

AN INTERVIEW WITH IAN & SHANNA ANDERSON

An Oral History Conducted by Barbara Tabach

West Charleston Neighborhoods:
An Oral History Project of Ward 1

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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An Oral History Project of Ward 1
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PREFACE

In 2011, Ian and Shanna Anderson moved into their McNeil Estates home with their two young children. Though both of the children born-and-raised Nevadan, neither Ian nor Shanna is. However, as the couple explains in this interview, letting their roots grow in Las Vegas has been quite easy. Ian has lived in Las Vegas since 1997 and Shanna since 2008.

Ian was raised in Central corridor of Phoenix, where he explains he was in the minority as a white person. Shanna, by contrast, is a native of Ann Arbor, Michigan. They met, married at Taliesin West (Scottsdale, AZ) and settled in Las Vegas, where both work in the office furniture industry.

Shanna and Ian share a passion for design, especially midcentury modern design. So when they felt the need to move from their Summerlin home, they looked for a house in the center of the city. Something clicked when they saw 2601 Mason Avenue. It was a burnt out shell of a dwelling, but their vision of what could be became a tale of imagination and patience.

They talk about the upside and downside of living in this Ward 1 neighborhood; there is the proximity to work, concerns about education for the children, and where they shops and play. They talk in detail about owning a perfect family home in a remarkable part of Las Vegas.

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October 11, 2013

in Las Vegas, Nevada

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This is Barbara Tabach. It's October 11th, 2013. I am sitting in the Anderson home in McNeil Estates.

Thank you so much for having me.

Thanks for having us.

So each of you state your name and how to spell it.

Shanna Anderson; S-H-A-N-N-A, A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N.

And I'm Ian Anderson; that's I-A-N, A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N.

Excellent. So, your house, here in McNeil Estates, is on Mason Avenue. We're going to talk about how you got here eventually, but let's start with where you're from originally.

You want to go first, Ian?

Sure. I'm originally from Phoenix, Arizona, born and raised, kind of a central corridor of Phoenix, which is considered the center of town, very similar to this part of town for Vegas. Then I went to school in Flagstaff, Arizona for about four years and then moved out to Vegas in 1997.

And how did Vegas and Phoenix compare at that time. Back in '97 how would you compare the two cities?

Back in '97, I think Phoenix was similar or even smaller than Vegas is now. I remember in high school when Phoenix hit a million people or so and then I remember it creeping up on two million. So I think there's a lot of parallels, just a delayed parallel in Las Vegas to Phoenix. Completely different personalities, though. I think Phoenix without the gaming—it's not as transient. It still is transient, but growing up there it's a little different. Having major sporting teams, having things that draw the community together is where Vegas has been lacking, but I am seeing it turn the corner.

So was it your career that brought you here?

Well, kind of.

Yes. After college I moved down to Mexico. I needed eight credits to graduate, so I had studied the semester prior, moved down to Mexico for a language program. Just fell in love with it and I still to this day just love Mexico, the people, the culture, the food, everything about it.

So I sold everything I had, took my graduation money and moved down there for about six months and just traveled around with some friends, some good friends, and eventually ran out of money and so I had to get a job. I was offered a job out in Las Vegas with the Knoll Dealership.

Knoll?

Knoll, K-N-O-L-L. Knoll is a direct competitor of what I do now, so it's office furniture.

Wayne Hogue was really my mentor. I really respected him from a business standpoint. He had offices in San Francisco, Sacramento and had just purchased the dealership here in Las Vegas and offered me a position. So I thought, great, I'll come out here and learn business from Wayne. Quickly thereafter I was promoted to a general manager position. Couldn't leave then. Then we sold the business another year and a half—no, it was probably four years later they sold the business. Couldn't leave then. Then had this opportunity to start my own business not that long after that.

And what is the name of your business?

Henriksen Butler. So Ron Henriksen and Steve Butler started the company in 1980 up in Salt Lake City. As of May of 2011 my partners and I—so there's five of us, so I have four other partners; they're all located in Salt Lake City—but we altogether now own five different businesses. One is Henriksen Butler Design Group up in Salt Lake City; Henriksen Butler Nevada in Las Vegas; and then we have Spacesaver Intermountain, which is a high-density

storage system, and we're in San Diego, Idaho and Utah for that business; then our service organization; and then, of course, real estate, which just kind of manages our own real estate. So that happened in May of 2011.

Well, you're quite entrepreneurial.

Or just lucky, I think. The right place at the right time maybe.

So what did you study in college?

Hotel restaurant management. So my degree is in HRM. I still love that aspect. I love food. I love people. I love seeing people have a good time; that really makes me happy. So that's why I decided to get that degree in the first place rather than a business degree. I think it's still applicable. It was for the most part a business degree with an emphasis on hospitality. So I think it's still applicable to almost anything you do.

And then you obviously have to have a sense of space and how to use it in your business?

Yes. I have an appreciation for great design. I mean I absolutely love it. Don't get me started. I'm not schooled or formally educated in design. My father was a sculptor. So I've already been around art, architects, designers. That's kind of who he hung out. So I've always been around good design and appreciated it. I never thought I'd be in this business, but I am. But I think that there's a certain truth about good design and inevitability about good design that there shouldn't be any other way to do things. I always use the simplest example of even food. Whether you're making a sandwich, whether you're mowing the lawn, whatever you're doing, that craftsmanship and that perfectionism that my dad passed on to me, I still have.

That's very cool.

And Shanna, how about yourself, where are you from?

I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I grew up there until I was sixteen and then actually moved

out of my house when I was sixteen to live about an hour away and go to an international charter school. I then went to college two hours away in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I've kind of been in Michigan my whole life. I moved out here in 2008. I had been working in Michigan for about five or six years at the time and met Ian just through business, both being in the same industry. I walked into his office and we fell in love.

Lightning struck, huh?

Yeah.

That's cute.

That's a whole other story within itself.

Yeah. So we got engaged three months after we met and I moved out here about two months after that, in 2008.

