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# An Interview with Shirley Edmond

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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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer and the Library Advisory Committee. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank the university for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

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. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

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## Preface

In this interview, Las Vegas native Shirley Edmond talks about growing up in the Westside neighborhood of Las Vegas as the daughter of a local preacher. She tells of the early community's shopping and neighborhood landmarks. Shirley also shares stories of her work at both the US Post Office and Matt Kelly Elementary School.

Also present during the interview is Shirley's husband Mackie.



**This is Claytee White. I'm with Shirley Edmond in her home here in Las Vegas. It is June 22nd, 2010.**

**So how are you doing today, Shirley?**

Fine. Very good.

**Great. So tell me a little about your childhood. You were born here in Las Vegas?**

Yes. I was born at the time I believe they called it Memorial Hospital, which is now UMC. I was the first child born to my mother and my father, although each of them had a daughter from a previous marriage. Including my half-sisters there were six girls and one boy in the family. We grew up on Jackson Street, 418 Jackson Street. At the time that was kind of like the Strip for West Las Vegas. My dad's daughter grew up in Phoenix with her mother.

Across the street from where we lived was the El Morocco Club. On the other side of E Street I believe it was Cotton Club. On the next street up, F Street, was the Louisiana Club, then the Town Tavern. The Cove Hotel at D Street and Jackson and Jackson Motel across from it. So we grew up with a lot of action going on. I remember where the Muslim mosque is now, I believe it was originally an Elks Club or the Elks Lodge. I remember they used to have a lot of entertainers come, B.B. King and Ike and Tina Turner before they got to be big—the “Chittlin Circuit.” They had a lot of entertainment there. Across the street from where I lived Larry's Sight and Sound originally was located. There was a cleaner's next to it, Hudson Cleaners, because my aunt's boyfriend worked there and he picked up and delivered cleaning.

Next to our house my dad built a little malt shop. It was before Hamburger Heaven. So a lot of the teenagers used to hang out at Johnson's Malt Shop. I remember one young man, a very popular young man was even killed there, one of the airmen from what I understand. They used to kind of get in confrontations about the girls because those black airmen, you know, they wanted companionship and then the teenage West Las Vegas boys, they didn't want any competition. So at one point they got into a confrontation in front of the malt shop that was right next to our house. Leonard Hodges, he was the fatality. He was a young man that had grown up in west Las Vegas. So we were used to a lot of excitement. We would see fights and we would hear the entertainment coming out of the clubs. I think we had a parade or two on Jackson Street.

We'd see horses. I think P.L. Jefferson that at one time owned the Town Tavern, he used



to ride his horse up and down Jackson Street. Of course, that was before it was paved. I remember Mr. Christensen lived around on Van Buren. He had a little Shetland pony that he would hook up to a little buggy and he'd come and let the children -- give us rides in the neighborhood. So I thought we had a pretty exciting neighborhood.

My uncle and my aunt, Irene and Poydras Johnson, had a restaurant called Irene's Drive Inn on E right at the alley between Jackson and Van Buren. And it preceded my dad's. It was one where the Strip entertainers used to come and eat, the Mills Brothers, Nat King Cole, and people from that era, because they couldn't go across town. So my uncle and my aunt had that restaurant. When they divorced it closed, of course. I think the motorcycle club has that property now.

But I remember it as a little girl before it was paved. Across town was paved, but West Las Vegas had no paved streets. And from my house at that time I could walk across what is now E Street and bang on the door of the Cotton Club. I was about three, I guess. And they would come and open the door. I have memories of them putting me up on the bar. You didn't worry too much about people taking advantage of your kids at that time. It was all like one big neighborhood and everybody knew everybody. One big family. You knew everyone or at least their family members. But I remember that because my Uncle Poydras was my favorite uncle and he'd go over and gamble there and I'd try to follow him. They also had a home that was right next to I guess, kind of behind and next to the restaurant.

