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An Interview with Kay Dwyer

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Director and Editor: Claytee D. White

Assistant Editors: Gloria Homol and Delores Brownlee

Transcribers: Kristin Hicks and Laurie Boetcher

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Nancy Hardy, Joyce Moore,
Andres Moses, Laura Plowman, Emily Powers, Dr. Dave Schwartz

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The 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 (housed separately) accompany the collection as slides or black and white photographs.

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

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

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Preface

Kay Dwyer was born August 30, 1934 to James and Eileen Crawford. Her father attained a job as an accountant with Basic Magnesium Incorporated in 1942. This meant that the family moved to Henderson, Nevada, which was a brand new community back in the early 1940's. The BMI plant, which manufactured magnesium for bombs and other war materials, is discussed throughout the interview.

The interview begins with Kay reading a composition that she wrote entitled, "*Our Summer of 1942 and More.*" In the reading she talks about the early years of her life when she first moved to southern Nevada. Kay gives remarkable details about the towns of Basic and Henderson (Basic became the town of Henderson) were like during this historic period. In 1952, she graduated from Basic High School and then moved to Los Angeles to attend Pepperdine University for two years. She moved back to the Las Vegas area and started a family with Stanly Hardy with whom she had three children. Sadly, at age 31 Stanly passed away from pancreatic cancer.

After a break, Kay decided to go back to school and graduated from Nevada Southern University (now UNLV) . Upon graduation, she immediately began teaching at Clark High School. In 1968, Kay married George Dwyer after being a widow for five years. Later, she taught at Las Vegas High School where she would go on to spend the next 25 years until 1995. This interview is an excellent resource for quality information pertaining to the early years of Southern Nevada. Kay Dwyer's extraordinary experiences provide us with a special look at the history of Las Vegas.

Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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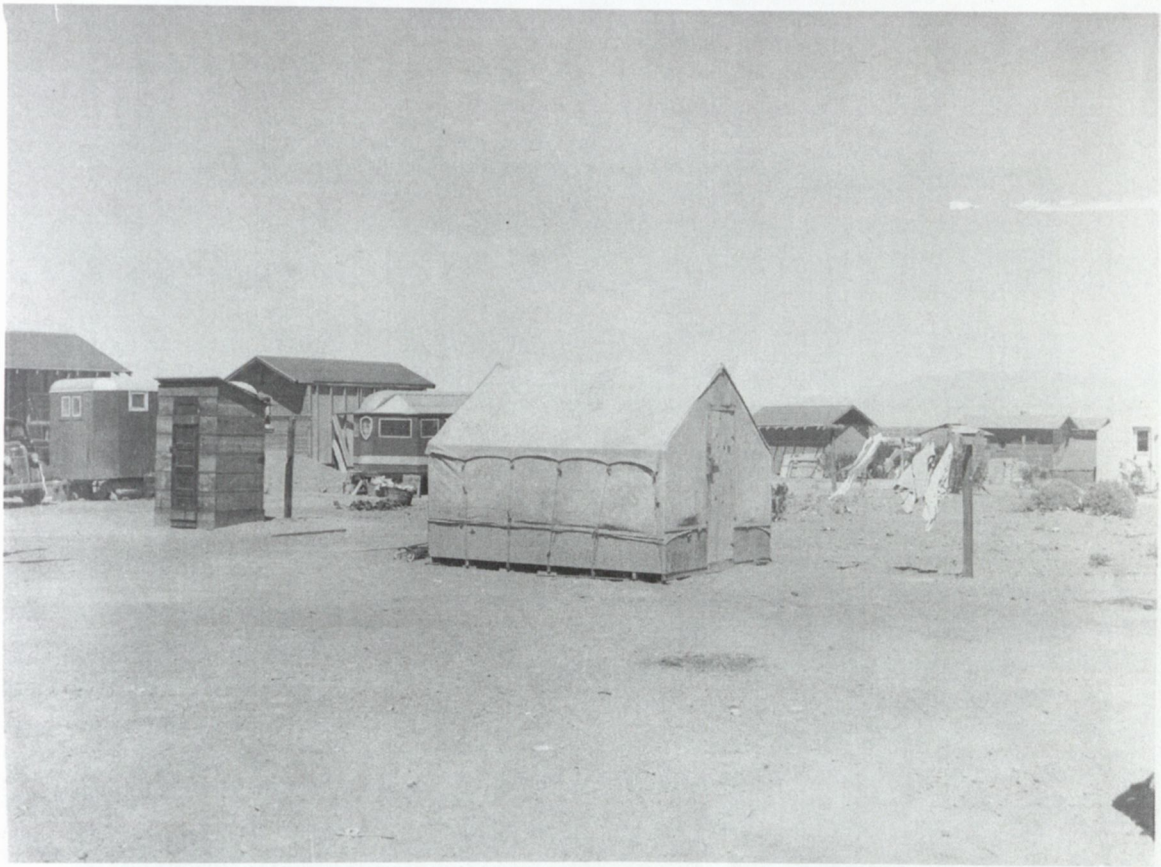
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Fay C. Dwyer 8/16/00
Signature of narrator Date

3308 Lovell Ct.
Las Vegas, NV 89121

Address of narrator

Claytee D. White 8/16/2000
Signature of interviewer Date



Housing at Basic Magnesium Incorporated, Henderson, Nevada - 4/18/1942

Workers inside BMI plant, Henderson, Nevada - December 3, 1942



Basic Magnesium plant employees relaxing at local bar after work



Southern Nevada Trailer Camp (Cafe and Rooms) at Basic Magnesium, Inc.

Henderson, Nevada - March 13, 1943



This is Claytee White. And I'm doing an interview with Kay Dwyer in her home here in Las Vegas. It is August 16th, 2000. Hi, Kay.

Hi.

Kay is going to read a composition that she wrote for a class to just get this interview started.

I titled this "Our Summer of 1942 and More."

"We arrived at our new home on the night of June 12th, 1942. It seemed to me that it was very late, sometime after midnight. In reality, it was probably around 10 o'clock. We had planned to arrive sometime after dark because of the blistering heat during the daylight hours.

"My father had recently taken a job at Basic Magnesium, Incorporated, as an accountant. He had been employed at several mining locations in Nevada and Utah throughout his career. The new plant at Basic was ideal for him because of his background in metallurgical accounting procedures.

"The move to a brand-new community in an unfamiliar area was both exciting and frightening to me, my mother, and my sister. We had no friends or family in Southern Nevada. So we were totally on our own in these unfamiliar surroundings.

"The night was unbearably hot as we brought the furniture into the house and set up beds and the bare essentials to get us through that first night. I remember lying down on paper runners that had been placed for protection on the new wooden floors. My dad finally turned on the swamp air conditioner. And sometime later, when the pads were soaked with water and a few windows were open to allow air circulation, we were at last able to go to bed and sleep in relative comfort.

"Thus began my family's journey in a community that would be our home, where we would put down our roots for the next 55 years. Our address was 3 Magnesium Street. This summer was the first summer of America's involvement in World War II. The declaration of war had occurred in December of 1941. And the plant, Basic Management, Incorporated, and the town of Basic town site were built in order to manufacture magnesium bombs for the war effort and to house the employees and their families.

"I was seven years old that summer, and my sister was fourteen years old. Our days were filled with helping to settle into our new home. There were no stores or restaurants or any other

facilities in the town at that time. The only public building was the new post office located where the downtown branch of Wells Fargo Bank stands today.

"The residential area of the town site was built so that enemy aircraft could not see it from the air. The houses were painted in desert colors. The streets were designed in a random configuration so that streets did not run perpendicular to each other. That is why the streets in all sections of Henderson are winding and circular. The streets were barely paved, and there were no sidewalks. The homes were made of wood with no foundations underneath them, and they were built with double-headed nails so that they could be dismantled easily. The town was designed for temporary housing because the plant and the residences were intended to last only for the duration of the war. There was virtually no vegetation, trees, or lawns because of the camouflage considerations.

