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An Interview with Margaret "Peggy" Casey

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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University Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

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Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

Margaret "Peggy" Casey was born in Louisville, Kentucky where her father was the city editor of the local newspaper. She grew up amidst all the excitement of the Kentucky Derby, which she recalls in the interview. Peggy attended college at the University of Wisconsin during World War II. She describes the atmosphere and what it was like during her years in college. After graduating, she worked for an aeronautical company, Curtiss-Wright, where she helped build planes for the war.

By 1952 Peggy was married to Walt Casey, whom she met through her sister, and they had moved to Las Vegas. In the interview, Peggy discusses what the environment was like in Las Vegas for a woman raising children. She describes what grocery shopping was available, and how she sewed most of her children's clothing.

Peggy's children got involved in different activities. Mike had asthma, and he started swimming at the Paradise Park pool, which was built around 1960. The aerobic effects of competitive swimming developed his lungs. Steve was into horses and actually delivered newspapers on his horse. Her daughter loved horses also, and owns them to this day.

In 1959, Peggy joined the Mesquite Club, which is the oldest federated women's club in Las Vegas. The club planted trees, started the public library, and was involved in many worthy causes. She also became a Master Gardener and has helped in many gardening projects around the valley.

Peggy gives a great account of her life in Las Vegas, and that of her family and friends. At the end of the interview Peggy gives her thoughts on Las Vegas today, comparing them to her memories of Vegas back in the 1950's and 1960's.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER at UNLV

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Name of Narrator: MARGARET CASEY (PEGGY)

Name of interviewer: CLAYTON WHITE

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Margaret (Peggy) Casey 1/13/05
Signature of Narrator Date

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Clayton D. White 1/13/2005
Signature of interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. And I'm with Margaret "Peggy" Casey. It is January 13th, 2005.

How are you this afternoon?

I'm very good. Thank you.

Good. Did I give your complete name correctly?

Yes. My name is Margaret, but I'm called Peggy.

Okay. Now, what is your maiden name?

Perkins.

Where are you from originally?

I'm from Kentucky, Louisville. My father was on the newspaper there.

Did he own the newspaper?

Oh, no. No. He was the city editor.

Good. Wonderful. What was it like growing up there?

Oh, it was wonderful. Kentucky was really a beautiful place, and we had all kinds of activities. Daddy being on the newspaper, we had all kinds of extra privileges, passes to the movies and to the swimming pool and all kinds of things like that. It was great.

Usually when I think of Kentucky, one of the first things I think about is the Kentucky Derby. Now, where in relationship to Louisville is the Kentucky Derby held?

Well, it is in Louisville proper.

So did you ever --

I didn't get to the derby until I was in college. But when my mother was young, they used to go to the derby and sit on the grass and have a picnic lunch. Now it's just monstrous grandstand and hours and hours of traffic.

Right. Well, tell me what it was like going to the Kentucky Derby as a young woman in college.

I went to University of Wisconsin and four of us drove down for the derby. It wasn't quite as monstrous then as it is now, but it was very exciting.

Which year was this?

1941, I believe.

Do you remember who won the derby that year, which horse?

I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't. Oh, I think maybe it was Whirlaway. I probably shouldn't say that, because --

We can always check. We were just beginning to get into World War II at that time. How did that change your life as a young girl in college?

Well, it didn't change my life in college. But after I graduated, I got into a program that Curtiss-Wright had. And I went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, for a year's aeronautical engineering training. Then I worked in Caldwell, New Jersey, in the propeller division. We were in the engineering part, not the production.

Were you considered one of the "Rosie the Riveters"?

No. That would be in production. But it was exciting. If a propeller failed, they would send it to us to see why it had failed. I would do things like put a whole propeller down in a heat-treating tank and see what happened, I guess. They did chemical tests and all kinds of tests. I guess I wasn't paying a lot of attention.

Did you consider that work as part of the war effort?

Oh, yes, that was certainly part of the war effort. Curtiss-Wright had --

And tell me about him. I don't know that name.

Well, it's an aeronautical company, Curtiss-Wright. They built planes. As I say, we were in just the propeller division. But they made engines. Walt probably knows more about what they did than I do. But they had groups in seven different colleges, in the East anyway. When we finished our training, then we worked there until the end of the war. After the war was over, why, they had no further use for us.

