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An Interview with Virginia Beckley Richardson

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White
and Carole C. Terry

Produced by:
The Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries
Director: Claytee D. White
Junior League of Las Vegas
Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries
Junior League of Las Vegas
2011

The original interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and the Junior League of Las Vegas. The Center and the Junior League members worked together to produce this project.

The project required several steps. First, messages include the elimination of duplicate, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All messages have been taken to preserve the style and language of the original. Contributors, the two authors, have reviewed the material to assure accuracy. Virginia Callahan wrote the Appendix No. 1, "Recollections of Early Las Vegas," and provided Appendix No. 2, "Address by Bruce Berkeley of the kindergarten at the Well-Berkeley Elementary School." In addition, she joined the Junior League the historic newspaper which copies of which are included in this project.

The Junior League of Las Vegas and the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries are proud to present this project.

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and the Junior League of Las Vegas. The Center and the Junior League members worked together to generate this first-person narrative.

The transcript received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrators. Furthermore, the two narrators have reviewed the material to assure accuracy. Virginia Richardson wrote the Appendix No. 1, "Recollections of Early Las Vegas," and provided Appendix No. 2, "Address by Bruce Beckley at the dedication of the Will Beckley Elementary School." In addition, she loaned the Junior League the historic newspaper articles, copies of which are included in this project.

The Junior League of Las Vegas and the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries thank the University for their support of this project.

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Junior League of Las Vegas
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Table of Contents

Oral Interview with Virginia Beckley Richardson Page 1

Appendix No. 1 – Recollections of Early Las Vegas
by Virginia Richardson Page 23

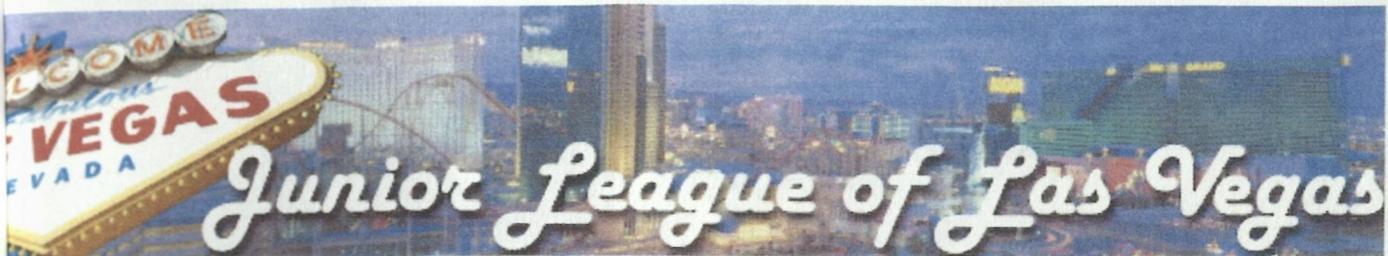
Appendix No. 2 – Address by Bruce Beckley
at the dedication of the Well Beckley Elementary School
Las Vegas, Nevada. November 7, 1966. Page 28

Newspaper Articles (Listed by headline)

	Following Page
Mrs. Richardson Elected President of Service League April 15, 1951	vii
'League' Tells New School Plans August 11, 1963	5
Set "Yum Yum Tree" Premiere as Annual Service League Benefit October 13, 1963	6
Benefit Ball is Outstanding Fall Event September 27, 1959	7
Service League Benefit Party Set on Saturday Evening June, 1951	8
Service League Benefit Garden Party June 10, 1951	8
Charter Members [of the Service League] March 5, 1961	9
Silver Tea Will Fete Anniversary of Las Vegas Service League February 26, 1961	10
Two Pioneer Families May 14, 1950	11
Officers Honored by Service League May 14, 1950	13
Soiree Highlights Noted September 27, 1959	18
Benefit Party Set for September 16 th September 3, 1961	22
Celebrate 50 Years September 6, 1960	27
Merchant's Home Becomes Monument March 11, 1979	33

Preface

Through her oral interview and the materials she provided, Virginia Beckley Richardson gives us a unique and fascinating look at both a pioneer family of Las Vegas and the early activities of the Service League, the forerunner of the Junior League of Las Vegas. Her personal recollections are an insight into life in the city's early years, and the biography of her father written by her brother, Bruce, humanizes a prominent figure in Las Vegas' history. The newspaper articles she made available enhance her descriptions of the Service League's activities. In addition, the article, "Merchant's Home Becomes Monument," describes her family home originally located on Fourth Street and relocated by the Junior League of Las Vegas in 1979. Her recollections clearly demonstrate her enthusiasm about her family's accomplishments and her involvement in the Service League



The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project
of the
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Use Agreement

Name of Narrator:

VIRGINIA B. RICHARDSON

Name of Interviewer:

CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Signature of Narrator

Date

Signature of Interviewer

Date

Mrs. Richardson Service League

Mrs. Richardson Elected President
of Service League

April 15, 1951



LEAGUE PRESIDENT—Mrs. Jack Richardson, prominent young Las Vegas matron, will serve as president of the Service League in the coming year, succeeding Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall. Mrs. Richardson is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Will Beckley, prominent early-day Las Vegas residents, who are identified with much of the history of the community's social and business life.

Mrs. Jack Richardson has been honored by election as president of the Service League and will assume her duties at the installation luncheon to be held on May 9. She succeeds Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall, who has served this year as leader of the organization.

Other new officers include: First vice-president, Mrs. George

with Mrs. John McNamee as committee chairman, assisted by Mrs. Gerald Sylvain and Mrs. John Conlon.

A discussion was held on the recently inaugurated project for training of the blind, which is sponsored by the League, under direction of Mrs. C. D. Baker. To expand her committee and increase the activities, Mrs.

represent the Service League in the Association for the School for Handicapped children of Clark County, including: Mesdames Roy Flippin, George Boman, Ray Morford, and Lorin Ronnow.

Mrs. Richardson is a member of one of Las Vegas' earliest pioneer families, the daughter

Boman; second vice-president, Mrs. Charles L. Fletcher; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Howard Cannon; recording secretary, Mrs. Fred Beeman; treasurer, Mrs. Robert Schmutzer; parliamentarian, Mrs. Howard Woodbury; and membership committee, Mesdames Richard Ronzone, William J. Moore, Jr., and John Hirsch.

The annual luncheon honoring new officers will be planned by the provisional members,

Baker asked for additional volunteers. They are Mrs. Cornwall, Mrs. Milton W. Keefer, and Mrs. R. Julian Moore.

Those who volunteered to aid in the well baby clinic at the Clark county health department were Mrs. Clifford A. Jones and Mrs. Kenneth Smith, and those who will assist with filing at the Clark county civilian defense office are Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Oscar Bryan.

A delegation was named to

of Mr. and Mrs. Will Beckley, 120 South Fourth street. She attended her elementary and high schools here and was graduated from the University of Nevada, where she was prominent in student activities. She was affiliated with the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority on the campus. Her husband is the owner of the Las Vegas War Surplus store. Mr. and Mrs. Richardson have two sons and make their home at 424 South Eleventh street.

This is Claytee White. And I'm with Virginia Richardson in her home here in Las Vegas. And it is November 5th, 2009.

So, Virginia, how are you doing today?

I'm doing fine. Thank you.

Wonderful. And we also have here at the table with us Carole Terry. And the reason that Carole is here is to make sure that I'm doing this right. So if you hear another voice that's the voice of Carole Terry.*

So tell me, Virginia, about your early life growing up here in Las Vegas. You can start anyplace you like.

It was really a fun time because most of the families lived on Fremont Street between Third and Las Vegas Boulevard. Also, many families lived on South Second Street in houses built for people who worked for the Railroad. Ours was a half block off, Fremont at 120 South Fourth Street. Our home phone number was number 21 and Beckley's Men's Furnishings Store (my father's business) was number 27. But all the children played together and our parents entertained each other. Our mothers would sometimes make us a picnic lunch and we would ride our bicycles out to the Old Ranch (Mormon Fort) which was located on Fifth Street (now Las Vegas Boulevard) just past the Palm Mortuary.

And our games were I guess you'd say kind of corny now, playing jacks and alley-oop and run-sheep-run and hop scotch, which kids have probably never heard of today. Then, all the functions almost always included the entire family as far as dinner parties and outings. We all went to Sunday school every Sunday. Most of the girls belonged to the Brownies. It prepared us for being Girl Scouts. The boys joined the Boy Scouts.

Do you have brothers and sisters?

I have one brother, W. Bruce Beckley. He was an attorney here, a local attorney.

***Note: Claytee White's questions are in bold type, Carole Terry's in italics, and Virginia Richardson's answers are in regular type.**

He spearheaded the forming of the firm of Beckley, DeLanoy and Jemison, chartered.

The firm is still practicing on Las Vegas Boulevard and Gass Streets.

Okay, good. Did your mother work outside the home?

No. She never did. She helped dad in the store often. She carried his lunch with a little lantern up the back alley up to the store every day. Then she stayed and worked in the store until it closed at nine.

Well, that was a lot of work.

Yes, it was, a good twelve hours.

Running the house and working in the business. Tell me more about the business.

Give me your father's and your mother's full name. And then tell me about the business.

My father's full name was William Ulrich Beckley. He was born in Guntalingen, Switzerland, and came over here when he was about six years old and settled in Fairbury, Illinois. He worked for one of his brothers, John Beckley, who had a men's clothing store. And that's where my father got an interest in the clothing business.

Tell me about the type of clothing and tell me, then, about your work in the store.

He had all the first class clothing, Hart, Schaffner and Marx, Edward V. Price made-to-measure suits, Stetson hats, Florsheim shoes, Freeman Shoes – all top lines. I remember we sold Levi's by Levi Strauss for \$1.98. Gloves and a lot of western shirts were available for Helldorado. Stetson hats, the western hats, and cowboy hats were also popular.

And so how did you help out in the store?

I was a clerk a lot of the time. I kept his books for a couple of years before I went to college.

Where did you go to high school?

I went to the Las Vegas High School and graduated in 1933. I went to college at Scripps College in Claremont, California -- it was a girls' school -- for two years. And then I transferred to University of Nevada for two years. I was a Kappa Alpha Theta. That's where I met my husband, Jack. It was a real snowy day. And I majored in business administration and it was the first time I had gone to the business administration class.

Not many girls took business then. And so when I went in I must have looked like I was petrified. And Jack came up and he asked me if I'd like to be seated by him. I did. And that was the beginning.

Wow. That's great. That's a wonderful story. So how long did you date before you got married?

About two years. We were married in '39.

So was he from Las Vegas?

No. He was from Ely, Nevada.

How did you persuade him to move to Las Vegas?

Well, it was just kind of a natural -- he was in the Air Force and graduated as a second lieutenant at the University of Nevada (Reno). It was the Nellis Gunnery School at that time. So that is how he came to Las Vegas.

So 1939 was just before the war. Did he stay in the military and get involved in World War II?

He was called back in the Korean War. But I remember December 7th very well. We were out at the Colorado River. And I just had the one son then, Bob Richardson. And this other couple had their daughter. We had a radio on and it said all military personnel return to the base at once. We rushed back. He was here for about two years. Then he was transferred to Foggia, Italy for two years. By that time he had been promoted to a Lt. Colonel.

Wow. Now, did you go to Italy with him?

No.

So you stayed here. What was the separation like for a young wife at that time?

Well, it was just something you did. I mean you were proud to do it for your country, and I had the support of my family. And I had the one son that was about two then. So I kept busy. I truly missed him, but I accepted it as we all did.

Great. And so he was a career military person?

No. He retired in '46.

So right after the war he retired. And then he went back for the Korean conflict?

Luckily he was stationed out at the base here in Las Vegas. We were very fortunate about that.

Yes, you were.

At that time he operated a Las Vegas surplus store connected with a men's clothing store.

So then he established a Real Estate office. What did you learn about Las Vegas real estate from that involvement? What was it like at that time, right after World War II, to be in real estate?

It was in '47, '48, right in there, and real estate was on an upward swing..

John S. Park was developed.

Yes.

Do you remember that community?

I remember Dr. John S. Park and their home. He was a local dentist. Their home was on east Charleston Boulevard. Marybelle Park, his wife, had a fabulous collection of Indian baskets.

Do you remember all of that being developed?

Yes. Chapman Drive was near there. The McNamees and the Hirsches (a dentist), the Conways (an accountant) and lots of my good friends lived on those streets.

Great. So now, at that time you were already -- when did you finish college?

I attended Scripps College in Claremont, California, for two years and transferred to UNR and graduated with a business administration degree in 1938.

Okay. Did you ever use that business administration degree other than working in the family business?

No. I was secretary to one of the governors here for a couple of months during the summer. He had his office on the second floor of our building with his store on the first floor. Dad built the first three-story building in town. He bought the two-story building and then added the third story when the dam was being built, about 1928, and rented that to the Bureau of Reclamation for several years.

So which governor did you work for?

You know, I think it was Scrugham. I really can't remember. I was so young then.

How many children do you have?

I have two children, Bob and Bill Richardson, who both live in Las Vegas now. Bill constructed the Mandalay Bay hotel and the Monte Carlo hotel and still does a lot of construction work. He still has his W. A. Richardson Builders, L.L.C., on Sunset Boulevard.

I would say. And what did Bob do for a living?

Bob was a partner in the White Cross drugstore for quite awhile. And then he went into real estate. He's now retired.

Wow. That's great. When did you become involved in community work?

Right after the war when we came home and got our lives settled down and bought our little home.

Where was your first home?

Our first home was on the corner of 11th and Garces Streets.

Now, there was an early hospital. Do you remember that?

The Las Vegas Hospital?. Yes. That was in the north side of town, on Seventh or Eighth Street.

Is that where you had your children?

I had Bob at the Mildren Clinic on South Second Street. Bill was born in the Las Vegas Hospital.

Tell me about getting involved in clubs and organizations. Where was your first involvement?

Junior League was the main one, originally called Service League, and I was President in 1951-52.

