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An Interview with Jim Bilbray

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

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

Jim Bilbray was born right here in Las Vegas. He attended school here through graduation from Las Vegas High School. As a high school student, he helped collect money to buy the first land on which to build what later became UNLV. After a stint in the National Guard, he enrolled at BYU in Provo for one quarter, and then began attending classes at UNLV.

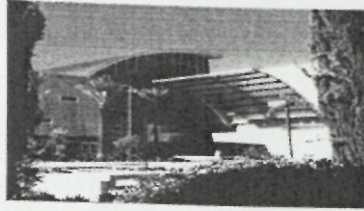
Jim served as student body treasurer at UNLV for one year, and was then elected student body president. He also played on the first tennis team, was a back-up player on the first basketball team, and bowled on the bowling team. In 1959, he transferred to American University in Washington, D.C., graduating with a degree in government and public administration. He then went to law school.

In 1965, Jim returned to Las Vegas, looked up some of his old friends, and concluded that they needed to form an alumni association. They created a nonprofit corporation which they named the Nevada Southern Alumni Association. At age 29, he agreed to run for a position on the Board of Regents, and won. His was the key vote which resulted in funding for the Humanities Building.

Mr. Bilbray recounts many stories of the early struggles and downright hostilities between UNR and UNLV, struggles over budget, professional schools, and priority lists for buildings. He also relates the efforts he and others made to obtain property for future campus growth, and agrees with Carol Harter's vision of a University mall.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

UNLV Oral History Project @ Fifty



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James H. Bulley
Signature of Narrator

Sept. 6. 2006
Date

Claytee D. White
Signature of Interviewer

9/6/2006
Date

It is September 6th, 2006. And I'm in the office of Jim Bilbray this morning. How are you today?

Very fine, thank you.

Wonderful. We're doing a history of UNLV, as you were probably told.

Right.

And we're interviewing people from all across campus, all walks of life. So when were you at UNLV?

Well, let me give you the background. I was born here in Las Vegas. Went to Las Vegas High School. And, of course, as I mentioned to you on the phone before, I was one of those young people that collected money to buy the first land for UNLV. Then, of course, it was called the Southern Regional Division of the University of Nevada. Classes were first conducted at the Las Vegas Auditorium, which is now part of the Las Vegas Academy.

But right after high school, even though I helped to collect money for it, I went off to the army. We had the six-month program. You went six months active duty with the National Guard Reserves and you did basic training, advanced training, and then did what they called OJT, on-the-job training, then returned to your guard or reserve unit for seven and a half years of reserve duty.

So I came back. Some of my friends were LDS. In the winter quarter I couldn't get into UNLV because the semester ended in October. So I took a quarter and went up to BYU in Provo. To be honest with you, the weather there was so cold that I couldn't wait to get back down. So when the quarter ended, I came down. Dr. James Dickerson was head of the Southern Regional Division. I went to see him. I took one course that quarter in the old building, the old auditorium upstairs. I think it was a government course. I can't even remember now after all these years. That was 1957.

And then, of course, in the fall we opened our first building, which was the Maude Frazier building, and I attended classes there. I wasn't really going to stay there, I didn't think. I was probably going to transfer to Reno the last year. But I liked it. I got to know everybody. We were a very small campus. We had about 300 students, not even all full-time. But at that time, even for student government elections, we allowed everybody to vote. If you took one credit, you

didn't have to be a full-time student because, you know, everybody was there. I was active in the student government that year just on committees and things.

And then the next year -- well, that year a friend of mine got elected student body president, Ernie Cramer. At that time our student officers, other than the president and the vice president, were not elected. I don't know how it is today, but I was appointed as student body treasurer and I served for the year. Then the end of that year, I got elected student body president and I served as student body president.

The second semester toward about February, though, I came down with mononucleosis and was laid up for about four to five weeks and had to resign my seat and turn it over to the vice president.

