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An Interview with Charlene Cox Cruze

An Oral History Conducted by
Claytee D. White & Karen Schank

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

The Las Vegas story of Charlene Cox Cruze begins long before she was born in 1941. Her early ancestors had traveled through the area in the 1850s and her grandparents settled in Las Vegas in 1905, the year of incorporation as a town. She is a registered native American and Daughter of the American Revolution.

Char recalls growing up in the valley when it had: a “forest of mesquite”, plenty of water and atomic bomb tests. Her family’s first home was a structure built on a flatbed that her father pulled behind a truck wherever he had work.

In this narrative Char touches upon the memories of being a youngster playing in the dust to riding a horse across the desert, swimming in the pool at the Flamingo and seeing celebrities like Elvis Presley and Nat King Cole perform. She also offers her thoughts about the transformation of Las Vegas from a small city to the modern corporate era of the Strip.

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



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Ephraene (not) CRUZE

Name of Interviewer:

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Ephraene Cruze 8/09/10
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Clayton D. White Karen Schank 8/9/10
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Today is August 9th, 2010. This is Claytee White. I'm with Karen Schank.

Karen, spell your last name.

S-C-H-A-N-K.

And we're here to interview Char.

Char, would you please give me your full name and spell your first name for me.

Charlene. And it's C-H-A-R-L-E-N-E. My birth name is Cox, C-O-X. My mother's maiden name is Campbell, C-A-M-P-B-E-L-L. I use the name Cruze, C-R-U-Z-E, which is a name I chose sort of like a professional name because I am a registered Native American, registered Daughter of the Utah Pioneers, registered Daughter of the American Revolution, and I follow a good path. And Cruze, C-R-U-Z-E, the formal spelling, is the way of the cross. And utmost in everything I do you're going to find a little reason behind it. You know, teaching calligraphy, ancient symbols, ancient alphabets and all these things I've grown up with, of course—the Masonic laws, Indian laws and mobster laws. You know, a little thing, and I've always found there was a reason.

One of my most fun things is when I tell people when the mobsters used to—I grew up in Vegas during the time that godfathers ran the town. They hit town the same year I was born. The mobsters took over one end of the Strip and the military took over the other. So I was caught between the “M and M’s” I call it. So I had the godfathers down here and you had the military down there. So there was just this old Highway 91 running through town. I wasn't allowed past any of the five points or the railroad track.

What do you mean the five points?

Five points. See, this valley is so fascinating. Most people don't know that we are the most beautiful basin. And according to the Native Americans we are the perfect medicine wheel. My old teacher that used to come teach me, he would say, child, you live in the most sacred place. And he touched me so. He used to come and he would spread his blanket out and he would tell me about these places here. Well, you know, being a kid it's like, yeah, yeah. I mean you didn't have a car. We didn't have. So you thought, well, yeah, you know. Then as I grew older and I became a tour guide 35 years ago, I began thinking about things: like why is that mountain there and what's its significance? And all the sudden it's just like somebody turned on a light and opened a window and you went, oh, my gosh, everything that old man told me is the truth. And I

learned that we live in the most spiritual place in the world. We just camouflage it with a lot of things like the "M and M's"; so that people have to search for it.

And when I go out on tour -- I do a lot of ceremonial work helping people that maybe can't deal with a loss or searching for a good way to go in their life, getting on the spiritual path and things like that. And it's just so beautiful when you pick these people up and the next thing you know you're unfolding this story and they're actually looking probably for the first time at a virtual reality textbook of history and geology and sacredness. Instead of a mountain over there they see what it means. Instead of this over there they go, I didn't know that. I go, oh, yeah.

So tell me what the five points are, where they are.

The five points are located at 91 where Las Vegas and North Las Vegas connect. There's five points there. I think it's Owens, old 91. Main Street veers off into the old Fifth Street that diagonal off. So the five points are there.

Now, I wasn't allowed in North Las Vegas because that's where they sent all the "no-accounts" as my grandma called them and the shady ladies back in the 1920s when they were trying to kind of clean this town up a little bit so that the federal government would let the workers on the dam move here. See, they were trying to clean everything up. They planted trees. Oh, they really tried to do a real big sell.

The other of the five points is where Las Vegas ended to the east—Charleston, Eastern, although Eastern was pretty much in the swamp. You know, that was way below the old ranch. And you had all those streets coming in together. You had Boulder Highway. You had Charleston. And then they angled off.

And then five is really important. I mean, if you study sacred geometry and quantum physics, you learn that the number five is a very, very powerful number, you see.

Then the other five points is where the old Roundup Drive-in, Main Street veered off, Fifth Street here, St. Louis here. Well, it just so happened we lived just past that. From that point out was the edge of the great desert and it was the place of the godfathers, you know. Growing up in this religious community here in Las Vegas—I was raised in the Mormon faith, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Boy, I'll tell you what. You had a big respect for God. And you knew one day he was going to get that big old book out and start leafing through it and looking

your name up.

But the godfathers didn't waste time waiting for you. They had two rules. You don't lie. You don't steal. And believe me if you did, you just were never seen again. You got to take, I call it, the 86 tour out of town. You got to ride in a trunk, usually. They loved it here because the whole Strip's built on this whole Cretaceous/Mesozoic sand dunes out there. Old Bugsy Siegel, he could walk about eight giant steps out the back door of the Flamingo and say plant him right there. Bugsy was clever, though, because he came from Cleveland and they had a lot of stuff growing back there. So he said let's plant a rose bush on him. And little by little Bugsy's garden grew. And I write a lot of fun poetry. I'll go Bugsy, Bugsy, cute little Cleveland gangster, how does your garden grow? I write fun things about this whole time. Well, nothing feeds roses better than bone meal and blood.

So here we were in the middle of the desert. You'd drive miles. Mojave Desert has no trees. There's no trees native. And you get out to the Flamingo and, my gosh, he had the prettiest roses that you can possibly imagine. Well, you know, pretty soon you put two and two together and figure those things out.

But the godfathers were awesome. They were Jewish and Italian. The kids in my neighborhood where I lived at the edge of the great desert, which is now underneath the Stratosphere Tower, many of them were Italian. I remember when I was about 11 years old or so when the soldiers -- that's your Italian soldiers -- came through the neighborhood cruising in those cars from the 40s. And they'd see the boys playing at the Circle Park there and they'd call them over and talk to them. Well, some of them they recruited. Some of them made good and they're still alive and kicking and running casinos. Some of them didn't. And that was a real eye-opener for me because I will never forget; I can see it as clear as day -- the paper when -- Robert Duarte just lived up the street from me. And they said Robert Duarte's bullet ridden body was discovered in the desert. And I just could not wrap my head around this. Then I really knew these guys played for keeps.

So had they recruited him?

Yes.

You were aware of that recruitment?

Yes. And somehow or another he crossed up or he lied about something.

Old man that I worked with in the industry—by the industry I mean the tour industry. I won't mention his name here on the tape, but he just passed away. Ornery he was. Most of the tour guide ladies wouldn't work with him. He was ornery—I'd go, Are you scaring my tour guides again? He was sweetest man in the world. I always noticed that he wore a black glove. So one day we had some considerable time that we had to wait staging. It's hard for me not to say his name because he's very, very special to me. I said, Tell me about your hand; do you mind if I ask? He said, Well, I'll tell you. And he told me. He said I got caught with my hand in the till. Busted every bone in his hand.

Why did they give some people a second chance and most of them not?

Well, I don't know. I don't know. I guess he wasn't into it much or something or somebody stepped in. Maybe he had done a favor for somebody. That would be my guess. I didn't quiz him on it.

And then we sat there. I bet we talked two and a half hours about Vegas and about how it was and how you just knew to behave here. If the godfathers came back today, why, they would just be appalled at the way people act, the way they dress. They'd be appalled at the corporations and what they're doing to people, at the extravagance. Back then if people lost their money in a place, they made sure they sat them down, gave them a good meal, gave them a bus ticket home, and said, now, when you get back on your feet come on back. I mean they took care of people unless you stole from them or lied to them. And then they took care of them, too.

So tell me what it was like as a young girl here in Las Vegas before you were aware of all of that. What was day-to-day living like? Where did you go to school? Tell me about your family.

Well, it's really neat about my family because my mom and dad lived out on-the-road job for almost 14 years. My dad built my mom a little house. He framed it in on the back of a flatbed. I've got a great picture of it. It was hauled by the dump truck. And that was her home for 14 years. She never got pregnant. I have to say they were on rocky times. My dad was about six-foot -- whatever -- two, probably 240 pounds and could pick up a truck tire like it was a -- and my mom was five-foot-two, eyes of blue and as beautiful as you can possibly imagine.

As you are.

Oh, no. No. My mom was beautiful. And she had Betty Grable legs. I always would tease her. I would go, Mom, you've got the cutest little Betty Grable legs. She was just beautiful.

But my dad, he was a construction worker and he could drink. And when he drank he could get real mean. My dad was also quite a rounder with the ladies. When I was a little girl -- and I'll go back to how it was. But when I was a little girl and he hadn't made it home, Mom would put me either in the Studebaker -- we had a Studebaker President and we had a little Chevy Coupe. And she said say we're going to go get your father. And here I was little tow-headed ringlets. We'd make the stops. Let's see. It would be the Rag Doll. He liked the Rag Doll out there. Of course, this is past the five points in North Las Vegas. And he liked the Black Cat. That was the other five points. You're getting in real dangerous territory now. And my mom would pull up to the saloon there and she'd say you go get your father.

And, of course, back then you'd open the door to these places and it would about boil you over with the smell of alcohol and cigarettes. And I'd go in there. And usually my dad was sitting down. See, he played the fiddle and he could chord on the piano. He'd be down there probably with some little floozy sitting on his lap making over him. Usually he'd be singing Indian "Love Call" or something; so you can imagine. I'd just go up to him and I'd go, Daddy, it's time to go home now. Of course, he'd pick me up and sit me on the bar: that's my little girl. On and on and on.

So I just grew up kind of like those places were nothing, nonchalant and that. But to this day I've never walked into a bar unescorted because my dad told me a lady never does that and she never pumps her own gas. Now, I sort of got in a little pickle with that one because I can't find anybody to pump my gas.

The rules changed, though.

The rules unfortunately have changed. But growing up in Las Vegas—so here they are. They're out on-the-road job. My dad, when he was on his deathbed, he loved to tell the story about they were coming down out of—they had been up to Silver City and coming down on that old road, Tonopah and Goldfield. I guess they had a moment of passion. Honest to God, this is days before he passed away. He had to tell this story to somebody. They headed down this way and my mom

was not feeling good. She was sick and she couldn't figure out what was wrong with her because they probably pretty much told her that there wasn't much chance of her ever having a baby. And I've got to tell you that 14 years later I didn't arrive at the most appropriate time in their relationship.

But anyway, mom got down here and she was pregnant. I mean they're just rolling into town with a construction crew. And they pull into Vegas Camp across the street from the old Anderson Dairy, which was up on Main Street then. And they just tore that old trailer park down over there across the street. I think it was on Bonanza and Main Street. The old Anderson Dairy was across the street. Then right down the hill was the old ranch, the fort where his mom and dad had spent their honeymoon when grandpa came here to get a job as a carpenter and a Teamster. Grandma had gotten pregnant here. So it was kind of cute. It was like kind of history repeating itself.

So I was born at the old Las Vegas Hospital September 19th, 1941, at nine p.m. at night in room nine on Ninth Street. So it was always easy to remember all that. There were only two doctors in town. I probably shouldn't mention their names, but I think both of them—Dr. Cherry and Dr. Hardy.

