

LD  
3745 .  
G67  
2007

## An Interview with Robert Gore

An Oral History Conducted by David Emerson

---

The UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
2007



©UNLV@ FIFTY Oral History Project  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Project Director: Claytee D. White

Coordinator and Interviewer for Math and Sciences: Dr. David Emerson

Project Editor: Gloria Homol

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Andres Moses, Laura Plowman,  
Emily Powers, Dr. Shirley Emerson, Mary K.  
Keiser, Lisa Gioia-Acres



Recorded interviews and transcripts composing the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project have been made possible through the generosity of CSUN (grant initiated, presented, and shepherded through the CSUN political process by Andres Moses) and the Libraries Advisory Board. Lied Library provided a wide variety of administrative services and the Special Collections Department, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided advice and archival expertise. The Oral History Research Center enabled students and staff to work together with campus community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives.

The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include 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.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

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



## Table of Contents

Came to Las Vegas in 1973 as public affairs officer for Thunderbirds; home to West Virginia; return to Las Vegas with Summa Corporation; conversations with Air Force Association about engineering school at UNLV; mention of Tom Harden, Bill Flangus, Dave Broxterman, John Heilman, and Juan Sotomajor; doing presentations around Nevada regarding engineering school with Dave Broxterman; getting Summa Corporation behind the idea with help of Zach Taylor and William Lummis.....1-5

Details on garnering support from Nevada Development Authority, Governor Bryan, community leaders, Mary Hausch at the Review-Journal; meeting with Jack Vergiles and Mike O'Callahan; eliciting support from Channel 3; holding seminars for legislators; unexpected help from cocktail waitresses.....6-11

Possible nuclear repository in Nevada was impetus for stronger emphasis on need for school of engineering; FORGE (Foundation for Resource Gains through Engineering) started promoting school of engineering; every legislator cosponsored the bill regarding the school; side story regarding Bob Maxson, president of UNLV, and the engineering school; Tom Beam gives one million dollars for the building; no honorary degrees or other recognition for any members of FORGE.....11-16

Remembering how UNR fought against school being built in Las Vegas; Bob Thomas's involvement and the research that changed his mind; details on becoming a public relations officer, first in the Air Force, then with Summa Corporation, and finally UNLV; mention of Lyle Rivera, Bob Maxson, John Unrue, and Elaine Wynn; eventually fired by Maxson.....17-22

Working in real estate since leaving foundation at UNLV; interviewer shares anecdote regarding DEC computer, graduate student, and the president of Freeport-McMoRan Mining Company (promise of 50,000-dollar gift to engineering school); second shared anecdote regarding 250,000-dollar gift from REEC Co president Dale Frazier, promised at a football game; mention of Chic Hecht and the staffer (Benet Stout) he loaned to FORGE to help with promoting the engineering school.....23-26



## Preface

Robert Gore first came to Las Vegas in 1973 as a public affairs officer with the Air Force. He returned to West Virginia to go into the family business in 1976 and four years later was offered a job with Summa Corporation. Back in Las Vegas, he also served as director of the Air Force Association. At a dinner meeting of the Association, Retired General Bill Becker suggested that an engineering school was needed at UNLV. Bob and the Air Force Association put together a group called FORGE, whose primary purpose was to promote a school of engineering.

Bob Gore, Dave Broxterman, John Heilman and others began researching the idea of building an engineering school. They drew the interest of people at the Test Site, Nellis Air Force Base, and PEPCON, and put together a slide show and a binder full of research data. Bob and Dave presented their information to the Nevada Development Authority and Nevada legislators, and started a grassroots campaign to enlist the support of the people of Nevada.

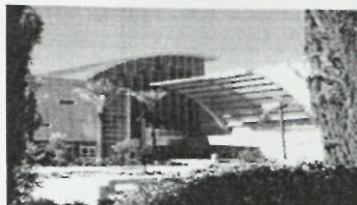
Bob gives details on the efforts that FORGE and many other individuals made on behalf of the engineering school. He takes readers into the myriad meetings that were held and the important associations that were forged with people like Tom Beam, Lawrence Livermore Laboratories, the DOE, Jim Cashman, Mary Hausch of the Las Vegas Review Journal, Channel 3, Bob Thomas, and numerous others. The interviewer, Dr. David Emerson, was involved in this effort as well, and shares anecdotes concerning donations from a mining company and Reynolds Electrical and Engineering Company.

Today Bob is working with a real estate company in Las Vegas. Twenty-some years later, he still recalls the hard work and dedication of people like Benet Stout, on loan from Senator Chic Hecht's staff, the legislators who unanimously cosponsored the bill initiating the building project, and the original FORGE group who gave their all to the idea of a school of engineering at UNLV.



ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

UNLV Oral History Project @ Fifty



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator:

ROBERT L. GORDON

Name of Interviewer:

David Emerson

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 1/31/08 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

[Signature]

Signature of Narrator

1/31/08

Date

David W Emerson

Signature of Interviewer

1/31/08

Date



*[Interviewer is Dr. David Emerson]* I have the privilege today of interviewing Bob Gore, who played a very important role in the development of engineering at UNLV. The university's library is doing an oral history program. And this is one component of it.

So, Bob, it's good to see you again --

Good to see you, David.

-- after all these years.

You haven't changed much.

Well, you haven't either.

Yeah, I have. You're being kind.

Let's see. I seem to remember you lived in Oak Crest I think.

You're right.

And you had a Ford Explorer that the license plate said "PILEIT." Is that right?

P-I-L-E-I -- I forgot about that. It was a play on words because I was a pilot and I was also making a living as a salesman, which meant I piled it on.

What brought you to Las Vegas in the first place?

I came here in 1973. Actually, I was chosen for the Air Force Thunderbirds. I was the public affairs officer then for -- through 1976. Then I got out of the Air Force, went back to West Virginia to go into business with my family, and then had a job offer back here four years later with Summa Corporation. So I've lived here 30-something years I guess total.

Right. What got you involved in the effort to build up the engineering program at UNLV?

