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# An Interview with Charles Deaner

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

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



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## Preface

Charles Deaner's narrative begins near Erie Pennsylvania, where he was born. His family history can trace its roots to a grandfather who fought in the Civil War. Charles served in the Air Force and battled in the North African campaign of World War II. After which, he attended college and received a law degree from Syracuse University.

At the urging of a sister and brother-in-law who had settled in Las Vegas, he ventured to a changing Las Vegas of the 1950s. He shares stories of his first law practice and legal case. Charles became a leader in his profession and has many stories of how his practice grew during the 1960s and 1970s.

His narrative also includes his insights and descriptions of the many changes that have occurred over the decades that he has lived and worked in the Las Vegas community.



# Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



## Use Agreement

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Name of Interviewer: Clayton D. White

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Charles W. Deaner 4/4/11  
Signature of Narrator Date

Clayton D. White 4/4/2011  
Signature of Interviewer Date



**This is Claytee White. I'm in downtown Las Vegas today in the Deaner Law Offices. I am with Mr. Charles Deaner.**

**Would you please spell your last name and pronounce it.**

D-E-A-N-E-R, Deaner.

**Okay, Mr. Deaner. So how are you doing?**

How am I doing?

Yes.

Every day is a good day when you're 88.

**You're 88?**

Yes.

**Oh, wonderful. Tell me where you're from originally.**

Erie, Pennsylvania, which is between the state of New York and state of Ohio and immediately south of the province of Ontario divided by, of course, Lake Erie.

**Yes. So what was that like growing up? How large was the town?**

The city at that time was the third biggest city in Pennsylvania, about 130,000. Now it's down to about 103,000. It's lost population like a lot of the Midwestern factory towns.

**Yes. What did your parents do for a living?**

My father was an electrician at Griswold Manufacturing, which at that time was the largest maker of cooking utensils in the United States -- frying pans. At that time they were all cast iron.

**What was it like growing up there and going to school?**

Well, I sort of feel sorry for the people that didn't grow up there. It was a wonderful place to grow up as a child because we were on Lake Erie. I lived on the edge of town, on the east side. We could actually walk to the lake. It was about a 45-minute walk. Or we could take a ferry across to the peninsula, which is called Presque Isle. It's an 11-mile arm that protects the cities at bay. In fact, it's the bay where Perry built his ships in the War of 1812 and later defeated the British at Sandusky. The summers were pleasant. There was always a breeze off the lake. The winters were snowballs and snow. It's one of the snowiest cities in the United States. But as a child I thought that was heaven.

**Any brothers and sisters?**



I had four siblings. An older brother Stuard; he's named after my mother, S-T-U-A-R-D. A sister Harriett, who is the reason I'm here. I am the middle child. A younger brother George, who was always called Dutchie. And my baby sister, Edna May, who still lives on a farm south of Erie about 12 miles.

**So she still has that idyllic life?**

Well, they got rid of the cows. They have this great big farm, and none of the children want it. So I would say give it to the Nature Conservancy, they take land and preserve and protect it. I belong to it. I said, you should give it to them as a typical northern hardwood forest because they have about 40 acres of timber on there and a lot of it is just the natural hardwood they grew in that area even before the white man came, when it was mostly Indians. But I don't think they're interested.

**Okay. Some kind of a preservation organization.**

Yes.

**What inspired you to go to law school?**

Well, I'm the first college graduate in my family. When I grew up in Erie, most people went to work in a factory. But when I finished high school in January of 1941, I wanted to go up and join the Canadian Army because I wanted to help the Canadians. Being so close to the Canadian border, I used to listen to all the hockey games and Canadian broadcasts because at nighttime they had a better signal that came across the lake. Of course, they were in the war already and I wanted to go up and help. My dad said, no, finish high school and then join the American force. So that's what I did. I went down to the recruiting office the day after I graduated and asked to join. I wanted to join the field artillery. The recruiting sergeant said, well, you're a high school graduate; you should join the air force. That's what I did.

**Oh, amazing. So most people in the Army, most of the volunteers were not graduates of high school?**

At that time I really don't know. I know my first duty station was at Lowry Field in Denver. In my squadron I would say over half of them were high school graduates or even a couple of college graduates. You've got to remember this was right at the end of the depression.

**That's correct.**

There weren't a lot of jobs out there.



**What are your parents' names? And did your mom work outside the home?**

No. She was a housewife.

**Okay. And their names?**

My mother was Mary Ada Stuard, S-T-U-A-R-D. Her father, my grandfather, fought in the Civil War believe it or not. He went in when he was 17 in May 1861 and served for three years. He was captured at the Battle of the Wilderness on May 1st, 1864. His whole company was, the 7th Pennsylvania Reserves. He was taken to Andersonville and spent from -- first he went to Florence, South Carolina, then Andersonville. In about June of '64, he escaped from there and he was recaptured. Finally, just before the war ended, some Michigan cavalry came in and rescued them. He finally got out of the service in May of '65.

**Did anyone ever capture his stories?**

I am trying to. He was actually captured twice. He was captured in the peninsula campaign about seven miles from Richmond. He was on a -- I went to the island -- it's right in the middle of the James River -- Belle Isle. Actually, there's nothing there but a little monument that says this is where prisoners of war were. But it's just down from the Tredegar iron factory, which is now a federal museum.

**That's interesting history. Has anyone in the family written about that?**

No. I'm gathering material, but it's something that I really haven't—my nephew, who still lives in Erie, he's a computer expert for the post office at the regional office there. He has found some stuff that I haven't even found. There were some letters that he was writing to the pension agency in Washington to try and get a pension because he contracted scurvy at Andersonville and lost weight and never was quite the same. So he had to get affidavits from his sergeant and people that served with him. One of them was from either -- one of the officers said that when he escaped and they captured him, they took all of his clothes off and put what they call a meal sack on him. Fortunately, it was in the fall. It wasn't cold yet. He died, by the way, 11 months and three weeks before I was born. He died in late November of 1921, and I was born November 16th, '22. So I never saw him. But my father said one of the things he remembered him saying was at one time he caught a dog at the prison camp in Andersonville and he didn't get any of the meat, but he got some of the broth. I don't know how he survived that war, but he did.



**That's amazing. So you enlisted and went to Denver in the military. That was a change, but it's still cold.**

Oh, I thought it was wonderful. It was right up against the mountains and I've always been fascinated by the west. So I was there. When I went in I was waiting to go to school there. They had a photography school and armament school. Armament loads the bombs and loads the machine guns and stuff on the aircraft. They put me on KP, and I was on there for like a month solid after I got through my recruit training. I thought I don't want to do this all my life. So this sergeant asked, do you want to cook? So I agreed to cook. For two-plus years I was a cook and baker. Then I had a chance to go to A and M school, become an aircraft mechanic. So I got that and then went overseas and joined the 9th Air Force in England. They had just come up from the Northern African campaign in the defeat of Rommel.

**So you never wanted to fly?**

Yes. I volunteered to be an aerial gunner. I passed all the tests, but I have no depth perception where they line up two sticks. The upside of that is I probably would have been dead because I would have been one of the earlier airman gunners because it would have been '42. Then I volunteered to become a paratrooper. They said, no, we're going to send you to college. So they sent me to Salt Lake City to go to a specialist school, and they canceled the course after I got there.

**What was the course?**

It was going to be psychology at -- I'm not a Mormon, but I went to Salt Lake up at a campus there in Utah, but the school was actually going to be BYU. Anyway, that never happened. So I said I want to go overseas. So they sent me over to join the 9th Air Force. The unit I joined had been in North Africa. After Rommel lost his army, they moved the whole 9th Air Force. We were actually supporting the British 8th Army up to England to help get ready for the invasion. So I joined them in February of '44, early February.

**So were you a mechanic at the time?**

Yes.

**Now, when a unit goes into battle, what do the mechanics do?**

Well, the unit I was with was the Headquarters, 19th Tactical Air Command. I was with the Headquarters Squadron. We had one transport plane. You might know them as a DC-3. They were



the transport plane -- they're still flying by the way -- it was called a C-47. They were flying around the U.S. before the war. They carried about 26 people and two pilots. But they were the transport planes that hauled most of the paratroopers in and towed the gliders into France and into Holland. The base we were on had an air transport group, but we were not with them. We were with the 19th Tac, which was a fighter-based group. So one month after D-Day, we landed at Utah Beach and went on into an air base near Laval, L-A-V-A-L, in northern France. Then we moved on up to (Rennes) and then to Chalon Sur Marne. That was an interesting billet because we lived in a nunnery that had been used by the German forces. And then from there we went to -- we were following the organization, obviously, who had all fighters and troop carriers. And we moved from there to Luxembourg. I was in Luxembourg during the bulge. We actually helped fly materials and equipment there, even though we were assigned to the 19th Tac. We went to England to get overshoes, got over close enough and then back, so they could provide them to the troops because they weren't equipped with that. And, also, what they call shoe pack, which was a combination artic shoe that they could wear in the snow. You probably wouldn't know much about those in North Carolina.

**That's right. So were you happy about your decision to volunteer?**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. It's nothing I ever want to do again. When the war ended I was in Erlangen, which was about 30 miles north of Nuremberg. We were over with Patton, with his army, the 7th Army. We were his air force. That's why if you follow what I was saying before I went in France, it was always with the 7th Army. Then what the mechanic does, he just takes care of the aircraft is what he does.

**And so you came back in which year?**

I got out -- this might be interesting. I went over in a convoy from New York City. It was right after Christmas of '43. It took us almost two weeks, 50 ships. We had two torpedo warnings. Fortunately nothing happened. But we were down inside and we had to come up with our jackets and life preservers and stuff. It took us two weeks to give to Liverpool. On my return, I landed in New York, I think on the 15th or 16th of October. And I came back on the Queen Mary and it only took us five days.

**So the Queen Mary had become a troop ship at that time?**



Oh, yeah. If you go down to Long Beach where it is, you'll see there's part of it set up for troops. The bunks are only about, oh, 20 inches apart and they're about five or six bunks high. I mean it's like racks on a shelf when you climb in there. But it was nice. The trip was only five days. Going over I was on a British ship and we slept in hammocks. That's not real good sleeping. Then we'd have to take them down and roll them up because below us were the tables that we ate on, so you slept over the top of tables.

**They used every inch of space.**

Yep.

**And what happened after the military, after your service was over?**

Well, in Erie you work in a factory.

**So you went back to Erie?**

Yes. My mother had died when I was 12. So I did all the cooking when my mother died for my brother and sister.

