An Interview with Hattie Canty

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Las Vegas Early History Project

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Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries
Director and Editor: Claytee D. White
Assistant Editors: Gloria Homol and Delores Brownlee
Transcribers: Kristin Hicks and Laurie Boetcher
Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Nancy Hardy, Joyce Moore, Andres Moses, Laura Plowman, Emily Powers, Dr. Dave Schwartz

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

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

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Preface

Hattie Canty grew up in St. Stephens, Alabama. As a young woman, she moved to California to seek employment, married and started a family. They moved to Las Vegas in the late 1960's and she found work as a maid for the Thunderbird Hotel and later at the Maxim Hotel and Casino. After the death of her spouse, Hattie discovered the importance of belonging to a union, which provided her with health benefits and a pension. Additionally, the Culinary Union Local 226 taught her how to fight for her rights.

As a new union member, Hattie walked picket lines on her days off. She became more active after being informed that six hotels did not have union representation. Over the years, she became involved in securing better salaries for women and increasing the number of African Americans in high-paying positions in the casino industry. In May 1990, Hattie was elected President of the Culinary Union. In both 1993 and 1996, she was re-elected by landslides.

During her tenure, she had her share of labor challenges. She went to jail at least six times while striking. She influenced contract negotiations for the downtown hotels, improved race relations among workers, and involved more members in union operations. However, the crowning glory of Hattie's work was implementing the Culinary Training School that allows training in most union job categories.

Thanks to the Culinary Union Local 226, Hattie Canty is living proof that a maid can own a home and send her children to college. She is active in community causes and enjoys spending time with family and friends.

We're at the Culinary Union. How are you today?

I'm good. And you?

Great. Now, Hattie, you were just getting ready to tell me where you're from. Would you go ahead and tell me that?

I'm originally from Alabama, 64 miles from Mobile, Alabama, St. Stephens. And many, many years ago St. Stephens was the capital of Alabama.

When?

Not Montgomery. It was St. Stephens. And where I lived at in Alabama they are going to make that an official park. And some of the things that was there many, many years ago will be redid and be in that park.

Some of the buildings or some of the statues?

Not buildings. Statues. And there are Indian cemetery, Indian bathtubs and things that was carved into the rocks. They are still there.

St. Stephens. Now, is that S-t-e-v-e-n-s?

No. S-t, period, S-t-e-p-h-e-n-s.

So now, how big is St. Stephens now?

Maybe there's between three and 500 people. And that's a maybe.

When did you leave there?

I left in 1957 I believe. I left in '57.

Now, is that where your husband is from as well?

No. My husband was from Texas.

So when you left St. Stephens, whom did you leave with?

No one. I left on my own.

And where did you go at that point?

I went to California to live with my brother.

At that time were you old enough to work?

Oh, yes. I was 18 years old when I left. I had finished high school and I went out there to live with my brother because there were no opportunities in Alabama for me to get a job.

Now, did you leave brothers and sisters back in Alabama? Any others?

No.

So it was just you and that brother?

It was four kids. But everybody had left home.

Now, what about your mom and dad?

My dad died when I was like maybe 17 months old. He was in an accident. And my mom had remarried. And she was still living there when I left.

Now, what kind of work did people do back in St. Stephens? What did your mom do?

My mom was a homemaker. She didn't do any kind of work. But mostly black women cleaned homes for people. And that was the only work back there for black women who were not educators. I only remember black women as being schoolteachers or working in somebody's home.

Just like my little hometown.

What did you do when you got to California?

Well, when I got to California -- you know, what your mom do as a rule the daughter does it. And when I got to California I got me a job as a housekeeper. And I was cleaning somebody house.

Now, what part of California?

That was in San Diego. And I worked out in La Jolla, California. And I worked out there until I discovered that I had some ability to be a cook. And then I got me a job at The Pancake House in La Jolla, California.

How long were you in that part of California?

Maybe a couple of years. I met and married my husband, and early when I first got there. I met him maybe like the second week I was there. And we got married. We had all these babies. And then we moved here to Las Vegas because by trade he was a carpenter and there was no work in San Diego at that particular time. So he went looking for work. And he first went to Arizona. There was plenty of work in Arizona, but it was minimum wage.

Now, did you go to Arizona with him?

No. I stayed in California. Then he wrote me and he told me, Hattie, there's a place called Las Vegas. He say I can get a job there. So he came here and he got a job at Silver State Disposal. And at that particular time it wasn't paying a lot of money, but a driver was making decent money.

How did he hear about Las Vegas?

From friends. He had a friend. I think it was Redman. We called him Redman. And he was from Arizona. And he had came here and gotten this job as a driver and he was telling my husband about it. And that was in Local 631. That was a union job. And he was telling him about the benefits.

So he came here and he got this job. And after he got his first pay, he came back to San Diego. And everything we had we put it in the car and got a little trailer and we came to Las Vegas on a Sunday.

Now, how many children did you have at that time?

By that time I had six kids.

Which year is this that you came to Las Vegas?

I came to Las Vegas in '70 -- wait a minute. Let me get that together, now. In the early 70s I believe. I got all that. '69 or '70, somewhere around there. Some of this I'll probably have to call you and give you --

That's fine. We can do that.

Now, you had six children already.

Yeah. Now, two of those kids -- see, when I came from Alabama I was married. But I was separated. We was divorced. And two of those kids was from a previous marriage.

So now, you're in Las Vegas and your husband is working a job with the union already.

Yeah.

And do you decide to go to work right away?

No. I did not decide to go to work right away. That could have been in '60 -- I came here in the early 60s. I'm sure it was because I didn't go to work right away. And when I did decide to go to work it was in the early 70s. But I was a homemaker. I took care of my family. I took care of my husband. And by this time when I did decide to go to work, I was taking care of so many people until I was trying to get out from under all of that and I really didn't know how. And the only way I could get out from under it -- I thought if I got me a job as a maid because I did not know of anything else to do. I had not gone to college for anything. I wasn't trained. I had not taken any kind of course to do anything else. But cleaning a house, I knew I can do that.

What about being a cook again?

In this town that particular job was too fast for me. It was a little bit too fast for me. And I didn't want to go back into that. I wanted something that -- with a family I needed something that it didn't require a lot of thinking to do. I wanted to relax a little bit because when I get home at night, I didn't want to be so uptight that I couldn't be mom because I had to be mom once I walked into that house. And then for the next four to six hours I was really mom because I was cleaning and cooking. And maybe by 12 o'clock I got to bed.

So where did you find that first job?

At the old Thunderbird. And that was in '72 I believe. The latter part of '72 I found that job there.

Now, tell me a little bit about -- in 1972, did you join the union to get that job at the Thunderbird?

Now, in the beginning I didn't join the union. I was one of those people who had never worked in a union house, didn't know anything about a union. And when I first got to work, I just went out there and they hired me. And I never shall forget. I believe it was Rachel. And I believe Rachel came out and she wanted to see my referral. And there were no referrals for me. So she told me, she said, you have to go to the union hall and get a referral if you're going to work this job so you got so many hours. So I came down here and got the referral. And I went back out there and I was legal. That referral made me legal.

Tell me what you thought of Sarah.

Sarah. When I first met her, the first time I saw her I knew that was a very popular woman because anytime a black woman would walk in construction area with a hardhat on, she knew what she was doing. And she was the rep at this particular hotel. And to get to where the maids was she had to go in some construction. And she had a hardhat on to come through that construction. And whenever she spoke people moved. She was a shaker. They moved. And I don't care if it was management or the maids.

Now, tell me what was her full name?

I believe Sarann Knight.

Now, is that Sarann Preddy?

No.

This is Sarah Hughes you're talking about?

Sarah Hughes is who I'm talking about. I'm sorry. Sarah Hughes.

So now, '72, she's working along with Al Bramlet?

Yeah. I don't remember what year she died either. She was working with Al Bramlet. And I don't know a lot about Sarah. I really don't because I was so into Hattie and my thing at home. And at this particular time my husband did not want me to work. I'm working because I'm tired of all these little people that are running me crazy at home. So I'm focused a lot on me and what's happening to me. I was real selfish at this particular time.

I didn't get too involved in the union except paying my union dues. I always -- I believe in whatever I were in I should pay my fair share. And my union dues was my fair share. And I wasn't a person who caused the union any problems or who caused my job any problems. I did what I was told to. And I expected a fair day pay for a fair day of work.

Do you remember what you were earning?

I believe something like 32 something a day. It wasn't very much.

Now, when you first left Alabama, what kind of expectations did you have of a job. You know, going to California what were you thinking?

I wasn't looking for a job because I had all these little kids with me. But I felt like if I could get a job and if getting a job to survive was taking care of somebody's home, then I knew I could survive because I knew how to do that. And I've always been an honest person. And I felt like I didn't have to worry about anything because there were a lot of stories coming from California and other northern states that there was a lot of money in these states. And people back in the country in Alabama and North Carolina, those places, we wanted some of that money. But they never told us how we was going to get that money. And most times when you got out here in Nevada or when you got to California that money wasn't flowing like they said it was flowing. You had to work for that money. Well, I had worked all of my life. So working wasn't a big problem.

What kind of work did you do back in Alabama while you were in high school?

I didn't. There wasn't no work that you could do while you was in high school because I lived out in the country. You had to catch a bus to go to school and you caught a bus to come back home at night. And you got home. You did your homework and whatever chores that you had to do. And

there wasn't time for -- you know.

Now, you're at the Thunderbird. How long did you stay?

I probably stayed there totally about three years because my husband got sick in '75. And when he got sick eight of those ten kids -- I had ten kids total by this time -- and eight of those ten kids was at home. So what I did -- I had to take a leave of absence and stay home to take care of the kids and take care of him. And I did that. And that was a challenge. I didn't think that I would ever be able to do that because my husband was the type of husband who had always taken care of me and the kids. While he was alive or while he was well, I didn't have anything to worry about. But now the table turns where I'm taking care of him and I've got everything to worry about. And I stayed home and I took care of him. And then when he died that's when reality sat in because the amount of money that he was bringing home I had to live off like a fourth of that amount of money. My money dropped like that. So everything had to be readjusted. And, now, that was in '75.

So then I didn't go back to the Thunderbird. I went to the school district because I needed to work a shift that I thought that I could take care of my kids even better. And that was a straight swing shift because at the hotel I couldn't get a straight swing shift. And I worked for the school district for one year as custodian. And after that year -- I worked out here at Red Rock School. And then the next year they wanted to send me to Henderson at Vo-Tech. And I just couldn't work swing and drive all the way from Vo-Tech like at 11 or 12 o'clock at night because I'm one of those people who go to sleep real early. And I went out and I talked to the guy. And he wouldn't make concessions for me. He didn't take in consideration me being a single little dud with all these kids. It was either you take it or you don't have a job. So I just didn't have a job anymore because I couldn't take it.

