

# An Interview with Mahlon Brown

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer and the Library Advisory Committee. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank the university for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases, photographic sources (housed separately) accompany the collection as slides or black and white photographs.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
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## Preface

Attorney Mahlon Brown begins by talking about his family. His dad was a senator for Nevada, his grandmother was an “amazing, strong, powerful, and insightful” woman, and his mother he describes as beautiful, well-read, and a music lover. He reminisces about his undergraduate days at Howard University and the job he held as a Capitol policeman during the sixties. This included guarding JFK’s casket.

Mahlon recalls many notable Nevadans that he knew personally, worked closely with, or came up against in meetings or trials. He shares many anecdotes and stories about his contact with Judge Foley, Ronald Pollock, Kenny Guinn, Father Vitali, and Earl White, to mention just a few. He also shares memories of women like Ruby Duncan, Mary Wesley and Maya Miller.

Attorney Brown describes the duties of the office of Justice of the Peace which he held for a few years, as well as some of the cases he and Jack Anderson handled when they worked in Legal Services. He also describes the poverty workshop he and Jack ran for three or four years, which gave welfare recipients a chance to air their opinions.

Mahlon shares his opinions, insights, and firsthand knowledge of the Mob, Howard Hughes, Mayor Oscar Goodman, Malcolm X, James Brown, integration on the Strip, and many other topics. His personal connections and lengthy history of working and living in Las Vegas make for knowledgeable and entertaining reading.

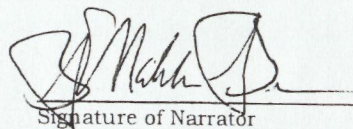
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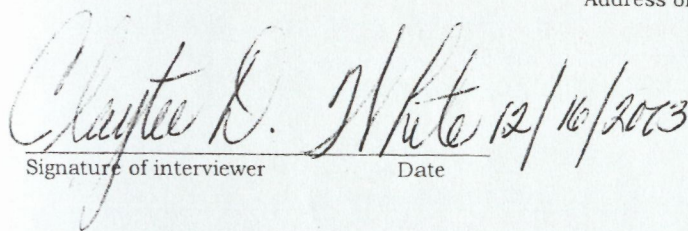
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*Interview conducted by Claytee White on December 16, 2003. Attorney Mahlon Brown began talking and since I could not stop him, I started the tape recorder in mid-sentence.*

He never said. Now, how much courage does it take not to abstain?

**A lot.**

I think it takes a lot. Unfortunately -- and I'm a liberal -- I find my liberal colleagues over the years abstained more than my conservative opponents. And my father was not a liberal. He would call himself middle-of-the-road. But from my perspective, he was pretty conservative. But that doesn't make him wrong. It doesn't make him a bad guy. He did a lot of good for this community. (Indiscernible.) But there are a lot of them. You talk to the accountants. The tax credit thing we got from the federal government, he's responsible, he and a couple of others, Richard Bryan helped. Richard was the young senator, and my dad was the old senator.

But those guys, the old guys that are still around, the Harry Reids and the Richard Bryans and the Bill Raggios and the rest of them, they all commented he was the guy to like. My father was the guy they looked to, to learn how a legislature is supposed to be run, like the meaning of integrity and those kinds of things. So I'm honored in that respect.

**How did he feel about you being a liberal?**

Oh, my father and I, we do not sit in the same boat all the time. I don't think liberal. He didn't think in terms of liberal or conservative. He thought in terms of his common sense and what was right and wrong and that kind of stuff. I know he was proud of me at the end and some of my accomplishments. That made him (indiscernible).

But I'd like to jump back if I may to my grandmother.

**Yes, please.**

My grandmother, after being a doctor, after being a nurse's aide (indiscernible), went into the Clark County Sheriff's Office in 1935, which was small -- the sheriff then was Dean Miller -- a small little office. And she ran it. She ran the civil center. I remember her badge. Her badge was number one. She had the number one badge. It said number one on it. And she ran that until the early 50s. And she ran it through a number of sheriffs. And then she's the one who gave Ralph Lamb -- he'll tell you that today -- gave him his first job. Lloyd Bell and some of the great law enforcement people in the past, she was responsible for their employment, like coming out of the

Korean War or wherever they were coming out of at the time. Those guys were coming out of Alamo and the Alamo Valley, I think. *[Editor's note: Alamo is 90 miles north of Las Vegas in Lincoln County, NV, in Pahranaagat Valley. It is one of the closest inhabited places to Area 51.]*

Anyway, she was also in 1954 the national committee woman for the Democratic Party, State of Nevada. And interestingly, coming from the South, with all the inbred, if you will, prejudices, as I went back and researched her for my own -- because she was my favorite relative, if you want to know. She was an amazing, strong, powerful and insightful white woman. And I looked at all the photographs she kept. Interestingly enough, all of the photographs -- not all of them, but clearly 75 percent of them are all her and black women in conferences, in discussions and newspaper pictures. And what I think it was, it was an awakening to her. She got here and began to realize that the people are people. All that black stuff she learned when she was a girl just went away.

**Did she ever discuss that?**

Not with me. I think she did with her friends. But she died in 1963, wasn't it? I have some of her old Christmas cards. I mean, she and Adlai Stevenson and Harriet Truman and all those kind of people with clout. Eleanor Roosevelt, when she was coming through Las Vegas, would stop only to see my grandmother. (Indiscernible.) They were pen pals. A lot of stuff between her and (indiscernible), letter writing. And good stuff.

**Did you save her letters?**

I have some stuff. Yeah, I'll find some stuff for you.

**Good.**

Anyway, she fell and broke her hip in Chicago at the national convention in (indiscernible). That made all the newspapers. She was an interesting lady and totally respected. When she walked down the street -- she broke that hip. That hip eventually killed her. But I remember lying in the hospital, and this was all numb. This whole hip was all wide open, right to the bone where they were operating. And she's telling them that she wants the line to look like this and (indiscernible) that. More tragedy. We're talking the 70s if you're a woman. Talking about some star on her leg. I don't know who's going to be attracted to her other than herself.

There were so many things about her. And she's kind of gotten forgotten in this whole

thing about history. I personally think she's the most important person in the family because she set the standards.

**Would you ever write a book about your family?**

Oh, probably if I sat down and found some time in between fly fishing and running my son's campaigns and things like that. There are some good stories about this. Somebody said once to me when I ran for attorney general in '81 or '82, "Just write a story about that campaign," because there were so many funny things. We were doomed to destruction that it was so funny as we went along the road.

**Are you going to tell those stories later on?**

Sure, I'll tell all those. I have no secrets.

**Okay, great.**

Because you wouldn't guess them anyway.

**Okay. Now, your grandmother and Eleanor Roosevelt -- did she ever meet Mary Mcleod Bethune?**

Don't know.

**She was a black woman who was a friend of --**

Oh, I know who she was. No. I know who she was. But I don't know if she ever did. When I was talking about black ladies in Las Vegas, they were all local black ladies who were in the Democratic Party. The salvation, if there was one, for black people in Clark County in those days -- and we're talking about the early 50s -- had to be in the Democratic Party. There was a dominating religion in town that discriminated against blacks. So there was no salvation with them. I think they've changed somewhat from those days. So they were just local ladies.

Anyway, I remember walking down the street with her with that cane. She had that cane the last few years of her life. I remember some policeman was giving her a ticket. She pointed that cane at him, and she said, "What do you think you're doing?" And he raised his hands, and he goes, "Nothing, Mrs. Brown, nothing," and just got the heck out of there.

**Now, that I consider power.**

That's power. But they all knew who she was.

**So going back to your father -- well, tell me a little bit about your mother, also.**

Good. Good for you. My mother was the brains in the family besides being an extremely -- in my opinion and I think everybody else's -- beautiful woman. And all over my house, oh, she (indiscernible). Extremely beautiful woman, educated, bright. Probably foolish to call my father (indiscernible). But well read. Read every book that was ever written. I mean, read every book. Read the classics. Read them all. I remember one time, speaking of how accomplished she was, there was a book on music, how to learn music. She read it quickly and started playing the piano just by reading the book.

**And had never had piano lessons?**

Never, never had them. I loved her dearly. She was my favorite of all favorites. My mother loved music. While she'd do the housekeeping with the vacuum cleaner, she'd turn -- whether it was Duke Ellington or Artie Shaw or whoever the heck it was, she'd turn it all the way up and then piddle through the house, vacuuming with this music going loud as can be. My father's never there. He's out playing golf or whatever he was doing. My father played a lot of golf and a lot of gin rummy.

She had a friend named Stella Arcali. She had a lot of friends. The ladies kind of gathered around her. She was kind of the queen bee. Most of them are dead. So what I'm saying doesn't matter. If there are some of them alive, they may resent that. But that's the truth. She was queen bee. Where were we?

**You were talking about your mother.**

Oh, and the music. And I remember the ladies all circled around her because she had judgment and understanding. If they wanted to know about politics or that sort of thing, they'd come to my mother to ask about it.

The music part of it, I was impressed with because she'd go out and see Duke Ellington. And Duke Ellington would stop right in the middle of one of his numbers. He'd stop the music and say, "Hello, Mrs. Brown. Come on in. Got your seat right here." And she and Stella would go sit there and listen to Duke Ellington -- whoever it was, whoever the entertainer was. They knew Ms. Lucille when she came.

She had all the music, all the books, and a great sense of humor. I remember probably one of the first dirty jokes I told to her.

**(End side 1, tape 1.)**

**(Blank side 2, tape 1.)**

Where we left off, I was talking about the Button decision, which is an NAACP case, U.S. versus Button or something like that. That United States Supreme Court case established that if lawyers are doing public service for eleemosynary purposes and not receiving pay, then they were permissive. And I brought that up at my hearing. They called me in. I had a hearing. They wanted to remove my license. The people there, they didn't give a damn what the Supreme Court said. I was still unauthorized. I was practicing improperly. They did not prosecute me or my gathering of attorneys. But that's one little story in that case.

The other story is another guy came in named Ronnie Pollock. Mike Trister was the head of the Civil Rights office in Jackson, Mississippi. When I came in, Ronnie Pollock, the last time I know, was being (indiscernible). But they came in. And so we're going through this hearing. There are so many fun stories. Remember when Pat Van Veton was in a meeting?

**Yes.**

She's part of this story. It was a Thursday. And all the files were sequestered in the clerk's office. Judge Foley says he wants briefs on this by Monday. And we were saying, "Judge, how can we do this? We don't have the funds." He says, "Here's a key to the courthouse." And I think there was a guard there. I don't think he even gave it to the guard. He just gave us the key to the clerk's office. And we went up there, the Pat Van Vetons and the Herman Van Vetons and the Ruby Duncans and the rest of us, just doing the grunt work while Ronnie Pollock, with a yellow pad like you've got in your hand, sat up on the counter of the clerk's office and started writing out of his head, not out of the law books. He already knew this stuff. And we're providing the factual information that we're getting out of the files and all the other stuff. He wrote a 125-page brief right there. Now, a lot of that was paper stuff. But all the law that was -- I mean, the names and stuff. But I'm guessing there were 35 to 40 pages of pure legal text that he was citing out of law books, the pages, the dates, the time.

**And give me his name once more.**

Ronald Pollock. In this world everybody knows who Ron Pollock is. Anyway, Ronnie Pollock. I think they had already been outdated around five years, but he was one of them.

Anyway, we're in front of Judge Foley. Richard Weisbart, he's a good guy, and he's representing the welfare department, and he's got his little bank of attorneys there. There's me and Jack Anderson and Ronnie Pollock representing these welfare people, the people who were on welfare -- who were off of welfare because of their behavior.

But anyway, so about 9 o'clock that morning -- those briefs all got into the judge. So this is the final day of argument. I don't remember what day it was. Mr. Weisbart asked about 9 o'clock in the morning, "Your Honor, he says that" -- and we were relying on the theory of Goldberg versus Kelly, a previous Supreme Court case that came out of the Supreme Court not a couple months before. He says, "Your Honor, I have a conference call coming in at 10 o'clock on the phone out in the hall with the attorneys in the Goldberg case. And they will tell us this issue was so on and so forth, and they will tell us what court was all about. And I'm asking your permission, your Honor" - this is the welfare department talking -- "to take a break at 10 o'clock. I can go out and have this conversation and bring back that argument." And the judge says, "Fine."

And he did that (indiscernible). He came in, gave that argument of what the lawyers in the Goldberg case had said. Foley, I cannot forget him. He's just kind of sitting back looking judicial with a big smile on his face. He says, "Are you done, Mr. Weisbart?" Mr. Weisbart says, "I'm done. Thank you, your Honor." He looked over to Mr. Pollock, and he says, "Mr. Pollock, I assume you have a response to this." And Mr. Pollock gets up and says, "Your Honor, I do. Having some familiarity with the Goldberg case -- you see, I also was an attorney in the Goldberg case, and I won that case." But Foley already knew that. And then Pollock went on and told him what it was all about. And that's where the decision of (indiscernible).

But as a result of that case, all the state agencies in Nevada adopted the fair hearing offices. And every state now, whether it was the motor vehicle or welfare or employment security or whoever it was, created a whole new bureaucracy, which was the fair hearing bureaucracy, and they all came out of that case, a case that ironically is non-reporting and I'm not sure why. But we'll get it for you.

**Good. That's wonderful. Now, was this the most fun time in your career?**

Oh, yes. The most rewarding, too. Fun, I don't know about fun because a lot of it was heartbreaking. Being the U.S. Attorney was fun. I mean, you're the biggest fish in the valley.

You know what I mean? That's fun.

But there were other cases just as important as (Indiscernible) v. Miller. The Domingues case is the most important for my -- and the fair hearings are wonderful, and thank God we have them. But the Domingues case was Jack and I -- I keep mentioning Jack Anderson, and I don't want you to forget Jack Anderson.

**Okay.**

I may have been the personality, but he was the brains. He truly was the brains. He was one year behind me in college, as white as I was, and far more liberal than I ever thought I could be. But we went to Kenny Guinn, who's now our governor. And Kenny will verify this story. This is a true story. We went to Kenny Guinn, who was then the superintendent of schools. And we said, "Kenny, you're not in compliance with federal law." This is the lunch program.

Now, we had become partners accidentally with a group of Methodist-tight ministers who were mad because the school system, even though it had a lunch program, was not providing hot lunches. Now, this is hot lunches for those white people who could afford them. This had nothing to do with -- or anybody who could afford them. I don't think they discriminated against a black kid in those days if he had the two bucks the lunch required. But the point was they wanted hot lunches. That's why they were aroused. They wanted hot lunches. So anyway, they joined with us.

Anyway, we went to Kenny Guinn, and we explained to him how he was in violation of federal law. He's getting all this federal money, but he's not providing a lunch program. And he knew he was. I mean, Kenny said, "I don't know what to do about it." He was really beside himself. He'd been working on it. It wasn't like he was shrinking from this. He'd been working on it and trying to get it done. His underlings tell him to do something and then says, "Well, you've got to have money. Clear it up."

So we came back. And, I mean, he was feeding like 75 kids a day for the whole school system, right? I think he got it up to 250 by the end of the month. And your expression is the same one we had. We filed our lawsuit in federal court, and today 90 to 100,000 kids get a lunch. Remember in those days -- and probably that lawsuit brought it up to 40 or 50,000 -- or 40,000. But that's the only meal a lot of those kids got all day. They didn't eat dinner, and they didn't have

a breakfast. They had whatever that lunch was. I mean, this is the same lunch program if you remember Reagan said that for the vegetable substitute he wanted to put in catsup sauce. Well, that's the kind of thinking that existed in those days, really ugly, inhumane, insensitive kind of thinking. Ronald Reagan just didn't get it. He said, "I don't want to think bad of people. I just think they just didn't get it."

**And they probably never had the experiences that some of us have had.**

Well, they all tell some story about how their dad didn't have a job and they had to work and they lived on the wrong side of the railroad tracks. So they don't understand abject poverty.

**Right.**

And I've got a great story for that, too. See, these are great stories. There's just an abundance of all these stories in the U.S. Attorney's office. But there's better stories with Legal Services. The welfare department, they were the devil. They were bad people with bad thinking. They were like slave owners. I mean, they just didn't --

**And to them it was probably more class than race. Don't you think?**

That's a good question. I don't know. No. I think the "N" word was prevalent in their vocabulary. I think they used it a lot.

**I mean, even though they were a lot of them --**

No, no, no. No. I disagree with you. I don't think it was class because there were what Ruby referred to as "Bushie" blacks around in those days.

**Right.**

And you know what a "Bushie" black is, don't you?

**Yes.**

Well, nobody else did. But I mean, there were "Bushie" blacks around. There were Bob Bailey and guys like that who were fully and accepted and then Alice Keys and people who were wonderful. I'm not knocking them. But they were "Bushies" and they were accepted.

**And the reason I said that is because there were a lot of white people on welfare at that point, weren't there?**

Seventy percent of the people on welfare are white.

**Okay, right. So that's why I'm saying that when people made those bad choices, the**



**higher ups, for the welfare recipients --**

They didn't know there were white people on it.

**Ah, okay.**

See, they didn't know that. They didn't accept that. They didn't know the illiteracy rate.

**I see.**

All the different things that applied, the numbers are all white people. But no one knows that or would accept it or admit it. See, that's what ghettos do. If you've got a ghetto, you bunch everybody so you can see them over there. Now, if you spread the white people, they can live where they want to, as long as they can get in this trailer park or that trailer park. But you don't see them, and they're spread all over.

**That's right.**

But not the blacks. They're all in the ghetto. And they just looked it.

**Oh, yes.**

Black people looked --

**I understand.**

So we could spot them. Same exact argument in World War II with the Japanese. You can spot them. So put them in a camp.

Where was I? I was talking about -- oh, I was talking about poverty, abject poverty. We wanted to show them. So we got a bus. And along with Catholic Welfare and Father Vitali and Father (Indiscernible), who are still around, we rented this bus. We took Senator Bryan -- he was the assemblyman then -- and some others. And we put them on this bus, and we took them out to the Clark County housing department out in -- I think they called it Victory Village -- out in Henderson. It's all gone now. It's all disappeared.

**Yes. That was because of BMI.**

It was built by BMI -- not for poor people. It was built for workers in BMI in the war. And when that all went away, then they adopted it as a public housing project.

**So was it both of them, Victory Village and --**

There were two of them. Yeah.

**-- Carver, Carver Park?**

No, no. Carver Park is here in Las Vegas, I think. Victory Village is out in Henderson. I think Carver Park is right over here on Westside if I'm not mistaken. But I might be.

**Okay. Go ahead.**

That's a big story all by itself. The way Clark County ran public housing as opposed to the City of Las Vegas. You think it would change a lot. But in those days, the City of Las Vegas public housing under a guy named Sartini, who we used to fight with because he didn't have fair hands, but he ran one of the best public housing projects in the country. I mean really, it was well kept. They mowed the lawns. The sewers worked and stuff like that. Clark County, on the other hand, ran the worst in the country. It was rats and, you know, just terrible.

Anyway, we put them on the bus, and we take them out on the streets. And we had our people, and they had their people. They had the welfare department's nurses. And here are these little kids. And they're white and Mexican. They're all mixed together. No big deal. But they've got all these sores all over their faces. So the nurse for the welfare department, along with George Miller, says, "See, this is what we've been saying all along. These people don't know how to keep themselves clean. Look at how dirty. And these sores are just because they're filthy and they don't know how to take care of themselves."

We bring in our nurses, legislatures, whoever they are all. "This isn't filth or dirt. You know what that is on those kids' faces? That's scurvy. That's because those kids haven't had fresh vegetables in their entire life. They don't know what a fresh vegetable is. That's a vitamin A deficiency. And that's what all those scales are."

And that all changed. This was a test over something else at the time. Nevada had a thing called the commodity foods program. It was one of the few states left in the country. I mean, we were really (indiscernible), one of the few states left in the country that didn't have food stamps. There were no food stamps in Nevada. We had a commodity foods program. Commodity foods program, do you know what that is?

**The cheese and the --**

The cheese and the mayonnaise and everything the farmers had extra of. So it's all starches. It's cheese and mayonnaise and corn and pasta and all that stuff. And he says, "How can this great big, fat black lady be starving?" Well, she's starving because that's all she eats, and she's

dying, and she's lucky if she lives to be 35 or 40 years old because she's malnourished. That's what happens with this thing.

So that's what we were challenging. We needed to get a food stamp program. They, of course, didn't want that. And the food stamp program brought millions and millions of dollars, economic benefit, to Nevada, and to the grocery stores and all them people ripping it off. But it also brought fresh vegetables to the poor people. And that's what the purpose was.

We were testifying in front of the state legislature that we had done our work, like this story I just told you. Father Louie Vitali, who at the time was head of the Catholic Welfare and later became head of the Franciscans to the World or something like that, and he just got out of prison again because he was protesting, he's the guy who protested the bomb all the time. He won that war. Louie is an amazing man, and he's still around. He's a few years older than me. Anyway, Louie gets up and goes into the bathroom. He's a Catholic priest. And he says, "I got to go get me some toilet paper." He forgot his collar, you know, the white collar. So he goes into the men's room, and he gets the toilet paper, and he rolls it flat, and he presses it flat and makes a nice little collar and sticks it in there and says, "All right, let's go testify."

So we go in front of them and do our testifying. And we're up at a gal's house -- we're celebrating because we knew we had won. See, we're out at a gal's house named Maya Miller. Has that name come up in your --

**No.**

Oh, well, you should know Maya Miller. In fact, you should get her now. She should be one of your interviewees.

**What is her first name?**

Mya, M-Y -- I guess. However you spell Mya.

**Okay.**

She lives out in Washoe Valley, Reno. She's one of the old liberal funding sources. She's always funding, and she's hanging everybody's neck out in the legislature. She funded Ruby. She funded everybody. And we're at her house having a party and celebrating, and we were late to the airport. So we're driving back to Reno. It's about a 30-minute drive from there, and the plane's leaving. And the plane started to take off. Louie Vitali gets a hold of (indiscernible) and says,

"I'm Father Vitali and I need to be on that" -- he goes through all this stuff. And they pull the plane down. The plane comes back up, and they load us on. So who's sitting in the front three seats? George Miller, the head of the welfare department; his right-hand man, who was the devil, Tomlinson; and the governor, Michael O'Callaghan, who was the governor during all this, good old liberal Mike. Upset. They were upset that the plane had stopped for these crazies. And we laughed and went back and sat down. But there were many of those kinds of stories or those little confrontations. There are so many of them.

**Now, did you tell me about the Domingues case?**

The Domingues case was the lunch suit.

**Okay, good.**

One of my other favorite ones is Guerra. Guerra versus Archie. In your study of black history in Las Vegas, have you come over the name of Bob Archie?