My aunt Susie Lee Johnson and my cousin Lillian O'Neal opened up a beauty salon right there. I think it was the first black real beauty salon in West Las Vegas—folks did hair in their homes before it opened. It was called Rainbow Beauty Shop. Every now and then when I got a little older they'd let me answer the phone. So they opened up a beauty salon there and it was there for many years during my childhood.

**Did you ever have any part-time jobs anyplace over there?**

I worked in my dad's little restaurant during high school, Johnson's Malt Shop. Brenda Williams and many other young ladies worked there on and off.

**So what did you sell?**

It started out a malt shop, but it ended up selling dinners also. But hamburgers and hot dogs and we'd make milk shakes and malts and French fries. My dad made chili. He had a Texas recipe for



chili and it was quite well known in West Las Vegas. Several people that came to work there took the recipe other places. But my dad was well known for his chili. So that's originally what we sold and then chips and stuff like that, ice cream. There was an ice cream fountain. So I would make the ice cream cones and make sundaes. We'd do malts and milk shakes. We had the milk shake and malt machine. So that was part of my childhood, too.

**Did your parents ever go to any of the nightclubs right there on the street?**

Well, my dad was a minister, a pastor. And my mom was a first lady. So they did before I was born. But from my memory they were church people.

**So what did the people in the neighborhood who would go to those places, what did they tell you about them?**

Well, I remember the Brown Derby. My cousins used to go there. They talked about the good music, partying, who was with who. They used to talk about the fights, the confrontations that different ones would have when some started drinking and got a little upset. So the Brown Derby was one of the main topics that I heard about. The others were mostly entertainment and the fact that they could gamble. They couldn't go across town, but they could gamble in the neighborhood. Clubs were a source of employment too.

**Did they ever talk about the jam sessions?**

Yes, when I was younger I believe. But because like I said B.B. King—The Treniors came a little later. Mostly blues singers and some of them would come over to the Elks. I remember especially the Elks. My memory doesn't serve me correctly if they went to the clubs. But I would imagine they did. Yeah, "Eagle Eye" Shields, I think he played at one of the establishments. I don't imagine that was his major job. But he was known as one of the entertainers that lived in the neighborhood. I remember he would come into the malt shop. Oh, let's see who else do I remember. Oh, right off the top of my head -- quite a few of the entertainers. I'm trying to think if Nat King Cole came. He might have. But I know the Mills Brothers used to come. I'm trying to think of some of the ladies. Right off the top of my head I don't remember.

**Do you remember where those entertainers stayed when they were over there?**

Now, there was a rooming house. I'm told there was one near Jefferson and F Street. But if memory serves me correctly, there was another one on E Street. I think it was Ms. Jolly because



she had a little store that sold little handkerchiefs and things. I remember we used to go to her little shop and pay 25 cents for a handkerchief for my mother for Mother's Day. And Ms. Jolly had a little knickknack-type shop. I think she also had a rooming house. Like I said I think it was on E Street, E and -- what's that? Is that Madison?

I remember Jim Tatum had a barbeque place where Victory is.

**Really?**

Yeah. Where the original little church was, that was a barbeque, Jim Tatum's Barbeque. He's got a niece here or great-niece Angela Tatum. I worked with her at the post office. She was a catering server. I guess that I met that said he was her uncle. He was a big man I remember.

**Do you remember either Mrs. Harrison or Mrs. Shaw's places where people could stay?**

I remember Ms. Shaw's name. I don't remember exactly where she lived. I remember Ina Bell. They had some apartments on Van Buren. I don't know if any of the entertainers lived there or not. But I remember she had one of the first apartment complexes that I knew about.