**So you knew how to cook already.**

For almost six years. Anyhow, I went back to my dad. My sister was living then with her two kids because her husband had gone in the marines and went, of course, to the Pacific. He was with the 6th Marine Division. In fact, he worked with the code talkers, the Navahos. So I got a job at the General Electric assembling refrigerators, putting light bulbs in and putting the trays in and stuff like that. They were going to go on strike, and I was making \$50 a week. I'm like, gosh, \$50 a week and these idiots are going to go on strike? I never had so much money in my life. It was actually \$48-something. My brother-in-law, Mike Cooper, was a piano player before the war in a regional jazz band or dance band. My sister also was a piano player and she met him after high school. So he played with a band in Erie that played at the local Moose club. In Pennsylvania if you belonged to a Moose club or an Elks club or a private club, you could drink on Sunday; otherwise, they had laws that said you couldn't, called blue laws.

**Yes.**

While my brother-in-law was overseas with the Marines, my sister once in a while would go down there because she knew everybody in the band and because her husband was part of the band. He joined the Marine Corps. After I got home I would go down with her. And the leader, named Ken



Smith, said why don't you go over to this Gannon College over here on the GI Bill? I said I can't do that; I didn't take a college preparatory course in high school because I was going to go to work in a factory. He said, well, go over and talk to them. He said I think because you're a veteran, there may be -- so I went over and talked to them. It was then called Gannon College. It was run by the Catholic diocese. They said go over to the VA and take all these tests; and if you qualify we'll enroll you; you won't require the college preparatory courses. So I did. I spent I think all day taking tests and examinations. A couple of days later they called me and said you're fine; we'll send a letter telling them that you can enroll. And so I went over there and on February 1st of '46 I started college.

**This was going to be just a bachelor's degree?**

Yes.

**What did you decide, which field?**

I had no idea. History was always what I loved. I thought, well, I would just major in history. Then as I started going through it, I thought I can't make a living just studying history. So I decided to take a minor in education so I could teach. So when I graduated I had a major in history and a minor in education. But I had two years of GI Bill left because I had the full 48 months. That's scholastic months. So that means -- it's the way the months are in school counted.

**I didn't know that.**

So my buddy says to me -- his name was Cavanaugh. He said, how would you like to go to law school? I said I don't want to go to law school. I took constitutional law and I thought it was very boring. I said I think if I do go into anything, I may go to the University of Buffalo and become a social worker because the VA said that's what I would do best.

**So now, while you were in school getting your bachelor's, did you work also?**

Oh, yeah. I worked part-time as a bookkeeper in an insurance office. But the funniest job I had was on Sundays. My brother George by then had come back. He was in the 2nd Marine Division. He went in about a year after I did. He was through most of the Guadalcanal. When the war ended he was at Guam. He drove an amphibious tractor that went up on the beaches. So he said why don't you on Sundays—we'll pay you like ten bucks for doing this—be the doorman at the Marine Corps League Club, which they had a bar and they could drink. I said okay; that sounds good; I can study



while I'm at the door. I'd be at a window and they come up and show their card and I press a button and the door opens and in they go. So I took that job. He was like an officer in the club or something. I don't mean -- he was an enlisted man, but I mean he was an officer at the club.

**Oh, I see.**

So one Sunday night I heard a lot of noise back in the bar area. It was dandy club. It was a long rectangular building. And the bartender says, Deaner, come in here and throw this guy out. I said what? I mean he's drunk and he's being a problem. I said that's not my job. Yes, it is; you're the bouncer. My brother didn't tell me that he was a pretty good-size guy, and I sort of sized him up. So I went back to the door and I opened both doors, the outer door and the inner door, and I came around behind him and grabbed him by the belt, got him up on his toes, and pushed him out and closed the door. He's knocking and yelling, saying, you dirty, rotten, no-good dog face, with a few other names. And I said to my brother, I don't want to work here anymore. But that was fun, sort of interesting.

**What is a Moose club?**

Moose club -- there's one here in Las Vegas. It's like Elks or the Knights of Pythias.

**I see, so fraternal?**

Fraternal-type thing.

**So after college your friend is trying to talk you into going to law school. So he has decided to go, probably.**

Right. And I said okay, I'll apply. Where do you want to go? He said, well, I want to go to Ohio State or Florida or Syracuse. So I applied to all three. But I thought maybe if I go to Florida it will be warm down there. Well, unfortunately he never applied to Florida, but I was accepted. But he was accepted at Syracuse and so was I, so I went to Syracuse with him, which worked out because it was right on the main line of New York Central Railroad and there were about seven or eight trains a day each way between here and Syracuse University. So it worked out.

**So you could stay home and go to law school?**

No, no. It's 220 miles east. But it was easy to get home.

**Did you work through law school, as well?**

Yeah. I worked part-time in a dry cleaner and laundry, what they call a receiving store where you



drop off the clothes and then they pick them up and take them to the laundry and then do the dry cleaning and washing. But it was like a pickup station. It was right downtown Syracuse. What you had to do is you had to bag the laundry in nylon bags and you had to put tags on the dry cleaning. I got \$15 for working four hours a day, six days a week, and I could study. So I worked from five to nine, got \$15 a week and two shirts cleaned a week.

**Important. So did you find that law school wasn't boring after all?**

Well, the first year I almost flunked out because I had—in fact, I talked in the law school about this after a bit. They have talked to me many times. I said one of the problems I had in my first year of law school, I didn't understand how it worked because they started throwing the courses at you; they don't explain to you how the law works. They don't explain that you have to file lawsuit and go to court. I did not have that background because I was a blue-collar family. I didn't know anything about law or courts or anything like that, and so I didn't really understand how it works. So I had problems with the concept. So the first year I had problems. But once I figured it out, then I was fine. I graduated in regulation.

**Good. So how did you decide on which field of law?**

At that time you really didn't decide that. The courses weren't as broad as they are today. Everybody took basically the same courses. But I did take a tax course and an estate course, which was an optional course, so I thought maybe I'd come out and do that kind of work. In Pennsylvania at that time you had to work in a law office for six months before you could take the bar examination. So the two summers that I was off I worked in a law office in Erie. When I graduated in May of '51, my sister had gone out to Las Vegas. Now, that's another short story, if you want me to.

**Please. Yes.**

Okay. Her husband came back from the Marine Corps. He was actually in China in Tsingtao, which was the harbor for Beijing, and he was a radioman handling signals between the Marines and Beijing and the coast. They all came home about April of '46, much later than I came home because I had been in much longer. He went to work with the band at the Moose club and played there for a couple of years. And then the old band that he worked with before the war, the dance band, had gotten a job to open the Desert Inn in 1950. His name was actually Harry Hauck, H-A-U-C-K, but



here in Vegas he would be known as Carlton Hayes, H-A-Y-E-S. His band played at the Desert Inn from 1950 to about '64 or '65.

He wanted my brother-in-law back because he was a fine piano player. He went to Freedonia State Teachers College in western New York State, which was only about 30 miles east of Erie. He was an arranger. He was excellent. They convinced him to move out to Vegas and go to work. I still had a year of law school left, and I kept telling my sister, you don't want to do that.

**What was it about Las Vegas that you didn't want her to?**

Well, I hated to see my sister and her two kids (move), because I would only see them when I came back in the summertime.

**Okay. So this was just selfish on your part.**

This was being selfish, yeah. So when I graduated from law school, my sister says, well, why don't you come out before you start studying for the bar exam? I said, gee, you know, I liked the west so much when I was in Denver. And I was also for a short time in Salt Lake City.

**Oh, that's right.**

I said I really like Denver; it would be nice to go back west because Denver is where I really wanted to live. So I got in the train and I arrived April 18th, 1952, on that train. That picture you see; that's the train from Chicago to Los Angeles. I was met by my sister and brother-in-law. And I knew when I got in that train in Erie that I'd never go back.

**It was just a feeling?**

Yes, a feeling, even though at the time I only had enough clothes for a trip. And so the longer I was with my sister -- at that time she lived in a house just off Maryland Parkway near old Gorman if you knew where Gorman was before they moved.

**So was it in the John S. Park community?**

Yes. In fact, the kids went to John S. Park Elementary School.

The principal of John S. Park is -- the school's named after her I'll think of the name in a minute. It was a woman it might have been. Thomas? Anyway, whatever the school is now called, she was the principal at John S. Park.

**Yes. We just did an oral history project of that community because it was the first Las Vegas residential community on the National Register of Historic Places.**



Yeah. The Biltmore was even earlier.

**Right. But that whole community made the National Register of Historic Places.**

Oh, I didn't know that.

**So that's why we did an oral history project on it.**

Yeah. That was built during the war.

**That's correct. They finished it after the war. So when you arrived in '52, were there still houses being constructed in the area?**

Yes. The house that they rented was on Bonita, which is right behind the Huntridge theater. In fact, to access it you had to go over Tenth Street off of Oakey. Oakey was mostly a dirt road at that point.

**So were you and your sister, that sister, the closest of the siblings you think?**

No, because there is a seven-year gap. My sister was born in 1915, I was born in '22, then my younger brother '25, and my sister '28. So it was like two earlier, then there was a seven-year gap, then the three of us. I had a problem with big sister. I thought she picked on me just because I would steal her cigarettes.

**So how did you like it when you got off the train? What did you think? What was it like?**

It was dusk. I think the train got in early evening. It was my sister's birthday; that's why I remember it. It's easy to remember. It was dusk and I remember as the train was approaching from Salt Lake City. And Las Vegas is in a bowl, actually; it's a valley. There was a little yellow spot down at the bottom of the bowl. Picture like a cereal bowl with just a little bit of cereal in the bottom or some milk. And it was sort of yellowish because of the lights. So my first vision of Las Vegas was small lights in the bottom of a bowl. Now, contrast that with flying into Las Vegas now where it's lights valley to valley. That was really my first impression of Las Vegas. Then when I got off the train, it was apparently a hot April day. Now, April could be hot or cold. But it was probably a warmer day, probably the temperature in the nineties or close to a hundred. I go, wow, it's warm here.

**Oh, that's great. So had she already started a family?**

Oh, no. The two children were all born before the war. One was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. The other was born in Huntington, West Virginia.

How the band got to open up the Desert Inn is a little bit of a side story, but you might be interested in it.



**Please. Yes.**

Before the war Carlton Hayes, Harry Hauck, from Erie, Pennsylvania, who went to the same high school as my older sister, brother and I. Academy High. He formed a band out of high school. In fact, my sister and brother played in the band in high school. My brother played the bass fiddle and my sister played piano all through high school. They would play after school and then do some jobs on the weekends. Well, Harry Hauck, who later changed his name to Carlton Hayes, decided to keep the band together and they would start going on the road. Well, my sister didn't want to do that because she fell in love and got married. The Hauck Band finally caught on and became a regional band. I think they had about 12 or 14 pieces. It was what they call a sweet band. They played not a lot of jitterbug or jazz. They played more like a Guy Lombardo-type band, if you know who he is. And they played in a lot of hotels in the middle west and up in Canada -- Detroit, Buffalo, Toronto, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Indianapolis; those areas. Became a regional dance band. Sort of a band like Lawrence Welk but without the German accent, although Harry C. Hauck was a German from south Erie because south Erie was pretty much German.

