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An Interview with Anne Kellogg

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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Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries, Director: Claytee D. White

Project Creators: Patrick Jackson and Dr. Deborah Boehm

Transcriber and Editor: Laurie Boetcher

Editor and Production Manager: Barbara Tabach

Interviewers: Suzanne Becker, Barbara Tabach, Claytee D. White

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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.

Deborah A. Boehm, Ph.D.
Fulbright-García Robles Scholar 2009-2010
Assistant Professor, Anthropology & Women's Studies

Patrick Jackson, Professor
John S. Park Oral History Project Manager

Claytee D. White, Director
Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries

Interview with Anne Kellogg

July 25, 2007

Conducted by Suzanne Becker

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Preface

Anne Kellogg's paternal family came to Las Vegas in the 1950s. Then in the late 1960s, her mother arrived to teach school. After her parents married, they set up their first home in John S. Park neighborhood and whenever they moved to a larger house it was within the John S. Park neighborhood. And her father's business office was always nearby.

Childhood memories include John S. Park Elementary School being a "hub" for all the neighborhood children no matter where they attended school. There was jumping on the Schofield's trampoline, roller-skating to Odyssey Records, and using Strip hotel tennis courts to practice her game. The Strip was not important in daily life, but if she got good grades, she got to play the Midway at Circus Circus Casino.

As an adult, Anne still sees John S. Park as a nice neighborhood that holds an important spot in Las Vegas history. In addition, she offers thoughts on the so-called Manhattanization of Las Vegas, Downtown rehab and the birth of the Arts District, and about retail and being a business owner in the community. .

Interview with Anne Kellogg

July 25, 2007 in Las Vegas, Nevada
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So if you'd like to begin by just telling us where you're from, when you were born.

OK. Well, my name is Anne Kellogg. I was born at Sunrise Hospital. And it's kind of funny because I just looked at my birth certificate the other day and it says, "Rural Las Vegas" on the birth certificate. And it's at Sunrise.

So Sunrise, here in Las Vegas, and at that time it was considered [rural].

Oh, yeah. Rural Las Vegas, yeah. Which was in 1970. I was born May 19, 1970. My parents at that time owned a little house on Fifth Place.

Which house?

You know, I don't know the address. I should find out. It was on the west side of the street, sort of in the middle. It was the one that was next door to a two-story house and it had a courtyard. I don't know the address. I think it was probably like 12-something, like 1210, maybe. So anyway, we lived there, of course, until my brother was born in 1972, but right before that we moved over to Seventh Street. So we lived on Seventh and Park Paseo, on the corner, and I know the address there was 1200 South Seventh Street. And then when I was about eight years old, I guess we outgrew that house and we moved over to Eighth Street.

So you guys just kept moving streets over.

Yeah. [Laughter] I guess we liked the neighborhood. But we moved over to Eighth Street and we lived at 1390 South Eighth Street until I was sixteen. So I mean my whole childhood experience is all really largely in that neighborhood, and with that and all, we, the neighborhood kids, like we all like gathered at the school, at John S. Park

[Elementary School]. That was our hub, you know. I went to John S. Park as a kindergartener, but I didn't go there for grade school. I ended up going to St. Joseph's [Catholic School], which was down the street on Maryland Parkway. But after school, it was still like our school, you know. We would go there and play and whatever it is you do, like whatever season it was, it was like softball and we were playing, you know, softball, or kickball. We had a funny game that we used to call Butts Up, that we used to play, and it was so silly but we would throw the ball at each other, and try to hit each other with the ball, and there was like this whole elaborate craziness. But, yeah, so there was a lot of us. There was probably about twenty or thirty of us, you know, different age groups, but we'd all kind of play together, all from the neighborhood.

And so there were a lot of families, a lot of kids in the neighborhood, and everybody played together, basically.

Oh, yeah. I mean it was, you know, you got home from school, got some food, and then, you know, just tried to make a beeline over to the school, just to, you know, see what was going on and play and just do whatever, you know. I mean it was great, you know.

And are your parents from Las Vegas?

My dad's family moved here in the 1950s. My grandfather was from Nebraska and he kind of jumped around. He was in Salt Lake [City, Utah] and then he went to Boise [Idaho] and then they came here. My dad was, I think, about seven? So that was in the 1950s, so he's, for all intents and purposes, a native, although he wasn't born here. And then my mother actually is from South Dakota, and she moved here in the late sixties when the [Clark County] school district, you know, needed teachers, you know, which they've never stopped needing teachers since then. And they met and fell in love and had

my brother and myself. My brother is a couple years younger than me. His name is Larsh. Actually my grandparents lived on Bracken [Avenue] when I was growing up, too. So I mean we were always [living in the neighborhood].

That's very cool. So what was the neighborhood like when you were growing up?

Oh, it was great. I mean I had a great childhood growing up in that area. We had so much fun. We just would do, I don't know, I mean every kind of neighborhood thing, like we'd play, you know, Hide-and-Seek. There was this funny guy, I guess he was probably a veteran of one of the wars, and he lived in this house, and he used to yell at the trees.

Every once in a while, if we'd get bored, we'd like do some kind of top-secret spy operation and go see what he was doing. We called him Crazy Joe. And we would like go spy on him. I don't know, I mean like, I don't know what you mean. We'd ride bikes around, we had sort of like ongoing kickball and softball games, you know.

It sounds like there was a lot of camaraderie, I guess. Were there a lot of neighborhood activities that happened, like block parties and that kind of thing?

Yeah. You know, I don't remember any block parties where like all the parents came out and had potluck or anything like that, but I mean we all knew each other and there were certain people who were closer than others and so if they were having a pool party, then we would go over there. You know, birthday parties, obviously, that was a big deal. As far as organizing, every summer I think it's the Clark County Parks and Recreation, they used to do this thing called recreation, at John S. Park, in the recreation rooms, and they would just open it up. I guess it was sort of like an early latchkey program, for the kids in the neighborhood whose parents worked and they needed someplace to go all day, so that was kind of the most organized thing. That was kind of fun because we'd be able to go on

field trips. They came up with all these activities in that environment, but then we also did field trips, like we went to Lake Mead, went hiking up to Mount Charleston, and they'd come and take buses and take us up there. You know, this was before the Boys' and Girls' Club. It wasn't as strong as an organization, as it is now, so I don't know if they do those kind of programs anymore.

