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Oral History Interview with Therese Courture Thomas

conducted by
Roberta Zaplatilak
February 29, 1980

The informant is Theresa Thomas. The date is February 29, 1980. The time is two o'clock in the afternoon. The place is 1010 East Bracken Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The collector is Roberta Zaplatilak from 1010 East Bracken, Las Vegas, Nevada. The project is Local History Project in Oral Interview about the life of a Las Vegas old timer.[1]

OK, Terry. Tell me about your family.

Well, I'll start with my great grandparents. Their name was Higbee. And my great grandfather was the custodian [on the grounds] of the tabernacle in Salt Lake City. The way they came over ... The Mormon missionaries had come to England and they were preaching and getting converts, and I guess my great grandfather and his brother were Mormons when they came here. My great grandmother and he were married and her name was Caroline. They were from London, England. They had a son and a daughter that came over, and the daughter was my grandmother. She was Louisa Anne Matilda Higbee and my grandfather was William Hemming. I don't think any of Grandfather's parents came from England. They came here due to the Mormons, and they wanted to go to the great city of Salt Lake where their Mormon leadership was.

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Grandmother used to tell about the missionaries that said the streets were paved with gold, and when she got here she found out they weren't. It was cobblestones. I don't know how true that is, but that was her little joke about it. My father was the son of John Courture.[2] He married a German girl named Theresa, and he was French Canadian. They moved to Iowa from Canada. My father had one brother who [he put through West Point] after [their] father died. He was valedictorian of his class, but he didn't get to be that because he sneaked out to see his girl friend. He never did even get to graduate because they caught him.

My mother was one of five children. She was born in Salt Lake City. They moved to Thistle, Utah to work on the railroad. My grandfather had been a railroad worker at Salt Lake and Thistle was a little railroad town in between Price and Spanish Fork.[3] My father came there to work as a carpenter with a construction firm during the building of this new railroad town. He met my mother who was fifteen. He dated her, and when he left he told her, "You grow up while I'm gone, and I'll come back and get you." And this is what he did. [On July 5] 1917 I was born, and they were living in Thistle, Utah. Father was then working on the railroad. The railroad had a strike, which caused many people to leave Thistle. We were among the families that left. We went to Provo, Utah. There we bought an old castle that an old German doctor had built for his very young bride. It had four towers on it. It was made with walls eighteen inches thick out of adobe, great huge, beautiful rooms, and all kinds of fancy things on the ceiling. Very European type of home. It had three huge fireplaces, and paintings in one hallway, paintings up in the little arches that were framed. And we lived in this house for all the time we were in Provo. My father had great plans to convert it into a very lovely Spanish type of home. He was going to change it from a German castle to a Spanish home.

When my father worked for Columbia Steel in Utah, he decided to go into business with a friend of his as a construction company. They built many homes in Provo, many big apartment buildings and things. Very unfortunate: this was just in 1928 prior to the '29 dilemma. By 1930 they had lost everything they had gone into and built. He had to come to Boulder City [Nevada] for work.[4] Evidently it was the only place in the United States where anyone could get work. People from all over the United States were here. I remember we used to try to find a state that there wasn't a license [plate] from in Las Vegas. Every state in the union, there were people there working. He went to work as a

laborer, although he had signed up in Las Vegas in four different capacities under different names, because it was so long a wait.[5] You had to go to Las Vegas for the waiting and going to work in Boulder City. They had no hiring hall in Boulder City. And it was very union. They were a very strong union here at that time.

The people that came here to go to work, there was no housing. Las Vegas was just a tiny, tiny little place. [People] were camped out in the parks. And over on Bonanza [Road], in what they call the West Side, was all kinds of little tent buildings that had maybe the bottom of them was wood, and the top was a canvas cover. They rented these to people to live in.[6] I remember the first house we came to after my mother decided we'd move down here with Father, was a small house in behind a bigger house over somewhere just north of Fremont [Street], between Eighth and Ninth Street. There was just loads of trees here. The people had really planted lots of cottonwood trees, mainly. In fact, the streets of Las Vegas were all lined with trees in the early days, and as they began to build, the trees [were] pulled out, and we hated that. We didn't like it at all when they started tearing up all those trees because it was hot here.

This was still in the early 1930s?

Yeah, this was '32. I had started in my music then. You wanted to know a little bit how I got into my profession. I started in my music by collecting songs and words to songs, and I knew almost every song that ever came out. I used to listen to the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* and make copies of all the words and learn all the songs. I wasn't a musician exactly, but I loved music. My mother had had a girl stay with us in Utah that went to BYU,[7] and although I had taken piano lessons and dancing lessons, I still couldn't play real good. But I learned from her to play by ear, as they call it. I learned how to make chords. I started playing. *Last Night on the Back Porch* was the first song I ever played. Mother said she took the girl to the railroad station, and when she came back I was playing.

Also, I got started in the dancing which I did here because I *could* play. My dancing teacher let me play for her classes, and I helped her teach. Now, I was thirteen and fourteen when I was helping her teach. Tap was the main thing then, tap dancing. We had some ballet and barre work and things like that, acrobatic. But tap was *the* thing in these days.

Not like the lost art it is now, it seems.

I had a hard time to get my students, when I finally got my studios going, to take ballet. The mothers weren't the least bit interested. They wanted their girls to be Eleanor Powell or Ann Miller or Ginger Rogers. So anyway, we moved to Boulder City, finally [from Las Vegas]. You wanted me to be sure and mention how we got here. My father had been hurt on the dam.

In building the dam, they had to clear the way for the place the dam would be by digging two tunnels on each side, [two] on the Arizona side [and two] on the Boulder City [Nevada] side.[8] The water was going through these two tunnels on each side, and then they put dirt down in as a back-up for the river in order to keep the bed dry to put the dam down.[9] They had to blast these tunnels and my father was hurt in the tunnel cave-in because they were all inside digging the pieces that hadn't blasted away, and there was a cave-in. So Mother went from Vegas to Boulder City to visit him [in the hospital] for about three weeks I think, and then we moved to Boulder City because she finally found a house that a very kind gentleman let us rent because his wife had been very disgusted with Boulder City's heat and gone back to New York. His house was empty. He lived in a little place he'd built in the back to live in while he was building his home. It was his own home.

In Boulder City—you want me to tell about the houses?

Yes.

