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An Interview with Walter P. Casey, Jr.

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Las Vegas Early 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

Walter P. Casey Jr. was born in Plandora, California, which is located in the Imperial Valley at the Southeastern tip of the California Mexico border. Walter grew up living on the farm where his father grew crops like wheat and alfalfa. In 1942 Walter graduated from the University of California Brawly, and then went on to attend Berkeley for four years. Upon completion, he went on to become a flight navigator for Pan American World Airways during World War II. During the war, the U.S. Navy contracted flight navigators for transporting services.

Once Walter was finished with the Navy, he went on to work for United Airlines where he was to find business for their air freight service. In 1951, after doing that for a few years, Walter decided to move his family to Las Vegas. Walter describes Las Vegas back when there were only 50,000 people. He tells of the vibrant environment in the valley and describes some of the casinos that were around in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1954 Walter started his own business with a \$6,000 loan from the Bank of Las Vegas. He personally ran the water softening business for almost forty-five years before handing it down to his son. Walter also talks about his involvement in politics. He was the chair of the Republican Party in the state of Nevada, and he also did some lobbying for the National Association of Manufactures. Towards the end of the interview Walter reflects on his marvelous life in Las Vegas and comments on the water situation in the valley today.

LAS VEGAS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER at UNLV

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Name of interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Walter Casey 11-11-04
Signature of Narrator Date

5226 Topog St.
Las Vegas NV 89120

Address of narrator

Claytee D. White
Signature of interviewer Date

This is Claytee White and I'm in the home of Mr. Walter -- is it Walter? -- Casey. Today is November 15th, 2004. And is it true, Mr. Casey, that you've given me permission to use this information for educational and research purposes?

That's fine.

Good. So, Mr. Casey, if you will give me your full name please.

Walter P. Casey, Jr.

And where are you from?

Well, I was born in Plandora, California, and raised in Imperial Valley, Brawley Imperial Valley at Southeastern California.

What kind of occupation were your parents involved in?

Oh, my father was in the insurance business. He also grew crops like wheat and alfalfa, and at one point raised sheep, and did almost everything you do in a farming area.

Now, Imperial Valley, is that Bakersfield?

No. That's San Joaquin Valley. This is Imperial Valley in the southeast corner of California right at the Mexican border.

Okay. Good. We don't hear that much about that area, not really.

No. It's just a very lucrative, very rich farming area. It's irrigated by water from the Colorado River. A very important act was passed in about 1900 and that's when they first started diverting water in there. They took nothing but wild desert, absolutely the worst kind of soil area you could ever think of, and made a wonderful, economic success out of a farming area.

Good. Now, how many children were in the family?

My brother and my sister. There were three of us.

Did you do a lot of working on the farm?

No. We lived in town. My father's insurance business was there. We went to school, of course, grammar school and high school there in Brawley.

Give me the names of your mother and father.

My mother's name was Irene, maiden name, LaFatre. And my father, of course, was Walter.

So how did you leave there to get to Las Vegas?

Well, that's a very sequitur. I went to the University of California from Brawley and started there

in 1938, I believe it was. Graduated in 1942 with a degree in something or other. I think they call it general curriculum. So I spent four years at Berkeley going to school and rowed on the crew at that time.

You did what?

Rowed on the crew.

What is that?

Well, you've seen these shells where you row?

Yes.

We had a good crew at that time. So we enjoyed it very much, and it was very helpful.

Good. So you were general education. So you had not decided what you were going to do for a living?

Probably not. Probably not. No. It was probably the easiest course to take in school, and I really wasn't much of a student. So I took it because I didn't know what I wanted to do and it got me through college.

What did you do after Berkeley?

After Berkeley, World War II came along. And I went from there to Pan American World Airways as a flight navigator all during World War II.

Now, what happened during World War II? Were you in the military?

We were in the Navy assigned to Pan American Airways. We were flying naval air transport out of the Pacific Ocean. We were in the big flying boats, the Pan American China clippers flying down to Australia and New Zealand and that kind of thing. I did that for three, four years. At the end of the war, they transferred us down to Miami. And I flew for the Army Air Transport around in South America and Africa for just a short period of time, four or five months.

When you say Pan American Airways, I don't understand the connection.

Well, Pan American World Airways had a contract with the Navy to fly naval air transport service, so all their airplanes were sold to the Navy. In order to fly with them, we had to join the Navy, and then they assigned us to Pan American. So we were really in the Navy, but we weren't. I was an ensign for four years.

That's interesting. Did you ever hear talk of the Tuskegee Airmen?

Yeah. They were Army Air Corps, I guess. And they flew, I think, mainly in Europe, didn't they? I can't remember that.

Right. Around Italy. Okay, good. So once you actually got out of the Navy, then you continued with --

No. I left Pan American because I didn't want to be a flight navigator any longer than I had to. So then I went to work for United Airlines. From Miami I went up to New York to visit my cousin and my sister and met my wife -- future wife. I hired in at United Airlines and went to work for them. They were developing air freight at that time. So my job was to find business for their air freight service. I was in Chicago, Oakland, in Portland, a number of cities with them till I got sick. I was in Portland, and I wound up with rheumatoid arthritis.

So how old were you at that point?

Twenty-six, 27, something like that. I guess. I don't know. That would be 1946. I would be 26 or 28 -- someplace along in there. So I had to leave United because I was bedridden for a while. It took me close to a year to recover from that. So I didn't do anything. Then I sort of looked around. I really wasn't full of energy at that point. The doctor said I should move to a dry climate. So we looked all over the Southwest.

Were you married at that point?

Yeah, we were married and had two children. So we looked all over. We went to Tucson, Phoenix, Bakersfield, you name it. We looked at them all. We decided Las Vegas would be the best town to live in. So we moved to Las Vegas.

What year was that?

That was in 1951, I came here.

What did Las Vegas look like to you in 1951?

Well, it was less than 50,000 people. It was a small town. There were four or five casinos, I guess. It was really a nice town.

So what attracted you, I mean after looking at all those other places?

Well, the attraction was that it was a growing, vibrant community that meant that if you worked a little bit, you could do pretty well. I liked it better than Tucson, for example, or Bakersfield because they were sort of set in their ways. Las Vegas was really just sort of bubbling. It was full

of life, and it was just a good place to live. It turned out to be an excellent place to live.

That's great. That's great to be able to look back and say that.

Yeah.

Where did you live when you first came in '51?

Where did we live? Well, I went to work for an outfit selling janitorial supplies, Best Maintenance Supply Company. We lived just down here a ways. A lady had a little shack that she rented us. It was a shack. There wasn't much there. So we lived there until we bought this property.

So the property where we are right now?

Yeah.

Oh, you purchased it back in the early 50s.

Yeah, 1952 actually. So we started to build a house.

What was this area called at that time?

Paradise Valley.

Who did you rent that little shack from?

A Mrs. Bork. She lived there for a long time, until just 15 years ago. I guess they finally did something with that property. But there was nothing here, absolutely nothing. You'd go for two miles and not see a house. So it was sagebrush. But you could sit here and look out and see the highway to Reno, the highway to Salt Lake, the highway to L.A., and the highway to Boulder City or Phoenix. And it was just delightful. It was really nice.

