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An Interview with Bob Coffin

(James Robert Coffin IV)

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

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

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This project was the brainchild of Deborah Boehm, Ph.D. and Patrick Jackson who taught at UNLV and resided in the John S. Park Neighborhood. As they walked their community, they realized it was a special place that intersected themes of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gentrification. Patrick and Deborah learned that John S. Park had been listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and that original homeowners, local politicians, members of the gay community, Latino immigrants, artists and gallery owners and an enclave of UNLV staff all lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, they decided that the history of this special place had to be preserved, joined with the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and wrote a grant that was funded by the Centennial Committee.

The transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the narrative. These interviews have been catalogued and can be found as non-circulating documents in Special Collections at UNLV's Lied Library.

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Interview with Bob Coffin

January 29, 2010 in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Claytee White

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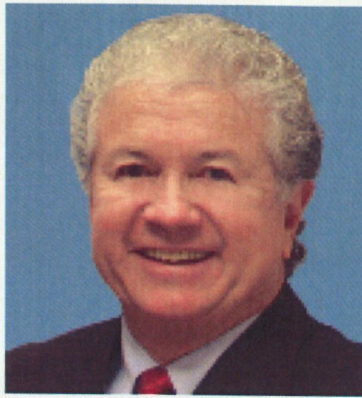
Preface

Bob Coffin (born James Robert Coffin IV) arrived in Las Vegas in 1953. His family moved to better climates for their nine-year-old, who suffered from allergies and asthma. His first drive was the long, nine-hour drive from California on two-lane highway. The family rented a house in the Highlands until 1960 when they moved to the John S. Park Neighborhood.

This is a tale of life in Las Vegas from his perspective of a young politician who admired the neighborhood to becoming the owner of the Gubler home with his wife Mary Hausch in 1967.

Bob is a longtime local politician and activist with a special interest in neighborhoods. He was elected to the Nevada State Assembly in 1982 and 1984 and to the State Senate in 1986. He offers insights to the past, changing demographics, and the future of the John S. Park Neighborhood.

Bob's wife, Mary Hausch, who is married to Bob Coffin, has also been interviewed as part of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood project.



Preface

Bob Coffin [born James Robert Coffin IV] arrived in Las Vegas in 1951. His family moved to find a better climate for their nine-year-old, who suffered from allergies and asthma. His first memory is the long, nine hour drive from California on two-lane highway. The family rented a home in the Huntridge until 1960 when they moved to the John S. Park Neighborhood.

He weaves a tale of life in Las Vegas from his perspective of a young politician who admired the neighborhood to becoming the owner of the Gubler home with his wife Mary Hausch in 1987.

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Special note: Mary Hausch, who is married to Bob Coffin, has also been interviewed as part of the Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood project.

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Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood



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Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Bob Coffin Jan 29, 2010
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Claytee D. White 1/29/2010
Signature of Interviewer Date

Interview with Bob Coffin

January 29, 2010 in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Claytee White

It's January 29th, 2010 and I am with Mr. Bob Coffin in the Reading Room at Special Collections [University of Nevada, Las Vegas]. My name is Claytee White.

So how are you today, Bob?

I'm fine, thank you. In good health.

Wonderful. You look great.

Thank you.

Tell me about your early life, where you grew up, your sisters and brothers, and what your parents did for a living.

Well, I grew up, the first eight years, nine years, in Southern California. The first eight years, I suppose, were in Anaheim, California, where I was born. Technically, Fullerton, California had a hospital, Anaheim did not, but my birthplace is Anaheim. We lived in a quiet little street, very close to the old downtown of Anaheim, which has now been demolished under urban redevelopment, but the house still exists, still looks exactly as it did sixty years ago. All the neighborhoods look alike there; they're very much the same.

I was a child plagued by allergies and illnesses as a youth, so I wasn't very happy many times because I was plagued with eczema caused by allergies as an infant, until about the age of one-and-a-half or two, and then I started to developed asthma, caused by similar allergic reactions, and so I was in the house an awful lot. When I would go out of the house, of course I'd run around and work off all the energy and probably get sick

again. So it was a difficult early childhood for health. This was always a concern for my parents. Some of my asthmatic attacks were so bad that I had to go to the hospital for medications that they would inject in me. Fortunately, I didn't have to stay overnight on any of these excursions but it scared my parents.

My dad was in the oil business. Actually, at the time of my birth, he worked for what was known as CalShip [California Shipbuilding Corporation], which was a shipbuilding concern over in Long Beach or San Pedro [California]. They built Liberty ships, I think. I always mix it up: Liberty ships or Victory ships. [CalShip built both.] But they were cargo ships for World War II. He had been an oilman from the beginning, an oil distributor working for numerous companies. He had graduated from high school in Southern California and had worked in gas stations and distributing oil from, say, 1927, the year of his graduation from high school, until the war, when he went to work for CalShip. He had been born in Canada, so he was not eligible to be an officer in the [United States] military. And he was in this necessary [civilian] occupation, so he stayed in that occupation through the war.

So that was the first three years of my life. I had an older sister who in 1945 was ten years old; I was three. She died of a misdiagnosed [illness]; she died of peritonitis after having appendicitis and surviving the initial attack. It wasn't diagnosed, frankly, until after she became seriously ill at some time later. So she died when I was three.

My mother did not work [outside the home]. My mother was born and raised in California. She graduated from Anaheim High School in 1932. She was of Mexican descent. Her parents were all Mexican, and I say "Mexican" but they were born inside California. My grandfather on my mother's side [was] born in around 1883 [and] died at

an early age. He died in October 1918 from the flu; the influenza killed him. [Note: This was the time of the worldwide flu pandemic.] My grandmother was born in the 1880s at the Mission San Luis Rey near Bonsall, California. So all [the family is] of Mexican descent. She [my mother] grew up in Anaheim.

So I had a happy childhood from the standpoint of the things that I got to do and see. I went to kindergarten at a school very close to my house, and [to] first grade and part of the second grade at the Catholic school which was attached to St. Boniface [Roman Catholic] Church, our neighborhood Catholic church. That was a very old institution.

My parents were always searching for a place, or something, where I wouldn't have asthma. They had heard that things would be better up in the mountains, so we moved up to Silverado Canyon [California] (1949), which is just underneath Saddleback Mountain, very visible landmark in Orange County.

There's a college there.

Oh yes. There are schools. It's above UC [University of California] Irvine, above some junior colleges and others, and it's a huge population area.

But that was truly, I think, the happiest, healthiest time of my life, the eighteen or twenty months we spent up in the mountains, because I really got a chance to live country life, even though we were just a hoot and a holler from the big city. It was a small school, two grades to each class, so there were four rooms in the class. It was a lot of fun. And I was healthy, to a reasonable extent.

But the search continued for a healthier place for me. We searched around, we took drives around the Southwest, we went into Arizona and looked at several places, and

I was always coming along with that. But Dad finally settled on Las Vegas [Nevada] because he had a friend who had an interest in the oil business here and said that my dad could expand his oil business up here in Las Vegas. So he moved up and we followed shortly after, in the late fall of 1951, and came here. That's kind of the short story of getting to Las Vegas from birth to age nine.

