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An Interview with Paul J. Christensen

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Director: Claytee D. White

Editors: Barbara Tabach and Gloria Homol

Transcribers: Kristin Hicks and Laurie Boetcher

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Barbara Tabach and Claytee D. White

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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 accompany the individual interviews.

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
University Libraries
University Nevada, Las Vegas

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Preface

Paul Christensen grew up in Las Vegas during the World War II era starting at the age of six-years old. His parents were M.J. and Hazel Christensen, founders of a jewelry business, which they later sold. He attended the Fifth Street Grammar School, the John S. Park School and Las Vegas High School. Too young to enlist, he was of an age that could focus on his education and opportunities for success. He attended college, earned a marketing degree and joined the Air Force ROTC program. He flew B-47 bombers during the Cold War. After his service, he returned to the family jewelry business and helped in its growth.

He got his start in politics by serving on the board of the Chamber of Commerce in 1973. He served on the city council for 11 years. Some of the issues he championed were control of gentlemen's clubs, distributing sexual advertisements to tourists, water waste and the creation of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. While working for the city council, he also was the Chairman of the Convention Authority with the city. In addition, for 11 ½ years he worked for the county commission.

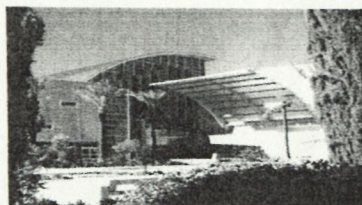
He talks about his religious beliefs as a Mormon taught him integrity, honesty, which prepared him for a life in politics. While working for the county commission he became Chairman of the board within 2 years. He implemented the Quick Care Centers throughout the valley.

After serving 23 years in local government, receiving numerous awards including the Distinguished Nevadan award, Paul is retired and does consulting work on the side. He and wife live in Las Vegas and enjoy getting away to their retirement home in Beaver, Utah.



ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



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Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Paul W. Christensen
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 2/19/2008
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. And I'm with Mr. Paul Christensen in his home in Las Vegas. It is February 19th, 2008.

So how are you today?

I am great.

Wonderful. So tell me about your childhood, where you grew up. I believe it's in Milford. Tell me about that.

Well, actually, I grew up mostly here. I moved here when I was six. And I don't remember a whole lot about Milford, Utah, except that I knew a couple of my parents' old friends, but that's --

Give me your parents' names.

M.J. and Hazel Christensen.

Now, is that the same family that I hear about on the radio with the jewelry stores?

It was. That guy's no relation to us. We sold the business. And it was a corporation and the corporation had that name on the corporation. So he used that name. But he's a southern boy. You notice that with his accent. And we were in that business for a good many years when we left it.

So do you know a lot about jewelry, about diamonds and all of that?

A ton. That's what I grew up doing.

That must have been exciting.

I learned how to fix watches when I was 14 years old.

Did you get to travel?

Not much. Not much.

Most of the trading was here domestically?

Uh-huh.

So where do people get jewelry from to sell in Las Vegas?

Some people travel, but others -- the salesmen come here. In fact, they pester you to death if you're not on top of it. They go to jewelry shows in New York and places like that. But we used to draw lots to see who didn't have to go to New York because it's a -- I don't enjoy that.

So now, tell me about growing up in Las Vegas. Where did you go to school?

I went to school at the Fifth Street Grammar School in the building that's gone, where the federal

building is now. That was a brown stucco building that had the library -- no, that was downtown in the courthouse -- had the kindergarten in a little building on one side and fifth grade in a little building on the other side. And second through fourth grades were in the two-story building.

So now, the Fifth Street School that's being remodeled right now down on Las Vegas Boulevard --

That's the new section that replaced the section that burned out before I ever moved here. And that had sixth through eighth grades in it.

And high school...where did you go?

When I got to the sixth grade they opened the John S. Park School. And I transferred to the John S. Park School because I lived on South Ninth Street and it was close. So I went to the sixth -- first it went from kindergarten to sixth. And then the next year they added a seventh. And the next year they added the eighth grades. So I started in the sixth grade there and then they added the seventh grade. So I stayed for the seventh. And then they added the eighth and I stayed for the eighth. Then I went to Las Vegas High School.

Did your parents ever live in the John S. Park community?

No. You're talking about the Huntridge addition. No. We lived across the street on -- same number as this -- 710 South Ninth. And that was about four doors from where Hoover and Charleston come together. And the Huntridge was just over the line across Charleston. So we were about a block from the Huntridge addition.

Do you remember when that addition went in?

I sure do. It was either the first or second housing development in Las Vegas. Right in with Mayfair addition. I don't remember if Mayfair came first or Huntridge came first. Mayfair is that area above 15th, between Fremont and Charleston Boulevard. That was the old Mayfair addition.

The reason I'm asking is because we have just been funded to do an oral history project of the John S. Park community because it's now on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The whole community?

Yes.

Boy. Those homes weren't that good.

Maybe not, but people lived there for years and years.

Oh, yeah.

And that neighborhood now is one of the most diverse in the city. We have a lot of people from UNLV who live out there, just everybody.

We used to go down to Circle Park and --

Tell me about those days. Where did you play?

Where or what?

Both.

You know, we didn't have too many parks and stuff like that. We played in school. I remember the basketball court at John S. Park. This is during the war, World War II. And the John S. Park basketball court was asphalt and it was outside. And one of the trainers from UNLV was one of the teachers there. His name was Erlin Tober, great guy. And I knew him well. He lived in the other addition I just told you about.

Mayfair.

Mayfair. He lived over in Mayfair. But Erlin Tober was a math teacher and a physical education teacher. We spent a lot of time playing on the basketball courts and playing in people's yards after school. We played together a lot and played a lot in the streets. It wasn't a very big town. We were safe in the streets, you know. We didn't have a problem with that. So we spent a lot of time.

Who were some of your friends whose names that I might recognize today?

Gosh, where do I start? Diverse group of people. A lot of them are dead. Keith Hayes. He died of cancer while he was a judge. He got cancer while he was in the legislature. His wife took his seat in the legislature and eventually ended up on the county commission, Karen Hayes. Lee Edwards is also dead. He was a pharmacist. His dad ran the old Las Vegas Hospital.

So, you know, those were probably my two best friends as a child. But I had a lot of other acquaintances. Darwin Lightfoot was a dentist here. I don't know if he's still alive or not. Gordon Farndale ended up as a nuclear physicist I believe.

So tell me what spurred everybody to be so successful? What was going on?

It was a time of life. It wasn't a bad time to be successful. All the other guys were gone in the Army, you know, and we were too young. And so we got a chance to get the education first. It made a big difference. And it was a smaller town. There were more opportunities. A lot of them

ended up in the gaming business. But in those days you had to know somebody to be in the gaming business. So it was a little different.

And people even say now that you have to have juice in order to get into the gaming business. Do you still think that's true?

I think that's true to start out. But I think if you work your way up, you can work your way up just fine. Those people didn't get successful by not recognizing talent.

So tell me about going to high school at Las Vegas High.

It was great, a lot of fun. I had an older brother that was there the first year I was there, which made it a lot easier for me because I had a senior in high school to protect me when I was a freshman so that I didn't have to take a lot of gas from people. It made a big difference.

What is your oldest brother's name?

Oh, my oldest brother is named Don. He was in the Army in World War II. And I had another brother named Vern that was in the Navy in World War II. And then I have an older brother named Carl, who was a district judge here for 30-something years. And he was the one that's just three years older than I am.

So he was the one that protected you in school.

They're all still alive.

Wonderful. Are they still here in Las Vegas?

Yeah.

That's good because the project that I'm interviewing you for is Early Las Vegas. And you probably saw the name on the form that you signed, Boyer. Dr. Harold Boyer is the person who donated monies to start the Oral History Research Center. And your older brothers would probably be great assets to our --

Oh, that would be good. They understand it. My brother Carl has seen everything in the district courts, everything. And he's kind of a -- we're all kind of outspoken.

Now, tell me about when you were growing up, they probably started the Helldorado parades.

No. They started just before.

So what was that like for young boys growing up?

It was a gas. K.O. Knudsen, who was the principal at the grade school, used to marshal the parade for the kids, the kids' parade. And, of course, this was a big deal for a small town. And now it's a little deal for a big town and it doesn't go over as well. But we had a children's parade on I think it was a Friday or Saturday. And the beauty parade was on Sunday. The old-timers' parade was I think on Thursday. It went down Fremont Street from about Main Street to Fifth Street. And then it went over the old village, the Frontier village that was above where Cashman Field is now. And it was a real "shoot 'em up" deal. I mean they used to shoot pistols downtown with blanks in them and put people in jail and make somebody come bail them out. It was a lot of fun, a good rodeo.

Do you think that Mayor Goodman's idea of bringing that back is a good idea for this time period?

Never make it in this time period. Never make it. There are too many other things that compete. See, I was on the Las Vegas Events with the Convention Authority when we brought the National Finals to town.

And you're talking about the National Finals Rodeo.

Rodeo. And it was a big deal. I mean that's the Super Bowl of rodeos. So it's awful hard to bring a rodeo back to town that's going to eclipse the Super Bowl of rodeos. Since then they've brought back the bull -- what do they call it? -- PBR, Professional Bull Riders. They compete here on a separate deal. It's hard to surpass that. And now you've got a NASCAR race. And you saw what happened with the mayor's road race downtown. It fell flat on its nose because you can't compete with NASCAR. I mean it brings millions and millions of dollars, far more than the rodeo ever brought and we thought the rodeo was a great thing. So it's grown too much for that. That's like bringing a 30,000-people rodeo to a 30,000-people city that's now grown to two million. It isn't going to make it -- I just don't think it'll happen.

And since we're talking about downtown and bringing thing backs, the mayor is also revamping downtown. How do you feel about some of the plans and the look now?

Well, I have a problem because I grew up downtown. For the first little while we lived here, we lived downtown. We didn't move down on Ninth Street until World War II was well under way. And then we moved up to Seventh and Charleston for the remainder of the war.

And when I got out of the Air Force -- I went to college and went in the Air Force. When

we got out of Air Force, we all built out here. My three brothers and my dad all built here. We built these. Mine was the middle house. I have a brother on this side and my dad was on this side and another brother was beyond him and another brother beyond this one.

So which area are we talking about? What is this area called?

We bought the property from two guys.

This is not the Scotch Eighties?

Oh, no. Scotch Eighty is down here.

So it's farther --

Scotch Eighty is down between the freeway and Rancho, south of Charleston. That's Scotch Eighty. That's where the mayor lives.

But what I was going to say is that I think he thinks like New York. And this isn't a New York City. We don't have subways. We don't have a transportation system. You can't go to city hall to a meeting unless you've got ten dollars' worth of quarters in your pocket and somebody out there to plug the meters in the parking garage. It can't be done. And you can't build a downtown like that, where everything is either valet or walk, because you get two streets away -- it may be safe, but it doesn't look safe. And it could be as safe as your own home. But if it doesn't look like it, you don't want to be there.

So what do you think needs to be done?

Well, I don't know. I don't have the answer. Downtown used to be a good financial district. It used to be a fairly good retail district. But they drove all the retail out. I was in the retail business for too many years. And I understand that everybody who builds a retail district wants all the money to build the district and they charge horrendous rents. And you can't make it with the rent you have to pay. So when a casino comes and wants the property that you're leasing, you're gone. We had the department stores downtown. We had the grocery stores downtown. We had all that downtown, which would still service the same area as it did before. But they've run them all out.

The streets are too narrow, also. You've got to remember this thing. When they first divided up Las Vegas, when the railroad sold the lots, the railroad owned it all. But when they sold the lots, they were 25-foot wide lots. Yeah. Those railroad houses up on Second and Third and Fourth Streets are on 25-foot lots. My wife's parents bought three of them to have 75 feet of

frontage to build their house on South Sixth Street, three lots. So, you know, it's too crammed up. The streets are narrow.

And then they close the streets. You never know when you're going to get through. I mean the way to move traffic in this town according to the city council is to close the streets. It doesn't work.

But people are going down there. Look at the World Market Center.

Yeah, look at it. It plugs the streets.

They're big, aren't they?

Well, they've got the IRS building down there now. When you go down and visit the IRS building, you've got no place to park. You've got to take a taxicab. There's no parking at the IRS building.

So now, is that the building right there beside the county building?

