, and I jumped into our silver Toyota 4-Runner and headed for Mineral, Nye and Esmeralda counties. Soon we were driving east on Interstate 80 along the Truckee River.

About 30 miles later, we turned southeast at Fernley onto a two-lane road: U.S. Highway Alternate 95. Once out of town, we left behind the tall, leafy trees, houses and other buildings. As far as we could see, the beige, sandy and hilly landscape was dotted with low, pale green sagebrush.

Taking the cutoff past the Mason Valley Wildlife area, we shaved 10 minutes off our almost eight-hour ride. Traffic was light as we whizzed by a few tractor/trailer trucks and passenger cars. We drove southeast on Highway 95, past the azure Walker Lake, and arrived in Hawthorne at noon.

At the Mineral County Courthouse, Treat took photographs while I walked into the courtroom and sat down on a tan folding chair behind the bar. After finishing the last case on the calendar, Judge John Davis said, “Mrs. Cafferata, please come on back.”

In his chambers, I interviewed him for the article on page 11. After the interview, Treat and I drove to the old Mineral County courthouse, where he photographed the building. See page 7.

North of town, we inhaled lunch at McDonald’s and took the truck route bypassing Hawthorne – another time saver. The road took us mostly through the desert valleys with snow-topped mountains jutting up on either side of the highway. The empty land contained no buildings or trees until we drove through the old railroad towns of Luning and Mina. Soon the two-lane road narrowed so much that the area past the fog line was about a foot wide. A rumble strip running down the middle of the road



Mineral County Courthouse



Patty Cafferata at the Nye County Government Complex in Pahrump

reminded me not to drift over the center line.

In Tonopah, where I stopped for gas, Treat asked, “Is this station really called ‘Giggle Springs’?”

“Yes.”

About 30 miles down the road, a few Joshua Trees were sprinkled across the valley floor before we reached Goldfield. I had promised Justice of the Peace Gus Sullivan I would be in Beatty as close to 5 p.m. as possible. We arrived exactly on time at the William Sullivan Justice Center, named after Sullivan’s late father. We reminisced about his dad and he introduced me to his German shepherd, Lacy, who walks the judge to work every day. After the interview, we toured his courtroom, decorated with an antique pendulum clock from the ghost town of Rhyolite. His article appears on page 14.

We spent the night at the Stagecoach Inn, where we ate dinner. The next morning, we left at 10 a.m., drove south and turned west toward Pahrump on Highway 160. The desert flowers were in bloom. All along the roadside we saw white, yellow and pink flowers that looked like tiny, colored gum drops dusting the desert.

I promised Judge Robert Lane I’d meet him close to 11:30 a.m., but we arrived in Pahrump around noon. When we pulled into the parking lot of the Nye County Government Complex, the odometer registered 415 miles from Reno. Lane gave me a tour of the building before I interviewed him for the article on page 12.

Treat and I drove south to Laughlin for a history conference and, days later, we drove back to Reno on Highway 95. We stopped in Beatty, Goldfield and Tonopah where Treat took photographs of the courthouses and towns because we had not had time on our trip south. See pages 7-14. We were glad to be home after having driven 830 miles round trip through Nevada’s wide open spaces to interview the judges in the Fifth Judicial District Court. ■