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An Interview with Charlotte Hill

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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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

Charlotte Hill's arrival in Las Vegas was not an instant love affair. She had grown up in Cincinnati, Ohio, and in comparison Las Vegas "was the worst place I had ever been." The year was 1952. Her husband had taken a job with the Sands casino. Over the next six decades Charlotte would become an honored volunteer and community activist.

Her first organization was the Brownies as a mother and soon was involved with the Frontier Girl Scout Council, about which she shares a delightful story about cookie sales. In 1962, she was a charter member of the Home of the Good Shepherd. In 1972, she founded the Friends of Channel 10 and became innovative and active in fundraising for public broadcasting. By 1974, she was the United Way's first woman campaign chairperson, a quite successful one who helped exceed the one-million dollar goal during economically difficult times.

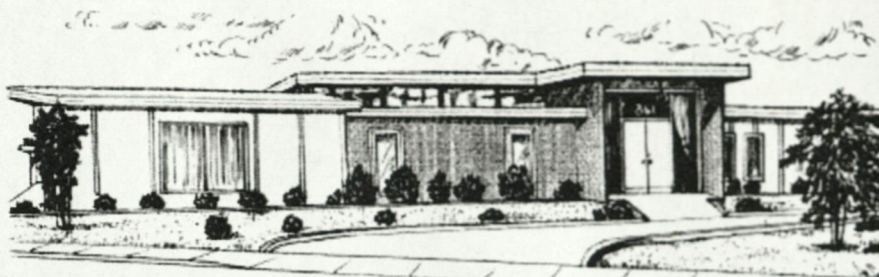
Her other milestones included serving on Economic Opportunity Board, board of Boys and Girls Clubs of Las Vegas, as president of the Community College of southern Nevada Foundation and most recently being named to the Nevada State Board of Education.

Charlotte's community efforts have made a difference in countless people's lives. She has been acknowledged numerous times, but counts the Alexis de Tocqueville Award from United Way of America as a crowning achievement.

In addition to her volunteer work, she is a fashion consultant with the Carlisle Collection.

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Boyer Las Vegas Oral History Project



Biographical Questionnaire

Name: *Charlotte Hill*
Address: *3111 Bel Air Dr. Apt 308*
Phone: Day *735-5414* Evening: *Home*
Date of Birth: *10/15/25*
Mother's name and occupation: *Katherine Gelman, Homemaker*
Father's name and occupation: *Harry Gelman, VP Hisey Tool & Die Co.*
Year you arrived in Nevada: *1952*
Where you spent your childhood: *Cincinnati, Ohio*
If married, name and occupation of spouse: *Widow*
Date and place of marriage: *7/12/46, Newport, KY*
Your current occupation: *Fashion Consultant + Community Activist*
Your current community activities:





This is Claytee White. It is May 4th, 2009. And I'm in the home of Charlotte Hill here in Las Vegas.

So how are you doing today?

I'm doing just fine. How are you?

Great. The first thing I want to ask you -- usually I start with your early life. But I love your furniture.

Thank you.

Is this from your travels?

No, not at all. The breakfront was in our house on the Desert Inn golf course. And I have moved it each place I have lived since then.

Well, it is beautiful.

Thank you. And some of the pieces in there were in the curio cabinet of my grandmother and in the house where I lived as a child.

So where did you grow up?

I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Tell me about that.

Well, what would you like to know?

Just what it was like growing up there, what your parents did for a living, how you left there.

All right. Cincinnati was a very wonderful place to grow up as far as culture and education, which I certainly appreciate to this day. My father's occupation was -- he worked for a company my uncle owned and he was the vice president of a -- it was a machine tool and die company called Hisey Wolf. And my mother was a homemaker.

Any brothers and sisters?

No. I'm an only child.

Okay. So now, did you go to college?

Yes, I did. I graduated from the University of Cincinnati.

And how did you get to Las Vegas?

That's a good question. My husband was in the hotel/casino business. And we moved here a week before the opening of the Sands where he was going to be employed.

And what was his position there?

He was in the casino, whatever the title was at the time. I'm not quite sure whether it was a floorman or what the position was.

Okay. So now, is that why you came to the Morelli and His Music program a couple weeks ago?

I came because I had lived around the corner from them, or rather they built around the corner from where we lived because it was -- we built the third house on Country Club Lane. And so I was there before Antonio Morelli built there.

So did you get close to Helen?

I knew Helen. I was in the house probably once or twice. When I came to the house last month, the front part of it looked familiar. But I knew I had never been in the bedrooms or beyond the living room and probably the library space.

Great. So did it bring back any memories?

That was always my favorite house, not the Morellis' house, our house on the Desert Inn Country Club. It was a wonderful place to live. You looked out on the backyard of like 365 acres of the golf course and the most magnificent view of the Strip, which of course was far less extensive than what it is today.

So which year did you and your husband come to Las Vegas?

1952.

Tell me about what Las Vegas was like in 1952.

I have to be honest. It was the worst place I had ever been. I was not sure I would survive even living here a year.

Why?