Yes. And I think there's already a book with those names in it.

I'm not sure. Whichever one was the most sober because they usually weren't real—anyway, so I was born. My mom had all kinds of complications. My Aunt Jett pretty much took care of me an awful lot. They were working for my mom and dad on the road crew. She just had her baby a month before. So my cousin was just a month older than me. And then here I am. But my mom, that was not a good thing for her having me at all.

But anyway, so we were just living in this little, whatever you want to call it, little house on the back of the flatbed. It was eight by sixteen foot. That was her house for 14 years. She had a number nine tub and kerosene lamp and gas stove. She washed out on the washboard. I've got pictures of all this stuff. One time she was scrubbing the clothes so hard to get the asphalt out of my dad's work clothes that she created hydroelectric power. No. She created friction and caught fire, just like rubbing two sticks together.

So anyway, they went way out to the edge of the desert, Meadows addition it was called

out there. It was that and the John S. Park/Huntridge addition. Those were the first two. I've got the old book that shows all that, those neighborhoods and stuff like that. My dad bought three acres. It was a hundred dollars an acre on what is now the Strip under the Stratosphere, three acres back.

And he set the little trailer house. I have a picture of that, too. They made them. It was like the old covered wagons. You'd take the box off the frame. The frames are still the same width, everything from the old Roman times. They're still the width of two horses' asses. So are railroads. Everything is. Truck chassis, everything. Anyway, all you had to do was you laid your pipe and that. You built a foundation. You set your house down. That way you could get under your house if something broke. It wasn't all this stuff like you have now.

They had a well. We were on the Michaelis well. You'll want to remember that name. Wars. My dad and Mr. Michaelis and the water wars. Anyway, they got water there. So for the very first time my mom could have running water. So right away the first thing she built was a laundry room.

Then when I was five then my dad went out to—let's see. What was it? It was probably Pittman. I think it was Pittman. I'm not sure if it was part of a barracks or what it was. He moved houses. He moved the Little Church of the West from the Frontier; I've got a pic of that, too, down to the Hacienda. Closed what is now the Strip. Closed it all down. It took all day to do it. But he went out there and got some sort of -- I think it was maybe part of a barracks or something out there that maybe the army had built. I don't know. But people did that all the time. They built houses to be moved because if you had a house you weren't about to leave it behind and go buy another house. So he got that. And they built a foundation and they added a big room on the back. So we had a really nice house. Chan Nay and the Nay family, you'll run into that over there at Tule Springs, the Nay family. He was half-breed. He was their carpenter. So I vaguely now remember bits and pieces of living in the old trailer house.

My Uncle Harvey planted a cottonwood tree. A sort of funny thing that happened is that tree grew and was gorgeous. It was a huge, big cottonwood tree. And the year Uncle Harvey died that tree died. It didn't surprise me in a way. But I remember that it was so beautiful the way the cottonwood leaves shimmer and the wind, the way the wind sounds going through the leaves.

Then it would snow. Oh, and we'd just run and play in the cottonwood snow. What was the most fun—now, that's Boston Street. Those streets were—you had Boston Street. You had St. Louis. That's where—what is the name of that little market over there?

Meyers?

No. Let's see. That would have been later on. There's a little market over there on St. Louis. Oh, we were terrible kids. We'd get pop bottles and make them look like we found them out in the desert and take them in. And he'd give us cash and he'd set them out back. And we'd go get them again. Kept doing it. That's the only way; we were terrible kids. I'll think of the name of that, though.

Anyway, there was Chicago Street. Then going this way there was Baltimore and there was San Francisco, which is now Sahara. People that lived on Baltimore Street—Louis Andre Dubois. We called it "DeBoys" because we didn't know French. They were really rich people. And Junior "DeBoys" or Dubois, he works for the university. He's in accounting. So you need to talk to him.

Oh, well, they were very well-to-do. They had the ranch and horses. Then the daughter—and I can't remember her name—she was older. She had a whole collection of the Storybook dolls. You remember those Storybook dolls? You remember those? Oh, you need to research that on Google, the old Storybook dolls from the 1940s. Well, she had just a whole room full of Storybook dolls. And they had the horses. Irene Dubois. I mean these were like the classy. They ran with the elite down there on the Strip. I never do remember what he did exactly. But he wore those kinds of -- they were definitely Easterners. Let's put it that way.

And Junior and I always played together. Oh, we had guns that could shoot around corners. And we'd run through the desert. Our greatest find out in the desert was we found half buried and quite buried in the sand was this old, old steamer trunk. Well, we just knew it had fallen off the wagon and it was full of gold. We didn't tell anybody about it. It was hard to find things. Just remember it was all desert out there and it was all sand. If the wind blew it would have covered up our steamer trunk. So we knew we had to move fast on this.

So we went back and we got a wagon and a shovel. Well, we found out the wagon was more trouble than it was worth. But we ended up dragging this thing. And it was heavy. Of

course, the lock was rusted shut. But I mean that only added to the—but we couldn't let anybody know because we knew if we had this treasure, we could leave town and join the whatever we were going to do.

Well, my dad had this whole yard there. So my playground was construction equipment and shop and tools and everything. We finally cracked the lock and got it open. It was all full of spices. You know, those old-timey spice cans that you pay really good money for now. What's the name of those spice cans? Cinnamon and all-spice and cloves. Well, we were a little disappointed, of course.

I have no idea how old this trunk was. I mean, it was either thrown from the train because, you know, the tracks were right over there. I don't think it could have been. It was pretty big. I don't know. It could have been thrown from a wagon. I don't know. I don't know.

And so finally we just kind of—we made mud pies of every flavor. We'd set them out. Nobody would buy them. It was kind of funny.

But none of those streets were paved. They were all dirt. Oakey Boulevard was a dirt road. When I'd go to school over at John S. Park, we'd walk through the mesquite, this forest of mesquite. They were just beautiful. Sometimes there would be hobos. There would be hobos. We were always told to be careful walking through there. Of course, you were careful because the mesquites can scratch you pretty bad.

But when the rain would come, and it used to rain more, it rained. We had our summer rains. Don't call them monsoons because we never called it that and that's an Eastern word and we don't use it out here. We had our summer rains. This is just a delta, you know. The water just flows through here down wherever it wants to go. They spent all those billions of dollars on those stupid flood control things and no water ever goes in them. They don't have a brain. These people that came here do not have a brain I'll tell you.

So anyway, here it would come. You'd have your Duck Creek Wash. You'd have your Flamingo Wash. Because you know how many fault lines there are down through this valley and the water just, oh, yeah, we are really in a mess. They just follow right down there. So who was I talking to the other day? And our folks would let us go out and wade in them. They'd be deep. We'd roll our pant legs up to our knees and just play in the water running in the washes and this

mud and mud and mud. You couldn't get your cars out. You'd just be there until the rain was over. So that was great fun.

Half the time I'd have to go down to Fifth Street. I didn't like Fifth Street because there were a lot of rough kids that went to Fifth Street. Let's see. Toby Tobler was the coach down there. "Drop Dead Keller," that was our principal, D.D. Keller. That's what we called him, "Drop Dead Keller."

We'd have to march out of the classroom in '51, those early years, and sit on the lawn and watch the atom bomb tests. Let's see. Not fourth grade. What grade was that? They issued us all dog tags. We used to have bomb drills where we'd sit under the desk. Now, is that smart or what? Yeah, we would. We'd have to do that. But that old school, that old Fifth Street School -- this is the old part where the federal building is now -- you cannot --

Where the federal building is?

Yeah. It's not the one they just restored. That was the junior high school. That was the older kids. No. We had to go to that two-story old building.

That's the one that burned down?

Sure, like every other mysterious fire in this town. What real estate agent burned that one down, you know? In fact, they're good at that here. If they can't buy you out, they'll just burn you out. We know that. They've done that to more ranchers out in the valley than—come on, honey, welcome to the world.

Yes.

Yeah, sure, the Icehouse burned down, too. Yeah, right. And so did the old hospital. Why just imagine? Mysterious fire. I did a whole segment on mysterious fires of Las Vegas in my training class when I trained. I said be careful; if they make you a deal, you better take it.

So tell me about your teachers. What were they like? You just mentioned one who was a physical education --

Mrs. Pierce, we liked her. We liked Mrs. Stewart. My very all time favorite teacher, though, her name was Bernice Carter, sixth grade, Fifth Street School. I don't know where she came from, but she wore the ugliest shoes I've ever seen in my life. She was short. She sort of looked like the fairy godmother on Cinderella. And she was short, kind of chubby, and wore those horrible

dresses and those ugly shoes.

So what did you like about her?

She was strict. She had her classroom. She had a standard. She made and starched and hung Priscilla curtains on those ugly old windows. So she created for us everything she could. She had a paddle and she used it. She was strict, strict. In sixth grade we were diagramming sentences. We were learning algebra. We had debate teams. And we had to put on a formal Martha Washington tea. So we had to rehearse manners. We had to learn to serve tea, which served me well when I became the president of either the Penn Women or the Women's History Project. I don't know.

Because the Women's History Project used to have a tea.

And I have pictures of me serving the tea. So it served me well. Bernice Carter. And she wrote in my autograph book and I have the page. I saved it. And we had to learn penmanship. We learned circles and lines. So I grew up and became a calligrapher. She taught all the things. Most of the teachers were just terrible, but she was one in a million.

What was the other thing I was going to tell you? She wrote in my autograph book in this gorgeous penmanship. She said, "This above all to thine own self be true, and as the day follows the night thou canst then be faults to any man," Shakespeare. And I went, what in the hell is this? I thought she was going to say, Charlene, you've been such a good student this year and it's really been a joy to have you in my class, blah, blah, blah. No. She gives me this thing. I didn't have a clue who this Shakes whoever guy. I didn't know it was a guy. And I go, "canst'?" She just doesn't know how to spell, does she? Well, you see what's sitting over there.

Yes. "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare."

I finally figured that one out. It's been my motto all my life. She set down for me a standard. We were in high school. Let's see. I think we were sophomores in high school. And there was a bunch of us. Who in the heck was it? It might have been—I can't remember all of us. There were four or five of us. And we were real clever at cutting school. So we said, hey, let's ditch today and go over and see Mrs. Carter. So we went over and she was just wonderful. She said it's so good to see you girls and I'm so happy to see you. No sooner had we gotten out of the room she went right to the office and called the principal and reported us.

Wow.

No. I loved it. She didn't vary. Yeah, she was glad to see us and all that, but she knew we were cutting school and that didn't abide with her.

But I sure remember those kids that -- I could tell you tons and tons of stories about school days. Like I said John S. Park, one of my fondest memories, Mrs. Pierce, she was beautiful and she just was a wonderful teacher. What was her name? Fay Stewart was one of my teachers, wonderful, wonderful teacher. That was back when there were no visual aids. Even when I taught church all those years and taught calligraphy all those years, years, years, you know, 25, 30 years, there was none of this stuff. There was none of this -- what's the name of this store? -- Education Is Fun or Learning Is Fun or whatever. We created all that. We in our imaginations cut out enough construction paper stuff and drew enough stuff and pasted enough stuff that eventually it materialized. I think if you went out in my garage you would see boxes and boxes and boxes of hand carved stamps that I have hand carved long before there was a Michael's, long before there was stamping is fun. It was not fun. I mean, you carved. You drew them, you reversed them and you carved them. I taught all my students -- I would hate to guess how many students I've taught in this town.