So what did you do after the war?

Well, I was looking for something to do. After the war, I lived in New York for a while. I was living with Walt's cousin, who was from California.

How did you meet Walt?

Well, through her eventually. I was living with her and she was going to take a vacation to California. So another friend and I drove to California. Then we spent part of her vacation with her and then drove back. I guess in the meanwhile, I had met Walt while I was living with her, just after the end of war. By the time we were on our way back, we had decided to get married.

On our way back, like the 3rd of July, we went through Yellowstone Park, and there was no place to spend the night. So we parked on a hill, and we were in a little business coupe. And she was small. So I said, well, you sleep on the shelf there and I'll sleep on the seat. And we only had one blanket between us. It was cold there on the Fourth of July. And the next day, all we did was look for a place to sleep that night. And we kept going in every ranch that we saw, and they couldn't take us. Finally, it was getting about 5 or 6 o'clock and it was going to storm. We went in Jenny Lake Lodge. They said, well, you go across the road there. It was a couple miles across the road, but a ranch was just getting started after the war. They said maybe they could put us up. So they put us up. They said, yeah, they could take care of us for the night. And we thought, well, this was pretty nice. Maybe we could afford to stay there a couple days. The next day, we went out horseback riding. And they said, well, if you want to help clean up the cabins and get ready for the dudes that were coming, we could stay a couple weeks. So we said, okay, we'll do that. Before the two weeks were over, the cook, who was an alcoholic, got drunk and didn't show up. So I said, well, I'll cook. We spent two months there. We spent all summer there. I was the cook, and my friend was kind of the dishwasher. We had a wonderful time. It was just a really friendly place.

Are you from a large family?

No.

How did you learn to cook for a big number of people? What did you do?

Well, during the war, there were six of us that lived together, and we would take turns cooking. But I just cooked.

So how many people were you cooking for once you started cooking there?

Oh, probably 20 or 30. One thing that was very funny was that Walt came to visit me. So I thought we'd go out for dinner and have a cookout supper and a horseback ride. So I got my friend to -- had her all set up to cook dinner. We cooked on a wood stove. I had the stove all laid and told the cowboy to come in and light the fire for her. One thing that I had neglected to tell her was that she needed to put more wood in the stove. And when we got back from our ride, the dudes still hadn't had dinner because the fire had gone out.

So you thought that was kind of just common sense, right?

Yeah.

So after that two-month period, did you go back to New York?

No. I went back to Kentucky and got ready to get married.

So what brought you eventually to Las Vegas?

Well, after we were married, Walt was working for United Airlines, and he was transferred to Portland. It's a very damp climate. He got rheumatoid arthritis up there. So when we went down to Brawley where he is from, the warm weather there pretty well got him over it. They said, well, you better find a warm climate to live in. So he had a friend here who was running American Linen. So we came to Las Vegas.

What did you think of Las Vegas? After Louisville and New York, what did you think of Las Vegas?

It was a little place, but it was fun. It was really fun because you knew everybody.

Do you remember the year that you came?

I came in '52.

Okay. What was it like? What did it look like from a woman's viewpoint?

Just a little, little place. It was hard to find a place to live. So we bought a five-acre piece that was way, way out in the country.

Is this the piece that we're sitting on today?

That's the piece we're sitting on today, yes. We sold the back half of it. We sold two and a half acres. Oh, I guess we only bought two and a half acres. We sold the back acre. We used that money to start our business. After Walt was sick for a year and a half, he had to learn to walk all over again. So we didn't have any finances at all when we got here.

So did you work at all in those beginning years?

Not in the beginning. We had two children when we came here. The month that we started our business, we had our daughter. So I stayed home. For one thing, we were really way out in the boonies. There were rabbits running around everywhere. There were also snakes and things. I was worried if one of the children would get bitten by a snake, what would I do? We didn't have a telephone. I didn't have a car. So I bought a snake-bite kit for a dollar. But actually, we only saw one snake.

So you never had to use the kit?

I never had to use the kit, fortunately.

And you had two sons first, correct?