Tell me about being a member of the Service League. How did you get involved at the very beginning?

In 1946, it was just a group of about twelve young women, headed by Florence Lee Jones. And then the year after that I joined. It was just a group of good friends who decided we wanted to do something for the community.

Do you remember some of those first

Yes, I've got a new newspaper

'League' Tells New School Plans

August 11, 1963

'League' Tells New



PROJECT CHAIRMEN

From left, Mesdames H. Don Ackerman, committee member; Dwight Babcock, Retarded Children's Nursery School chairman; and C. Norman Cornwall, 'Unmet Needs' committee chairman discuss the new project to be supported by members of the Las Vegas Service League.

This fall, Service League Las Vegas will hold its annual Benefit Party, the proceeds to be used for some part of community need. In February an "Unmet Needs Committee" was formed with Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall as chairman.

This committee made inquiries into all facets of Las Vegas determining that where the greatest need was with retarded children in the three to eight age group.

Mrs. Dwight Babcock, with a special committee, also investigated the opportunities that could be given to these children. The Service League then voted to begin a retarded children's nursery school in the fall.

A qualified teacher was selected then a building in which to locate. Service League members are required to take a special training course held at the Children's Clinic, then devote six shifts at least during the hired teacher's time at the nursery school.

The benefit will be given to these retarded children party committee members including, Mrs. Vincent Smith, chairman; Mrs. Art Smith, chairman; Mrs. William tickets; Mrs. Richard Ro patrons program chairman Mrs. Ed Treacy, Benefit treasurer.

ew School Plans



PAST PRESIDENTS APPROVE

Eight past presidents of the Las Vegas Service League pose for a picture taken during the initial organization meeting for the support of the League's new project, the forming of a Retarded Children's Nursery School. Among scheduled events on the group's fall agenda is a benefit party to begin funds for the school. Shown are, from left, bottom row, Mrs. Harry Allen, Mrs. Jack Richardson and Mrs. A. Dwight Babcock. Second row, Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall, Mrs. George Phillips and Mrs. John F. Cahlan (League's first president). Top row, Mrs. C. Gail Andress and Mrs. M. J. Wiens.

Review-Journal Photo

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Do you remember some of those first projects?

Yes, I've got a new newspaper pictures.

That's wonderful. So what we're going to do now is we're going to go through some pictures. And she has a very nice stack of some newspaper clippings and photographs. So we're going to look through some of those.

This is a picture of past presidents.

And we're looking at the Review-Journal and we have photographs here of the past presidents. And we want to make sure that we scan that one.

And this is one of the pictures of one of our service benefits that we all worked on. **And this is called the Yum Yum Tree?**

Yes.

Do you remember enough to tell me a little something about the Yum Yum Tree premier?

I believe it is described in the article.

It's one of the annual Service League benefits.

Yes. We put one on every year. And it was all done by the husbands and the wives. And they did all the electrical work and they built different stages for us. They were very good about helping us.

And this first paragraph of this article is very interesting. The newspaper is dated -- it's the Las Vegas Sun and it's dated October 13th, 1963. And the first paragraph has, "Since 1946, when the Service League held its first benefit party, many Las Vegas projects have benefited from the work of this socially conscious group of Las Vegas matrons." And we have lots and lots of photographs of people who were involved. This is wonderful. I'm so glad you kept these.

Yes. I've have some more over here, too.

Good. And she's going to make a list of what she's taking so we'll be sure to bring everything back to you.

This is another benefit. This was in '59.

Oh, a ball. So what kinds of balls do you remember?

Set 'Yum Yum Tree' Premiere As

Set "Yum Yum Tree" Premiere as
Annual Service League Benefit

October 13, 1963



TELLS STORY — Mmes. Frances Conway, William Urga and C. Norman Cornwall look through scrap book illustrating Service League aid to City Library, for which two benefits were given.

helping children in the home with clothing and handcraft materials.

The Las Vegas City Library has been greatly benefited by League projects and this work has included purchase of a projector and screen, donation of books, assistance at summer reading programs and repair of books.

Variety School is also on the list of Service League benefactors. The League was the largest contributor of funds in 1950 for the new building and treatment center and for equipment used by children there. Provisional members get part of their training at the school.

At Nevada Southern Memorial Hospital a large bare room became a friendly meeting place for aged patients when benefit funds were used to repaint, install heaters and coolers and install comfortable furniture and a piano. Rose de Lima's pediatrics ward has also received furniture, toys and pictures from the League.

Thrift Shop and Blind Center, Hadland and Fantasy Park, Nevada Southern University, each great need in Las Vegas has met with cooperation and assistance from the Service League as the need has developed.

This year the project is the nursery for retarded children. Wholehearted assistance to this project was decided upon when a survey of unmet community needs revealed there was no service available for these children in the 3 to 8-year age group.

Benefit funds are being used to pay a teacher, provide a building and purchase equipment. In addition the League has made it mandatory for each member, active or provisional, to take a course at the Retarded Children's Center and put in specified hours acting as assistant to the paid professional teacher on duty.

YOUR Family IN THE SUN

Sunday, October 13, 1963

LAS VEGAS SUN 29

GERRY APPELBY, Women's Editor



REVIEW THRIFT SHOP — Mmes. Harry Allen, C. W. Pierce and Cal Cory review Thrift Shop activities which began operating in 1947. Donated clothing sold at low prices was used for many worthwhile charitable projects and to help

individuals in need. The Thrift Shop still carries on and rags and useable materials are diverted for the use of the Nevada Sightless.



TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE — This year's benefit promises to be a gala affair with the premiere showing of "Under the Yum Yum Tree," starring the latest movie idol Jack Lemmon, in the Huntridge Theatre, the evening of Nov. 19.

Art Trelease, assistant city manager, right, looks on as Mayor Oran Gragson buys the first ticket from Mrs. Vincent Sanner.

We sold tickets to it to raise funds for our charities. And the community was very generous to us. We did our own little skits. They're all local people, all members of the League took part – even the husbands.

That's great. These look like some really interesting skits. This is a benefit ball. And this newspaper we're looking at now is September 27th, 1959. So do you remember where some of the balls were held?

I have one. It was held at the home of Dr. Karl Krause, which was located just about where the University Medical Center hospital is over here on Charleston.

So near UMC?

Yes. Their home was there. They had a great big home on one acre. That's where we had one of the big parties. You can see how they were putting up the stages and the decorations.

Oh, that's nice. So what did you like about Las Vegas at this point? So this is 1959, 1960. What was Las Vegas like?

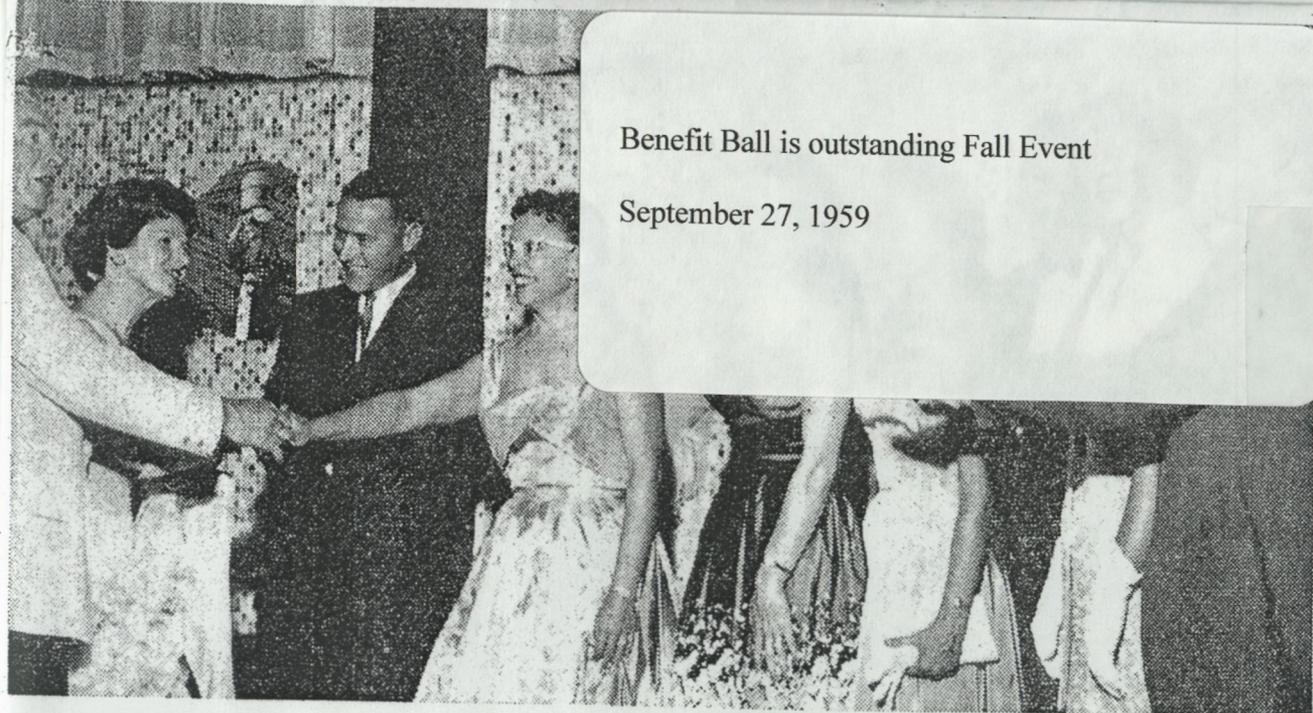
It was really a wonderful community then. It was when everyone knew each other, bonded together and helped in all the activities, the school functions and the PTAs and all organizations.

The Service League was very helpful with the blind community. It was a time the hotels were allowed to give their leftover food that was still usable. We'd go every week early in the morning and collect that food and distribute it to the blind and to those who needed it the most. Then the county cracked down on us and said it wasn't sanitary. And the food was -- it was all excellent condition.

When we had some of these benefits, about three or four of us would have to go to all the hotels and beg for booze. And I remember we used to go to the El Rancho, Frontier and the Sands hotels. We'd have to go late in the evening to see the owners, Jake Kozloff, Tommy Hull, Tutor Scherer, Farmer Page and Guy McAfee. But they were all so generous to us. They gave us case after case of whatever we wanted. So everyone was bonded in the community. It's not like it is now. You probably couldn't even get in touch with whom you wanted to see.

Benefit Ball is outstanding Fall Event

September 27, 1959



WELCOMING COMMITTEE

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rue (left) are greeted at the Convention Center by the League hospitality committee, including from left: Franklin Rittenhouse; Mrs. Rittenhouse, League president; Mesdames Michael McLaughlin and Jack Staggs, party co-chairmen; Jack Staggs; Mrs. John F. Cahlan, first League president; and John F. Cahlan.



IF YOU PLEASE

"We are Siamese, if you please." Mrs. William V. Wright (left) and Mrs. Donald English pose before a gilded Buddha as they begin the opening song of the show. They sang a parody, written

enault donated by Boulevard Motors to Service es out the car, which was won by Mrs. Irene Coker erson, and at right is Mrs. Ted Brandt, one of party

TANDING FALL EVENT



HONG KONG STREET SCENE

Dist. Judge John Mowbray serenades Mrs. A. W. Ham Jr., the "western tourist," while David Boles sits with folded arms after pulling the rickshaw for the visitor, and A. W. Ham calmly smokes a Malayan pipe. More than \$6,000, raised at the annual league benefit party, will be used to build a children's "Fantasy Park."

Women's Activities

Clubs—Society—Features—Calendar

JANE TUCKER, Women's Editor
Telephone Number DU-4-4660

Sunday, Sept. 27, 1959

Las Vegas Review-Journal 17

That's right. So at that time you were dealing with hotels owned by sometimes we call them mob. What was that like?

Well, I will say they're the most generous people. Tommy Hull, Jake Kozloff, Tutor Scherer, Farmer Page, and Guy McAfee who owned the Golden Nugget at Second and Fremont. And the Last Frontier and the Sands. They were all so generous to us and just glad to help us.

Was that the general attitude of your friends of the city when you would think about the Strip?

There wasn't too much of a Strip right then. Sometimes these hotel owners would invite us to attend the floor shows at their hotels. I remember seeing Jimmy Durante and Lily St. Cyr at the El Rancho and Liberace at the Last Frontier. Marlene Dietrich also appeared. We always dressed well to attend the shows – hats with veils, white kid gloves, etc. The men, as they call them racketeers, were very generous to the community.

This is the Review-Journal and it's dated June 10th, 1951. This is great. I'm so glad you saved these. A beautiful benefit. It looks like some people are in costume. This is a benefit garden party held Saturday night, June 2nd at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Karl Krause. And they put the address in the newspapers at that time. And you did this for furnishing the children's reading room at the new city library. Oh, this is fantastic. And according to the newspaper this party was a success.

It was a lot of work.

I know it was. At one time did you have a store?

The Service League? Yes. We had secondhand goods donated by local residents. Our store was on the West Side just under the underpass on Bonanza. We ran that for many, many years. We rented it from a Mr. Gilbert who had a grocery store nearby. We were open all day and had different shifts. We did all the washing and sorting of the clothes. We raised a lot of money for our charity work.