And Fay Stewart -- it was really neat. There was Cannon, Helen C. Cannon and Fay Stewart. And Fay Stewart was my kindergarten teacher. I remember her little house over in Huntridge. We'll skip forward to many years. I hope I can say this without crying because -- I'm teaching a class, calligraphy. Get my roster of names. And who's in my class? My kindergarten teacher. And that really meant a lot to me. And so was Helen Cannon. I taught Helen Cannon calligraphy. I taught Fay Stewart calligraphy. And they told me I was a good teacher.

Wonderful.

So that was good. But some of the teachers were—to tell you the truth I couldn't even tell you the names of some of them. They came and they went.

I remember in church Farolyn White. They were kind of a poor family. They didn't live too far from us over there. She had a bunch of boys. They were kind of on the wild side. But she was the one who packed us up and took us to the old ranch for the bird walks horribly early in the morning, horribly early, like who cares if the sun comes up or not, you know? Taught us all



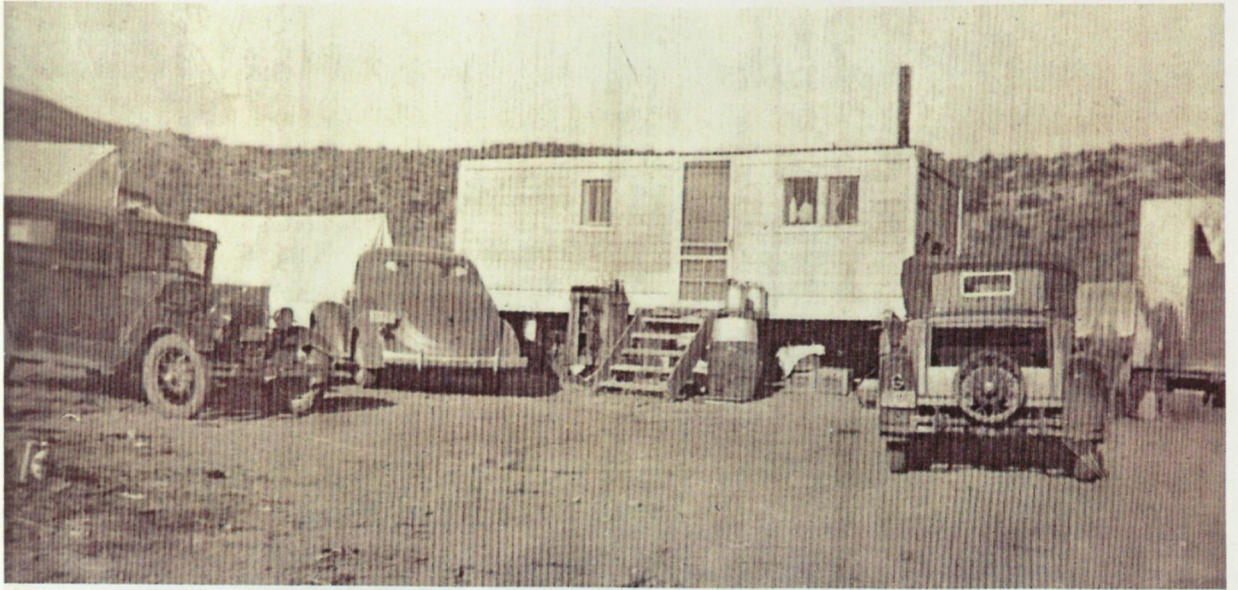
AUSTIN
STUDIOS
CALIFORNIA

To my Grandma
with all my love
Baby Charles



Char's father, Lewis Hunt Cox, worked at Boulder Dam from 1934 – 1965. Left: Lewis holds his infant daughter, Charlene, in 1941.

Above: From the family scrapbook, a snapshot of the dam construction in 1934.



Char's parents' first home.



Family home on Boston Street.



Charlene with her parents Lewis and Anna (Campbell) Cox at their Boston home.



Char's "playground" was the yard. Below she has fun with friend Brad Bowman.



about -- she and Bernice Purcell. And they're the ones that made the effort.

Took us up to see the old Wilson Ranch. I'll be damned if I call it the Spring Mountain Ranch. The old Wilson Ranch. Took us up. Farolyn stood right up to those Boy Scout leaders and said, what do you mean only boys can use this camp? I'm bringing my girls up and you just try. I wouldn't have wanted to tangle with her, okay?

And we got to go up to the Boy Scout camp up in the canyon above the old Wilson Ranch. And it was a dark night. We were in these little tents. We had these funky little flashlights. I mean come on, we used the batteries up before it ever turned dark. And so we do the marshmallow mellow thing and all that and told a few stories until it's time when we're getting ready to go to bed. Just about that time when everything quiets down this scream comes down that canyon like -- well, it just went right down your back. I mean I went, we're done for; this is it; we're dead. Mountain lion. We just froze in our little beds.

It was so beautiful up there. It was so beautiful before they went in and spoiled that whole place. I remember hiking up there years later and seeing a herd of mule deer, 12 head of mule deer. I don't know. Now it's like just terrible.

But the tenderness of this whole town is gone, the tenderness. Even the godfathers were tender. We could go out. We either walked over to the El Rancho Vegas or the Last Frontier or we took the bus. That was a big deal. It cost a dime to ride the bus. We'd get a quarter and we'd take a banana and some vanilla wafers. I guess we thought we were really classy kids. All we had was Kerr jars, glass canning jars. You always had to carry water. Even when Susan Wells and I would ride out in the desert on our horses you would have this old glass bottle of water. We didn't know there was canteens and stuff like that, you know. We were funny.

But you'd jump on the bus, go out to Flamingo and swim in the swimming pools for free. And who was out there around the pool? Well, those godfathers. I saw every single one of them including Bugsy because my dad hauled the dirt in to build the Flamingo. And when it opened he got an invitation. He had some real choice words to say about Virginia Hill by the way. And it was a dark and stormy night let me tell you. I remember the shirt my dad had. The men wore all western clothes. They wore satin shirts. And my mom, she was dressed to the nines, always in heels, always, always. We got in the car and the wind was -- well, nothing was out there. I mean

you couldn't even see.

They took you?

Oh, yeah. Oh, of course. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. The wind was blowing across that road so bad, that sand, that you couldn't even see. Your headlights couldn't even cut it. It was just an old two-lane road out there. There were no streetlights. It was the L.A. Highway. It was not the Strip. And I don't want to hear about how they say the Strip got its name because that's not how it got its name. I'm tired of hearing that story.

So we drove all the way out there. And all the way out there my mom did nothing but bitch. Go out on a night like this, this is stupid, and it's freezing cold. But she was dressed so pretty of course the cold would have spoiled the whole thing. Anyway, we got out there. That was back when you just pulled your car up and they took it and they parked it. They never gave you a stupid ticket or nothing. They remembered you. We got out and we went in.

And that, of course, is the beginning of another fascinating story because we went in and I went, oh, dear, this is very bad. I'm five years old. I go, oh, they got that stuff on the floor. You see out here we didn't put carpet on the floors because you'd just have to pull it up and sweep the sand out from underneath it every day because the sand blew right in through your house, you know. And they had that stuff on the floor. Well, I had seen that stuff. That was December, okay? The summer before I had seen that stuff on the floor at a place, a very dark little building called the mortuary. My friend that used to baby-sit me, she had gone with her friends out to the lake and gone past the rope. Undertow got her and she drown. Now, you have to understand this is the old Bunker Brothers that was out there on Fifth Street, not the one where they are now. This was a little white building down there.

Near the fort?

Well, it was actually closer to where the police station is. When you started down the hill, there was nothing down the hill. So anyway, we went there. It smelled of these flowers. Well, see, I didn't know they did that. I didn't know why they did flowers was to cover up the smell of the dead. Did you know that?

No.

Oh, that was the whole way flowers got started is because the body was decaying and all the

flowers. That's why I won't send flowers.

So they didn't have the embalming techniques then?

Well, you know, to tell you the truth I don't really know about that. But I'm going, what's all this? It smelled funny. We didn't grow up around gardens. We didn't know all this stuff. And they had that stuff on the floor. We'd go in this room and there's these like candlelight things. There's this box here. I'm thinking, what's in the box? Well, I'm not tall.

What's on the floor?

The carpet. They had a carpet in the mortuary. I'll never forget the painting, too. Oh, I hope they didn't destroy that painting. It was like a green meadow with the lambs and that. Of course, we had never seen lambs. So we just thought that was like wow. I mean if the room was this wide, that's how wide it was.

So what are you saying, six feet?

Well, as wide as this room.

Oh, as this room that we're in now.

Yeah. It was pretty small little rooms back then. I'm trying to think about the only place in town that you'd still see a little house like that would be over maybe on the Westside, North Fifth Street or down around Palm off Sahara back in there will you see the houses like they used to be here.

So we were in and everybody's like very sober. So my mom lifts me up. I reached right down. I can't understand why she doesn't talk to me. I reached down and touch her lips and smear this lipstick. And I can't figure out why she feels like a candle. All of a sudden, oh, no, her lipstick's smeared. So they call somebody. And in walks this guy who looks like he's about 12 feet tall to me in a black suit. Well, it's the undertaker. I go, what's going on? Oh, well, you know. I feel like I'm in trouble. I didn't know. So anyway, I had that experience. Oh, the other thing is there is music coming out of the wall somewhere. So obviously they have a speaker somewhere.

So anyway, the night I walk into the Flamingo opening night that stuff's on the floor and there's those guys in those black suits. And there's music coming out of the wall. You can't see a radio anywhere. Not one radio to be seen because that's all we had then. So I knew right away these guys were morticians. They were undertakers. I was probably right.

Yes.

But there they were with their—men wore Levis and real pants. What's this “slippy” little -- it's almost skirt like. And I look, and I don't know why I'm into this feet thing, but I look down and I go—well, we didn't know anything about Florsheim Shoes and that. Boots, boots make your feet like, you know. Well, these horrible shoes from back east make your feet look like they're about a yard long. And I'm thinking, what's with these shoes? And then some of them would be wearing these shoes and they were patent leather. Well, of course, five years old, I'm studying ballet and tap and everything and I'm going, why do these guys want to be tap dancers? I mean it was just a real—I was just a strange kid. And then being an only child I had time to think about things.

I'll never forget that opening night at the Flamingo. My dad lifts me up. I put a nickel in the slot machine. That's back when you had to pull the handle. Well, he had to help me pull the handle down. And I hit 18 nickels. Now, this is before plastic is invented. So I have this little five-year-old hand trying to hold 18 nickels and I think I'm the richest little girl in the world. I just know. You know, when the guys would get together and that, there was all these western clichés you'd hear. I remember them saying: Got to learn to quit when you're ahead. You've got to walk away when you're, you know. I thought, well, this is it. And I never gambled after that because I was a winner. I was just the richest little girl in the world.

They would put on these Sunday afternoon—well, you have to understand this was the Jewish godfathers because Sunday to them was a day of the week. So Sunday, and we would go out when my mom would—we didn't always because you had to go to church first. But we'd go out. And they'd have Easter egg hunts. There's stuff we never saw in our life. I mean if we went on an Easter egg hunt, our parents took us out in the Valley of Fire and buried the eggs in the sand and they were baked eggs like in Israel. It was horrible. I mean you could never find them because the sand movers so much.

Finally years ago I had to get Spike Jones. They'd bring guys like Spike Jones in to entertain us. Funny. I mean secluded rendezvous, boop, boop, boop. I mean we'd have all this entertainment. And the kids, as long as you behaved -- and we all behaved I swear to God because we were scared to death of these guys.

