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An Interview with Reverend Jerome Blankinship

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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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
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Preface

Jerome Blankinship was born in Hollywood, California in 1933 to Herman and Helen Blankinship. Jerome grew up as an only child in a suburb of Los Angeles called Huntington Park. He spent his entire childhood in the suburb and finished high school there as well. Then he went on to attend the University of Southern California. He received a degree in education and wanted to be a school teacher, but after a short stint in teaching at the Los Angeles City School District, he discovered that it was not for him.

He then went back to graduate school and earned a master's in counseling and guidance. After graduating he received a Rockefeller grant to attend seminary, which was a calling that Blankinship had been very interested in. He attended the same seminary school that Martin Luther King Jr. went to, Boston University, School of Theology in Boston.

Once finished with seminary, Blankinship pastored a church in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles. Then the Reverend was offered an opportunity in Las Vegas to start a new church. After visiting, Blankinship fell in love with Las Vegas and moved in the summer of 1966 and has been here since. In the interview he shares a vast amount of information about the Las Vegas valley during his early years in the city. Today Blankinship is the senior Chaplain at Sunrise Hospital.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER at UNLV

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This is Claytee White. It is November 24th, 2004. And I'm with Reverend Blankinship in his office here at Sunrise Hospital. How are you this morning?

I'm fine. Thank you.

Good. Could you please give me your full name?

My full name is Jerome, middle initial is G, and my last name is Blankinship, B-l-a-n-k-i-n-s-h-i-p. We're the folks who spell it with a K-I-N. The reason, that's a long story. It's basically because my ancestors couldn't spell very well. So that's kind of what happened.

Your ancestors, what are they?

Well, they've been in the United States for six or seven generations. But they were poor dirt farmers coming from Ohio and then Southern Illinois. I've been back to Southern Illinois in saline county, actually, and seen the gravestones of my great grandfather and my great-great grandfather -- not my great grandfather. Great-great and great-great-great. And some spelled it K-E-N, and some spelled it K-I-N. And when I asked, they said, "Well, your relatives were kind of poor and dumb." And so they were just poor dirt farmers. They raised crops and...

Oh, that's interesting. I grew up exactly the same way. So where were you born?

I was born in Hollywood, California, only because my mother was there at the time. This is way off the topic. But my mother, for reasons that I don't know, went to see an obstetrician/gynecologist when she was pregnant with me. That was not the custom in those days. The custom was, if you saw a doctor, to see the family doctor. And my mother went to this high-powered obstetrician/gynecologist who practiced in Hollywood and had many movie stars as part of his clientele, part of his practice. So I was born in Hollywood. But I was raised in another city, in a suburb of Los Angeles called Huntington Park. I was raised there, went to high school there, and lived there until I went on to college and then graduate school.

Could you give me your parents' names?

My mother's name was Helen Martha Goss, G-O double S. And that's where my middle name comes from -- my mother's maiden name. She was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1905 and with her family moved to Southern California when she was about seven or eight, moved to Imperial Valley to El Centro, where she grew up and went to high school and stayed until she then left high school and went to Los Angeles and met my dad.

My father's name, his first name is Herman. He always went by the initial H because he didn't like the name Herman. I don't know where that came from in the family tree. His middle name was Eugene, and he went by Eugene or Gene Blankinship. He was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1903. When he was about six or seven, again, he moved with his family to Southern California, to Los Angeles.

He's told me stories about the train ride that he and his family took from Memphis to Los Angeles. He was old enough to remember the train rides. I'd say he was about six or seven when he made that trip. More like six, I believe. He remembers a few things about Memphis. That was before the Mississippi was contained. So when there was a flood or something, the river would just come right up into the town. And he remembered going down and seeing the river floating through Memphis as a child of about five or six.

So then my parents met and married in 1928. I was born in 1933. As I say, it was Hollywood, although my parents lived in another suburb of Los Angeles called Huntington Park. They both lived there until their deaths. My mother died at -- I believe she was 85 or 86. And my father died when he was 91. So they both had long, long lives.

What did they do for a living?

My father was a salesman. He sold all kinds of things. Early on, he was in a family business which didn't work out very well. There was too much competition and too much struggle in the family. Then he went into sales. He worked full time until he was 76 and part time until he was 86. He did tell me that he worked too long. He should have retired sooner to enjoy life. But he was a workaholic.

My mother was basically a housewife, although she did have some business school training. Before I was born and then after I graduated from high school, she worked as an office clerk in various places, at a Red Cross center, at an insurance company, at a trucking firm. She was kind of the girl Friday in several of these things. Those were the days when many, many, if you could, many, many moms would stay home during the time that their kids were in school. She stayed home while I was in school, packed my lunch that I took to school every day.

Were you an only child?

Yes, I'm an only child.

Oh, okay. Good. Now, where did you go to college and graduate school?

I went to college at USC, University of Southern California. I got a degree in education and thought I was going to be a schoolteacher. That was kind of my parents' dream for me because I was born, as I say, in 1933 during the Depression. And the Depression was a difficult time for my family. I don't remember it. I mean, I don't remember the difficult times. It was just normal. It was fun. But they were very concerned because so many people were unemployed. And they knew that teachers always had a job. So they kind of whispered in my ear from early on that I should become a teacher.

So I got a bachelor's degree in education and taught school briefly for the Los Angeles City School District. I did not enjoy it. So I went back to grad school and got a master's in counseling and guidance and thought I would be a high school guidance person.

Was that at USC, as well?

Yes, that was also at USC, yeah. My folks had always been active in the church. They met at a church, as a matter of fact. I can remember being in the nursery school in the church and kindergarten classes in the church. I have lots of memories of being involved in the life of the church as a small child -- well, as a youth, as well, but as a small child. So I did feel the call to ministry.

Which church?

The Methodist Church. The Methodist Church in Huntington Park is where I spent many, many years. Then after I got my master's in counseling and guidance and was looking for a school to be a school counselor or school psychologist in an elementary school in L.A., I had the opportunity to go to seminary on a Rockefeller grant. It's called a Rockefeller Fellow.

Oh, great.

Just recently, they found me again. I have been lost to them. But just recently, somebody called me from Atlanta and said, "Aren't you a Rockefeller Fellow?" And I said, "Yes, I am." And they said, "Well, we wanted to put you back on the mailing list." So what do you know about that?

That's wonderful.

So I chose intentionally to go as far from Los Angeles as I could. And I went to Boston University, School of Theology in Boston, right in the heart of downtown Boston. That was an

intentional decision. I had never been on the East Coast, and I thought it was important to have that cultural experience. And it was marvelous. What a great city Boston is. I just had a wonderful time in Boston. I can remember going to the symphony and going to see the Red Sox play baseball in Fenway Park and see the Celtics play in the Boston Gardens. I did go to school, too, occasionally, once in a while.

Well, you could have done all that in Los Angeles, couldn't you?

Well, when I lived in Los Angeles, there were no major league teams.

Oh, at that time.

At that time. There was kind of a professional football team called the L.A. Dons. But there weren't any major league teams. There was minor league, but no major league professional teams. So I needed to go to Boston. Boston has got history and the Freedom Trail and Paul Revere's home and Old South Church and on and on and on.

Yes.

So a Rockefeller grant was a one-year grant to see if a student would like seminary. I loved it. I felt God's call to do that. So after one year, then I got a Methodist scholarship to continue my seminary education and completed that in a little over three years. It was there that I also took some courses in hospital chaplaincy and really was excited about that. I served local churches for 19 years, but I always had in the back of my mind that someplace along the line I would go into hospital chaplaincy. And that began in my seminary years at Boston.