Had you been to Vegas before?

One time. I had the conception that most tourists have of Las Vegas. I actually remember—and you[referring to Ian] probably got irritated with this—that I kept asking how do you live here? It's so weird. It's so...not understanding what was really behind the curtain, what the rest of Las Vegas was. Now I'm on the receiving end of that. A lot of people out of town ask me the same question. They just don't realize what the community and the culture is here. It's different than a lot of other places, but there's still a whole locals' scene that you just don't even realize being a tourist.

Right, right. So you were a fresh resident when you got married or a little before you got married. And you had been living here how long?

Since '97. We got married in '09.

Yes.

So about 12 years.

So when you first moved here where did you live?

When I first moved here, my first apartment was The Fountains at Flamingo, which was on Flamingo and Pecos. I was there for about, oh, I don't know, maybe a year. I met a good friend of mine that was actually in our wedding, was in the same apartment complex and we became friends. He lives in Chicago; that's where he's from. So we actually moved to the Equestrian Apartments, which were on Eastern and Horizon Ridge. Back then that was the only thing out there. I remember when they finally opened a Shell station. It was one lane going each direction on Eastern from the I-215 all the way out. So this is before Anthem and everything else; they were maybe starting to build that. We lived there for a while. Then I bought my first house in Glen Heather, which is catty-corner from this neighborhood, and lived there for a couple of years. It just didn't turn like I wanted it to.

Turn, what do you mean?

I had grand hopes. My sister still lives in Phoenix and I think I mentioned I lived in that central corridor where there's a lot of historic districts—the Willo District and Encanto District, Del Norte. So I was hoping this re-gentrification of the area was going to happen. I had some Hells Angels that lived across the street, some bikers, people parking their cars on their lawn. I was hoping that it was going to turn and people would actually start moving in, buying up houses, remodeling and it would be a good investment. I loved the location and the area. But it just never quite turned like I wanted it to. So I ended up in Summerlin for the next several years; moved out there in May of 2001.

To the house that we lived in, right?

Until today or until February 14th, Valentine's Day of this year we moved into this house.

Well, let's talk about Glen Heather. Did you ever see that house yourself, Shanna?

I've driven her by there.

Yeah, we actually bike around the neighborhood now, and so we have biked past it and I try to imagine it in its glory days.

It has potential.

My husband being so particular, I'm sure it was great, but it's not great right now.

So it still hasn't turned?

Not quite. There's still pockets. There's still great little homes in there.

Yeah, there's some great homes.

And there's nicer streets. The actual street of Glen Heather is probably the worst of the whole neighborhood. I still think it has potential; it's just a little ways off.

Yeah. I mean there's so few of these types of neighborhoods that it inevitably you would assume that people with a desire to live in an actual neighborhood but close to downtown that it's going to turn, but just not quite quick enough. And the homes are a little smaller, which isn't always a bad thing, but it makes it, for a family of any more than four, pretty difficult to live comfortably.

So the size of houses there is smaller, more cottage-like?

A little smaller than McNeil. I mean if you looked at the different neighborhoods like Scotch 80s, McNeil, Rancho Circle, Rancho Nevada, there's kind of a pecking order, if you will, when it comes to size, in my opinion. Scotch 80s, obviously most everything in there is half acre or at least an acre, bigger homes. Then you kind of come over to McNeil and they're quarter acre average, maybe a third, except for Ashby. Then, of course, Rancho Circle, they're beautiful and gated, etcetera, Rancho Nevada. I think Glen Heather would be at the bottom of the pecking order.

And you mentioned Ashby.

Ashby is one street over and it runs east and west. It's just the first street south of Charleston. All of the homes on Ashby are—I say all of them; I'd say 90 percent—some of them have split their properties, but are one-acre properties. Then you get to the other side of the street is a third of an acre and then most everything else is about a quarter acre in here. And I still would love maybe someday to be on Ashby. This was just a neat opportunity with a burnt down house and an opportunity to build.

Yeah, to start from scratch in a neighborhood this old, it would normally be—you'd be buying a livable house and then tearing it to the ground. So it was pretty unique.

But I've heard the maintenance and the water bills and things like that on an acre could be quite high. So maybe it's better off that I'm not.

Yeah, we got sticker shock just coming here with the pool.

Versus Summerlin.

Yeah, because those are all super energy efficient and about two inches of grass. It was different.

It is different.

But it's all trade-offs.

You said something about this house was burnt down.

Correct.

Let's talk about what the house was like and that project.

Sure. So I work right down the street. So you know where the old Holsum Bread building is?

Yes.

So our office (is there)...I was the first person to sign a lease when Jeff LaPour rehabbed that

project because, again, I wanted to put my money where my mouth was if I ever had the opportunity, had my own business that I was going to be Downtown Arts District.

It was well before that was the cool thing to do.

That was, well, ten years ago when I signed a lease and then we were in about a year after that. So we've been in that space for nine years. Occasionally I would drive through the neighborhoods either on the way back home to Summerlin or just maybe at lunchtime depending on where I went to lunch; drive through this neighborhood.

Did you find it first or did Lee?

I found it. No, I was the one who found it. There was a chain-link fence around it, a burnt down house.

Plywood covering the front entrance.

Plywood covering the windows and things like that. So I just called the number and started looking at it and snuck through the fence and started walking it. From the exterior you would think absolutely what a nightmare and nobody was going to (live here)—I think it sat empty for maybe a year and a half, two years.

It went through two owners. The person we bought it from wasn't the person that owned it when burned down, right?

So it was a mess. I mean the house was a mess. Really just a tear-down. Why did we even save the foundation in hindsight? But still I'm happy we did. What happened was... There are all the different stories that I've heard. There's several theories. One is that it was a meth lab and the meth lab blew up.

Because (the house) exploded. It didn't just start on fire. It actually exploded.

That would be suspicious, yes.