**Tell me about church life in the community.**

Oh. Well, Second Baptist was the big church. We went to, well, it was Upper Room Church (now Pentecostal Temple) of God and Christ. That's the church we went to. Pastor Harris had a church on D Street, D right before you get to Van Buren; I went to school with some of his children. I can't think of the name of it. It's Christ Holy Sanctified Church or something to that effect. I think it has a different name, but the church is still there. But Second Baptist, Upper Room, and then some of the others I remember from childhood. What's Addison's New Jerusalem church that your mom goes to? And Pastor Gilmore pastored at Bethel Baptist when I was little because some of my aunts that lived around the church, that was their church. Our Pastor Bishop C.C. Cox was quite well known in Las Vegas. He has an elementary school named for him.

**According to a count that I saw not long ago there's supposed to be 52 churches in that area.**

It might very well be, some very small ones and some large ones. Might very well be.

**Did the pastors ever comment on what was happening in the nightclubs over in the area?**

Well, we only went to Upper Room. So not so much on what was going on in the neighborhood. It was just for your everyday life the messages that I remember.

**Do you remember around 1954 Josephine Baker coming to Las Vegas?**



I don't remember that day specifically, but I remember her being one of the entertainers. She helped integrate the Strip.

**Did whites come to the Westside for food and entertainment?**

The only ones I saw were interested in the ladies. So I don't remember any, really. They might have, but I don't really remember any from childhood. Not until they built the Moulin Rouge.

**And do you remember the building of the Moulin Rouge, 1955?**

Well, I remember when it opened up. It was quite an exciting time because everybody felt like they could go for the entertainment and they could go and gamble and they could do what was offered across town. I eventually went to work for the postal service in the Bonanza Annex right across the street.

**From the Moulin Rouge?**

Uh-huh. Now the newspaper owns that building, The Sun [Review Journal]. But before the postal service moved on Martin Luther King. As a matter of fact, when I started work that was the mail processing facility for Las Vegas.

**Tell me about going to school as a young girl. Any memories of the Westside School?**

Oh, yes. I went to kindergarten and first grade. I skipped second grade I believe and went to third grade. Then from there I went to Madison, which is Wendell P. But, yeah, I remember kindergarten. Ms. Welch was my teacher. I believe she was the daughter of Ms. French, who was the principal, I believe if memory serves me correct. But, yeah. At that time, though, for some reason they wanted us to have high kindergarten, low kindergarten, high first and low first.

**What does that mean?**

To me it just meant that you'd be spending two years in the same grade. And I don't know if that's why they skipped us. I believe my whole class, we didn't go to the second grade. We went from first to third. But they were doing that. Why they did it, I don't know. But I specifically remember that because my parents were saying I would be 19 years old trying to get out, you know. But they discontinued it. I don't know. They might have discontinued it the year that they skipped us, skipped a grade.

But I remember Ms. Mabel Hoggard. I believe she was my third grade teacher. Yeah. I remember she used to dress so well and she had such a dignified manner about her. It kind of



made me want to be a schoolteacher. My teachers really kind of inspired me as far as education. I remember when I was coming up most of the teachers, especially in West Las Vegas, they tried to instill in us that we could be somebody, we could do something. They would come dressed nicely. So we just thought that a teacher was really something to be.

I remember Mr. Don Kirkland. He taught at -- well, I keep calling it Madison, but it's Wendell P. Williams Elementary School. He would tutor us after school in math, try to help us. I also remember a teacher Ms. Jean Sexsmith was her name. She was a Caucasian lady. But she would pick some of us up from the school on a Saturday and take us to her house. I remember she'd serve us milk and cookies. And she would tutor us, too, in reading and things like that. Yeah.

Claudette, it was Nichols, Enus is her name now. We went to Rancho together. I went to Rancho two years. When they built Western I went to Western. I was in the first graduating class from Western. So from kindergarten to tenth grade she and my friend Georgia Ealy -- she married a Maynard and then she married a Lanford. But she was tragically murdered here, I think in the 80s. But the three of us, they called us "The Three Musketeers" because we hung together. We would visit each other. We would walk from each other's homes and hung together at school. So they called us "the Three Musketeers."