"There were no telephones in individual homes for security reasons. The only phones available were on poles throughout the town and were used for emergencies only. They were monitored by the government because of sabotage or breach of security. The elementary and high schools were under construction and did not open until October of 1942. The entire complex was surrounded by a fence, and the only access was through gates that were secured by military-armed guards. In all, it was a very bleak beginning for a community that would eventually become the second largest city in Nevada.

"Many of the original structures remain as residences today. After the war, they were sold by the federal government to the people who wished to purchase them. The frames were raised and foundations were poured so that the properties could be financed. The prices ranged from approximately 1,000 to \$3,000.

"Once a week, we would travel to Las Vegas to do our grocery shopping at the only supermarket in town. It was the Safeway store on Third Street, one block south of Fremont Street. We would usually have dinner at the Silver Cafe, a Chinese restaurant located one block north of Fremont Street. The Silver Cafe was the forerunner of Fong's Garden on East Charleston Boulevard. Both of these establishments belonged to the prominent Fong family of Las Vegas. Fong's Garden was finally sold in 1996. Sometimes we would have dinner in the dining room of the Apache Hotel where the Horseshoe now stands. There were few choices then.

"The retail stores were integrated with the hotels and casinos on Fremont Street. And the commercial area ended at Fifth Street, now known as Las Vegas Boulevard. There were stores such as Ronzoni's Department Store, Cress's Five and Ten Cent Store, and Hecht's Dress Shop, which was owned by Senator Chic Hecht's family. There were others, of course, including M.W. Davis Jewelers and Trader Vic's Souvenir Shop. The El Portal Theater was one of two theaters in Las Vegas at the time. The Palace Theater was located on South Second Street.

"The water in Basic town site was almost undrinkable. It was heavily treated with chlorine and had a very unpleasant taste. So we would take large water bottles with us when we went shopping to fill with artesian well water. My best recollection is that these wells were on property a few blocks west of Main Street on Bonanza Avenue. My mother used this water for cooking, and we kept some in the refrigerator for drinking purposes.

"Because the residential area was not completed that summer, there were no community organizations. The magnesium plant was the common tie for the people in the town, although a few churches began holding services in whatever facilities they could find. The community church was located eventually where the Henderson Senior Citizen Center stands today. St. Peter's Catholic Church was built on Boulder Highway.

"The sense of a neighborhood evolved with the opening of school that fall when Basic High School and Basic Elementary School were housed in a horseshoe-shaped building anchored by a gymnasium on Water Street. The Henderson Convention Center replaced that structure, and it remains a vital part of Henderson today. Students and parents came together and friendships began that endure today.

"After that rather austere beginning, the character of the community began to emerge and define itself during the ensuing war years. The families and the individuals who inhabited the town started to adjust to the huge national and societal changes that were taking place during that era.

"My mother had always been a housewife as far back as I could remember. Our move to Basic town site in the early war years generated many changes in our family. The women in the community began to enter the workforce in greater numbers as the men were engaged more directly in the war effort, in both military and defense-plan employment. She took a job at a

Foodland market that had opened on 15th and Fremont Street in Las Vegas.

"As the area grew, the city of Las Vegas and the Basic complex expanded toward each other along a two-lane road known as Boulder Highway. She rode a bus to and from work, and she would often bring a quart of vanilla ice cream with her for a family treat. I never knew why it was always vanilla.

"Later, mother was hired at Basic Magnesium, Incorporated, along with other women in the town to bake bricks that were used in the process of making magnesium mold. After the war, she became a chemist technician through on-the-job training at Stauffer Chemical Company where she was employed for the next 22 years.

"My sister, Jackie, skipped her junior year in high school after completing the first school year as a sophomore. She graduated from Basic High School at the age of 16 and worked at the local ration board. She eventually became the chief clerk, and she was responsible for distributing stamps for the many rationed items, such as canned foods, meat, sugar, flour. The only food items not rationed were fresh fruits and vegetables. Automobile tires, gasoline, and shoes were also rationed. And Jackie was charged with the responsibility of allotting ration stamps for these and other items. She was only 17.

"She also met her future husband, Jack, at Basic High School. They were married in 1945 and recently celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary.

"Meanwhile, my dad continued his job at Basic Magnesium, Incorporated. He worked the usual six-day week. The 40-hour, five-day work week was to come after the war years were over and the federal labor law was changed. Dad was an avid reader. His range of knowledge was amazing, and he passed his love of learning to my sister and me.

"I began school at Basic Elementary attending the third grade. My classmates had come from many different places. The prospect of employment had drawn people from all over the country. Consequently, they were a diverse group representing many cultures, religions, and backgrounds.

"Because the town had been newly created, no one had a history in the community. We had to cultivate our own traditions. My sister and I were among the few native Nevadans, having been transplanted from Pioche, Nevada. We attended school with children from the East Coast,

the Midwest, Texas, and California, among or locals. We blended well and a great many of us remain in the area.

"For the most part, my third grade class graduated from Basic High School together in 1952. Because the school was relatively small, most of the students in all of the class levels knew each other through brothers, sisters, and other family members. Parents saw the students knew each other because they were involved in school planning and activities. Therefore, the children and teens had many surrogate parents.

"We certainly had a different social climate from our neighboring communities. Everyone was on a comparatively equal economic level. And our town became the blue-collar industrial center of the county. Boulder City was a federal government town from the Hoover Dam construction era. And Las Vegas was an emerging tourist and gambling stopover between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles.

"Basic, as the town was now known, was unique in its origin and interesting in its development. After the war, the plant was divided and sold to various private chemical companies. The town was released by the federal government and became incorporated as the city of Henderson. Extended families and newcomers moved to the new city to work at these recently opened enterprises, and the population increased rapidly.

"Many of us who grew up in Henderson remain in Nevada as professionals, employees, entrepreneurs, and retirees still contributing to the community. We have children and grandchildren who benefited from the roots we planted and the traditions we began.

"I have participated in many Basic High School reunions over the years, the last one in 1996, which included the classes of 1943 through 1956. More than 300 alumni attended. This was an amazing number considering the size of the original classes. My class of 1952 had 49 students in it, while the entire student body numbered only 350.

"As we observe the lights in the Valley after dark, it's hard to comprehend the growth of our small comfortable community and how it has changed into the city of today. My roots are still solidly planted in Henderson, as they are for my children and extended family. I am proud to have been a pioneer in this extraordinary journey that encompassed the last 55 years and continues today."

Okay. Thank you. Why was it only vanilla?

I don't know. I never did know.

Give me your parents' names.

My father was James T. Crawford. My mother was Eileen S. Crawford.

And you have one sister?

I have one sister.

Jackie.

Jackie.

Why did you leave Pioche to come to Henderson?

It was an exciting time. It was the beginning of the war. My dad had worked for a mining company for many years and we were on our way to Los Angeles. He was going to see if he could find something in Los Angeles with the war effort, and employment was booming. So we had a stopover in Las Vegas. We had a friend who lived here and suggested that he try the plants in Basic because it had to do with metals. So he was a natural and they just hired him right away. So we never made it to Los Angeles. We stayed here.

How did you travel?

Car with no air-conditioning, obviously, in 1942. It was a two-lane highway. It was a long drive from Pioche to Las Vegas. So we had to stay overnight before we went any further.

Now, where is Pioche located in relation to Las Vegas?

It's about 190 miles north of here. It's the county seat of Lincoln County.

Do you remember the names of some of your neighbors or playmates?

