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2010

An Interview with Steven Ligouri

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee White

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Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Produced by:

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

Project Creators: Patrick Jackson and Dr. Deborah Boehm

Transcriber and Editor: Laurie Boetcher

Editor and Production Manager: Barbara Tabach

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

Recorded interviews, transcripts, bound copies and a website comprising the *Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood Oral History Project* have been made possible through a grant from the City of Las Vegas Centennial Committee. Special Collections in Lied Library, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided a wide variety of administrative services, support and archival expertise. We are so grateful.

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

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

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

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

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

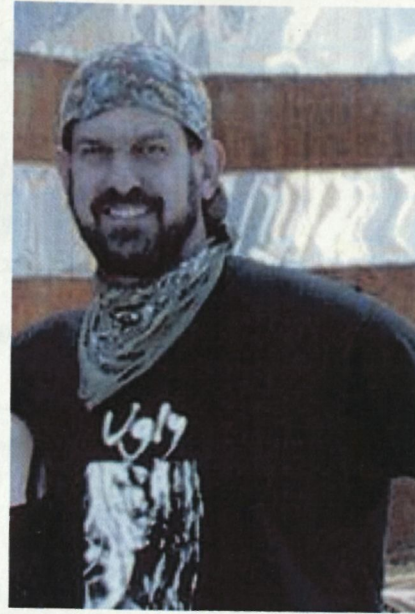
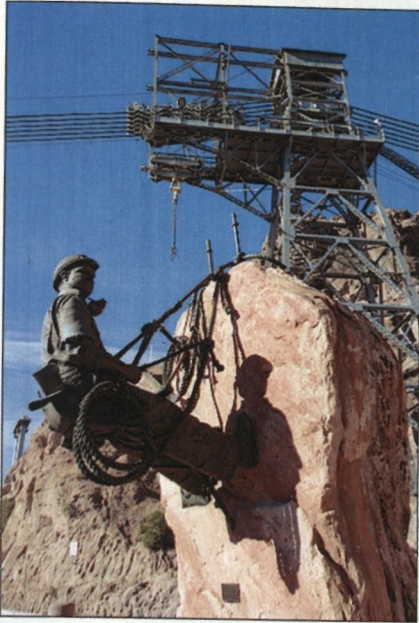
## Interview with Steven Liguori

January 20, 2010 in Las Vegas, Nevada  
Conducted by Claytee White

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## Preface

Steven Ligouri is an artist who is a born and raised Nevadan whose artistic creations can be enjoyed at such places as the Hoover Dam, where his famous High Scaler sits comfortably [above left photo]. The stories of this statue and others are included within this interview.

Steve began mastering his trade as a youngster making jewelry with assistance of his father, Bruno Ligouri who owned a turquoise shop in Boulder City. Since his birth in 1962, Steve has lived in several locations: a family farm in North Las Vegas, John S. Park neighborhood, in Boulder City, and eventually back to John S. Park.

Returning to the John S. Park neighborhood after a 22-year absence gives him the chance to reflect on the changes that have occurred. Steve fondly calls the neighborhood “home” and firmly believes it can reach its potential.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood



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STEVEN LIGUORE

Name of Interviewer:

CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Signature of Narrator

Steven Liguore January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Signature of Interviewer

Claytee D. White 1/20/2010

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4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 457010, Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-7010  
(702) 895-2222

## **Interview with Steven Liguori**

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**This is Claytee White, and I'm from UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas], and I'm with Steve today in his home here in John S. Park [Neighborhood]. It is January 20, 2010.**

**Steve, tell me a little about your early life, where you grew up and what that was like.**

I was born at Sunrise Hospital here [in Las Vegas, Nevada] in 1962. I grew up here. My parents had a farm off of Nellis Boulevard, and then they bought a house on Bonita [Avenue]. I forget what year that was. I lived there until I was like nine years old. My father [Bruno Liguori] came out here to do mining. He had a kiddy-ride business, so he had all these kiddy rides for the markets. Then he also had a window-washing business. And he came out here to be a miner.

**Tell me what kind of mining.**

Gold mining. He wanted to be a gold miner. He had mines and stuff. He put up the first TV station on Black Mountain with the gentleman who owned Channel 8. He carried everything up there and did all that stuff. That was brutal. He would tell me stories about that.

**What kind of stories did he tell?**

Oh, how he had to carry the water and the cement up there, and how hot it was, and digging in the rock, [about] the gentleman that owned the television station back then. He



owned it until he passed away, I guess. He owned Channel 8 for years. He was the original owner.—Just, you know, how rough it was.

**So do you remember any of the businesses that he had?**

He had New York Seltzer [a soda business]. He had pure syrup, so everything was like natural syrups; so if it was cherry, it was real cherry; if it was grape, it was real grape. He had a business out here with that and then would go to the homes and deliver it, so it was pretty cool. And then he had a window-washing business also. He had a Key-Rite [Security] business. He was an inventor also. He did all kinds of inventions. He made toys [and] furniture. He did all kinds of stuff. We'd go mining every weekend, and then he would take and bring guns and teach us how to drive and, you know, we'd get to blast. He actually found a helmet and a chest-piece from the Spaniards up on [Mount] Potosí when he was mining up there, which was really pretty cool. He was a very colorful man.