I also heard that the owner of the home was renting it and the renters kept asking them to fix certain things—hey, this needs attention, and he would ignore them. And I guess the renter was upset and said, hey, if you don't do these things I'm going to burn your house down. So that's the second theory I've heard. Then the third theory I've heard was that the renter lived with his elderly mother who had an oxygen tank and the oxygen tank blew up. But the fire was right around the bathroom in the front area here. From what I've heard from the neighbors and read some news things, like some clips, the air conditioner actually blew off the roof and landed across the street in somebody's backyard. It was that loud of an explosion where it shook people's windows. I don't know if it broke any windows or not. So then it sat empty.

Then I believe the owner of the house—again, this is all information word-of-mouth here... He had a second mortgage on it. Of course, at this time I think it was underwater. So when the insurance wrote him a check, they didn't realize he had a second mortgage. So they paid off his first, wrote him a check for the difference and he walked with it. So there was the gentleman that came in—

A very upstanding citizen.

So the gentleman that came in, he was a fire and water renovation expert. After a fire they come in and clean up. Then, of course, it had asbestos in the ceiling. Then they had to asbestos abatement. He had done probably twenty-thousand dollars' worth of work just to get the asbestos out, etcetera. And the bank probably just said, hey, we don't want it; we owe you money; you probably have a lien on it; it's yours. He was going to build a house. He had plans; I saw them. He was going to build a house for his son or maybe two children that were going into med school. And he thought, hey, I will redo this house; I will build it up and they can live here, go to school over at UMC, the School of Medicine. They ended up going to—is it Touro?

The medical school out on the east side of town. So they ended up going to that medical school, so this wasn't going to work. So we bought it from him and started the process.

So did that owner ever live in the house at all?

No, no, no. It was a vacant—

Just an investment.

No. People around the neighborhood—it was an eye sore for three-plus years, I think. The city was ready to have me tear it down. It was a challenging—

Did he live in the neighborhood?

Nope, nope.

Yeah, we had to—I mean you really did something—

As soon as I bought it there was already a judgment against the house and they were ready to tear it down. And I was like, wait, just give me a chance; I've just started the design process. That took about six months. Then it took us—the financing...because they thought we were overbuilding in the neighborhood. So the first group that we were talking to everything was a go, everything was a fine. And then at the last minute, we think that you're building too much for the neighborhood, so we're not going to do it.

How did you convince them otherwise?

I didn't. I went somewhere else. It's a different type of loan product. I can't even remember if it's a 1031. I don't even remember the name of it. But it was basically a renovation loan. But the key to that loan is you had to have owned the house for more than six months.

So the silver lining was—

By the time all this all happened, it all worked out. And so it was more of a renovation construction loan. Even though it was basically a brand-new house, it was technically a

renovation.

Yeah, we signed the papers, the final loan papers to get everything cleared the morning that our daughter was born.

Oh, wow.

Yeah, it was because I was on the phone with my office just telling them don't put me on maternity leave. Then it would have changed income, which would have started things again. ...

That was good timing.

Yeah, right?

So what about the original house—I mean obviously most of it was gone—were you able to salvage? How did you approach the historic roots of the house?

We had planned on saving probably more of the house than we ended up saving.

Well, it was nice because the architect that we worked with who is a personal friend of ours, too, he was very committed to the theoretical idea of trying to keep historical accuracy. There were times he went to the extent that he wanted to even only use materials that were available in—was it 1960 or '61?

The original house was built in 1960.

So we worked with somebody that had probably even more of a commitment than we did.

Well, I had talked to a couple of different, even, builders and they just weren't on the same page as far as the vision. They were in a mindset of, okay, how do you get as much square foot out of the footprint, how do you do it for as little as possible, and how do you make it make sense from a financial perspective? And I said, no, no, you're kind of missing it; I know it's not as efficient as it could be, but we've created interior/exterior living space. We've created some design elements that we wanted even at the cost of, well, gee, my cost per square foot just went up. So

we finally landed on an architect we always knew we were going for, Trinity Haven Development. Trinity Schlottman is his name. He had built Urban Lofts downtown. He had built Artifice and done a lot more commercial projects. It was during a slow time and I got lucky and he said, hey, I'll take on this project. So it was very collaborative between the builder, the architect and myself.

So how do you find an architect? I understand that you respected his resume, but that it creates this sort of sense of history, yet, it's more modern.

We always wanted—personally we knew we were never going to come in here and build a two-story box in the middle of a ranch neighborhood. And I've always been attracted—Herman Miller is my furniture dealership that we own. So being exposed to a lot of the midcentury modern greats—Eames and Nelson, and then Craig really—Craig, the architect, Craig Palacios was really attracted to the idea because at least he understood he had a client on his hands that also appreciated those types of things. So it worked out really, really well. There was never really any disagreement or difference of design. And he was very collaborative. I can't say enough good things about Craig because while he always added value, he still really worked hard to get my vision out and kind of mix with his vision, as well.

And Shanna, when you think about the Summerlin living compared to moving—going from the suburbs into inner Las Vegas, did you have any feelings?

It's an interesting question because I don't think there was ever any major concern about safety.

However, we were for a period of time—the neighborhood has a Facebook page—and so we were watching the Facebook page and it was almost like a witch hunt sometimes.

I wouldn't go that far.

No. There was crime being posted—

It just emphasized the crime that was happening, which is very prevalent because it was on the middle of the Facebook page. So-and-so got broken into. We saw somebody driving—
No, but I also think there were a lot of suspicious things posted that were probably nothing, so much so that when we moved here, part of the gate that you saw when we walked in, that was intentional so that no one could actually come up to our front door. Yes, we didn't want to put shades and things in the front. So there was that buffer. So it was security reasons, as well. We made sure that our dog was going to bark. We have security cameras. We made these efforts. I'm happy we did all of them, but I also think that we might have overdone some of it just outside of fear of living—at least from what we were hearing from some of that. Even when we moved in at first, there was one time when there was, I thought, a shady van parked out in front of the house for a day and it was the neighbor. So I got the same mindset going on.