**Oh, yes. Oh, yes.**

Bob and I went to Howard University. That shows you where I am on the dumb scale. I mean, he was two years behind me in high school, and he graduated a year ahead of me in law school. But Bob was very, very bright. If I was having criminal trouble, I'd want Bob Archie representing me. That's how good he was. But he also got involved with a lot of white girls and all that stuff. And that didn't help him and it ruined him in (indiscernible). I think he even did some time for (indiscernible) and that's when I lost respect for him. It's funny because the only two people -- and he was high at the time. He was director of the State of Nevada Employment Security Department. O'Callaghan had appointed him to that. But because of this embarrassment, O'Callaghan didn't speak for him, only me and John McGroarty. John went to Howard with us, too. He's a white guy. He was a judge here in town. We were the only character witnesses that went to trial and stood up for Bob and talked about, you know, you've got this Bob and you've got that Bob. And that's what you need to know, your Honor.

Anyway, Bob Archie was the chairman of the employment security. And Nevada, along with every state in the United States, had a law that said if you are fired because you are pregnant, your ability or right to receive unemployment benefits do not come into play until the doctors certify that you can come back to work after having the baby. But my gal was two months

pregnant when she was fired. So that meant she had to wait gestation, another seven, eight months. And then wait for that. And that's just plain wrong. But every state in the United States had that.

And I know Bob didn't want it. Pete Breen, who is now a judge up in Reno, was the attorney for the department. There are two things about this. I'm representing Mrs. Guerra, and we go over in front of Judge Sundy, who is now dead. He had a law clerk that was just as bad as he was. And they would "Mutt and Jeff" you. They would play these games. One would play the bad guy, and one who play the good guy. Back and forth. So they decided to do that on this case. They go back in the chambers and do this. Judges have got to be stopped from doing that kind of stuff. I mean, there's a lot of that. I don't know if there is that anymore. But in those days, there was a lot of that behind doors. A lot of that stuff in those days.

So anyway, he rules. He says, "You don't want a bunch of puking women hanging around your building. You're entitled to fire them." You know, that kind of stuff. So he directs Pete Breen, who didn't like winning the case; he just didn't like it -- told him to write it just so (indiscernible). He did it all. Sent it to Sundy. Sundy went through it, inner-delineated, wrote things on it, changed, did this and did that. Then he signed it. He said, "Now it's the way I want it." And he filed it.

Within ten minutes I had filed my appeal. Within ten minutes of me filing my appeal, the judge calls me on the phone and says, "What are you doing?" I said, "What do you mean what am I doing? I'm appealing your decision. I have every right to do that." And first of all, he says, "You know, I've been waiting to do that. I didn't mean to sign that." I said, "Judge, you've written all over this thing. Of course you meant to sign it." He said, "No, bring it back." I said, "I can't. It's already filed." He says, "You're in contempt." I said, "I'm not in contempt of anything. I'm here in my office, and I'm not coming near your courthouse." And I filed it.

And that case on that issue stands for -- in the state of Nevada today -- when the district court loses jurisdiction. He did lose his jurisdiction the minute the appeal is filed. That's the case that stands for that. No one forgets all that stuff. It's not that big of a deal. But that's the case that stands for that.

Anyway, we went up and we argued the case to the Nevada Supreme Court. It was argued

at 10 o'clock in the morning. The written decision was down at 4 that afternoon. This case reversing everything saying, what are you talking about? The state attorney generals from the United States had a meeting over this case, and all the states changed (indiscernible). They all changed to this. But I became the hero in the women's movement, no doubt.

**That's wonderful.**

I won't tell you the benefits of having done that.

**No. That's okay.**

And that's the Guerra case. But that's the case that entitled women who were fired for being pregnant to obtain unemployment benefits before their doctor said they were ready to go back to work. That was a big deal back then.

**Now, I want to know more about Bob Archie. Is he still around?**

No. He's dead.

**Oh, he died. Okay.**

Bob Archie got cancer, and they cut out most of his insides, and he still managed to carry his little -- what do you call those things? He went around and went to trial. Bob Archie, again, he went to high school with me. He went to Howard University as an undergraduate, too, as well as law school. He was head of the ROTC at Howard University. (Indiscernible) number one guy in the Howard ROTC. He went to Vietnam, front line, and ran prison camps in Vietnam on the front line. That's a hero to me. He did all that kind of stuff. Came back and started (indiscernible) as you know all kids do (indiscernible). I think he may have been an attorney (indiscernible). Then he became a formidable criminal defense attorney at that. He's no different than a lot of accomplished black attorneys throughout America, but he strayed. He strayed and got in trouble. You don't stray when you've got enemies like that. And they were following him all the time. So he died a tough death. But he was brave. He stood up and did all that stuff.

But in this community, Bob Archie is important to the black community. And this is me, a white guy you're talking about. So this is just my observation. But to me, he was the first black kid in this community -- he was born in Louisiana someplace. But he was the first black kid in this community who made it intellectually. He was not an advocate. He didn't do that kind of stuff. And that needs to be recognized somewhere along the line. And there were good kids and

all that. But they were getting out of the ghetto because of their football, basketball, whatever that ability was. Well, Archie got out on his brains. There wasn't a lot of that in those days. There wasn't any of that in those days.

**Tell me also since he was an attorney, I want to know more about Charles Keller and Earl White.**

Okay. We can do this for four or five days. You know that?

**I know. I know.**

Earl White went to Howard University, and he's about three or four years ahead of me. At that time in the history of college, academically he was the top student that ever graduated from Howard University. I don't know if that's true today, but it was then. I mean, we're talking about Spotwoods and some other very important people who were there. And Earl, academically, was ahead of all them.

I have a great Earl White story. Earl is a little more conservative than your average black guy. When I got back to town, we befriended each other right away. We still are.

**Where is he now?**

He's in private practice. He didn't do too well in politics. He replaced me as justice of the peace -- or soon thereafter. It's not easy to get elected to anything if you're black in this town. But then he became a district court judge, and he was defeated as a district judge because they played the race card. I mean, they just played it. And this town went along with it and bought it. His arrogance didn't help him. Earl has an aloofness about him that offends white voters. That made him his own worst enemy. And I don't mean he had to humble himself. He's not capable of that anyway. But he just needed to level it out a little bit. And maybe we could have won that thing for him.

But there was a big law firm in town, which he had exposed for their illegal behavior and all that stuff, that just pumped money into a thing, ran pictures of the Negro judge, you know, that kind of thing, and they beat him. So he's an arbitrator now and a mediator, and he does a lot of that stuff. He doesn't do anything where his mind idles.

But I've got to tell one other White story. I was doing Legal Services. His mother came to me about how the cops were really harassing and picking on her. (Indiscernible) I forgot what his

name was, but it started with an H. And they gave me this long list of all these arrests and there were no convictions. And I got all my liberal (indiscernible) up and I said, "We've got to defend these cops (indiscernible). It's like two years before with the Jan (indiscernible) story. We've got to protect these people."

So before I did that, I was smart. I went over to Earl White, and I said, "I want your counseling. What should I do with these people?" And Earl says, "Brown, you're a young man. The cops do you and me and everybody in this community a service. If they go over to that house every morning, kick in the door, drag that bunch of raggedy ass, no good people out in the streets, take off all their clothes and spray them down with fire hoses, they are the worst people that ever lived. And that mother is the worst -- she's the Bob Barker of the whole gang." And they were white, you know. "And you just need to" -- and he was right. He was right. We all backed away from that then. That's one of my favorite Earl White stories.

**Good. Now tell me about Charles Keller.**

Didn't know him. He and I knew each other.

**Let me ask one more question about Earl White. Was Earl White the first licensed African-American attorney?**

No. I don't think so. I think Bob Reid was.

**Bob Reid?**

Yeah. Bob Reid was also justice of the peace. But Keller may have been before him, although those guys are all contemporaries of one another. Bob Archie comes a little later. But Bob Reid went wayward, too. I mean, he started playing (indiscernible). I don't know where Bob Reid came from. He was here when I got back from school. And I liked Bob Reid. He was a fun guy. Charles Keller was older. Do you know he just died recently?

**Yes.**

He was bright. I don't know where he went. He went to like Yale or something. He was bright, but he liked to make a buck, too. And he would say it in a different kind of a way. He was pretty conservative. He went around the streets. He didn't understand why we were on the streets. He thought (indiscernible) decisions his way. And I guess overall, he wanted it the way he wanted it. I respected him. He was bright. He was there in the beginning of what I call the phony Civil



Rights days. So was Earl White.

You may get mad at me for saying this stuff. But we had a Civil Rights law that was passed back in the 60s (indiscernible). And that was just --

**Was that integrating the Strip, 1960?**

Well, it was later than 1960. It had to be '65 or --

**So you're not talking about the agreement that was signed at the Moulin Rouge when Grant Sawyer came down and --**

That's probably what I'm talking about.

**Okay. It was 1960.**

How long did it take them to implement it?

**Supposedly that night.**

Oh, bologna. You know, that's just bologna. I mean, in the early 60s, Sammy Davis still couldn't sleep on the Strip. It wasn't in the 50s they stopped him from staying out there. It was the 60s. So Grant Sawyer probably was governor then, but they didn't start implementing that until a lot later.

Here's another story. Jack and I were running the Legal Services and the Justice Department Civil Rights attorney comes over, who I knew from (indiscernible). He invited us to a party because we were celebrating the settlement they had with the Hilton Hotel over racial discrimination in terms of employment. And they were going to celebrate at his house. He was renting a house from my father-in-law at the time. So we went over there. We're sitting with these three or four very white guys and one black guy who was a Civil Rights attorney. And Jack looked at him and he says, "Well, what are you going to do about all the backpay?" And this attorney says, "What about the payback?"

"Excuse me. These people had been discriminating against these folks for years and years and years. And every case that settled like this across the country except this one, they require a certain amount of backpay for all the discriminations and all that." He says, "Well, we're not doing that." And Jack and I just looked at each other. He said, "We really don't want (indiscernible)."

This was a sellout. This whole deal was a sellout. But everybody today praises it.

**(End side 1, tape 2.)**

This case with the Hilton Hotel was allotted as one of the great Civil Rights accomplishments of the century for Southern Nevada. I don't agree with that. There was no punishment. They were doing the inevitable. Equal employment was happening all over America. But there were also people who were finally adhering to the rule of law. I mean, the 13th and 14th Amendments, they've been around since the Civil War. I mean, that's nothing new. Anyway, this is the only one I knew of that no one was punished for it. They didn't have to pay any backpay. So we left that meeting and never (indiscernible).

**And there was nothing that could be done at that point?**

Oh, no. We were not in any powers. We had no jurisdiction. That's something the Justice Department...(Indiscernible) in other speeches. (Indiscernible) Benny Binion. Benny Binion had the best definition of justice ever considered. And that is, "Justice is just us. That's justice." And that was just us in that time in history.

My father sat back and watched, though, because he wasn't sure about (indiscernible). I mean, his friends told me to get out of town. I was in one of the restaurants one night, and one of the guys who was head of the Republican Party was just screaming at me, "Why don't you go back where you came from?" I said, "I was born here." You know, they didn't like the status quo being toyed with and played with or disturbed. So those were the days.

But as lawyers, as Legal Services lawyers, we had the power because we could go to court. And we did that. That was our weapon. Our weapon was our ability to go to court, but, more importantly, our willingness to go to court because we were willing to go to court for just about anything. And there was no money involved in it. In those days as Legal Services, I had a wife and two kids, and I was making \$13,000 a year. Law clerks who hadn't even passed the bar were making more than I was.

**Did your wife work?**

No. We just struggled. She's a good mother. She raised those little kids.

**Great. So after those years at Legal Services, what did you do?**

There's a lot more story. Believe me. There's a whole bunch more stories.

**I would love to hear some more stories.**

There's a lot more stories. One of my favorites -- let me tell you a Ruby Duncan story.

**Yes.**

Ruby Duncan and Mariann Wesley -- and again, back at the welfare department, they were starving kids and they sat around and thought up rules to stick it to them, the poor people, particularly poor black people. They really did. They also stuck it to white people, incidentally. That wasn't their intention. So we decided to stage a sit-in, an eat-in. So Ruby and Mariann took 125 little black kids to the Stardust Hotel and sat them down. I'm not there with them because I don't belong with them.

That's where we were different. A lot of the called liberal, quote, movements in the 60s, Jack and I -- and Jack is the one I want to give credit to -- says, "We provide these ladies with their information, but we cannot make the decisions for them. They have to make their own decisions. Wrong or right, once they make it, you can't talk them out of it. That's not our place. We are their counsel. We're their lawyers. We just tell them what we think is best. And they can do whatever they want." And that distinguished us from many others around the country. There's another story that goes with that. But from around the country, that distinguished us.

Anyway, so we're sitting across at dinner at the Copa Lounge. Remember that's the lady who went (indiscernible) with my mother. She owned that bar. So we're sitting there, which is across the street from the Sahara. And Ruby marches in with 125 (indiscernible). All these kids are eating fruits and vegetables and milk and all the other stuff. And they never had anything like that. It came time to pay the bill, (indiscernible).

**So now, what did they think at the Stardust with all of these black kids?**

They were intimidated, first of all. So they sat there with their mouths open waiting for the other shoe to drop. And the other shoe didn't drop until it was time to pay the bill. They just did it all. They were worried about discrimination.

**Okay. I see.**

See, that's what they were worried about when they walked in. We can't serve all these kids. And we can't ask them if they can pay upfront. We don't ask everybody else that. So that was the issue then. So it came time to pay the bill. And Ruby and Mariann were arrested. They didn't arrest the kids. The kids got back on the buses we had got for them. They went home, and

Ruby and Mariann went to jail. Then the Stardust Hotel dropped all charges.

A guy named Herb Tobin (indiscernible). You've probably heard of Herb Tobin. Great guy. But he was one of the guys at the Stardust Hotel. And this is where socializing really occurred. From that day forward, Herb told me himself he provided 200 turkeys to whoever really wanted to go to (indiscernible) at Thanksgiving. That's socializing.

**Now, how were they released from jail? And was it done quickly?**

In moments. Oh, in moments. They weren't there very long. I don't think they were there 12 hours.

Anyway, Mariann Wesley is a very big woman. But she's big. She's not a big fat woman. She's a big woman. One day we had a protest down at the welfare. (Indiscernible) I told you was the (indiscernible) officer. He had done something and Mariann was upset at him. They were upstairs. It was in a shopping center over on Washington or Rancho. Mariann Wesley walked up those stairs, walked in that door and into his office, picked him up, put him over her shoulder and marched his ass right down the stairs, carrying him over her head like that. Didn't hurt him, never hurt him, just certainly embarrassed him.

**Oh, that's funny.**

I don't even know what that accomplished that day. But there was a moment of aggravation. I mean, somebody had to do something. One of those things.

**Tell me more about Jack Anderson.**

Jack Anderson, like I said earlier, was the brains. And here's a guy who worked for me and then later became director of Legal Services. But he worked for me. And when he was working for me, they asked him to be director of Legal Services, not for Nevada, not for Las Vegas, for the whole United States.

I've got to tell you a great story about him because we were just kicking butt left and right. Governor O'Callaghan had a (indiscernible). So he sends over an invitation to Jack Anderson to bring him over to his office to make him charge one of the state agencies, equal something. Do you know John Smith who writes for the Review-Journal?

**Yes.**

Well, his mother was the secretary to the governor then, Mike O'Callaghan. So they bring

Jack over for an interview. And they have the president -- Public Service Commission. That's what it was, Public Service Commission. And they bring Jack over to interview him for (indiscernible) because the old guy who was there during the interview, too, he was going to retire. And this was O'Callaghan's idea to neutralize it. Get Jack away from me, split us up, so we'd be less powerful. And I want to give you a quote. And there's some naughty words in this quote, but it's important. Jan Smith, John's mother, who's a great gal, but at the time she's a loyal Democrat, works for the governor and all that kind of stuff. Democrat and liberal isn't the same thing, either. Well, you know.

**Yes.**

So she says, "Well, what do you think about (indiscernible), Jack? Let me make this real quick." Jack says, "I believe in America. I believe in our system of government. I believe that we have legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government. And wherever you're seeking redress, wherever you need to find a solution to your problems, you need to exhaust every remedy whether it's to the judiciary, to the executive or to the legislative. You need to follow those, and you need to follow every rule. Take it all the way. You need to do that. That's your duty as an American citizen."

And they're all sitting there beaming and laughing. And he says, "But I also believe that if you've done that, if you've exhausted the administrative remedies and the legislative remedies and the executive remedies and all that stuff, if you've done that, then you have a duty to burn the mother fucker down."

They were just shocked. They became really white. And O'Callaghan was listening. The door was open. He knew what was going on. And they go, "What do we do now?" And he says, "Just hire him. I don't care what he says. Hire him." And they went back and said, "The governor says you're hired." He says, "I'm not hired to anything. I came over here for the fun of it. I don't want your job."

That's Jack Anderson. That kind of sizes him up. Jack did all this Legal Services stuff. And all the things we did together and all the credit I'm giving myself, he gets most of that. He was that smart.

**So what happened to him afterwards?**

He moved to California with his wife who was a VISTA volunteer for us. He met her during that. He became partners with Billy Hunter. Billy Hunter was the U.S. Attorney when I was, a black guy, for San Francisco Northern District. Billy Hunter used to be the chief counsel for the NBA. You see him on TV all the time. He's the attorney for the National Basketball Association.

Anyway, he and Jack became partners (indiscernible) finances and counseling stuff. He's busy (indiscernible).

**Oh, that's great.**

My son became (indiscernible). In fact, he won a big case where he got a lot of money (indiscernible). So Jack's up there and we communicate. I got an E-mail from him yesterday.

**Wonderful.**

He was picking on our president. I just laughed at him. I said, "You guys got to leave him alone." On an E-mail back to him, I said, "You keep picking on this president. Leave him alone. He's going to self destruct anyway."

**That's right. That is right. There are just so many things that I want to ask. Let me see.**

I've got days of this stuff.

**Okay, good.**

Let's go back and do Washington, D.C. and Howard University.

**Oh, wonderful.**

I was a policeman. Harry Reid was also, at the same time I was. Jimmy Belroy was a policeman and I was a policeman. And I was part of -- in that role, as a policeman role -- I'm talking about I was a body with the uniform that just stood there.

**So were you capitol police or were you --**

Yeah.

**Okay, good.**

So was Harry. So were a lot of guys. There was this kid. He was like five years younger than Paige. He was like 15 or 16 years old. He'd say, "can I go with you guys tonight? Can I go out and play with you guys tonight?" Nah, you're too young for that. That person was Chris

Dodd, Senator Dodd.

Anyway, so as a policeman, I was there when all this stuff -- I stood at Kennedy's casket for 36 hours. I was the guard on that casket. I was kind of the young, halfway good-looking kid they had on the police force. So they put me at the front of the triangle to escort people through the capitol whenever they came. The captain liked and hated me. We had a love-hate relationship, full battle. There was a couple of black clouds (indiscernible) black cloud over his head where the lightning just kept hitting him in the head like that. He was funny. He was infamous in Washington, D.C. back then. Whether it was Civil Rights or whatever it was, if someone had to be kicked off the capitol grounds, he loved doing it. We were his little star pupils. Remember that name, Dareahta? He was the (indiscernible) Germany after World War II, and he was a great man, a great man. I escorted him and talked to him.

During the Kennedy funeral I escorted (indiscernible). He was an American. I remember John Glenn. I saw him way out in the crowd. I just scanned the crowd. Two or three people I met. Those kinds of little stories. But I was just a bodyguard. There were a lot of other bodies there.

Some funny things, most of it we happened to talk about today. Capitol police was a great opportunity. After I left that, I became foreman of the United States Senate Post Office, and that got me through law school. I was still an undergraduate when I was a policeman. That was 48 hours a week, 6 days a week. (Indiscernible.) You had to be. So that's probably where (indiscernible) because you had to be there, of course. So many stories.

**So what was law school like? Did you find --**

You mean was I discriminated against?

**Yes. And did you find it --**

Every day.

**Really?**

Absolutely. Oh, yeah.

**Okay. So how did that --**

That's a good one. That's a good experience, which I wouldn't trade for anything. I remember one of the black nationals (indiscernible) dashikis (indiscernible) dress code on campus

and that kind of thing. I went to the library. They were having a meeting or something like that. They had a bunch of dashiki guys. And they threatened to kill me and you're not allowed (indiscernible). You've been on the law school, haven't you?

**Uh-huh.**

And I got my butt out of there. I went back up stairs to the lounge and just kind of hovered in the corner. One of my buddies, Glen Carr or somebody, asked me what it was about. And I told him what happened. And they went down to the library (indiscernible). And I'm not giving them credit. I'm just saying that the friendships I made there -- and they certainly weren't anti-black nationals by doing that. They were anti the behavior (indiscernible). But on campus at that time was Dr. Brown and (indiscernible).

Malcolm X, in my opinion, was the most important black guy that ever lived. And no disrespect to Martin Luther King and all the wonderful things he did. But in terms of the black man in America, Malcolm X is the first person that I can (indiscernible). But he's the first person to say there's nothing wrong with being black. Be proud to be black. There's nothing wrong.

**That's right.**

That's more important than sitting in a restaurant and eating with a bunch of honkeys. To say there's a pride in being what I am and there's nothing to be ashamed of and getting (indiscernible).

**That's right.**

And that's what Malcolm X did. And I think there are black people who recognize that. And if they didn't know it was him, it's okay because they followed his advice whether they knew it was Malcolm X or not.

**That's right. A lot of us learned it from James Brown.**

Really?

**"I'm black and I'm proud."**

Really? Well, that's much later.

**Uh-huh. But a lot of us didn't learn it until then.**

James Brown and the Fabulous Flames, 1948. That's when he started.

**Wow.**



I knew James Brown. I mean I knew of him and followed him and loved him. We joke with James Brown. But James Brown was also a bad man. He did a lot of bad things, you know. He went wayward. And that's interesting you said that. I've never heard any black person say that before you. You got that from James Brown. But he got it from Malcolm X.

**That's correct.**

Well, I'm not sure he ever got it anyway. And I love James Brown, but I don't give him all the credit you just gave him. But I'm not black, so I don't know that.

**Right. But the song was just a song that people could relate to and did relate to.**

Sure.

**People who didn't read. People who didn't listen to what was going on in the national black community.**

Okay. And that's most of them. That is most of them.

**Right.**

There are other people. There's Dick Gregory that was around, an interesting man. He was as bright as anybody. He just had a terrible time (indiscernible). He resorted to hunger sit-ins and stuff like that, which (indiscernible).

**No, it didn't.**

And that's too bad because he did have something (indiscernible). He's still around. He's still alive.

**Wow.**

There's a couple other ones that I'm not thinking of or remembering now. (Indiscernible.) Eldridge Cleaver -- did you read "Soul on Ice"?

**Yes.**

He's a fascinating man.

**And I probably should read it again. I read it when I was a very young woman.**

I have it at home. I've got it.

**And I probably should read it again because it didn't strike me as frightening as --**

Well, it's violent.

**It's violent. And if I remember correctly, it doesn't say a whole lot for females or**

**about --**

Oh, no, no, no. I was there in (indiscernible) when he uses the word "pussy power."