No, no. It's the one north, north of the trade center. The one next to the county building is RTC. And I would have never stood still for building that there had I been on the county commission when it was built because that took away all the parking for the county building. You recognize if you have a county building that indicates rural. You don't come down to the county building in taxicabs. You come down in your own car. You may be coming from Jean or wherever. What if there's no place to park when you get there? What do you do?

So tell me about college. Let's go back. Where did you go to school?

Brigham Young University.

So what was that time period like? You'd been in Las Vegas. You were accustomed to Las Vegas.

Well, I went to BYU in 19 -- let's see. I graduated in 1950 and went to BYU in the fall of 1950. And I got up there and I was in school too early. After one quarter up there, I said what the hell am I doing up here?

Why did you feel that way?

Well, because I wasn't heading in any particular direction. And I looked around and I said I'm out of here. So I came home and worked at service stations. I worked at Cashman Cadillac for a short time.

Why not the family business?

Well, I wanted to see what the other world was like. And so then I decided, well, all these other guys were doing better than I was, so I better go back to school. So I went to school. Then the draft was leaning on me. So I got into the ROTC program and did four years of ROTC in the Air Force and left college with a degree in marketing in 1955 and a commission in the Air Force. And in July I went to pilot training and flew with the Air Force for three years and got out and then came back into the jewelry business.

So what kind of missions were you flying in '55?

Well, I was in SAC. That stands for Strategic Air Command. I flew a B-47 bomber that had nuclear weapons onboard in case we went to war.

Because this is the Cold War period.

This is the Cold War period.

So what kind of things did they tell you about this period? To be prepared for what?

To dig a hole if you got shot down and get in it and stay in it for two weeks.

Did you have enough food with you for two weeks?

No. Heck, no. It was a loser. If I ever got shot down, I was a dead man. But we didn't have a shooting war going at the time. We were on alert all the time. I was stationed in Idaho and I was never -- well, I did a year of pilot training in that time. I didn't fly actually in bombers until -- for only about a year and a half. And I did the lovely ancient pilot training. And that was all on B-25s. So I never saw the inside of a jet until I got up to Wichita for B-47 upgrading. And that was one heck of a fast airplane for its time. And so we were on alert most of time. We had a lot of training -- nuclear weapons training, survival training, aerial refueling training, gunnery training.

I was stationed in Mountain Home, Idaho. And we had rotated over Guam when I got out. I was on the island of Guam when I got my release papers. But when we were in Idaho, we were never more than an hour away from the air base unless we were on leave. If I went to the movie in the evening, I could get as far as Boise. But that's as far as I could get because I had to be back at the base within an hour ready to go.

And when we were on alert -- I have a ribbon for changing -- our wing changed the time,

the alert time. We had to get to the airplane prepared for take off and we had three hours to get it in the air. We changed that to 15 minutes by sleeping at the airplane for 36 hours. We spent 36 hours on and 36 off. And we slept right at the airplane in little barracks buildings that were temporary. And when they blew the whistle, why, we had to have that airplane's engines running and be taxiing down the runway in 15 minutes. And we did it.

And that whistle could blow at any time?

Yeah. And we did it with no loss of life, no injuries, no loss of aircraft, no accidents. We took it from three hours to 15 minutes. And I have a ribbon for that.

Oh, that's great. During the 50s you were away quite a bit, away from Las Vegas. What did you hear about the Nevada Test Site?

I know all about that.

Okay. Tell me about it.

That started before I left, didn't it? I believe it did. It started before I left. I knew a lot of those guys. A lot of the scientists lived in this area. They lived right up in here, a lot of them. In fact, my nephew ended up working out there for years as an engineer. But I knew all about it. I wasn't afraid of nuclear weapons.

Why not?

Well, I flew with one. You know, I armed and disarmed them. You know, I played with them all the time. That's what I did.

So what did they tell you about them at that time? Did you know that it was possible for radiation exposure and all of that?

Sure. Sure did. You just had to know how to handle it just like everything else. I have no fear.

Am I thinking? I probably shouldn't say this. Somebody will shoot me for it. But my thinking is that if you want to solve the energy crisis -- I have no earthly understanding why every nation in the world has nuclear power plants, but the United States doesn't like them. If I was the king for the day, I would put the most huge nuclear power plant you ever saw in your life out at the Test Site and utilize all that infrastructure. And the ground is already polluted. It has been for years. Then put a nuclear fire plant out there, run wires all over southern Nevada and southern California and eliminate the need for smokestacks. And then I would start a scientific program to

learn how to reprocess nuclear waste so that you keep using it over and over, and that eliminates your storage problem.

So do you think that Yucca Mountain could not necessarily even be a question?

I think Yucca Mountain is always going to be a question because there are those who don't like it and don't know why they don't like it. They believe some stuff that is being told from both sides. So, consequently, it's so polluted now -- thinking polluted, mentally polluted -- that nobody knows who to believe anymore. So they want nothing to do with any of it.

And that's unfortunate because I think it could be made -- of course, I wanted it from the get-go. Why they have to dig it up from the ground? You can put them in bombproof silos on top of the ground. And then you can monitor the heck out of it. It's not a problem. You know, they worry about burying it, getting it in the water supply and everything. Put it aboveground. That's where they store it now a lot of places. They keep it cool. But you could do that. You could run water around it and keep it cool and never get into the nuclear waste with water. It could all be done technologically.

You know, when I was a kid Dick Tracy had a wrist radio. Now you look at the phones they've got and you wonder where's the limit on technology? There is no limit. So why don't we spend our energy on technology instead of arguing with one another about it? It makes no sense to me.

So once you got out of the Air Force, you came back to Las Vegas.

I went back in the jewelry business and we expanded the business. We had a store on Fremont Street and we expanded it out to several other stores and so forth.

So when did you get married, at what point?

When I was in school.

So while you were at BYU?

Uh-huh. We got married -- what did I tell you, 1952?

I think so.

I think I went to school for a year and got married the following summer. I may be off a year. I had one son when I graduated, my oldest boy. I got to think for a second where I lived. I lived there for one year. And then the second and third years. And the fourth year I was married.

Yeah. Yeah, we were married in June of about 1952 because I started school in '50 and quit in December that year and went back in '51. Then we got married in June of '52 after two years. And then -- '53 after two years. Did I tell you '52? I got married in '53. And then I went two years to school as a married student. Graduated in '55. It was '53.

So the date you got married was 12 June of '53.

Yeah.

I won't tell.

She knows me. She's lived with me a number of years. She knows I don't remember a thing.

Now, after you came back at what point did you become involved in politics?

That's interesting. Now you're getting into interesting stuff.

That's right.

For some reason I was on the Chamber of Commerce. And I don't know how I got there.

Somebody nominated me. I guess I got elected. But that's hazy to me because I don't remember campaigning or anything. And now days they campaign for the Chamber of Commerce Board and I didn't ever do that. I suddenly found myself on it. I was wondering how the heck did I get here?

They campaign now for the board of the Chamber?

Yeah, they do. A lot of people don't know that. But they do it quietly.

But it's in-house?

Well, they campaign against members of the Chamber of Commerce, the business people around town. But at any rate, I was on the Chamber of Commerce with a kid I knew from school that was a year or two younger than I was named Al Levy, a good friend of mine. And he and I were at a legislative action committee meeting where we went over some of the bills in the legislature to determine what the Chamber's position was going to be on them after discussing them pro and con with bunch of people in there, board members and experts and so forth. And Al was running for the city council. This was 1973.

So I'm in this meeting with Al Levy and he's going to run for city council. And he's got his stuff up. He has a headquarters up on Sahara up above the jewelry store. And he was going full bore and the filings hadn't even opened yet.

And so at that time you ran at-large, but they were numbered seats. And he picked a

numbered seat. You had to declare the number of seat you were going for. And there were two up every two years, two seats and either the mayor or the city attorney, so that you had three people in the city up for re-election every two years.

So he was running for -- I forget the number of the seat. And I said, Al, you're making a mistake. You should be running in four. He said why? I said the guy's easy to beat. He's got too much hanging on his neck that's going to hold him down. He drinks too much. I didn't want to say that out loud. And all these things were a problem. And he said, no, I'm in the right seat; I can beat that guy. I said I know, but can you beat the guy that's going to run against you, because there was a guy named Ron Lurie that was going to run against him. And he said I think so. I said, well, okay. He said if you're so damn smart, why don't you run for four? And I said for two cents I would. And that is the end of that conversation.

Well, about a week later a guy called me up and said in a very gruff voice I got two cents. I said what the hell are you talking about? I knew him. It was Jimmy Cashman is who it was, Junior. He's dead now. And he says I want to come down and talk to you. So he came down to the store at five o'clock that afternoon on his way home from work. And we stood out. And he said do you know what it takes to run for city council? I said never gave it a thought. He said it'll cost \$25,000 minimum. I said, well, I'm not going to run for it then because I'm not going to spend \$25,000 for a seat that pays -- I think it paid \$4500 a year. And he says how about if we raise the money? And I said who is we? And he said, well, it'll all be clean, straight-up money.

He had brought a friend with him who knew a lot about politics. And I said yeah; I'd do that. And said he said okay, be over at the house and we'll find a campaign manager. I went by his house and he had this guy there and I sat down and met him. And he hadn't run a campaign in a lot of years and he never ran another one after mine. But we sat down and talked and set it up and started a go. He said, now, I'll give you a list of people to call and I'll have them prescreened. And then he says I want you to talk with me after you meet with every one of them for campaign funding because I know how much they're prepared to spend and I know who you shouldn't talk to and who might trip you up and try and get you to do something so that you owe them for forever. And he says here's another thing. Whenever you get some unsolicited campaign contributions, you call me before you accept a nickel so that I can screen them and tell you if they're straight or

not. He was a very, very honest, straight shooting man. And I've always loved Jim Cashman. I worked for him for a short time when I was in between high school and college. And I knew the guy.

And so we did. I spent about \$24,000 on the campaign and came within 53 votes of winning it all in the primary with five people in the race citywide. And I never campaigned on the west side because they didn't like Mormons because we had to let them in. That was the -- so if I had spent a little money over there with some of my friends, I probably could have won it all in the primary and been done with it.

The first humorous thing that happened to me was the night of the election. We're all standing around. And, of course, the TV cameras were all here grinding away, you know, like this. And somebody stuck a TV camera in my face and a microphone and said, "Why do you think you won this election?" And I thought to myself what a dumb question. And I looked at the guy. I said, "Because I got more votes than anybody else."

That's great.

I mean I never heard such a stupid question in my life. You know, he could've said what was your strategy or why do you think you got more votes than anybody else or whatever. But why do you think you won the election? Well, I got more votes. My campaign manager called me up a few minutes later and he said what the hell did you say to him?

That's good.

But that's how I got in politics. It was really funny because I went down there to the brand-new city hall. The old commission was dedicating it I think in June after the election. And we took office July 1. And one of the first orders of business that Ron Lurie and I pushed through was a rule that after the election as soon as the votes were canvassed and counted and the election was -- what do they call it? -- recorded or reported or whatever, you know -- certified, the election was certified, the new people took office. We had a city attorney, who's not elected anymore, but this city attorney that was defeated spent the next month cleaning out the files and dismissing cases and so forth so the new guy that went in there and had cases to present that he had no files on. And that was very bad. And so we eliminated the -- what's the word we use for that? -- lame ducks. And it was one of the first good things we did; eliminate the lame ducks.

So now, your friend Levy who was running won as well?

Yeah, he won. And Murray lost. In that same election there was initially a referendum on the ballot to divide them into districts and call them wards.

The system we have now?

And that was the last election run at-large for the city council. And Levy won that seat. And I can't remember who else was on there. Well, Hank Thornley was on there -- not Hank Thornley. That's the guy I beat. George Franklin was on there and Hal Morelli.

Morelli of the Morelli House?

I don't know. What's the Morelli House?

It was one of the old houses that has been moved downtown now, a historic landmark.

Hal Morelli was working as a dealer at the Fitzgerald or whatever it is at Third and Fremont last time I saw.

So now, you were on the city council for 11 years.

Eleven and a half.

Eleven and a half years. So tell me about some of the issues that you championed during those years.

Well, we tried our level best to stomp out the crap downtown at the girlie joints, all that stuff, the stuff that --

Those are the gentlemen's clubs?

