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An Interview with Marie Horseley

An Oral History Conducted by Suzanne Becker

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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This project was the brainchild of Deborah Boehm, Ph.D. and Patrick Jackson who taught at UNLV and resided in the John S. Park Neighborhood. As they walked their community, they realized it was a special place that intersected themes of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gentrification. Patrick and Deborah learned that John S. Park had been listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and that original homeowners, local politicians, members of the gay community, Latino immigrants, artists and gallery owners and an enclave of UNLV staff all lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, they decided that the history of this special place had to be preserved, joined with the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and wrote a grant that was funded by the Centennial Committee.

The transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the narrative. These interviews have been catalogued and can be found as non-circulating documents in Special Collections at UNLV's Lied Library.

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Interview with Marie Horseley

June 13, 2007 in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Suzanne Becker

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Preface

Twenty years after her birth in Utah in 1924, Marie Horseley met and married her husband who was an engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad. They settled in Las Vegas, his home town and soon purchased a home for \$9800 in the new John S. Park neighborhood. Sixty years later Marie, twice a widow, remains in the home. Up the street four doors, one of her granddaughters lives with her three children.

Marie recalls the new housing development that appealed to railroad workers. The roads were dirt and there were no streetlights, but soon a community blossomed. Marie is a self-described quiet resident; her life was about raising her three daughters and being a member of the LDS church. However, she knew everyone on her street no matter their religious affiliation.

Today the businesses are gone. Homes have changed appearances over the years as owners have changed. Ethnic diversity is apparent and the sense of community closeness has slipped away for her. Yet she loves her place there, feels safe and secure. When asked about the ides of John S. Park being designated a historic district, she is not all that wowed by the idea of restrictions that might be included in that. Nevertheless, she has no intention of relocating from the comfort of the place she has called home all these years.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood



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Marie Hensley-Johnson 6/13/07
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Well, I guess we'll start at the beginning. If you could tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your family, your parents, what they did?

OK, I was born in Springdale, Utah, October 13, 1924, and of course I attended elementary schools in Springdale and then I went to high school in Hurricane, Utah, which was an hour's drive each way on a bus. So I did that for four years.

How did you end up going to school there?

That's the only place the high school was, so we had to go there. And then, my mother's name was Melinda Hepworth Dennett. [Hepworth] was her maiden name and then she married my father, who was John Dennett. And he was a farmer. My mother started cooking for a restaurant and then she went to the [National] Park Service [NPS]. So she was working for the Union Pacific [UP] portion of Zion National Park.

And what did she do there?

She was a cook there. And then of course when she reached retirement age they forced her to retire.

When I graduated from high school, I went to Santa Monica, California, and there I worked for Douglass Aircraft.

What drew you out to Santa Monica?

I had two sisters living there, and I worked as a carhop until I turned eighteen, and then I went to work in Douglass Aircraft, building airplanes.

And so that must have been a switch, going from the town that you lived in out to Santa Monica.

Yes, it was, but it was a choice you had to make. I mean it was a patriotic feeling.

And so what year was this that you [went there]?

1942.

OK, so it's during the war and you were actually building airplanes?

Yes. Mm hmm.

What was that like?

Well, I worked the midnight shift, and my job was installing the fuel lines and wiring the radios. And then I worked there for a little while and then I was working with a girl whose fiancé was in the service, down in North Carolina, and she wanted me to go with her to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, so we went together, down there. And she stayed and I came back. And I was kind of at loose ends, but I was at home and there was no jobs or anything. So, Pat Rogers, who was over the Utah parks, asked my mother if I would go to Cheyenne [Wyoming], and work for the Union Pacific Railroad up there. So I worked for the railroad, worked there for a little over a year, and then my sister was living in Caliente, Nevada, and she needed help raising her child. So, I came down to Nevada then, in 1944, and worked for the Union Pacific there. And that's where I met my husband when he came from the service.

He was coming through on a train.

No, he was from here, and he worked for the railroad. He was an engineer. He took his examination in December; after we were married in April, he took his examination and became a full-fledged engineer in December, about December of '46. We were married in April of 1946. But since he was a native of Las Vegas [Nevada], then we came here to make our home, and at the time, '46, they were just beginning to build our home here.