I took chaplaincy courses at a hospital that was under the wing of Boston University called University Hospital. It's down in south Boston, which again was a real neat cultural experience because people in south Boston were initially Irish and then Slovak -- and they had a lot of conflict -- and then African-American. And, again, conflict because Irish and Slovak and African-Americans didn't mesh too well. I don't know why but they didn't. But anyway, the hospital served all those ethnics groups. And that was a real cultural awakening because I had lived in pretty much a sheltered environment in Los Angeles. Hispanics, of course, a lot of Hispanics, but that was about it when I lived in Los Angeles.

I'm going to ask a lot of questions now.

All right.

Tell me about the USC area at that time. I know what it's like now. I would like to know what it was like then.

Well, it was an aging area, but many of the people who lived there had lived there for 20, 30, 40 years. So it was an older area and aging area, but not terribly ethnically diverse as it is today. It's almost a ghetto today. That was not true then. It was an area that had at one time a lot of prestige, but it was fading. But I remember talking to people who had lived there for 30, 40, 50 years in the same old house. And they were big houses, huge. I've been back, not recently. But four and five families will live in the same house. But in those days, one family lived in these great big houses with porches and steps up -- just marvelous old, old homes. I think the homes are still there. It's just that they've subdivided them. So there are a lot of people who live there.

Now, there are some major boulevards around there. I think Exposition Boulevard, some of those.

Yes. Figueroa.

Yes.

Vermont.

What did they look like? Were they tree-lined at that time?

Yes, they were tree-lined and clean. Vermont, Adams, Figueroa, Exposition, they were all kind of wide. I was kind of amazed how broad they were and how clean. Again, I was reminded how many older people lived in the USC area because it was a college community and we were all young and bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and these older folks who lived there kind of holding down the fort. Of course, once they died, their children did not come and live in those homes and they sold them. And the area changed.

When I was in college in the early 50s, there were a lot of veterans. And I was in classes with men, particularly men, sometimes women, but particularly men who had fought in the war and who were ten years older than I and had life experiences that were just, you know, because they were on the GI bill and they were finishing their education. They had a whole different perspective of life. They had seen death and destruction and they had fought and killed in the war. They came to it from a whole different point of view. For a 17-year-old freshman in college, that was a new experience. I had never rubbed shoulders with those kinds of people.

That's great. That is great. Now I want to go to Boston.

All right.

Okay. First, is that the same seminary that Martin Luther King, Jr., attended?

Yes. And I met him there.

Tell me about that.

Well, he had finished his Ph.D. at Boston University and came at the invitation of a couple of faculty members who had mentored him for his Ph.D., Harold DeWolf, in particular, and Paul Deetz, another gentleman. And he'd come and talk. And this was before -- he's still living in Montgomery, before he moved to Atlanta. So he was not as well known, although he was becoming well known. And I remember he'd come and speak to us on the Civil Rights issues and so forth, which, again, for those of us who had not been in the South -- I had never been in the South. I have several times since then. But at that time I hadn't been in the South. So this was all -- you know, I'm bright-eyed. Oh, my gosh.

When I grew up in Los Angeles, there were not too many African-Americans living there. A lot of Hispanics, but not too many African-Americans. So I had not had a lot of experience with African-Americans, as I say.

But King, I remember specifically one time down in the basement of this seminary there was a recreational area. There was a soda fountain and a little cafeteria -- well, not even a cafeteria, kind of a sandwich grill and so forth. And there were also ping pong tables and exercise equipment. I remember Martin Luther King playing ping pong with some students, and he took off his jacket. And I was there, and I held his jacket when he took it off. And I looked inside the jacket, and it said J.C. Penney. That's where he got his suit.

Another thing that had surprised me about Martin Luther King was he was short of stature. Most people -- because he's a giant in influence -- don't realize that. I bet he was five-four or five-five at most. He was not a tall man at all. But you don't know that when you see him behind a platform. And his voice and his message are so gigantic that people don't realize that he was not that tall of a man.

I met him again years -- not years, but maybe five or ten -- well, five years later maybe, eight years later when he became much better known, when he was at a rally in San Diego where I

was serving a church. And I had a chance to talk to him. I reminded him of this event at Boston University where I held his jacket while he played ping pong. He said he remembered. I don't know. I think he was being kind to me. I think he was being polite. I don't really think he remembered. But he was very gracious and said that he remembered that moment.

Wow. That's interesting. Thank you for that story.

You're welcome.

Now, after that, then you went back to Southern California?

Yes. And I pastored a church in the Los Angeles area, somewhat near where I came from. Actually, it's what we called a new church start. It was the start of church, start of a congregation in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles. There was a large church about five miles away in Santa Monica and another very large church about two miles away in Westwood on the UCLA campus. And they were trying to put one in between. After two years of that, it didn't happen. We were unsuccessful in growing a brand-new church in the shadow of these two larger churches.

But I met a lot of people. I met some folks involved in the Hollywood scene, some actors and actresses and other people who were involved behind the scenes in the Hollywood world. I met several faculty members from UCLA. I had been to USC, remember, so it was pretty hard for me to swallow my pride and meet UCLA faculty members on the UCLA campus. I even helped teach a class at UCLA. I forget what it was. I think it was about chaplaincy. I don't remember. But then after two years there, I took a church assignment in the San Diego area.

Okay. Before you tell me about that, tell me how the Methodist Church works. Don't they automatically move you from place to place?

Yes, they do.

Okay. Could you explain that a bit?

Well, all the pastors are under the authority, as we say, the authority of a bishop. And the philosophy of the Methodist Church is that pastors should be moved every -- well, there's no actual given number of years. But every three, four or five years, what we Methodist call our gifts and graces run thin. And you only have so many gifts and graces, and then you've expended them. After four or five years in congregation X, it's time to go to congregation Y. So, yes, they move. And the pastor has some say in that. But still we pledge to be under the authority of a bishop, and

a bishop then moves us.

So that's what happened, a bishop moved me to -- actually, it was in a north San Diego county in a community called San Marcos, which at that time had about 2,000 souls and was very rural, cattle grazing and growing. There was a major egg production company. One member of that church had 50,000 chickens laying eggs. I was sometimes paid in eggs rather than cash because they didn't have that much money. They supplemented my income with eggs. We had more eggs. No wonder my cholesterol is so bad. I had eggs morning, noon, and night from the egg farmers in San Marcos.

That's all changed now. I was there for the 100th anniversary of the congregation. I was there 40 years ago -- or 45 years ago. But they had their 100th anniversary, and they invited all the pastors back. The town now has about 40 or 50,000 people. It was 2,000 when I was there. And the egg farmers are all gone. Their grazing lands for the cattle are all gone. There were some who did farming. They're all gone. It's a bedroom community for San Diego pretty much now. It's all built up.

Did you remind them of the eggs?

Yes, I did. I told them that story. I think several of them thought I was putting them on. The place, where this 50,000 chicken ranch was, was sold to the University of California system, and that's where Cal State San Marcos, the campus of Cal State and San Marcos sits on the same plot where all those egg farmers were.

Oh, that's interesting. Now, tell me about -- were you married at that time?

Yes.

How did your wife feel about the eggs?

Well, she was a good sport. I met my first wife in Boston. She was in seminary not to be a minister, but to get that kind of education. I told her she was there to become a minister, but she denied that. Anyway, we met at Boston University and were married. Then she and I tried to get this church started in Los Angeles. And then together we moved to San Diego County, to San Marcos.

