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An Interview with Harriett Thornton Hicks

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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Preface

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases, photographic sources (housed separately) accompany the collection as slides or black and white photographs.

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

Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

Harriett Thornton Hicks was born June 8, 1913, in Parowan, Utah; the thirteenth child of 14. She tells of her pioneer family who dwelled in two log cabins—one for cooking and one for sleeping. In 1931, she moved to Las Vegas to join two older sisters who had relocated here. She was picked up at the train by young Charles Hicks, who was a friend of her sisters. Charles had a car and offered to provide transportation. Within three years, the two were married. She quit her drug store job to raise a family and he worked for the railroad, the only business at the time in Las Vegas.

At the age of 96, Harriett recalls a range of community milestones, such as the Boulder Dam, the news of Pearl Harbor bombing, Fremont Street, the Biltmore Hotel, and how to live in a city with mob influences.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



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Harriett T. Hicks
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Good morning. This is Claytee White. And I am with Harriett Thornton Hicks in her home in Las Vegas. The date is October 28th, 2009.

So how are you this morning?

Oh, I'm just great. How are you?

Wonderful. So tell me, Harriett, first tell me when you were born.

I was born in Parowan, Utah, June the 8th, 1913 in my parents' home.

Go ahead and tell me about growing up there.

Well, it was just a small town and we were --

And what was the name of the town again?

Parowan, Utah.

Would you spell that for me?

P-A-R-O-W-A-N, U-T-A-H, Utah. And I'm the 13th child of 14. My mother and father were pioneers, of course. They owned a sawmill. And we went up to the sawmill in the summers, of course after I was born. I was the 13th one. I had one more sister after that. We spent our summers in the sawmill. Then we'd come home in the winter and go to school in Parowan, Utah.

And where was the sawmill located?

In Panguitch, Utah, Sanford County in Panguitch, Utah.

Now, how do you spell that name, that city?

P-A-N-G-U-I-T-C-H, Panguitch.

How far away were there two places?

Oh, let's see. Close to 300 miles I imagine.

So how did you get back and forth?

Team and wagon, covered wagons. We'd take two wagons, two teams. We had two covered wagons. And we'd take our food in one and kids in another. We walked a lot of the way. Then mother drove one team and my dad drove the other. We went clear across. Oh, the prairie was so rough at we had to make our own roads along the ways. It was fun for us kids, though, but we walked. And we'd stop on the way and have a nice dinner. In those days you could kill sage hens and rabbits and we'd have those. Which was good because my mother was a good cook. Then when we got to the sawmill, of course my dad and mother run the sawmill. Us kids kind of kept

the house.

So did you have two houses?

Yes.

So give me an idea of what the houses were like that you lived in.

Oh, they were just log cabins, just maybe one big room. One room we cooked in and the other -- and we had beds -- well, see, by the time I was old enough to go -- some of my older family was already married and gone away. So there were about only—let's see, the last of us were six girls. So about four or five of us girls would be the ones that would go back to the sawmill with my dad and mother. But one of my brothers was still there and he would help and go with us. Then we had the two big houses. We kind of slept in one and cooked in the other.

Two big rooms?

Uh-huh, two big ones. They were apart.

Oh, wait. You have two houses?

Uh-huh.

I don't understand.

Yeah. We had two big log cabins.

One in each of those cities?

No. In the place where we were up in Sanford Canyon. That's where our sawmill was up out at Panguitch, Utah.

So why did you have to have two log cabins?

Because we needed more room. Couldn't all of us stay in one cabin. We could cook and eat in one. We had to sleep in one or kind of live in one.

So did most other people also live in log cabins?

Yes. Up there we did. And then we'd wait till it started to snow and then come back and go to school.

Is that the only thing that your father would do, he would have the meal?

No. He did lots of odd jobs, my dad did. But my mother ended up in the last few years of our lives being a nurse. And she was a midwife nurse for years.

Oh, really? She was a midwife.

Uh-huh. For many, many years after I kind of grew up.

How did she get back and forth to the different homes?

She worked for one doctor and he had a little car. And if he wasn't there in time to pick her up, she would walk.

Wow.

She'd walk from place to place. And I would watch. One time I had to watch her go.

Did you ever go with her?

No. No. Those days it was kind of private for you just to be watching. But one time I did get to watch a birth, one of my nephews over at the house that she had. She finally did turn our home into kind of a hospital.

Oh, really?

Because there was some other lady that couldn't stay at their home. And they'd come there and have their babies. So once in a while we'd get to hold a newborn baby.