No, I mean I knew it was going to be different, but it was something that was—I mean as I was sharing with you before we started this portion of the interview, it was important for us to have our kids growing up in an area where they had a lot of diversity and there was just more of a sense of community. In the six, seven months that we've been here, I think neighbors have reached out more to us than in the ten years that Ian was in the other neighborhood.

I knew my neighbors in Summerlin and still they're great people, great people. It was just I think different places in different people's lives. I think we were surrounded in my old home...I had a retired cop next door, another retired person from electronics business next door on the other side, I had a retired doctor across the street.

Yeah, everyone was retired.

There were no little kids.

But people also, I think, consciously live in neighborhoods like this. We mentioned earlier the

block party that they have every year. I mean there is a concerted effort for community down here.

There's a pride. There's a lot of pride.

Yeah, and don't get me wrong; it's not that people in Summerlin don't want community or don't value that, but there is less of an effort put, I think, than down here.

I believe it's surrounding ourselves or at least being closer to people that are like-minded or at least have similar values. And it's not so much values on a moral scale; it's just we value travel, we value experience, we value the arts, we value people. And I'm not saying this about Summerlin because it's not. We still have great friends there, lots of them. We still go out there all the time. I say all the time—on occasion. But seeing the parade of—we lived right near a school out in Summerlin and seeing the parade of soccer moms in these big SUVs and this insulated life of pulling in their garages and you never see anybody out on the front porches. *No, that's a good—calling it an insulated life. And people sought it out on purpose. But it's not what we wanted.*

Oh, yeah. Parks. Boy, we lived on a park and it was beautiful. Nice people and friendly people. The park down here is not as clean.

Oh, yeah, I pick up broken bottles every time I'm there.

But we're close to downtown. We're close to my office. I save about six 40-hour work weeks every year by not having to take that commute.

Wow. You did the numbers on that.

Oh, sure, sure.

Work weeks or workdays?

Six 40-hour work weeks. So I'm not receiving six weeks; I'm receiving 40 hours a week, six

weeks of drive time.

That's significant.

It is.

Huge.

I mean that's six extra weeks of work. I could either be more productive at work. I could spend more time with the family. I'm here today for lunch. It takes me three minutes to get home. So yeah, there's some huge benefits to being close.

I was going to say, too, we were talking about—and it has nothing to do with the people, but just the architecture. Something that is so unique about these neighborhoods is—and I didn't realize how unique it was until I moved away from the Midwest. But no two houses look the same.

Now, in Summerlin almost every neighborhood there's like five plans and you pick which one.

So when you're talking to other people, it's, oh, yeah, I live on the fourth house from the park or I have something in my window that might be unique.

We used to know people because we'd meet them in the park in Summerlin and you'd get to know them by their pets on their children. Oh, you're the lady with the—

Yes, yes.

In this neighborhood it's, oh, you live in the pink house on the corner. So you actually start identifying people with where they live.

Oh, you're the one with the tennis court.

A different sense of identity.

Sure, sure.

So let's talk a little bit about the people because one of the questions is that sense of isolation that you do get in a suburban constructed, gated, quote, unquote, communities

that are there. But here who are your neighbors?

So we just happen to be surrounded by attorneys. So next door Trevor is an attorney and I think he just started his own practice maybe a year or so ago. Kind of catty-corner that way, he's a defense attorney. And then next door on this side, she works for Snell & Wilmer; she's an attorney.

I'm going to note that you're pointing towards the back of the house. So you know your backyard neighbors.

Oh, sure.

All right, good.

Those are the three that actual touch our walls. And then across the street across from Strong, I believe he's a retired district attorney.

I think you're right, yeah.

And then the house to the north of us is vacant. It's been vacant for a while. He used to be, I think, dental implant or kind of made, I don't know, teeth or something. But they kind of short sold and then they came in and remodeled it and it's up for sale now. And then catty-corner across Strong and Mason, a new couple just moved in.

He works for the state.

He works for the state; that's true. They just moved in within a month ago. And she used to be in real estate, I believe. She's actually writing a book right now and it's called *The Front Porch People* and it's about this neighborhood.

Oh, really?

Yeah. So she has been—and this is again, from the few conversations I've had with her in the last few weeks here, she had been searching this neighborhood; I mean literally driving, stalking

up and down the streets looking for places to live. When they found this place, it sold in less a week, I believe, and they moved in and they couldn't be happier.

What's her name?

Susan?

Oh, gosh, I don't know.

We'll think of that. That would be something we should definitely talk to her.

I don't know how far along she is. So the idea is that—

She might find this interesting.

Well, it is because the whole idea about her book is the people that are actually in front of their homes and not just in their back.

She gave us the two rocking chairs that you saw out front. We pull them in because they'll probably get taken.

That would happen anywhere.

She bought new rocking chairs and gave us those two.

But there's some really neat people. So James and Stacy Reza, they own Globe Salon downtown. He's the ask-a-native.

They live where?

Just down Strong about three or four houses.

It's the house that has like all the Dr. Seuss-type trees in the front. Right at the edge of Ashby.

Across from them on Ashby—oh, I can't remember her name—Hammargren.

Oh, Lonnie, yeah.

His daughter lives down there. There's a lot of artists. When I say artists—

Oh, Absinthe, the couple that made the show Absinthe.

You know the show Absinthe on the Strip?

The Gazillionaire and Penny, they live down the road.

They live around the corner. Moss, who owns two of the most iconic bars in Las Vegas, the Double Down Saloon and Frankie's Tiki Bar [Room], lives two doors down.

Did you see a green house when you were driving up?

Yes.

Yeah, that's his.

Who else? Down on the corner I think he works for the Blue Man Group.

Oh, at the end, yeah, the end of Mason and Rancho.

There's really some interesting people.

But you know who you are and you know what they do and that's interesting because that doesn't always happen.

No, no. And that's just from meeting them. And they have unique positions. Like one of my competitors in business lives one street over on Burton. Who else do we know in the neighborhood?