So what was the geography of the area like? Because I've heard people say that it's just expanded so much.

With Las Vegas?

Well, yeah, with Las Vegas but with John S. Park in general. I mean, I suppose Las Vegas Boulevard wasn't quite as busy as it is now.

No. No. I mean, when I was little, and roller-skating became really big, when, in 1976, you would roller-skate all around. I was able to roller-skate like up to Odyssey Records. I don't know if anyone told you about Odyssey Records, but it's sort of this legendary record store. Actually it was on the corner of Wyoming [Avenue] and Las Vegas Boulevard. And I mean it was just this phenomenally cool record store, even by sort of national standards, because you know Las Vegas was a small town, really, until recently. And so I'd roller-skate up there, you know, some of my friends would roller-skate up there, and it would be fine, like our parents wouldn't necessarily worry that we were too young to roller-skate to Odyssey. And we'd go to 7-Eleven. Like I remember we'd go to this 7-Eleven, which is now Mighty Mart. It across the street from Luv-It [Frozen Custard Inc.]. I'd go there and buy candy and comic books.

And then sometimes we'd decide to go the other, we'd decide to go east, and we'd go over to like Huntridge and go to the drug store [Huntridge Drug Store] and buy

nail polish or whatever it is you do when you're a little girl. Yeah, just different things like that. At one time there was kind of like a little sandwich diner in the corner of Tenth [Street] and Charleston [Boulevard] that became what is now Doña Maria's, [Tamales Restaurant] because Doña Maria's actually started in that little strip center that's on Charleston and Tenth Street, and then they kind of kept expanding and expanding and then they moved over to where they are now on Las Vegas Boulevard. But I mean, you know, it was different. Like all those motor inns, those funky old motels were a lot nicer then, obviously.

You know, but the neighborhood, I mean it was always such a great neighborhood. Like, I don't know, it just seems like, to me, it's home. To me, like I like that part of Las Vegas, the mature landscaping and all that kind of stuff.

Do you know what it was that inspired your parents to settle in that part of town?

I don't think there were any other parts of town [laughter]. Well, I don't know. I mean, you'd probably have to ask my dad about that. Well, my dad's in the insurance business, and my grandfather was in the insurance business, and my granddad's office was actually on the corner of Sixth [Street] and Sahara [Avenue], and so I think they just lived in that neighborhood. And so when my dad opened his agency, he opened it on Charleston. His office was on Charleston between Tenth [Street] and where you go into Eighth [Street], like that block of houses across from where the Pioneer Citizens Bank was. It's U.S. Bank now. So that's where his office was. So I think probably it was just easier for him to just have an office close to home. I mean there weren't that many choices—you were either basically in the numbered streets like downtown Las Vegas. Rancho [Drive] and

that whole area was probably just starting to get established. Because this was in the 1970s, or late sixties when they bought their house and got married and all that.

Yeah, and like you said earlier, I mean Las Vegas was still a fairly small city at that point.

But I think that ultimately they just liked it. I think my mom liked the older houses versus like the new subdivisions. You know, we were at school at St. Joseph's so I think she liked the idea of us staying close to there because she didn't want to drive a lot. But I think, you know, like I say, she just liked the neighborhood.

I suppose, you know, the Strip wasn't quite what it is today, but do you remember having any thoughts or, you know, thinking about the Strip being right there or was that ever an issue? Like what was your awareness of that whole burgeoning industry that was really taking root when you were a kid?

Right. You know, we didn't really spend a ton of time in the casinos, but we would go there for special occasions and, you know, obviously for shows and all that kind of stuff. My parents aren't big gamblers. I mean they do entertainment things. We would go eat there. But I don't know, I mean I think that it's always just been sort of just a constant presence, like the gaming and the gambling has always been a kind of a constant presence. When I was little, when we lived on Seventh Street, I was probably about five or six and we got a new neighbor, and it was a young woman, and her daughter who was my age, and she was actually a showgirl, at the Tropicana [Hotel and Casino], like in the Folies Bergere show where she had to like sing and dance and do all that stuff, and I mean that was pretty glamorous and cool, like it was kind of like, wow, you know. The neighbor's name was Anna Schiave and then her daughter's name was Claudette, and

she's been like a great friend of mine for years and years and years. But it was wild, I mean because, you know, my family obviously, like my dad's an insurance agent and my mom is a teacher, so, you know, like having this showgirl next door and she had the parties and there would be all these like great people around. Yeah, it was great. And they had a foosball table, you know, I hadn't seen a foosball table before, which now it's like a huge popular thing.

But I mean as far as awareness of the gaming, I mean if we got good grades we were able to go to Circus Circus [Hotel and Casino], like that was our treat. If we got good grades, we could go and play on the Midway at Circus Circus, so that was always kind of fun and interesting, like with the trapeze artists and the spinning bar and all that kind of stuff.

I remember my dad took us to the Sundance, which is now the Fitzgeralds [Hotel and Casino], when it was first built, then when they first built the tower, just because it was so new and interesting and all that.

When I was like a teenager, like I was eleven, twelve, thirteen, I'm a big tennis player, so they started this tennis league for the kids, and so all of us played. You know, there were no country clubs really back then, that had tennis courts, but the hotels all had tennis courts, so I played on the Sands [Hotel and Casino] tennis team, so that was my home court, so that was kind of cool. And we'd go play the Tropicana or we'd go play the Hacienda [Hotel and Casino], because I mean there just weren't many [places to play tennis]. Now, the public parks have tennis courts and all that, but they didn't really have that so much back then, so it was kind of cool.

So do you remember what the city was like, you know, compared to what it is now, in general?