Now, before you come out to Nevada, I mean now Las Vegas has this worldwide reputation, it's pretty much known. Had you heard anything about Las Vegas or known much about it, or Nevada for that matter?

The titanium plant. [Basic Magnesium, Incorporated] I knew about that because my brother-in-law worked there for a short time. And, so that's all I knew about Vegas was just going through. And then I'd been to the dam [Hoover Dam], walking to school.

So what were some of your first impressions when you got to the Las Vegas area?

It was a nice place to live. Of course his birth was here and, it was much different. Didn't have the crime that we have now, and, I don't know, it was a whole different atmosphere.

What was it like downtown? Do you remember what buildings were here, what some of the main, you know, features were downtown?

Sal Sagev Hotel on Fremont [Street] was there. The Mint. I guess the Horseshoe Club was there also. But the Four Queens and the Mint, they were all built much later. There was a Woolworth's store store on the corner of Fifth [Street] and—where the Neonopolis is now.

OK, down toward Fremont Street.

Yes, it's at Fremont and Fifth. The street is Las Vegas Boulevard.

And when you got here, Las Vegas Boulevard was not really too existent.

It was still Fifth Street.

It was still Fifth Street. Was it paved or anything?

Yes, that part of it was.

Was that the road that went to California?

Yeah, it was, all the way out.

That's amazing.

Yeah, it is amazing and seeing all the Strip. The Strip didn't exist.

But these homes were built in 1946, started in '46. And that picture, you can see that this one was completed. This picture must be about '47 to '48.

So this is a newspaper clipping with a photo taken from the air, and you think about 1948 or so?

Well, '47 probably because, right here, they moved in shortly after we did. She told me one time, April of '46. So this has to be earlier than what I put down there.

Right. OK. That's still pretty amazing. Now, so it looks like Park Paseo was there and it looks like Eighth Street and Eighth Place were not paved roads yet or anything?

No. No. They're dirt roads. I had picture, one picture here of the car, yeah.

And what drew you and your husband to this particular area of the city?

This was just being developed. And housing, well, anyone could do it. But we moved into our home, without any down payment. The property and the house was \$9,800.00. But it was a good place, you know, new housing and everything, and it was offered for GIs. There was several railroad men bought in here.

So there were a lot of veterans returning from service at the time?

Not particularly. The one next door, yes, and us, and then Matthews up the street. Then over on Ninth Street there was Charlie McGhie and Wes Matthews. I don't know whether he was a serviceman or not. But we were all first buyers.

OK. What were some of the other areas in the city that people lived in? Were there other neighborhoods that were developed at that time?

Well, Huntridge was in existence. And then, mostly, I can't think of the name of it, but it's up where the veterans and the library is, in that area. And then downtown by the railroad tracks.

And so, but you guys came here because this was a pretty good deal and it was just being developed?

Yes.

And you've been here ever since. [Laughter]

I've stayed here. I couldn't find any place any better.

So, I know you mentioned this a little bit earlier but, could you describe to me, because it's a very populated area now, but could you describe to me a little bit what the landscape looked like when you guys first got here? It doesn't appear from this photo that there were a whole lot of houses.

It was nothing. It was dirt, lots of dirt. My husband dug about twelve inches of old caliche out of the front yard, and then we went out on Flamingo [Avenue] and Eastern [Avenue] and got sand. There was nothing out there. It was all desert. So he hauled the sand, and put in the front yard, and the back yard. I don't know, it was just a good place to settle.

Do you remember when the Strip started to become more developed?

Not in any particular year, but it was after we moved in, then it began. But really it was Steve Wynn that started the thing. Of course, Bugsy Siegel, he had built the Flamingo. And there was the Thunderbird. And then the Sahara came later, maybe about that time.

Now, did you guys ever go to the Strip for entertainment?

Very seldom. We saw a few shows, but that just wasn't our style of living.

What types of activities did you guys do? What kinds of socializing did you do?

Well, we have the LDS [Latter-Day Saints] church, and all our activities mainly were through the church. I had several positions and so, that was our big thing. And then our friends were all members of the church.

So it was a very big church community.

Yes, at that time, it was. And so this chapel over here, was built in about 1952.