That's great.

So we built a house. I actually built the house myself.

Really?

Well, you know, when you've got to do something, you do it.

But now, what kind of background allowed you to be able to build a house like this?

Well, just desire to do it, I guess. Actually, we didn't have too much money at that point. In fact, we were probably broke and didn't realize it. So I built the house. We got people in Las Vegas to work for us. There was one policeman who worked after hours for us, a fellow over here from West Las Vegas, really a nice guy.

Was it Bill Moody?

No. God, I can't remember his name now.

Not Hoggard?

No, it wasn't Hoggard. No.

Okay. Those are the police officers I know.

Yeah. I should remember, but I really don't. But he was a nice guy, and he worked hard, and he would do what he was doing. So that helped. So we got a little thousand-square-foot house built up, which we lived in till -- that was in 1952 -- 1964, when we finally expanded and built a lot of the house. It kept pretty well really.

It's a beautiful piece of property.

Well, yeah. Some of these trees we planted in 1952, the elm trees. And we just kept adding to it and developing it. You know, as you go along you make it a little nicer. That's what we did.

Now, you had children who were growing up here at the time.

Yeah, our kids started school here. Let's see. The oldest one, Steve -- this was just a gravel street out here -- and the bus would stop right there and take him over to Paradise School, which is now part of the university on --

Right there on Tropicana?

Yeah. It was called Bond Road in those days.

Was this called Topaz?

Yeah, that was Topaz. Right. So he'd catch the bus and go over to school. Then his brother came along about a year and a half later, and he went to the same school. At that time we had school districts that were the township areas. In other words, this was Paradise Township. Desert Inn Township is the next one over. And there was Flamingo. It depends on the area, sometimes where the hotel was. But the township, whatever size it was, was the school district.

So we didn't have a Clark County School District at that time?

No, no, no, no. We had good schools in those days.

Now, was there more than one superintendent?

Yeah. The school district had its --

So the little township had its own --

...had its own school and its own -- yeah. It survived on property taxes from from the business development in that particular township. One of the reasons we moved here, the Paradise School, there were two or three hotels -- two hotels, I guess, in it and it had a good tax base. So they had enough money, and they hired good teachers, and they did a good job of teaching.

So this must have been the El Rancho and the Frontier, probably? You're talking about the first --

Probably the Flamingo would be more like it.

So the Flamingo was in the late 40s.

Yeah. Their first grade teacher was Jim Rogers that runs the television station. He is now the chancellor of the university, I guess. His mother was the first grade teacher for us, and she's still living and she's still in town. She's still here.

Is she still active?

I don't think she's active. But I saw Rogers about a year ago. In fact, he was going to see his mother at that time. But she was really a nice lady, and the kids really enjoyed her. She was a good teacher.

So Jim Rogers has been around, then, all his life almost?

If I'm not mistaken, he was probably born here. I'm guessing. Although his father came here from someplace else. He might not have been born here, but he's been here a long time.

Wonderful. I like that because he would make a good person to interview especially with a mother that active that early.

Yeah.

So did your wife work outside the home?

Not until we started a business in 1954, went into our business in 1954.

Did you sell janitorial supplies until that time?

Up to that point, yeah. And that was a good job. Straight commission. There was a need for it.

Who were some of your customers?

Well, all the hotels up and down the Strip and any businesses in my particular territory, which was the whole east side clear out to Boulder City. So any business in that area was a customer. Some were good and some were bad. But it was a good business.

Well, tell me how business was transacted at that time. Give me an idea of how you would make contacts.

Well, I'd just go by and see the guy in his business and say hello to him and tell him what I had. You would just go down the block and, in effect, knock on doors and you go from business to business to business. And gradually, you develop a pretty good base of business. I suppose business hasn't changed that much. I think it's probably pretty much the same, although there's so much more now than there was, more competition, that kind of thing. There were, I think, two other firms in the business at that time. But we were able to get our share of it.

So what kind of business organizations did you become a member of to help you?

Well, first I joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce. And the Junior Chamber of Commerce at that time was really, for a person my age, the group to belong to because these were all the young guys that were on their way up and they're busy and active. They all went on to become leaders in the community -- almost all of them.

Can you remember any of the names of the ones who were active along with you?

Oh, yeah. We had Emmitt Sullivan who ran a slot machine route. Jim Cashman, Jr., who had Cashman Cadillac. God, I don't know. There's just a lot of them. Bob Robinson, who was an optometrist here for many, many years. Roy Earl, who was a lawyer. Off the top of my head, I can't really remember.

Any of the Tibertis?

No. Jelindo was not involved in the Junior Chamber. He's about my age, but he wasn't involved in the Junior Chamber of Commerce. And his kids were, of course, younger. He was too busy running his construction outfit, I guess, but Jelindo was a nice guy. He just wasn't involved in that particular club.

We had the Junior Chamber. I was interested in politics, always have been. I was a strong Republican. Oh, I wound up being chairman of the Clark County Republicans and then state chairman of the Nevada Republicans. So I was really busy from that standpoint.

Then we had the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce was also one of the reasons the town is here. The Chamber developed Las Vegas News Bureau in the -- oh, I'd say -- mid 40s, probably after the war. They hired a guy -- oh, what's his name -- from Sun Valley to be

the PR guy. Anyway, they developed a program of photography where they took what they call hometown pictures. So they would go out to a hotel and take a picture of you and your husband at the hotel and send it to your hometown and it would get printed. They did that for I don't know how many years. But it was one of the most successful programs I can think of. It made Las Vegas known around the world really, all because of this one idea of what they called hometown pictures. Don English was one of the News Bureau's photographers. He lives just down the street here from us. They were real what you call artists. They knew how to compose a picture and make one that would sell. So they did an awful lot of that kind of work. That was one of the things that you don't think about. But it was one of the reasons that Las Vegas became what it is. Just having hotels -- you've got to sell what you've got. And so the hotels all participated in putting money in to keep this thing going. They called it the Live Wire Fund, but it was part of the Chamber of Commerce.

So your photograph would have gone back to Imperial Valley, and they would have put it in the local newspaper?

Yeah. The local newspaper would always run that kind of a picture. It's local stuff and, boom, they run the picture. But English, as I mentioned before, was really good at composing pictures beyond that. Have you seen this picture of a floating craps game?

Yes.

Well, he took that -- or he took one of them. And that's the kind of thing that he would dream up. Of course, they were out at the test site taking pictures of the atomic weapons testing. So these guys were really artists. I mean, they really knew what they were doing. They were financed well enough so that they could do what they wanted to do. There must have been four, five, six photographers. And then, of course, you had writers to write stories and all this kind of thing.

And the story would go along with the photograph?

There would be a story about so-and-so was in Las Vegas for a visit, on their honeymoon, or on their whatever. So it would be just a tag line really on that. But they'd also write stories about the area. They were so well respected. In those days you had what they called a wire service. I think it was AP let them put a wire service right in their office.