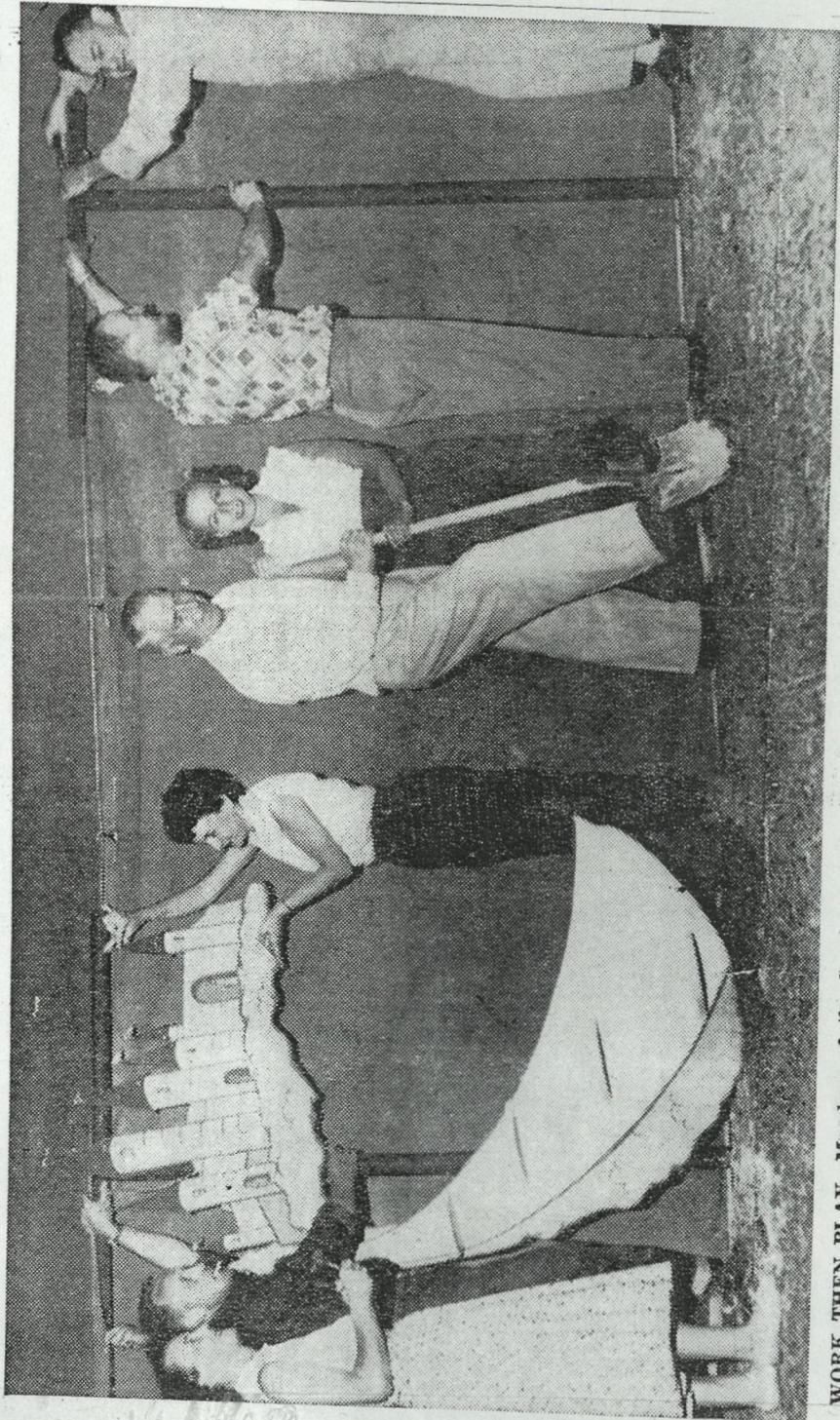
Now, this was across the tracks?

Yes.

So do you remember when that was?

JUNE, 1951

Service League Benefit Party Set on Saturday Evening



WORK THEN PLAY—Members of the Service League and their husbands were busy putting up decorations when this picture was shot, as they prepared for the big annual benefit garden party set for Saturday night at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Karl J. Kraus, 2020 West Charleston boulevard. The crew at work is, left to right, Mrs. Lorin Romnow, Jack Richardson, Mrs. George Boman, Leonard Fayle, Mrs. Jack Richardson (League president), Roy Fry, and Allie Lawson.

In a setting planned to emphasize the "story book" land of a children's library, the annual benefit serving which for which guests were invited to purchase doll house, with a display of children's library books,

benefit serving which for which

| Sunday, Ju

Women

Clubs - Socie

Service League Benefit Party
Set on Saturday Evening

June, 1951

cocktail party of the Service League was set for Saturday evening, starting at 6 P.M. in the garden of the home of Dr. and Mrs. Karl J. Kraus, 2020 West Charleston boulevard.

Funds raised at the benefit will be used by the Service League in furnishing and equipping the children's reading room in the new city library building, for which ground was broken on Thursday.

Special displays were set up for the party, one showing handiwork of members of the Las Vegas Association of the Blind, who have received craft training from Service League members for several months; and another showing a "miniature Thrift Shop," another charity operated by the Service League in Las Vegas. There was a miniature

garden party was Mrs. Richard Laub, who was assisted by all 70 members of the Service League.

chase and autograph for donation to the library.

Special booths for games provided entertainment for the guests, and resort hotel show performers were scheduled to appear at intervals during the evening to add to the festive occasion.

Invitations were extended by Service League members to their friends to attend the party, which started at 6 P.M. A large crowd was expected to attend the event, which has become traditionally one of the outstanding summer social occasions in Las Vegas.

The general chairman for the garden party was Mrs. Richard Laub, who was assisted by all 70 members of the Service League.



ALL WHO ENTER HERE—Will find a storyland setting for the Service League benefit party Saturday evening at 2020 West Charleston boulevard, home of Dr. and Mrs. Karl J. Kraus. A canvas was erected around the garden, and story book characters set the scene, as funds will go toward equipping the children's reading room in the new city library. Preparing for the party are, left to right, Mrs. Richard Laub, committee chairman; Mrs. Kraus, official hostess; Mrs. Jack Richardson, president; and Mrs. George Boman.

| Sunday, June 10, 1951

Service League Benefit Garden Party

June 10, 1951

Women Clubs -- Societies

FLORENCE DEE SOLON...
Telephone Number 2724

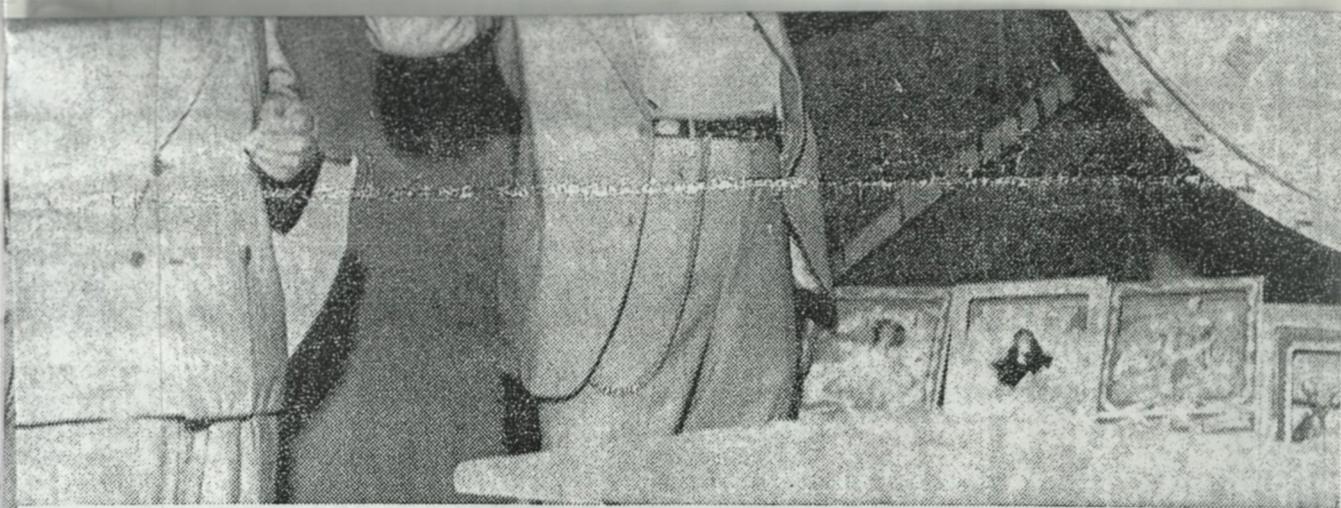


REFRESHMENT TIME—Husbands as well as Service League members assisted at the benefit party. C. W. "Woody" Pierce was a "waiter" at the "hot dog" stand. He is shown here serving Mr. and Mrs. J. Dewey Solomon, party guests. The "hot dogs" were free, but the "kitty" which Pierce kept on the serving table brought in a large donation to swell the library fund for which the party was held.

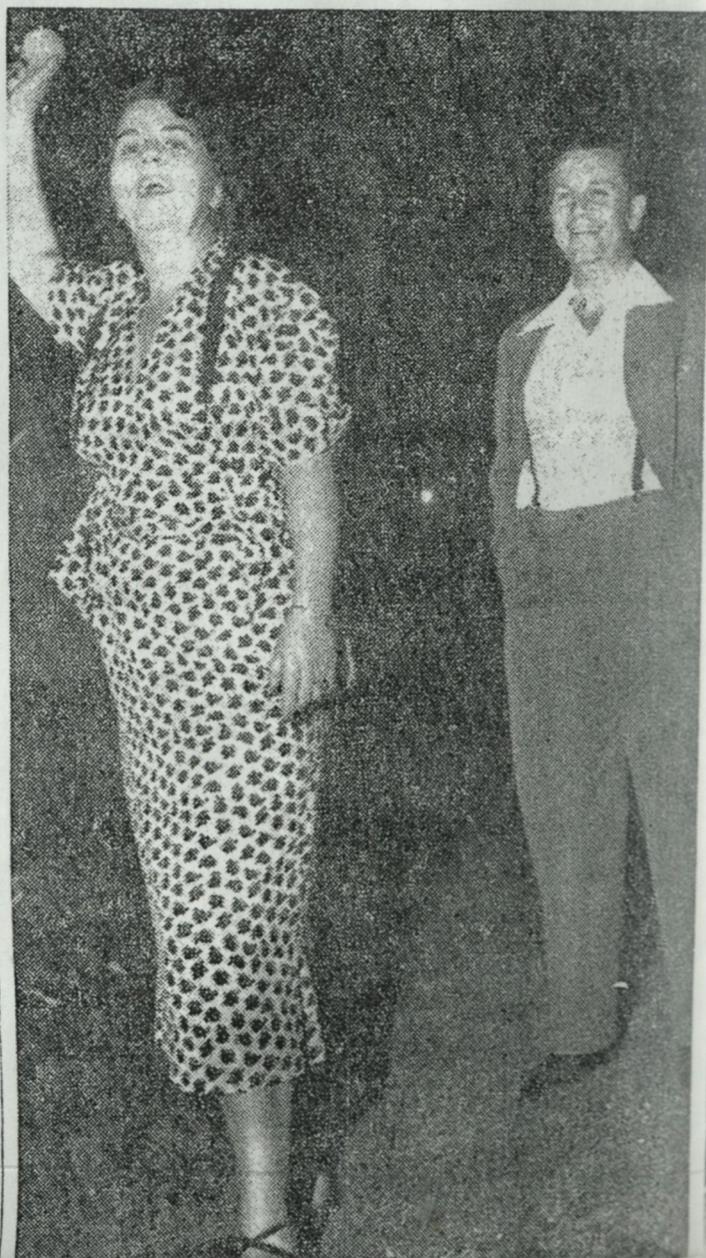
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cocktail party of the Service League and autograph for donation to the library



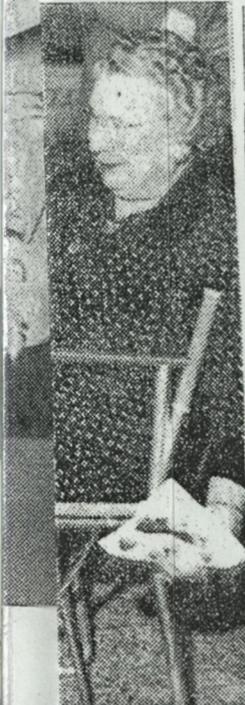
BIG WHEELS—For the past five years the "big six wheel" has been one of the money making features of the annual Service League benefit party, and each year Sheriff Glen Jones (right) has been in charge of dispensing the prizes. One of the good customers this year was Tony Lucey, left, who responded to the ringing of the cowbell by Sheriff Jones, who was dressed as a typical "barker." The sheriff was decked out in a bright red suit, with wide watch chain, a polkadot bow tie, and a bowler which was slightly too small.



League Party Is Success

The fifth annual benefit cocktail party of the Service League held Saturday evening, June 2, was one of the outstanding summer social events in Las Vegas and was attended by approximately 750 members and guests, who gathered in the garden of the home of Dr. and Mrs. Karl J. Kraus, 2020 West Charleston boulevard.

Through the cooperation of business men, who contributed generously for refreshments, prizes, labor, and entertainment, the League raised approximately \$3500, according to Mrs. Jack Richardson, League president. The fund will be used to furnish and equip the children's read-



In the 50s, middle 50s.

Do you remember the Moulin Rouge?

Oh, of course. Yes.

So in 1955 when the Moulin Rouge opened, do you remember that period?

Yes. I remember when it was open. I did not go. I had several friends that went. And they said it was a lovely affair, actually. It was quite formal.

I have been told stories that that area was not a safe area at that time.

We were a little bit hesitant to go there, but it never fazed us. We never had any problems. Everyone that came in was very good to us and bought our little old clothes and other donated items. We raised quite a little money for the community.

Wonderful.

We used to collect clothes from everybody. We had a little Boy Scout hut that was over where Ruvo's cancer center is now. That was just vacant land. And there was a Boy Scout hut on the property where we stored all our clothes. We would sort and wash them and take them there and sell them.

So you did a lot of work. That was a lot of volunteer work.

Yes, it was.

And everybody donated the time?

Yes. And every Service League member had to work X number of hours to stay in the club.

Oh, that's great. So how many members do you think were active at that time when you had the store and you were running back and forth to store the clothes?

Maybe 30, 35.

That's good. Who were some of the women that you remember who were active at the beginning along with you?

I have a picture of the actual members.

Now, what about this picture here? This looks like a lot of people.

These are the charter members.