It's kind of strange in a way. I was a director of the Air Force Association. I was on the board of directors in a class called "the under 40 class." There were about three or four of those slots and I made one of those. The chairman of the Air Force Association was back here just visiting as he did all the chapters. I remember we were sitting at dinner with Retired General Bill Becker. The chairman's name was Brosky as I remember. He was a judge. Everybody called him Judge Brosky.

So we were talking about what we needed to do to get the local chapter of the Air Force Association built up. And we were eating at the Desert Inn, I remember, the Portofino Room. After telling us this Bill Becker looked at me and said, "I know exactly what we need to do." I



said okay. I don't know what I was expecting. He said, well, we need to build an engineering school. I thought, Huh?

So anyway, after the judge left we got to it. I was kind of intrigued by this because it seemed to be such a fantastic project. So at least -- now, let me say that further down we found out that we weren't the only guys that had this idea. But at the time we thought we were. So there were some retired Air Force folks. I wasn't retired. I was actually in the naval reserve at the time, but I was former Air Force. Four of us got together. Bill was president of the chapter, and we decided that, well, we would just look into this thing. It was Bill Becker, Retired General; Retired Colonel Dave Broxterman; Retired Colonel John Heilman; I think Juan Sotomajor -- yeah, he's a retired colonel, also, or lieutenant colonel -- and me.

So we were just kind of kicking this around and thought with the presence of Nellis [*\*Air Force Base*] and the Test Site that this probably made good sense. Dave and Bill were on the edges I guess of consulting to high-tech firms. They were hearing from, as I remember, people in DOE and some other places saying you guys need to build an engineering school at UNLV. That's about all we knew about it, so we just started researching it more and more.

And the more questions we asked we found that -- there was another group headed at UNLV that was pushing for that. Oh, an active guy in that -- I remember his name now -- was Tom Harden.

**Oh, yeah.**

Remember Tom Harden?

**Yeah. He was a vice president of PEPCON.**

Oh, you were vice president?

**No. He was.**

Oh, he was. That's correct. That's correct. And he worked for Fred Gibson or Ted Gibson, whatever Ted or Fred goes by. And Tom Harden was involved. I think Al Flangus was part of that group as I recall.

**Bill Flangus.**

Or Bill Flangus. Yeah, Bill Flangus. Wasn't Bill a regent or something like that?

**No. He was at the Test Site.**



That's right.

**And he also at one stage became head of the -- whatever the board is at the state level that is in charge of building state-funded buildings.**

Okay. That's what it was. I remember that he had some statewide responsibility. That's correct. So there was that group, and all of a sudden we realized that we had a choir out there, but we also weren't singing the same song. I mean it was like the idea had developed spontaneously without any communication between anybody.

Dave and I worked on a slide program based upon the data that he had. It didn't have any sizzle to it as they say in the advertising business. You know, in the advertising business they say it's not about the steak; it's about the sizzle. Well, this didn't have a lot of sizzling. It was pretty flat, pretty technically oriented. But it made sense. And we were making the rounds, presenting this particular thing as a thing to do, as to why we needed it.

**Okay. Now, the rounds, what do you mean by that?**

Oh, we were going to anybody who'd listen to us. I remember one time we went up to Tonopah to listen to somebody up there. We traveled several places in the state. Just like-minded people that we heard about. I forget how formal that was. But we were doing some things and we were getting some notice.

Well, I was the manager of public relations at Summa at the time. I was called into my boss' office and he said, "The company wants you to knock it off on this." And I said, well, how come? Because my job was to be involved in the community. Well, because we'll get hit up for a big donation and we're just not financially prepared to do that at this point.

At that point Hughes Helicopter that Summa owned -- the guys are trying to get the Apache Helicopter Program approved by the Army. It was in serious trouble, and it meant a lot to the viability of the company. So it wasn't a selfish point of view. It's just that they had dollars going somewhere else and that was to the Apache. Of course, we all know the Apache's a huge success, and I guess they'll be building them for the next 30 years. I don't know. But in any event, I was told to knock it off.

Well, Dave kind of took over -- I was kind of making the presentations. I'd go with Dave to all these things, but I just flipped the slides for him. And it was the -- remember the overhead



slides? I was Dave's slide flipper. So we'd go to these things and flip these slides. Now, this was in about '82 or '83, in that time frame.

**That's about my recollection.**

As a result of my being on the Air Force Association, I went to a board meeting at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, and there was a book that was the rage at the time. It was called *In Search of Excellence* by Tom Peters.

**Oh, yeah. I remember that book.**

Boy, everybody was reading that thing. He had a chapter in there called "The Ten Cities of Great Promise." Oh, it was snowing during that period, so when I wasn't in a forum or something like that with the AFA, I was reading that book. And when I was reading that book I thought, man, here's the sizzle on the school of engineering. This book contains arguments that will make people sit up and really notice.

The most important argument was that he had picked up ten cities of great promise. Salt Lake City was one I remember. There were several others that I don't really recall, but all of them had three things in common. All of them had a significant military or high-tech presence. All of them had excellent transportation and communication infrastructure, you know, major airport, international airport. Every one of them had that. And every one of them -- and he listed these things -- every one of them had a quality engineering school. That's the one thing we didn't have to be in that list.

Of course, we had Nellis, probably the most significant operation in the United States Air Force. Most people you ask in the Air Force will say it is. And infrastructure -- we've got McCarran International, always under construction and being expanded. So we had the infrastructure. What we didn't have was the educational infrastructure because what we found out, and what guys like you already knew, was that engineering knowledge is a melting Popsicle.

**That's right.**

You know, you can know a hundred percent of everything you need to know today. And at the time I think the half-life of an engineering education was five years. Wasn't that the time?

**I think that's about right. Yeah.**

So the five years -- it's probably sooner than that today. So at the five-year point, out of



everything you had learned, half of it wasn't applicable anymore. So we found out that in order to have a high-tech presence in a community you had to have the immediate availability of continuing education; otherwise, the engineers would gradually lose their ability to perform.

**Right.**

That was the sizzle and the argument, so I put together this little thing based on that; based upon Tom Peters' argument, which everybody was reading. I showed it to Bill Becker and to Dave, and we all looked at it and went, holy mackerel, this is a powerful statement. You have to have something like that.