I love Las Vegas. You know, obviously there were some times when you're a teenager and you get really cool and you just don't think anything of it [laughing]. But Las Vegas, I don't know, it was always just really interesting to me. It was always home. I was really lucky because my parents really sort of valued travel and traveling and so we traveled a lot, during the summers mostly, and we'd meet other people or I'd go visit my family in South Dakota or Nebraska and they'd say, oh, you live in Las Vegas? Oh, my gosh. Like everyone had this awareness of Las Vegas. And to me that was always really interesting because they always wanted to talk about that: Well, what's it like? Who do you see, movie stars all the time? Dan Tanna? [Note: Dan Tanna, played by actor Robert Urich, was the lead character in the television series *Vega\$* which aired from 1978-1981. *Vegas* also starred actor Tony Curtis, a long-time Las Vegas resident, as Philip Roth, owner of the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino. *Vega\$* was filmed on the Las Vegas Strip.] I think that was interesting. There was always a conversation "in" when you traveled, even as a child: What do you do there? What do your parents do? Well, what's it like? Because there's this appeal just because of the Strip, and then it just kind of falls off after like.

Right. Like you live in a casino or something.

Right. Right. So, you know, I mean that was a pretty typical question as a child growing up in Las Vegas, like, oh, do you live in a casino? The funny thing is, is when I got to high school I actually became friends with a girl, and I'm still friends with her now, who did live in a casino for like two years. It was just funny. [Laughing]

Some people do. So it does happen.

Yeah. Yeah, they lived in it, her and her mom and her mom's boyfriend at the time, like that's where they [lived], they lived in a casino.

I didn't know you could do that.

Why not? Yeah. If you own it. [Laughing]

That's true. [Laughing] That's true. So many thoughts in my mind right now. So you basically did grade school through high school here and then went to Reno for college?

Right.

Do you remember at all, because it seems like the neighborhood has gone through so many shifts, you know, starting with just post-World War II when people started building homes here, up through the seventies when it seems like maybe it sort of started to deteriorate a little bit, do you remember those shifts happening?

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I mean, well, the John S. Park Neighborhood has always been pretty much in the same state of flux that it is in now. It's never really, truly gone totally down the hill, and it's never probably been as nice as it was probably in the Fifties. Do you know what I mean? I drive around there now and it's nice, you know, I mean it still looks and feels like the neighborhood that I grew up in. I mean there's some changes that have happened, some positive, some negative, but I think for the most part like John S. Park has really held its ground as a place in Las Vegas. You know, it sort of sits in the center point between Fremont Street and the Las Vegas Strip, and it's a nice little shortcut for all of the pedestrian traffic, and that's always been that way. That's always been the case. So, with that just sort of geographic location of the neighborhood, there's always going to be this cross-town traffic that's going to get tempted, if a bike is left out or

maybe somebody, they've left their window open, you know, like these kinds of things, which is unfortunate but it's just the way that it is.

But as a kid, obviously your family felt it was pretty safe.

Oh, yeah. I mean we got robbed, but like who didn't, you know? [Laughing] What's funny, we had a few burglaries but nothing, thank God, like, knock on wood, any major [thefts]. But when we lived in the Eighth Street house, we had an alarm, we had all this stuff, I remember we didn't even lock our door. Which is stupid, probably, but we didn't. Like, we always had dogs. We never really locked our door. You know, we sort of had an open-door policy for all the neighborhood kids, if they wanted to come over, you know.

Right. And so you were pretty good friends with your neighbors.

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean we were always pretty active in the child community of John S. Park. [Laughing] My brother, both of us, you know.

Now there's a pretty significant Mormon [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as LDS] presence in the neighborhood. Particularly growing up, I mean was that ever an issue or were there ever issues between families or Mormons and non-Mormons?

No, I don't think so. I mean my Eighth Street house was directly across the street from the church. You know, we're Catholics and there's Mormons but other than just kind of the awareness of, OK, this is their day to go to church, you know, and this is where they go and they go all day, I don't really recall any tension. In fact, we had pretty positive relationships with our neighbors growing up. I don't know if you know Jack Schofield. Have you talked to Jack?

I haven't. He's on my list of folks to talk to.

Yeah, he should be on your list. He's a great guy. I mean he's obviously like a long-time lover of Las Vegas and he's lived in that same house--I think he still lives there--on Eighth Street. It was like two, three houses down from where I lived. But he was always so fun. He had a trampoline in his back yard. So, of course we all knew that he had a trampoline in his back yard, so we always wanted to go jump on his trampoline because, you know, every once in a while, if we got bored like playing tag or whatever it is we were doing, we were like, oh, let's go see if Mr. Schofield will let us jump on his trampoline. So, like every year we'd always have to get a note. You know, this is an attorney, so he'd always make us get a note from our parents that it would be OK for us to jump on the trampoline. So, you know, it was this big process, we'd knock on the door, can we jump on the trampoline? OK, OK, but you need a note, you have to get the note. But yeah, he was a great guy.

And then, you know, there were times when they would invite us to play softball or play volleyball or whatever, and we went, you know, we just kind of learned about it and it was kind of like, OK. My mom was very Catholic so that's the way we were.

But I think, if anything, it's been a good thing to have so many LDS people in that area because they take care of their houses, they care about the neighborhood, they keep an eye on things, they keep an eye on other people's kids, you know what I mean? I think that's not bad to have someone at home kind of [watching over things].

So what brought you back to this area?

You know, in my experience, there's been so many people who I've gone to school with in my whole life, people who I went to high school with and some of the people who I went up to college with in Reno, and it just seems like they've all kind of scattered away

from Las Vegas. And it's unfortunate because, for whatever reason, they have this negative impression of Las Vegas or whatever. I don't know what happened to them. But, for me it's important to be a part of this community, and I like the idea of being part of positive changes, because Las Vegas is in need of love, and so, if you don't have people around who love the community, then it's not going to thrive and prosper. A city is an alive thing, and it needs care, and if you don't have anybody who cares, living in the city, then it's just going to end up dying. So, for me, with being here at Holsum [Lofts], which was always a big part of our experience living in the John S. Park Neighborhood, like driving back and forth, you know, wherever it is we were going, you know, always like seeing Holsum and seeing the neon and smelling the bread and all that stuff, I mean this place, when they redid it and I saw it, I knew that I had to be here with my business.

