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## An Interview with Dr. Harold Boyer

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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The Boyer Las Vegas Early History Project

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

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The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. 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.

Clayton D. White, Project Director  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
University Nevada Las Vegas

## Preface

Dr. Harold Boyer recalled with great clarity his childhood in Arkansas. Born in 1916 in Hartman, he attended a two-story school which went to eighth grade, fished in a nearby stream, and earned money from the age of six selling newspapers. He remembered that his father wore many hats, including that of town physician, president of the school board, and mayor. He also operated the movie theater and would drive around town announcing upcoming film features through a megaphone. Harold gave details of living through the Great Depression and completing his high school and college education.

Dr. Boyer recited many details of his life in the Marine Corps as a medic, serving on active duty in the Pacific arena in WWII, going into medical practice in Oklahoma City and Enid, Oklahoma, and being called back to serve in Korea. In 1952, while checking out practices in several Southwest locations, he came to Las Vegas and interviewed with Dr. Carver Coffman.

Harold painted a picture of Las Vegas in the sixties and described his practice and the many organizations in which he participated. He described how certain entities contributed significantly to the growth in the Vegas Valley, including the Convention Bureau, the Elks Club, Rotary Club, Shriners, the Mormon Church, the Mesquite Club, the university, and the gaming industry. He also gave a very positive view of the cultural activities that were/are available to the people of Las Vegas.

Comments by Dr. Boyer on race relations recalled the sixties when integration in area schools, hotels, and neighborhoods became a reality under strong black leadership. He also talked about the relationship between casino operators and the civic organizations previously mentioned, and included an anecdote concerning one of his patients and Al Capone.

Helldorado, a unique community celebration, began in 1937 and was designed to draw positive attention to Las Vegas and pull people together. Dr. Boyer described the parades, dances, games, and barbecues that made it so much fun, and listed the founders who made it possible. This list includes people like the Von Tobels, Bob Squires, Bill Ferret, and the Ronzoni family. He related that Helldorado gradually faded out as corporations took over the gaming industry and the population grew to hundreds of thousands.

Howard Hughes, the Greenbaums, and Bugsy Siegel are some of the people Dr. Boyer recalled as part of the fabulous tapestry that makes Las Vegas special. He talked about those who had a positive influence on the town, like Ed Von Tobel, Jess Abbott, and Jackie Gaughan. He has wonderful ideas for creating a park near the downtown area that would rival Central Park in New York, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, or Audubon Park in New Orleans. His closing comments reflect on special projects conducted by the Rotary Club and the future of Las Vegas as an international air travel transportation hub.

# Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Project Director, Peter Michel, Special Collections, UNLV Library, 895-3252

## Use Agreement

Name of narrator: HAROLD L. BOYER

Name of interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Harold L. Boyer  
Signature of narrator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Address of narrator \_\_\_\_\_

Claytee D. White 11/15/2000  
Signature of interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**This is Claytee White, and I'm with Dr. Harold Boyer. It is November 15th, 2000.**

**How are you today?**

Just fine. Thank you.

**Good. We're going to get started. I want you to relax, and we're just going to talk about your early life. When and where were you born?**

I was born May the 22nd, 1916, in a small rural town in Arkansas -- Hartman, H-a-r-t-m-a-n. That's located 55 miles east of Fort Smith and four miles north of the Arkansas River and 120 miles west of Little Rock, at the foothills of the Ozarks.

**So what was that community like, rural or --**

It was a rural community, which was founded in about 1875, and it was agricultural. There was also coal mining. The Missouri Pacific Railroad ran through the town. And that's why it was established there.

**Now, did you have brothers and sisters?**

I have one brother living and two brothers died.

**And their names?**

My brother who is living is Bill N. Boyer, and he lives in Dallas, Texas. My older brother died at the age of ten in Arkansas of diarrhea. My younger brother, my second brother who was two years younger, was killed accidentally by a falling pillar at the age of four in Hartman, Arkansas.

**Now, your mother worked in the home?**

Yes.

**And was your father the town physician?**

My father was the town physician. He was the president of the school board, and he was an active community leader, and he was a mayor. I might add that he later became mayor of two other towns in the following order. One of them was Fort Towson, Oklahoma, to which we moved in 1929, where he was mayor. And then he was also a mayor in Lincoln, Arkansas, where he lived until the time of his death. He was a Republican in Democratic territory.

**Now, he was a mayor in Oklahoma at one point.**

At Fort Towson, Oklahoma.

**Now, when did the family live there?**

We lived there from 1929 until February of 1946.

**Now, tell me about growing up in Arkansas, going to school there.**

Growing up in Arkansas was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. It was a small town, 600 population. I went to school in a white two-story schoolhouse, which only went up to the eighth grade. In school I carried a pen and a slate. I went to school in 1922, and I finished the first six grades there before moving to Oklahoma.

It was a town in which there was only a short distance to where I could fish in a stream. There were mountains to the north of me. I was a paperboy. I was known as the "Hartman paperboy." At one time I delivered five newspapers. And I was always proud of that because my father started me out selling newspapers at the age of six. And he ordered the Grit Newspaper, a weekly newspaper, from Pennsylvania. Then I began selling the Southwest American. Then I sold the (Indiscernible) Times Record, which was the evening paper of the Southwest American, which incidentally was owned by the Reynolds Publishing Company. Then I also sold a (Indiscernible) Post Dispatch on Sundays and also sold the Arkansas Democrat out of Little Rock. So I had the monopoly on the newspaper in a town of about five or 600 people.

**So from six years old, how much money were you earning?**

Well, I would bank about six dollars a month.

**You know, I had a brother who sold the Grit Newspaper, as well, in North Carolina.**

**So tell me about a town that small, how did you get around in the town with your newspapers?**

We walked. My father had one of the few automobiles in town. It was a T Model Ford Roadster.

We had a telephone. We lived on a hill where there were about six or eight other homes. We were one of two or three homes. We had telephones. Of course, the telephone was the wall-type, where you're signaled by the number of rings. That was our communication system. We were also the community's communication system because when anyone called Hartman to let someone know about a death in another state or another area, they called Dr. Boyer's home because they knew he had a telephone. I was always the one who was delegated to call the people

to the phone to let them know that there was a death message.

**So was that traumatic, though, for a young boy to do that?**

No. It was just a matter of living.

**Yeah. It sounds like such a joy to live like that.**

**Tell me what the life was like for the wife of such a busy man in a small town like that.**

Well, all little towns then had a social structure. The community mostly centered around the church and the school. Then the big event of the week on Sunday was going down to the railway station after church in the afternoon and seeing the train come in. The train came in from Arkansas, and it brought our ice cream from the Ward Ice Cream Company in Fort Smith. Then the ice cream was kept in the town drugstore.

We had movies. My father also operated a movie theater where he would actually change the reels and crank the machine. He also, since we had no radio and no newspaper to advertise the movies, had a tin megaphone. He would have his partner drive his T Model Ford, and my father would take the megaphone and go up and down the little hills and streets in Hartman announcing the movies of the week, which usually was a cowboy reel movie. He would even tell the number of reels and the number of side attractions. So he would say, "Well, there's a seven-reel movie with Hoot Gibson," naming the movie as "Somewhere West of the Sun." If they had a newsreel, there would be a PathA newsreel. Then if it was a comedy, that was also announced by megaphone. So people generally knew what was going on in the way of movies. Then in front of the movie theater, there were big signboards, on which were pasted up the colored pictures showing the type of the movie and the names and pictures of the actors.

He also owned some real estate, and he rented a building, which had his drugstore, and he had his office in the rear.

**So now, the ice cream that came in, was that your personal family ice cream, or did you --**

No. That was ice cream which was dispensed and sold from the drugstore.

**Okay. Now, getting back to those movies, that sounds so interesting, how often could you see a movie per week?**



We'd have a movie generally about once a week and usually on a Saturday night. People worked all the time. They just didn't go out at night except for little social events. But the movie was only about once a week.