Oh, that's exciting.

So did the entire family move to Las Vegas at some point?

No. One older sister and her husband moved to Las Vegas in about 1926. Then another sister, one of my older sisters, moved in about 1929. And then another sister next to her moved in. And then I came down in 1931. I lived with the one sister who was married and had children. And that was Doris and Tom Myers.

That was? I'm sorry?

Doris and Tom Myers. And they were married. And then we lived together, the three of us girls. Then I met my husband. Of course, he knew my two sisters. I met him then.

So you met your husband in Las Vegas?

Yes. And he was born here in Las Vegas in 1912.

So what is his name?

Charles, Charles Edward.

So Charles Edward Hicks?

Yes.

So what did Charles do for a living?

You know, when he was a boy going to school out here, he was what they call a callboy on the railroad. You know, they didn't have phones in those days, but they had young boys call the workers to work.

How?

Just go to their houses and wake them up at night and tell them when they were supposed to come to work. That's what they called them, a callboy.

And that was people working for the railroad?

Uh-huh. That's his employment working for the railroad. That's when he was just a kid and going to school. He was a callboy and made money that way.

Oh, my goodness. So what did he do after that?

Well, then after that he kind of worked -- well, they say it's cleaning people's chicken coops kind of, just domestic work. He was a kid that always had to have a job. And he always did have a job. Then he finally went to work himself on the railroad after he got old enough as a brakeman on the railroad.

Oh, he was a brakeman.

His dad was a conductor. That's what his dad did was worked on the railroad.

So when did his dad come to Las Vegas?

They came to Las Vegas in 1909. And he was on the railroad. That's when the railroad was the only business in Las Vegas at that time.

What kind of stories did your husband tell you about growing up in Las Vegas in 1909 and when he was a little boy later on?

Oh, you mean his dad? You mean my father-in-law or my husband?

I'm sorry. Yes. Your husband. What kind of stories did he tell even about his family?

Well, they just was a common, ordinary family. They just worked, just kind of had a home here and enjoyed life. His dad was gone quite a bit on the railroad. His mother raised them. They had three or four children. One of them died there when she was little. Well, the only transportation they had I think was a bicycle. They didn't really do too much. Of course, there weren't many gambling halls here. He liked to gamble a little bit. But they had a lot of fun, the kids did. I guess they played. There were a few little dance halls around that they went to dances and

enjoyed that. They went hunting. He was an avid hunter. In fact, he just went -- and that was when there was hunting all around right where I live now.

I guess when he was 12 years old, while his little brother was being born, he wanted to get his gun and it was in his mother's bedroom. And the doctor said, you can't come in here. He said, I can come in there; my gun's in there. And so his mother said, you better let him come in; otherwise, he won't leave you alone until you do. So he went and got his gun and went over to the -- and caught him some quail. And that was when he was 12 years old. He tells about it. And they did a little odds and ends. I think his hunting was his own profession he loved to do besides work and do somebody else's. But he was a great kid to want to be working, earning money all the time.

Did he ever tell you about being a brakeman on the railroad, what that was like?

Well, yes. He didn't really like it. He didn't like to be away from home. But he was gone a lot. They had to be pretty careful being a brakeman on the railroad because that was the biggest -- what do you call it now days? In Nevada, you know. Lots of traveling.

Right. So that was a really good job at that time.

Oh, yes, very good. Then he finally ended up being a -- after him and I were married, of course he -- when we first, he worked at the Standard Oil Company for quite awhile.

What did he do at Standard Oil?

Well, that's what they call it where you get your gas now days. He would put gas and service cars and stuff like that at Standard Oil. He worked there for several years after we were married. And then he went back on the railroad during the World War II. He worked on the railroad all that time until, oh, my gosh, after we had moved over here. Then he just got tired of being away from home. And so he went to work for Cal Housel at the Pioneer Club as a dealer. He ended up being a dealer for several years.

I guess you've ever heard about a Little Fong? Have you ever heard of him, Little Fong?

Oh, yes, the Fong family. Yes. They had a restaurant.

Yes. Him and Little Fong got well acquainted. And they used to hunt together. And so he went to work for him as a dealer.

So where was that casino?

On First and Fremont. It was called the Silver Club on First and Fremont. Let's see, the first time I came down here I worked for Nevada Confectionary on the corner of Fremont.

What was the name of the store?