One of the jobs they had after the war was at the Lookout House in Covington, which is a city across the Ohio River from Cincinnati in Kentucky. That was run by the mob out of Cleveland. When the mob took over the Desert Inn, to save Wilbur Clark's butt basically, they wanted Hap, as everybody called him. They wanted the band they liked the band so much. So they talked Hap into bringing the band to Vegas and opening it. Well, he still wanted my brother-in-law as the piano player because he was so good. So they came out and opened the Desert Inn. So the reason I am here is because of the mob, sort of indirectly, but the truth.

**So did your sister see any mob influence?**

No. No. Well, indirectly, like we all did. Everybody knew that the hotels were operated by the mob. There were some that weren't. The Desert Inn in particular was and, of course, the Stardust and the Dunes and the Sands and Riviera when Benny Goffstein had it. The El Rancho was run by Katelman out of Florida. But most of the hotels, my understanding back even then, were really started by what they call the Cleveland mob, Moe Dalitz and others, I'll think of some more names in a minute.

**And that was probably because they could not get the financing.**



They had the money, but they really didn't have any place to put it. The story always goes here that they got tied into the Teamsters. Then Parry Thomas of the Bank of Las Vegas, who I know -- in fact, I think he's still alive, although I'm not sure; in fact, I did some legal work for him off and on -- came up with an arrangement to get the funds out of the Teamsters, and that provided the source or the funds to build these hotels.

The town was full of gamblers from (not legal) elsewhere. Like I had a client named Sammy Cohen, who was a bookie in L.A. He was run out of L.A. and then came here and became a very successful bookie.

**I just learned about two or three days ago that the word mob is supposed to be a derogatory term. I didn't know that.**

Yes. Where I grew up, yes. But here it never was here. The mob here became respectable.

**And the word was okay, the word mob?**

Oh, yeah, although you didn't talk about it in front of them, obviously. I met Dalitz a couple of times and Burton Cohen who was their attorney. I knew enough to say hello to them. Irwin Molasky I've known. I also did some work for -- he was the attorney that was involved in the Dunes from St. Louis, whose name I can't remember right now. But he and his son were involved in the Dunes. There were some areas in there that they had some problems with the Gaming Commission.

**Oh, yes. Okay.**

You probably have more of that background than I would know.

**And we have a couple of books like *The Green Felt Jungle*.**

Yeah. And Smith's book. His book, when I read that book, it just brings back all kinds of memories. The writer for the R-J. John L. Smith, yes.

**So where did you decide to work once you decided you were going to live here?**

Well, I had to get a job. So my brother-in-law knew a person who knew another person who was a manager of what they call a DLS station for Retail Credit, which now is called something else. It's one of the three big credit companies that you can get your credit report from. If I heard the three, I would know which one it is. So I had to do something. So I got a job there as what they call an insurance inspector, not an investigator, but an inspector. What you would do -- if you applied for fire insurance, I would go out and see if the house was there and things like that. If you asked for



credit, I would check with the banks to see if your credit was okay especially if you wanted a gas credit card. In those days you could call the bank and ask what kind of credit arrangement you have with your bank because we would ask who you banked with, or at least the application did. So I had that job for about eight or ten months.

One of the people I was interviewing for something -- I don't remember what it was; I was getting information -- was a lawyer named Dale Cook, who had an office down on the corner of Third and Fremont over top of the restaurant called Melody Lane, downtown on the northwest corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Fremont. He was with the attorney for the title company, Pioneer Title. I started telling him about I had a law degree. He said, gee, maybe I can get you a job over at the title company. So he talked with the manager. His name was Major Minor Sweeney. He interviewed me. So I went to work as a title searcher.

**Now, had you passed the bar?**

No. No. I hadn't even thought about taking the bar. By the way, at that time you had to live in Nevada a year, anyway, before you could take the bar. So I arrived too late. Had I gotten here in July, I could have taken the bar. So I wasn't able to take the bar until 1953.

**And what was the job like at the title company?**

Well, you searched titles. When people buy a house, they want to make sure they have a good title. So you ran the records, go to the courthouse, and so on and so forth. But you make up reports. I had a legal background and I started liking this. Of course, I had taken property law.

Meanwhile, I applied for the bar and studied part-time and on weekends. This attorney gave me his bar study courses that he had used when he took the bar a couple years before that. So I took the bar in July of '53. Then I was admitted October 5th of '53. I should have been admitted a week earlier because they had a big ceremony up in Reno. I didn't have any money because I was working and I had to wait for money because I had to send \$25 to the clerk of the court in Carson City to be admitted to the Supreme Court. When I got the money, I sent it up and then they sent me down the admission papers. I was not sworn in up in Carson City. I was sworn in by a district judge here, Judge Taylor, a week later.

**So it's 1953. So many things are happening. Casinos are being built rapidly at this time.**

No. The first casino -- the original five -- the El Rancho was here. The El Rancho had Lili St. Cyr



as a stripper. The district attorney was Roger Foley, not the father who was a federal judge, but the oldest son was there at a show, and she was revealing a little bit too much, and so he was going to prosecute her. That, of course, was in the papers and that was fun for a while. But there was the El Rancho, the Thunderbird, the Desert Inn, the Last Frontier and the flamingo and downtown the Golden Nugget.

**Not that far from the Sahara?**

There wasn't any Sahara.

It was called the Bingo Club. Yeah, it was north of the Riviera. It would be on Sahara (then San Francisco) and Las Vegas Blvd (then Hwy. 91). But anyway, there was the El Rancho, the Thunderbird in which my brother-in-law was the corporate secretary—that's another story. Let me get to that in a minute. Gosh, I can't remember their names.

**But we can find that.**

They were two brothers and Cliff Jones, who was involved in gaming. He was at one time lieutenant governor. He was a former trial judge, of Jones, Weiner & Jones, which was the first big law firm in town. They had like six lawyers. Anyway, then the DI, the Flamingo and the Frontier. But the Last Frontier was not a hotel. It was a bar, gaming, and a lot of things they had like a park, amusement rides and things, and also you could rent horses.

**They had a village there?**

Yes, Frontier Village. So you could shoot guns at milk bottles and stuff like that, more like a carnival-type thing. You could also rent horses there. If you rented them you would ride up Spring Mountain Road, a dirt road which crossed the tracks and up into the desert. That was the ride you could take. It's like a couple bucks or something. Then, of course, when you got up probably around what would be today maybe Jones or Decatur, that area, you turn around and come back. And the horse, no matter what you tried to do with him, would head right back to the barn.

**That's great.**

But going back to my job at the title company, that's where I met my wife, Lucy, whose sister's husband, Mattison Martin, was the secretary at the Golden Nugget. So I knew him obviously very well. But the Nugget was not a mob operation. It was run by an ex-cop from L.A., whose name I can't remember right now. Matt Martin, my brother-in-law, and Buck who came from Reading,



Pennsylvania; and Bob Brooks, who built Rancho Circle; Buck Blaine was the guy from Reading, Pennsylvania; and one other. There was no mob influence, as far as I know, but I'm sure they didn't do anything to antagonize the mob, obviously. But it was the biggest deal downtown. It was the nicest place.

**What part did your brother-in-law play in that?**

He was the secretary. He was a part owner. It's sort of interesting. My sister-in-law had contacted tuberculosis back in Indiana where my wife was born in a town north of Indianapolis. They came west to New Mexico for the weather, the sun and the dry air.

My brother-in-law, his father ran a bank in Lebanon, a town north of Indianapolis. He got out of school during the depression and went down to Florida to get a job and worked at a gas station. This was a mob that had a joint, not the Chicago mob. I suppose it's probably the New York people or Miami. The gas station was right near a gaming joint, which was obviously illegal. So these people would buy gas from him and they liked him so much they said, well, why don't you come over here and we'll get you a job parking cars? Well, one thing led to another and he ended up running the gaming business. Well, that always embarrassed my sister-in-law because her father was a contractor in Lebanon and they were sort of a small town. They were sort of prominent in the community. She was always embarrassed by that. But anyway, that's how they came west.

**So there were people who were embarrassed by Las Vegas?**

Oh, no, not embarrassed by Las Vegas. She was embarrassed because her husband was a gambler. He was in the gaming business. See, she was very dignified, my sister-in-law, and knew all the Mesquite Club and knew all the right people. She was just a wonderful woman.

**Wonderful. Now, who is the other Dealer --**

My son.

**This is your son. Okay.**

**Your sister went back into the band at the DI? Was your sister ever in the band?**

No, no, no, she was never in the band after high school. Her husband was.

**Her husband was. Was he in the band until 1965?**

Yes.

My sister died in '63. He had alcoholic problems, and she was able to handle it. She could



control it.

My sister later went to work for me, by the way, as my secretary when I first started up the firm. I practiced alone from '53 to '56. Then we formed a law firm called Deaner, Butler and Adamson. Jack Butler and I met in Baptismal pool of the Baptist Church at Ninth and Bridger. So our firm was made in heaven.

**What kind of law did you practice at the time?**

In those days you took everything.

**Tell me about some of your first cases. Anything memorable?**

Oh, well, some little silly stuff. The first trial I ever had was in justice court. The justice court at that time was a little yellow building about the size of this office right on the corner, on the corner of Third and Bridger where the old courthouse is. It was on the northwest corner. The JP was Johnnie Lytle. This person came to see me in my office. It was at 425 Fremont, and my room number was 201 and a half. I couldn't afford a full office, so I paid \$75 to have them split an office. I paid I think \$75 a month rent. You walked up the stairs to my office. I was by myself.

Anyway, he came to see me and he was unhappy because he had his car fixed and they didn't do a good job and he wouldn't pay the bill. So the garage sued him. So I was defending him. We went in and argued in front of the justice of the peace. I saw him marking down on a piece of paper. He would have like plaintiff and defendant column, and then he'd go like this, like you'd make four vertical marks and then one diagonal cross to indicate a total of five. When I looked at the end and I saw there were more lines over on the mechanic's side, I knew I had lost the case.

**So was that your first case?**

That was my first case, yes. I had been practicing probably a couple of months. The first trial I should say, not first case.

**Okay. As a young man here when you would go out socially at that time in those early years, what was it like, the social life?**

You'd go to the bars down on Fremont Street and have a drink after work, although I didn't do a lot of that because we had the two young kids at home.

My wife's name was Lucy, my first wife. She died in 2001 in January. I've since remarried. My present wife is chair of the nursing school at UNLV, Dr. Susan Kowalski. Of course, I know the



dean. You probably know the dean over there. Anyway, where was I? Okay. Back to social life.