**How much did you pay to go and see the movie?**

I believe about 10 and 15 cents, 10 cents for children and 15 cents for adults.

**Now, side attractions, were those newsreels?**

I beg your pardon?

**The side attractions.**

Well, it could be newsreels, which would tell the current events of the week or so and they were pretty up-to-date. Then the other would be the comedies. Sometimes the entire pictures were comedies such as the Harold Lloyd pictures. They were great things. Some of the pictures were all comedies. But sometimes there was a comedy in addition to the regular feature.

I remember very clearly one interesting thing in connection with the movies is that we were a very religious town as were all small towns in Arkansas. We had a Methodist Church, we had a Baptist Church, and we had a Holy Roller Church. A picture came out called "The Life of Christ." And there were a number of old ladies in town who would not go to a movie because it was a sin to go to a movie. But we did have a more educated minister, Reverend H.O. Bowlin, and he volunteered to make comments on the movie that was being shown because they were silent movies. And there was a script which is shown below the film, and people would read them. And if a person couldn't read, the person next to them would read the script. But in this case, Reverend Bowlin made the comments about the movie as it progressed. I must say there were some people who weren't there to see the movie. He was the only minister that was there because it was considered sinful to go to a movie.

**Wow. Now, why did your family leave Arkansas and go to Oklahoma?**

Well, we had two things that happened. Number one, my father's building, which he owned, burned and, unfortunately, he had let the insurance expire and we had to pay that off. And the second thing is that was in 1929. That's when the Depression hit. So he contacted through a pharmaceutical agent in a little town in southeast Oklahoma where a physician had died and it was a sawmill town and very active. So he went out to investigate this town, and he elected to go out

there. So he left Hartman. But there was an older doctor left there. So the town was not left without a physician.

But about the time we got to Fort Towson, the Depression hit Fort Towson. So we went all through the Depression with all the hardships that you would expect. That was another important feature of our lives in those times. We were the products of the -- we were the greatest Americans of the Depression era.

**What do you mean the "greatest Americans"?**

Well, you remember the book recently written by Tom Brokaw. It's about the people who were born before the Depression, lived through the Depression -- for example, our class went through the Depression. We all had to work through our premed schools. Part of us worked through medical school. When we graduated in 1941, there was Pearl Harbor Day, December the 7<sup>th</sup>, so about 80 percent of our class, mostly men, went into the military service. So we were in the military service for about four years. Then from there, we had to come out again. At that time some of us were married and we had children. And we had to go through our training period. So we spent three or four years of training after World War II, after we had graduated from medical school in 1941. Then we settled down and bought our GI houses. And we set up our practices. And we reared our families. Then in my own case, I was called back again in the Korean War. So I had quite a bit of disruption in my professional and my family life from the time the war was over until I got settled.

**Tell me a little about the town in Oklahoma where you settled. Compare that with Harman, Arkansas.**

Hartman, Arkansas was a small community. It was just one or two general stores out in a rural area. I believe you may have said "Harmony." I thought you said "Harmony." It's Hartman. But Harmony was a small community. That's an area in which my father was born. His family had been there since the 1840s.

**Oh, I have it wrong. Okay. There were two towns in Arkansas, and they both start with an H, Harmony and Hartman?**

Harmony was the community in which my father was born. And Hartman is where he went into practice upon graduating from medical school in 1911.

**Hartman is the one that I meant.**

Yes. Now, the question applying to Hartman was what?

**How did that compare with the town that you settled in, in Oklahoma?**

Well, it was almost the same size except it was more agrarian and it also had a sawmill and that was one of the problems. The sawmill went out of business because when they ran out of timber in those days, they didn't replant the trees and they just sawed all the wood in the country side and they moved the sawmill to some other place. When we moved there, the population was only about 600. And at one time the population had been over a thousand. So it was like any other town that had depended upon one industry. When that industry left, the town went down. But the town is still there.

**But your family stayed there until 1946?**

No. We stayed in Fort Towson from 1929 to 1946. Then my father established a practice in Lincoln, Arkansas. The chief reason for that was my parents divorced then and he sought another town in which to practice. And my mother remained in Fort Towson from the time we moved there in 1929 until she died in 1961.

I claim three hometowns: Hartman, Arkansas; Fort Towson Oklahoma; and then Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Okay. So now, after leaving Oklahoma to go to college, where did you go to college?**

I completed high school in 1934 and went to the University of Oklahoma in Norman where I spent three years as a premedical student. In those days the requirements for medical school were as little as two years, but most people went two, three, or four years. And I went three years, and then I went into medical school from there. In medical school I went to the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine in Oklahoma City in 1937. I graduated there in 1941.

**Then in 1941, of course, World War I -- excuse me.**

Well, war broke out. But I went to my internship first.

**Before going to World War II?**

Yes. And my intern was in New Rochelle, New York, from 1941 to 1942. And while I was there, the war was declared in December 1941.

**So New Rochelle, New York, now, that was quite a big change.**

Well, I chose to make that change because I had grown up in a small town and I wanted to see some other part of the country. And, secondly, the New Rochelle Hospital was a small hospital, but they paid the magnificent salary of \$50 a month for interns after you had been there for six months. My first salary was \$25 a month, and then it went to \$50 a month in the second six months. And by the way, some of the internships throughout the country paid nothing except room, board and furnishing uniforms. Ours was on the upper scale because we got money, but it was not a teaching hospital such as the University of Oklahoma or Yale or Harvard or Vanderbilt or Emory.

**Right. So then you left --**

Well, when the war broke out, I went down to 90 Church Street in New York and got a commission as a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy Medical Corps -- Medical Reserve.

**Why did you decide on the Navy?**

Because I wanted to be a flight surgeon and because I didn't want to walk. I wanted to be on a ship where I didn't have to walk. As it turned out, after I got in the Navy, I finished my internship in June and I immediately went into the military duty to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas. I then applied for flight surgery training, which I didn't get into until much later. So then after I was in the Navy for about six weeks in Corpus Christi, I received orders along with three other medical officers, and we went to the Pacific Fleet Marine Force. I didn't know what that was. It turned out it was the Marines. So I became a walking Marine rather than a walking soldier.

**So how did you switch from the Navy to the Marines?**

Well, the Marines gets all its medical officers from the Navy. See, the Marine Corps is under the Navy, and the Navy furnishes all the medical officers and the medical corpsmen and the chaplains and the engineers for the Marines. So that's how I got into the Marine Corps.

I went to Camp Elliott, California, in San Diego, and I was there until November. Then I was shipped overseas to active duty in the Pacific. I went through Wellington. We were there for six weeks. Then we went to Guadal Canal and were there for about two months. Then we came back from Guadal Canal to New Zealand and took on replacements and regrouped and retrained. Then in November of 1943, we went to Tarawa, which is another operation in the Pacific. We

were there for about five or six days. Then after that military operation, we went to the Hawaiian Islands, and we were stationed up at Camp Tarawa, which is named after the battle, for a period of time.

At that time I was with a tank battalion rather than infantry. And one day the commanding officer called me in and said, "I have orders for you." And I came in and said, "What are my orders?" He said, "You're being detached from the Marines, and you're going to the flight surgery training school in Pensacola, Florida, for flight surgery training. And I had forgotten about applying for it. So as a result of that, my outfit moved out without me. And they went on to Saipan and Tinian, which were two other big operations. And I went back to Pensacola and got my flight surgery training.

**Now, what does that entail? Did you learn how to fly?**

No. We were medical officers to take care of the naval aviators and the corps. We were sent out to such things as aircraft carriers as a flight surgeon, not to do surgery, but as a medical officer on an aircraft carrier. Or we could have been detached to a Marine squadron, or we could have gone to a naval station or a Marine station. Medical officers were flying with personnel in the Navy or the Marines.

**I see. Now, the show "M.A.S.H.," is there any reality to that show?**

Absolutely, except in "M.A.S.H." they had nurses. In Guadal Canal and Tarawa, we had no nurses. The Army had nurses. But the Navy Medical Marine Corps had no nurses out in the combat areas. "M.A.S.H." was slower-moving, but it was a very accurate depiction of that.

