

# illuminating Reno's Divorce Industry

*An online exhibit at [renodivorcehistory.org](http://renodivorcehistory.org)*

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## **An Interview With Thorne Pierce (Netsch)**

Interviewed via telephone in Tucson, Arizona by Mella Harmon in Reno, Nevada

October 23, 2014

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**Thorne Pierce (Netsch)**

Interviewed by Mella Harmon on October 23, 2014

*Mella Harmon: This is Mella Harmon in Reno, Nevada. The date is October 23, 2014, and I am interviewing Thorne Pierce, who is in Tucson, Arizona. Mr. Pierce, I know I have your permission on file, but I would like to ask you here on the recording, do you give permission to record this interview for the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries to be made available to the public?*

Thorne Pierce (Netsch): Sure.

*Terrific. Thank you. All right, now I would love to hear your story of coming to Reno with your mother, I understand.*

Yes.

*Okay, please tell your story. I'm interested to hear.*

This happened in 1938. I was six years old, a skinny little kid. And my folks decided that they didn't like each other, so my mother, whose name was Leslie Thorne Pierce, was divorcing my father, whose name was Dewey Lockwood Pierce. And she decided that the best thing to do was to get a so-called "quickie divorce" in Nevada, and therefore off to Reno we went.

It opened with getting on the Twentieth Century Limited, because I do remember that, in Grand Central Station, when they rolled out the red rug and we walked down that to the train. And I remember seeing the steam locomotive out in front as the train went up the Hudson River, and I knew that next time—I got the upper berth, of course, being a kid, but the nice thing about the upper berth in this car was it had a small window, as opposed to other Pullman cars. And so therefore we were going through Elkhart, I believe. And it was cold; I could see the snow blowing all over the place.

So we got to Chicago, and then we got on some train—Union Pacific, I believe—that went to Reno, at that time. The only things I remember about the trip were two things: one, when we were coming down a mountain grade, I was able to stand out in the open observation car at the end of the train; and secondly, I remember being in the diner, and we were bucketing along quite well and all the silverware was jingling all over the place, and you could tell it was cold out there, because there was a sort of a gray slate cloud cover.

We got into Reno. I have no idea what happened after that, except when we got out to the ranch where my mother was staying, I remember that we always got dressed up nicely for dinner. And I remember taking a ride with my mother with other guests on horses up into the hills. And I remember that they had a lot of horses pulling people on skis with a rope, and the horse would bucket along, and people would fall and laugh, and have a wonderful time.

They said, “Would you like to try?” And I said, “Sure, at a walk.” Well, I wasn’t very successful, but anyhow....

And my mother met this one cowpuncher there by the name of Pat, and that’s all I remember of that except that Pat actually had done everything—whatever we were supposed to do—and back to New York City we went, which I don’t remember anything about. But I remember that Pat was part of the Madison Square Garden Rodeo, in I believe ’38, ’39. And he got us a couple of tickets to go to it, and I thought that was a big-time deal.

And that is about the extent. I remember the food was good, and the horses were great. And mother got her divorce. And that is the end of the story, as best as I can remember.

*Do you remember if there were other children there, when you were there?*

No, I don’t remember seeing any children.

*You were it for the kids, huh?*

You know, where Mom went, I kind of had to go, too.

*At age six, yes, that's the way it worked. Well, do you remember what happened when you got back to New York? Was your life different?*

No, life wasn't any different. Mother got a brownstone—I think it was 245 East 61<sup>st</sup> Street. And my dad was doing his thing at the house in Riverside, Connecticut. And all I remember is the tickets came, and we went, and there was Pat, doing some kind of cowboy thing.

*Well, that's really a neat memory. I'll have to check that out and see if I can find some information about that.*

His name was Pat. I do remember that. Much later, when I was going out visiting my sister, now deceased, why, I remember going out the road in Sparks that went out to Pyramid Lake, and I couldn't really say this was the area, but what else could I say, except there was a place, a golf course, where I had a dog chasing geese. And that's about the extent of it all.

*It's a wonderful memory, and we appreciate it greatly.*

I just remember it was in the wintertime, because there was snow galore.

*That's interesting, that you came in the wintertime. It would have been nippy.*

Yes, but nobody seemed to suffer too much.

*Glad to hear it. Well, thank you again so much.*

You're most welcome.