Two sons when we came here.

So keeping them in the house all the time was almost impossible.

Oh, no, they didn't stay in the house.

So as the children grew older, you joined a club, I believe. You joined a club?

Well, I joined the Mesquite Club in '59.

Tell me about that. Tell me what kind of club it is and what it was like when you joined.

Well, the Mesquite Club is the oldest -- it's a federated woman's club. They really did a lot to start Las Vegas. They planted trees downtown. They started the library. They did a lot of good. They still do a lot of good. It's just harder to do it now.

In 1959, do you remember any of the projects that you participated with?

Oh, actually I don't. But they've always raised money for -- they give it to worthy causes in the city. They have their own building.

How do they raise funds, and how did they at that time?

Well, at that time every year they'd have a big luncheon in a hotel and have a fashion show. And, jeez, that was a big thing. There were maybe three or four organizations that would do something like that. But those fashion shows, everybody wanted to go and they raised a lot of money.

Why were they so special?

There wasn't anything else to do.

And so you got a chance to dress up and go to a luncheon?

Yeah, go to a luncheon and have people walk around and show you the fancy clothes that you could get.

Did you have people that sponsored? Like dress shops, did they sponsor the fashions? How did you get --

Well, they would just put the fashion show on. It was their expense, but it wasn't a great expense for them. I think probably, generally they'd use the club members for the models. They'd raise the money from the luncheons, was the big part of raising money. But the luncheons weren't

expensive then like they are now.

The hotels that you would use for those luncheons, would they donate the space, or did you have to pay for it?

Well, they would provide the ramp for it. But it was part of the expense of the luncheon. They didn't charge us anything. They donated that part, whatever we needed, curtains and lights.

You just probably paid for the food.

Yeah.

And maybe to rent the room. Do you remember some of the hotels that allowed you to use their facilities?

Oh, yes. We used the Tropicana and the Thunderbird. I don't think they ever had any in the El Rancho. The Frontier and the Sahara. The earlier hotels. The high-rises now were not part of it.

So who joined the Mesquite Club? Give me an idea of the typical member of the club.

Well, it used to be that a person had to be sponsored by two other members. So it was, I guess, somewhat exclusive. Now anybody can say they'd like to join. There's no great big rush for it. But it was always just friends of the members. They'd have a membership of about probably 250 people. They had a program every week, which was informative.

What kind of program every week? Give me an idea what a weekly meeting is like.

Oh, the governor's wife might speak or somebody telling us about water or just anything that was of interest. Sometimes it would be somebody talking about a book. Once a month or every two months, they'd have a fundraising luncheon right in the clubhouse. They'd have bridge parties.

Where is the Mesquite Club building?

It's on St. Louis just east of the Landmark. About three or four -- maybe eight blocks east -- well, say, it's four blocks east of the Strip on St. Louis. They built that building in about, I think, 1960 or '61. There was nothing else around it. Now the neighbors are kind of complaining about it.

But you were there first.

We were there first.

Why would they complain about having that building in their community?

We were renting the building out to help pay our expenses. Sometimes the renters would be a little raucous. So now we are not renting the building anymore. That causes a problem for the

club because there are a lot of expenses involved with maintaining a building.

So tell me about today's activities. You told me about what it was like in the 50s and 60s with the bridge clubs and the weekly meetings. What is it like today?

You mean my life today?

No, no. The Mesquite Club.

Oh, it's still pretty much the same.

Is it still a weekly meeting?

Weekly meeting. Actually, now maybe it's only three weeks. They don't have a meeting on the fourth Friday. But that's new. They've always had weekly meetings. Not in the summer, September, October, to June.

But it is still a weekly meeting except for the summer.

One thing that I was thinking about was that when we were out here, we were all by ourselves. There was one house way down the street. There were only three houses within a two-mile radius of us.

Now, this is where you live?

Uh-huh, right here. And the boys, of course, were like three and five or two and four. They'd come along and grade the roads. None of the roads were paved. The boys would sit out there and watch the road grader go by. And he would stop and give them a ride every now and then. That was a big part of their lives.

That's great. What was it like for you living that far away from the town? And you told me about the snake-bite kit and why that was important. Give me an idea of what life was like for you as a young wife.