**Well, thank you for that. That's really enlightening.**

**When did you come to Las Vegas for the first time?**

Well, I'd like to preface that by saying that after being released from active duty in the Korean War, where I was assigned as a dermatologist for the Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida, I went to Birmingham, Alabama, and had a position with a coal mine, and this was after I was already a certified dermatologist. So while I was there, I just did a coal mine practice with a dispensary of taking care of the dependents of the coal miners, taking care of injuries and delivering babies. So after I was there for about a period of nine months, I used that as an operating base to seek another place in which to practice.

Keep in mind then that all places in the country were not easily -- it was difficult to start a practice in some areas. So I should also say that after completing my residency training in dermatology, I went to Oklahoma City where I practiced with another doctor for a few months. And then went to Enid, Oklahoma, where I practiced for about nine months. And while I was in the Navy Reserve active duty, I was called back to Korea. And that's how I went back into Korea in the Korean War.

So after getting out of that, I went to Birmingham, Alabama. I was a coal mining physician. I used that as a place in which to look around for another place to practice. Finally, I was corresponding with a medical place and bureau in Chicago, and I submitted a resume of my medical records and my training. And then they would seek out places throughout the United States that were looking for physicians which might require my type of training.

So finally, I had contacted five places. One was Phoenix, Arizona; one was Alhambra, California; one was South Pasadena, California; and one was Las Vegas, Nevada. So I finally saved up a little time and money and went by train out to these areas. And I interviewed all of them with the exception of Las Vegas. It was the last one. It was on the way home.

I was standing on the station platform in Pasadena, California, trying to decide what to do. Two trains came through there. One went north and one went south. I took out my map and looked and saw that Needles, California, was a main town. So I decided to take the train from there and go the southern route to Needles. And I got off and went across the street at 10 o'clock at night. I said, "Do you have a bus line that runs from Needles, California, north to Las Vegas?" She said, "Yes." I said, "What time does it run?" And the desk clerk says, "At 5:30 in the morning." I said, "I'll take a room and call me at 4:30."

And this is how I got to Las Vegas. When I got here, I was met by Dr. Coffman, who was the first dermatologist here, who had come here in 1949. He liked it because he had been stationed at Nellis Air Force Base and he was going back into the Air Force as a dermatologist. And by the way, Dr. Carver Coffman, my predecessor who's responsible for me being in Las Vegas, was the first Air Force dermatologist. He stayed in the Air Force for a while and came back and practiced. He died here. He was a very close friend of mine.

**Wonderful. So which year is this?**

That was in 1952.

**Now, someplace along the way, 1946, you took the time out to get married. How did you meet your wife?**

Well, I met my wife in St. Louis when I went to see a doctor about an allergy. She was at the desk, and she invited me to come in to see Dr. Hansen. So there was a window and a door. I said, "How do I come in, through the window?" And she took a liking to me.

**She liked that joke.**

She thought I was pretty cheeky. So we were married. We had two children.

**What are your children's names?**

My son's name is John Walter, and my daughter's name is Mary Elizabeth.

**And where are they now?**

They both live in Las Vegas.

Now, to continue the story, though, if I may --

**Yes, please.**

-- Dr. Coffman took me around to see all the shows in downtown Las Vegas. At that time there were 32,000 people. And that's all I saw. We went to the Last Frontier, and we saw a show in town. He took me down to the office the first morning, Saturday morning, and he saw three patients. One was a new patient, and for that he got ten dollars. The other two patients on this Saturday morning were follow-up visits, and he got five dollars. So at the end of the morning, he had made \$20. He says, "That's enough. Let's go home and have some breakfast."

So that was my introduction to Las Vegas. We met. I got off the bus at the Union Station, the only Union Station where the Union Pacific came through. Then I called him. He said, "I'll be right down." I said, "Well, how will I know you?" He said, "Well, I'll be driving a green Dodge four-door sedan and I'm bald-headed." And he said, "How will I know you?" And I said, "I'm kind of tall and skinny and have a crew haircut," which I got when I was in the Korean War. When he came down to the station, there was no need for all this palaver because we were the only two there at the time on the intersection of Fremont and the depot.

So we drove up to his little apartment. We had cheese blintzes for breakfast. That night, we went out to the movie. We went out to see the Last Frontier. That was all I saw of Las Vegas.

I went back to Birmingham. I hadn't made up my mind. He called me. He said, "Harold?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Are you coming out to Las Vegas?" I said, "Well, I don't know. One thing bothers me. I didn't see too much. And I didn't see very many trees and I like trees." He said, "Oh, the trees up at Mount Charleston are so big you can't even put your arm around them. They're big Ponderosa pine." I said, "I'll come."

So within two weeks, I was out there. And I had to go to Reno and take my examinations. Then I stayed all night in the YMCA building and took the bus down. We stopped at Hawthorne first, and we had some supper when the bus stopped. Then next, we drove all the rest of the night. We got in early at Indian Springs or at Beatty, Nevada, and we had a little breakfast there. The next morning, Saturday morning, we came to Las Vegas. In the meantime, he had already gone to active duty. I had the key --

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

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Dr. Jack Cherry, who was a pioneer physician in Goldfield, Nevada, and also Tonopah, Nevada, could spin tales by the hour about these old mining towns. But anyway, he sponsored me into the Rotary Club, which was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I had so many fine friends.

I became president of the Rotary Club and I was active in the Boy Scouts for a while. Then I was active, very active, in the American Cancer Society in Clark County and later became president of the Nevada division of the American Cancer Society. I was eventually on a national committee for the American Cancer Society. I was quite active in that.

I was fairly active in the Clark County Medical Society. For about eight years, I was the secretary/treasurer of the Clark County Medical Society. And then later on, I became president of the Clark County Medical Society at a time when we had about maybe 150 members. Now we have over 3,500 members.

**Now, with that busy schedule, what kind of things did women do here in Las Vegas?  
What was your wife doing?**

Well, my wife was not a club joiner, but she played bridge and she gardened. She had very close friends. We attended all the public things. We were very strong supporters of the



university. We were there when they laid the cornerstone. We contributed to the --

**Judy Bailey.**

Oh, the Judy Bailey Theater. We contributed to the Judy Bailey Theater there and attended the performances. So we've been pretty good contributors to the cultural things of Las Vegas and supported it in that way.

**So of your civic organizations and your involvement over the years, which organization do you think has made the most major impact here?**

I think in later days it was the Las Vegas Convention Authority, which at one time was called Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation. The abbreviation of it was SNIF. And while it was named SNIF, it never amounted to too much. Some of the professional people would go to meetings in other cities, you know, promoting Las Vegas. Well, the name of SNIF...

But later on it became the Nevada Developmental Authority and the Convention Bureau. I would say that some of the early politicians who pushed this were very civic-minded people, like "Bud" Albright, who was probably the father of the convention center, and all the Albright family and the Christiansens. I would say that some of the most important people were the political people. Also heavy promoters in the old days were members of the Elks Club. And members of the Shriners Club have been community leaders. And the Mormon Church has been very strong in support of the schools. Even the Mesquite Club had very influential women. You'll find those same women leaders in various organizations also belonged to the Mesquite Club. The social clubs, the Junior League, or the wives of the young leaders in the community have been very interested in that.

More recently, the university now has a big impact on this place. And then, of course, I think that the biggest people who have made our gaming and our tourist industry have been the people in the gaming industry. You can say what you like, but they're the ones who took the risk. They are the ones who had the foresight, the know-how, and the money. And they also are the ones who have supported the infrastructure. They're behind the scenes, but they have contributed heavily. And they're interested in a nice city. They're interested in the streets. They're interested in good medicine. The gaming people have given us a great number of community leaders who helped build Las Vegas.

Now, of course, the early leaders were the old-time structure, which came because the city -- and it was the railroad and the merchants. But believe it or not, one of the earliest organizations in leadership was the Rotary Club. If you go down the rosters, the old Rotary Club was established in 1923. Those men have been there since 1905. If you'll go to the early roster of the Rotary Club, you'll find some of the early pioneers in Las Vegas. One of our pioneers brought up Nellis Air Force Base. Basic Magnesium was put up for some reason.