Now, that should be really interesting and exciting to be married to someone with that same kind of background.

Yes.

And knowing that they're very interested in the same things.

Yes, yes.

So what was it like for her to be a first lady of a church? I don't know if you call them that.

Well, they do sometimes. I don't know. I wouldn't even speak for her. There were strengths with somebody who had that background. There were always disadvantages. She would critique the Sunday morning sermon and say, "Why did you say this? And why didn't you say that? And where did you get your extra Jesus for this?" and so forth and so on. So it was a mixed bag.

Oh, it sounds like fun.

It was.

Well, good. This time, how did you leave Southern California?

I moved. Again, the bishop asked me if I would come to Las Vegas to start a new church. I was a little gun shy because of the start that I had tried in Los Angeles unsuccessfully. But he said, "This church has already got 160 people who are committed to growing the church. They are scientists. They are university professors. They are business people in the community. It's going to be a go, and we'd like you to try it." So I had negative feelings about Las Vegas.

Why was that?

I had been here a couple of times traveling, and it just seemed like "Sin City" or I don't know. I wasn't aware of the community. As a tourist, I was driving from wherever to wherever and coming through Vegas. Also, my parents were kind of anti-gambling people. They belonged to the anti-gambling philosophy. So I had been trained all my life -- in fact, I still seldom put a nickel in the slot machine. I don't know. I just don't like to lose. And it's partly the tapes that my parents had in my mind, "Don't gamble. You'll always lose." So I wasn't sure that I wanted to come to Las Vegas.

But anyway, I came. I flew over on a little airline called Bonanza Airlines that flew prop planes, not jets. That was before jets. I flew over. And by golly, I met by some of these people, got shown around town, and very, very much enjoyed what was happening and decided to accept the bishop's appointment to this church. I'm not sure that I had a choice to say no and only thought I would be here for maybe a couple years. But I fell in love with Las Vegas and have

been here since 1966.

So anyway, I came to Las Vegas under the appointment of a bishop in the summer of 1966 to start a congregation, which was really already started. My job was really to get them going, get them organized.

Which church was it?

It's University Methodist Church on Maryland Parkway. That's an interesting history. There was, until last year actually, a downtown Methodist Church on Third and Bridger, which had been here since 1905 or '06. It was land donated by the Union Pacific Railroad which started Las Vegas. They donated an acre to the Protestants, who happened to be the Methodists in this case, and an acre to the Roman Catholics. They still have some of their land. And their church is called St. Joan of Arc on Bridger and about Second or someplace there. Anyway, that congregation in the early 60s decided to relocate, to move out of downtown because the parking. The Strip was certainly important, but downtown was still the heart of Las Vegas. I remember shopping at J.C. Penney downtown and other stores downtown. Anyway, they bought land way out on Maryland Parkway.

In those days, Maryland Parkway was paved only from Tropicana. From Tropicana southward, Maryland Parkway was a road, but it was not paved. It was a dirt road because hardly anybody lived south of Tropicana on Maryland Parkway. The airport was there so that the dirt road went to where the airport still is. The university was there, a couple buildings. People at that time -- I found out later that the university was already there when I came to town -- but people would talk to me and say, "Why would they put a university way, way out there?" And the university played their football games at Las Vegas High School's stadium, which is now the academy. The old Las Vegas High School on whatever it is, Bridger and Fifth or Fourth or whatever it is, Sixth, I remember going to see UNLV football games at Wildcat Stadium on the campus of Las Vegas High School. And a lot of people thought that's where UNLV should have bought land and put their campus in town instead of way out in the desert.

Anyway, the folks at First Methodist Church downtown bought the property, bought five acres of property from a gynecologist here in town, Quincy Fortier. And Dr. Fortier sold the property to them. He owned a lot of property, and he owned this particular property. And they

bought five acres. At that time I think they paid \$150,000 for the five acres, much of which fronts on Maryland Parkway. They even engaged an architect, and he came up with some schematics of what the congregation would look like. Then some people at the downtown congregation got cold feet and they said, "You know, I'm not sure we ought to move way out there. Probably we better stay where we are."

(End side 1, tape 1.)

The bishop sent a new pastor to the downtown church. His plan was to have them revote about whether or not they wanted to make the move down to South Maryland Parkway. The vote was very close. The vote was more to stay than to leave, but it was fairly close. So his solution, his compromise, was, well, those who want to go, go. And those who want to stay, stay. And we'll have two congregations. The downtown congregation at that time had about 400 souls in their membership, which was a fairly strong congregation. And about 160 made the choice to move down to South Maryland Parkway. About the same number decided to stay -- a few more decided to stay downtown. Sadly, the downtown congregation shrunk and shrunk. And last year, just last year, they finally closed their doors and gave up the ghost. But it was kind of sad because they had been in that site for, oh, almost 100 years, but could not maintain anymore. They sold off a lot of the property to try to help them economically, but they still had the basic building there. But they finally closed the doors.

Anyway, the congregation down on Maryland Parkway grew after I came. I was the pastor there for nine years. We built several buildings, and we did whatever needed to be done to get it going. I'd always had an interest in campus ministry, as well. So I kind of negotiated with the bishop that part of my assignment would not only be the congregation but also to do campus ministry across the street at UNLV, what there was of UNLV. I remember actually there were several buildings being built, like Tonopah Hall. The dormitory was going to be built, well, in those early years. The late 60s, I'm talking about. I came here in '66. So '66, '67, '68. They built Tonopah Hall. They built -- what's the classroom building there? I forget what it's called. The big --

The seven stories?

Yeah. What's that called now? I want to say Founders, but that's not it. Anyway, whatever --

It does have an F, doesn't it? But I can't think of it. Where the president's house is.

President's house, yeah. And they built a library, and named it after a former professor.

Dickinson?

Dickinson Library in that round building. So there was quite a bit of construction on the UNLV campus. It was still called NSU, Nevada Southern University. And they were just beginning to give degrees. The plan initially when the university opened was that students would take two or three years. But if you wanted your bachelor's degree, you had to go to Reno and finish your last year at Reno. So you could take three years here and then transfer to Reno because this institution was not a degree-granting institution. That had changed a few years before I came in '56, but not many years. People were still excited to be able to go all four years to NSU and get their sheepskin and their diploma and their degree.

I guess I neglected to say that I had begun a Ph.D. program at USC before I started seminary. And then when I came back from seminary and took an assignment to start a congregation in Los Angeles, I picked up and started trying to work and finish my Ph.D. at USC in sociology. I was going to do family systems. That was the thing that I was interested in exploring. I got bogged down. I had a full-time job. I was married. I had more than a full-time job because I was doing some extra things on the UCLA campus, as I indicated, and then trying to commute over to SC and work on a Ph.D. Then several of the suggestions that I had for my Ph.D. committee for research, they didn't like my ideas. So we were struggling with what was an appropriate research topic. I was still taking some beyond the master's classes. In fact, I don't remember now how much beyond the masters that I have. But anyway, that kind of fell apart. But I had that resume.

And I had also taught when I was in Northern San Diego. I taught at Palomar Junior College, which they didn't call Palomar Junior. They just called it Palomar College. It's a junior college, although they're trying to make it a four-year school now, down in San Marcos. But I taught sociology there because I had some academic preparation beyond the master's toward the Ph.D., but didn't get the Ph.D.

Anyway, when I came to UNLV or NSU at the time, I had a nice letter of recommendation from Palomar College. I went to see the sociology department person. I said, "I'd like to teach."