Because we didn't have a lot of money, there used to be a Thrifty drugstore on Fremont Street about where the Four Queens is. Or was it between -- between Third and Fourth. Yeah, the Four Queens. We bought a bottle of bourbon that was called Old Waterfall. It was about six bucks. So after the office closed we'd sit around and drink. If we had to fire somebody, maybe a secretary that wasn't doing the job or somebody, we'd sit around the night before and decide who was going to fire the secretary. Usually, the guy who had the most to drink would get stuck with the job.

**Yes. Who were some of the other lawyers at that time?**

Ralph Denton, who was right across the office from me in my original office in the Professional Building on 425 Fremont, which was between Fourth and Fifth, Fifth now being Las Vegas Boulevard. Casino Center was Second Street. He had a secretary they called "Boots." She was from Carolina or Virginia or someplace and she had a real heavy Southern accent. When she'd go out for lunch, she would get loaded.

**So a lot of drinking at that time.**

Not always, but once in a while. That used to be sort of a standing joke.

Interesting thing, I had a case going my first year of practice involving a lost note. I think I had written a letter to somebody telling him that you have to pay this; even though the note's lost, you owe it. The other side hired Cliff Jones as a lawyer. He was one of the early lawyers here. He was involved in gaming with the Thunderbird and a lot of others. In fact, he eventually ended up going worldwide with gaming in Central and South America, Caribbean, Greece. Anyway, I wanted to see him because his client owed this money. He said, well, you're right. He said but what you're going to have to do, he said, you're going to have to file a suit to establish the lost note and then we'll pay you. He gave me the forms and the papers and showed me how to do it.

Well, the bar was very small then. When I was admitted there were about 50 lawyers. I'll show you this newspaper article just because it's interesting.

**And this is October 6, 1953. Other new lawyers are John Barry of Sparks, Roland Valenger of Lovelock. So where is your name?**

There were 18, I think, admitted in '53, and I think there were seven from Las Vegas.

**John Foley.**



Yeah, who is a brother of Roger, the younger brother. He's still alive.

**John Porter.**

Yeah. He ended up being the federal court clerk over in the federal court.

**Dean Breeze.**

Dean Breeze's father was also a lawyer. He was one of the early pioneer lawyers.

**Vinnie Chris --**

Vanoy Cristopherson. In fact, he was the prosecutor on a couple of cases I had when I was defending criminal cases. He later went to Utah and became a district judge in Brigham City area.

**Robert Cohen.**

Robert Cohen owned -- he did some practice, but he got more into buying properties. He owned several motels.

**Ted Porter.**

Ted Porter was in the DA's Office with both Devlin and under George Dickerson. Ted's still alive. He's retired. But he and Bill Devlin practiced law here for years and years and years. Those two, Devlin and Ted Porter, grew up in Las Vegas along with John Foley.

**And then Charles Deaner. At that time did you have to have any continuing education classes at all?**

No. Later on I became very active in the bar. I taught and lectured. I was in an area -- I just accidentally started doing a lot of real estate work because of my experience over at the title company. Let me stop you there because that involves my wife.

I met my wife at the title company. She lived in Biltmore, which was over off of Main Street around Bonanza. Most of those houses are now torn down. She was there because of my sister-in-law whose husband was the secretary at the Golden Nugget. So many people are here because of something like that. I guess it's called the magnet?

**Yes. It's like a -- a chain migration.**

Yes. There's a word for it. For example, there was a fellow who used to office with me, Bill McGimsey. He was a JAG in the Navy during the Vietnam War and he met his wife over there, (she) is Vietnamese and was an interpreter. She would do the interpreting in the courts when they had a Vietnamese person involved. He married her. Eventually that whole family came over here



because of that. So it's the same way.

**Yeah. That's interesting.**

**So tell me about the Biltmore community. Wasn't there a Biltmore hotel there?**

Yes. Right on the corner. It was started by a guy named Horace Heidt, who was an entertainer and had a band, oh, on the West Coast. He was really -- I understand. This was all done before I got here. Even when I got here it was a nice place. It had a pool, more like a motel but a pool, and they had the gaming right on the corner. The pool was sort of behind on Main Street and sort of back behind the units. In Biltmore at that time lived Tibertis, the old man, Jelindo, who I knew very well; the Martins, my sister-in-law and then my wife; and -- anyway, a lot of people that are early Vegans lived in Biltmore because it was really the first community built as sort of like a subdivision.

**So were most of the houses the same type of house?**

Yeah like they were stamped out of a machine. Small, but pleasant. Everybody had a swamp cooler. Air-conditioning was not norm. Swamp cooler unit, basically water goes over the shavings and the circular wheel spins and draws the water back in and sucks it down into the house. We were very comfortable when we had low humidity here. You could leave your doors open and windows open. But when we got more vegetation, more people, more cars, they didn't work very well.

**Yes. Do you remember the Biltmore hotel, motel, allowing blacks to use the facility before blacks were able to go into most places?**

I don't know. I've always been very much aware of that problem, even though in Erie we always went to school with black kids. Always there were three or four in the class. When I was a paperboy in Erie and it would really be cold and bitter, I delivered the afternoon paper called The Dispatch Herald. There were two black families that lived at the end of the route. They worked for New York Central Railroad, I think probably as section hands or something. They would invite me in and give me a hot cocoa. They were really nice to me. Even in Erie black people didn't eat in the restaurants, but they would eat downtown in the five-and-tens.

I don't know. The first thing I did know, because I found that this was a much more segregated place than where I grew up, I had a client named Pat Rozzelle. He had a little slot machine place called Orange Julius down on Fremont Street, on the south side of Fremont Street. He had about eight slot machines in there. The black people would come in there and drink that



drink and get candy bars and stuff and play the slot machines, waiting for the bus to take them over to the Westside. Then the only place that I knew that black people could eat would be at Woolworth's on the corner of Fifth and Fremont. They would go in there.

**But you weren't aware of anything about the Biltmore?**

No. I had a real good friend, because I was very active in scouting, Kermit Booker. I met him through scouting. He was from Coffeyville, Kansas. He was a teacher. So was his wife. I think there's a school named after him now.

**What is their last name?**

Booker, B-O-O-K-E-R, Kermit.

**Okay, okay. Kermit Booker. Yes.**

I never thought anything about it because my father's helper was a black guy. He'd come to the house all the time. I never gave it much thought.

**Right. And probably you didn't have to at that time.**

Well, I never really saw the discrimination like I saw in the south. I couldn't believe what it was like in the south when I was in there. I took a group of troops from Salt Lake to Boca Raton, Florida. And then coming back I was by myself. Black people couldn't ride in the same coaches and they couldn't eat -- they had to sit in different places at the stations. That was something I couldn't comprehend.

**Yes. I even grew up with separate bathrooms and water fountains in North Carolina.**

Now, see, in Erie they rode the buses. They used the beaches. One of my best friends was a black kid. His father was the mailman for our area.

**So Erie was more progressive than most places.**

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We never had that, but I saw it as I got older. But Kermit, his son was interesting. He was black, but he had a white spot of hair on his forehead. He was my son's age. He had a little white spot of hair that grew up like this. He and my son, when we'd go up camping, he with my son would take his son. We would go up for training things, and we became very good friends.

I was a Republican at that time because traditionally our family was because of the Civil War. So I decided -- somebody talked me into running as a Republican for an office. I still have it,



someplace. I wasn't anticipating this and don't know what happened to it. There was a book of matches. It said, "Deaner for Assembly." But I can't find it.

**So you ran for the state assembly.**

Yes, and I lost.

**Okay. But how long had you been here before you ran?**

I had been here four or six years.

**That was early. So whom did you run against?**

There were six seats in this area. There was one up in the valley, which was always won by Mormons because that's where most of them lived. I made it through the primary, but I lost in the general. But George Von Tobel, of the Von Tobels store, he made it out of six to run to be the Republican. He was the first Republican assemblyman elected, I think, since Roosevelt. At that time he was the first one. I'm no longer a Republican, by the way, but that's another story. But there were a lot of black people at that time that were Republicans.

**That's correct, because of the Party of Lincoln.**

So when I ran one of my platforms was open accommodations. So I got a great big billboard over on the Westside. See, to me at that time we ran at large from the whole area. There weren't districts like they are now. So I had to campaign throughout the whole Las Vegas area, not -- the immediate area.

**Right. So like the city.**

City. There wasn't much in the valley then. That's where I met -- if you want to stay on that side of the black issue --

**Yes, please.**

That's where I met Bob Bailey because he was active in the Republican Party. In fact, he's from Cleveland and he went to Cleveland Latin, which is a hundred miles west of Erie. We became real good friends. In fact, I got him in the Kiwanis Club.

He sang at my sister's funeral. Anyway, we went off the track or off the subject.

**This is fine. Did you know Mahlon Brown?**

Both Mahlons. I knew the senator. For a short time we were partners in the law practice at the Valley Bank, which is now Bank of America. It's a 16-story building up the street.



**So I think that's where Senator Richard Bryan's office is in there.**

Yes. With Lionel and Sawyer.

I also knew Dick Bryan quite well. He appointed me when he was governor as the first Southern Nevada to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

**So is the law community still a small community here?**

The answer is no. If you want to get into that area, that's a whole -- that could take -- well, anyway. Probably -- if I can find it. Probably a lot of what it was like is that article I wrote for the Nevada Lawyer, the State Bar monthly magazine.

**Oh, this is good. "Thoughts from our past presidents." So you were a president of the --**  
State bar. And the county bar.

**Wonderful. Good. So I can probably get a copy of this over in the library.**

I could have her make a copy.

**That would be wonderful. I'll put it with the interview.**

I guess it's because I'm old people want to talk to me.

**Oh, no. Oh, no. It's because you know stuff. You just know stuff.**

**How did you feel about Las Vegas getting a law school?**

How that all started -- I think I was on the Board of Governors then. No. I think I was on it when the problem arose. What happened was there was a Catholic priest who came to Reno and opened up a private law school. I can't remember what it was called. But then the bar started worrying because we didn't want a private law school because then we were afraid it would be like the diploma mills over in California. I didn't have anything to really do with it other than I encouraged it. But the law and the bar and a lot of the lawyers got together along with a lot of other people and started pushing for a law school sponsored by the state. Of course, eventually it happened. We were at one time along with Alaska the only state in the union that didn't have a law school. Now I guess Alaska has a law school, as well. And Delaware I think was another state because Vice President Joe Biden went to the same law school I did. I met him at a reunion. But he was later, because I graduated in '51, up at Syracuse. But he went to Syracuse because Delaware didn't have a law school.

**What is the Board of Governors?**

Board of Governors is the governing body for the state bar. Fifteen members are elected from



districts. From that board they elect the president.