But I suppose you'd have to go again to the politicians. It was the early -- the Pittmans, Governor Pittman and his brother, they were from Mississippi. They were powerful leaders in this community directly. And then McCarran, Senator McCarran, he was an early leader, highly political. He got things done. So much of the influence in the early days came from outside of Las Vegas, but they were part of the state. They had the northern part of the state and the southern part of the state. And they didn't worry so much about us then because they were the big part of the state. But they bore and bred a monster, which they didn't know they were going to have to encounter.

But I think it's multiple people. These leaders have come forth at different times and have done different things. But in the entire thrust, you'll find it's peppered by the same people, which do different things in different ways. And sometimes they overlap and they go from one community to the other. They belong to the Elks and the Shriners and their churches, the Mormon Church. So it's been a concerted effort on the part of a lot of people. Everyone has had something to contribute.

**Did you ever think about politics for yourself?**

Only at one time.

**And what happened?**

Well, I was busy practicing. I didn't think I knew that much about business. But at one time I gave serious thought to becoming a member of the board of regents. I think that I could have, but I just made the decision not to do that. So I'm in the Republican Party, but I'm not very active. I just contribute to it.

**With your interest in the university, even until today, that would have probably been a very, very good step for you, the board of regents.**

Well, I don't look at those things as steps up. I don't have aspirations to be known. I like to see things done. I don't care whether I do it or someone else does it. Most of mine has not been -- I'm not the rooster in the barnyard that crows the loudest.

But that's the only thing I would have considered. That would have interested me because I was interested in the university. But I just thought that there were people who were better qualified. I still think that people on the board of regents should be highly educated people and well qualified and have time to devote time to it.

And we have been fortunate that we have had people like that. Archie Grant, who was a leading businessman here, very smart, he was on the board of regents. We had Dr. White out of Boulder City. She was a graduate. She had a Ph.D. She was a graduate of an eastern school. We had Dick Ronzoni, who was a knowledgeable businessman and who had Ronzoni's Department Store. They were some of the pioneer people. We've had a number of people who have had foresight, and they've had political know-how, and they have been into politics. They've been in politics.

**Where did your children go to school?**

Well, my daughter went first to -- my mind's getting a little weary. It's a girls' school in St. Charles, Missouri. It's the oldest girls' school west of the Mississippi. Some of my wife's friends had gone there and her grandparents lived there. My brother lived there at that time. So that's why she went there.

**I see.**

She was not quite ready for coeducation, so that's why we sent her. Then she later went to school back in New Jersey. Then she went to school at a small college down in California. She went to UNLV. I think she finally got a degree from UNLV. But she must have a total of over 200 college hours. She went around from school to school and teaching. And she still takes classes occasionally. She's a bright young lady. She hasn't been able to handle men, and they haven't been able to handle her.

**I understand that.**

And my son went to Cal Western down in San Diego for his prelaw. Then he went to Gonzaga Law School up in Spokane, Washington, which if you remember was Bing Crosby's old

alma mater. Then he took what is his prelaw at the University of Utah because he wanted to get in some skiing there his senior year.

**Great reason.**

Well, he's turned out to be a successful lawyer. He's low-key and quiet, but he's well liked. Everyone he meets likes him. He's very bright, very smart. He doesn't have aspirations to be an Edward Bernstein or anything of that nature. At one time he ran for state assembly. I said, "What's going to be your goal?" He says, "Well, I don't think the state constitution and laws are very well written. I'd like to have a revision of the Nevada statutes and laws." So unfortunately, Nevada missed out. He wasn't elected.

**I see. Okay. If you'd like to --**

Are you ready for a break?

**Well, I think this would probably be a good time to take a break.**

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

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

**This is Claytee White, and I'm with Dr. Boyer. It's the last day of November 2000, November 30th. So how are you this morning?**

Just fine. Thank you.

**Okay. Now, the last time we stopped, you had said a few things about some of the civic organizations that you belonged to. You had talked about the cancer society, your medical society. Las Vegas is one of the places in the country where smoking is at its highest. Was that topic ever discussed in any of your groups?**

Well, that was one of several things discussed. This was part of our general education to the public of smoking, the dangers of smoking, among other things. People didn't appreciate the dangers of smoking as much in those days as they do now.

But I can remember even as a child, my father was a country doctor in Arkansas. He used to preach to me, when I'd go with him on country calls, about the dangers of smoking and about how it would stunt little boys' growth and people would die early. That was in the 1920s that he was preaching about the bad things of smoking and tobacco. He knew that then.

So I was off to a good start when I went into work for the cancer society because I knew

about that. Then, of course, I learned about other aspects of cancer after that. But there was a big public education program, and that was a big part of our program then.

**Good. Do you ever think Las Vegas could become one of those cities where we don't have smoking in restaurants? How far do you think --**

I never would have dreamed we would have that. Now I just take it for granted and most people do, including the smokers.

**Right. What about non-smoking casinos? Would that work?**

I don't know about that. I don't know about that. People have the choice of going into the casinos and that's their choice. But they have no choice about how much smog is in the air. They have no choice about other sources of public smoking. But I think the smoke in casinos is pretty much a part of the picture.

And, fortunately, you don't see as much smoking in the casinos as you did at one time. When we came here, you sometimes almost couldn't see across the casino because there was so much smoke-filled air. And the cocktail waitresses would tell you that when they came home from work, their clothes were saturated with cigarette smoke. Women wore beautiful gowns then. The men wore suits. And when we came home from the casino, we smelled like a tobacco pot. And that was the way it was. So you can imagine what it was like smoking and having it in our lungs.

**One of the things that you had talked about before was your great interest in UNLV. You also had a connection with the Judy Bailey Theater over there. How do you feel when people say that there's no culture in Las Vegas?**

How do I feel about it? Oh, I accept the fact that some people just don't know about it because it's not advertised as much as it could be. I shouldn't use the word "advertise." But many people do know that it's here. People have much more culture in large cities -- Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia -- and they know it's there, but they don't make use of it. But we have these things here.

I think proportionately, percentage-wise of the population, we do appreciate our culture and we talk about it to our friends. And, of course, part of that is to offset the feeling they may have about sin, the gaming, casinos. We do have culture. We do have a lot of churches. We have

a university and all these things.

So we sort of tend to brag a little bit about our culture. I think that we do have a great deal of culture here. We have fine musicians here. We have fine dancing groups. We have the ballet. We have plays. It's advertised in the papers every day. There's no reason why people can't know about these things because the papers do a good job of publicizing what's being offered on the Strip and off the Strip in the way of plays and concerts and, of course, the things put on by the university.

But even before that, there was a subculture of culture, I'll say, one of which was the Mesquite Club, which was founded by the pioneering women. And there were literary groups and people sent their children off to school. So Las Vegas is pretty much an enlightened community culture-wise, I would say, in comparison with other cities of the same size and under more adverse circumstances.

**Okay. When you first came, as you began to be a part of the community building group, what kind of relationship did that group have with the African-American community or any other communities of color?**

Well, there was early integration into the churches, education, and the school system. And there were non-educational groups, in which there was participation or membership. I would say it was more of an enlightened community than many other communities were in the United States. There were the Afro-Americans and there were the Hispanics and there were the Asians. As I remember, that was not very much of a consideration.

Of course, the Afro-American population was concentrated in what was called the Westside, but that was the old pioneer part of Las Vegas. That's where the early black settlers came in. There was also a black settlement, I remember, out in the northern part of town. They were pretty wealthy, had a lot of land holdings.

Out in Paradise Valley, there was a Japanese group which was very progressive. They lived almost in a shack, but they did a good job of rearing their children. One of them became a pathologist at a hospital in Los Angeles. One of them became a nuclear scientist at either Harvard or at MIT. A third one was Mr. Tomiyasu, who was a successful businessman here. They were highly respected in the community, and they contributed a lot to the community. They practically

fed the workers by the thousands when they were building the dam here in Las Vegas. They did some scientific farming.