He said, "We can use teaching assistants. We can't pay you very much, but we pay students to teach." So I began in 1966 until recently, off and on, teaching as a P99, that's what they call it. Do you know what a P99 is?

Uh-huh. An adjunct.

An adjunct in the sociology department at UNLV.

Now, for some reason, I thought the seminary meant that you had a Ph.D.

No. It's another master's, Master's of the Divinity.

Oh, okay.

So I've got two earned masters and a halfway-earned Ph.D. in sociology.

Good. Who was the head of sociology at the time?

You know, I don't even remember his name. He left and went to New Jersey, I remember that, to teach in some small college. UNLV was not attracting major scholars or major professors for their little out-in-the-desert campus. I remember how deserty. There was just nothing around except desert, scrubby desert at best.

Now, do you remember any of the presidents in that era?

Oh, sure. In fact, I probably know every president of UNLV on a first-name basis. I'm probably the only person alive who has known every UNLV president on a first name basis. Don Moyer for whom Moyer Student Union is named, was the president when I came to campus in '66. His title was chancellor because there was only one president and that was the UNR president. There was only one president in the university system. So Don Moyer was the chancellor of the Southern Nevada campus. Don is still alive. I see him from time to time. He's a marvelous, marvelous guy. He must be in his late 80s or early 90s. But he's still around. Just a super, super person.

This is exciting. One of the things that we want to do within the next several months is to start doing an oral history of the university. And this is why I'm asking some of these questions.

Right.

So I would love an introduction to Don Moyer.

I would be pleased to do that. I know him well. I know him well. He's a wonderful man. And I'd

be very pleased to introduce you to him.

Good.

He was followed, I think, by Don Beckler. I'm not sure of the chronology here. But Don Beckler, whose expertise was fish -- he is a -- whatever that word in Greek is for fish expert. Don is still alive, still around. And I think he's still on several boards in the state. But he was the president. Then Roland Zorn, Z-o-r-n. He's deceased. He died actually here at Sunrise Hospital. But he was a history professor who came. And I'm not sure again of the chronology, whether Zorn came and then Beckler or Beckler and then Zorn. But I knew them both. They were followed by Pat Goodsole. Pat?

Goodall?

Goodall, that's it, yeah. Pat is his nickname. His first name is really Leonard or something. He was president for ten years. He's still around and very active. He's chairing the county's growth task force right now. Pat Goodall is probably in his 70s. He was president for ten years. He did a lot of growth on the campus.

Then there was a year's gap in there where Brock Dixon was interim president. Brock now lives in Australia. His children live there, and he moved to Australia. Then he was followed by Bob Maxim. Bob Maxim I knew and know well. Bob was president, again, for about ten years. He is president now of Cal State Long Beach, thinking of retiring. He's in his mid to late 60s. He built half the campus that's grown up here.

Then when Bob left to take the position at Long Beach, there was an interim president, Kenny Guinn, who's now the governor, whom I knew when he was school superintendent back in the 60s and early 70s.

And now, of course, Carol Harter is president. And I know Carol and her husband, Mike. I know them, as well.

So as I say, I'm probably the only person who has known from Don Moyer, from '66 -- I don't know the leadership before then. But from at least '66 to present, I have known every president and interim president on a first-name basis. We've had a lot of connections with them.

That is great. I really, really appreciate this information. That's wonderful.

So that's the university presidents.

Tell me about campus ministry.

We were literally in the late 60s in a time of ecumenism where all the faith groups were trying to live with each other and get along with each other. So there were four or five different faith groups who have small campus groups, small groups of students that they meet with either on campus or mostly off campus because of church and state regulations. And up at UNR, they had joined together in a united campus ministry program, again under the emphasis of ecumenism. And Don Moyer, I remember him calling me into his office in the late 60s and asking if I had heard of the UNR model. And I had, but I wasn't that familiar with it. But I heard of it. He said, "Do you think that would work here at Nevada Southern?" And I said, "You know, I think it might. I don't know."

And so I began to talk to the other faith groups, including the Roman Catholics and the Jewish community. Everybody had a very -- the Jewish community had none. But the Roman Catholic had a very small group. So as I say, because of this interest in ecumenism, why, it was a goal. And the Catholic bishop at the time was a fellow by the name of Joseph Green. He came in '66, the same time I came. I went to his reception when he was the new Roman Catholic bishop in what at that time was the whole state. They've divided the Catholic territory into north and south at this moment. But back then it was the entire state. His office was both Las Vegas and Reno. And I remember at a reception meeting him at Gorman High School down the street here. Anyway, he was excited about it, and so were the Episcopalians, and so were the American Baptists, and so were the Lutherans, and so were the Presbyterians, and so were the Methodists and the Congregationalists and the Jewish community.

And I founded that inner-faith campus ministry program. The Roman Catholics had land, which at that time was in the middle of the UNLV campus given by the Von Tobel people. The Von Tobels were the big hardware people in town. That's where people went on Saturday afternoon, to the Von Tobel Hardware. And you'd get free popcorn and some days free ice cream cones to everybody. So that's what people did in Las Vegas on Saturday afternoon, go to Von Tobels to the hardware store and rummage around to see what was going on and get your free popcorn. And hopefully, that was the day they were also giving free ice cream cones. The Von Tobels are still in town. One of the grandsons is a physician who's on staff here at Sunrise.

Another is a politician in town, Helen Von Tobel.

Anyway, the Von Tobels gave land, which the university wanted to trade out because it turned out to be right in the center of where their master plan was. It's where today the new library is located. So they traded this for land on the corner of Brussels and Tropicana, which was way out in the boonies. Right now, it's right in the middle of campus again. The Catholics gave the land.

The Catholic priest who worked with Catholic students and also taught at Gorman High School had earned a Ph.D. in chemistry and taught at Gorman and did campus ministry at UNLV. He later taught at UNLV because he did have an earned doctorate in chemistry. And, you know, not everybody has one of them. Father Walter Novak was his name, Wally Novak. He belonged to the order of Catholic priests called Viatorians.

Anyway, he was very ecumenically inclined, particularly since the bishop encouraged him to do even more. So we went around town and raised money to build a building. This was in the early 70s. When we first started this ecumenical multi-faith campus ministry center, we held it at University Methodist Church because there was no place to hold it on campus. And because of church and state regulations, we couldn't use a classroom or something like that. So the bishop came to the Methodist Church, the Catholic bishop came to the Methodist, put Holy Water and blessed it so that it could be a place for Catholic worship, as well as Protestant worship. And Bishop Green did that.

Father Novak and I raised about \$250,000 to build the building on the land the Catholics donated. The money came from mostly the casino industry, not from church people, sadly -- or maybe not sadly. I don't know. I mean, we couldn't get them to give any money. But the casinos...Caesars Palace made a nice donation. Billy Weinberger was the president and CEO of Caesars Palace in those days, and he was very generous. Al Benedict was at that time president and CEO of the Tropicana. He made a nice contribution for the hotel and a contribution out of his own pocket.

Bob Canon, a Methodist, was also one of the owners of the Trop along with Mr. -- his son is still in town. He lived there. He lived at the Tropicana. He had diabetes, and he had amputated legs, and he wheeled around in a wheelchair and lived there. I'm blanking out on his name. But

his son and daughter-in-law are very, very active in the community still today. But the Tropicana made a contribution.