**Okay, yes.**

The "pussy power" speech. And he's directing his attention to black women in the crowd. And he says, "Between your legs, you possess the weapon that can drag the white man into the alley and then the gutters for the killing." You know, beat them up (indiscernible).

**Yes.**

And that was kind of the gist or the strategy of the speech he gave. But he turned out to be a phony, too -- not too. But he turned out to be a phony. He goes off and joins Kaddafi or somebody for a while. Then he comes back and becomes a Mormon. I mean, it's just one complication right after another, right? But it's a moment in time and everybody has a moment in time. I mean, (indiscernible) message.

**Oh, yes.**

So Howard in those days was in its transition period, too. Do you remember when they took over the colleges around the country? There were these protests?

**Oh, yes.**

Well, Howard was one of those. We were hand-in-hand with Columbia University. I'm trying to think of the dean at the time. The dean was a black dean and was also the head of UNICEF. He wrote (indiscernible) civil procedures. But he joined with us. He was president of the law school, and he joined with us in the -- we took up -- Jack Anderson and the rest of us locked that school down and took it over -- for a while.

**How did they take it back?**

(Indiscernible.) That happens everywhere.

**And did you --**

You're looking for somebody to listen to what your issues were, whatever they were. We finally got an audience. The press came around. And that's all you were looking for.

**So did you accomplish your goals?**

At the time. What's it accomplished? I'm not sure. There's a gap between the (indiscernible)? Of course not. It's twice what it was when (indiscernible). Now, certainly black

people have done well.

That's an interesting phenomenon. Jack invented this. We used to do a poverty workshop over in the Catholic Welfare office. There was a big room -- oh, I'm guessing -- probably 3,000 (indiscernible) -- 2,000. But we'd fill it up with everybody who represented any sort of poverty community. Race wasn't an issue. Geography wasn't an issue. They were all invited. We surrounded the room with blackboards. And we'd do this every year. Once a year we'd go in there, and we'd try to find what everybody's needs were. That is food and housing. We did this for three, maybe four years that I remember doing it. And the reason I'm telling the story is it was always the same, the needs.

What would you think the number one poverty issue would be, at least to these people? And they represented everybody. They were white people, black people, Mexicans.

**Education.**

That one wasn't even on the list.

**Food.**

I would have thought food. It's not food. Food is number two. No. Food is number three, actually.

Housing. Housing is number one. Medicine is number two. Food is number three. And that was traditional. We'd do that every year. Education was five or six or something like that. But we just dealt with the top three, and they were always the same: Housing, medicine, food. People need to have a roof over their head before (indiscernible). Something they can call a home.

After Legal Services -- and I can tell you stories all night about Legal Services. But after Legal Services, I was appointed as justice of the peace in Las Vegas.

**Appointed?**

Appointed. And then I ran for that office and won that office in an election. Remember I told you earlier that my dad was justice of the peace. It was the highest paying job in the country. And it always was right up until they elected me. And that's when the legislature decided the justice of the peaces in Las Vegas weren't marrying people anymore. So, boom, out goes all that. They were making about 150, \$200,000 a year at that time. And I'm back to \$26,000 a year as justice of the peace. And I knew that going in. I already knew that. That writing was on the wall.

But it was just my term where they changed all that.

Anyway, it was an opportunity for me to take my liberalism as I really believed in it and apply it to a position of power. And we did that. We did a couple of things as justice of the peace that shook them up a little bit.

### **What are the duties of the justice of the peace?**

Justice of the peace is a full-fledged judge. He's called different things in different jurisdictions in the country. He's called a magistrate. He's called whatever it is. But in what they call the township of Las Vegas, not the county, but the township, he has all civil jurisdiction up to -- today it's 75, 100 -- but then it was \$250. Then he does all of the criminal misdemeanor jurisdiction. But he also sets all the felony bails, does all the felony preliminary hearings, sets bails for murderers and everything. So if I was ever a judge again -- and I've told that to my son who's a municipal court judge, who only deals with the criminal side of misdemeanors and (indiscernible) -- the judgeship that is fun because it's so mixed. There are so many different things to being justice of the peace because they do it all. They have trials. They deal with the worst of the bad and the best of the good. They also do (indiscernible). They do all that stuff. So it's a big jurisdiction for a little court.

Anyway, there were a couple things we did over there that I noticed after I was sitting there awhile. Witness identification is a big issue in felony cases. So they would bring the defendants in (indiscernible). They were just a bunch of blacks. And they would bring them in, in handcuffs on the side (indiscernible) to identify them. Then they'd sit this person out. They'd bring the black defendant over -- nine out of ten defendants (indiscernible). Then they'd ask, "Can you identify the person who allegedly did whatever they did to you?" And the response was, "Sure. That guy right there."

So I decided to run some tests because I knew something was wrong. I knew this wasn't fair. So I took the defendant. I took a more light-skinned black defendant. I did this on purpose. Stuck him in the defendant's seat over the objection. I said, "Do you want to do this? Or I'm going to start doing it every time. Let me do this test here (indiscernible)."

So we put a light-skinned black -- medium to light-skinned black person in the defendant's chair. The true defendant, we put him off to the side. He was very dark. And we let the little

white lady identify who did it. She identified the person right in the chair. I made my point. We've got to stop and we've got to do what we can to procure identifications made the way we've been making them forever.

I was the brunt of the -- there was a guy in town called Paul Price. He was a local (indiscernible). But this guy was a bad, evil guy. He was a guy who (indiscernible). He wrote a lot of stories and people liked him. He was a trash writer. He was like this guy on Fox News. What was his name? Written a book, him and Al Franklin, on fighting and all that stuff. Anyway, he was mean and I was his favorite target. There was not a week that went by where there wasn't a column written about that "liberal hick" (me) and whatever I had done to let some guy go or set some bail or something like that.

Bail was another issue. I just watched this guy. All these times have changed. This guy, they accused him of kidnapping and killing a girl in Wisconsin. You may recall from the news or whatever.

**Oh, yes. Uh-huh, yes.**

They set his bail at \$5 million. Now, that's purely a publicity stunt. This guy couldn't make \$5,000.

**Right.**

But they set it because it makes the judge look good, it makes the prosecutor look good, that kind of thing. And that's all crap. Back in those days, there was a case called The Candy Man. It was about a local candy man who supposedly rapes little kids. His was the first million-dollar bail. But the bail was set in (indiscernible). And I got some black kid who stole a lady's purse, and his bail is \$50,000. This is a good time to show you the difference. The candy man split. A million dollars was nothing to him. He was gone. \$50,000, this black kid isn't going anywhere. He's got his grandmother at his house. You could have set the bail at \$10,000. You could have put him out on his OR. He's still going to be here because he hasn't got a place to go. And you don't understand. And then you read bail and you read the old history of bail, and those are the things you considered: His ability, his neighborhood, his ties with the community and the nature of his crime. Some black kid who robs a bank, even a big one, he's not going anywhere. The white guy with the sex crime, forget him. He's disappeared. That's the other reason

(indiscernible). Black people don't do these things.

**We didn't at one time.**

Oh, it's happening. But I don't think that guy in Atlanta, I don't think he's the guy. I still don't believe he's the guy. But maybe he's been hanging around white people too long. History shows that all these deviant crimes are committed by white people. I'm not sitting here to condemn my own people or my own race. But the raping of the white girl --

**(End side 2, tape 2.)**

**We have a mayor who sometimes says that there's no such thing as the Mob.**

He doesn't sometimes. He says it all the time.

**Okay. What do you think of that?**

I think he's full of bologna. He's also my friend. And he was against us all the time, and we always whipped him. He never won. And he'd know that. He'd laugh. I used to get a kick out of Oscar because Oscar was a good motion (indiscernible). He could get that (indiscernible). But if he ever got to trial, which he didn't like to do, if he got into trial, we were going to win because we had the whole power of the FBI and everything else. So we had much more going for us when we finally brought it to court.

**So did you actually go up against him?**

Not personally. I was not a trial lawyer. But Larry Leavitt did and whipped him. Phil Pro did and those guys did.

**Okay.**

But I admire Oscar. I think Oscar is the best mayor the city of Las Vegas has ever had. Was I his pal and buddy when I was the U.S. Attorney? No. He was the enemy. He was the guy on the other side, and he represented the bad guys. But we got them all. They're not around anymore.

**Okay, yes.**

That's why he's the mayor. Because if they were still around, he'd still been representing him and he wouldn't be mayor. He should be thankful for it.

**So now, history says that when Howard Hughes came to town and started buying up casinos, that's when the legitimacy came, the corporate image came to Las Vegas. So you're**

**saying that it came because you got rid of the Mob?**

I'm not saying I got rid of the Mob. I'm saying the teamwork that went on (indiscernible). Howard Hughes had hotels that still had Mob guys in it. Howard Hughes brought to the town these big boys, which is public trading and the stock gaming. He wasn't the only one. That's when that came in, 1964, something like that, if you want to call that legitimizing it. If you were on the big board, then you suffered scrutinizing of the SCC. So the timing was all there. It was time to move some of those people out. But believe me, I'm talking when I was there it was 1970 (indiscernible). Some of those big publicly traded companies had Mob guys in it and were skimming despite all the protestations that there were no Mobs in these hotels and no skimming. That's bologna. It was there and they were skimming the shareholders then.

**That's true. I think this is a good stopping point. What do you think?**

Is it really 1 o'clock?

**Almost.**

You just talk and talk and talk. Jeez.

**So what I would like to do --**

Certainly. I understand that.

**(End side 1, tape 3.)**

It is January 13th, 2004. I'm in the office of Mahlon Brown. How are you this morning?

I'm fine. How are you?

**Good. We're going to continue where we left off the last time we talked.**

You can remember that?

**You were talking about some of the cases that you have been involved in. And you were talking about the Mafia and how you were able to help the city clean up some of that.**

I see. Is that where we were? We were on U.S. Attorney stuff?

**Yes.**

Okay. Now, U.S. Attorney: at the time I was appointed U.S. Attorney by Jimmy Carter, President Jimmy Carter, I was the justice of the peace of Las Vegas, Nevada, and had been elected to that position. That sets the stage. This is 1977. There was a contest, if you will, for the appointment. I was fortunate enough to win out. The U.S. Attorney, it's an interesting job. Many who are U.S. Attorneys or former U.S. Attorneys think it's the best job in the world. I'm one of those. There are other people who couldn't wait to get out of job simply because of the kinds of pressures that are there, the hard work, the politics that try to impose themselves on the position, that kind of stuff. Some people can't deal with that.

So I came into the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the staff exited. I was an outsider, and the staff exited. With a couple of exceptions, everybody was gone. So I had to rebuild an entire office of attorneys. The staff people stayed.

*Is that usually what happens?*

I don't want to suggest that it's usually what happens because I think a lot of them weren't ready for someone like me. I had this Legal Services, liberal background. And traditionally, that office is, at least, perceived as a very conservative pro prosecution office. Being pro prosecution has nothing to do with being liberal or conservative, but people don't -- again, it's perception.

Anyway, I came in. So I had to regroup and put together a new office. And I did



that. I put together -- and some still talk about it -- maybe the best office in the United States, a seven-man office for the whole state of Nevada. Two of those were civil. There were two offices. There's a small office in Reno and a major bigger office in Las Vegas. So in Reno, you had two people. In Las Vegas, you had five in the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The people I brought in, who were my staff, speak for themselves. The chief federal judge for the district of Nevada, Phil Pro, was one of mine. The senior magistrate, the federal magistrate Lawrence Leavitt, he was my first assistant. He was also a leading prosecutor in the local office at the time. Alan Freedman, Ray Roxel. Ray Roxel is still there.

But Ray Roxel has had an interesting career. He's gone around the country. In fact, he was the acting U.S. Attorney in Atlanta, Georgia. And he himself is interesting because he is from Lithuania, and he was in the refugee marches in World War II. When we talk about his loyalty and his patriotism and all that's going in the world, you can't match this guy.

We hired Ruth Cohen, the first woman that had ever been hired in the office.

**What was her name again?**

Ruth Cohen. She was the first woman Assistant United States Attorney. She came over from the District Attorney's Office. As time went on, we hired the second and the third women ever, and we also hired the first black. If you're counting the points they give you for affirmative action, I got two for her because it was a woman and she was -- and the office got up to about seven, eight people. People came and left. We had a Native American. I don't want to take too much credit for that, other than discovering he was a Native American. No one paid attention to that. But when you're working for the federal government and they're asking you what are you doing to hire minorities, I turned out to be number one in the country. Over 50 percent of my staff was minority, three women, one black, one Native American, that's pretty good numbers. So enough of that.

But the office grew. Also, at that time there was a Strike Force attached to the office. Strike Force was a group formed not much before that to deal with organized crime specifically. They didn't trust me. They thought I was a political hack, et cetera. So there

was a kind of --

**Who composed the Strike Force?**

Attorneys. Mostly out-of-state attorneys. That changed. I think I had something to do with changing that. But it was always out-of-state Justice Department attorneys they brought in who they thought were immune from all the political pressures and all. I mean, that presupposes they didn't trust us to begin with. I think they were really wrong about that. I think Strike Force at the time was really wrong. That all changed. They became very loyal and very supportive, and they realized that we were there to do our job. The politicians didn't get to make the phone calls to this office like they do to other offices. And that goes on all the time.

**And not just in Nevada?**

Oh, no, not just Nevada. It didn't go on in Nevada the four years I was there. We got into some very big issues about that that came over the years where politicians -- or people who worked for politicians -- would come to me and say, what's going on? I say, it's none of your business and, you know, you have no business calling me to begin with, and please don't do that anymore.

But the office evolved and it grew. It grew in experience and wisdom, if you will. Wisdom and judiciousness is something a prosecutor needed as much as a judge. These prosecutors got to know what were good and what were not good cases, what you should spend your time on.

Because of the size of our office, we tried something that had never, to my knowledge at least, been done in the country before. And that was we set up a priority list, a prosecutorial priority list of what we would and would not prosecute. That was based solely on the fact that we didn't have a big staff.

For the record, I'd like to state the statistics that went around. Las Vegas then was half a million people or whatever it was. 1981, whatever it was. We were the size of Sacramento and other cities. Seattle was bigger, but not much bigger. It's funny. I've been making this whine now for 25 years. But those cities had probably 25 to 30 Assistant United States Attorneys in them, in the town themselves, not the state. I had seven for the

whole state of Nevada. They had probably 25 FBI agents and three or four CID agents, which are criminal investigation specialists from the IRS, and their 27 Assistant United States Attorneys to service them. I learned from Washington, D.C., that the politicians -- it's not important to name them now -- had made it very clear that Nevada would not get any more Assistant United States Attorneys. They didn't want anybody messing with things.

Well, Seattle and Sacramento had about 25, 26 FBI agents. Nevada had over a hundred at the time. Nevada had 35 CID agents at the time. We had this giant contingency of law enforcement people, a big DEA office. Other cities may have one or two DEA agents. I think we had 10 or 15 at the time.

The other federal agencies around the country recognized this. There was a lot going on all the time that needed to be paid attention to, particularly how the casinos were misused, not only by hidden ownership and organized crime influence, but the cages themselves which became a banking institution for the transfer of money. All that has changed today.

**So there was money laundering?**

Money laundering. But more just banking. People didn't realize that. You get the big old dope dealer that comes to town with his bag of money or his bag of dope. Then he hands it to the cage. And they give him a little piece of paper. And they say, you can get it -- kind of like a box at the -- what do you call them -- at the train station? You know that kind of thing. Because of the danger in those transactions, the bad guys learned why not to use the casino. You've got all these security guards around. No one's going to do anything. We can make our exchanges right here. I'm not saying the casinos knew about that. They just had a system that worked for the bad guys.

That's all changed now. There's a lot of reporting. I hope it's all changed in terms of that sense. But that was going on at the time with the organized crime.

So with the help of the Strike Force -- one guy was Stan Hunterton, who's still a very successful lawyer here in Las Vegas -- he was part of the Strike Force. When I left the U.S. Attorney's Office -- when Ronald Regan fired me -- I had the pleasure or honor or

whatever it is to be the first guy in Las Vegas that he fired -- the first guy in Nevada that he fired. And I'm proud of it. I mean, it's like Winston Churchill, you judge a man by the enemies he keeps. Boy, I kept some good ones, and I wouldn't trade them in.

Anyway, when I left the U.S. Attorney's Office, Larry Leavitt -- because of the politics involved around that appointment, some really ugly things happened right at that time, which is a chapter all by itself -- Larry Leavitt, anyway, moved over to the Strike Force and took a couple of cases with him. He took a case which we'll get to which was called Yobo, for lack of a better name. I think there was a story or a joke there that -- Joey Yablonski was head of the FBI at the time. He's made a few enemies in this town. But he wanted to call it Yabo, and it got nicknamed Yobo because the FBI agent who started it down in Arizona didn't say it right. So anyway, it became Yobo instead of Yabo.

It was an undercover sting operation that started not as a political undercover sting, but simply a bad guy sting. The FBI had one of these storefronts down in Arizona with guys dressed up to look like bad guys with beards and long hair and all that stuff, buying stolen goods off the street. In that operation, they picked up a very significant individual from Nevada. His name is not important. Not now. He's not alive. But he took them to be bad guys, did some business with them thinking they were bad guys, and talked them into coming to Las Vegas. And says, boy, you guys, we can do some business. Come on up. I'm who I am. And you can come up to Las Vegas, and we can clean up there.

**And you don't want to tell me the name?**

No. People who read this later on can figure out who they are. Anyway, they moved the whole operation up to Las Vegas. Faces changed a little bit. We cleaned up. There was a guy named Steve Rybar, and at that time he was as slick as they come. He came in with his pinstriped suits and his slick haircut and his nice ties. There were no targets. We believed there was political corruption in the state. The legislature was in session at the time. So Rybar was just placed on a corner, so to speak -- I'm exaggerating, but that's kind of what it is -- in Carson City, Nevada, letting everybody know he was a sleazebag and had money to spend, et cetera. And it didn't take long. I mean, it's like carp going to a dead piece of chicken in the water. I mean, they just came swimming in. We

ended up convicting a number of people.

**Elected officials?**

All elected officials. County commissioners and the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. These people were people I had known all my life. I'm sure they don't call me that anymore. But prior to my becoming the U.S. Attorney, I was a friend or family friends or they all knew me. I guess that's where the Strike Force and the rest of them came over and said, if it's a question of right or wrong, he knows what to do. I pride myself on that.

**So now, could they yell entrapment?**

Well, they all yelled entrapment. And they all failed. Why do you say that? That's interesting that you ask that question.

**Well, I just would assume that that's the first thing they'd say.**

Well, that's the first say all crooks say.

**Don't you think sometimes that there are honest people, but in just a certain situation, they'll just make a bad decision?**

Well, let me tell you this. You're going to be the politician and you have a vote someplace on some things, okay? And I come up to you and I say, hey, commissioner or senator or whatever the hell you are, I've got this 500-dollar bill or I got this 10,000-dollar bill, depending on how good the deal is, and I want to build a fat farm up in Mount Charleston and it's against all the zoning stuff and it doesn't work -- I mean, on the other side, it's got to be bad -- I need you. You don't have to report this. This is cash money. You don't have to report, et cetera. Take this. Get this thing on.

Now, there are two crimes there maybe, depending on how you look at it. One is the solicitation or what they call extortion by this commissioner letting the person making the offer know that you need to make me some money offers before you get my vote. That would be extortion. Bribery would be the guy on the other side saying, hey, I want to pay you some money for your vote. And those stories switched back and forth. That was kind of what went on in Yobo. And there was more than that. But they were buying votes, and votes were for sale.

**It was just that blatant, that obvious?**

Well, it was blatant. You know, we have a recent thing here in Las Vegas. It's more than 20 years later and the lesson obviously wasn't learned. It was learned for a while. But what they're doing now is not much different. There are new cases in Las Vegas with county commissioners and such. The method was different. Ours was an undercover sting. We were the second big one. There was a thing called Abscan back East. And Yobo followed Abscan. It was federally-conceived, FBI-conceived, a way to do undercover operation. The thing they have now, the investigation, was a result of Title III search warrants, wiretaps. We didn't use wiretaps in Yobo. That's different. Wiretaps were usually how you go after organized crime because organized crime guys don't meet in the thing. And I'm not sure we would have caught anybody in organized crime if we had used the Yobo tactics. They're pretty smart. They could've spotted that one coming. Or at least I think they would have spotted us coming.

**Do you think these people, even though they were caught in this sting operation, had been operating this way all of their political lives or had done these kinds of things before?**

There's no way I can know that. There's certainly a hint of that. You can't prove that. So why do you accuse them of that? But it's clear that their integrity is truly in question. And there's a willingness to take a lot of money for doing what they're supposed to do normally.

Nevada's got a -- and I thoroughly object to it, but it's happened all over the country -- Nevada has an excuse. You called it entrapment earlier, as a standard excuse. Well, Nevada has another standard excuse for this situation. And that is political contributions. We were just making political contributions and that's all it was. And that's the defense you'll see in most of these cases that are coming up.

How do you describe that? There's another issue that Nevada struggles with, in my mind at least, and that is conflict of interest. Nevada has gotten around conflict of interest by half of an excuse, and that is disclosure. Now, I always felt that when you disclose your conflict it requires that you back off, that you do not participate. Well, that is not required

in Nevada. All that Nevada requires is that you disclose and go ahead and do what you want to do. I think that's wrong, but --

**I thought you couldn't vote on the issue.**

Well, they can challenge you and move to disclose, but they don't do that. The person who's concerned about it, I guess, could move that you recuse yourself because of your conflict. And that may happen from time to time. But I've seen many politicians who will stand right -- whether city council or commissioner or whoever it is, legislature -- explain their conflict, say that I have an interest in this thing, but I don't think it's going to influence my decision, so I'm going to participate anyway. That happens all the time. That's wrong in my opinion, but it happens all the time.

Anyway, so Yobo went on and got a lot of people. It was a big success. When this recent case came out, everybody referred to Yobo from 20 something years ago and says, where have the Feds and state law enforcement been for the last 20 years? This just doesn't stop at Yobo, obviously. And it's a legitimate question that no one's bothered to answer yet. There was a 20-year gap in there that none of this kind of stuff, no political corruption cases were brought up.

**Because some of these people caught in this sting were people that you had known for years?**

Oh, sure.

**What did that do in the community, especially a tight-knit community like Las Vegas has been?**

Well, that's a subject for a whole new chapter in what we're doing here. Subsequent to my leaving the U.S. Attorney's Office, I ran for Attorney General. That was an interesting thing, how that happened. We went into the primary. In the primary, in the Democratic primary, I beat the Senator from Reno and I beat the former district attorney from Las Vegas. There are 17 states in Nevada. I carried 15 of them.

Counties?

Or state. State of Nevada. Ran for Attorney General for the state of Nevada.

