

McGee-Mitchell Correspondence Background

The Bernice McGee and Clarence and Grace Mitchell Correspondence covers a period from 1965 until 1972. Bernice gave us all of these letters in January 2007 when we visited her home in Fort Worth.

Below is an excerpt of an e-mail that I received from Bernice relating the story of how they came in contact with Clarence and Grace Mitchell. (Clarence went by Mitch and he was also referred to as Travis and Marlowe. He was almost never referred to as Clarence)

E-mail excerpt: Bernice to Garry (March 29, 2006)

“So help me, Mitch never talked about Tumlinson. You know by now how we met Marlowe. We came home one day to find a package in the mail from a Travis Marlowe. In it was a letter saying he had read our “Other World, etc, etc” and wanted to meet us. Also in the package was the Life Magazine with him on the cover. Remember? One eye and a hat the only thing showing behind a rock ledge as he was always incognito. And he wanted to meet us??? We were with Mitch and Grace several times. Recall reading how we met up in Tortilla Flat, after dark using secret password to identify one another? Ha! Really cloak and dagger stuff, so we did not push him into talking about anything or anyone. Hey, he was the big-wig endorsed by Life Magazine. We were just grateful for anything he wanted to tell us and show us....which he did, running us all over the desert in his jeep. As the years went by things became more informal...to the tune of Jack and I taking him and Grace, along with Stoney and Lucille Stone of Reavis Ranch to our Playboy Club in Phoenix. Stoney and Lucille were dying to meet the infamous Travis Marlowe. We met at Stoney's house for a drink, and a chance for them to meet Marlowe before going into Phoenix for cocktails and dinner. When we first met Marlowe's we were compelled not to divulge his true identity to the Stone's. The only thing they knew was that he had an impediment. Mitch had a very bad stammer in his speech. See how I digress now that all these memories are flooding back.”

At the beginning of 1965, Clarence Mitchell's book “Superstition Treasures” had just been released and Clarence was busy promoting sales. He had recently read Bernice's article, “World of the Superstitions” that appeared in the Winter-1964 issue of Old West magazine. My sense is that he saw a chance to possibly develop some additional interest in his book through the McGees. They were aware of the article that appeared in Life magazine during the summer of 1964 and were excited to establish a contact.

That contact resulted in Bernice coordinating with the Mitchells and writing an article, “Invitation to a Ghost Walk” that appeared in the True West magazine of April 1966. The Mitchells were enthused about the article but they began to prepare Bernice for some negative responses when the article was released.

Bernice and Jack were unaware of the MOEL litigation and the conflicts the Mitchells were having with various individuals. Although Bernice didn't understand what was going on she did ask, and no answer was forthcoming.

The McGees would not get a hint of what those issues were until some friends sent them newspaper clippings of the Paul Dean articles in 1970. Bernice and Jack were friends of the

Mitchells but Bernice had begun to question Clarence's story earlier. Those suspicions eventually resulted in Bernice's last article, "Are the Peralta Stone Maps a Hoax?", published in the April-May of 1973 issue of Frontier Times magazine.

Below are some additional e-mail excerpts that provide some additional flavor on the McGee-Mitchell relationship.

E-mail excerpt: Bernice McGee to Garry Cundiff (April 7, 2006)

"Dr. Glover wrote of Moel Inc's president, Charlie Mitchell (Clarence's relative ?); Grace Mitchell Sec/Treas.... This all happened 1960-64? We met with them extremely soon after all that scandal of unregistered stock, etc. We had absolutely no idea of what they had been up to...they certainly didn't mention it."

E-mail excerpt: Bernice McGee to Garry Cundiff (April 2, 2006)

"The Lost Dutchman Mine can still be a wonderful thing to search for...without the Stone Maps. If you recall when talking by phone I told you Mitch was full of B.S. about some things. Remember, Mitch was jobless, the man had to be desperate for a way to make a living. Their place in Queen Valley was small but nice. The last time we saw Mitch and Grace was a disappointment. For months he had written about a spectacular find in the Mts. further proving he was on the right trail of Peraltas. We couldn't wait to see his proof. When we arrived at his home, he brought out a small chunk of wood...like a branch off of a bush or tree. Not much larger than your thumb. One end was smoothed. He said the Peraltas had cut off a small branch along the trail as a trail marker. Huh??? Boy, were we disappointed. As I said he was needing another story, or something. I once asked about the Peralta Ghost who appeared to him from upon an overlooking ridge. When asked why he thought it was a Peralta and asked for a description. "Well, he was wearing clothes like I suppose they wore in those days." Huh??? No details; like height, weight, hair color; long or short, hat, jacket, pants, boots, shirt, weapons??? You just read his description."

E-mail excerpt: Bernice to Garry (April 19, 2006)

"I have every letter written by Mitch and Grace (Marlowe). Very interesting stuff in there warning us about letters we would probably get from their enemies in Oregon and Washington, and especially one from a California man named "Brower". I found an unopened manila mailer that we had sent them at their Apache Junction address in 1973...the post office there forwarded it to Smith Flat, California. P.O. there said, "moved.left no address", then sent it on to Fort Worth. It remains unopened. I know what it is...a copy of "Are the Peralta Maps a Hoax?" We felt like back-stabbing dogs by writing the expose re their maps. Money from their books was their only source of income, that we were aware of. Found out later about selling stocks re maps. Anyway, we didn't want them to think we went behind their backs doing this story...so sent a copy to them as quickly as Western Publications released them to us. Think they were P.O.'d at us and rightly so. To this day I feel some guilt."

Garry and Carol Cundiff
July 15, 2010