Well, it certainly was culture shock. I love fashion. The stores were far from what I was used to. And it just was not a wonderful place to live at that time. And, in fact, there was no place to live. And I think we moved about four times in ten days.

So where did you start? Where was the first place?

Oh, in some motel. And, finally, we learned from someone about an apartment that was going to be available on -- I think at that time it was called South Fourth Place. We had to pay so-called

under the table to make sure that we got that apartment.

But you got it.

But we got it.

And was it a nice place?

No.

I was afraid of that. So how long did you have to live there?

I'm not quite sure how long we were in that location. I think the next stop was a house that we rented on Griffith, a street or so off Oakey Boulevard, in the old Huntridge area. And let's see. The next one after that we rented a house on South Seventh Street. Then we moved. Probably at that point, the owners of the house were coming back to Las Vegas. And so we had to move again. And then we were going to build a house. But in the meantime while it was being built, we lived in the old Francisco Park.

Now, when you were on Seventh Street, was that John S. Park? Was that the area?

Yes.

Okay. So that area was relatively new at the time.

It had been a good residential area. And, of course, John S. Park was probably the best elementary school at the time. Yes.

So when did they start building the places on the golf course of Desert Inn?

There were houses on the Desert Inn side. And then on Country Club Lane there were two other houses. And then we bought the lot, I think it was in 1956, and finally were able to move into the house—building didn't go too quickly—in 1957.

So this is the first house that you really liked?

Yes. The others were temporary residences.

So you must have been talking back and forth to your parents from '52 to '56. What did your parents think about this place from your conversations?

My father unfortunately had died in 1950. And then my mother came out to visit several times. And then she eventually moved here.

How did you talk her into moving here?

She was a widow. And by that time her mother had passed away. So she moved out here.

But were you beginning to like the place more, in '56 at least?

Anything would have been more than my initial impression.

Okay. Tell me about the house on the Desert Inn golf course. Describe it to me.

It was a ranch style, one floor. I loved that house. And then in 1973 I think it was we completely remodeled the house and added on to it. Then it was just -- oh, answered all of my needs and, you know, things that I really wanted to see in a house.

So tell me what the '73 version was like.

The '73 version, we had added on. Well, what had been the family room had been converted into a dining room. And beyond that, we added on a huge family room with parquet floors, which no one in Las Vegas knew what a parquet floor was nor was there anyone here who could install the floor. And we brought the workmen up from Los Angeles to put the floor in. And then there was just a fabulous cabinetmaker here. The company was called I believe Hoffmeister. And they installed and built all of the cabinets. Even then I was involved in many, many organizations. And beneath the cabinets and the slate countertop I had all built-in filing cabinets of the same wood. And it was just a perfect room to work in and to entertain in. I just really loved that house.

Great. So how did you feel when all of those houses had to be sold?

We had been long gone by then.

Oh, I see.

Yes. So we sold the house and moved in 1981. So we were not there during the period of time when Steve Wynn was purchasing the houses.

You had already moved here.

No. We had moved around the corner to Pinehurst Drive.

Okay, good. Tell me about --

Can we go back one moment to Country Club Lane?

Yes.

I took this out this morning so I could show it to you. And as you can see, it's old and I taped it together. Jean Paul King -- you can read about him there, about what his contribution to our news media and to acting was. He built the first house on Country Club Lane.

So did he live in Las Vegas at the time?

Yes, he did. And at the time when we bought the lot he was selling the lots for the Desert Inn hotel that owned the property. And Jean built the first house, he and his wife. And the second house was owned and built by Dwight Hoopes and his wife, who was the chief engineer for the power company. And the reason I'm telling you this is that we had waited so long for our house to be completed I finally said to my husband let's just move in even if it's not entirely completed. Well, no one told me that there hadn't been an electrical inspection and there wasn't any power. And Dwight Hoopes connected some very, very, very long extension cord from his house through the window of our utility room so I'd have some light in the house.

What a great neighbor.

Yes. But anyway, I wanted to show you this that I had kept after he and his wife and child moved to Los Angeles. And then there's a note on the back of that that he had written to me.

That's good history.

When we went to see the program, Morelli and His Music, tell me what that night meant to you.

There were some wonderful memories of sitting in the Sands' showroom and having seen all of the stars. And I had listened to Antonio Morelli many, many, many times. And it was just a wonderful place to be at that time and to have the opportunity to see all of those stars.

So at one point, then, at least for entertainment, Las Vegas began to be okay with you?

Entertainment-wise, yes.

That's great. Describe the Sands showroom to me. Why did people like that Copa Room so much?

I guess now you'd have to say it was an intimate kind of venue. It wasn't some 4,000-seat showroom where maybe the entertainer is down on the stage and could be like a speck down there as far as your visibility.

That's true. For a place that you didn't like so much you really, really got involved. How did that involvement start for you?