Nevada Confectionary. And that was Mr. Mackey. I worked for them for a long time. Then he retired and closed up -- or somebody else took over. The Sal Sagev hotel took over. That was a nice big hotel. That was a nice hotel up until a few years ago.

Now, is that the one with Las Vegas spelled backwards?

Uh-huh. Yeah, that's the one.

So did you work in the hotel?

No. I meant after Mr. Farren. He owned the three drugstores -- the Las Vegas Pharmacy, the White Cross Drugstore and the Professional Pharmacy all up on Fremont Street.

So where did you work?

I worked at the Las Vegas Pharmacy on the corner.

So what did you do at the pharmacy?

Well, I was just a soda jerk.

Ah, yes. You made those good sodas.

We all made the good sodas. And I made lots of them. And I worked there until my little daughter was -- or I only had one week to go when she was born. I used to tell Mr. Farren if you don't get somebody to work for me, I'm going to have this baby in the sink.

So what was Las Vegas like then?

It was real nice. It was. When they were building the dam, Boulder Dam I call it, it was a real nice town. Even though they had a red light district, it was --

Now, tell me again which year you came.

1931.

So you came in 1931 when they were just starting to build the dam.

Yep.

Were there a lot of people coming here with no place to live trying to get jobs?

Yeah, sure.

What was that like?

Well, they were nice people. They were good people. But they all found work. But the trouble part of it was never a day went by that somebody didn't killed on that dam.

There were that many people?

Uh-huh. That was anybody that was working there.

So it was that many people being killed?

Yeah. At least one every day. They either fell down it or something. The reason I remember that is because there was two mortuaries here in town. And one was on -- I've forgotten now.

Anyway, the reason I'm remembering that is because this one fellow, my sisters and I knew him real well. And every time that he'd have to go through an inquest of some kind, he would have to have somebody come there and sit by the phone, sit in the mortuary and answer the phone until he got back. So us girls would take turns to do that. You know, it was a place that was full of dead people.

So that was at Palm?

Well, it wasn't called Palm at that time. The Palm wasn't here then and neither was Bunkers. But it was called Lee Taylor I think it was. But he knew us girls. So he'd give us a little extra job for that.

Good. What did you and your sisters do for recreation?

Well, we used to go to the dances. They had quite a few little places to dance around here. They had one called Blue Heaven clear out here, way out east. And then they had Twin Lakes Dance Hall over at --

Lorenzi Park?

-- Lorenzi Park. They had a dance floor over in The Lakes. We used to go there. And then they had one theater here we used to go to on Fremont Street. And we used to bowl. They had a bowling alley on Fremont Street. They used to have bowling leagues. And I liked that.

So when you met your husband, how long had you been here when you met your husband?

Well, I had met him before that because he had got up to my hometown with my two sisters at one time. As I said he knew them. Of course, they were both a lot older than he was. He had just met them because they had met where they were working and got acquainted with him. Of course, he had a car. And every time they wanted to go someplace, why, he would take them. So then when

I came down -- oh, they brought him up to our home one day to visit. He brought them up. I was just a young kid and I wasn't interested in him. I already had a boyfriend. So then -- this is quite a story. So about a year later I guess there were three couples of us running around together, which I was 17. Of course, we got to talking about how we were going to get married. And my mother didn't say much, but she called my sister down here in Las Vegas. She said, you get Harriett a job down there because I don't want her to get married up here. So that's how I got the job --

Why didn't she?

Well, because I was too young.

Oh, she thought you were too young. Had you finished high school?

No. So anyway, my sister Clara got me a job right away and I come down. That's when I come down. Then Charlie, they sent him to pick me up at the bus. So in the meantime, every time we went someplace he took the three of us. We'd go out to Blue Heaven and dance. And he was a good dancer.

Oh, good.

He'd take us all three. In fact, he was courting all three of us, I guess. In the meantime, I don't know whether he was falling in love with me or I was falling in love with him. But finally Clara and Jean, they both had boyfriends. And that left me with Charlie. So he and I got together.

Oh, that's nice. That's really nice.

So tell me did you have any kind of association with the old fort?

Yes, I did. We used to have a lot of our Daughters of the Utah Pioneers meetings down there. And I helped clean it up once or twice is all. But there were others that had much more to do with it than I did. I just would help once in a while by cleaning it up but not like these others -- Rhea Mortensen and Marla Weaver and all those who help keep it going.

Now, tell me about that organization, the Daughters of the Utah -- what is it? Daughters of Utah Pioneers. So where did that organization come from? How long has it been around?