Then one more thing -- well, so many things about the entertainers. I was seven and I had

lost my two front teeth. I was just really into the John Thompson then. I mean I was like the lame duck and the scales. This is why I used to -- I'd have ten pennies. Every time I did it perfect I got to move a penny over. I was just the right student for Mrs. Carter, trust me. But if I made one mistake, one mistake, all the pennies went back.

Oh, wow.

I know. I was terrible. And my arms would just ache right here. I can remember how my arms would ache.

From practicing?

Uh-huh. So between my ballet—I just grew up—and we had a radio. And I couldn't wait for my mom and dad to leave me alone. I remember dancing through the house to "Ghost Riders in the Sky." We had Roy Rogers and Dale Evans and we had all these pretty songs.

There was one singer I especially liked. Whenever I'd hear him sing, I would tell my dad, I'd say, oh, I really like this singer, I really like this singer. Well, he came to town to the Thunderbird. I was seven. I'll never forget my little dress I wore. My aunt had made it for me and it had this little collar. She embroidered like flowers on the collar. She had made the little sash out of a satin ribbon. But, you know, I was feeling a bit sad because my teeth were out. So I didn't smile a lot at that time.

So we went to see this singer that I liked. So he came out and he sat down at the piano. And instead of sitting on the piano stool like he's supposed to, oh, no, he turns like this. And he's all over the black keys. Well, those were the hardest scales when you had to go to the flat keys, E flat, E flat, A flat, D flat, oh, you know. And he was all over it and singing. And I went he has not got his hands held right. I mean I don't know. I was a crazy kid.

So he spies me. Of course, then you knew all the maître d's. You'd walk in and they'd say, Lew (my dad), how are you doing? And they go like this (snapping). I loved this. And the next thing you know here comes the table down front, especially if you had—there was no reason back than that a kid couldn't go to a show. And so I was sitting ringside watching this and just listening, listening, watching, watching, critiquing his piano playing, of course. And he spies me over there and he modulates down a little and he sings "Dance Ballerina, Dance" to me. Well, I know in my heart that he can tell I'm a little ballerina, you know. I just thought that was

marvelous. That was Nat King Cole.

Oh, wow.

And so my next lesson I marched into my piano teacher and I said, I'm going to play the piano like Nat King Cole and if you don't know how to teach me, then I will just get another teacher. And I did because she didn't. She didn't know how to modulate. She didn't know how to transpose. She didn't know how to do all the stuff that he did. I think he played the piano probably before he walked. I mean fascinating things.

And I remember the days of rock and roll. Of course, we were dancing our little feet off to "Blue Suede Shoes" and all those guys. Of course, they were blackballed from town. They were not allowed here. I mean Chubby Checker, Fats Domino, The Crew Cuts. Absolutely.

Why not?

Are you kidding me? The godfathers would have rock and roll in their property? No. They had Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan. I saw every great jazz singer in the world except one that I missed because I was in traction with my last baby. I missed "Lady Day" or I would have had every single one of them.

So jazz was okay, but not that rock and roll?

Jazz was okay and the Rat Pack was okay.

So this one Sunday afternoon this guy's coming to town. He was on the Ed Sullivan Show. I'm sure you know right away who I'm talking about. But you can only see him from the waist up. We'd go over to the TV and look down. And I had to beg my mother. He did an afternoon show at the Frontier, April 1956. It was three dollars. Well, I mean pricey, pricey. Well, I finally talked my mom into letting me go. When I got there of course the maître d' knew me. So I was right down front again. These girls are over there screaming and carrying on. I'm going this is totally repulsive. This is totally undignified. And I just was shaking my head. I mean I just couldn't understand why they were acting like that.

Now, I was at a very impressionable age, okay? I was still a girl, very much. I didn't know much. For growing up in Las Vegas—we lived in such a safe town and I was so naive. We went to church. That was your social life. Your social life was church or the activities through the church and that was it. I was not allowed to go to the roller skating rink.

But anyway, so this guy comes out on stage. He is like good-looking. Got a pair of slacks on. He's got a sports coat on. He's got a real guitar in his hand. He hasn't got like all this stuff. He's got an acoustical guitar in his hand that looks like it's been played. With him I think he had three or four guys. He had another guitarist, a bass, drummer. I'm trying to remember if he had a keyboard man. And he comes out and he just kind of peruses the audience a minute. And here's these girls over here screaming. I'm going, oh, can they just please stop the screaming? He tilts his head a little bit and this hair goes like this. I could just feel something inside of me melting. I'm going what's come over me? This cute little smile unfolds across his face and he takes that guitar. I mean you can tell he loves that guitar. He hits that opening intro to "Heartbreak Hotel." And I don't remember anything after that. I transcended the whole world.

I just remember leaving and I was leaving in some sort of a -- when the show was over some sort of a side room trying to fight the mob just like kind of crazy. I don't know. Craziest feeling. I went, I've got to get married. And I had no idea why. I mean it was just so funny. I mean obviously whatever. He played the right combination of chords at that concert. He really did. And I got engaged not too long after that and I got married young.

I went through summer. I hated school. Oh, my God, high school was so boring. I already knew how to sew. I knew how to cook. I knew how to can. They put me in home ec. "And our first project will be a straight skirt." I said fine. So I made the whole skirt the first class. She says, oh, you can't do this; what are you going to do the rest of the six weeks? I asked her, what are you going to do? So she never did like me at all. And the same with cooking I mean. So they wouldn't let us take shop because we were girls. And I didn't want to take band because I had my piano and I was good with that. So we cut class.

Well, what about the other classes, history and English and all of that?

I took all of that. Got an A in it.

Was that boring?

Yeah. It was boring, yeah. And social studies I just laughed my head off. I mean I had grown up in the real world with my dad in construction and doing business with the Public Service Commission and the this and the that. And this guy is going to stand up there, Heber Hardy is going to stand up there and tell me how the government runs? I'll tell you how the government

runs. It's who you can pay off. So I was really funny because we bet a nickel on it. I said I'll bet you I'm right and you're wrong and I'll bet you a nickel on it. And he says you got it and he shook hands. Heber Hardy ended up being in Carson City. I ran into him one day and I said I think you owe me a nickel. And he says, you know, I think you're right. Yeah. But anyway, they were horrible teachers in school, horrible.

So did you go beyond high school?

I took some college.

So where did you go?

UNLV. I studied with Dr. Howard Chase. Dr. Virchel Bolley, the wild Russian that had just gotten over here from Russia; but I'll back up a minute.

So high school, we just cut school all the time. Of course, I was really good at calligraphy already. I mean Mrs. Carter had made sure of it. One day Mr. Long was in Ronzone's where my mom worked and he said, how is Charlene? Because I was always writing my own excuses. We're so worried about her; she's missed so much school this year. My mom said, what? So I'd get the "you'll have a meeting with the principal." And I go whatever. So he calls me and my mom in and he says we can't have you ditching school like this. And I go why not? I'm carrying an A average. What are you going to do? I said you have a totally boring school. You have stupid teachers. I was just not -- and so he says, well, what about these excuses? My mom says, I didn't write those excuses; I don't know anything about it. He says, well, who wrote these? I said I did. I said I can write like my mom or my dad. I said I can write like you if you show me your handwriting. I said so what are you going to do about it? I said the school is not challenging. This is Vegas High School.

So I went to summer school, picked up enough credits to get out. Get out. That's all I wanted was out. When I took the classes at UNLV, of course, I had studied music with Dr. Howard Chase and I was studying with Dr. Roger Buschell. So when I worked into Howard Chase's class, Dr. Chase's class, he goes, oh, Charlene, this is wonderful; I'm making you my student teacher. And I'm going, well, why did I just pay all this money? So he goes over and he introduces me to Virchel Bolley and he says, Virchel, this is one of my students. And he's crazy. Do you know Virchel?

No.

Oh, my God, you've got to meet him. He's wild. He is a wild Russian let me tell you. So Dr. Chase said she's been my student, this, this, this, whatever. By then I was a member of the National Music Teachers Association. I had been teaching. So he says, oh, great, I'll make her my student teacher. So half of the time they weren't in class. That was UNLV. That was 19 -- well, let's see. That was in the 60s when I went.

Here I was married and had four children. I still had a 22-inch waistline. I had this gorgeous dark hair and slender as a willow. Virchel wanted to go out with me. I went, I'm married. He said, well, maybe you can baby-sit my children then. I said, I have my own children. He's crazy. But, of course, he's still alive. He's over there at the university. Dr. Chase unfortunately passed way. He was a real gentleman. He was really great.

But the town was small and it was wonderful. We had school out there at UNLV. I mean you'd tromp through the sand dunes to get to class. There were no roads out there. We just thought why would they build clear out here? Clear out here? That's what we said about the Flamingo hotel. Why would he go and build it clear out there, three miles out of town? You realize the town used to end at Charleston. The godfathers had a rule. They never built in the city. It actually was originally a three-mile rule just like it was out at sea.

Did it stop at Charleston or Sahara?

It stopped at Charleston. There was no Sahara.

So San Francisco -- okay.

No. And then the city annexed it down to --

Oh, to Sahara.

And then they changed the name to the Sahara and all that kind of stuff.

Okay. That's how it happened.

But the old days Charleston was the end of town at the Gateway Motel there. That's Stanley Paher's mom and dad, Stanley Paher, the historian that does Nevada whatever, publication or whatever. Yeah. You should interview Stanley.

The Gateway Hotel was theirs?

It was the Gateway Motel.

Motel. That's correct.

I just went down to see Stanley not too long ago. He was in town for a book fair. He had his mom with him. Now, you guys should talk to them because Stanley grew up here. Well, I mean he's made his whole life of history.

So do you want to ask some questions about the old fort, Karen?

Yes. Can you go more into detail about the old fort? Are you feeling okay?

Oh, yeah.

Have we drained you? Okay. Could you tell us some more about the old fort and your early experiences there?

Yeah. You know, first of all, we lived—you know where we lived, under the Stratosphere. Well, the old fort was a long ways away. I mean it was a trek. What we mostly did there outside of our primary classes going on the bird walks -- and, of course, we loved those grain silos. That was the most fun. And we'd chase the chickens and then the chickens wouldn't lay for days. We didn't know that. But we'd go out and taunt the cows in the field. We didn't know if they were bulls or cows. We didn't know the difference. But we'd think we were big bullfighters, and they'd kind of look at us like these are very strange kids here, you know. But it was all good kids. It was Mormon families. So there was a lot of stuff that the Leavitts and the Stewarts did out there. They were very supportive of the church.

The church had a huge church farm out in Paradise Valley. And then they moved it back over there kind of where Sam's Town is. But the original church farm was out there off Warm Springs. There's a whole other story we can get into about Paradise Valley and all the springs there and all the Anasazi sites. My friend loaned me pottery shards, which date back 5,000 years, that were found there where the old mesquite forest used to be, where Park 2000 is in stupid Sunset Park, you know, Howard Hughes. Old man Helm had a ranch out there. The church had their farm out there. The Leavitts had a ranch there. Newell Knight had a ranch there. Then you had the Rocking Horse Ranch. And then you had the Daydream Ranch. And then you had Misty Place. You had all these wonderful, wonderful places that were out there. God, I mean there's just a jillion stories about Las Vegas.

But the old ranch, we would go and swim. What are I remember about the swimming

pool, the water was ice cold. They had planted lots of trees to shade the pool. But you'd run to the sun if you could find it because that pool was so—and then they had just dug a hole and built it with big rocks, okay? So the spring literally—we were swimming in Artesian water. I mean that's how much water there was here, Twin Lakes. Now, we could go to the old ranch. That's what we called it. We called it the old ranch. We could go there and swim like our church class or whatever like that. Twin Lakes was a different story. Twin Lakes was off limits because that was a dude ranch.