And the Maxim Hotel was opening up. And I went out to put an application in. And then I decided I needed to take some time off. And the Maxim opened up like in July or the first of August, somewhere around there, and I went away. I went to Lake Havasu. I said I'm going to Lake Havasu and just spend the weekend. So I went down there and spent the weekend. I came back and I messed around for a little while. And then I went out to the Maxim. Put my application in. I got the job out there as a maid. I didn't know -- I never -- you know, when you don't prepare yourself for anything, you don't of anything to do. But I knew I could take care of

myself and those kids. And I got me a job as a maid.

Let me back up for a second. Before I got that job as a maid, I had been working in private home for Mrs. DeMartino in between the school district and the Maxim Hotel. And the DeMartinos, they were really good to me and my family because in '75 when I first met them, the first thing she did for me -- she say, you know, Hattie, she said, we're going to do something, she and her husband. They was going to do something different that they hadn't did before I don't think. She said we are going to give our Christmas to someone and we chose to give that Christmas to you. And so they gave me their Christmas. And they had five kids and they had two daughters there at home. And one of the daughters she was really upset because, you know, they were young girls. They were something like maybe 12 or 14, something like that.

And I have never forgotten that. And my children have never forgotten what the DeMartinos did for me. It made me feel like that there were people who really did care because by this time I didn't think nobody in the world would ever do anything for me because they hadn't did it. But at Christmastime -- a Christmas tree, everything. They just gave us everything.

But anyway, after that I explained to her that I needed me a job with benefits, health and welfare and pension and all of that because, you know, I'm young at this particular time and I knew I needed to think about me when I got older. And so I went to the Maxim Hotel and I got that job as a maid. And I hope I was a real good maid because I worked there for like maybe three or four years.

And then the Maxim added on. They added like 400 more rooms onto the hotel. And a friend of mine told me, she said you know they're adding on. You should go down and apply for something else. She said there are going to be other jobs. I first go down and I apply for the lady that work in the restroom, the powder room maid. I applied for that.

Now, you applied where?

At the Maxim Hotel down in personnel. I went to personnel and put it in my file. I have the lady to put it in my file that I wanted something else. And the only thing right then was powder room attendants. So I got that. And once I got that I discovered that I had claustrophobia and I couldn't work in the powder room. So I had to bid myself out of the powder room. I went back up on the floor as a maid.

When they built these other rooms onto the hotel my friend told me, Hattie, go up there and apply for uniform attendants. And she said it pays ten dollars a day more and you should be able to do a little bit more for your family. I go out and I apply for the job. And when they finished building these rooms, I had gotten a job as a uniform attendant. And I worked there for a long, long time.

But in working there, in working for the Maxim Hotel, I began to learn what kind of organization that had all of these great benefits that I had gotten. And some of my children had gotten sick with some serious illness. One of my boys had a cancerous -- removed from the nerve right by the ear. It was cancerous. And if I had not belonged to the union and if I had not had that Culinary insurance, I wouldn't have been able to get that operation. And I learned how beneficiary it was for me as a poor black female to belong to a union.

And my children by this time began to get bigger. They was graduating from high school. Some of them was going off to college. And if it had not been for the union in this town or living in a town -- if I had been in L.A., I would have been on welfare, totally on welfare. But by being here in this town, every time somebody wanted to do something, he had to go get a job to help me so we could do these things.

And my daughter, who is a registered nurse now at Valley Hospital, she'll tell you quick if it had not been for union money, I would not have the job that I have now. And that's the way we put it because in this town I am living proof that a maid can own a home. She can buy her cars. She can pay taxes on that home. She can send her kids to college. And these jobs represented stability to me and every other maid out there in this town. And we are appreciative to be working here in this town. And I try -- what we try to do -- and the reason I say we, I'm not the only one who's trying to do this -- is show younger women and men how beneficiary it is to be in a union town because the union stands for so many things in my life, things that -- if it had not been for the union, there wouldn't be no minimum wages. Somebody would just be paying you money. If it was not for the union, there wouldn't be no breaks, you know. And we don't negotiate for that. The government says you get that lunch break. But we enforce that; try to make sure that the maids, the porters and the dishwashers continue to have that.

It has been a struggle, a struggle for me in this town to pull things together. And at one

point I got so involved in the union -- Hattie -- I just got me involved in it -- I thought, now, Hattie, at some point you've got to separate the civil rights movement from the labor movement. But you can't do it. There is no way you can do it. Anytime I fight for anything in this labor movement it benefits me in the civil rights movement. And that's what a lot of people don't understand.

I want to ask just a few questions to follow up on some of those great things you just said to me. I want to start at the beginning. How did you get to know the DeMartinos?

I was looking for a job. And in the newspaper she had advertised for -- she wanted two girls. And the other lady that went out there, I knew her, too. We went to church together. But this lady -- see, God works in mysterious ways. This lady had a husband and she was doing much better than I were. So she didn't have to take what I had to take. And this lady, the DeMartino lady, she was picky about a certain thing. And this other lady, she refused to take that. And I say it doesn't bother me, so I'm going to do it. And I did it and I benefited from it.

Where were you and your family living when you first moved here and through the years?

When we first moved here I lived in Sherman Gardens. They had just built that. They were new apartments. It was 1801, I believe, J Street, over on J Street. And we stayed in the apartments for a couple of years. Then we bought a house in Windsor Park. That's where I raised my family.

Now, where is Windsor Park?

That's out near Carey Arms and Martin Luther King and at 2116. The house is not there anymore. They moved me. That's a great story, too.

I'd like to hear it.

Let me tell you something. See, the union taught me a lot of things. The union taught me how to fight for what I needed and what I had and if it was something I wanted, how to go after it. After my husband died I noticed my house just falling apart. That house just fell apart. Not only mine, other people's homes just was falling apart. Now, this big old raggedy house is all paid for, but it's costing me too much to do the renovation on it.

And I guess about 10 or 12 years ago we kind of built an association. A group of people got together, mostly women in Windsor Park. We got together. And we started going to city council meetings out in north town. We got the news media to come up there. And we got to

talking about what was happening up there. We focused so much on city council until they got people to come out and do studies to see what was wrong with this land. Come to find out there was problems with the land.

And out of that, one year ago they moved me into a brand-new house. But we fought with them. See, everything I have ever gotten, it has been a struggle. But everything -- I was right. Whatever it was I was doing, I was right in doing it.

What was wrong with the land?

There was fissures on this -- you know, my house was built right on a fissure. You know what that is, don't you?

No.

That's like, you know, those -- what is that thing? It's where the ground separates.

Like one of those -- the earthquake -- what are they called? Like a fault.

Like a fault. So there was a lot of faults up there. And sometime you could see them. They might be like maybe an inch wide. But if you would stand there all day long and let your water hose run down in it, it would continue to run. It never would fill up. So you know something was going on.

So it got real bad up there. Quite a few people have moved from up there. They moved out a lot of people. They supposed to have another program where they are going to be moving people, but it won't be like the first program they had. That first program they had, they built people brand-new homes. And they moved so many out. I think the next program they are going to give people vouchers, so many thousand dollars, and you can go buy you a house, you know.

But you actually got a new home?

I got a new home. It's not as big as what I had. The piece of property is not as big as what I had. But then I don't have ten other kids to live there. And I'm thankful, you know, that I am where I am.

What part of the city are you now?

I'm about maybe a half a mile from where I was, or a mile. And I'm near Martin Luther King. I'm still near Martin Luther King and West Street. I'm on West and Jones, right on the corner of West and Jones. And so far I'm not having any problems. I'm still in my same neighborhood. And I

love that. I love where I'm living at. You're going to have problems wherever you're living in this town. You just have to know how to deal with the town and everything. And I've always been a good neighbor to most people. So I don't have no problems like that.

You used a phrase a minute ago -- two phrases. What does "bid out" mean?

When you're in a job and how you bid out of it, that's when a job is available. They put up a bid sheet. If you have the know-how and the seniority, you can bid out of wherever you are.

What is a swing shift? What hours are those?

Those hours are after 12 o'clock. It could be two to ten or three to 11 or four to 12. I always worked the four to 12. I really worked swing shift, four to 12.

Give me the names of your children and their ages.

Oh. Okay. I might not can give you the ages, but I can give you the names. You would ask me that question. Let me give you the names and then I'll give you the ages next week. You don't expect --

No. Just give me approximately. It doesn't have to be exact.

Then my baby Eddie is 27 years old.

That's the baby?

That's my baby. My oldest son, he got drowned some few years ago. The next son is like 45 years old. So there's -- let me start at the oldest one. Ruben. Anthony. Darrel. Tyrone. Now, that oldest boy, I didn't give you his name. His name was Eddie. Then my baby boy's name is Eddie. So I had two Eddies.

So you named the youngest child after the oldest?

Well, not really. The oldest son was named after my father. See, that was by my first marriage. And when my baby boy was born, he's named after my husband's father. So I ended up with two Eddies.

Like George Foreman. What is his name, George Foreman?

Uh-huh. George Foreman, George Foreman, George Foreman. Yeah.

Right.

And my daughters was Rhonda, Rhonda Lynn. Paulette Rene. Tracy Glee. And Deline Jane.

Now, how many of your children went to college?

All of my daughters. All of my daughters went to college. But only one daughter is working for the job that she went to college for. My oldest daughter is working at the Maxim Hotel in the job that I have because she has three children. She went to school for an educator. And when she gets through with her children, she said she -- right now she did not want to go and work all day long with kids and have to deal with her kids when she got home. My daughter Paulette, she's still in college. She's going to school for accounting I believe. And she works at the Bally hotel. She is one of the hotel managers out there on front desk.

So, is she in school at UNLV?

At community college. And my daughter Deline, that's my baby daughter, she works at the convention center. And Deline, she would have been finished with her education, but I made the mistake -- well, she made the mistake a few years ago. She come down here for a job. And she got this job as a coffee server. You would not think that a coffee server make a lot of money. But a coffee server can make a lot of money. And so that's what she is, a coffee server at the convention center. And she don't work that often. She might work one week out of a month.

Wait a minute. I know a lot of people who need summer jobs. Now, tell me about this job as a coffee server.

What it entails?

Yes.

This job, it's really hard work because you're going and you're getting stuff and you're taking it to people's stand. And you're running and walking all -- you're really not serving coffee. You're not serving coffee. That's just the title of the position that you have.

These are the people who are managing the booths, who purchase the booth space?

Yeah. You see like -- let me see what shows it might come in here. And then she's got to sell the shows, the food, the drink, the whatever they need. It's a lot of hard work for a little bitty girl that weighs about a hundred and ten pounds. When she gets home at night, she's dead almost. And she has a little boy. Deline have a little boy. She's married. She have a husband. They live out in Henderson. Their little boy is three. He soon will be four. And she promised me by the time he was in first grade she's going to go back and she's going to finish her education.