Good. So were you healthier [here]?

Yes, for a while. What happened is that: yes, the change of climate did help, but all those years my parents were told that it was a cold, moist climate like California that was causing my asthma, and it seemed to go away as we changed climates, whether it was up into the mountains at elevation two thousand feet at the very end of Silverado Canyon, or the two-thousand-five-hundred-foot elevation of Las Vegas. But actually after having been here for a while, I started to develop hay fever, and every now and then an asthmatic attack. I found in later life that it was really caused by allergies. You see, they didn't know it then. And in fact, animals and grasses, well, I felt healthy enough to mow the grass up here in Las Vegas at an early age, so that was nice, but our cats also moved up with us, and later in life I found out that was my most severe allergen was the animals in the house and the growth outside. But it never reached the seriousness that it did when I was a youth in California.

Don't you have cats in the house now?

Yes, we do, and that's happened all of a sudden in the last year, actually, just by accident. We've always had one, my wife's cats, but anyway, we've got them now, a whole bunch, and I'm going to have to go to the doctor and start getting the old shots I had thirty-some

years ago when I discovered it was allergies. It's simply an allergen shot, kind of a homeopathic remedy. But in any event, it works.

So what are some of your first memories of Las Vegas?

Well, of course, the trip up and driving was the first time I'd ever seen snow. We weren't in Las Vegas; we were already at Barstow [California] and coming out of Barstow it was cold and we got up the highway. It was a nine-hour drive, by the way, in those days because it was a two-lane road all the way from Southern California to Las Vegas. So we had to spend a night. We broke the trip into two parts: Barstow the first night. Woke up and there was a dusting of snow on the ground. As we got closer to Las Vegas, Mountain Pass [California] to be exact, there was quite a bit of snow on the ground. And it was cold in Las Vegas when we arrived. So that's a memory I can't forget.

I got to know the kids in the neighborhood. We moved into Huntridge first thing. We rented a house at 1076 Bracken Avenue, at the corner of Eleventh Street and Bracken, right in the middle of Huntridge, and just a block away from John S. Park Elementary School.

The local school authorities thought that my little country school might be behind, and so they decided to keep me out of school for a few months, until they let me restart in the third grade. By the way, I attended part of the second and all of the third [grade] at the school in Silverado Canyon. So I had to retake some of the stuff I had taken in third grade.

But I enjoyed it. I got to run around and make friends. And when I'd run around, I wouldn't get sick, so that became a new freedom. I played sports as a little kid, kind of just drifted around, waiting for somebody to ask me to do something, and it turned out I

had a pretty good throwing arm and I could catch the ball and I could do lots of things that I didn't know I could do.

Who were some of your friends?

Well, across the street was James Romero: Jim Romero and his brother Gary [Romero]. Gary was older; Jim was my age.

Down the street, close at hand, was Ernie Ohlson, and he became well known around here as the first videographer, first cameraman and artist, for Channel 10, which became the public television station formed in the late Sixties.

Well, there were all kinds of people, behind our house and beside. I mean I could name probably ten or fifteen people that lived on my street, and Griffith [Avenue]. And I still keep in touch; I still know some of those people almost sixty years later. Because many of them have stayed around or, even if they left, they'd come back.

So, my memories were pleasant. We lived there from late 1951 till sometime in 1960 when we bought a house, just down the road a bit at Eleventh and Saint Louis [Avenue]. These are my John S. Park years. Just as an overview, I spent third grade, fourth grade, and half of my fifth grade at John S. Park School. Then I switched over to St. Joseph [Elementary] School. We were parishioners of St. Anne [Catholic Church] but St. Anne's did not have a Catholic school. St. Joseph's was in the province of the church downtown, right in the middle, across from the jail. We didn't go to that church but that was the closest Catholic school. Tuition was five dollars a month. It was affordable. We were taught by nuns of the Dominican Order.

John S. Park, though, was a lot of fun because it had a big grassy field. It's still there, most of it; not all of it because some of it is covered by portable classrooms. For

the life of me, I can't remember the name of all of my teachers right now, although at times I can.

What was downtown like at the time?

Well, the whole town was virtually something you could reach on your bicycle. So downtown was easy to get to, downtown being Fremont Street and a block or two each side of it. Not long ago, just a week or two ago, a lady died whose [family] had been owners of a little store called K & K. That was one of the stores we hung out at because they always had little things for kids that you could buy. I remember buying yo-yos there. And there was a Filipino guy that would sit in front of the store and carve tropical designs on these wooden yo-yos. They were all made of wood; nothing was made of plastic in those days.

We were able to drive our bicycles from our house. We'd attend movies at the Huntridge Theater, naturally: Saturday morning matinees, Saturday afternoon features. And we would drive our bikes and try to find a place to park them where they wouldn't be stolen, down at the Fremont Theater and also the El Portal Theater on Fremont Street. There was another theater nearby there, but I can't remember the name of it and I'm not sure we ever attended that theater. We could afford the fifteen cents or so that it cost us to go to these theaters. Two bits [twenty-five cents] over at the Huntridge. The Huntridge was pretty new.

Because bicycles were being stolen, what was the police department like?

Well, it was just the Las Vegas Police Department [now Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department] and the County Sheriff, but really, we lived all our life with the blue uniforms of the Las Vegas police. They were all well known, and also, since it was a

small town, they learned our names, too. They learned pretty much who the troublemakers were.

So did you ever get into any trouble in John S. Park?

Well, not till later. I mean I'm thinking maybe in high school I got in trouble, but I don't know whether I got in much trouble [in elementary school]. I didn't get arrested when I was in grammar school.

What about high school? Tell me about [that]. Did you walk to high school?

Yes, of course. I was always going to be a Wildcat. My heroes as a youngster were the athletes at Las Vegas High School and I thought that I was going to go be a Wildcat.

I was an altar boy at St. Anne's. I got a call from Father Ryan at the time, and he said, We need you to come over and help because we're building a school. I knew my dad had been working on some sort of project for a school, but I wasn't quite sure what [it was] about. But anyway, it might have been October of 1953, I was the altar boy at the groundbreaking of what became the Bishop Gorman High School. And the photographs are around. In fact, one of them is in a history of Las Vegas. The major photograph is there and I'm the little altar boy, with a very sore arm, holding the holy water in a very heavy silver basin, which the bishop used to bless the ground.

Well, at that point I began to see that maybe Las Vegas High School wasn't going to be in my future. It didn't really dawn on me too much at that time but I could see that [Bishop Gorman High School] was going to be my new place. But I had no heroes there. There was no school. It took a year to build it, and I helped build it. I was on the grounds a lot, watering the dirt, just climbing around and getting into trouble, looking around. New buildings were an irresistible thing for me. So it began to be pretty clear in my mind

that I was going to be heading to what became known as Bishop Gorman High School. So that was the beginning, although, as I say, somewhere around that same time, maybe '54, I started attending St. Joseph's. It became real clear then [that I would go on to Bishop Gorman High School].