Well, when we first came in almost ten people brought us cookies and banana bread and were very welcoming in that way.

That's a different thing.

So when you have the block party, is it more than just your block? Tell me more about that celebration.

It's McNeil and I believe it's the fifth or sixth annual.

Yeah, fifth annual and it's at basically Cahlan and Mason. It's on Cahlan between Mason and Ashby; they shut down that portion of the street. But it's going to be everybody basically from—

I think Councilwoman Lois Tarkanian.

Yeah, she sponsored it.

I think usually the mayors come by in the past because he's over in Scotch 80s—or she, ex-mayor.

She now.

Yeah, yeah.

But it's Oakey and Charleston and then Campbell and Rancho. So everybody from that.

That really defines McNeil, Campbell.

So it's a neighborhood...

It's a McNeil block party.

What do you do? What happens?

They've got a little jumpy gym for the kids. The fire trucks come. They have a barbeque, a chili cook-off. They have a talent show.

A silent auction.

You know who else is in here? It's Nate Tannenbaum, that weather guy. I think he's in our neighborhood because he's always been the moderator of the talent show, at least last year he was.

Oh, that's right, yeah. So this will be our third year.

We went during the process, once we bought the property, because I actually went to one of the homeowners association meetings to let everybody know: hey, I bought that property, here are the construction plans, here are the architectural plans if you want to see them, just to hopefully get less complaints to the city that, hey, I'm a respectable person and I do what I say I'm going to do and we'll follow through, so please be patient.

Yeah, that was a smart move.

Are there any people that you have met that have been here for decades?

Oh, sure.

Oh, yeah. Well, right across the street, they've been here for 25 years.

Okay, so they are long-term residents.

There's a judge that's down in lower McNeil. I think he's still a judge; I'm not sure.

We met that couple on Sunday morning that have been here since '65.

The couple we met Sunday and they said his parents built the house and they've been there since 1965. So it's a real mix. And then I have some architect friends that are saying, oh, my friends just bought the house further down. So I think you're seeing a transformation or a transition right now. It was built in '54 next door, '55. This was '60. So people that might have been in their twenties or thirties at that time are now getting towards their eighties, eighties or even above. So I think that you're seeing some transition take place.

And a number of—and I don't know how many. But we've met a number of people who grew up here, grew up in such-and-such house and then later got married and moved back into the neighborhood, too.

Why did they do that, do you think?

I think back in the day—from what I understand—this is a very humble neighborhood. We're not talking about the Country Club or The Ridges or anything. But I think back in the day this was a nice area and a lot of the doctors and attorneys that worked downtown or at UMC lived in this neighborhood. I won't say affluent neighborhood, but just a nice, solid, middle-class neighborhood. So I know the Mathis, Tiberti families that still live in the neighborhood; they're on Ashby. They used to have the house a couple doors down. I think there's a couple of the kids

that live in the neighborhood. The same thing happened in Phoenix.

It's so friendly. I mean that's why I love it here because I grew up with that (similar feeling).

It's a scarce commodity because there's not a lot of this type of property available in Las Vegas this close to downtown; that's what it comes down to, I think. Because everybody that comes and visits us, I mean friends from the south Strip to Summerlin, they start immediately looking.

Yeah, that's happened to like seven or eight couples.

We're looking in your neighborhood.

Well, do you see yourself as some sort of pioneer in that?

No, no, not at all. No, not at all. No.

[All laughing]

I'm torn on that because do I believe that we have a little bit of a vision of what we want and what we like and do I believe in—I believe in what I like so much that I think that eventually it will carry on. Now, sometimes I've been way too far ahead of the curve. In this case I think we're just part of the group.

We're just that cool.

No, no. We're in the curve and there's other people that are moving down here. So I don't see us as pioneers. We've just chosen this lifestyle versus Summerlin. I don't expect people to follow.

I wouldn't care if people followed or not.

No, I don't think a lot of people know that I lived here for three and a half years before I even knew this existed. I think because everybody is used to the master planned communities and that's so common in Vegas—before I moved to Vegas I had no idea what a master planned community was. And I always use the example that it's like Pleasantville because honestly that's what I had always seen about a master—

Pleasantville, the movie?

The movie. Because I had never seen this concept of a master planned community coming from the Midwest. So then we came out here. I think there's a lot of people that just immediately will move to Green Valley or Henderson or Summerlin or one of these places and for a very good reason and they don't even know that places like this exist. So I guess the one good thing is we're fairly social people and so we know a lot of people and we have parties and do a lot of community stuff. But we know a lot of people. They come down to the house and they're exposed to something that they just had no idea existed at all.

In the sense of where the neighborhood is positioned, where do you go to shop for groceries and that type of thing?

Smiths, which is 150 yards away. You can bike there.

On Rancho and Charleston.

I go to the Trader Joe's.

It has something to be desired. I think that that little complex there could be upgraded.

The grocery store is great; it's just getting into the grocery. I'm asked for change. Most trips I'll have my two kids and they're asking me if I have any spare change. But that's just part of living in a city.

Well, I have to say that one of the very first interviews that I personally did was in Scotch 80s. We needed to make a stop because the person I was with wanted something to eat. So immediately, I barely got out of the car and somebody was asking if I would buy them some tacos. He didn't ask for money; he said would you buy me tacos? And I said, okay, I will buy you tacos. I don't experience that out where I live in Henderson.

No, that's common.

And I bought him specific tacos that he needed and I did it happily. But that was really a different experience.

So you're definitely exposed to it. But at the same time that's real. I was a minority at my high school.

How's that?

Being white. This is in Phoenix.

A white minority in Phoenix.

Yes, because the school was predominately Hispanic and black.

They rezoned.

Oh, that's right because you said it was more in the older part of Phoenix.

What they did was they desegregated all the high schools. So they made the districts very long and skinny. So they went all the way down south to South Mountain in Phoenix all the way up north.