(End Tape 1, Side A.)

You were telling me about your daughter who was the coffee server. You want her to go back to school.

She got to go back to school to get that education. She got to. She don't have too many more hours. And she was hoping by the time that baby is in the first grade she'll be ready for all of that.

This is just wonderful.

And her husband work at Silver State Disposal. You know, he has a good job, a better job than my husband had when he was up there. And hopefully, you know, they'll be able to save. And one day maybe he'll decide that he want to go to school because they're young. Neither one of them are 30. They can do anything they want to do. And that's the one thing they have seen -- I have been an example for my family. And they have seen that I came from nothing to where I am today.

You mentioned church earlier in one of the statements you made. Which church have you been associated with here in the city?

Mostly in this city Pentecostal Temple.

And most of your children, also?

Yeah. Now, I go to Second Baptist a lot. I like to go to that eight o'clock service.

A few minutes ago you also mentioned civil rights and working for a union. Tell me what kind of civil rights activities were you involved in at any point?

I was never involved in the civil rights movement, but I wished I had because I was there. But I wasn't involved. But in a sense you can say that I was because I always did the right thing. It was there. That thought was there.

Where were you in the 60s?

Mobile, Alabama.

Did you live in Mobile at one time?

At one time I lived in Mobile. I was there during some of the Walgreen sit-ins.

So when you were married and had the first two children, you had lived in Mobile?

Yeah.

Now, did you work in Mobile?

Yeah.

What kind of work did you do there?

I worked in the restaurants. I worked at a Greek restaurant.

So you had skills already when you went to California.

Yeah.

Okay, good. Now, getting back to the Maxim Hotel, I want you to tell me more about the duties of the uniform room and what happens in a uniform room.

The duties in the uniform is similar to the duties in a cleaners. But in a sense the workers -- if you was a cocktail server when you came in, in the morning I had to give you your personal uniform. I couldn't give you just a uniform. There's a uniform for every cocktail server there. And as a rule that uniform has that person's name in it or her number. And you send those clothes out by that person's name and you check them in by that person's name.

So if I lost a uniform, a cocktail server's uniform, I would be held responsible -- not pay for it. I could get in trouble over that. So I never lost a cocktail server uniform. I never lost a uniform, period. Now, if something got lost, it always got lost at the cleaners because I could open up my book and I could say that I sent Claytee's uniform out such-and-such a date and it has not come back in.

Now, how many uniforms does a maid have or a cocktail waitress actually have?

A cocktail server as a rule has two to three uniforms. At the Maxim they had either two or three uniforms. And that would always give that girl the opportunity -- well, an opportunity to have a uniform always in the uniform. If one was at the cleaners, she had one. There was a clean one in the uniform room.

And they left those uniforms there after each shift?

After each shift. And sometime, now, they might want to wear that dress a second time. They had lockers. They could put their uniforms in their lockers.

All clothes don't go to dry cleaners. Some of the clothes go to laundries. Like the kitchen stuff, that stuff goes to the laundry. Maids' uniforms as a rule go to the laundry. And at that particular time I was dealing with Western Linen. And the guys at Western Linen would come out and they would pick up hundreds of uniforms. And I didn't have to count -- at the Maxim I did not have to count the maids' uniforms or the porter pants. The only uniforms I might have to count is

the rejects. If they sent me out uniforms that nobody could wear, I had to count those. If it was 25 or 30, they had to replace 25 or 30 in that particular size.

Uniform work is -- it's a hard job because most of the time you're standing on cement. And you've got to go through every uniform to make sure the buttons are there, to make sure those uniforms -- the hems are not out, to make sure the pockets are not torn off, to make sure that uniform came back clean. You've got to look at the collars because some uniforms got white collars and they could come back and they are not clean. And most girls will not wear a real dirty-looking uniform even if you say it's clean. Even the pants you've got to go through to make sure that zippers are always together, make sure buttons are on those, hems are not out of those uniforms.

And you've got your cook jackets. You've got to make sure those executive chefs or those sous-chefs -- now, their clothes, they are personalized, too. They don't just wear any jacket in the uniform room. You've got to make sure that -- let's say James -- all of James' jackets is hanging in James' spots. All of John's jackets are together. And when these jackets come in, they cannot come in with stains on them because the uniform person is held responsible for that. Over at the Maxim we was. And we had to make sure everything came back like it should come back.

Who took care of the repairs; buttons, zippers?

Well, we tag those. If buttons was broken off of the dress, we would tag it. They had a little tag said "button needed." We put that in there and we through it in a special place. And Western Linen would put those buttons. Western Linen would hem. Western Linen would sew up a pocket that was off of there. We didn't have to do that. Now, on special clothes like the cocktail server dresses, we had a special girl who sewed for those people.

That worked right there in the linen room?

That worked right there in the linen room. And she would sew up. She might readjust or she hemmed or put lace back on because, you know, those dresses are very delicate and you had to keep them up.

Now, why were some uniforms personalized and some not? The expense?

Well, as a rule chefs -- most all chef clothes are personalized because when they come in for their jacket, if a chef wear a size 38 jacket and the sleeve length a certain way, he wanted to be dressed

neatly up there on that floor. So that was the reason. And maids' clothes as a rule did not have to be personalized because you might have 50 girls that's 28s. You might have ten that's 30. So they could say I need a 30, you know.

You started talking about getting involved with the union, doing your job like you knew it should have been done, all the union benefits. Tell me how you got involved in participating with the union, not just working with the hotel. What was the first link?

The first link I believe was in '84. And that's when we lost so many hotels. I think it was about six hotels we lost. And on my days off I would always go up to -- where did I walk at? -- the Aladdin? I would go to -- not the Aladdin. What was the MGM before they built on that, that hotel, where there are now, whatever hotel -- The Marina. That's where I always walked, at The Marina.

Walked, what do you mean "walked"?

Like rally or picket, out on the picket line. I would picket every off-day. That's where I would go. And my baby would go with me because he was five years old. We would go up there and we would spend all our time there. Even though we lost The Marina, that's where I always picket. You know, things began to happen in my mind. I began to see that we had lost all these hotels. And if I got active, if I did what I could, you know, maybe this wouldn't happen. And I was thinking about what I could do. But it had to take all of us to stop what was going on in this town. We didn't stop it in '84, '85, '86 or '87, but we began to work on it. We began to work on it. And some of those places that we lost in '84, we have gotten them back today. But it's because of the hard work that I did and many other union members.

And at this particular time I had no idea I would be the president of the Culinary Union. If anybody had told me that, I would've said you're nuts; get out of my face. But I did it because by this time I'm a single mother with all those babies. And I needed that union salary. And I needed the health and welfare. The pension, I didn't think too much about that. But that health and welfare I did. And that's where I was focused at at this particular time.

So when that strike was over, what did you do about those feelings that you had begun to have?

I got involved. I didn't sit there in the hotel. I came down here. I got involved to see what I could

do. And what I could do was right there at my hotel. And that was to talk to the girls about the union and to get them hopefully feeling like I was feeling. And this was like in '88, early part of '89. And by this time it was contract time for the Maxim. So I told the girls, I said, look, we really got to get this thing together. I said because if we don't, we're not going to get no contract. They said, oh, we'll get a contract because the Maxim had always did they thought was the right thing. And I would tell them. I said this company is like any other company. The right thing for them is the dollar. I said they are not thinking about the workers. That's just how I felt. So I said we've got to get ourselves together. We've got to get together. If we don't we're going to lose. And then they put an organizer out there. Roxanne came out there. And she began to talk to us and talk to us about the things we need to do. And to me she was on the job too much. That's what I thought; she is here too much. But she wasn't there enough. Today I know she wasn't there enough because, you know, it would take that much time to get people's focus in on what they need to do for the union.

But when we really got to negotiating with the Maxim Hotel, there were one of the head guys -- he was the comptroller. And he would always tell me -- because he saw in me what I didn't really see in myself. He saw that I was a leader. And I wasn't going -- I didn't feel like I was a leader. I felt like I was just doing the right thing. And he would always tell me we'll have a contract by a certain date. When that date came and we didn't have the contract, I'd go back to him. He said, well, we'll have it by this date. So when we got in negotiations, he said, well, I tell you what. I want to hear from my workers. And he says this to the negotiator. And he called himself on different ones to speak. And he said I want to see what Hattie got to say.

And, you know, out of the clear blue Hattie said too much. I said, look, you lied to me four times. And I told him what times he had lied. And after I said that, you know, a little fear come in. Here I am telling this man -- he is my boss and he signs my check -- that he's lying, you know. And I said we need a contract. I said we have to have a contract. So everybody got so quiet. They got real quiet around that table. So I said Dorothy -- I went to my friend. I said, Dorothy, I'm in big trouble, huh? She said, no, just go on. She said you just told the truth. You told what he said and he hadn't did what he said. So he lied, not you. So I finally got over that. But it took me a couple of weeks, you know, to get over that.

How many people were in that meeting?

Oh, god, I bet you it was 20.

Now, were you a union steward or anything like that at that time?

Well, I wasn't a steward, but I was a committee leader.

What does that mean?

A committee leader is a union worker in the hotel or in the shop. And she or he is talking to all of the workers, at least 10 or 15 workers, about what's going on between the company and the union especially when you're in negotiations. You have to inform your coworkers about what's going on.

So what is the difference in a committee leader and a union steward?

Well, there is not too much difference. But we like to call them the committee person, slash, shop steward. To me I'd rather be called a committee person because you are out there with the peoples. And in this town and in this union a long time ago a shop steward was paid like 25 or $30 a month to do what he was doing. And a committee person does twice that much and you are not paid anything. So actually, a committee person is a worker who want to do it, who got it down in them to work for the betterment of the workers and the community because they have realized we are not -- see, we're not dealing with mom-and-pop operations anymore. These corporations are coming here and they'll blow a worker out of the waters. So the workers got to get involved in that jobs and in the unions, you know.

Tell me what Roxanne's position was.

Roxanne was a top organizer. She was the person who would go out and she had a keen sense of -- or maybe I should say a good eye for knowing who was the committee leaders, what to say to them and how to choose them and how to get them focused on what they need to do. And she worked with you daily. And she might spend an hour or 30 minutes with you every day. If you had an off time, she would spend time with you when you got off to help to do the job you needed to do in that hotel.

Now, is she still with the union?

No. Roxanne left here a couple of years ago. And the last time I heard from her she was in New York.

Now, after being a committee leader, what is your next step with the union? Now, you're still employed at Maxim.