In Boulder City the houses were built by the people as they came in, if they could build their own house.[10] If they couldn't, they rented houses.[11] There was a few private little places that people built. I will say first [that] almost every house in Boulder had a screened porch. That's where you kept cool in the summertime. They had no air conditioners and things like that. They had a swamp cooler that the water ran and ran and ran, and that's one reason Las Vegas was getting low on water, I do believe. They were beginning to worry about it even in those days.

Our power came from Los Angeles.[12] I remember in [1933] I was getting a permanent, and the big earthquake in Los Angeles[13] made our power go out, so I didn't get my permanent finished. I was just sitting with the things in my hair.

And the solution was on your hair already?

Yes. It was kind of half-way done, but it didn't look very good.

Anyway, the coolers were swamp, and people sometimes made them with just a fan and a little bit of gunny sack over a box. And even some people used what they called a cooler for a refrigerator. [It was] the same idea. They let the water drain down from a pan that held the water and they'd put their butter and milk and beans in there and try to keep it from spoiling.

Now, the second nice house was the Henderson houses,[14] which a gentleman built and rented out to people. They had the big screened porches and two rooms in the back. Then the Six Companies built their houses with a fairly decent plan, but there were rows and rows and rows of them all alike. They had the screen porch in an "L" shape around one side and the other side of the house, and two bedrooms and a living room and a small kitchen. Most of our cooking was with gas. We had to get the gas from trucks that hauled it, and they filled your tank.[15]

While I speak of this, I want to tell you about the little family in Las Vegas [of the] man that sold this gas. His family had a tragic accident. Someone had lit a cigarette, evidently, was all they could find out, and the light had followed the path of the leaking gas and went right through their house and it killed quite a few members of the [family]. I can't remember the name of the family. But I do remember the girl was our prom queen or something. She was a very popular girl in school.

In Boulder City—I can't remember my ninth grade. We were such an upset family at that time. I think I went to the ninth grade in Boulder in a small house, as I remember.[16] I know I remember I went to the tenth grade in the nice school. By then the government had built a nice school.[17]

You mentioned [going] to school in buses?[18]

That was for my eleventh and twelfth grade. The buses were big, long, red rattling trap buses, but I guess in those days they were nice. We drove to Las Vegas everyday and went to high school for my eleventh and twelfth grade.

I was baptized a Mormon in Utah and I was very active in church. I went to everything. I helped with the programs because I could dance and I taught a few little steps to people. And in school assemblies I'd help with the programs there,

playing for kids to sing and playing for other little dancers that could dance already, or acrobatics, or whatever was on. And then I'd teach some of the kids a little routine to go with their song. I remember one girl in particular, Mary Beth Nelson, had a very nice voice. Her father was Judge Nelson[19] in Boulder City in later years. She and I use to work a lot of programs together. Also, in school, I used to play for the noon dances.

I wondered if you wanted me to mention some of the kids I went to school with.

Yeah, yeah. Especially those that became prominent citizens.

There was Virginia Beckley, the Dotson children. Ted [Dotson] was the one that lost the arm and I still see him occasionally now. He had an automobile accident coming up the hill from North Las Vegas to go to school.[20] And there was Virgil and Art Ham. And Judge Francis Horsey.

Art Ham. That's [who] the Art[emus] Ham Hall at the university [is name after].

And they just tore their famous home down not too long ago here, too.

And the Wasdens, Edith and Howard. Howard now has a school named after him. Sherwin Garside.[21] And the Whitney boys. Their folks are from the city of Whitney.[22] My sister used to go with Roy. And Bernadine Bowman. The Bowmans had their grocery store over on Bonanza [Road]. And Robert Lias, ex-postmaster. Jack Hanson from the Allen Hanson clothing. And the Tomiyasu children. Their father had a big Japanese colony here. He eventually owned quite a bit of property out in Paradise Valley which he tragically lost through some kind of tax politics. I shouldn't say that, but he did. Lee Rand Orr, who is now a judge, I believe. Barbara and Shirley Ferron. Their father had the White Cross Drug Store. George Von Tobel, and he had a younger brother. I think we called him Angel in those days. Bryn Armstrong,[23] who's with the newspaper. Harley Harmon. And Bill Nellis,[24] who Nellis Air Base is named after.

I remember when the Fifth Street School burned down.[25] I remember also a lion being on the highway in between Boulder City and Las Vegas. It was just tied up to a little post out there. It was quite a tourist attraction, and people used to stop and look at it. One little girl from Boulder City got too close and she ended up with some terrible scars. I think that's when they got rid of the lion.

Well, do you have a question now?

No, I think you've just about covered... .

My father put his time in in Boulder City. He'd get another, better job, and a better job, and when we lived on Avenue B in 1934—we were in a Six Company house—my mother saved grocery money without him knowing it and bought me my first piano. He was so angry he wouldn't even play it. My dad played, and my grandmother played, too, his mother. And he finally one day came in and sat down and played, and we knew all was forgiven.

I think it was interesting it was so hot. You had to wet the sheets?

Oh, yes. This was when Dad first came here. The first two or three years of construction it was so hot here the men would get up and wet their sheets and go back to sleep, go back to bed, and put the sheet over them so they could sleep. And as soon as the sheet dried out, they'd have to get up and wet it again. Then I want to tell you about the man that tied himself into the river. He put a rope under his arms, and a rope around the rock on the shore, and he just had part of his body in the river and was just keeping cool so he could sleep. And luckily some people came along and saw him laying there. The river had a tendency to creep up after they started the dam. They had the cofferdam in, and they let certain amounts of water through, but it still was creeping up a little. They pulled him out and it saved his life.

Should I tell you about the ferries that used to be?

Yes.

I rode on the ferry. Murl Emery[26] ran the ferry and it went across from the Nevada side to the Arizona side.[27] In the old days that's how they got to the the dam. I have one little note, kind of a joke. One time my brother, who was with some friends of his down there, they used to go down and dive and swim right around where the ferry was, even though they weren't supposed to. A man was on the ferry going across and he dropped his false teeth in the water. He had the kids dive and trying to find his false teeth!

Did they ever find them?

No, they never found them. But my mother almost died when she found out what my brother had been doing.

It must have been dangerous.

Yes, the river was always very treacherous. It had currents, undercurrents. Even after the lake formed. The first few years there were quite a few deaths from boats. One of my very dear friends was drowned in his sail boat.[28] It collapsed and his body was dragged under. They found his boat but they never did find his body.

I will tell about some of the clubs in Vegas. That's an interesting part of the history.

OK.