So did you go to Bishop Gorman?

Yes, I did.

And who were some of your classmates that you remember?

Well, José Blasco (Joe Blasco), John Conway, Jay Rodriguez, Jim Hill, Michael Gaughan. Gaughan and a number of others went to St. Joseph's; that's where I first met them, and we're still friends. I still know all of them. José Blasco I think might have gone to John S. Park and perhaps John C. Fremont Junior High School, and then came over to Gorman and started with us. I met him in Confirmation class at St. Anne's before we started school. I graduated from [Bishop Gorman High School] in 1961. That was the summary, real quick, of the schooling. You got them all.

Did your parents live in the Huntridge [neighborhood] and John S. Park area the entire time that you lived with them?

Oh yes, 1951 till 1960, when we lived on Eleventh and Bracken there.

So did you go away to college?

Well, I did one year. I spent a year at Arizona State [University, ASU] but I started at Nevada Southern [University, NSU], what we called then the Southern Regional Division of the University of Nevada [now UNLV]. I started there in early '63.

I had had jobs in [high] school, but my first job at graduation [in 1961] was to go fight a forest fire up on Mount Charleston, actually at Cold Creek Canyon. A call went out for volunteers.

I also enlisted in the [United States] Army Reserve on August 2nd or 3rd, 1961, right out of high school. I had tried to get in the [United States] Marines and the [United States] Navy, but they turned me down because of my asthma background as a youth. So finally the Army said they'd take me, and then I began to think a lot about, did I want to commit to three years of military service right away? So I signed up for the Army Reserve, about the exact same time the Russians encircled Berlin [Germany]. So things got really hectic in this country at that time. But I signed up for the Army Reserve, which called for a six-month active duty requirement. No sooner had I signed up than President [John F.] Kennedy called up all the reserves, and those of us who were brand-new could not go on to training immediately, so we had to wait. Well, I got a job out at the Nevada Test Site [NTS]. I was lucky. So I managed to work out there for about four months.

So tell me about the Nevada Test Site. Did you drive back and forth every day?

Most days, yes. I borrowed one of my parents' cars, an old '55 Chevy, and I highballed it out to Mercury [Nevada], where I worked, pending a higher classification for security purposes. It was never cleared by the time I left there. So I worked out there and I had a room, fifty cents a night. Actually I shared a room with four or five other people.

Everybody had a bunk bed, upper or lower. So, for fifty cents a night, I didn't have to stay there every night, but I stayed maybe two nights out of five. That was an exciting place to work in those days.

What kind of work did you do?

I was a custodian. I cleaned the barracks for the scientists and the engineers who worked on the bomb.

How did they feed you?

Well, they had a big PX [Post Exchange] out there, with a buffet, you know, you'd come in and you'd get served. It was military style, very quick in and out. There wasn't much in the way of amenities: a small movie theater and a small bowling alley. But it was kind of lonely out there. I made a friend. I found a friend from high school that also worked out there, so we would see [each other] every now and then. Primarily I would spend most nights in Las Vegas chasing around, looking for people my own age. It was about a very hectic hour's drive [to the Nevada Test Site].

We interviewed some early doctors here. A doctor told me that the highway from the Nevada Test Site back into town was called the Widowmaker.

Yes, it was. Death.

Tell me about that. Why were men driving so fast? What was that all about?

[Chuckling] Well, I guess they wanted to get home to their wives, girlfriends, and whatever else it was they did. But also, it was only a two-lane road all the way, and everybody wanted to get home, and you had so many thousands of people get off work at the same time, that it was a madhouse. A lot of them would stop at a little wide spot in the road called Cactus Springs [Nevada], which is not there now, I don't think. It's between Indian Springs [Nevada] and Mercury. If they didn't stop at Cactus, they might stop at Indian Springs and pick up a six-pack of beer and drink all the way home. Some of them would carpool. But you'd see people [driving really fast]. I mean the average speed out of there had to be eighty, ninety miles an hour. You'd be in a long line of cars

and you'd see somebody make a go to try to pass twenty, thirty, forty cars at once. Most of the time they made it. But every now and then somebody wouldn't. There were a few head-ons and a few just one-car rollovers. People were very sleepy. They were working long hours, long shifts, making tons of money, so they wanted to work overtime. You get the picture. It was a bad cocktail.

Yes. So, you went away to college [and] came back.

Almost. I went into the [Army Reserve on] August 2nd or 3rd of '61, trained at Fort Ord, California. Our reserve unit that I joined was an infantry outfit. Basic training was the same for anybody in the Army. You spent about nine, nine-and-a-half weeks in training, zero week plus eight months training. I got out in April of '62. (By the way, it was the worst weather I'd ever been in in my life. I only saw the sun the last week of the time I was there. It was the first time I'd seen any sunlight.) I had two weeks' leave, came home, had a few dates, ran around, had a great time visiting the drive-ins and saying hi to friends.

But, about that same time, I was developing what they call a vocation for the Catholic priesthood. In fact, this had been happening before I went in the Army, probably about the time of late summer or the fall of '61. So, anyway, on my mind was the possibility that I may, after military service, go into the priesthood, or go study for it at a seminary.

So after my two weeks' leave, I spent two months in Arkansas at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Fort Chaffee had been called Camp Chaffee in World War II. I spent two months in advanced infantry training, because you trained in your Army training based on what your reserve unit [was] when you came home. And that was the first time I'd

ever seen segregation and Jim Crow laws. Fort Smith, Arkansas was just down the road. Fort Chaffee was only eight or ten miles away.

Training was fun. It was hard work. It was swampy. I'd never been in this kind of country, river and hilly country, high humidity, snakes and big spiders and scorpions on the ground.

My first pass, after a few weeks at Fort Chaffee, I went into town and went to a rodeo at Fort Smith. I was amazed. At the rodeo grounds, they had colored water fountains, colored bathrooms, so everything was duplicated. And colored people sat on one side of the place—you called them colored people, that was the colored section—and everybody else sat on the other side. Fort Smith was really racist. That was my first exposure to that. Of course, half our troops were black men, so we were all together. It was basically very, very integrated in the Army. But that was my first exposure to that.

So what was race relations like in Las Vegas from 1951 to 1961?

At that time, I wasn't conscious of a race problem. In my retrospective looking-back, I have to cheat to look back to see if there was a race problem. There wasn't much then. It became stronger in the mid-to-late Fifties, but in the early Fifties, well, I can't think of a black child that I went to school with, you see? There were one or two at St. Joseph's. I don't think there were any at John S. Park because they all lived on the Westside and went to Madison [Sixth Grade Center] School. But we competed against Madison in the summertime. I started playing baseball when I was about ten. We played against black people. We never had any on our team, though. Everybody stuck to their neighborhoods. The Westside was pretty prosperous. The Westside was prosperous because that's where the staff who worked at the hotels lived, and they made good money, and they really,

really were a wonderful place to visit, which I did visit in high school days, by the way, later, because I found you could go over there and drink and dance when you were under twenty-one. But that's another story. I try not to do an old man's routine of trying to reminisce too much.