I'm still employed at the Maxim. By this time I'm over 55 years old or about 55 years old. And the only thing I wanted to do is to retire because I said when I'm 62 years old, I'm going to retire. I'm going to get out of all of this because, you know, that is tiring. I guess you could say it's just like a schoolteacher or a preacher. You know, people beat you down. Every day you take a beating because many days when I go get my lunch -- now, I'm going to sit at this table and talk to these girls. And by the time I sit down, they would all get up and go somewhere else. They did not want to talk to me because they knew I was talking about the union.

But it was good that I were talking about the union because if I didn't stay focused on keeping the union in that hotel, the management, they could've took us on. And I didn't want them to take the union on. And they started campaigning there and would blow the union out. And so I had to keep my campaign alive to where, you know, the union would always be in that hotel.

Now, why were the women afraid when they were already union members? It's not like you're trying to get a union in a place where there was no union.

Yeah.

Why were they afraid?

Just because you're a member, that don't make you be union. You're paying your dues and all of that. Very few people know a lot about the union even though they're paying their dues. They pay that 32 -- we pay $32 now a month. And I'm sure back then we were paying something like $16 a month. And they felt like when I pay my money, that is all you're going to get from me. But that's not all I need from you. I need your participation. And whatever we're doing or whatever rally there is, we all need to be together because this town cannot come in here and afford -- and the union be blown out of here because too many people depend on these salaries.

Sometime I look in the paper and it talk about how these hotels are just prospering, flourishing. And the workers are not getting anything. At one point maids could buy homes. It's getting to the place now that a maid cannot buy a home because the salary's not where it should be and also homes are more expensive than what they used to be. So we're going to have to always focus on affordable housing. We're going to always have to focus on things that maids, porters

and dishwashers are going to be able to do because this is a part of our community.

This is a town -- and you know what I think about, too, sometime? The type of work that I was doing in that hotel, these hotel owners can't pick it up and take it to Mexico. It's here in this town. And it's here to stay. So why not make us a part of it? We've got to get our fair share of that pie. We don't want a sliver no more. We want a slice of pie.

Now, tell me about getting those women then with that attitude to union meetings.

Well, that was hard. That was hard. But every day you had to go back to them. Are you going to be there? And if they tell you maybe, well, a maybe was good for me. But the time I walk up there and they would tell me I'll be there, Hattie, you don't have to say something, I knew that was a no. I knew that was a no. So that maybe -- I could go back and talk to them and reason with them and tell them why they needed to be there. Tell them if you're not there, if you're not coming to these union meetings, we're not going to get what we want from these hotels. Come to the union meeting and showing the union officials what we need and what we want.

How often are union meetings held?

Once a month. We should have a union meeting once a month. But now, since we're dealing with so many more of these big companies, these big corporations and things, there might be union meetings down here two and three times a week. We can't do once a month no more. We meet down here quite often. There is a meeting just about every night down here from some hotel. Workers from those hotels are in this building.

Wow. I like that idea.

You've got to try to keep the peoples together. You really have.

I like that. But that must mean a lot work for you, though.

It's a lot work for me and it's a lot of work for other peoples. You know, I'm not the only person that's working. And that's why it's not so hard for me is I can come down here and I can say, well, god, I'm tired. Somebody else will say how tired they are. Well, if I don't say nothing about how tired I am, you know, then nobody else is tired.

I want to know more about -- we talked about inside the hotel. Tell me what the black community felt about the Culinary Union. From the time you started getting involved to now, what is the attitude like?

To be honest with you the black community -- when I first started getting involved, the participation wasn't very great. It wasn't great at all. And the one thing -- see, blacks has been treated so bad, and not just at Culinary Union, but in other unions. They was iced out of good jobs. And young black men even in construction couldn't go get jobs that paid good that other people were getting. And as a rule when people talk about the unions, if they were talking about somebody that's digging a ditch or driving a truck, they wouldn't say Local 631 or local whatever. They said a union ain't no good.

And that don't necessarily have to be true because what this union have done -- we had problems and we yet having problems. But we tend to work on our problems. And that's one thing I like about the Culinary Union. We are trying to work on problems that we have had. We don't have anything to do with who the hotel hire. We do send peoples to jobs. And down here we sent out three peoples for every one job that a hotel might want. And there are blacks, Latinos and whites that we send out. Now, when that person get to the hotel, whoever the hotel hire, that's that hotel's business. But there are certain things go on in the industry that we do make it our business to make sure this don't continue to happen.

Tell me some of those things.

I don't see a lot of blacks in certain positions. And I do want to see more blacks there. You don't see a lot of black cocktail servers out there on the floor. You don't see a lot of black slot foremen out there on the floor. And there are different jobs that you just don't see a lot of blacks in. High-paying jobs at the hotels, you don't see a lot of blacks in it.

But what we try to do, we try to go to these companies, talk to them and let them know how they feel. And hopefully these things -- there are going to be some issues that we are going to really take -- going to be top priority and things are going to be happening. And I don't try to hide it. We don't have a lot of blacks -- with all the blacks in this town, we don't have a lot of blacks working in the hotel industry at all. And I don't like that. But it's a struggle. This is another struggle that we've got to work on.

And this is why I'm constantly talking to black young women. Get involved because if I had never gotten involved, I would not be sitting here at this desk today. It's the involvement. It's the leadership. It's the honesty that I had. And that's what they have to portray. And if I had been

a flim-flam person, they wouldn't have seen anything in me.

Hattie, that's what I see as the civil rights part of this.

That's right. It's a struggle. I think that's why I wanted to separate it because the civil rights part of it, it can take -- it'll work you. It will work you. And you need to have somebody to work with you on that civil rights part of it because you can't do it by yourself. And that's what I love about this union. If there are things that are bothering me, there are higher up people I can go to and I tell them what's bothering me. I tell them my concerns. And I have did that.

Some of my concerns is about the low percentage of blacks in high-paying jobs. And I'm concerned about -- when I first started the maid work, most of the maids was black. Now that maids are being paid a decent salary, they are not there anymore. And that bothers me. And only we as a black community got to do something about it. We got the right vehicles to do something about it. And if anybody say that those black young girls are not qualified, we have a Culinary Training Center now that we can send these black girls to or these Latino girls or these white girls through. But it's going to take the community to help me to get some of these people into these programs. You know, it would be wonderful if blacks never had to be a maid. But when I tell you that is a vehicle to you getting to be in the white house or whatever house you want to be into, that's sometimes what it take. You take those low or those entrance positions. And you get into the cooperation and you look around and see what do you want. Then you say that's mine and go to working for it.

How do I find -- I don't even know if this is open to the public. How do I find the numbers of black women and Mexican-American women and Asian women and white women still in these jobs and in the past?

That's for the public. You can get that. I'll get that for you. But I can't get it today. I'll have it for you if you come by next Friday.

Oh, fantastic.

I used to have it in my desk and I threw it out just a few weeks ago because I gave it to Reverend Rogers. And he didn't do anything with it. I gave it also to -- was it Rommidon? No, it wasn't Rommidon. But I gave it to someone else because they had asked me for it and I gave it to them.

And you have records for let's say since you've been involved, how the numbers have

changed over the years?

I don't pull it up like that. I pull it up and it show you how many black females, how many black males, what percentage, white. You would think that white is a high, high percentage. And it is the highest. But the Latinos is almost there with the whites. And then we are next. Blacks are next. Let me just say if the Latinos -- if the whites are 31 percent, Latinos 30, then we drop way down to like 12 or 13 percent. So, see, there is a big gap. And you think those are a lot of people. No. It's less than 5,000 blacks.

And that's what I'm concerned about. We've got to get our blacks into these hotels and into jobs that's paying decent money. I'd much rather see a black woman in a union job than to see her in a nonunion job if she got six or seven children because in that union job she is making a decent salary. She's getting 45 cents an hour going into her pension. She's getting two dollars -- a dollar and 82 cents going into her health and welfare. You know, the benefits are out there for her. We have great benefits. I go get my glasses -- I don't pay nothing for my glasses. I go get whatever I need. I don't have to pay a lot for it. So I would much rather see a poor woman, black or white or Latino, whatever, go into a position where you're going to have some benefits.

That's the one thing that drew me to it was the benefits. And I learned how to appreciate it or how to work to help to keep it. And the struggle that I was struggling with when I first got into this local, I'm yet into that struggle. And it's about keeping the union alive in this town and doing well.

I'm inspired. Tell me what relationship the union has had with the NAACP in this city.

The union when Reverend Scott -- we had a real good relationship. But not -- the NAACP is working, but to me not like it should be. I don't believe that the leaders of the NAACP know how powerful they are. I really don't believe that the preachers in this community know how powerful they are. When you come to the hotels, the hotels give those people respect, are reverends. And they don't use it. Just being a preacher or being the president of the NAACP, it can open doors for a lot of people. It can help with some of the hurts and the pains these people are going through.

We have never had to use the NAACP because one of our members was in trouble. We tried to educate the NAACP about how far we can go. And as long as we can do something for a member out there, there's nothing the NAACP can do for that member. But just in case that

person is in a situation to where the union can't help them, then we refer them to the NAACP. And sometime it stops there. As a rule I don't follow it up once I send that person to the NAACP.

I understand that the NAACP has done some things for some nonunion people. But I would like to see this NAACP really, really work it. And the only way they're going to ever be successful, they're going to have to get involved with poor people and some of the struggles. The fights are out there. Today they can get -- if they wanted a fight, I could give them quite a few today.

I'm not going to let you off that easy. I want to know more about what the NAACP should -- (End Tape 1, Side B.)

Hattie, I was just talking about the NAACP. I have not been active here like I was in Los Angeles. And I know that the NAACP is all volunteers. What can the NAACP here do? In the 60s, it was so active. What happened?

I just don't know what happened. I think sometimes when things -- when people -- when things are modernized too much, it weakens the strength of whatever that -- you know, it weakens it down.

Let me just say if I was the president of the NAACP -- and I'm saying if I were; that's not a position that I want even if I didn't have this -- I would not want that -- the first thing that I would do right now, I would want to know from these hotels why you don't have more blacks in these high-paying jobs. Why there are not more black bellmen or valet parkers or cocktail servers. If I was the president of the NAACP and I was not working, I would visit every shift in the hotels. I would be there days, swing and I'd will be there nights or grave. And then I would want to know from them why I didn't see more black cocktail servers and why I didn't see more black bartenders because these are high-paying jobs. Some of those jobs pay 60,000 a year and plus. Some of those guys make good money in these jobs I'm talking about. And I would also visit the housekeeping departments. I'd stand out there when they're getting off at night. I would let those girls know who I am. And I would want to know what has happened over the past so many years, why I don't see more black young women in the housekeeping departments, why I don't see more black cooks in specialty rooms? And I know you've got to be concerned about some of the other places, too. Why you don't see more black dealers? And these are nonunion jobs. But I would go

into that, too. Why no more black managers? Why you just chose sometimes a black woman and put her out front or a black man and then, you know, you feel like you've done your job? But that's what I would do.