Good. So these are your contemporaries. This paper is dated March 5th, 1961. It's



Charter Members
[of the Service League]
March 5, 1961

CHARTER MEMBERS

Among the charter members of Service League honored at the 15th anniversary reception of the organization held Tuesday were f George Phillips, past president; and standing, Mesdames R. Julian Moore, J. Howard Jones, William J. Moore Jr., Clifford A. Jones, F. Cahlan, B. J. Swanson, V. Gray Gubler, Jack Richardson, C. W. Pierce and Kenneth Zahn.

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V. Pierce and
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the Review-Journal. And these are the charter members of the club. And they include -- this is a 15th anniversary reception of the organization. And they include Mrs. George Phillips, past president; R. Julian Moore; J. Howard Jones, William J. Moore, Jr. So these are husband's names. Isn't this something? Clifford A. Jones; Paul McDermott; John F. Cahlan. And the women's names are not here at all. B. J. Swanson; V. Grey Gubler; Jack Richardson. That must be you. C. W. Pierce and Kenneth, last name is Z-A-H-N. Isn't that something? The husbands' names are here. The wives' first names are not even here.

No. That's the way it was in those days.

Now, there is the Fantasy Park. It was a project --

Yes. Fantasy Park.

Celebrating the 15th anniversary at a silver tea Tuesday.

Tell me about Fantasy Park.

It was just bare land. I don't even remember the location now. We had slides, swings, etc. We had an old train brought in and that was a big hit. .

And then you even had an airplane brought in at one time. You had these huge -- like the train was just a real-size train.

Yes.

This was Sunday, February 26th, 1961. It's in the Review-Journal. And this is an article about the silver tea anniversary of the Service League. When did it become the Junior League?

1971.

This is a picture of Fantasy Park train. You can see the train here.

This might be -- is this the same picture?

Is it the same picture?

Yes, it is.

Is it?

Okay, good. This is a copy of the same newspaper.

Right. February 26th, 1961.

Silver Tea Will Fete Anniversary
of Las Vegas Service League

February 26, 1961

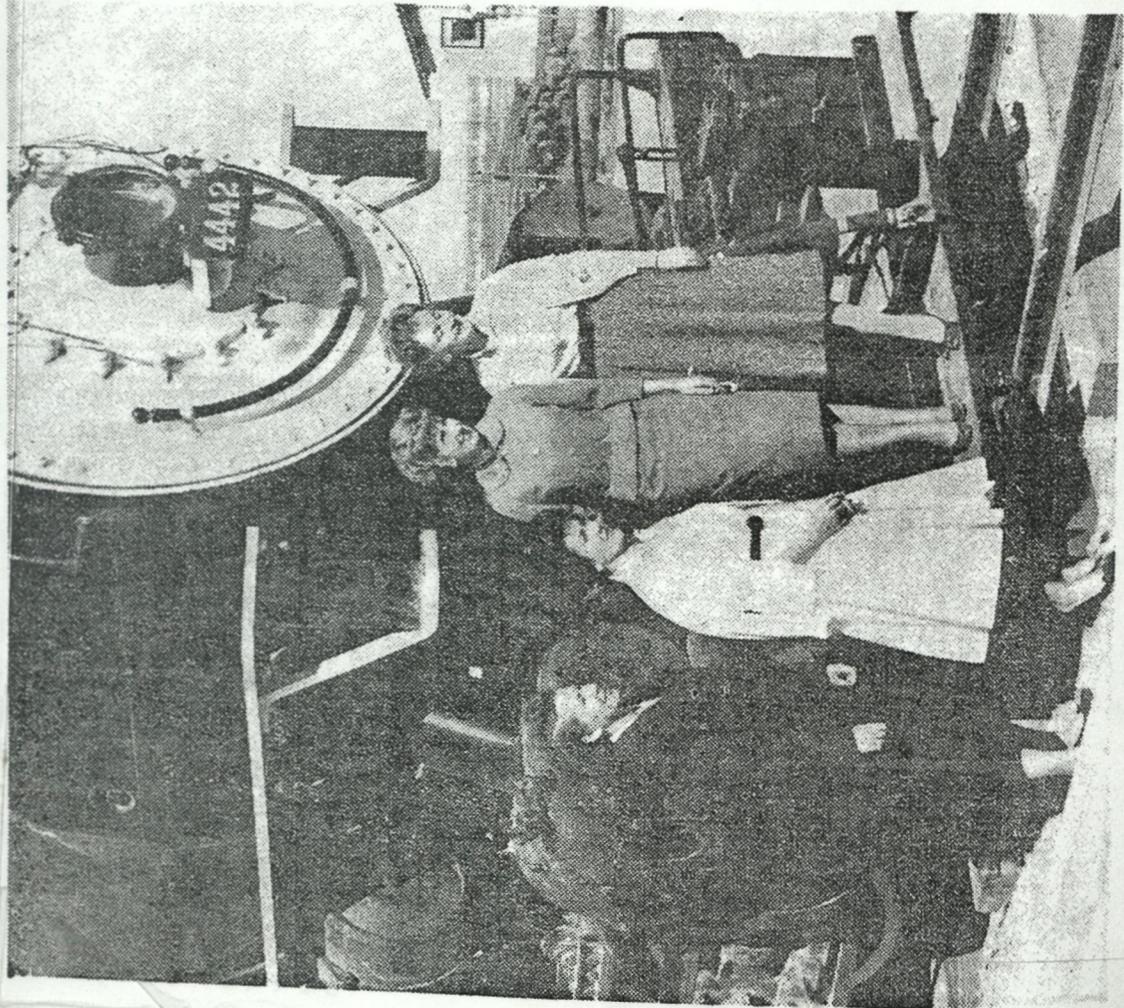


LIBRARY WAS PROJECT

The construction and the giving of children's books, was another immense project which the Service League members gave time and financial aid. Members pictured are, seated, from left, Mrs. B. H. Purdy and Mrs. B. J. Swanson. Standing, Mrs. W. J. Moore, Mrs. J. A. Richardson and Mrs. C. W. Pierce.

—Review-Journal Photo

Silver Tea Will Fete Anniversary
Of Las Vegas Service League



FANTASY PARK

One of the latest projects undertaken by the Service League, which is celebrating its 15th anniversary at a Silver Tea Tuesday, February 28, is Fantasy Park. League members at the park are, from left, Mrs. J. Howard Jones, Mrs. Teak Stafford, Mrs. Paul McDermott and Mrs. Gray Gubler.



PLAN SILVER TEA

Among the members of the Service League, who are making the arrangements for the Silver Tea, which will be held in the Rancho Circle home of Mrs. Clifford A. Jones are, from left, Mesdames James H. Down, Harry Allen, Kenneth Zahn, Jack Hanson and John F. Cahlan.

—Review-Journal Photo

That's correct.

That's just a picture of me as president.

Oh, this is a beautiful photograph. Mrs. Richardson elected president of the Service League. Installation date sat in May. This was Sunday, April 15th, 1951, the Las Vegas Review-Journal. And this is a fabulous picture.

In those days we didn't have any place to meet permanently. We would have to go around different places to find a room. We did meet at the El Rancho. They finally gave us a room that we could meet every month.

Oh, that's great. Did you ever have to have meetings in homes?

We did originally. Most of all of our original meetings were at Bill Coulthard's home. Lena Coulthard was president. That's where Andre's Restaurant was on Sixth Street. We met there for many years.

Wow. Oh, that's great. So what else do you have over there?

Well, this is just about my family and local families, actually.

What were some of the local families that you -- you said earlier that when you and your husband were young married people -- and I think maybe I'm not making this up; I'm hoping not -- that you entertained each other.

Oh, absolutely. This is way back, though, in 1950 .

Wow. Now, this is an interesting piece because we get to see some of the pioneer families in this article dated May 14th, 1950. And we see the Boles, Beckleys, Richardsons. So this is wonderful for history itself.

You knew the Von Tobel family, too, right?

Oh, yes. In fact, Ed was the one that got my father to come to Las Vegas. He was my father's best friend. He came first and then he wanted dad to come out as he thought Las Vegas held a good future. He was from Illinois, too.

As we're looking through these, do you remember participating in the early Helldorado parades?

Yes.

Tell me what that was like.

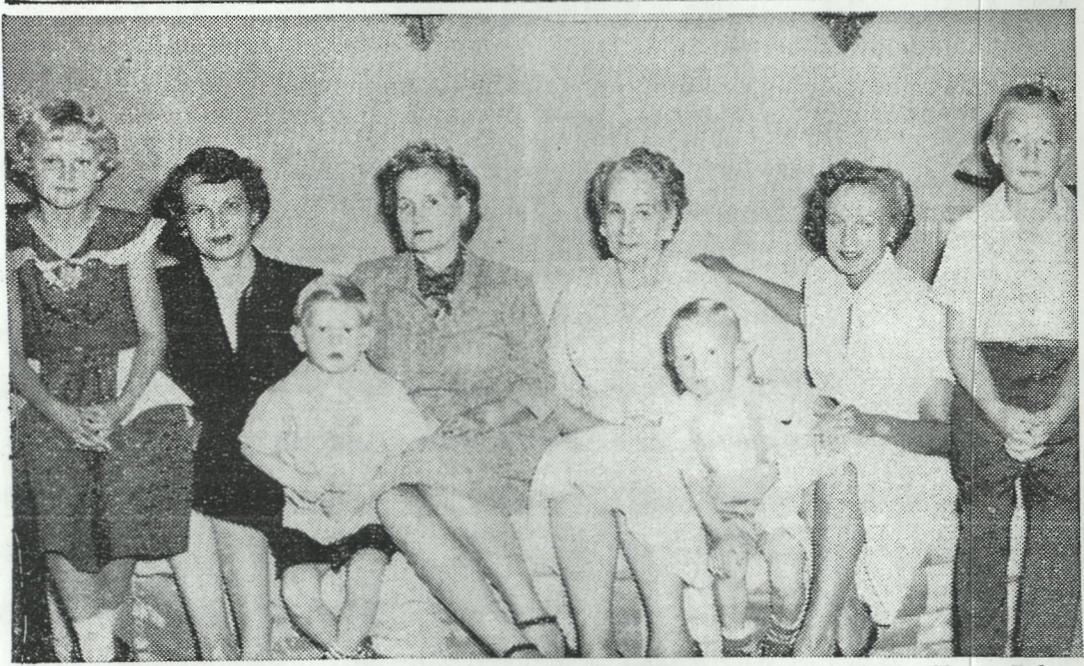
When my father had the store, h

Two Pioneer Families

May 14, 1950

MAY 14, 1950

Society Las Vegas is



TWO PIONEER FAMILIES — Left to right are: Sharon Boles, 8; Mrs. David Boles; Bruce Boles, 4; and Mrs. Jake Beckley, mother of Mrs. Boles; Mrs. Will Beckley; William "Bill" Richardson, 3½; Mrs. Jack Richardson; and Robert Scott "Bob" Richardson, 9. Mrs. Will Beckley is the mother of Mrs. Richardson. Mrs. Jake Beckley and Mrs. Will Beckley are sisters, and their husbands were brothers. The late Jake Beckley came to Las Vegas in 1905 at the start of the town and was engaged in business in one of the first lumber companies in Las Vegas and later was associated with his brother, Will Beckley, who came in 1908, in Beckley's store, a men's clothing enterprise. Jake Beckley retired in 1939 and built the Acre court, which he was operating at the time of his death in 1941. Will Beckley retired from business in 1941, when he leased his store building for the Pioneer club here. The Beckley brothers went to Wolcott, Indiana, for their weddings and brought their brides to Las Vegas to establish their homes. Mr. and Mrs. Will Beckley were married in 1910, and Mr. and Mrs. Jake Beckley were married in 1913. Both Mrs. Boles and Mrs. Richardson are native Las Vegas and attended the local schools, after which they were graduated from the University of Nevada. They established their homes here after their marriages, and their children have been born here. Mr. and Mrs. Boles have an adopted son, Jimmy, 15 years old. Boles is an auditor, and Richardson is a store owner in Las Vegas. Mr. and Mrs. Will Beckley have one son, Bruce Beckley, who is an attorney in San Francisco.

Have you seen the recent Helldorado pa
centennial in 2005.

No.

think you would probably be a little di

Yes, I think so.

o some of these newspaper articles that

When my father had the store, he along with all the stores and hotels -- Ronzone's and Penney's -- made floats. And those were the days you made them yourself. And it really was fun. We decorated one of our own cars. Then later on we hired a truck with a platform for the bathing beauty to ride on. But it was all hand done for a while. And then finally Helldorado grew and grew and they had some gorgeous floats after that. We used to watch it on Fremont from the balcony of my father's store on First and Fremont. Those were the great days of Helldorado. All the tents were put up at the Helldorado location for all the activities and the entertainment, the clowns, etc.

Now, I wanted to locate your father's store. You said First and Fremont. But the building it was in is still there.

Yes.

And it's called --

It was Pioneer Club.

It was the Pioneer Club, because that building is still there that his store was in.

Yes. He bought the two-story building way, way back in 1914. His store was there, and then he added the third story. He sold it to Tudor Scherer and Farmer Page and some of the gangsters.

Okay, great. Now, did you actually ever participate in any of the parades?

No. Not myself, no. We just gave a lot of hours and a lot of work in making the floats. But that was a fun time. Everyone worked together. Families just got together and supported it.

Did the Service League ever participate in the parade?

No.

Have you seen the recent Helldorado parades in the last -- they brought it back at the Centennial in 2005.

No.

I think you would probably be a little disappointed.

Yes, I think so.

So some of these newspaper articles that we've been looking at take place in the 50s.

That was the time that the Nevada Test Site we began to have those aboveground tests of the bombs. So did you ever --

We felt a lot of them. We had Venetian blinds in our home. They weren't quite as heavy as these are today. They'd just swing back and forth when a bomb exploded. Then we'd get on a bus and would park X number of miles from where they said was safe and watch it explode. The house just shook. I guess it was a little more dangerous than we thought, getting so close.