I had been told to knock it off by my company, but I knew that unless Summa got involved it wouldn't happen. It just -- Summa is the legacy of Howard Hughes. And that's the name of that school today. I just knew that unless Summa got actively involved in this project -- it didn't matter who else was -- it just wouldn't work. That was my thinking and I still think it's valid.

So anyway, I told Bill, I said, I've got a problem and it's because I've been ordered to stop by my company. And I said I've got a way to get around it if you want to do it. This is when I stuck my neck out with my job. Remember Zach Taylor, a retired Major General?

**Yeah.**

Zach was president of one of the major local banks.

**That's right.**

Wasn't he also a big shot with Boyd Enterprises as I recall?

**He might well have been.**

Or they financed a lot of Boyd stuff. I forget. But Zach was a retired two-star as I recall and ran the center out here at one time.

So I thought, well, if anybody's going to understand this, it'll be Zach Taylor. I knew Zach Taylor was a personal friend of Will Lummis, and Will Lummis was chairman of the board of Summa. So I said, Bill, if you can get Zach Taylor just to talk to Mr. Lummis and don't ask him for anything except to hear my presentation on this, I believe we can get Summa behind us.

So I was sitting in my office a week or so later. My boss, who had told me the company had wanted me off of this thing, came in and said Mr. Lummis would like to hear your presentation. He's pulling the board together or somebody together. Have your presentation ready



by such-and-such date.

So we went into the secondary conference room. Jim Joyce was there. They brought in their lobbyist. He was Summa's lobbyist, local lobbyist at the time. And so I went through this thing, just logically went through the challenges we had as a community, the expansion of gaming elsewhere, which had threatened us at the time if you recall, and some other things. Economic diversification was a big deal back then, too. It was a real big buzzword back then. Well, that's why the NDA [*\*Nevada Development Authority*] was established in the first place; so we wouldn't be so overly dependent on gaming.

So anyway, I made my presentation and they sat there in silence. I thought, "I'm a dead duck. I better be looking -- I better go back on active duty in the military." And Jim Joyce said give me that; I can sell this at the legislature. Everybody started talking and Mr. Lummis said, "What do you think we ought to do, Bob? We want to do this."

At the time I was working to help get the Urban League presence here. We were working with a guy from Los Angeles whose name I forget, but he was on the Urban League's loaned executive program. Basically, he was an IBM employee and IBM had just donated him as a loaned executive to the Urban League. And I thought, well, that's a good idea.

So I told Mr. Lummis what I thought we ought to do is that the NDA should take the lead on this. But the NDA didn't have the staff, didn't have the wherewithal, and didn't have the funding. This was going to be a fairly significant effort, so I recommended that if they wanted to do this we should present this to the NDA. And if they wanted to get involved on this, offer me to the NDA as a loaned executive.

So we did that -- went to the NDA. Of course, the NDA had -- still does -- big shooters in it. Ted Gibson, you know, was a regent at the time as I recall. Fred, Ted was a regent at the time. But he was also one of the founders of the NDA and had been a president of it. About every big shot in town was on the NDA.

I made my presentation there and made this suggestion. And I ended it -- this is where we get political. I know people at universities don't like to do this. But this is where we get political. Now, the governor's beginning to get wind of this, and we're also getting wind through the press that there's like a 20- or 30- or 40-million-dollar surplus in the state budget. Well, that's what we



were looking at. But we weren't the only ones looking at that. So the governor wasn't about to make a commitment at this point. This was real embryonic in this effort.

So I made my presentation and got asked a few questions. But the conclusion of my presentation was the big unknown -- and I remember on my view-graph slide -- the biggest challenge at this point is, one, the governor; two, the governor; three, the governor. So anyway, the governor's administrative aide was in the audience there. I forget his name.

So everybody -- yeah, they liked it -- said we're going to consider this. And I felt like it was going to happen, which it did.

He came up to me afterwards, the administrative aide, and said I have a message from Governor Bryan. And I said okay; I'd be glad to hear it. And the NDA at the time -- I don't know the NDA as a group. But some big shots in the NDA were pushing for a tax cut or something. They were fighting some proposal by the governor to raise business taxes or something. And he said the message from the governor is, "If you will stop this" -- and he meant me -- "If you will stop this effort, then the governor will support the engineering school."

**Wow.**

Well, yeah. That's what I thought. I hadn't been out of the military that long and military people tend to be -- I don't want to say ignorant. What is it that you would call it? Optimistic. Naive. And generally -- at least I was -- unknowing of what real politics was. And I said, well, okay. I said tell the governor this is not negotiable; that this project will stand on its own two feet and that we are going to make this project work. I just cannot get involved in lobbying people to get something else either done or undone. I just can't do it and won't do it. Well, that put us at odds with the governor I guess.

So anyway, NDA said yes. I ordered new business cards. Instead of saying Bob Gore, manager of PR at Summa Corporation, they said Bob Gore, executive director Pi-E-squared. And Pi-E-squared was an engineering term for progress through education and engineering. It was an engineering acronym for that.

So we just put -- I condensed the slide program. I converted into a speech because that way I didn't have to carry a slide projector around with me. I converted it into a speech. Had some wonderful people who had donated their time to the committee. We had started our own



committee. We worked out of Summa headquarters. My office became an NDA office, in effect. I think Ted Gibson was still chairman of the NDA, at least for this. He was oversight. He was my boss at NDA. And that's how we had it set up.

I only made him mad at me once, which is a better track record than I had with most bosses, and that was over something political. I had said something I shouldn't have.

But early on in this thing we -- right at the first we were at a critical juncture because at that time -- we called it juice. I guess they still call it juice. If you got things done in this town or this state, it was getting enough big shots behind you to get the juice to do it.

But then there was another plan that we considered. That was a grassroots PR effort, just a classic grassroots PR effort. That was my business at the time, and I remember that I was watching a program on PBS talking about how formal public relations began. There was a guy named Ivy Ledbetter Lee. He went to work for Rockefeller -- I think it was Rockefeller or Standard Oil -- trying to improve his image.

In any event, the most apt definition of public relations is the engineering of public support to allow you to get done what you want to get done. But that's public support. That's not going out and twisting the arms of the big shots.