This one over here, right down on Franklin [Avenue]?

On Franklin.

OK, so that's been there since 1952. And, since there were so few families or people when you guys moved here, was there community? Did you know all of your neighbors, or were you friends with them?

Well, there was so few that, yes. Now Dr. Weiss was the first owner of that house over there, and he only lived there a short time when he sold it to Jake Von Tobel. And of course Jake's children were my kids' ages, so we had good friends with them. And we raised our kids the same with the McCalls next door.

How many children do you have?

I have three daughters.

And what are their names?

Maureen is married to a dentist, Dr. Smith, and she lives here. Linda is married to Brent Olensleger, and they live here. She works for the Clark County School District, as a secretary. And then my youngest daughter is a dental office worker, and she works for my son-in-law, and her name is Jean Warburton.

And is she here also?

Yeah, all three live here. But, unfortunately Linda's going to move, to Utah, and I'm contemplating moving, also, to be by her.

But it was a nice neighborhood, and you know it grew up to be really a nice, clean neighborhood. We had no problem with thefts or stuff like that, so it was pretty secure.

OK. Has the neighborhood gone through a lot of changes, or what types of changes have you seen it go through?

Well, of course I'm the original owner and there's no other house on the street that's the original owners. And there's just one or two rentals. Basically it's been people who have really bought and they've stayed. So it's been a stable area.

Do you remember when you first got here, what types of businesses were in the area, if there were a lot of businesses downtown?

Downtown has changed drastically.

Yeah. I know you mentioned there was a Woolworth's. What were some of the other big stores?

There were several theaters.

Movie theaters or live, for performances?

Yeah, movie theaters, uh huh. Movies. And in the Huntridge was a big movie theater. So those were about the only two, really. And our kids went to those, you know. But most of our activities as adults were through the church. They had dances. They had good dances, you know, and good bands, live bands, things like that.

I know you said a lot of you went to the LDS church right down here. Were there more churches in the area that people belonged to or is this the prime one?

The Catholic church was built later, the one that's on Maryland Parkway, because like I say there was nothing south of Franklin, until John S. Park, and then our chapel of course built up, but then all of those houses on Eighth Street are all much later than ours. And, so there wasn't a whole lot really to do if you didn't go to the Strip, and that's the same way I guess with a lot of people now.

Yet you know this neighborhood is so close to the Strip.

Yeah, it just wasn't our way of living.

Has it changed as the Strip got bigger, do you think? Did it change the neighborhood at all?

Not our particular neighborhood. I don't see any changes.

OK. Since you're a founding member of this neighborhood, what, if anything, stands out in your mind as being some of the more significant events or happenings that have gone on in this neighborhood, while you've lived here? Are there any particular moments or things that stand out to you as sort of big events, whether they were political or with families or something?

No, I don't recall anything like that. We were all pretty quiet people, actually. [Laughing]

So what do you think about the fact that this area has been designated as a historic district?

Well, I opposed it, to begin with, because I was of the belief that if you bought a home, it was your property and you could change it, if you wanted to. And I just didn't like the restrictions, that they were placing on it. If I wanted to change the color of my house, I felt it was not their business. Of course I haven't done it, but still. [Laughing] But no, I changed the windows out long before. When she questioned me about it, I said, you

know, I said I done it and I didn't have to have a permit to do it, and now you have to have a permit for everything, and I think it's ridiculous. I think they're overstepping our freedoms as a homeowner.

Right, because you've lived in this house for like you said, sixty years. And so have you made a lot of changes to it since its original [construction]?

Yeah, we put the brick on the front of the house, and I changed the windows out, and basically that's the front. Now we added on, in the back, we've added on rooms and stuff.

So how big was your original house that you built?

Well, it was a two-bedroom-and-bath. Now you could say it's three bedroom-and-two-baths.

OK. And was that about the average size of the houses in the area being built?

Well see, and then we converted the garage into two rooms, so we have that, and then I have an addition back here.

So you've done some significant work.

Yeah. Yeah, my husband, you know, he was a carpenter, in addition to being a railroad engineer; so we did a lot of changes in the years since then. This, and he put the new cupboards.

OK. And so was he an engineer the whole time you were living here?