**Did he find gold?**

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

**So how was gold processed? If he found gold, what did he do with it?**

What we would do is we would take the ore that we found, and we would do like assays of it. So we had a special scale that we had to have a solid cement table, let's call it, so it wouldn't move, and you could take a piece of paper, weigh it, get it all balanced out, and then take a pencil and just slightly touch the piece of paper, and it would have a weight. That's how sensitive the scale was.—Right now a friend of mine in Arizona has that scale; I want to get it back from him.—It had a glass case and you lower the front glass after you did it and then you released everything and it would tear it out and you could weigh it. Pretty interesting. We would take samples, crush them down, do assessment

work on it, and then after we would go through and fire a little cupel with lead around ore, let's call it, [and] it'll leave a little dot of gold. We'd measure all the dirt and everything else and from our measurements we'd get how many ounces per ton it was, which was kind of interesting, you know. It was pretty neat, really neat.

And then a byproduct of the gold was turquoise; so we would get turquoise from the mines. He knew a lot of the miners and one of the miners asked him, Well hey, why don't you go sell some of our turquoise? We'll sell it. So my dad's like, Really. So we started selling turquoise, which was pretty interesting, because a lot of artists would use it.

When my mother and dad got divorced in 1971, we lived off of Charleston [Boulevard] in a really small one-bedroom apartment. He was the first man in Nevada to win the custody of his children, which was unheard of. His attorney back then was Lou [Louis] Weiner, and Lou Weiner was a very prominent attorney here and a good friend of my father's. My father knew so many people. He had a lot of friends. We moved into this little tiny nothing, and I wanted to cut turquoise, so a friend of mine had a lapidary shop set up, and I would go over to his house. We were part of the Gem Club. I would go over there and do silversmithing and stuff like that. But I wanted to carve and cut turquoise, so my dad bought me a little Model T and I'd cut cabochons and then he'd sell them, and I would do silversmithing and he'd sell it. And then we would go to different artists. We went to a lot of Native Americans and we sold them turquoise, and you get to watch what they do. And then I started collaborating with different artists and, you know, we'd make different things up. A lot of Zunis would do inlay work and I really liked that and we'd

make pieces. As my dad was selling stones to different people, I would play, which was really pretty fun.

And then we moved here, across the street [at] 829 Park Paseo [in the John S. Park Neighborhood]. The washroom in the back was my little carving studio. I had a vacuum cleaner hose through the wall. There was like a shed outside the building, so I had the vacuum cleaner in there, had a little toggle switch inside, and had my grinder, and in the garage I had my lapidary equipment. The house that I live in now was [owned by] Mr. [Joseph] Santino. I think Joe had a casino here. He was a big man, really big, big man, maybe six-foot-four or six-foot-five, maybe taller, big fingers. My ring finger is like a seven-and-a-half; his was probably thirteen. One of his hobbies was collecting petrified wood, and cutting it and slabbing it and making bookends [and] tabletops. So I would come across the street over here and watch what he did; he'd come across the street over there and watch what I would do. It was pretty interesting.

### **How did you learn to do all of that?**

My father would show me how to do it [making jewelry]. He had all the tools and stuff like that. When I was a kid, in order to do silversmithing, I had to learn how to solder with a blowtorch. And I don't mean a blowtorch that blows out. It's like you take an alcohol lamp, you take a piece of charcoal, you cut your silver and put everything together and you have it all set up, and then you put it on top of the charcoal block, and you take this piece of brass tubing with a wooden mouthpiece on the end (I still have it, as a matter of fact) and you blow the alcohol lamp's fire to the charcoal and heat it up, and then you have all your solder already set on it (it's cut in like little pieces), and then you just solder it. My father said, If you can solder with this, then I'll let you use my

torch. So I would solder pieces with that and after a bit of time he let me use his torch. I could use his torch now, so it would take a lot less time. You learn not to melt the metal, too, because it's real expensive. Back then I think it was like three dollars and some-odd cents an ounce for silver. When I was goldsmithing, gold was seventy dollars an ounce.

**So did you ever take any classes anyplace or actually go to school for any of this?**

No. No, my father taught me.

**So when you say your father got custody of the children, how many children?**

My brother and I.

**Where is your brother now?**

In California.

**Tell me more about the artwork. A few minutes ago, when I came in, you put your dog away, and now I see there's a dog here that you are sculpting. Tell me about this dog.**

This dog [Nig] was the mascot of the workers of the Hoover Dam. I'm doing a whole series of workers of the dam. He was part of it, and part of the history. Our history here is so young. I knew a lot of the people that worked on the dam. We have a very young history, so if you can preserve the history we have now, while it's fresh, maybe it'll be some type of foundation for our children. I have three daughters. I have an eight-year-old daughter and I finished this one piece and she actually has been helping me do pieces, which is really nice. My other daughters do the same thing.