**Did you walk back and forth to school?**

Yes. Yes. I lived on Jackson. And Georgia's family moved in Berkley Square when they built it. Claudette's family, her mom and dad still live on D Street right at Harrison I think. I think it's right near Harrison. (Woodrow Wilson, our first black assemblyman or commissioner, was Claudette's uncle.)

But we always walked to school together. And I remember the boys would chase us home from school every day. Why, I don't know. This is from Westside School, because if we stopped running, they would stop running. But they would chase us. Mr. Spakes, I think was his name, he had a store, a candy store. We'd run from Westside School to his candy store. We'd get our candy and then we'd take off running again. Why they did it, I don't know. ●

**Do you remember any clubs or sports from the Westside School?**

I remember the recreation center was next to the school there right across from New Jerusalem. It



was right on that corner.

**What kind of a rec center?**

It was a city recreation. Jefferson Recreation. It was built there -- that was a new one. Now, this is before Doolittle. And Jefferson pool. They had a pool there. That's where we used to go swim.

**So was it where the USO used to be for the soldiers?**

Now, I remember the USO, but there was another rec center before they built that one. It was on D Street, too. Maybe that was a USO.

**Okay. Now, do you remember Jimmy Gay ever working --**

Oh, yes.

**-- at either of those rec centers?**

Uh-huh. Yes, I remember Mr. Gay. I went to school with his oldest daughter, Cloney. We were schoolmates at Madison. My sister delivered their mail. She retired from the postal service also. She delivered mail to Ms. Hazel Gay, his wife. They'd talk. As a matter of fact, I believe he was from Arkansas where my mother was from.

**Right. Fordyce.**

Yeah. So my mother knew him.

**So even with the kind of crime that was in the area from time to time, it was okay? Parents still felt very comfortable with their kids walking back and forth to school?**

Yes. The most crime I remember was the fights they might have at the clubs. We didn't have a lot of neighborhood crime or break-ins and all that. The only instance that I remember of neighborhood crime where I lived -- a soldier evidently had too much to drink. We didn't always lock our doors. And we had like a porch between our house and my dad had some apartments. I guess our window was up because it was hot. We had swamp coolers. You know, didn't have air-conditioning. And he climbed in the window. We found him in the bed asleep. So we called the police. Of course, they came and hauled him out and took him to jail. But he didn't do anything. He didn't bother anybody. He just crawled in the first window I guess he found and went to sleep. I remember I found money in front of the house the next day. I guess they had, you know, just dragged him out, turned him over and put him in the squad car. I, of course, found some money out there. It probably came from his pocket.



**Do you think your parents regretted calling the police on him?**

No, because -- well, what else were they going to do? They just wanted him out of the house because we didn't know him and he didn't know us.

**After Westside School you went to Madison. Then you graduated from Western. So after that why did you decide not to become a schoolteacher?**

I got married. I went to work for the postal service. I was going to work a year. Well, even before I went to work for the postal service, I was going to work a year and then I was going to go to school. And I got married instead. Got married in January. I graduated in May of '63 and I got married in January of '64. I took some other classes as a matter of fact at community college. Before the location in North Las Vegas they had some buildings on Main Street. My sister-in-law, Lee Ella Edmond (she teaches at Jo Mackey School), and I took some classes there. There was a building on Main right before you go under the underpass there. It was over on the right. I don't remember what was there. But evidently they rented the building. We took some classes there before they built the building off Civic Center, Cheyenne. Right. Before they built the Cheyenne campus.

**And that was before the one on Charleston as well?**

Yes. Yeah, because Charleston came after Cheyenne. I went to Charleston also. Well, I took classes at the old buildings and then I took some classes at the one on Cheyenne. I also took some at the one on Charleston. From time to time I'd take some classes.

**Back at Westside School, how do you remember the school being shaped and how do you remember the layout of the classrooms?**

Well, we basically came in -- because kindergarten and first, I remember I think we were in the first main big room that you got to when you came up the steps. It's in the back now I guess or on the side.