And then, as far as the neighborhood goes, though, we never really left. My dad's insurance agency was at mid-Charleston at Tenth and Eighth. He was there forever, and then he moved over into Lawyer Land [Lawyer's Row], across Charleston—I call it Lawyer Land—which is good. I think they've actually saved a big part of that neighborhood.

What they've done with those buildings is great.

Yeah, I mean because if the attorneys didn't like it down there, then that would be in a shambles, I'm sure.

So he was over there for a long time and then he moved the office to the corner of Fourth [Street] and Charleston, and so that happened in like '92, '93. And then I came back in '97. My background is actually in journalism and history and marketing. I studied

journalism and history in college. So I have this like sort of odd sense of nostalgia that either makes a ton of sense or it's crazy. There's no two ways [about it].

So I did that and I worked for different agencies in publications for a while, and then he talked me into working for him at the insurance agency. So I did that, and as kind of a part of that, the Arts District neighborhood asked me to serve on the board of that neighborhood. So I did that, and that was in 2002 that I started serving on the neighborhood association. I've been sitting on the board for five years. (That's actually crazy.) But, as part of that, I got to know some of the people in the neighborhood, and the whole First Friday thing started, so I've been helping with that whole effort.

So you've been in on it since the ground level of First Friday.

Right. So I kind of drank the Kool-Aid on the whole Arts District redevelopment thing and sort of ended up over here, too, but it was in my heart forever, you know, to do that, so it was just a matter of finding the right fit for what I wanted to do.

And so, I guess tell me a little bit about the history of your business [Paper Doll] here.

OK. Well, I've always been a big paper person. Like I love stationery and paper and all that stuff. My grandmother, Maxine Kellogg, who lived here in the 1950s, she was a big paper person, too. She used to correspond all the time with her sisters who lived in other communities, and she was just a big believer in that, and so she kind of, you know, pounded that into my head, that that's an important thing, and as an extension of that I think I became, you know, sort of hyper-aware of like stationery and all that stuff. When I'd travel I'd ultimately end up in stores like this, with gifts and stationery and paper. So, you know, it's always kind of been like a passion of mine to do that.

And then, as a journalist, you know, I was a daily newspaper journalist and then I went to the weekly situation and now I freelance. And when I started first freelancing, I did a lot of Las Vegas guidebook publications, and sort of what happened is I developed a niche for writing about retail in Las Vegas, and so I was kind of the go-to [person] for various publications whenever they needed any kind of coverage of retail in Las Vegas. So I really know more than the average bear about what's happening in this market.

So I started meeting and really getting to know all these different entrepreneurs and independent businesspeople and, you know, I was always thinking, gosh, I could do that, I could do my business, I really want to do it, I really want to do it. And, you know, I never really had the guts to pull the trigger. And then, when I first visited this project in May of 2005, the stars kind of lined up and I saw it and I was just like, oh, my God, this is perfect.

I mean I think Holsum is really one of the most special places in Las Vegas, because I think that it captures a lot of the history of the city. And I think, you know, the concept that they were baking bread for people in the very beginning of Las Vegas, I mean bread is the sustenance of a meal and the sustenance of a community maybe. I mean because there was a time when everything was coming in, maybe on trucks and trains, you know what I mean? But when the bread factory opened it was like, OK, now we can at least always have bread, you know. And then, you know, I knew that it was going to be this really amazing project, just in the concept stages, but then when I saw it, and they did such a good job of rehabbing the buildings—there's three buildings—that really it just felt special to me, and it felt like a place that I wanted to at least make a go of it for my business.

So, you know, a lot of people probably think I'm crazy for opening here because they always ask me, oh, you should be in Summerlin, or you should be in Green Valley, and it's like, my heart's not there, so I shouldn't be there. My heart is here, like my heart belongs to downtown Las Vegas, and there's so many different components of downtown Las Vegas, that it gets kind of confusing, I think, for people who don't understand what downtown Las Vegas really means. Because there's like the Fremont Street downtown. Now there's East Fremont Street downtown. There's this sort of like North Las Vegas downtown stuff, you know, like Cashman Field, and then there's the really east, like where the old Fox Movie Theater used to be. You know, these are all to me like considered downtown. It's just such a convoluted concept, really.

What do you think people's perception of downtown is now, aside from, you know, folks that actually live down here because, even to this day, it seems that the John S. Park Neighborhood, or you say you live downtown, it really has certain connotations to it, and a lot of people just kind of look at you like, oh, you know.

Yeah. They do. But you know what? They've done that forever. [Laughing]

Right. So it's been something that's been part of the history of this area.

Yeah. You know, Las Vegas is a funny place and there's no right or wrong answers. I think that each person who comes here brings their own like sort of constitution about what is a nice place to live and what isn't a nice place to live. And so, I think what ends up happening here is that, it's just easier to move into a new house, than it is to move into an old house. Or, you know, it's just easier to move into a new office building, than it is moving into an old office building. I mean there's upsides to each one. But I think that, for whatever reason, the new Las Vegas favors new; the old Las Vegas favors the old.

And you have a lot of people who've been here for a long time who really are excited about the changes and who have seen so many changes. You know, like the downtown is the heart of our community, and as an organism, a living organism, you have to have a healthy heart. So I think, if you kind of think about life in terms of that, you think of downtown in terms of that, you can't not want to see success down here. There's always going to be components that are going to make it have to exist. I mean there's all the justice centers, you know, the regional justice center and the courthouse and all the law stuff is happening down here. The county even moved its main offices down here. You know, I think the World Market [Center] is going to be an interesting thing once it gets played out. I think it's all these different treasures. I think the [Las Vegas] Springs Preserve is going to really change a lot of the way a lot of people think about Las Vegas. It's a great project and it's wonderful. And to me, you know, when I think of downtown I consider that to be in downtown. And, you know, I just think that downtown is like basically [Interstate] 95 to Eastern [Avenue] to Sahara to Decatur [Boulevard]. That, to me, when I think of downtown, that's what I think of, whatever encompasses that.