The point is, I finished my military training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. So at the age of nineteen, I'd had a wonderful chance to see the world as I knew it, I mean the United States, by going to New York for passes. And I came back [to Las Vegas]. Then, I promptly went into the seminary for the Catholic priesthood, in August of '62.

Where was the seminary located?

It was in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, at a little town called Mount Angel. This is was on behalf of the Diocese of Reno [Nevada] at that time, which covered the entire State of Nevada. So I studied to be a Catholic priest for four months, until I realized that I didn't think I could live the celibate life. I could take the vow of poverty, if I had to. They didn't require that of diocesan priests. I wasn't very materialistic; I could do that. And obedience was the other vow. But in the end, I didn't think it would be a good idea for me, because I just didn't think I could work out well as a parish priest with all those beautiful ladies.

So, I came home, loafed around for a week or so, went to work for the [*Las Vegas*] *Review-Journal* as a reporter. I had been a paper boy as a kid for the *Review-Journal*. Went to work as a reporter back in late '62 and early '63.

Where did you get your journalism training?

Well, on the job. High school, I was a stringer for the *Review-Journal*. That's a part-time person who writes specific beats, and I was the *Review-Journal's* stringer for Gorman

High School. So while in high school, I would cover all the sports, and write a story or call it in, depending on where I was, and I'd get paid five dollars a story, and I got to write some of those stories. Sometimes I'd go in and write it. It took me forever; I was a very slow writer. Other times I'd call it in. But getting five dollars, and getting your name on a story in the *Review-Journal*, was wonderful.

Going back into the high school era, actually I started playing golf when I was about thirteen in 1956, and that was a big thing because there were three other guys that lived in the area, in Huntridge: Martin Bowen, Jerry Hanwick, myself, and Fred Diamond. There were a few other guys and I'm blanking out on the fourth. But the point is that we would carpool. Our mothers would take us to the Las Vegas Municipal Golf Course. That's how we spent our summers. Fifty cents a day to play. Pack a lunch and maybe twenty-five-to-fifty cents for expenses.

So how did young men as young as that get involved or interested in golf?

I don't remember exactly what started me. I can't tell you. I do remember reading about this junior thing in the [*Las Vegas*] *Sun* newspaper (we got them both at the house), about a tournament and a school to learn how to play golf, what they called a clinic, and so my mother took me out. And that really was fun. I borrowed clubs and hit golf balls. We did that for four weeks and then we played a tournament. I did that when I was thirteen, and I just loved it. I really loved it. I was athletic enough to play all sports, but as the years went by I got smaller in relation to my friends and others, and so I wasn't large enough for varsity sports in high school, although I did play JV [junior varsity] basketball at Gorman. So, I became a pretty good golfer. By age fifteen, I was playing to a low

handicap and was one of the best junior golfers in the state at age sixteen and seventeen. And I got to travel.

And today?

Today I'm starting to play golf again and I'm a pretty good player. I'm in the seventies [for handicap]. I hope to shoot my age before I'm seventy. I'm getting it back.

I have deviated all over the place. There's no structure to my comments.

[Laughing] This is great. This is fine. So when you got ready to purchase a house, did you purchase your first house in John S. Park?

Just not too far away. I lived in apartments most of the time through the Sixties, and then I had various other things. Yes, in fact my first marriage was in January of 1968 and I was married for seven years, and we lived in apartments or rented houses. The first few years, we lived in apartments. Then we rented a house. Then we were divorced. I didn't buy my first house, which was a condo, until 1977, so I was thirty-four years old before I owned my own piece of land, so to speak. It was behind Sunrise Hospital in a condominium area called Casa Vega, and they are still there. I got a complaint every now and then from somebody that lives there today about property taxes. That was my first property.

Tell me what was it about the John S. Park-Huntridge area that you admired.

Well, everything was close, so I could walk everywhere or ride my bicycle. John S. Park was a maturing neighborhood: it was trees, the streets were narrow, no sidewalks, it was lawn-to-streets a lot. It was very self-contained with that theater [Huntridge Theater] there. We didn't have to go to the store or anything like that. There was a Safeway on Charleston [Boulevard] and Maryland Parkway. The park itself was a great attraction for

us. We played sports in the daytime; in the evenings, that became one of our recreation spots.

We didn't need a lot of money. I mean, you know, we didn't. There wasn't much to do. Understand, we didn't have television until around 1954, so we occupied ourselves with whatever we did at home. I was a radio listener. Because I was sick as a youth, I read books, a lot of books. I started reading at a very early age, and in fact, I still have books that were given to me starting at the age of five. I noticed as I was going through those the other day: five, six, seven years old, I was given books to read. I learned how to read a newspaper early. And in the mountain school in California, I was kind of a freak because I would read the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper to older kids out there on the playground. They just wanted me to read for them so they could hear this and see this little kid reading, when I was in the second grade.

So when they decided to hold you back when you first came to Las Vegas, did they ever discover that that was a mistake?

I don't know if they did. I did OK. I didn't burn up the classes, you know. I was OK. I was lazy. I was a student of potential who didn't always really realize his potential. The point was, I was having a good time, and I probably got B's and some C's and a few A's, so I wasn't a total slacker, but I would say that I pretty much set my academic standards about then that I maintained the rest of my life, frankly.

Tell me about John S. Park politically: the political activism that we see sometimes in a neighborhood like that.

Oh, I don't remember any there.

OK. What about in your later life when you moved back into John S. Park?

Well, political activism didn't surface in my life until high school at Bishop Gorman. We started there in '57, I guess it was, so as fifteen-year-old freshmen. I would say that John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 was a real big moment for me and a lot of other people my age, as well as my parents. A lot of people who were Catholic were Republicans but they didn't all vote Republican; they voted Democrat to put him in.

Well now, this brings back a memory because you asked about political [involvement]. My first political moment was when I was six years old, and the reason I know that is because my mom didn't work. My father did all the work; my mom stayed home. So one night in the wintertime, my mother got dressed, fixed up, and was leaving the house after dark, and I said, Where are you going? And all I can remember is, she said to me, I'm going out to vote for Harry Truman. So that was 1948. I had turned six years old.

So you remember her getting dressed.

Yeah. Yeah, it was something really scary because she wasn't going to make dinner. There wasn't any dinner coming and my dad was home. That was very unusual. Naturally it would cause a concern if you're not going to get fed, or you think you're not going to get fed.

So, then you take it back and you begin to follow these things. I was a reader, and so I followed the newspapers and I followed current events. But I wasn't particularly politically oriented to anything until, say, 1960 when we all wanted John Kennedy to win.

Yes. When did you purchase your first property in the John S. Park community?

John S. Park proper-proper, that I really owned on my own, would be in November of 1987, when Mary [Hausch] and I purchased the Gubler house at 1139 Fifth Place.

Why did you decide [on] that area? At that point, you probably could've purchased almost anyplace in the city.