**So is this the same building where the radio station is located today?**

Yes. Our kindergarten was in there because I remember we had to run up those steps. We'd go in. Everything seems so large, you know, when you're little. I thought we had a great big school. I remember the swings and things that they'd let us play on. I had an older cousin, Arthur Cook, who went there and he'd come check on me and the sister under me and make sure nobody was



bothering us. He's since deceased. I just remember having a lot of fun.

**If you could be part of the decision to determine what the school would be used for in the future, what are some of the uses that you would like to see?**

My goodness. Something with education I think since it was a school, to promote something in education, not so much entertainment I don't think. But I'd like to see it promote some kind of education. I don't know if they have any artifacts from there or not. I mean they possibly didn't save anything. But it would be nice to have a little tour if they could replicate some of the things that they had, the way it was set up.

**Do you have any photographs from that time?**

My mother had a lot of old photographs. When she passed they kind of got shifted among different people. So I really don't have any from West Las Vegas.

Let me ask you did you put out that -- there was a little booklet on the West Las Vegas, oh, some years ago. But they had an article about Westside School in it. And I had a copy of it. But my bedroom is in disrepair right now. I'm redoing it. But I was trying to remember who put that booklet out.

**I'll find out. It could have been the city.**

It could have been. I don't even remember where I found it. But I remember they had an article on Westside School in there. I think it had an article about the Westside, period. So maybe the city did put it out. But it's been some years. Oh, boy, it's been a long time.

**And there was a historian here named Frank Wright who did a lot of things about the Moulin Rouge and he could have written the article. So I'll check on that.**

But it was a little booklet.

**I'll find out because he did a little booklet similar to that on the Moulin Rouge. So I'll see if there was maybe another booklet as well.**

**So when you finished high school, how did you get the job at the post office?**

I took the exam. I took the exam and I worked a year, as a matter of fact. And they wouldn't let me have an extended leave, so I resigned. And then when my daughter was almost a year I went back and took it again. They rehired me.

**What kind of work did you do?**



I started out a clerk. So I did just about all clerking work.

**At the window?**

I wasn't a window clerk. I sorted mail. I was a box clerk, what we call a registry clerk (certified and registered mail.). I would check certified and accountable mail out to the carriers and check it in when they came back. I went into supervision. So I was the first black promoted woman in mail processing as a supervisor. So I was the first one promoted. They had some that they would use, but I was the first one to be promoted in maybe the state. I know in Southern Nevada. Someone said probably the state. I retired from there in 2000.

**Which location did you work?**

Well, I started at the Bonanza station when it was there. Then they moved the mail-processing department. We had like a big warehouse on Highland. They called it the Highland Annex. And when we moved from there to the Circus Circus office, which the Circus Circus hotel now owns. It's right there on Highland and I don't know what that little street is that runs there. But it's one of their buildings. Then when they built James Brown facility -- we called it the GMF -- we moved there.

**Oh, by the airport?**

Yeah, which is currently the mail-processing center.

**So you never got to work at the one that was in the heart of downtown, the big one?**

Oh. That's where I went and took my original exam. But I didn't because most of the work done there -- they had the personnel department there at one time and then they delivered mail from there. So I wasn't in the delivery services. I didn't deliver mail. I wasn't a carrier, but I worked with the processing of it, sorting it we called it. I remember some people that worked there, though. Willie Herbert, he was in personnel management. Then Joyce James was in management. Black managers. They were our examples that we wanted to emulate, all of them. (Ms. Leona Jordan, wife of Arthur Jordan, and Ms. Anne Jackson both worked as Acting Supervisors; also Rey Christenson. Rey was first black man promoted and also first black mail carrier in Vegas.)

**Yes. What was it like being the preacher's child?**

Well, when we were in church it was fine. But sometimes, you know, I'd see the other kids doing things and going places and my folks wouldn't let me. Now I appreciate it because it kept me out



of a lot of trouble. One thing, though, some of the bad boys as we called them, they would come to our church on Sunday night for the girls because that's where we would be. From what I understand they said they would come to see the girls.