Judy Bailey, who owned the Hacienda, for whom the Judy Bailey Theater on campus is named, made a contribution. She never paid it all, but anyway, she made a contribution. They paid part of it. Well, I don't remember all of them. But anyway, \$250,000. Oh, Irwin Molasky of Molasky, Inc., made a contribution.

Moe Dalitz made a contribution. Moe Dalitz had reputed connections to the Mob. I remember going to visit him in his office. And I remember this very, very clearly. He said, "I'm going to make a contribution of \$5,000." Now, he said, "I'd like to make it on a check so I can use it for income tax. But if my name embarrasses you, if it's embarrassing to you that you got money from Moe Dalitz, I will give you the same \$5,000 in cash." And I remember Father Novak and I said, "No, we're in the business of redeeming money. We're in the Christian business of redeeming money. We can redeem your money. And you can write the check, and you can get the income tax credit and we will accept your money." So he did.

Moe Dalitz was one of the founders of Sunrise Hospital as a way to launder money. It's a long story. But Nathan Adelson, for whom the hospice is named, was an entrepreneur in town. And he got the impression that they ought to start another hospital. There weren't very many hospitals in the Valley except for the County Hospital, which it was called. Now it's called UMC, but at that time it was called Clark County Hospital. There was a private hospital downtown called Las Vegas Hospital. And that was about it. So doctors were encouraging them to build a hospital. And Mr. Adelson was an entrepreneur. And he said, "I think I can do it." But he needed money. So he went to Moe Dalitz. And Moe Dalitz said, "I know where I can get you money." And so with Moe Dalitz's money and Mr. Adelson's entrepreneurialism and some other money from physicians who chipped in, in 1959 Sunrise Hospital was built. Nothing is left of the original building. That's all been torn down, and other things have been built along the way.

But anyway, Moe Dalitz was in town. I went to Moe Dalitz's funeral -- I don't know -- about 10, 15 years ago. I don't know when he died. I don't know whether he had connections to the Mob or not. But he was certainly kind to me and kind to the community in many, many ways. And whether he had connections to the Mob or not, I don't know.

Wow. But it's interesting. So tell me, is that the way you collected the money? You would just make a phone call, and you'd go to see people?

Yes. Cold, cold. We went to the Desert Inn. Carl Cohen was president of the Desert Inn. I remember sitting down and having lunch with him. That was a time that a lot of the campuses were in rebellion because of the Vietnam War and that kind of thing. And he said, "If you can promise me that there'll be no rebellion or riots at Nevada Southern, I will make a pledge." And I remember we said, "Mr. Cohen, I've got to be honest with you. We'll do what we can. That's what we're in the business to do. We're trying to stop riots. But I cannot in good conscience make a promise to you." And he said, "Thank you for your honesty. I'll still make a contribution. But I'll hold you -- if there's any problems there."

And there were very few problems at UNLV. Finally, it did get the name changed. I forget when that happened, but they changed the name to UNLV. There were very few problems with student riots during the Vietnam time. I made a bad mistake. I wrote a letter to the editor saying that I was disappointed that there wasn't more student activity at UNLV than there was. UNLV then, and to some degree still today, is a commuter campus. And people were not there as residents to riot. When classes ended at 3 o'clock, they were on their way to their job, most of them. Half or more worked -- well, I suppose more than that worked another job. They didn't have time to be involved in student uprisings. So I, for reasons that escape me now, wrote this letter to the editor, and it was printed in the paper. Boy, did I get a lot of phone calls on that. I was looking for more excitement on UNLV campus because it was so calm. So I guess we kept our promise to Mr. Carl Cohen at the Desert Inn. But he made a contribution.

So, yeah, it was all cold calls. And we did get help from Irwin Molasky and Al Benedict and Weinberger, who engaged in cold calls for us because Father Novak and I didn't have all those contacts -- Billy Weinberger and Al Benedict and Irwin Molasky. But those were the days when one of those people could call you and say, "I'm interested in helping the inner-faith campus ministry build their building, and we need \$10,000 from you, or we need \$15,000 from you." And you did it. That would happen in those days. And in those days, 10, \$15,000 was a lot of money. It still is. But, I mean, it was really a lot of money in those days.

Wonderful. That is great.

So as a matter of fact, I was honored by the university. I'm a Distinguished Nevadan. I got the Distinguished Nevadan Award. It was done on behalf of my work to establish the inner-faith campus ministry and keep church and state separated but still have a presence for religious and moral values on the campus. Bob Maxim awarded me that. He was president here. That was in '94. So it was ten years ago.

Wonderful. That is wonderful. Tell me about starting a new church in Las Vegas. Was it much fun or was it difficult? How were you looking at it when you first came out?

Well, I was impressed by the fact that there were 160 people already signed up to start. So it was fun. We kind of opened the doors and people came. I was a little younger then than I am now. That was 39 years ago. People seemed to appreciate my leadership. We just had a great time. Things just grew wonderfully, not like topsy. I mean, it grew with organization and with design and so forth. But it grew quickly. We moved right along. We were able to build buildings and just grow. People were very generous with their support, both personal and prayer and money and the whole thing, time, leadership. It was a great experience. I had a great experience. Fun, fun time.

Oh, that's wonderful. Why did you leave?

I got kind of burned out, to be honest with you, and I was also having personal marital struggles, which ended in a divorce, sadly. A job came along that I thought I would enjoy and kind of did, but kind of didn't. I was offered a job teaching at UNR in the School of Nursing of all places. I'm not a nurse. But I did have this chaplaincy background even then. It was a job funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, NIMH, out of Washington, D.C. They wanted somebody to help student nurses learn to get in touch with their own -- this is a time when everybody was trying to get in touch with their feelings.

Yes, yes. We should do more of that now.

And what does it mean when somebody dies on your unit? Or what does it mean when you give somebody a shot and they felt the pain? I mean, get in touch with your feelings. So somebody at UNR had designed the program for an assistant professorship in mental health, not on-site nursing. I took nurses to the site facility up in Sparks. But it was real mental health and getting in touch with yourself. I was also the first and only male on the faculty of the School of Nursing. They

thought that was an advantage to have -- because more and more male students were beginning to come out of Vietnam War era. Men who had been medics or whatever and we were getting some more men through the school. So they thought I would be a good role model for somebody -- oh, boy, is that a nurse -- to be a male presence. So I broke the gender code at the school of nursing at UNR.

Well, good.

I remember my first day there, I said, "Where are the restrooms?" And they said, "Well, down the hall or outside and around and in that building down there." I said, "No, no, no. That will not work. We need a restroom in this building." And they had three, but all three of ours were for women. And I said, "Well, which one are you going to choose to have for a men's restroom?" And they looked at me, and they said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Well, one of those three will be a men's restroom." They said, "Oh. Are you sure about this?" I said, "I'm very sure about this." Then women kept coming in because they were not used to having that name changed. Just because the name on the door got changed, it didn't mean it told the girls where they were supposed to go. So that was a kind of a fun thing to change that.

That was in the mid 70s, '75 into '76, I taught at UNR. The grant ran out. I didn't understand soft money grants in those days. The grant ran out. It was an 18-month grant. I don't know whether I would have done it if I had understood, though I had a great time. I had a great time teaching at Reno and living in Reno. But I'm not sure I would have done it. I don't know what I would have done. That is water under the bridge. So after 18 months, the grant ran out and the dean called me in one day, the dean of the School of Nursing, and said, "You know, your grant is running out?" I said, "No." She said, "Oh, yeah, this is an 18-month grant. You've been here 18 months." I said, "No." She said, "Yeah, it's been nice having you. God bless you. Find a job."