You would get off of the bus?

No. We'd stay on the bus.

Did you ever feel the breeze from it?

No. But we could see the smoke rising..

Great. We had another very active group here -- a couple of active groups -- the Mesquite Club. Did you know women --

My mother was the first secretary of the Mesquite Club. That was a women's organization. Most all the local women belonged to that. They raised money with the little bridge clubs that they had. It was a wonderful group.

Did you ever think about joining them rather than joining the Service League?

No. I really wasn't much of a joiner. But I did like Service League.

You just kind of fell in with Service League because all of your friends?

Yes.

Oh, that's great. Did your mother ever tell you any stories about the Mesquite Club, some of the things they did?

No, not particularly, other than playing bridge..

Later on there was another group. It was the League of Women Voters. They were very politically active.

No. I was never a member.

Any of your friends?

No. Not that I know of.

The young couples that we see in those magazine articles and part of the Service

May 14, 1950

Officers Honored Annual Luncheon



SERVICE LEAGUE OFFICERS — New officers of the Service League, installed Wednesday, were honored at a luncheon held at the Hotel Thunderbird. Left to right are: Mrs. Milton W. Keefer, parliamentary; Mrs. William J. Moore, Jr., second vice-president; Mrs. William Coulthard, retiring president; Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall, new president; Mrs. B. Mahlon Brown, first vice-president; Mrs. George H. Albright, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. Jack Richardson, recording secretary.

(Photo by Buck and Swift)

Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall, prominent civic leader, was installed as new president of the Service League at the annual meeting of the organization held Wednesday afternoon. A luncheon honoring new and retiring officers was held at the Hotel Thunderbird and was arranged by new members.

More than 60 members of the League gathered for the social event, and they were seated at tables decorated in the Hawaiian theme, with grass skirts, leis, and fruit comprising the table appointments.

Leis of flowers flown here from Hawaii were presented to Mrs. Cornwall and to Mrs. William Coulthard, retiring president, and gardenia corsages were provided for the other new and retiring officers.

The officers installed include: President, Mrs. C. Norman Cornwall; first vice-president, Mrs. B. Mahlon Brown; second vice-president, Mrs. William J.

Moore, Jr.; corresponding secretary, Mrs. George Albright; recording secretary, Mrs. Jack Richardson; parliamentary, Mrs. Milton W. Keefer; membership committee, Mrs. Stanley L. Hardy, Mrs. Ed Von Tobel, Jr., and Mrs. Howard Woodbury. Mrs. Ray Morford, new treasurer, was out of town and will be installed at a later date.

A business meeting was conducted by Mrs. Coulthard before she installed the new officers. Approval was given for expenditures totaling \$93.75 for welfare cases in the coming month, and it was reported that \$72.63 was spent on charity in April.

Approval was given on a plan to assist in establishing a speech correction center in Las Vegas to benefit crippled children unable to attend school, as well as those attending regular classes. This request was made by the Parents of Handicapped Children which conducted a sur-

vey and found approximately 100 children in Las Vegas needing this specialized training.

Final plans were announced by Mrs. Moore for the annual benefit cocktail party of the Service League to be held at 5 PM Sunday, May 21, at her home, 710 South Eighth street. Funds raised will be used in establishing a recreation room for aged indigent patients at the General Hospital and in purchasing equipment for the speech center. If the benefit will not cover both projects, part of the "Little Miss Doe" fund in custody of the Service League will be used toward the speech project.

In recognition of the service given by Mrs. Coulthard as president of the League during the past year, a gift was presented to her from the membership.

The next regular meeting will be held on June 14 at the Hotel Thunderbird.

Outstanding Community Record Made By Service League Here

By Florence Lee Jones

er sources in the community.

The Service League, completing its fourth year since organization, has a record of 8,263 hours of volunteer service in the community during the past year. This record is without parallel by any organization in the state of Nevada.

The annual report on activities of the 66 members of the League was distributed at the luncheon meeting held Wednesday at the Hotel Thunderbird, marking the installation of new officers by Mrs. William Coulthard, retiring president.

The service contributed by the membership averages 125 hours per member for the year and approximately three weeks of volunteer service for each in Las Vegas on the basis of a 40-hour week.

Of the total of 8,263 hours, there were 1,531 hours worked in the Thrift shop operated by the Service League at 336 West Bonanza road, where profits of \$982.65 were made to help support the charity expenditures of the organization during the year.

In addition to the articles sold at a small cost at the Thrift shop, clothing was distributed to a total of 111 persons without cost. These were cases referred to the Service League by the American Red Cross, Catholic Welfare, Child Welfare services of the Nevada state welfare department, and the Salvation army.

The total charity expenditures by the League during the year amounted to \$1,938, in addition to a contribution of \$1,942, to the city library fund. The latter amount was raised at the annual benefit cocktail party sponsored by the organization last spring.

The activities of the Service League have extended to practically every community welfare project in Las Vegas during the past year.

The American Red Cross was one of the groups which benefited from the Service League policy of community service. The chairman of volunteer services was from the League, and she and another member served as leaders in the residential drive for the 1950 fund campaign. Members aided in the fund drive, Junior Red cross workshops, swimming program for children, motor corps, Gray Ladies, production and disaster committee.

The clinics at the Clark county health department, held each week for babies, have been assisted by League members. In addition they have aided in special clinics for immunization, for rheumatic fever, cancer and tuberculosis patients, and for crippled children.

The League has worked in close accord with child welfare services, providing 34 weeks of foster home care for 32 children, funds for hospitalization and special diets for children in substandard homes, providing shoes and clothing, giving volunteer clerical work in the child welfare office, and meeting many emergency needs for which there are no public funds or oth-

During the past year, the city of Las Vegas has held many fund drives for welfare purposes. For the "March of Dimes" of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, League members served as chairman and co-chairman.

Members also assisted with the Tuberculosis Christmas seal drive, the Community Chest, and the library building fund drives.

Aid to individuals has included tutoring and providing toys for bedridden children; shopping for dependent families; transportation for needy patients from their homes to the General Hospital and supplying of magazines for hospitals, the old age home, and the Westside community center.

One of the special activities of the League involves an aged invalid Mexican patient, who has been confined to the General Hospital for several years. Once each week, a Mexican meal is delivered by a League member to the hospital to satisfy his appetite for his native food. Another patient living at home requires physical therapy twice a week at the General Hospital, and League members pick her up at home, take her to the hospital, and return her to her home.

The Service League participated in the annual Christmas toy project for the children of this area, with a member as chairman for the group's participation. Members have given other community service by participation in Parent-Teachers association projects, in serving on the Girl Scout and county recreation board, in aiding the Clark County Council of Social Agencies and the juvenile home, and arranging special parties for soldiers at the Nellis air base.

While the Service League charity activities emphasize benefits for children, many complete families or adults in need have been aided during the past year.

Among the group's charity expenditures have been payment of eight tonsillectomies, three eye examinations and purchases of glasses; transportation for needy patients to hospitals in other localities to receive treatment from specialists designated by the crippled children's clinic; purchase of many pairs of new shoes for school children; purchase of milk, groceries, and formula for children and families.

One case referred to the Service League was that of an infant requiring goat's milk, which the family could not afford. The bill was paid by the Service League, until the family physician was able to build up the child so that other foods would suffice.

The League was organized in February, 1947, and is the only group of its kind in Nevada. Each member is required to give 100 hours of volunteer service within the community each year to remain in good standing, and the average of 125 hours per member for this year indicates

League, when you did entertainment with your husband and would go out sometimes, did you ever go to the Strip to the casinos?

Oh, we always did.

Tell me about that. What kinds of things did you do on the Strip?

Oh, it was a wonderful time. You'd get all dressed up in your little white kid gloves and hat. They had wonderful floorshows and entertainment. And you knew everybody. You knew the owners of the hotels, and they were at your beck and call. It was just a fun time. All the hotels -- the Last Frontier when Liberace came was so special. It was such a treat to see the actors and especially Jimmy Durante at the El Rancho. It was such an elegant time. And then sometimes we'd stay so late we'd have to have breakfast. It was in the back of The Last Frontier -- they had a place called the Silver Slipper. And it was kind of old movie town with the saloons and little places to eat. After attending a floor show, we would often go to the Silver Slipper to have a 25 cent or 50 cent breakfast and then get home before the kids woke up.

I love it. Now, did you buy cocktail dresses at Fanny's?

Oh, absolutely.

What was that store like?

Oh, Fanny's was elegant. She was downtown for a long time, but then her son took over and moved the shop on the Strip. It was when Joseph Magnin's was here and it was right across the street. They carried really elegant gowns, coats and accessories

Oh, that's nice. I hear good things about Fanny's all the time.

You were just talking about the Silver Slipper. Do you realize that now they have restored some of those old signs?

Yes.

And they're putting them up again.

Yes.

And they're going to have an opening to display one of the signs on this coming week on the 9th at 4:45 in the afternoon. If you want to see one of the signs being unveiled, they're going to do it near Bonanza and Washington on Las Vegas Boulevard in

between Bonanza and Washington. So that's going to be the official opening of those signs.

That's interesting.

So I plan to leave work early and run down there. That's why it's on my calendar.

I bet you would.

So I love hearing the stories about the entertainment. Did you ever go into the Sands?

Oh, yes. Oh, they had a wonderful restaurant there. We used to always go. It was small. But, oh, the food was excellent. And the room was nice and cozy with soft music.

Okay. So during this period what else was the Service League doing? And maybe we'll run into one of the newspaper articles soon and it will start calling it the Junior League. And then we'll know when that -- okay. It wasn't until the 70s. All right.

I guess this is just parties that were going on in Las Vegas.

And even in some of these photographs that we have here in Service League and other organizations, aren't these dresses beautiful?

Oh, they are. Everyone just dressed so nice.

Oh, look at these cocktail dresses. And the thing is a lot of them we could wear today.

Oh, yes, you could.

Yes. They're so beautiful and so well made.

This is some dinner party.

Oh, this was our house at 120 South Fourth Street, actually, before it was moved. *That's the house that moved to the Clark County Heritage Museum on Boulder Highway.*

This is the house -- now, tell me more about this house.

When mother died we donated the house to the Junior League. The Junior League moved it out to the Heritage Museum on the Boulder Highway. It's still there. They moved quite a few homes. It's a little street of the old-time homes.

Yes, because they also have one of the old railroad houses out there.

Yes.

And I think they have one of the wedding chapels out there. So this is wonderful. This newspaper is dated November 9th, 1989. And we get to see a former -- how does it feel when you look at this house?

Kind of eerie. It brings back a lot of memories. That's when we didn't have central heat. We just had little kerosene heaters in the house. Then we finally got an oil furnace. But, you know, no one complained.

That's right. I love that idea, keeping the houses.

And this is when the Philadelphia orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, came. And there's his picture. Some of them we entertained.

So was this the Service League's --

No. No. This is just local society as it was then.

It was the Las Vegas Symphony Society.

Yes.

So were you ever involved?

No, I wasn't.

But this shows that Las Vegas had a desire to bring culture to the city. What do you say when people say to you there's no culture in Las Vegas?

They just don't look for it.

That's what I say.

They just don't look for it.

I have friends sometime who say, oh, I used to live in Los Angeles or I used to live in New York and there's just no culture here. And you know what I do? I start sending them E-mails from the university about all of the plays --

Yes. All the programs.

-- and the programs going on at the university. And they stop.

Good. That's a good idea.

They just stopped. They don't say that anymore around me.

And this is just a picture of my folks at their anniversary.

Oh, this is great. This is William -- anniversary cake to his wife of 50 years. The

pioneer couple celebrated their golden anniversary on September 6th. So what year would this have been?

September, 1960. That was in our backyard at 1111 Rancho Circle.

Rancho Circle?

Yes..

Now, tell me where that area is in the city. Near UMC, right?

No, on Rancho Road near the 95 Freeway just past Alta Drive on the left hand side of Rancho Road.

Those are big beautiful homes over there. So how long was your family in that home?

We were there for about 33 years. We never thought of living there and then a lot came up for sale. The asking price was \$5,000. My husband threw in a shotgun and that sealed the deal.

Oh, that's a great story.

These aren't all Service League. But this one was a party we had out at some ranch house. It was a costume party of all the members.

What was one of the most memorable projects that you participated in?

They were all so memorable. They all had their own touch. I can't say that one was really more exciting than the other.

Give me the names of some of the offices that you held. I know you were president. But prior to becoming president did you hold others? Like were you secretary --

I was secretary one year.

What were some of the duties? Do you remember the secretarial duties?

Just to keep track of all our activities. That was the most important thing.

And as president do you remember some of the duties that you had to assume to become president?

It was just all the projects in which we were involved. It was for the many benefits, arranging all the entertainment. And a lot of the entertainment was done by locals and members. But it was fun.

Do you have any favorite Junior League stories?

Oh, I can remember one. After one of the benefits a lot of us decided to get in our cars and snake around through town. And that's when the courthouse was where it is today, but it was set in the middle of the block. Of course, there was grass that surrounded the Court House, but you could drive right up to the steps of the courthouse. So we all drove up there. And as we got there, Judge Mowbray stood out in the middle of streets and put his arm out and he said, "This is illegal for all these cars to drive through at this late hour." So he stopped us. And then some attorney got out of his car and said, "There is no law against this." And, Judge Mowbray just walked up the steps and slammed the door.

Oh, that's great. What do you see as the future of the organization now?

Well, it's changed a great deal. I guess it's because it's gotten so big and you don't know all the members. It has lost its personal touch. I haven't been active in it for quite sometime. But it's still a good organization. They do a lot of good work. But I'm just not current.

How many years would you think you were active?

Probably 25 years.

Wow. That's a wonderful contribution to your community.

May I ask couple of questions?

Sure.

Do you remember working for UNLV as part of the Service League projects? I was reading the history and they said that the Service League was very instrumental with the early days of the University of Nevada Las Vegas down here.

Maybe in getting the collection together. But I'm not familiar with the projects.