Yeah. The stuff that the ACLU loves to champion that's not good for any city. I mean, you know, there's going to be prostitution. I understand that. But they shouldn't be advertising it on Fremont Street. I don't think that's the proper thing to do on the news racks, forty news racks on every corner with give-away girlie papers in them that end up all over the street.

And then we had jam auction.

What is a jam auction?

A jam auction is a thing where they used to have, this auction that basically they would auction things off. The reason they call them jam auction is if they get somebody in there dumb enough to bid on some of that stuff, then they'd jam more crap down their throats and sell them a whole bunch of garbage and so forth. And it would just put a real blight on the community.

We tried to get some of the other things done. The biggest thing that I did was I fought the county commission for a long, long time on wastewater.

Tell me about that.

They were going to put a big federal-funded wastewater plant. And they saw the handwriting on the wall with the water, the county. And so they were going to take the city's wastewater, too. And the way they were going to do that is force us into their plant and have the EPA help them do it. And I could tell you hours' worth of stories on that. But the gist of it was that we fought them. And I ended up being the sewer expert. What was it they used to call me? Who was the guy on The Honeymooners, the guy that ran the sewer plant? What was his name? [The character's name is Norton.]

Ralph? Not Ralph. Ralph was a bus driver. The only name I can think of --

But you know which one I'm talking about. I can't think of his name either. That's what he used to call me. And everything that had to do with sewer, they would just look at me like what do you want to do?

And so I used to look into the things that I had jurisdiction over or that I had not total jurisdiction but things that I was assigned to. And I used to look into them deeply.

I remember -- I'm going to digress a second here. When Ron Lurie and I first took office we ended up with master keys. They issued us master keys and we ended up going in offices in odd hours to find out what the hell was going on because we were the outsiders and nobody would tell us anything. The planning director was the only guy we could sit down and talk to. And he said, well, you'd have to look in that file to find that. And so we'd go look in that file some night. And that's what we had to do in order to find out what was going on. There was nothing clandestine or illegal about it. It was just we had to find out what was going on because nobody would talk to us.

Why?

Well, they all worked for the other guys.

The other guys on the city council?

The guys that we threw out.

Oh, I see. Okay.

It was quite a political machine down there at the time. And we broke it up. It was really funny because the mayor wanted it broken up. But the mayor expected Levy to win, not Lurie. And I came in with Lurie. So he put me with Lurie and didn't trust either one of us. And I was really supposed to be the mayor's buddy. You know, it was a little tough. So anyway -- was it Kramer, the sewer guy?

I think Kramden Kramer [Norton].

Something like that. Anyway, so we ended up in this deal coming down the line on this sewer plant. And this came later on in the season toward the end of my term. First I was on the Convention Authority for a while and I was chairman of the Convention Authority at one time with the city.

Right. I'm going to ask you about that later.

But I went down to the sewer plant to see what was going on. And I used to poke around the county plant. And we ended up looking at that and seeing a bad situation. We had to fire a city manager because he was doing nothing. Then we got another one that was doing nothing. So we had an interim city manager for a long time. We hired this guy from New Jersey who was the deputy county manager in Hudson County, New Jersey. And he was 30-something years old and they called him "The Kid." And it rankled him to no end. He could buy and sell most of them now today. But he said, well, here's what we've got to do. If we're going to go after the county on this sewer, we've got to get some expert help.

So we hired a guy from -- I can't think where we got him. He was raised in Georgetown. He was a graduate of Harvard, a chemist. And he was a relative I think, a nephew of Vladimir Horowitz. He could play the piano like I've never seen anybody play the piano, and play the organ just as well and violin and cello, and spoke umpteen different languages, and one of the brightest people I've ever met in my life. And we interviewed him down at the Golden Nugget one night, Ron and the mayor and myself. And we came away and I said I don't know. This guy's either a nut or a genius. And I'm betting on genius.

So we hired him. And he said, well, we've got to get an attorney. He said the best attorney I know is this guy in Chicago. We called him and he said, well, I normally work for the EPA. But he said you send me the stuff and I'll look at it. We sent him the stuff. And he sent it back and

said I used to work for the EPA, but he says they're hosing you so bad, he says, I want to take this on for you.

And we ended up suing the county, the state and the federal EPA. I was personally ejected forcibly from the region nine administrator's office in San Francisco, EPA region nine administrator's office because I called him a crook.

So what was happening?

Well, they were building this sewage plant and they were going to force the city to use that sewage plant. And they had a sewage -- your Professor Deacon was in it up to his eyeballs, Jim Deacon. He was convinced that we had to have this super high standard of wastewater.

Well, we found out from the process through our discovery -- this attorney was sharp. He brought a little assistant with him. And he got discovery granted in courts. And he'd go in and microfilm everything in their files. And then he'd pore over it hour after hour after hour. We found the telephone references to a miracle telegram that came down when I had all the city councils in the area meet together one day. And Commissioner Broadbent, who turned out to be a very good friend of mine once I got over this and he got over it, stood up with a miracle telegram. We found out where he'd ordered that telegram from the EPA to appear at that time.

And they had a standard. And we finally were able to prove that the EPA could not under oath measure a standard that fine that we were expected to meet. And we couldn't meet it unless we went in the county's plant. And the county's plant got that standard because the builder of the plant said that he could meet that standard. And so they said that's the standard we'll use, even though he couldn't measure it, the EPA couldn't measure it and we couldn't find a testing laboratory that could measure it anywhere.

And we went into court with that and we got a consent decree. And the federal government ended up paying for upgrades to our sewer plant. They built the county's plant. The two remain separate, although they're connected so that if one plant goes down the other can treat the water and vice versa. And that was a long-term project that we didn't complete until I was with the county commission.

One of the last things we ever did was create the Southern Nevada Water Authority, which gave all our...at any rate we ended up getting that Southern Nevada Water Authority on with the

county, which gave all the cities and everybody an input that used water. And it's all worked great now. But at the time it was a real bugaboo. And we got it solved.

I think that's one of the ways that I got back in the good graces of Bob Broadbent, and we became very good friends. In fact, I helped him get the job of running the airport. But that was all because of the -- that's a different story. I'll tell you that later.

But at any rate, that's the stuff we were doing with the city; trying to monitor everything else. The city was running fairly well. We had a lot of dog pound problems. They've still got them. They always will have. People don't take care of their animals.

That's the case in probably a lot of cities.

Well, everybody thinks they can do it better than the other guy. And they can't.

So how did you move from the city council to the county commission? How did you decide to do that?

Well, it was interesting. I found out that the city was a little island. The county was where the action was. All the things I wanted to do -- you know, I never made a dime being county commissioner. I came off with less from the county commission than when I started. I mean my net worth is less. Nevertheless, the things I wanted to accomplish for the people of the county were not doable at the city. That's rather limited in its scope. The mayor's expanded that by rah-rahing everything. The high profile mayor has expanded that and the county lets him take that high profile. And that's good because they all want to stay under the radar anyway. But in those days you didn't have that. So I was going to run against Ronzone.

The department store Ronzone?

Uh-huh. And my friends all said, you know, Ronzone's really your friend. And I didn't have anything against him. I thought he was ineffective. And they said he's going to retire before long. Why don't you just sit tight until he retires and then we'll help you? And so I did. And when he retired I filed and won. And I swore that I would never lose but one election. If I ever lost an election, I was all done.

Oh, I see what you mean. Okay.

So that's how I got on the county commission. The reason we had an 11 and a half-year term is it's 12 years, but the city council takes office in July and the county in January. So I had to resign

from the county council six months in order to take the county seat, the county position. And they appointed an interim for six months and then he had to run.

Before we talk about the county, tell me about two things. Tell me about the mob influence in Las Vegas during the 50s and 60s.

You know, I'm sure there was, but it never touched me. I think that's what Cashman was talking about in '73. And I knew some of those guys in my contacts in the jewelry store and stuff like that, but they were just regular customers. They were not any harder or easier -- they were a lot easier to deal with than the current bunch because the money flowed more freely and they didn't care.

But, you know, my dad was in politics in those years. He was a state assemblyman and later on a state senator. And I'll tell you the way he explained it to me one day. And he's exactly right. He was in the legislature and it was a common practice here in the legislature to find a case of whiskey at your front door or -- my dad didn't drink, but, you know, stuff like that, a new suit of clothes or whatever. And he went to a friend of his in the legislature who was blown up in the parking garage at the bank. His name was Coulthart. He was in the assembly. And he said, Bill, I hear all these things about these guys getting suits of clothes and cases of whiskey and everything. How come nobody offers me any of that? And he says, M.J., they wouldn't dare. They know you'd turn them in. You'll never get offered a dime. Your reputation precedes you and they know that it would be dangerous. So they're not going to offer you nothing.

And I adopted the same policy. You know, I caught them using my name for comps one time. And I asked an attorney about it and he said always, always, always to protect yourself, if you ever go to a hotel or anything like that, you sign John Doe or something like that on the bill. Never sign your name because then the hotel knows if somebody's comping you. If it says Christensen then that isn't you. And I caught them doing that. A guy I knew was the entertainment director at one of the hotels. And somebody called me -- excuse me one second.

I still do a little lobbying.

I see that. You were talking about -- we had probably completed talking about the families or the mob.

Yeah. I had some good customers that were hotel owners and so forth and they had some

idiosyncrasies and stuff like that. But they never came to me that much. I'm sure that I've got a picture of me on every FBI office wall in the United States from the time that we had the topping-off ceremony at what's now the Fitzgerald's, which was the Sundance at the time it was built. I'm not sure it's even Fitzgerald's anymore.

Yes, it is.

Is it? But there was Moe Dalitz, Herb Tobman, Al Sachs and Bill Briare was the mayor. And Al Levy and I and Ron Lurie were up there on the topping-off ceremony. And I didn't drink, but they were having champagne. And so I was pouring the champagne for everybody.

What is a topping-off ceremony?

That's when you complete the top floor. Then you have a ceremony to top it off. And then you know that the cranes are coming down and they're going to start building the interior. Then the stuff is all elevators then, you know, the rooms and so forth.

Do they still do that today?

Sure. They have topping-off ceremonies quite frequently.

Wow. I'm in the wrong circles.

Well, it's nice way to get a little press coverage, a little spurt, you know.

Tell me about the Mormon influence in this city and the power that comes from the Mormon community.

Oh, I think it's overrated, frankly. I think the power of the Mormon community is not a wielding power. It's that you try and surround yourself sometimes with people that you trust. If I'm going to have an accountant and there was an accountant in one of the hotels that was very high up in the hotel business who was a good church member, then the reason they liked him is because he didn't have his hands in their pockets. He was honest.

You know, I hearken back to Bob Broadbent on that. Bob Broadbent was an inactive church member for a good many years. And my sister knew him in Boulder City. They lived in Boulder City. And she thought he walked on water. I used to kid him about his shoes with the life jackets on, what kind of shoes he had that he could walk on water. He wondered what the hell I was talking about. But that's what she said. And the interesting thing was that he surrounded himself with some church members at the airport and got in all kinds of trouble for it, sued and

everything else, because they thought he was giving favoritism to the church members. And that was not true. What he was doing was he was hiring a person that he could trust to do the job that he wouldn't have to watch all the time.

A guy that he hired from Washington, D.C. was an undersecretary of the Interior for a short time. And when he came back, he went to work at the airport. And he brought a guy with him out of Washington that he knew when he needed a ground transportation head. And he brought this guy out. His name was Kimball. He was an Annapolis graduate, sharp, good guy. He worked for me for a while at the DSA. But he was accused of surrounding himself with Mormons. And it was because he knew he could trust the guy. He didn't have to worry about the way it was handled. You know, there's nothing like having a military guy handling your personnel because they don't take no -- you know, they're like John Wayne toilet paper.

So there's a lot more to that. There's not as much of that as people perceive.

So what is it about the Mormon lifestyle, the Mormon culture that gives people that impression that there is so much honesty and wholesomeness? What happens?

Well, that's what we preach. That's what we preach. Honesty. Full tithe payers. Don't drink. Most don't gamble a lot, if at all. And if you eliminate drinking, gambling, you eliminate a lot of the reason to steal from your employer. They teach them industry. Pay for your house. Don't buy more than you can pay for. You know, the Mormons got chased out of about four states.

Oh, yes.

I used to kid Yvonne Gates about her ancestors being picked on. And I said, well, don't you think mine were picked on? Hell, we were run out of state after state after state. You got Martin Luther King assassinated. They assassinated our leader, right, while he was in jail on a trumped up charge. And the guards all left so that the mob could come in and shoot him full of holes.