So I was going through a divorce at that time, which added to the mental anguish and stress that was going on. But anyway, by luck or by God's grace, Sunrise Hospital had decided to hire a full-time chaplain and had advertised for it. I didn't even know that. I was taking nursing students to the hospitals in Reno, Washoe Med Center, St. Mary's Hospital, and the VA. And somebody said to me, "Did you know that Sunrise Hospital in Las Vegas is advertising for a full-time chaplain?" I said, "No, I didn't know that." He said, "Yeah, we got it through the" -- that

was before the Internet -- but we got it through the, you know.

So I called and I happened to know some of the people here. And, yeah, they were. And I said, "Well, I'd like to apply, and I'd like to apply soon because my job here in Reno is finished." And they said, "Well, send us your stuff, your vitae and your information, and write a little essay and tell us why you want to do this, and we'll consider you." But they said --

(End side 2, tape 1.)

So I came here, and I interviewed for the position of chaplain. I did know some of the people. I suppose that was an unfair advantage. At least some of the candidates who did not get the job felt it was an unfair advantage. But in any event, the folks here hired me in August of 1976 to create, begin, a new pastoral care chaplaincy department. I had not done chaplaincy before. I had done similar things. I had been a pastor and called in hospitals. I taught nurses. I had been in hospitals many times. I had the training, the background, the academic training -- or at least some of it. I had to take some more. But anyway, I began to call on friends of mine who I knew were in ministry as chaplains in California and up in Reno, the people who told me about the possibility that this job existed, and began to design a program for pastoral care. I had great cooperation from administration of the hospital.

That's where I met Nathan Adelson who founded this hospital, who was still here. Sadly, he died about a year after I came. In fact, Mr. Adelson was a very devout Jew and prayed every morning in his office. Put his prayer shawl around and his yarmulke on and would say his prayers. After he died, I asked his widow if I could have his prayer shawl, and she said yes. And I still have it in my office.

That's wonderful.

Isn't that something?

Yes.

He handed me scripture one day, which was in Hebrew. And he said, "Can you read this?" I said, "Mr. Adelson, I once could read it, but I cannot read it anymore. I know it goes from right to left, if that's any help to you." And he laughed. I remember another thing he said. He said, "This is a private for-profit hospital. Does that bother you? Because I reckon you've been in the nonprofit world all your life." I said, "I have been in the nonprofit world all my life, and I can't answer that.

I'll have to see. My father was a small businessman, as I say, and a salesman. I don't think that will bother me." He said, "Well, if it does, let's talk about it because we're here to provide the best quality care we can for patients and to make money. And if that's a problem, let's talk because that's what we do here. So if that's a problem for you, I want to know right up front. I don't want you to hide that from me."

Mr. Adelson, as I say, was an entrepreneur, came to town here in the late 50s to open markets. He had opened grocery stores in Beverly Hills and in Southern California. He didn't know anything about groceries. He knew about making money. When he came to Las Vegas, he noticed that the grocery stores all closed about 8 or 9 o'clock at night. So he opened a grocery store on Charleston and Valley View, or near Charleston and Valley View where Hyde Park Junior High School is, that was 24 hours. The first 24-hour market in Las Vegas. And it was a success, of course.

It's a 24-hour town.

It's a 24-hour town. But nobody thought about that. And then he sold it. I mean, as soon as it made its money and was going, he had no interest in managing a grocery store. His idea was to manage something, get it off its feet, get it going, make money, and sell the sucker. And that's what he did. He did that with property and all kinds of things. He was an interesting guy. He built this hospital with that same concept in mind, though he stayed here for almost 20 years. He would have stayed longer, but he died.

So that's the story of Mr. Adelson. He was called the president of the hospital. He didn't do much except kind of set the tone for things. There was a full-time man who was called the chief administrator who really administered in terms of making the hospital work. Anyway, I took the job in August of 1976, and I've been here ever since. I've seen a lot of growth in the buildings of the hospital and a lot of changes in healthcare. When I first came here, healthcare was pretty much your insurance paid 80 percent of whatever was the problem and you paid 20 percent. So there were no limitations. For instance, now we have length-of-stay issues. Like if you have appendicitis, you can only be here three days. If you have a baby, you're only supposed to be here two days. They are mandated by the federal government, which is involved in the insurance thing.

Is that good?

Well, it's hard to say if it's good. I mean, it certainly is more economically accountable because -- I mean, we have people check in here, famous people, whose names I won't use, but famous movie stars and one politician from another state who would have their annual physical here, and they would be here for four or five days, and they would be running around the halls, and we'd bring bar service up to their rooms. I mean, people took advantage because they knew that there would be no questions asked, that their insurance would pay 80 percent and they'd pay 20 percent. And often, the 20 percent would be written off. So you got a week's vacation at Sunrise Hospital.

That changed by federal mandate for all insurances, not only federal insurance, but all insurances. Now, we have people at insurance companies pay to make sure you're not here a minute too long. They're called case managers, and they manage your hospitalization. If you're here a minute too long, they'll cut off payment, which is a pretty clear incentive to get you out the door. And we get people who don't come until they're pretty -- we say we get them sicker, and we've got to rid of them quicker. Sicker and quicker. I don't want to go off on that, particularly. But it's just that healthcare has changed so much in the almost 29 years that I've been here.

Now, whom does the caseworker work for?

The insurance company.

I see. I'm going to come back to the hospital. But in the 60s and 70s when you were here, there was a women's movement.

Yes.

How did you see it in the church, if at all?

I'm reflecting on that. I don't think the church was really supportive of the women's movement. So that most women who came to church were not at the forefront of bra burning or those -- I mean, that didn't really happen. But that's the symbol that goes with it. Most of the women who were in my congregation may have been very supportive, but it was not the number one issue on their agenda. And that was true at the university, for instance. The quote, unquote, feminists did not have much of a platform at UNLV or at the church.

The big issue, when I came to town in the mid 60s, was Vietnam. I felt strongly that we were getting nowhere in Vietnam and a lot of lives were being lost and we were spinning our

wheels and it was time to find some way to negotiate and get out. And I remember being in protests. Thank God, I didn't get interviewed. My wife saw me on television. But unless you were really looking, you didn't do that. We had a pastor here in town who felt so strongly about the Vietnam War that he was protesting at the federal building because the federal building represented the United States, and he tied himself to the posts that separate the driveway so trucks could not get in or out of the driveway as a protest to the government. He, of course, was on the front page, and he was front news.

Do you remember his name?

Yes. His name is Donald Thompson. He lives in New Jersey now. His congregation did not support him. They said, "We can't have you be our pastor." He was the associate pastor at Griffith Methodist Church down here on 17th and Oakey, and he got moved. So I was aware that the congregation at University Methodist Church where I served was a little bit more questioning of the Vietnam War, but certainly was not into protests or that kind of thing. So I had to be very careful, although I shared with them from the pulpit my uneasiness with the war. And as a Christian, I thought, you know, that that was appropriate, to be uneasy. I didn't come out and say, "We should get out," because I wasn't sure what we should do.

I still don't know what we should have done in Vietnam -- probably not gotten in it in the first place. But once you're in, how do you get out? And, of course, that would be true in Iraq today. I mean, now that we're in, I don't think we should just cut and run. We shouldn't have gotten into it in the first place. But once you get in, then how do you negotiate a decent and reasonable and face-saving, maybe, way to get out? I don't know.