Well, as I say, when we came here, we didn't have any money. Walt and an apprentice carpenter built a thousand-square-foot house with no money. We did with the least we could get along with. One thing I did was scrape linoleum off of used flooring so that we could use that. There was always something to do because the house was not finished at all.

We moved in and Walt had told me to go and pick out some windows. So I went and got some windows. When we moved into the house, the boys could not see out their windows unless they were standing on their beds. So before we did anything else, we remodeled and we put fixed

windows in the living room. And the living room windows had been larger than the windows in the kids' room. And we put the windows from the living room in the boys' room and put fixed windows in the living room. And then the boys could see out without standing on their beds.

That's great. Did they have playmates?

Eventually there were a few families that moved in. There was, well, a boy that lived down there that was a year or two older and then one other boy. Not many playmates.

Now, as they started to go to school, how did that change for you? And was their school bus coming out here?

The school bus picked them up right here in front of the house.

So now you're home by yourself all day.

No. Still something to do in the house.

How did you get back and forth to your Mesquite Club meetings?

I guess by that time, I must have had a car. One day Walt came home and said, come on we're going into town. And he took me to town, and he bought me a used Plymouth, I think it was, for \$125. That car ran very well for about two years. It gave up the ghost. And we got a -- I think it was a '38 Oldsmobile. I think that was \$150 plus the trade-in.

That's great.

So prices have changed a lot.

Oh, yes. So tell me what difference that car made for you?

Well, I could go to town. We had to go to town to get the groceries. And we're six miles outside of town. So I can go to the grocery store.

Tell me about the stores at that time. Now we're talk about the 50s when you first moved here. Where did you go shopping?

There was a Safeway at Maryland Parkway and Charleston. That was the closest grocery store. Eventually, there was a grocery store at Paradise. Tropicana used to be called Bond Road.

B-o-n-d?

Yeah. There was a Mr. and Mrs. Bond that lived farther down the street.

I'm glad you said that. I see that there's a street right here named Casey.

Yeah. That's named for us because we were here before the street was.

That's what I wanted to ask. Okay.

Mr. and Mrs. Bond were very upset when they changed the name to Tropicana.

I don't blame them. If you wanted to shop for clothing for the family, where did you go shopping for those?

Oh, I probably made a lot of the clothes. I know I couldn't take the boys to Sunday School because they didn't have decent clothes to wear. Finally, I made them some red and black plaid overalls. I could take them to Sunday School.

Is that what most kids wore?

Oh, I don't know. But it was something I can make and did.

Getting back to the Mesquite Club, do you have records now for the club? If a historian wanted to do research on the Mesquite Club, where are your records housed?

I think there were quite a lot of records at the university. I know that one of the members was very active in -- I don't know what that project was called, two or three years ago. All the records are at the university.

There have been some other good clubs around, but they don't have any paperwork. So that's really good that you've contributed those already to the university.

Give me the names of some of the other women who were active when you joined the club.

Well, Laura Belle Kelch was very active. Rose Irwin was active in the other thing. Gee, my mind kind of leaves me.

But as you think of some of those names, you can just give those to me.

Did you ever do any work outside the home?

Well, after we started the business, Walt said, you better come down and work in the office for about eight months until we get over the hump. I said never did anyone see such a big hump. I worked for, I think, about 11 years or more.

So what was that work like?

Well, I enjoyed it. It was bookkeeping. I enjoy working with figures. So it was comfortable for me and fun to do. Eventually, we got -- not a computer, but a bookkeeping machine. That was interesting.

As the boys got older, what kind of activities did they participate in here in the city?

Well, let's see. Mike had asthma very badly as a child. When he was 11 -- that would have been in about 1960 -- they built Paradise Park and put in a swimming pool. And he started swimming and he got into competitive swimming. It did worlds for his asthma. It developed his lungs. So he was in competitive swimming.

Steve liked horses. He had a horse. He ran a paper route on his horse. He went, oh, quite a distance, three or four miles south and all over. One time he got pneumonia and I ran his paper route for him. That horse was wonderful. The horse knew the paper route. She'd just go and stop for a moment to drop the paper in the tube, and then off she was to the next place.