**Right. But you said that there are 17 states in Nevada.**

Oh, I'm sorry. There are 17 counties. In the primary, I won 15 of them. In the general, which gave them that time to regroup and realize what the boys -- the boys, I would add what they do -- I won one county, and that was White Pine County. And I really don't have anything against my opponent because he just got lucky. He was a pretty attractive young man who had no baggage, had zero baggage. And I had lots of baggage. I put a lot of these boys in jail. And that was my baggage. You would think that would be my flag of victory, but it's not.

**Especially for an office like the Attorney General.**

Oh, yeah. No, sir. They didn't want anything to do with me. In fact, the man at the time, who's dead now, that was head of the Las Vegas Hotel and Resort Association stood up in front of their meeting and said, this guy will be Attorney General of this state over our dead body. We don't need anybody like him. And that goes back to that little comment I made earlier about Winston Churchill. You judge a man by the enemies he keeps. And I really made a lot of enemies. And it came from two or three sides. One, the politicians obviously didn't like me. The casinos didn't like me. We're the ones who closed those casinos down. During the time in office -- again something that had never been done before -- we closed two casinos. We raided the Stardust and the Aladdin. Closed them. Closed them down for organized crime influence and skimming and all the other things that go with it. That had never been done before.

So the powers that be in this state, which are the gaming industry and the politicians and the rest of them, they just went out of their way to beat me, and did. I was out-spent in the general elections five to one. Five to one, in a little state like Nevada, that's a lot of television. Anyway, that's just history and I wouldn't change the way I did it, anyway.

**Okay. Good.**

I had mentioned earlier when the U.S. Attorney would set priorities, prosecutorial priorities, which hadn't been done anywhere before, I went to the FBI. And I said to the FBI, we don't have these resources and the time to do stolen car cases coming across state lines. Locals can do that. We don't have the time to man those cases federally. You



know, that kind of stuff. The one that was funny is that I had also tried to get us not to do bank robbery cases. Bank robbery cases are easy cases. They're smoking-gun cases. There's usually a guy running down the street with paint coming off the back of his money or something. In my mind, you don't need an experienced, trained federal prosecutor to prosecute a bank case. The problem was that the federal judge at the time -- he's now dead, and he was a wonderful man -- said, I like bank robbery cases. As long as I'm sitting here, you're not getting rid of bank robbery cases. So we didn't get rid of bank robbery cases.

But we tried to weed out the things that the locals could do and do it just as good. Dealing with our seven or eight prosecutors, the local district attorney had a hundred prosecutors. Maybe 60 criminal, and the rest were civil, but he had that many people. So we did heroin. It had to be a full ounce of pure heroin. Now, that's not true today. Now just a smidgen of it[is needed for prosecution]. Marijuana, I wanted 500 pounds of marijuana. If you see what I'm doing, I'm trying to get big organized crime, the big guys. I wasn't after the little guys. There were other people who can do them. And I'm not saying you should excuse the little guys. There are other jurisdictions that can take care of that, especially with our limited resources, manpower.

And we did that with all the different agencies. Some of the four agencies hated me, like BLM and immigration because I just wasn't doing their cases. I simply wasn't handling them. And I'm saying, I'm sorry, but we just don't have time to deal with 20 illegal aliens you caught in -- one of the cases was very funny. I get a call at 3:00 in the morning from the head of the local immigration office. He was so excited, very excited. And he had a French accent. He was French Canadian. He says, we've caught them, we caught them, we've got 24 illegal aliens. And I said, where did you catch them? And he says, we caught them on I-15. I said that's great, where? Just outside of Cedar City, Utah. And I said, what's your jurisdiction? Well, they're on I-15. It's a federal highway. But Utah has a U.S. Attorney's Office. What's your jurisdiction? Well, they had to be coming this way from Las Vegas. They were going in a northerly direction. I said, would you please go down to the jail and let them all out. You have no jurisdiction, and I'm not

prosecuting them. Now, that kind of attitude in those days didn't endear me to the immigration authorities.

But those kinds of agencies, the postal service and some of the others, today they do well with the U.S. Attorney's Office because the U.S. Attorney's Office has moved back to the statistic gathers, as has the FBI in my opinion. FBI in those days, they had a revolution in the country. People were worried about what was important in terms of law enforcement and who were the good guys and the bad guys at the levels you had to get them. And we were doing that.

We set those kinds of priorities, made a lot of enemies there, but we certainly didn't make any enemies in the FBI, IRS. The DEA liked it, too. The DEA liked that because they'd get some guy in Washington, D.C., saying I want more cocaine users, you know, that kind of stuff, which is simply statistics. Some black kid on the Westside was hooked on cocaine -- well, he didn't have to be black; he could be a white kid any where, somebody using cocaine -- in my mind, that's not a major federal case when you have limited resources.

But recently, that's all they've done. They've done those kinds of cases. That's really the answer to the question we asked earlier. Where was the public corruption for 20 years? It was in the closet. We were out dealing with --

**Kind of petty crimes?**

-- petty crimes. What I call federal petty crimes.

**How large is the U.S. Attorney's Office now?**

Thirty something people.

**Is that adequate?**

To do that kind of work. But it depends on what you're doing. If you're doing what we just described, it's plenty adequate. And I don't want to pick on the U.S. Attorney because I don't even know him. But if you want to write letters back to Washington saying we're overworked and to justify that, these are how many cocaine users or addicts or stolen car cases or that kind of stuff, and we need more people to handle this, I'm sure Washington will respond the same way.

They didn't to us because they knew what we were doing. We were doing two things when I was U.S. Attorney. We were doing public corruption and organized crimes. In my opinion, the two most important. And believe me, a lot of people agreed with me. Presently, they don't agree with me because you don't see any of it going on.

**Because that's so widespread.**

Well, it's at the top. When you let the top guys get away with it and you're using their statistics to justify your existence, what have you accomplished? The little guys are going to be there forever.

**I agree.**

**(End side 1, tape 1.)**

The reason I brought this up -- setting up priorities -- is that this allowed us to concentrate on serious violators. In that process, we got the number one cocaine smuggler on the Western United States. We got the -- Tahoe Tommy -- number one hashish distributor in the West, maybe in the country. The guy had an agent in every airport in the world and smuggled hashish in.

**He had an agent. What do you mean "agent"?**

Well, they did it in the baggage room. That's how they did the smuggling of the dope. But because DEA guys, who then became heroes, and FBI guys, with Yobo and the organized crime, we closed down these casinos, that's what I was trying to do. That's what we accomplished. One of these guys, one of these days, maybe someone will recognize that. But we did good because we set our priorities and we went after them. There were a lot of great cases like that, whether it's the FBI or the IRS, DEA. And that's something that hadn't been done before, and it's not done anymore. The IRS and the FBI worked together as teammates, as pals. There was a history of them not getting along. And I think that's all revisited again. I don't know how they get along now, but I know it faded for a while. But when we were there, they worked together. And we kicked a lot of butt.

**I want to talk about two things. I want to talk about UNLV, and I'd like to talk about some of the activists on the Westside that you probably worked with from time to time. But first, I'd like to talk about UNLV and how this campus began. I**

**know that your family had something to do with it, and I'd like to hear that story.**

Well, in my mind, it's an untold story, but it certainly merits some recognition. My father came here in 1923, grew up in the system, served in World War II with the Navy and did what you were supposed to do in those days, came back and was elected justice of the peace of Las Vegas for one term. And that's all you got in those days because it was quite a job. It paid a lot of money. You made a lot of money. It didn't pay a lot of money. You made a lot of money off marrying people, things like that. Anyway, he was the JP there. He was also the county coroner. He got to do both jobs. But he made about 40- or \$50,000 a year. In 1942 or whenever it was, that was a lot of money. Colliers Magazine at the time did a story on him about how he was either the highest or the second highest -- I think the President of the United States is the only one that made more money than he did as a public servant, something like that. But anyway, yeah, these coroner's jobs, everybody talks about the Carol Lombard plane that crashed on the mountain. Well, my dad went up there on a horse. He was the coroner for that crash.

**Being the justice of the peace and a coroner -- I see a coroner as someone with a scientific background, medical background.**

Not in those days. Not in those days. You're right. Coroners today are usually medically trained people and all that. When my dad was justice of the peace, the coroner is something that they were so happy he volunteered to do it, you know. I mean, it's one of those kinds of jobs.

Anyway, he got elected in 1950 to the state legislature where he served with distinction [e.g. distinction] for 26 years, most of that time as the majority leader of the state senate. And the majority of that time also, each county -- we hadn't -- what's the word when you get one vote -- what's the word I'm thinking about? Anyway, you had 17 counties, you had 17 senators, one from each county. You impose democracy, if you will. I think there are still 17 senators, but probably 11 of them are from Las Vegas. What am I thinking of? I'm embarrassed I can't think of the word.

So in those days -- and this would be like 1954, starting with that -- the idea came that we needed an institution of higher learning in Las Vegas. You've got to realize the

power in those days was all in Reno because not only was Reno the bigger town, but it also kind of controlled the cows. Again, you had one vote out in each one of those counties. And those cow counties in those days looked to Reno as the home base. I mean, Reno was the older town. Las Vegas was a bunch of Bugsy Siegels and people like that, you know, and we don't need to deal with them. And here's my father in that bunch who gained the respect of all those old senators around the state. I'm not sure Reno ever supported him, even though today Bill Raggio, who is the senator, has always spoken very highly of my father and considered him one of the great legislative leaders of the state.

But in those days, my father took it upon himself to talk to those old cowboys. We needed this down in Las Vegas. Las Vegas was growing. And by that time, it was probably equal to the size of Reno or maybe even bigger. As a result, Nevada Southern was built out here. I think I went to it in 1956 or '7, whenever it was. It was over in one building called Frazier Hall. Now, Maude Frazier got most of the credit for the university because she was a legislator and a nice lady and revered by all. And I'll give her credit. It may have been her idea to begin with to have the university down here, but she didn't get it done. She was one Assembly woman. My father got it done. He got this university built down here and wheeled and deal. And he was on the Finance Committee and all that kind of stuff. He got this university over insurmountable odds when you think about it...Reapportionment was the word I was looking for. I think about 20 years ago, they gave him a Distinguished Nevadan Award out at the university, and that was the end of his involvement in that. I still resent that. I resent that university for not paying attention to his role in their existence. But that's neither here nor there. It's over with.

**How would you like to see him honored by the university?**

Oh, I'd leave that up to them. I wouldn't give them any ideas. If you know who your father is, you ought to honor thy father. You know, that kind of thing. And he is their father. It just has gone under the way. But history's full of that kind of stuff.

**I wanted to ask about some of the movers and shakers on the Westside.**

There were no movers and shakers on the Westside. There was some noise making.

**Last time we talked, you talked about Ruby Duncan.**

She's a mover and shaker in the true sense of the word. Recognized everywhere except Nevada because she was just the "N" word. That's how she was referred to most of her young active life, that crazy fat "N" lady over there. Ruby Duncan is a giant among ladies -- among human beings for what she did and what she accomplished.

Unfortunately, the people who should revere her the most revered her least. And that's the black people around her. She embarrassed some of them.

Understand, growing up in this town that the black community was run by the churches. Not that they still aren't. But the ministers ran the -- and I don't mean to slight because there's some great men over there who are ministers. And they're all men, by the way. And that's one the problems she faced, too. And she was part of a revolution taking place in America where the black woman was emerging, evolving, out of her subservience.

It's interesting, the dynamics of the Afro-American growth in this country. Someone needs to sit down -- and I'm sure it's been done. This is old whitey over here talking now. But as you know, growing up in America from the 1800s, the black woman was accepted in the house, in the white man's house. She was the maid or she was the nanny or whatever she was. She had a role. But she never rose above that role. It was accepted. The black man was never accepted in the house to speak of. He stayed outside and he worked the fields. As we progressed, he did the shoe shine in the airport or on the street or he did labor or he washed dishes in the back of the restaurant where no one would see him.

But in the community, in the ghetto itself -- and these were ghettos -- it seems to me, up until about the mid 50s, maybe early 60s -- maybe early 60s is better, the black male dominated, whether it was physical -- and I think most of it was physical. I think he physically imposed his will on his neighbors and on the women in the community for a bunch of reasons. I mean, one is he was bigger and stronger. Two, he was discriminated against. There's a Harry Chapin song about firemen. I've used this story a lot of times. But something's burning somewhere. Does anybody care? Do you know that song?

**No.**

It's a point about a white racist kind of guy with his family in a three-story wood apartment house kind of building, and the house is on fire, and there's no way out. And all of a sudden, the door upstairs breaks open, and there's a fireman there. And he's a black guy. He saves her life. And the story that goes along with that, you know, when it comes down to saving my life, that black guy can do it just as good as the white guy. But the point of the song was that in the economic stratus of this community, the blacks and the poor whites and the Mexicans, they're all fighting for that bottom spot. They don't want to be on the bottom. So they will do anything to whoever's competing with them to make that person lose.

Years ago CBS -- this would be the middle 60s -- did a report on poverty in America. One of the people they interviewed was this white sharecropper just over the border in Washington, D.C. He was out in Maryland or one of things. There were two little white-blond kids who had big circles under their eyes. And he used the "N" word about 20 times in that interview, talking about I'm not going to accept no welfare, no goddamn welfare. These kids are dying. But it was a racial thing. It had nothing to do with hunger and all that. He just hated those N's. And I wasn't going to be like those N's.

**And I think that's why Ruby Duncan's cause never gave her the recognition that it should have given her because she was fighting for welfare.**

She wasn't fighting just for black kids. That's right.

**I know. But that's not the way it is perceived.**

Oh, no. It's just black troublemakers. They didn't even understand about stomachs and medicine and rooftops and all the other things we're talking about. I mean, here's this lady who comes from Tallulah, Louisiana. Comes up here in 1954 -- I think I'm right on the date -- and goes out to some abandoned motel on the Boulder Highway. There's an irony in this. I think my dad owned that property. But he didn't know about it -- it was an abandoned old motel out there -- and didn't care about it. It was probably built when they built the dam for people who, you know, worked on the dam. But this was 1954, so this is 20 years later. It had no utilities, no water, none of that kind of stuff. Just a ghost town kind of a building out there.

And Ruby and her family -- and they had buckets, and she'd go up to the spring. Geographically, I'm trying to think. There was a spring, oh, probably two or three miles away from there up on the ledge by Russell Road. That's probably where she got the water. She'd tell you better than I would. She'd bring that water down for whoever it was that was in the family. She started it. She worked as a maid and all the other crummy jobs they have for black people in Las Vegas. Interesting times.

Anyway, she evolved. We kind of came together, she and what we were doing. And when I say we, it's not me. It's me and Legal Services and Jack Anderson and some of them. She was the head of us. She was making noise before we got there. But she wasn't getting any help from Legal Services. Legal Services was at the time -- and we're talking 1968 or '9 -- was nothing but a white man's aspirin to some social clubs. And it was put out there to deal with stuff no one else wanted to deal with. And that certainly didn't include feeding black people. It dealt with other -- go back to the U.S. Attorney's office -- other unimportant social issues. We got this little one-man Legal Services agency that took care of rent disputes and stuff like that.

So when we came in, I took over Legal Services. And Ruby was already out there. She'd been out there screaming and yelling for equal opportunity and adequate food and housing for the people of her community. Then it started. I'm trying to think what the catalyst was at the time. But there was a thing called -- there was a lunch suit. And the name of the lunch suit was *Domingues v. Clark County School District*, I think. But anyway, that's what brought Ruby into the limelight. Because at the time there was a group -- Herb Osmond, he was a good guy, white minister, Methodist minister, represented a bunch of white people who were mad at the school system because the school system wasn't serving hot lunches to their white kids. So he came to us looking for legal help. We brought Ruby and the ladies in. And they said, that's a nice idea, but how about the little kids who aren't getting any lunch? That result was a big, big lawsuit. Kenny Guinn will acknowledge today it was important because at the time he didn't know what to do about it and he knew it needed a lawsuit from us to make it happen.

**He was superintendent?**



He was superintendent at the time. They were feeding 50, 75 kids a day, free lunches. They're feeding 30-, 40,000 kids a day lunches now. For many of those children, that's the only meal they have all day. When this Ronald Reagan guy comes into office and suggests that the ketchup, the little container you get at the ballpark hot dog stand, satisfies a vegetable requirement in your lunch program, that kind of mentality crept back in. And it's back there now. I mean, the days of what we were doing are long since gone.

There's another irony or contradiction, whatever you want to call it. The best president for poor people -- if I asked you now, you wouldn't know the answer to this -- but the number one president in terms of those kind of programs, food stamp programs, employment opportunities, medicine, all that, you know who that was?

**I would guess Lyndon Johnson.**

Well, attitude-wise, you're right. Results, you're wrong. Richard Nixon. Now, this is my opinion. Not because he gave a damn. Not because he cared. Richard Nixon didn't want to be bothered with these dark kinds of influences. So he spent money on them. You'd say, we've got a poverty problem in West Virginia. Give them a few million dollars, tell them to shut up. Or whatever it was. And he did that all over the country. And that's how Legal Services was born in the Nixon administration. It was later under the Reagan administration that it went away and was killed, publicly slain. Anyway, it was Richard Nixon for the wrong reasons. But we didn't care in those days. The money was coming and we were being funded and everything was okay. That's another one people don't know about, but it's an interesting story.

So we have Ruby Duncan and she forms a group called Operation Life. We did some phenomenal things with Operation Life. We'll get to the other black leaders who started coming around, but they weren't around -- she was by herself. Understand, the ministers were afraid of her. Ministers in those days had a deal with the Great White Father across the tracks. And it is literally across the tracks.

We'll talk about the freeway system and what that was about. Why don't I mention it now, so I won't forget? The freeway was at that time being built -- the one we now call I-15 or whatever it is -- I-95, the one they're enlarging now. But in those days, they

were going to build it. And they were going to build it basically right down Bonanza, where it is today, where it's built, parallel with Bonanza. But D Street and whatever the streets are in there, there were no tunnels there. There were no overpasses. It was a wall. It was designed in those days -- and they'll deny it. They'll deny it forever. But it was designed to contain the black population. They had conversations and thoughts about -- in those days, there were about 40,000 blacks that lived here -- how can you contain them? This is one way. You can do it with two police cars, one on either end. You can contain 40,000 black people.

**So there was a wall where?**

It was the freeway. The freeway would be the wall.

**I see, okay.**

The freeway, a great big thing like this. And you couldn't come in and out of it. You don't have those underpasses that are there today, D Street and the rest of them. They were not in the plans. They were designed to -- big, nice wall around that side to keep them away from this side of town. Anyway, Ruby led the noise on that one and challenged that one. And it worked and it went away. At one time there were discussions and they were going to build a wall around City Hall so these radical, crazy people couldn't interfere with the good government, you know, that kind of stuff. These are times when the security issues started coming in and people were worried and afraid, particularly afraid of black people. Most were afraid of them because they don't even know them. But you're afraid of what you don't know.

I had a mother-in-law. She's excellent. And she's still floating around. But she hated black people. And she was in a rural --

**Did she know any black people?**

Didn't know any of them. Never met one. She lived in a rural part of Michigan and just hated them N's. Just hated them. I used to get in big fights with her. I said, why? Who do you know? Name me one. Oh, you know, sharecroppers live down, you know, et cetera. This goes back to the Harry Chapin song. People are always looking for someone to put below themselves. Right now, we've got the Mexicans and the blacks fighting for

position. The blacks don't want to lose the position, well, they've got to -- and the Mexicans are not their enemy. It is their competition, though.

**Well, I think that if blacks and Mexicans would unite --**

I think they should unite, but they're not. There's a religious thing there, too. You've got the Baptist kind of religion as opposed to the Catholic kind of religion. I don't think they're compatible. And I think that's where one of the problems is. Catholics are priests. Baptist ministers are some guy like you and me. And I think that's a big difference.

**You still think so now after the controversy?**

Oh, no. I mean, you're talking about the weakness of the Catholic priesthood? I mean, those poor babies have got themselves in a lot of trouble. I don't think that's anything new. I think that's gone on since the time of the world. Somebody said that the majority of the priests in the world are homosexuals. You can understand why. The privacy of being a priest and the living --

**Now, the homosexuality doesn't bother me. It's being a pedophile that bothers me.**

Me too. I have nothing against homosexuality. But it seems to breed it. The whole environment of the priesthood seems to breed what we're talking about. And I don't know if that's true or not.

**Tell me about Marion Bennett.**

Marion Bennett, what an interesting character. I've always liked Marion Bennett for his shrewdness. He's a shrewd son of a gun. Believe it or not, he's shrewd. Now, a lot of people won't say that is a compliment. They'll say that's just a negative definition of somebody. He's one of those ministers. He served in the Assembly, state legislature for a long time. I think in his way, he's done a lot of good for the black community. I don't think he touches it in terms of the quality of work that Ruby Duncan has done. But in his capacity, I think he's done a lot. But he's cautious.

Ruby wasn't cautious. There wasn't a cautious bone in her body. She dealt in two, right or wrong. It was either right or wrong. And she didn't speak in gray.

Marion's like all the other white guys and black guys who are successful politicians. They know how to speak gray. Marion's as good at speaking gray as any white guy I ever knew. Their word for that is survival, political survival, economic, whatever it is.

But that wasn't on Ruby's agenda. Ruby was out there for what she was doing. I get a warm feeling all of a sudden thinking of stuff we used to do together under her leadership. She was in charge. And Ruby wasn't the only one. There were ladies who grew out of her leadership, Erma O'Neill and Rosie Seals and Mary Wesley and the gal who just died, Romajeane Hutton. What a great lady Romajeane Hutton was, and Essie Henderson. They have their own image and their own identification. Some of them stayed loyal to Ruby throughout the years; others went their own way and formed their own groups. But the point was that there's nothing wrong with that. That's fine. They'd get in fights like all people do for political control of this or that.

Out of those years, I think about how all the good we at Legal Services did. But one of the reasons we did so good is because we were so powerful. We were powerful with the ability of lawyers to go to court and sue people. But we also had a constituency, a loud, large -- and to the folks in town, scary -- we had an army over there. And my offices were there. Our offices were in the Moulin Rouge and that's where we centered from, me and Jack and a few others, and kicked butt. And out of that, you have the leading lunch suit in the country, I mentioned earlier. Eviction from public housing, leading suit in the country. At that time all of the public housing around the country used the Guerra case -- not the Guerra case -- maybe it is -- yes -- no, no. Guerra's the pregnancy case. I mix them up. But anyway, lunch suit, evictions, medical.