Well, Mary did look at a number of places. Starting in 1982, when I was elected to the State Assembly, I had a certain geographical limitation on where I could live. And I wanted to live in that area. I was still gravitating toward that anyway in my everyday life, so I saw no reason to move anywhere else. And I was living in the district from, say, '76 on, in terms of my own property, but with the condo at Casa Vega, and then a house on Lewis Street near Bruce [Street], that was in Assembly District 9. So in 1982, an opportunity came up to run for the State Assembly, and I was reelected in '84, and then elected to the Senate in 1986, so it became essential that we live in Senate District 3.

The community itself, in addition to your political career, that neighborhood has been politically active locally, demonstrating against infringements. Were you ever part of any of those?

Oh yes.

OK, tell me about some of that local participation.

Well, it hasn't been too bad up until the 1990s, because the normal growth of this town was not on the part of Las Vegas Boulevard or Charleston or, say, Saint Louis (it's all residential along Saint Louis and Oakey [Boulevard]) until eventually land values reached a point on the Strip where people started looking for things to do up on the north Strip. Our property line is one hundred sixty-two feet from the back property line of Las Vegas Boulevard properties, if you will, so very close.

So, we first began to have to be involved. I forget the exact year that we started to have to be involved. I think it was '97 when Chris Karamanos wanted to develop something real big along Las Vegas Boulevard. The late Chris Karamanos (a former Regent) owned a motel-hotel on the boulevard there, on the same side of Las Vegas Boulevard as our house faced. In other words, he was on the east side.

And then I think Bob Stupak may have purchased that property, and Bob Stupak created the concept of something really outrageous. It was called the Titanic [Hotel and Casino], and it was to capitalize on the popularity of the movie. He envisioned a great ship, with the bow of that ship facing our property virtually. It was at a slant, but we would have been looking up right at the anchor chains of the Titanic. So, we had to help organize the neighborhood. My wife Mary [Hausch] primarily did most of the work. She was frankly the leader in the beginning. She did the work. I know there are others who claimed to have been there at the beginning, but Mary was the one who organized and sent letters around town and around the area and began to get people fired up to attend City Hall first for Planning Commission and City Council meetings.

So, that was the first time. I mean I'm trying to think if there were earlier instances. There may have been. Certainly Chris had ideas in the early Nineties that we helped snuff out, early on, because it would have infringed on us.

When a community participates in things like that, were there spillovers into the social [aspect]? Did you get to know your neighbors more? Did that morph into something different for the neighborhood?

Yes. Yes, it has.

Tell me about that.

Well, in fact it's funny you mention that. In 1987, I was able to put through a bill in the legislature to allow the cities to create zones, to foster neighborhood action, to follow the neighborhood preservation, to be able to actually develop funds for this. So it was even before it was really needed. It's just that I had a concept, because I was working on preservation issues in the Senate. In fact, it was my bill which saved the old Las Vegas High School building from destruction. The school district was going to sell it to a developer, and my bill stopped that.

I began to be somebody that people looked at as interested in preservation of neighborhoods. So then a bill I sponsored and passed in 1987, the same year we did the Las Vegas High School bill, called for creating some of the very things we have today, which are neighborhood associations everywhere. They've been fostered by the City, which has been very progressive in helping these things grow and dedicating employees to help see that they actually prosper.

What you say is true about the supposition that these external forces helped create a different kind of neighborhood action, and friendships, all these things, yeah. Yeah, people did get to know their neighbors a lot better than, say, a neighborhood watch would.

Wow, that's interesting, because I didn't expect that answer. I didn't realize that you had done something formal with the bill.

A number of years before.

Yes, but that's very interesting.

Yeah, the Mormon Fort downtown, which was just about totally disintegrated, was brought back to life and became a state park [Old Las Vegas Mormon State Historic Park], based on my work in 1989 and 1991 in the legislature.

So tell me about other cultural, social aspects of the community. A lot of people say that we have First Fridays now because of the people in areas like John S. Park. Do you see a connection?

Yes, I do.

Could you talk about that?

Well, actually starting in the Eighties but in the Nineties too, the Huntridge area was really open for gentrification. Most of these houses were built in the early Forties to the latter Forties: 1941-'42 for certain neighborhoods, '46-'7-and-'8 for later neighborhoods. So they were approaching forty, fifty years old and they were falling in value and it was a great place to buy and fix and be a first-home area. People who do that sometimes are also artistically inclined and very neighborhood inclined. They want to make something out of what they're doing. They want to be not just a homeowner and go to work, but a homeowner in a neighborhood where they can have family or have familial relations and a true neighborhood-village aspect, and that's what we've got.

Now it ebbs and flows, you know. Sometimes it's quiet and sometimes it's very active. It kind of depends. In a way it's somewhat reactive. People with artistic talent seemed to find Huntridge. So naturally it's really nice that they could be in the downtown area, live near where they have art galleries and places to express their talent. And again the City, which has been wonderful at helping foster that, has spent a lot of money

promoting something like First Friday. There's lots of other things we could do but everybody's pretty busy.

You're really close to the downtown area, and Mayor [Oscar] Goodman has tried to do a lot for Fremont Street East and other areas of downtown. What does that mean for the John S. Park-Huntridge community?

Well, I think what he does for all of the downtown area [is good]. It's not just Fremont Street, really. I mean, his activities have been not just based north of Charleston but rather have gone south of Charleston. He's tried and tried and tried to build new things, and the Council has supported him in his efforts. He's not hitting a home run every time, but he's swinging for the fences every time. So he's been a wonderful mayor. And Gary Reese has been a wonderful councilman for our area. Together they've done an awful lot to protect our neighborhoods. Everything they do that builds pride in downtown helps us. I mean it not only helps give us a sense of neighborhood, but it also builds value in our neighborhoods because if your local governments are committed to a future of some kind for a neighborhood, that means that people know that they can invest there, that nobody is going to give up on them.

Do you still see this John S. Park Neighborhood as a place for children playing in the street and for walking?

Yes. Yes, our house is a highway. I mean people walk by our house with children, with their pets, constantly. So it's still safe. It's still a great place to live, and we really are amazed at that, too.

I was away in 1987 at the legislature. Mary did all the shopping for the house. She found it. So, as soon as I came home on that particular weekend, probably in September, I

forget when it was, in '87, we drove my car and parked it on Fifth Place across the street from the house, and we just sat there in the car for about an hour, hour-and-a-half, and we listened. And it was surprisingly quiet.

This was in the evening?

Mm-hmm. It was very quiet, even though Las Vegas Boulevard was just a hundred yards away. Unbelievably quiet. And the trees were tall and big and lush and you could hear birds and you could see people with animals playing around. It just had a good look to it. And I knew the Gubler family from when I was a little kid, and I knew they had been the owners of the house, so it was kind of a natural.

Tell me about the Gubler house.