But this piece here, it's kind of really sad because the dog was a mascot. There were a lot of workers that were killed [during the construction of Hoover Dam].

Unofficial, 707; officially, there's ninety-eight, but unofficial it was a lot more than that.

They didn't count the people that didn't work directly with the Bureau of Reclamation [BOR], so if you worked for another company, like if you worked for a subcontractor or like International Trucks, and you were doing something and you got killed by an explosion or something like that, you weren't counted as a death at the dam.

**A few minutes ago you said that this was part of your series. What do you mean?**

**Explain that, your series.**

In 1995 a gentleman asked me if I could do a sculpture of a worker. He wanted to do it to honor all the people who constructed the dam, because the only thing that's at the dam right now is a Winged Figure of the Republic. It's an archangel but they don't call it an archangel. It's actually a man with wings sitting down with his hands up in the air. They call them Winged Figures of the Republic. When I talked to Oskar [J.W.] Hansen's assistant, she said they were cherubim. (Oskar Hansen is the sculptor who did the Winged Figures of the Republic on Hoover Dam.)

In 1995 I did a bronze statue of a worker named Joe [Joseph] Kine. They called him a '31er. On July 15, 1931 he moved to Boulder City [Nevada] and found a job as a high scaler. I think it paid like fifty cents more a day, so he only made five [dollars and] fifty [cents] a day or something. He worked [as a high scaler] at Glen Canyon Dam also. He lived in Boulder City the whole time, raised his family there, a daughter and two sons. He retired from the Hoover Dam at the very end. After the dam was completed, he stayed there. He was part of the city. [In] the parades they had in town during the Fourth of July, he was on a bosun's chair on the Hoover Dam float. So it was kind of cool, you know. His daughter married Mr. Rants who has Rants Plumbing. So they're a big part of Boulder City.

So in 1995 Bert Hansen who is a blind vendor in Nevada with the [Nevada State Business Enterprise Program, or BEP], wanted to do something to honor the workers of the dam. I thought he [Joe Kine] had died because he wasn't in the parade anymore, and [Bert] said, No, he's alive. I want to give it [the statue] to him.

We had our store there at that time. We had our store there in Boulder City for fifteen or sixteen years: Bruno Liguori's Turquoise Trading Post, Inc. on 1306 Nevada Highway. When you do things with the community and for the community, you feel a part of the community. So I said to him, Hey, you pay me for all my materials, and I will do the sculpture and we'll both give it to him. I think the whole thing was like we were on a mission from God because my foundry wasn't big enough to cast something that big. I can cast something this big [indicating size] but it was twenty-two inches tall. This was August 28<sup>th</sup> and we had to have it done by [the dedication ceremony scheduled for] September the 16<sup>th</sup>. So I called a friend of mine up because none of the foundries around here would let me use their foundry. Mine was too small to cast it because it was too big. The biggest piece I could cast at the time was like twelve inches. This was twenty-two inches in height, so it was huge. It gets exponentially more difficult the bigger you go.

So I went up to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan to a friend of mine, [sculptor] Bill Epp. Bill Epp did the Canadian Mounted Police officer, Winnie the Pooh with Frank Corbin, the London Zoo and Canada, tied the two together; he did a commission for the Pope. He [did] like forty bronze monuments in Saskatoon, Canada alone. Great sculptor. One of the founders of Desert Sculptors [Association] here in Las Vegas now. I was the president of Desert Sculptors for two terms, so that's how I knew him. So a friend of mine, [artist] John Stockman, who is a really good friend of Bill Epp's, wanted to go with me and

Bill's like, Don't fly. Get in your car right now, get up here right now. That way you can leave when you're done. You'll meet all my friends and all my family.

So we go off. I go back to see Bert and say, Hey, I've got a place to do it in, and then he tells me this guy is alive, you know. That's when I say I'll do it, you know. So I go to his [Joe Kine's] house before I leave to interview him. He showed me how to tie the knot for the bosun's chair, for the cut rope to tie it on to it, what he was doing, how the jackhammer was made.

So we left. We get up there. We left at ten o'clock at night on a Thursday (which was August 28<sup>th</sup>, I think) and we arrived there at ten o'clock in the morning on Saturday, due to a case of beer. So my friend [John Stockman] is driving while I'm carving the jackhammer in the front seat [of the car] and doing the sculpture, right? And so we're taking turns: he sleeps, I sleep, he sleeps, I sleep, and we're sculpting the piece because we only have so many days to do it in.

So we get up to Saskatoon. The first day, Bill Epp takes us around and shows us his forty monuments, you know, which was mind-blowing. The second day, I had the sculpture done, and we're making the mold on it, and he has all his family there, you know, because he told me I was going to meet all his friends and family. And at that point, my friend John (he won this award from the Las Vegas Art Museum and I won an award from the Las Vegas Art Museum) was like, Oh, you're a real sculptor now.

[Laughter] And I was like, Yeah, sure. I'm in his realm, right? I'm like, Yeah, right.