Then, come the fall of 1957, the students had decided to form a government. At this time we called the campus "Nevada Southern". If people look, it wasn't the Associated Students of Nevada Southern; it was the Confederated Students of Nevada Southern.

The mascot was Beauregard, which was a confederate wolf with a hat, and we took the nickname "The Rebels." It's funny. We use the South as kind of what it was doing, but it was really a revolt against northern domination, the northern domination meaning Reno, certainly not the northern states like in the Civil War. But everybody thought that's why the scarlet and gray are the colors of the school and the Rebels are the mascot.

A number of years ago, they took away the "confederated" students and went back to the typical "associated." The Rebels became more colonial or just rebelling against rule rather than the confederacy. The confederate flags disappeared from campus.

Back in the late 50s and early 60s, no one really thought too much about a confederate flag being a racist symbol. I mean just nobody thought about those kinds of things in those days. Black students, as well as white students, waved the confederate flag at victory. Even the black students weren't aware. It only began in about the 70s that people started saying, hey, you know, we've got to get rid of this symbol; this is not the kind of symbol we want.

Several times over the last 30, 40 years, they've had votes by the student body trying to change the name from Rebels to something else. Every time it's been turned down overwhelmingly, with even minority students voting not to change the name. Certainly the name

"Rebels" doesn't have to mean the southern rebels of the Civil War period.

Anyway, I was there in '57. I left in '59 and I went back and finished my degree at American University in Washington, D.C., and got a government and public administration degree and then went to law school.

I came back in 1965. The first thing I did was to look up a lot of the former students that were my old friends. We came to the conclusion, at least I did, that we didn't have an alumni association. So I got together about ten people, and then looked into the statutes.

At that time I had just taken the bar. We formed a nonprofit corporation, which we named the Nevada Southern Alumni Association. We filed the papers with the secretary of state. Then we filed with the IRS to get a tax-exempt number, which in those days was pretty easy to get. I was elected the first president, in status first president, for about five years, mainly because they couldn't get anybody to take it over and run it. We really weren't very effective. We didn't have very many members. Our dues were five dollars a year and we just had, you know, potlucks where we brought people in. You know, everybody brought spaghetti and stuff and we'd meet.

The first time we started really coming together was when the president of the university decided to give us a half time advisor, and they gave us Fred Albrecht. I think he was tennis coach for half time and half time he was the alumni advisor. And I knew him well because the first teams that UNLV ever had, believe it or not, back in '57, '58, '59, were a bowling team, which of course bowled in a bowling league here, a basketball team, and a tennis team.

I was on the tennis team and I was kind of manager and back-up player for the basketball team and I was a member of the bowling team and I was student body president. I mean in those days you would do many things. People like Stan Colton, who later became state treasurer, was treasurer of the student body when I was the president. Everybody had different jobs. Landra Reid, who is the wife of Senator Reid, was a cheerleader at UNLV, the first cheerleader.

Dean Carlson was our dean at that time. There were kind of hard feelings I guess when Dr. Dickerson, who was an English professor and has a building named after him -- a lot of people felt -- and I don't know how much he felt -- but he felt that he should be named dean of the new division down here because it became a college of the University of Nevada. Everybody thought that he would become dean. But Dean Carlson, who was an associate dean or a dean up in Reno,

was sent down to head it up, wonderful man, great guy and everybody loved him.

Chub Drakulich, who had coached at Rancho High School, was brought over as a PE teacher. He went to Dean Carlson and said, "I'd like to start a basketball team." Well, Dean Carlson told me he thought it would be like the bowling team; we'd be in the city league. And he says, "Go, ahead, Chub. I can't give you even money. You've got to go raise your own money; we don't have any money."

So when he brought the schedule in to show him he had set it up, the first game was down at the old Dula Center, which is right down on Bonanza Road. That's where the games were played. You might have 60 people show up for the game. The first game was against College of Southern Utah, which is now Southern Utah State. In the first half, we actually were ahead by one point. We lost by like one point in the first game of our history. I think we won 6 and lost 15 or 16 games. But it started the tradition. They played Snow College, Carbon, LaVerne; mostly two-year schools.