It absolutely was out of the blue. My daughter wanted to be a Brownie. And I went to a meeting for the parents of the children who wanted to be in the troop. And a lady who had been a Brownie leader the year before said, oh, if you will take this troop, I would be your co-leader. Well, I'm

sure she knew very well at the time that she was going to move. Anyway, she moved to North Las Vegas, which could have been like in another world for me at that time, and there I was with 16 little Brownies and no help. So that's how I started with the Frontier Girl Scout Council. And very shortly I wound up being on the board. I guess I knew that I was going to be able to contribute more, or thought I could, working with the adults. But I did continue with the troop until the time that -- at that time I think they were called intermediate Girl Scouts. And then by that time I was, say, a district chairman. I was the vice president of the council and so forth and just could not continue and do justice to all of them. So I made sure that there was another troop leader for the girls.

So tell me what a troop leader actually does.

At that time we had meetings where -- I don't know if it's still the same -- the girls would come to the house. I actually had a lot of the meetings in a couple of the houses of the parents because my husband was in the hotel business and sleeping during the day. And so I would have the meeting at home of one of the girls parents. And then you met with them. You went through the Girl Scout program with them. There were things -- I guess I shouldn't even be admitting that like I didn't even know how to thread -- or couldn't thread a needle or make a bed, but I learned how to do it so I could teach them. So anyway, the Girl Scout program to me always advocated the intelligence in promoting not just activities but that the girls were learning and adhering to the Girl Scout promise.

What is the Girl Scout promise?

I knew you would ask me that. I should never have -- on my honor I will try to do my best, yes, et cetera.

Okay, good. As part of the adults running the program here, what kinds of activities or what kinds of things did you have to do?

I worked with the leaders, gave them support services. I became a trainer. I did a lot of the training of the Girl Scouts and went to numerous training sessions that were given by regional and national people. I have to say that the Girl Scouts had some of the best training materials and adults that they brought into the national Girl Scout organization that were excellent. They really had some great people.

So what do you think Girl Scouts, the organization, does for a young lady?

I think it gives them what now everybody is concerned with, the self-esteem of the girls. I think it provides skills and, as they get older, career learning opportunities. So it is a well-rounded program. And, of course, camping, which I was never proficient in. But I saw what camping offered. And eventually, not connected with the Girl Scouts, but I founded and still run the Las Vegas Sun Summer Camp Fund.

Good. One of the things that I know about the Girl Scouts -- and I buy a box every year -- is those cookies.

Oh, the cookies.

Oh, those cookies are great.

Well, that brings up a cookie story.

Okay, good.

As a district chairman I was over all the leaders and the troops that were selling cookies in this area. And at the time Paradise Valley was a really kind of barren area. There were mobile homes out there and so forth. And this is when what is now Boyd Law School was Paradise Elementary School on Tropicana.

Oh, that little building. Okay.

On Tropicana. Well, the law school is there.

Well, do you know where the law school is now?

Yeah.

You know it's on campus. It's the old library building.

Well, where it had been on Tropicana --

That's right. Yes.

-- and Swenson was the Paradise Elementary School.

That's right. Yes.

Anyway, this leader had ordered for her Brownie troop just I can't tell you how many hundreds of cases of cookies. And I thought where she lives the people cannot support this. What is she going to do with these cookies? Well, this leader I guess took her little Brownies, I'm not sure, with her and went to the Strip hotels, which she was not supposed to do, getting in to see the presidents of

these hotels. And the presidents were too embarrassed I guess not to buy all these cookies. And I was just horrified and had the wonderful job of going back to these presidents of these hotels -- the Sands, the Hilton, different ones -- and offering to return their money. And, of course, oh, no, I wanted to buy, you know. Including a man by the name of Jackie Freedman, who was the president of the Sands hotel. And Jackie Freedman was not about to admit that he had been coerced into buying these cookies.

What did they do with them?

I have no idea what they did with them.

Oh, that's a good story.

Earlier you had said that you got involved because of your daughter. How many children did you have?

I have two daughters.

Okay. So they both caused you to be involved.

So really what you just told me about the Girl Scouts, we really already had the mechanism in place for everything that we're trying to do today to help girls.

It was just an early version. It's like everything new -- or old is new again.

Yes. But you were already doing that.

So tell me about the United Way. How did you get involved in that? And were you doing all these things at the same time, Girl Scouts and United Way?

Yes. I got involved through my involvement with the Girl Scouts. And when the United -- well, it was United Fund to begin with. I guess at the time I was probably vice president of the Girl Scouts and was there for the initial kickoff of the United Fund. And then when I became president a couple of years later then I was on the board of the United Fund.

Now, the United Fund means that you had to raise lots of money.

Yes. Yes. It changed the name and became United Way. Later on the name was changed. And then in 1974 I was the first woman campaign chairman.

So what did that mean? What did you have to do as campaign chairman?

Well, the president of United Way at that time was a gentleman by the name of Dick Schofield, who was president of the Sahara hotel. And Dick had called me and asked me to meet him for

lunch. And, you know, I thought, oh, he's got some other committee or whatever he wants me to serve on. And this was 1973 when the economy was bad, probably not as bad as it is right now, but the economy was bad here. There was an oil shortage. It was when feminism was coming into its own or just starting. And Dick asked me to be the United Way -- yeah, I guess it was United Way then -- campaign chair.