It was built in 1950-51. On the records they say completed in '51 but I know that it was worked on in '50. The Gublers lived next door in a house at 1135 Fifth Place while it was under construction. It's a pretty big house and it's on a good-sized lot, and then they got control of Franklin Avenue, which should've gone through, because it goes right by John S. Park School but stops at Sixth [Street]. The original plans for the city made it go farther, maybe even to Las Vegas Boulevard, but that was short-stopped by homes on Fifth Place. Then this lot next to the house stayed empty for quite a while, so then they were able to get hold of it through a legal term called adverse possession, and so the street was de-dedicated or abandoned and [V. Gray] Gubler, who had some clout in Las Vegas (it was a powerful family), they got hold of that, so they built a pretty good-sized house. The house is on a lot almost a half-an-acre in size.

I grew up with the Gubler boys. I played golf with David and John Gubler. They had an older brother. But they were there very early. I think they came in the Thirties. [V. Gray Gubler] was a city attorney in the Forties, so he had some real clout.

So describe the house for me.

Well, it's a single-story, you might say ranch-style, kind of a sprawling house. In its day, it was a very big house for the town: three-thousand-and-fifty square feet. So it was a good-sized house with a free-standing garage that's like six hundred square feet. It's block construction but it's small blocks with weeping mortar. You've been at the house, so you've seen the nice touch of that mortar coming down. It gives a nice old-fashioned look to the house. There was a period of time for five or six years when people were building lots of houses that way.

It's not very well insulated. The windows, which look nice, are made of metal and of course the air leaks in and out and around, not only through the walls but around and through the windows, even though we repaint it all the time. We've put a lot of money into that house to preserve it. It had its share of rot and mold as things age and/or accidents happen and maintenance sometimes gets deferred. As it happened, we didn't know at the time we bought it. Well, we finally invested a ton of money to fix it and bring it up to date.

But the house is on a nice lot with lots of trees. We have planted lots of trees since we moved there. The first-generation trees were dying. They're almost all dead around town. There are not very many elm trees left from the Forties and Fifties. So we have planted half-a-dozen water-smart trees: mesquite and palo verde trees. They grow fast

and they give us a nice country look. So we've kind of changed the appearance of the house from the external [viewpoint]. The house has remained the same, exactly the same.

Describe how the community becoming a historic-designated community made a difference.

Well, for the while the idea that it would be historic created some fear, probably more fear against than opportunistic kind of a feeling that this could help us. It took a little bit of a battle for people to understand. Some people just grasped immediately that it would be nice. Our house is the most southern house on the historic roster on that street. Nobody across the street is any farther south. The houses across the street when the designation was granted were built in 1954 and ours was more than fifty years old but it was granted, so that's what you need, you know, plus not to be changed on the outside.

Very, very well-built house, by the way. It's off the ground about three feet, pier-and-beam construction supporting the foundation, wooden floors, but not pretty wooden floors like you would have. The original floors were just nice plywood over beams and piers. We've since put wooden floors and tile floors down.

They're beautiful now.

What was the church influence like in the community, as a young boy?

OK. We had three churches: Jews, Mormons, Catholics. [Chuckling] And I should say three religions. Church was St. Anne's. That was the dominant church there. The [Jewish] temple was built down on East Oakey, just below Fifteenth Street. And Mormons had a ward [chapel] built about 1954. [This was the First Ward.] I was around when they were building that. We used to climb around in the construction site. That church has been torn down, just a few months ago.

What kind of impact did that have?

Oh, it was horrible to see that go, in a very personal way, because here I as a youngster was around while it was being constructed, and then to see it be too old and not repairable, and be torn down in my lifetime, makes me feel real old.

I hadn't thought about it like that.

Yeah! Yeah, I'm outliving a building and I'm not that old. Shows you how old I really am.

What is missing in the community? Is there anything that you now at your station in life would desire for the community?

When you talk about "community," do you mean the whole valley?

No, no, no, I'm still talking about the Huntridge-John S. Park community. Is there anything missing there?

Well, it's still delicate. I mean its future still hangs in the balance. Along the boulevard, along Charleston, and along Maryland Parkway, which is the spine of the community.

When you say the future hangs in the balance, what do you mean?

Well, because there is still an urge to develop. And land values have dropped considerably on Charleston and Las Vegas Boulevard. So when the economy comes back, there are already European and Asian investors putting money into Las Vegas. They will try to buy land. They will try to get the highest and best use of the land. They will try to change all the zoning laws. They will try all these things to raise, again, skyscraper-height [buildings]. It might not be this year or next year but it's coming, and so we have to make sure that our people are aware of this coming and that they all come in and see that what they have is nice now but they won't keep it if they don't hang on to

it real hard, especially along Charleston, of all places. In fact, East Charleston and West Charleston, other beautiful historic areas like Scotch Eighties and McNeil [Estates] and even Mayfair down the road on Charleston, they all have a stake in the future. People will want to put up twenty,-thirty-story buildings along Charleston Boulevard all of a sudden. There are some people that want to sell out for that purpose. They want commercial. They want professional and other kind of multifamily designations for their neighborhoods so that they can eventually cash in on the great thing. And some of these people are really upset that they didn't get to cash in on the latest boom. But that's what I worry about the most, is we just can't let our guard down in the future.

One of the things that people have told me that they feel is missing from the community right now is a grocery store.

Well yeah, to get down to brass tacks, if you don't have a car, it's pretty hard for you to get fed. You have to be able to get in a car and go. We need a grocery store. Although I haven't really checked out the Latino grocery store on Charleston. I haven't been in there. I'd like to get in there. It's in a building that used to be a Safeway building many, many years ago, right there at Charleston and Maryland Parkway. I want to get in there and check out the availability of the foods.

That's been an unstable corner, though, over the years. One thing that seems to hold, by golly, stay in there, is the Huntridge Bar, and the Huntridge Drug Store. They've got food there, you know. That counter has been reopened and so I've taken a lot of people there to eat. But those are the only constants. Everything else seems to change, radically, and it's not looking too good along Charleston there, so I can't wait to see what's going to happen as money starts to flow in.

But Asian money and certain European currencies are more stable than the dollar right now, but they live in countries where the economic stability is not certain, so they're putting money into the United States while things are cheap and the dollar is cheap. So they're buying land.

OK, we obviously need a grocery store. We need a market. We need a place where people can walk to.

So what are you going to do about it?

Well, Mary has been, I think, my champion on this. She has been the one who has written letters to stores, to companies, corporations, asking them to locate in the area. But you know, it's hard until they understand the demographics of the area. We need more young people, because the age is still up there a bit, and people don't want to invest in an area unless the demographics include people that will spend money, and it doesn't have enough yet. But working on it like we are, I think we're going to get there.

At one time John S. Park was almost homogenous. It was almost all—

Self-sufficient.

Now, it's more of a diverse community. We have artists, you have a large Gay population, you have a large population from here at the university [UNLV], we have immigrants coming in. What does that mean for the John S. Park community, this new diversity?

This should mean prosperity and a solid future, if we continue that. We have to foster it, though. We can't just let it happen on its own. And the growth of the city, at least the direction of the City, has been to make that possible, like keeping up our neighborhoods. They've done a good job. We're almost finished with the [Regional Transportation

Commission] Streets and Highways Program, Streets Program anyway, all revamping the streets. I think my street is the last to get done, and it'll get done, I'm told now, sometime in the second quarter of this year.