But anyway, that was one of the issues. The Vietnam War was the big issue in all of the 60s, but particularly in the late 60s when I came here. The women's movement was not front page. The Civil Rights movement was not front page.

I, because of strong feelings and because of meeting Martin Luther King on two occasions, invited people of color to be pulpit guests in the congregation, not only African-Americans, but Asians and Hispanics because the congregation was 95 percent Anglo. I remember as a kid myself, as a youth, the church I grew up in did that. They brought in people of -- because we were mostly, again, probably -- I don't know the figure -- but largely an Anglo congregation. And they

brought in people of color to present from the pulpit. And I thought that was a wonderful, wonderful experience. So I brought in people of color. I brought in the Roman Catholic priest who was helping me with the campus ministry thing. I brought him into the pulpit. Half of them had never had a priest speak to them before in a church setting. So we tried to bring a multi-cultural experience to them. I knew they weren't going to go out and get it.

Yes.

So we would bring it to them. And I tried to do it very gently. I talked to people beforehand. I didn't surprise them. I negotiated with the leadership of the church. You know what I'd like to do? I'd like to bring this Catholic priest in. "Why do you want to do that?" Or I'd like to bring an African-American pastor in. "Wow, gee." I said, "Trust me. It's going to be all right." And they did trust me, thank God. And things worked out well. So that was one of the ways. But I brought a woman in to preach. There were a few women pastors in those days. I brought a real crackerjack. You know, you brought the best you could. And it went over very well for most people. There was some, of course, who didn't appreciate it. But most of them appreciated it.

But the major issue was Vietnam. In our congregation we had a family who had a son who was drafted and ran to Canada and is still in Canada. Never has come back. I officiated his dad's funeral two or three years ago -- yeah, four or five years ago. Anyway, he snuck in. He said, "If I'm caught here, I could be arrested, and I'm going back to Canada. I've denounced my citizenship because of the Vietnam War." We had another fellow in the congregation who was an Air Force jet fighter pilot from Nellis who was shot down and was a POW.

So on Sunday mornings, I would hold both of those up, the family who has lost a son because he's left to go to Canada and the family whose husband and father is in a POW camp in Vietnam. And we tried to hold them both up to present to the congregation a wide view of what the struggles of life are like.

That's exciting.

Yeah, it was an exciting time.

Tell me about the protest that you did participate in.

Well, there was a protest. It was in Commercial Center, as a matter of fact. I don't remember much more about it. We had a sign, you know, "Vietnam is getting us nowhere." Again, my issue

was that we needed to find some negotiation. In fact, that's what ultimately happened. We negotiated a peace which lasted about a month. And then the folks from North Vietnam came down and took over South Vietnam. And that was the end of that. But what I was advocating ultimately came to pass, not because I was advocating it. Brighter minds than I. But I wasn't saying let's get out, boom. But let's find a way to get out. This isn't working. This is not working. Too many lives are being lost. This isn't working. Hello. Can't we find a way honorably to get out? And I guess if I was on my soapbox today, I would say the same thing. I mean, this isn't working.

That's right.

It's not working. So anyway --

I want to know where you lived when you moved here in '66 and what that area was like if you could describe it.

I lived relatively near here, actually. I lived on Palma Vista, which the cross streets would have been Eastern and Valley View, I guess, in a development called Francisco Park because Sahara Avenue had just changed its name from San Francisco Street to Sahara. They began in the early 60s naming the east-west streets by the hotels that anchored them on the Strip. So we have Sahara, Flamingo, Desert Inn, and Tropicana. Tropicana was Bond Street, B-o-n-d, Bond Street. When I moved here, the change of the streets' names were probably less than five years old.

So the housing development was called Francisco Park. It was a Pardee development, Pardee Homes, who still build homes here in town. The street was surrounded by desert. My son remembers riding his bicycle. And in about two minutes from the house, you were in desert. We brought a cat with us, and the cat disappeared and we thought lost forever. But finally, it came back, you know, it had been out in the desert.

I remember Las Vegas as a lot of desert, scroungy desert with litter, lots of litter where people would just throw their beer cans or their paper towels or whatever. The Strip -- the Tropicana was there, and it was probably the major hotel on the Strip at that time. There was nothing south of the Tropicana, I don't believe. Coming up Las Vegas Boulevard, Caesars Palace had just been built. I got a tour of Caesars Palace before it opened because of my contact with Billy Weinberger through -- long story.

But anyway, I also got a tour of the Boulevard Mall before it opened. The Boulevard Mall had not opened yet when I came, except for the Sears store. Sears had a downtown store, which they kept open several years more. But then they branched out and put the Sears store at the Boulevard Mall. That was the only store that was open. They were building around the Sears store. And a friend of mine, who was an electrician and also a member of University Church, gave me a tour of the Boulevard Mall. I had to wear a hardhat and all that kind of stuff. And that was the first mall in Las Vegas -- the Boulevard Mall. Obviously, others have come along. But it was built on just a huge bunch of desert. This hospital had desert all the way around it. UNLV had desert all the way around it.

Right.

So I lived at Eastern and Valley View. There were no signals. There were stoplights, but no blinking -- just a boulevard stop.

Just stop signs?

Yeah. But no signals, per se. When we built the church in 1966, there were no phone lines down south of Flamingo. So the phone company, God bless them, said, "You will have to put in the main line because if you want a phone down at your church, you'll have to go from the corner of Maryland Parkway and Flamingo and put a main line down," because there was nothing there.

What about the university?

That was on the outside street.

Oh, okay.

And then they said, "Everybody who moves in, we'll tap off your line and you'll get credit." Okay. I mean, we didn't like that because it was a huge expenditure, thousands of dollars, to dig a main line on the east side of Maryland Parkway from Flamingo to where the church is at Harmon. But what were your options? You didn't have any. So we did that. Then they did send a check every -- I don't know -- month. I don't know how often. But there was nothing from Flamingo to where University Methodist Church is. There was nothing on the east side except desert.

That's exciting. I know that you go in and out of casinos.

Yes.

What was entertainment like for you as a young family moving to Las Vegas in '66?

Well, we did not go to casinos. I don't know why. I guess kind of a prejudice against them, maybe.

What about having dinner?

Well, we'd try to find restaurants that were non-casino restaurants. There were some in town, not many. The Copper Penny up on Charleston was a family hangout. A lot of people went to the Copper Penny, and we went there. Occasionally, if there was an entertainer that we particularly wanted to see, we'd go and get a babysitter for the kids. We had two small children at that time. My daughter still lives here as a schoolteacher here in Las Vegas. She wasn't born here, but she's lived her all her life except when she went away to college. She didn't go to UNLV. She went to a California college.

We occasionally went to a Strip show, usually not to eat, sometimes. But usually when we ate out, we'd eat at a free-standing restaurant. That was the main thing that would get us to the casino, when guests came to town. At the church I had employees at several of the casinos, and they would sometimes comp us. One of the presidents of the Tropicana, Bob Canon, was a Methodist and layperson. There's only half a dozen Methodist ministers in town. Every year he would give us a night on our wedding anniversary free at the Tropicana Hotel. I think it included breakfast, as well, but not dinner. So we'd eat dinner at home, and we'd get the babysitter, and then we'd go and check in at the Tropicana Hotel and spend the night. Then we'd get up in the morning and have breakfast and then go back to the real world.

But I know that we were always taken back a little bit by the nudity. It was always tastefully done. It wasn't that. But that's just not something that you would come across in your normal life.

Right. And none of us do.