Yeah, he was an engineer, uh huh.

And he worked for Union Pacific, just right down here off of Charleston [Boulevard]?

Yeah, the roundhouse was down there. But, well, he started out as a fireman, of course, and until he got seniority enough, then that's when he started working as an engineer. But

he took the test in December. And then when he passed away in '85. Then I remarried, and he was a conductor for the railroad, and so railroading just kind of stayed in my blood, having worked for the railroad also. But he passed away six years ago. So I've been alone since then.

Well, it's good to at least have the neighborhood around you.

Yes.

Are there other residents that have been in the neighborhood as long as you or close to that, that you recall?

Only Ina Porter, on Park Paseo, and then Nordra McGhie. They are both the original owners. And that's all. [Laughing] So yeah, the whole neighborhood has really changed. Now I have a granddaughter that lives up the street from me now, but she owns the house that she lives in. Four doors [up].

Oh, great. Great. You just mentioned that it changed. What are some of the biggest changes? I know we talked about the historic thing, but, I don't know, just for you, what are some of the biggest changes?

Just the whole town. Of course this is my personal opinion, but I think it's overbuilt, and our water situation is ridiculous. When we first moved in, the artesian wells where the [Las Vegas] Springs Preserve is, our water came from there. And then, pretty soon, they started bringing water in from Lake Mead, and then of course the restrictions started happening, and a lot of people like me went to desert landscaping in the front yard.

How long ago did you do that?

It's been about two-and-a-half years, two years or so.

Yeah. I mean for out here you need to do it.

I like my backyard, the grass. I don't plan on changing that.

Was it a lot of work to convert?

I have it professionally done.

Ah, very good. [Laughter] That's the way to do it. Is there anything that you don't like about living here?

In Las Vegas?

Well, in Las Vegas and in this community.

I have no objections to my community. I feel safer here. We've had very few robberies, and I had a policeman who was living next door to me for a short while, and he said that they get less calls for this particular street than anywhere in town. Because I questioned him one time, why we never saw policemen patrolling the streets, and he said it's because it's considered the safest place in town. So you feel more secure than a lot of places. It's amazing. That's the thing that I don't like about it [Las Vegas] is the traffic, you know, they can't keep up with it because it's growing so fast. Schools are the same way. And so I don't know, it just isn't as friendly a place to live as it used to be.

This neighborhood or the whole city?

The whole city.

The whole city. Yeah.

Well, and I don't even know my neighbors, only to say hello to, you know, to them when I see them.

Did it used to be different? It sounded like, you were talking about the kids used to play together.

Yeah, and visit, you know, we'd visit back and forth in the houses, and do things together.

Yeah, like barbeques and that kind of thing, the church stuff?

Yeah, church. We'd go on trips together and do things together, yeah.

OK. OK. So you had a lot of good friends in the neighborhood.

Yes. Yes.

Did you go up to Mount Charleston, a lot?

Not a lot but we went looking to cut down our own Christmas trees. [Laughter] But of course then he was transferred. He worked for the railroad and he was transferred to Utah. But we still remained really good friends.

Who was transferred?

Walter McCall. He was a dispatcher, but, like I said, we remained good friends. She just passed away, a year ago last December, so I just feel like I've lost a real close friend.

Yeah. I think that that's one of the great things about living in a community though is you meet people and it's a nice thing.

Katie Von Tobel—we would visit together all the time, you know, and raise our kids together, and then she passed away in '57, and so then he moved shortly after that. But anyway, the people who were still [here], we would visit back and forth in our houses, the Pittmans.

So when you first moved here, what were some of the families? You've mentioned the Von Tobels and they've been very important in Las Vegas. And the Pittmans.

[J.W.] Pittman was a bartender and he didn't move here until 1958. This brochure that they put out, the historic neighborhood and that all, they attribute Pittman's place, where

it was Pittman Place, to him. No, it was my understanding that it was named after Vail Pittman who was a United States senator. And it was in about 1948, or '49, that they changed the name from Pittman Place, to Eighth Place. Pittman didn't move into the house until 1958.

So it changed before that.

Oh, much more, yeah, ten years before. So I called them, and hopefully they'll make that correction.

Yeah, they should get the history right.