That's amazing. Now, tell me about your daughter. Your daughter is the youngest child?

Yes. She was born here.

And she's the only one born here?

Yes.

Which hospital?

It was Southern Nevada, the only hospital at that time. Oh, I guess there was -- what was that -- Las Vegas Hospital on Eighth and Ogden or something like that. But I think it's long since gone.

What kind of activities did she get involved with?

Oh, she likes horses. She didn't get into anything competitive, but by that time, we had a neighbor down here that had horses. So that's about mainly what she did. She still likes horses. She has two Arabians.

And she lives in an area of the city where you can have horses now?

Yeah.

Earlier you mentioned that you made clothing so you could begin to take the boys to Sunday School. Where did you go to church?

Well, I grew up as a Presbyterian. So I took the children to town to take them to Sunday School. And after I got there, I discovered there was no Presbyterian Church in town. So we went to the Episcopal Church for a while. I was going to say that was a darling little Episcopal Church. I think it was on the corner of Second and Carson. It really hurt me when they tore that down to put -- I don't know -- just some big casino or something there. It was a beautiful little church with stained glass windows. You know, the kind of church you'd have in a little town. It wasn't a little

town anymore.

(End side 1, tape 1.)

What kind of entertainment did the children get involved with? What did they do?

Playmates, but did you do any special things like going to Mount Charleston? Any things like that?

Well, we would go have picnics and go to Mount Charleston and go to Mount Charleston to play in the snow once in a while. Mostly, they just dug in the sand and played with trucks.

When you first moved here, '52, they were beginning to test the atomic bomb right here near Las Vegas.

I think that was a little later. I'm not sure. Maybe '56. I'm not sure of the dates at all. Walt would know. We used to sit in the living room and watch them go off. That was really exciting to see. You know, the big mushroom cloud was there.

And you actually saw those clouds?

Oh, yeah. And see the big bright...

Did you feel the explosion?

No, I don't think we felt much of it. But we'd always be there to watch it.

How did you know that they were getting ready to explode a bomb?

Oh, I think everybody knew. It was probably in the paper. It's going off at 6 o'clock in the morning. They always went off in the morning early.

At the same time the gaming industry was growing. Did you and your husband ever go out to dinner or to dances at any of the hotels?

We rarely went out to dinner. But in those days, you could go to a dinner show and just have dessert and coffee. So that was a big treat for us. Any of the shows. And there were also lounge shows at that time, too, that were really good. Walt was involved with the Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. So they had activities that we would attend and dinners and shows that way. But we didn't have finances to do much on our own.

But is that the way you got to meet other women?

Yes. And I belonged to the Pi Beta Phi Sorority when I was in college. All the sororities have a group called Pan-Hellenic that they're all part of. Are you a --

No, not Greek.

So when I found out about that, why, I met a lot of people that way, some people that I still know. Up I guess until that time, the only people that I talked to were the people in the hardware store and the grocery store.

That's interesting. How did you feel living in a tourist town?

It didn't have much influence on us, I guess, except that friends would come to see us. We built a little guesthouse out in back. Walt's parents would come up quite frequently and other friends would come. So we had company that way.

That's great. How big is your guesthouse?

Oh, it's just a bedroom and a bathroom.

Today when you go look at new homes, if they have a guesthouse, they call them a casita. So you had a casita years ago.

I was calling ours la casa del carport because it's on the other side of the carport.

That's great. Were there any particular eating establishments that you remember? I know you didn't go out a whole lot.

Yes. There was the Copa Lounge. Have you heard of that one? Right on the Strip across from the Stardust on Convention Center Drive. Served Italian food. Pete was the cook. I can't think of the host's name. And he would make the salad. He was great. Walt used to go there for lunch sometimes and come home at 11 o'clock at night. That was the place to go. Wonderful food. That was probably the only place we ever went when we went out.

That's where everybody went?

I think most of the old-timers went there at that time.

Do you remember the Blue Onion?

Yes. But I don't think I ever went there very much. When Walt first came here, he was selling maintenance supplies. And they were one of his customers.

Do you remember an area called Market Town?

No.

There were still some farms here when you first came. They were out. Did you buy fresh vegetables from some of the local farmers?