The tennis team, Alice Mason was the coach. And when she saw the success of the basketball program, she set up matches for tennis, too. I don't remember playing any JC's, but we might have played a couple. We played against Lake Mead Marine Base, Nellis, and teams like that.

So now we had the first tennis team, first basketball team, and we had the first bowling team. They developed the other programs from there. Dean Carlson said, "I never expected a program like that."

I mean we went up to the games, nothing too far because we certainly couldn't fly across country. We didn't have any money. But everybody kind of jumped in a bunch of cars and we drove up to wherever we were going to play, and the kids changed in the locker room and played the games and then came back down here. The under funding of the athletic programs went on for many, many years.

Fred Albrecht can tell you about how when they were invited to play in a tennis tournament against the tennis team down in Irvine, the kids wanted to go and they said, "We don't have any money." So they all pooled their money and they said, well, you know, we'll bring our sleeping bags. The team actually drove down in a couple of vans. They slept in a park. They got up the next morning and went and cleaned up and everything because they didn't want the kids from the

other schools to know that they couldn't even have hotel rooms. They slept at night in the park, then played in the tournament, and then went back and slept in the park.

So I mean it was rough. We had no scholarships. We didn't have anything like that. But you played for the love of the school and the love of the game. And there was a great loyalty to then Nevada Southern.

Well, one of the things that really concerned everyone back in '65-66 was the fact that this school was really getting shortchanged down here in the money situation. Originally, when Nevada Southern was conceived, first of all, there was a real hostility in the north to even allow the school to be built down here. What happened was that in the legislative meetings -- and you can go to the legislative history -- we were always told -- and I remember people like Swackhammer, who later became Secretary of State, who at that time was an assemblyman -- saying that if they allowed a school down in Southern Nevada, because they say we don't have enough money for higher education, we really can't split it up into two schools, but we can create a junior college in the south. So you can go the first two years in the south and then you have to transfer to the University of Nevada Reno and it would be a division of the upper school. So all classes would transfer. It wouldn't be a problem like from a community college to the university.

So there was a real objection up north to creating the school. Gradually, what happened is that students wanted to stay longer. So they finally said, well, you have to matriculate at least a year up in Reno to get your degree. So it wasn't until 1964 that our first degrees were issued down here. And that was a real struggle because they really didn't want to see this happen.

So what happened in '67 and '68 is I met with a lot of the alumni and we said we've got to get a Nevada Southern person on the board. There had never been one, anybody who went to UNLV -- well, then Nevada Southern -- on the board.

Board of Regents?

Board of Regents, yeah. So I agreed to run. I was very young. I was like 29 years old. Most of the regents were the people like Archie Grant, who had run for governor and was an institution; Paul McDermott, who was a big insurance man in town; you had Dick Ronzoni, the head of Ronzoni's, which was the big department store. The regents were divided. I think when I ran there were five from the north and four from the south, but all kind of prominent and older.

So I was kind of brash, just a young man-- and I looked like I was about 15 -- running for regent. I went out and talked to student government and the student government leaders, and they all wanted it big-time. I went to the faculty, and the faculty said, "Jeez, we want you to win and we'll be behind you, but we can't come out openly for you." I asked why, and they said, "Well, because if we lose, then the regents will know we have no power." It sounds crazy, but that was the attitude.

So the students backed me and several professors openly supported me, but the faculty senate or whatever it was would not take an open stand to support my candidacy, even though every one of them was for me.

At that time we ran countywide. You know, there were three to be elected, so the top six got through the primary as nonpartisan. It was a four-year term in those days, not six. So anyway, I ran, and what happened was a lot of the faculty, government teachers, had asked students to work on races. Well, of course, the number one race everybody wanted to work on was mine. So for a small school we had maybe a hundred volunteers come out and want to work.