That was I believe in Nauvoo?

Yeah. And they did. And I said, you know, you're no different than the rest of us. Just quit hollering about it and suck up your belt and move on. That's what the rest of us do. And so you learn those things. And we're not that far removed, you know. My great-great-grandfather walked across the plains pushing a handcart and he was crippled. It wasn't an easy time for him. So the industry is there, industry and honesty and integrity. And besides that they were here first.

Generationally, do you see it changing at all now?

I think the more you know about the Mormons, the more you begin to respect and assimilate them and not hold them out to ridicule -- this recent primary campaign bothers the hell out of me because I took a class from Mitt Romney's dad when I was in school. We had a class called electors in executive policy and he was one of our teachers for a week. He was president of Nash-Kelvinator at the time. That's probably before your time. But Kelvinator used to be the refrigerator manufacturer. Kelvinator Refrigerators, that's who made the refrigerators that had the big round deal on top with the coils and so forth, you know, that you see in the old movies. And then Nash Automobiles later became American Motors. They merged Nash and Hudson and became American Motors. And Nash-Kelvinator went away.

But at that time there was a group of people who were LDS that used to come and lecture at the Y. We had Rose Marie Reid, of bathing suit fame. She was a staunch church member. We had O. Leslie Stone of O.P. Skaggs, Skaggs-Stone Company. We had the president of the TransCanada Pipeline. I can't remember his name. John Cash Penny came and lectured once, the old man himself. I mean I had some great teachers, great people.

And all these people, you know, they call us a cult. And that's one thing that started getting to me. I told somebody Mitt Romney will never be elected because the Baptists all think we're a cult and the rest don't understand us. Many years ago blacks were accepted into the church. There's not a problem there anymore. It hasn't been for a number of years now. It was in the 70s I think, wasn't it?

I think it was.

Seventies or 80s or something like that. And we believe in Revelation. However, you don't just get a revelation. They said, well, that was sure timely to have that revelation come giving the blacks the priesthood. It wasn't timely. You asked for the information and then you get the revelation. This is your answer. And that's what they did; ask what do we do? And they said they're your brothers and sisters. End it. And so they did. Very simple. There's nothing complicated about it. But they all get all bound up in this mess. And I think the more you get that in the main stream, the less it's going to happen.

That's right. The more it's understood.

What do you think -- and do you see the same thing happening with Howard Hughes?

When he came he also surrounded himself with people from the Mormon --

Yeah. I knew a couple of them very, very well. One of them painted this house, the one that got thrown in jail in Mexico when he went back to get his gear after he died on the plane coming out of Mexico, the one that was dumped by Maheu. Once he died, why they kick everybody else out. He was supposed to have a pension. He lost a child and he was supposed to go home for his month off. And he conned him into staying with him and bringing his children and wife down to -- was it the Bahamas at the time?

Yes.

And the child drowns in the Bahamas.

I talked to Howard Hughes a couple of times on the radio. Interesting guy.

Tell me about that.

That's my claim to fame.

I have to know.

When I was in high school, I used to hang out at the airport. I wanted to fly airplanes since I was that big. And I used to hang out in the airport in the tower with a guy that I knew from the jewelry store, a customer that told me I could come out anytime to sit with him in the tower. And he would like the companionship because there wasn't much happening.

And I'm sitting up there in the tower and the radio comes on and crackles. And he says such and such for landing at McCarran Airport, gave the radio lingo. And he said you want to clear him in? And I said yeah, why not? And he said okay; clear him in. I said this is McCarran Tower; 4521 is clear to land runway one-five north; report downwind or three-mile file. I don't remember what it was. So he said Roger. He said you just cleared Howard Hughes to land. He said that's his airplane. I said you're putting me on. He said no. You watch him. And he got out of the car with a brunette on his arm, a torn shirtsleeve. I mean he didn't care how he looked. He went over to the hotel. A couple of days later I was out there and he got back in the airplane with a blond this time and headed back to California. And I said I cleared Howard Hughes to land at McCarran.

What do you remember about the Howard Hughes' era here in Las Vegas? I guess we can

call it that. Did you see a change? They say that he's the one who got the mob out of this city.

I don't know. There was so much going on about Howard Hughes this and Howard Hughes that and he's secret and all this stuff. And you didn't talk to Howard Hughes. You talked to Bob Maheu. And Bob Maheu was around. You know, it didn't affect me a whole lot. Whether it affected the gaming I don't know. I wasn't in on that.

But just being here in the city, there was no impact?

Oh, it made a difference. Everybody was talking about how Howard Hughes was going to make this town safe and all this stuff.

So even at that point?

Oh, yeah. Sure. Well, he bought The Landmark, which was on its way down. He moved into the Desert Inn and took that over. Of course, you had the feds in there helping. The feds wanted these people out of here, too. So I don't know who did what. And I'm not sure it's that much better, frankly.

So now, we had stopped your political life as you are becoming a part of the county commission. So tell me about those years.

They were interesting years. I had fought the county for so long that they wouldn't show me where the bathrooms were at the county commission. I mean I was not accepted. After the election every year they cut up the pie. In other words, they would determine who's going to be the chairman and who's going to be the head of the water district and who's going to be this and who's going to be that.

What did you get?

The sewer plant. The first thing I did was to go out there taking pictures where it said Clark County Sanitation District, Chairman Paul J. Christensen, and then sent it my friend, the attorney in Chicago. I said it's gone full circle. But we laughed about that on the phone.

But the first time I went out there and started walking around the plant, I noticed two guys following me. And I finally said what are you guys following me for? Well, we don't want you to get in trouble. I said I won't get in trouble. And then I went back into the office. And Jimmy Gans -- he probably won't mind me saying this. But he was all set to resign. I was really mad at

him. And I said what are you thinking about resigning for? And he said well -- and he started hemming and hawing around. I said, Jim, I've never been mad at you. The county commission ordered you to do what you did. And you had a guy over you that was a bigger problem. And I could find nothing in the records where you've done anything wrong ever to anybody. I have no animosity towards you. I hope you stay on here to help me straighten this whole thing out. And we became very good friends. He works at the convention center now.

How did you get that kind of peacemaking character? Where did that come from?

Well, you know, you can get mad and you can stay mad for a long time, but someday you have to sit down and say it's over. Get over it. That was Pat Shalmy's favorite comment. You'd go to Pat Shalmy -- (making whiny sounds). Can you do anything about it? (Making whiny sounds.) Well, then just get over it. And you'd look at him and say okay.

I'll have to tell you a little story back when I was on the city council. We were fighting in front of the legislature over something. I don't know whether it was annexation or what. I don't even remember the issue. But we had this long ongoing feud. And my campaign manager and Broadbent's campaign manager and me and Broadbent and the city manager and the county manager, the six of us got together in Circus Circus in a room. They said okay, there's plenty of food and everything in here. You and Bob and your managers sit down here and work out your differences. There are plenty of beds for you to sleep in if you don't get it worked out tonight. But we want them worked out because you're hurting the whole Southern Nevada Valley. And they left.

And we looked at each other and said, well, where do we start? And we sat down and spent about three hours getting over it. Come to find out we were all headed the same direction. We were just using different paths. And we got it all solved and came out of there. Shook hands. And I was friends with Bob ever since.

So whose idea was this to put you in this room together?

Our campaign managers. They said we're trying to get you guys elected, but you're at each other's throats. It's nuts. And so we did. And at that time we made peace. As a result of that, we built a convention center in Henderson, we built a water park complex in Boulder City, we gave North Las Vegas a ton of money to do what they wanted and built Cashman Field all with Convention

Authority money. The biggest complex motion ever passed by the Convention Authority board was where we built all that. That motion was two pages long because we covered everything in that motion, the whole ball of wax, bonding and everything. It scared Patiti (phonetic) so bad he separated us on the Convention Authority dais. So we didn't sit next to each other anymore. And shortly after that Bob moved to Washington. I never sat on the county commission with Bob Broadbent. He was gone.

Now, the Convention Authority -- now, you were a part of that when you were on the city council and --

Yeah. The Convention Authority board is made up of members from all of the cities, the county and Chamber of Commerce people.

So how many people from the city council --

There used to be two and two and a rotating one from Boulder City that we rotated from Boulder City and Henderson. And over the years they've added them here and there where they've had more and more people. But there's always one more than there are hotel representatives. And there's a reason for that: you spend tax money. And you have to have a majority of the board elected or you can't spend tax money.

Oh, okay. So now, when you became a member of the county commission --

I couldn't get back on the Convention Authority board. Karen Hayes had that blocked. And they were so mad at me that Manney and Karen and Bruce all got together and figured out who was going to be on there. I was going to tell you that. When I got to the sanitation district, they had already cut up the pie. And then they just called me into the room at the Convention Authority and said okay, this is the way it is; this is what you get; this is what Bingham gets. Bingham and I went out there together. And they said that's all you get. See you around.

So what were you able to do with that, though, over your tenure on the commission?

Well, there is some irony in that. I don't remember if it was two years later or a year later I was the chairman of the county commission because I was the one that could move the meeting along.

Isn't that something, how it works?

And one of the guys, a former county commissioner said at the time -- he just died here recently and I can't think of his name. He was on the school board for a while before he was a county

commissioner. David Canter. David Canter predicted. He said Christensen will be chairman of that board inside of two years.

How did that feel?

Well, it was an honor, but it was a lot of work. I didn't want it again. I had to give Bingham a secretary to change it. I had to give him our secretary. And I had to break in a new one when he became the chairman. Otherwise, he wouldn't have taken it. I said you deserve the experience. I'll break in a new one. I won't have that job.

Wow. So can you see a place in your life for being humble?

Sometimes I'm very humble. Sometimes I'm not. I have a temper. I am fiery. And I'm outspoken. I get that from my mother. My mother called it just exactly like it was. And if you didn't like it, lump it. And I'm the same way. You know, if I think a guy's a crook, I'll say I think that guy's a crook, end of conversation. It's over. But if I have to eat humble pie and I'm shown that I should, then I don't mind doing it. I have apologized to a lot of people.

And I'm not just talking about after the fact. But sometimes it appears after talking to you that you know going into a situation.

I don't appear to be humble, but I am. I know what you're talking about. Some people hide the humility by being outspoken to cover it because they're embarrassed about being so humble. I'm the guy that at the time I was defeated and we ended up -- there was a great big party down at the government center in the cafeteria room. I still have a hard time looking at the tape. They gave me a tape of that party. And I still get tears in my eyes when I think about it because people came that I didn't see that I had done things for without knowing that it benefited them that much. I have people that -- some of them are gone now, in fact, most of them. Manney's gone. A lot of those guys are gone. Ralph Englestad is an example. Ralph Englestad came to that. He doesn't come to parties. And he sat over in the corner and didn't say much. And somebody said how come Ralph's there? I said I have no idea. Yeah, I do have an idea. I learned a long time that with Ralph Englestad he'd call you and be angry as hell, give you a lot of heat, and if you listened to him until he ran down, told him what you could and couldn't do and what you would and wouldn't do, he'd accept that. And I learned. And I told a number of people this later. They said how did you get along with Ralph Englestad so well? I said you never lie to him, you never steal



Four-year-old Paul in Milford, Utah



County Commissioner photo 1985.

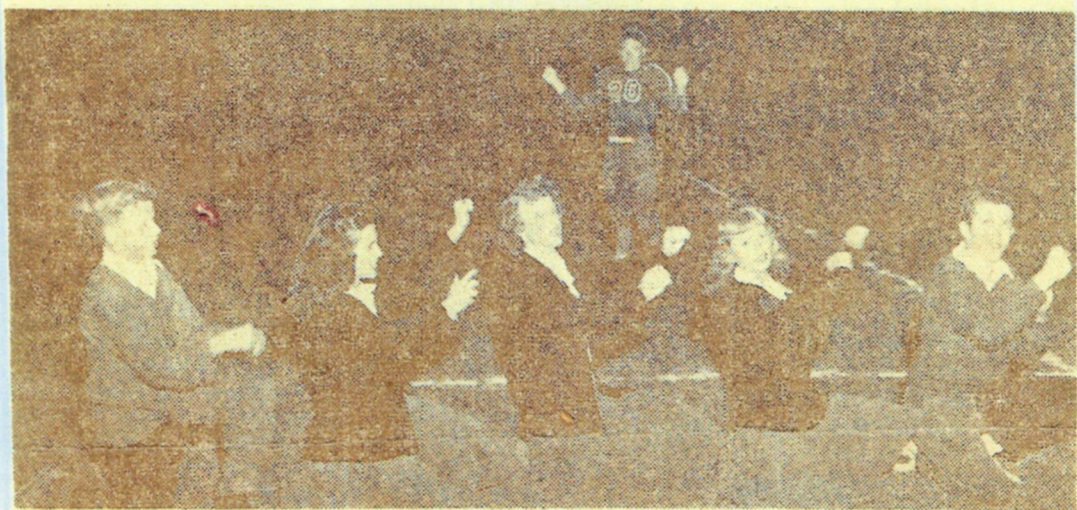


Norma and Paul Christensen
1991.