**I see. How are Nevada lawyers trained prior to us having a law school?**

Most of them went to schools in Arizona, California or Utah. There were some from elsewhere. But if you start looking at the roster, you would find University of Utah, Arizona State, Arizona, Cal Western, Pacific up in California and the Bay Area schools, Santa Clara and St. Mary's and UCLA. Of course, they also came from elsewhere like I came from Syracuse.

But many of them went to nearby schools.

**Right. Like our native sons.**

Because the WICHE program, which I think five mountain states held into, where if they didn't have a graduate school like in law, but they have one in medicine, then they would allow like -- let's put it this way. Utah had a medical school -- no.

**We had a medical school.**

We had a medical school and Idaho didn't, but had a law school. So if I wanted to go to law school, I'd go to Idaho at in-state rates and vice versa. I think that law's still in effect. I don't know that there's much of it going on anymore. So you're right. That doesn't mean there weren't lawyers from Harvard and elsewhere.

**Oh, yes. Definitely. What kinds of connections do you have with UNLV over the years?**

I started teaching a course out there in the adult education I'm guessing about 1960. I helped set the course up. It was to train people to become real estate brokers and licensees. I had been the attorney for the Board of Realtors® for many years. And so we met and formed a committee and set up the course. We worked with Rueben Neumann for a long time. He was like the faculty contact. But I taught three weekends twice a year out there. I lectured the real estate law. I did that for 21 years. The first one was in -- oh, they tore the building down now, the first building on campus.

**Oh, yes. The Maude --**

No. That's still there. The second one.

**Maude Frazier and -- ooh.**

It's named after a teacher at Vegas High.

**That's right. It was the small building.**

That's right. I taught there. I taught in the one next to it. Then I taught in the buildings back on



Harmon where the AEC had some buildings. Then I taught at the Flora Dugan Building. I think the last place I taught was in the education building. I've lectured out there since I did that teaching. It was fun. Believe it or not, I also got a lot of business because of it.

**Oh, yeah. That would make sense. Yes.**

**So how did you meet your current wife?**

Well, first of all, let's go back. I met my first wife at the title company, Lucy. She worked in the switchboard. A guy I was working with was a solid kid from Maine, Butch Bouchard, he later ended up owning one of the title companies in town -- in fact, they still do -- National Title. I taught him how to search titles. We were searching titles. And the switchboard was like over there. And we had to go through these books to run records. Butch was like, boy, she's got nice legs. I said yeah, she does, but she smokes too much. In fact, she finally died at 83 of -- but she smoked almost to the day she died.

I met my present wife through a friend, a civil engineer who went to Caltech. We were good friends. He kept saying would you like to meet some ladies? I said, no, I'm never going to get married again, because I was married for 47 years.

**Wow. Two children?**

Two, two boys, yeah. Both gone. But I have four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. But they're all in the east.

**Why did they leave Las Vegas?**

I don't know. But that's what happened.

**So do you visit the East Coast a lot?**

Yeah. When I was back in North Carolina, the purpose was to visit my one grandson in Augusta, Georgia, and then my granddaughter in Beaufort, South Carolina. You'll probably want this, too. I'll have her make that.

**Let me see. Yes. Mendoza. Is this person related to John Mendoza?**

That is John.

**This must be John Junior.**

No. Let me see.

**This is the John Mendoza, the judge?**



Yeah.

**Okay.**

Yeah, that's him.

**All right. So what period in your Las Vegas years do you consider the most fun, the most progressive for you?**

Fun -- I think about the time I was the president of the county bar, by that time The Mint was open downtown with a high-rise. They had a great restaurant up at the top. Sam Boyd used to be like the maître d' up there. Bill Boyd, I knew quite well. He was with Jim Brennan. Later on they had an office in Union Plaza down on the first floor. That era. And the bar was still small enough that you knew most of the lawyers. You knew the bad ones and the good ones. And you could still call on the phone and do things by just a telephone call. You didn't have to run to court and get a paper signed. The bar meetings were really fun because we used to hold them out at the city golf course out off of Vegas Drive.

**The municipal?**

Right. And they got to be really wild out there because we'd get loaded up on booze. There weren't many women in the bar then, probably a half dozen at the most. In fact, when I was admitted I think there were four women practicing.

**Oh, already, in 1953.**

Yeah. Jean Houssels, who was married to Ike Houssesls, he is married to Nancy Houssels of the ballet fame.

**Nancy Houssels?**

Nancy, yeah. Well, his first wife was Jean. Ike's first wife was Jean. She later went to Switzerland and married somebody. She lives over there now. She was practicing with her husband, Ike. Virginia Miller, who later moved up to Mountain Springs, up on the way to Pahrump, someplace up there. Nellie Price Rossi, who I covered for early in my practice. When she went away, I'd do her -- all she did was divorces. And one other woman. Oh, she was from Chicago. Emily Wanderer.

**Oh, yes, I've heard of her.**

There were four women. When I was admitted there were four women already practicing.



**Okay. So how were women accepted here in --**

They were just accepted. They were women. In my law school class at Syracuse the president of my class was a woman. And there were four or five that graduated with me, and the class only had 36 lawyers.

**Great. So I guess this is one field where women were accepted early on.**

Earlier than medicine, but not as early as, of course, they should have been.

**Of course. Tell me about the practice in divorces here.**

Well, of course, that all changed. There was an article in the paper the other day about how Nevada was through the depression.

**1931.**

Yeah. So they enacted two items. One, they created legalized gaming, and they shortened the residence period for divorces to six weeks. When you were a young lawyer back then, a divorce was \$150. They'd come up and stay the six weeks. That was your bread and butter. I don't care what kind of practice you had I don't think even the best lawyers in town turned away divorce business. It paid the rent and it paid the bills. It was so lucrative for court reporters that they would move the divorce calendar around among the three judges then so that all the court reporters got their \$25. They would share it that way because when you went in to put your case on, you had to have a check for the court reporter to cover their -- because they had to take everything down.

**Oh, so that was their personal money.**

Right. And the married side of it was also good because there was only one justice of the peace for the whole Las Vegas Township. Mahlon Brown was one of them, by the way.

**That's right.**

So a tradition came that you could only hold it for two years because you made so much marrying people -- you would stay open on Saturdays and Sundays -- that they felt that you would be greedy if you tried to do it more than once. There was a lawyer named Al Becker who ran -- yeah, he became JP. He lost when he ran again—his slogan was "AB for JP".

**Because that just wasn't done.**

-- that wasn't the custom. That was wrong.

**Oh, wonderful. Those are great stories.**



Because women weren't allowed to show up in court with pants or shorts or anything like that, they'd just have a wrap-around skirt in the clerk's office. When one of your clients showed up at the courthouse at one o'clock, because the divorces were usually right after lunch -- at one time they were in the morning, but they moved them to the afternoon between 1:00 and 1:30 or something like that -- so you'd have to go into the clerk's office and ask -- her name was Helen Scott Reid; she was the clerk forever -- one of the girls in there, I need the skirt. So they'd wrap it around. Back when I first started in the warm weather, you didn't wear coats to court and neither did the judges. The judges didn't wear robes until they built the new courthouse, which is now empty, not the RJC, but the old courthouse.

**On Las Vegas Boulevard.**

No. Empty buildings at Third and Carson. When they moved over there, they had air-conditioning, so then you had to start wearing coats and ties.

**Okay. So how do you feel or how does the industry feel about that old courthouse -- upstairs was the courthouse -- post office/courthouse is now going to become a museum?**

I didn't know that.

**Well, you know, the --**

I didn't know that.

**-- the Mob Museum.**

Oh, no. That's over at the old post office and federal courthouse.

**Right.**

Oh, yeah. My daughter-in-law's involved in that. Nancy Deaner.

**That's right. Oh, wait a minute. So Nancy Deaner is in your family. Isn't that Deaner spelled differently? I didn't know this.**

She was married to my son.

**Oh, wonderful. I know Nancy. Isn't she wonderful?**

Oh, she's good. She's doll. She's not the mother of the kids. The mother is Susan, who he met at the University of Colorado. She was from Virginia and that's why all the kids are back there.

**I see.**

Lynchburg.



**So the courtrooms that were in the post office, you didn't consider those --**

Oh, yes, up on the second floor was the federal courtroom where Roger Foley Senior was the judge and once in a while Judge Ross would come down from Carson City. I tried a lot of cases in there, some criminal cases along with some other cases. You always felt in federal court and even when they built the Foley Building over here on Las Vegas Boulevard, which was the newer federal courthouse, if you walked into the federal court, the judge sat up so high, if you look over at the one even at the Mob Museum how the benches were, you always thought that somehow these judges in the federal system are nearer to god than the state's.

**That's good. So did you know Lloyd George?**

Oh, very, very well, yes. A wonderful, wonderful guy. In fact, I've done legal work for him.

**So are there any other stories that you remember that you'd like to share?**

Oh, there's lots of them. But going back to the bar, you were talking about in the sixties and seventies and how much it was smaller and more personal, once a year we would have a party out at Tule Springs -- that was before it became the big park it is now -- with the doctors, with the medics. There was a lawyer from Ely, whose name I'll think of in a minute, John Manzonie. Anyway, we were out there partying and raising hell and drinking and the doctors were out there. For some reason, the dentists came along. I don't know how they started coming, but the dentists came, too. I guess because it was so much fun. We'd play games and stuff.

John Manzonie when he got drinking, he was sort of nasty. He owned ranch outside of Ely. So he got in an argument with a dentist named Hauck, Dr. Hauck, who was about 275 pounds and probably was a linebacker someplace in college. And John Manzonie was about my size, about five-five or five-six, 140 pounds. John Mendoza and I were talking, and all the sudden we saw little John trying to duke it out with Dr. Hauck. I said, John -- I'm talking to Mendoza -- we got to put a stop to this. He said, well, that's go. John had played football for Vegas High. In fact, I think he was on the Las Vegas team that was undefeated and unscored upon for an entire season. And so here I'm running. So what John does, he goes over and grabs Manzonie, who is my size, and pulls him away, and I go over to the doctor. And I go, whoa, what am I doing? Fortunately, before he hit me there were enough people that grabbed him. I went back to Mendoza and I said, you SOB. But he just grabbed Manzonie and pulled him up like this.



**Oh, funny.**

And another time after one of these bar meetings, Judge Babcock had just bought a house over in Twin Lakes right off of Rancho. Back in there, back towards where the ponds are in Lorenzi Park. So he said let's go to my house and we'll have a nightcap. So we all got in our cars, probably seven or eight cars, and followed him to his house. Well, he kept driving around Twin Lakes, back and forth and back and forth. He had just moved in there, and he couldn't find his house. So finally he went to a gas station or something and called his wife.