You know, when the pioneers -- you've heard about the pioneers that come across the plains when the Mormons got run off?

Back in 1850?

1830s. And so then the pioneers, of course, they started coming to Utah when Brigham Young

brought -- and said this is the place, Salt Lake. And that's when they originated the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers because that's what they were. They were pioneers. They came across the plains, handcarts and wagons and walked. Many, many of them died along the way. And some of their ancestors are still around. But not now, a lot of them aren't because it's too long ago. Then they settled a lot in Utah. And then they finally started settling here in Nevada. Nevada, of course, they came through Nevada and that's when they built the old fort down there. They just really have hung onto that. They've tried to take it and get rid of it two or three times, but there have been so many of the Utah pioneers that just hung in there and won't let them do it. So now it's quite a resort place.

Wow.

But that's how the area became because of the pioneers that came from Nauvoo and over there. And I had a great-grandfather -- that's why I'm a Daughters of the Utah Pioneers because I had a great-grandfather that come across the plains. Then, of course, my father was a Utah pioneer because he was born in Utah in the year before 1869. He was born in 1865.

Wow. Are you still active in the Mormon Church?

Yes, very active.

So what kinds of activities are you still active in when it comes to being active in the church?

Oh, everything they do. I work in the temple. I'm a visiting teacher. We call it that. We have a relief society that we're interested in that we all go to. And I go to my regular church on Sunday. I never miss. That's my salvation.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Earlier you said something about the red light district. That was Block 16.

Block 16.

So where was it?

On First Street off of Fremont over in the corner there. The reason I knew is because I used to wait on -- they had the cutest little girls, the sweetest things you ever seen. And they used to come in where I was working to have lunches and stuff. And they were so sweet. Are you going to tell -- well, anyway, if you ever seen a man in a pink shirt, you knew he was a pimp. You never saw a man in a pink shirt, only when he was one of their pimps whenever you seen a man in a pink

shirt.

Wow. So today men are wearing pink shirts again.

I guess so. That was their trademark.

So did you ever have any occasion to see that block?

No. I never went. I kept my distance from there.

Now, I don't know if you know this, but Block 16 right beside of it, that's where a lot of black people lived.

Uh-huh.

Okay. Did you know any black people in the community?

I knew some of the nicest ones there that were blacks. They were outside where I worked. They shined shoes. They was some of the nicest people you ever wanted to know. Also they worked in the hospitals. The ones that I knew were just great people. I had to say hello to them. I knew them. They were kind. They never bothered me. I was always very fond of them. I felt bad lots of times. When somebody said something bad about them, I'd say that's not right.

After working in the drugstore, where else did you work?

Oh, I think that's the only place I ever worked. Well, I did in Parowan. I used to work for my sister in a cafe for years. Her and her husband owned a cafe. She had a little girl and they needed somebody to tend her. So I tended her. And, yet, I made ice cream sundaes and she taught me how. Then finally after I grew up I worked for her and her husband for a year in Parowan before I ever came here.

But when you came here that was the job that you took?

Yes. That was the only job. So I quit working after my first child Gloria was born. Why, I didn't work anymore.

So when was your first child born?

When?

Uh-huh.

The 21st of April 1935.

Oh. So you only worked for four years?

Uh-huh, after I came down here.

And then you were a housewife after that.

Uh-huh. And that's what I've been ever since.

Tell me about the Helldorado Parades.

Oh, yes. Oh, those were great parades. My little daughter was in one of the first ones when she was a little girl, Gloria. I had Gloria to the day, she was born on our anniversary. And then five years later I had my son Richard. He was born in 1940.

But the Helldorados were really fun. Of course, that was just kind of a real vacation for all of us. We enjoyed it. Everybody was in it. It was just a real -- but I don't know. I don't think it's quite that anymore.

Yeah. It's really different now.

No. It was just so fun.

Because you had, what, three days, a three-day celebration?

Uh-huh.

Where was the village where they made the Helldorado Village? Wasn't it around here someplace?

I think it was. That's one of the kinds of things that breaks my mind.

Where did you live before you came over to Biltmore?

I lived on Garcia Street.

Oh, yes. So that's off of Fifth?

Uh-huh.

And then where did you and your husband live?

We lived over on First Street, in a little house over on South First Street where there used to be the Von Tobel Lumber Company ended up being there after we moved. And then we looked at two or three places before we bought over here. This was just being built. This is the first -- oh, what do you call them?

This was the first development?

Yeah, development.