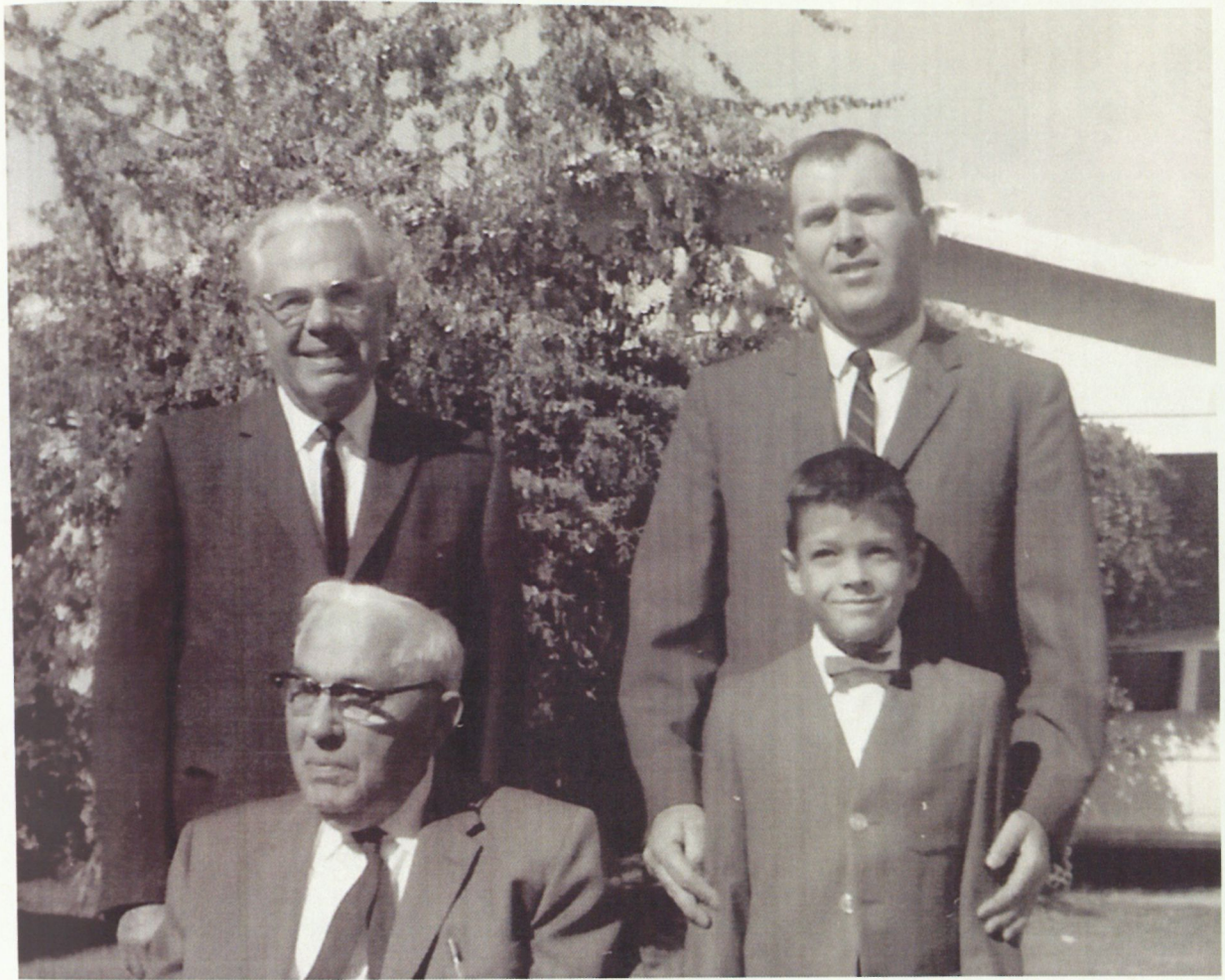


John Fechsner
LAS VEGAS

THE DESERET NEWS



HOLD THAT LINE—Newly elected cheerleaders at Las Vegas High School polish up on technique as the big football season kicks off. Left to right, are Joe Johnston, Elsa Kurtz, Pat Craun, Lydia Duarte, and Paul Christensen. Football fullback: Neil De



Four generations (clockwise, from bottom left): Grandfather C. N. Christensen, father M. J. Christensen, Paul Christensen and son, Marcus J.



Historic May 24, 1978 meeting of the four cities on the proposed "208" water quality management plan. Paul was a county commissioner.



Veterans Day Parade, Paul drives the car. Along for the ride are: Bill Pearson, Ron Lurie, and Al Levy.

from him, you never cheat him. Then if he's right, you try and help him. If he's wrong, you tell him you can't and this is why. All you have to do is be dead honest, straight upfront with him. And I was. And he was one of my best backers. But the thing that gets you is he showed up for that party. He never goes anywhere that he's seen, never. Dead now, but he didn't at the time.

I was accused a lot of times of being too close to Al Collins.

I don't know who that is.

Collins Brothers Development. They're both dead now. The brothers are dead now. But at the county commission they said anything Al wants you give it to him. I said that's probably true. But I said when he wants something he comes to me and says what do you think about it? And there are a whole hell of a lot of ideas that he's brought that I said, yeah, you can't make that fly and I wouldn't support it. Rethink it. And he respected that and would go away and rethink it and come back and say, well, this is fine. And I would say, well, it looks more sensible to me. Let's try it if you want it. And that's the way government should be run. Eliminate the problems before they happen. That way you don't have a roomful of angry people.

But, yeah, I have a lot of humility. Like I said I did these things because I love this town, not because I was going to make any money off it. I didn't. That's what hurt me so bad in my re-election campaign that I lost.

I'm going to ask you about that in a couple of minutes. How long were you on the commission?

Twelve years. Twenty-three and a half years in local government.

So as chairman of the commission, what are some of the issues that you thought were important?

There are no issues as chairman that are important. The issues are important whether you're chairman or not. The chairman conducts the meetings, signs the documents, controls who speaks and that's all he does. He's the sergeant of arms at the meetings.

And so he has no more power than anyone else, just more work?

Not a smidgen, just more work. You do have to show up to more things. You have to stand up and cut more ribbons. And those are things that, you know, I did them because I was supposed to and smile and all this. But I would have much rather just stayed home for most of those things.

Yeah. Those ceremonial-type things.

I wasn't big on ceremony.

So what were some of the issues? Any important issues that you remember vividly?

Growth.

What was your philosophy?

Water. Water, sanitation, growth -- they're all related.

How do you see the water issue here in the valley?

Misunderstood by most of the people including the media. I'll tell you how bad it is. I have a very good friend. In fact, he's got a home in Beaver just like I have. And he's going to retire and move up there within the next year. But he is a staunch friend. He and his wife are good friends of ours. And we were on our way to Beaver Friday. There was an article in the paper about Lake Mead and he said, well, what are you going to do when Lake Mead runs dry and Las Vegas loses all their water? I said we don't get all of our water from Lake Mead. And he said, well, you do too. I said no. You don't understand. We get 286,000-acre feet a year, which is a mere pittance. The first that's going to be hurt is California and Arizona because they get the lion's share of the water. Well, they do not. You get all that water. It's sitting right out there in the lake. I said, John, read my lips. I know more about the water in this community than most people do outside of the engineers at the Water District because I was involved in it for many years. And you don't have a clue what you're talking about.

I said we get the 300,000-acre feet and then we get the return flow credits. I don't know what they're up to know. It used to be 86,000. And water we put back in has to be cleaner than what we take out. And it is. You could drink the water coming out of sewer plant into Lake Mead. It would taste chemical, but it has -- I can't remember what the terminology is -- so many parts per million of total dissolved solids and so much phosphorous and so much other. Anyway, the numbers were ten, two and point-four when the original waste treatment plant was built. Theoretically they'd give you 30, 30 and one. But they couldn't measure it that fine. There are more total dissolved solids in a bottle of Perrier than there is in our sewer water going into Lake Mead. But the greeters and the newspaper people don't like to print that. So that's never there.

If you look up Channel 10 in the 70s, there was a big argument. Theron Vondair

(phonetic) and I did a show together with the guy that's still out there -- what's his name? -- Fox, Mitch Fox. And after that show I think that's when the county -- I was still with the city -- was arguing the sewer plant. And I think the county put Keeper (phonetic) on. And they wouldn't let her go on an interview by herself after that because I ate her lunch. She was preaching the green song and it just wasn't selling because she was wrong. And I gave her the facts and figures and so forth. And she had no idea. Now, she's a delightful lady. I love her. You know, she was a stellar member of the commission and a stellar member of the community. And I still see her occasionally and we're very, very good friends. But I flat ate her lunch when I was on the city council with that interview on Channel 10.

But those are the kinds of things that we dealt with. We had problems with individuals that came and went, the Schlesingers of the world and the Karen Hayes. I could never figure Karen Hayes out. We were both Mormons. I knew her when she was in high school. I don't know. I think she saw me as a threat to her security or something because she didn't like me from the get-go. She didn't even like me running for that office. And when I won she hated me from that day forward. So, you know, I couldn't get around her.

Tell me about the issue of water and the water use on the Strip. People say --
Still misunderstood.

So explain that to me.

Well, let me put it this way. I can simplify it for you. The Mirage used to have the big pools and all this stuff. It's all recycled water. They recycle it on the spot. They take their own water and have their own sewage treatment plant right on the premises and run all that stuff through their own system. That doesn't take water from the Water District. Nobody wants to believe that because they see all this water flowing. They figure, ah, look at all that drinking water. Well, it isn't.

And the Bellagio's the same?

Probably, because that's a requirement now I think. I think they have to generate their own water. And we instituted that, but we could never sell it. Nobody would believe us. I asked Steve Wynn personally one day. I said why don't you put a sign that says this is recycled water? And he says it wouldn't look good for the hotel. He's right. How would you like to go to a hotel where you see

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this gorgeous fountain that says sewer water?

So, you know -- but nobody understands. They don't want to understand. And it's always the newcomer that just moved here last month that raises hell about it because they see I'm supposed to have desert landscape. Well, look at that lush landscaping at the hotels, you know, and all this water used at the hotels. Well, look at it, honey, it's sewer. That's what it is. But it's misunderstood.

So now, let's talk about the election.

Let me just say one more thing. I think one of the biggest problems that the commissioners at all levels have is educating the public. And they can't do it unless they're together on their education and unless the news media carries that message for them.

And that's not exciting enough probably.

That's right. It doesn't sell papers. It does not sell papers.

After all of these years in public service, you said you wouldn't step down until you lost an election and you lost an election. Tell me about that loss. How did you, number one --

It was devastating to me for this reason -- several reasons. Number one, I'm a Democrat. I thought it was not only illegal or reprehensible that nobody did anything about it, especially in the Republican Party, when the hotel owner that has a reputation of being very, very, very vindictive -- so I'm not going to mention his name -- gave my opponent a hundred thousand dollars that we know of and gave it to the Republican Party to wash it and give it to him from the Republican Party because the party can give him all the money he wants. Otherwise, it can't be more than 10,000 from a corporation. So he gave him a hundred thousand dollar to wash through the Republican Party. Number one, the Republican Party should have never taken that money. That's the first thing. And he was angry at me because I caught him with some illegal things on the Strip. He didn't bother to get building permits. He lied about construction so that he could get parking and stuff like that. You know, it was a problem from the get-go.

That was one of the things.