I would not only stop there, I'd probably go to some of the schools and I'd sit in on some of the classes. And I'd want to know who were teaching all these little kids because you might get in a classroom -- I sometimes think about a lot of these little kids coming in here from Mexico and Cuba. What are these kids being taught if that teacher is not bilingual? And I know this is happening. And so there's a big role that the NAACP can play in this town that would help this town.

Now, one of the things that I do disagree with what happened here in this town -- when the NAACP got so focused in on this little girl that was killed at Stateline, I don't think that was racially motivated even though she's a black little girl. I think that's somebody who had that opportunity and he did it. He would have did that if it had been a white kid.

And there are lot things that the NAACP can get involved with, some of these jobs. There are some hotels in this town don't have maybe but one black person working in the kitchen, big hotels. That should not be. That should not be. And they can get involved. It would help me. That would help me.

Tell me if union members are persuaded or if you suggest that they become NAACP members. How much can you say?

I try not to get too involved because right now there are some people out there in the neighborhood who think that I overthrew their -- I don't organize people to get involved in no other organization but the union. Now, I might suggest that Claytee would make a much better president, let's say, than Adella. I'm just saying, you know. I might suggest that this is somebody we should really support.

Let me tell you. Reverend R Scott. Reverend Scott have always stood by the union. And when he was running I always would tell my membership what Reverend Scott for the union. And anytime there was a rally and I needed Reverend Scott to come out and deliver that pray, he came out and delivered that pray. Or if there was another NAACP leader here from another state and he was going to be on that picket line, I would call Reverend Scott. Reverend Scott came and

he walked that picket line with these people. You know, so I could always talk about what Reverend Scott did because he did it.

Now, tell me about Reverend Rogers.

I don't know a lot about Reverend Rogers. And I've had my differences with Reverend Rogers. I sat down and I talked to him. And I really thought that Reverend Rogers was going to be a good president. I don't know what happened to Reverend Rogers. God knows I don't. I voted for Reverend Rogers. That's no secret. I did vote for him. Things just fell apart and I don't know why. I really don't. And I tried to talk to him. I called him on a couple occasions and I tried to talk to him because one thing about me -- I don't have a lot of pride. That I don't have. But guts, I got guts. And I got what it take to get certain things did. And some of the things that I have -- I call it guts -- as a rule black men don't like that. They feel intimidated. And, you know, so I have to be very careful especially when I'm dealing with black men. I've got to be very careful because I can stand up with the best of them.

Hattie, is that what makes you so different? I don't look at you as a typical black woman in Las Vegas. Tell me why you are so different, why you're not just typical.

I think it's the Alabaman that I have in me. Whatever mom gave me from Alabama, it's that. And then it's -- I'm just a southern country girl. That's it. I'm just a southern country girl and one who will not take no for an answer. One who if you said can't be done, why it can't be done? Let me try it. If it can be fixed, I can fix it or I'll get somebody to fix it. And one who not going to be beat down by the system or not going to be beat down by the community. I guess that's what make me a little different. I got what it take to overcome, what Reverend King was -- I got that. Everything thing that Reverend King was talking about, I got it. And I cherish that. And I don't forget that.

You know, I had a dream one time. And in this dream -- I was having problems at my house. I had a cousin that was there, one of my husband's cousins. And she was bossy, real bossy. And that night I went to bed. And I really wanted her to go back to California. And in this dream it was like I was fixing a little dress. And I always said Jesus appeared in this dream -- God appeared in the dream and He says ask anything in my son Jesus' name and I'll do it. You know, He just said that. And when I woke up I remembered that dream. And I said, Lord, make

everything right between me and my husband's cousin because I knew that that was his cousin. I knew he really loved his cousin. And I didn't want her to leave angry with me. So I got up and I apologized. And then we kissed and we hugged, the two of us, and we made up. And when she did go back to California, I never saw her again because she died. But she went back happy. And so I use that same thing today. I'm honest. And when I get to those situations that I can't deal with, I turn them over to God and I let Him help me with some of these things. And I consult Him about a lot of things. But I got enough sense to know He ain't going to work in my life if I don't work. I've got to work.

And many a day this body be tired when I get home because I want things to work out in my life. And they have worked out in my life. There's a lot of things in my life that I never thought would happen to me. I never thought that at certain times of year there are so many thousand dollars I could put away for my children, my grandchildren. I never thought that that would happen in my life. And it's happened in my life. I'm not a wealthy person, not by a long shot. But I'm not one who is hurting, you know, either. But I work hard, hard for that.

And I don't want no -- I have no ego, no ego at all. I really don't know what a ego is except I see people out there who want to be something and they're not. And I'll say that's ego. And I'll tell you something else. I have never been depressed. Knowingly, I have never been depressed, not even when my husband was dying. I was very upset, but never depressed. I'd get angry, but never depressed. So I tell my family that now and sometime they can't believe me. They say, mom, all the things that happened. There were times -- I remember one time when there wasn't hardly food in my house. But we could always put together rice or potatoes, chicken and bread. We could always do that. Maybe that would be the last chicken. But at the next dinner meal, there was a meat. There was a meat to be put on that table.

And I brought my kids up like this, Claytee. You don't go out and discuss with other people what's going on in this family. If you've got a problem with something in this family, let's talk about it at night. We didn't have a lot of time in the morning, but we had a lot of time at night. Let's talk about it. If there was something wrong with your clothes, if there is something wrong with the food you're eating, let's talk about it. I did sewing for all of my daughters. I made everything they wore. And then I went to the thrift shop for my boys. I made their shirts. I did all

of that. And I worked while I was doing a lot of that stuff. But if they had a problem, let's talk about it.

Hattie, I'm going to get back to the Maxim. Now, you became the committee leader. The strike ended. You lost The Marina hotel and some other hotels at that time. Tell me your next step in the union.

My next step in the union -- downtown four. We call it downtown four because it was the Golden Gate, the Las Vegas Club, the Union Plaza and the Showboat. They had reneged on a contract. At this particular time every weekend on Friday and Saturday, we had a picket line. And I would go down there every Friday evening. I'd go down there Saturday morning. I'd go back home Saturday morning. I'd take me a rest. Then Saturday night I'd go back down there again. So I really got involved. After that I got down there and I got involved even though I'm working now.

I remember one time in '84 the Desert Inn was out on strike. And to show you how involved I was -- and my son has said to me after this, he says if I was management at the Maxim, I would hire you. I was a maid. He said I would hire you. I guess that kid could see something that the Maxim or other peoples didn't see. But I was taking him to work. I was going to the Maxim and he was going to his job. And he said, oh, momma, I know this guy. He said pick him up. So I picked his friend up back down on Martin Luther King and probably Vegas Drive. And by the time we got to Bonanza, this guy was telling me that he was on his way to work at the DI. And I say what you do at the DI? He told me what job he was in. And I say the DI is out on strike. He said, yeah, Ms. Canty, but I got to work. I stopped my car. I said, scab, get out of my car; I am not taking no scabs to work. And my son said to me, mom, you're going to -- don't put him -- I said get out of my car. I put him out of that car.

I could not support him and support the strikers. If I'm going to walk the picket line for the strikers, I am not going to take a scab to work. You can only do one or the other. And so I explained that to my son. Now my son laughs about it. He said, boy, you are really into the union. But, you know, whatever you're in you've got to be into it. If you're not into it, somebody else will come in and even destroy it or they'll take it over. And so that's just how I've always been. I just stayed involved.

And after The Marina and after all of that, I have -- after that I never went home and sat

down on the union. I have always been involved from that day forward. It's just a struggle just like when we -- after the Frontier, there is other struggles out there. We will forever be in a struggle here in this town. And sometime I wonder if these younger peoples are going to pull it off because it's a certain group of people that's really, really making sure this union continues to stay together. See, now we are just as bad as educators. The union leaders or the organizers, we're working as hard at educating the union as you working out there at UNLV because what we discovered is we have to educate our members about what's going on in the union. And once a person knows what's going on, then he more likely to be involved. But where you don't have involvement is where there is no education. And where there is no union in this town, most workers die.

Right. So now, you're working with the "Big Four" on your weekends. You're down there picketing.

I'm down there picketing.

And then what happens?

The "Big Four" finally settles. They finally settles. And after the "Big Four" settles, we felt like we could take a break for the while. Then if you remember -- you might not have been here -- I think it was in '89 or '90, the Horseshoe, there was a strike there, nine-and-a-half-month strike. That went on. And right after that the Frontier took us on. See, so we've been out of one battle into another battle. And during the Frontier, we took on the MGM. We organized the MGM. We got that organized. So that was a struggle. At that particular thing over there, that was over 500 people that got arrested for jail and I was one of those people. I've been to jail many times. Never thought that I would go to jail for anything because I've always been a good person. But for the labor movement I've gone to jail quite a few times.

How many times have you been to jail?

At least six times. At least six times.

Wow. You're going to have to tell me about one of those times next Friday when we get back.

Now, after all this activity when did you decide to run for an office? Or tell me what happened before you ran for an office. Was there any --

Well, the only thing that I can say what made my coworkers or this leadership decide to run me was at that negotiation I was telling you about when I took management on.

At the Maxim?

At the Maxim Hotel. And they all was there. And they didn't say nothing. And, you know, I'm wondering please get me out of this. Please say something, you know. But they say I delivered the message so smooth. Said there were no way they could have did anything to me. Well, after that Jim Rawlings came to me on one Friday morning. Jim Rawlings, that's the secretary-treasurer. And he says -- that was in early part of '89 after the negotiation is over at the Maxim. Later part of '89, he says, Hattie, when the executive board meeting is over, I want to talk to you.

At that particular time I was a trustee here at the union. You know, I was a trustee. I had been elected in 1987. That was the first year Jim ran. But, see, as trustee you only meet once a month. Then we only met once a month. And I had to look over the money matters here at the union. And I didn't have a vote. Trustees don't vote. I didn't have a vote. But it was a very important job because if you decided not to sign a financial report, well, certain things wouldn't be paid. So the trustees got to sign -- there are certain reports they have to sign so things can be paid.

So after the meeting I went in his office and he says, Hattie, I'm going to run again and I want you to run on my ticket. I say, hey, I'm going to run as E Board member. He said, no, I want you to run as the president because, see, the secretary-treasurer, that's the highest position. The president is next highest. And I looked at him and I said, no way, Jose. I said I'm not crazy. He said I'll give you some time to think about it, which wasn't very much time. It scared me. That scared me. You know, I got a funny feeling in my stomach.

So I went back to work and I told Dorothy. I said, you know, Dorothy, I can't take that position. I said people will think I'm crazy. I don't have no education. She say very few labor leaders went to college to be a labor leader. She said and members elect you. And if the members elect you, then you got that position. She said I tell you what. She said you think you're crazy now. She said if you don't take that job, I'm going to think you're crazy.