We finally found the house. Of course, she wasn't too happy with eight drunken lawyers.

**Oh, that's wonderful. So what do you see the changes, '53 to 2011? What are your major changes in this city?**

Oh. Well, first of all, size. This is the smallest city I've ever lived in, not counting during the war. This is the smallest city I've ever lived in is Las Vegas because when I came here this city was about 25,000 and probably around 40 or 50,000 in the whole county, including the city, and now it's over two million.

For example, the water company was owned by the U. P. railroad and the water cost you two dollars a month, one or two dollars a month. And they never sent you a bill. About six or eight months along they would write you a letter saying you haven't paid your bill, then you had to go over on Second Street and pay the bill at the Water District -- well, it was not Water District, but water company. Then they sold the company to the Water District, which was created to take over the water system in the valley. Some of the downtown water pipes were wood. When they were replacing them, they dug up these cedar pipes that were wood. So the original pipes downtown, a lot of them were wooden pipes.

**Wow. And the water didn't --**

Well, eventually what happened is it would soak up and swell. I think there's a piece of one over at the Water District.

**Next time I -- okay. That's good to know.**

The streets where I am right now -- my office is on Fourth and Gass -- Gass, by the way, was Octavius. He was one of the first mayors. They were just paved when I came here, these streets around this area. Oakey was a dirt street between Las Vegas Boulevard and Charleston. Charleston



was a two-lane highway and Las Vegas Boulevard was a two-lane highway. It was the main highway in and out of town and there were a lot of old motels along there. One of the only ones left is the one on the corner of Fifth and Charleston. I forget the name of it. It's still there right across from the Walgreen Drug, kitty corner.

**Okay, there is a Mexican restaurant.**

Right. And then next is the motel.

**Oh, okay. Oh, that's right.**

Old West or something it's called. That's the only one left.

**Yes. Okay.**

There were two Mexican restaurants, the El Cholo, which was just north of where the Gold & Silver Pawnshop is now, and the El Sombrero, which is still here on Main Street. I went there in 1952 and had Mexican food. And there wasn't any Italian restaurant. The first Italian restaurant was down on Fremont Street; started by Lorraine Hunt's parents. She is a former lieutenant governor who owns the Bootlegger restaurant off the Strip.

**Is it the same name as the one now?**

Yeah. I can't remember their names. If I heard it, I'd know it. They were from Niagara Falls, Ontario. That was the first Italian. They started actually as a pizza place down lower on Fremont.

Where you had only a few doctors, we had the one hospital and we had the small hospital on Eighth Street and the County Hospital. The train station -- people took trains in and out. We had six trains a day each way -- five trains. McCarran, the airport, was on the Las Vegas Boulevard side. Most of the aircraft were prop-driven. Western Airlines was the big airline. And you went out on the Strip to a show, you got dressed up. You put on a coat and tie. You could go to a show for the price of drinks. So you'd go see a great show for just a couple of drinks. That would be the evening show. The supper show was at eight o'clock and you ate dinner at that time.

**And you paid for the dinner, of course.**

Yes, obviously. And if you really wanted a good seat for the show, you would help the maître d' help you find it; he would hold out his your hand for a substantial tip.

That was interesting because people got dressed up. That changed after the seventies. They started going less formal. But at that time when the mob ran the joints, they basically gave away the



food and made all their money from gambling. Have you ever heard in your investigation of the first count?

**The first?**

Count.

**No.**

Well, before Howard Hughes came along, there was always the first count each night. That's where the boys skimmed what they called the first count and the balance of the money was reported to the Gaming Commission and the IRS.

**Now, I've always heard of skimming.**

Well, that's really what it was.

**Yes. I didn't realize how it was done.**

Well, I'm talking about how the boys did it.

**Yeah, that's what I mean.**

It was always cash. They weren't greedy about it. They didn't overdo it. When you went out with somebody who was in the business, they always paid with cash.

**Wow. One of the things early people that came here in the forties and fifties, one of the things they always tell me is it was better then. But is it because the city was just so tiny?**

I would say yes, it was better, because it was closer and it was casual. By the way, that's another thing. When I first came here when you cashed in a five- or ten-dollar bill you got silver dollars back as change. You would have them in your pockets and they'd start tearing your pants pocket. But they disappeared in the mid-1950s. They just dried up. I guess because people just started hanging on to them as souvenirs is what made them disappear.

Was it better? Yeah, because -- and the funny part of it is, even up to now this is still a small town in a way. There's a group of people who run it. I used to say to people back in those days that were like strangers or people from my hometown when they'd say what's Las Vegas like? I'd say, well, the Jewish people own it and the Mormons run it.

**So do you still say that today?**

Not so much. I don't think that you could say that today. I think it's become so big one group of people could not do that. But I think they still obviously make an impact. Those two groups of



people still have a substantial contribution.

If you wanted to get any kind of big city, you had to go to L.A. That's what people did. In the summertime, even before I got here, many people would arrange to go down to the beach and get away from the heat. And they had money. People had money to do that. I had a good friend whose name was Robert Gifford, who was a lawyer here for a long time. His father was a telegrapher on the railroad. He was about to be born in the summertime. So, of course, his father working on the railroad, they had a pass; they could ride to L.A. on the train for nothing. He never forgave his mother for going down to L.A. to deliver because he was not a native Nevadan.

**That's right. I love it. So now, did the rest of the people who could not afford those beaches in Santa Monica, probably, would they go to Lake Mead?**

They would go to Lake Mead. Or Twin Lakes. Or to the pool, the city pool, which is over by city hall. It's gone I think. There was a big open pool. By the way, that pool was mixed.

**Where?**

It was on the corner of Bonanza and Las Vegas Boulevard. It was in a building.

**So that was not that far from the Biltmore.**

No. Just down the street. And even then that pool was mixed. People from the Westside would come, which I'm talking about in the early fifties. I just remembered that.

**Good. Thank you for that.**

But that's where they went, Twin Lakes or there, and then you could go to the lake. But the lake, of course, that was a big deal. It's just like when I grew up in Erie and you'd go out to the peninsula, you'd have to get ready to go out there to go on the beach. But to go to Twin Lakes or to the city pool -- mostly I think you took the kids to the city pool. But Twin Lakes, you would go as a family. It was nice.

**Have you seen Twin Lakes since they've redone the whole thing?**

No. The last time I was over there, I was over there at a function for the museum and it was over. It was getting dark, so I really didn't get a chance to get a look at it. I'm trying to think. I'm just trying to think of some little things.

**Yes.**

Oh, this. I've always been a baseball fan. We always tried to get a baseball team to play on



Cashman Field, not the one we have now. Cashman Field at that time was a park owned by the Elks. That's where the Neon Museum is now stored. It was about there. That's where the Helldorado used to end. They'd have the big parades and they would end there, and they had like a -- Helldorado Village. But there was also a ballpark.

So I was very active with baseball. And I don't know. Somebody knew how much I loved it. So Jim Cashman called me and he said we need a lawyer to go with us because we have a chance to go to the meeting of the California League and get one of the franchises that was going broke. This was like in May in the fifties. The meeting was held in Fresno, California. So we went to the little meeting over there and rode in Cashman's car. There were about four or five of us. Drove all night. Stayed up and went to the meeting. They agreed at the meeting to transfer the franchise to us. It seems to me that it was a Pittsburgh Pirates farm club. I mean they were sponsoring this. And so we started selling tickets and trying to get people up to go to the ball game. So the Ford dealer -- it was Archie Grant I think; the second building on the campus in Grant Hall is named after him -- donated an Edsel through a raffle. He gave it to us at cost. Well, we raffled off the Edsel and we didn't make enough money for the raffle to cover the cost. Those are just a lot of -- but I can sit here and --

**Yes. Tell me more about Helldorado and then we'll close.**

Well, Helldorado was really a big deal. When I first got involved, I was a scoutmaster at the First Baptist Church at Ninth and Bridger, and our troop -- you would bid for a block. The Elks would assign blocks to each troop, and you would sell pop. So we would get like a kid's cart and ice. I forget which pop company it was, but they would deliver the pop to your spot on Fremont Street. Then we'd ice it down and then have the scouts sell it up and down. We made a lot of money. I mean I don't know what it was, maybe it was \$50 or something, but it was a lot of money because you were selling it for a dime, probably.

Helldorado was really a -- the whole city got involved. You dressed up in cowboy clothes. They had a kangaroo court downtown and throw you in jail. They would have magnificent parades. They started on Thursday and ended on Sunday with the big floats and the showgirls. Bands would come from all over the west. In one of the bands there was a bunch of great high school kids from Ely. They brought this band down. In fact, I think they were so good that they went to some other events. The military got involved. The whole town just went to Helldorado. And it was fun.



**That's great.**

But as the town grew, again, it lost its impact.

**Right. So now, you know that it has come back --**

Yeah. But it's not the same.

**-- since the centennial. So have you gone to like the rodeo or anything since then?**

No. No, I really haven't. No. Maybe I have too many good memories. They were good, too. My office was on Fremont Street right on the corner of Third. It was called the Nevada Building. During Helldorado I used to invite all my clients up. We'd sit there and watch the parade. You could open a window. It was right across the street from the El Portal Theatre, which is gone. There is a gift shop I think there now.

**Yes. Wow.**

But it was fun.

**That's great. Well, I thank you for some of those memories -- for all of those memories. This is nice.**

Oh, yeah. I'll give you these articles. They probably tell you better about what the law was like and how it's changed.

**Now, would you like to talk about any of the legal, how the laws have changed?**

I think that's more in these articles, if you read those.

**Okay, good. I will insert those. We are going to transcribe this interview. It's going to take several months. We're going to transcribe it and we're going to let you read it over. You'll be able to make changes, if you like.**

Oh, I'm familiar -- you know what a deposition is?

**Yes.**

Oh. Well, I just got -- I do a lot of expert testimony, and so I gave this deposition. Now I have to go through it and see if there's anything that looks mistaken in it.

**Well, good.**

But it's the same idea.

**Yes, it is. Yes. Great. Thank you so much.**

You gave me your card I think.



**Yes, I did.**

See, my wife's is the same except it says Susan Kowalski, Professor Nurse -- what's it called? School of -- I forget the name of it.

**Yeah. I think she's probably in the School of Nursing.**

Oh. But the school is called --

**Oh, Health Sciences.**

Health Sciences. It's the red building.

**Yes. Beautiful building.**

In one of those articles I talk about some of my cases. In the old, old courthouse, not the one that they moved into, the RJC, but the one that's now empty, there was an old courthouse that looked more like a courthouse with the columns and the stones. In the same spot, by the way. In the old courtroom, in Judge McNamee's courtroom, if you had a jury trial -- I remember I had a criminal case there. We had finished up about suppertime. The jury was sent upstairs to deliberate. So we'd go across the street to the Elwell hotel and eat and drink. The bailiff would come over and say, well, I'll come and get you. This one jury was out so long that by the time they came in the lawyers were feeling no pain. One of the lawyers was John Bonner. But I remember him getting up -- the judge asked for something. There was a little rod coming down to hold up like the bench or the little fence that ran along in the courtroom.