### **Right.**

And we elected to go that route. We elected to go the grassroots and at that point it became a classic public relations program. We identified centers of influence. Any Rotary club that would hear us, any Kiwanis club, any Lions club, anyplace where there were a group of community leaders, that's where we wanted to go. And that's what we started doing.

We refined our message. We did publications. We did research. I had probably four or five people. A Mary Hausch at the R-J was one of our volunteers. Oh, my gosh. I'm glad I'm not standing in front of an audience because I forget some of the most wonderful people involved in that. We went to the TV stations. We went to the R-J.

The very curious thing about the R-J was we went to the R-J editorial board with our argument. Who was it? Was it Sherm Frederick? No. I don't remember who it was at the time. But they sat there. And it was typical. It was like -- it became an outstanding presentation because the silence afterwards at first rattled me like the first time I gave it at Summa. But then I



started getting that silence all the time because you could tell it sunk in and people were --

**People were paying attention.**

-- putting two plus two together on their own. And the same thing happened there. The editor said I don't think this newspaper has never put itself behind a project, but we're going to come out of the blocks on this.

**Wow.**

And they said Mary Hausch is going to be your go-to gal. Whatever you need from us -- and she was an editor -- whatever you need from us, you let Mary know. And, boy, that was powerful. I used it only once that I remember because it was like having an atomic bomb at your disposal, and I did not want to take advantage of that. But I did once.

So anyway, I went around. I met with some significant political types. Jack Vergiles, who was a professor at U -- but Jack was also a state senator.

**That's right.**

Mike O'Callahan, a former governor -- I'll never forget Mike O'Callahan listening to the presentation. I gave it over the desk, you know, just informally like we're talking. And he sat there in silence for a second. I said, "What's your advice, Mike?" And he said, "Just be kind, Bob, just be kind." And I said okay -- I think he was telling me two things. First thing he was telling me was that the argument would stand on its own without any input from him. And the second thing he was telling me was to be kind. And I went to Jack Vergiles because he was head of the senate or he was a big shot in the --

**I don't remember exactly what role he played in the senate.**

He was a leader, and a powerful one in Nevada politics. And it had to do with his job in the senate. Afterwards Jack said, "You realize, of course, that you're not going to get any credit for this." And I said that hadn't occurred to me. That wasn't one of my motivations. But I said, well, why is that? He said, "Because it is such a damn good idea that everybody and his brother is going to be taking credit for this. And you are too far down the totem pole to get any." That's exactly what he said.

So we asked -- I thought, well, we need a history. We need something that -- and this was a professor at UNLV, Bill something as I remember, who was in the history department. He



volunteered to do the history, but he never showed up at any meeting. So we didn't get a history done because we were all so busy doing other things. And it just went from there.

The one time that I needed the R-J's help was when the Reno Gazette Journal saw this as a real threat. I mean they were so far off the charts. In one editorial they called me a slick Italian-shoed -- they called me "pushy Las Vegas promoter." So I went to Mary Hausch and I said, (making whining sounds) -- I didn't really whine that much, but it was kind of like whining -- Look at this.

So the next day the R-J comes out, boom, with this big editorial. And I remember Ned Day supported us. Ned Day was the first real strong --

**He would take on anybody.**

Yeah. But he was our first real media break. Channel 3 really got behind us. What was his name? He was the manager at Channel 3. He was also on our committee. I mean our committee was -- there were some powerful but not extremely well-known people on our committee. I mean people knew Mary Hausch's name. I forget the Channel 3 manager's name -- great guy with red hair as I recall -- but he was on the committee. It was just amazing to have these powerful media people that I could use when I needed to. Fortunately, I just worked as hard as I could not to use them unless we really needed them.

**Media people strike fear in hearts of the politicians, don't they?**

Well, they do. They do.

So we started holding these seminars. One of the things we started to do was hold seminars at Artemus Ham Hall for legislators. This was an election year and the legislators would show up. And then I'd hand them that box. As you can see it's marked Pi-E-squared. It was the materials we had put together. We had put research materials together, rewritten them and packaged them in kind of an attractive way. We had a binder and each pamphlet in the binder was a different type of research because, you know, we weren't dealing with the real intelligent types at UNLV who read dry stuff and understand it. We were doing something for the people, for everyday folks. So we had to convert a lot of that language into something that was more understandable to the average Joe.

It got to the point where I had a couple politicians come up and say, listen, you don't need



to tell me anything. He said, "I'm walking door to door, and the first thing people say to me is we need an engineering school."

And we found out during this process -- we didn't even know they existed. But near the end of the project, we found out that there were some cocktail waitresses from the Strip that were actually going around getting signatures to give to the legislators. They saw this as a way that they could have their children stay in town doing something besides working in the gaming industry, not that that was a bad thing to do. But they all knew that not every child you raise wants to be in the gaming industry. And if you didn't, you didn't work here. So they saw this as a great way.

**Sure.**

**(End Tape 1, Side A.)**

My strongest motivator at the time, but I couldn't say it, was the nuclear dump which was on the way at the time. It was a forgone conclusion. The state legislature had voted overwhelmingly and sent a resolution to -- remember? -- the DOE or the Congress saying we want it; bring it here. The thing that bothered me about that is that I personally was worried that we were going to get the nuclear repository and nothing else. Out of the 700 and something nuclear weapons that had been exploded right here on the outskirts of our town, we didn't make any money from the engineering on all those. I mean all the money for that engineering went to Lawrence Livermore and that area, Silicon Valley area, and it went to --

**Sandia.**

-- Sandia and other places. All those other cities had their engineering schools and the companies there and they'd fly their engineers in to set off the bombs in our state and then leave.

Same for Nellis. If you look at all that expensive gear flying around out at Nellis, you know, we didn't make any money off that. The payroll belongs to the people who lived out there. We made no engineering dollars on that.

My concern was we were going to get that repository and nothing else, so what we were cautioning ourselves to do -- and I say we, FORGE -- and I'll have to go back and explain that. I left that out.

FORGE was the five guys I was originally talking about, the Air Force Association. We



put together a little group to start promoting the school of engineering called FORGE. That was an acronym for Foundation for Resource Gains through Engineering.

And this is what those in FORGE were thinking, all of us were thinking: If our town was going to be the home of the nuclear repository, then we want something positive out of it. And we were actually -- what we were hoping for was to have a national laboratory here.