Well, I wasn't getting no help from her. So I decided that weekend I better talk to my daughters. Call. All the family comes over and we talk. And I told him I said I just can't do that. And my baby daughter, she said -- she's always been real proper -- momma, don't worry, I'll help

you with anything. I'll help you. You ain't got to worry about nothing. I said, well, what you going to help me with? I said you're going to be somewhere when they're going to be wanting a report from me. I'm going to be down there and I'm not going to be able to give them a report. Momma, I get the report ready for you the day before. I said, okay, Dell. I've never had to call on her to help me. I don't know what kind of report she would have done. But everybody was willing to help me. I got support. And during the election I won like three to one over someone --

That was 19 --

That was May of 1990. And then in '93, I ran and I was elected again. And that was the same way, three to one. It might have been higher than that because by this time it was somebody that wasn't known. And then in '96, I ran again and I won. And it was a landslide. I mean the person might have got 400 and I got like 1400 votes, you know.

So next year is the next election?

Next year is the next election. So I'm playing this by ear. I don't know how the health is going to be doing because I'm 64 years old. I'll be 65 in June.

That's young.

And everybody say you've got to run. And I say, well, I've got to see if I want to get up, you know.

But you're too energetic and too healthy to retire.

I feel good. I feel good. And I feel like I've given a lot to the union. And I feel like there's a lots more I can give. And I'll do it as long as I can. I'll do it. And my mind is good. I look at some of these young peoples today don't have no mind. And I wonder what happened to that person.

You told me a few minutes ago about being a trustee back in '87. Now, how does that position come about? Is that an elected --

That's an elected position. That's an elected position. And I first ran for that. And it was one of these things like a girl called me. And she said we need a person on the E Board and a trustee. And I want you to take the trustee and Dorothy to take the E Board position.

Now, tell me who Dorothy is.

Dorothy Harden. Was she here when you came in? Was there a lady in here?

She was leaving. There was a lady leaving.

That was Dorothy Harden. We worked together at the Maxim. And she's still at the Maxim Hotel. And we had worked together since the Thunderbird. She used to be my supervisor.

Oh, since the Thunderbird. Now, she's on the executive committee?

She is on the executive board now. She's still on the executive board.

Now, tell me who's the highest, the executive board or the trustees? How does that work?

In a sense you would say the executive board. The E Board is the highest because they make all motions. See, this union and most unions are -- everything have to go before the executive board. And the executive board approves it.

How many people are there on the executive board?

There's five. Yeah, there are five. And I don't make motions. I don't second. But I run the board. If there is a tie, then I would break the tie. That's the only way.

So there are five people on the executive board and you are one of those five?

Yeah.

Oh, okay. And the other four are --

The other four -- wait a minute. There's six on the executive because myself, the vice president and Jim. And then it's three other people on the executive board.

So now, how do you get those three other people? Where do they come from?

Those three other people, they are elected. All peoples on the executive board is elected. All peoples on the trustee -- we have three trustees. All three trustees are elected.

And they are usually people who are working?

They are usually people who are working in the industry. They are people in good standing with the union. Before the election they should have been a member for at least two years. You can't just join and say, well, I'm going to run. You have to be in good standing with the union for at least two years. But most people have been in good standing with the union for years that decide because it's not a laid-back job. You do have to make decisions. And when I say that we have now 40,000-plus members out there, you are making decisions about some of those 40,000-plus people's lives or what benefits or whatever they might be getting. So it's not a laid-back position. And it's not just a yes position to me and Jim even though, you know, the president or secretary-treasurer might want something to go this way. But if one of those people decide no, it

should be this way and they make the motion, if they get the support from that group, then it passes.

Do you know that most people outside of the union have no idea how the union runs?

Yeah, I do know that because most people think that the union people take or steal from the union. That could never happen because we are watched so you won't believe it. And everything is public knowledge. Right now if you want to know how much I make a year, that's public knowledge. You go down to the courthouse somewhere down there and you have somebody pull it up for you.

I didn't know that.

Uh-huh. Anything about this union. How much money this union got -- all of that is public knowledge. We don't try to hide it. We try to let people know because it's out there. Any member of this town or anybody, just about anything you want to know, you can go down there and get it. That's just like a senator or some state official. Our lives are just that open. We have to go before the labor board. We have to be licensed, you know, fingerprinted. This is quite often, once a year just like if we had a casino or something. Not licensed, but we go before the board. And then we have to get fingerprinted and all of that.

I'm impressed.

And that's to keep out ex-felons -- not gangs, but these other people that once was involved in the union -- gangsters or whatever. But this union is squeaky clean. I would never be as successful as I am or work so hard in something that were not clean. And I'm proud to be associated with the Culinary Union.

That's good. I'm going to stop right here. This is a great stopping point. And next Friday morning what time do you think is going to be good for you?

(End Tape 2, Side A.)

This is Claytee White. I'm with Hattie Canty. Today is June 17th, 1998. How are you today?

Good. Good.

Hattie, I was listening to the information you gave me from when we talked before. And I just want to thank you because I know how busy you've been. I want to just clear up a few

things before I start asking a few questions today. You talked about a woman named Roxanne who was an organizer. Do you remember her last name?

I don't remember it right now, Claytee. But before you leave I'll give it to you.

Okay, good. Now, is she a white woman or a black woman?

She's white.

Do we have any African-American organizers?

Yes, we have. We sure have.

You also mentioned a friend of yours, Dorothy. Is Dorothy still involved in the Culinary Union on the executive committee?

Dorothy is yet on the executive board and Dorothy works over at the Maxim Hotel on a status. She's a status board operator.

What is that?

The status board operator, they keep the status of the rooms. They keep up with the rooms. They know if rooms are vacant. They know what rooms are occupied. They know what rooms are dirty. They just know everything about those rooms at the hotel.

I've never heard of that position before. So how many people do you have in that position at each hotel?

Oh, you could have six. Over at the Maxim I think they have three status operators.

Now, why haven't I heard anybody -- you know, I've heard of the guest room attendant, the supervisors, the executive housekeepers, all other positions, the men who help out. But I've never -- and linen room attendants. But I've never heard of --

The status board operators. Status board operator is a union position. It's a decent-paying job, pay a little bit more than what uniform gets because you're at that computer all day long and you're watching the computer. You're looking at the rooms. And you have a lot of input at the front desk. You know what front desk is doing. Front desk knows what housekeeping is doing because she computes those rooms into the front desk computer so the front desk will know what rooms are available.

Oh, that's interesting. Where are most black women today, those in the hotel/casinos? Where are most of them, in which jobs?

I would say the housekeeping. Most black women are in housekeeping.

We were talking before and you were talking about the various battles that you had been in. And you started with The Marina and you had gone over all the way through the MGM battle. Where is the next battle going to be?

I wish there was not a next battle. But I'm sure there are going to be a next battle. And when that happen, Claytee, if I don't call you, you'll hear about it on the news.

Yes. Now, tell me can nonunion people picket with you?

Of course.

So if a person just has a feeling that they know that the union is right and they want to help out, they can go and walk a picket line?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Nobody walks the picket line except the people that came out of that particular hotel getting paid. All these people you see walking the picket line, they're walking the picket line to continue to save jobs in this city, to continue the cost of living that we have in this city, to continue what we are used to because if there were not picket lines, we wouldn't be getting the salaries that we are getting. If there had not been great picket lines, the Frontier hotel would not be solved today.

You also mentioned the last time we talked about workers getting a slice of the pie. I know that management here -- I look at the revenue numbers and those numbers in the newspaper all the time. And I know how big those numbers are. When you say workers getting a slice of the pie, what do you mean?

We want some of those numbers that management is getting. When they come to the bargaining table, I believe they would love to reduce those numbers. But just like you saw those numbers in the paper, we see them too. And so they want the whole pie. We only asking for a slice of those numbers because without a larger slice of the pie, we wouldn't be able to pay those house payments or to send our kids to college, buy good clothes or if something wrong with our kids' teeth, get those fixed. We want identical the same thing for our kids that these great hotel bosses want for their kids.

You told me that you're a good person and you never expected to have gone to jail. But now you've been to jail several times because of labor rights. The last time you went to jail was

probably the MGM?

I wished I could say that, but that's not the last time I went. I went just recently over at the Ox Restaurant.

New York New York.

Yes. I went there.

You asked me a question before you turned your mike on about why do peoples work nonunion. People work nonunion here in this city because they need jobs. And they are hoping that when these big hotels open up they will go union. And so a lot of peoples are trapped at the Ox Restaurant because they thought it was going to be union or they know that this hotel is opening up on the Strip, one of the most prosperous hotels in this city, and it should have been union. Well, the restaurants are not union. And people get caught up in it. They can't afford to quit that job. They've got to wait until they can find another job.

Thank you for that. Marge told me about all the great benefits and how the union has helped her and how she feels about this union. And you've told me the same thing. And I know this is a union city. And that was a question that I've had in the back of my mind for a long time.

Tell me about that last time you went to jail. What was that like? How were you arrested? What happened that day?

This last time I went to jail?

Yes.

Well, you know, we actually did not go to jail. We got arrested and they carried us over by Tropicana -- I don't remember what the cross streets were. But it's the Catholic Church over there off of Tropicana. Well, that's where they kind of booked us at, you know, took all the legal stuff. But they did take us away in a paddy wagon. So if you had seen me out there, you would have known I wasn't going to a school. I had to be going to jail.

But they had a place already reserved because they knew that this might happen?

It was too many. There was too many that got arrested. There was quite a peoples that got arrested. You can imagine what we would do to the system on a Thursday evening if 200 peoples at once go downtown to be arrested. We probably would have had many more. But, you know,

you kind of have to stop peoples. We always tell people if you have not gone through this civil disobedience training, then you should not go get arrested because we don't want our people hurt. We try to teach them how to do so they don't be hurt. And I'm sure if Dr. Martin Luther King was here today, these are some of the things he did back then in the 50s and 60s. And so we are really taking charge from what he did. Many of us go back and we look at films or we listen to him or we read books so that we'll do this the right way.

So we have that link again with civil rights and the labor movement.

Oh, yeah. We can't get away from it. We can't get away from it.

That's right. You know, Hattie, before I didn't get your parents' names.

My mother's name was Hattie Donason. That was her maiden name. I had to think there for a minute. And my daddy's name was Eddie Robertson. And they both have passed away.

You told me about a Culinary Training School. In that school can you learn all of the jobs or is it just for certain jobs?

It's just for certain jobs. But it's the majority of our entry-level jobs. That's one of my babies because I saw that thing come from down here to -- well, it can go as far as we want it to go. And one reason I'm so proud of it, Claytee, we have trained over 200 -- we have trained many people -- but over 200 people on the welfare roll. And 70 percent of those people are working in a hotel right now. And that's one reason that I'm so proud of the Culinary Training Center. I would love for you to come down and visit if you haven't did it. I just left there because we had a tour of the training center last night. We had another one this morning. Anytime I'd love for you to come down there.