[Bill] goes, Watch what happens with this piece. This piece is going to be a healing piece. This piece is going to be such a huge piece. You have no idea. The next day, he dies. His son actually poured the piece, which I couldn't believe.

Frank Corbin's son came to the funeral, which was really unusual, so I got to ask him about the Pooh bear. I mean Winnie the Pooh. Come on. He's the guy who took the Pooh bear from Canada over to London, and in London, that's where he got Pooh, Winnie the Pooh, because this guy (I forgot the writer for the thing), he takes his son—I don't know whether his son's name was Christopher or not, but he takes his son to the zoo. And here his son was so overly overwhelmed by this bear, and loved this bear so much, and they're sitting and having some type of ice cream or something like that by the pond, and he sees this duck, and came up with, what would the bear do if the duck landed on his nose? Pooh! [Laughter] This is what Frank Corbin said, telling me the story. Winnie the Pooh. And I was like, oh man, that's so cool. So that's how the Winnie the Pooh name came [about].

So, I met all [Bill's] friends. They had the funeral at the place. Betty, his wife, told me I could stay there and do the sculpture—but I couldn't live in the house, you know, because he had all the family come up—and the son poured the bronze. Pretty amazing.

In the slurry room, there was this little statue that was slurried. We couldn't tell what it was, so we burned it out and poured it. Bill was Mennonite, and Bill's father put a church up in Saskatoon, or paid for a church. I think he was a preacher or something. But Bill was never religious, as far as I knew, ever, you know. So, after we cast this piece and broke it out of the slurry, it's a manger with a sheep looking around the corner, the back corner of the manger, looking into the manger, and in the manger in the very center is a cross. Kind of weird, huh? So maybe he knew he was going to pass away.



So we put the bronze together. His son poured it for me, we welded it together, chased it off. The guy who was supposed to make the base wouldn't make the base because he was so overwhelmed by his friend's death. And this whole time, all these people from Prairie Sculptors [Association] are coming through the facility saying, Oh, you better leave. She's kicking us out. You have to take all your stuff out. I mean the pressure was unbelievable. They had like seven hundred people that were part of Prairie Sculptors. It's like, OK, you have to get your stuff out. He had a fifty-acre ranch, and on his fifty-acre ranch he would have all his pupils and friends, you know, do their artwork. It helped them too. A very giving man.

So I get back down here. The first dedication we had [was] at the Elks Club and gave it to him [Joe Kine], which was really cool because we made it on time. I'm an Elk for twenty-some-odd years now, so I had it at my club and they had a presentation. And he's looking at it, and he's looking at the back of it because there's like the rock, and he's looking at the back of it when we unveiled it, and then he peeks around the side and he goes, That's me! That's me! And I'm like, oh, cool, it was worth every single moment, you know?

Then they had a dedication on the dam, at the new visitors' center, and he was saying, See right over there? That's where this photograph was taken. The sculpture was taken from a photograph. And this one lady from Germany goes, Oh, that would be really nice, to have a monument put up there. I'm like, Yeah, right, that would be cool.

So, my father dies in '97. I don't want to have the store open anymore. I just want to be an artist. I made jewelry for [pianist and entertainer] Liberace, I made jewelry for [singer] Glen Campbell, [actress] Pam Dawber, [singer] Gladys Knight, [actress] Melanie

Griffith, [boxer Mike] Tyson, [boxer Evander] Holyfield, [singers] Waylon [Jennings], Willie [Nelson], and the boys. I mean I've made jewelry for all kinds of people, [model] Cindy Crawford, just tons of different artists, you know. They would come into the store and I would make jewelry for them. The royal family of England. I had a really good clientele. And I just didn't want to do jewelry anymore. I wanted to be an artist. People won't rob you for bronze or stone, you know, but gold and diamonds.

**But did you consider the jewelry as well?**

No.

**You did not, even though you made individual pieces?**

Yeah, art to me was something that somebody won't take and put in the safe, you know? And big enough where somebody can appreciate it.

**So public art.**

Yeah. In 1990 I won [the right to create] the Veterans Memorial Monument for Southern Nevada. It was something to honor the past, present, and future. So I was watching the [John F.] Kennedy funeral [which took place in 1963]. Because how do you honor the ultimate sacrifice? And you know, it happened to be on TV that night, so I'm watching it and I'm thinking morbid thoughts. I had a casket I drew out with a flag over the top and stars around it and there's the eternal flame and everything. And I'm watching this series and all of a sudden you see little John-John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] saluting. Pure honor. Because I don't care if it's the President of the United States or if it's a lieutenant or a private or whatever it is, they're still just as important as anybody else. So, I see this saluting.

The day before that, a friend of mine, Lee McDonald, who is a photographer here in Las Vegas and a Nevadan, was telling me about these sculptures up in Central Nevada: three mounds of dirt where they took a tractor and they bulldozed the dirt away from the middle. So you have three mounds of dirt with the dirt missing through the three mounds in one spot. So you have mass and absence of mass. Pretty cool concept, right?