**Oh, okay. Like a railing.**

He was really feeling no pain and he would walk. And I thought he's going to hit his foot under there and fall. And God must have taken care of him because he never did.

But to finish the story, you could go into the courtroom and there was a pipe that ran up. I assumed it was a sewer pipe or something, a draining pipe. I talk about that in there. And you could listen to the jurors deliberate.

**Tell me about the Nevada Test Site. Did that impact your life in any way?**

Only that when I came here they were testing the bombs. Two things I remember specifically about it. I never went up to Angel's Peak to look at it. But at that time I was living with my sister-in-law on Bonita, which is just back of Huntridge. I think it's the first in the Howard and Hasset Subdivision, which is right behind Huntridge. Oakey -- anyway, there's Bonita. There's three



streets. They back up towards the west. The bomb went off and it cracked a window and my sister opened the door and it pulled her right out because of the vacuum that was created all the way from 70 miles away. Now the bombs were set off aboveground at that time.

But I also remember another time I was an insurance inspector. I was driving out to Boulder City to check on something at the hospital out there. I was going up the hill, which is the old Boulder Highway between Henderson. And I was looking off to the left or the north and the big plume was drifting across towards the lake basically. You could see it. There were planes flying through it. I guess they were testing the fallout.

Those are the two things I specifically remember. And the third thing would be when they started testing underground. I was in the Bank of America building on the sixth floor. I was in there on -- I'm pretty sure it was a Saturday, fairly early in the morning. All the sudden there was this creaking sound and the building started rocking. And the drapes were going like this. I thought, my gosh, it must be an earthquake. And it was a bomb they set off up at the Test Site, 70 miles away.

**Ooh, those are so powerful. Yes.**

But anyway, that's my impressions of the bomb.

**Yes. Thank you so much. And I thank you for all of the memories.**

**Okay. This is 2008.**

Yeah. Where is the other one? Oh, here it is.

**Wonderful. Thank you so much for these two articles. So one is the anniversary issue of -- Of The Nevada Lawyers.**

**Good.**

This is our county bar and this is the state bar.

**Oh, good. Thank you. I see that you were quoted. Someplace in this article you're going to say something about, "It wasn't necessary to teach ethics in law school?" So that changed?**

Yeah.

**Okay. Unfortunately.**

Yeah. Yeah. It's not the same.

**Do you go to any of the activities at the law school on campus?**

Three or four years ago I went to something. And I also did something else, but that really was for



the American Bar. The American Bar has -- what did I do at the law school? I was on a panel. It was a moot court I think. Yeah, I was a moot court judge, an appellate judge. But also for the ABA for the moot court competition, which is all law schools, American Bar Association, in the country, I served on that panel last year. We were over the federal court. There were schools from -- I thought they were all going to be from this region, but they weren't. They were from all over the country. I think there were 12 or 16 law schools. They have a case and they send you all the information. And then they argue the case and you've got the briefs and stuff.

**How interesting.**

You want me to put them to the right one?

**This one is Nevada Lawyer.**

Yeah. Those probably will tell you as much as I would tell you about the actual law practice.

**Wonderful. I appreciate this.**

But I wouldn't want to do anything else. I've had a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful -- the law's been good to me and this town's been good to me.

**That's good that you can say that.**

I always look -- I'm a kid who grew up in a working class area in Erie, Pennsylvania, on the east side among the Polish. I'm not Polish, but we were one of the few Protestants in the neighborhood. My dad sang in the choir at the Baptist church. The Baptist church in the north is different than it is in the south.

**Yeah. I grew up in a Baptist church.**

They don't believe in drinking, but they're not as strict as the southern Baptists. But I soon decided that that was all pretty silly.

**The drinking part or what?**

Oh, not till my mother died. I was almost 13 when she died. We stopped going to church and the lady next door was a Methodist. So we used to call her Aunt Grace. She wasn't our aunt. She sort of looked out for us because my dad had to work and my sister and brother were gone. So she started taking us to Sunday school and church at the Methodist church. After the sermon they would pass around a commitment Sunday thing, saying that you sign this commitment not to touch alcohol. Of course, I was like 12 or 13 years old. I signed it all.



**Since you didn't have to be concerned about it. Oh, wonderful. Wonderful.**

I'm a train nut. I mean there's people that are golf nuts, football nuts, and I'm a train nut. One of the reasons I wanted to go to North Carolina, I wanted to ride the LYNX, which is the light rail in Charlotte. It runs from downtown -- downtown Charlotte's like on a hill where are the buildings are and it runs I would say east towards the flatter part. It runs out about ten miles. In North Carolina there's a railroad called the Carolina Railroad, which runs between Raleigh and Charlotte, which is actually owned by the State of North Carolina. It was built after the Civil War and it's run by the Southern Railway, which is now Norfolk Southern. The State of North Carolina has really gotten into creating a train system. They now have four trains a day between Charlotte and Raleigh.

They're going to spend more money to upgrade the track to make the trains go faster. They call the service, they call it Piedmont Service of the Carolina Railroad.

**Okay, good. That makes me feel good about my home state.**

How long has it --

**Oh, I was back there last year. I have a brother who retired from his job at the Newport News shipyard, 47 and a half years. So I went back to his retirement party. So I'm back there.**

They used to say about -- my son told me this. North Carolina, it's a veil of humility between two mountains of arrogance, between Virginia and --

**South Carolina.**

I'm quoting. Something like that.

**Okay. So what do you think about the train that they're talking about running from here to Victorville?**

Realistically that's not going to happen until California, if they ever do, builds their high speed rail, because then if it tied into that, it would work. But just going from here to Victorville, I can't see it working out.

**I wish it would go to downtown Los Angeles.**

Well, that's where it should go.

**Yes.**

You know what they could do? But now with the change of things in Washington -- it looked to me for a while like Obama was going to push trains, a high-speed rail and all that. And he did. He got



about \$8 billion, which some of these stupid governors like Wisconsin, Florida and Ohio rejected. Illinois, by the way, grabbed it up, and so did California. But now with this Tea Party stuff and that attitude, I'm not very encouraged. I'm really disgusted. I am. I worked for Obama. I voted for him. I used to be a Republican, but George Bush made me a Democrat.

That's another little interesting story. When I was a Republican chairman in 1958, Republicans were outnumbered like four or five to one. This was a very democratic city. And Rex Bell was our candidate for governor. I can't remember who he ran against. I think he ran against Grant Sawyer, yeah. Yeah. And I was the county chairman. I had trouble raising money because there weren't that many Republicans and the Art Hams and the McNamees and a few other people. That was about it. Oddly enough, they were mostly Catholic. And in my hometown most of the Catholics were Democrats. I was thinking about then; and, of course, things have changed.

We had a big rally on Fourth of July out at Twin Lakes and Rex Bell was the speaker. I can't remember whether he collapsed there or immediately after and died of a heart attack, so we lost our candidate. I can't remember who we replaced him with. But anyway, we lost the election. And that's when Sawyer became governor. I think Bell probably would have won had he lived because he was very popular.

**That's right. He was very popular. I've interviewed his son.**

Oh, you met Tony. Tony's a neat kid.

**Well, no, no. I've met Rex Bell Junior.**

Rex Bell Junior. But his real name is Tony...he was the district attorney. Yeah, I've known him a long time.

**Yes. I went out to the ranch.**

Did you? Near Searchlight.

**Yes.**

Walking Box (Ranch), yeah. Rex was a neat guy. Hottie Beldon was his brother and partner, who did all the work. Rex ran around smooth and suave. I never met Clara Bow. I met Betty Grable -- you would remember these people -- and Harry James. He was a big Republican. He and I sat down and talked baseball because I'm a baseball nut, too. For hours we talked baseball.

**Wow. Wonderful. Well, I'm going to leave you alone and let you get back to work. So I**



**appreciate this so much.**

It was fun meeting you. Did you go to Raleigh? Is that where you went to college?

**No. I went to college in Durham.**

Carls?

**No. Durham, North Carolina.**

Yeah. I know Durham.

**North Carolina Central University.**

Oh, okay. North Carolina Central, okay.

**Uh-huh. But I finished school in Los Angeles at -- which college was it? California -- because they have two systems.**

Yeah. They have L.A. State and then they have the university.

**I went to -- what was it called then? California State University.**

Yeah. Out of L.A.

**So when you were talking about that earlier.**

Oh, yeah. I don't think I would have gone -- well, I don't know that I would have done that. But I was headed for the school of social work because the VA said that's what we you really are. You're tested that that's what you should do. I'm glad I didn't because my son did that for a while before he went to law school. It's a thankless job.

**Where did your son go to law school?**

Albuquerque, New Mexico. He went to college at the University of Colorado. But he spent so much time screwing around that he couldn't get in law school there. But he got in at Albuquerque.

He ended up on the Law Review.

**Wonderful. That's great. Thank you.**

It's a pleasure.



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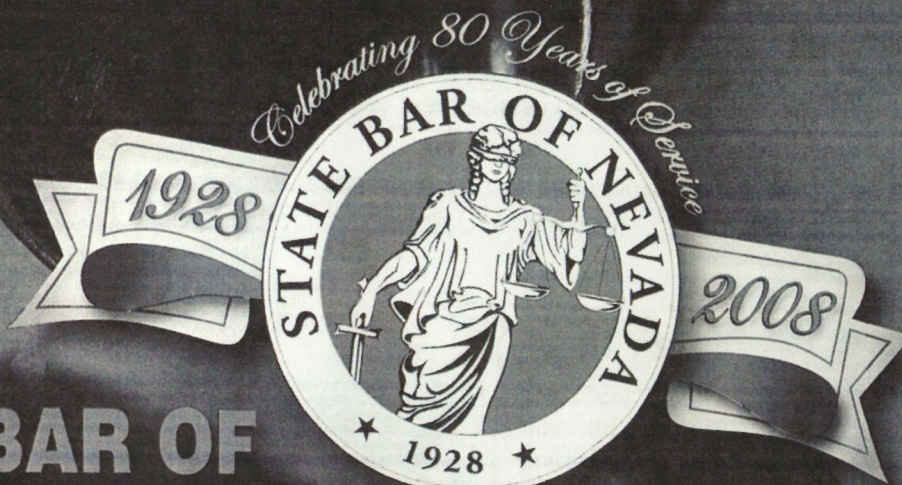
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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE STATE BAR OF NEVADA

# NEVADA LAWYER

JANUARY 2008 • VOLUME 16 • ISSUE 1



## STATE BAR OF NEVADA KICKS OFF 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



**PAST  
PRESIDENTS  
SHARE THEIR  
THOUGHTS**

**MEET YOUR  
BOARD OF  
GOVERNORS**



# THOUGHTS FROM OUR PAST PRESIDENTS

As we enter the State Bar of Nevada's 80th year, it is a time to reflect on where the organization has been and how far it has come. Who is better qualified to reflect on the bar's past, present and future than our own past presidents? We asked them to share their thoughts on the changes they've seen in the bar since their presidencies, and the major issues they faced during their time serving as bar president. In addition, they shared their major accomplishments and most memorable moments while holding the office. Finally, many had some good advice for State Bar of Nevada presidents to come.