**Tell me about the public housing case.**

The public housing case, I forget the name of it. I'm sorry. But anyway, it was against the City of North Las Vegas public housing. In those days there was no eviction. If you wanted somebody out, you kicked them out. It all stems from the original *Woods v. Miller* case. If you remember *Woods v. Miller*, we talked about that with the march down the street, and Ruby was leading that one. That was for due process in the system, which

we didn't have at the time. *Woods v. Miller* is a case that brought public hearings and all the due process necessary that goes along with receiving anything from the federal government. You can't take it away from them without due process. In those days a guy named George Miller, he was the devil who ran the state welfare department. And he truly was a devil. He was a bad guy. I don't know if he's dead or not, and I don't care. He reduced the checks of 54 percent of the people on welfare with no notice. All of sudden, you know, it doesn't make any difference that your rent is due tomorrow or your kids haven't eaten today, checks were over with. And that's when we went in and we marched, and we had all the big shots, the Reverend Abernathy, Jane Fonda, all those people came to town and marched right down the Strip and did all that kind of stuff. And that resulted, millions of dollars later, against the state. The state had to pay out. But Ruby Duncan led that.

Dr. Wiley, remember Dr. Wiley, George Wiley? He was the national head of the Welfare Rights Organization. He's dead now. We're talking about the late 60s, early 70s. These were the leaders of -- we called it the Movement for lack of a better term. In Las Vegas the Movement had a leader. The leader was Ruby Duncan. It wasn't Marion Bennett or any of the other men. They helped when they could, but they weren't the leaders. The leader was Ruby Duncan.

**In the earlier 60s -- '61, '62 -- would you say that there was a leadership difference at that point? Would you say then it was McMillan and West and Bob Bailey?**

Yeah. But now these are different people. We can talk about West and McMillan and one of the ones I convicted in the Yobo thing, a black counselor who sat on the county commission. I'm sorry we're going through a lot of names. McMillan -- and we talked about the lawyer.

**Keller.**

Keller. And who was the other name you mentioned?

**West.**

Dr. West. These were educated black people who had moved here from

someplace -- Bob Bailey -- who had moved here from someplace else and came in with a job and a reputation and an ability to make money. Those are the kinds of people those white people, you know, invited them over. They wouldn't invite them over a lot, but you might get two dinners a year out of being wherever you are in that --

**(End side 2, tape 1.)**

That's the other thing. And we're both guilty of it. We're sitting here talking about the difference between these black leaders, if you will. And the point is they're no different than white leaders. Everybody has their own little idiosyncrasies, their own way of doing things. And McMillan had his. And Bob Bailey has his. And Marion Bennett has his. And Dr. West has his. Dr. West's son and I went to high school together.

**Let me tell you why I'm asking these kinds of questions. As you probably know, I'm in the process of writing a dissertation.**

Right. I do know that.

**And my dissertation is going to be about the black community. But I want to get it right. I don't want it to be one-sided. I don't want to give all the credit for everything that happened to --**

To Ruby Duncan, for instance.

**Okay. I want to be able to tell the entire story.**

And that won't be easy because there's a lot of lying goes on when these things happen. You know that. A lot of lying goes on. And I'm, maybe from a white person's perspective, the best source you have for that. I don't know if I am or not. I don't want to take too much credit. But I did get to see a lot of other things.

When I ran for justice of the peace -- this was after Legal Services -- I got 94 percent of every black vote in Las Vegas. Now, black people don't get those kinds of votes. And I'm very proud of that. And guess what? When my son ran, he got those numbers, too, in many of those precincts.

**So how did you get out that vote?**

Ruby Duncan got out that vote. What do you mean? I mean, I went around and knocked on doors and did the best I could, but Ruby Duncan got that vote out, period. And

not just Ruby, but Erma Jean and some of the other ladies in the different groups, Rosie Seals. They got that vote out. But it got out and gave me a new presence, too. People recognized me as -- I don't think they liked it. It still goes back to when the head of the resort association says, he's going to be Attorney General over my dead body. Well, they know all that stuff. They know that I had the black vote, what I got. And they know what I did as U.S. Attorney. They know what I did as justice of the peace. And that's all the stuff they don't like. It rubs them. That's not unique to me. That's all over this country.

**Tell me about Rene Dimond.**

Rene Dimond, good lady. Good, good lady. Her husband's Leo Dimond, who worked in the gaming business for years, likes to fish now. But Rene was always there. She was one of the white ladies who came in early and was close to Ruby and advised and, I'm sure, helped raise money over the years for different things, that sort of thing. I think they got estranged at one time. I'm not sure about that. But Rene's still around. Rene's also white. She's able to go back to her side of town and hold those jobs that she's had a lot. She's been advisory governor. White people aren't going to appoint Ruby Duncan to the big jobs. They're going to appoint black people who look like you, who act like you. That's the facts of life. And Ruby's not like you. That doesn't make you better or her better. It's just different. That's what I was trying to say a minute ago.

**It's just my experiences.**

All that stuff. And your carriage and how you handle yourself. Well, I haven't got you to meet Julie Payne yet. But Julie Payne was a black lady who was like you. She came up and she got involved with Poor People Pulling Together.

**So Poor People Pulling Together was another movement?**

It was a spin-off of -- Poor People Pulling Together, PPPT, was a spin-off of Operation Life. Erma O'Neill. Rosie kind of stayed in the middle, maybe. But she had a lot of ladies that went with her. Their primary was tenants. Remember we'd had an earlier conversation about how they gathered all the poor people, white and black and Mexican and everything, in town and we tried to determine what their priorities were, what's most important to them? That came out of one those meetings, this PPPT. Erma and the ladies

recognized that the number one priority amongst poor people, white or black or whatever their color, is a roof. It's not medicine. It's not food. It's a place to go at night and be safe or at least halfway safe. That's what PPPT was. It was a tenants' rights organization that evolved and would, you know, lead tenant walkouts and those kinds of things all over the county. I mean, just out in Henderson. It mostly dealt with public housing kind of projects, and it was very valuable. It's equally valuable as Ruby.

Ruby had other things, like food stamps. When we got food stamps on, mostly funded by (indiscernible). He was the Catholic priest. He was a Franciscan who maintained his church, St. Joseph's or whatever it is over there on Reisner. Crazy guy. Love him. He's still around. He does his jail time regularly for protesting against some atom bomb or something like that. He's got a lot more guts than I got, I tell you. He puts it where his mouth is.

Anyway, we were testifying in front of the legislature on food stamps. I remember Louie forgot his white collar for his priest thing. And he went in the men's room. And he got some toilet paper. Wrapped and folded, ironed and pressed it, and got it up there. We went up there in front of the legislature and talked about food stamps. Food stamps to them was another welfare program, and they didn't want anything to do with it. We had to go in and prove to them that it made everybody a lot of money. I mean, it brought millions and millions of dollars into Nevada. Not only did it accomplish the feeding of people, which is good -- it's supposed to be good -- but it got you suppliers of the food and grocery stores and all the other people -- it meant money in your pocket. And that's how we sold it. We didn't sell it because it brought nutrition or it was the right thing to do. We sold it because of money. And we knew that. But what the heck. You go do that. I think I explained earlier about the commodities program before, which is what food stamps replaced.

Anyway, in the back of that, there's Ruby. She's back there and the other ladies. I don't mean to -- and she would say the same thing. She would talk about the other ladies, how important they were. But people were listening to us. Of all the black folks in the community -- you can put all those ministers in one big box -- they didn't get the attention



that Ruby Duncan got from the powers that be.

**Was it because she had good legal advice behind her that she was able to get that kind of attention from the white community, or what do you think --**

Well, that might have helped. I don't want to take too much credit. I mean, we're willing to go to court. She had her own gang of lawyers, and that was us. But she made the decisions.

**I understand.**

That might have helped. They weren't ready for us. Like that eviction case in North Las Vegas we were talking about earlier, half of these cases were what they called consent decrees. The other side threw in the towel. They didn't go to court and fight over them because they knew they couldn't win them because we were better.

**Explain legally what a consent decree is.**

That means the other side throws in the towel. It's as simple as that.

**So when Charles Keller filed a consent decree against -- I believe it was 18 different casinos in the early 70s about jobs, do you remember that?**

And they consented. Let me tell you why I don't like that. And I'll give Keller credit for it. But again, it's where you're coming from. So Jack Anderson and I went with the attorneys from the Civil Rights Division here in town. This is that time in life, the early 70s. They got this consent decree. And everybody was very happy that the hotels were no longer going to discriminate. They were going to equally hire people, et cetera. We said to them -- Jack said, well, the law provides a lot more than what you're doing. The law requires that they need reparation. For all the damage they've done in the past, they need to repair some of that. They wanted nothing to do with it and neither did Keller and anybody else. They liked what they got. They were happy with what they got. And life went on. We left the room. We say, what about reparation? What about all the damage these people have done?

**So why did Keller back down?**

Everybody backed down. Because that wasn't Ruby and the ladies. This was what Ruby calls the Booshies.

**Right. Because it was the NAACP and --**

The Booshies. Well, I'm prejudiced because she's made me prejudice, okay. They were good people -- wonderful people -- but they came from a different slant.

**I agree that there was a split in the community.**

Okay. That's a good word.

**So are you telling me that --**

Ruby was with us that night. We left that meeting. We walked out on it. Ruby says, you know, we just don't have anything in common. You guys march to a different drummer than we do. Glad you got your consent decree. And Keller wasn't at that meeting. It was a lawyer meeting. And these were Civil Rights Department lawyers. And I knew one of them was from Las Vegas.

**When you say Civil Rights Department lawyers, who are these lawyers?**

I don't even remember the names. I remember one name, but I don't remember the rest of them.

**Out of what agency?**

They came out of the Justice Department, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. They came here and saved the world.

**Did they come especially for this case, or were they stationed here?**

No, no, no. They were never stationed here. They came here for this case. Keller had filed a lawsuit and that brought the attention. So they sent out a couple of people to look it over and realized Keller was right in what he was saying.

That's not the problem with where we were coming from. Where we're coming from -- I mean, all you did is slap their hand. They all agreed to be good guys from now on. What about all the stuff they used to do? In my mind at the time, it's pretty exaggerated. But, I mean, that's like telling the Klu Klux Klan that they can't do what they do anymore and be satisfied with that. That's an exaggeration. I understand that. But the analogy, I think, can be drawn. It is kind of what the guys are doing right now with George W. Bush, our President. He's going to forgive all the illegal aliens. And his own party is saying, you can't give credit to people who have been bad. That's what you're

doing. I personally don't care. I believe in what the Statue of Liberty says. Bring me your humble and weak, all that stuff.

**Now, I'm sure that there is some competition at some level. But a lot of those jobs, Americans don't want anymore.**

Why?

**Because they're jobs in the fields in California.**

They're tough. That's why they don't want them.

**That's right. And nobody wants to do that work anymore.**

That's what the black man's facing because the Mexican will do that job.

**And I think that you'll find that a lot of African-Americans are looking for other kinds of jobs now.**

Because they got a taste of it. If you think back to the Black Panthers and Bobby Seale and all those guys, they weren't revolutionaries. They were insurrectionists. They wanted a piece of the pie. They didn't want to change the pie. They just want to be let in and have a piece of the pie. The white American doesn't understand that. They thought they were some Communist-led whatever it was. But that's all they wanted.

**And you're different. Coming from where you are now, how do you look at --**

I had three wives who will agree with you, but go ahead.

-- integration and segregation? Do you think that African-Americans -- just looking at Las Vegas -- did we do the right thing to fight for integration, or should it have been done differently?

That's an interesting question. I don't know if I know the answer to that. I think that the biggest problem that any minority group has -- it just happens to be blacks who dominate -- actually, the Latin American is the largest population -- but in my experience when I was here, it was African-American. When you go back to look at the logic whether it's *Brown v. Board of Education* or *Texas v. White* or any of those Alabama cases, the issue is that when you isolate the black person, get him out of the mainstream -- my best example is the Texas law school case. These kids are growing up in law school. They're making their connections. That's because they're Texans. You don't want them to do that.

When they get out in the real world, they have lost all that camaraderie they developed in law school and all the deals are being made exclusive of them.

That's what integration does. It brings you in. And more importantly, it introduces you to another human being. That's what integration really should be. There's nothing wrong with this guy or that guy or anything. We see that it's happening. And obviously, the blacks in this town are moving out into the different communities for two reasons. One is to better themselves, I'm hoping. And two, the Mexicans are moving them out. That's happening right now. Mexicans are coming in in unequal numbers. And good for them. I mean, they're hard-working people.

**I think you're going to see that throughout the West.**

Oh, absolutely. It's what happened when the blacks left the South, Civil War country.

I think the right to integrate is mandatory in our constitution. You have to be able -- if you are black or whoever you are -- to move into a neighborhood. If you can afford the house and all that, you have the right to do that. And it's important just for the body public. I mean, it makes us great. As long as we segregate ourselves and leave certain people out for whatever reason, the color of their skin or the way they talk or whatever it is when you do those kind of things, you're defeating yourself. That's self-defeating, especially now in this world of terrorism.

Can you imagine if all the different minority groups felt welcome in America and felt secure and solid that we'd be having the same problems we're having today? I don't think so. No. Because we've got a gathering of people who are discriminated against. You've got these black kids joining the Muslim churches and stuff like that. And I don't know. I'm probably exaggerating again. But they've joined for some reason. They weren't getting it out of their Baptist churches or their Catholic churches or something like that. So there's an audience. There's an audience for all the bad guys in the world. And America's created its own audience by segregation, by discriminating. That's my two bits for this morning.

**Before we end --**

Are we ending now? God, I was just getting going.

**-- tell me about your work after the U.S. Attorney's Office.**

After that ejection, you mean?

**You ran for office?**

I ran for Attorney General. I told you that story already.

**What happened after that?**

Well, that would be 1982. You know, I had law enforcement in my blood. That's what I wanted to do. And I think I had said somewhere along in this interview that one of the reasons I failed in the U. S. Attorney General's race was my inability to tell the public that feeding babies and making sure that senior citizens had good medicine is no different than putting bad guys in jail. It's good government. And it's not left-wing or right-wing. Putting bad guys in jail, they call right-wing. Feeding babies is Communism or some silly word like that. That's what I believed in and that's what I tried to do. I obviously failed in getting that point across, even though in those races I had every police endorsement. I had all those kind of people because they knew what that meant. There are so many contradictions out there.

**But with somebody outspending you five to one, that's difficult.**

That's exactly right. And that's what happened. A lot of television. A lot of pretty face television.

Anyway, so after that, my old buddy, who was a JP when I was, Bob Miller, who was governor -- I said to Bob, well -- oh, I know what I was doing. Right at that time, I was thinking for running for district attorney, another area of law enforcement. It was up and I was ready to go. And I had people ready to go. We still had our committees. And everybody said, let's make him district attorney. Bob Miller came to me -- he later became governor -- Bob says, I just got out after meeting. And he named who was in the meeting. It was the same guys that I told you about earlier. They say they don't want you in any law enforcement jobs. They will not stand by it. They will go out of their way to beat you in any law enforcement. Do you want to run for Congress? Do you want to run for state -- you can have their full support. But you're not getting any law enforcement job. That was

told to me by Bob Miller, then governor -- going to be governor. So I says all right.

In fact, the guy who became district attorney about this same time came to me and asked -- because he thought I clearly would win this job. There was no question in his mind that I was going to be the next Attorney General. He was district attorney as a deputy in there. He came to me and says, I just need a job. I need to make my retirement, et cetera. As soon as I'm out of the way, which Bob Miller and those guys convinced me -- and I believed it. It just goes to the same thing I did with Attorney General. They picked him to be the district attorney, which is fine. He's a good guy. That's what he is.

So then I told Miller, I said, hey, Bob, you got any jobs out there? I don't need to be paid. I'm a lawyer. I can make a living. But you got some of those tough jobs? I like tough jobs. Give me something that could cause you embarrassment or you're worried about and all that stuff. So he calls me one day. And he says, how about a seat on the Wildlife Commission, you know, hunters and fishermen and all that stuff. And I like to fish and do a little hunting. I think he just wanted a lawyer on there at that time. It ended up that three of us were appointed. But the plan was to make a guy named Ed Bruce, who became my dear friend -- he just died recently -- but Ed Bruce at the time sat on the national board of the National Rifle Association. They have an 18-man board, and he was one of them for the whole world. He lived in Sparks. It was Miller's plan to make him the chairman of this commission. It was a nine-man board. Everybody got in there and no one wanted Ed, without my participation at all. I had walked into the second meeting. You are now the chairman. We all voted you to be chairman.

So for eight years I was chairman of the Nevada Wildlife Commission. No pay, just a lot of trouble and strife. Made as many enemies there as I made anyplace else. The difference there was the constituency was all armed and some of them were pretty good. I guess I got in the most trouble in the Wildlife -- there's a group of mad hunters out there. They call themselves Hunters Alert or something like that. And they're just mad at authority. They don't want anybody to tell them what they can kill or shoot and all that. They supported Kenny Guinn. They now hate Kenny Guinn. They got their own guys on the commission. And the guys on the commission got educated on the commission, they

realized, and now they hate them. It's not going to change. I haven't been there since -- when did I leave? Seven, eight years ago. But they're still writing in their newsletter about how they hate me.

**You had a lasting impact.**

Well, I wanted them to do it right. The biggest impact I had and the people who really disliked me the most were law enforcement. State of Nevada Wildlife law enforcement who thought they were storm troopers. And they could march around and push people around and do things because they had a gun. And that's not their job. They are game wardens. They're not cops. I mean, they have a cop jurisdiction. But act like a game warden, don't act like a cop. They were setting undercover things, these stings. I said, stop it. This group went behind our back once and tried to get their friends in the legislature to allow them to purchase their own uniforms. They wanted black uniforms.

**They're going to be Gestapo.**

Yeah, that kind of stuff. It's crazy. But we did that for eight years. And the guy who was the chairman, this guy named Willy Malene, an administrator, and I were getting in fights. We're still friends. I just looked at him and said, you and I, we disagree on darn near everything these days. Diminishing returns have set in. I'm not liking coming here anymore. I used to love coming here. I don't like it anymore. And I'm sure you don't like me around anymore because I tend to embarrass you on things, challenge you on things. So why don't I just leave? And I did. And I still had two more years of the next term.

Then throughout this, I've belonged to the Association of Former United States Attorneys. It was about that time, say four years ago, three or four years ago, that group asked me to be its executive director. Another freebie. One of these days someone's going to offer me a paying job.

**Usually executive directors are paid.**

Of most organizations in the country, yeah. But not this one. Well, this one doesn't have any money. I mean, these are a bunch of has-beens and want-to-bes. We all had the greatest job in the world and now we get -- it's really a reunion kind of thing. We get together every year. I run the program now. This coming year, we're in Ashville, North

Carolina. This past year we were in Las Vegas. I put together a (indiscernible) program with dinner speakers, and I put together the best in the package.

**So who was your dinner speaker last year?**

Last year in Las Vegas, my dinner speaker was Senator Richard Bryan. He was the best we've ever had. The year before him, I had Chief Justice Renquist of the Supreme Court. The year before him, I had Mayor Giuliani of New York City. This year, I have Janet Reno. I get the best. I'll give you an example of my program this year. I have Joe Widdly, who was a guy I know. He's chief counsel for Homeland Security. He's just an hour speaker. I've got Judge Martin from the southern district of New York. Judge Martin, who had a lifetime appointment, just quit that judgeship to go around the world and challenge Ashcroft, saying that what Ashcroft is doing in the Justice Department is wrong. That's what he does. So he's one of my speakers. I mix them up. I don't discriminate against anybody. I get both sides. I've got Leon Freedman, a very liberal Supreme Court expert. He was Scalia's roommate in college. He's from Costa Law School. He's always there. He's regular member. I picked up a new speaker from the University of North Carolina Law School who I have never met. His name is Connelly. He's going to talk about the sociological impact of the Patriot Act on America. What a nice little study that's going to be.

**Is the public invited to any of these forums?**

No. You have to be a member. And I'm trying to get Larry Thompson. Do you know who Larry Thompson is? Larry Thompson just quit as the city -- he's a black man. He was the U.S. Attorney in Birmingham, Alabama. He's a wonderful man and very bright and very Republican and all that stuff. But he was the Deputy Attorney General of the United States. Hopefully, he'll be my other speaker. You know, it's a nice mix in there, a good program.

**That sounds great. Any other commissions that you've served on?**

Well, I'd have to look on the wall. Over the years, Michael O'Callaghan had created some kind of goofy commission when he was governor. But he just gave me that so I'd shut up a little bit. It's called the Committee on People or something. Hold still



while I find it because I forgot what the damn name is. The Governor's Commission on the Status of People.

**So what exactly is that?**

That's a good question. And I don't have an answer for it.

**What did you do on the commission?**

Met.

**So now you're working with this law firm?**

No. I'm with me. I'm by myself.

**Oh, you're by yourself. You just have an office.**

I rent the space in here. And I run the Legal Services. And I'm getting old.

**What do you mean you "run the Legal Services"?**

I mean the Former U.S. Attorneys. I run that. Collect their dues. Do a newsletter every now and then. And that gets my mind working a little bit.

I spend most of my time, if you call it political time, ensuring the security of my son as a judge. I've run two campaigns now for him. I learned from losing those other campaigns how to win. I won one campaign. You know, I ran for justice of the peace and won that one. But my job is to protect him. People out there know that. They know that when they run against my son, they're going to run against me. I don't mean that I'm a big deal or I've got any money. That's not the issue. The issue is that Bert Brown has a father that will go walk the precincts with him and do that. I put on my tennis shoes and my shorts and I go up into Sun City and Summerlin.

And we were telling this story last night. You get these old crotchety senior citizens, of which I'm one. They'll be in the room and it's a Saturday afternoon. And, you know, they got the screen door open to get some fresh air. And there's some guy on the front porch knocking on their door and interfering with whatever they're doing. This happened so many times. Some old crotchety voice in the back going, what do you want? What are you bothering me for? And I'd yell, get your butt out here. I want to talk about my son. I probably lost a couple that way. But nine out of ten of them love that approach. Here's a father out there who's out campaigning for his son. And they really, really like

that.

**That's good. Now, I also have heard that you are involved with real estate now.**

Oh, yeah, just personal real estate, you know, the stuff my father owned and my grandmother before him. Brown-accumulated property. I've spent most of the time trying to pay off the state taxes laid upon me when my father died. That's mostly what I do.

**The reason I ask that is because there is some development going on in downtown. The mayor wants to redevelop downtown.**

I'm part of that. I'm building a parking garage.

**Another one?**

No. A private one on property that used to be my grandmother's house. It's right in front of the new courthouse at the corner of Lewis and Casino Center Boulevard.

**One of the things that I've heard about is that downtown will eventually have condominiums, town houses, high-rise apartment complexes.**

Those are concepts that people -- don't hold your breath.

**Do you think that's going to work for downtown Las Vegas?**

Oh, I think it has to work, I mean, if you want to preserve or recapture the urban area of downtown Las Vegas. I'm supportive of the mayor. I think the mayor's got the right idea. A good example is this Performing Arts Center. The folks want it out in Summerlin where the white people live and they can drive their little convertible Mercedes over to the opera or the ballet or something like that. But that's not what the Performing Arts -- the Performing Arts Center is for everybody. And the people in the city center, for the most part, are immobile. That didn't even enter their minds out there. They don't give a damn they're immobile. How are they doing going to get out there? Are they going to get on a bus and come out? What's wrong with walking to it? Like most cities do, you walk to their Performing Arts Center or you catch a cab. But you can't afford a cab to go all a way to Summerlin. And Oscar [*Editor's note: Mayor Oscar Goodman*] recognized that and he's having that here in town. I am sure he's taking a lot of heat for that.