So I'm like, oh, well, my great-grandfather came out here with [Giuseppe] Garibaldi to fight for [Abraham] Lincoln [in the Civil War], and Lincoln gave him a gold medal. And he loved America so much, he moved back here [to America] with his family. You know, you have people from all different walks of life that really have a common bond, and the common bond was the flag: America. That's a symbol I think everybody can relate to.

And then, in the flag I put the silhouette of a soldier—it could be a man or a woman—saluting. So you have honor, and you have what they're honoring. And you have the absence of the person. So you can put yourself in there, you could put your father in there, I put my great-grandfather in there, I could put my dad, anybody, you know. My dad was 4-F. He couldn't fight, but he hauled burlap, and he did a lot of work for the military, but I mean he did it on his end. My dad had thirteen brothers and two sisters, and most of them all went to the war [World War II]. Some of them were shot; some of them were injured. Most of them came back alive, I think. But you know, they all took part in America.

**Describe this piece of art for the tape.**

OK, this is called the High Scaler monument. It's on the Hoover Dam. It's twenty-two feet tall.

**So this is the second monument. You described the first one; this is the second one.**

Yeah. This is a sculpture of Joe Kine. He was a high scaler. And it was to honor all workers of the Hoover Dam. It's Joe Kine rappelling off of the canyon on hemp rope, and he's on a bosun's chair with an Ingersoll Rand jackhammer between his legs. He's got a water bag on the side of the rock. He's got his gloves coming out of his pocket [and] a crescent wrench in his back pocket with the initials J.K. They gave out five thousand wrenches to every man that worked there. In order to know your own, they signed with initials, and I put his initials on there (which was weird). And at the dedication, his grandson goes, How did you know my grandfather signed his name like that? I had the wrench, and he signed it exactly like that. How did you know that? I was like, Yay! Yay! So if you ever go down to Hoover Dam, you can take a look at that.

But this is a part of the whole series because I've been doing different workers that worked down there, and the dog is a mascot and I think it's more than apropos. I had a private patron that is purchasing it, which is really nice. And I happen to have a black Lab [Labrador retriever], which is really perfect, you know, because it's kind of weird.

**The one thing that you're concerned about is the dog's name. So tell me what the dog's name is.**

Well, the dog's name is Nig, but at the time and everything else, it was the time, you know, and the dog was a mascot. He actually went and picked up his sack lunch, jumped on a truck, got a ride down to the dam. You got to remember, there was five thousand men that worked on the dam, so he was basically everybody's dog, the dog that they couldn't have because they were displaced, they came out for work, they couldn't afford an animal, and he was the mascot for all these men down there. He was killed. He was

sleeping underneath a truck and the truck rolled over him, didn't know he was underneath there, so it was kind of really a sad death. And they don't count that death either, which they should. He was really a part of it. [The statue] will be placed in Boulder City as part of my series of Hoover Dam workers.

**So right now Boulder City has a lot of art displayed on the street, different kinds, different types. Have you had anything to do with any of that art?**

Yeah, John Stockman and I founded the Center for the Arts in Boulder City and we put [in] the first sculpture park in Southern Nevada. It's in Boulder City on the Colorado Railroad. John was also one of the founders of Desert Sculptors. That was through Bill Epp. John passed away on July 21, 2006. He was a big part of the art movement. He helped Allied Arts [Council of Southern Nevada] a lot. He helped CAC [Contemporary Arts Center in Las Vegas, Nevada] With no funding from the city or the state, we put in the first public sculpture park in Southern Nevada, and that started it. And the reason for that: we were trying to preserve a historical building, the first water filter plant, which was the first building built in Boulder City. That was to filter the water from the river for the people in Boulder City to drink. It's still standing there.

Right now I have the High Scaler at Hoover Dam. There's two pieces in the museum [that] I did. And then I have Rip, who is over on Colorado and Nevada Way. He's a mucker. What he did is he shoveled cement. He's a life-sized bronze statue. And in those statues I actually put copper from the Hoover Dam. They sold a lot of the copper from the electrical buzz room that they took down. [From that copper] I produced coins and memorabilia for the Bureau of Reclamation. So I have copper from the Hoover Dam in the pieces.

And then the other one I did, his name is Alabam'—we don't know his real name, or the real name of Rip.—These were from historical photographs. Alabam' was a sanitation engineer, and he cleaned the latrines. In the public art for Boulder City, he was the first piece commissioned by the City of Boulder City. We think he's from Alabam'. He was an older gentleman, which was kind of odd because mostly they hired younger people on the Hoover Dam. It was 120 degrees in the shade in the summertime and every other day you had a man dying from heat prostration. So he cleaned the latrines; he cleaned the toilets. He was very essential. A very proud person too, I feel. You could tell by the photograph. I mean here is a guy who did his job. There's verbal documentation about his life, too, in the book that [Boulder City historian] Dennis McBride wrote. If it wasn't for people like that, there would be no Hoover Dam. So everybody is just as important as everybody else, like I was saying before. So he's got a broom with toilet paper on it over his shoulder.

**I saw the statue today. I was in Boulder City today.**

Did you really? My gallery is right across the street, the old gas station.