I enjoyed it, though, really. Our church, we have conferences and then we have conventions and things. So we would get to go to some of those. I remember we went to Reno. Reno and Las Vegas, we did a lot of interchanging at our different conferences because we had churches up there. Now we're in two different we call them jurisdictions. They have their own and southern Nevada has ours. We can still kind of visit, but the setup has changed.

**How would you travel back and forth to Reno?**

Car, basically a car. And we'd stay in somebody's home. I remember we had a youth -- well, they called it a Youth Congress. It used to be in Reno every year. So our youth would all travel up there. And the saints would open their homes and we'd have pallets and things on the floor. They would fix a big meal. We couldn't stay in the hotels.

**And the same thing when they would come here?**

Uh-huh, same thing when they would come here.

**What kind of recreation, sometimes some of the things that you couldn't do, what were some of the recreation that young people, high school students would do on weekends?**

Well, when I was in high school I didn't go to all the dances they had. I went to a few. But my parents didn't really let us go to a lot of the dances. But I played basketball -- and I'm only four-eleven -- for the city. Yeah, my friend Georgia, matter of fact she became a model, a model with the Lenz modeling agency here. She went to New York to do modeling work. But she and I and Claudette, we all played for the City League.

**What is that?**

We played at city recreation league. My husband knows because he used to come see us play.

Down on Bonanza, what's that recreation center now, Bonanza right there by Main?

**Not Doolittle?**

No.

*Dula.*

Dula. Dula, that's where we would play. And Mr. Henry Moore, he was our coach and also a



school teacher.

**So who would you play?**

We would play other teams. I think we were the only black team.

**But other city teams?**

Well, recreation, out of the recreation system.

**I see. Other recreational facilities would have teams.**

Uh-huh.

**Oh, wow. That's interesting. So did they have teams for young boys also or young men?**

Yeah. But when we played we played girls there were different rules. They made us play by girls' rules. You played half court. Only the forwards could shoot. I was a forward. My friend Georgia was a guard. She was about five-eleven. We played that. (It was rumored that the black teams always won so they were glad to break up the black players on the high school teams.)

And then I was in the Pep Club at Rancho. So we would go to the games. I remember one of the coaches came in and gave us some instructions on the game. That's how I kind of got so I understood the game, football especially, a little bit. He came.

**So is Pep Club the same as cheerleaders?**

Well, we weren't cheerleaders. We were like a squad, a group that would cheer. That was basically what we did. They would have the cheerleaders out there. A lot of times they would be doing the cheers in front of us because we would -- you know. That was at Rancho. I was in the Pep Club at Rancho.

What else did I do? I played basketball for city. And I worked in my dad's little restaurant.

**So you were busy.**

Yeah. But, you know, I was on the Las Vegas Sun Youth Forum. I was one of the finalists. So I got to be on TV.

**So tell me what that is.**

Well, at the high schools the Sun Youth Forum has a forum every year. And I believe they still do it. They have different topics that they have the high school students to -- well, first you start in a group and you discuss and you come to conclusions about different subjects. I think ours had



something to do with discrimination and how to overcome it. But there were different topics. So I was the finalist on that. Yeah, at the convention center we had a big to-do, had TV cameras taping us. It was great.

**Good.**

And then when I went to Western (High School) I was on the Rallies and Traditions Board that we were setting up because it was a new school. We were kind of working together to set up our traditions and things. And Girls Glee, I was in Girls Glee because one of the classes I wanted to take I couldn't get in and that one was open. So they kind of stuck me in there. Oh, I know what it was. I took typing and I wasn't really that great in typing. So I only took one semester. And the second semester Girls Glee was open. To get out of typing I went to that. (I graduated in the top 10% of my class.)