We were hearing through DOE circles that Lawrence Livermore Laboratories wanted a place to move because they had created for themselves a toxic waste dump out there. They were making overtures like 'Las Vegas would be a nice place for Lawrence Livermore Laboratories to be,' without the hazardous waste dump that they created there.

As I recall DOE has a huge cottage industry spread all over the country. What DOE was hoping to do was to bring those people gradually to a single place. There could have been no better place than here for that, and even if there could have been, we should have gotten it anyway because we were going to be the home of the repository.

So that was the primary motivator behind us. And I think you can understand why we weren't out there selling it that way. We didn't sell it that way.

So anyway, it got to the point where the engineering school thing developed a life of its own because we had done the grassroots PR program. And then what we tried to do when we realized that that was going to be successful, we started stacking other UNLV needs on the coattails of the engineering school. And we did that through the lobbyists with the NDAs. Jim Cashman the Third. Basically, Jim Cashman the Third -- he and I would talk. You know, I'd be receiving feedback from guys like you and we were starting to lobby for other things in it. At one point the engineering school just became a foregone conclusion, months before the legislature even convened.

The engineering school effort -- I remember one news report called it a political juggernaut. And at the time -- I think it's probably still true -- it was the earliest any spending legislation ever came out of the state legislature. And it is I think still today the only bill in Nevada history to be cosponsored by every legislator.

**That's right.**

Every single one of them.



Now, the problem was -- and I'm a blunt person -- the problem became the new UNLV president, Bob Maxson. Bob, even in retrospect, wanted the credit for this. And I kept remembering what Jack Vergiles told me, you know. You, meaning me, or none of my friends were ever going to get any credit for this thing. The problem was we were the champions. And what Bob did was kill the champions.

We got a building. We got a program out there and I understand that it's really, really in good shape today. But it languished for a long, long time. The school still has not, I don't think, reached the potential that it could have if we had the leadership in this state to say we need some high-tech firms, the firms that support Nellis and Lockheed Martin and Boeing and some of these others, to locate here. But we need to make that work.

In any event, it got so bad that during the festivities for either the opening of the school -- I can't remember exactly. It was some important community dinner with the press there and everything. I got a call from an insider that I had at UNLV. I was still at Summa, of course. And he said Dr. Maxson is deliberately not going to recognize FORGE for their involvement. I said what do you mean deliberately? He said I put it in his speech and he has deliberately asked me to remove it.

And I made an appeal to Bob. You know, Bob couldn't ignore me because I became over time the head of the effort. I mean how do you do that? But the other guys who were so, so important and worked every bit as hard as I did, even though it was more in the background, he just absolutely refused to recognize. And I don't think you'll find anything down on that building -- you will not -- and, of course, the governor became the champion of the engineering school.

**Oh, sure. Yeah.**

But if you look I think at probably any plaque that's on that building or any of the documents that are associated with it, I don't think -- I would be shocked if you'll find the name of anybody who actually is responsible for that building being there, with the exception of Tom Beam.

Now, Tom Beam and I became close friends as a result of this. Tom came into my office real early in the project and said I got a deal for Summa. And I said okay. He said I've pledged a million dollars to the engineering school and for that my name goes on the school. He said but if



Summa will give two million dollars, he said, then I will give them the prestige of having their name on the school and I'll back off and just have my name on the building. And, of course, you know, when we think about -- what's the name of the business school at -- oh, I used to use it all the time to illustrate this kind of thing. Well, when you're talking about famous colleges within universities, they never talk about the building name. They talk about the name of the school.

And so in the end that's what happened. Summa contributed, not only my time and effort, but contributed two million dollars, got heavily involved. And as a result of Tom Beam it's now Beam Hall. I don't know if it's hall or not. Beam whatever. But it houses the Howard Hughes School of Engineering, which --

**Interesting.**

Yeah. So that was Tom's involvement. And that was very magnanimous of Tom because it would have been much more prestigious to have his name on the school than on the building.

**Yeah. He was not a person who was self-aggrandizing.**

No. Well, Frank and Estella Beam Hall. I said, Tom, why didn't you put our own name up there? He said, well, Bob, you've got to honor your parents first. What a great man. He is in many ways the greatest man I ever met.

**Oh, yeah. I remember the first time I met him at some kind of meeting. I walked him out to his car. Now, as you remember his cool-weather garb was jeans and a flannel shirt.**

...and moccasins.

**Yeah. And his warm-weather garb was jeans and a T-shirt. And we got to his car, which was a ten-year-old Oldsmobile.**

Yeah. What? Brown, was it? It was an ugly old brown. Taupe or something.

**Well, you might be interested to know I have interviewed Maxson. And he gave you a whole lot of credit in that interview. So it's going to be recorded in history.**

Well, that's shocking to me. That is absolutely shocking to me because Bob and I became at odds over that.

**Yeah. I remember that.**

It just grieved -- the fact that Dave Broxterman and Bill Becker and Tom Harden and those guys did not get the credit -- I mean at least on a sheet of paper and put it in the building, something --



the fact that those guys did not get-- I'll tell you what I did. When that school was dedicated, there was a dedication dinner, remember, in the vestibule beneath the model of the Racer, the Hughes Racer?

**I probably wasn't invited to that because nobody recognized any effort I put in. So --**

See. So after that I drove south and drove my car out into the middle of Ivanpah Lake and cried. I mean I got recognized. But all these other people just didn't, I mean not as a group, not with their names on something. My problem I guess emotionally was that what made this successful was the involvement of relatively common people. Now, everybody was involved, even prominent people. But what really made this project safe was that common people, who got the man on the street to demand an engineering school from their legislator, got absolutely no recognition.

And I thought how foolish it is to take -- because we could've kept that talent pool going. We could've kept it going. We could've stayed involved in doing things for the engineering school. But, man, it just blew the wind out of our sails. And I'm quite honestly shocked.

And something else that you will also notice is that there is not a single person that I can think of who was involved in that effort from a civilian point of view who got an honorary degree out of it.