We set up all the precincts in the county. In those days the town was much smaller. So we had myself and my own family, the student volunteers and other alumni volunteers, and we all took a precinct. I took a lot more than one, but each student took a precinct. We watched in the primary as a student went door to door with the figures. At that time we had averaged out and the faculty had given me this information in a white sheet, which basically showed that the state funding for education at UNLV, then Nevada Southern, was like \$575 per student per year. It was more like \$1600 per student at Reno. Now, they said it's top-heavy because they have graduate programs at Reno. We don't have graduate programs in the south.

So anyway, what happened at that point was we went through the primary and we had strategy. We came up with the young guys. My campaign manager, believe it or not, was the same guy that ran my campaign for student body president. His name was Don Williams and he ran my campaign. And he says, you know, we've got to run good in the primary to get through the primary. Our ideal position is to be fourth because if we're not -- four out of the six for the primary -- we'll scare the old men who have all this money. If we scare them, they'll put forward a ton of money against us in the general because no one spent that much on regent's race. I think my

budget for the whole election was \$9,000 for the general and primary.

So what happened was that we really did -- we didn't at that time do any radio or TV. We just did the door-to-door hoping we'd run fourth. We didn't want to run fifth or sixth, and we didn't want to run higher. But what happened was I actually ran third.

We did an analysis of the precincts. In the precincts we looked to see how we did where I walked, where my family walked and where students walked and some that we didn't get to. And did we do any better in each one? Well, we found that wherever the students and myself walked, we were just way ahead of the other ones. But wherever the student walked up to a door and said to somebody, "I'm a student from Nevada Southern. I'd like you to look at this. Would you please vote for Jim Bilbray for regent," well, people went into their ballots and marked them right then because they had no idea who to vote for.

But I had another advantage, too. My father had been county assessor for 20 years. So he was well known and the family had been prominent here in town. So the name was known by the old-timers. But the town was beginning to grow, not like now. I mean there were probably about 150,000 people, you know.

Where the students walked, they almost did as well as where I walked. So we said okay, but we ran third. Archie Grant ran fourth. This scared the hell out of Archie Grant, so he poured a ton of money into the race. Whatever assets we had, we ran a little radio spot and kept walking because at that time you could buy TV spots for 15 bucks. So it wasn't like today, but we did have some television.

So when Election Day came around, I ended up running first by a huge margin. Dick Ronzoni ran second, Archie Grant ran third and saved a seat, but Paul McDermott got eliminated. It was funny, though, because Archie died about a year later and Paul McDermott got appointed by the governor, then Laxalt, to take his place back on the board. I thought, oh, jeez, here I beat a guy and now he's coming back; he's not going to like me at all. But he didn't hold a grudge.

So...when I was there, we had this meeting. We had a meeting up there at Moyer. The Moyer had just been built. And in comes -- I mean you've never seen so many students show up for my swearing in. The whole place -- the people were lined up outside. The regents were almost wide-eyed in shock. Well, what's going on? I mean we get 10 students here at a meeting and here is

maybe 500 showing up and there are people out in the hallways that can't get in.

So they realized that there was a real strong feeling. And I became the voice for Nevada Southern, fighting for different issues.

Now, did the other seven representatives --

Eight.

-- support you?

Well, I'll tell you a story about that. I'll give you an idea of how it was. I was considered really a maverick by them. I would say that other than Molly Knudsen, who represented the Austin rural areas, who had been a debutante in New York -- I mean she sported a diamond ring I've never seen, like 12 carats she wore around in cowboy clothes. Austin, Nevada is where she lived. She had married a rancher, moved out of the 400 families up in New York and moved out there. Molly was a wonderful lady.

Dr. Anderson, who I had gotten to know years ago when he ran against Howard Cannon for the United States Senate, and had become kind of friendly with, but even the Nevada Southern regents -- the other regents had a deep distrust. All of them had gone to Reno. They were not part of the -- I mean they had a great loyalty to that campus.