Yeah, he shouldn't get the credit for something that he had nothing to do with, but you know, it really disturbed me.

Were there other streets on here whose names have changed, or in the area whose names have changed, or have they always been numbered streets?

This has always stayed the same. Fifth Street of course is Las Vegas Boulevard now. And then Sills had a, oh, little restaurant thing on the corner of Fifth and Charleston. Where's Charleston? [Looking on map]

Right there. [Indicating on map] On the corner of Fifth and Charleston. Like where the Walgreen's is?

It was on the other side of the street. Then there's a sheriff's station now. But there used to be a little restaurant there.

Do you remember what it was called?

A little drive-in. And then down the street, where it branches off into Fourth [Street], I can't think of his first name but Smeltzer had a nursery. And then there was another

drive-in restaurant there, on the corner of Fifth and where it branches off, you know, like a kind of a jog like that.

Yeah, downtown more, past—

No, this way, south of town. But he had a nursery there for quite a while.

And to your recollection, are any of those businesses still around?

No.

They're all gone.

Yeah. They're long gone. Those are actually about the only two really businesses that I recall on Fifth Street at that time. And then on down, of course, south of, well, Sahara [Avenue], that's where the two hotels were. But, even Sahara was named San Francisco Street. And it was a dirt road. And then there was Bond Street, and I can't remember what they changed that name to, but at one time it was called Bond Street, and that was along in there, in the area too.

Around Sahara?

It might've been Bond Street after, you know, San Francisco.

The Sahara wasn't there yet though, right?

Nothing there. There was nothing there. Just had a dirt road, you know.

Where was it considered the edge of town? What was considered to be the edge of town?

Right here, on Franklin. As far as I can tell, because it was after that that the housing developments started, and built up a lot.

OK. So if you were to go toward the area, say, where the university [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] is right now, or the airport [McCarran International Airport], that there was nothing out there.

Yeah, there was nothing. Nothing. See, the airport was Nellis Air Force Base. That was McCarran Airport. And then Nellis took over and they built the current airport, and that has undergone so many changes, you know, built up. Well, the whole area has changed, drastically. Since I don't get around that much anymore, I can't keep up with it.

Well, it happened so fast, too.

Yeah. You can go down the street and one time something will be there and the next time you drive by, it's gone. [Laughing] [Bishop] Gorman High School wasn't there. The high school was up on Seventh Street, Las Vegas High School, which is the academy now. And my kids all started to school at John S. Park, and the John C. Fremont was junior high at that time.

And where is that?

That's on Saint Louis [Avenue].

OK. So that's like on Saint Louis and Tenth [Street] or something in that area?

Yes, between Tenth and Maryland Parkway. And I don't even recall Maryland Parkway being a through street. It couldn't have been, until after things began to develop. But then the kids went to Las Vegas High School; all graduated from Las Vegas High School.

So all of the schools were right in this area. They could pretty much walk or ride their bikes.

They did. But they graduated from Las Vegas High School. I know it hasn't been that long since, you know, they built the one up on the hill.

Wow. Do you think it still has the same type of neighborhood feel to it, this area?

I don't know about Ninth Street. I can't speak for Ninth Street, because I know Pat and her husband over there, they're always friendly, you know; they have get-togethers, for the whole neighborhood. But, I don't know anybody now that lives over on Ninth Street except the fellow that walks his dog, and I don't even know what his name is. And then of course, Bob Bellis that used to live up next to Mrs. Porter, I knew him of course. But the neighborhood has changed, you know, all the homes even look different.

They do look different. How? How so?

Oh, well, they've made improvements on them, a lot, you know, but the people that have moved in have just improved the looks of them.

What was it like politically in this neighborhood when you guys arrived, do you recall? Or the city.

We weren't too involved. We were just quiet, you know. We weren't outgoing people, and didn't get involved in a lot of things. We voted, all the time, but we never got involved in campaigns or anything like that. I used to volunteer for Red Cross and cancer societies and things like that, but as far as being really involved, I never was, because I was raising my family. And I went to work, when I was, oh, what, my mother passed away. So anyway I went to work for the Jewish preschool, out on Oakey [Boulevard]. I worked there for twenty-four years.

Wow! And the Jewish preschool is on Oakey and Seventeenth [Street].