So that machine?

That machine that sent pictures. They would only send good pictures. They wouldn't send junk. They would send good pictures. They were so well liked and respected that they were allowed to have this machine. The News Bureau was the only area news service that was allowed to that because these guys would make sure that what they sent out was worthwhile. It wasn't junk.

So how do you compare the kind of ad campaigns we're doing today with what was done in the early 50s?

Well, it's entirely different. The town is so big now. And, of course, they use money from the room tax to run the News Bureau now. But it doesn't have the need -- all the hotels have their own services, and they take care of that now, where before they didn't have that.

So it was something interesting to watch and think about because of what it did. The city of Las Vegas or the area here, Clark County, was promoted by this kind of thing and very successfully. Of course, we had a good product to sell. As a consequence, why, there was interest all over the world. And it just grew and grew and grew. It fed us, so...

Now, you had clients in Boulder City. What was it like driving from here to Boulder City in the mid 50s?

Well, they had that Boulder Highway, which is a two-lane road running out there through Henderson. It's just like it is today only it was two lanes instead of four or divided -- instead of a freeway. Part of my territory was Boulder. I used to talk to the businesses out there. I went down to the dam and sold to the Bureau of Reclamation, that kind of thing. I don't think there's much difference. You got on the road and drove out there.

Tell me about the business that you started, you and your family.

Well, we started a water softener business. We started with a franchise called Service Soft. At that time I had borrowed \$6,000 from the Bank of Las Vegas to get this thing started. Didn't have any money. I mean, we had spent all the money on the house, whatever we had. So we didn't have much. Anyway, borrowed that money and started the business.

Did you use the house as collateral?

My signature.

Oh, wow. Okay.

In those days, you could make a signature loan. I knew the banker. So he said, sure, we'll go

ahead with it. Of course, we paid him back. We maintain a good credit rating, which was very, very, very helpful.

Was the banker someone that you had met in one of your organizations?

Yeah, that banker was Harry Lahr. He was one of the people who started the Bank of Las Vegas. So it was a small bank at that time. They had just started loaning to the hotels, as a matter of fact. They made some contacts with the Teamsters Union. They had money that they were able to get in and help the hotels. That is when the so-called Mob was running the town.

How did young businessmen, like you and other people that you named earlier, how do you feel about the town at that point being run by the Mob? Did you believe it, number one?

Well, they certainly had a big influence on it. But there were some good things to say about them. They kept themselves clean in Las Vegas. They may have been against the law in Cleveland or someplace else, but here they went according to rules. They also had a strong -- I call it police department in the hotels. So anything that was wrong, they took care of. So we had two police departments. We had the local one and these guys. So the town at that time was really well controlled from a police standpoint.

Do you believe that there was less crime than in any other city its size at that time?

You know, I really have no idea on that. I couldn't speak to that. All I know is what problems we might have had, either the city, county police, or the hotels themselves took care of. If they had somebody they didn't like and they wanted to get rid of, they would take them down to the Stateline and say get on your way.

Give me an example of somebody that they would do that to.

Well, they'd get some what they call cross-roader in there.

Explain that term to me.

Well, he's stealing. He's stealing from them. He would be sent on his way. He'd just disappear.

Do you think he left on his own or --

No. He was encouraged to leave.

Okay, good.

So that way you kept the town pretty darn clean. The Gaming Control Board at that time wasn't that strong. But they had rules about cheating and that kind of thing. I'm sure some went on, but

it was controlled pretty well. One thing that I think changed the town completely was when they went from individual licensing for gambling to corporate gambling.

(End side 1, tape 1.)

Corporate gaming came in about 1964, '66 or '67, someplace along in there. Before that, individuals were responsible for the hotels. It was an entirely different atmosphere from what we have today. Today it is a big, big conglomerate, and you don't have the responsibility directly on an individual like we did in those days. The fellows that owned the hotels, you knew all of them. So if you wanted to go see a show, why, you would go see a show. They'd take care of it. When you went to a show in those days, you would put a coat and tie on. You got dressed up. It's not like it is today where you go out in sandals and flip-flops. There was a lot of couth; I guess is the best way to put it. So that has all changed.

But the hotels were responsible for their actions directly to the man that held the license. That meant that they were pretty darn careful on how they ran them. If they got in trouble doing something wrong, they would be corrected by their own peers so that they -- it's hard to explain. But it was entirely different than it is today. Entirely different. Now we have the big Gaming Control Board and all this kind of thing to watch and make sure everything is all right, which is fine, but it's different than this was when each individual had a license and it was worth a lot of money and he kept his nose clean. And also to do that, he liked all the people in town. He was friendly with everybody so that a casino owner would -- well, I guess the man would speak to those of us in the business community and active in community affairs, the Chamber of Commerce or whatever it might happen to be. We got to know all of them. They made sure that we liked what they did.

Now, did any of those owners join organizations like the Junior Chamber or the Chamber of Commerce or --

I worked very closely with Sam Boyd when he was first over here at the Sahara. But there were a number of them that were active like that in the Chamber and other organizations. So they were part of the community. They really were. If you ran for political office, you would go see them, and they give you a little money and this kind of thing. I don't know how to explain it other than to say it was just different than it is today.

And where did they live?

Well, they lived all over town.

So they lived in the regular community?

Oh, yeah, they lived in the community. Most of them had nice homes like in Scotch Eighty or some places like that and around the Desert Inn Golf Course. That Desert Inn was built just the year we got here -- the Desert Inn Golf Course, I mean. And they built houses all the way around it. A number of the casino owners lived there in homes. So, yeah, they were part of the community.

Okay, good. Now, tell me more about your business. I stopped you and started asking other questions.

Well, the business we started in 1954. I ran it personally for about 40 years, I guess. My son, who worked with us, took over shortly after that.

So tell me what the project was.

Well, it was soft water.

So is it the equipment that I attach to my faucet or --

No. You attach it to the water line going into your house. So you would soften the water. The water here has a lot of hardness in it. So you use soft water to make it easier to wash, to bathe, to do dishes, and that kind of thing. There was a real market here, and people had money in this town, always had money. So it made it easy to do business. We were able to develop a pretty good business in that time. Then I ran that for -- well, I guess my son took over about 1980 -- completely in 1988.

So from 1954 to 1988, you did this?

I ran it. Yeah, 44 or 45 years. Then he took it over and ran it for 12 or 13 years and then sold it. So we're completely out of business now.

So how do you feel about that?

Oh, I hate to see it go. It sort of hurts to see it go. But he did extremely well and built it up from what I had when he took it over. So it worked out fine.

Good. If you sold a system to the Flamingo in 1955, how much money am I thinking about?

Well, that's one thing I did very little. I did very little selling to hotels. Mainly residential went

with my particular business. I wasn't in the position to bid on jobs like that against a plumber. Then many times, you would have to wait for your money with the hotel. They pay you, but it might take a little while to get it. And I didn't like that too much. So I did business mainly in the residential or small business and residential.