**So what does the artwork say to people in Boulder City and how do they feel about that piece?**

A lot of people like it! I mean as far as I know. People are saying that they like the face. To me it has emotion; I hope people get that from it. A lot of people like the character. I was talking with Fred Harvey. He's the gentleman who puts up [the] Burning Man [Project in Northern Nevada] every year. He gives like a half-a-million dollars a year for public artwork. It's a lot of money. And he was so happy and excited. They had had this art conference at the Tropical Hotel [and Casino] the year that we dedicated that piece

and he tells publicly to people, Isn't it nice that a city embraces the true heroes of the community? The people that really make the difference are people just like you and me. And I'm like, you know, I'd never thought about it like that. You never know how things happened, you know. You really never know how things happened.

**What drew your father to this community? The house across the street?**

Well, it was kind of interesting because the house across the street was not expensive. It had a garage, it had three bedrooms so that we each had our own bedroom, you know. I mean it was not a lot of money at all. I think we were paying \$275.00 a month for rent there, which was really cheap. It went up to \$450.00 or something like that when we moved out.

**So which year was that that you moved into John S. Park?**

1972, I think it was. So it was pretty interesting.

**Did you know anything about the history of that first house?**

No, I did not. I found a lot of newspapers upstairs in the attic. But it was just kind of nice being in a house, you know, for me it was wonderful.

**Especially after the small little apartment?**

Oh, my dad would take the mattress off the box springs, put it on the floor, and my brother and I would sleep on the mattress and he'd sleep on the box springs. Yeah, I mean, whew! Wow. We would cut turquoise all night long.

**What a way to grow up.**

Oh, it was cool.

**So did you go to school?**

Oh yeah.

**And you'd stay up all night cutting turquoise.**

Well, you know, I liked doing it. I wanted to cut stones, and then I started to carve. Yeah, it was like, Hey, can I have a piece to carve? He would say sure, so he gave me like this worst piece in the world, and I carved this eagle out of it, and he's like, Oh man, if I knew you could carve that good, I'd have given you a better piece of turquoise. [Laughter] So then I would sit home because he worked. At the time, because he had to pay an obligation to Lou Weiner for the divorce, he did window-washing through the [International Brotherhood of] Teamsters union, which was fine, you know. He made good money. He was on a bosun's chair too, which was kind of weird. He worked at the International Hotel [and Casino], and they had a bosun's chair that he'd have to [use to] go outside and wash the windows.

**OK. So it was a high-rise.**

Mm hmm, thirty-one stories. So that's how I can really relate to these workers at the dam because they were miners basically, and my father was a miner. I know what blasting was because we would go out and do blasts. He'd set the dynamite charges and we'd get to do the connections and go boom!, which was cool. And then he would have lunch with us and then he'd go in there and check it out and everything and we'd go in there and excavate. It was pretty cool. So, you know, when he needed money, he worked. I mean he always worked. So it was kind of really interesting what he would do, and he would do anything. He made really good money.

So I moved out when I was sixteen, which would've been '78, and got myself an apartment. My dad was going out with [a lady at that time]. Her husband had just died. He was hardly at home and I was living with my brother and I was like, You know what?



I want to go live by myself. And I worked at the Desert Inn [Hotel and Casino] for a few months as a busboy, then a hotel cashier, which was kind of interesting. Then I worked on houses. And then my dad came up to me and said, Hey, you want to open a store? I'm like, Sure! Are you really serious about it? He said yeah. Great.

So we opened Bruno's Turquoise in Boulder City, which had a direct line to the police station for the alarm, which was great. We didn't have to worry about that. Then I got myself a condo out there [in Boulder City] and lived there, I think, till '98. Yeah, I lived there for twenty years.

And then on the project for the Hoover Dam I met Stephanie Havel, who was a project manager for WPH Architecture [PC]. She lived in Vegas off of Lake Mead [Boulevard]. She wanted to buy a house. I started dating her. She's the project manager [and] I'm doing the sculpture for the High Scaler, you know. It was kind of interesting. So I said, I know a great little neighborhood. You'll love it. So she purchased the house over here at 1218 South Eighth Place. I was like, oh, you know, that's cool. We were still living together all this time. So I fixed the garage up as a studio and put [in] three-quarter [inch] plywood and did all kinds of stuff to the house, put a Jacuzzi in.

**So you're back in John S. Park after maybe twenty-two years of being away. What was the difference?**

Let's see here. I still knew some of the people that lived here, which was kind of interesting because, you know, they remembered me as a kid here. Mary Dutton Park was a real park, with the grass. Travelers used to stop and have a picnic with their family and sleep on the grass and then drive, because it was so hot. Now it's a rock park, which was kind of really weird. That sculpture there is my first monument that I did in Las Vegas.

This one here is my second one, and this is to honor Irene Dunne. She was a film actress. The name of the sculpture is [Film] Stars of Yesteryear. That's in Circle Park, on Franklin [Avenue] and Maryland Parkway. My second one I did for the Centennial. So they're both for the Centennial, which is kind of really nice for the neighborhood, especially [since] it's only three doors away from my house.