When I first came here, of course, I was too young. But I still remember a lot of the little clubs that were all along the highway. There were so many of them, and they were just kind of like little dumps. They really should have been banned by the health department. There were a few nice ones. The one nice one that was built first was the Meadows.[29] I remember how we knew that nobody decent went out to the Meadows. One time when I was in the eleventh grade I had a boyfriend that took me to a dance. My mother used to let me go to the dances with her chaperoning. She kind of liked this young man, so she let him take me home and she'd go on home. He took me over there [to the Meadows] to have dinner without her knowledge. By the time we got served dinner and got back home it was so late that she met him at the door and scared the pants off him. He never did come back. I got to see the great Meadows. Later on I used to go there when I got to know the musicians and I'd go out there to see friends. They still had dances there, but it was never a big club after '34 and '35. It was never much of anything.

I saw many of the clubs that are mentioned in the new book that's come out. The Black Cat had a great big black pussycat facing in. The door was right below his mouth.

[Was] the Colony Club [here] at this time?

Well, the Colony Club was built later. That's the one that burned down [on July 5, 1944]. It was near the Showboat.

What about the Green Shack?

The Green Shack [has been there] as long as I can remember. There were two sisters that owned it. I think they had a cafe in Boulder City and then they had the Green Shack in Las Vegas.[30]

At this time I had been teaching dancing a little, and, like I say, was helping with the programs everywhere. I got permission from Sims Ely[31] for my dancing classes and I held my first classes in the Mormon Church. I went to California and studied, or Utah in the summer. Then I'd come back and have my classes. I got a real nice studio in the Episcopal Church basement in Boulder City. I had an offer to go to teach in Ogden and run the studio there for the [theatrical] artists. But I liked Boulder City because I was Big Frog in a little pool, and if I went to another place I found out I was a little frog and didn't have that much chance.

I bought my first instrument for playing with mallets, which was a marimba, from Mr. Garehime[32]. He had a store in Boulder City, and it was the wooden keys. I got it for $15. Mr. Garehime was a very dear friend to me. He always let me have my instruments and I could pay for them as I could pay for them. I bought a nice piano from him, traded the one my mother had gotten me for it.

Before I get too far from the early days, I want to tell you about Block 16.[33]

Yes.

We used to drive up Block 16, groups in the car, and wave at the girls. They didn't like it. They'd always make faces at us, and yell and swear.

Girls that would frequent the clubs?

The girls were working for the club.

You mean cocktail waitresses, like?

Oh, no. They were just girls that lived in the little rooms back there. They were the prostitutes of Las Vegas. Of course, there were always bars there. The girls would stand out in front of the building they worked in, in the most gaudy costumes you ever saw. I mean some of them were very reminiscent of dresses that you might have seen just two or three years ago. Bright colors and wild combinations of things.

The [reason] that Block 16 was removed was when the gunnery air school came into Las Vegas, before it became Nellis [Air Force Base], that's what they called it. It was a bad influence to the boys, I guess, so they kind of began to get rid of it then. They had tried before, and it didn't work.

Then eventually, when they really ruled out prostitution here, was after Glen Jones[34] was sheriff. They got rid of prostitution entirely.

Do you remember about what year that was?

I have that somewhere here.

Anyway, Mr. Garehime used to tell me, "Terry, please buy some of this property out here in the desert. It's only a dollar an acre and it's going to be valuable someday." I wish I'd have done it.

I saved money and studied dancing and taught dancing here right through [until] I graduated from Las Vegas High [School] with ninety kids. That was a big graduation class for then.

We had moved up to Utah Street[35] [in Boulder City]. My father was working for the government. He was Carpenter Foreman for the government and when President Roosevelt dedicated the dam,[36] Dad built the podium he stood by. President Roosevelt had polio and he had to have something to hold onto. We were very proud of the fact that he built this. Also, he designed the canopy that was shading where the tourists stood, because he said tourists couldn't stand in that hot sun and they needed some shade. He used to change some of the plans as they went along building in the dam, and right up until the time he was so sick he couldn't work, they were calling up or coming to the house to find out how something should be done. As a thing that big is being built, there are changes that have to be made as you build along, and [Dad] was the one in charge of it, so they had to come to him to find out.

Our first Helldorado,[37] I was present. I made a lovely little cowboy outfit out of white pique and I took my accordion and my folks took me to Las Vegas to play. I let them go home without me because I had not finished. So I went to hitchhike home and I got as far as the Three Pigs,[38] which was one of the many little bars along the way, and I couldn't get any farther until finally the milkman came along and he took me home. I knew him from school because he always delivered the milk at school. My folks had gone to Las Vegas to find me because I hadn't gotten home and somebody told my mother she'd heard me say I was going to Los Angeles, and Mother thought I'd run away from home. So when they called and I was the one who answered the phone, my mother just fainted. My dad had to finish the conversation.

I'm continuing the interview with Terry.

Well, I'm talking so fast and you're not getting anything in. But I must go back just a bit. When I was in high school, Oran Gragson, who we all know as the mayor, had a little second-hand store on Fremont [Street]. Very old, antique things in it, and I used to go in and talk with him in those early days. He later built a nice furniture store. And then, as everyone knows, he became our mayor.[39]

Also, I wanted to talk about the little swimming pool on Fremont [Street] we used to go in.[40] When we were in high school that's where we used to go swimming.

I will tell you about my father finishing the new school. The man that had the contract couldn't get it finished on time. The government took it over and Father finished the new school in Boulder City that was for the seventh and eighth graders.[41]

I want to tell you about one of my teachers, Eva Adams. She used to teach in the Las Vegas High School, and she became Secretary of the money in the United States. She used to signed the greenbacks.[42]

Also, one of my teachers was Harvey Dondero. His wife everyone knows of now.[43] And Maude Frazier I knew very well. She was my principal. Tommy Nelson, he now works with Liberace in his museum. He was one of our musicians in Boulder City. And Clark Higgins.[44] His father was in the legislature at one time.[45]

Then, you wanted me to tell you about the water release on the dam. After the president was here to dedicate the dam, which I took a picture of him as he drove by our house on Utah Street—we were then living in a government house. He a year later pushed a button in Washington that signaled the release for the water.[46] I saw that when all the water came out of all the valves. It looked like a huge waterfall coming from each side and the spray was just all over the whole sky, clear up as high as the dam was filled with the spray. I guess even if you were standing on the dam you'd have got sprayed.

Were as many people out for that [as for the dedication]?