Oh, really? So what is the name of this development?

It's called the Biltmore Addition.

So were black people allowed to live in here?

No.

So this was one of those restricted neighborhoods.

Yeah, at that time because they built the Moulin Rouge across the road there. They had all those white entertainers. I remember Sammy Davis. I remember him over there.

So do you remember seeing him or you just knew he lived --

No. I seen him at the Thunderbird perform.

Now, was the Biltmore Hotel built at the same time?

I think it was. It was right on the corner of Main and Bonanza. And it was quite a -- and that's where a lot of the entertainers, you know, not the black people, but the entertainers stayed there.

Were there any times that black people could live there?

I don't know. I can't tell you that.

Okay.

No. A lot of it is just remembrance that they restricted them to the Moulin Rouge over there. And that was a nice place.

Did you ever go to the Moulin Rouge?

No.

Tell me what the Biltmore Hotel was like. What did it look like?

Well, it was just an ordinary hotel. It wasn't really exclusive what you'd say.

How many floors?

Just the three floors. And there was a bar down on this end of it. Across the street was a car salesman.

A car? Parking?

No, no. Not parking. Regular car salesman selling, you know.

They sold cars?

Uh-huh.

On the Biltmore property?

No. Right across the street from there on Main Street was the car. Then there was a big grocery store down the street as you go down Main Street. All of those, of course, are gone now. Then

this Biltmore started building up and they built all these houses along here. We moved in here in 1942.

What is the name of this development called?

Yeah. That's what it's called.

It's called the Biltmore. Okay. 1942. So we're in World War II.

Yes. We were right here. I mean some friends and I were having a little social here when President Roosevelt announced Pearl Harbor. That was in 1942.

When you heard that they had bombed Pearl Harbor for the first time, what did you think?

What was that like?

Well, just scary. We were just scared to death I guess, all of us were. We sure did a lot of praying. That's when they ended up, you know, started rationing stuff and food stamps.

So do you remember that?

Uh-huh.

How did it work here?

Well, it worked good.

So what did you have to do?

Well, we just had to make sure what the family had. And they gave us so many to last for the month. What it was you'd just have to go to the food stamp and get your little book. Just be careful the way you used it. But we didn't suffer. I mean, you know, to be truthful we really didn't because my husband had a job. And all my family was doing good.

That's great. That is great.

Like I said we really didn't suffer. We truthfully didn't. Of course, the church had us all -- you know, they always wanted us to stay out of debt and to keep enough food in storage for 72 hours or however long. They warned us to do that. We did that. And they'd always tell us to stay out of debt. I never have owned a credit card.

I think that's smart. I think that's so smart.

We never owned one. I never have to this day. And I've always got along just fine.

Wow. What did you and your husband do for fun, recreation?

What did we do? Oh, my gosh. We were great hunters and fishers. We used to do this. We had a

Stream trailer and we'd go park it and go someplace during dove season and quail season and chucker season and deer season. We loved to do that. Of course, he worked lots of nights when he was working. So every time he'd have a day off, we'd go someplace.

Oh, that's nice.

And we had lots of fun together. We would go hunting and fishing and camping. Take the kids when they were still little. When they finally grew up and got married, we kept right on going. And they could do some of the same things.

Do you remember any people who worked at BMI, Basic Magnesium over in Henderson during World War II?

Oh, I should know them, but I'm not positive who they are. I can't remember that much.

And after the war was over they started the Nevada Test Site.

Yeah.

Did you know people who worked out there?

Yes, I knew them. I knew them, but I couldn't tell you -- I knew a lot of people that worked out there. Yes, I did. And there were a lot of accidents. They used to call that Widow's Highway because they was all losing someone. But that's another place there were a lot of bad accidents, that and the Boulder Dam. I think they lost more men than any other time.

Did the men talk about how dangerous it was?

Uh-huh, they did. I didn't happen to have any of my family working there at the time because my brother that was here had a gas station, one of those gas places where you brought gas to the people's houses. But none of my family were working out there.

What was the medical community like here?

It was good. They had Dr. Woodbury and Dr. Balcomb. They had good doctors. I know I had my children with them. Well, I had Gloria at home because my mother was a midwife and she wanted to come down. And she helped me deliver. But I had Richard at the Las Vegas Hospital with Dr. Woodbury. They were very good.

Why do you think people say that medicine is not good here and people go away to other places?

I don't know why to be truthful with you. I've always had good luck with my doctor.

But you are so healthy. You're 93. What is your secret?