That's right.

And they had those cowboys out there that kind of entertained the ladies from the east. And they were afraid that those cowboys were going to be like trying to entertain us. So you'd go out to Twin Lakes. And in the middle of their handmade swimming pool was like a fountain. You'd swim out there and the water just poured drenching all over you, freezing cold. You'd just stand there and shiver. Of course, that was the whole deal; get out to the fountain and giggling and everything. We had to be chaperoned when we went there. That was where I took my first high dive and belly flopped very well.

Then we had the city pool on Bonanza there where isn't it a senior citizen center now? The old library was there, which was like about as big as this room. And then they had the city pool there. That was the first time I ever swam in chlorine. We didn't know what chlorine was. It was terrible. Now, it was all cement and there were no trees. So you either had the old ranch right down the road with all the trees or you had the city pool. Well, I kind of lied about my age and told them I was 12 to take my junior life-saving course. So I passed my junior life-saving when I was 11 there at the city pool. I think it's Dula. Is it Dula?

Yes. Dula. Yes.

And, of course, then you can get into Helldorado and the old Helldorado Village and the old skating rink; I was never allowed to go to the skating rink. And the real Cashman Field when it was real.

Where was the skating rink?

Let's see. It was over there on Fifth Street and Bonanza. And then over on Main and Bonanza I think it was -- and I hope I haven't gotten these two flipped, but I don't think I do -- was the



Above: Kindergarten photo John S. Park Elementary School.

Below: Vegas High School photo.





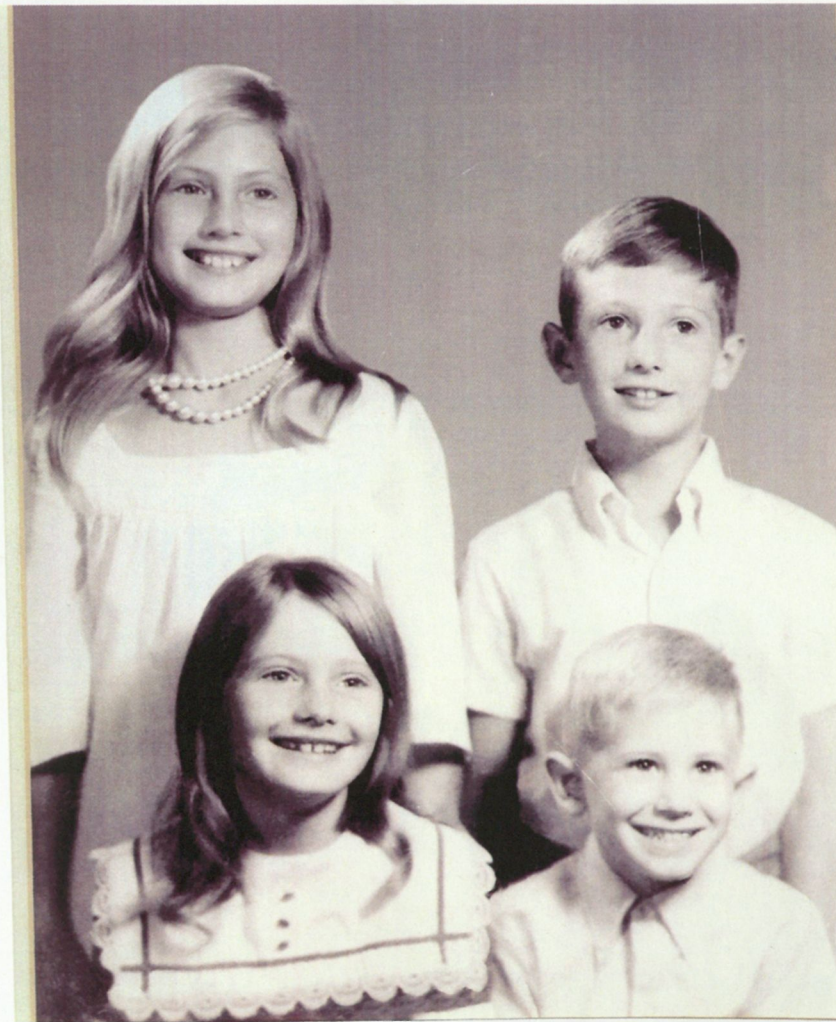
Above: Photo taken at Las Vegas Springs.



Left: Young Charlene



Photo of Char as a young mother.



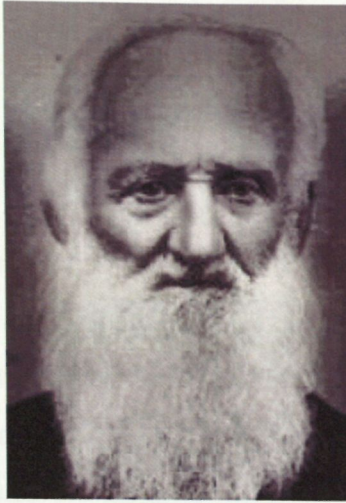
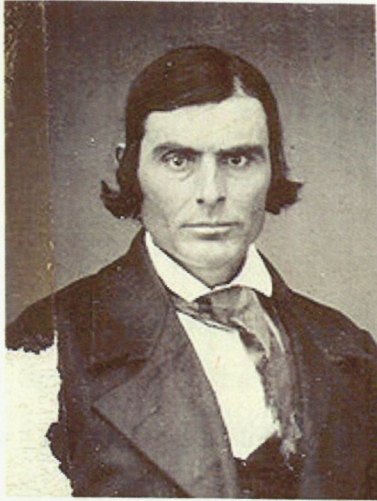
Char's four children:
Teri, Tommy, Jenny and
David.



Left: Anna Isabella Campbell Cox and Lewis Hunt Cox in 1927.

Below: Charlene's father, relocating the Little Church of the West from its Frontier Hotel location.





Great great-grandfathers : Hosea Stout (left) and Edson Barney (right) spent time in the Vegas valley during the mid 1800s.

Below: Grandma Campbell (left) and Grandma Cox (standing) with her sisters.



Biltmore Hotel.

That's correct.

And there I saw the Mills Brothers. And, see, one of my favorite songs was "Paper Doll -- "I'm going to buy a paper doll" -- because paper dolls were my life. And I finally got to see the Ink Spots. I got to see them sing that song. Yeah, that was wonderful.

Tell me more about the Biltmore.

Well, it was kind of like this and it had a pool. It was kind of green in color. A lot of things like—what was the one out there on the highway? It was over on the right. Well, kind of like where the old—I think it was the Castaways ended up being there. But there was a place. That's where I saw Les Paul and Mary Ford. But I think right along there was the old Red Rooster Club. And then there was another place. What did they call that? I think it eventually became the Castaways if I'm not mistaken. But the one you need to know is the old name of it and I have all that written down somewhere in that book. But it's just like, oh, my God, to see Frankie Laine sing "Mule Train," oh, my God, that was just great. And Vaughn Monroe. God, who are some of the -- I mean just unbelievable. And, of course, they had all these showgirls.

So you just grew up in this world of—it was a fantasy land. Safe, classy, first-class. I have always said if I had one wish I hope they go fast enough in electronics that they can stick a probe in my head and download the wonderful -- I never had a scary experience in this town, never. I've never. I almost hate this town now.

So what are some of those changes that you find yourself not liking?

I don't like the rude people. I don't like the Strip at all. The Strip is ugly. It's garish. It's opulent. I don't know what in the hell they think they're doing there. I really don't because tomorrow morning I'll be picking up people from the Flamingo and I'll begin with a story. And you know what? All daylong they'll say tell us another story.

That's right.

Tell us about and tell us about and do you remember? This whole mystique and ambience of Las Vegas ended with Howard Hughes, Steve Wynn. When those bastards came to town, Hilton, Conrad Hilton, they changed this town.

So other people say that was the good change, it was the change from the mob to the

corporate. But you're saying just the opposite.

Just the opposite. And you ask anybody that grew up here, they'll tell you the very same thing. There was no gray area with the godfathers. They kept their word. I could walk up to Moe Dalitz and say, Moe, we got a problem in our family. Let's say, Moe, I've got a problem; we need some help. You just come right in, sit down. Now, I've never asked for help, but I happen to know that you could go and you could get help. I mean I've got a friend that owns resorts on the Strip. He's a wonderful Italian guy. Taught me how to kiss.

So what kind of help could a family get?

Medical help. Medical help. Nobody lost their home back then. Nobody went hungry. You never saw beggars on the street.

We had a little hobo town. It's where Sahara and the freeway crosses. You'd go back there. We'd ride across there. Susan Wells and I would ride across with our horses. It's nothing to cross there, but you'd go across the tracks. I always thought, oh, I hope my dad doesn't know. But their big ranch, the Wells Ranch, was over there across the street from about where the old hospital is on Rancho. That was all ranches over there. But between my house right over here, the Stratosphere, and over it was a bit of a diagonal. We'd have to cross the tracks. And here would be all this little hobo village. I'll never forget that we'd ride. Of course, we were riding during the day. Well, they were out begging for work or for food or whatever they did. The tin roofs rattle. Oh, we would gallop our horses as fast as we could go. And they lived more or less exactly like they lived when they were building the dam before they got housing for the workers. It was a shantytown. But we never took pictures. You know, the pictures are here. The pictures are all here. Susan Wells, yeah. She put me on a rank horse one time.

A what?

A rank horse. That was always the deal, you know. I can't remember how old I was. I wasn't very old, maybe 11 or so. Got to ride old Thunder or whatever, you know. That was how you always got initiated, you know.

Oh.

And old Thunder wasn't really old Thunder at all. I was a good rider. Two of my uncles belonged to the sheriff's mounted posse. I had ridden my share. I thought a little cocky maybe. So I get on

old Thunder or whatever in the hell his name was. Give him a little kick in the shanks there and nothing. He just stands there. I thought, oh, man, they've put me on an old sow horse. Well, upon delivering the second kick he reared. I hung on. He went down. I held on. He reared. I held on. Next trip down I did the best bop in the world you ever saw. Then, of course, I hurt my hip. Probably the start of a lifelong -- but you couldn't tell your mom. I mean she came to get me and I'm going, oh, I must get up now. But that was just part of kid's stuff.

So you are part Native American. So was that from your father or your mother's side?

Both. My mother is Scottish. Campbell, Campbell clan in Algonquin, upper New York State where the old people, the old nation. My dad's people, Welch, predominately Welch and Cherokee. I'm registered with the Northern Tsalagi Nation. Tsalagi is the Cherokee word for Cherokee, so if somebody says Tsalagi. So I registered with them because there's no paper trail on my mother's people. My grandpa was half-breed. My uncles, Dale and his father, there was 12 in the family. Raw-boned. They played extras in movies as Indians. I mean they were Indian. My grandpa made every pair of moccasins that that family; he made a cradle board for my grandma's babies. Maybe he couldn't read or write much, but he could—Dale's father would sing and my grandma played the guitar.

We grew up with stories of—well, see, that's another whole story. You don't want to get into that side of the family because our great grandfather was the sheriff up in Garfield County who grew up with Robert LeRoy Parker, who is Butch Cassidy. So that's a whole other yarn. So when I go over the road on tours, we get to Zion and start talking about history and Bryce and all those places. I've got a cousin that's a tour guide up at Cedar City. His dad worked for the park service. He taught me things about Zion that only an Indian would know just like the old man that came to our house and taught me where the hidden caves are and the bodies that still sit with the corn baskets in their lap and the music cave.