And the other thing is that my opponent -- first, I had a democratic opponent that filed ethics charges against me over my wife's travel with the convention center. And they were phony charges. In fact, it was a fictitious name he used. And it came off his mother's fax machine, who

was in the printing business. And she used to be the head of the Department of Business Industry in the state. So those were some very bad ads.

But I beat him in the primary. In the general election this guy went out in my new district, which had been redistricted because Schlesinger kept it off the agenda, the new districts, until he got his districted so that he picked up the Democrats and gave me the Republicans in the northwest in the Summerlin area. And then my opponent went out there. And he's a good-looking kid, male model. I found out psychologically old people like to think of their youth. And so they always go for a younger guy that's good-looking over an older guy.

And charming.

Yeah. They'll always go for that. But he lied. And I challenged him. And that's when I should have been more humble in my challenge because I was at the same meeting and he had this whole crowd of people out there. It was set up by my cousin, frankly, who was a city councilman at the time, who I've since made peace with. And I've made peace with Jan Jones. She was there. I was really never that cross ways with Jan Jones. But he said to those people I'm going to reduce your taxes. And I said he cannot reduce your taxes. As a county commissioner you have no jurisdiction over the city's taxes, none whatsoever. It can't be done. But they believed him anyway.

Of course.

Young, good-looking cop. And then the other thing that bothered me, his ads all said he filled an LDS mission. Well now, that's something I didn't do because I had the Korean War breathing on me and I couldn't go on the mission. I didn't want to anyway. But it wasn't a requirement. Never has been.

I didn't know that.

No, that's not a requirement. That's strictly voluntary. But what he didn't tell them was he was an inactive member of the church that had -- I'm not sure he was even a member. I think he had been excommunicated for indiscretions. And they asked me about that. And I said, you know, I want to tell you this. I know about the church. I know a lot about it. I was raised in it. There are two people who will know what his status is. One is his bishop and the other is himself. And the bishops are sworn to secrecy. They won't talk about it. So you can't find that out unless he tells

you. I can't tell you. I don't know for sure. I've heard the same thing you've heard, but I can't verify it. And that's done for the safety of the members because they do have the opportunity to repent, be re-baptized and pick up where they left off and so forth. And we're supposed to welcome them with open arms. And we do on a regular basis. But I don't know what his status is. So I let it go there. But he claimed himself off as an active Mormon and he wasn't.

And the other thing that bothered me was some of my very, very good friends that live right over here in Rancho Nevada Estates were pushing his candidacy because they thought he was a nice young kid and I had been there long enough. Let him have a chance at the pie.

So what do you think some of those same people felt a few years --

Denial. I never voted for him. Like hell you didn't. I never suggested him. Oh, you personally came to me and asked me to step down so you could have my seat. I mean I got some of the funniest comments you ever heard in your life because I go to church with them in the same bloody ward. I don't worry about it.

Good. What happened to the commission that so many people were indicted for crimes?

What happened?

Too easy. Too easy to do things and make money.

But it was such a little bit of wealth.

Well, I'm going to tell you something. Ooh, I probably shouldn't because these people are still on the commission, some of them.

Don't call any names.

No. But here's what happens. You need a guiding hand. And sometimes the guiding hand is not there. Example, Bingham and I used to sit either one side and the other side or next to or two away or -- you know, Erin would sit here and I would be here and Bingham would be here or Bingham would be here and Erin here and I would be over here, something like that, depending on who was chairman at the time. And we used to talk to Erin all the time during the meetings, say Erin you can't go for that. Don't vote for that. This is the wrong thing to do and this is why. They'll eat your lunch. You're being set up, Erin. Don't do it. I know this guy. You can't trust him. Don't do it, Erin. And we kept her pretty clean. She was a dynamite gal. I liked her a lot. I liked her a lot, still do.

You know, I've had people tell me how could you like Erin Kenny when she did all the things she did and now she's in prison? And I always say to them, you know, I've got a lot of friends. Some of them are dumb. But they're just dumb friends. But they're still my friends. She'll always be my friend even though she's a dumb friend. What else can I say? I think that speaks to humility.

That's exactly right. That's exactly right. We're not supposed to judge.

No. I wasn't walking in her shoes. I don't know what took place. I think she got herself in trouble. She admitted it. And she was one of my friends, but one of my dumb friends.

So what was it like -- different subject completely -- what was it like to become a Distinguished Nevadan?

It was an honor. It was a real honor. And my friend Shelley Berkley I think arranged that. I like Shelley. I don't agree with some of her politics, but I really like her. I've always liked her. She's always been dead honest with me. When she was in the state senate, sometimes she'd say I can't vote for that and this is why. I'm under this gun. And I hope you understand that. And I said I do. I appreciate your honesty. Mark her off the support list. She's not going to support the bill.

You know, if you know where somebody is, you can arrange that. You can figure how to get around that. But if you didn't know and they sneak up on you, then you're in trouble.

And she was always dead honest with me. I'll never forget once she came in when she was working for the Sands. And she said I really need this, Paul. And I said, well, I can't go for that. I don't like that guy and I'm not going to go for that. And she'd say, well, it means a lot to me because I'm recently divorced and raising my kids and I need the money and he pays me well. And I said since you put it that way, I'll go for it. No skin off my back. I'll help you. He would never know that unless he reads this and he never will. But, you know, she's always been straight with me and I appreciated that.

It was quite an honor to me because I had also -- what is the title? Brigham Young University.

Tell me about that. I don't have that on my list.

Some emeritus award. I was astounded at the group I was with. One of them was head of the marching band when I was in school up there in the 50s. Some people were prominent people.

Distinguished Alumnus Award. So I had one from both universities.

The funny part of it was that I was on the TSA. We regulated the limos and tow trucks and so forth for five years and some. Governor Miller appointed me to that. So I've worked for the city and the county and the state, never the feds.

So the TSA is the taxicab --

No. That's taxicab statewide. But the local taxicab authority has jurisdiction here. We had limos statewide, buses, trucks. It was the transportation section of the public service commission that got broken off. And I was on that first board that was created when they split them up. And Mendoza was the chairman.

Not Judge Mendoza?

John Mendoza, former judge.

Okay. Yes.

What's his wife's name?

I don't know. I would have to read my interview.

She doesn't go by the name of Mendoza much. It was a Hispanic name. She had a strong Hispanic -- it was prior to her marriage to Mendoza. And I remember because they came to me and asked me what about putting her on the Housing Authority? Would I object to that? And I said why would I? Well, she's Hispanic. I said so what? I said I don't care. If she's good, she's good. I have no fight with her. She's an activist and that's okay with me, too. I don't care. So she ended up on that board, whatever it was. And we became a little closer after that because she thought I was anti-her and I never was.

Sometimes it's just perceptions that we just --

Well, I didn't have any reason. I didn't have anything to do with what she was doing and I had no reason to have any animosity towards her at all. But at any rate, she's a delightful lady.

But he was chair of it. And we moved into what was left of the offices. And he hung this plaque on his wall with a ribbon and a nail. And I said, oh, I've got one of those. He says you have? Oh, he was going to lord that over me. You know, he likes to be the big shot.

Oh, that's great.

Shut him right off at the pass.

Two other things I want to ask you about. The first is the county hospital. What are your feelings about the county hospital? I heard that you have some very outspoken things to say.

The county hospital is an institution that's misunderstood in a lot of ways. Number one, everybody thinks the hospital should show a profit. It can't show a profit. It's not made to show a profit. The only way it could show a profit is if the county took the money that they're supposed to spend in indigent care and give it to a third party and have the third party pay it back to the hospital. And that's not going to happen.

The problem with the hospital is the leakage. I got handed the hospital because nobody else would have it.

And this is on the county commission?

Uh-huh. It's a separate board. You understand how that came about, don't you?

No, I don't.

The Water District was a separate elected board. The hospital was a separate elected board. The Sanitation District was a separate elected board. Years ago back in the early days, the early 70s or maybe late 60s, they put them together under the county commission. They're the ex-officio board members of the hospital, the Water District and so forth, the county commission was. The reason why is because the hospital -- Harry Reid started as a hospital board member.

That's right. That's exactly right.

But the reason they did is because they found the Sanitation District touring the world looking at sanitation plants. And that was a scam so they could all go on trips. And the Water District was a steppingstone. Most of the people in the Water District ended up in public office. Grant Stewart ended up on the city council. Ronzone started with the Water District and ended up on the county commission. A lot of those people.

So, number one, you have to understand that part. A lot of people don't realize that. And I'm amazed at the number of people that come here since that was all done. And a lot of those people have died off. You won't find that from many people because the leaders of the county and city and so forth don't know that. And the people in the legislature that did that aren't still here to remember it. They're dying off. So it was done years ago.

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years ago. When I first moved here, that was a poor farm.

So I read something about a poor farm and I had never heard of it before.

Okay. Here's what you do. You drive down Charleston Boulevard and you see the long low buildings at the extreme east end of the hospital, right by Shadow Lane. Those were the original poor farm buildings, cement block buildings, low profile.

So what do we mean by poor farm?

That's where you put people that needed long term care that were old people. There weren't that many of them. There were only 25,000 people in the whole bloody town. When I moved here there were 9,000 people in this whole valley.

Isn't that amazing?

And, you know, it's explosive now. So that's what the hospital started as originally.

When I ended up on the hospital board, I did what I always do. I got a badge. I was the first person on the county commission to have a badge at the hospital. And I walked around the hospital at night on my way home from work at a place like that. Stop in the hospital and had an all-access badge. I could go anywhere but in an operating room and walk around and look and see what's going on. And then they have a meeting every month where they sit down with the hospital staff and the head nurses, go over how many people had to be restrained and for what reasons, and meet with the hospital accreditation board to satisfy their policy. And then we had to go to the accreditation meetings and be interviewed for that. I had to have working knowledge of the hospital, so I gained that.

And I found out that the hospital was -- I thought it was being terribly run. We had a guy in there that they had hired before I got on the county commission that wasn't doing the job. We found an administrator that used to be at Sunrise that was up in Reno and he had gotten out of the hospital business and was trying to retire. I found out he was available, so I asked him to come down and talk to us. I gathered up the folks to hire him and Karen Hayes just went nuts because she wasn't getting consulted. I didn't need her vote. So she wasn't consulted.

So we hired this new guy. And he says the way you do that is you've got to make the hospital show a profit, as profitable as you can. That's when we started the Quick Care centers. There are a tremendous number of people in the community that come here from California or

elsewhere that have got insurance and everything else, but they've got to see a doctor tonight. Their kid's sick. So they take them to Quick Care. And if they've got to be hospitalized, where is it going to put them? University Medical Center, the only trauma center. Where are you going to go? UMC.

Sunrise just raised hell because we were taking all their trauma patients. Well, tough. And then they were shifting patients over to us. And we got that stopped.

Why would they shift patients?

They didn't have any money or insurance. They would dump them on us.

Then we got a pretty good administrator. And I don't remember why, but he left for some reason. We had to hire another one. I think he got ill and died. He got cancer I think and finally died of cancer. I still see his doctor. He's the one who was his assistant quite regularly. And he was a great guy and it worked well. And we just lost track of the hospital after that, the other commissioners did. I watched it as close as I could.

But at any rate, so that's the problem with the hospital. You've got to be careful. They missed the warning signs with this guy that they just had.

Well, he stopped reporting, it sounds like.

Well, not only that. If they had looked into his background, they would have found out he had the same problems in Chicago. I mean what you do is you nose around the hospital circles and find out what's going on with the hospital associations and so forth and who's good and who isn't and all this kind of stuff. You have to do something.

The guy that we had between Bransus (phonetic) and this guy ended up working for Tony Marlin.

So we worked at the hospital. It's a hard thing to do. They always have unrest out there with the employees. And I established a program that worked really, really well, but nobody's ever continued it. When I was chairman of the hospital, they were about ready to go on strike. And I said what on earth are you people going on strike for? And they said (making whiny sounds), just, you know, griping about everything. It finally came out that nobody will talk to us. I said I'll talk to you. They said, well, we need to hear some grievances. I said, oh, I'll listen to them. So I told my secretary, who was dynamite -- she's still working up there for Bruce -- I said

you set up an appointment for these people once a month and I'll give them an hour and we'll sit down and go over it. And we had the head of the union and chief steward. And they came in and we ironed out most of the difficulties before they ever became difficulties. And all they needed was somebody they could talk to that would do something about what was going on that was wrong.