I wasn't down there when the president dedicated the dam. You had a hard time getting down there. We were on the side. As I remember, we were down around the curve. My father was there because he, being a worker, went down and he was right there. There's a place where you go around almost like a full circle, and some of us were still backed up in that full circle, so we couldn't see what the capacity of the crowd was. But it was tremendous. They didn't let any cars down there. You had to walk. You had to park up in the very beginning going down through that rock where the road is just before the dam and walk down.

But I was there when they opened the valves. I got pictures of that.

That was about 1936?

Yes. That was in '36.

Shall I continue with the things I did in Boulder City?

Yes.

While I was teaching I had recitals each year. I gave *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* [on April 22 and 25, 1938] and there was huge write-ups in the paper about it, and this made me feel like the big frog I felt like. And I also gave a lot of assistance to Mr. Earl Brothers[47] who had the theater in Boulder City. He had amateur contests. I played for Rex Jarrett and he won a prize. And my sister won first prize doing a tap dance.

You used to make the costumes?

For my recitals. Designed them and sewed half of them because some of the mothers couldn't sew. And I made uniforms. I had 44 students in my 1935 class I believe it was, or '36. Anyway I made uniforms for every one of them. They were little blue skirts that came off, and then they had the little short jumper underneath for their acrobatics. I designed the sets and [my father] built them. He also put the barres up for my barre work in the basement of the church. The church wouldn't rent to me anymore, so I went over to Garehime's old music building—he was out of that, then. [My father] put the barres up over there. Also, I had classes in Las Vegas. I had the old bakery building on Fourth Street that wasn't being used anymore, and I made a lovely studio in there. It had hardwood floors. Boy, was it nice.

And you wanted me to be sure and tell about Queho.[48]

Yes.

I had my classes the last year in the other side of the Park Mortuary, which was [then] not being used in Boulder City.[49] It was Garehime's old music building. And the restroom was in the center part, and my little girls used to go in there to wash their hands or go to the bathroom. They came running out one day and said, "Oh, Terry! There's bones in there!" And I said, "Bones?" And I went running in there and there was this skeleton laying on the table in there. I later found out it was good old Queho [*she pronounces it* ***Kwee-ho***]. They had found him up in the mountains in this cave.

Was he the renegade Indian that had been living in the cave killing all these people?

Yes. He had died of starvation, evidently, and someone found his bones. And there they were in the restroom of my dance studio.

Snow White was in '38. That was my big class. I had met a lady in here that had come from California to get a divorce. She was a dancing teacher and she fell in love with Las Vegas and she wanted to stay here. Her name was Nancy. She wanted to have her dance studio here, and she came and got acquainted with me. She and I worked together on the last little bit of *Snow White*. She helped me. It had turned out to be a really huge thing, and I was very grateful to get her to

help me with that. It was so good I had to put it on twice, and then I had to bring it into Las Vegas. People wanted me to put it on the Mormon Church stage in here.

Also, I had helped with a music teacher bunch [who had] come in here teaching children music. They put on a little thing called the *Enchanted Forest*, I think it was. My studio helped with that program and put on a little story dance skit.

Let's see. When I taught in Garehime's that was my last year of teaching. I had married. My husband was a guide on the dam.[50] They cut down their forces. I don't know if this was because of the war situation that was forming or what. Anyway, they laid him off. He went to California and I stayed in Boulder City. He went down to work in the ship yards. That's when I was hostess on the boat.[51]

They had two boats. One big one and one nice small one. This nice small one was called *Paiute*, and I think the other one was called *Paiute* number 2.[52] But anyway, one was a long boat that took lots of people and the other was a small boat if they didn't have too many people who wanted to go. I played my accordion and answered all their questions and told them all the details about the building of the dam and how high and how deep, pointed out all the beautiful points of interest going up into Grand Canyon. Gave them their lunch. Sometimes when they came back and it was storming, we'd take the people over to a place in by the mouth [of the Grand Canyon], a place that was for boats to dock,[53] and they'd go back by car, and we'd bring the boat on home. One time I was very pleasantly surprised with finding out that Henry Fonda and his wife were one of our tourists.[54] After we got back that night they asked the pilot and myself if we'd like to go to Las Vegas with them and have dinner and go all over town. This we did, and of course everyone where we went—we ate in the Green Shack (there weren't too many great and wonderful places here then and that was a very good food place). We danced, the pilot danced with his [Fonda's] wife and I danced with Henry Fonda and people would come up and say, "Isn't that Henry Fonda you're with? Bring him over to the table." I remember when he came to pick me up at the house he was fixing something in the car. He put his foot up on the dashboard and was pushing and he broke the back of the seat in his convertible. We fixed it so his wife could go ahead and sit there.

But also when I was hostess on the boat Phil Harris and Alice Faye got married, and I used to take their newspaper up to them every day and they were

honeymooning out on the lake on a boat. They were married here and they spent their honeymoon here.

We were getting so many well-known people here then. Also we were getting a few gangsters.

I played music for a lot of the people around here: Buck Blaine[55] [who] was connected with the Golden Nugget [Hotel and Casino]. And we went to his house and played music one time when Cliff Jones[56] was there and Guy McAfee.[57] Also, Paul Ralli.[58] I went over to his house with the little trio I was playing with, and we played for them over at his house. These details come in my mind, just that main part of who it was and where I was [but] I don't remember too much about all that. I played one time out on Dry Lake[59] when they had a barbecue for a political rally, I think. Lieutenant Governor Fred [S. Alward][60] asked me to play out there. I played for everybody who had a community sing.

Talking about your music career, was it around this time you played on KENO radio?

This was in 1939 and my husband had lost his job on the dam and we came over here [Las Vegas] and lived on West Side, believe it or not. Everybody lived on West Side that wanted to. We didn't have too many colored families here. I graduated with the first colored boy that ever graduated from Las Vegas High. His name was Percy something, I can't remember it now.[61] Everybody lived there. The housing was cheap over there and my husband didn't have a job. We got acquainted with some people that had the radio station started. It happened to be Max Kelch and John [Strock].[62] They had a girl, a secretary, I remember her being there. The union didn't like the idea we were playing on the radio station. We were called the *Wanderers of the Wasteland*, and we got fan mail and requests.

But you weren't even employed there, were you?

No, we were just playing because we wanted to get a start. That's the way young kids are, or were then, maybe. You just played to get started in something like that. And I wasn't really a musician yet. I didn't belong to the union. But believe me, the union was trying to get us off that stage. And the kids

that had the station told them they were going to have us play whether they liked it or not. But we ended up getting off the stage. The union won out.