The Nevada Lawyer would like to extend its appreciation to all of our past presidents, and give a special thanks to those who took time out of their busy schedules to answer our many questions.



**Loyal Hibbs,  
1977 - 1978**

The State Bar of Nevada has become more of a business instead of a profession, mostly as a result of lawyer advertising. The issues [we had] were organization. Prior to that time we had no full time executive director and no real

budget.

[One of our major accomplishments took place at our first Board of Governor's] meeting. It was a three day "retreat" in Elko. At that meeting a Board Search Committee was formed; it came up with our first full-time executive director and full-time state bar office, and another board committee was established which came up with a detailed budget.

Supreme Court Justice Byron White came and spoke candidly about the court at our annual meeting at Furnace Creek in Death Valley (the first time the state bar had ever met outside of Nevada). Justice White and his wife stayed the entire time of the convention (Senators Laxalt and Cannon and then Governor List arrived for part of the meeting), and he mingled with the Nevada bar members as though he was one of us.

**ADVICE:** I would not presume to make any recommendations to the current leadership. Bar matters have become immensely more complicated and sophisticated than they were when I was president, 30 years ago.



**Charles W. Deaner  
1980-1981**

There are eight or nine times the number of lawyers now practicing than there were during my presidency in 1980-1981. Women were beginning to come into the bar in substantial numbers. Now I understand they comprise close to 50

percent of the membership. Many now are in judicial office, including positions on the Supreme Court. Remember when Miriam Shearing was the first woman District Court judge? It was really a big deal!

The big city (L.A.-type "take no prisoners" syndrome) has influenced the practice. Collegiality is hard to find. Computers and their capacity have made research much easier than the old plowing through various volumes of state and national reports. Today, I believe an attorney could practice law without a library, without a secretary, without an office, other than his home, if zoning or other restrictions do not prohibit same.

In my tenure there was a challenge to requiring American Bar-accredited law schools for bar admissions. The big issue was mandatory continuing legal education. It was considered during my administration, approved by the Board of Governors, and sent to the Supreme Court. There was a lot of opposition to it. Many objected because it was just another regulation. Others held that most lawyers, as a



# THOUGHTS FROM OUR PAST PRESIDENTS

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matter of course, continued their professional training. Some objected because of the lack of available courses.

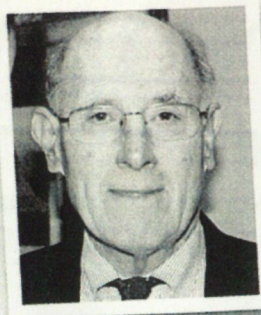
The Gunderson court turmoil was in full swing [when I was president]. There was also an ongoing problem with the lawyer liability insurance coverage. Carriers had withdrawn from the state, and there was some talk about the bar creating its own mutual insurance company.

[One of the major accomplishments during my presidency was] CLE, which is commented more fully above. It was a hot item on the Board of Governors agenda. The electorate turned down the constitutional amendment allowing the formation of an intermediary appellate court. Again, this matter will be before the electorate in 2008. I hope the bar fully supports it and has better success than we did in 1980. [Another accomplishment was] encouraging the formation of the Nevada Bar Foundation, which was formed during or shortly after I left office.

[One of the most memorable moments of my term was] the bar convention held in Elko, which I had a lot to do with, along with the bar executive, Roger Detwiler. A well-known Texas trial attorney, Richard "Race Horse" Haines, was a luncheon speaker; he brought down the house. Gerry Spence, the famous trial lawyer from Jackson Hole, Wyoming, entertained us with his participation on a legal panel, and [there was a] re-creation by Elko attorney Jack Hull of Mark Twain. Mark Twain worked for a newspaper in Virginia City in his early years. Another memorable event was during the annual north/south softball game. I was the pitcher for the south and watched Chris Kaempfer hit a home run that just missed a Nevada state trooper while he was passing by in his vehicle.

I am impressed with the direction of the bar and the Board of Governors in recent years. They must get behind the proposed amendment to the Constitution to bring in the Modified Missouri plan. While I was on the Board of Governors, we attempted to get it through without success. The Modified Missouri Plan proposed in the impending Constitutional amendment is essential to making it a truly independent judiciary. This should be the most important matter involving the Board of Governors.

**ADVICE:** Almost from the very beginning of my practice, I believed that judges should be appointed and not elected. It leads to a better quality of judiciary and less possibility of influence by generous donors.



**F. DeArmond Sharp,  
1982 - 1983**

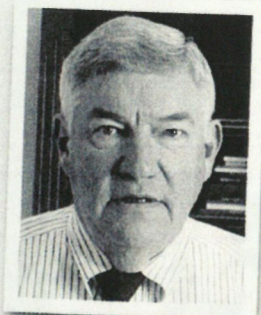
The size of the bar has dramatically increased. The administrative staff has dramatically increased. In my day, with a smaller bar, there was more opportunity to become acquainted with members from other parts of the state.

The major issues I faced were managing the disciplinary system, which had recently been revised and bar counsel hired, and dealing with budget issues.

[Some of my major accomplishments included] planning, organizing, and conducting the first Board of Governors Planning Retreat at Fallen Leaf Lake, and the adoption of the IOLTA program.

[My proudest moment as president] ... occurred when I was sworn in as bar president at the meeting held at the Hyatt, North Shore, Lake Tahoe, with my mother, wife, and children present.

**ADVICE:** Pay closer attention to management and investment of state bar Funds, to review the disciplinary system with the goal of speeding up the time it takes to handle major disbarment cases and to consider coordination with the bar associations of Clark and Washoe [counties].



**Hon. Stewart L. Bell,  
1991 - 1992**

The Supreme Court appointed a study committee to consider potential disintegration of the bar, i.e. make the bar a voluntary social organization without jurisdiction over important issues such as admissions and discipline.

During my term, relationship issues between the state bar and Supreme Court were repaired, and the bar was allowed to continue as an integrated bar performing functions that are critical to attorneys and clients.

It is my belief that the bar does an excellent job of performing its core functions. I don't believe, however, that the general public necessarily holds that same opinion. To that end, I believe that the bar needs to continue to perform well while at the same time taking steps to insure that the public is informed so that it recognizes and respects the bar's efforts.



# THE COMMUNIQUE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CLARK COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION



## Anniversary Trivia

Who are these two CCBA Past Presidents?

*Hint:* They are the only father/son legacy who have served as CCBA Presidents.

*Answer on page 39.*



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**CCBA History**

Judicial "Firsts"

Remembering the  
Good Old Days







# Recalling 42 Years of Practice

By Charles W. Deaner

**M**y first real trial was in Justice Court before Justice of the Peace John Lytle. The Justice Court was in a small yellow building on Carson between Second and Third. It was in the former City library. The case involved a defective auto repair job by a local garage. The Justice took no notes, rather he had a plaintiff and defendant column under which he would draw a straight line for each point he thought the plaintiff made and a similar straight line for points made by the defendant. After four parallel lines, then he would then draw a line diagonally across, and then continue the same practice in segments of five. At the end of the trial when I saw the defendant's column loaded up with lines, I knew that my number was up.

At another Justice Court before Justice Oscar Bryan, Senator Dick Bryan's father, I was defending a woman charged as a common prostitute. The detective on the vice squad, after he gave her \$100, immediately arrested her as a common prostitute. I defended her on the grounds that anybody who charged \$100 could not be considered a common prostitute. Judge Bryan bought the argument, and found her not guilty.

Department 1 in the old court house, then presided over by Judge Frank McNamee had a pipe which projected from the floor of the court room up through the ceiling to the third floor where the jury room was located. If you were quiet, and the hour was late, you could stand by the pipe and listen to the jury deliberations on the third floor. My former partner, Jack Butler, now deceased, and I were trying a mining case in Tonopah in front of Judge Peter Breen. One of the witnesses was an old miner, whose name I recall was Jiggs. When asked by attorney, politician, Ralph Denton, who represented the plaintiffs, how he remembered that specific date, Jiggs testified he did because it was the day his social security check arrived, and he always cashed it and went over to Fran's Star Ranch, the local bordello, to visit the girls.

Once in a while, the Clark County Medical Society and the Bar would get together for a joint meeting. After

long hours of drinking and eating, sometimes minor disagreements between the professions would get a little out of hand. I remember one incident at Tule Springs, now Floyd Lamb Park, where a dentist who could have been a linebacker for the Green Bay Packers (I don't know what a dentist was doing there, except maybe the medical profession had brought him along as a bodyguard), and a feisty lawyer of slight stature who after a few drinks had a reputation for orneriness, got into a fight with the dentist. I can still clearly see John Mendoza holding the feisty young lawyer on the ground by sitting on his stomach while I, all 5'7", 140 lbs of me, held off the big dentist. To this day I don't know why I'm still alive.

My early practice (the '50's and '60's) was a pleasure. Most lawyers showed professional courtesy -- sure there were a few bad eggs, but everyone knew who they were--the town was small, everybody knew every-

body, and the law and motion calendar on Friday morning was a chance to get together and get up to date on all the goings on in the profession. Particularly, afterwards, either at the Melody Lane, Hickory Smoke Barbeque, or City Drug, all in the area of Third and Fremont.

However, with the constant growth in Southern Nevada, the area and the Bar has contracted the Southern California flu. Courtesy is a word that has, apparently, disappeared from society, not only among professionals like lawyers and doctors, but the general public as well.

It wasn't necessary then to teach ethics in law school or to have ethics as part of the Bar exam because most lawyers were ethical. I believe that it is the case today; however, because of the growth of the area from 50,000 when I was admitted to over 1,000,000, law has become more of a business than a profession, and I predict the this trend will continue.

All in all, despite the misgiving with the present status of the Bar, I wouldn't be anything else and the bottom line is it's been great being a member the State Bar of Nevada and the Clark County Bar for the past 42 years. **G**

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*"It wasn't necessary then to teach ethics in law school ..."*

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1905

Completion of railroad through Vegas

1907

Financial panic devastates mining industry

1909

Clark County formed