And so to me it's management. If you've got a bunch of employees that are disgruntled, the best thing to do is find out what's eating them and solve it so they can get back to what they're doing. And it worked well for a while. And I thought I left them in pretty good shape. Then they got in all this trouble again.

Yes. It sounds as if both the city council and the county commission are full-time jobs. Am I right?

No. Wrong.

It doesn't take you 40 hours a week to do all the work that you've done?

No. No. No. It might take you 40 hours a week, but it's not daytime.

Okay. So it's all the time. It's at any time?

Yeah. I got to correct that a little. Somebody said you ought to have an unlisted number. I said why? And he said, well, people call you all hours of the night and everything. And nobody ever did. Rarely would I get a call in the evening. If I did, the first comments would be I hate to bother you and I wouldn't do this. And they would call me at the store and say I hate to call you during business hours and so forth. I'd say feel free to. I understand that. And my secretaries, both of them, the one at the city and the one at the county, had the rule that patched the phone call through to me. Unless you know it's a raving nut, then pass it through to me. I'll handle it because I'm available to those people. That's who elected me.

You know, you can spend as much time hanging around there and getting in trouble as you want. But you're better off to get out of there and get amongst the people and find out what's going on in the workplace and so forth. When you start making it a full-time job, you lose sight of who's paying the taxes. You need to have your finger on who's paying the taxes as well as who's collecting them and spending them. And I firmly believe in part-time public officials. They pay them a lot of money.

And do you think with the kind of concerns and issues that these are part-time jobs now?

Yeah, because they make the issues big to make them full-time. Ask Bruce Woodbury if he's full-time. He's never in the office. He's at his law office. Camille calls him in the law office and transfers calls into him, runs papers down to him and runs them back to the county. He sits in meetings twice a month. But it's not full time. We book the meetings all in one day so that you can get it handled in two days, one for zoning and one for all the other stuff. You know, that's not too much to ask. I took the job at city council for \$4500 a year. But I think they boosted it up to 15,000 by the time I left, which is chump change. And in order to get that we had to have a businessmen's panel recommend that and that was Bill Briare's idea.

Tell me about the growth in the valley. You've seen it grow from 25,000 people to two million. What is your philosophy on growth? It should be controlled? Should we curtail it? What do you think?

I don't think you can. I think it's unconstitutional and I'll tell you why. You have the right to live anywhere in this country you want to live. The only way you're ever going to control growth is not have the infrastructure that will handle it, to the point where they don't want to come here anymore. And if they don't want to come here anymore, then you've got growth control.

I had this argument with Bob Broadbent one time when he was on the county and I was on the city, talking about growth control. And I said what are you going to do, Bob? Are you going to put a gate at each end of the city and not let anybody in until somebody moves out and not let anybody get pregnant until somebody dies? How are you going to control growth? Tell them you can't live here?

They've done it in Boulder City and it got declared unconstitutional. They have a limited growth policy out there. But one of the attorneys took them to court and won. They have to have so much percent growth allowed. They wanted to keep it absolutely quiet. Well, we used to subsidize Boulder City -- about 2,000 a year for every man, woman and child living there -- out of the tax rates out of this part of the valley. It's nice to live in a private enclave that somebody else is going to pay for. They didn't generate enough taxes out there to support themselves.

Tell me about the Speedway Children's Charities.

That's an organization that was sponsored by Bruton Smith, who owns the speedway out here and

owns several around the country, a number of them. And there's a general -- what's his name? I can't think of the name. A retired Air Force general that he commissioned to set up the foundation, Speedway Children's Charities. It operates wherever there's a track and collects money through various events. We have driver auctions and poker tournaments and stuff like that to generate money for children. And Bruton Smith is a shoes and socks kind of a guy. He doesn't like to see a child that doesn't have shoes. And so he helps us steer it. But we have a pretty much autonomous group locally and they're also connected with the headquarters in Charlotte.

And the money goes -- I think we pay for half the salary of a clerk at the speedway. Outside of that every nickel we collect goes to the kids. Everybody works for free. And it's been a good thing. It's fun. Some of the things we do are fun. I'm not a golfer. So I don't like golf tournaments. And I'm not a poker player. But we've got a driver's auction coming up here pretty soon and that's a hoot.

So how does that work?

Well, you come down to Sam's Town. You ought to come down. They auction off drivers. And if you win the high bidder on a driver -- it's an open auction -- well, then you get to ride around the track with that driver on the parade lap in a convertible or whatever sitting on the back with this driver around the track.

And I'll tell you NASCAR fans are nuts. We have a silent auction. They'll buy -- one year we sold about 50 tires, used tires. People take them home and make coffee tables out of them. We got 50 bucks apiece for those -- a hundred bucks apiece I think it was for those tires.

And these were tires that had been used on a racecar?

Had been raced. Yeah. They couldn't use them anymore. If you stack two of them and put a piece of glass on it, you've got a coffee table, genuine NASCAR tires.

Wow. That's amazing. That's good.

And then bent-up hoods. You could get a bent up hood to hang on your garage wall of somebody's car. Helmets. T-shirts. You'll have the driver up there and you'll be bidding on this driver. And he'll say, well, how about I throw in my jacket? Then he'll take off his jacket. And I'll tell you these people go nuts. This is the jacket that Dale Earnhardt wore, you know. And this is the jacket that Kyle Busch has got. It's a hoot. It's a lot of fun. I think we gave away a little

over \$300,000 last year.

That's wonderful. And how do kids qualify to --

You have to make an application. But we won't buy teachers. We won't pay salaries. There's a set of guidelines. I'll just hit the high ones. We won't pay for housing. Stuff like that. What we pay for is we buy supplies for kids. We send them to camps. Kids go to camp like the summer camp fund that The Sun sponsors. We do one for kids that have arthritis, cancer patients, anything to do with kids. Bruton Smith, the track's owner, does not like to see an underprivileged child.

How did you get involved with that? I mean it seems so far removed from everything else that I read about you.

How did I get involved with it? It's kind of a fluke. I was instrumental in getting that track on. When Ralph Englestad and Bill Bennett built that track, there was a law that said you couldn't have that much noise next to an air base. And I said come on, guys, who's going to be the noisiest out there? I mean let's get real. And I understood the law. I helped pass it. It was to keep people from building housing in there because of the noise zone, see. And so we got an amendment to the law that allows racetracks in, and that helped. That started it.

And then they had a sewer problem. I helped them work out through the sewer problem because they wanted to charge them a fortune for sewers. And I said, you know, you can only use one toilet at a time. So every toilet that's flushed at the track is a toilet that's not being flushed somewhere else in the sewer system. Well, you think about it. You can't sit on two pots at once. So they were going to charge them full hookup fees and full sewage flow fees and everything else. And I said you won't see a nickel's worth of flow change because the people leave the hotels and come to the track and it all goes to the same place at the other end of the pipe. If you put a flow meter on it, you'll find that there's no more flows going in at the end of the pipe than there are down here. I know about the sewer system. And they built an oversized sewer all the way from the track to the plant. You know, they didn't spare money. They built it like they were supposed to build it. They complied with everything and so forth. You know, I said this is nuts, guys.

I don't know if you've ever been to a NASCAR race. But you're looking at an event here that will put millions of dollars on a weekend into this community. And it's the highest grossing I think that's ever done in this community. It makes the rodeo pale in comparison.

I just can't believe it.

You can't understand it till you sit there and see those stands full of people. It's sold out right now for two weeks -- March 1st race. It is completely sold out.

And so I was out there with some of the people who were pushing the track originally. And the new guy came on, Chris Powell. And his wife is a sweetheart, Missy Powell. And I think I got suggested to be a member of this board by -- oh, I hate to be like this because I can't think of his name. The guy that used to be the publicist for Circus Circus who flew the pink helicopters around the Strip. What is his name?

With that kind of description, I'll find out and insert it for you.

I'll have it in here in my file. I'll give it to you before you leave. But I think she became a good friend of Chris Powell's wife, Missy Powell, who's from Tennessee. Where's the racetrack in Tennessee? She's from Bristol. And, boy, she sounds like it. Cute as a button. Accent you can cut with a knife. But super nice, nice people. You know, they asked me to be on this board. Now, they were at sea without a paddle. The publicist for Sam's Town was on that board and he kind of half ran it for a while. I'll give you all those names. I can't think of them, but they're all on my last minutes, which are still on my desk. I got on that board and they made me chairman at the last meeting. I said, well, I've got the time, but you'll have to give me some help. They said, well, we'll do all that, you know.

But I'm amazed at the number of people that don't have any Toastmaster experience and don't know how to run a meeting. You know, I ran a tight meeting at the Convention Authority and a tight one at the commission and a pretty tight one at the Water District when I was chairman of the Water District. And I ran a tight one at the Water Authority because I understood how to run a meeting.

One of the things you learn -- go back to the Mormons for a minute. One of the reasons Mormons stand out is they're taught to speak in front of a crowd when they're this big. They give Sunday school talks. They give talks in sacrament meeting with the whole congregation there when they're children. They're taught that from the get-go, so being in front of a crowd doesn't scare me at all. I've spoken to a thousand people at a time -- no problem at all -- in German no less. And I don't speak German with an interpreter. So that's one of the places they come from.

I'm amazed at the number of people that rise to the level of being a county commissioner that don't know how to conduct a meeting.

That's not surprising.

And you have to read Robert's Rules. It's very simple. And you pay attention. Your attorney will tell you what you can and can't do. And you listen and you remember it next time. I did that at the charity meeting. I'd say we have a motion to adjourn. Well, do we have a second? I said motion adjourned doesn't require a second according to Robert's Rules. They didn't know that. I said just vote on it. Done. But the average Joe doesn't know that, see. They don't learn it.

And we don't have anyplace to learn it.

Yeah. And we learn it. And we have children praying in church in front of the congregation that are six years old. You know, you learn that all the way up the line.

So you're ready for anything.

Yeah. You know what's going to happen. You know how to do it and you're not afraid of the crowd. They're not going to bite you. Nobody's going to hurt you up there.

I have two questions left. Tell me about Dina Titus.

Dina Titus, state senator, ran for governor, got beat. I like Dina Titus.

And she likes you.

I'm not wild about some of her philosophies and she's undoubtedly not wild about some of mine. But I respect the lady because she does what she says she's going to do and does what she thinks is right. I didn't think Dina Titus would win. She's too liberal for this community and the state of Nevada.

Let me tell you about my dad in the legislature. When my dad ran for the assembly, I think that was the first year I could vote. Or maybe I couldn't vote that first year, first term. You had to be 21 at the time and I don't believe I was 21. So I don't think I voted for him the first time around. But when I could vote I had to register Democrat because my dad was registered Democrat. And I could never understand that because he's a very conservative fellow. Well, at the time there were the Republicans over here and the Democrats here. Now the Democrats are over here and the Republicans are over here.

Still there. Okay.

Same place. Walter Baring used to bill himself -- he was a former representative from Nevada -- as the Jeffersonian Democrat. And so there are a lot of conservative Democrats in this state.

Like the South.

Uh-huh.

So she was too liberal to win governorship?

I thought she would be. Uh-huh.

I wonder if -- okay. I won't ask that.

What else you have?

I wonder if people regret that decision now not to elect her?

Well, I'm sure they do.

Yes.

I'm sure they do. Some people always regret the decision when they see the guy acting in office regardless of who it is. There are people who regret ever voting for George Bush. There are people who regretted voted for Harry Truman. You know, there's always that. I'm sure there are people that regretted voting for me the first time I told them no on a zoning issue.

Right. My last question is something that I read about your experience. Did you do some active duty at one point? Vietnam?

I was out before Vietnam. I was active duty and I got out in December of '57.

Well, then I have to leave this with you because there is another name that comes up when you pull your name up on Google. And that person was a hero in Vietnam.

You should keep that. No. That's not me

.So any final words?

No. I didn't have anything to do with this.

Let me explain to you a couple of quick things that I may have left in my ramblings here. You remember we talked about Al Levy on the city council?

Yes.

Well, I don't remember who it was. It may have been Myron Leavitt when he became lieutenant governor. He was on the city council. And he had to resign to be lieutenant governor because he ran for office and got elected. And I went to Ron Lurie and I said we appoint Al Levy to that post

because he lives in that district. He says, Al Levy, (making whiny sounds). He was really hot. I said, Ron, you're both Jewish. You're both good guys. I know you both. I know Al Levy from the time he was a kid and I know you from the Chamber of Commerce days and so forth. I said why don't you bury the hatchet? He'd be a good asset to this board. And he said, oh, okay, if you want him. And I got the other votes and we appointed him. And they became very good friends.