Are there any special projects that you think organizations like the Service League should become involved in, in this day and age?

I think they have their hands full at this point and are doing an excellent job.

Do you think the reputation of a city like Las Vegas, especially the reputation that we kind of have now, does it subtract from the work of a group like the Junior League?

Soiree Highlights Noted

September 27, 1959

I don't think so. I think it more or
have a lot to offer. But people don't look

SOIREE HIGHLIGHTS NOTED



ATTEND SERVICE LEAGUE BENEFIT

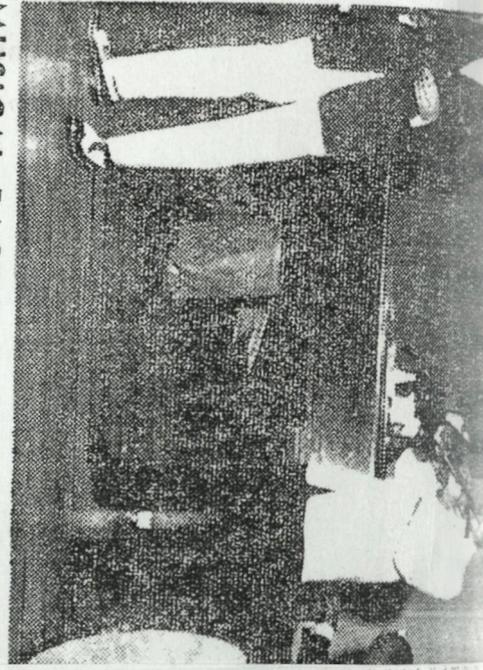
Among the more than 1100 persons attending the Service League benefit event, held in the Gold Room of the Convention Center, are, from left, Mrs. W. L. Tueller of Salt Lake City, who with her husband made a special trip to Las Vegas for the party; Flo Walters, who donated her assistance to the production as choreographer of the Japanese dance number; Mrs. Glenn Tueller, show director; her mother, Mrs. John Sexton; Judge Sexton and Frank Strong.



CHINESE HILL-BILLIES

Show stoppers were a trio of Service League husbands, who pantomimed "personality" before a silent microphone while a recording was played in the background. From left are Thomas A. Turner, Ralph Denton and Herbert M. Jones.

Review-Journal Photo



MUSICAL BACKGROUND

Art Johnson (left), production singer at the D at the Service League benefit party, and Bill Cla orchestra played for dancing and the show pr are, from left, Joe Klumpler, clarinet; Chuck Moran, bass; and Johnny Cassella, drums. Chore al dancers, Donna Lein and Flo Walters.

2013 FEB 11

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Source Highlights Note
September 27, 1959

I don't think so. I think it more or less enhances it really, in a way, because we do have a lot to offer. But people don't look for that. They just look for the fun on the Strip. **This is my last question. What would you like to see the average person know about the Junior League, the Service League? What kind of legacy would you like the organization to leave to the average person?**

To let them know that this kind of work can be done and progress can be made even with little monies involved. It's just the people themselves that have to get involved. I think it's a project that has to be done from the heart, not for the monies involved. *When you were involved in the rally days of the league, I understand the May luncheon, the typical May luncheon was started in the early days. Is that true?*

Yes. We had one every year in May. *And were you active in the league when it became the Junior League in 1971?*

Yes. *I'd like to digress a little bit and ask you a little bit more about the early days. I have been doing a history of people of German extraction in Las Vegas.*

My father was Swiss-German. *I know. And Jake Beckley and the Von Tobels.*

Yes. I have a picture of Jake. That was the first airplane that flew into Las Vegas. And he was the first passenger on it.

That's right. Did you speak German in your home?

No. *You did not. Okay.*

Dad spoke a little German, but not to us because we couldn't understand it. *Yes. And I want to know a little more about the house because people will be visiting the house. And I've been to the house several times. Do you have any fond memories about living in that house or some stories to tell about it because you were a young girl I know at the time?*

It was at 120 South Fourth Street, a half of a block off Fremont. I had my wedding reception there in '39. It was a small wedding reception. My parents always entertained

with dinner parties there.

Was your reception in the afternoon or the evening?

In the evening at six o'clock. We were married at five in the Methodist church and then we had the reception at our home.

And did everybody dress up?

Oh, my yes. Yes.

Oh, that's great.

There was an interesting part of our wedding. My father had Bryan Bunker employed at his clothing store and he belonged to the LDS Church. He was just like a second father to me. I wanted him to marry us. So we had to get a special dispensation for him to marry us in the Methodist church. We were married in the Methodist church on February 18, 1939.

Is that the church your family went to, the Methodist church?

Yes. Both my brother, Bruce Beckley and I always went to Sunday School and Eprath League at this church on Third and Bridger.

It's not there anymore, is it?

No. It was across from the courthouse. It was a lovely old church. My mother and father donated the first organ.

Now, did you mention you had brothers and sisters?

I had one brother, W. Bruce Beckley, a local attorney. His firm was Beckley, Singleton, DeLaroy, Jameson & Reed, chartered.

Who were some of the other children that you played with? Do you remember?

Oh, Barbara and Shirley Ferron, Fran McNamee, Carol Williams, Ruthie Doolittle, Buddy and Charles Doherty.

Your parents were great friends of the Ferrons, weren't they?

Great friends. In fact, Shirley lives just a half block from me today. They lived on Fourth and Fremont and we lived just a half block off Fremont and Fourth. We've known each other since we were two years old. We're still great friends.

And your father was very active in community work.

Yes. He was one of the original members of the Rotary Club. He was instrumental in getting a bank here, the Bank of Southern Nevada. It was a private bank. And then when they took us off the gold standard they closed it. They said the government wasn't going to tell them how to do business.

Oh, did they really?

And he was in the Rotary Club. They did a lot of good work.

But your mother didn't get involved in any of the community activities, or did she?

Other than the Mesquite Club. She was the first secretary.

But that's the only one?

Parent-Teachers Association.

Did she or your father or you as children get involved in church work at all?

My mother was a great church worker.

At the Methodist church?

Yes. My brother and I went to Sunday School every Sunday and later on to Eparth League, a church group of young people who met Sunday evenings.

Well, I don't think I have any more questions. Do you, Claytee?

You said one family was the Boyer family?

Yes.

One of the families that you named --

That you played with as a child.

Did you mention a family, the last name Boyer?

Yes. Charles and Buddy were their sons

Yes. Well, this has just been absolutely wonderful.

Well, I hope it helped a little bit.

Oh, it has helped a great deal. Some of the newspaper clippings that you've kept of the years, those are going to be so valuable.

Those are fabulous.

They are kind of fragile.

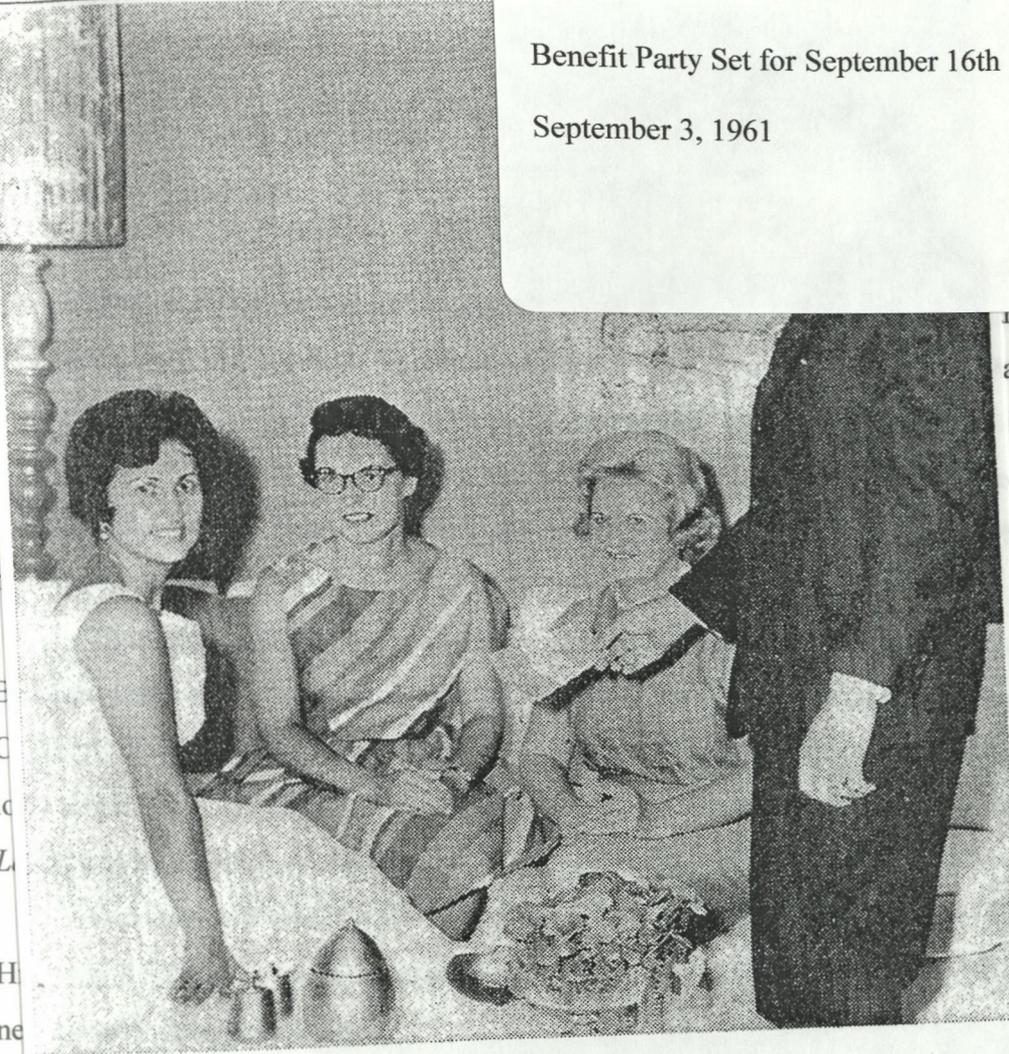
And we will get them back to you for sure.

We will Xerox them and give you three copies. Well, I really appreciate this. Thank you so much.

You're just more than welcome.

Benefit Party Set for September 16th

September 3, 1961



RECEIVE FIRST TICKETS — Mayor and Mrs. Oran Gragson were among the first to receive tickets for the annual Service League French Fantasy Benefit Party, September 16. Left to right are, Mrs. Sidney Whitmore, party chairman; Mrs. John McNamee, ticket chairman; Mrs. Gragson and Mayor Gragson. Tickets may be obtained from any Service League member.

Benefit Party Set For Sept. 16

"A Night in Paris" awaits Las Vegans planning to attend the French Fantasy Benefit Party, sponsored by the Service League of Las Vegas, September 16. The Flamingo Convention Center will be transformed into a French street scene under the direction of Mrs. Dennis Healy, decoration chairman. The decor will be patterned after Parisienne sidewalk cafes where guests will be served by members of the League. Music will be provided by Tommy Nelson's band.

Proceeds of the event will go to the League's Fantasy Park funds under the direc-

mittee and Mrs. Franklin Rittenhouse the invitations and cigarette service.

Members serving as cocktail and food waitresses will wear special aprons over black dresses and replicas of a French maid's cap which has been designed and made by Mrs. Harry Smith and Mrs. John Mowbray. All members will wear name tags patterned after the French flag.

Other committee chairmen are, Mrs. Jerry Woodbury and Mrs. Thomas Yoho, in charge of cocktail waitresses; Mrs. J. C. Benbow and Mrs. Art Smith, publicity; Mrs. W. L. Holst, bar manager; Mrs. C. T. Harris, cashiers; Mrs.

the show. Mrs. W. J. Urga and Mrs. Raymond Babcock, this year's chairmen, have planned unusual entertainment which will be placed throughout the evening. The entertainment will be based on the French Fantasy theme with such acts as the trip of Herbert Jones, Tom Turner and Ralph Denton. A Can Can line which has been practicing for over a month includes high kickers, Mmes. Harold Van Buren, Millard Sloan, Ernest Haupt, Ed Treacy, Edwin Belmont, William Southard Jr. and Jack Staggs. The highlight of the evening will be a Men's French Marching Team, which includes, Harold Cunningham, William Laub, Bob

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tion of Mrs. Franklin Brown house and Mrs. Ted Wiens.

Mrs. Sidney Whitmore and Mrs. Art Ham Jr. are the general chairmen of the benefit. The affair is not invitational, admittance donation of \$5 per person will include buffet, dancing, door prizes, entertainment and an evening to be remembered. The holder of a lucky ticket will receive \$1,000. Pete Reid and Mrs. Harley Harmon arranged for several associates of Clark County Licensed Beverage Assn. to provide champagne cocktails.

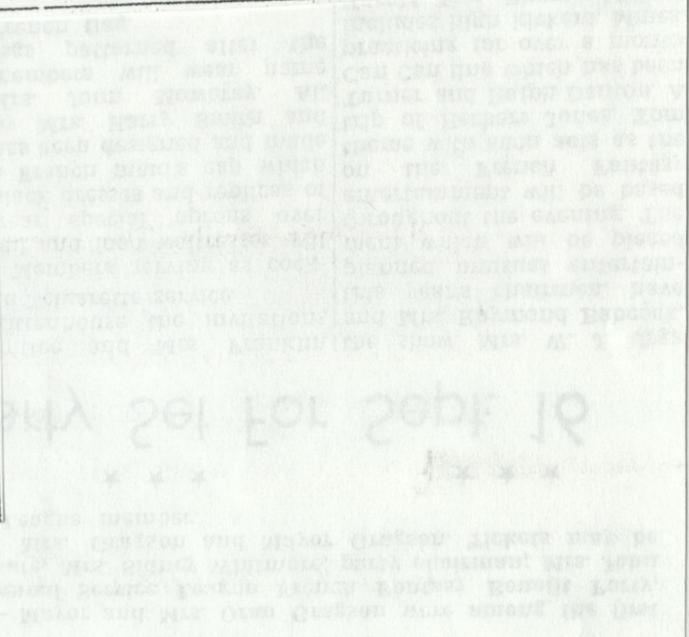
Mrs. John McNamee and her assistant, Mrs. W. M. Laub, are in charge of the dinner tickets. Mrs. Calvin Cory and Mrs. Paul McDermott made the arrangements for the hot and cold buffet which will be served at 10:30 p.m.