Many of the Hispanics then worked on the railroad. I had a number of Hispanic people. They were all very charming people.

I was just not aware of that much difference. I grew up the first 12 years of my life in a town where there were no blacks at all. It was in Arkansas. But it was just the way that it was. I had no prejudice at all. So I didn't know that much about that until I interned in New York. They were more racially conscious, I would say, there than they were in the community in which I had grown up. When I was a newspaper boy in Fort Towson, Oklahoma, there were some blacks in the community. And we loved them all and they all loved us. I was invited to their homes for pie and milk when I delivered their papers. They were just my friends. I was not aware of that.

I actually wasn't aware of that many racial differences here when I first came here. It seemed to come later. But, of course, later on with integration in 1965, they had to begin to integrate the schools and a conscious effort was made to overcome that. They began to get jobs in the casinos dealing, cocktail waitressing and so forth. So I think the community as a whole has made a conscientious effort to integrate.

**Compare racial attitudes in New York to Las Vegas. Now, I know the difference in the size is tremendous at this point.**

Well, I interned in New Rochelle, New York, which is a suburb. We had a pretty good-size black community. There was also a bit of an Irish community and there had been an Italian community. I knew most of the blacks as patients in the hospital. A few were employees. I think maybe the school system in New Rochelle may have been integrated, too. I'm not sure about that. I just don't know.

My contact then with the blacks was as patients and the ones who came to the emergency room. That didn't bother me. I wasn't afraid of anything. But I was taught, "You better watch out, something is going to happen to you, this and that, because these people fight and then they shoot. And when they shoot to kill someone, they don't know who did it." So all this kind of surprised me. I had never witnessed anything like that before. My patients, I just loved them like I love all my other patients. I had no problem.

**A few minutes ago you said that early on you thought the churches here were integrated?**

Well, no, not integrated. But when I was in the Methodist Church, quite often the ministers would have meetings together. There was one very prominent Methodist minister of there, and he's still here. I can't think of his name.

**Is it Marion?**

Marion?

**Did he run for public office at one time?**

Yeah.

**Yes, okay. I know which one you're talking about.**

Then we had a dentist that came in here, and he was kind of a suave person. But anyway, he came in the medical society and was accepted. I don't remember all that much trouble.

**Was it Dr. McMillan?**

No. He was a dentist.

**Right.**

Yeah. It was the other one.

**Dr. West?**

West, Charles West. I knew him real well. We worked together at the American Cancer Society.

**Oh, good. Dr. West did a lot of volunteering. He volunteered as the medical person for one of the football teams here in the city. He used to travel with the team and all of that.**

I didn't know about that.

**How well did you get to know Dr. West?**

Well, as well as I knew any other doctor.

**He sort of served as the ambassador, I would say, sometimes when guests came in, like an African delegation, he and his wife would then act as the --**

Well, I didn't know anything about that.

**Okay. What was the relationship between the community builders and the people who ran the Strip? And I want to know in the early days, when the Strip was run by people**



**that today we consider a family or a mob. Was there any kind of relationship?**

Well, I know some of the old-time contractors had some of their right-hand people who were blacks here in the community. They had a very close relationship. I can remember several of them who did that, who were very close with their employees. Since that time, some of them have started their own business, you know. They learned the business.

I have one person who was a cement finisher, and he had dermatitis on his hands from handling all the cement. So I said, "It looks like you might have to get out of this." But he said, "This is my business." So then he was being taking care of through the Nevada Industrial Commission. And every time he'd get cleared up, he'd go right back to work as soon as he could. First thing you know, he was into it again and I had to patch him up. So it got to where about every three months it was, "Doc, I have it again." So I would have to give him some cortisone and get him straightened out again.

Then finally, they persuaded him to become a dealer. They put him in dealer school, and he went through that, and he went out on the Strip. He didn't like it. He wanted to go back to the cement business. And he did. And finally, he was his own contractor. And I can't think of his name either now, but I knew him real well. And quite a few.

I had a lot of them in the culinary business because wet work, you know, and the bartenders would have wet work dermatitis and the maids would have wet work dermatitis and the cooks would have wet work --

**What is that?**

Well, just dermatitis of the hands from all the soap and water and the heat and the fish juice and the meat juice. They're allergic to certain things. So I saw a lot of occupations with dermatitis among anyone who worked on the Strip. So I saw a lot of that. But that was just part of the job. Even doctors began to have dermatitis on their hands from scrubbing so much sometime. I've even known one doctor who had to give up surgery because he couldn't scrub. So that was an occupational dermatosis.

This being the town of hotels and thousands of culinary workers -- and they were covered by insurance. They had good medical care. But their hands maybe just couldn't take the thing unless they protected them or got some sort of a duty which required less wet work and less

contact with these things which irritated their skin. The Nevada Industrial Commission and the unions were all very helpful and had a good relationship there.

**What was the relationship between the community builders, people like you and other members of the Rotary Club, between that group of people and the owners of the casino, especially in the early days?**

Well, quite often the Rotary Club when I came here had a number of members in the club who were in the casino business. They were owners. They were presidents. For example, the owner of the Tropicana was a member of our club. The president of the Tropicana Hotel was a member of our club. So they were in our club in the gaming business. In the beginning, this Rotary Club of about 23 members, they were businessmen. Of course, they had the Rotary Club before they had gaming here, too. So they were all businessmen and no casino operators amongst them.

But later on, it was obvious that the gaming industry was a big part of the industry and they were in our community. They also not only belonged to the Rotary, but they belonged to the Masonic clubs, and they belonged to their churches, and they sent their kids to school. They served on the school boards. And a cocktail waitress would be a den mother. So there was no problem about being in the gaming industry. There was just no problem during my time.

In the early days, though, it was a pretty religious town. They had a few Methodist Churches and Baptist Churches. But they all took gaming chips in the collection tray, and they'd take them to the bank and cash it. They had no adversity to taking chips. Our Lady of Las Vegas over here has had gaming people in it. And the first cathedral here was heavily supported by bosses on the Strip because they had a cathedral and a Catholic Church right on the Strip. So that was never a problem amongst the people here in town.

Now, you see, we have gaming all over the country. So now they no longer point to Las Vegas as being "Sin City" because they have the same problems and the same things we do. But they have more trouble with theirs than we have with ours because they can't keep those politicians' hands into their pockets. So now they don't say anything. We're so glad to have them out there -- I am.

**Last time you told me you were going to tell me a story about Al Capone.**

Oh, Al Capone. Well, of course, in the early days after they had gaming here, there were people who had been in the gaming industry and things in other cities, but they couldn't surface. Newport, Kentucky, and Covington, Kentucky, right across the river from Cincinnati were gaming communities. But the men who worked there, if their wives went to church, they would say, "Well, my husband, he's a clerk." They wouldn't say he was a dealer. I've had close friends who worked in the casinos back there and they knew Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin and all those people when they were in their early days. But the people from Cincinnati, which is a good German and Catholic community, they're just all over Kentucky, they flock in there. In the same way our good friends are Mormons up in Southwest Utah, they like to go down to Mesquite for dinners and maybe a little play and a little fun. Then they go back home at night and go to church on Saturday morning. So it's convenient to do that. No one bothers too much about it here.

But I would say now no one pays any attention to what they do because they all have legitimate jobs. They try to make every effort to keep their gaming industry clean and no cheating because if they do they could lose their license. So who's going to have a dealer or a pit boss doing badly out at one of the big Strip hotels by losing a billion-dollar layout? They have that power of doing it.

And fortunately, from the very beginning, we've had very good gaming control. The sons of business people have gone into law and they're on the gaming commission. Alan Bible's son was a chief of the gaming commission. So the gaming, the businesses, and the religions, they're all pretty well indicated. Everyone understands, and you won't hear the preachers preaching about it from the pulpit, either. In the same way they don't have clocks in the casino because they don't want the people to know how late it is and that they should be going home and going to bed to get up and go to church the next morning.