So one of the first things that came up, one of the first sessions when I was a regent, the regents had a policy on the board that, once you set the priority list for building buildings, the only way you could change that priority list is unanimous consent. So in comes the chancellor, who was Neil Humphrey at the time, and Neil says, "We've got a problem in the legislature.

"The top priority for UNLV is the Humanities Building, which is the building that's on campus, the high-rise. But what revenue funds we can generate from Nevada Southern is so small that it would take mostly state revenue bonds to build the building.

"The second in priority after that was the education building at UNR, University of Nevada. About 80 percent of their building can be funded with revenue bonds from the university. So it takes just a small amount of state funding and we can get that on. But we've got to change the priority list to put Humanities after.

And I said, "Well, we're in dire straits down here. We don't have any place for kids to take classes. I mean we don't have classrooms. We don't have anything. How can we do that?"

Well, we don't have a choice. So they made a motion and everything. So everybody voted yea and then nay and I raised my hand. And they said, "Well, we're going to take a break for a minute." And Neil and the regents came out to me and they said, "Jim, do you realize -- you don't understand. We have to have a unanimous vote. You've got to vote with us." And I said, "Well, I don't think it's right." And they said, "Well, we'll talk about it again."

Technically, you've supposed to have somebody that voted the opposite way that brings it back up. But they said because of the affirmative, they'd bring it up again. So they brought it up again right before lunch. Again eight hands go up and one negative.

So we broke for lunch. And it was a cold lunch. No one would sit with me except Dr. Baeplar and I think it was Roman Zorn, who was the president. I can't remember who the president was. But anyway, they sat with me and the student government representative and everything.

So we went back after lunch, and again, they brought it up. And I voted no. It was almost a meeting where everybody stormed out and left me at the end.

I get a call about two weeks later and the caller said, "Guess what? Because Raggio and the Renoites wanted that building so bad, they just happened to find the money to build the Humanities Building."

So 100 percent?

So we got the Humanities Building only because to get the Education Building in Reno, they had to pass it. That later became the Dungan Building because Flora took my seat on the -- I think she took my seat on the regents later.

But we went on that way. In fact, it was so bad that at one point they had a meeting at the Moyer building. We were fighting over the budgets. The students hung Laxalt in effigy in front of the building. They had a big picture in the newspaper. Here's this body hanging there with a rope around it with Laxalt on it.

So anyway, the regents' next meeting was up in Reno. Actually, we had it in Carson City. The chancellor says, "The governor," who was Laxalt, "Wants to meet with us." So we got there and we were all sitting there. The governor's secretary came out and said, "Would y'all wait here, the governor wants to meet with Jim Bilbray first." And they all looked up here. I'm going in, you know.

I go in and Laxalt says to me, he says, "That really hurt me." He said, "That really hurt me." Then he says, "What can I do?" And I said, "Well, Governor, get more money to the south." But how do I do that? He said, "I've already submitted my budget," and da-da-da-da. And I said, "There's no way down the students down there are going to feel more friendly to you unless more money comes south because we have students that are in their third year that haven't been able to take freshman English because they can't get into a classroom. They have no classroom for them, no teachers, we have no money, and the campus is bursting at the seams. We need buildings, we need teachers, we need money." And he said, "Yeah, but that really, really bothers me."

And then he let the rest of them in. And then afterwards, everybody said, "Well, what did he say to you?" And I said, "Well, he's upset that they've hung him in effigy, you know." Laxalt was always very sensitive to criticism. He was very, very sensitive to criticism.

How did he stay in politics so long?

Well, you know, you realize he served only one term as governor and left. He did not run for a second term, which he could have won. He served two terms in the United States Senate and left. He really was a person who really could not stand criticism. I feel to this day -- and Laxalt's still alive; I never brought it up to him again -- but I'll bet you he still remembers being hung.

Well, what happened after that was, first of all, the name change took place, and there were some people very strongly in favor. In fact, I favored at first calling it Nevada State University, keeping the NSU initials and everything. The faculty came and said, "Listen, in many states like California the U-Cal system is the premier system. The state system like Fresno State, San Diego State and those is the secondary system. We don't want Reno to be the primary system and the southern campus not being it." So the decision was made to go ahead with UNLV, which everybody hated at the time because it just was so out of character with what the school was. But that stuck at that time.