Well, I thought there were two reasons. One, it would be politically correct to ask a woman. And, two, the economy was bad and probably anybody who did it was going to fail. So it might as well be a woman. Those were all the things going through my mind.

So it was for the 1974 campaign. And it was the first year that our United Way had a goal of a million dollars, which was considered a huge amount then. And the campaign was successful and we went over a million.

So how did you feel?

I felt on top of the world that I was able to do this as the first woman campaign chair, but even more was able to raise that kind of money to help all of the agencies that were providing the social, human care services.

Right. To do something like that means that you must have gotten to know everybody in the town who had any kind of funds at all.

Yes, I did.

So what did that mean for all of these other things that we're going to talk about that you began to be a part of, Boys and Girls Club and --

It's something that enables you to carry those contacts over to whatever organization you're involved in provided it's something that is worthwhile. If it's not anything that I believe in, I cannot do it. So I mean everybody knew me. They knew what I stood for. I'm sure you're familiar with the name Paul McDermott.

Yes.

And Paul was on the United Way board as well. When I would go down to his office at Cragin & Pike downtown and they would let him know that I was out there, he used to walk out with his checkbook and say, *How much do you want?* And, you know, it was wonderful being able to go to all of these people and ask them to help support what I considered a worthwhile organization.

Oh, that's great. That is wonderful.

Now, after that or during the same time because I think you started back in 1962 -- what is the Home of the Good Shepherd? What is that about?

It was a home for teenage girls. Some of the programs that I guess they have or schools in other communities were for unwed mothers. Ours was not. There were girls that were like pre-delinquent and would benefit from this kind of discipline and education. And we started the home. I was one of the charter members. There were twenty of us. And the home was over on Twain just off Paradise. I think it's probably where there are apartments now. I think it might be an apartment building. But there was the home. That was the first Home of the Good Shepherd that we had before we built the one out on Ann Road, which was really considered far out at that time.

Oh, I can image. What kinds of programs did The Good Shepherd provide for young women?

It was a school. And so the nuns were there. They were teachers. And then they worked through the court system, too, in taking the girls. And then some were privately placed where like someone we knew, their teenage daughter had taken their car and gone off, you know, and they weren't really very bad, but they did need some more supervision and structured life than what the parents were able to give them.

So do you think that was a successful program or is successful?

It was. It no longer exists here.

So of these things so far, what did you enjoy most?

That's kind of a hard question because all of the organizations to which I devoted my time and energy I felt were going to improve the quality of life for teenagers, youth, adults. And, of course, I have been devoting a great deal of my time since 1971 to public broadcasting both on a local and national level.

How did you get involved in that?

It was when I was president of the Help Center, which started out as being the Volunteer Bureau, then Voluntary Action Center, and then the name was changed to the Help Center. And one of the people on the board asked -- she was employed at Channel 10, at KLVX, which at that time was

out at Vo-Tech. And she asked me if I would come and meet the station manager and listen to what he had to say about something. So I said I would come out there and meet him. And strangely enough, not spelled the same way, his name was Jack Lemmon.

And I went out to meet him. And he told me that there had been -- or there was a new organization called the National Friends of Public Broadcasting and there was going to be a national conference in New York and would I be interested in going and naturally looking at starting a Friends group here. And it was probably a book about this size or bigger with materials. So I said I would take it home and I would read it. And this was 1971. I mean it probably was the best-kept secret. There weren't many people who knew that KLVX Channel 10 even existed at the time.

And so I did read all the material and went back and talked to Jack and said, you know, that I run the Sun Summer Camp Fund and that there is no way I could go to the conference, but there was no way that I could even think about doing anything until the fall.

And going to the conference in New York I met a lot of interesting women who had been founding members and who had started Friends groups in Chicago and New York and Salt Lake City and Houston I think, different ones. And what they were doing overall sounded very worthwhile and something that I would like to try to establish here. But then I listened to what they were doing in Salt Lake for a fundraising vehicle, and I thought whatever that is I've got to do the opposite. They were having a Las Vegas night for their fundraiser. So I knew I had to come up with something that would be original. So anyway, I came back and after the summer began to work on organizing and founding the Friends of Channel 10.

Who were some of the people that you invited to be a part of this?

I had a board. Irwin Kishner is a name you might recognize. I had asked Irwin Kishner, Jewel Brooks, Charlene Scott and Steve Nicholson, who was the president of the community college at that time. What I did was kind of look at something that the FCC used to require, which was an ascertainment study of interviewing and going through the community and making sure that the licensee was serving all these people is kind of the best way I can explain it to you. And it also told you what kind of representation you needed to have there in order to accomplish this. And I kind of looked at that and used all of those categories for the basis of bringing people onto the

board, as well as I looked through the very, very little filing drawer they had of donors at the time and brought in some of those people. Edythe Katz, now Edythe Yarchever, was on the board. I'm trying to remember who else was there at the time.

But that's good. That's excellent. And so you began to get these people in. And what was your first fundraiser?