That's great.

But that's how Al Levy got on the board without being elected the first time because we had to appoint. And it was interesting because I knew Al and I knew him very well. He was a good guy and his dad was a good guy. Harry Levy Gardens was his dad. That's who they named the senior citizen center for over here north of Bonanza and Rancho. That's who that was named after -- Al Levy's dad, Harry. Good people.

We had to appoint several people. We had to appoint a city councilman to replace Roy Wolfter. I think it was Roy Wolfter. Yeah, it was. Either Roy Wolfter or the other guy. I can't think of his name either anymore. But the black people came to me and they wanted us to appoint a black city councilman. I said I've got no problem with that. Send me some and let me interview a couple. But everybody looked at me as the guy that blocked the blacks. And it's not me. You know, I went to school with them. We didn't have segregated high school here. I went to school with a lot of fine, fine black people. And so they finally sent us some guys. And one had an axe to grind and I knew it would be a problem. And then they sent me this guy named Pearson, who was a dentist, Bill Pearson, great guy. So we appointed him and he ran for the seat on the county commission and got elected the same time I did the county commission. Great guy. He turned out to be one of my good friends. I teased him and he teased me back. And if you can tease a guy and if you can racially tease each other, then you're friends.

I'll never forget one day we're sitting in a county commission meeting, dirty rat. I leaned over and said, Bill, who's the guy six rows back, two seats in on the right-hand side wearing a white shirt? He looked over there and said is it a white guy? I said yeah. He said I don't know; they all look alike to me. I said damn you, Pearson. I should hit you right square in the nose for that. You know, when you tease each other like that -- I liked to have died laughing.

So it sounds like this life has just -- you have done such wonderful things. So other than the

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Speedway Children's Charities, what other things are you involved in now?

Not much. I do a little consulting with Lucy Stewart.

Okay. Tell me who Lucy Stewart is.

She used to be the planning director. She quit the county while I was with the TSA. And then when I left the TSA, I got boosted out by the governor, Guinn. And she approached me and said I want you to come to work with me and we'll form a partnership. I said I don't want to work that hard, Lucy. And she said okay, just work as much as you want. So I don't work hard. I do two or three things a year. I have a couple of clients. But I don't think I make 20,000 a year doing that. But it keeps my hand in. It keeps me aware of what's going on.

That's how I got to Dina Titus. One of my clients said Dina Titus sent me a letter and I want you to set an appointment so that we can give her some campaign funds and set up a lunch. And I said okay, I'll do that. And I called her and set it up. And it was fine. It worked. We squeezed another guy for some of it. So it's okay. You know, I don't mind doing that. That's good. That keeps you so that you know somebody and somebody knows you.

It was kind of ironic. It's a funny story because when I was with the TSA, we used to have to go present our budget at the state budget committee at the legislature. They eat departments alive up there. They tear them a new rear end up there. And we had this budget gal up there that used to try and prep me. And I would say that's okay; I'll handle it. And the budget was fairly simple. And I'd point out what we were spending the money for and where it was coming from and how we were going to do it and how we were going to save money here and there and so forth. And I presented the budget. And they'd say, well, I have in one question. What about this? Well, that's where that comes from. Oh, I see. I understand it. Anybody have any other questions? Nope. Okay. See you. And we'd walk out.

And she walked out and said what are you, charmed or something? I mean that guy eats people alive in there and he just asked you one question for clarification. And you answered it and he let you go home. What's going on? And she could not understand it. And I said, well, I try and surround myself with people that give me good information. And the other thing is I've probably been in public office longer than most of these people in the legislature and they learn to respect that because they know that you've stood in front of the public and asked for their vote six

times. And they understand that. And so there's a little rapport there that I have that the average bureaucrat doesn't have. I've been on the other side of the table. And it made a difference I think.

That's why I kind of like to stay in the consulting game although I've been whipped pretty badly by the city council and the county commission twice. I represented the son of a good friend of mine in front of the county commission and they were absolutely terrible. In fact, I demanded an apology from their town board. And they never did give it to me on the county commission. If I had been on the county commission and they would have treated a person like that, I'd have told them you send a letter of written apology or you're all going to be off this board. It was Bailey, Bob Bailey's boy, John Bailey, nice, nice man, good attorney. A piece of ground in Lee Canyon. And they restricted him to two acres per house on six acres when he's got a flood channel going through that he has to mitigate. What they basically did was deny him the use of his property, period. He can't use it for anything.

Oh, my. Can that change eventually? Another board?

It will be a long time. Some of those members on that town board up there -- I used to have Mount Charleston; I know those people -- they think they own the whole bloody mountain. And some have been there longer than dirt. And they complained that we had sneaked this project through and wrote a letter to that effect and from the fire district up there to that effect and sent it to all the homeowners up there in the Mount Charleston site, which is over the mountain from this. And the houses above him are on one-fourth-acre lots.

And, you know, we said excuse me, these are the facts. We have attended every one of the board meetings. We've attended every one of the town board meetings. We've attended every one of the town board workshops. We've written on the maps that they put for that purpose what we intended to put in there on those workshops. We've done everything the staff asked us to do. We've changed it four times to satisfy people. We've done everything we know and we've not done any of it in the dark. And I said for you to send a letter out -- and I've got a copy of it -- to that effect is reprehensible. And I personally demand an apology because you've soiled my reputation. I never in 24 years of public office did anything in the dark that I am being accused of here. And I demand a letter of apology.

Then Tom Collins stood up and he said, you know, I look here and they've attended every

meeting. So I think you're wrong. But that was all that was said. It was unanimously denied. And I thought okay. And I never heard another word.

I told John I'm going to tear him a new rear end here before we leave if you don't mind. And he says I don't mind at all; they deserve it. So I let them have it with both barrels. I don't know if it'll do any good later on or not. But I was disappointed with the commission. The commission could have forced that. Even if it wasn't your district, you could say that's reprehensible activity and it can't go on. We've got to stop it.

So the one thing that we didn't talk about and we can end with this -- did your wife ever work outside the home?

When I was in school for a little bit. Did you ever hear of Barbizon?

Yes. Is that a modeling school?

No. Barbizon used to make lingerie. There was a factory in Provo, Utah. And she was very quick with her hands, very good with them. She got a job in Barbizon where they tried them out and they made I think 60 cents an hour at the time for six weeks. And at the end of six weeks if you weren't fast enough so that the 60 cents an hour was less than what you were making on piecework, why they'd let you go. Well, she made piecework after about a week and a half. And what she did was she trimmed -- when they put the lace, she trimmed the material off around where they put the lace on with like cuticle scissors. She could do it so fast that she ended up being one of the highest paid girls there, which was about a dollar and a half an hour, not a hell of a lot of money. But I scrubbed the kitchen floor in the cafeteria for 85 cents every night. But that's how we made ends meet when we were in school. We paid \$50 a month for an apartment. It was back in the old days when gas cost two bits a gallon. So, you know, it was --

So what do you see as the future for the Las Vegas Valley?

You know, I wish I had that crystal ball. It's hard to tell. I stay off the Strip. I stay off the freeways. I think we're headed for some real problems in transportation because we -- the best way to transport around town now is the taxicab or a limousine, unfortunately.

You see a lot of those.

You know, I have children who live out in the northwest. I can't drive and react fast enough at 75 to use the freeway unless there's a long distance to merge and so forth. And the people are mean.

You know, there was a time when I'd shake my fist at somebody and holler at them out the window. But you might get shot if you do that now. So you don't do that. You just don't make eye contact. And the guys will honk at you and ride right on your bumper to get around you so that they can slow down and turn off at the next intersection, which if I'm doing that I figure, well, I've got a quarter of a mile to go. I'll just slip in behind him and get off at that intersection. It will be no problem.

Of course, I objected to a 55-mile-an-hour speed limit when we had one. But 75 miles an hour is plenty fast enough and 65 is plenty fast enough in town. And for people to drive 85 and 90 on the freeway is absolutely ridiculous because they're out of control. But we don't do anything about it because the police won't even pull you over unless you're over 80 or they would be spending all their time pulling people over. I drive from here to Beaver and back almost every week. You drive 85 or 90 or you're a slowpoke. And I'm a slowpoke.

So are you going to eventually live there?

I doubt it. Not much to do there but watch the cars rust. That's what I liked when I built that place when I was on the county commission because it was a place to go hide. And there isn't a stoplight in town, not one.

So how large is Beaver?

5,000 people.

Oh, my goodness.

Mostly farms.

Oh, wow. That's the kind of community I grew up in, 5,000 people, and I grew up on a farm.

There's no stoplight there at all.

I've got to tell you one other thing that's kind of interesting. You know, I relate a little bit to the South. The reason why is when I got into the Air Force, my class was scheduled to start pilot training in September. And I looked at that and I said you graduate at the end of May and you can't go in the Air Force till September. What are you going to do for those two and a half months? And I thought this is nuts. You rent an apartment for two and a half months and everything. So when I filled out the paperwork, they said the induction with most people with the class, you know, I said ASAP, as soon as possible. And we've been to some kind of a shin-dig, a

church party or something. And I came home. And there was a telegram, a Night Letter. So I got it and it said we've had an opening in class 56U, which starts in July. I forget the date. And if you want it, you want that spot, then telegraph us back and we'll send the order by Night Letter. And a week later I was packed and headed for San Antonio to go into the Air Force in pilot training.

Well, when I got down there and in pilot training in that class 56U, I was in with a group of all southern boys. There was a kid from Yale and myself. And everybody else was from Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Carolinas. I don't think there was anybody from Florida. It must have been a different category or something. When I was in pilot training, I always liked to kid people and tell them I was in pilot training for about a month before I could understand what they were talking about because I didn't have a clue. I had never been next to those people before in my life. There was a kid named Billy Caruthers.

The reason I'm familiar with that -- this is in my memory so tight right at this moment is I just got a notice that they're having a big reunion. I got a list of all the people that were supposedly attending. That's going to be I think April or May -- May -- and it's going to be down there in South Carolina somewhere. And I'm not going to go. It's too damn far for me to go. I don't like airlines anymore. I've flown all over the world. And I flew my own airplane for 25 years, 30 years after I got out of the Air Force. But there's too much hassle at the airports. I don't like that.

Yeah. It's different now.

Yeah. But this kid's name was Billy Caruthers. And I used to laugh. I'd say it takes him five minutes to say his last name by the time he got through rolling the Rs.

Those southern accents are something.

That's why I kind of relate to Dina. She's got that southern accent. She rolls it.

Yes. Well, I really appreciate this. I appreciate all the stories and all the great information.

Thank you so much.

I'll just tell you one other thing. You can't be in politics and take yourself too seriously. You've got to laugh. You've got to sit back and just roar once in a while. Like when Pearson said those white guys all look alike to me, I just had to sit back and laugh. You know, sometimes that's all you can do is just sit back and laugh and let it hang out, you know, because otherwise -- people get

so uptight with themselves sometimes and it's just terrible. And I do the same thing. I get so angry. I think, oh, forget this. And you just have to cool down.

That's why I built the house in Beaver, so I can go up there and sit on my front porch and watch the eagles and the hawks and the horses. The river goes right by, the Beaver River. And it's pleasant. I can pick apples off my apple tree. I go up there, but I couldn't stay there longer than about a week because I'd go nuts.

Now, what about your friend who's retiring to Beaver?

I think he's making a mistake. But he's a small town guy. He was raised up there.

He's not going to sell property here before he moves?

Yeah. He's got a house here. He's going to rent it for a while and then probably sell it. My brother has a big place up there. He farms up there. He raises cattle up there. He doesn't have a clue which end of the cow --

But you can hire people to do that part.

But he's happy to be up there. Every week he comes up and we've got to go look at his cows. He's got a farmer up there, a rancher up there that helps him take care of it. He helps him a lot. They grow hay together and everything. They've got one of the biggest hay farms up there. And they move a lot of hay, tons and tons of it. They move cows. He must have 85 cows. So he likes to play that game. But it's a release. It gets him away. It gets him where the sun shines and you wear overalls. You don't have to dress up. You can just be yourself. It's nice.

Let me give you those names. I've got it here.

So are you going to read them into the recorder?

No. I'll just give them to you.

So I will stop this. Thank you.