Since you've been here, I guess, has your business climate changed at all? How long has this store been opened now?

Since November of 2005.

OK, so two years. Has it changed at all since you first opened, the clientele or the business climate?

No, I mean not really. I think that, when Holsum first opened there was a really high hope that it would become sort of an arts factory type of [thing], only a little bit nicer building obviously, more services available with the restaurant. But I think that the artists, you

know, it just didn't work for them, so now they're gone, but for what I'm doing it's still perfect. It's going to take a lot of work to get me to not think about Holsum. [Laughing] And you know I love being by the trains because, having grown up in John S. Park I have always heard the trains in my life, always. So hearing the trains, to me, is very soothing. It just feels right.

How would you describe the relationship between your business and the John S. Park Neighborhood?

Well, it's a positive one, you know, I mean I'm kind of there for them.

I guess when we talk about John S. Park Neighborhood we're actually not talking about John S. Park proper but, you know, sort of from Las Vegas [Boulevard] to Maryland Parkway and Charleston to Saint Louis [Avenue] and even the Huntridge area.

I see a lot of people, all the time, come in from that area. They don't always tell me that they're from there but I mean like, you know, if they mention it I'm always excited.

How do you think the development of the First Friday has played out in shaping this whole area, like the neighborhood and the community?

I think First Friday is the strongest card we have in our hand for downtown redevelopment right now. I think that we are seeing East Fremont kind of starting to emerge as a strong destination. And that has a lot of potential to be like a destination that's a thirty-days-a-month destination. The Arts Factory and the Arts District and what we're doing with First Friday is a strong part of the puzzle. But for this neighborhood, for the Arts District neighborhood, I think the best thing that could happen is if the businesses started being open when they say they're going to be open. [Laughing] You

know, you have a strong sense of independence and a strong ability to be an independent business owner down here, which is great. But with that, you can decide when you want to be open, and if you just feel like on a Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock just calling it quits, you can do that, and that's unfortunate, because people need that consistency. And so that would be my wish for the future, as far as the Arts District is concerned is that we could figure out a way to just be open when your door says you're going to be open. Don't expand your hours. If you say you're going to be there on Saturday from twelve to two, then just figure out a way to be there from twelve to two. It's really hard to do that. When I opened the Paper Doll that was one of the questions I really had to ask myself, and be really honest, I mean brutally honest with myself, like can I do it? Can I sit down from ten to five Monday through Saturday and be open on these days? And it took me a lot of days to sort of, you know, get the answer, and the answer was no.

[Laughing] You know what I mean? I can't do it. So part of my business plan included hiring people who I could trust to be here in my absence.

Right. That's an important thing to know if you're going to be running a business.

Absolutely. I know why people have to run out the door and go to the doctor or to go to jury duty, you know, all these things, but you have to think about those things when you [start a business]. But with the Arts District, I mean if you're an art gallery, especially an artist-owned art gallery, you know, if you don't feel like being there, see ya. [Laughter]

Right. Yeah, I guess that's one of the perks, the upsides and the downsides of having your own [business].

Right, because if they were in, say, the Forum Shops, they would be required by their lease to be open. Otherwise they would get fined. But that's like downtown versus the

more developed areas, more master-planned. It's tough to have that independence. It's tough to maintain your house. When no one's holding your feet to the fire and saying, mow your lawn, it's hard.

Yeah. It's a lot of self-discipline.

Yeah. Like I wouldn't ever fault anyone for not really wanting to live in one of the older sections of Las Vegas, if they didn't want to, because there's a lot of things that have to happen to maintain a household. It's one thing when you have a neighborhood association sort of like on your back, but it's a whole other thing when nobody's on your back. And I think that, you know, it's all good to have this cute, funky, Mid-century Modern house, but I mean if you don't have what it takes to keep it up, then you're doing a disservice to others. I mean I know that sounds really harsh. I mean I've lived homeowners-association-free until like a year ago. [Laughing] And I'm not sure how I like it [here]. It kind of freaks me out a little bit. It's a huge switch. I mean it's like, whoa! But at the same time it's kind of like, you know, I don't have to worry about if someone has their grass four feet tall, if they're alive or not. [Laughing] You know what I mean? Like, I wonder if I should be worried about that person, you know.

That's interesting because you do, I mean you do know people in the community and you do watch people's houses and if you see changes, like all of a sudden you don't see somebody for a couple of days at their normal time or something, you do wonder, you know, if everything is OK. And to me I think that's kind of a unique, a good aspect of the community, but at the same time, that's a good point that that perspective shifts a little bit when you leave something like that.

Yeah. Well, you know, I miss it but it's like half-empty, half-full, you know, the chicken or the egg.

So I'm curious what you think, particularly as a business owner, about the Manhattanization, as they like to call it, of particularly this area, and how you think that's going to impact the Arts District, you, and even the community.

Yeah. I think that there's some things that you have to look at that I don't think a lot of people look at when they think about the Manhattanization as being a bad thing. First thing they have to look at is the neighborhoods in downtown, and remember when I say downtown I'm talking about the Decatur-95-Sahara-Eastern, they're big lots. We built houses on big lots. I mean you have like twenty-five-hundred-square-foot homes on four-or-five-thousand-square-foot lots. You have quarter-acre lots, you have acre lots, you've got big lots for big houses. So the density is not there. So we don't have as many people living in this area who are accessing grocery stores, banks, restaurants, paper stores. So, when you think about the Manhattanization of Las Vegas, you know, I think about it, and this is from my business perspective, but I just think about it as what I'd like to see in a rehabilitated downtown, you know, I'd like to see people. I'd like to see people out enjoying themselves at the sidewalk café, with their dog. I'd like to see people going to an evening concert at the Poets' Bridge at Centennial Park. I'd like to see people doing that stuff. Well, you know, people anymore, and in life, they don't go outside of their neighborhoods. It's just a pain. So if there's nobody in those neighborhoods to go to these places that are downtown, then it's a waste. So, to me, I think that the more people they could bring in to live here and to have homes here, the better it is for everybody.