Oh, yes. Many of us remain friends today. One of my close friends was named Jodi Galloway. She is now Jodi Hall. And her parents were in the area, as well as mine. And there is a school named after her father. Fay Galloway Elementary is named after her father. And she and I remain close today.

I'm also close with a lady named Billie Galloway whose father, Bill Galloway, was a county assessor for Clark County for many, many years. And she married Jimmy Schofield who was a state assemblyman for many years here. Her son Mark is now the county assessor.

There were many, many others that I recall from childhood who still remain here. Many of us

became teachers and remained here in the community.

So tell me a little about your career. I know that you said you went to school late in life. So tell me about that.

I graduated from Basic High School in 1952, and I went to Los Angeles to go to college because we didn't have anything here at that time. So I attended Pepperdine University for two years. Cupid struck his arrow. I came home and married, and I had my three children. My husband unfortunately got pancreatic cancer, and he passed away at the age of 31.

Can you give me their names, please?

My children are Stan Hardy, Kathleen Milner, and Loraine McMann.

Your husband was...?

...Stan Hardy, and he passed away in 1963. I had three children to support, so I decided to go back to school. We dug in our heels and lived frugally for the next three years. Although I had had two years of college, I had to work my schedule around the children's. So it took me three years and three summer sessions to get through school. I got my degree from what was then Nevada Southern in 1967, I think it was.

I started my teaching career at Clark High School in 1967. I was a widow for five years. Then I married Mr. Dwyer, George Dwyer. We started our own engineering business. So I took a couple of years off from teaching, and we put that together. Then I went back to teaching to support the new business, as you know. I taught at Las Vegas High School, then, for the next 25 years and retired in 1995.

Good. So now, when did you leave Henderson?

Well, I left Henderson for ten years when my husband and I, Stan, were married. But we lived in Las Vegas. We moved to Henderson just before he got ill. I stayed there until 1968. When I married Mr. Dwyer, we moved to Las Vegas. I've been here ever since.

Unfortunately, I lost Mr. Dwyer, too. He passed away in 1976. I have been here ever since. I just kind of moved across the street and have been here for the last 21 years in my present house.

Okay, good. Now, I want to go back to your early childhood in Henderson. Those were exciting times. Your sister worked -- once she became about 17, she worked with the rationing program. Now, that's very, very interesting. How did that affect your family?

What changes did you see?

I was very young. But I have a really vivid memory. Through my teaching career, I taught economics. The war and rationing had, I think, the most profound effect on our culture, on our economy, on everything because it was so all-enveloping. World War II had an amazing impact on me. And I remember vividly many things.

Everything was rationed. You were only entitled to two pair of shoes a year. Now, when you're growing and your feet are growing very rapidly, you can go through many pairs of shoes a year. So our parents would do with one pair. And they gave us their spares so that when we needed shoes, we had the stamps that we could use.

Tires were rationed. If your tires wore out and you didn't have stamps, you put your car up on blocks until the next allotment came out unless you had an emergency. That's where my sister came in. If you had an emergency and if your grandmother died in L.A. and you had to go there and the only way you could get there was by car, they might give you an additional allotment of tires for your car to get there. But otherwise, the tires were rationed.

I don't recall what numbers we had. But I do remember that everything was rationed. We had rationing on all canned goods and on meats, even staples like flour and sugar. In fact, I remember the day that sugar went off rationing. I was visiting in Pioche. One of the kids worked at the grocery store, and he brought home a five-pound bag of sugar. And we made candy. That's the first time we had been able to make candy in years because it was rationed and you only made a cake on very special occasions like birthdays because the sugar and flour were not there. That was when Newco was invented. Butter was not available. Butter was diverted to the war effort. The old economic theory of guns and butter -- we had more guns than butter. And so Newco was invented.

Well, it just was a whole different way of life. And if you had relatives who lived out of town and didn't have the ability to get hold of some of these items, it was very difficult for them. I remember traveling to Pioche to visit with relatives, and my suitcases were filled with margarine and mayonnaise and canned goods and things that they couldn't buy. Our parents shared their stamps with them so that they could have some of the things that they were not able to get in those outlying areas.

Now, tell me how the stamps worked. So each family got a certain number?

Right. Every family, depending upon the number of people in their family, was issued ration stamps. They were in books and they were stamps. And when you went to the gas station to buy gasoline, not only did you pay for the gasoline, but you had to have your stamps. You could have any amount of money, but if you didn't have the stamps, you were not able to purchase the gasoline. It was the same with any item that was rationed. You had a certain allotment for the year for your family. And every year, then you were issued new books of stamps to provide for the family in those areas for the remainder of the year.

Now, this is a crazy question because I'm a history major. But how was butter used in the war?

I don't really know. I do know that many of the food items were redirected to the military because we had so many people, so many men in the military, that many of the food items like the canned goods, the nonperishable goods were diverted to the military, whereas we had fresh fruit and vegetables. They were not rationed because they couldn't be transported.

Thank you for that explanation. That makes sense. Now, when you first moved to Henderson, there were no churches?

No.

How long was it before the first church was established?

I wish I could tell you that. Again, I was only seven. So I'm trying to recall these incidents. I think that probably church groups began initially to meet in homes, I'm assuming, because there were no public buildings. As I said, the post office was the only public building. Nothing else was built until basically the war was over because, again, it was built for camouflage purposes and they didn't want it visible from the air. So it was a long time before we had public buildings. I do remember the community church being built, sort of. I think St. Peter's over on Boulder Highway was built before. It was outside of the Basic town site area. So they probably built that rather early in the history of the community.

Since everything had to be camouflaged, was everything the color of the ground, of the desert?

Yes, desert colors. The house across from the street from us was beige and blue and some pink,

yellow. It was a very odd-looking house. Ours was kind of normal. It was kind of a beige color with green trim. But the colors were desert colors. You didn't see pink tile roofs. And, of course, everything was flat roofs because we didn't have to have peaked roofs for the desert, no snow. And that also would lend itself, too, to the camouflage.

I remember the telephones. They were red. They were on telephone poles throughout the community. And we were not allowed to have individual residential telephones because of security. They didn't want people having telephones. And cameras were very limited. Someone asked me one time, Do you have any pictures? And I really don't because the use of cameras was discouraged.

In those days when you would go to the dam, for instance, you would have to join a convoy. You had to sit there and wait until whatever number of cars they had determined would make up the convoy. Twenty cars, I'll say. They would search your car to make sure that you didn't have cameras or anything. If you did, they had to be placed in the trunk before you went across the dam. Again, that was for security. And as soon as they assimilated the number of cars that they felt necessary in the convoy, then you would be led across the dam by an armed military escort. Then when you got on the other side of the dam, you had to sit and wait for another 20 cars to come back across. So it could be a long, long time getting back and forth across the dam. Today we take relatives and friends to the dam to see it when they come here, but that was not something that you really wanted to do then because it could be a day-long excursion in the heat with no air-conditioning. So it was a whole different story.

If you look carefully today, you can still see the gun turrets that were placed around the dam. They're still there. But I'm sure the guns are gone. And they're probably overgrown with sagebrush and whatever. But if you look real hard and you know where to look, you can probably still see where the guns were placed around the dam to discourage anybody from going across there and trying to blow it up.

Wow. You would make a good guide for the dam today. The convoys, was that because of limited personnel?

It was because they didn't want people going across the dam unescorted. They couldn't escort one by one. That was impractical. So they had a jeep in front with armed guards. Then they had

another one in the back. You were not allowed to stop on the dam. You went straight across. If you were going on, then, of course, that was okay. But if you were coming back, then you had to turn around and wait for X number of cars to come from the Arizona side. Then you were escorted back across the dam. And you were not allowed to stop.

That's interesting. Later on, once the war ended, what kind of recreational facilities and activities did you have in Henderson?