But the battles over the budget and the hostility went on and on during that period of time. The med school came up at that time. All the evidence was that the med school should be in the south where at that time -- remember that was the time that Medicare was just coming in-- but most indigent or poor people or seniors were being treated at the med schools for free or minimal cost. I prepared a white paper that was submitted to all the legislators saying don't put it up north; if

you're going to have one, put it down south.

Well, they said this was supposed to be a two-year med school because it was modeled after one of the Dakotas that had a two-year program. Nevada students can't get into med school. There's a shortage of seats. But at South Dakota or North Dakota where they have the two-year program, students finishing the two years are getting in very easily because students had dropped out after the second year so there were seats.

Well, in reality that was never the plan. That was the plan that was sold to the public. That was the plan that was sold to the legislature and to the regents that didn't know. But Dr. Lombardi and Dr. Anderson on the regents, and Dr. Anderson especially, and I love Dr. Anderson -- but it was always planned from the beginning that it would also be a school of dentistry, it would be a medical school, really. The old college was being established. They wanted a law school. They wanted all the professional schools to be in northern Nevada. Even though UNLV could go on to a master's and some doctoral programs, none of the professional schools would be in the south. And that's what was done.

Since the medical school went there, is that the time it was decided that if we ever get a law school it would come south?

No. No. In fact, the votes were very close because they had to do it. It was 1969 or maybe it was the '71 session. I can't remember. But it was the last session before reapportionment that would give the majority to the south. Not only would it give the majority to the south in the legislature but it would also give the majority of the seats on the regents to the south because the population numbers had switched. So that's what happened, and that's why they had to push it through that session because if they didn't push it through that session -- now, they didn't give up.

They formed a college up there called Old College Law School up in Reno. It was a private school. Okay? It had donors. And it only ran for three or four years. But the whole plan was to create this law school and that Reno would then take it in as part of the -- because remember they had the Judicial College up there.

That's right, yes, where judges go now.

Yes. The idea was to put the law school with the Judicial College. It was really after the south got the majority that they prevented that college or Reno would have had the law school and it would

have been up there and it would have been very difficult to start a law school in the south.

But it took many, many years, as you can see, before we finally did get a law school in the state because we had none. And that's why many Nevada students -- like I went to American -- a lot of them back to Washington and worked for the senators. I worked for Senator Cannon when I went through law school.

So were you one of the Cannon staffers -- he had two spots a year?

Yes. He sponsored me. I was a --

So how does that process work?

Well, what happened was there were many jobs the senator had. He had staff positions.

(End Tape 1, Side 1.)

Senator Bible was there, too, he was head of the DC committee. He put a lot of Nevadans down in the bailiff's jobs down there, in clerks' jobs down at the courthouse. Well, I started out as a staffer for Senator Cannon but found that going to law school and working full time was just overwhelming. So he got me a position as a capital policeman working from 12 midnight till 8 in the morning. What I did was sit on a desk there at the senate office building or in the capitol. I just virtually studied the whole night because hardly anyone came through the door between 12 and 8 in the morning. Then at eight o'clock I left and went to law school from nine to one, three days a week and nine to eleven the other and tried to get some sleep in between. But really I did all my briefs and everything that way.

Senator Cannon had I think three police jobs, he had one post office job, and he had maybe two or three elevator jobs and, of course, he had staffers. But Senator Reid was under Baring. He worked for the post office over there on the other side. He did it from about three in the morning until about eight in the morning. He used to run to make the deliveries so that he would have all his deliveries made to all the offices within two hours. Most people take four or five. But he ran. He still runs. He's a jogger. He would get done so he would have like three hours to study.

Wow. So now, do our Senators still have those kinds of positions?