**So now, do you sing at church?**

I sang in the choir. I'm not a soloist by any means. But at one time I sang in the choir.

**Now, the glee is a glee club for singing?**

Yes. Girls Glee. What else did I do? Rallies and Traditions Board, Girls Glee. Like I said I still worked at my dad's malt shop. I think basically -- oh, I was in some other club, but I can't remember what it was.

**So would you say that growing up here was a great adventure?**

Oh, yes. Yes. As little kids, not so many of the black kids, but a lot of the white kids would go down Fremont Street and ride around. I remember the old Sill's Drive-In I think it was. I don't remember too many of us going there, but you would hear the other students talking about it.

**That's right. What about the Blue Angel?**

I remember hearing about that.

**But black students didn't go there?**

Huh-uh. Not too much.

**Okay. Where did your parents do shopping?**

We went downtown. We would walk sometimes, walk downtown. Every once in a while catch the bus. But Sears was down there and JCPenney. And there was a dollar store we used to shop at, too. Also, Chic Hecht's, Ronzone's. Dollar Street Market, wasn't it, on Main Street? Nathan



Gray used to work there.

**She's asking her husband who has been sitting here in the room with us the entire time.**

**Mr. Edmond, what is your first name?**

*Mackie.*

Yeah. I believe it was a dollar store, wasn't it?

*Down on Fifth.*

There was a dollar store and then that market on Main Street. Do you remember that market because Nathan Gray worked there? I think it was called Dollar Market I believe.

But anyway, there was a dollar store also that my folks and I, we used to go and shop at. I remember we used to put things on layaway because we didn't always -- especially when I was working for my dad. I think I bought all my clothes. I'd put them on lay away. I remember Hecht's, Chic Hecht's. There was a Hecht's and there was a Chic Hecht's. Ronzone's was down there. Of course, Sears and Penney's.

**Did black women shop in Ronzone's and Fanny's?**

Yes. Fanny's I remember. The pastors' wives especially, the ones that had a little more money, yes.

**Where did you buy groceries?**

At that Dollar Market. I believe that's what it was. It was right on Main Street.

*At Bonanza?*

Yeah, to the right of Bonanza if you were coming from under the underpass. What's there now? I think it's some property with a chain fence around it I believe. There was a market there. I think it was Dollar Market.

**So that's near Main and Bonanza?**

Uh-huh. And then later on, on D Street there was a market there. What was his name? Baker's. Baker's Market. And then Mr. Johnson had a store on Van Buren. We did most of our -- especially neighborhood-type stuff, we did a lot of shopping at Johnson's. And then a lot of the major stuff, your meats and stuff, we went to the Dollar Market. Then there was another store on D between Jackson and Madison. Oh, what's his name? Oh, I can't think of what his name was. He was a Caucasian man. He had a store there.



*Johnson.*

No, it wasn't Johnson. Mr. Johnson was an African-American. I remember especially when I was a little girl sometimes he'd give us candy and stuff. And then when his first wife died, he married Lubertha Johnson.

**Oh, okay. That Johnson. Yes.**

Yeah. They had a store on Van Buren, he did. And then they moved over on D Street. After his first wife died they moved over on D Street.

Do you remember?

*Across from the Brown Derby?*

Yeah. Yeah. It's a store there now, but I don't know who owns it.

**So when you go back to the community now, tell me some of the differences you see right away.**

Well, there's, especially where I lived, not much activity. You don't see much activity.

**There are a lot of vacant lots now on Jackson.**

Yeah. One of ours where I lived, the city made us tear down. They said because of asbestos, but there are older buildings still there. So that's one of them. But, yeah, it's just like a lack of energy. It was always something going on. You always could see people walking up and down the street. You know, you had your shops where people would go. At the barbershops they'd go congregate.

I remember Andrew Jackson. I think he had the first black barbershop on Jackson Street, Jackson's Barbershop. Then, what, Mr. Geran, he came to work for him. Then I think after he gave it up, he took it over. Mr. Jackson and Mr. Gay were the first black morticians here.