Well, the first one, not that I did but the station did, was going back and forth out to the station for this little on-air fundraiser that they truthfully did not know much about doing things like that. I think I went back and forth eight times that day. And it was like out in the boonies, or so we thought, off of Russell Road at that time. And another one, the SIP or the Station Independent Program for public broadcasting was not in existence. So there was at that time a station manager and a general manager. But the station manager bought some programming. And I think he paid more than what we raised on the air. And I said please do not do this again. If you need money tell me how much and I will try and raise that money for you.

But the first big fundraiser that I did was in 1972 at Caesars Palace. And it was called The Auctioneer. I started something that had never been done here, a live remote broadcast from Caesars. And Muriel Stevens and I did the interviews of the people who were attending. People dressed in their very finest. We had a fabulous store here called Joseph Magnum at the time. And everybody was there buying their gowns and going for makeup for hundreds of dollars. I forget the name of the famous hairdresser and makeup artist who was doing the different people who came.

And what I did was I had the general manager Ron Hawley get permission from PBS in order for us to be able to auction what is now called program underwriting, the right to have their name or the company's name associated with the program. And I did get a Corporation for Public Broadcasting Award for that. That was kind of the beginning of underwriting. My auctioneer was Danny Thomas. And then he had a protégé with him. I think his first name, too, was Danny, but his last name was Prophit. And he had written a song called "The Auctioneer." And so that was the theme music that we used on our on-air promotion and there at the event. And we had different stars that came in who were on the Strip. And we did it all on live television. And people—it was unbelievable—sat at home and watched this whole thing that went for like about

four hours. So it was a very successful on-air fundraiser.

So people could call and bid on things?

Not that year, but the second year. This was all the audience bidding on the programs. And the menu was designed by Julia Child. She couldn't come, but she did create the menu. And that was another humorous adventure because the first course that she had said we should have for this elaborate, wonderful dinner was le truite en gelee. And I called the producer of her program and said where do you think in Las Vegas we are going to get the fresh trout in order to provide this? Well, there's a trout farm close to you in the Midwest. I don't remember. You know, she had no idea, no conception whatsoever where Las Vegas was. She was in Boston. So anyway, it was a very, very successful event.

Great. So tell me what are some of the items that you're auctioning?

We auctioned the actual programs so that I had a program booklet that said the McNeil/Leher News Hour, X number of dollars to underwrite 13 weeks or a year or whatever.

I see. Yes.

Sesame Street. Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. One person -- I don't know if the name Duckworth would mean anything to you. George Duckworth was at the Dunes hotel. And Kim was there and they had small children at the time. And she went to the phone -- there weren't cell phones, obviously, at that time -- and called her husband could she buy this and have the children's names on it? So that was the concept.

Wow. What a great idea.

So we did that for three years. And the second year I brought in volunteers and had them at a phone bank and also had some of the volunteers in their gowns and all going from table to table. And the people in the audience, as well as those who called in, could bid on the program.

That's a great idea.

So we did that for three years. Then it was getting to be a very successful event, but it looked like our production crew needed more of a challenge. And anyway, what I did then was the next year I sent out a letter and said you won't have to come to another boring dinner, and if we are able to raise X number of dollars by such and such a time, we will give you a thank-you party. And we televised that at the Jockey Club, which was fairly new at the time.

Wonderful. So it was like a stay-at-home --

Yes. It was stay-at-home. But I mean the people came that were going to be on television again and so forth.

Oh, great. Oh, that's wonderful.

It surprised me to see on some of the things that you've done that you were part of the Economic Opportunity Board.

Yes, I was.

How did you get involved in that?

I was representing United Way on the board. And then my term had expired, the Green Amendment came in and so forth. And then the County Commission had a representative on the board and the late Tom Wiesner asked me if I would represent the County Commission on the board.

So tell me what kinds of things were going on? Was this in the 1970s?

60s, 70s.

1960s, okay. So you must have known Ruby Duncan?

I certainly did. Ruby's a doll.

Yes, she is.

So tell me some of the programs that were going through that Economic Opportunity Board at that time, if you remember them.

We were looking at various programs that were going to be self-help programs, Head Start, which I thought was wonderful.

So you knew Lubertha Johnson?

I certainly did know Lu and all of her wonderful hats. Yes. And they were all good friends.

I spent a great deal of time over at EOB when it was on Owens and had lots of good experiences and bad. I was very involved in the planning. In 1967, there became some summer crash monies that were available. And the idea came to me that I would like to start a camping program with those summer crash monies. And then I built into it a program for CITs, or counselor in training if you're not familiar with that, so there would be some small stipend and that these teenagers could go to camp and, hopefully, it would build into some kind of summer

employment for them.

And Fay Mullen worked there at the time. I don't know if that's a name that's familiar to you. Her brother, called Moon Mullen, was a judge and probably the first black judge in this community. And I worked with Fay. And she and I went door to door trying to recruit kids that we wanted to send to camp. We were not all that well received because a lot of the mothers, they wanted those little older kids to watch the younger ones and they were leery about having the kids, maybe the eight-, nine- and ten-year-olds, go to camp. But we actually went door to door trying to recruit kids and did this for several years, or two and a half years I guess. And Fay and I ran that program.