And this meant that you had the entire Valley. You didn't just have a segment of it. You could sell anyplace you wanted?

Oh, yeah, I sold in this area. I dropped that franchise later and just had my own Casey Water Conditioning. And we developed a pretty good name and reputation and were able to be successful at it. Along the way, I got interested in the process called reverse osmosis. You may have heard about it. I started a little company to do research and development with RO. We had that down at Del Mar, down by San Diego. We had that for probably close to ten years, maybe a little longer. We did a lot of R and D for the office of C&M Water. The Vietnam War was going on. They needed all kind of water devices. So we did a lot of R and D for the government. Then I took some of that development and made a commercial product out of it, which I sold here around the United States. Then finally sold that. I don't know how much money I sold it for.

Now, what was the connection with Del Mar? I just know it as a racetrack.

Well, down there at one point, they had what they called the old powerhouse, which is on the ocean near downtown Del Mar. It was no longer a power station. So we leased that and ran the business out of that because it was on the ocean and we could get seawater. It was a good town. So we ran that at that point. It worked pretty well.

One other thing I got involved with as I was active in politics is I became a good friend of Ed Commerce who ran Bonanza Airlines. Ed and I became pretty good friends. He was at that point a board member of the National Association of Manufacturers [NAM]. He was here in Nevada for National Association of Manufacturers. When he went off the board, he asked me to go on, which I did, and I was off and on that board for about 25 years.

So tell me about that board and its work.

The board of National Association of Manufacturers represented large and small businesses in the United States. These businesses all had an interest in how the government treated them. So they did much lobbying for their interest in Congress and with the various administrations. My

position at that point was that I represented Nevada. I did my best to make sure Nevada's interests, business interests, were represented on the board.

Now, did you do any lobbying here in Nevada with our legislature?

I did a little with the governor or legislators, people like that, yeah. Sure. Let them know how the NAM felt or how I felt. So I did do a certain amount of that, yeah.

Did you ever run for political office?

Once.

What did you run for?

I ran for the State Senate.

What happened?

I got beat.

Who did you run against?

I don't know why I even ran that time, but I just had some interest. So I ran. It was a two-seat district. I ran third. Chic Hecht, the later Senator, beat me. It was a good experience, and I'm glad I did it, but I didn't get very far with it. So I kept my political activities on a personal level instead. It was fun, really.

Tell me about being a young couple moving here and raising a family: in what kind of entertainment did you and your wife participate, especially family entertainment, and then just as a couple? What kinds of things did you do?

Oh, we had a lot of friends with whom we socialized. In those days, you would go out to a hotel for dinner, for example, and see a show. All the shows were dinner shows in those days. So you would go to a show and have dinner, like at the Thunderbird, wherever. Really the entertainment was your friends, and then you would gather a group together and go out and see a show.

One club I didn't mention -- the Thunderbird made me think of it -- it was called the Hualapai Club. The Hualapai Club was a men's club formed in 1958, someplace along in there. Joe Wells, who owned the Thunderbird, gave us a room overlooking the swimming pool on the second floor. We had a room there where we would go up and have lunch and cocktails or play cards. There may have been 150 us. I don't know how many there were. When Wells moved out of the Thunderbird, we went over to the Desert Inn for a while. Then we went to the top of the

First National Bank building for a while. Then we wound up at the Fremont. Then we wound up at the Union Plaza. That was probably at least ten years ago, maybe even longer. The town has gotten so big and grown so much and there are so many centers of influence that you couldn't have a club downtown or a club on the Strip or a club here because it was too hard to get together. So the club just disbanded. It just ran out of steam.

What were some of the things that you did? It sounds like a social club. But was it completely social?

It was social. Yeah, it was just social. You'd get together and you'd talk business. It wasn't like going to a restaurant. You would go in there and it was quiet. You could talk. We had a card room where you could play gin rummy or whatever. The bartender was there for years. The one thing that stopped the club was this effort to cut the limit on drinking. So where you would go in and have two or three martinis at lunch, you couldn't do that anymore because you could get picked up by the cops and get in trouble. Years ago, particularly in the JC days, we would go out and we would have a big party and do a little drinking. And if it got to be too much, the cop would take us home.

Because everybody knew everybody.

Yeah, everybody knew everybody. They made sure that everything was all right, take you home and tell do you not to do it again, and that was it. So that is the kind of town it was in those days. I don't think that could ever happen today because some attorney would come along and do something with it. So anyway, I hadn't mentioned the Hualapai Club. But that was really a great outfit.

I really appreciate that. Because of all the people I've interviewed, no one else has thought to mention that club.

No one mentioned it?

Huh-uh. So that's really good.

Well, most of the active people in business, or many of them, were part of it. I saw here just the other day where Martin Collins died. He and his brother were real active. Bankers. Harry Minetti. Bankers, business people, real estate. Everybody that had any kind of a name at all was probably a member of the Hualapai Club. So it was a great outfit. I was sorry to see it go.

I can imagine. Now, tell me about the Rotary Club. Were you ever a part of that?

I was a member of Kiwanis. My son is the president of Rotary right now, the major club, the big club. But the people I associated with were all Kiwanis.

Tell me about the Kiwanis. I don't hear about that organization as much.

At that time it was quite an active community service club. We used to meet at the El Rancho until it burned down. Then we went over to the Frontier. Then, I don't know, I sort of drifted away from it after a while. I just got busy doing other things and drifted away. It's still active, but it's not that well known.

What were some of the projects that you remember that that club took on?

Well, one we did was the Desert Demonstration Garden out on Alta. We had a real hand in starting that and running it. Dr. Hugh Fulner was a member, and he was really gung ho to make that thing work. So as a club, that was one of our projects. Then as it went along, the Water District took it over and is now operating it. But we had a big hand in starting that. And I don't know how long ago it was. That was over 40 years ago, I would assume. It's gone pretty well since then. That was one thing we did.

We used to take trips. We had one trip, I recall. The 1960 Winter Olympics were up at Squall Valley. So we chartered an airline, a DC-3, and flew up there and went to the Olympics and then came back. We spent a day or two up there, I guess.

Now, was this a family affair, or just the men who were in the club?

I think the wives went on that one, too, although you can only put about 23 people in the airplane. So maybe we had more than one airplane. We did that with the JCs. We would rent airplanes and fly to wherever the national meeting was that year, Minneapolis or Kansas City or whenever. That was a lot of fun, really. We really enjoyed it.

Tell me about the activities related to children. As your children were growing up, were there family picnics, church activities? What kind of activities included the children?

Well, we had one son who was a swimmer. He got into age-group swimming. The doctor said he should do this. It was good for his lungs or something. Anyway, he got into this. So we had to spend many weekends driving to meets, here, there, wherever or taking him to swim practice at 5 o'clock in the morning. So we did a lot of that. His brother wasn't that active in that kind of thing.

And his sister did a little, but not much. But we were really busy with this kid taking him everywhere. And other families did the same thing. There were a lot of activities like that, athletic activities and school activities. They kept busy.

Great. In the 50s, as you were arriving here almost, they started the test site. They were testing the atomic bomb.