This whole place is so alive—most spiritual place in the world, most spiritual place in the world. So I find refuge in that. I stay off the Strip. I have to go pick up people and take them out.

Then, of course, my dad worked on the dam from 1923 to 1965. Now that new road going on, that's going to close his old road that he built and I won't be able to drive on my dad's road anymore. I've taken my children across that road, my grandchildren and my great-granddaughter

across that road. My grandparents rolled into this place in 1905 to go to work. Came across that old Spanish Trail in a prairie wagon. My great-grandparents settled in St. Joseph. And my great-grandmother, the first schoolteacher in Clark County. My great grandfather, the first bishop over there. Great-great-grandfathers, two of them, came here if you can imagine not that long ago, you know, 1850s. And here comes Joshua Stout with his little—I can just maybe see his leather bound journal there mapping his way across.

So in 1850 when the Mormons settled the fort --

That was it. He came before the Mormons. And then the other great-great-grandfather came with the second wave to work on the lead mine. He was from New York originally. These people came and --

Now, the lead mine didn't turn out to be that successful.

No. If you've ever been up there to Potosi, that's hard mining up there. And that lead deposit isn't really very good. Then, of course, it goes into, you know, there was so much nickel and silver that ran with it. I mean this story of mining here is fabulous. I mean which story you want to go with? Like there's 10,000 avenues you can branch out on. So I always tell people that's where the legend of the silver bullet because that goes back. See, you have to study so many things because this goes back to the time of the vampires. And the only way you could kill a vampire was the silver stake through his heart. Have you ever seen the story of the Lone Ranger?

Of course. I grew up with the Lone Ranger.

Well, I meant the story of how there were six rangers and one actually survived the attack. But then this Indian man finds him. He sees this thing around his neck. Well, when they were kids and there had been a problem, the ranger as a kid, as a boy, had stepped in and saved this Indian boy's life. And in return the Indian boy gave him this medicine pouch that he wore at his neck. Well, can you imagine his surprise when, you know, he's ready to just do this guy in because there's no love lost. I mean the only good Indian is a dead Indian. Well, the only good white man is a dead white man, you know. And he sees this and realizes it's his boyhood friend. Well, he nurses him back. Then, of course, when he gets back and gets his strength up and that, he says—I don't know if his name was Tonto. That's kind of a dumb name. But he goes out and he says we're going to put another grave there, he says, so that they think they killed them all.

It's a Zorro story. It's another Zorro story. It's just in this day and time. There will always be a Zorro story. There will always be the one who triumphs good over evil and something to do with silver. With Zorro it was the sword. With the Lone Ranger it was the silver bullet. So the stories grow.

Death Valley stories, for example, they went right to the journals of these old Death Valley travelers. That's where they got their story line. You know, Dale Robertson. I'll never forget the year Dale Robertson was a parade marshal at Helldorado. One year it was Roy Rogers and Dale Evans and Gabby Hayes. They used to bring the old 20-mule teams in from Death Valley every year for the old-timers parade. I saw Scotty before he died, Scotty of Scotty's Castle. I met Buster Wilson. He was really an old drunk. I've got pictures of some of his paintings. Buster Wilson could spin a yarn the best of any of them.

I remember one time the Sons of the Pioneers came in. It was so funny. Sometimes I just get so embarrassed about stuff I did. We were listening and singing all the old—we really liked the water song, you know, "keep the moving Dan," you know. Somebody said, oh, these Sons of the Pioneers, they're just -- of course, I grew up with like Uncles, they were twin boys, and my grandma. They all sang the same songs. I said, well, you know they're my cousins because I thought since I was a Daughter of the Pioneers, the Sons of the Pioneers were my cousins. Everybody was cousins, you know.

But anyway, I've been thinking about dragging that story book I made up for the the president of the Mormon Church. I got to present it to him. I have some really wonderful stories about David O. McKay, especially President McKay. So you got that whole side of it, too, the beautiful things. So you had all these—just a great town, great town.

Tell me about blacks.

Tell you about the blacks. Okay. We never saw them outside. They lived -- by the time I was born—although there was no segregation as far as us going to school. I mean they had the Roosevelt School and the other little school down there. What's the one they turned it into Sunset High School? And I knew you were going ask that, Claytee. And I think you've heard me talk about this before.

See, Claytee and I go back a long, long, long way.

I never, and I tell people this, I say we never saw—and I say Negro because that's what we called them. We didn't call them blacks. We never saw Negroes, Mexicans or Asians, ever, ever. So you might say I grew up in a totally white world. You did see them working in the hotels. There was never any exchange except they were wonderful, polite. They were probably always in a uniform, always polite. Even I understand now, someone mentioned to me that with Nat King Cole actually looking at me and singing that song that he could have been reprimanded for that. I had no clue. But a Negro man was not allowed to look upon a white woman even in the shows. And they were all Negroes. I mean the most fascinating women that colored my whole life, you know, Eartha Kitt and on and on and on. I mean they have no idea how they affected this girl right here.

Me, myself, I never knew anything. I didn't come from back east. I didn't know anything about the Civil War. I didn't. I knew nothing about it. Negro men worked for my dad on construction. Indian men worked for my dad. But we never saw Mexicans and Asians, not here. But we saw Indians and we saw Negroes. There were Negro cowboys and they rode in the rodeos, and Indian men. And so many of your Indians were breeds of the Cherokee, which I learned later, because the Cherokee Nation took in the Negro and so did the Quakers. And my dad's people are Quakers. Well, see, I've learned a lot over the years.

They started out, Claytee, when they first came here was because of the factories in Henderson. When they built the magnesium and titanium factories, they wanted factory workers. They wanted people who would never ask any questions and just were glad to have a job. They went down into like Alabama and Louisiana.

Fordyce, Arkansas.

Uh-huh. And they brought people up and they built them a little town. And I remember Carver Park. I saw Carver Park. Frankie Williams and I took her out there and I talked to her about—we had a lot of discussions about Carver Park. Some of the white people lived there, too.

Victory Village.

There was Victory Village and there was Carver Park. But some of the white people that were really, really poor; there were always those really, really poor white people. They lived there, too.

And my best girlfriend who just died a couple of years ago, we grew up across the street

from each other. Her father got murdered in a railroad yard. Her mother had died at childbirth. And she had the wicked stepmother, okay? Well, wicked stepmother abandons her in Carver Park. And the great aunt, who is actually a prostitute working for Vera Krupp out at the ranch -- don't tell me about that room out there, please. I cannot abide with any more lies about the history of this town. Anyway, Vera had some pretty exotic parties out there and she ran the girls.

Now, is this at Bonnie Springs?

No. It's Spring Mountain Ranch. The old Vera, Vera's old; you know, what's his name had the radio show. Lum and Abner were at it. Then he sold it. He was a Hollywood man and he sold it to Vera. And Vera, she partied hearty out there, let me tell you.

Anyway, this great aunt of Joann's was contacted because that was the only relative they could find. She was working head hostess at the El Rancho. She was a prostitute. I mean she was no hooker. This woman made money at this. She had Cliff Jones on -- I mean the list of guys that was on her dance program were the highest politicians in this town.

She lived across the street from us. Well, she and my mom did not hit it off at all. But here I was. And she comes over to my mom one day. She goes, I've got to take this kid, but at least I'll get her father's railroad pension, which was supposed to go to Joann. I mean she was totally in the money. And so she says, would you mind riding out with me to pick up this -- it wasn't very nice -- you and your kid? You and your kid.

So we went out. We kind of had a hard time finding her. I had never seen anything like that in my life, Claytee, the way those people were living out there. Dirt poor. Dirt poor. And here is this little barefoot, filthy, little girl, sour milk on the table, nothing to eat in the house, and rats I swear to God as big as dogs.

Well, this poor little girl, what was in store for her the rest of her life was very, very sad. She took her home. Yeah, she cleaned her up and she fed her. Kept all of her father's railroad money, of course, and used her as a child slave. And when she was old enough that some of these old codgers were interested in --

But that girl, I'll tell you what, never a cross word came out of her mouth. She was the dearest friend to me. I hated that woman so bad. I'd go and threaten her with her life. I said you beat her -- she beat that little girl almost every day. I say you touch my friend again and I'll kill

you. Well, it got to the point she got scared of me and she kind of quit beating me (sic) because I'll tell you what happened. Joann told me about this man who had—because Ethel was using her for child—we didn't know nothing about any of this. She was crying and she said she hurt really bad from what this -- and I couldn't understand what she was talking about. I had no clue. I remember this as clear as day. My mom was sitting at the sewing machine. I went in and I go, you know, there's this man that hurt my friend. And my mom is a pretty feisty little lady.

Anyway, my mom called the police. Well, this was a little difficult for Ethel because Ethel was screwing half the police force. But they called the FBI in. I was playing out in the yard with my elves and fairies. That's how young we were. And this guy comes and talks to me. Well, I just told him what I had told my mom. I guess Ethel got her hand slapped a little bit and they extradited this guy out of the state. She and Roxie, Roxie Four Mile, they were two of the top hookers, top prostitutes in this town. Now, I don't know how we got off on all this. The Carver Park story.

Yes.

So we had never a problem. There's a lot of girls I grew up with here. We get together for lunch and that. And we never had a problem until the Culinary Union came in. And the Culinary Union came in and could see—well, we didn't know; we didn't understand because like I say we didn't know anything about the Civil War. We didn't know anything about it. I mean, you kind of heard about slavery, but you didn't really -- if it's not in your lifetime or in your family or in your -- I knew about Indians more than I knew about Negroes. The Culinary Union started organizing all these Negro people that were working their tails off on the Strip.

But it's like Annie used to tell me. Annie was the maid to Wilbur Clark's wife, a Negro woman. Did you ever get to interview her?

She wouldn't talk.

She wouldn't tell you the story? She told me the whole story. She had that health food store over on Tropicana and I always went in there. And she told me all about how it was. And she said -- and they knew not to say a word because the ones that did get a job had a good job. And she said she never took a tray up to Mrs. Clark that there wasn't a 20-dollar bill on that tray. She said, I put my kids through college. She drove her on all of her little errands. Let me tell you the envelope is

still being passed in this town. Don't you think for a minute that old thing has ever stopped. I've been to funerals in this town where the FBI is still out taking down license plates number. Why, I don't know. Nobody would be driving their own car.

But anyway, so the Culinary Union came in in the late 50s. And about the time they did the Moulin Rouge. We used to go over there all the time. Did you ever get to the Rouge?

Oh, yes.

Okay. Great place. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, God, it was great. It was just great. And friendly. There was never a feeling of fear in this town. There wasn't. And then that deal with Al Bramlet when they kidnapped him, shot him full of bullet holes and everything. And then the Negro people rose up. They said we've had enough of this. Sammy Davis Junior, that whole deal with Sammy when Frank said if my friend can't stay here, we're all leaving. We're all packing up.

Where was this at?

Probably the Sands.

The Sands.