Then the OEO decided that you could only use ten-percent of the money for recreational purposes, which meant there was like \$3200, I think. Well, I wasn't going to be able to do much with that. So that's when I looked into starting my idea of the Sun Camp Fund. And that's when I went to Hank Greenspun with my idea of having it be the Las Vegas Sun Camp Fund.

So tell me about that. Obviously, he went along with it.

Hank went along with it. He had had the experience as a child back east of going to I think it was called the Fresh Air Camping Program in New York or back there and thought it was a great idea. And Ruthe Deskin was the assistant to the publisher. Hank assigned Ruthe to work with me. I formed a board and had it incorporated. It's a 501(c)(3). Started the first program. Let me get something for you.

So now, how recent is this brochure?

Last week.

So you're still doing this.

I am still doing that.

Go ahead and make that statement again.

I went to Hank Greenspun at the Las Vegas Sun newspaper. And Hank loved my idea of starting a camp fund for disadvantaged children. And as I said before he assigned Ruthe Deskin, who was the assistant to the publisher, to work with me in getting the stories in the newspaper about the children we were going to be able to send and, of course, not using any names, but circumstances and why these children needed to have a camping experience.

And so this, by the time I got it all legalized so to speak and ready for us to start a camping program, it was probably in July of that year and there were not many camping slots available. So we only sent 13 children to camp that first summer. And this last year, 2008, we sent 1202 children, disadvantaged children to camp at an expense of almost \$400,000. So we have come a long way. I am proud to say that in the past 38 years we've sent thousands of needy children to camp.

What do you think the camp experience does for children?

I think really it is a life-changing experience. They are learning not just camping skills and how to build a fire or commune with nature, but they are learning how to get along with other children. They are meeting children from other areas, not just of this city, because more than 70 percent of the children we have to send out of state to camp because we don't have enough facilities here. So they are meeting children that come from California that live in California and live in Arizona and Utah. And it's just a whole new experience. And in some cases the food is different. It's a whole new life-changing experience.

So where are some of the places that you have to send kids since we don't have enough camping areas?

The children go to camp in -- some will go in Big Bear in California. One of the new camps that we're -- Camp to Belong is going to this year is Camp Mariastella that's in Wrightwood, California. The Salvation Army, the children that go to that camp, they go to Arizona near Prescott. The Boy Scouts have three different locations in Arizona and here up in Potosi. And the Boys and Girls Club are going to camp near Palm Springs. They're just all over the west.

So with that many children that you're working with logistically, how do you make it work?

I am blessed with having someone who works with me and has worked with me since the day that she graduated from college, almost when she first moved here. Her name is Ruby Epps. She's a retired school principal. But when there was such a desperate need here for teachers, she did, after she retired, go back to teaching, which she's still doing right now. And Ruby has worked with me. Ruby moved here after she graduated from college and then started helping me when I was working with the EOB. They were able to get her through one of the governmental programs to help me. And she works every summer with us on the camp fund. And then she's assisted by

another great person who was a vice-principal, Mickie Harris. And they, thank goodness, are running the day-to-day operation during the summer so that it enables me to go away. But I'm in touch by e-mail and phone all summer long.

How do they get all of those kids now? At one time you were knocking on doors. So what do you do now?

We don't have to knock on doors.

Good.

The majority probably is referred to us through the various youth agencies, through the Y, through the Boys and Girls Clubs of Las Vegas, through the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts and Salvation Army. And then also our stories appear in the Sun newspaper every day. And some of them are calling us for applications. And also we work through Family Services. This year, again, Ruby -- I was out of town -- made a presentation at a Family Resource Center meeting last month. And our applications are out in all the various organizations. And people, of course, just call the paper and ask for an application or they can download them.

Okay, good. Oh, that's exciting. That is amazing.

It's been a very gratifying program. And to tell you a very wonderful story, the day when I was honored at the legislature in March, afterwards one of the assembly women came up to me and said I went to camp in the summer as a Sun Camp Fund person.

Wow. Oh, that just tugs at your heart.

Yes.

Oh, that's fantastic.

That was really gratifying. And, hopefully, that camping experience made a difference in her life.

That's right. You just mentioned the Boys and Girls Clubs. Now, you also work with them.

Do you serve on the board over there?

I served on the Boys and Girls Clubs of Las Vegas board and was the first woman president.

You were talking about the Boys and Girls Clubs, serving as the first woman president.

How long ago was that that you were the president?

I'm not sure what year that was. I'd have to go back in history. I know Ron Laurie came after me.

He was the next president. I really don't remember which year it was.

But you have a lot of locations here in Las Vegas?

Yes. There are a lot of different units as they call them. And then I'm now on the advisory board of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada.

And in that capacity what are some of the things that you have to do?

Actually, it's just more of support and attending their events and contributing financially. And then, of course, I work closely with all of them in regards to their camping programs, which we really provide the majority of the funding for.

Wow. That's amazing.

One of the things I wanted to talk about -- oh, now you're on the State Board of Education. Now, how did that come about?