And then after I retired, then they sold it to someone else. And the Jewish church doesn't meet in there anymore.

So what was the religious makeup of the neighborhood, do you know?

Our particular street was nearly all LDS.

I was going to ask you, since there's such a big draw to the church there, so there was a fairly heavily populated Mormon population?

Yes, our street had a lot of Mormons on it. And there were Catholics, like the Von Tobels, and then I had a doctor that lived next door, they were Catholic. But we got along just great, you know, there was no animosity. We'd do things together, with the Lynns. So we had a nice, quiet, calm neighborhood.

Yeah, it sounds like it, it sounds like a great place, and sounds like there were a lot of kids, a lot of families with children, in the area.

Yeah, we were family-oriented, all of us. And, I knew people, of course, over on Seventh Street and Eighth Street that were all LDS, we'd do things together, you know.

Right. Over the years have you seen different types of people move into and out of the neighborhood? Do you think that that's changed a lot?

Ninth Street in particular. Our street is pretty much Caucasian. We do have a couple of Filipinos and one Mexican. But Ninth Street is quite heavily populated with Mexicans.

Yeah. Right. And that's a change for this area, from when you were first living here.

Oh yes. Yeah, it was all white, when I moved in. There was no interracial [mixing], and now, well, I have two Filipinos on this street now.

And I do think that's true for the larger Las Vegas area as the population has grown. Have you seen Las Vegas change a lot in terms of that?

Yes. Yes. Like I say, the whole city has just changed so drastically that it isn't the same place it used to be. We just don't have that closeness that we used to have. It's all Strip

now, the whole thing revolves on the Strip, and I can't agree with their philosophies out there.

Yeah. So was Las Vegas, as you recall, was it less tourist-oriented? It seems like there's, you know, much more tourism now, maybe.

Well, they had good shows on the Strip that you could go to and they were family-oriented so that you could go to them and, you know, take your families if you wanted to. But, well, even the climate has changed with them, even now.

Yeah, well, it's gotten so big and they just have so many things.

Well, they're trying to appeal to the people, the masses. They've done away with the big bands that used to come here and play. You could go listen to Harry James and Bob Crosby and you just don't hear that, don't get that anymore.

Yeah. What were some of the shows that you went to see? You mentioned earlier you guys went to a few shows.

Well, Bob Crosby was one that stands out in my mind. But there were others that we did go to. The last one that we went to, I had friends come, they were from England and they came, and it was so crowded. The waiter actually hit the side of my friend's head with a tray. He couldn't get between us.

Everybody was sitting so close together.

Yes, uh huh. And like I say, everything was just hectic.

Where were you guys? What casino were you at, do you remember?

I think that was at the Sahara.

The Sahara. Yeah. Is there a relationship at all between the John S. Park Neighborhood and the gaming industry, or has it remained separate? It didn't seem like there was a lot of interaction from what you said.

No, I think we stayed pretty much away from that type of thing. I don't know of anyone on this street that works for the Strip.

What types of jobs did people have in the neighborhood?

Oh, a lot of railroaders, even the ones that built up over on Ninth Street, a lot of them were railroaders. And Eighth Street, they had railroad people. And Park Paseo had railroad people. This just seemed to be the place. New housing, right after the war, and so a lot of railroaders just bought in here.

Right. Well, that makes sense, so close by as well. And then did that change eventually? Did a lot of those folks move out?

They moved, they passed away and moved, and it sort of changed. I'd like to see Las Vegas go back to the way it used to be.

Yeah? I was going to ask you, you know, what do you hope won't change?

You mean change from now?

Yeah, as we are now, what do you hope will hopefully stay the same?

No, I'd like to get rid of a lot of the crime. It's almost frightening. In some of the areas, you can't even go outside without, you know, your life is in your hands. So no, I would like to see it become a better place to live.

Yeah, the high-rises.

I think they're a big mistake.

Yeah. How come?

Well, I think it destroys the looks of the whole place. We're not Manhattan, New York. We're a desert place and I think we should be a little more careful about the way they're building up, these high-rises. They're not renting. They've got a lot of vacancies.

Very expensive, some of them.