Oscar takes a lot of heat for a lot of things he does. I don't agree with him on

everything. I personally believe Oscar Goodman may be the best mayor this town has ever had simply because he's doing it. He's busy out there doing something. Other than his own ego, I don't think he has another agenda. I don't think he wants to be governor. He's stupid if he wants to be governor. He wants to be mayor of Las Vegas and he likes being mayor of Las Vegas. That's good for him. He's doing what mayors are supposed to do.

**(End side 1, tape 2.)**

**What do you think of the Fremont Street Experience and the Neonopolis?**

I think it's all silly. I think silly is a good word for it. Oscar gets no blame for that other than he finished off Neonopolis, which I don't think he had any options. But I think Neonopolis was a bad idea to begin with. It has no audience. It has no customers. It's at the end of the gaming thing. Downtown Las Vegas has really become a locals' area for local people. Local people don't need a goofy little shopping center down at the end of the gaming.

**Well, what about when the high-rise apartments are built and the town houses are built?**

Well, how long away do you think that is? I don't think Neonopolis can survive that long. All these are well-intended ideas. I just think they were not thought out long enough. The Fremont Experience, I think, is a joke. It's kind of neat. But when the locals who live out in Summerlin have visitors in town, they come to town. They bring these people down to see that. They watch one show. They don't go in the hotels and spend their money. They come down. They sit on the sidewalk with their Kentucky Fried Chicken and watch a couple of shows for an hour. And then they go back home. That's what that's accomplished.

Has it improved business downtown? I'm sure someone can say it has. I don't believe it has. I think if it has, they're fooling you with the numbers. They got this bureaucracy built around. They charge all these hotels all this money. Some of them, as you've read in the paper, can't afford to pay all that stuff because they're not making that kind of money. I just think it's a big white elephant. It's clever. But I don't know what it accomplishes. I don't think it accomplished what it meant to accomplish.

There are a lot of people downtown, but they're not in the hotels. They're in that corridor with all those kiosks and those little traveling stands selling trinkets and stuff. Are they going in the hotels? I don't know. I doubt it. That's Fremont Experience.

It was their attempt to compete out there with the Strip. The Strip is not designed to appeal to the locals. You've got a whole other culture that does that. That's the Palace Station, the Station people and the Gaughan people and the Boyd people. Well, Boyd's more diversified. But the earlier two I mentioned, they're the ones who are feeding the locals. They do it so much better than anybody downtown does it, and they know how to -- food's the answer. They know how to prepare decent, you know, seven and a half, eight-quality food. Get people in and out. All they want. Those people spend their money in there. They stop and play those slot machines. It obviously works because I don't think anybody is as successful as those two groups. I mean, they just make a lot of money. They make it by giving a lot of stuff away.

**Have you ever invested in any of the casinos?**

No. There are things you do and you don't do in my mind. It deals with what my sense of right and wrong is. For instance, I've been told that the second largest business in Las Vegas after the hotels, gaming -- that goes together -- are the topless bars. There are a ton of them around. I mean, they're everywhere. Are they a blight? I guess you could call them a blight. But I certainly don't want to be partners with them. I don't want to be involved in -- and I know some of these guys that run these joints. On the street they're fine and all this stuff. But I still don't want to be their partner, and I don't want to reap any of their benefits from it, and I don't want to go to their places. And I have been to their places. And I, probably four or five times over a 30- or 40-year period, have been to a topless bar. And I'm still trying to figure out why I went the next time because it's silly. It's a silliness, you know. That doesn't make me Mr. Pure because I'm anything but Mr. Pure.

**Is there anything else that you want to share with us? As you know, these interviews will be used for educational and research purposes in years to come.**

That's interesting. Again, I've got my prejudices. The white folks are taking care

of the white folks. And no one's taking care of the black folks. Few are taking care of them. The only reason they're starting to pay attention to the Mexican folks in town is because the numbers are increasing and, God forbid, someone may register. Do you realize what would happen in this town if they got those Mexicans registered?

**Yes. Yes. I understand that you're probably thinking of black people as living on the Westside and --**

That's the ones I'm -- yeah.

**And that's probably the community that you're talking about.**

That's the only community I know. I don't know the black people who live out -- and I know they are. You go in all these communities, there are black people everywhere, which is kind of what we were after to begin with. I mean, that was kind of the goal. There's nothing wrong with that. But I'm talking about the ones they left home, they left behind.

**Because I think that you're going to find that the majority of African-Americans now do not live on the Westside.**

No. I said that earlier. Mexicans have replaced them. They've moved them out. But you know a lot of those black people living there, I bet they've formed a new ghetto someplace. If you look around -- and I don't know this -- but they will come together. People come together. When you have something in common like not having something, you'll come together to have each other if nothing else.

**And you're probably right.**

I think if we go around a neighborhood, you'll find this group. I'll give you an example. You go up to Summerlin, okay, which is very white. But it has some black people in it. Most of them live on the same street. They look for that. Jewish people, a lot of Jewish people up in Sun City. Most of them are bunched. They're all in their own little two or three streets here or two or three streets there.

**And I think it has something to do with a group's culture.**

Well, of course it does. But you have protection. Who was one of the black leaders -- it may have been Malcolm X or somebody -- who was talking about bunching

up? He says, do not bunch up. They can get you with one grenade. Do not bunch up. Disperse. Get out in the crowd. There's truth to it. Certainly, Jews historically learned that.

**For someone who is studying the African-American experience in Las Vegas, give me some unique areas that I should concentrate. Tell me about special lawsuits that I should go back and find and read.**

Well, you mentioned earlier the Charlie Keller lawsuit. In terms of suits with racial implications, that may be one of the only ones. The rest of them, when we started, we were not racially inclined. We were dealing with poverty. In those days, 70 percent of the people on welfare were white. That's another figure people don't like to swallow, but it's true. Our issues were hunger issues and medicine issues and housing issues, poor people issues. And we were good at it. We were good, if not better, than anybody in the country with our little, teeny old, dinky office with a picture of Che Rivera hanging over the front door. Those were the days. Funny, funny times.

What the kids need to learn? I think the white people are the ones that need to be educated. They need to understand that there's nothing wrong with black people. It would be just nice as could be if we had a nice black family living next to you. You don't want some crazies living next to you. You don't want any crazies living next to you.

**Do you think that that is still a major problem today?**

Oh, the gap is twice as wide -- oh, yes -- the economic gap between blacks and whites. There's no question. Every black kid can't be Michael Jordan or the goofy kid singer.

**Michael Jackson.**

Michael Jackson. Every black kid doesn't know how to tap dance, doesn't know how to sing, doesn't know how to dunk the ball. That's about one percent of the blacks that know how to do that.

**What I should look at in the black community, that's how we started this.**

The black community needs leadership like any community. Does it have leadership? You're out there more than I. You're black. Do you see leadership out there?

**Do other communities have leadership?**

I don't know.

**Usually, when we look at leadership in the black community, we're talking about a black figure someplace.**

You know what's funny? Here's a good example. We're watching all these stupid, silly Democratic campaigns. Every white group I've been in -- and most of the ones I'm in have got mostly white people in them -- the one guy they agree with is Sharpton. But they wouldn't vote for this guy if their life depended on it. But, boy, he's right, you know, Sharpton's really right. He's really saying the right thing. But do you think they'd vote for him? They would never vote for him. Will he get one percent of the vote? Never. The black people won't vote for him.

**That's true.**

But he's right about so many things.

**He says a lot of things. He said something about Howard Dean the other day that was exactly right.**

How many black people do you have on your council? None. And I'm not saying that you have an obligation to go out and hire black people simply because they're black. But I think they need to get the benefit of the doubt, which we've never given them. The benefit of the doubt is what we're talking about. When a black guy comes to apply for the job, listen to him, pay attention to him, see if he's got talent. Affirmative Action still has a role, and that role is that since there are people that won't listen, you have to force it upon them. That's what Affirmative Action meant, because if you don't force it upon them, the kindness of their little Christian hearts will not work. It does not work.

**Yeah. I agree.**

So what is going in the black community? To learn about them or to teach about the black community?

**I am just looking to write the history of the black experience in Las Vegas from the beginning of the city to about 1970.**

Well, most of that, as you know, was all grandparents were slaves. They came out

of the South. They came out of Louisiana or what we affectionately refer to as Misshavanah. They come out of Misshavanah and they come here to subservient jobs or any jobs, mostly maids and the waitresses. I told you I represented my grandmother's maid. And I mix them up because there were two of them. It was a mother and daughter. One was Annie Dansy and one was Mary Nettles. And I think Mary Nettles was the mother. These two ladies worked as maids all over. They just didn't work for my grandmother. They worked as maids all over town. But they saved their money and saved their money. They ended up going five blocks down off of Fremont Street. They put a lot of kids through college with that. They're both dead now, I'm sure. But that's what the goal was.

**Now, Mary Nettles, that's a name that I've heard I think from Clarence Ray.**

Who is Clarence Ray?

**Clarence Ray is an African-American who came here early on and was a gambler.**

Is he still alive?

**No, not any longer, but he knew everybody in the city. Someone did an oral interview with him and we have it in the --**

I'd like to read that. What's the guy's name? Jimmy --

**Jimmy Gaye**

Jimmy Gaye. Jimmy Gaye just died, didn't he?

**Jimmy Gaye died --**

Well, I mean, like four or five years ago?

**Yes.**

Jimmy Gaye was kind of the court jester of the black community.

**Now, explain that to me.**

The white people would bring Jimmy Gaye to anything because he was likable. He was funny. He was smiling all the time. He was a shoe shiner. It's racism at its worst. Jimmy Gaye was a lovely man. But he was the court jester for the white community. Ruby would say that better than I. It's not her feelings, just watching him.



**When I interviewed some of the maids who came from Fordyce and Tallulah, they referred to Jimmy Gaye as the father of Fordyce. He came from Fordyce, Arkansas. They called him the father of Fordyce because he got so many jobs here for so many black people.**

I bet he did. I bet he did. And that's a good point because he was probably a good buffer, too. I bet Jimmy Gaye did get a lot of jobs. I bet there are a lot of people who are very grateful to Jimmy. He was probably a buffer, too. I mean, if you're a white guy with power and you want to step on some black guy, you may hesitate a little bit because you've got to step on Jimmy Gaye first. There may be a real value in that because everybody liked Jimmy Gaye.

**And he was a golfer.**

I was never a golfer, so I didn't know that. But okay. Did he play golf with black people or white people?

**White people.**

Well, that goes to he's the jester. Let's bring Jimmy Gaye. He's funny. He's got all these good stories. And we'll bring him out and we can have fun with him. He's not coming home tonight with us, but we can have fun with him. That's why I said court jester because Jimmy Gaye was slick, hand slapping. He had a great big white mouth, white teeth. He was always out there. In every political thing, Jimmy Gaye was right up front. I think they used him. But he used them, too. So that's okay. It made them feel better because they did have a black guy in the crowd. Jimmy Gaye probably understood that. I probably didn't give him enough credit over the years. He probably did a lot of good, now that I think about it. He kept the dogs away.

**That's right. I think that was his function.**

He probably knew that, too. Probably, other people didn't know that. Now, if he got them a job, they're obviously grateful for that. But they didn't understand the bigger impact he had or the bigger influence he had. That's very important.

I'm glad I learned that today. I learned that today and that's good. Maybe one of these days they'll learn the good that Ruby Duncan did. Did I mention to you that the

League of Women Voters voted her the number one woman in the world? In the world. And in Las Vegas, she's just the old "N" lady.

**She had been written up before she began to get local recognition because she is going to appear at the first conference at the law school which is going to --**

Our law school here?

**Yes. Which is going to take place February 20th and 21st, I believe. She will be one of the community people on a forum that they're going to have there. But she got a national write-up. I think some students from a school in New York wrote a book about the welfare --**

I'm in the book. I know the book.

**Okay. The welfare movement.**

Yeah. We're doing it right now. The gal just called me four or five days ago. She wanted me to review the -- she hadn't sent the book to me yet. She wants to before they release it.

**Oh, now, this must be a second book.**

It could be. I mean, this is from Dartmouth. I'm sorry. This is not from --

**Good. I'd like to see what they're going to write about it, as well. So it looks like her recognition is going to be national first?**

It always was.

**And then maybe we'll give her some recognition here?**

But she's always had national recognition. People in the Movement, as we call it, over the years have known about Ruby Duncan in the big law schools, Columbia's law center and the Atlanta law center and the Jackson, Mississippi. They all know about Ruby Duncan and recognize her contributions. It's locally that she's just the "N" woman. It's that "N" word. And I don't want to indict everybody in Las Vegas because she has some white friends, some white ladies who have joined her. But I'd like to go ask every one of them -- you've already mentioned a couple of them -- when is the last time you talked to Ruby? I'll bet it's been over a year.

**Is this "N" word used a lot in the white community?**

Of course, it is. Not by me.

**I know.**

But it's used. Yeah, white people use that. White people use other words, too. I mean, spics are spics and niggers are niggers and all that. In my mind, a low white person talks like that, even though there are some fancy people who use those words. I told you about Father Vitale using the "F" word. I mean, people become human from time to time. And human is not an excuse for it. It's the reason for it. And they just do dumb, bad things. And using that word is a dumb, bad thing. Now, white people say, well, the black people call each other that. Well, then they're dumb black, too, for doing that because it's a derisive, nasty word that has no saving grace in it whatever. It wasn't ever designed for that. It's a poop word. It's designed as a poop word just like the "F" word was and the rest of it. And you don't need to use it because it has no place.

**I agree.**

**(End side 2, tape 2.)**

**This is Claytee White. And I'm with Mahlon Brown in his office. Today is January 26th, 2004. How are you this morning?**

I'm fine.

**Good.**

You appear to be very fine, too.

**Well, thank you so much. I wanted to just ask some questions that we didn't get to before. I appreciate your knowledge of the black community. So I'm going to dwell on some of that this morning. I want to talk about the political life. Do you know Joe Neal?**

Very well.

**Could you tell me your associations with him and his --**

Well, Joe was there back when. He worked for one of the agencies that supplemented or did something with the Test Site. I'm not sure what the name of it was. They had different names. There was probably a boom to the black community, economically speaking, because I think they did hire an inordinate -- based on Las Vegas

history -- they hired blacks for jobs that weren't restroom attendants and gardeners and stuff like that. If you were asking hotels in those days about how many minorities you employed, they'd give you this number, but they didn't tell you what category that number was in. You know, it was usually restroom attendants and maids and stuff like that. But along comes the Test Site stuff, the atomic energy. There were a lot of jobs out there and Joe was in one of those jobs. I don't know exactly what it was. But I know he came around and was supportive.

And I can only say good things about him. There are people who will detract from the importance of Joe Neal. I think Neal was important not only to us in those days, because he helped -- I mean, he wasn't the leader he is today -- but in those days he was certainly a participant. He was vocal, outspoken. And we helped him whenever he needed to come to us, you know. You have to understand, most of everybody we're dealing with in those days were ladies, all right? There weren't a lot of men running around doing this, other than Ruby's boys. And Ruby's boys were helping us in whatever way they could. I don't know why I remember Kenny the most. Kenny was Ruby's son. He was a big, good-looking kid, and he looked like he could kick ass all over town. But to me, he was soft-hearted and pleasant and polite and all those things that white guys want out of black kids. You know what I mean?

**Is he still in the city?**

Yeah. He works for the garbage company. He started off as a -- that's probably why he was so big and strong -- loading garbage out of the back of a garbage truck. And then he went up into management. I'm not sure what the reasons were for that, whether he was good at it or -- whatever. It was hard to trust everybody in those days -- it really was -- for their motives.

Anyway, Joe Neal was one of the few men around in these days. And you can understand that because it was the welfare rights' ladies who took the lead. They're the one that came out on the curbs and walked the streets and made the noise. And the men were either subjugated all their lives to a point where they didn't have the courage -- and courage is a good word. I mean, Ruby had courage. And the ladies behind her did, too. I mean,

she gave them that strength. She was the leader, but they all, in their own independent ways, had their own courage and their own willingness.

And I remember some of them would stand up to Ruby. Erma Lee was one of those. Erma Lee Hunt. She's the one who put together Poor People Pulling Together. And it developed out of a -- I don't know if it was a leadership battle between her and Ruby, but it was certainly a point of view battle. And I think they just had a different way of doing things. And I think both ways were right. And Erma Lee went her way and, that we talked about earlier, using housing as their common denominator. Ruby was using it all. I mean, Ruby was into food and medicine and all the other stuff.

### **Is Erma Lee still around?**

I haven't seen Erma Lee in years, and I don't know. I think she's fallen on bad times. But in those days, she was a pretty little thing, too. I mean, a little, teeny thing.

Back to Joe Neal. Joe Neal was there and was part of it. Then he ran for office. We helped him run for office and did whatever we could to help him run for office. And he's been in that senate now -- he was there when my father was there. Let me tell you something. When my father was alive, I went up and visited him once and he introduced me to the audience. As I remember the story, I went over and sat next to Joe Neal instead of sitting next to my father because I wanted to. They still didn't like him up there. I mean, they didn't like him. He was their token black guy. Well, all these guys were. You watch what they're doing -- and I'm not trying to defend the kid who -- what's the one who just got in trouble? Works for the city?

### **Wendell Williams.**

Wendell Williams. But these people don't like him. I mean, he's not done much to ingratiate himself in that regard. But Joe Neal didn't do any of that stuff other than being loud and confrontational and inquisitive about the reasons for this or for that.

Anyway, when my father died, Joe got up and said some wonderful things. Joe's connection really was he was closer to me, who was on the outside, than he was with my father on the inside. My father's an old Louisiana kind of boy, too. No one would ever accuse him of being a liberal. You can accuse him of being honest and fair and all that

kind of stuff, but not liberal. He respected Joe Neal. He really did respect Joe Neal. Not the kind of guy my dad would have over for dinner as opposed to me who would have him over. I'm not sure I ever did. But I'm just saying that wouldn't have bothered me.

I think Joe Neal is one of the most important black leaders in the community because he made his presence known all the time. He's like Ruby. I think Ruby is the most important. In fact, you and I had a discussion earlier, and we asked, who's the most important black leader in America? And a lot of people would say Martin Luther King, but I think Malcolm X was for some of the things he started. I think that same way in Las Vegas. I mean, Ruby Duncan is our Malcolm X. And Joe Neal may be our Martin Luther King. And that's fine because Joe Neal was out there. He was making noise. He was asking. He was challenging. And more important, I guess the good word is he's reminding them all the time. He's reminding them that we're here, you can't ignore us, and we're part of this, and we vote, et cetera.

**What about today? Joe Neal today?**

Oh, I think he's still the same. I think he's far more -- they kind of laugh at him when he runs for governor or when he does one of those kind of things. It's kind of like Ralph Nader on a national scene or even a Sharpton. You watch Sharpton and he does look like he's running out for senate.

**But if you listen to him --**

If you listen. But they didn't listen to him. But if you do listen to him, he's right about 95 percent of everything he says. Some of them are picking up on that. But you know and I know that he will never get elected to anything other than his own district in New York City, whenever it is. That's the way that is. And that's the way it is around here. I mean, Joe Neal's getting elected in a district that's predominantly black, as is Wendell Williams and the big guy, Bruce Arbury and those kinds of guys. Now, all those guys weren't there. Joe Neal was there back in the old days, okay?

**So in the 70s?**

Early 70s. Late 60s, early 70s.

**So do you remember Marion Bennett?**

Sure.

**What was your relationship, if any, with Marion Bennett?**

Well, Marion Bennett -- and I thought it was always a good relationship. I'm not sure it still is. But he's a gentleman and he's pleasant. And he was on the board of directors, as was Joe Neal, I think at those times, of the Economic Opportunity Board. They were the ones who fund our program, the Legal Services program. So we'd have to answer to them once a month or whatever it was, and we didn't answer very well. I was always disappointed in the EOB because it was designed as a place to train people, particularly black people. By definition, it was poor people, but by participation, it was black people.

Some of the programs out there certainly did affect white people. But the leadership with a couple of exceptions was all black. And they're supposed to train people and they're supposed to move on. Move out of there. Most of those people are there 20, 30 years. I mean, they didn't move anywhere. And maybe I can't hold them responsible for that because maybe there was no place for them to move. And that experience is probably true all over America with the EOB programs out of the late 60s and the Richard Nixon OEO programs. I mentioned that earlier.

But Richard Nixon is the one who funded all this stuff. I don't think he funded it out of the goodness of his heart. He funded them out of don't bother me with all this stuff, just pay for it and get rid of it, you know. The Movement, called the Welfare Movement or the Poverty Movement, did well under Richard Nixon, but only in terms of dollars, not in terms of understanding or enlightenment.

Marion Bennett was on the board and Marion Bennett was vocal. But I always felt Marion Bennett was vocal for Marion Bennett's purposes as opposed to -- I mean, if Ruby's ideas happened to coincide with his, that's fine. But he had his own agenda. That doesn't mean it's wrong. It was just his own agenda. And he was never -- I know the ladies didn't trust him in those days. But they didn't trust a lot of people and rightfully so. There may have been times they didn't trust Joe Neal. They should have trusted him more than they probably did.

But you've got to understand -- and you do understand -- in those days this town was run by black ministers. I think today it still is to some extent. Black ministers did not like Ruby. She jeopardized their power position. Some of them loved her. But for the most part, she was an interloper into their little world of power and politics and how they wheeled and dealt the black vote and how they made a living. They made a living on the black vote.

**Explain that.**

Well, they would control the contributions. When you get some politician who says, in this block, you know, we didn't have apportionment and all the other things that go there. And these ministers could deliver votes, but it was only ten votes, but it would still deliver votes. And that had a value to it, and that value was registered in terms of dollars.

Ruby comes in and she's got ideas. She's selling ideas, and not for money. She's selling them because they're the right thing to do. So she comes in and usurps. They looked to her as a usurper of their territory, of their rights. And I've always thought of the black community as a matriarchal society, which is also funny because black ministers, males, ran it.

**But the black woman was always there in the background doing all the work in the church.**

All the work. And in the church, too, I'm sure that's true. I'm not a church guy. I mean, I used to go with Ruby and my secretary a couple of times. I think I told you about Dorothy Murray who was Pentecostal, and I've gone with her and my secretary a couple of times. That's an experience.

Anyway, Bennett was one of the ministers. He's smart. Marion Bennett is a very intelligent man -- out front. But he always has his agenda. Marion Bennett always has an agenda. And I say that in a negative way because I always worry about people who have a private agenda. I think maybe a lot of people do. But I don't think that of Joe Neal. I don't think Joe Neal has a private agenda, a secret agenda.