**Now, tell me how Al Capone plays into this.**

Oh, Al Capone. Well, I had this little fellow who was a dealer. It's funny how people sometimes confide in their doctor when they won't even confide in their minister. Anyway, he worked in Chicago. He says, "Doc, I was a clerk at Al Capone's office in Chicago. I lived maybe ten blocks from the office. So I would walk home for lunch every day, and my wife would have lunch for me. So one time they said, 'Well, there's a brand-new black T Model Ford down there.

You can have that. You can drive back and forth to your home courtesy of Al Capone." Well, he said, "I'm all right. I can walk." And they said, "Go ahead and take it and see how you like it."

So he went down and cranked up the little T Model Ford -- same model that I have in my country doctor museum back in Arkansas, by the way -- and he drove it home and had his lunch and he came back out. He said, "Just by happenstance, I walked around to the back of the car and lifted the lid on the trunk. And there was a Thompson submachine gun lying in that trunk."

I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I very gently let the lid down, went in the car, started home, went back down to the office and said, 'Here's the key.'" He said, "I just prefer to walk." And then he said, "When I came to Las Vegas and I would see some of these people -- I knew who had been in the mob business and other places; and they would see me and they would recognize me and I would recognize them -- I kept going and they kept going." They didn't want one another to know anything about one another. Mum is the word. Keep your mouth shut and your eyes closed and you won't get in trouble. So there were people who did that, you know.

But on the other hand, I've had other bosses, up high in the gaming business, who have been in gaming since they were kids, and they would tell me who was a big shot in this hotel. "I knew him back in the purple mob days in Cleveland. And, oh, he was a crook. You couldn't trust him." And this one fellow, Mr. Eddie Fritz, made two fortunes in gaming. He was on a ship coming back home from Europe. His price in the stock market went down. He says, "Doc, I lost everything I had in the stock market crash."

But anyway, they would tell me stories about themselves and other people, and some were people here in town. But I would just keep my mouth shut. They would confide in me. I've heard some pretty good stories, and I could name some names. This one friend that I have, he was from Covington and Newport, Kentucky, and he knew a lot of these people back there now who have been big men on the scene in the gaming industry here. And he knows who are mobsters and who are not mobsters. He knows the game inside and out. He's now 88 years of age. But the stories he could tell you...

**Has he been interviewed?**

No, not by --

**Would he tell the stories now at 88?**

Well, he's getting up in years, but he would be interesting to talk to. He remembers a lot, and he has a very bright mind. He had a wonderful wife. She was a good bridge player. His wife and my wife were close friends. In fact, we lived right across the street from one another. He has a son here who has a good position out at the test site. After he got out of the hotel business, he went into the restaurant business here. But he could tell you all these stories about the early days.

He tells me he started the first baccarat game in the Caesars Palace hotel. It used to be called chemin de fer. And he knew now how to play it from learning it back in Kentucky. They asked him to come out to Caesars Palace. He said, "I went out there and they introduced me. I want to see so-and-so." And they told him, "Go on. He's in the back room." So he went back in the back room and they set up a deal. So he put in the first baccarat game or chemin de fer in Caesars Palace and Las Vegas. And I have no reason not to believe him. Now that's a big game here, but he started it.

But he tells so many other stories. He's been in the eye in the sky. He could spot a crook from here to there with the bat of an eye, a crooked dealer. He just knows the game like the back of his hand.

**Has he ever told you how to spot a crook?**

How what?

**How to look for someone who's cheating?**

Oh, he's told me just stories. Yeah, he can tell it in detail. He could tell it in detail. It's just like telling you how to bake a cake or how the hog got over the fence.

**Oh, that would be so interesting.**

Yeah. He's a very interesting person, very bright-minded, highly intelligent, but he just never was educated.

**It sounds like the communities were just so integrated -- business, the professionals like the doctors and everybody. It just seems like everybody was really integrated at that point.**

**Tell me about the beginning of Helldorado.**

Well, Helldorado was started, I believe, in 1937 at a time when business was bad. There were two business leaders. One was Mr. James Cashman, Sr., who had Cashman Cadillac, and the

other was Mr. Sullivan. I believe he had a plumbing company. He was in a business, perhaps a plumbing company. He has children who are pioneers here, too.

So they put together Helldorado, which included a rodeo and a parade. They declared that everyone should wear western wear on Helldorado days. When I came here, we all did that. I wore a wide belt. I wore cowboy boots. I had a bolero, and I had a handkerchief around my neck, and I wore that to the office. And everyone dressed for Helldorado. The clerks in the bank, they went western style from the president right on down to the lowest clerk. It was just a community thing, and everyone pitched into it because they all realized it was part of their livelihood to do this.

They had three parades. You'd have a kiddies' parade on a Friday. Then they had the old-timers' parade on a Friday afternoon. That was for the old pioneers. Then on Saturday, they had the beauty parade. They had beautiful floats, which had been built by the hotels and the local people. They had showgirls, original showgirls, out there standing up there with all their costumes and feathers on. Some of the young high school girls were very pretty. They were selected from the local families, and they would be parading. They had high school bands. Then there was a famous Spanish riding group that always came up every year from Santa Barbara, California. We usually had some Hollywood figure to be the marshal of the parade. I remember seeing John Payne. Hoot Gibson was here at that time, the old cowboy. But it was usually headed up by prominent people.

So after that, they all went down to Bonanza and Main Street, the Helldorado grounds. They had games and they had stands of food and barbeque. Everyone went down there for that. Then they had a dance that night.

They also had a fighting routine where everyone had to buy a badge, a Helldorado badge that you wore on your clothes. It cost two dollars, and you'd better buy one. If you got caught without it, they could throw you in the pokey, which was a big iron bar cage right in the middle of the street. If they put you in there, you had to stay there until some of your friends came up and saw you and bailed you out by buying a ticket and so forth. Then occasionally, there were frame-ups. They would get one of their friends down there without a tag and have these big policemen with western-type hats with their two guns. And they would wrestle and put them in

the slammer, in the pokey. They would keep them there as long as you wanted to.

**It sounds like so much fun.**

Oh, it was. It was fun.

**Did it help revitalize the business community?**

Well, that helped bring in more tourists. They kept going from 1937 until, I guess, sometime in the 60s. Then they got to the point where the hotels wouldn't participate because that was drawing people from out on the Strip to downtown and they would have nothing to do with it. So normally, they had the support of the hotels. But, of course, you go back before then, they didn't have that many hotels --

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

-- old-time hotels which would participate would be the Thunderbird, the Golden Nugget, the Sal Segev Hotel, the Last Frontier, which was built in 1941 or '42. They all pitched in because the parade brought business up to Las Vegas from Los Angeles. So that went by the hotels.

But later on, gaming was mostly concentrated on the Strip. They didn't want people going down there because they generated their own publicity and they had their own publicity community and so forth. They would do many things to get notoriety. The local people did the PR, too. Many were quite good at it. They would volunteer their time and work for nothing to create all this publicity. And the Union Pacific Railroad would support it because they were getting people to come up by train at that time, too. The airlines would generate business for them, Bonanza Airlines.

My wife was a stewardess on Bonanza Airlines. She was on a float one time, which was sponsored by Bonanza Airlines, going down the street. So it was hometown play, which was so corny that it was funny.

**When did that hometown atmosphere change to -- I would say now we're sort of a big city. When do you see that change taking place?**

I would say maybe in the 60s and 70s because I remember even then as late as 1975, 1985, I would see patients who had moved in from larger cities. "Oh, we just love the small town atmosphere." Now, that was in 1980 and 1985. Of course, these were people from Los Angeles. These were people from New York or Chicago. Here we were the old-timers. We couldn't

remember like it was back in 1900. When I came here, there were people who could remember the old days when they had the start of Helldorado. So I've had the opportunity and the health to be able to see all this change that's taken place over the years.