**That's right.**

Not a single one. And some people at the time who were important to UNLV did and they deserved it. I don't take away from the people who got their honoraries in 1985 or '84. I don't take that away from them. All I'm saying is that there was a group of people out there that it's like -- and I don't mean -- when I say the university as a whole, I don't mean everybody at the university. But it's just like the university said thank you, now go away. That's basically what happened. Thank you. Go away. Fine. Go back to whatever you're doing. And that was just -- it was just tough for me to live with.

**Oh, I can understand. From time to time I felt the same way about it.**

Did you feel that way about yourself, too, and your own involvement?

**Oh, yeah. You know, I worked my butt off for that project.**

Oh, I know you did. I know you did. But it was like -- and that speech that Maxson gave where he thanked everybody -- I forget how I approached him because I didn't want to betray the



confidence of the staffer who had called me. Well, it's not hard to figure out who that was if you think about it. But I said, Bob, I just want to make sure that you have the names of everybody involved, you know, from our point of view in this project in addition to -- I mean I couldn't put together the names of people at UNLV because I didn't know -- except for you. I mean that was under your purview or whatever it was, UNLV's, to say, okay, this is a collection of professors we had that drove this. That was significant on your part. But I was just making the case for the civilians who donated their own time on this.

**Absolutely. It was crucial.**

And it was just refused. I don't know how else to put it. It wasn't ignored. It was worse than just being ignored or, oh, I forgot. It was just like this is the way it's going to be.

And I still don't know -- maybe I'm still too naïve to understand what motivated that. But it's safe to say that I don't understand it -- to this day I don't understand it. I don't know what good came of the school out of that. It seemed to be counterproductive for the school because there are those of us in this community that as a result of this just fell in love with UNLV. We just did.

**Oh, yeah. The amount of effort your group put in was crucial.**

So anyway, there might be little things that I can think of. I don't know if you still have one of those binders with the pamphlets in it.

**I have some of them at least. If you have some you would like to donate to the cause --**

I would if I could find them. I honestly don't know where there are.

Oh, there was another important thing that happened, too. This was a significant thing that happened shortly after Bob had gotten here. There was a guy in the Nevada legislature, a friend of Frank Tusig's, Bob -- oh, I admire the guy so much. He was a high-tech -- made a fortune in a high-tech company in Silicon Valley and moved to Carson City. He became a member of the Nevada Legislature. Bob Thomas. Bob Thomas.

So what had happened when public support was building up here for the engineering school, the legislators starting looking at each other thinking, well, we don't know technically anything about this. What does it mean? So they looked for their nearest expert that they felt like didn't have a self-interest in it.

Meanwhile UNR was fighting us. Oh, man, it was -- and I made several trips up there to



say, guys, we're not the enemy, because they were in bad shape, too.

**That's right.**

I remember I went into their engineering building and under one stairwell they had firewood stacked up there. I mean you could tell that that program had cobwebs and was going away. I said, guys, we are here to generate excitement for the possibilities of engineering for the whole state. Now, we can't back off of our argument for Las Vegas because we have Nellis Air Force and McCarran and you don't. I'm sorry, but you don't. And if you remember at the time in Reno, even if the weather -- the minimums got like a thousand feet, airplanes couldn't land because of the mountains around. So we said we've still got to make our case, but we do not want to make our case at your expense. So I think we made them feel better. But I was still a Las Vegas Italian-shoed pushy promoter in their eyes.

So anyway, Bob Thomas became involved and I began hearing about him because the legislators are saying, Bob, you've made your fortune in high-tech. Is this a valid argument? And Bob was saying no. We need to do it up here. From Bob's point of view, I can understand that. Bob felt that Reno was kind of on the doorstep of Silicon Valley and that made more sense.

But what Bob didn't know about was the scope of Nellis nor really the scope of the Nevada Test Site. I was amazed at how little northern Nevadans understood about the federal presence in Las Vegas, the significance of Nellis and the Test Site. They knew the bombs were going off, but they didn't see all the buildings around here that belonged to EG&G and REECO and all the support facilities.

So I got wind that Bob was coming down to see Bob Maxson. I wasn't invited to that meeting, but I'm the one that had the argument, the case. And so I invited myself to that meeting. So we went around the table. There was a table of about five or six people. I don't remember if you were there or not.

**No.**

You weren't there?

**No.**

Well, okay. So anyway, it went around the table. And there was only one guy there who knew the argument and that was me, which didn't surprise me. Well, we need for this -- the reasons that



these people around the table were saying we needed it just weren't the ones that were sparking any interest nor made much economic sense, not to say they're dumb people. I don't mean to say that. I don't mean to put them down.

**Just uninformed. Right.**

Uninformed. And you could see Bob kind of shaking his head. Then it came over to me. And I said, well, I've prepared something for you, but let me give you a little briefing. So I had in my mind condensed my 10- or 15-minute speech down to about three minutes. And I gave him my little address. And I slid -- one of the reasons that we had that binder with all those books in it was to give our arguments credence and credibility because you can sit there and you can say something to somebody and the response can be so what? But when you slide a whole sheaf of research across the table to them, now it becomes real.

So I pushed this over to him and Bob's attitude totally changed. Now you could see the wheels turning. Now Bob is thinking about what's best for all of Nevada. You could see that happening. And I forget. He took it home and I think he called me the next day and said I'm behind this a hundred percent. You can count on my support at the legislature. Well, that was key because Bob was in the position where I think he could have killed the project.

**I went up to Carson City with him just when the legislature was about to meet in '83.**

Let me close this door. Okay. Where were we?

**You excused yourself to close the door.**

Thank you. I needed that.

**Bob Maxson called you to --**

No. It was Bob Thomas. Bob Thomas called me the day after that I had given him this stuff. And you could tell this was the kind of stuff that Bob was used to seeing. It was in civilian or layman form, but the titles have a technical nature to them. He flips through and just looks over and looks at the cover page of each one. And he can see just from the cover pages which organized our arguments in the different sections that one led into the other. So there was volume one, two, three, and all that kind of stuff.

He called the next day and said I've gone through this stuff. He said you guys can count on me for anything. Not only will I not fight it, I'm going to become your biggest supporter at the



legislature.