Most of those positions have gone. The police are a professional police force now because of the problem. I mean we had 11 guys that guarded the capitol building itself at night, and people would wander in at night. If you had to go to the bathroom, you'd call downstairs and tell them

that you had to go to the bathroom. And the gate would be -- there would be nobody there. If somebody wandered in, they wandered in.

One of the funniest stories that happened while I was there -- I don't know if he came through my door or not -- was the Speaker of the House came in one morning early. He goes in his office and he finds four Marines all drunk laying out in his office on his couch. They had come in during the night drunk. He walked in and he sees them lying all over, so he calls the Commandant of Marines over at the other Marines barracks. They come and take those guys. I always joked that they're probably still digging latrines out on Paris Island. Those were the kinds of things that went on, but you didn't have any riots or anything.

I was a capitol policeman the night they called me in for earlier duty because we needed everybody. We were there for the Martin Luther King speech that went on that day and we were all out. I don't think most of us knew the significance of it from that time. But it was a massive amount of people. And it was really funny because some of the students came up. And there was as many -- a lot of whites. People don't realize there were a lot of whites in the audience.

Oh, yes.

A lot of them were from Harvard and Yale. These kids came up and started talking to us. We were policemen up there. Two of the guys standing with me were finishing up their Ph.D.'s in philosophy and everything. These kids were talking--they were like freshmen and sophomores--and they said, "Are you guys really policemen?" Finally we told them no because they said, "Well, you had us going." Jeez, what kind of education did it take to be a policeman at the capitol? None of us were professionals or anything except for the sergeants and the lieutenants. The rest of us were all students.

One time, we had a Marine sergeant came in that took over our detail at night. He did an inspection, and gave us some order where we were supposed to pull out our gun, open our chamber and drop the bullets in our hands. Then he would look down and see if they were clean and everything. None of us knew how to do it. So he looked through it. He came in the next morning. He went to the chief. I heard him. He said, "I can't believe it; I went in and inspected these guys; their guns were filthy; I couldn't even look through the barrel." He said, "You know, half of them didn't even have any bullets." And the chief said, "Oh, my God, you mean some of

them had bullets?" Now, that's a true story.

But anyway, I worked for Cannon. Actually, McGeorge started taking more students when the patronage system starting falling away, and that's what it was in those days. But it became more security conscious. I mean there are 2,000 policemen today. I think we had a force of 200 that guarded the capitol 24 hours, but it's totally different today.

So tell me when you look at UNLV's campus today --

Oh, it's amazing.

-- compared to -- what do you think? What do you feel?

Well, I feel great because it's my school. In fact, when my wife and I were coming back from law school -- we had two children while I was in law school -- we were heading back and she wanted to get home to her parents and everything and I made us come this way instead of around because I wanted to go by the UNLV campus, Nevada Southern campus. Later she was kind of mad at me and she says, "I understand how you love that school." But I had to go see it because it's amazing.

You know, when I was on the regents, one of the things I tried to do was rent those four-plexes that are between Maryland Parkway and the campus -- we had a recession here in Vegas in the 60s, late 60s. Those apartments couldn't be rented out because Nevada Savings and Loan had taken them back in foreclosure. They came to me because I knew the people there and said, "Can you get the university to take it over? We'll put it on a 40-year note with nothing down. You can make it student housing, married student housing."

But we had a problem. We had one dorm, Tonopah Hall, old. We couldn't fill it. The reason was that two-bedroom apartments were going for like 75 to a hundred dollars a month. The dorms were as expensive, but you could have your own apartment right by campus.

Well, you know, it was the biggest mistake because they've tried to buy that many times now and every time the price goes up. We could have had all those apartments and that land, including where Vegas Towers now sits, but they've sold that off and built those towers. Today it's going to cost the university millions.

So one of my disappointments is looking at some of the properties that we could have acquired. If it hadn't been for Perry Thomas and Jerry Mack and the land foundation, which I served on, we wouldn't have had what we had. But now all these great plans they have of going across the street

and building this mall -- I mean a lot of things Carol Harter put together were wonderful, and hopefully, they'll continue under the new presidency. But I love the school and love what it's done and where it's going.