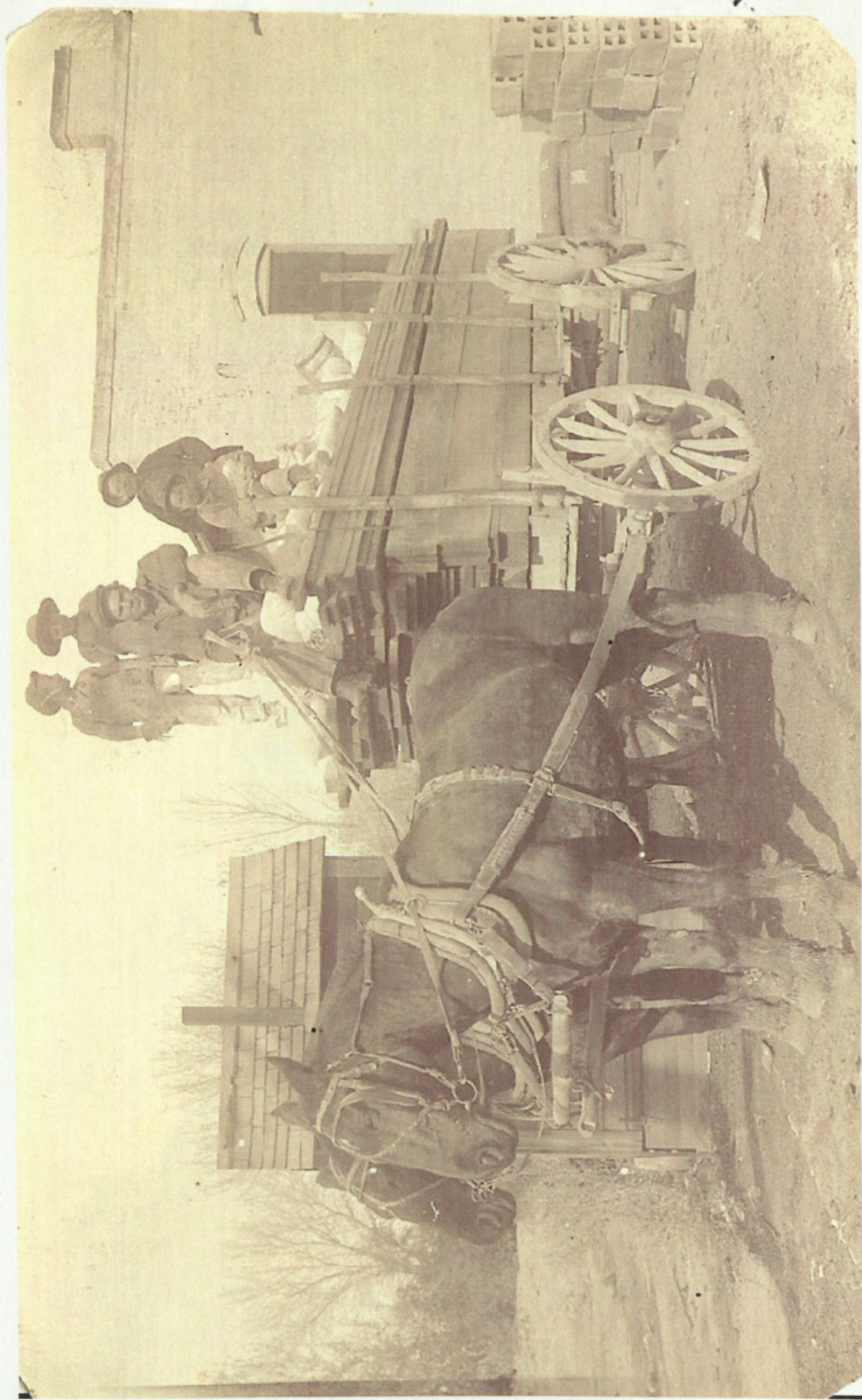
Yeah, because they wouldn't let Sammy stay there. See, the black entertainers could not stay on the Strip. Well, we didn't know that. Nobody told us that. We'd go to see them and they'd look terrific. We had no idea that they went out the back door and went over and had to stay in a rooming house or with a family over there. Lucky that family. I would have had them staying at my house teaching me piano. But, oh, no.

I mean a lot of Vegas has been a shock to me. Learning about that and getting to know -- most of the drivers that I work with -- and you know this for a fact. And the man I'm talking about with the black glove was a Negro man. And you know what? I'll tell you one thing. Those Negro men are polite. They're respectful. And I'll tell you what. I'll go on an over-the-road tour with a Negro man in a New York second before I'll ever go with a white driver because there's never a problem, never. They know how to treat a lady. They do. I know jillions of them out there on the street. I'll tell you what. They are fine gentlemen.

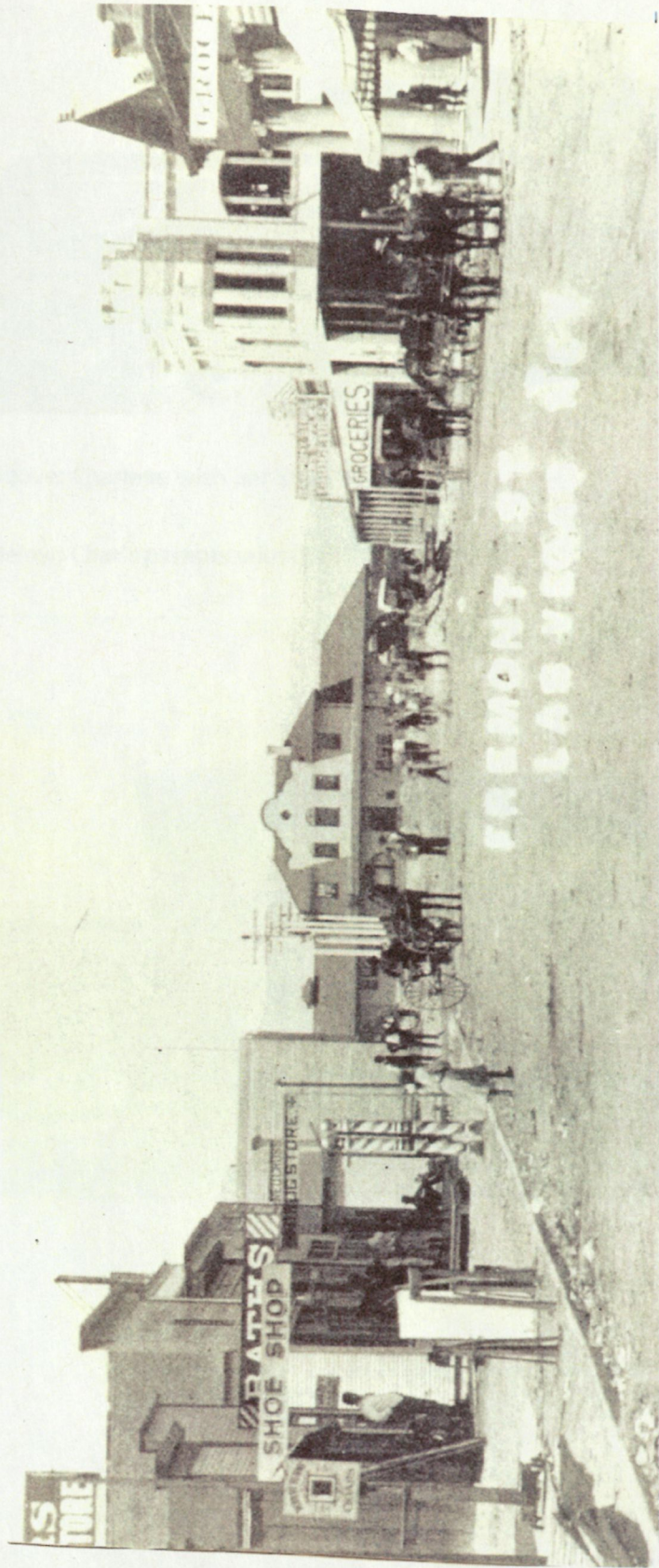
Yes. Could we jump back to the old fort?

Sure.

Thank you. I know you remember the ruins that were there before they were bulldozed. I



Grandpa Cox's team moving a load.

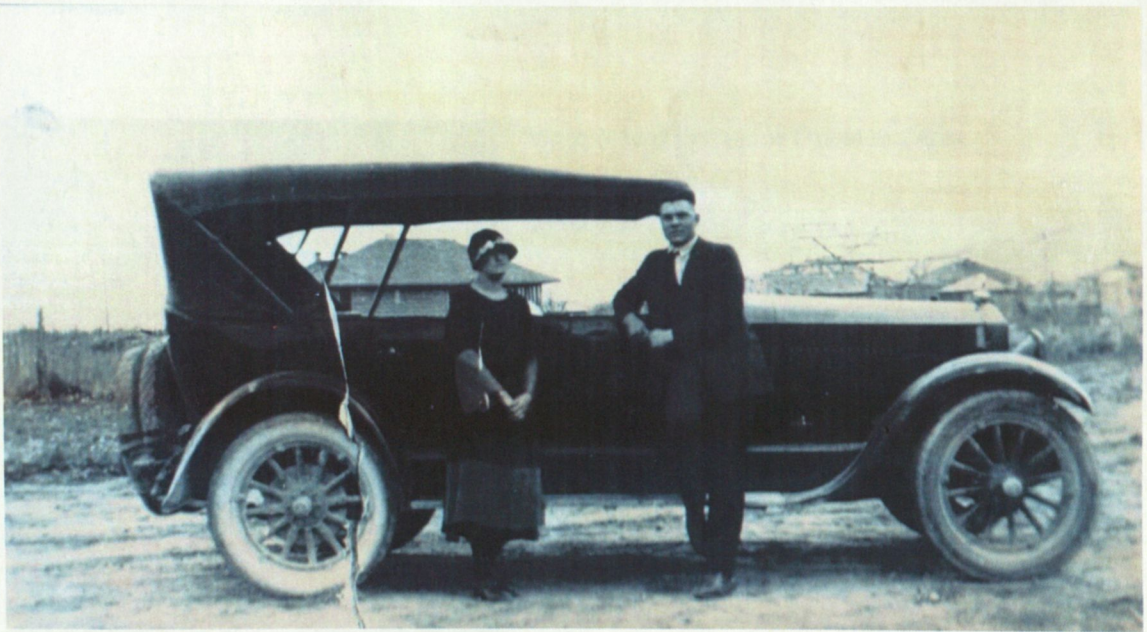


Fremont Street in the early 1920s.



Above: Charlene with her Studebaker.

Below: Char's parents with their Diamond REO.





More recent photos of Charlene Cruze,
2009 – 2010.

remember you telling me about that. Could you tell me about how high the walls were and any rooms within the walls of the fort?

That would kind of be hard to tell you now. I was shorter then.

That's true. Tell me about the structures within the walls that you remember.

There was a lot of adobe left when we were kids. And there was a lot of like pieces of buildings or kind of what they'd used for -- still kind of usable, but like not a full building. I mean that one building that they have there, that was pretty much -- see, that was used by the Bureau of Reclamation. They're really the ones that salvaged that building. They are. So by the time I was there -- you've got to know this is probably in '47, '48, '49. It was more or less just leased cattle ranch to Cornell Stewart and Mishi Leavitt, his wife, and Douglas Stewart who started the deal up in St. George. Douglas, he's a fine, did you talk to Douglas?

Doug Stewart. Yes.

Oh, you did talk to him?

Yes.

He's a wonderful man. We grew up together. Then there's Mike Leavitt. And you talked to Mike. And I know Worldsley Frainer's given you a history on the Frainer family.

I was just wondering. You had mentioned that there were some maybe they looked like buildings within the fort.

Yeah. All there really was --

Apartments or something?

Yeah. They just looked like, you know, kind of the cabins out at Valley of Fire. You know the cabins out at the Valley of Fire that the CCC boys built? Yeah? Okay.

So those are the small ones with just --

Yeah, very small. And they have a chimney. I mean they have a fireplace in them. More or less like that except they were all broken down. So they were about that size. They would be about eight foot, maybe eight.