Some of these old people were really founders who came here in 1905 like the Von Tobels, Bob Squires who had the newspaper, Bill Ferret who had the White Cross Drugstore, Ronzoni who had the store downtown, and a number of them who were truly the old pioneers. Then, of course, there were other pioneers who came here and worked and built the dam. They raised their families. Some stayed and some left. But they were all contributors who will forever be lost to us because we don't know who they are.

But there are many people throughout this United States who helped build Las Vegas. I tell my friends and I tell my family and I tell my children, "Everyone who comes here does something." Everyone lays a brick. Everyone one scrapes a little more. Everyone carries a hod a little bit. It takes all these people to build these skyscrapers. It takes all these people to do all the culinary work. It takes all these people to give the support -- the cleaners and launderers, the doctors, the nurses, the teachers, the educators. You're a pioneer. You have helped. What you're doing here is helping to record the history of Las Vegas. So we're all pioneers. Even though we may not stay here for a very long period of time, we all contribute.

**In the 60s, Howard Hughes came. That's when we see a break and the city goes toward the big corporations coming in. The Hilton and all of those big companies started to come in at that point. Did your professional community see a big difference when that began to happen?**

We knew it was happening, but we didn't participate in it because we were physicians. We took care of them whether they were a pit boss or whether they were a street cleaner or whether they worked in a casino in the culinary business. We had a broad spectrum of all this, you see.

**Was there a change in the feeling, the small town? Was that kind of when --**

No, it didn't take place. We could see it taking place, but we didn't feel the full impact, I would say, until the 80s when we began to see it.

Of course, everyone knows and I'm sure you've been told about the good influence of Howard Hughes moving in because he was a corporate man, an accurate bookkeeper. He hired a



lot of retired military officers. He had a lot of Mormon people on his payroll. He operated a clean game. And he set a model. So if his hotels took in so much money and he paid so much taxes on what he paid, then that would put the bee on other people who had hotels and who were doing that much business or more and may not be paying that much in taxes.

The stories we heard, just street talk, was that people would go to Phoenix and go to Mexico, and they would take money out of here by the case full, you know, and so forth. They had messengers. I never knew anyone who did that, but that was just common talk amongst people. But they didn't say too much about it. By the same token, if a crime was committed, if some man was a mobster who did something wrong to other people in the business and was not fair, they might do away with him. But they would do it out of town. You may have heard about the Gus Greenbaum story. Well, my wife knew both of them down in fee in addition.

**Tell me that story.**

Well, the story is that I think Gus Greenbaum left one of the hotels on the Strip. It may have been the Flamingo. He had a clientele, I suppose. He went to the Riviera. Some people didn't like that, apparently, so he and his wife were killed at a hotel in Phoenix.

Then you've heard that some of Bugsy Siegel's bosses didn't like him because they thought he was spending too much money on this and that and wasn't doing the job right. He had this girlfriend, Virginia someone. So that supposedly is how his career ended because he wasn't playing the game according to the rules of his bosses.

What I'm telling you now is just talk about the time. It's no secret. The conversations are no secrets. But I have known people to tell me these things over the years, doctors, friends who were physicians, just some of these people. One was a personal physician of Gus Greenbaum and close friends of his and so forth. But you wouldn't ask him about this. He wouldn't tell you. And he was just a physician.

**Give me the names -- if you right now had the opportunity to interview let's say two people --**

Interview what now?

**If you had the opportunity to interview just two people who are still alive today, who do you think would be the two most important people whose stories we should get on tape,**

**who are still here?**

Well, so many are on my list. One who still has a clear mind is Ed Von Tobel. You may have already interviewed him. He has a clear mind. He has a good memory. He's one.

One who would have been very good to tell about some of the inside of the gaming industry would have been my friend Jess Abbott, but he's 88 years old now. He has a clear mind, but he's not quite as vigorous in build as he was. But he would have been a good one to tell the inside story, the relationship of some of these people here to Newport, Kentucky, and the gaming figures he has known. And he has known a lot of them. They knew him. He's well known and well liked. He could go get a job anytime.

Oddly enough, he was a dealer and a box man. He could have been a pit boss. He could have been a shift boss. But he didn't want that. All he wanted was his job. He didn't want to go any higher than a box man or a dealer because if he went above that, he'd lose his tips. You know, box men aren't supposed to get tips, and the dealers do unless they split it with the shift. But he just never aspired to be a boss.

On the other hand, there have been people who have started from the bottom and worked up. Boys who go to high school have become presidents of some of the hotels.

I would have to sit down and think before I could give you an answer like that. Some of them are on my list, and I could spark a few of those. Jess Abbott is not on my list. He could probably tell you some things if you get him just in the right position.

He grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. A few years ago, he wrote a letter to the editor of the Cincinnati paper. So what happened, there was a young reporter in the editorial department there who would like to know something about the earlier days and he read this column. And he called Jess Abbott up. And so Jess really spilled it out to them. He wrote a lengthy column. And he said, "When can you call me again?" And he said, "Anytime you want to." So he contributed some materials that were written up in Cincinnati's newspaper because he was a boy with an acute memory. He remembered his boyhood days on the riverfront there and on the hill and so forth. And he also knew the gaming people in Newport in the nightclub there. There's a club there. He knew all those, and he knew these people after they came out here.

**So that was written up in the Cincinnati newspaper?**

Cincinnati paper. He probably has clippings of it. But he's sort of a character. He's very smart. You could sit right down and give him a cup of coffee and get him going. He could give you some interesting little stories.

**Oh, I can imagine.**

It's too bad -- he has such a good memory and he knew so many details, so many little things.

**But it's probably too late to talk to him?**

He knew people who lived in the little old cabins or the little houses behind the El Rancho Vegas. Howard Hughes lived there and other people lived there with their girlfriends and so forth and so forth. He knew a lot about that. He knew the owner, and he would joke with him like he was his brother-in-law. He's just right in their face, you know, a nice, affable person. But he has so much he could have told.

A person downtown who I think probably knows a lot -- I know he knows a lot. He may have been interviewed. And that's Jackie Gaughan who has the hotels. His son, Mike Gaughan, is my patient, lived right across here. Mike Gaughan's mother-in-law lives right next door to us.

**Now, this is such a beautiful hidden-away community here. How long has this been here, and what is it called?**

This is called Rancho Nevada. It is not as affluent as Rancho Circle. When I came here, Rancho Circle was the affluent area.

**Now, where is that located?**

Right back behind us, over here.

**Okay. This is just beautiful.**

Yeah. I'll drive you around and show you. Steve Wynn's brother-in-law lives right down the street here. Some pretty prominent people live here. Mike Gaughan lives right over here. But it's convenient because it's located in the central portion. Incidentally, this area is a central area. It was noted in the paper the other day. Green Valley, Rancho Nevada, then Bellaire, Rancho Bellaire, then Summerlin and now Spanish Trails, Spanish Oaks. There are so many different areas now that some of these people who are able and mobile, they don't know which way to go. There are so many places to go. They're confused and frustrated. We have people who have lived

here who come back to this area. Every time they come back, they usually fix up their homes.

It's right next door to the umbilicus of Las Vegas; that is the Las Vegas Valley Water District. My son lives right across the street. Over there is the old artesian belt, which at one time had a well flowing 30 feet in diameter. It went down this way, and it fed the spring. The Williams mountain men came, and John C. Fremont came, and more of the pioneers came. That's where it all came. The belly button is right across the street. They're going to make this into a preservation park, which I think is the greatest thing that's happened. The Las Vegas Valley Water District is doing that, and some of the community organizations are kicking in. It's going to be nicely developed.

**Good.**

Of course, you know about the Union Pacific property down here where Mayor Goodman is trying to do something. That is the second part of the umbilical region. That came second. I think what they should do with that, instead of putting a stadium or a performing hall or something like that, is they should make that a park. It would be like Grand Central Park in New York. It would be like the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. It would be like the big park in St. Louis, Missouri.

**So why don't you suggest this?**

What?

**Why don't you suggest that to the mayor?**

Well, if I talk to him, I think it's a good idea. I guess I should give it to Oscar Goodman.