As I recall, there was a lot of involvement with churches. The churches really had great programs for the youth. As I grew up a little bit older, we had a teenage club out there. The parents were the chaperons. We had dances every Friday and Saturday night. They charged a quarter to get in. The parents were the chaperons. So there was no playing around. You had to answer to your parents or your friends' parents because it wasn't always the same parents. I can remember being very pleased when my parents did the chaperoning. I was always happy to have them there. Most of us were. We didn't resent our parents being there at all.

And then Las Vegas had the Wild Cat Lair, as it was called. It was a teenage club, and celebrities from the Strip would come out between shows and perform for us. We had live bands on Friday and Saturday nights that were donated by the musicians union. And the kids from Boulder City, Henderson, and Las Vegas all attended. They paid a quarter to get in. We had, I think, one security guard there. But as I recall we were all dancers. We weren't playing around. We weren't running in and out the doors. As I recall I wouldn't have known a marijuana cigarette if I encountered it. I mean, there just weren't drugs in there and alcohol was not a problem. But that was a big thing for all of us.

Where was that located?

You know where the old post office is, the original post office? It was in that general vicinity. It was off of --

So we're talking about downtown on --

Stewart.

Yes. Near the bus station today.

Yeah.

CAT.

Pretty close. It was where the post office is. Between the post office and Las Vegas Boulevard off of Stewart, around in that area.

So it was near the Lady Luck Casino?

No. On this side of that. It was called the Wild Cat Lair because the mascot for Las Vegas High School was the Las Vegas High School Wild Cats. That's why it was called the Wild Cat Lair.

Wonderful. That's the first time I've heard about that. So thank you.

During the war and afterwards, where would adults socialize, have entertainment?

They were just beginning to open up some of the casinos. Of course, downtown was starting to develop. We did have a movie theater eventually in Henderson. It was called the Victory Theater. Because it was during the war, it was called the Victory Theater. And we had that for entertainment. We did eventually get a drugstore that had a Happy Days-type soda fountain where I worked as a junior and senior in high school. Then there was a small café, but these were very limited in Henderson.

But Las Vegas was beginning its journey. I remember the very first resort hotel I went to was called the Biltmore. It was on Bonanza and Main, and the stars of it were Martha Raye and a gentleman called Leo Carrillo. That was my very first encounter with a floor show or resort hotel.

Then the El Rancho opened on the Strip. It was the first resort hotel. I can't remember the year. You probably have that in your research. And that began the progression. Then the Frontier, the Last Frontier was built, next came the Flamingo, and then we just took off.

The housing portions of Basic, as it was called at that time, had an area known as Carver Park. Do you remember it?

Oh, yes, I do. I do. Very well.

Can you describe it to me? Tell me how that looked.

It was like a temporary housing. There were two villages actually across the highway. One was called Victory Village. And the other --

(End side 1, tape 1.)

There was Victory Village, and the other one was Carver Park. The Carver Park village was established primarily to house black families. They were segregated at the time from the white areas of Henderson, as most of the community was. The Las Vegas area had the Westside. And

Henderson, which was then called Basic, had Carver Park. It was temporary housing. And there were two or three -- I don't recall -- maybe three or four units per building. And they were like apartments. They were very small. They had kitchens and bedrooms and small living rooms. As I said, they were temporary housing. They were never intended to last for a long time. They were built for the duration.

The reason I remember Carver Park so well is because, as the community developed and the population grew, the school in downtown Henderson outgrew itself. And there was a small school in Carver Park. So all fourth grade students were shipped to Carver Park. All of us got on a bus, and we went over there for the fourth grade. I believe it was the fourth, fifth, and sixth, if I'm not mistaken. I think those three grades because I attended Carver Park School in the fourth grade and I also attended Carver Park School in the sixth grade. I don't remember whether or not they continued that until the new schools were built. I'm not real clear on that. But I did attend the fourth and sixth grades in Carver Park. So I remember that very well.

So then all of the schools were completely integrated?

Yes. We had black students in our school. But because we didn't have a fully integrated community, we only had a few black students. I remember a girl named Phyllis. She was the only black girl that I can recall. There was a black boy. I can't remember his name. But they attended our -- I think his last name was Hudson, but I'm not sure. But anyway, they attended school with us. And I don't remember a lot of black students, even though we had Carver Park. There just were not a lot of black families out there.

Oh, okay. So maybe there just weren't that many children?

I don't think so. I wish I could be more helpful to you in that area. I'm not really sure.

What about once you started school at the high school?

Again, that's what I'm referring to really. Phyllis I can remember in high school. I wish I could remember his name. There were only one or two kids in the whole school who were black at that time.

You told me so much in the paper that I'm skipping around here. Your mother worked.

Yes.

Why did she decide to take a job in Las Vegas and not at Basic Magnesium in the beginning?

Because they weren't hiring there originally. My mother is kind of a funny story. My dad, again, was working at Basic Management. Well, they have an auxiliary, if you will. I believe it was one of the metal suppliers in a place called Gabbs, Nevada. Well, it had to be, you know, the jumping off spot of the entire world. So my dad went to Gabbs on a business trip and got snowed in. He didn't want my mother to work, as many men didn't in those days. They wanted the wives home with the children and whatever. That was the woman's role -- to stay home.

So while he was gone, she decided she wanted to go to work. So she took the bus and went into Las Vegas. And the only thing she could find was working at Foodland market. She became a stock person, and she worked in the bakery. When something opened up in Henderson, when they began hiring women at the plant, she left the job at Foodland and went to work at Basic Management.

What did your father say when he got home?

Well, I don't recall because if there was a dispute about it, I'm not aware of it. But just from that point on, she worked. And no one questioned it. He adjusted very well.

So what about your girlfriends' parents? Did the mothers work, as well?

Most of them did because, as I said, this was the beginning of World War II. There was a shortage of labor because the men were in the military, especially the young men. The older gentlemen, too, who were professionals or who had something that the country needed in terms of experience and whatever, they were also part of the war -- military. And many family men were deferred because they were working in a strategic industry, you know, for the war, which Basic Management was. They were making magnesium bombs that were used in the war effort in the European and the Pacific arena. So a lot of our older men, like my dad, were deferred because they were working in an essential area. But the younger guys were not. So they were sent.

So the women in Basic, just like everywhere else in the country -- like Rosie the Riveter and building ships and jeeps and planes. Well, my mom was part of the war effort working at Basic Management making magnesium bombs.

Have you ever heard of Magnesium Maggies? That was a term that a historian --

Yeah.

And Rosie the Riveter. So for Basic, she made up the term Magnesium Maggies.

I think I have. Someplace in the back, you know, cobwebs of my mind, I might remember that.

Did your mother ever talk about her work, what she did?

If she did, I wasn't aware. Again, I was very young. So she may have. I know that when she went to work after the war, when she went to work for Stauffer, it took a lot of study and work on her part for her to become what she did. She worked in the laboratory. She was a laboratory technician. And she had as much knowledge as many of the graduate chemists who came through there. In fact, she trained many of them when they came in right out of college. So that was a unique opportunity that I don't think you would get today. She went in there without a degree. And by the time she had put in her 22 years, she was very knowledgeable in the world of chemistry.

And the name of that company again?

That was Stauffer Chemical Company.

S-t-a-u?

Uh-huh.

F-f.

Yeah. F-f-e-r. That company was there for many years. And it's only been in the last, oh, decade or a little longer when Stauffer wasn't there. I want to say that the company that's now known as Pioneer whatever, something like that in Henderson, took over the area where Stauffer was. Stauffer made chlorine and caustic for Purex and Clorox companies. They also had a division Montrose that made very, very strong insecticides. So it was a very diverse area. It went from making magnesium bombs to making titanium metals, which we still have today, to what became Pacific Engineering. And we had Western Electro Chemical Company. There were a lot of chemical companies that moved in there after the war. Hardly any of them exist today except for Titanium Metals.