Well, anytime that you're going to do a tour, I would love to know.

Okay. We have a lady who teach women how to do maid work. And you would think all of us know how to do maid work, but we really don't.

I know we don't.

We don't. And she teach them the right way. She don't teach them any shortcuts. She teach them the right way. And most of the time, 90 percent of our girls or ladies that go through that Culinary Training Center get jobs. They know they're going to get a job if they go through the Culinary Training Center. We have a restaurant. We teach people how to prepare food. We teach people

how to serve food. We teach people just how to prepare it, how to serve it, how to cook it. And it is great. It is great. So you've got to come down and look at that.

A few weeks ago the Vice President of the United States was here. He did a tour of that school. Alexis Herman when she came, Secretary of Labor, she did a tour of that school. And she mentioned that on national TV, the Culinary Training Center.

And that is one true partnership that Culinary have with management in this town because management pays three-cent an hour for every hour that a worker work goes in -- that's how the training center is run, three-cent an hour for every worker. Management pays for that. So all of these students you see down there, they don't pay nothing to go through that training center. It is paid for already.

So now, how long is the course if I wanted to learn how to serve food?

That course is about 12 weeks long. That is if you --

I don't know anything about it.

If you don't know anything about it, if you pick it up good, it's 12 weeks long. If we see that you're not going to make it in 12 weeks -- we don't graduate nobody who's going to be a problem to the business when they get out there because that's not what they're paying for. Management is paying for this course that you learn how to work in that environment when you get into the hotel. And so as a rule when they go through there, they are ready. They might have to pick up speed. They might have to learn the setup at these different hotels. But they know about food. They know how to make beds. They know how to clean. They know how to wash the pots or clean the ovens. Whatever it is they know how to do it.

How did you come up with this idea?

Well, I would love to say that I came up the idea, but I did not. It was borne before I got to be the president. I just happened to be one of the people that got involved from the beginning of the school. And I'm glad that I did because I've learned so much since I've gotten involved. And so many workers could have been saved a long time ago if there had been a Culinary training center because all the time when you're saying -- let's say we send you out to do maid work. If you don't make it in five days, if you don't come to where the company think you ought to be in five days, you're not going to make it. But when we send somebody out, in five days they're there.

And, see, in five days there's no way I could do that work when I've only cleaned my own house before.

Right. Right.

Wow. That's interesting.

Before I confused two names. You were telling me about Rachel Coleman and I confused what you were saying with Sarah Hughes. I want you to tell me again about Rachel Coleman. Was Rachel Coleman the woman who wore the hardhat when you --

No. That was Sarah Hughes. And God bless her soul. She's passed on now. I had to go to the cemetery on Memorial Day to visit my husband's grave. And I passed her grave. And I said to my daughter, I said, you know what? I said if I had a bunch of flowers, I'd put them on her grave. But I didn't have no extra ones. So my daughter said wait just a few minutes. So she went and got me flowers and we placed flowers on Sarah's grave. And that's just how much that lady mean to me. Anybody else I would've passed the grave and went on and not -- but Sarah -- I didn't know a lot about her. But she was a woman's woman. She was a black woman that represented strength. That's what I saw in her. I saw strength. I saw courage. I saw a woman who were willing to do the job. If there was construction going on -- and I remember that from the old Thunderbird -- she had this hardhat on. And she had to go through the construction to get to where we were working at. So she had to put a hardhat on to come to where we was. And she did it.

Thank you. I think what you have done here has also been a great example for your family just hearing what your daughter said to you when you were getting ready to run. How do you see your children -- and the other incident that you gave me, your son in the car with you when you put his friend out because he was a scab. How do you see your children different from their friends? Do you see any impact of your working here or working with the union so closely?

Well, I see some impact that my life, my total life have had on my children's. Working this job -- I think my kids would agree with me wherever I am, I would be the person that I am today. And working this job necessarily haven't -- I want to say the right word. This job didn't make me whole. Hattie made this job what it is because that that I have down in me is what my kids see. They have always seen that. When my husband died and I was a maid, they saw how I could get

that family together. I had to show strength then and I show even more strength now. They saw that when I didn't have but a little money I could yet put a decent meal on the table. They don't remember the lights being ever out or the water being cut off because I always was the type of person who took care of business. I had to take care of my business. I never really liked responsibility, but I could accept it much easier than most people that you know. I accepted my responsibility and I took care of it. I don't know if that answers your question the way you --

Yes, it does. Yes, it does. You had said something before about when you had that fight about your house in your community and you and the neighbors got together and formed that group. I know that all of that plus this just made you a real great career woman.

Well, that helped. Now, the union, what I learned here helped me with that. It helped with that because, you know, there were a time when -- anytime you're dealing with people and they're afraid you're trying to take this over. It wasn't that I was trying to take it over. I wanted to make sure that we all were satisfied with the outcome of it. And that sometimes I did so much and I would have to, you know, step back and let somebody else go forward as if people thought that they did it. You know, you have to do that sometime is to let people think they are doing it.

That was a tough fight because -- you know what? -- we weren't only fighting with the peoples that built these homes. We couldn't find those people. But we had to fight with the city of North Las Vegas. We fought with them until they decided to do the right thing. And eventually they did the right thing by some people. Some yet not satisfied with the outcome because everybody's not moved yet. There are a lot of people still living in that area. And the place is unfit for people to live.

I'm just trying to make sure that I have gone over everything. What do you see as a future for women in the union here, in Local 226 here in the city?

What do I -- women -- you know, women are over one-half of the people in this union. And women, they are just going forth. They are just doing what -- we know what to do and that's to take care of responsibility. Take care of the membership out there. I wish sometime you could come down to a committee meeting, a union meeting. You'll see mostly women.

Are those open to the public?

No. They're not. I would love to -- one of these times I'll invite you to something that is open to

the public and you'll see it's mostly women. And women are very aggressive in this union. A woman organizer -- just women period. It's much easier to organize women than it is to organize men. And you're not going to believe it. Men are so fearful of the boss where most women -- the first thing they say, well, I was looking for this job and I came here. And when I leave I'll be looking for a job. And they don't want to be pissed over all the time. Maybe that's not the right word. And they want to stop it. And they know the only way to stop it is a group of women get together and they go to the boss.

Some of the toughest people in this city is housekeepers. It's nothing -- we have gotten two to 300 housekeepers and marched them up to the executive office or they have did it on their own. There have been times when we had to stop housekeeping departments from walking out. And I would tell them you can't do that. We have a contract there. If you walk out they're going to lock you out and you all going to be fired. But that's when they are tired. And when housekeepers -- these are women, both black, white and Latinos. When they get tired, they are tired. And most times they'll do something about it. See, we just have to make sure that what they do about these things are the right things.

When you became that committee leader back at the very beginning of your union activity, what kind of training did you get and how did you get that training to know what to do in the facility, what to say to the other women?

Well, the training that we got or I got was hands-on training, one-on-one training. And Roxanne was there every day. And when I didn't know what I was doing, she was sitting right at the table to direct me. She taught me how to move people, how to push people, how to get people to do the things that the union need for them to do. And doing that she also taught me more about the union because nobody can push you to do something for the union if you don't know what the union is all about because most of us have a bad taste in our mouths about the union, what we have heard or what we have seen on TV. But you know we really don't know what the union is all about. And one thing I said to one of the workers here the other day -- if it were not for us, what would these people do, maids, dishwashers? They would be making minimum wages. It's not that I'm getting a big salary. That's not it. But I am doing a big job out there to make sure that workers are taken care of or they know how to take care of themselves.

Most of our workers today know they don't want to work for minimum wages. And I think that's because of the education that the union has gotten in there and done. And people don't realize what unions really stand for. We help with the minimum wages. This year we got a raise in minimum wages. If it had not been for the unions -- (indiscernible) was leader in this -- we wouldn't have gotten that raise. So now when you're working minimum wages, you're not getting 3.75 or four dollars and a quarter. You're making five something an hour. That's not a lot of money, but it's more than what it was three years ago. And I can just see that's not staying there. I'm sure it's going to move at some other point.

Health care issues. The union is in the forefront on that. We are in the forefront. And you know something, Claytee? The Culinary Union have some of the best health care programs out there. I tell anybody it might not be the amount of money you want, but look at your insurance that you are working for.

Every woman I've interviewed -- I've interviewed cocktail servers. I've interviewed maids. I've interviewed a lot of different women. And everybody, everybody bar none agrees with everything you said about the union.

That's right.

So the word is really getting out there.

Can you tell me about -- I'd like to know about race relations among the workers when you first started and what it's like today.

Race relations. Give me an example because I don't want to just go --

Okay. I want to know about -- this city had a reputation back in the 40s, 50s of being a very racist city. At that time housekeeping departments were almost all black. Some women have told me what a harmonious working relationship they had working in these various positions because most of them were segmented by job categories. So there were never any racial problems. I want to know how that has changed today. We have women in housekeeping from all various groups. We have Latinos. We have Asian women. We have white women and black women. Do you see a problem? Does the union have a problem now with that?

I'm going to answer that question and I hope it's a good answer. Race -- this is Hattie speaking --

will always be a problem. You're going to have to know how to deal with it. The one thing the union do, what we really, really work on doing, if there's a housekeeping department in this city that's split up by race, we get in there and we try to talk to both parties or three parties, how many parties it is in there, and let them know that's the way the boss wants you. They want you split on race. Then they split you on everything else in here. And when you really sit down and talk to them, you can kind of bring these people together because most of us -- and this is how I saw it when I was at the Maxim. This Spanish girl or this white girl, we had to work together in the hotel and we worked together. When we got off at night, she wasn't going home with me no way or I wasn't going home with her. And sometime you develop relationships with people or either friendships with people. But you can't do it when you have just got in 50 maids from Mississippi, the backwoods of Mississippi, and you've got in these white girls from let's say Connecticut who have never worked that much with black peoples. You got in some Latinos who don't know a lot about black peoples. So you've got cultural differences there. So you've got to work together with people. And that's one thing the union has tried to do is bring people together. And we have those problems in the hotel. And we have to get in there and work with those girls and let them know. If you let the boss split you up like this, then there are going to be some problems. And so we try and we have been able to bring some of these girls together, bring those problems to the forefront. Let them know that when you finish your job, that's it. You go home.

Thank you. I want to talk about just one strike so that I can see what a strike is like from beginning to end. I want to talk about the Frontier. We read in the newspaper that Culinary members agreed on an increase in their union dues to support those strikers. Was that a true report?