By ten.

Eight by ten. There would be a little cooking, little place over where you could cook. I'm not sure -- I don't think all of them had the little fire pit. I think some did, some didn't.

And which wall of the fort were those connected to, do you remember?

As far as I could -- see, they've changed all the streets out there. That's another thing that's disconcerting is you went to the old ranch. Then they cut Washington through. But that was all old ranch. That was all -- it's really -- and you know that museum over there. They took part of the old ranch. So that old ranch really went over to the old Cashman Field, like kind of where they have those signs stored now. It was big. It was really big. And the swimming pool is over where the Nevada State Building. I sat there every day. I went there every day and watched them bulldoze that stuff down.

Wow.

That stupid Freedom Park or whatever they called it. Why didn't they just leave the old ranch there? That's the Elks Club for you. That's those Elks.

But again with the old fort, these are inside the adobe walls?

Yeah. Yeah. You could tell that they were straight across the back. But the walls were broken down I think probably just because the cattle had gotten in there. I mean because the cattle was -- there were corrals where the kids bring their horses.

In connection with the old Stewart house, the ranch house, the old Stewart house, could you tell from that where those buildings were?

Well, the house was like over here. Those little buildings kind of were over here.

On the opposite wall?

Like closer to Las Vegas. And this would be closer to going down the hill where the house was. And then the swimming pool was over here where the spring was. We used to play in the creek all the time. All the time. We'd catch skeeters.

Were there frogs in there?

Yeah. And boys popped them.

Popped them?

What does that mean?

Squeeze them and pop them. In fact, that one breakfast I went to the other day, oh, I think it was last year, the Boy Scouts were out there. It's that one where they cook the breakfast and stuff.

And one of them had caught a frog and was trying to taunt me with it a little bit. And he says let's

pop it. And I go don't you dare pop that frog.

I mean the creek was big. That little creek was big. Go look at the Muddy River.

Is that what it looked like?

Without the salt cedar. Yeah. It was a flowing good-sized creek. And from there back there was nothing. I mean water went down to the --

Did you follow it to its end?

Oh, no. Oh, no. We wouldn't have been allowed to do that. That would have been too far, too far to go. We were never allowed to go down to the -- I guess what you'd call where it meets up with the Colorado. Oh, no. But it was big. It was huge. It took in all that area where that Bunker Brothers' mausoleum thing is. They should have never built that on top of those burials over there at Bunker Brothers. That's terrible. That's just plain terrible. But you know? That was (Highway) 91. That was a two-lane road, honey, going down through there. That was not some six lane whatever it is now. They've cut, cut, cut.

What are the changes that you dislike most?

In Las Vegas?

Yes.

All of the above.

Okay.

All of the above. You see, when I was born there were 10,000 people here. Everybody knew each other. Everybody took care of each other. That's the western way is you took care of one another because it was a matter of survival out here. There was no questions asked. There was no hesitating. There was no fear. There was no anything. You took care of one another. You respect your elders. You listened to the stories. You did your chores. I don't like anything much what I see, thank you.

Yes. How did you get back into this area of the city? You're almost where you grew up.

Well, that's sort of all about my last name, the way of the cross and the journey of the medicine wheel. And I've come north. This will probably be the end of it right here because north is the place of the elders. It's the place of the buffalo. It's where you make transitions, usually. It's good to be back home. It's good to be in a neighborhood that all the houses don't look alike. It's good to

be on ground that I walked as a child. It's okay. And when I pull into the back of the Stratosphere, I chuckle. I'll laugh. And I'll think, oh, my God, they're on top of my little dog's grave. And I tell people that. And they can't -- just like a lot of things we couldn't get our heads around. You know, we could not fathom -- and, you see, they've so protected Vegas. News, things that happened here never -- and it wasn't let into this town. Nothing affected this town. We were like isolated paradise.

My dad paved the runway at what became Nellis. We weren't sure what those guys did out there. That was past the five points, so we weren't allowed to go out there. That's just how it was, you know. Well, it's just like if you go to the edge, are you going to fall off?

But I remember then my husband, I ended up marrying an air force guy, that was my first time to go past except when we took a road trip somewhere. But he was a crew chief on an F-100. I went out there and I had never been to the base before. I had no idea what anything about this was.

Of course, when I grew up World War II was over, basically. I do remember early, early—in fact, I've got in one of my scrapbooks gas rationing stamps or something like that that my mom and dad had. I remember something about how hard it was to get tires for the equipment. And, see, my dad was exempt because they needed him here to build the runways. That was what he did. Instead of being drafted and going to war, he made the homeland prepared.

I wasn't old enough to comprehend Pearl Harbor. All I know is the Japanese—some of the old Japanese people that moved here after the war, were relocated here after the war and they were kind of set free to -- we didn't understand prisons and concentration camps. But we went out all the time and bought vegetables from the Japanese. Of course, Tomiyasu, he made some mighty fine wine. So people knew about him.

But there were ranches all over out there. It wasn't just Tomiyasu's ranch. There were ranches all over out there and farms. You could grow anything here. There was water everywhere. My first well out at my ranch was down 200 feet. And then the water table dropped and then I had to put a new well in at 600 feet. Well, you figure a thousand dollars a foot for a well. Where is an ordinary family going to get \$4,000?

My house, my ranch house was the old train station from Arden. My dad moved that onto

the property for Lehman and Donna Leavitt in the early 30s on the back of his flatbed, his low bed. And they built a foundation. That was my house that I had. And do you know? I could not get the Historical Society or anybody else to even give a rat's ass about it. You should have seen that house. It had the original railroad siding for walls, these doors, these door handles. When I remodeled that house, I stripped down layer and layer of wallpaper and linoleum floors. And do you think anybody cared about it? I photographed it all. The fireplace, hand-cut sandstone from up there at the quarry.

Wow.

Yeah. Creaky wooden floors. Kids couldn't sneak out. So it was wonderful. It was wonderful.

So is there anything else that you'd like to add?

You know, if you guys as you're coming around to stuff, if something comes up, give me a holler. I'll probably have a story about it.

I was wondering if you would go into detail about the removal of the old ranch house? I know you witnessed the bulldozing of the old structures.

Well, a lot of the old buildings --

And what year it was.

Just like from the Frontier Village -- oh, it was 1960. The Frontier Village, we loved the Frontier Village. And most of those old buildings were taken out -- and I can't remember. See, we didn't know who all the players were then. They were taken out there to the gold mine, which was the Gold Strike, which is now the Hacienda. So I've got pictures of that. I used to take my kids out there. They even have the old jail that they held Geronimo in and the stuff that we'd had. There's a movie -- you see a little bit of it. Roy Rogers and Dale Evans and Gabby Hayes made a movie in 1946 called "Heldorado," with one "L" because they couldn't do the "hell" word. It's an old black-and-white. But you'll see some. That's the Frontier. That's at the Frontier. So you can actually see what kind of carpet, what did the walls look like. How big was the casino? About as big as this room. You know, and stuff like that.

So Ila, Ila -- what was her last name? She was my ballet teacher. They opened up the Ranch House out there on whatever the name of that street is now out there north. I actually think they moved the ranch house itself out to the Ranch House. We used to go out there a lot. And

Ila --

Yeah. The street's named Fawn that they put it on.

Oh, is it? We used to go out there a lot back in the 70s. That's when the Lamb family had their big -- oh, yes. Yeah, those are the cocaine days of the Lamb family. You could score more cocaine out there at the Lamb Ranch, Darwin Lamb's ranch, yeah.

So I actually think and I have a sneaky suspicion -- I don't know it for a fact -- that my dad probably helped move that stuff out there because that's what he did. That picture of him moving the Little Church of the West is priceless. Here's the whole little church sitting on the back of the rig. I don't know who else in town at that time -- I think there's one other guy that lived down in Whitney or somewhere that was moving stuff, too. Being as the ties with the old ranch and that, it wouldn't surprise me at all if my dad didn't help with that move.

But he took a good part of that stuff. But the rest of it—the chicken coops and such—I went every day, every day, because we lived down there on Taylor Street not very far from there, just down the hill, Owens and Taylor. I just sat there and cried. But, you know, it's really hard now because of the streets. They've just torn that up so bad. And who in the hell was the stupid mayor then or something? Who thought of this stuff? I'd like to just slap them around.

Where did they bulldoze the stuff to?

Into the swimming pool.

So they just closed the swimming pool up?

Covered it up. If you were to do archeology in that swimming pool area, you'd find a lot of it right there.

We'll have to get Helen Mortenson on that.

Oh, good, get Helen on that. She's spitfire I'll tell you. I love that woman. We did a big program one time, she and I, out at the cave, the gypsum cave. I can't remember why we did it, but we did. Ask Helen why we did it. She'll know. But I was all in my regalia. Flute player, I found this wonderful flute player. And I have a portable mike that I invented. He was playing. He was in the cave playing. I wrote this story called "Spirit Mountain and the Medicine Wheel" and I told that story. And you could hear it all across. People that were there have never forgotten it. Mary Manning, you know, Mary's moved outside of St. George there.

I don't know her.

You don't know Mary Manning, Las Vegas Sun for 30 years?

Okay.

Oh.

You better call Mary Manning. Yeah, Hank Greenspun's right arm for how many years? Not that I particularly like the Greenspuns. I have to be careful when I'm around her. Well, you know, he was running guns off the mesa to Israel. We used to watch the planes leave. He had a runway there.

He was actually arrested for that.

Yeah. Yes.

Oh, okay.

Oh, there were some exciting things happened here. Yeah. I don't know, you guys. If you ever have any questions, just holler.

Great.

So anything else, Karen?

I think we've taken --

This is wonderful. This is simply wonderful. Thank you so much.

Oh, you're welcome. Claytee, it's good to see you again.

Wonderful to see you always.

And you know we're all from Africa.

That's correct.

So don't forget where we've all started. I've had my DNA run, thank you.

Yeah. That's right.

I'll tell you a funny story just for you. I get called out to step on buses and to be the tour guide. I never know who, what, when, where. So this is at the Golden Nugget. And I'm looking around and I spot the bus. I do know the name of the bus. So I go out and step on that bus, Claytee, and every single person on that bus is Negro. And you know some of those little ladies from the south; they're pretty hard to play to. And I got on the bus and I looked around. They looked at me. And I could tell by the way they looked at me like what's this honky white broad doing on

our bus? And so I just got right up there and I said, you know what? We've got a lot of in common. And they're looking at me like sure we do. And I go what's the color of your blood? Red, why? And I said so is mine. And it broke the ice.

Good. Good.

Every year they call me to come back and do their tour.

Wonderful. Wonderful.

But I'll tell you it was an eye-opening thing for me to get my DNA run because I had always wondered why I was so fascinated with Africa, Ethiopia, Mesopotamia, the Tigris and Euphrates River, Egypt. And then I got my DNA report back. And, you know, I'll tell you what. There's no need for all this BS.

That's correct.

No need at all. I go there's no curses, you guys. That's bullshit. There's no anything. I said it all has to do with pigmentation and the sun. That's all it does. And do you know what? I just feel this way. I've never gotten to see the Aborigine people. But that first evolution out of where it started in this wonderful little nest where people talked like birds and still made sounds that were of nature went right a around the coast and the Pangaea was arranged so into Australia. They were safe there for so long, before those damn Europeans invaded them. So I figure this way, you know, they know a lot more about life than I do because mine's been—my people went up the same little trunk of the tree, but they went this way. Some went over. Some came across.

Great. Thank you so much.

So that's a good story. So go ahead.