**Yeah.**

But, you know, it has such a wonderful exposure along the freeway. On one side it has 95. The railroad is on one side. It parallels the downtown park. So it could be the only garden park of downtown Las Vegas. That would bring back downtown Las Vegas. Look at all the famous stores up and down the street of Grand Central Park in New York, the highest priced property in New York, very attractive. It's better known than any other part of New York, the Grand Central Park.

**That's right.**

Maybe Rockefeller Center is second. But most people know about Grand Central Park in

New York.

**I think that's a great idea.**

Another one is the Audubon Park in New Orleans, the Audubon Park. The area has become famous. It's like the garden district of New Orleans. I often said we should name all this the garden district because we have all these trees and grass and so forth. Everyone moves in because of that. But anyway, that's what I think would be a good idea. I think it would generate more income than anything else if we would convert that to a nice park. Very little maintenance. Of course, you wouldn't get any tax from it. Think of all the business that would be brought in on that. It's a centerpiece -- it could be a centerpiece of Las Vegas. It could be the emerald surrounded by the diamonds.

**That's great. My last question. A lot of the civic organizations have created part of the foundation of the city, the Rotary Club and other clubs like that. What kind of projects are you working on now in the Rotary Club, and what are some of your big plans for the future?**

Well, each administration has its own project. The only thing which we have going now which is an ongoing thing is the Las Vegas Foundation, which is a tax-free fund. We dispense funds out of that for any deserving group or individual. That's the only ongoing thing we have besides just the membership and the structure of the rotary.

The clubs have done various things and so many different things with the clubs and parks. We have a little Rotary park up here, but it's been surrounded by buildings. There's not too much to it.

Most every year we have a speech program, a public speaking program, and the subject is for a Rotary test. We circulate this amongst all the high schools and invite them, these particular speech groups or classes, to participate in this. They select one speaker from each high school, and they get their pitch, and they're judged by people who judge public speaking. They have winners there. Then they go to district meets and they compete again. So the four-way test public speaking thing, that's sort of a cultural thing.

**Do the participants get some kind of prize or a scholarship?**

Oh, they get a monetary prize.

**What would you like to see clubs like the Rotary doing, let's say, in the year 2001?**

Well, I would like for us to upgrade our membership. We have too many people who come into our club, I think and other people think so too -- some may, who use this as a stepping-stone. They come into the community, and they want to get in the swing of things. So they become a member of the Rotary Club, and they can add that to their CV. Some of them do things and some don't. Some people are workhorses and they do everything.

I remember the year I was president, the only thing which I tried to get is to get a meeting of the Rotary International here in Las Vegas. But we were before our day. We finally did get one. We had one in 1975. So that was the year I was president. I didn't participate in it, but I had been one among others who was trying to get it going before then. When I became president, one of our own pioneers, Wayne Kersch, said, "Doc, you ought to promote having the Rotary International."

So I took him at his word. I prepared a big, long letter and submitted it to the commission board. Of course, I didn't realize the immensity of it, how little my little letter was because these things are very much sought after like the Olympics in Australia or in Salt Lake City. They even get to the point where the Mormons put money down on the line because they see how important it is.

So we did have the Rotary International meeting. That's one thing that we did which was monumental.

One of our big programs was a Polio Foundation drive in which Rotary International undertook this project to vaccinate all the world to stamp out polio. We raised thousands and thousands of dollars for it here in Las Vegas. Nationally and internationally, there were millions of dollars, 25 or \$30 million just for the vaccine alone -- more than that, I guess. So it was a big national pitch, and every club in the United States participated. We did it especially. So that's one of the things we did here is to participate in that program.

We supported good things in the community such as this World History Foundation. You'll find a lot of Rotarians who are active on the various committees in the university. So that's one of our own projects, but it's not a project as such. We also will help young men who are future leaders who obviously have a drive to do things in the community. We'll make them

president of the club. So that's one of the things we do.

Our president now is Tom Krobe, and he's been very active in the Boy Scouts. He's been active in the Rotary Club -- oh, a number of organizations. He's a boy from a small town in the Midwest. But he is the type of pioneer who's come in -- we've had them before -- who will come in and go to work and do things.

So let's say he's a pioneer. You're a pioneer. We're all pioneers. We all come here and contribute something. As I say, we've sawed a two-by-four. We've laid a brick. Moved on. When it's all done, you have a tremendous building or whatever you want, which is made of bricks or sawed two-by-fours by you and me and everybody else.

**Right. My last question, very last question: Where do you see Las Vegas ten years from now?**

Where do you see Las Vegas doing what?

**Where do you see the progress, the changes in this city if you look down the road ten years from now? Where are we going to change most? What are we going to become?**

I think we're going to be a big business center and I think that's going to be embedded by the airport out here. If you look on a map, we're right in the middle. We're right in the middle of a very strategic area. We're in the middle of a clock. If you have hands on the clock that are 200 miles long and they sweep, that clock will sweep through Los Angeles, Phoenix, go part of the way to Salt Lake City and to San Diego and to Reno and over the mountains to Yosemite. So we're in the middle of a large area. Even now, it's my understanding that the federal government has this designated as a certain trade area in which they have statistics, which they keep measures on the statistics on this area here. And our trade area not only includes Southern Nevada, but it also includes southwest Utah, it includes northwest Arizona, and it includes the southern tip of California and in Nevada. So we have a large area, and we're right in the middle of it.

We have the infrastructure. We have the freeway going. We have a tremendous airport facility here, which is, again, only going to get better. And this is one of the visions that Howard Hughes had, by the way. He wanted at one time to do just what they're doing now, have a big airport. Of course, you have to deal with the city, and they don't have as much vision as Howard Hughes had. But he was right on the button. He was right on the button. And I thought so, too.

And the other place would have been down here south of Boulder City, Sandy Valley there. But it's too much surrounded by mountains. But anyway, that was one of his concepts. And he was right.

I think Las Vegas has gone from a small railroad town, which served as a depot and a watering station for a railroad that came through here. And there were trails that came in here, and there were mines around here. There were cattle shipped out of here. If you went down south of here down out to Kelso, you would see a little community. They had a big fancy depot. They had a place where the train personnel slept. It had a restaurant for them. But that was a support structure for this railroad in Las Vegas.

So we have the railroad. We have the airport. We have the climate and technology. We have a beautiful climate. I say that our beautiful season starts the first of June and goes clear through -- no. It starts first of October and goes clear through the year until the end of June. Then it turns hot. Then we have three hot months of July, August, and September. Nine months, we're home free. We don't have to shovel snow. We don't have to wipe ice off the windshields. The sun shines. It doesn't rain. We have all this. People have shown that they like moderate climates. So the climate is a part of our industry. Our climate is actually a part of our industry here.

I think as time goes by, we'll need to have more water around us. We're learning to use what we have now. I think we have more desert landscape, except for this area of Rancho Nevada. This would go with the garden district of Las Vegas. We'll pay the water bill.

But anyway, it's gone from being a railroad town to becoming a trade center for this area, this big area. Then it went to the casinos. That was in the 30s. Then another thing which came along was the military. We have a tremendous military installation now. That's the next thing. Another thing with which we were blessed was that Basic Magnesium plant out there. That came on just before the military, I think, moved in.

So now we have the casinos, and now we've gone from certain types of shows, one player -- Danny Thomas. Then we have Frank Sinatra. Now Las Vegas itself is the center of attraction. It is not one show, one room. Las Vegas itself is there in the same way in New York Grand Central Park is there and in New Orleans there's the French Quarter and the Audubon Park. In Florida it's Disneyland.



But Las Vegas is the attraction. It is still growing. Now the next stage we'll become international. We're going to have international plane flights and we're going to have planes to accommodate them. So the end is not in sight.

No one in the last ten years ever had any idea that all this was going to happen. I understand now we're up close to one and a half million, at 1.4 million. When I came here, I came here because of the nice size, quiet town, 32,000. And they just blew my town all to hell. So what do you do? You sit back and enjoy the show.

**Right. Well, thank you so much. This is wonderful.**

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