Oh yes. Look at Trump. That's another thing I cannot figure out is, I know things have gotten so expensive—but the price of homes; people can't afford to buy them anymore. Look at the foreclosures. You didn't have that years ago. We had a place that if you bought your home from a land and title company, they were there for years; even afterwards, but now they're no longer in existence. You've got a lot of these quickies, think they're going to get rich quick and then they leave town with the money. Well, I don't know whether it's just Las Vegas, but it just seems to be a trend, all over. People are not honest, like they used to be.

Right. Well, we live in very different times. I don't know where those changes came from.

But we need to go back to it. I mean it needs to be a place where you can raise your children and not worry about them constantly. And I worry now about my little great-grandchildren, that are growing up, even on this street, and the school system is so overloaded, and you can't get really good teachers anymore. So yeah, I hate to see them have to go to school here in Las Vegas.

You mentioned you have a granddaughter that lives down the street. Does she have children?

She has three.

So how many grandchildren and great-grandchildren do you have?

Right now, well, I'll always have just sixteen grandchildren, but great-grandchildren, by September I'll have thirty-four. [Laughing]

Oh my goodness! And how many of them are in this area, in the Las Vegas area?

Well, one daughter lives out by Chaparral High School and she has two daughters that live here, and they have children. And then, the one daughter that lives down by Nellis Boulevard, she has one at home. And then she had three. Then the one that lives up on Hollywood, she had six, and one of her boys still lives here. And then the one that lives up the street from me.

Right, so you get to see them, often.

So I get to see them.

And they go to the John S. Park School here?

Madison will start kindergarten this year. But the others, they're out by Chaparral High School. And then another one lives way out on Grand Harbor Boulevard, which is way south of town. But they're just kind of scattered around now, Idaho, and one just moved back to Oregon, and two are up in Wyoming, and one in Utah.

Wow! So they're all over.

Yeah. It's the grandkids that move. It's not my daughters. I've been lucky. Everybody says, oh, you're so lucky to have your children here at this time. So it's been nice having them. And we do lots of things together as a family.

That's great. That's great. Do they come over often?

Not so much anymore. Now next weekend we'll be going to Utah to have a family reunion up in Cedar City.

Oh wow. That sounds like it will be big. [Laughter]

Yeah, it will. It's not going to be as big this year because of the gas prices. But yeah, we have a family reunion, have had for the last three years anyway.

Sounds nice.

I'm from a family of ten, by the way. [Laughing]

OK. And so you have nine siblings?

Yes. There's only three of us left.

And where do you fit into that order?

I'm the ninth child. And I have one sister that lives in California and one sister that lives in Salt Lake City. She's the youngest sister and the other one is four years older than I. Just lost a brother in January. And so, out of ten of us there's three left.

That's a large family.

Yeah. Well, in those days, they had large families. But, you know, being a farmer, they had to help with the farm work, and I did too.

What kind of things did you farm?

Well, it was fruit. We had big fruit orchards. And we raised our own gardens, and had cows and chickens and pigs, you know, horses. But, I left as soon as I graduated from high school. I left and went to California to find work. But I worked in the fields, along with my brothers. Hauled hay. [Laughing] Besides weeding in the gardens, you know.

Did you do any gardening out here, once you got here?

Yes, we had a big garden out in the backyard. In fact, I've got three tomato plants out there right now that are growing tomatoes.

Oh, that's great! I'll bet this is a different climate for growing than you were brought up with.

Oh yes. Oh, we used to have a good garden. Of course my husband was able to take care of it, you know. Then when the water got so scarce, we had to give it up. Like I say, I'll put in three tomato plants.

Did you ever think that Las Vegas would get as large as it did?

I had no idea. Couldn't even fathom that it would grow like it is. Mount Charleston was hours [away], it felt like hours to get there.

Way, way out.

Yeah, it was a long way away.

Yeah, now when you go out there you have houses almost all the way.

Yeah, you're right in town, all the way.

Yeah, that's interesting.

I live in my own little world. [Laughter] I don't venture out very much in it, when the traffic gets so horrendous.

What do you like most about living here in the John S. Park Neighborhood?

Because of the safety, and it feels more secure. It hasn't changed. Really, that part of it hasn't changed that much.