What kind of stories did you hear your mom tell about working there? Do you remember any of the stories? Did she tell them years later?

I don't recall too much of when she was working at Basic Management. It was back-breaking work. I know that the ladies were hired to bake bricks. And I never really knew what they meant except that they had to have extremely high heats in making magnesium metal. And they had

these brick ovens that they used in some capacity, whether it was an electrolytic process or what. And they had to make these bricks. So the women who were unskilled at some of these areas made bricks. And they literally lifted them from the ovens to pallets and those kinds of things. It was back-breaking work. It was very hard work. But what they were used for, you'll have to find someone more knowledgeable than I in that area. I'm not really sure. But that was what she did. Of course, when she went to work for the chemical company after the war, that was a whole different story. But during the war, I know that she worked shift work because I had to be very quiet when she was working graveyard. I couldn't make noise when she was asleep during the day.

Because her shifts would change?

Yes.

Tell me about your father's work there in the accounting department. Did he ever tell you anything about that, or did he talk about the environment in any way in the plant?

Not really. Again, I was young. I don't really remember. I know that he was pleased with it because he had worked for many years for a company called Combine Metals out of Utah and Nevada. It was a mining company. I think he had been there for like 20 years before he left there and came to the Las Vegas area. But I don't recall him really talking about it.

I do know that when my mother worked there, the black workers were the janitors, the service people. And that continued up through her time at Stauffer. I remember meeting some of these people that my mom worked with for many years. One was -- I can't remember his name. But he was a preacher. And he lived on the Westside. And he came to work every day. And he worked at Stauffer for many, many years. I may have a picture of them somewhere standing in a group as they all worked together. And as I look at the group, they were all white. I think there were two black people in this whole area. That's my recollection.

Did your parents ever talk about race relations in Henderson in any way? Did you have other groups other than blacks and whites?

Not to my recollection. We may have.

One thing I remember, after the war was over and Basic Management disintegrated, my father had to find different work. He had made many friends during the time that he had been there. I

remember he worked for a place called Gray Line. I don't know if you want the names of these places, but he worked for Gray Line. It was a limousine service. Part of my dad's job was to find places to stay because we were beginning to get the celebrities into Las Vegas. So part of his job was to route limousines as they came into the airport and picked up people and route them. And I can remember at that time the black entertainers could perform on the Strip, but they were not allowed to stay there. I remember one time my dad was told that he had to find accommodations for someone. I wish I could remember whom. But it was a black entertainer or black entourage in West Las Vegas. He said no. And they said why not? I can remember him coming home and saying -- and he almost lost his job over it -- he said, if these people are good enough to perform in the hotel, they should be good enough to stay there. And he said I will not be a party to this. And as I recall, he didn't do it. But what happened, I don't really know. But I can remember him coming home quite irate that if they were qualified to perform, they certainly should have been able to stay at the hotel where they were performing. He was very irate about that, I recall. He didn't stay at that job for a long time. Eventually, he ended up with the Colorado River Commission. He worked for them.

And that was the rest of his career, almost?

Yeah. Pretty much. He worked at various places that I don't remember. One time, when I was graduating from high school, I went to work for him. He was the manager of Pioche Manganese, which was another plant down in the plant area. So I worked for him there for a while. I think his last job before retirement, I think, but I'm not real clear on this, but I think it was at the Colorado River Commission.

Tell me about those outings where you used to go to Las Vegas to buy groceries once a week.

Tell me about that.

Well, as I said in my story, the town was surrounded by a fence. You couldn't get in and out of the town site without identification. So we would go to Las Vegas to buy our groceries. We usually had these big water bottles, as well, because we had to fill them with water. So we would go to Las Vegas, and we would buy our groceries, and we would go to dinner, usually. That was a once-a-week outing with the trunk filled with groceries and everything. Then we would go back to Henderson. It was a two-lane road on Boulder Highway. We'd have to stop at the guard gate.

They would have to go through the trunk to make sure you weren't bringing in something, you know. Then we would go home and, of course, put the groceries away.

I remember entertainment. Sometimes family entertainment was parking on Fremont Street and just watching people. That was what we did as a family. There wasn't a whole lot of family entertainment. And again, during the war, you were very restricted on what you could do because you couldn't travel with tires and gasoline rationing. I don't recall going to movies. Later on, we did when they had the movie theater in Henderson. But I don't recall that. I remember just going shopping and going to get the water. And I remember going out and getting the water.

Where did you get the water?

I can't really recall. I wish I could recall. It's wherever the artesian wells are located. I recall them being out there on West Bonanza, but I'm not sure that that's where they were. Out near the old Binion estate, in that area. But they might have not been there. It might have been --

Could it have possibly been the area of Meadows Shopping Center now?

I don't know. I think it's more likely to be over where they're making that garden, that park. That's probably where it is because that's where they're locating the artesian wells now. So it was probably in that -- but it was west of the railroad tracks, let's put it that way.

And the restaurants that you remember, the Chinese restaurant --

The Silver Cafe. And I remember the Apache Hotel. I'm sure there were others. But my mom really liked Chinese food. So we usually ended up at the Silver Cafe.

I remember when the hotels opened up. Once in a great while, we would have a real treat, and we'd go out to one of the hotels and see a show. I remember my mother being irate. She wasn't going to pay \$4.95 for a prime rib dinner. That was just ridiculous. Of course, in those days there were no cover or minimum charges. And as teenagers, we would go to the hotels and see shows for 50 cents. They charged us 50 cents for a Coke, which we thought was just outrageous. But again, there were no cover or minimum charges. It didn't cost anything to get in. So we would have a Coke, and we would watch all the stars. I saw Sammy Davis, Jr., when he was with Will Maston. I saw Patty Paige and Burl Ives, you know, all the old-timey stars. Nat King Cole. All the old-timey stars. It costs us 50 cents.

They would let children in to see those?

Yeah. Absolutely. You would go out there with a date and you behaved yourself. They would let you in. They had two shows. They had the dinner show, and then they had the late show. And we would usually go to the late show because we could go for 50 cents. We couldn't afford the \$4.95 prime rib.

That's really interesting. Now, once you finished high school, tell me what you did at that point in your life. I know that you went to Los Angeles at some point. But tell me again what you did.

I graduated from high school in 1952, in June -- or May. And I went to Pepperdine University that fall. I was there for two years.

Your fiancé, your boyfriend, or your husband, was here in Las Vegas?

I had not met him at the time. I met him when I came home between my freshman and sophomore years. My cousin who was stationed at Nellis [*Air Force Base*] used to come out and spend time with the family. And he brought his friend who had come from the Salt Lake area. So we got together that summer. I went back to school that fall. By the following summer, we had decided that we were going to get married. So we got married at the end of my sophomore year.

Now, tell me about the military presence. In Henderson, you've already told me how the community was protected. When you would come into Las Vegas, do you remember seeing a lot of men in uniform?

There was no Nellis at that time. They developed the gunnery range, but it wasn't Nellis. There wasn't the big military complex that we have now. In fact, our community airport was located where Nellis is now. I wasn't really aware of a lot of military presence.

The only thing I can recall from the military is that, as the troops were moved from location to location, they were transported mainly by train. As a civilian, if you had to make a trip or if you were going to make a trip, you could get bumped, even at the last minute, for military because they took precedence over anything. I can remember, even as late as the 50s, when I was going to Pepperdine -- again, we were getting involved or were involved in the Korean conflict. So the military took priority. I got bumped off the train returning to school one time. My dad bought me a compartment so I could get back to school after Christmas vacation.

That's the way you went back and forth, by train?

By train. I did fly if it was a short holiday like Thanksgiving. But if it was long like Christmas, I came by train. People didn't fly as frequently in those days as they do now.