**But don't you think his agenda, Marion Bennett's agenda, though, was always something for the community?**



No. I think a lot of the community did benefit from Marion Bennett's activities, but I don't think that was number one. I think Marion Bennett is number one on his list. I don't mean to discriminate against him. I think that's true about all those ministers. They're taking care of themselves first for the most part.

**I guess he did own lots of property on the Westside.**

How did he do that?

**Yes. Okay.**

Because he was a smart businessman? Maybe. Maybe he always had the opportunities. That's the agenda I'm talking about. I remember years ago when I lived in Washington, there was a Congressman from Tennessee. I can't think of his name. And he, to my knowledge, is the first one who articulated the difference between bad graft and honest graft. And his definition of honest graft was when you get elected to a position and you've paid all the dues that go into an election, then you come in contact with information that nobody else has and you have the right to take advantage of that without fear of repercussions. That's honest graft.

**So is that the way our system works?**

Oh, sure it is. Sure it is. That's not changed. He just articulated it. That's all.

**I know that you were active in the black community until about the 70s, the late 60s, early 70s.**

Active, yeah. I was there, though. Back in the late 50s --

**Good. That's what I want to talk about.**

I wasn't active. I ran a men's store. I was 18, 19 years old. Right behind the Louisiana Club, there was a men's store called Leonard's. That's probably where I got socialized, in that store. The Louisiana Club was over on -- what's the name of the street?

**Jackson Street.**

Jackson Street.

**Now, why would you open a men's store --**

I didn't open it. I just had a job. I was 18 years old.

**You were working in the men's store.**

Working in the men's store. And a guy named Leonard Fox, who I think ended up being a cab driver -- he wasn't a very nice man, but he was an opportunist. He opened up a store in the late 50s out on the Strip over at what they call the San Francisco Square, which was where that big souvenir shop is now on the corner of the Strip and Sahara. That was called the Fox Shop. His name was Leonard Fox. He was from New York. He was a cab driver. He had clothes that no one else had. They were all L.A., New York, modern clothes that no one in town had. So to be cool in those days, you went to the Fox Shop. He's the one who opened the store in the Westside.

It's interesting how he started with those clothes. But he realized this market in the Westside, the black community, was not those -- contrary to what white guys think of black guys and zoot-suiters and all that stuff. The inventory became very traditional. I just noticed that for the first time. I'm sitting here thinking about that for the first time today. Inventory was not Fox Shop's inventory. It was Leonard's inventory. It was dark suits, white shirts, dark ties. You know, nothing flashy. But anyway, I ran that store. We're still on the fringes of when black people weren't allowed on the Strip to live. So they were staying in the black community, wherever they were staying. The Moulin Rouge wasn't there then.

#### **The Moulin Rouge was built in 1955.**

Was it really? Okay. Then it was there. I'm sorry. We had the four or five clubs on Jackson Street. The Louisiana Club, the Carver House, and a couple other ones like that. And they were hot spots. I remember at lunch, I'd go around the corner from my place -- I'd just lock the door up and go around the corner to the Louisiana Club because they had Chinese food. Duke Ellington was always in there, playing 25-cent craps at the craps table. I didn't know who he was. My mother knew him, but I never met him. I think I told you the story about how my mother knew Duke Ellington from a long time ago. But just to watch him, he had such a presence. There were all kinds of people in the place just standing over in the corner watching Duke Ellington play 25-cent craps.

But in that store, a lot of the musicians would come in. I had this affinity with music because of my mother and her love of music, and I knew all the people. I remember

Dakota Stanton and her husband would come in. I mention these names to people today, and they've never heard of half of these names. Most of the Ellington band. You had Paul Gonsalves and Johnny Hodges. Who was the trumpet player? Sam Woodyard was the drummer. Those guys would come around the store. They'd buy things. They wouldn't buy the suits and stuff because the suits were meant for old preacher kind of guys. But they would buy the socks and T-shirts, underwear. But they'd hang out there, and I'd just listen. I'm sure, again, that socialized me a little bit, too, or at least I could empathize with some of them. Why the hell were they here when they could afford to be someplace else?

**Tell me about the other businesses on Jackson Street at that time.**

Well, they were all food or gambling related. That's why this men's store was back on the back street. It's been a long time since I've been down those streets. Carver House later became Operation Life.

**Yes.**

We took that building. That's in the book we were talking about this morning, about how we went over with First Western and they lent us the money. I got a grant from the Fleischman Foundation. This guy named Fran Breen was the head of Fleischman Foundation. And Fran Breen loved Ruby. I don't know if he loved her because he thought she was sexy or whatever. He liked being around Ruby. That's fine. He had the money to spend. I think he gave us \$500,000 towards the purchase of the Carver House out of the Fleischman Foundation, which is Fleischman yeast and all that stuff. But it was based in Reno, and that's where he lived. He was a lawyer in Reno. He was an older man then. I'm not sure Fran is still alive. But when I ran for Attorney General, he used to pilot me around. We got close to one another.

Most of the swimming pools in rural Nevada were built with Fleischman money because Fran Breen would drive around and see one of these little Podunk towns that didn't have a swimming pool and the kids had no place to go in the water except for some artesian pond outside of town. So he built swimming pools all over Nevada.

Anyway, Fran Breen gave us the money for Operation Life. The Carver House was closed and it was abandoned. Then we got the building across the street. I forget what it

was. But I think it was a casino, too. And we turned it into a library.

**At what point did the Carver House become the Cove?**

Same thing. Carver House? Cove? I'm not sure which came first.

**Okay. But it was the same building?**

Same building, yes. Probably Cove came last. Carver House probably first.

**Did you ever spend any evenings in the African-American community at that time?**

Oh, sure. Now we're talking two different times in my life.

**I'm talking about the 50s.**

Yeah. I was playing in those days. There's me and a guy named Don Williams. And you could do an oral history of Don Williams all by himself -- write that down someplace -- because he has another name in town. He's still alive. I talked to him the other day. Don's my age and we grew up together. His other name in politics in Nevada is -- he's a white guy -- is Darth Vader. Rightfully so. Couldn't be a better name for Don Williams because he is the dark side of politics. And I don't mean that in a corrupt sense. But he knows how to beat you negatively as opposed to beat you positively. People feared him, all the leaders in town, political guys. But he created guys. I mean in my mind, he created Harry Reid. He created Jimmy Bilbo. He created a lot of people -- showed them how to win in the early days.

**Would he sit for an interview?**

I don't know. I'll certainly ask him. But he and I would play in those days. There was a gang of us. There was a guy named Ralph Pruer, black guy, gay. Me and Don. I'm missing a couple. Oh, Felix Luna, a Mexican guy. We're just playing is all we're doing, looking at girls and drinking whiskey. That's all that was. We spent a lot of time in those casinos in those days.

**Other than Duke Ellington, who else did you see that was considered a black entertainer?**

Dakota Stanton, all the Ellington band. Sammy Davis was more over at the Moulin Rouge. The Moulin Rouge is geographically interesting, too. Whoever designed it and

had the idea of capturing the black economics of the time wasn't willing to stick in where the Carver House was. It's ten blocks away on Bonanza or eight blocks away, whatever it is. So it's right on the border as opposed to being in the black community. And in my mind, that was obviously on purpose. I mean, they weren't going to take the big chances. They were going to take a middle chance. They took a chance. And I think in the long run, it failed. But the idea was halfway good, anyway. They wanted to provide something first-class for the black community.

**When the Moulin Rouge failed, did you see other businesses on the Westside also doing less business or closing down because of that failure?**

Jackson Street started to close down, but I don't know if you can associate that with the Moulin Rouge. I'm not sure if the Moulin Rouge -- and I didn't live there, so I don't know that I'm right or wrong -- whether it did much to improve the economy of the Westside. It may have. I don't know that, and I won't say definitively that it brought new joy to West Las Vegas economically because I just don't know. Those places were jiving, if you will. That's kind of what they were doing before Moulin Rouge. And I left then. I left and went back East to school. I know when I came back, it was all down. It was all closed. There was nothing going on there.

**And you left which year?**

'61.

**Okay. So in '61, it was lively, flourishing?**

Yep.

**And then by the time you returned, which was late 60s --**

'68, it was gone.

**-- there was a downturn?**

Well, there were places there. The Louisiana Club was still there. But not much. I'm trying to remember. There were two places right across the street from the Louisiana Club.

**Town Tavern.**

Town Tavern, that's the other one. I misspoke everything. The Town Tavern is the

one where Duke Ellington Band played. The Louisiana Club was Louie's place across the street. The Town Tavern was right behind the clothing store.

**And the Town Tavern is the only one that's still there.**

Yeah. The Curtis brothers own it, don't they?

**Somebody with the last name Green.**

Maybe. Is there an Elijah Green? Is that who that is? Okay. But, yeah, Elijah Green. That's exactly who it was. I think he was partners with one of the Curtis brothers. There was a gang of kids called the Curtis brothers, and they were all great athletes who went nowhere. They went for a little while and went somewhere, but they ended up all in a gas station, right there on -- where's the EOB? Which street is it on? Owens? You know where Owens divides right there, there's a gas station over in the corner? The Curtis brothers owned that gas station. Overton Curtis and Danny Curtis and a bunch of them.

**I think I asked this question before, but I want to repeat it. If I wanted to write a balanced history of the African-American community, not just the 70s, but earlier, who, white and black, should I include in my interviews? Maybe a person who's really not thought of by most people.**

And I'm not sure some of these people are still alive. Ruby was there. Ruby got here in '54? But in those days, there was Ms. Pearson, and I think she's passed. I'm thinking of ladies now. The other guy Jimmy -- black guy we were talking about?

**Gaye.**

Jimmy Gaye, they've all passed. You've got to have Joe Neal. I don't know when Joe first got here, but Joe, in preparation for his public leadership, has probably studied all of this pretty good. So I think you have to have Joe Neal. Donald Clark, you've got to have Donald Clark. Understand how very bright Donald Clark is. Donald Clark happens to be a minister, too, okay? But I certainly don't categorize him with that earlier group of ministers I was talking about. Donald Clark understood the issues, understood right and wrong and was sometimes tough about it. But he's quite a guy. I notice he's on that panel, too. I'll be surprised if you get him out there, but we'll see. He must have said yes to somebody, so...he was a county commissioner for a while. An interesting man, Donald

Clark. But you've got to get Donald Clark. And you've got to get people whose minds are still vibrant and they remember.

I'm sure in my Legal Services/welfare rights days, I didn't come in contact with a lot of people. A lot of the old black folks were scared of what we were doing. I mean, they may have admired it from the back of their rooms in their houses, but they didn't get out and join us. We're doing something that had never been done before. We're making noise.

**Were they ashamed of it?**

I don't know that. I'm certain they were intimidated by it. I don't know how anybody could be ashamed of what Ruby Duncan was doing. I can understand how they can be upset with what Ruby's done and doing, but not ashamed. If they're ashamed, they're not honest with themselves. But when you're taking power away from somebody, then you can be upset about it.

We were talking about who would tell the story of the black community. I gave you two. Ruby's one. And actually you should ask Ruby, not some old white guy. You should ask some black folks who they know are still around who really -- and I'm sure there may be a couple ministers around, besides Donald Clark, who know that story. Marion Bennett may be one of the people who knows that story. I guess Bennett's about my age, isn't he? How old is Bennett?

**Bennett is probably -- he came here in the late 40s.**

Is he 70, then?

**Probably.**

He's older than I am. I'm 64. So he's older than I am.

**Your office was located in that Moulin Rouge complex at one time.**

Correct.

**Was the Moulin Rouge open for business, any type of business, while you were over there?**

Oh, yeah. They had a restaurant in there, and they had a bar at nighttime. I think I told you the story where -- I know it's in the book. We were talking about the book that

our friend just recently penned. But we were in there one night late at night, me and James London, Gloria Steinem and Jack Anderson and Ruby when the cops came in and brandished their weapons in our face and all that stuff. That's in the book. I had forgotten about that story. They were just trying to show their muscle. They said, oh, it was a mistake, we didn't mean to be here. But they knew exactly what they were doing.

And there was a guy in those days named Lloyd Bell. I just saw him the other night. I saw him at Harry Claiborne's funeral. Lloyd Bell was the undersheriff. He was a bright, sensitive man. A tough guy in the way he's supposed to be as a cop. But he recognized the volatility of what was going on in those days and the marches. This was the time of the march. He's the one who pulled the cops in. There were rumors on the street that the cops were just going to go out on the street and shoot the "N" word, you know what I mean? It got nasty. It sounded like Misshavanah and George Wallace conversations going on. But brighter and a lot more level-headed was Lloyd Bell who got the guys together and said, just calm down. There's not going to be any violence while I'm in charge around here. And he did all that kind of stuff. He didn't get credit for that, but he did it. I know he did it. He saved the day for all us in terms of violence, anything that would have happened. So we had a nice, peaceful demonstration down --

**(End side 1, tape 3.)**

We were talking about cooler heads in those days and the march and the demonstration and all that stuff. And Lloyd Bell is one of the behind-the-scene guys. He was the undersheriff of Clark County at the time. He's the one that prevailed on his men and the community to simmer down. These people are entitled to march and demonstrate. Let them do that. You know, we don't need any snipers on the roof and stuff like that. He did that. I'm giving him credit now as best I can, but he deserves more credit than that. And again, I was also talking about the attitude of those who were marching. There was no evil intent on anybody's mind. They were marching to make a point. No one intended on hurting or doing any property damage or anything whatsoever.

**For a complete history of race relations in the Valley here, Las Vegas Valley, which lawsuits should I become familiar with?**



*Woods v. Miller*. Not the other ones. I mean, the other ones are what they are, but *Woods v. Miller* is a big one. That's what the march on the Strip was about. That's what brought everybody's attention nationwide to this town. They give a lot credit to the Charlie Keller suit against the Hilton Hotel, but that kind of went unnoticed. I told you that story already, and I'm not saying it wasn't important. But for the black people in this community, *Woods v. Miller* was the big one. It woke up the system. It was actually responding to the needs of black people. It happened to be that the issues in *Woods v. Miller* weren't black issues. They were due process issues and they were issues that affect everybody. But it took the loud and noisy, crazy black folks, led by Ruby Duncan, to bring it to the front.

**Okay. And those were also issues for poor people?**

Very much at the forefront. It surrounded permanently disabled issues that Nevada didn't have.

**Now, Keller's suit was more about getting jobs; is that correct?**

Yeah. Exactly. It was about getting jobs. I'm not sure much of that happened. But that may be. Let's give that credit as the starting place where the hotels started hiring black people, and that's very important. And that's just as important. I guess jobs are just as important as due process. So maybe I demean that suit too much, and maybe it is just as important as *Woods v. Miller* because jobs are clearly important. I've told you how we met with all those people at the time -- the Civil Rights guys from Washington, D.C. We talked about recompense and how they're supposed to pay people back. They didn't want anything to do with that. We're going forward. All the damage, that's been done. They didn't want to talk about that. So we just didn't march down the same line as those folks.

**Were there any suits filed here, school integration, housing, any suits that I should become familiar with that you remember?**

Well, integration, that's a good word. And maybe that started with the Hilton suit. I mean, it still isn't integrated. Integration was accidental. It wasn't because everybody volunteered. The integration that you're seeing in this community is because the Latino population is moving the black population out of their traditional ghetto world, and they're

spreading out. And I don't want to blame it on, boy, we all get better jobs and, boy, the system's really working for us and all that stuff, because it isn't. I mean, the gap's still wide between the haves and the have-nots.

I think the worst thing in the world that can happen is to you is that you could be born a young black male in this country we live in. He's still the forgotten soul. Our prisons are still filled with them. He is still the number one candidate for narcotics abuse and all the other stuff simply because the system never opened up for them and won't, not under its present -- I don't hold out -- we've got to cleanse our souls and our minds of racism. We haven't done that. A lot of people have. I mean, the Jimmy Carters of the world and people like that and the leadership, they try hard. It's still there. I mean, go look at your Congress. You think all the numbers represent the black population? Of course they don't. What is the black population? Ten percent of the country? Is that what they say it is?

**Ten to 12 percent. Yes.**

Ten to 12 percent. Do you think they have 10 to 12 percent of everything that's wonderful? Just 10 to 12 percent? I don't mean they have all of it. But do they have 10 to 12 percent of what's wonderful, whether it's jobs or homes or opportunities? They don't. That hasn't changed. We started talking about it, you know, 30 years ago. Not much has changed. I think that the power structure sleeps a little better at night because they've got everybody under control.

That's something that someone needs to study, doesn't it? Why are the people today, black people, poor people, whoever, why have they moved back into subservience as opposed to the anger of the 60s? Everybody was angry in the 60s. And there were other things. I mean, there was a war going on that no one liked. There were a lot of other catalysts that caused this public noise or outcry. But I would bet that most of those boys -- has anybody done a racial thing of the kids killed in Iraq?

**Not that I've read.**

I mean, that's what Vietnam was. Vietnam, I think the black soldiers, the dead ones, outnumbered the white ones probably two to one because they are the ones they

stuck on the front lines.

**Yeah, especially in the beginning. In the beginning years.**

**I talked with Reverend Bennett a little the other day. And he said one of the things that the black community needed is a strong leader.**

They've always needed a strong leader.

**So at one time, when you had the poor people's campaign, you had Ruby Duncan as a very, very strong --**

What did he say about Ruby Duncan?

**Oh, he had all good things to say.**

Good.

**Who do you see as that person in Las Vegas now? Does it have to be an outsider? He felt that there wasn't anyone here now who could take up that helm.**

Well, he certainly knows better than I do. I mean, he lives in the black community. All those guys, the Bob Baileys and the rest of them, you know, they survived. I'm not going to say anything bad about them. They survived and did what they had to do. All human beings do that just to get by from here to there.

First of all, the leadership, in my opinion, has to come from younger people, really younger people. When we go back to the days of the Black Panthers and stuff like that -- I'm not advocating Black Panther methods -- but there were some bright, intelligent, young people involved in those days. I'm sure those black, bright, intelligent people exist today. To my knowledge, they've moved. They've gotten out of that community. The black community is not as cohesive as it used to be. That's what Marion's talking about when he's talking about leadership. How do you lead a dispersed group? It's pretty dispersed. The black community is pretty dispersed. It may be ghettoized in parts of this valley. But at one time it was a singular location, period. Now it's spread all over. I'm sure it's hard to bring all that together. That may be the plan to begin with. Maybe that's what caused it. Quit bunching them. They're more powerful when they're bunched up. Let's spread them out a little bit. But that's paranoia talking.

**Tell me about Sara Ann [Sarann] Preddy.**

I don't know that much about her. I mean, I know Sarann.

**Did you ever get to meet her?**

Oh, yeah, I've met her a number of times. But I don't know her. I've always respected her. I remember, you know, watching her in front of that city council and trying to save the Moulin Rouge and doing all the things she did. But I really don't know her. And she knows me. And she'd probably say the same thing. I think she was always in the forefront out there from an economic point of view. I didn't see her as a political activist. I saw her as an economic activist, which is just as important.

**Yes. Were you aware that in the 50s there were a lot of white members of the NAACP, the local branch?**

No. Other than my grandmother. I've searched for those pictures, I want to tell you. Prior to today's meeting, I've gone through -- and I'm going to have to do it again -- but I went through my house. I have a folder. I know it's in a yellow manila folder that I've isolated. And I did it for my own purposes about two years, and now I can't find it. But it shows my grandmother, who was chairman of the Women's Democratic Club, Clark County Democratic Club, on the podium with all these black ladies. And here's a grandmother who is from Louisiana and Tennessee, you know, that kind of stuff. But I'm so proud of those pictures. And they're in that house. I've just got to find them somewhere.

That would have been in the 50s, early 50s. She was National Committee Woman for Nevada. She was paying attention to -- I assume she was or she wouldn't be in those pictures with them all the time. There are a lot of them. All different kinds of days and times and luncheons with Ms. Pearl and eight black ladies were sitting up at the table, you know, that kind of thing. And she wasn't always sitting in the middle, either. Lots of times she was on the edge. That made me proud, too. But with particularly her background, you know, no one ever -- when I grew up, I never thought my grandmother was some kind of crazy, liberal kind of gal. You know, she was a pretty stern, harsh, Southern woman. But obviously, she socialized herself or became aware of all those problems. Awareness is half the deal.

Going back to the 50s. You know, I'm a kid in the 50s. I don't know that stuff. I was born in '39. So I spent my life, up until I was 17 years old, knowing none of that. Knowing that white kids didn't go to Westside. It was a scary place to go. You could get hurt over there. The black guys will hurt you.

**So when you took the job, how did you feel?**

Well, I was brave in my way of thinking. I mean, I didn't have any social agenda other than my own machismo. I was just going to go over there as a young, husky white kid -- husky, I mean, people laugh when they hear me call myself husky -- and do this thing. And I did it. I probably also needed a job. It was a combination of those. I fell right in. There was never a problem.

I was discriminated more at Howard University than I was on -- what's the street behind that? Jackson and H Street -- whatever the street is. Where the market was. There's a little market. And the Leonard store. It was in one of these L-shaped centers. And a market was on the corner. It was a Ranch Market or something like that.

But I never was discriminated against by anyone that I remember. Now, there may have been some confrontations from some punk kids or something like that, but I don't remember that. But you know, when I want to go to the library at Howard University and some guy in a dashiki, you know, is going to karate me to death and told me to get out of there, I felt a little discriminated against, yes.

**Tell me about the social life here for young whites before you left to go back East.**

It did not include black people, period. Other than that little gang I told you, with me and Williams. And they thought we were nuts and all that stuff. But we didn't have those problems. We just didn't have those problems in our heads. And that's where it is. It's either your heart or your head. We liked the excitement of the black life, you know, and the music and the food and the girls and all that other stuff. We just liked that. We liked being around it. We liked being a part of it. I don't know if it was make-believe or what we were doing, but we certainly liked it. We were there alone. There weren't a bunch of people joining us and doing this.

**What was your social life like when you returned?**

Well, I returned with a wife and two kids and a mission. The mission was to do God's work, you know, and the poor people's work. So I spent the next six, seven years doing that -- oh, it was for the next five years. It was from the end of '68 to '74 when they appointed me justice of the peace.

**So now, was your mission enough to satisfy the social needs of a wife?**

I think -- no. The social needs, yes. Husband-wife needs, no. Laverne was her name. She's the mother of my children, and she's a wonderful woman and a good mother. But I just was never there. I mean, she socialized freely and openly. She had a mother who's still alive. She's about 90 now and was pure racist. I mean, she never knew a black person in her life. Just hated them Negroes. And I used to confront her. Finally, we got to where we just didn't even talk. But I said, what's your experience? What do you know? I know. I know. But Laverne would entertain in the house, and people would come over. Ruby had been in the house. All the ladies would be there. And I never sensed once that she resented that. I know what she did resent. She resented that I was usually not in the house. I was over in the office or at some crazy meeting late at night planning tomorrow's strategy or what we're going to do. And that didn't help our marriage at all. I mean, it just didn't.