Right, right.

How did that influence Las Vegas? How did you look at that activity, especially as a military person?

Well, it was great for business. It was great for business because there was tremendous interest in that testing. We could sit in our front room and watch those bombs go off, you know, watch everything. Right from here, you could see it, right out there.

So you could see the cloud from here?

Yeah.

So there was absolutely nothing out here at that time?

No. Very little. But there was no concern about the weapon, about the bomb at that point. As I say, it was good for business because people came from all over the world to be here to watch it. There are a lot of stories now about how they did it wrong, did this wrong, did that wrong, and all this kind of thing. But I think a lot of that is spin. I don't think that the dangers that they talked about were -- they are over-exaggerated. And the fact that all the sheep in St. George or someplace lost their hair, a good part of that has been debunked. There may have been some problem. I don't doubt there was some problem. But it wasn't nearly as serious as they make it.

But bringing that up to date, if you really look at this thing -- let's put it this way. I went to a talk the other night by a fellow who has studied radiation all his life. He is at Washington State University now. He said that too much radiation is bad. It is bad for you. In Japan were Hiroshima and those bombs. If you looked at it from an analytical standpoint, the people that survived that -- sure, people were killed by the blast and by the radiation from the additional blasts -- but for the people who survived, the death rate was no more than the people who weren't subjected to it. In other words, when the radiation is low, it doesn't cause the problem it does with the initial high blast. And he also said that if you are irradiated for some reason, that you treat that

just like you treat a cold. You take pills. But the idea is that the danger has been overstated far beyond any reasonable limit. It's an emotional thing that has grown completely out of hand. Another example is a number of years ago a gas truck was driving down towards Searchlight. Had an accident. A big, huge fireball. All kinds of problems. And some news reporter said to the sheriff, boy, what if that had been an atomic bomb? He said if that had been an atomic bomb, you wouldn't be here and everything would be over and gone. Nothing would have happened. There would have been no problem, which means that the way they treat this material now, it's so encased, so protected that very little radiation is able to get out. And the chances of serious problems are one in 2 million or 5 million. It is just virtually nil. So the State of Nevada is making a real mistake in fighting this thing.

Yucca Mountain?

Yucca Mountain. This is the biggest governmental project ever in the world, this thing out here. If we would just go along with it and work with them, we could get so many benefits out of it, you can't believe it. All our highways would be taken care of. We could do anything we wanted here with the money that's available for allowing this activity to go on. To fight it, we're just throwing it down the river.

Well, if we fight it and it comes anyway --

It's going to come. Yeah.

And we'll still get the benefits; is that right?

We're going to lose some benefits. Absolutely, absolutely. Things that we could have done -- for example, at the university, we could set up an engineering department out there in atomic energy and make it a world-class department because the government is really interested. They want it. They would like to have it. I guess they're starting to do some things that way now. But they really missed the boat in jumping in and saying, yeah, we'll do it and develop a real strong, world-class department in atomic engineering. Because atomic energy is one of the energy sources of the future, we should be taking advantage of it. It's just sitting there for us.

I see that you're wearing a UNLV T-shirt. Are you talking to people on campus about this?

No, I haven't talked to -- this is for the golf club. I'm interested in golf. So I wear this stuff. But, no, I haven't really spent a lot of time on the university, on the campus. I know a number of the

people over there, but I just -- going and being an advocate for this kind of thing, you've really got to get set. You've got to plan and work and study and know what you're doing. I just don't want to think. I haven't spent a lot of time really making a presentation outside of what I'm saying here. But I just expressed it to you since you're talking about it or what people do.

I think that when you get an opportunity, you ought to jump on it. Just grab it and don't let the emotion get in the way of the reality. And in this case, emotion has gotten in the way of reality completely. I just think it's wrong personally because we're letting the rest of the world go ahead of us on all this atomic development.

I'm interested in water -- or I was -- and desalination of seawater, for example. You need a lot of energy in order to make it work. Many places in the world -- I'd say 20 to 30 plants, atomic plants -- use that power to distill water, make good water, because they don't have water or they need water and they don't have power. They use atomic power to desalinate the water. Here in Nevada, we've got the Pacific Ocean down there. Cheap power would make it realistic to desalinate the water.

And it would be healthy to drink it?

Oh, yeah. There's no problem with the water. There's no residual atomic radiation in the water, no. Not at all. See, the power you generate runs a generator to make electricity and uses electricity and that kind of thing.

It sounds like we just need a lot of education.

I think so. I really think so. And at some point it will turn and go the other way than it is right now. But it's going to take a lot of education to do it, in my opinion.

Looking at Yucca Mountain, if you were to put the stringent rules that they're putting on Yucca Mountain on Nellis Air Force Base -- now here you've got something with all kinds of airplanes flying around. They're dangerous. They've got fuel. They've got bombs. They've got everything. And if you put the same restrictions on that, you'd never have Nellis Air Force Base. It wouldn't be there. You couldn't build it because of all the restrictions that would be placed on it to build that base. That is one place where we have gone wrong. We're allowing restrictions of effort to stop growth.

That was one thing that was so great about Las Vegas in those days. Whatever you could

do, you could do. You would just do it. Now, if you cheat and lie and steal, you're out. But if you decide to do something, you go ahead and do it. You didn't have any problem. That's why it grew so fast because --

(End side 2, tape 1.)

You were talking about how this place is different because of that attitude that we have.

The attitude of the town was one of if you could do it, go ahead and do it, and nobody is going to stop you. Nobody is going to say you're crazy. You just go ahead and do it. That attitude, I think it's departed in a large part of the United States, but particularly in Las Vegas. Now, if you have a ton of money, you can build another hotel and add onto it, which is still part of that. You can do these things. But for the small guy wanting to get going, it is a lot tougher than it used to be. My son has an outfit called Lamb Asphalt. They lay asphalt down for parking lots and this kind of thing. He built a new building in North Las Vegas. It took him two years to get all the permits to get that building up. This is what I'm talking about.

So we're impeding progress?

Yeah, we really are. We really are.

From where you sit and from the discussions you've had with friends and everything, if you were talking to a college class with very creative students in it, what would you tell them to do today in Las Vegas so they could get ahead, they could make a lot of money, they could get into some business that would just be limitless?

Well, I think you could take almost any business in Las Vegas and with energy and effort and money and whatever, you could make a success out of it if you have the right attitude. Your attitude is really the whole thing. Your attitude is I can do it and I'm going to do it. And so you go and do it. You work 20 hours a day doing it, but you get it done. That's the way you do it. You can't do it sitting back and saying, well, that's not quite right, this isn't quite right, and that's wrong. And, well, I can't do it because this is wrong and this guy is hurting me and this guy is after me and that kind of thing. Forget all that kind of stuff. If you have a positive outlook, you will do well in Las Vegas. In the real estate business, for example, you will really do well. Even though prices are high, you're going to do all right. The market is there. This town is growing so rapidly that there is opportunity wherever you look. I'm just sorry I'm older and don't have the

energy.