Helldorado was getting bigger and better all the time, and we played for rodeos that were here and we played for the dances and things. We had a nice little trio, my husband and his friend, Charlie Guy. I bet lots of people in Las Vegas know him. And myself. The floats were getting prettier because as they built hotels, the hotels put in some of the most gorgeous floats you ever saw. They had running waterfalls on them and beautiful girls. And they were comparable to the Rose Bowl parade. I think the reason the hotel floats started falling off [was that] Vegas was very western for many years. In fact, when they first put the stoplight up at Fifth and Fremont,[63] everybody had a fit. It was the first stop light [in Las Vegas]. They made them take down the places where people could tie up their horses on Fremont Street. And they didn't like this because Las Vegas was going to stay the western frontier town of the United States, or in the world, I guess. And I think as the hotels expanded [and] Las Vegas lost its western atmosphere, Helldorado lost its bigness. Everybody in Vegas knew about Helldorado and you had to buy a button or you'd get picked up and put in the hoosegow, the little cage on the street. And we had street dances. And now, it's still big and people still go to what they have, the main rodeos and everything, but it's nothing like it was then. The fact that the hotels made us more a modern city instead of western, I think that's what had to do with their not being so interested in putting big floats [in the Helldorado parade]. Because they don't anymore.

You have anything now you want me to talk about? We're in about 1941, and in 1941 was when the war started. I was in the San Fernando Valley. I was there in California for about a year, then I came back. My husband joined the navy and I stayed here. And they were still trying to get rid of Block 16, I guess. The army came in more and more and they didn't think it was a good influence and they were still trying to get it out.

Basic Magnesium[64] came and they built metal for the planes, I think it was. I worked there for a short while in the Expediting Department and my sister was secretary to one of the main fellows there.

My sister was the greatest.[65] I have to tell you this. She was on the honor roll at Woodbury College, on its permanent honor roll on the outside of the building. Woodbury Business College in LA. And she was valedictorian in

Boulder City and Queen of the May. She's in Miami, Florida now and she's still working for bigshots. The big frog is still in Boulder City trying to be something!

I remember when Carole Lombard's plane crashed.[66] It was '42. We couldn't see anything from town. It was out in the mountains to the southwest of us.

Was she a well-known star at the time?

She was Clark Gable's wife. Clark Gable was here many times, I remember. Hoot Gibson and Roy Rogers. Hoot Gibson eventually got a ranch. I remember the little building where he eventually put his D 4 D Ranch,[67] I think was the name of it. I worked around here for a short while, like I said, on the boats, then I went back down to California. And I was gone some more. I was a full-fledged musician when I went back this time. I joined the union and the boys were all off to war. I got into music real good. I came back here in 1944. I was married, I married a blind boy that played guitar, and he was a wonderful musician.[68] He taught me a lot of things about music. We worked in quite a few of the places that are long gone now. The Golden Nugget, right on the corner where you go in the corner door there, was the Mission Bar and it belonged to the people that had the Apache Hotel across the street. I worked for places out on the highway. The Swanky Tonk[69] opened and we were the opening trio there. We worked in the Silver Slipper for a lady named Johnnie. The Silver Slipper was out near where the Swanky Tonk is now. When Johnnie sold her big glass silver slipper I think she sold the privileges or the whole slipper to the Silver Slipper that's on the Strip now.[70] I don't remember whether our slipper was that big, but I know the idea, they bought it from her.

We worked in some little places out on the highway that aren't there anymore. I used to go to the Red Rooster and Grace Hayes bought it and turned it into the Grace Hayes Lodge. Now it's that little place across from the Desert Inn. The Castaways.[71] The big hotels kept building and the big stars kept coming and I was here off and on. I went over to Kingman and worked in a place over there. Kingman was building up a little at that time. Then I went to New Mexico, but I always came back. I say I never had any other kind of license [plate] but Nevada on my car, except for one time, and that was when I finally moved to Yuma, Arizona in 1963. I always sent for my license and voted as an absentee voter [in Nevada]. My dad always sent us our car license.

My mother in 1945 left Boulder City and the little house we had built. My father died from his injuries on the dam in that cave-in. The broken ribs had penetrated somehow his liver and caused it to grow too big. We bought a little house down on California Street that my dad helped build. My mother left then and went to chiropractic college and became a chiropractor, and she's Dr. Millie Bogardus. She met Paul [Bogardus] at college and he came out here and he fell in love with Las Vegas like everybody does.

And Helldorados, I noticed after I came back, were getting smaller, which was a shame. I remember when Glen Jones went out of office. It seems to me that's when the prostitution law was passed.

Was he the sheriff?

He had been our sheriff, and I think it was around in '45 or '46.

Right now I can tell you about the little clubs out on the Strip that were there that aren't anymore. There was the Bingo Club.[72] I understand Mike Douglas worked out there one time. I had a very dear friend, Alice Hall, played accordion there. I remember this definitely. When the English girl, Bridget, came here to get a divorce from her soldier she had married, and somehow he went to visit her—he had visitation rights with the son—and she shot him.[73] And we had a big trial. I remember all that because I was here then. Bridget Waters her name was, and she was from England. I was working in the Esquire [Club][74] and they remodeled that Esquire, and eventually the Golden Nugget swallowed it up.

The Players was another little club out on the Strip.[75] I saw Art Tatum out there. They had quite a few nice, important players [musicians] out there.

Art Tatum, was he your teacher? Was he actually a teacher [who] taught you or inspired you?

No. My style was copied after Teddy Nelson and Art Tatum. He was a blind musician, a Jew, played the piano. So when he came here, I was very thrilled. It was terrible, though. I went in that night and I opened the door and the door squeaked. He just turned around and looked as I walked in.

In '45, '46, and '47, '48 I was in and out quite a bit. I was still a musician. I became a musician and that was all I did. I traveled a lot. I played out at Nellis Air Force Base with the trio out there. I went to Yellowstone and Arizona, and

always came back. My folks lived here and I was always dragging in. I didn't play in many places here and I lost track of a lot of musicians.

So this pretty well takes you up through the early days.

Oh, I must say one little thing. I played and sang in San Clemente [California] in 1954. That was before the president, Mr. Nixon, went there. I worked for almost two years. Then I played in the ... they had [the] Shantung Room in the bowling alley on Fifth Street that isn't there anymore. The first big bowling alley we had here. I played in the Shantung Room there for two years. And I went out and played on Nellis Boulevard at a little place there where a lot of air force boys come in. This is where I met Richard Thomas and married him. This was in 1957 that I married him.