So what is going to happen with your street?

It's going to be repaved, and new sewer lines will be laid down. The infrastructure is not too bad, but they say the sewer line ought to be redone, so essentially when you see people redoing things like this, that tells you it's a good place to invest, if a city is willing to spend money on these neighborhoods, and it's not just a simple overlay, but a rebuild. That's another fifty years. I mean we're talking the future. And I mean it may not be a big thing to an outsider but if a person looks upon it as being a leading indicator of a good place to live, that will be one of them. So, we're almost done with that.

Now we're not building new sidewalks everywhere because people in these older houses are still allowed to vote and choose whether there should be sidewalks even. We don't have them. A lot of our houses don't want them, so we're not going to have a lot of sidewalks. Some places they are there, but not everywhere. We don't want to chew up the lawns with concrete sidewalks.

Tell me about recreational facilities. There has been a little controversy about the parks in the neighborhood.

Big controversy, in my opinion.

Tell me about that.

I think it [Circle Park] should be reopened. It should have been opened a long time ago. We should have found a way to get around the problem of homeless people being there. We can actually coexist with some of these homeless people, as long as they stay well-

behaved. The homeless are with us always. A little niche in the park somewhere where they can crash, because they stay awake a lot at night because it's an unsafe living, so they sleep in the day when it's more safe. I think we can live with them there as long as they just don't interfere with people's lives. That's a park I've played on since 1951. For it to be closed is a terrible thing, and for them to not do anything, other than possibly try to widen the darn roads again and then cut up the park even further, would be horrible. The park is a signature thing. It's truly the signature [of the neighborhood], other than the Stratosphere [Hotel and Casino] tower which is nearby, which is truly Las Vegas's signature. I think Huntridge Park is the physical feature, of all things, that needs to be preserved. And access [should be provided] as soon as possible.

Very influential people seem to come out of the John S. Park community. Why is that? I mean I have interviewed a city councilman, an ex-governor, an assemblyperson. I mean they just go on and on. What is it about that community?

It could be because it's stable. It gives a person a place to get started in their political activities: [former Nevada Governor and U.S. Senator] Richard Bryan being one. We probably could think of others if we put our mind to it. But the point is that it was a place where you could go and represent, because you were proud of it. I know I always have felt that way. It was a solid, middle-class area where people who aspire to public office or nice things in life think about that as they're young. If you have a real hardscrabble life, it's very hard to think about the idealism that's required to seek public office. You're worried about survival. Your parents are worried about survival, let's say. The youth, then, have a chance to dream about the future. I would not say that we were more productive or that we created more influential people than other neighborhoods, but we

were one of the first, I think, to spring forth with people that were pretty excited about the future.

The Huntridge [Circle] Park was the venue for our protests in 1963 against the legislature's inaction in funding what became UNLV. We were always being held as a very weak sister to what became UNR [University of Nevada, Reno]. And so when I was in school there starting in the spring of '63, we demonstrated. We had a bonfire. We hung the governor and couple of key legislators in effigy on Maryland Parkway. The best place you could build a bonfire. And then we marched down Fremont Street and we had a demonstration right through Fremont. Stopped traffic.

We really made some noise. And it all came out of there [the John S. Park Neighborhood]. Quite a few of my friends were active in that. I think the *Las Vegas Sun* still has pictures—I'm not sure about the *R-J*—from the spring of '63, probably February or March of '63. I don't think anybody had done any political action up until then.

What most do you like about living in John S. Park?

The safety. The wellspring of artistic talent. I like the bohemian nature of the neighborhood. I mean we really have interesting people of all kinds, truly. You mentioned the Gay population. Yes, of course. In fact, there have been Gay people living there for many, many years. It's never been considered to be something that was a big deal to talk about. I remember going way, way back into the Seventies anyway that there were a lot of folks living there who were active in the Gay community at the time. I knew them from Democratic Party activities. Well, it was a good place to live and be near the Strip or the restaurants where many of them worked, and they were left alone. They weren't persecuted. There was a time when that kind of sexual orientation could hold you

back on getting a loan [for a home]. So, buying an older house where you didn't need such a big loan was a way to avoid the embarrassment of being turned down because you were of a [certain] sexual orientation.

In fact, the only thing that surprises me about this is that we're not more multiracial. I just am a little surprised about that, because there's no barriers.

I haven't interviewed anyone who is black.

Well, they just want to jump up and out into the nice new neighborhoods. [Laughter] Can you blame them? I can't blame them. I can't blame them. I mean everybody wants to own their home.

Mary introduced me to one of the businesses in the community. It's called Luv-It [Frozen Custard]. Tell me about Luv-It.

Oh, Luv-It ice cream. Frozen custard. Oh, Luv-It is wonderful. It wasn't there when I was a child. It grew up and found a place to be and it's an icon in our community, and people come from all over town to have their frozen custard. It's there till late hours in the summertime when it's most needed, but it's there all year long; except for the two or three weeks that they take off to go skiing, it's open. And it's been controversial recently because one of the actresses [Mindy Kaling] in *The Office* sitcom on television made some bad remarks about the area. Well, actually, the remarks she made were about an area south of Oakey, which probably deserved some of the sketchiness that they were labeled. But, on the other hand, it isn't all sketchy, if you will. She just happened to run into some bad people right in that area. You look around and you see, wait a minute, that doesn't look so good. But that's just the skirt, the edge [of the neighborhood].

And I like how the community responded to that remark. Would you just tell me about it on tape?

Well, the social network, the social interaction website sprang up real fast. I forget her name, but it was so funny, you know, you join a page to put a hex on her, to really, I don't know, dis-invite her from town, whatever. That also betrays a sense of inferiority when you do that sort of thing, because you feel you have to protest the comments. You could just look away if you want.

But the community had a Luv-In. I loved that. I thought that was wonderful.

Yeah. Yeah. So that was good. Another unifying thing. But it also betrayed, again, that little sense of edginess that we have about the future, that you have to fight to keep a good future.

So what do you see as the future for John S. Park?

I see it lasting a long time, as long as people are willing to reinvest in the homes and continue to keep them up. The City has done its best to keep up the infrastructure so that they have nothing to be ashamed of. There are no potholes in our streets. If people see that, then they think that's a pretty good place to come and invest. It's a wonderful time to buy now, because houses are cheap. My God, you can get into a house for fifty, sixty, eighty thousand dollars, and a house for raising children. I can't see anything wrong.

The only thing I really regret is not seeing enough recreational facilities at John S. Park, the Huntridge Park. We called it Huntridge Park. I don't know, sometime later, people started calling it Circle Park. It's never been a circle. It's always been an oval, and a lot bigger. In 1966, the City Council voted to widen Maryland Parkway. It used to be a beautiful boulevard. It was a divided boulevard with about a fifteen-or-almost-twenty-

feet-wide strip from Charleston all the way to Oakey, that far, with trees down the middle, grass and trees. And then in the dark of night they came along and cut down all the trees, and they decided to widen the road, so they thought this was a master stroke to catch everybody asleep and do all this, and they made the park smaller because they doubled the size of the road on each side. You take fifteen feet or so off of each side of a park and all of a sudden it's a lot smaller. There also used to be a real circle park at Franklin and Maryland Parkway, the first traffic circle around town. Well, that was gone.