My parents are there now. But the district was between Seventh Street and 20th Street and it went from all the way up to like Northern Ave. all the way down to like Baseline Rd. almost. So I lived closer to Central; I lived closer to Camelback. I lived closer to two other schools, but I had to go all the way down to North High School, which is no longer north; it was further south. The point is I remember having friends growing up that went to private school or different schools and just had never been exposed. Well, gee, I didn't have African American friends or Hispanic friends. It was so insulated that we would go out to a party or a situation like Smiths where you had the tacos and they would be petrified or they just didn't know what to do. It was like, guys, they're just people like everybody else is; it's just that you've never had a chance to interact with them. But the fear level was probably as high on both sides; higher than

they really needed to be.

So anyway, we wanted our kids to make sure that not everybody drives a brand-new SUV. When they get into high school, not everybody gets bought a brand-new car at sixteen. In fact, that's the extreme minority. So even if you have money, I mean make sure that you realize that there's another side of this town and you need to be conscious of it and appreciate the things that you do have versus just trying to keep up with the Joneses, so to speak.

Well, that's something that brings up a whole different point in the discussion. But until I moved to Las Vegas I was never very cognizant of people's wealth; like it just wasn't even on my radar and I never valued anybody or looked at them any differently because they had this job or that job or this house or that house. It just wasn't even relevant. And for whatever reason—and I don't know if it's kind of the glamor side of Las Vegas and the limos and the Strip and the casinos—I don't know what it is and I haven't been able to put my finger on it, but it immediately became apparent and it was something where we were—and maybe part of it is that it is a big small town and we are friends with people that just sold their business for ten million dollars, things that in normal situations you might not even be on the same wavelength. But because it's a big small town and we knew this and so we found ourselves almost comparing sometimes and not necessarily feeling like we had made it as much, just putting so much importance and value on that. I caught myself doing it all the time.

To Ian's point, we felt like if we stayed in that part of town it was going to be that much harder for us to show our kids balance. When even 75 percent or 50 percent of the kids are way above the norm, it's that much harder for your own children to feel like they fit in and that they're valuing the right things and the appropriate things. It might not even be an issue in another city, but it was, for me anyway, a very big part of being in Vegas and wanting to make

that move; that there was just different things people valued and that that wasn't much of an issue.

And this is a new city. That's one of the wonderful parts of our work—that it is a new city and we can capture the history of it before it really totally disappears, if we keep moving fast enough. What do you know about the schools that your children will go to?

Oh, that's the million-dollar question.

So our kids are only three-and-a-half and the other is 15 months old.

Oh, no, next year our son, in the fall, has to go someplace.

So next fall Ryder will be going into pre-K. So we actually started searching probably six to nine months ago.

We have him in a little program at Tivoli Village; I mean it's a play group more than anything.

So we interviewed the principal at Wasden Elementary School, which is a beautiful school and I really like it. It's the public school that he would go to if he goes to public school. The campus is great. I think it was one of the first elementary or one of the oldest elementary schools still around. Beautiful gymnasium. You just don't see hardwood floor interior.

With like the raised stage and the velvet (curtains)...

It's neat. So I love it and it's close; it's right down the street. However, I think it was something like 50 percent or more of the children are not reading to their grade level, are behind and not proficient in math or science at their grade levels. So it wasn't about, oh, gee, I don't want him hanging out with a demographic; it was do we really want his friends—even if our expectation was that he would be in the top five percent of the class if he goes to public school, but if he's hanging around people that really aren't even reading to their grade level, is that really the best environment for him to excel? And then is that the group of kids that I want him hanging out for

social reasons later in life? It's unfortunate because I think a big part of where they go to school is just who do you want them associating with? And then later in life—I mean look around Las Vegas today and you talk to a lot of the kids; we all went to Gorman together; we all went to Meadows together. These were the kids that probably came from affluent families growing up that are now my age or maybe even a little younger. But they're all well connected because of where their friends are at in the city and they're the ones that are making things happen today, which is a great thing for them.

So that's been our challenge. I was a public school kid. I don't have anything against public schools. But we are challenged. Most of our friends, their kids in Summerlin are going to [Alexander] Dawson School.

Day School.

We have friends in Day School. Then there's Tony Hsieh—I say Tony Hsieh's—but Downtown Project's new 9th Bridge School. We really love the curriculum. It's not inexpensive for any of those options.

None of them, yeah.

So where they're going to school? I think right now we're probably leaning towards either Day School or 9th Bridge. Is that correct?

Or potentially there's a Catholic school, pre-K through eighth.

Oh, Our Lady of Las Vegas.

We're not Catholic. We have some good friends—she grew up here and went to school there and is now a doctor and she knows some teachers. They said that at least the pre-K and kindergarten are great. And I like the fact that I could actually walk them to school. It's a tough dichotomy because we believe in this neighborhood and you know all the reasons that we wanted

to move down here, but they're our kids and there's only so far that I'm willing to take kind of this urban push that we're doing. We'll get in the middle of it. But the school is a tough break where how much are we willing to push on that level versus just spending the money and putting them in a private school and giving them every advantage that we can there?

And you may be really describing something that isn't just a neighborhood issue as much as a Las Vegas issue.

Absolutely. There's no in between in Las Vegas.

Right. Our daughter went to public high school here. I only moved here because there was a really good public high school, culturally balanced and all of that. So I know exactly your dilemma because you're working with little ones just starting out.

Right. There's nothing in between. There's either private school that's very expensive private school—and I happen to have friends in different cities around the country and you talk to them and they say, oh, no, our private, the cost of their private school, which is not much better than even the public schools there, but half of what there are here.

Or more, yeah. I mean they can command that because people will pay it and there's not a lot of other alternatives.

Yeah, it's too bad.

So we don't know yet.

Get back to us in two years and we'll know.

Well, maybe things will change. We can only hope.

We like the 9th Bridge School. Day School is probably at—I would say 9th Bridge, then Our Lady, then Day School, at least where it is right now. But we've got another six months before we need to decide.

Well, hopefully that will change for everybody because it would be good for the whole community to have that.