Mrs. [Joe] Santino passed away, so her daughter had the house, and I rented it for them once and found this one lady who was really nice. I kept on telling them I wanted to buy the house and she never would want to sell it, never wanted to sell it, never wanted to sell it, so finally she sold it to me. I was married to Stephanie and had a kid [at that time]. There was a hundred and seventy tons of petrified wood and agate and stuff in the back yard. There was ten thousand pounds of petrified wood in the basement, all slabbed and finished. And then there was probably about another seven thousand [pounds] of tabletops up in the attic in the garage.

**And she left all of that here?**

No. I had to sell it for her. The agreement was, if I sold it for her, I could buy the house. I'm like, oh, gee, let's see, that's so hard. OK. [Laughter] So I still have like thirty thousand pounds of petrified wood in the yard, which is pretty cool. She said I could have that, and some pieces that are more permanent here, big heavy pieces that are part of the landscape.

It's a little different than Boulder City, living here. When I was a kid, the lady across the street, Mrs. [Ina] Porter, her husband was digging his basement out. While her husband was digging out the basement, it was flooding because the water table was so high.

When we did the monument over here for Mary Dutton Park, the reason why the monument is done the way it's done is because they couldn't farm without water, and the well they had here was an artesian well, so the reason why I did the monument with the plow, the plow is going into the ground and it hit water, and that's what the sprays of water are. So you know it's life, it's energy, and I kind of think it displays their flamboyancy and their dedication to come out here all this way to Southern Nevada in 1918 to have a cart farm. My God! In this brutal climate. So water made it happen. When we did the geotechnical survey for that piece, we had flowing water at eight feet. Flowing water.

**So we still have a water table that high in this area?**

Well, it fluctuates. It definitely fluctuates because the [Southern] Nevada Water Authority [SNWA] was pumping out so much groundwater before [that] we had sinkholes in a lot of places out here. Now I don't know if they're pumping out that much water from the water table or not, but back at the dedication of that piece there [ca. 2004-05], the water table was higher, so it was good.

**Now the reason that that park became a rock park, was it because of the homeless?**

No, it was because of the bureaucratic people here in Southern Nevada.

**OK, so explain that to me.**

Well, you know, the park was always the thing for travelers to stop in. Their excuse was to keep bums out. They still sleep in the park, they still sit on the wall, they still come into the neighborhood. So instead of leaving it as a park for the neighborhood people to enjoy, they don't want to deal with that, so they put rocks in there and try to call it good, you know, to take care of an obligation that they have from the people that donated the

land. Remember, Mary Dutton donated that as a park. Circle Park was the same thing, donated.

**So tell me about Circle Park. How do you feel about it being closed?**

Oh, I think it's terrible. I mean I have an eight-year-old daughter. They took money to redevelop the park. I put twenty thousand dollars into a monument to honor the history of our area. They had ten thousand dollars from the Centennial Commission to do it with. We got Cashman Construction Company to do the excavation and the installation of the base [for the sculpture], which is really great. Sprint donated part of the excavation of it; they paid for that. And then you had another firm—I forget the name of the engineering firm that engineered it. So, you know, you had people that got involved for the community, and the community got involved in the park, and it was made for the community. Now they're going to take it because of political reasons. (They're going to hate me for saying this but it's on record now.)

I'm part of the arts [community] and I want the arts to grow here. When they had the one-percent for capital gains for improvements for the City, I was the only artist that was called to come and speak to the City Council. I'm always for the arts, you know, but there's political people here that have other agendas, and it probably will kill my artistic realm here but I think that if you are for the public, you're for the public, and if you have other agendas, OK, well, you know what? There's other ways around them.

So for our community, for our neighborhood, them closing the park is terrible. You go to Fremont [Jaycee] Park or [John C.] Fremont [Middle] School on Saint Louis [Avenue] here, the bums are there. People go play there. They play soccer, they do everything else, and guess what? When I was a kid, they had stabbings in Circle Park,

they did drugs, they did heroin, they did all kinds of stuff, and the kids still played in that park. So what's the difference now than before? It's a better park, it's got more stuff in there, it'd be better for our community, and for them to close it down for [Councilman Gary] Reese's and Mayor [Oscar] Goodman's political things, I think it's terrible.

**You came back here in '98. So you have been through some of the political upheaval in the community. Did you participate in any of those campaigns?**

I like Tick Segerblom a lot. He's the [Nevada] Assemblyman that represents our area right now. He's really cool.

The only real campaign is, how do you make the neighborhood more neighborhood-y, actually for the children, and for people that visit too. So when they wanted to do public art I was like, wow, that's great, you know. You try to get involved.

**So were you here when they [the Stratosphere Hotel and Casino] wanted to put [in] the rollercoaster?**

Yeah.