So I had been in town about three weeks. And the downtown casinos -- remember downtown was still a major player. First of all, when I came to town, only white males were seen in casinos in gaming positions. People of color and women were not allowed to be dealers or waiters. They could be maids. But dealing with the public in a face-to-face way, it was white males. And one of the criticisms was that people don't know how to be servers, they don't know how to deal. So another pastor and I at Trinity Methodist Church started a gaming school. We didn't know

anything about it ourselves, and we got some help from other people teaching people how to deal 21 and so forth so that when people of color or women went to the Tropicana or wherever and said, "I want a job being a dealer," and they'd say, "Well, you don't have experience," they could say, "Yes, I do, I took courses at Trinity Methodist Church on how to do it." And we taught people also how to be servers, how to serve from the left and pick up from the right or whatever it is.

So another pastor and I started that movement of teaching women and people of color. So that had just begun when I came to town. The first year was probably the year '66. It was probably the last year that casinos hired only white males. And beginning in '67 and '68, women and people of color began to do it. There were some exceptions.

When I first came to town, downtown, as I was starting my story, they started to have topless dealers, women dealers, topless, and they covered with a pasty over their nipple. So I get a phone call from the newspaper. Brand-new in town, didn't know what. They asked, "What do you think about the pasties on the dealers downtown?" I said, "Jeez, I don't know what to think about it." They asked, "Well, are you opposed to it?" I said, "Well, I don't know whether I'm opposed to it or not." Okay, thank you. The next day in the newspaper, "New pastor okays pasties." Swear to God. And if you don't think my phone didn't ring off the hook that day.

One of my dear church leaders called me up and said, "They got you, didn't they?" He said, "Be careful of the newspaper. They will get you every time." I said, "I didn't say that." He said, "I know you didn't say that. I know you didn't say that." But he said, "You've got to be careful what you say because they'll just get you."

"New pastor doesn't find anything wrong with pasties." Oh, my goodness.

I love it.

So when I came to town, there was a lot of desert. Houses lumped here and there. They were not connected together. There was a housing development and then desert and then another housing development. There were very few strip malls. Downtown was still the place to go. Ronzoni's was a local department store. There was J.C. Penney's and Sears. They were all downtown on Fremont Street. Ronzoni's came to the Boulevard Mall and then was bought by Dillard's. The manager of Penney's, whom I knew through church work, managed both the downtown and the

mall because they didn't think the mall store was quite ready for a full-time manager.

Any clubs and organizations that you and your wife joined?

I don't think so. The Mesquite Club was, of course, here, but you had to be hoity-toity to belong to that and we weren't invited to that. My wife at that time was a full-time homemaker and raising two preschool kiddos and raising me, I guess. I did join the Kiwanis Club. That is true. I did join the Kiwanis Club for a while. I don't know why I dropped out, but I did.

How did you meet the Boyers?

He was in the church. He was in the church. One of the 160 who were committed from the get-go. And he was kind enough to invite my wife and me out to dinner. And I remember he said, "If you'd like, I would like to be your doctor while you're in town. No charge. I'll just take care of all your medical needs except OB/GYN. I don't deliver babies. I have done it, but I don't do that anymore." And my wife said, "Well, I don't think we're going to have any more babies." He said, "Well, except for that, I know I'm a dermatologist, but during the war I was a flight surgeon." He was on the beaches of Guadalupe Canal and Ion Jima, Dr. Boyer was. He told me one time his corpsman was here helping him put a tourniquet on a guy, and he looked over and his corpsman was blown to bits and he wasn't. Just that close to being blown to bits. So Dr. Boyer was very gracious in providing free medical care to us or, if he couldn't do it, getting someone else. We finally secured another doctor, who was also in the congregation, an internist. Dr. Boyer's specialty had turned into dermatology. And I felt a little funny about having him -- well, not really. You know, got a cold, he would do it all. And that's how I met him.

One time, I forget what the occasion was, but I got a little crossways with some of the leadership of the church. I think it was over Vietnam. And he did not agree with my Vietnam position. Of course, he'd been a doctor in the --

(End side 1, tape 2.)

But he took me to the Rotary Club where he was very active. And he sat me next to him. And he said to people, "This is my pastor." He didn't say anything more. He didn't scold me about anything. He just affirmed me. He just said, "This is my pastor." He didn't say, "I disagree with him about Vietnam." He didn't say anything like that. He just said, "This is my pastor. I want you to meet my pastor." And it was a wonderful affirming experience, just a wonderful affirming

experience. I mean, he didn't have to say anything. He didn't say anything. He just affirmed me. And I knew what he was saying was I don't agree with you about Vietnam, but you have a right to say it and just continue to be my pastor. That's your number one job. And all the rest, forget about it. I mean, forget what they're saying or something. Just be a good pastor, and the criticism will go away.

Fade away, which I'm sure it did.

Yes, it did. One question. We need to wind up now, I guess.

Tell me about the changes that you've seen in this city, 1966 to today. What are some of the most outstanding changes?

Well, the development of the Strip, of course. I mean, there are a lot of vacant lots between hotels in the development of the Strip. I guess the corporate nature of the Strip. You could no longer call up a hotel president and ask him for 10 or 15 grand and he'd send you a check. The whole corporate structure has changed from -- I don't know who ran it before, the crooks or the Mob or whoever. But it's corporate mentality. The bean-counters are somehow in charge.

Which did you like better?

Oh, the old days, of course. So many new people don't have any sense of what Las Vegas was, not that it was sacred or holy or special -- but it was special. It was special. Saturday afternoons at Von Tobels, that was special. The whole town showed up there. You knew everybody. You knew everybody. Now, it's still pretty much a good-old-boy city, and I don't like that so much. But there are so many new people. I think greed has become -- and greed was always a part of it, but it didn't seem quite as on the forefront. Greed seems everywhere now.

I mean, gee, I don't know. The whole build-up of the town. Everything is building up. It's changed. It used to be such a friendly city. I guess it is still in a sense. But there are so many new people who don't have the history or the background, I guess. I don't know. Good things have happened. For women and minorities, certainly the town has awakened to come to the -- you know, this used to be called the Louisiana of the West.

The Mississippi.

The Mississippi of the West. And that was not a compliment. So there are some good things that have happened, too, and we've become more sensitive to women and people of color.

When I first came here to town, nobody who got sick ever stayed in town. They'd all go to California to get medical care. And I think most people now stay. At least a lot of people have stayed here in town. When I first came to town here, there were physicians who were not graduates of medical school. In the old days, all you had to do was pass the medical boards. If you passed the boards -- and that's true with lawyers, too. If you could pass the boards, you did not have to go to law school or medical school. Now, that had ended long before I came. But those folks were grandfathered. There is a particular Dr. Cherry who was a Union Pacific doctor. Union Pacific was a major player in the town. It isn't anymore. But Union Pacific, that was major. And Dr. Cherry was a U.P. doctor and never went to medical school, but passed the medical boards. When that changed, he got grandfathered. He was a man in his 80s, maybe 90s. He practiced very little medicine. But he was kind of an anomaly because he was a non-medical school doctor. And there were some non-law school lawyers in those days. So that was kind of a unique thing.

Four digit phone numbers instead of seven digits. When I came to town, what was our number? It was a name like -- I think it was Sahara whatever, 7238. The prefix was Sahara. Of course, I'm not sure that's good or bad. That's just memories of the good old day.

Well, I really appreciate this.

You're very welcome.

Thank you so much.

You're very, very welcome. I've enjoyed it.

Good.

(End side 2, tape 2.)