Did you travel alone?

Yes.

Tell me about the experience of leaving Henderson or the Las Vegas area which was small at that time and going to school in Los Angeles. What was that like for a young girl of 17, 18?

It was a shock because I went -- now, Pepperdine was a very protected environment. It was a church school and very protected. They took very good care of the young people who went to school there. But nevertheless, as you said, it's a large community.

I got down there. My mother and I had decided that we wouldn't call each other for a while. Let me get settled in. So my parents took me down there and got me all settled in my room and everything. Then they left and came back to Henderson and left me there. We had decided that we'd wait for at least a month before I called to let me get adjusted. So the first phone call home, I called collect, of course.

Did you wait a full month?

I did. I waited for the month. And I called collect. And my mother said, hello? And I said, it's me. We cried for ten minutes. We never said another word. We hung up. By the time I came home at Thanksgiving, I am so homesick. I can't go back. I just can't go back. I'm too homesick. And they said, well, you have to go back. You know, your tuition and your room and board, everything's been paid for. You have to go back. So at least complete the first semester. If you still can't handle it -- the only other place I could go was Reno. So it was still out of town. So I went back. And of course, by the time I came home for Christmas, I was anxious to get back and go to college.

So what was your entertainment life like in Los Angeles? I know it was a Christian school, a religious school. Now, you were on Vermont Avenue, I believe.

Yes.

So you were away from downtown.

Right.

So what was it like for extra activities?

We were, again, close to Vermont Avenue. So for little restaurants and whatever, we could go there like in the evenings if we wanted to. In those days, it was perfectly okay to walk wherever we wanted to go. Our meals were all there at the college, and we had breakfast, lunch and dinner. The only time they didn't serve dinner was on Sunday night. So we had to accommodate ourselves. We found places within a mile walking distance where we could go to have dinner on those nights.

But most of our social activities were in the school itself. Again, it was very strict. We had no dancing allowed there. So we had our athletics. We had our football and basketball games and all of that. After the games, where most colleges had dances and whatever, we had what was called the Fifth Quarter. It was just a get-together. And we had amateur shows and things like that. I found most of the entertainment was there.

I did get in trouble because I was the president of my sorority in my sophomore year. We had what was called a spring banquet. Each of the sororities and fraternities had this thing. But, of course, we were not allowed to dance. But we left campus. So being from Las Vegas, I wanted to go someplace really nice. So I arranged for the banquet room at a restaurant in -- I can't even remember. It was probably in Hollywood -- called Cerro's, which was a very, very famous place. We had the upstairs banquet room. And there was no alcohol served. We had no dancing. It was just a party. I got in trouble because I had contracted with Cerro's, which was not considered an appropriate place for college kids to go. Although we weren't down in the nightclub area, we were upstairs in the banquet room. So I almost got sent home over that one.

Have you seen Pepperdine's new campus?

Yes.

Isn't it wonderful?

Years later, I went back with a gentleman who had been my psychology instructor when I was a freshman. He was a teaching assistant, and he taught freshman orientation. We became friends. Even though dancing was not allowed at Pepperdine, we went dancing on the weekends. So we became very good friends. He left and went into the service. And I didn't see him for many years. Later on, I went back down in the California area to visit with my sister who was living in Pomona at the time. I called him. He came to Pomona, picked me up, and took me to Pepperdine. We

went to a basketball game and I saw the new campus. It was beautiful.

I was just on Pepperdine's campus about a month ago.

I haven't been there for many years.

You've told me, then, how you got married, had your family, and that you then went back to school because of your husband's death.

Right.

So I have all of that. Those years when you were going to school and your children were growing up, were you in Las Vegas or in Henderson for those years?

Henderson. And I didn't have to work because I had Social Security for my children. I had benefits as the widow with dependent children. My husband was a veteran. So I also had a veteran's pension, although we didn't have a lot of money. My house payment was \$75 a month. So we were able to do that. My kids always had what they needed. They didn't always have everything they wanted. For the three years and three summer sessions that it took me to finish my degree, we kind of bit the bullet. I didn't have to work. So I was able to go to school during the hours when my children were in school. That's why it took a longer time. My parents, bless their hearts, they were very good about helping me with the baby-sitting. I didn't have to get money from them. But they did do a lot for me in terms of baby-sitting. My mother would sneak down and get my laundry and do it while I was in school. Those kinds of things I was very grateful for.

And you drove every day, then, from Henderson to -- not UNLV.

Nevada Southern. There were only, I think, two buildings. There was Grant Hall and Frasier Hall and then the library. I think they were beginning -- the P.E. complex might have started there. I'm not sure. But it was very, very small.

At that time probably both Henderson and Las Vegas were very small communities.

Yes.

Did you feel that it was sort of an atmosphere where most people knew each other?

Very much so. Especially when I would go to the bank or to the grocery store, you always met someone you knew. You know, a grocery store trip that would normally take 20 minutes sometimes ended up being two hours because you'd have to stop and visit with everybody. My

banker at the time was a lady named Selma Bartlett, and she's now with the new Bank West. She's been my banker since the early 60s. She's still here, and she's still active in the banking world, although she left the Wells Fargo organization and went with a group that now formed The Bank West. But she's been here for many, many years.

When did that atmosphere change for you? When did you start going to the grocery store and you didn't see anybody because there were just so many strangers, so much traffic?

I moved to Las Vegas in 1968. So I kind of lost that hometown thing when I left there in 1968. But I would say that the atmosphere of Las Vegas changed when the corporations came in and took over the hotels on the Strip. Howard Hughes had a great impact by coming in and buying up so much property. So the atmosphere on the Strip changed. It was no longer who you knew when you walked in. They didn't walk up and shake your hand. Of course, I was too young at that time. But I know the older people who lived here and were prominent in the community could walk in and shake hands with all these people. I can remember the old saying, it was better when the Mob was here because there wasn't the crime that came in later. Of course, we didn't have the population either in those days. So that, I think, was the turning point for Las Vegas, when the corporations came in and the, quote, Mob left. That's when it started to change.

I think the major, major change happened, of course, with our now popular Steve Wynn, when he came in and changed the way that the casinos do business. That caused, I think, the big explosion, as well as the burgeoning economy.

What did you see as Steve Wynn's changes?

I see him as an innovative person who has the ability to see the future. He could see that gaming was beginning to burgeon in other parts of the country and that Las Vegas, in order to attract people, was going to have to offer something more. So he put his money where his imagination was and built the Mirage. Of course, he had done magnificent things already downtown with the Golden Nugget. But he built the Mirage, and that was the beginning. It went from the Mirage. Then the other hotels and the other corporations came in and said, hey, I think this guy's got something going. We became the, quote, destination. It's not just gaming. Now we are a resort destination. I think that the community owes a big debt to Steve Wynn.

When you were younger, did you ever hear about Block 16 or what Block 16 was in early

years?

Are we referring to the red-light district off of Fremont Street? As a child I may have, but I didn't know what it was. My first awareness was of a place called Roxie's. It was at Four Mile. It was called Four Mile. It's now over there sort of where -- you know where the trailers were all destroyed during the flood of 1998 in July? It's sort of in that area. It was called Four Mile. There were a lot of redwood trees and everything, I recall, in that area -- cottonwood trees -- I'm sorry -- in that area. That was the, quote, bordello. I remember we even had a problem with our sheriff in that there were some kinds of stories going around about the sheriff at the time having something to do with Roxie's bordello.

(End side 2, tape 1.)

Now, you were just talking about how new we are here. Would you make that statement again?

I said for us our history is so young. Like for the city of Henderson or Basic Management, we were nonexistent before 1942. So in terms of the rest of the country, we're not very old at all. We're very young. But for us, our history is old when you're talking about 50 years ago.