Most of them were thrown out in the 1967 City elections. We ganged up on them. Threw out at least two, maybe three City councilmen. Mayor [Oran] Gragson survived the next election by the skin of his teeth. He must not have been up. We didn't have enough votes to kick him out. I can't remember the exact vote but I know that a number of people lost their election because of [the widening of Maryland Parkway]. So, even people around town, they recognized, hey, wait a minute, this was a bad thing to do to a neighborhood. That was your very first sign of an uprising. I'll bet you we go back to that. That's the real first sign of an uprising in the community.

That's great. No one else has mentioned that.

Oh really? Oh, yeah, I would say that's the watermark. Yeah. The beginning. Because we played on that park, at night, you know, we'd go out house-to-house and steal fruit from the people, crabapples, terrible things, but peaches and apricots, and we'd carry them out to Maryland Parkway, and sit on the parkway at night, and eat those things until we got sick, throw them at each other. I even played golf out there as a kid, you know, as a thirteen-, fourteen-, fifteen-year-old, hit golf balls.

Like putting?

No, no, no, hit full shots, because it was pretty big. You hit from the Circle Park over the traffic, to the big park. Well, I broke one window in a house. Marshall Deutsch's house was down at the end of the park just off the parkway. We broke a window in his house and I remember Jerry Hanwick broke a window in a car. But it was great for our skills. Hitting from the big park then over the traffic to the little park, the round park—we didn't call it the Circle Park, it was just a round park—that was a good target. That was like hitting a long shot to a green. So half-a-dozen of us used to play golf out there. They finally ran us off. So it was a multipurpose place, but nobody ever remembers it for playing golf in the Fifties, but we did.

This is wonderful. I just really appreciate all of these memories. Are there any other comments that you'd like to add?

No, I don't think so. I will respond.

Well, this is great. You know, I've asked you about the political, the cultural, the social. This is just wonderful.

Well, it's funny that the park itself, I could have mentioned that earlier but I didn't think about it until all of a sudden I realized that's when quite a good portion of the town got upset about the rape of Maryland Parkway and the destruction of all those beautiful elm trees. There are very few elm trees left anywhere. At our house, I would climb up on top of the house to watch atomic bombs go off, in the early-to-mid-Fifties. And then when the leaves were on our big elm tree in front, I would climb up in the tree as high as I could, so I could see the blast.

From that distance, you could actually see the [explosions]?

Yeah, but most times it wasn't worth it because it was cancelled more often than not because of bad weather or different wind and all that. When television came to Las Vegas, we used to watch the bombs on TV. They'd put a camera out there in the middle of nowhere with a view of the camera, and it was always predawn, when the winds were at their lowest, and there'd be a light on this thing, and it might be hours, it might never go off, but I'd get up and watch it. Once it did go off. Oh! Amazing. Just white, and then it was over. But I remember seeing a bomb from the roof or the tree, I can't remember which one, and it was a strange thing. This was like predawn, probably five, five-thirty, and I remember the blast, the light of the blast, and how this yellowish-white light burst across the skies. It was like a windshield wiper but in front of your eyes, just like that [motioning]. In other words, your eyes were too slow to catch everything, but it looked like that, and then it went like that [gesturing] back as the flash receded and the fireball took its place, but that was not enough light to travel fifty or sixty miles. I truly remember that. I have a vision of that.

Amazing.

Well, thank you, Claytee. I've enjoyed our visit.

Thank you so much.

Where do you live?

Tropicana [Road] and McLeod [Drive], over here by the university.

What's the name of that development that you live in?

San Remo. Townhouses.

San Remo? OK. So you're close to work here.

Very.

Yeah. Do you go home for lunch? [Laughing]

No, I bring my lunch because a lot of times on our lunch hour, we walk, a group of us here in Special Collections.

Do you. Where's your favorite lunch place around here?

Oh, I have several. Most times I bring my lunch from home, but I like P.F. Chang's [China Bistro], and Bahama Breeze. A lot of people like [Paymon's] Mediterranean Café right there on the corner [of Maryland Parkway and Flamingo Road]. Those are probably the three.

How about these little places across the street on Maryland Parkway? Nothing nice yet? They're gone now.

Nothing. Before the political upheaval about Chipotle [Mexican Grill] and their workers not being treated fairly where the food comes from in, is it Alabama, Arkansas, they have farms there where the laborers are not treated fairly, so that put a cloud on that place. I really like it because it's pretty healthy.

Is that still going on?

I don't know. I haven't been over there recently.

Was that in the *Rebel Yell* or someplace? I missed it.

***Rebel Yell* and there were some protests here.**

Well, I guess I missed it. Could have happened when I was out of town, doing other things we were worth protesting about. We'd like to protest again.

So what do you plan to do now that your term limits [are coming to an end]?

Well, I thought maybe it would be easy, you know, this year would be an easy year to go through, but I'm not. I'm not marking time; I'm having to work as hard as ever. Now I've

got to go to Carson City [Nevada] for three days of meetings and then come back here for two days of meetings the following week because we've got to figure out what to do with this budget, and we don't have a cooperative governor [Jim Gibbons] so we've got to [work harder]. The four party groups, four caucuses of the Assembly, the Republicans and the Assembly and the Democrats in both houses, are working together to try to come up with a plan. We'll have to parse out, figure out if those numbers that the Economic Forum gave the governor are valid numbers. Could be that they overstated it because they're pessimistic. So, we're going to have to fight this thing. This is horrible. So this is consuming the first part of this year, and I suspect it won't go away. I think right until the very end of my term, I'm going to be occupied with this.

And then, I'm going to run for the City Council in 2011, for Gary Reese's seat, and I'm raising money for that race now, as a matter of fact. And I've been having good luck.

Fantastic. I'm ready to knock on doors.

Thank you. And it's been fun, and I'm getting a lot of support, so I'm going to run for it, and I'm declared, I'm definitely running, and people are giving me financial help to do that. Got to have those bullets, you know.

Yes! I'm impressed.

Thanks. I decided I was too young to quit politics. I mean you're only as old as you feel.

OK, so I'm going to let you go. This has been wonderful. I really appreciate it.

Thank you for inviting me.

And once we finish this project, you're one of the people that we'd like to do an entire history of, a longer [interview], several sessions.

OK. Sure, I'd love that. I'd be flattered that you would consider me for that.

Oh yes, definitely.

OK, thank you.

Thank you.

I've given stuff to the school every now and then. In 2004 we had that terrible impeachment session, a special session with Kathy Augustine, and I helped keep her from being convicted of the worst because it was a trumped-up thing, and I gave all those files to [Special Collections Director] Peter [Michel]. I don't know what's happened with them. I don't know if they're still around.

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