But there was just a lot of activity, a lot of people. There were some homes there, too. Then most of them are gone. So it's just a lack of activity. It's like it's dying.

**Yes. What do you think is the future of that Westside area? The way it looks now where we have lots of vacant lots. Lots of property, lots of wonderful properties over there where you could build a lot of things.**

That's my problem. Why are they tearing down and not replacing? I can understand getting rid of something that's not functioning anymore. But I think it should be rebuilt. It's being left to die and nothing is being fused into it to resuscitate it. That's the way I see it. It's like the plan is to let



it die out. And what they're going to put there, I don't know. But that's the problem. If we knew maybe you could be a little more excited about it. But I really haven't heard too much that they're planning to do with it.

**What about F Street? Did you hear a few months ago that F Street was closed off?**

Oh, yes. We've worked with -- I've been interested in that. Matter of fact, I wrote an article in the Review Journal about the F Street closure.

Because my step grandmother lives on F Street right next to where they closed it off. Then his mother lives on G Street, about a block away. So I think it's very tragic because you've got people that are hemmed in that had an access to downtown and to the county buildings and all of that. Well, they can get there, but it just makes it difficult.

And the reason why it was done was never explained that I understood. Why was it closed? If you know a reason for something, you can kind of understand it or you can work towards understanding it. But when things happen and you don't know why, you're never told why, it's -- like I said I wonder if it -- well, I wonder. I'll put it that way.

**Okay. So any closing comments you'd like to make either about the school or about the community itself?**

Well, I really would like to see the community revitalized. There's a lot of space. There's a lot of things that could be done. I'd like to see the Westside with some reconstruction. This stimulus money, I'd like to see some of it put into that community. My church is still there. My daughter lives in that area, my mother-in-law, my step-grandmother. And I was working there. After I retired from the postal service, I went to work for the school district. I worked at Matt Kelly. I was a library aide. I just retired when school ended.

**Wow. So how long did you do that?**

I worked for the school district about seven years I guess and I worked at Matt Kelly (Elementary School) about four. My son went to Matt Kelly. And I enjoyed it. I loved it. But, you know, when you get up in age sometimes you think maybe, well, I should slow down a little bit. So I was in the area daily almost.

**Good. That's good.**

And I would just like to see it reenergized and revitalized.



**Do you still go back to church there?**

Oh, yes, I still go to church. I'm at Pentecostal Temple Church of God in Christ (COGIC). And it's on F Street. So we really would like to see F Street opened. And the Westside built up. Put things in it like you've got across town. People will come if there's something to come to. But if there's nothing to come to, then why bother? So that's what I'd like to see. Not only grocery stores, more homes, shops, community centers, more schools if necessary. I mean, you know, they're building all over. Maybe in West Las Vegas, a topnotch school might be something that would draw people back to the community also. But I'd like to see them try things that they're trying every place else. Why deny one area if you're revitalizing others?

**Shirley, I really appreciate this so much.**

Well, thank you. Thank you so much. I enjoyed it myself.

**Great.**



**B**  
Baker's Market, 15  
black morticians, 16  
Brown Derby, 3, 15

**C**  
church life, 4  
Cotton Club, 1, 2  
Cove Hotel, 1

**D**  
Dollar Market, 14, 15

**E**  
El Morocco Club, 1  
Elks, 1, 3

**F**  
Fanny's, 14, 15

**H**  
Hudson Cleaners, 1

**I**  
Irene's Drive Inn, 2

**J**  
Jefferson Recreation center, 7  
Jim Tatum's Barbeque, 4  
Johnson's Malt Shop, 1, 2

**L**  
Louisiana Club, 1

**M**  
Matt Kelly Elementary School, 17  
Moulin Rouge, 5, 10

**R**  
Rainbow Beauty Shop, 2  
Ronzone's, 14

**T**  
Town Tavern, 1, 2

**W**  
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