Probably was a complete surprise to me. Jackie Brown, who is the principal of Charlotte Hill Elementary School, called me and said that someone had called her for my phone number from the state and she didn't want to give it to them without my knowledge. And so I called. The person told me that I had been recommended by someone for a position to fill a vacancy on the State Board of Education. And Lillian Hickey, who was a former member of that board, had proposed my name to fill a vacancy in this district. And so that's how it came about and going through the process of filling out the paperwork and having people as references and so forth and so on. And then it really kind of dragged on for a while. And then I did not hear officially until someone from the governor's called me. I think it was on the same day as the State of the State Message. And that's how it came about.

So what does the State Board of Education actually do?

I'm not able to give you a complete answer to that. I am so new. I have attended one meeting. Right now -- you see this book before you. And this is with all of the bills in the legislature.

And she's pointing to about a two-inch thick book.

And there are 472 pages here that I am trying to get through with primarily the bills that are Senator [Steven] Horsford's bill and other bills in health and education and be prepared to look at those. I think Jodi Stephens from the governor's office will address one of the board meetings and others who are with the charter schools and other educational affiliations will come and make

presentations to the board. And they are called workshops. And I'm just feeling very new and very uninformed until I catch up with everybody who was there before I ever attended the first meeting.

But with your track record you're going to do just fine.

I hope so. But this is a whole new world to me.

Yes. I can see that.

I want to talk about fashion and clothing. What was your major in college?

Languages, romance languages.

I don't see any connection whatsoever.

Absolutely none whatsoever except for the fact that I always loved clothes. Even as a child we had a very talented dressmaker and I would have an idea to make something as a little girl and say what colors I wanted, what I wanted it to look like, and she would make it, or I was able to go shopping with my family and pick out what I wanted. But as far as the education in the world of fashion, no, it was not there. No. It was romance languages.

And then I finally finished up completing everything with a plan, a whole training plan that I created for what now -- I created it for public broadcasting for Channel 10. But I guess I'd use the horrible word of telemarketing. But it was strictly calling members whose membership had lapsed and in training the volunteers in what to say.

Great. You said that when you first moved here the stores weren't up to the stores you were accustomed to. Was Ronzone's here at the time?

Yes.

Now, what did you think of Ronzone's? Okay.

All right. Moving on.

Moving on. So you work today as a fashion consultant. What does that mean?

No. That is what those who sell the Carlisle Collection, are called. It is a company out of New York. And the clothes are shown in the home. And they call us fashion consultants. Of course, in a sense we are advising the customers on what will look good on them.

I have always said I really could never be a successful salesperson because I am very honest. Yesterday we were in some store, and a woman I was with put on a skirt. And she said

look at this, what do you think? And I said take it off, it makes you look too broad in the hips. I mean one person said to her, oh, it looks whimsical. You know, and another one said, oh, it's a salsa skirt. I mean it made her -- you know. And I'm going to tell someone what I think.

But I'm sure she appreciated that.

Oh, yes. And then she wound up buying something that I sent back to the fitting room for her to try on.

Great.

But I have to be truthful.

So the slacks that you're wearing now, is that from your collection?

Yes.

Because I have never seen any slacks like that. I like the fabric. I like the fit. I like the way they look. They're just completely different.

Yeah. The jacket's in the other room.

So I like that. Good. So how long have you done the fashion consulting?

Since 1993. But I did do the buying for a store here years and years ago.

Which store?

It was called Betty's. This was many years ago. It was a store opposite what was called Market Town at Oakey and Las Vegas Boulevard. I mean the owner was a friend of mine and I did the buying for the store.

So where did you go to buy the clothing?

To Los Angeles. Or if I happened to be going to New York for other organizations or what have you, I would buy in New York as well.

Great. Oh, that's wonderful.

So what other organizations were you a part of that you'd like to mention?

Well, what have we not mentioned?

I think we've done a pretty good job. You were a Distinguished Nevadan.

Yes. In fact, the luncheon is Wednesday for Distinguished Nevadans for past and present.

Yes. Because it's graduation time almost.

Yes.

What about the Chamber of Commerce? Were you ever a member?

Yes, I was a member. I was a member with my association with Channel 10 and our Friends of Channel 10 and I represented them at the chamber. And then also I was on the board when there was a women's -- I'm trying to think what it was called then, the women's council that they had.

Women's Council in Outstanding Volunteer.

No. There was a women's council before it was all one. It was a separate -- or a part of the organization before. You know, it was more equal opportunity, you know. And I was on that board. Then I did co-chair with Irene Vogel the Women of Achievement through the chamber, too.

Looking at all of the awards that you've received that you've earned, which award stands out for you? Which one means most?

I am very proud that I was the recipient of the Alexis de Tocqueville Award from United Way of America. And, also, we have not talked about that. I served on the Board of Governors of United Way of America for five years. It was an unbelievable experience that I looked around the room and wondered what I was doing there because I was looking at the presidents of American Express, Exxon, United Airlines, Prudential Insurance, just on and on. And I could never, you know, see how did I get there with all of these outstanding --

But your background is as rich as any of the others.