So the Strip isn't far. Do you go to the Strip for your entertainment or where do you go?

We do sometimes.

Sometimes. And it is nice having it that close. Where did we go recently? But every once in a while it calls for something on the Strip. Actually Chris Petrick from Bretford is in town tonight. So if I were to go meet him, he's down at the Venetian and it's five minutes away.

We're downtown more than anything.

We're downtown most of the time.

Okay, talk about that. Talk about your entertainment, where you go as a young couple for fun.

Well, we have two little kids, so this is it.

With or without the kids.

We have our cocktails on the back porch.

A lot of times I would say it's other friends' homes or here. As soon as you get into that age group of kids, families with kids—

Yes, yes, I know.

—it's the easiest. When we do go out, I mean sometimes there's a function and I think we have some friends from Summerlin actually that we're going to go to the Discovery Children's Museum's gala.

But that's back up in Red Rock this year. It used to be MGM. We have tickets to the Broadway series at Smith Center.

Smith Center, we love to go to the Smith Center.

That's great.

Fremont Street, while I like a lot of the places and the bars, never on First Friday anymore. It's just a different age group, I think. We love going to Casa Don Juan on Main Street. So the downtown area, Herbs and Rye. I mean there's some neat little hidden gems that are kind of in this area.

Now, these are restaurants?

Restaurants, bars.

Yeah. Herbs and Rye is up on Sahara. When I go in, anyway, I feel it's one—it just feels almost like a Triple George atmosphere where it's the cozy booths and you'd think that like Frank Sinatra was sitting next to you. It's just kind of cozy and older.

It used to be the old Venetian where actually the Rat Pack used to hang out. It was the Venetian Restaurant, not the Venetian Hotel.

Yes, okay.

That's where Herbs and Rye is now.

So Herbs and Rye is there. We go to Tacos El Gordo on Friday night.

I love tacos El Gordo. It's on East Charleston.

We try to do traditions with the kids.

Authentic tacos.

Well, you said that was your favorite, right?

I love Mexican food, yeah.

So they have tacos al pastor. So we'll go down there and then hit up ice cream after that.

Love over on Oakey. But we definitely hit the Strip on occasion. People always come to visit

you and we always meet them down on the Strip. The restaurants are, of course, overpriced. They're still great restaurants; they're just not great values.

Oh, we're going there next weekend. Ian bid on a silent auction.

Silent auction, Rock of Ages. So we'll go do those things.

One of the things I love about Vegas is when you want the best of the restaurants, nightlife, entertainment, it's one of the best places in the world for it, if not the best. There's so many in such a condensed area. It's nice that it's a ten-minute drive. It's less than a twenty-dollar cab ride, eleven- to fifteen-dollar cab ride that we can be right there, either the Strip or downtown. Things are accessible in Las Vegas.

When you live here?

No, I would say in general.

In general they are. But here, very easy.

You've got world class restaurants, entertainment, 24 hours a day. Even bars and restaurants that are off the Strip are typically open because they cater to a three-shift or four-shift type of town. Even beyond that we love to snowboard and ski and things like that. So Mammoth is five hours away. Not a lot of people from Vegas go to Mammoth, but it's a beautiful drive and it's as close—most of the people are from L.A. or San Diego, Southern Utah. It's a one-hour flight to San Diego, to L.A., to Phoenix, to Salt Lake City, to San Francisco. You can get a lot of places easily from here.

And I love that about Vegas.

So if you moved—I know you just moved here—but if you moved you'd like to stay in this vicinity, is that what I'm understanding?

If I moved and stayed in Las Vegas, yes. If I moved out of Las Vegas, who knows where?

Right, right, right.

But yes, regardless of—if we're in Las Vegas, it will be somewhere in this neighborhood, preferably—I've always loved Rancho Circle. I don't know if it's less than 50 homes. It's pretty small. But they're larger properties. I would love to live in there, even Scotch 80s.

This was definitely a learning experience for me, this house. I never thought this was going to be the end all, our last home. I thought that, hey, this was a great learning experience to build a home. But that next home that I build, maybe that will be the final home.

I could see us being here—when we built this—you said earlier how it might not be as efficient as some of these other homes. I think that this is about as efficient as it can get. We use every room every day. It is a good size for a family of four. If we had a little more space, I'm sure we'd figure out how to use it. But we also didn't want to overbuild and have all these rooms that people don't use, like formal dining rooms and these things that are so common in homes that are just not a good use of space. But with the kids it was important that we had—and it's not a huge backyard—but we had a backyard. We had a pool. We wanted it to be an environment where our kids' friends wanted to be here and you can kind of keep an eye on them because everyone wants to be at your house. So I think the only way that I would move to another house in Vegas from here would be if we could even create a better indoor and outdoor experience so that it would be that much more motivate, potentially like a game room and a whole thing. But I want the kids around; I don't want them in other families' homes. I want them here as much as we can.

Are there any other amenities that this neighborhood has or doesn't have that you wish or see that it will come?

You definitely realize shopping. Besides the one Smiths, yes, there's a Trader Joe's that's on

Decatur in between Sahara and Oakey there. But the amount of retail that was in Summerlin and nice retail—Boca Park was not too far, but surprisingly from where we were close to The Ridges, it was actually almost the midpoint between here and there. It's the perception of things in Summerlin.

It is perception, yes.

But besides the Smiths and whatever little shops are in that center, it's kind of spotty. There's not a lot—

You can get to Fashion Show.

That's true. There's not a nice Target or something.

But it's good because I just don't buy as much crap now because I'm not around those places.

But parks, I do miss the parks in Summerlin. They were well manicured and always clean and great. The one that we have is nice, but the grass is dying out in certain areas. It gets too much use. People leave trash and they're not as respectful as I would like them to be. So parks and shopping I think and even groceries—I know that's a big thing for downtown, as well. There's no grocery stores.