You've already talked about the difference in the Mob years and corporate years. How did the average family feel about the presence of the Mob? Did it ever come up in conversation?

Not really. The only thing I can recall -- and it was always said in jest -- is that we felt very safe because -- I was a latchkey kid before -- and I didn't have a key -- because we never locked our doors. I would come home for lunch every day, but the door was open. I mean, it was unlocked. I would go in and fix lunch. And then I would leave and close the door behind me. But we never locked our doors. You never locked your car when you went someplace.

We all had this relative feeling of safety. Whether it was valid or not, I'm not sure. But we all felt that the, quote, Mob kept crime and petty crime out of our state because they didn't want federal scrutiny. So any bodies or anything, we used to say were always found across the border. You could go into the border of Arizona or California or Utah, but you didn't find the bodies buried in Nevada because they didn't want to stand the scrutiny. Now, whether that was said in jest or whether that was really valid, I have no idea.

In the 50s, there were some federal hearings related to Mob activity in Las Vegas. The

federal government decided to crack down. Do you remember that period of time?

I don't remember that. I do remember the Bobby Kennedy era when he was very much involved in trying to get the Mob out of everywhere. And, of course, Las Vegas was included in that. So I remember the stuff that went on at that time. But in the 50s, I probably was otherwise occupied. I really don't remember that.

In 1955, the first black nightclub opened, first black casino, integrated casino. You were talking earlier about how the black entertainers had to go on the Westside to find living quarters. This was the Moulin Rouge.

I remember the Moulin Rouge.

Did you ever see it? Did you ever go into it while it was operational?

I think I did at one point, but I don't really remember. I think I did. Because whenever anything new opened, of course you went, you know. But that's all I recall. I don't recall ever going to a show or a dinner or anything there. But I do remember it. I remember where it was. And I remember the signs. That part of it, I remember.

At that time a lot of casinos -- in the 50s there was one of those -- because Las Vegas is sort of a boom-and-bust place. This was a time that some casinos were closing or they were changing hands or construction could not be completed. Do you remember that era? People talking about the downswing in the economy at all?

Yeah, somewhat. I remember where the Sahara now stands, there was a place called Club Bingo. It was closed and demolished, and the Sahara came up in its place. The Frontier has had many identities with the upswings and downswings of the economy. It was the Last Frontier. Then it was the New Frontier. Then it was the Frontier. So, I mean, it's gone through this metamorphosis over the years. And, you know, in the recent years, of course, we've had a lot of implosions and changing the skyline.

I remember there was a certain period of time after the war when Vegas was more depressed because the booming war years were over. The boys were coming home from the military and starting families and that kind of thing, going to college. It was a different kind of culture, although it didn't totally fade out. But Vegas didn't really -- as I recall. Now, I may be wrong about this. I don't recall there being a big boom during those years. It didn't start until a

little bit later. When they started building the hotel on the Strip is when it really started.

I remember Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn opening. I remember going to The Skyroom to dance. And that was on the third floor.

The Skyroom on the third floor.

Right.

Do you remember women giving up some of the war jobs?

I can only think or speak in my immediate community. Most of the women got kind of used to the paycheck and, I guess, the independence and continued working after the war. They had to change jobs in some instances because the men came back in and took over the riveting jobs, I'm sure. That was what I said earlier, that I thought World War II had such an extreme impact on us as a culture, as a society, and certainly as an economic entity because women did enter the workforce. And they were very reluctant to leave. As I recollect, not many of the moms who were working in those days left their jobs.

Tell me about living in a tourist town -- because after the war -- even during the war, we had tourists coming here. Even though you don't remember where you lived before that much, how would you think that this tourist destination would make a difference in the way families live?

Only in that we're a 24-hour town, I think makes it unique. I've had many students in my teaching career who came from other parts of the country. And in economics, we would talk about that, especially in the areas of employment for young people. They used to say, well, I don't have to go to college because I'm a busboy and I can make a good living. At the end of the shift, my waiter shares with me, and I can bring home 20 bucks a night, you know. So I don't have to go to college. And unless the employer really went by the strict rules of the school district, some of my students would get off work at 7:00 in the morning and come to school. They had been working all night. So I'd say, well, do you want to do this the rest of your life? Well, no. Well, you've reached the top of your profession in a matter of two months. You know, where are you going to go from here as a busboy? Well, I can be a waiter. Well, where are you going to go from there? I think our young people here have kind of an altered or skewed view, if you will, of the importance of getting an education because jobs around here are plentiful and they are plentiful for

young people. In spite of the fact that we hear of youth unemployment, they are plentiful. But they are in service industries with really no future. And I think that's one impact of the tourist economy that maybe other parts of the country don't have.

I appreciate that. I've interviewed a lot of blue-collar families, mother and father working, decent income, owned their own homes. I was surprised at the few children who went to college from those homes. Usually, those are homes that send children to college. So that explains that for me.

As you know, young people very often don't see any further than the end of their nose. And they don't look out further. In economics, I would say I want you to write down, where do you want to be in five years? Where do you want to be in ten years? And then, you know, most of them would say they want to have a big house, a family. Well, how are you going to get that if you're a busboy? You have to think beyond that. There's nothing wrong with being a busboy. But that should not be the end of the career for young people, in my opinion.

Do you think you were able to change any minds?

Oh, yes. I've worked very hard to change those minds. I have many of my students, even though I've been retired for five years, who still contact me. And we still keep in touch by E-mail. Yes, that's one of the gratifying things of being a teacher, especially at the high school level, because I felt -- and still feel -- that I had an impact on a lot of lives. I hope.

Tell me what Las Vegas was like in the 1960s. Most of the country -- and here -- went through a Civil Rights Movement, antiwar movement, and some other kinds of movements, antiwar protests and all of that. What was Las Vegas like at that time?

I was a young married mom. I had my three children. My youngest was born in 1959. So I was very much involved with my family. I was a stay-at-home mom. By the time I had my third child, I couldn't afford to go back to work because it cost too much for day care. So I stayed home with my family. So I wasn't really aware of that.

When I became aware of things of that nature was after my husband died in 1963 and then I went back to college. So I was in a younger environment. I was an old lady of 28 going back to college with students who were right out of high school. There was not, to my recollection, a huge amount of protests in the Las Vegas area. That was in the large cities. It wasn't here. I'm sure

that there was civil unrest. It didn't find its way, to my knowledge, to the university, which normally it would in any college town.

Nevada Southern, being an urban university with no -- at that time we had no on-campus housing. I think that might be what made the difference. In the large urban areas where they had on-campus housing and dormitories and such, the students were able to get together more. Our student body was more transient. And I think even in those days, it was an older population because the young kids didn't want to go to Nevada Southern. They wanted to go to UCLA. You know, they didn't want to go to school here. So some of the older folks, like me, we went back to school, and we had to go where we could go. Not that Nevada Southern wasn't a good experience. It was a very good experience. I felt like I got a very good education there. But it wasn't your normal university atmosphere.

And the town was so involved with being a tourist destination that there was not a whole lot of room for protest. We've always been a strong union town. My recollection of protests has been more in the area of unions than in civil unrest, although we have had some of that. But union protest has been more prevalent, I think, than some of the other kinds of protests that other communities have experienced.

As a young woman going to school, raising three children, did you have any social life at all? Didn't have much time for social life because I had to work my college schedule around the care of my children. And my youngest was -- her father died in June. She didn't turn four years old until August of that year. So I was fortunate to have a friend who had an elderly aunt who took care of her for me while I was in school because my mother was still working. Then my other children were in school. So by the time my youngest was going to school, I was almost finished with college. But I didn't have a lot of time for social life until after I had finished my school. And then I met Mr. Dwyer the last year of college and married him. After I had been widowed for five years, we got married.