Right. And potentially, so looking as in bringing in more people, it will bring in more activity, it will grow the infrastructure a little bit.

Right. If you have more people living down here, you need more dry cleaners, you're going to need more wine bars, you're going to need more restaurants, you're just going to need more of everything, like coffee shops, a grocery store, you know, you're going to need a park. I mean I'd love to see someone come in with a proposal that's going to build like some kind of green. (That's not going to help anybody but I'd like to see it.) You know what I mean? So I don't think it [Manhattanization] is a bad thing and I think that, you know, it's a good thing. And I'd rather see a really cool project come in that brings some life and brings some excitement, versus seeing something happen like what happened at the Del Mar Hotel. It was this fabulous old motor inn, you know, interesting Mid-Century architecture, you know, it became essentially like the worst motel on the Strip, and now it's just gone, it's just imploded, because they just got in so much trouble with all the hookers and drug dealers and the suicides and murders, I could go on and on, that the owners just decided, you know what? Just forget it. And so now we have an empty lot.

And so how do you think we avoid that happening?

I think how you avoid that happening is that you need to develop a more positive attitude about development. I think that there is an inherent fear of development in some of the mindsets of some of the big players in the neighborhoods, especially in John S. Park. I've talked to some people about it. But I think that, you know, there's a way to make it work well, because you can't keep rejecting these grand ideas by the developers because what ends up happening, and it's so unfortunate for the downtown, is that they say, OK, you

know what? I was going to give you this beautiful five-billion-dollar project, it was going to be really nice, it was going to be an asset to you guys, it was going to be this and that and whatever, and you know what? If you guys don't want me to do it here, I'm just going to go, buy some land way south of town, it's going to be a lot cheaper, it's going to be a lot easier to develop, and I'm still going to be able to do my project the way that I want to do it. I'm just going to take it from this part, which could've worked, and I'm going to build a big fifty-story tower out on Hualapai [Road] and Flamingo [Road], or whatever. I mean you don't want that. I mean that's definitely not the place for that kind of a project. Ever. You know.

So I think to kind of maintain the integrity of the community downtown, you know, if you play like Sin City or all these old development games, it's like it develops in the core first, you know, like that's how the game says it does. I mean that's how it has historically in Manhattan, in San Francisco, you know what I mean? That's just how the cities are built up. And so, you can't build a city up, you know, ten, twelve, fifteen miles from the core. Like that's silly. You know what I mean? If you think about it, I mean it's just silly.

You're right, it doesn't make sense to keep pushing that further out. There seems to be a tension, you know, because we see these just phenomenal projects happening, like on the Strip and things are just getting bigger and bigger and bigger. It almost seems like with some folks I've talked to, there's this tension of, yeah, everybody wants change and development down here but, you know, at what cost? Do the developers come in and is there going to be a concern for the neighborhood and for the businesses down here, or is it going to be, you know, let's build as much as we

can, and highly profitable for the folks building it? And then ultimately, it has an impact, I suppose negative or positive, on the community.

Right. I mean I'm not sure exactly. I mean I think about, when you say that, I think about some projects that have happened on the Strip. I think about, you know, the Venetian and like Wynn [Las Vegas] now and now Trump [International Hotel and Tower] and the Bellagio and like that, kind of like the Spring Mountain [Road] and Las Vegas Boulevard area. And you know you have some pretty strong neighborhoods that are still pretty close to there. You have the Las Vegas Country Club [National Golf Club] neighborhood, which is never going anywhere. You know, I would even say that John S. Park really is a big part of that. And then a little bit further east but not that much further east you have the Sahara National Golf Course [Sahara Palms-Sherman Residential], and I know that they're experiencing some changes right now. I'm not sure exactly what's going on but there's been some mumblings. But those are strong old neighborhoods. And I think they've been positively impacted by those big projects. So, I think you can't have a crystal ball and know what's going to happen. I mean you can't say, you know, that something is bad, until it's bad. I mean to me, I think that the Fremont Street Experience, enclosing the Strip and making it into a pedestrian mall, was not the best thing that could've happened. I don't know what else that could've happened. But, it seems to me like it was an interesting concept at the time and they tried it and I think that what it's led to is like a little bit of loss of life for those downtown casinos. And would that have happened anyway? I don't know. You know what I mean? And I mean the Neonopolis is definitely a nightmare. But then I think that Soho [Lofts] seems like a really positive project, Newport Lofts looks like a really positive project. The stuff that's going on over,

you know, like Ogden [Avenue] and Las Vegas Boulevard, Stewart [Avenue] and that, by the El Cortez [Hotel and Casino], I'm not sure what the name of that project is, I'm sorry. And there's going to be people, I mean they're just going to bring people. So that's good. I mean people is good for a place, you know. I think people fear change.

Yeah, and as somebody pointed out the other day, I mean change is going to happen, and so I think it's in everyone's interest to figure out how to make it work for us, you know, and how to make it work for the area, and have a positive attitude.

What about this new stadium proposal?

You know, the stadium proposal is kind of what it is. I mean it's a phenomenal assemblage. If you look at it from like a real estate perspective, I mean assembling that amount of property with that many different owners is virtually impossible. I mean the fact that they even were able to get it done. Well, I've been down here forever, so I know a lot of the different personalities. I mean it's amazing that they were able to do it. I don't know that that's the right place for a stadium. Our neighborhood association has met with the developer and we were extremely concerned about the fact that it was so close.

Because originally when they did the site plan, and it's all preliminary, they had the stadium like rather close to the corner of Charleston and Main [Street], and it was alarmingly close, and so we were really extremely concerned about that. So, last time we saw them which was, I think like two weeks ago, they were pushing it back as far as they could, and they were going to create more of like a pedestrian-oriented, like open-air kind of thing that kind of was coming in to the facility, so that it would be more like they'd have the mouth on the corner of Charleston and Main, and then that would be flanked by, you know, shops and cafés.