And he did. And we became friends. I haven't seen him in years and years. But I really admire him. What I admire about Bob Thomas is that the most fortunate occurrence in my life was to sit across the table from a man that tells you exactly what he thinks. I remember one time I ran for office.

**I remember that.**

I had given a speech to some guys in Reno, and I came back and was calling each one of them asking for a contribution. And, you know, I was getting this waffley kind of stuff that some guys would give. There was one guy that said, well, Bob, I'm not going to give you anything. He was a contractor up there and he said I'm not going to give you a donation. And I said, well, why not? He said I just don't like your arguments. He is probably one of the guys I'll remember with the greatest fondness out of my unsuccessful bid for election, because he just had the guts to tell me where he stood. He told me in a very manly way and I figured I could do business with this guy.

**Well, as an example of how effective you guys were behind the scenes was I knew the guy who was head of the Assembly Ways & Means Committee, Marvin Sedway.**

Yes.

**He told me, as the '85 legislature was coming up, you're not going to get your money for engineering; we need prisons. And the head of the Nevada chapter of professional engineers told me the same thing. Well, that isn't what happened.**

No. The people can demand anything they want. That's another reason, now that I think about it, why we decided to do the grassroots PR. The reality is that once the people, enough of them, decide they want something, it does not matter what the special interests want at all. And that's why we did it the way we did.

**If I can change the course a little bit here, how did you become a public relations person?**

**Was it on the job, or did you start back in college or what?**

Well, no. I was a pilot in the Air Force and I was grounded. I had taken a college course in journalism and they thought, oh, he'll make a good information officer. So they moved me into what's now called the public affairs field. It was called the information field at the time. That was considered Air Force PR, so I just kind of grew up in it.



I really didn't like the field that much until I saw that thing on Bill Moyers about how professional PR began because I did not understand -- I thought at that time if you're good in public relations maybe you can play golf. You can shake hands well. You can tell a joke. In other words, I'd always heard that the value of public relations is being able to tell someone to go to hell and make them look forward to the trip. I was really not happy in a field like that until I saw this thing on PBS, when I found out there was a craft, there was an actual craft to public relations. When I found out there was that craft, which is the engineering of public opinion, then PR became goal-oriented.

And I think that's why I didn't like it before because I was just kind of there. But once I understood that public relations can have goals -- or has to have goals. Otherwise, there's no reason to have them. In other words, if a company is here and it wants to be here and it absolutely needs public opinion to allow it to be there, then you've got a goal. And I'm goal-oriented. I do know that. So once public relations became a business of goals to me, I started liking it.

But then I got out of it. I've been selling real estate now since -- when? -- since '86. Well, I left Summa after the engineering school was done and was at the UNLV Foundation for two years...

**Right. I remember that.**

...during which time I had four bosses. Oh, it was tough. I just couldn't -- Maxson fired me. Well, actually it was kind of funny. I went in and I said, now, Bob, you and I both know this isn't working out. And Ernie Becker over here said, Bob -- you know, Ernie was on the board of the foundation. So I was making a round to all the foundation members. Another guy I like is Ernie Becker Senior, who's no longer with us. I talked to him and he said you're not going to be successful at this. And it really cut me. And I said why? And he said you're too entrepreneurial. You're just not cut out for this. He was right, as it turns out.

So I went to Bob Maxson and I said, Bob, it's just not -- I mean it's just not my thing. You know, you'll find people at universities who don't want to be out here in the business world. It's not their thing. And I realized -- and I don't fault the university. I just realized that it was not my thing.

At the time I think the -- I believe that control for the foundation was being contested.



Elaine Wynn was my chairman. But Bob was head of the university. And as good as their relationship was, there was a tug there. Then I reported to Lyle Rivera. Technically I reported to Lyle Rivera, but I also worked for Bob Maxson and Elaine Wynn.

John Unrue got involved because he put out -- you know, I had an open-door policy with you professors. And I remember one that worked out real well. I had a music professor come in and said I've always wanted to have a jazz library. That's my dream. So the professors were coming into my office telling me what their dreams were, telling me what they wanted.

Well, that worked out because as I went out and had lunch with people, with wealthy people, they would say, well, you know, I've always wanted to do something like this. Well, we have -- I guess it's still there -- a jazz library because I was having lunch with Tom Beam. And Tom Beam said to me -- he said, you know, I just love jazz. And I went click. And Tom Beam funded that. And that was working.

Well, what John wanted was all of you professors to come up to him with your requests and then he would prioritize them and give us a list of what to raise money for.

**That doesn't work too well.**

No. Well, it takes your heart out of it. You just don't present donors a list and say -- I mean it just -- sales and stuff like that, you've got to have some heart into it, at least I do. And that might be a shortcoming of mine, but I do. And it kind of took the heart out of it.

Well, the professors were still coming to my office after John had issued this proclamation or whatever it was, you know. I'd say I can't talk to you about this and they'd say why not? And I'd say, well, because don't you have vice president Unrue's -- or it was -- I forget what he went by -- chancellor -- or not chancellor -- provost. And I said because of his letter of so and so. And they'd say I don't have to listen to that. At least the guys with tenure were saying that. I don't have to listen to that. So here I am. I've got a guy sitting across the table from me, nice guy, who's telling me -- and I'm telling him I can't talk to him.

**(End Tape 1, Side B.)**

What was I talking about? I was sure animated about something.

**People coming in who have their dreams and so on. And you were not supposed to listen to them.**



Okay. So I get this nasty gram, I called it, from John. Now I've got John fussing at me because I'm talking to the professors, and I've got the professors saying that they don't care; they're going to talk to me anyway. Well, it became untenable.

So I went to Maxson and I said, Bob, this just isn't working out. This isn't my cup of tea. You know it. I know it. And he says, well, let's give it 90 days. And I said, listen, all I'm asking for is just some time to go out and find another job. You know, we'll just keep this quiet because I still loved the school, I loved the people involved in school, enjoyed very much my time down there on campus. Like wherever you've been in life, you get flashes of faces that have an impact on you. And they still come to me -- yours, which yours is pretty much the same as it was. Anyway, he said let's just give it 90 days and see if we can't make it work.

Well, I marked the 90th day on a calendar. I don't know why I did it. So eight o'clock in the morning the 91st day I get a call. What was her name? A great gal. She was Bob's secretary. Oh. What a wonderful woman.