We tried to do grocery delivery and it's underwhelming so far. But no, I mean we have the Smiths. We have the Trader Joe's. I will go out to Summerlin usually once a month, maybe twice to Costco and kind of load up on frozen fish and chicken and stuff. So we make it work. It's a very minor inconvenience for the ability to be down here. You deal with it. I don't think it's that big of a deal.

So do you have any crazy stories about the transition, building the house or moving into this neighborhood?

We blocked them all out.

No. Besides the typical things that anybody deals with when building a home, always double your time frame and double your budget; that was true with us, as well. The only other interesting part was I did have some neighbors that were really complaining about the house not moving forward. So I had to actually write the city a check for the amount that it would cost them to tear it down and they would hold it and if I did not keep my promise and start construction and pull permits by a certain day, then they would use my money and tear the house down. Because it just had been—again, the previous owner before my time—

They can do that?

Oh, sure, sure.

Talking with the city council and trying to explain to them that, hey, I'm for real; I'm not some investor or something and I'm planning on living in this home. It wasn't the neighbors' fault; it was just that they had been looking at this eye sore for years and if nothing was going to happen the city was eventually going to say, hey, it's a safety issue and we're going to tear it down.

You were good about keeping a lot of that so nice.

So that was probably the biggest challenge was just dealing with the city, dealing with a little bit of bureaucracy. Everybody was very friendly and nice, but it was still a challenge. They weren't just going to take my word for it that I was going to do what I said I was going to do. They don't know who I am.

What was that experience like, to go before city council?

I guess it was more talking to some city council members.

Oh, you didn't have to go before the whole—

No, no, no. Luckily I knew enough people that kind of knew people that could vouch for me.

Didn't Frank—

No, no. It was Trinity.

Oh, Trinity, the builder.

But yeah, that was probably the biggest challenge and frustration about, gosh, why don't people believe that I'm going to do what I say I'm going to do?

That track record was there against you.

Well, not because of me, but against this property.

Just in general, yeah.

Other than that—we had a beautiful statute that was in the pool.

She keeps coming up on the screen. I keep seeing her.

I say beautiful. I take that back. It was unique. It was fun.

It was a topless mermaid.

It was a little topless mermaid that held a vase.

A snake or something.

It was a vase and it would squirt water into the pool. But it was so fifties, sixties classic.

It was so cool.

So that was one of the one things that we wanted to save for the house. Somehow we would have integrated it, put it in a garden or something. But it was stolen during construction. We have pictures of it.

Well, now that we have the pictures I kind of—because I feel like it probably had to have been somebody around here. So I want to take the pictures and post missing signs up in the neighborhood and see if someone—

Have you seen this mermaid?

Yes, because I really want her back.

Oh, that's fascinating.

I've seen her come up on the screen a few times.

How big was she?

Maybe knee high, just a little—

Like a pool sculpture, like a little water feature in the pool.

But it actually squirted the water?

It squirted water into the pool. The pool was empty. I assumed it used to work. We just thought, hey, that would be fun. We can just save a few things from the original house.

Were you able to save anything other than the footprint?

We kept the pool. We added a pool deck.

Okay, so that's the original pool.

Except that we re-plastered it, added a swim deck, took out the diving board for safety issues.

But the fireplace and the chimney. We had to raise it up higher, but it's the original fireplace.

We kept the brick wall, added to it, but kept the brick wall.

Other than that—even the plumbing, we jackhammered out the plumbing and put all new plumbing to the street.

Well, that makes sense.

Besides the concrete underneath our feet, it's a brand-new house.

Anything else you want to share with me?

I feel like we've been rambling.

No, you haven't.

Just that we really—I was always torn—I won't say torn—I was always resistant to accept Las

Vegas for my home. Even the first ten years I lived here, no, I'm not from Las Vegas; I'm from Phoenix. I'm from Phoenix. And everybody is that way in this town is that I'm from somewhere else. And I still consider Phoenix my home. I was born and raised; my family is still there. But you're almost afraid to grow roots here because I had had so many friends and relationships over the last 16, 17 years that I've been here that have moved on, moved back home when times were good or whatever reason they've left, they didn't like it. And I joke about it when I interview people at my business. Why are you here? What keeps you here? Because so many times, well, I followed my boyfriend, my girlfriend, whatever the case may be.

But it's not until recently that I feel like you have to—I guess the only reason I say it is hopefully to encourage other people, if anybody will ever read this, to allow yourself to grow roots like you'll be here forever. Regardless if you're going to be here forever, grow roots that you're going to be here forever.

Well, it's so unsettling if you feel like it's temporary.

Yeah, because you never take the time to invest; never take the time to invest in relationships and invest in the community, invest in all these other things. So invest like you're going to be here forever. Whether or not you do, that's beside the point. But it will lead to a more fulfilling life—
And it will really add to what Vegas is trying—the community—

All the things to complain about Vegas...you're either part of fixing the problem or you're part of the problem and sitting on the sidelines and whining about things is not going to change anything. I can't remember who said it. Everybody always quotes Gandhi, I think, that the change you want to see, it starts—you know what I'm talking about?

Yeah, it starts within you or something like that.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, something like that. So that's probably the only thing I would say is the things

that you believe in and then the vision that you have, go with it and enjoy Las Vegas because there's a lot more out there.

It seems like you both have done that through your business, as well as the house and where you're living and coming back to the core of the city that's new for you. That's part of the future of the community I would hope.

We found the things that we value and are trying to make the most out of. It doesn't have everything, but there's a lot of things—

There are a lot of worse places to live than Las Vegas, a lot of worse places.

When I first moved here I didn't like it. I couldn't wait to move.

When she first moved here, she said I'll give you two years. I'll give you two years and then we'll be moving. And now she's the one.

I mean there's a couple of places I would move to, but not a ton of them.

I have some additional opportunities to potentially expand our business and now she's the one saying we're not leaving.

Well, I'm not going to move to those places necessarily.

I really appreciate this a lot. Thank you so very, very much.

No problem.

[End of recorded interview]

APPENDIX



Before and after front exterior photos.





During construction.



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