Right now if you had a burst of energy, what would you think about doing right now?

Well, I don't know. I would find something that intrigued me and go do it. I can't be specific, but I would find something I was interested in and do it.

We talked about the bombs and the testing of the bombs during that Cold War period. You came here at a time when the first integrated hotel/casino was built, 1955.

Right.

Do you remember the Moulin Rouge?

I remember pictures of it. I don't think I ever went there. It was only open for a few months.

What did you hear about it?

Well, there was a problem in those days of discrimination. The entertainers couldn't stay in the hotels. They had to go to some other place. So they went to West Las Vegas mainly. So they started a hotel. It just didn't continue. I don't know what happened. Why it didn't continue, I have no idea. But something went wrong. Maybe there wasn't a big enough market for it. I really don't know. But it just didn't succeed.

Are you comfortable talking about race relations in the 50s?

Oh, yeah.

Well, in the 50s things started happening, things started changing here.

Right.

Can you give me that transitional period and what you saw happening?

Well, I think overall the thing that happened was a few of the entertainers -- I think Sammy Davis is one of them, Pearl Bailey maybe -- they got to the point where they wouldn't take it. So they said if I'm going to have a contract with the hotel, I'm going to stay at the hotel. And so they forced the issue and things began to change.

Did you know any of the local African-Americans who lived here at the time?

Oh, yeah, sure I knew quite a few of them. Yeah. Woody Wilson, people like that. I probably knew a good many of them. Yeah. See, I went to high school that had Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Hindu, Mexican, and black. They had everybody. It was a melting pot. Grammar school, the town was segregated. The east side of town was all Mexican, I guess you'd call it. The west side

was white. So there were grammar schools for each area. So we really weren't mixed in grammar school just mainly because of where the schools were. There was only one high school. So everybody came to high school. We all played football. You know, there was no problem.

Now, in Las Vegas did that same atmosphere continue?

I think so. Yeah. Because the grammar schools and high schools were separate. But Las Vegas High was the high school, and everybody went to Las Vegas High. Our kids all went to Las Vegas High -- well, the two boys did. I don't think there was any problem with segregation at that time in the schools. It was in the hotels more than anything else. The owners had the idea that it was bad for them.

When I look back at the history, the only thing that concerns me about racial discrimination was that African-Americans didn't have the business connections. They weren't involved in that atmosphere we were just talking about where you can do anything. That's what racial discrimination did; it excluded African-Americans from that.

Yeah. Well, you have a point there. But a lot of my friends -- Woody Wilson is one example of it. He worked for BMI [Basic Magnesium Inc.] out here. Then he started up a savings and loan or a loan outfit and was very successful at it. Now, his business may have been entirely black. I don't know about the makeup of his clients. That's a problem that I think has to be addressed by -- I think a lot of that lies with the people themselves. You've got a mentality that I can't do this, I can't do that. And that's enforced by your peers. It makes it hard to have, say, an optimistic outlook. A lot of training with everybody should be to have an optimistic outlook. In other words, if you want to do something, go do it. And this should be taught in schools, really. I don't think it is, but I think it should be because kids are impressionable. If you can get their brains working properly, they're going to be okay. There's going to be no problem. I think the problem you talk about is probably getting better and better all the time because our neighborhood, for example, right across the street, a couple from California just bought the house. They're black. They're fine people.

I don't think there is a problem today. I have nieces who are earning all kinds of money today. I don't think we will ever have the problem that we had back in the 50s and 60s. But when you're not even allowed to go into a place --

Right.

-- then you don't have any opportunity to even learn how it works.

That's right.

So you can't learn to -- and even though we had some very, very small places over on the Westside, there was no way with the way the city worked that blacks could compete. So that is the only part I see when I look back in history.

Yeah, you see it. Well, I think you're right.

You know, social, religious, all of that, I don't see a problem there. The only problem I see is the business world.

Well, the business world is changing rapidly now.

Oh, yeah, now. Yes.

And I don't know how many businesses are minority-owned now, but there are a lot of them here in Las Vegas. So that problem is being overcome, I believe. Being perfectly frank about it, I think part of the problem lays in peer pressure from your particular group -- not yours personally. If your people in your area don't have an optimistic outlook, then you've got a problem because your peers are negative. I'm just supposing now. They're negative and that makes you negative. I'm such a believer in having a positive outlook.

I don't think there is a problem today. I think you will see blacks now in one of the casinos downtown owned by a black man. So I think you're going to see more and more of that.

You see just as many black doctors and schoolteachers as anybody else.

Right. Yeah.

It's just when I look back at history.

Yeah, in history there was a problem. No question about it.

Tell me about Howard Hughes.

Well, Howard Hughes liked Las Vegas. He came to Las Vegas, I'd say, probably during the war or right after the war. He used to come up here and owned the casinos. He liked to chase girls. So he was having a good time. That was before he had his airplane accident, which changed his whole mental outlook. He was probably reasonably outgoing. But he had this airplane crash in Beverly Hills. It was a plane he developed. It affected him. He became very concerned about

bugs and this kind of thing. So mentally, he changed. He wouldn't see anybody. He wouldn't talk to anybody.

But he came to Las Vegas in 1964, was it? At that time there was a lot of concern about the ownership of the hotels. The governor, Paul Laxalt at that time, said, well, we've got to do something about this. This is a serious problem. In effect, he had some influence in talking Hughes into buying hotels to take these fellows' interest out. He bought four or five, six hotels. Bob Maheu was his front man. He never made a dime on those hotels. He wasn't able to operate them successfully. So over time he sold them, and he got rid of them. He was very instrumental in getting corporate gaming into Nevada. He talked Laxalt into it. So Laxalt pushed it quite hard for a period of time. He was a positive influence because of his money, because of his activities. But he gradually went downhill. By the time he left here, he was bedridden and really in pretty bad shape.

One of the places in Clark County that probably still has lots of potential, lots of opportunity, I think, is downtown. What do you see as the future now? We tried things like the Fremont Street Experience and Neonopolis. Have you experienced either one of those?

Well, Fremont Street Experience is certainly good and very positive. Whether they can afford it or not -- it cost a lot of money. Whether it has paid off in that regard, I don't know. Neonopolis was a bad deal to start with. It was just a mistake. When you get government taking tax money and trying to do something with it, your chances of being successful are almost nil. And this is what happened here. The City of Las Vegas took redevelopment money and this kind of thing to build that. In effect, they're going to go in competition with the hotels. They don't have the expertise. They don't have the amount of knowledge to do what they're trying to do. So it sort of collapsed on its own weight.

Now, one thing that's positive right now is that big merchandise mart, furniture mart that's going up. That is huge. The money spent there, apparently it's going to tax rebates, that kind of thing. It is going to be very, very instrumental in helping the town. That big shopping center, that outlet mall. So things like this will come along and gradually bring a community of interest together and people together which will help downtown become strong again. They have got so much money invested down there that they have got to do something with it.