So it would actually attract pedestrian traffic.

Right. Right. Right. You know, the city of Las Vegas is dedicated to rehabbing downtown. I mean that's part of what they want to do. It's important not just Mayor [Oscar] Goodman and the council people but to the actual staff members. I mean they are as focused as they can be on maintaining the integrity of the community down here. And so I think that, you know, as they continue to work with the developers of the stadium, I think that we'll see some really interesting things. They're working with some phenomenal architects, and hopefully, you know, any responsible architect, in the world today, will have respect for the community and the space that they are doing their projects in. I mean I'm not an architect, I don't really know much about architecture, but the things that I do know about architecture and development is that the ones who are good and who are doing meaningful projects have a lot of respect for the space where they put their buildings. They don't just plop buildings down anymore, which is what we got with Neonopolis. They kind of just plopped a building on [the street downtown] and it doesn't make any sense. At the time I think if they would've maybe thought about it a little bit more, you know, I think they maybe would've ended up with something else.

Right. That forethought, or foresight, I guess, that we seem to have more of now than back in the heyday of the eighties, it seems like. Yeah, I mean interesting changes I think are going to take place.

Oh, absolutely. But that's Las Vegas. I mean, for as long as I can remember, every time there's been a major project—the first one that I can really think of was the Fashion Show Mall. I mean it took them a few years to build it, it's on that flood channel, and I'm like, oh, my God, how's this going to work? Who's going to go to Neiman-Marcus, in

Las Vegas? We have 300,000 people in our city. I mean we did at the time, we had 300,000 people living in the city. And they said no, we're going to do this mall and it's going to be beautiful, it's going to be Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman-Marcus and all these like hotshot, fancy stores, and it's going to work. And everyone just thought they were nuts, like these people are crazy. I think within like the first two years of opening, that Neiman-Marcus was one of the most successful stores in the chain. The same thing happened when Steve Wynn built the Mirage. I don't have any sort of like extra love for Steven Wynn, but I do think that the Mirage was a phenomenal project, and I mean when he built it, it was huge! And it was aggressive and it was a lot of rooms to have to fill, you know, and they fill them now every day. And the same thing with the MGM Grand. I mean the MGM Grand [is massive]. I mean I go there and I'm like, oh, my God, I got to put my walking shoes on to go. [Laughing]

And I was reading something, like after we build this new Echelon Place, what we're putting in place of the Stardust, I think after that, Las Vegas is going to have more hotel rooms than New York City, which is huge.

Right. Right. Yeah. So you have people who need to live. I mean I was just reading in the paper today, they sold a house up in Summerlin, up in some crazy neighborhood up there, for like a thousand dollars a square foot, and it was a house, detached house. The high-rises have been selling for that, but that's a totally different concept.

So I think you have to have people who are knowledgeable and dedicated to seeing how change can be positive. This is as nostalgic as you get, you know what I mean, I'm like, don't do that, they can't do that. But I think when you live in Las Vegas, you have to expect a certain amount of changes, and some of those changes are good and

some of them aren't so good, you know? Actually this is funny. It broke my heart when they imploded the Showboat, which was really nothing. I mean it was a nothing building, it really didn't have much of anything going for it, it had lots and lots of bowling leagues. But I mean I drive down there and I'm like, oh, my God, the Showboat's gone, like that's just crazy, and it's the Showboat, it's not the Sands, you know what I mean? The Rat Pack never even probably stepped in the Showboat, you know? But I did. I used to go bowling there with my grandparents, you know what I mean?

Yeah, I was going to say, it's a significant landmark in people's lives.

Right, in my little life. This is another thing, too, about Las Vegas. Like nobody knew this was all going to happen. So when Las Vegas first started growing and they were building the dam [Hoover Dam], they just thought, you know what? We're going to build this dam in the middle of the desert, and they we're going to be gone. Because at that time, you know, there was no really air conditioning. You couldn't even think about living in a desert without air conditioning. I mean you couldn't. But they just thought, you know, it's temporary. We're just going to be there, just get it done, and then we're going to be gone. So there's always been this sort of temporary kind of mentality here. And then, you know, in the Fifties and Sixties when the whole gaming thing was first going they were like, oh, my God, let's just get it done so we can build it before the government comes in and shuts us down, you know what I mean? So they're like, just put it [the building] up, you know what I mean? Like just get it built. And so that was a temporary thing. I mean there's some exceptions to the rule but for the most part I don't think there's been a lot of buildings in Las Vegas that are built well. It's not like in Chicago or New York where you have these brick buildings.

Well, and the city [Las Vegas] is not as old, you know, and when you're talking about an old neighborhood, which now is the John S. Park Neighborhood, I mean you're talking about a neighborhood that started basically in the Thirties, really the Thirties and Forties, you know. But I'll tell you, those houses are built really well.

Yeah, they're great, but they're houses, homes. I'm talking about the casinos. I mean they were just kind of like, you know what?

But I do think that extends to a lot of the new housing development that they do now in Las Vegas, sort of that, you know, put it up and just get them all up.

Oh, it's horrible. It's horrible. Oh, my God. I live in the youngest house I've ever lived in, now, and it's awful. The construction is just terrible. I'm like, oh, my God. It makes me crazy. But, you know, we'll see what happens.

Yeah. So what do you think about the historic designation of the John S. Park Neighborhood?

Oh, it's great. I think it's wonderful. I mean we're actually going after a historic designation right now for the Arts District. I think we'll be a federally designated district. I think there's only one neighborhood in Nevada that has the state and federal designation, and I believe that that's Lawyer Land. John S. Park has either one or the other. I mean it's good. Historic designation is good. There's nothing wrong with that.

Is there anything that you think is important to the history of John S. Park or of this area down here that we haven't talked about yet? I guess I'm curious as to what types of changes have you seen or do you remember as kind of standing out in your mind, maybe when you were growing up or even now?