I met Tony Martin through my husband. He [Richard Thomas] left the base and became a masseur in the Flamingo Hotel.

Las Vegas is just ... most people that are here for twenty years know it from then on, so I caught you up on the early part of it.

And that's about near the end of the tape, too. OK, thank you very much, Terry.

END

NOTES

1. This interview and hundreds of others were conducted by students of Dr. Ralph Roske, a professor of history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. These tapes were deposited in the Special Collections Department of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas library.

2. The family name at this time was spelled Couture, changed later to Courture. Mrs. Thomas's father was Ernest Ambrose Courture.

3. This was the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.

4. The Boulder Canyon Project Act, authorizing construction of Hoover Dam in southern Nevada's Black Canyon, was passed in 1928. Work on the project commenced on September 17, 1930 when construction of the Union Pacific branch line railroad from Las Vegas to the Boulder City town site was begun. Construction on Hoover Dam itself began in the spring of 1931.

5. It was common for men to apply for Hoover Dam work at the employment office in Las Vegas under several different names and for several different positions. Their chances for employment were increased this way.

6. One such place was Cowboy Bill's Camp, described by Erma Godbey in *Building Hoover Dam: An Oral History of the Great Depression* by Andrew Dunar and Dennis McBride [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993], pp. 213-214.

7. Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

8. These were the four diversion tunnels drilled through the cliffs of Black Canyon to divert the Colorado River from its bed around the Hoover Dam site. Work was begun on the diversion tunnels in May 1931.

9. Two concrete-faced cofferdams kept the river out of the Hoover Dam construction site after the river was diverted.

10. The government allowed individuals to build private homes on leased lots in Boulder City on Avenues L and M.

11. Men who worked for the project's contractors [the Bureau of Reclamation, the Six Companies, the Babcock and Wilcox Company, etc.] rented company housing.

12. Electricity used in Boulder City and in construction of Hoover Dam was delivered from California by the Southern Sierras Power Company, *dba* the Nevada-California Power Company.

13. This was the Long Beach, California earthquake of March 10, 1933.

14. S. E. Henderson, a building contractor and lumber dealer from Portland, Oregon, leased a large tract of land from the Bureau of Reclamation on the east end of Boulder City on March 18, 1932. He built about 40 small frame homes on Block 26, between Avenues L and M, and Arizona and Wyoming Streets. Henderson's was the first private housing development in Boulder City.

15. Propane gas.

16. Boulder City's first schools were conducted in small houses near the intersection of Avenue B and New Mexico Street provided by the Six Companies.

17. The Bureau of Reclamation contracted with the I. M. Bay Company of Junction, Utah to build a two-story brick school house on Arizona Street. Construction began on May 26, 1932, and the first classes were held in the new building on September 26, 1932.

18. Boulder City's high school students were bussed into Las Vegas to the Las Vegas High School. Boulder City's high school was built on Arizona Street in 1941 and the first high school class graduated from there in May 1942.

19. This was Alphonzo Jensen Nelson—he only went by his initials, A. J.— who was father of musician Tommy Nelson, and a prominent Justice of the Peace in Boulder City. "Judge" Nelson married many celebrity couples at Hoover Dam.

20. Twelve-year-old Ted Dotson was a newsboy for the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*. On April 19, 1934, he'd finished selling his papers in downtown Las Vegas and had hitched a ride down the hill into North Las Vegas where his family lived. When he stepped around the car to the cross the street, another car ran him down. His left arm was amputated above the elbow. [See the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* for April 20, 1934, 1:8; April 21, 1:3; and April 27, 12:7-8.]

21. Sherwin "Scoop" Garside [May 26, 1915 - May 20, 1986], born in Tonopah, whose father owned the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Sherwin Garside and his brother-in-law, Raymond Germain, opened Bonanza Printers in 1949.

22. Whitney was a small settlement between Las Vegas and Boulder City during the early 1930s [see the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* for August 29, 1931, 1:7 and December 1, 1931, 2:6]. This area today is located along the Boulder Highway between Tropicana Avenue and Russell Road.

23. An alumnus of the Las Vegas High School class of 1936, Bryn Armstrong was executive editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*.

24. William H. Nellis, a popular alumnus of Las Vegas High School and an Army Air Force First Lieutenant during World War II, was killed over Luxembourg on December 27, 1944. On May 20, 1950, the Las Vegas Army Air Field was dedicated in Nellis's name.

25. This was the original Las Vegas High School at Fourth and Clark Streets. Opened on December 17, 1917, it burned on May 11, 1934.

26. Murl Emery [June 7, 1903 - March 17, 1981], famed Colorado River boatman, homesteaded near Cottonwood Island in about 1917. For many years Emery provided boat transportation for the government engineers and bureaucrats during their investigation of dam sites before Hoover Dam was begun. Emery owned a store at Ragtown, a squatter's settlement of Hoover Dam workers near the mouth of Black Canyon. He operated a tour service on Lake Mead while it was rising, and later established Emery's Landing, a boat and fishing resort on the Colorado River at the mouth of Eldorado Canyon.

27. This ferry was operated by James Cashman, Sr. It left from the Nevada side of the Colorado River near the mouth of Black Canyon and landed at Kingman Wash on the Arizona side.

28. Therese's friend was Charles Lillybridge. Lillybridge, with friends Herbert Bowen and Milo Slawson, disappeared on Lake Mead on April 21, 1937. These men were the first deaths on the new lake and their bodies were never recovered. [See the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal* for April 22, 1937, 1:8 and 3:4; April 26, 1:3; April 27, 1:4; May 6, 1:7; May 11, 1:5; May 14, 1:5; and the *Boulder City News* for November 14, 1991, p. 7.]

29. The Meadows Hotel and Casino was built east of the Boulder Highway near the intersection of Fremont Street and Charleston Boulevard by the Cornero family [who were later involved in the Stardust Hotel and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip, which opened in July 1958]. The Meadows' formal opening was held May 2, 1931.

30. Therese refers here to the Green Hut, a popular Boulder City restaurant opened on April 23, 1932. It had no connection with the Green Shack in Las Vegas.

31. Sims Ely [1862 - 1954] was Boulder City's manager from October 3, 1931 until he retired on April 16, 1941. Ely first gave Therese permission to teach dance on October 7, 1935.

32. Jake Garehime came to Las Vegas from Colorado in 1924 and opened a music and jewelry store on Fremont Street. In 1932 he opened a music store in Boulder City. Garehime died in 1960.