Mrs. Richard Ronzone heads the hospitality com-

Madison Graves and Mrs. Harold Cunningham, door prizes and Mrs. Herbert Jones, programs and tickets.

This party will be among the most unique as members and husbands will put on

Patten, Edwin Benmont, Gene Matteucci, Ed Treacy and Dr. Stanley Hardy. Assisting in arrangements were Miss Jean Devlyn and Ray Sinatra.



Appendix No. 1

Recollections of Early Las Vegas

by Virginia Richardson

Most of all the social life included the entire family. There were few large hotels or restaurants in the 20s and 30s. Families would go to Sunday dinner at the Oasis Café on Fremont and also to Mammie's Home on North 2nd Street. She was a black lady and her meals were the best you had ever eaten. Homemade rolls and Southern fried chicken and angel food cake. Some evenings, our parents would host their friends at a Saturday night poker game.

They included the Ferrons who owned the White Cross Drug Company; Walter Bracken, head of the Las Vegas Water Company; Sam Lawson, head of the Power Company; Bob Russell, owner of the Apache Hotel on Fremont Street; Leo McNamee, a local attorney; A. C. Grant, owner of the Ford Car Agency; "Pop" Squires, owner of the *Las Vegas Age* paper; Al Cahlan, editor of the *Review Journal*, etc. etc.

Our families would take us children out to play in the sand dunes on North U. S. Highway # 95 and, also, to Grapevine Springs which was in the Southwest part of town near the old Tomiyasu Ranch.

Younger children attended Grammar School (kindergarten through 8th grade) which was located on the corner of 4th and Bridger. High School was just south of the Grammar School. Girls were taught Home Economics and the boys were taught carpentry along with the regular curriculum. Most of the students' mothers always visited our classes at least once a month. They also invited the teachers to dinner in their homes. Boy Scouts was well supported by the parents as well as Girl Scouts.

My father rented his first store in 1912 from John Miller who had the Hotel Nevada on 1st and Main Streets, across from the Overland Hotel and half a block from the railroad station. He had no electricity, just gas lanterns. He had this store for about eight years. On night in 1920 he left the iron on (He did all alterations required.), and the store burned down. He had saved enough to buy the corner of 1st and Fremont (Southeast

corner) where there was a building owned by a Mr. Gunn. He reopened the store. The building was two stories, had a tin ceiling and gas lights. He carried the best of merchandise at that time – Stetson hats, Hart Schaffer & Marx suits, Ed. V. Price “made to order” suits, Grayco and Arrow shirts, Florsheim and Freeman shoes, and Levi Strauss overalls. Most of the local functions were held on the second floor.

I worked for my father keeping books and selling merchandise and continued doing so while my husband was in the Air Force overseas. My husband, Jack, was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force. He was stationed at the Las Vegas Gunnery School, now Nellis Air Force Base. From there, he was transferred to Lemoore Air Base in Lemoore, California, from there to Dow Air Force Base in South Dakota, and on to the Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. He was then sent overseas and stationed in Foggia, Italy, for two years. I accompanied him to each American base with our three-year-old son, Robert Richardson, and then returned to Las Vegas.

My family’s first house was at 120 South 4th Street, one-half a block off Fremont. My father bought the 50 foot lot in 1910 and built a one-bedroom, one-bath home for \$2,500. He later added on another bedroom and a large sleeping porch where my parents, brother and I slept. It had one window. Walls were about four feet high and then there were canvas coverings over screens that could be raised, which made it much cooler during the summer months. It was extremely hot in the summers. I think my father built one of the first “air conditioning units” in town. He built a wooden frame around the window and covered it with gunny sacks. He placed an electric fan on a platform outside the window and let a hose drip on the gunny sacks. It made for a cool breeze. The fan made it fairly comfortable.

We had no central heating. We had a coal stove in the kitchen, a fireplace in the living room, and two small kerosene heaters we could move around.

We had no such thing as a vacuum cleaner so twice a year, mother would have the rugs taken outside and hung on a clothesline. Then a man would come over and beat them with a tool that looked like a tennis racket.

We had no refrigerator – just the ice man who delivered us ice several times a

week. The ice would melt and drop in a pan at the bottom of the ice box, and it would have to be emptied every day. Needless to say, we had a wet floor several times. We had no washing machine, but we had a wood stove in our garage. My father would light a fire when the Indian lady came to wash for us. She would soak the clothes in a huge metal kettle. Mother would pick up "Oat," the Indian lady, at the Indian reservation on North Fifth Street, across from where the Palm Mortuary is today, and then take her home.

During the war, I was active in the Red Cross rolling bandages, etc. I was also a Grey Lady. We wore grey and white uniforms and would go out to the Air Base Hospital to write letters and run errands for the servicemen who were injured. I was also on the USO committee for entertaining our servicemen. The USO had a recreation building north of Fremont Street on Stewart where dances were scheduled along with refreshments.

In the early days, we had two outdoor theaters. One on First and Carson Streets and one on Third and Fremont. There were no roofs, and the space was enclosed in heavy corrugated metal or tin, held up by 2 X 4's. No ceilings!! The piano player sat right below in front of the screen and played throughout the entire show. When it rained, everyone rushed out the door.

My father and uncle, Will and Jake Beckley came to America with their parents. There were six children in the family. They came over in steerage and didn't see the sun for six weeks. They eventually settled in Illinois. Jake Beckley came to Las Vegas in 1905 and Will, his brother, followed in 1908. My parents, Leva and Will Beckley, were married in 1910. Jake Beckley was the first passenger to fly in the first plane that landed in Las Vegas in 1920. He dropped a rag doll for me into our front yard from the plane.

Most of the residents of Las Vegas in the very early days lived within a few blocks of each other in what is now downtown. The area of local homes was approximately from North to South (Stewart Street to Garces Street) and East to West (Main Street to 10th Street. Our house from 4th Street is now in the Heritage Museum in on Boulder Highway - it was relocated by the Junior League in 1979. Some of the neighbors were:

Bob Russell: Owner of the Apache Hotel at 2nd and Fremont

Bert Henderson: Attorney and Judge

Mr. Borsack: Luggage Store

Ruby White: Florist

La Price Bryan Bunker: LDS minister

Walter and Anna Bracken: Head of Las Vegas Water Company

W. C. and Ruth Ferron: Owner of White Cross Drug

Leo and Fran McNamee: local attorney

Frank McNamee: local attorneys

“Pop” and Ruth Squires: Editor and Owner of our first newspaper, *Las Vegas Age*

Al and Ruth Cahlan: Owner of *Las Vegas Review Journal*. (When I was five years old, I was their flower girl at their wedding.)

Harry and Mrs. Blanding: local butcher, between 1st and Main

M. E. Ward: Mesquite Grocery Store, 1st and Fremont

Dr. John and Marybelle Parks: he was a dentist.

Alta and Art Ham: local attorney, children Betty and Art, Jr.

Cyril and Lottie Wengert: Head of Las Vegas' first bank

Other homes within that area were:

Veronica and Harley Harmon – sons Charles and Harley, Jr.

Ruth and Bob Griffith – daughter Mary Jane

Mr. Marion Earl: attorney. Originally worked for my father in Beckley's store.

Florence Lee Jones: Society writer for *Review Journal*. Husband: John Cahlan, Assistant Editor of *Review Journal* and brother of Al Cahlan, the editor.

Ernie Cragin: Portal Theater owner and one-time Mayor

M. Hess: One-time Mayor

Leah and Jim Cashman: Car Dealer – Cadillac, Buick – his son Jimmy and daughter Tona.

Dr. Hewetson: one of the first doctors, operated out of his house on Carson St.

Clint Boggs: Grocer, between 1st and Main

Dr. Mildren: Office on South 2nd Street, gave monthly physicals to all the girls working in the Red Light district in Block 21 on North 1st Street

Fanny Soss and son Maury: First class dress shop on Fremont – later on the Strip
– called Fanny's.

Mom Ronzone: Ronzone's Clothing Store, her son, Dick, was the manager.

Celebrate 50 Years

September 6, 1960



Review-Journal Photo

CELEBRATE 50 YEARS

William Beckley offers anniversary cake to his wife of 50 years. The pioneer couple celebrated their golden wedding day Sept. 6.



AT GARDEN RECEPTION

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Ferron (couple at right) extend congratulations to the Will Beckleys on their anniversary, at a garden reception Tuesday.

Review-Journal Photo

Appendix No. 2

*Address by Bruce Beckley at the dedication of the Will Beckley Elementary School
Las Vegas, Nevada – November 7, 1966*

During the course of preparing the brief remarks which I shall make tonight, it has become all too clear to me that some of the things which I am going to say about my Father had much better have been said to him.

I well remember reading one of the concluding chapters of Sandberg's monumental work on Lincoln. After dealing with the President's death, Sandberg wrote a chapter summing up and assessing Lincoln's life. It was entitled, "A Tree is Best Measured when It's Down." So it was with my Father. I know now the kind of man he was: I wish that I had appreciated him sooner and, more importantly, that I had let him know that I did. Nor is it my fault excused by the fact that, were he to hear what I have to say, he might be greatly embarrassed. He was a shy, sentimental and sensitive man, who neither sought nor found the spotlight of public recognition. Indeed, it is good that he did not, for he would have been self-conscious in its acclaim and sorely hurt by its criticisms.

If I were to have to characterize him in one word, that word would be "gentle." He was a gentle man: In addition, he was a gentleman, for, mind you, these are not necessarily synonymous terms. Many times I observed his tendency to lend a helping hand to the stray-cats of this world; and many times he was but scratched for his effort. Even today, someone, not known to me, will approach me to tell me of some occasion, many years ago, when he went out of his way to give of his understanding, and sometimes of his dollars, to someone greatly in need.

Some of you here tonight knew him; most of you did not. He was born in 1877 in Switzerland, in the small village of Guntalingen. It was and still is a tiny farming community, not much larger than the grounds surrounding this school. Its school, which provides education for all grades, would easily fit into this room.

When he was five, his family immigrated to the United States and settled in the town of Fairbury, Illinois, where there is a large Swiss-German population. There, he

started and finished school, all in six years. This rapid completion of his education was not necessarily the result of his brilliance, for the fact is, he only finished the sixth grade. So, as you can see, he was quite an average student; six years, six grades.

He then went to work as a farm hand and, later, as a clerk in my uncle's store in Fairbury. He traveled extensively during this period, once to the northwestern regions of Indiana, some 70 miles away, where, in about 1905, he met my Mother, who is here tonight.

I am told, though obviously I was not an eyewitness, that he was quite taken with her and she with him. But since the financial problems resulting from an early marriage between a clerk and a school teacher are, in no way, a modern phenomena, they simply didn't have what it took; and so, nothing happened (this, again, of course is hearsay).

In 1905, my Father's brother, Jacob, or Jake as we knew him, took off for the wiles of Southern California, with a companion known to some of you, Ed. Von Tobel, Sr. In the spring of that year, they read in the Los Angeles papers that the Union Pacific was running a first and free train to Las Vegas and back for people who desired to attend the Railroad's auction of lots in the original Las Vegas townsite. It seemed like a bargain, and they climbed aboard. It proved to be a one-way trip, for, caught up in the enthusiasm of the residents of the new tent city, Jake and Ed purchased some lots and started the lumber business which, even today, is still operated on those same lots by the Von Tobels on South First Street.

They prospered, if that word can be used to describe anything that happened in early Las Vegas, and soon urged by Father to join them. So, in 1908 – apparently nothing was still happening in Indiana – my Father came to Las Vegas. It was not, as I have said, a prosperous town and the first and only employment he could find was as a house painter. His first job was painting the schoolhouse in Moapa, further evidence of his lifelong devotion to and association with the halls of learning. But this association was even shorter than his experience as a student; and he soon dropped the paint brush, took his savings, which amounted to a few hundred dollars, and opened a small men's store in the building now housing the Golden Gate Casino on Fremont Street. He lived in the back of

the store.

But it was lonely; and I guess he kept wondering about Indiana, and, again I guess, about my Mother. So, appropriate negotiations were had, she accepted his proposal, and they were married in Indiana in 1910, returning to Las Vegas immediately

Apparently Dad had been somewhat guarded in describing early Las Vegas to my Mother, so I need not dwell on my Indiana schoolteacher Mother's first reaction to her new desert home. Probably it can be summed up in a word, "Ugh!" But they jointly continued to operate the store and lived in a house they had rented for \$20 per month. They soon purchased a lot on South Fourth Street, just a half a block off Fremont, on which to build their home. There, my sister and I were born, I in 1915 and she in – well – some years later. And there, until this day, my Mother lives, across the street from the main branch of the Bank of Las Vegas, surrounded by title companies, office buildings and retail stores. Of an evening, if you walk by, she will chat with you, as she does with Bill Morse, because she'll probably be sitting out on the only remaining front porch in downtown Las Vegas. It's a simple home, as I say, built in 1913, and often my sister and I urged her and my father to find a larger and more comfortable home. But they always felt it would be extravagant to buy another home. And so, since she's lived there for over 50 years, my sister and I have a secret pact: we don't tell her that, because of its location, she may be living in the most expensive house in town.

Meanwhile, back to the early days. The store increased its patronage during the next few years and was doing well, except for one thing – in 1913, it burned down! But this only made Dad mad, and caused him to expand his store to the present location of the Pioneer Club at First and Fremont Streets. And, believe me, there wasn't a slot machine, a neon sign, or an air-conditioner in the place.