Well, it was really a very wonderful experience. And I very much enjoyed the association being on the board of Association of Public Television Stations, on that national board. But here again, it was being on the board with -- like half the members were public television general managers and presidents, and then lay people the other half. So that was another wonderful experience that I felt it was something so worthwhile because the PBS board, CPB, they were not able to do what we did as more or less the lobbying arm and really being able to go to congress and plead the case for public broadcasting.

You came to Las Vegas relatively early.

Yes.

At that time -- you were here during the 1950s, yes -- they were testing bombs at the Test Site.

Yes.

So completely different subject. What was that like?

Well, no one knew what kind of dangers that it would bring to the surrounding areas and the people who were in those areas. And people used to stand down on the Strip and look at that mushroom cloud. It was like a happening, you know. No one knew what kind of devastation that it would create.

I'm looking over my list of questions. I usually ask the questions without even looking at the list. And it looks like I have covered almost everything.

Because your husband was involved in the casino industry, tell me about Howard Hughes, when he came. What did that mean to the city?

I guess I still have memories of seeing Howard Hughes in the much earlier days before he really became involved and an owner in I think tennis shoes and being in the casinos and long before the days of his becoming a recluse. But he came in here and it really I guess was the beginning of a whole new mentality and a new type of person or corporation to own so many casinos. Before they were individual ownerships.

Right. The people living in the community, how did it affect them? People tell me that, oh, they liked it better before. How did you feel about that?

I don't know that it really affected us that much. My husband had been at the Sands hotel. Then he was there and helped open the Tropicana when it opened. And then he became a small owner, shall we say, in the Fremont hotel. And so he was down there for a long time, quite a number of years. So it wasn't something that really affected us on an individual basis. But I guess it kind of brought more, if you will, respectability to Las Vegas and stability as well.

Speaking of dressing and fashion, in the Copa Room how did the women dress?

The women dressed then. I mean it is very disheartening to go to the casinos now and look at people in shorts and T-shirts and what have you. I used to go out with a friend on Sunday evening. And I mean we were always dressed beautifully, as everyone else was. In fact, I had talked a fashion designer into moving out here and thinking this would be a wonderful place for her. She had a place in Miami Beach. You know, it was somewhere where people did dress and looked wonderful like they were really going somewhere important. Now it's just really a shame

to see the kind of attire that people come into these beautiful billions-of-dollars casinos and what they look like.

Yes. How did your friend the fashion designer make out here?

Not well. It was the wrong time. She started out with a little store downtown and made a connection to open a shop in the Dunes that was going to be built. And then the stores just didn't come about as they were supposed to and she went back to Florida.

Oh, that's too bad. She would have probably been really --

And most people don't remember about the Copa Girls. Do you remember the Copa girls?

Yes.

Tell me about them and what that was like.

Oh, I don't think I really can tell you anything in particular about the Copa Girls. They were beautiful. You know, I remember after the shows they would come into the lounge and mingle and so forth. But I don't think that I particularly knew anyone or any personal history about them.

Early on there was almost no culture here. And I think you'll agree.

That's being kind.

Okay. But one of the things that Morelli did was that he put on community concerts. Did you ever attend any of those or remember any of those?

I really don't.

But that's one of the things that he did for the city.

Yes.

So now when you look back are you happy that you came to Las Vegas?

I think it has been an experience that certainly I would not change for the world, but it was a rough and very hard existence to get used to the early days.

When you look back from 1952 to now, what do you consider may be the most significant change or some of the significant changes you've seen in Las Vegas?

There have been so many that it's hard to even begin to describe them. Certainly, in the early days if you drove for 12 minutes you could get to the ends of the world. I mean that's all it took to go anywhere. And that was far out. I remember the woman who was president of the Girl Scouts the

year before I was. And Ray moved out to Charleston Heights. And we thought she had moved to the end of the world. I thought that was far out. I mean who could ever begin to image the areas -- Anthem, Summerlin, Southern Highlands? It goes on and on. There's no way that anyone would have ever thought of that kind of expansion. And certainly who would have ever thought that we would become the fifth largest school district in the country? In fact, when my daughters went to Paradise School, to begin with it was not even part of the school district at that time.

Oh, that was before consolidation.

Uh-huh. Yeah. So there have just been amazing changes. And still we're fighting for the arts and culture in this community.

What would you like to see? One of my last questions is what do you see as the future? But instead of that, what do you see us needing to do in the arts culturally?

Well, probably you should be asking my daughter who's the director of education and outreach for the Smith Performing Arts Center. And Candy has spent a lifetime devoting her talents and interests in the arts to improving it here in Las Vegas. I know we'll get to the Smith Performing Arts Center sooner or later. And maybe I'll finally have seen a place come to fruition where we can bring the arts under one roof.

Well, I really appreciate this. Thank you so much.

Well, thank you. And it's been a wonderful and amusing retrospect and going back and thinking about some of the early days. And beyond my first experience they were exciting days.

Good. Thank you so much.

And thank you.

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