Yeah. There's a lot of talk, I know people talk a lot about the homeless population, that's in this area. Do you think that has impacted this area?

It was. It was getting pretty bad. This little park up here on Charleston, after they put the desert landscaping in, that changed it over to the Circle Park. And then since they had to close that because of that one lady.

Yeah. But then you have had too many problems or seen things in this area.

We've seen bag ladies, and then I used to get people knocking on my door for handouts, quite a lot. That's not happened for a long time. So yeah, like I say, we are, I feel a little more secure now than a lot of areas in town.

Yeah, well, that would make sense.

Yeah, so it's just, a way of life anymore I guess.

It is. Yeah. Well, I really appreciate you taking the time to share your stories.

I don't know whether I've given you much information.

Oh absolutely! I mean it's just so fascinating to hear what it was like when you got here and about the people that were living here. It sounds like, you know, at least on this street, you had good relationships with your neighbors. Did you know almost everyone that lived on this street?

At one time, yes, I knew them all. In fact, one day I was just curious about the people that I remembered, and, of course it's changed so much now. So my daughter got on the Internet the other day and looked up to see who some of the original owners were. Of course it doesn't go back to as early as when we lived here. It doesn't pull up the names of the people, that far back anyway, so. It's just that those are the ones that I remember, like the Jolleys and the McCalls and us and then the Lynns and they moved, and then Norman Mott built, and then Ray Sinatra bought from him. And of course I was working, so I didn't do it much, but my husband would visit with him a lot, you know. And he said one time, of course, he was an uncle of Frank Sinatra's, he said when Frank wanted to get into show business, he came to him, so Mr. Sinatra told him, he said, You'll never make it. [Laughter]

It's a good thing he didn't listen to him.

Right. Well, all three of my daughters play the piano but my oldest daughter [Maureen] was trying to be a concert pianist, and so my husband was so proud of her and he took her down to Ray Sinatra to play for him and he thought she had all kinds of talent and was very talented, and he gave her some pointers. So we had a good relationship with the people that lived on this street, which now, like I say, is different. It's a different neighborhood.

Yeah. Do you still like it though?

Oh yeah. Nearly everybody works, now.

And that's a change.

Yes. It makes a big difference.

Yeah. People aren't around as much. That makes sense.

I see them when they're on their way to work or something like that. So it's different.

Well, we're getting close to the end of our CD. We've been talking for about an hour or so.

Yeah. Let's see, I told you about the barracks that first moved into John S. Park. There was no school, but because there were a lot of children, then they brought the barracks in, from Nellis. And then they started building the school, of course. There was 25,000 population, so that's been a big change. [Laughing] We had the dirt roads, and no street lights. They came much, much later, even after the streets were paved. And then Pittman [Place]. It was named for Vail Pittman. I don't know whether you're familiar with him or not. He was a United States senator. And that was my understanding, that that's where the Pittman Place came from, was from. So, anyway, that was it. That's about all I can [say].

That's great. That's great. I thank you so much for taking the time. Any last thoughts or memories about the neighborhood that you want to share?

[00:15:00] No, like I say, they all work. Everyone works, even my granddaughter, has gone to work.

Change of the times.

Yeah. Yeah, everybody else on this street works. Derek works for Cox Communications. And, well, the Filipino family don't work. But, you know, they're quiet people. They keep to themselves.

Yeah. Yeah. So yes, the neighborhood has definitely changed, it sounds like.

Yes. A lot of people moved, passed away.

Do you remember when you started to think, boy, it's changing. I mean you mentioned, people started working, the roads became paved, you got street lights.

[Laughter]

Yeah, some things are for the better, definitely, but still, oh yeah, it's nice because the homes on our street are pretty well kept up.

Yeah. Yeah, it's a nice street.

Yeah. And we're a little more secluded, you know, we don't have straight-through streets, so it's more secluded.

Yeah. Yeah, that's nice. You don't get people racing down the street.

Yeah. Yes.

Well, thank you again, very much.

Well, you're welcome. I hope it's going to be all right.

Oh yes! Absolutely. Absolutely.

I didn't intend to lose my voice this morning. [Sounded like she had a cold]

[00:16:49] End of Track 3, Disc 1.

[End of recorded interview]

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