And it was there, until 1941, that he continued to conduct his retail business. There were excursions, it is true. He and his brother opened and operated a store in Goodsprings, during that mining town's heyday, and they opened another in Blythe, California; but always it was the Las Vegas store that received his major attention.

Later, Dad decided to move our home and purchased a then prime residential

location, if you can imagine it, at the corner of Fifth and Fremont Streets where the National Dollar Stores now operate. We planted trees and carried water in buckets to water them from the house on Fourth Street. But the new home was not to be. Before he could afford to build the house, the location proved a much better site for, of all things, a gas station.

In the meantime, my sister and I attended and were graduated from the Las Vegas schools. The plural word 'schools' is a euphemism, for when we started, there was only one school – for all grades – located at the site, on Fifth Street, where the new Federal Building now rises. A far cry indeed from the 30 Elementary, 11 Junior High, and 3 High Schools Las Vegas now has. My Father, like so many who are fascinated by things they have so little of, felt that an education was a prime necessity for his children. Evidence of his support to education is the fact that he was the first Las Vegas merchant to buy a full-page ad in the high school yearbook, the "Boulder Echo." The fact that his son just happened to be the business and advertising manager of the publication that he had, of course, nothing to do with it.

Another story is, perhaps, apropos. He had hoped, ever since I was a small child, that I would be a lawyer. This was reason enough for me, after I had been graduated from high school, and being a typical son, to decide to become an engineer. With considerably more effort and work on his part than on mine, I did graduate in electrical engineering. That was in 1936, a time which, if your memory serves, did not offer the smoothest of sailing in that profession. By a fluke of fate, when I had finished, and had no job, I was offered a one-year scholarship to a small law school in Southern California. I told my Father – I remember it well for we were standing in the shirt department of his store – and he asked two simple questions, "Do you want to go to law school?" to which I answered, "Yes." Then he asked, "Do you think there's a better school?" Again, I said, "Yes" and named my school. He looked at me, smiled a knowing smile, and said, "If you can get in, I'll try to get you out," and walked away to rearrange a display of celluloid collars. But, needless to say, with that kind of support, I am now a lawyer. I am not sure I ever convinced him that I was a very good one, but I think he was pleased, none the less.

Dad remained active in the retail business until 1941 when the Pioneer Club opened. During his remaining years, he always maintained an office above the club and it was his habit to spend part of each day at and in the vicinity of his office, so as not to lose touch with the downtown area. Indeed, there are those, including my Mother, who might even suggest that on certain days, he had too many 'touches' in the downtown area.

In any event, when, late in 1964, the school district wrote my Father that an elementary school was to be named for him, he was suffering his last illness and he died shortly thereafter. But I shall never forget what that letter meant to him. It was the kind of medicine which, if I were a doctor, I'd try to grind up and put into pills.

He was a warm man, full of feeling, strict at times, unreasonable at others, who equated honesty with living, and who silently bore hurts and disappointments but never grudges. He both respected and exhibited integrity, admired beauty (sometimes in the form of pretty girls) and possessed a sympathetic understanding of the faults of his fellow men. In short, he was my Dad; and I can say no more and I can say no less than that I am proud to be his son and bear his name.

And so, I have said to you the things I should have expressed to my Dad. I am not a particularly religious man, but I trust, beyond all measure, that, if he did not intuitively understand the things which I have said here tonight, he will, somehow, know that I have publicly made my record.

There are other stories I might tell: as when he made me, at the age of 9, go along and return to the owner of the Ford Garage next door some tent stakes which I had, as my law books say, unlawfully appropriated while committing trespass. (You see, I still don't admit I stole them!) Of the time when, in 1932, the President closed the banks: he and his fellow directors of the long since expired Bank of Southern Nevada took the position that if the government had the power to tell them when to close, they didn't want to be bankers. So they closed, alright, but paid off their depositors in full and never opened their doors again. Or when my Mother, following the store fire, ordered their former landlord out of the new store because he inadvertently implied that my Father had started the fire. Or when she, as a substitute teacher in the sixth grade, with a heavy ruler, rapped

the knuckles of Bobbie Griffith, now a leading citizen and a member of the Colorado River Commission. Or when Al Cahlan, now a columnist with the *Las Vegas Sun*, asked my father for credit to buy a pair of shoes while he still owed a \$45 bill from the last month; he received, instead a severe lecture on how a young man should protect his credit rating.

I trust that these personal reminiscences have not been out of place; but the trust is that I know no other way to assess my Father. Were he here, he would be honored beyond all measure, but he would not have known how to express his gratitude for such recognition. And so it is that our family, and I know I speak for every member, is deeply grateful that he will be remembered for years to come in conjunction with this magnificent school which bears his name.

If I have bragged, on my Father, I ask your indulgence. If I have sounded proud, of my Father, I am. If I have been maudlin, concerning my Father, it was unintentional. But if, as I hope I have, permitted you to share the joy of my family and myself in taking part in this ceremony, my purpose will have been fulfilled.

In behalf of my family, and particularly on behalf of my Mother, I wish to express our deep thanks and sincerest appreciation for your being here.

November 7, 1966.

Merchant's home becomes monument

by A.D. Hopkins

Merchant's Home Becomes Monument

March 11, 1979

From Los Angeles de-
a free train ride into
ner suspected their
y of a newborn city.

p, the Beckley fami-
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e built by one of the
en to the Southern
will eventually illus-
desert village, in a

...house. It is an American success story, of a
young immigrant with very little money but a
good deal of ambition, and a young woman
with an equal amount of courage.

Actually, the original name was Bokli, with
an unlaut over the "o," said descendant W.
Bruce Beckley, a Las Vegas attorney. "But
when the family came over from Switzerland in _

1877, Beckley was as close as anybody in the
United States could seem to manage," he said.
So Beckley it became.

The Beckley family settled down on a farm
in Illinois, but one of the older brothers, John,
opened a clothing store in Fairbury. Bruce
Beckley's father, Ulrich — who by then was
known as Will Beckley and would remain so
known until the day he died — went to work for
his brother.

"In 1905," related Bruce Beckley, "still an-
other brother, Jake Beckley, was out in Los
Angeles. I never did know how he happened to
be there, but with him was Ed Von Tobel, who
grew up in the same town in Illinois and was a
close friend of his. The railroad was auctioning
off town lots in Las Vegas, and they ran a free
train up to Las Vegas for that auction. Jake and
Ed decided to come up, just for a lark.

"But when they got here they decided the
town looked like it might amount to something,

so they bought a couple of lots on South First
Street. And they opened a lumber yard there."

That lumber yard eventually became Ed
Von Tobel Lumber Co., oldest business in Las
Vegas still in operation.

By 1908 things were going well, and the
friends wrote Will Beckley and suggested he
come west to open his own store. "He came out
here with less than \$1,000," said Bruce Beck-
ley. But Will Beckley fattened up his bankroll
by painting houses on the Moapa Indian Reser-
vation for \$5 a day, and doing other odd jobs
around Las Vegas.

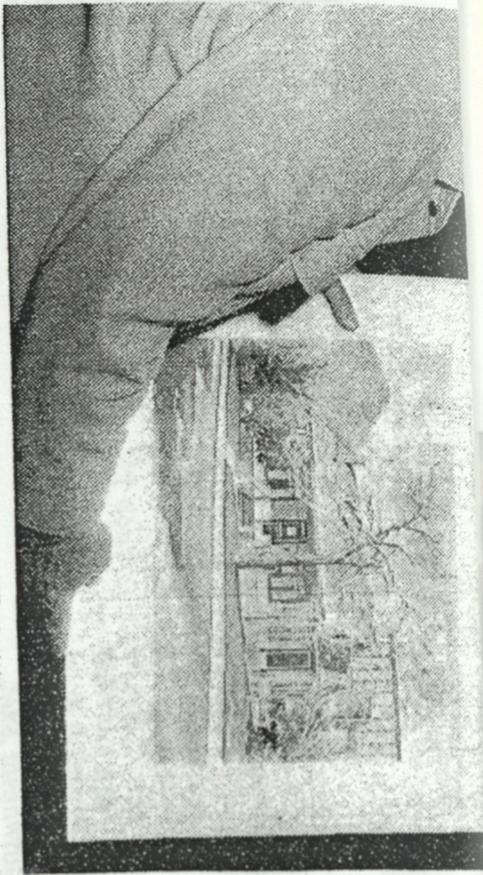
Within the year, Will Beckley was able to
open his own small clothing store. "It was in a
tent house," said Bruce Beckley. "The tent,
house had a wooden door you could lock, but
the sides and roof were canvases... anyone could
break in with a pocketknife, of course, but the
town was so small they apparently didn't have
to worry about that much."

Will Beckley lived in his tent house for some
time. By 1910, he figured he was doing well
enough to marry, and proposed by mail to Leva
Grimes, a pretty school teacher he had met
back in Illinois. Then he returned to Illinois
and brought his new bride back to the desert
village beside the railroad.

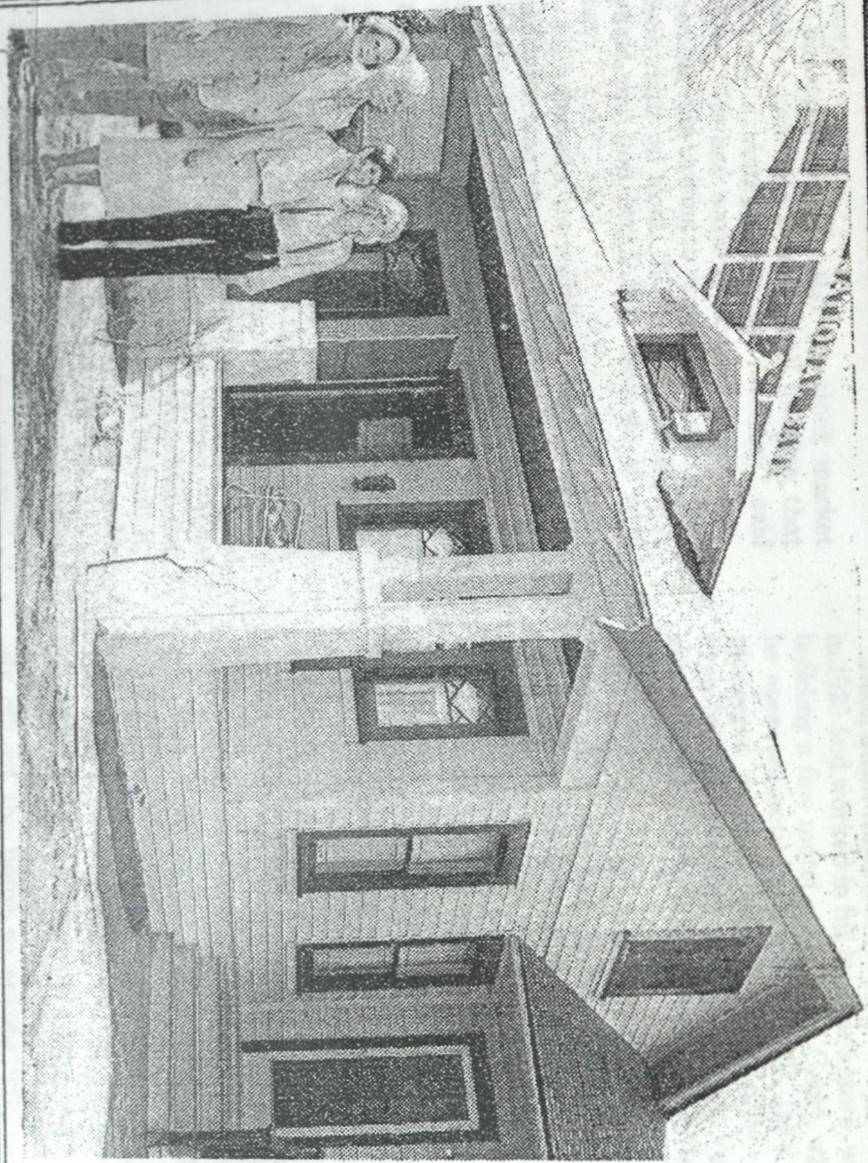
The couple moved into a house on North
Fourth Street near Fremont, renting it from
John S. Park, a local banker, for \$20 a month.
Beckley had acquired a building lot just half a
block off Fremont for which he paid \$450. Two



Beckley home in-
spired artists, like
the one who sold
Bruce Beckley this



Watercolor only two weeks ago. Below, Junior League members visit house to prepare for move. From left, Pattea Reid Ham, Beckley, Liz Foremaster, Martha Carter.



"Beckley House," at a cost of \$2,500. The home would become a local landmark, the last pioneer home in the downtown Las Vegas area, until the well-publicized decision last month to move it to the museum property near Henderson.

Meanwhile, Will Beckley had acquired a new business location — a store in the Nevada Hotel, on the corner of Main and Fremont streets where the Golden Gate Casino now stands. It was probably the best possible location for a clothing store. The hotel was directly across the street from the Union Pacific depot, and virtually all travel into Las Vegas was, of course, by train. Any traveler realizing he hadn't packed his socks or clean shirts might dash across the street during a stop to see whether the desert hamlet offered a clothing store. And the first store he encountered would be Will Beckley's.

A 1913 fire which damaged not only the building but some of Beckley's stock precipitated a fire sale, and a move to a new location on the corner of Fremont and First, where the Pioneer Club now stands.

The next Beckley store was a branch office. As partners, Jake Beckley and Will opened a store in Goodsprings, then a mining camp with major expectations, in 1918. And in 1920 Jake moved to Blythe, Calif. and opened still another operation.

In explanation of his father's business success, Bruce Beckley said, "He was personally a very classy guy. I don't think I ever saw him without a tie. And while I am sure he must have sold mostly overalls and work gloves when he was first getting the business established, by the time I can remember the business carried the kind of clothes he wore. Good brands and good quality — Florsheim shoes, Stetson hats and so forth."

Furthermore, Will Beckley made a fetish of paying bills on time. In those days, as today, retailers get a discount of two per cent for paying