Bill Tomiyasu had a ranch down here. All these elm trees we bought from Mr. Tomiyasu for a dollar apiece. They were about the size of a double-length pencil.

And now?

And now some of them are even gone. The elm trees don't live very long. So they've been here 50 years. Even the ones that are here have lost a lot of the big branches. They were wonderful trees when they were up and growing.

Would you think about putting other trees there now?

We have put other trees in, but none of them are very big yet. But we've got a couple of cottonwoods and an oak tree and some ashes. We have interspersed them for the time when these are gone, but they won't take the place of the elms. They were wonderful.

During this time we had a lot of local entertainment, a lot of people coming to town to entertain like Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin.

Oh, yeah.

Tell me about those days and that kind of entertainment, what it meant to just a family like yours.

Well, there certainly had to be a special reason for us to go to those shows. But they were fun. The Mills Brothers and the Rat Pack. It was fun to be able to see those, once in a while even.

That's great. Now, I know that they weren't here all the time. But when I see the ads in the newspaper and when I talk to people, it seems that Frank Sinatra was here really often or The Ink Spots were here really often.

They were here quite frequently.

As you continued to live here, do you remember any kind of protest against the war, the Vietnam War?

No. I know that there were protests, but they didn't impact my life at all.

Do you remember Howard Hughes?

Oh, yeah.

Could you tell me anything that you remember about him, stories that circulated when he was here?

Have you talked to Peggy Crockett?

I have not.

Has somebody talked to her?

I think so. I would have to look.

She knew Howard Hughes well. I think she would be a very interesting person to talk to. Her daughter...we were at her home the other night. Her daughter said that her mother tells her that she sat on Howard Hughes's lap more than his girlfriends did. But she was just a little kid then, you know. So she would be a good person to talk to.

I'll see if we have her interviews.

Yeah, see. And I could call her and introduce if you'd like.

Good. I will check. That would be great. I'll see if she's been interviewed by anyone on campus.

Well, she certainly should be. He started the airport, and they had a big house on the hill. She says it's where you come out of the tunnel and turn right. That's where they had a big ranch there.

Who?

The Crocketts did. You know, now it's all gone.

What kind of things did you hear about Howard Hughes?

Oh, I guess just what everybody heard. He was weird, but he was a good pilot. I'm not a person to say anything about him because I really didn't know him.

Okay. Did you have any idea of race relations in Las Vegas in the 50s?

Well, the only thing was that the Westside was the Westside. It was nice when that changed. I think it was a time that it's time had come for it to be open. Who was the entertainer? You know, they wouldn't let him come in the front door of the hotel. Then finally somebody broke that.

At what point did you see Las Vegas moving from that small town into a city? Was there any kind of event or time that you felt that this was no longer your small town?

Well, I think it was probably about the time that Hughes was here that the hotels, instead of being private owners, you know, we would know the president of the Riviera. He was a good friend of ours. If we wanted to go to any of the hotels, all you had to do was call and make a reservation. Now, your life is on the line almost to get a reservation.

One thing that we did that was fun. We had a kite flying party in March. A lot of Walt's

friends from California came over. The Riviera had a party for us and our friends stayed at the Riviera. They had a cocktail party for us at night there. Somebody was going up in the elevator and one of the other passengers poked his companion and said, that's one of them, one of the kite fliers. I guess they had one of their kites. And that was the only day in March, I'm sure, that the wind did not blow.

Whose idea was that?

Oh, I don't know. We have a good friend here who went to Berkley with Walt. So they got together and invited all their friends from Berkley.

That was a great idea.

As a matter of fact, when we had that party, Bob Brown was the editor of The Valley Times. He put out a newspaper for us. The invitation to the party was headlines about us. We sent a special delivery newspaper to all our friends that were supposed to come.

That's nice.

That was really fun. You know, it was still a small town then.

That's great. Looking back, what would you say is one of the biggest changes to you in this town?

Oh, the traffic.

Is that what stands out the most?

I used to go from here to the Las Vegas Golf Club clear on the other side of town. I could get there in 15 minutes. I can't even get to the Strip in 15 minutes now.

You said earlier that you played golf today. So when did you start playing golf?