I'm 96.

Ninety-six. Ooh, what did I say? Ninety-six. So what was your secret?

Well, I don't drink and I don't smoke. I try to take care -- you know, eat proper foods and get the exercise. I kind of have a positive attitude and I try to be kind and good to people. I'm not a person that likes to criticize, you know, just like when you say talking about the black people. I would just fume when I'd hear people talk and saying bad things about them. I'm one of those kinds of people that likes to have peace. And I do. And I have lots of friends.

Good. And that has kept you active.

I try to take good care of myself.

What about the Strip? Casinos started on the Strip in the late 40s.

Yeah, in the late 40s.

You were here when it started.

Yes, I was.

Comparing it from the beginning until now, what have you seen?

Well, I've seen too much crime and things like that is what I've seen and it makes me sad. Just like when I was talking about the red light district, we didn't have to worry about going out at night. Nobody molested you. We could walk anyplace in town and not have to -- you didn't even have to look doors. You know, after it gets started booming, all these people that came to town, of course, they claim there's lots of bad people.

Do you know a lot of people who worked on the Strip?

Well, that's where my husband did for a while. He worked at the Tropicana.

How did the church see the Strip or see those kinds of jobs?

Well, let's see. They preferred that you didn't work there. But if you do and you go to church and do the things and do what you're supposed to, it's okay. But other than that, they'd rather you wouldn't. But if that's the job you have and you're doing the right thing and staying out of -- you know, paying your tithing --

Okay. At first the casinos were owned by families.

Yes.

Tell me about that time.

I don't remember it. What do you mean owned by families? You mean --

The mob.

Oh, the mob.

So what did you hear about that in the community?

Well, just always that just stay away from that kind of environment. But, yet, more people moved here. More people moved here and then it kept getting where, you know, it really wasn't a good environment. Of course, they're beautiful places I'll admit. If you're in the family, it's a good place -- I mean I know when my husband worked, he used to send people off because he said you've got a family and you shouldn't be here; you shouldn't be gambling.

Wow.

Even though he wasn't. He was a dealer. But he was pretty cautious about it. Of course, he didn't let the boss know that he was --

Yes. Right.

If he knew somebody that shouldn't be there, he would kind of discourage them to come. Just like I say it doesn't matter what it is, you're not going to make any money by gambling there because they wouldn't all be here if you did.

That's right.

Those places wouldn't be there if you made the money that some people think you can.

Yeah. What have you thought about the political life here in this city? We have a mayor who's kind of outspoken. How do you see that?

It's hard for me to say. Like I say I try to not be critical. He's evidently doing a good job or he wouldn't be there. And he was elected by the people. So I support him. I don't like his personality, of course. But he's got a lot of good --

Good qualities?

-- qualities. Yes, he does.

The pharmacy you worked at also had a pharmacy named White Cross. That was very popular.

Yes, it was.

Now, did all of them serve food? I mean in addition to the sodas and everything.

Well, they served sandwiches and all, delicious.

Why do we hear so much about the food at White Cross and we didn't hear so much about the food at other two?

I don't know.

You think they served the same kind of food?

I thought they did. Because it was probably right in the middle of Fremont Street and then there were two or three clothing stores close by, Fanny's Dress Shop, and the bowling alley was right next to that. There's a lot of places closer to the White Cross and any of the rest of them. It was right square in the middle of Fremont Street. And I think that's one of the reasons that they were the busiest of all.

Ah, okay.

Because they were right there. And they were quite of few lawyers that lived across the street.

In John S. Park?

Uh-huh.

Did you ever hear about that John S. Park community?

Well, yeah. My sister's two boys went there. They did real good. It's a good little school. I understand it was.

Yes. Now, did you ever know anything about that neighborhood surrounding that school?

No.

Because that neighborhood is the first one that was put on the National Register of Historic Places.

Oh, it was?

Yes.

Oh, I have to think about it. I guess that's right too.

Yes. What do you feel is the future of a city like this?

I'm hoping that this recession will get better. I think it will. Of course, I may not live to see it. But I think it will get better.

I think so too. And I don't think it's going to take it as long as --

I don't think it is either. It's just if some of these political people quit bickering back and forth and get on the ball and get this -- most people that have got money, if they'd spent it like it's supposed to be --

Yes. Yes. Your husband passed away --

In 1987.

Oh, 1987. So you had a real long marriage.

It will be 22 years next month that he passed away. We were married 54 years.

Oh, my God. And when you got ready to get married, you went back home to get married?