You know, it's funny, that neighborhood really hasn't changed that much. I mean you still have John S. Park [Elementary School]. When they refaced John S. Park, that was kind of troubling, for me, just because you got rid of that old schoolhouse with the windows and now it's sort of looks like just one of the other new schools, which I thought that was a little creepy. I understand why they did it. I mean obviously it was an older building, it was time to do it. That was kind of weird. But as far as what happens at the school, it's still the same. I don't know, I don't go by there on a regular basis, but I would hope that the kids who live in the neighborhood would still go there and play on the rings, or the monkey bars. [Laughing]

And then, you know, obviously the LDS Church, I think it's the Fifth Ward that's there, I mean that looks pretty much exactly the same as it always has. It's well-maintained.

I think, you know, the houses, when I drive in there. My old house [on Eighth Street] at one time was awful. They made it into a drug rehab halfway house for recovering addicts who are just getting out of jail. I mean they just destroyed the house. But I think the guy who owns it now has it pretty much well back under control, although it looks a lot different. But it was heartbreaking when that was going on. What troubles me more is like when I go by and I see these people are like shooting the whole house with stucco, and not sort of maintaining the integrity of the structure. Instead of keeping the wood trim and all that, they're just like generically shooting it with stucco. I hate to see when they let the lawn die. If they're going to let the lawn die, just do something nice with the rocks. One of my weird pet peeves, too, and it's not just John S. Park but it's all over, is like everyone's letting their trees die. Like everyone's killing their trees. And I'm

like, why? You can rock your front yard and still water your trees. But you know I think like esthetically it [the neighborhood] seems nice.

Here's my thing. If you bring in more people, if you bring in more high-rises and this kind of thing, maybe you're going to get some more families down here. I know a lot of people who, as young couples, have gone into John S. Park and wanted the cool old funky neighborhood house and then they do that, and then it comes time for their children to go to school, and they're like, oh, wait a minute. It changes the whole [dynamic], because the private schools are all located in the southwest, primarily, and then like the public schools, they're just not what they should be in this area. I don't know what the answer to that is. I'm not a mom, so I don't know, but I know that that's been a concern for some of my friends who have families. So if you have more homes, even if they're up in the air, you might see some more kids.

I do think you're right. I do think that's important. Because what happens, too, if you have people that move into those high-rises, when it comes time for them to have families they're going to leave, and you want to keep people down here.

Right. Right. And you know the thing is that even if they're not going to build a private school down here or something, at least maybe they could justify sending a bus from whatever private school people want to send their kids to. And I'm not a big fan of private school, I really fundamentally believe in public education, but, I mean this is the world we live in.

Until we can overhaul our entire [school] system—

[Laughing] Right. This is a whole other conversation. My wish for downtown and all the people who are making the decisions down here is that they would be just a little bit more

receptive to redevelopment and development. I mean there's still a lot of vacant land, and there's a lot of houses down here that need love and need families to live in them, whatever that means, you know?

Maybe we've already talked about this but what does living or at least having lived, and now owning a business, in this community mean to you?

Oh, I think I'm just lucky. [Laughter] It means a lot to me. I like to think of this store [Paper Doll] as sort of like a community service. I carry a lot of historic books on Las Vegas history and the regional history, and I try to carry as much local products as I can. There's quite a few things in there that are local. I don't know, I just feel like I've been really lucky and I've been able to have so much from Las Vegas. It means a lot for me to give back, I guess. I don't know if that makes any sense. I know it's not very businesslike of me [laughing] but I like the idea of being part of the solution down here and being in some regards like a pioneer. A lot of people come in here and think I'm just absolutely insane for even attempting to have a business in this area. But they're wrong.

Well, I really appreciate you taking the time.

Yeah, no problem. And if you have anything else, I'm happy to [help], you know, whatever. I hope you got what you wanted. I don't know.

Definitely. No, it was great, I mean hearing what it was like, you know, when you were a kid down here, because I mean really it's not that long ago, and people talk about all the different little businesses that used to be around here, and it's always so interesting to hear what used to be here, you know, because those are some of the same things I think a lot of people lament today. Like it would be so great to have a really cool record store down here, and it would be great to have like a little

restaurant or coffee shop that people could hang out at, and I mean all that stuff was down here at one point.

Yeah, it was. Yeah, it wasn't always, you know, the Olympic Garden [strip club].

[Laughing]

Did you go to Luv-It a lot?

Actually, my first job that I ever had, I worked at Luv-It. The guy who owns it now is the grandson of the woman who was the owner. And I'm not sure when she died but I want to say that she maybe died in the nineties. She was hilarious. She was a southern firecracker. Originally that was going to be a fried-chicken place.

I'm so glad that it's not.

I know. So then they did the Luv-It, and it was fun. So yeah, when I was fourteen that I was my very first official, other-than-babysitting job. But I worked there. I was a Luv-It girl. All the girls in the neighborhood, not had to get a job at Luv-It but it was just sort of the right of passage, you know?

Has it always been that size?

Mm hmm. It used to be cuter, you know, they used to have some little tables outside. I want to say there was a tree at some point. But I think that what's happened, people just hang out there a little too much, so they've kind of made it so it's not quite as [attractive]. It's always been that size. It's tiny. But it doesn't need to be big. It's got two frozen custard machines and a reach-in for the nuts and sprinkles and you're good to go.

So, anything else?

No. I mean if you have other people that you think maybe we should talk to that would be good for the project—

Yeah, you know, I mean you might want to talk to my dad, because when they first moved here he lived down by Crestwood [Avenue], in those really old [houses]. I think they were built in like the thirties. There's like a section of houses. It's in Crestwood, right down by the school. There's some tract homes down there, right at the bottom of the hill. That's where they lived. And then they moved to Bracken.

So he's been in this area his whole life.

Oh, yeah. Yeah, he was hilarious. He was like Mr. Football, he and his buddies.

Yeah, I would love to talk to him, if you think he would [like to].

Yeah, he'd love it. He'd be so excited. He's not as talkative as I am, but we'll get him.

[Laughing]

Well, thank you. I really appreciate it.

You're very welcome. My pleasure.

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