Oh, when I was 12. And I've played all my life almost.

So tell me about learning to play golf back in Kentucky.

Well, my father played golf. I was an outdoor person. So I --

Did he teach you?

Well, I took lessons. I played quite a lot as a kid growing up.

And then here? How did you get back into golf here?

Well, whenever I could find a babysitter. As a matter of fact, there were a couple of times that we -- once we took Steve and left him on the first tee when we went out. You wouldn't leave a

baby on the first tee anymore. Maybe we shouldn't have done it then, but you didn't have to worry about things that you do now.

Isn't that great? When we talk about decision-makers here in the city, who do you think the decision-makers are now?

Oh, I'm out of it altogether.

Tell me in the 50s, who do you think made the decisions? Was it the gaming industry or individual people?

Well, I think there were probably a lot of individual people. Perry Thomas of course. He was one of the ones that got the gaming industry so they could borrow money. You should ask him those things.

I did. Most of us get the sense that Las Vegas is different. We kind of even feel that way today. How would you compare it -- you can talk about in the 50s and the 60s -- how do you compare this place or how did you compare it with other cities that you lived in?

Well, just the fact that it had so many big hotels and so many tourists is the main thing about it, I think. But we used to, when it was smaller, go to the hotels for something. Now we rarely go to any of the hotels, except we do go to the Bellagio and see the changes in the conservatory.

How often does that change?

It used to change every month. I think it only changes every other month now.

Because I love it, too.

I'm a master gardener.

What does that mean?

Well, we took like 50 hours of classes. Then you do a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer work a year to maintain it, answer the telephone at the cooperative extension. I do not do that. But we have an orchard up in North Las Vegas where we have 500 fruit trees. The master gardeners have many different projects. The orchard is one that I work on. There was a time when we did a lot of work at the university. They used to have UNLV and Plants. That's gone now because there's a building there. But the master gardeners did that. We worked a lot at the university. They have projects in some of the schools and some of the older retirement homes where they help people. As I say, the orchard is the one that I work at mostly.

Tell me more about the orchards. What do you do with the fruit?

Well, this year that orchard is probably eight years old. We used to just take the fruit home. But the last couple years, we've had a pretty good crop and they've had it at the farmers' market, one of the farmers' markets in town. When it was originally started, we had five trees of each variety that we put in. And, of course, we have many varieties of peaches. Mostly peaches and apricots. But we've got a lot of pears, apples, and persimmons, pomegranates and all kinds. And the idea is to tell people which varieties do best here in this climate.

Have the trees that we have brought in changed the climate?

Well, it probably is not as dry and there's greater humidity than there used to be. Not just the trees but all the lawns and everything have increased the humidity. So you feel the heat a little more than you used to.

As someone who has raised a family here, what do you think of campaigns like the one we have now: What goes on in -- how is it? What goes on in Las Vegas stays here. How do you like those kinds of campaigns?

It kind of isn't part of my livelihood.

What is your attitude about the gaming industry?

Well, it's certainly done a lot for Las Vegas. And I think that for the most part, they're pretty generous. I think maybe they have more control over the legislature than they should.

Right now we have a mayor who's even doing more -- we have people who are trying to renovate downtown -- the city itself, not just the county. They've done things like Fremont Street Experience and Neonopolis. What do you think of those kinds of experiments?

I think the Fremont Street Experience is wonderful. It's something that I think most tourists want to see and do see. I would like to see it more often than I do, but it's kind of an effort to get down there and watch it. But I think they're really great.

Have you heard our current mayor talk about his plans for downtown? Putting in a performing arts center, maybe another hospital, bringing in some of the --

In that property on the other side of the tracks?

Yes.

Well, it certainly seems to be getting developed. I think a performing arts center is probably a

great plan if we can support it.

Okay. I've covered about all of the questions that I had. So I'm going to finish just by asking you: What do you see as the future of Las Vegas?

Oh, my. Just more expanse, I guess. It's not the same as it was. And I think it's too bad. But progress has to progress, I guess.

I really appreciate this. Thank you so much.

Well, you're certainly welcome. I hope that I contributed something.

Yes, you did.

(Interview concluded.)

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