Yes. What happened was we were going to get married in June. And we decided to go up and he was going to ask my mom and dad like he should. So when we got up there, why, my sister that was living there, she said, why don't you go ahead and get married while you're here? So we went ahead. My mother called the bishop and he came over to our house. My mother and my sister were the witnesses when we got married. And we come back to Las Vegas.

So now, can anybody go into the temple?

No. You have to have a recommend. You have to be of good standing in the church. And then you pay your tithing.

Before you can go into the temple?

No. You can go inside just the one room there when you first go in. You can't go any further. If you're going just to wait and see somebody, if you like to you can come in there. We call it the foyer. But you can't go any further than that without a recommend.

Now, what is a recommend?

I'll show it to you.

Oh, it's something tangible. Oh, okay. So a recommend is like a little smaller than a credit card, like a Social Security card. And it has the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and it has your name on it.

Yes. And that tells you when it expires. You better be in good standing when it expires so you can get it renewed again.

Now, do you know that yours needs to be renewed?

In June, yes. In May.

2008.

2010. They're two years.

Oh, so two years after that date. I see. So now, who gets a recommend? Who gets to use this?

Me.

I understand. But --

I'm the only person that has this. The only person that has this recommend is me.

So who would ordinarily be chosen to get one of those? How do you get one?

You have to be in good standing with the church. And then you have to talk to your bishop. You have a stake president. And you have to go through quite a few channels. And you have to answer a lot of questions.

And then you can worship in a temple?

Oh, yes. You can go to the temple.

So if you went to Salt Lake City, you could go into the big, nice, beautiful temple there?

Uh-huh. This lets me go to any temple in the world.

Oh, my goodness. When I went to Africa, I went to a country named Ghana, West Africa.

And they had the Mormon Church there.

Did they?

Yes. I was very surprised.

Yeah. They have them there. They're getting them all over the world now days.

Yes, they are.

The lady who recommended me to come to see you, her name was Karen. She thought that you had a greater association with the fort.

I don't know. Like I say all the things they have on Saturday night. I go to the temple on Saturday. And I support it, but I don't have a lot to do with it. Marla Weaver -- you've got her name -- she's a woman that -- she's really the big shot of the --

What is her first name?

Marla.

Marla. M-A-R-L-A?

Uh-huh.

Okay. Weaver.

Marla Weaver. She's really in charge of it. Bless her heart, she works real hard. Of course a few years ago there was a lot now there's like three others. But they're kind of retired and not able to -- and it takes a lot of time to be down there.

Oh, I can imagine. I can imagine all the --

And she does. She's a very devoted person.

I think I have covered most of the items that I wanted to talk about. Is there anything else that you think is important to early Las Vegas that you would like to talk about? You made a few notes. So tell me what you have there.

Like I said Fremont was a big place at that time. They had a Safeway on there. They had a modern market.

Is that where you did your grocery shopping?

That's where we did. Of course, they don't have a Safeway anymore. In fact, they don't have any markets on Fremont Street anymore.

So what were some of the other places on Fremont Street that you liked to go to?

Like I said there were several women's clothing stores. One was called Fanny's. That's where I bought all my clothes at the time. Of course, Alan Hanson Clothing store there. Then Jack Price had a clothing store. There was, of course, a theater there. There was the Swanky Club along Fremont Street that was real popular. They had the best chicken you've ever had. We went there every Sunday. My husband, after the children were born, he would work nights so much. Then he'd only get to -- after they'd gone to school, he'd only get to see them during the weekend. So we always went out there.

Oh, that's nice.

And they had the best chicken and real cheap.

What was the name of that place?

Swanky Club. And then there was also --

Did the Swanky Club also have dancing?

I think it did. It was a regular place and they had a real good place to eat. That's where we went

to eat.

So we covered most of the things you have on there?

I think we have.

What kinds of activities does -- the pioneer club that you're a part of, what kinds of activities do you have?

Oh, you mean the Utah Pioneers --

The Utah Pioneers.

Every month we have a lesson about the pioneers. And we have our songs, pioneer songs. Somebody writes a history if somebody wants to write your own history or history of some of your ancestors. We have one of those every month. Somebody writes it. And, oh, [it's] so interesting to hear about our ancestors way back in the 1800s and 1700s.

So have you delivered yours?

Uh-huh.

Your family history?

Yeah.

Do you remember anything from that family history that maybe you haven't mentioned today?