She had these two little kids. I remember once we were protesting the Vietnamese war, and we were over in front of the federal courthouse. I'm sure Ruby was there that night, too. Laverne was there pushing one of the babies in a carriage and carrying the other little boy, who's now the judge, you know, my son the judge. But we were marching in front of the federal courthouse. We went through a night vigil where we're just naming off the names of everybody who had died. What does that mean? I don't know what that means. But that was our way of saying no to that war.

So then justice of the peace. Finally, I go from the Legal Services job, which was seven days a week and 12 hours minimum a day. I mean, it was just every day doing that stuff. Then I took the -- I saw an opportunity as the justice of the peace to do some good, too, some social good. We did a couple little things over there, and they may be

remembered.

I think I talked about, you know, how you isolate a black defendant on the stand. Did I talk to that? Did I mention that at all? Well in those days -- and still today, I'm sure, if you're a criminal defendant, they sit you by yourself. You're sitting there, first of all, next to your attorney. And the victim comes up, particularly if it's a white victim, who, honest to God, in those days -- and I'm sure today it's not any different -- just cannot tell black people apart because they don't look at them. There's a color out there. I stopped a little bit of that. I put the defendant in the front row. But I'd say now identify him. And many of them couldn't. In reflection, I'm not sure that's always right because the person is still a victim. Still a victim. We know that some black guy did it to her.

**Some black guy did, but not every one that walked down the street.**

I understand. See, now you're taking a side. And that's the side I took in those days. But on reflection, the first reality is that white people can't tell black people apart.

**I can't tell white people apart.**

There you go. Is that true?

**Um-h'm.**

Okay. I've never asked that question. But I'm sure it's true. Let's say it's a woman and her purse was stolen and she was knocked down and whacked in the head or something. And I think that's what this case was, which I set the groundwork for. Anyway, so because of that racism -- and that's a form of racism where you can't tell black people apart -- should the defendant go free? Here's the question. Because he did bad, whoever he was. Let's say that there are five black guys in the front row. He's one of those guys, and he hurts somebody. And because this poor old racist gal who's just a product of her environment -- and she may not even be a racist, she's just an old white person who's born in this country and had no association with black people; kind of what yours is when you're saying that -- why should that guy -- and that's the other side of the argument -- why should he go free based on that?

**Right. The guilty one should not.**

That's right. And that's what I was trying to accomplish. I'm not sure I did. I

weaned myself away from that because -- well, a couple bad guys got away because of that. So I weaned myself back into the system because it was important, then, to make a statement, I guess. And I found that it wasn't working the way I wanted it to work. In this particular case, the defendant was -- this was why it was so out front -- the real defendant was a light-skinned Negro -- African-American. And the defendant that she picked out was a great big black guy. The kid was as dark as can be. We just sat him over on the side. The real defendant was out of custody. And on the side of the bench was a place where you kept the people in custody. And there was only one black man there. It was a great big black guy. I mean, the kid was, I'm guessing, six-foot-four, you know, and dark as could be. And he was sitting there by himself. And the victim says, he's the one who did it. And down in the front row was a little light-skinned black guy who was truly the defendant. It told a sad story about America.

**Yes. It does because I remember the news media could make you be afraid of anybody. I mean, black women were --**

They're changing a little in the last couple of weeks. But for the last four years, the news media has got us afraid of having anybody but George Bush in charge. The news media has done that, just what you're saying.

**Okay. Well, the news media didn't do that with me with George Bush.**

I'm talking about America.

**I know.**

America. I'm talking about America. Why in the world would anybody in their right mind support George Bush? But they're doing it.

**Yes, they are. Yes.**

George W. Bush, that is. George, Sr., was just another liberal like the rest of us.

**You were on the Westside before integration. Integration didn't start until the mid 60s in this country. And you were over there working again after integration.**

That's correct.

**So can you tell me the difference in the community? What good was integration to a confined black community?**



You mean from a national perspective? Because they weren't integrated when I was over there.

**Well, now, when you were there the first time, there was no integration.**

There was no integration when I was there the second time.

**Well, supposedly now, in the country, though --**

Oh, in the country, that's different. There may have been. But when I was doing my second work as Legal Services, it was still a ghetto. It was still all walled in.

**So are you saying, then, that that confined neighborhood called the Westside --**

In 1968 and the early 70s, it was still a confined area. This time they had a big wall around it called the freeway.

**But there were no improvements because we had passed those laws in '61, '65?**

Oh, no. No. They didn't take place here. There may have been some jobs, but 99 percent of the black people still lived on the Westside. Integration was no salvation to them. Is that the answer to your question?

**Yeah. I think so.**

That didn't happen until much later. And again, I don't think it was because of integration. It was because they were just being pushed out by -- we did this with a Harry Chapin song and all that stuff about the firemen. Anyway, do you think integration is in the works in America today? Do you think we've integrated?

**I know that there's a law.**

Oh, yeah. There was a law passed right after the Civil War that talked about all these things, you know, two or three amendments to the Constitution. Then we end up having *Brown v. Board of Education* a hundred years later.

**'54, yes.**

We didn't need that, did we? We didn't have the Voters Right Act, the Equal Protection Right, the ERA, Equal Rights Amendment. All that stuff came 100 to 110 to 120 years after the Civil War. I guess the answer is we didn't need them, but we did need them.

**So are we going to ever be able to legislate the way we should act, the way we**

## **should treat each other?**

Of course not. I mean, the people tried to do that. But it's now 2004. Racism is rampant. It still is today. You sit around in the community that I live in, and it may include a few black people, not many. That's just the demographics of where I live. But people still make jokes about Al Sharpton. We're talking about the guy running for president, the black guy with long conk haircut or whatever you call that with his flashy suits and his flamboyancy. Forget the fact that he's telling the truth. It's just that it's not acceptable.

**If he would tone down that image -- or would have toned it down before he started in the race, would it have made a difference?**

That's the point I'm making. I don't think it would have.

**So Jesse Jackson's campaign for president --**

Well, they still hate Jesse Jackson. White people in this country hate Jesse Jackson. And they love Colin Powell.

**Why?**

I'm asking you why. Because of racism. First of all, Colin Powell is pretty light-skinned. He hangs out with Republicans. They're, for the most part, the ones who are truly -- racism seems to have found a home in the Republican Party. And why he's there, I don't know.

But life's full of those kinds of things. There are certain religions in this town that are dominated by males, but have women in it. And I can't imagine why a woman in her right mind would be part -- you know, an intelligent woman -- would be part of these goings on. But they do. People do these things and whether they do them out of a need for security, I don't know. I remember liberal guys like me -- I guess that's what I am; I'm a little more radical than liberal -- held out this hope that the Republican Party was going to take on General Powell and maybe even run him for president at one time. And then we all sat back and reflected. I mean, General Powell with all the goodness of him, whether he is or he isn't -- I'm not sure about him anymore -- he could never get out of a Republican Primary. He could never win a Republican Primary. That's where it happens. He could

win a Democratic Primary, maybe. Maybe. Don't hold your breath on that one. But never out of the Republican Party. I mean, the Jesse Helms's of the world dominate. And that far Christian right, they just dominate. And those people are willing to use that power and that force every day to make their world felt.

Colin Powell to them is simply a token. We're doing our stuff. We've got a Negro boy up there right at the top. So we're okay. And they rationalize and justify that in their mind that we've done the right thing. And they've used that as an example every time to say that they're not racist. We've got Colin Powell, don't we?

**What does the white community think of Condoleezza Rice?**

The same thing. I think she's more of a devil than Colin Powell. I don't understand her. I don't understand how she sits there -- and she's obviously bright and intelligent -- and sit there and lie. I mean, this woman lies out of her teeth every day and looks right in the camera and is glib about it and matter of fact about it and goes along with these lies that this Bush Administration is telling the public. And she's the biggest perpetrator of all. She's brought in for either the black point of view -- I mean, convincing the black population that George Bush is right -- or for more of a woman thing. She's really brought in because she's a woman. She just happens to be black in this situation -- this is my feeling about it -- just happens to be black. But Condoleezza Rice, I think, is truly right there with Dick Cheney. I think these are the devil incarnate. I mean, these are bad people who don't give a damn about human life and about right and wrong other than their own agenda. In the back of my little pea brain, I harbor some sense that before it's over, before this coming election, that Colin Powell is going to stand up and say I reject the Bush Administration and I don't have to go out and endorse a Democrat, but I'm walking away from this administration.

**I'm waiting for that day, as well.**

I think we're going to wait until hell freezes over, but it would be nice.

**Well, I just think that there's more to him than what we see.**

Well, we all do, because, my God, for the first time in the history of this country, we have a black Secretary of State. Who would have thought that? Who would have

thought -- first black Justice of the Supreme Court?

**Oh, Marshall.**

Yeah, Thurgood Marshall. Who would have thought Thurgood Marshall would be on the Supreme Court, but he was. See, he earned his stripes as a lawyer. He just happened to be a black lawyer. But Thurgood Marshall earned his stripes as a lawyer for all the things he did. The new guy earned it just because he was black.

**Do you remember anything about the 40s in Las Vegas? Any stories?**

Black stories? No. Other than the black guy was the guy in the men's room. I mean, for white people in those days, your contact with a black guy was you saw him shining shoes in the restroom or picking up dishes on the table. I'm not even sure they had black busboys in those days. The whole point was you didn't want black people coming in contact with white people. And I'm trying to think -- and I've never thought about that. But anytime when I was kid going out to dinner, were there ever black people waiting tables? And I think the answer is no. I think they would be back washing dishes or in the restroom or something like that, work crews, you know.

And this goes back to the woman thing. White people, wrongly so, always think that the black guy's after their -- I mean, they've been brought up to believe that -- that the black guys are after their white women. And the only place white women would ever have a chance to come into contact with black men is in restaurants or when they're going out. Because they're certainly not going to see them in their homes. And in those days, I'm sure the mailman wasn't black, either. I'm sure the mailmen were all white in those days, too.

**Because it was a good job.**

Yeah. So that's probably part of it. Just one more ugly anecdote out of our history.

**Now, in the 40s, the casino industry was just beginning to grow here in Las Vegas, the late 40s, early --**

Let me interrupt you for a moment. Then I'll come back to that. The other morning I was on KNPR. You didn't hear me, did you?

**No, I didn't.**

But we did a thing. I'm not sure I even belong to this group. We had Ed Von

Tobel --

**(End side 2, tape 3.)**

I was talking about that KNPR program the other morning. We had Ed Von Tobel, Sr., 90 years old; Thalia Dondero; and George Foley, who's 80 something. We also had Cal Houser, who is about the same age. You started to mention gambling and the history of gambling. I learned just from listening to him because they talked about gaming on this program. Gaming came in two phases. It came in the early 30s with the dam. And we had a prosperous time then. I'm sure there were black workers on the dam. Not a lot, but I'm sure there were some. That's a tough job. I mean, that's a tough, unforgiving job. People were falling into cement and dying. Anyway, you had gaming that had arisen then and it helped the economy. Then it disappeared. When the dam was over, it all disappeared. It didn't really get going again until the late 40s, not the early 40s, the late 40s. We had places. We had the El Rancho and we had the Bugsy Siegel thing with the Flamingo.

But he pointed out something of which I wasn't that aware. I should have been if I had just paid attention. Gaming really started -- the boom of Las Vegas started with one hotel that made it all happen, and that was the Desert Inn. Now, these were the Mob guys and all that stuff. But the Desert Inn, whenever that was, early 50s or maybe late 40s, is the one first-class restaurant, entertainment, the works that started this town booming. He would know.

We didn't get enough out of Cal Houser on that program. He's got some stories that my father would tell, too, because they're the same age. Cal Houser's father was my father's mentor, too. Just respect for the old man. In fact, when we did the Tropicana, my father was the lawyer for the Tropicana Hotel. They had the bad guys involved. It was my father that went out and got Cal Houser's father to come in and run in it. Mike Houser was one of the true giants of the early days of gaming in Las Vegas. But he was a racist and a bigot and all that other stuff. So there were no black people working because of him. But he did know gaming. He did know gaming. Anyway, you were starting a question and I interrupted you about gaming in the 40s. So really the late 40s.

**Because the Flamingo was 1946. There were a few before that. At that point**

**we had an early Mob presence. For people living here at the time, especially in your community, was there talk about that? Did you know what was going on? Did you even suspect anything? Was that part of your conversation?**

Oh, yeah, it was always part of the conversation. It was always in the positive because it's kind of like Robin Hood. One of these days, someone's going to tell the true story of Robin Hood. I've got a feeling Robin Hood isn't the Errol Flynn we know him to be. I think he was a crook and a thief and he took advantage of the opportunity to hide in the forest. And that's kind of what the Mob was. There's a saying here in this town that wasn't it better when the Mob -- when the boys -- they don't say the Mob; they say the boys --

**The boys. That's right.**

When the boys ran this town, wasn't it better? And people got to live with that, and they liked that because every now and then, they'd go out and they'd get a comp. This comp thing. I told that to my friends in Washington, D.C. It was one of these U.S. Attorneys conferences. What is a comp? A comp is a way of life in Las Vegas. It does not exist anywhere else. If someone picked up your check in New Jersey, somebody picked up your check in New Jersey. That's what they say. But in Las Vegas, you got comped.

Believe me, I learned as U.S. Attorney when we went in and raided those hotels and we closed the Stardust and we closed the Aladdin and the rest of them, those comp records were quite precise. These guys knew exactly who they were comping, why they were comping. A lot of these politicians in those days would go out and they'd take their family out to see a floor show. And they'd get somebody in the family to sign the check. Now, whoever's giving the comp is certainly not going to embarrass anybody or argue with them at the time of the signing. But that maître d' or whoever it was who was instructed to give the comp would go back to his little office, it would say comp for six people at dinner show on behalf of this particular politician and name him in those records.

So the politicians who think they're getting away with it or hiding from it, they weren't hiding. These boys knew exactly what they were doing. There would come a time

that they would call on that person to repay that debt, whether it was fixing a ticket or sitting in the audience during a trial or something like that. There's ways, you know, it's the old wink-of-the-eye way. Or leave us alone. That's how they were paid back. Think about that. The Mob and those guys in those days, they didn't have to go ask for a favor. Just leave us alone. And guess what? The community did leave them alone -- left them alone until we came around. Left them alone until me and mine became U.S. Attorney. And didn't do anything about it. You know, that was the rule. It was better when they were here.

But corporate gaming came in before I became U.S. Attorney. That came in the 60s, '64 or something like that when we went on the big board and stuff like that and Howard Hughes came to town and we started being publicly traded, which, of course, opens up a whole new scrutiny to who are the hidden donors and all that. So those kinds of pressures were coming nationally, but they were still here in Las Vegas. And the Mob guys were still in the hotels. They all had a guy in the hotel watching things. My dad had a name for that guy, and that guy is the Joe Goss. Joe Goss is the Mob guy in the hotel. When I was U.S. Attorney, when we started our little trip to deal with organized crime in Nevada, every one of those hotels had a Joe Goss. And we all know their names. Some of them are still alive. Lefty Rosenthal was the Joe Goss at the Stardust. Agusty was the Joe Goss at the Tropicana. There was guy -- I can't think of his name -- over at the Hilton Hotel was a Joe Goss. You know, Hilton was supposed to be the cleanest of all of them. Bologna. They all had these guys. And these guys were still around watching over their interests. They have since gone. But there's a couple of hotels out there that today I still suspect -- I'm not going to sit here and say who it is for fear of the libel suit -- but there is at least one hotel out there that I think is still right up to its neck in organized crime. And I've shared this with FBI guys.

**One of the other things they've heard about the boys is that when they were here there was no crime in this city.**

Well, there were no crimes that affected the white leadership of this city.

**But now, black people have told me the same thing. In the Westside**

**community, they've told me the same thing.**

Well, I'm sure they did. But I'm talking about street crime. Black people were still killing black people. And the white people were still killing white people in domestics and that kind of stuff and petty robberies.

But, no, there were no things like bank robberies and stuff like that. Because that's part of that symbiotic relationship, if you will, between the leadership in this community and the boys who ran the Strip. The Strip was the economy of this town. They wanted to maintain that. So the word got out. The sheriff's officers were enforcers. And I'm talking about sheriffs that I knew and loved. But these guys' job was to keep the streets clean, and they did it roughshod. I mean, if you were a bad guy in this town, you would wish you weren't. I mean, there were hotels in this town that had security forces, bouncers, the uniformed security guys in the hotel. When I was justice of the peace -- we were talking about Benny Binion earlier -- I remember Benny Binion had one of those kinds of security forces in his office. They ran things. They were the law and order inside that casino in a real rough sense of the word. I had a guy in front of me who was caught stealing off one of the tables, grabbing some money or something, and they caught him. And the first thing he started yelling was police, help, police, help, police, because he wanted the police to arrest him and take him. He didn't want these guards to take him out in the alley, which would happen. They all did that. These hotels policed themselves. You didn't have that kind of crime, either.

Earlier we were talking about why was there no crime. And the comment attributed to Benny Binion describing what justice was. He looks right at you and says, justice means just us. And if that is true, then that's what will predominate and that's what will prevail. There will be no crime. There will be nobody stepping on our toes. And we won't step on yours. Just leave us alone and we'll all do good. We'll all do good. And we did good. I mean, Las Vegas prospered. How can you get mad at all those people? I mean, you look at the people who run the town today and the family, their children were all -- and I'm one of them -- we're all educated with the largess of a system like that. Our fathers before us made livings. They provided, so many of them did, because of this



system of let and let live. No one interfered with the other person.

That is not true today. You know that's not true today. I mean, you've got these corporate guys who are just different kind of guys. They run big department stores to sell a product and the bottom line. I mean, there are comps.

**Do you remember an area in the city called Circle Park?**

There are two circles, all right? There are interesting circles. One is Circle Park. Is Circle Park going to be the 60s story? Then there's Rancho Circle. Rancho Circle is where all the rich people live and it's over here on Rancho Drive. It's still there. Circle Park was over here on Maryland Parkway. It was a park. I guess the only park. There were some lawns. I mean, the courthouse had that big lawn on it, and that was kind of a park. And there was Lorenzi Park. When I was a kid, it was all dirt roads out there. What are you going to tell me that allegedly happened in Circle Park?

**I want you to tell me.**

Well, I'm not sure anything of significance happened in Circle Park.

**Any antiwar demonstrations?**

Well, there may have been. I mean, it was a good place to do it. And we did some of that -- yeah, there was some of that stuff there.

I'll tell you another story. When I came back from Howard Law School, which was in 1968, I was invited to a meeting for young Democrats, for lack of a better word, young liberal Democrats who wanted me to run for office. In fact, they wanted me at that time -- it shows how naive they were -- I'm 28, 29 years old -- and they want me to run for Congress against Walter Bering. He was a Democrat, but he represented everything bad about Democrats. So I said --

**Now, what was his name again?**

Walter Bering. And he was probably really good for Nevada at the time. But anyway, I say are you nuts? I just spent eight years in Washington, D.C. And if anything gives you a taste of political reality it's living in Washington, D.C. You know, the bad side of it -- and the good side. But little stories like this were so silly. Silly is a better word than naive. They were silly.

I said my priorities are different than yours. The two issues at that time were legalizing marijuana and stopping the draft, the draft related to the war. I said, let me give you my opinion of both those issues. First of all, I'm not for legalizing marijuana. Because if you legalize marijuana, you little folks here, who all I'm sure smoke marijuana from time to time, you'll be up on the mountain getting high and forgetting about your social responsibility. And my priorities are poverty and dealing with poverty and confronting poverty.

I guess it wasn't the day I got back from Washington. I had done some Legal Services stuff. So they had come to recognize us. It was a year or two after I got back.

I said that's what happened. If all you do-gooders and all you liberal minds get the right to go freely smoke marijuana, you'll be up in the mountain getting loaded all the time and you'll forget about the people down here who are hungry. That's issue number one.

And then issue number two was the draft. When I was in Washington, D.C., I was the president of an organization called -- only because no one else wanted to be president of the organization -- of a thing called Nevada State Society. That was made up of people who lived and worked around Washington, D.C., who originally came from Las Vegas. And that passed each year to somebody. The year I was president, my two vice presidents were military guys. They were both colonels in the Air Force. One of them had taken a particular liking to me. So he would take me out. And he was a lot older than I was. He was 20 years older than I was. He'd take me to the different officers clubs around Washington, D.C.

And if you reflect back in history, this is Lyndon Johnson. We are past the assassination or dealing with Lyndon Johnson. And they openly talked -- the generals -- right in front of everybody, right in front of their \$1.25 lobster dinners, and that's what it cost for the lobster dinner. I mean, out in the real world it costs \$15. But in the officers' club, it was a dollar and a quarter for a lobster dinner. And the freshest lobster there was, too, I might add. Anyway, these generals in those days were openly talking about a military coup to take over, to get rid of -- do you remember Seven Days in Maine, the book, the movie? Well that's what this. This is the time. Fletcher and Nevel, I think those

are the two writers who wrote those books. They've written two or three. I think there's a book called "Revolution" about the blacks taking over the country.

But this is the mid 60s. And the world was in turmoil, and the right-wingers were mad at the left-wingers and the left-wingers were mad at the right-wingers. But anyway, the military, obviously the right-wingers, were frustrated with the Lyndon Johnsons of the world and the John F. Kennedys of the world. I'm sure it was those kinds of people that killed him. I'm still not satisfied with the report, even though recently the report said he could have been shot by Oswald.

But anyway, back to the story. And the story was the reason they couldn't do a military -- and I heard them talking about this -- the reason they couldn't accomplish a military takeover in this country was one word, the draft. The draft didn't give you real soldiers. It gave you six-week wonders and guys you can't rely on. This wasn't a professional army. It was a drafted army. You can't take over any country with a drafted army. You've got to have a professional army.

And I told that to these kids. I said, that's why I'm for the draft. The draft is the best thing that ever happened to this company. It means you've got soldiers you can't rely on to take over your own country. I guess you can rely on them over there in Vietnam. And I'm not sure that's true, either. I mean, there were a lot of lieutenants shot in the back. So they kind of looked at me and they couldn't believe me and they decided to pass on my candidacy.

**I think that was probably good. I think I'm through. I think I have asked every question on the list.**

On the black experience, you need to really ask black people.

**We do.**

I'm sure you do.

**It is not often that we talk to a white person who's had the experience that you've had on the Westside, actually in the community.**

There aren't any.

**Right. So to be able to talk to you about it just gave us some different ways of**

**asking some questions that we will be asking in the future.**

And I'm here to answer more questions.

**That's it for me.**

Have I worn you out, my dear?

**No. I don't have any more questions.**

Well, why don't you come back in a couple of years, and we'll do this all over again. All right. I'll see you tomorrow at lunch. I thank you for that. And I hope I've been of some help.

**This has been great. Thank you so much.**

**(End side 1, tape 4.)**

**(End of interview.)**