33. Blocks 16 and 17 were Las Vegas's red light district, established in 1905 when the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad laid out Las Vegas. Gambling, prostitution, and liquor flourished in these blocks until the eve of World War II. The Las Vegas Army Airfield [now known as Nellis Air Force Base] was established on January 23, 1941. President Roosevelt signed the May Act on July 11, 1941 which prohibited prostitution near military bases and defense centers. Block 16 was closed down in January 1942 and demolished shortly afterward.

34. Glen Conger Jones [July 15, 1910 - September 9, 1983] was appointed undersheriff of Las Vegas on January 1, 1939. Elected sheriff in 1942, Jones's years in that office were controversial. Hank Greenspun, editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*, accused Jones of having had a financial interest in Roxie's, a notorious brothel at Four Mile which was raided by the FBI on April 28, 1954. In the primary election shortly afterward, Jones ran last in a five-way race for sheriff. [See *The Green Felt Jungle* by Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris.]

35. 413 Utah Street, the former home of Wilbur Weede, Boulder City's landscape architect in 1932.

36. September 30, 1935.

37. Las Vegas's first Helldorado celebration, sponsored by Elks Lodge No. 1468, was held on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, April 25, 26, 27, and 28, 1935.

38. A bar on the Boulder Highway in East Las Vegas.

39. Oran Gragson, born in Tucumcari, New Mexico in 1911, came to Las Vegas in 1932 to work as a laborer on Hoover Dam. He stayed on after the dam was completed, and was involved in various retail businesses. In 1937 he opened the Little Second Hand Store which, by 1967, he had expanded into a complete home furnishings business with three outlets. A Republican, Gragson was elected mayor of Las Vegas in 1959 and served in that office until 1975. He has served as Executive Director of the Downtown Progress Association, and as the Southern Nevada representative for former Nevada U. S. Senator Chic Hecht.

40. Ladd's Plunge, built by Captain James H. Ladd near Twelfth Street, was a popular swimming hole in the 1920s and 1930s. Ladd opened Ladd's Hotel in Las Vegas in 1905.

41. Refer to note 18 above.

42. Eva Adams, a native Nevadan, was Director of the Bureau of the Mint in Washington, D.C., 1961-69.

43. In December 1974, Thalia Dondero became the first woman to be seated on the Clark County Commission..

44. See note 45.

45. Jack Higgins, who opened a barber shop in Boulder City's Terminal Building in March 1932, was a Nevada State Assemblyman from Clark County 1945-1955. His son was musician Clark Higgins.

46. The six 72-inch needle valves on the Arizona side of Hoover Dam were opened for the first time on Saturday, April 4, 1936. On Friday, September 11, 1936, all twelve needle valves—six on the Arizona side of the dam and six on the Nevada side—were opened. On this day, too, the first small generator at Hoover Dam was turned on. The electricity generated was used to operate various features of the dam, including the lights and elevators. The September valve opening was covered by the national media.

47. Earl Brothers was a Boulder City businessman and entrepreneur. Brothers owned and operated at various times in his career the Boulder City Theater, the Visitor's Bureau, the Victory Theater in Henderson, Nevada, and commercial and tourist facilities at Willow Beach and at Page, Arizona. He died in Boulder City on June 2, 1967.

48. Queho [also spelled Quejo, born ca. 1880 - 1889] was a Paiute Indian who committed a series of murders in the Eldorado Canyon area of Southern Nevada during the 1910s. He disappeared in January 1919 after a rampage in which he killed three people. Queho's mummified body, surrounded by his belongings, was found in a cave near Willow Beach by prospectors Charles Kenyon and Art Schroeder on February 20, 1940. The body was taken to the mortuary in Boulder City as Mrs. Thomas describes, briefly displayed in Laubach's Recreation Tavern on Avenue B, and afterward displayed at county fairs and Helldorado celebrations in Las Vegas. Queho eventually was buried in a marked grave at the edge of Cathedral Canyon, Nevada. [See the *Las Vegas Review-Journal Nevadan*, June 11, 1978, pp. 5J-6J.]

49. The Parks Mortuary in Boulder City was a two-story wood frame building at 555 Avenue G behind Coronado Plaza. It opened in 1932 and was demolished in 1941. The Gareheim Building was a one-story stucco building near the Municipal Building between Wyoming Street and California Avenue also built in 1932. Mrs. Thomas recalls that when Queho's bones were laid out, it was in the one-story, stucco Gareheim Building. It's unclear whether there was a mortuary operating in this building in 1940 when Queho was found.

50. Carl Deere, a musician and Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee in Boulder City, whom Mrs. Thomas married on February 28, 1939 [see the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, March 1, 1939, 3:7-8].

51. Mrs. Thomas was a hostess on tour boats for Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, Inc. [GCBDT]. Incorporated in Nevada on June 6, 1936, GCBDT signed

an exclusive contract with the National Park Service on May 13, 1937 to serve as the sole concessionaire within the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. [See "Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, Inc.: Southern Nevada's First Venture into Commercial Tourism," by Dennis McBride in the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, v. 27:2 (Summer 1984), pp. 92-108.]

52. The Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours boats were the *Paiute* and the *Hualapai*.

53. Pierce's Ferry.

54. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Fonda visited Boulder City on March 19, 20, and 21, 1941. They stayed at the Boulder Dam Hotel and took tours across Lake Mead with Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours.

55. Buck Blaine, educated as an engineer and surveyor, came to work on Hoover Dam construction in 1931 first as a mucker, later as a high scaler. In later years he was president of the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino, which opened on Fremont Street in Las Vegas in 1946.

56. Cliff Jones came to work on Hoover Dam in 1933 as a laborer. At various times on the dam project and in Boulder City he worked as a crane signal man, a hook tender, and in the Anderson Brothers Mess Hall making box lunches for the workers. He entered and graduated from law school, became a district judge, and was lieutenant governor of Nevada 1947-1954. With partners Lou Weiner, Harvey Dickerson, and Marion Hicks [who built the El Cortez Hotel and Casino on Fremont Street in 1941], Jones bought the Boulder Dam Hotel in Boulder City early in 1946. In 1948, Jones and Hicks opened the Thunderbird Hotel and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip. Jones and Hicks also owned shares in the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino. In 1954, Cliff Jones was involved in the wrong end of an FBI investigation into prostitution at Roxie's, a notorious brothel located four miles south of Las Vegas on the Boulder Highway. The controversy cost him his place on the Democratic National Committee. Jones's sister, Florence Lee Jones, married John Cahlan, owner and publisher, with his brother Al, of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. Florence became a prominent journalist and was the only woman officially allowed on the Boulder Canyon Project to cover Hoover Dam construction. With her husband, John, Florence wrote the two-volume *Water—A History of Las Vegas* [Las Vegas: Las Vegas Valley Water District, 1975].