**Joanne.**

Joanne.

**Yeah. Joanne Jacobs.**

Joanne says, Bob, Dr. Maxson, would like to see you in his office. So I made the trip to the office and was fired. And he said -- I'll never forget. He says normally I have counsel present when I do something like this -- that's how it began -- but you're a gentleman and I trust we don't need that. But your services are no longer needed here.

So anyway, I took advantage of my golden parachute, which wasn't very big at the time because I only had a year or so in. But it was enough. I had also wanted to be in real estate, so I went over to Coldwell Banker, commercial. I remember Don Hayes had kind of made an overture during the engineering school thing that he would like for me to work for him. So that's where I went. I was there for a couple of years, and then I came over here in I think '89. I've been here with Barry Becker and the guys ever since, and I've loved it here. This is a great place to work.

**I remember one interesting episode while you were heading up the foundation.**

Uh-oh.

**No. I think you'll enjoy this. You called up and you said, "Do you have any time today?"**



And I said sure. You said, "Well, I've got the president of Freeport-McMoRan Mining Company coming in."

Oh, yes.

"And could you spend some time with them and tell them what you're up to?" We didn't have anything to show at that time. All we had was that things were approved. But the engineering space was that little house over on Harmon Avenue with the big letter E in the lawn. And computer science had one room with a DEC computer in it. So he came over. Do you remember his name?

No, I don't.

I'll think of it. Anyway, we chatted for a while and I thought what am I going to show this man? We haven't got anything to show in engineering yet. We don't have any building or any equipment to speak of. Ah. Computer science. So I walked over there. John Werth was heading it up at the time. I walked into the room where they had this PDP 11 or whatever it was, the DEC computer and there was a female graduate student there. I introduced her to the president of the mining company.

Well, it turned out that they had bored thousands of holes in the property near where they were mining. They had a huge amount of data that would tell them whether or not it was worth developing as a gold mining place. They had so much data they needed to somehow process it and store it and what have you, so he was much more interested in computer science than he was in engineering.

Interesting though he would come here rather than UNR, isn't it, though?

Yeah. This woman was very knowledgeable. She was a graduate student in computer science. They had quite a long talk and then he came back over. You said bring him back to you when he was finished, and I did. You were going to take him to the airport where his private jet was waiting to take him on to Arizona where they had other operations. As soon as you got back you called and said just before he got on the plane he reached in his pocket and pulled out a check for \$17,000. He said this is the first installment of a 50,000-dollar gift to support the engineering program.

Was that the first gift of new -- well, it wouldn't have been.



Well, we had other gifts.

Yes, I know.

But that was one very significant boost for it.

I don't remember. I remember Freeport-McMoRan. I remember the guy being there, but I don't remember that.

I wish I could think of his name. It will probably come to me sometime or other. He sent Christmas cards every Christmas for a number of years after that.

Did he? That's great.

Another episode -- I don't really remember the date and whether you were still in the foundation or not. But, finally, EG&G got onboard. They were very skeptical of our engineering program.

To say the least.

Yeah, to say the least.

I mean I wonder why?

They finally got onboard. My elder son's father-in-law is a chemical engineer. He was at that time the manager of the Eveready Battery lab in Cleveland. He was coming here because there was an electrochemical conference going on over the weekend. He called up and said I'm coming to this conference. Can I come early and visit you? Sure.

So there was a football game that night at Boyd stadium. Shirley said, oh, why don't you take Brooke to the game? I don't mind missing it. So we went down there. In the same row where we sat I saw the president of REECo. So I thought, well, he's an engineer -- Dale Frazier was his name.

Yeah. I remember the name.

This is after Harold Cunningham left. I thought Brooke would probably like to meet these other engineers, so I went over to introduce him. Dale said, oh, and by the way, we'll be giving you \$250,000 on Monday. And Brooke's jaw dropped.

Weren't used to hearing things like that, were you?

Well, I knew it was coming. So I didn't act with any particular surprise. I said, oh, that's great, or something like that. So that kind of showed him, Rick's father-in-law, the way



things worked in Las Vegas.

**Well, this has been a terrific interview and you've given a tremendous amount of insight. A number of people have told me, including Maxson, you need to interview Bob Gore.**

That surprises me, coming from Bob Maxson.

One more name. Benet Stout. That's the name I was trying to think of on our committee. She had worked for a Republican. She was a member -- oh, the republican senator we had from downtown, had a store downtown.

**Oh, yeah.**

Oh gosh. Who was the ambassador?

**Right. Chic Hecht.**

Chic Hecht. She was on his staff and he loaned her to the effort. And she and a couple -- I wish I could find my books because I hate forgetting these volunteers like this. But these gals would do the mundane stuff. There were a couple of conventions they would go to and everybody sat at a table about the size of this desk. Remember that one picture we had of what we thought was the engineering school? Remember that architectural thing we had? And we had this other stuff. I forget all we had them -- all they volunteered to do. But it was just the kind of stuff that would drive me nuts. And these gals -- I mean Benet Stout, a senior staffer for a U.S. Senator, is doing things like this? I mean it was overwhelming. Their dedication to this just overwhelmed me. They were willing to do anything. And Benet was -- I'm sorry I forget the other names.

Maybe I can find all my stuff around here somewhere. You know, at one -- Dave, I remember seeing it. You got anything that can read that?

**I don't. But I bet we have a place at the university somewhere where somebody can read it. Bob is looking through some old computer disks at this moment.**

Real old. And if I can find my -- this may not be all of them. If I can find all those books, I'd be more than happy to donate them. I'll know them when I see them. They're in a burgundy binder. These are both marked Pi-E-squared. I think these are probably all written with a program called Volkswriter.

**Ah, Volkswriter.**



That was early word processing program.

**Let's see. There's a form here we like to use to acknowledge the gifts of any papers and things like this. And we can get them back to you I'm pretty sure.**

Well, what I'd like to have back is something I can read because I don't have anything that will read that.

**I'll consult some of my computer science folks and see if they know what to do to get this.**

Well, it's five-and-a-quarter-inch floppies?

**Yeah.**

**(End Tape 2, Side A.)**