I want to end this by talking about -- you can go back into the past with this or maintain in the present. But I want to talk about the present and the future, as well. Do you get a sense of where the power in this city comes from? Is it from the government, the state government, the city council, the county commissioners? Or is it from the Strip?

I was not prepared to answer you in that way. So if I can go in the back door, maybe I can approach that from that angle at some point. But the basis or the power structure in the public arena has been extremely, extremely influenced by the Mormon Church. They are trained from youth. The Mormon Church encourages their people to become involved in public service, very much so. That's not a bad thing. It's a good thing. But because of the prevalence of them in the county, city government, they became a very large political force, I think, in my opinion. I don't think it's as much today because we have a much larger population. And the percentage of LDS people involved in public life has diminished.

I think that the county commission is probably, in my opinion, one of the most powerful governmental agencies that we have going because they encompass the Strip. A lot of money. The outlying areas. They are not constrained by the city limits like the city council. The state, I feel, is still to a great extent governed -- maybe governed is a bad word -- influenced greatly, I would say, by the North of the state. Even though the population center is here in the South, we still have a lot of influence by the North, and they influence a lot of what goes on in the state legislature.

I don't know if I've answered your question. But I think the power base for the state still, in spite of everything, rests with the North. Maybe with this year's reapportionment, that will change. But who knows. And I think as far as our local area, the county commission has much more power than the city council because of the nature of their geographic location.

What do you think is Las Vegas's national image when it's looked at by people in New York; Seattle; Raleigh, North Carolina, what do you think they see?

That's a hard question because I have been here all my life and I have a very limited, you know, experience outside of this community. I actually only have been away since I was seven years old for two years when I went to college. So I really can't give you an informed answer there.

I do know that when people come here, they used to say that they thought the only thing we had here were casinos and that everybody worked on the Strip. I think we're getting away from that a little bit. To be honest with you, I think the city of Henderson has had a lot to do with that because it has become nationally recognized as one of the fastest growing cities in the country. And it's known for its parks and recreation for the citizens in the community. They've got a

national reputation in that area. And I think that they've had a great deal to do with changing the image of our community.

A lot of people used to say, well, I'm from Las Vegas. Then they would say I'm from Green Valley. Now they're beginning to say I'm from Henderson, which I think is a big improvement because Henderson used to be the blue-collar, industrial city. And I believe that's had a great deal to do with Nevada's image in other communities.

But I think our image is changing because of those factors and the population explosion in our community as it has grown outside of the Strip area. I hope that's changing. I think we're still known in some areas as Sin City. And I think that sometimes we do a lot to cultivate that.

Two more questions. I want to know how you see race relations in the city today. And you can look at it over the past years, if you'd like, and you can include as many ethnic groups as you are familiar with.

Well, again, I'm not a real judge of that. I've been retired for five years. I've been kind of out of the public eye. But let me say this. During the years that I was a teacher at Las Vegas High School, we were in the downtown area. We drew from a very diverse community. At one time, we had 54 different languages spoken at our school. So I was exposed to many different cultures. We had a large Asian population, a very large Hispanic population, and, of course, we had our black population as well. In fact, by the time I left -- by the time we left, I should say, and the school moved up to the Sahara, Hollywood location that it occupies now, the Caucasian population was pretty much in the minority.

We all got along extremely well. Any factions that were fighting kind of left their concerns at the schoolhouse door. We didn't have that. In fact, we promoted that. We celebrated our diversity. We had an international night where the parents came and brought ethnic dishes and we had a school celebration. We had the parade of flags where all the kids could bring their flag. And we had the assembly where they all brought their flags and marched down through the auditorium. It was spectacular. I think that if the young people were any gage, we didn't have the problems. I'm sure we've had problems out in the community.

I did notice over the years a difference in the Asian community. The first group that came from the Asian area after the Vietnam problem were educated people. They brought their children

and they came. And as you notice for a few years, every time you had a valedictorian named, it was usually an Asian name. After that, then the, quote, boat people came. And they were victims of the war who were not even really educated in their own language, let alone English. It was very difficult for them to come in and adjust. But they did an outstanding job, I think, in coming in and adjusting to the new society.

How race relations stand today, I don't know. You hear a lot. But I'm not in the mainstream. I don't really know. I do know that there have been some things in the newspapers about developing more black businesses and having the hotels maybe contribute toward that. But I'm only aware of what I read in the paper. And I'm really not involved in that.

And the last question -- unless you have some more remarks, which I hope you do -- what do you see as the future of Las Vegas and Henderson? And you can separate those or combine them.

I think our biggest problem and the reason for maybe not further expansion is water. I think that's one of our big problems. We are, after all, in the desert. And I think water is going to be of major concern in coming years if we plan to continue the growth that we have because there's a finite supply of water. So we can't have an infinite number of people, is the way I see it. I don't know what the future holds.

I think politically, we've got a lot going for us. I don't know of the impact if we have permanent [nuclear] storage at Yucca Mountain. I don't know if that's going to have an impact on us. It may or may not.

I think we're going to have to do something to diversify our economy a little bit as gaming increases throughout the country. We are keeping up the pace with our recreation destinations. I think we've slipped to number two. I think New York just recently surpassed us as the number-one tourist destination. But we are still up there in the number-two spot in the nation. How long we can continue that, I can only hope that continues forever. But it may not. And if it doesn't? Then what do we do? What do we fall back on, since that's our major industry?

Oscar Goodman is trying to come up with making us another dot-com center of the world. And we're making some inroads in that. But in order to do that, we're going to have to have an educated population. We have to have people who are educated in the tech world to work at these

places, to become the employees. How we're going to solve that, I don't know. The university has a big job ahead of it if that's where the responsibility lies. And taxpayers are going to have to back that, you know, by making sure that the universities have the programs and the qualified people. So there's a whole lot coming. I look at it as a challenge. I think that we're getting a large population of retired people. It's a nice place to retire because of the weather and the tax structure. So I don't know. There's just a whole lot of stuff out there that I see coming for the future. And I wish I were a seer, because then I would run out and buy property if I knew where this was going to go. But I don't think we're going to stop growing. I think we're going to continue. Like I said, water is going to be our major concern in terms of numbers. But I think we are going to have to change a little bit. And we've been talking about this for years. It's nothing new.

But we're going to have to get more involvement in the community with other kinds of economic bases because the Strip is so solidly in there, that if something should happen to that -- which I don't foresee happening in the future -- but say that it did, then we don't have anything really to fall back on. And we need to become more diverse. Our leaders, I hope, are working on that.

Well, thank you so much.

Well, you're welcome.

Now, is there anything else that you thought about, stories that you've heard that you'd like to add knowing that this can be used by researchers later? Is there anything else?

I don't know. I think we've got a big problem with our public schools because of the growth. I think there's been tremendous impact with the numbers of people coming in. We can't keep up with the growth. There has been talk of separating the school district. That it's too big. That we need to make it smaller. Whether that's a solution or not, I don't know. I think we need to be careful, and we need to study it where it's been done in other communities. I think it might have been successful in some areas, or maybe not. I don't know. But we've got to do something because our public schools are lagging behind.

My own opinion from being a teacher is that we need more parental involvement. And how you do that is a very, very difficult question, especially in a town where both parents are working. We've got a lot of single-parent families where mom is basically the caretaker and is

also the primary breadwinner and she has to work in order to provide for the children. And sometimes she has to work graveyard shift or swing shift and the kids go unsupervised. We've got some major, major social problems in that area I think. And maybe it's just a result of growing pains. I hope that we can get a handle on that.

But I think our growth is probably the number-one problem that we have in terms of education and probably in terms of infrastructure, as well. Traffic is terrible. Yet, we don't want these people not to be here. I don't want them to go anywhere. You know, the more the merrier. Come and join us.

Well, thank you so much.

(End side 1, tape 2.)