You know like I say, I was there when it was a dirt road. We called it "Tumbleweed Tech." Remember the blasting? We were in the classrooms and (noises). They were blowing because of caliche alone. They were trying to lay the pipelines. We drove out there and the first year it was just gravel. We had no paved roads out there when the campus started.

Could you explain -- and this is the last thing because I know you have to go -- could you explain the land foundation?

The land foundation was created by Perry Thomas and Jerry Mack. Their names are on the Thomas & Mack. They at that point had started Bank of Las Vegas, which later became Valley Bank, which then was sold to Bank America. There's a Valley Bank now, but that has nothing to do with the old one. They just picked up the name. They decided that if this college was ever going to move forward, they can't be left with 40 acres of ground. That's about what they had.

So they agreed to put up money that would loan money to this foundation they created that when land became available in that area, they would go buy it and they would put it at a four- or five-percent loan and just let it run. Until the legislature would appropriate at a future -- say, we got 10 acres here that we bought for \$50,000. With interest it's now 60. The legislature appropriated the money to buy the land.

Sometimes the land was bought 10, 15 years after Perry Thomas and Jerry Mack, the land foundation, had bought it. They picked up huge amounts of property, banked it for the university. As the university expanded and the legislature gave us money, then we bought it. If it hadn't been for that and those people who really had the foresight, we would have had no program whatsoever and we would have no campus. Now you have to go by eminent domain, but they're still negotiating I know to buy other properties.

Everything has to go up now. I think you'll see that Frazier's coming out. I understand everybody has nostalgia for it because that was our first building. I attended classes in there. Our student government offices were in there, but it's loaded with asbestos and other materials that it just can't keep.

Grant will come out because that building was the second building, but it's still a piece of -- you know, two-story. It's really not a great building. You need to go up, five- or six-story buildings.

That's what we have to do.

The land value has now gotten so high.

Just like downtown Las Vegas.

Yeah. Well, Mike Saltman has really come along and he's been a great supporter. He's more recent, but he's in the same style as Thomas and Mack and Jerry's dad. Perry's still alive. They did a great job for the university.

Well, this is wonderful. One of these days when you have some time, we have to do a life interview on you. We have to talk about all of your time in the assembly and in congress and all of that because this is just so amazing.

Well, like I said -- I tease people. Let me show you my letterhead. This will be a kick for you. I tell people that I can't keep a job because I've got so many things on the resume. They've got us here so if you don't go on line for a couple of minutes, it automatically clicks back and you have to go in with your password and get everything all over again because they've had people going through and look at computers.

Oh, yes. And this saves on energy.

Not only that, but it also is security here for the law firm.

Oh, that's right. Yes.

Let me just print this out for you so you'll get a little idea.

And what is this?

Well, what happened was when they opened the Boulevard Mall, they had a Broadway in there. It was right after Ben-Hur was made, the movie. Some young businessman went in and bought all the old Roman uniforms from Ben-Hur. That's the Roman armor around there, and that's Romulus and Remus that you see down there, the little medallion that's underneath.

Oh, yes.

This was a spear the Romans were carrying. So he made these up to sell. Now, this was 1966, and these were selling for like \$350. Today that'd be like maybe 2 or 3,000 in buying power. So I

couldn't buy it. I saw it up there, and they kept reducing the price.

One day I had a petty larceny case. I was a deputy D.A. I was talking to the guy from security and said, "I love that Roman armor." He said, "Oh, God, that's a joke up there. They think it will never be bought." I said, "Oh, I'd love to buy it." He said, "Well, how much would you pay for it?", and I said, "75 bucks."

So anyway, about two hours later I got a call back. "Come with your 75 bucks; you got it." So I got it.

Let me get this for you. So that was my Roman armor story. That item behind you is a Roman sword, gladius they call it.

(End tape 1, Side 2.)