Jackie Gaughan just sold his hotels. 85 million or something. I don't know what it was. But he wasn't really able to make any -- he made a little money, but he didn't make a lot of money out of them. He was never really all that successful, other than the El Cortez, which is his home hotel. The fellow that is trying to do it now hopefully will be successful.

Who did he sell to?

I think it's called -- is it Barrick? Barrick, I think, is the name of it. They bought four or five of his hotels. Hopefully, they'll be younger and have more energy.

We do see that influence. We see it at the Golden Nugget downtown.

Yeah, that's right. That's exactly right. These guys they're goers. And hopefully they can make that thing go. And Harrah's bought Binion's, and they're going to bring some people in to operate it who know what they're doing. And Boyd is in there. And Boyd is a good operator. I think he's probably going to make them money. The combination is, I think, going to be successful. It's going to take time. It isn't going to happen overnight. But that furniture mart, boy, that's like a year-long convention. I mean, people come from all over the world. It's really going to be money well spent, in my opinion.

So don't you think we're going to have to have some hotels closer to the mart, really well-apportioned hotels?

If the market is there, the hotels will be built. Right now, the market is not strong enough to even maintain what they have got. So, yeah, I think you'll get more hotels. There is plenty of land to develop. They're talking about moving the City Hall over there to that Union Pacific property.

Putting living space there.

Yeah, and making the City Hall an apartment house or something. See, that's an example -- well, I call them free markets. You've got some money invested, and you've got to find a way to make money. So you develop things that make it possible to be successful. That is what is going on there right now. Now, another thing that could be helpful is if that monorail could extend downtown.

Well, first if we can get it to work.

It has to work first. Boy, that's an overpriced monstrosity. I see they might get it open.

Yes. With a celebration.

And this outfit -- that Bombardi Air out of Canada -- their bonds have just been down to junk status. They're having financial problems, also.

The last kinds of things I want to ask you about: Because you're a person who really loves Las Vegas and you told me about that ad campaign from a long time ago, today the ad campaign is what happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas. And it is worded in a way so that it makes Las Vegas look less than reputable, less than honorable.

I agree with you. I agree.

So how do you feel about that? How do you see Las Vegas now nationally? How are people looking at us?

Well, I think that campaign probably could hinder the convention business to some extent because I'm a member of a group that goes to Las Vegas for a convention, and my wife says, no, you're not going there. You know, she sees that ad. So what it is talking about has been going on ever since the town has been here, but it's not -- this is blatant, to my way of thinking.

That's right.

I really think it's a mistake. We've got such a huge momentum now that something like that is not going to hurt us today or tomorrow. But in time, it could be damaging. Does that answer your question?

Yes, it does. So anything else that you've thought of as you've been talking that you'd like to add?

I think I've pretty well covered everything.

Give me some names of some of the other people that you think should be included in this kind of research we're doing on early Las Vegas.

Well, this Don English that I had talked about would be a good man. He was one of the photographers from the Las Vegas News Bureau. Bill Morris, an attorney, would be a good man because he was born here -- or not born here, but he came here when he was just a kid. He's a top-rated attorney. He's a pretty good man. He's been ill recently. You want people that have been here how long?

We're trying to get people 40s, 50s, 60s. But that's about the cutoff.

Well, another person that might be of interest to you is a lady named Dorothy Bokelman. She

worked for the school district for years and years for hearing-impaired persons. She is from Wisconsin. She is a nice lady, and she would have a lot to say about what happened.

Good. How do you spell her last name?

B-o-k-e-l-m-a-n.

Well, I appreciate this.

Well, I've enjoyed this. This was fun. I enjoyed it.

Great. Thank you so much.

Okay. Thank you.

(End side 1, tape 2.)

(Blank side 2, tape 2.)

It is January 13th, 2005. And I'm with the Caseys in their home. How are you this afternoon, Mr. Casey?

Just fine. Thank you.

Give me your full name for this tape.

Walter Casey.

Mr. Casey, I interviewed you a few weeks ago. And you called me to say that you had a few other things that you had forgotten to share with me. Would you like to just go ahead and give those to me?

One thing that I wanted to mention that I was involved in was that as a member of the Colorado River Commission in the late 60s, early 70s, we were involved in the development of the Southern Nevada Water Project to bring water from Lake Mead into Clark County. The water table in Clark County was being over-drafted because it was the only source of water. The population had increased so rapidly that we were drawing too much water from the Las Vegas basin. And there had to be another source of water developed. That source had to be Lake Mead because we have 300,000-acre-foot of water rights available in Lake Mead. Many years ago Tom Campbell, a realtor in Las Vegas, became very interested in this project and did everything in his power to get interest in developing the resource of the water from Lake Mead into Clark County. That work went on for a number of years.

I should say first that when the dam was built, a water project was built for -- well,

actually, this happened during World War II when Henderson became a very vital source of magnesium for the war effort. They needed water. A big pipe was put into the lake and a pump system was put in. They pumped water into Henderson from Lake Mead. This increased the size of the draw of water which is being delivered from Boulder City from the dam. But that was only for Henderson and Boulder City and not enough water to really service the Clark County area. So it was proposed that we develop a project called the Southern Nevada Water Project, which was later renamed the Robert Griffith Water Project because he was the prime instigator of this. We worked through Clark County and through the State of Nevada, through Congress, to get all the permits necessary to do this. One thing, we had to get financing from the federal government. For this project, which I have forgotten the length of the time, but from this project, we got something like one-and-a-half points of interest on the loan from the federal government to develop the project. This was done through contact with our congressman, Walter Bering at that time, and Alan Bible, one of our Senators. We worked very hard. Our staff at the Colorado River Commission worked very hard with Congress in order to develop authorization of the project. We, as the Colorado River Commission, were allowed to do that because one of our obligations as a commission was to manage the Nevada interest in the water behind Hoover Dam and the electric power that was generated by Hoover Dam.

In order to use that water, we had to go get authorization of the state, number one, which we did receive from the governor. And then we went to the federal government to get the further authorization. All this was accomplished, and we were able to start building the water project. First I should say that the project included a huge draw pipe from the lake with pumps to bring that water up 800 feet to the filtration plant. We built one of the largest filtration plants in the United States at that time to filter the water that came in so it would be better quality. Go from there into Clark County. In order to do this, we had to drill a huge hole in the River Mountains. We used a rotary drill that went four miles through the mountain. This was the first time that a hole had been drilled through hard rock with a rotary drill. We had been given a price of, I think, \$10 million to do it by normal mining, which is you go in and blast and haul the rock out. By doing the drilling with this drill, we were able to do that for 5 million instead of 10 million. So we saved \$5 million. The total project cost about 250 million. It allowed the whole of Clark County

to have plenty of water at that time. I have a picture here.

While you're looking for that picture, is this still how we get water today?

Yes. We get water today from the same project. But the important thing is that the Las Vegas Valley Water District has doubled the size of the project so that we can bring more water in and service a larger area. That was just completed not too long ago. Of course, we're trying to get more water from the river all the time, from the lake all the time. So we now have the facility available to bring the water that we need from Lake Mead into Clark County. It's big enough to handle all of that.