57. Guy McAfee [August 19, 1888 - February 20, 1960], Los Angeles police captain and vice squad commander, also owned and operated illegal gambling clubs and brothels. When reformist Fletcher Bowron was elected mayor of Los Angeles in 1938, he ran the pimps, prostitutes, and gamblers out of town, many of whom moved up to Las Vegas. Faced with prosecution himself, McAfee resigned from the police force late in 1938 and moved to Las Vegas. He bought the Pair-O-Dice nightclub on Highway 91, which he renamed the 91 Club [and which eventually was absorbed by the Hotel Last Frontier, and

renamed the 21 Club]. McAfee owned at various times the Pioneer and Frontier Clubs on Fremont Street, and was a major partner in the Golden Nugget. It was McAfee who persuaded Thomas Hull to build the El Rancho Vegas on Highway 91 in 1941, and R. E. Griffith and his nephew, William Moore, built the Last Frontier Hotel and Casino in 1942 on land owned in part by Guy McAfee. McAfee was also a later investor in Cliff Jones' and Marion Hicks' Thunderbird Hotel. It was McAfee who first called Las Vegas's Highway 91 the Strip, fondly recalling his salad days as a gambling operator on Los Angeles's Sunset Strip. It is interesting to note a letter written on January 26, 1939 by Boulder Dam Hotel owner Paul Webb in Boulder City to Nevada Governor E. P. Carville regarding McAfee's arrival in Las Vegas: "Dear Governor—Attached you will find a clipping from the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* of Jan. 24 which you will find substantiates our statements in this regard. Las Vegas is making a bigger mistake than they are aware of in encouraging this outfit into the county." Webb, originally a prominent building contractor from Los Angeles, may well have been familiar with McAfee and his operations there before he, Webb, moved to Boulder City.

58. Paul Ralli was a prominent Las Vegas lawyer who led the successful fight to close Block 16 in 1941. He was the author of *Nevada Lawyer: A Story of Life and Love in Las Vegas* [Dallas: Mathis, Van Nort & Co., 1946; second edition, Culver City, California: Murray & Gee, Inc., Publishers, 1949], and *Viva Vegas* [Hollywood: House-Wharven, 1953].

59. In the Eldorado Valley south of Boulder City.

60. Fred S. Allward served as lieutenant governor of Nevada from November 6, 1934 -39. He also served in the Nevada State Assembly 1930-34.

61. This was Percy Powell, who graduated Las Vegas High School in 1935 [see the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, June 8, 1935, 1:4].

62. Las Vegas's KENO Radio first went on the air at 8 a. m. on Friday, November 1, 1940. Owners were Maxwell Kelch and George P. Foster, while John C. Strock was the commercial manager. Therese, her husband, Carl Deere, and their friend, Charles Guy, provided the first live music broadcast from KENO. Their trio was called the Desert Drifters.

63. This traffic signal went into operation about April 2, 1931. [See the *Las Vegas Evening Review-Journal*, April 2, 1931, 1:4.]

64. Basic Magnesium, Inc., owned by Cleveland industrialist Howard Eells, built a plant to produce magnesium for the American military during World War II when European supplies were curtailed. Ground was broken for the plant in September 1941 in the desert between Las Vegas and Boulder City, and the first magnesium was produced in October 1942. The plant ceased production in November 1944. The town of Henderson, originally known as Basic, was built to house the Basic Magnesium workers.

65. Nina June Courture.

66. Film star Carole Lombard and her mother, passing through Las Vegas on a Victory Bond tour, were killed on January 16, 1942 when their plane crashed into Potosi Mountain, several miles southwest of the city.

67. Hoot Gibson and his wife, Dorothy, opened the D-4-C [*Divorcee*] Ranch on November 2, 1946 on Spring Mountain Road west of Highway 91.

68. Robert Verdell Sahagian married Therese in Los Angeles on November 4, 1944.

69. Formerly the Casablanca Club, the Swanky Tonk roadhouse opened on April 25, 1945 on the Boulder Highway in Henderson. Charles Sherman and Bill Green were the managers. In 1946 it became a popular restaurant known as the Club Swanky. Demolished in the late 1980s, it is the present site of the Jokers Wild Casino.

70. The Silver Slipper Club opened on the Boulder Highway in Henderson in April 1942. In 1950, owners of the Hotel Last Frontier on the Las Vegas Strip bought the name Silver Slipper, and opened the Silver Slipper Casino on property adjacent to the Frontier. The Silver Slipper was demolished in December 1988 during expansion of the Frontier Hotel and Gambling Hall.

71. The Castaways Hotel opened in 1964 [it was formerly the Sans Souci, which opened in 1957]. The Castaways closed on July 20, 1987, and was demolished to make way for Steve Wynn's Mirage Hotel and Casino which opened in November 1989. Grace Hayes [August 23, 1895 - February 1, 1989] was a silent film actress and a noted singer and nightclub hostess. She came to Las Vegas in 1942 to sing at the El Rancho Vegas. She bought the popular Red Rooster nightclub on Highway 91 [opened on November 26, 1930], and renamed it the Grace Hayes Lodge, after a night spot she had owned in Hollywood. Las Vegas's Grace Hayes Lodge opened on January 23, 1947.

72. The Club Bingo opened on July 24, 1947 near the corner of Highway 91 [the Strip] and San Francisco Street [Sahara Avenue], across the street from the El Rancho Vegas. The Club Bingo was demolished to make way for the Sahara Hotel and Casino which opened in December 1952.

73. Bridget Waters, a 26-year-old Irish war bride, shot her estranged husband, Frank Waters, to death in Las Vegas on Labor Day 1946. Her murder trial was sensational, and she drew great sympathy from local citizens. She was convicted of involuntary manslaughter on November 9, 1946 and sentenced to the Nevada State Penitentiary for 1 to 5 years. She was paroled in June 1948 and deported to England. [See *Nevada Lawyer: A Story of Life and Love in Las Vegas* by Paul Ralli (Culver City, California: Murray & Gee, Inc., Publishers, 1949), pp. 257-162.]

74. The Esquire Lounge and Bar opened at 120 South Second Street on November 28, 1941.

75. The Players Club opened in 1945 on Highway 91, and was just south of the present site of the Desert Inn.

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