Oh, yes, that was a true report. And the Culinary members did almost double their dues to be able to take care of that strike. Now, there was other monies put into that. But the union dues was the main thing because what the rest of the town realized that if they didn't win that strike over at the Frontier, every hotel in this town would know how to get rid of the union. All you got to do is starve them out, just wait awhile, and they were going to have to walk away because there wouldn't be enough money to take care of a strike. Strikes are very costly. And, therefore, we was able to pay those strikers, the ones who maintained that strike line, $200 a week. That's how

much they got. Now, if there was a striker who could walk six hours a day and go get a job at any hotel in this town, he yet got his $200 a week. So, see, we was trying to hopefully help the strikers to where they could be able to maintain, pay some bills, wouldn't lose no homes, wouldn't lose their cars and yet have a halfway decent life.

That solidarity is real.

It's real. It's really real. And wherever a person decide to go out on a strike, we will be there with that person until the end. Now, myself, I did not think that strike was going to go for six years. I don't think nobody in this city thought it was going to go for six years. But it did.

That was amazing.

People who work here in the union hall, what are your responsibilities when a strike like that is going on?

Our responsibility is support the strikers. We have to go out on the line. We go out there and we walk just like the strikers do. I walked many a day out there on that line myself. And we yet have to keep the business of the union going. We yet have to take care of the members in the rest of these hotels. Those are our members that came out of that hotel. So while they're out on strike, we yet have to take care of them, too. They have problems. Sometime you might have a striker who gets burned out from being out there on the line. So then he'll probably come down here and he'll work out there at the strike kitchen.

What is that?

Strike kitchen is -- you work in there preparing food or you work out there making picket signs. There's many things you have to do to keep that strike going. Everybody work together. And if you see where one is getting burned out, you have to put him some other place. Or maybe they're leafing out at the airport. We did many things during that strike. We were leafing the airport, letting people know that there was a strike at the Frontier. Or we might be leafing at some bank about the way that the Elardis had done the strikers out there. So there were many things that people could do and was doing.

So as the tourists got off the planes, you were letting them know at that point?

Yes, at that point.

Oh, that's interesting.

And we have learned, too. We have learned how to fight smart. It wasn't so much -- you know, see, anybody can walk a picket line, anybody. That's not a smart thing to do. But it is -- it's a weapon. That's a weapon.

And an important one.

Very important one. But the research department, that is a weapon. That's a big weapon. In your research department you know everything these people are doing. They can't do nothing without you not knowing it. So if they plan to go to -- let's just say if you plan to open up a hotel in New Orleans, we're on top of that. We got somebody down there testifying as to why you should not open up that hotel, about your labor troubles here in this city. So we kind of follow you around because every move you make, we should know something about that. And that sophisticated research department, that's what they're all about is to let us know. They don't necessarily do it. But to let us know what's going on.

So now, do you have a research department in this facility?

Oh, yeah, we have a research department here.

Tell me who's located in this building. What are some of the other entities right here in this building?

It's just the Culinary Union. The research department belong to the Culinary Union.

Right. But what are some of the other departments?

Organizing. Research. Our rep department. Grievance department. Grievance are the peoples that go out and take care of the problems that people have on the job. We have dispatch. We have orientation. The training center have a girl up here four hours a day taking applications for anybody who want to go through the Culinary Training Center. There's another department we have in here. Citizenship programs, about four hours.

What is that?

(End Tape 3, Side A.)

Now, when most of us think of the labor union, we have no idea that you have become sophisticated right along with the hotel industry.

That's what growth is all about. And when you cease to grow, you are dead. When you cease to grow, you are dead. And this labor involvement is alive, very much alive. And we have to grow

right along with the hotels in this industry. Also, we would love to work as partnerships with these companies here. We don't want to always be their enemies or fighting across the table. Things are much better when we sit down and work things out, talk things out. And that's what this union is about. It's not about fighting companies. You know, you take like -- there are some companies here, the Mirage Corporation, very good company as far as the union is concerned. At negotiation time we don't sit and fight. We could finish that contract off in one day if we would take the time to do it. Where some of these other companies we are going in days and days and then you've got to fight with the company. The workers got to fight. We don't like that. We really don't like that. But that's the way we have been forced to do with some things, with some companies.

How can you get some of these other companies to see that the model being set with the union and the Mirage is a good model to follow?

Well, you know ego's involved. When you got a bunch of egos, they'll never see those things. But I think the companies are getting -- you know, they want to go on and cut right through the crap and get to the meat of it and get things. It's a little bit better now than it have been because this time we wasn't in negotiations for a whole year like at sometimes we have been almost a year. And we still got some contracts to get out there. And I wouldn't say that's the company fault. It could be our fault because we've been so busy we haven't sat down to the table with these people. And I think when we sit down with them, you let them know what you want. We're not changing the contract that much. It's not a lot you've got to -- you know.

And this time around we have gotten one of the best contracts financially that we have ever gotten. At the end of this five-year contract, maids or porters or whoever they are in their industry will be making a dollar and 55 cents an hour more. And that is unheard of in this industry. That is unheard of it. We got let's see I think it was 25 cent, 30, 30 and 35, 35. And I think that's pretty good. That's not a lot of money, but that's pretty good. That puts a maid over $11 an hour.

Before when I was in here, you were saying that you were afraid that a maid might not be able to buy a house if you're not able to --

That's right. If we don't grow with this growth that's happening here in Vegas, a maid won't be able to buy a house. Or if she have a house, she won't be able to maintain that house. That

bothers me because I was able to keep my home when my husband died. I was able to pay the taxes. I was able to buy new cars. And I'm not saying I had a lot of -- I did not have a lot of money. Most people knew me know I didn't have a lot of money. But there were certain things I could do. And if the industry, if we don't grow along with these hotels, that's going to be washed out. It'll be unheard of that a maid or a porter can send their kids to college. So that's why the growth is very important for the Culinary Union or for any union in this town.

You told me about the training schools, citizenship and all of that. Does the Culinary Union do anything with helping -- I know that it has been said that a lot of people come to Las Vegas for jobs without a high school diploma because they know they can get work. Does the Culinary Union do anything to help people get a GED or get a high school education or --

I'm glad you asked me that question because we have the GED program at the Culinary Training Center. That is another one of our things that we have. So if a person come here and want to take a GED test or get their GED, we have that at the Culinary Training Center. So they can get that. We also have ESL classes.

Now, what is that?

If a person want to learn English, we got that class. So, you know, so far we don't have everything that all of our members might think we need. But we do have some of the important things.

You have a lot of important things. Tell me some of the things --

I'm sorry to -- but I think the Clark County School District provides instructors for those classes at the Culinary training center.

Oh, that's interesting. With all of the things that you're doing, what do you find as some of the things that workers are saying that we need this and we need that and they're willing to work to help you with?

Well, workers are just like anybody else out there, you know.

I know. We want the world.

Yeah, we want the world. But one of the things most workers want -- they want a good contract. They want a safe environment to work in. They want that guaranteed 40 hours a week. They want to hold on to that. And most of all they want to keep that health and welfare, their insurance. They want that. They want their pension. The Culinary Union have a pension that -- it's not as

big as a lot of peoples think it is. But most of our members, they are getting up to -- they are doing great. They are doing really good because if it were not for that pension, the only thing they would have to retire on would be Social Security. And me and you both know that's not enough. And so some of the people are getting a very, very good pension. Maybe January of '99 -- I can't announce it now -- but there going to be an increase. And I think our pension is going to be really satisfied with that. So what they are saying is what they would like to enrich upon. We got it, but they just want to make it better.

I see. Just like anybody else, anyplace else in the world.

Yeah. Uh-huh.

A lot of us are really ignorant about unions. We don't know what they're all about. We don't know what they're offering today. What do you feel was the general feeling here in the city during the Frontier strike?

Well, you know, Claytee, we had a bunch of people who felt like if this woman did not want those 500 and something workers in there, why didn't those 500 and something workers go get a job some other place? Now, you had a group of people like that. Then you got a great big group of people who said stay there; don't walk away from there because if you walk away from there, then this thing going to spread throughout the city. And they felt like we better stay here and fight for our rights.

And whenever the union -- when there's a strike like that, you're not just striking for the benefits from that hotel. But you are learning to take up for yourself. You are learning to defend your rights. You are not letting people just run over you or you're taking anything they give you. You're saying to that company, no, I'm not going to take that; I want this from you. You're not going to cut my contract. You're going to leave my contract in contact and you're just not going to do me like that.

Last time you told me that you weren't sure is that you were going to run in 1999. Have you decided?

No. I haven't thought about that, Claytee. You know, they just --

I think you should. I just really think you should.

Well, I tell you what, Claytee. You'll see in January of next year if I decide.

I'm leaving in six weeks. But I'm going to keep in touch. I have so many friends.

Where are you going?

I'm going to go work on a Ph.D. back in Virginia.

Oh, great.

At the College of William & Mary. It's only 90 miles from my mother. So I'm going to be leaving Las Vegas. But believe me it is the place I want to make as my home as soon as I finish my Ph.D.

And I don't know right now. There's a lot of stuff in me that said go ahead and do what you got to do. So I'm not ready -- I'll tell you this much. I'm not ready to go home and sit in that rocking chair.

Good. Good.

I refuse to do that.

That's what I was hoping you'd say. You know, you have given me lots of great information. I could go on just talking to you forever and ever. But I know how busy your next meeting is and how important that meeting is. Is there anything else that you'd like to say? This interview is going to be -- like I said it's going to be transcribed. It's going to be part of a Special Collections' collection that we have in the library. Students are going to use it in years to come. Is there anything else that you'd like to add about yourself, about the union, about the whole union process?

You know, Claytee, there's a lot of things that I would like to say. And here lately I had the opportunity of speaking at a luncheon in Washington, D.C., before about 400 attorneys. And I questioned myself why me? Why am I speaking to these people about the labor movement? But what I discovered in that meeting, very few of those people knew anything about the labor movement. So that was the time for me to kind of tell my story.

And for the young peoples or the older peoples that's reading this, get involved. Try and get involved with something that's going to benefit your children, your grandchildren. Because, you know, I'm 65 years old and there's a possibility -- I'm not going to be here 60 more years. And that's a great possibility. But the things that I have done, the doors that I have caused to be open for the young peoples that are following me, I feel really great about that today. I have not

gotten 60 years old to sit down and do nothing. Most of the work that I have done for this community has been in the last eight years. So you never get too old. Don't ever get discouraged. You can never get too tired. But you've got to keep on keeping on. And that's what it's all about; just keep on keeping on. Thank you.

Hattie, I thank you so much. There's a book that I use at home a lot. It's written by some black women. And the title of the book is *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible.* And that's how I see you. I see you as a woman who came from a small town in the South just like I did. And you have just done magnificent things. And I thank you so much for your time.

You're welcome.

(End Tape 3, Side B.)