How do you get appointed to a commission like that?

It is a governor's appointment. I was appointed about 1967 or '68, someplace along in there. One thing, being in the water business with water conditioning, I was really interested in water. So I talked to Governor Paul Laxalt, the governor at that time. He was kind enough to give me the appointment. That was a five-member commission.

Who else was on it?

At that time Bob Griffith was the chairman. Paul McDermott was a member. He was a long-time insurance man in town. Ted Lawson, who was head of one of the labor unions here in Las Vegas. A fellow named Frank Scott from Caliente. And one other. I'll think of it in a minute.

I think you've named five.

Have I named five?

I think so.

Well, now that's it. I think I'm the only one left out of that group. The reason Frank Scott was appointed was part of the power from the dam goes up to Lincoln County. They use power up there. So he represented that interest which is Lincoln County, separate from Clark County. But here is a picture of the drill that drilled four miles through the mountain. That is as it came out.

And this drill is powered by?

Well, it's a huge, big machine. It's about 200 feet long, and it has a big diesel motor, which turns the drill. This is the drill head. When that came through -- does the X show in the mountain there? Yeah.

Is that the exit hole?

That's the exit hole. And they hit that right on the money. They guide that with a laser light to make sure that they stay on track. As a matter of fact, when they doubled the size of the project here recently, they used the same type of drill, same type of operation.

So even here in 2000 something, we're still using the same drill that you used in the 40s?

Yeah. They're a little better. It was in the 60s. The drills are better quality. They're faster and bigger and that kind of thing. Anyway, I just thought that was interesting.

I think it's very interesting.

And we're, of course, still using the water that we get from Lake Mead.

If a historian wanted to see the papers used by this commission, the paperwork that you accumulated as part of that commission, where is it stored?

Well, archives of the State of Nevada would have them or the Colorado River Commission would have it available. I think the archives of the state would be the place to go for that information.

Well, I really thank you for that. And if you come up with any more precious tidbits like that, I'm really interested. We find that a lot of historians are interested in water because of the situation with water here and because of the interesting way all of this came about.

One more thing might be of interest. At that time we were looking for water, any source of water we could find. We spent a great deal of time studying the availability of water from Lincoln and White Pine Counties up north. We determined at that time two things: One, that the residents up there would not allow water to be shipped down here; and, number two, that the volume of water really -- it would be hard to pay for the project because -- I forgot how many acre-feet of water is available, but it's not a very large amount for the huge pipeline that is necessary to bring it down here. Now that's all changed with our need for water now. And they've done that. They've gotten a right-of-way, and they're going to bring water from those mines. And the people up north are going for it because they're going to get some benefit out of it.

What will they get?

Well, they'll get the benefit of being able to use the water that is being brought up. And the construction of that project will be very helpful to them.

Jobs?

It will open jobs. It will open land that wasn't available for use before. A number of helpful --
So the water is going to be more usable for them, as well as for us?

That's correct.

I appreciate that because I had heard something about this pipeline.

Yeah. It has just been approved by Congress; the right-of-way to run it. A number of years ago, they bought water rights all over Lincoln and White Pine Counties and got them approved by the state water engineer. Now they're going to be able to get that water and bring it down here.

You know, I know that you're retired now. But what other kind of commissions or appointments are you currently working on?

I have none now. I'm retired.

You're just retired completely. Okay. Good.

Not involved.

Well, I really appreciate this. These facts are really important.

One other point I could talk about water. During this period of time, we were working to bring Lake Mead water in and potentially bring Northern Nevada water in. There was a plan circulated out of Congress to develop water in the Yukon Territory of Canada and the U.S. So the Parsons Company in Pasadena had developed a very detailed plan of how to bring that water from that area down here. One reason it made a lot of sense was that you could start at 3,000 feet, and it would be all gravity down to us so that there would be no pumping. It would flow all the way. So the cost of that water arriving here would be quite reasonable. I won't go into detail on how they did this.

We decided to take a look at this. So two of us from the commission flew up to Spokane and joined another group. A newspaper in Washington was very interested in this project. So they put together a tour where we had, I think, a DC-4 airplane full of people, maybe 70 people, something like that, from all over the West. We flew from Spokane up into Canada. We went up into Canada and Alaska, went to the North Slope and the northern slope of Canada and down through the big coal mines up there, coal and oil mines, looking at this project of how they would bring water.

If it had not been stopped, we would have gotten more water than we know what to do

with, and 30 states in the United States would have gotten a plentiful supply of water. Plus, Canada would have had plenty of water across their plains. The project was huge.

About six, seven years ago, I was working with the former lieutenant governor of California, a fellow named Bob Finch, an attorney in Pasadena, who has since died. But Bob was trying to resurrect this idea. We worked quite hard to put it together. He went so far as to get a project cost and go through some financial brokers to determine if we could finance it. It turned out that it was going to cost -- and this was five, six years ago -- probably \$30 billion to develop all the power plants, all the water lines, all the dams, everything that was necessary to put this project together. But the use of water and power from this project would have easily paid for all of that, even at that huge price.

So now, is that something that they would reconsider today?

No, no. That was killed about that time by a fellow named Scoop Johnson, a senator from Washington, who said he would not allow the Columbia River to be used for any water project that would in any way endanger the supply of water for the state of Washington. So he killed it and got through Congress a 25-year moratorium on even considering it. So that 25 years has passed, but it never was resurrected again. But it made tremendous amounts of sense. Canada would have gone along because its benefits would have been substantial.

It was even going to put water in the Great Lakes, wasn't it? (Peggy Casey)

Well, the water would have gone across Canada. It would have been big enough that a barge-type canal could have taken their wheat out by barge instead of by railroad cars. Extra water could have been pumped into the Great Lakes. So when they would have a low-water year, they would be able to get water in there which would hold the level up and help the Mississippi River have enough water. It's huge. I mean, it's hard to conceive of the concept. But it would have been a tremendous, tremendous asset to the whole United States.

And you don't want to mention this now to one of our current senators?

You can't resurrect it now. The thing that would kill it now is the environmentalists. In other words, you would cut down some trees. Environmentally, it would be very difficult to do at this time. It would be darn hard to do. But that doesn't get away from the fact that it would have really been a substantial asset, particularly for the state of Nevada. We would have become a

green state. There would have been lakes in the north and south and middle and plenty of water in Reno. It's just amazing what could have been done with it.

But can you imagine the number of people we would have here now?

Well, yeah. You've got a point.

But that is amazing, just the thought of it.

Yeah, it really is amazing. You look back and you look at the reason the Roman Empire developed so. They moved water from long distances. Built huge aqueducts. They were able to develop their whole empire in France, in Germany, in Rome or Italy, in Turkey. Every place you go, they had aqueducts to bring water. So that idea is something that's been used for years and years and years to move water from one place to another place. But now we have too many attorneys, and there are too many problems to try and develop a concept.

The red tape that we have allowed.

Yeah. It's developed. So anyway, I just thought you might be interested in that.

I am very interested. And I really appreciate you thinking about it.

(End side 1, tape 3.)

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