Let's see. Of course, like I said my mother and dad, they lost three little children during an epidemic in Parowan -- two little boys and one girl.

An epidemic of what?

It was called diphtheria. They call it now days the flu or something another. They lost two little boys. They're buried in the same grave. There was a lot of sadness in there. But that was before I was born. That was in the 1800s when the first children were born.

A few minutes ago you were saying that when your group gets together someone teaches a lesson.

Uh-huh, somebody teaches the lesson. We get a little book in the mail every month. And they take that. And then there's pioneer stories that tells all about different -- the truth.

So that's like an oral history almost.

Yes, it is. I could get you one and show you one.

Oh, good. I'd like to see one of those.

So we're looking at one of the books from the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers. And this is lessons from April 2008. The Settlement of Northern Mexico by Utah Pioneers. And this one was done by Mary Harris. And, wow, it is wonderful.

So you can have that if you'd like to.

Oh, really? Thank you.

And they're nice. There are lots of nice stories in there. If you'd like to read them, it tells you all about our Pioneers.

So now, does everybody put one together like this?

No. You have to subscribe for it. But we have to have -- one of the ladies that gives the lesson, she makes sure she gets one. But since I've been -- I always send for mine.

Oh, this is great. Now, is somebody trained to give these lessons?

No. We just volunteer to do them.

Yes. We'll put that in the back of your book as the appendix in the back of the book. When we finish with this -- we're going to have this transcribed. And then we're going to bind it into a small book. And you'll get a copy of it. It won't be right away because we have so many. But you'll get a copy of that. So before I leave here today, I'd love to have a photograph also, one of your photographs so that I can put it in your book.

You would, huh?

Yes. Yes. Oh, this is a nice photograph. Thank you. This is perfect. We'll use that.

That's the latest one I have taken.

This is perfect. So who's in the graduation picture?

That's my great-granddaughter.

She's graduating from college or high school?

From high school. Just this last year. She's going to UNLV in medical school.

Oh, wonderful.

Bless her heart. She's going to UNLV.

That is great.

As long as you've been here since 1931, what about the city is the most impressive

change that affects you the most?

Well, the most impressive thing that has affected me was how the LDS Church, the Mormon Church has grown because that's where I belong. It's grown to so many -- I don't know how many. I should have got that.

And then like I say the schools, we've got lots of schools. We've got lots of kids going to school. I love the schools. The kids that are going are good kids. But those that are dropping out makes me sad. And there's a lot of them that are doing that right now.

Yes. Because the future for them will be very bleak.

Yes.

You lived in the downtown area almost ever since you've been here. How do you like the Fremont Street Experience?

Well, I went there once, but I couldn't tell you too much about it.

But did you like it before when you could drive all the way through?

Yes, I did. And a friend and I -- she's passed away now -- but she lived here. Her and I walked up -- oh, for seven years we walked every morning up Fremont Street. That was way back in -- let's see. She's been gone since my husband. I guess she's been gone about 15 years. But her and I, we used to walk up Fremont. It was so nice. We could walk and not be bothered.

How do you get exercise now?

Well, just more or less walking is all. I don't do it because I made the mistake of walking up the steps and I fell and pulled my muscles. And I've been kind of -- that's almost three years ago. I've been kind of where I can't do a lot of things that I'd like to do. I mowed my lawn for years, both lawns. But my son won't let me do that anymore.

Does your son live here?

He lives, oh, Eastland Heights they call it.

Oh, this is great.

He worked for the vector control in the county for 40 years. He just retired a couple years ago.

This is wonderful. I really appreciate this information. This is the kind of information we want to look at the old days and the Strip and the church and all of that. We want to see --
They say this little place was just a beautiful place at one time. But now it's kind of falling down.

You have to walk around to notice. It isn't kept up like it used to be, which is sad. And I am really the only original. To be truthful I'm the only original one still here in the Biltmore Addition.

You're the original person in the community?

Uh-huh.

Oh, my goodness.

I've been here ever since they were built. But we used to have a lot of our church people that lived here. They're all either gone or passed away or moved away.

Now, the Biltmore Hotel, did they do a lot of things for local people?

I think they did.

But you never went to any of the affairs there?

No. I'm not much of these -- like I say I'm kind of a quiet person. I like to stay home. I like to go to -- I love people. But I really have enough to do that I can enjoy myself at home.

That is wonderful. That is so wonderful. I thank you so much, Mrs. Hicks. This is wonderful.

Well, I hope I've given you something useful.

Oh, definitely.

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