**OK, so tell me about that and what happened.**

Oh, I think it's pretty outrageous. My own personal opinion about it: it's really great to have ideas that will change [people's thinking about a place]. Las Vegas is always thought of as a place where you can come here and get rich quick. And they're doing things more to have fun. Like remember when Wet 'n' Wild [Water Park] went in? That was outrageous! It had nothing to do with gaming at all. So when they wanted to put the rollercoaster [in], I was kind of for it. [Laughter] But the bad part was [that] a friend of mine had a house right behind where the thing was going to stop. That was on Fifth

Place. And that was really bad for that reason, so then I changed [my mind] because, you know, you see the aspect of the public being right there.

But the more things that are not gaming are really good for our community. If you know anybody who has children, when they say, Hey, Daddy, let's go do something, now I can't go take my kid and play in this park over here at John S. Park [Elementary] School because they have it locked. (They used to have it open all the time.) I can't go down to this park over here and walk over here because it's closed. And there's not that many things to do in the neighborhood. It'd be really cool to say, Hey, let's go over there and do that rollercoaster, which would've been really hot and I would've liked it a lot.

[Laughter]

But think about it. There are other communities that really embrace their communities, and not in the gaming aspect of it. To me, yeah, that would bring people to their casino, but on the other hand it was like, wow, what a fun thing to do! And when you're born and raised here and the only thing was gaming, and when Circus Circus [Hotel and Casino] I think in 1968 or 1969, and my brother and I were the first kids through their front door, you know; that was the hottest thing because you can go in there, you can play, your parents can go gamble, and you're allowed to go and play. And it was a safe environment. Nobody took any kids from there. You didn't have to worry about somebody stealing your kids. You went in there and you played and you had fun and you waited for your parents to come find you or page you and say, Let's go. It was great. They had a hospitality area where they had cake and juice and punch and everything else. If you were a neighborhood person or whatever it was, you know, they had all kinds of stuff all the time. You could have cake and something like that and relax

and they had bumper cars right next to it. It was really more family-oriented, not like going to the Desert Inn where you had to wear a suit and tie to get in, or Caesars Palace [Hotel and Casino] where it was like, oh, you can't touch anything, you can't go through the casino, oh, no, don't sit at a machine. So anything more that was for fun, yeah.

**I see. I see what you're thinking. Tell me about the community socially, and how you've seen it change, and the social aspect among adults.**

In this community it's different. It's changed a lot. When I first moved here, it was a mostly Mormon neighborhood. I got invited to the temple a lot. Very, very family-oriented. There's still a lot of family here. You always had doctors, you had attorneys, you had all different types of people that lived in this neighborhood. Very, very, very wealthy people lived in this neighborhood. It's changed. You don't have that many wealthy people [now]. You have people that are more yuppie, kind-of-ish. A lot of people stay to themselves. Now I see that a lot more. A lot of people were more neighborhood-y [before]. It changes. You had this one couple that had the house on Ninth Street, and they would have the block party. They were great! Wow! Bob Bellis was our [neighborhood association] president. Great time. Oh, and the neighborhood gets together and you meet everybody and that was wonderful.

**So are those over?**

I haven't seen one here. Bob Bellis got a house someplace else. He moved. He's not the president here anymore, I don't think.

**But he still has his home here.**

He still has a home here, yes, he does, but he's not active anymore, I don't think.

**So what would you like to see the neighborhood association do?**

More informative. You know, people expect it to be on the Internet [so] you can go on the Internet and look at it. It's expensive to do flyers, I know that, you know. But more things that gets people together. The block parties were great! You got to talk to everybody: Hey, I live over here, I live over there.

You know, I think I'm a little bit more off-the-wall than most people here. I'm not married right now. I have a really beautiful, gorgeous woman that I deeply care about—so I really feel very lucky, so that's my New Year's present too. [Laughter] It's funny how life changes here, at least for me. My life changes all the time, constantly in flux. And the neighborhood changes too. Different things happen in our community, politically.

**Tell me about that. What do you mean by that?**

Well, you've got a John S. Park Neighborhood that's now changed to Huntridge Neighborhood.

**What do you mean?**

Well, go to Franklin [Avenue] and Maryland Parkway, and if you drive up the street it says "Welcome to Huntridge Neighborhood."

**But now isn't that part Huntridge?**

No. Huntridge is across the street. Huntridge always was over by the theater. Now they have signs over here changing it to Huntridge. This is not the Huntridge Neighborhood; this is the John S. Park Neighborhood. If you go over there and look at that, the City or somebody spent money to put up signs. I don't know if it's politically why they did this or not, but it's there.



**So when this area became a historically designated neighborhood, did that mean anything to the average [resident]?**

It's supposed to mean something but I don't think it does. I think that it gets lost in all the political stuff. There's nothing that they've done to say, hey, if you want to fix your house up, we can help you with this, or, you want to try to keep it historical. Like this one house down the street, he's changed his house completely around. Another house over here changed his house around. This house in the corner of the cul-de-sac, where it turns into Ninth, they changed their house around too. So it doesn't mean anything at all for them to say that this is a historic neighborhood, because they're changing the way it looks already.

**They changed the part that you see from the street?**

Oh yeah, completely. I was really involved with [historic preservation] in Boulder City. It means that you can fix it up, you can paint it, it doesn't matter the color of the outside of it, but you can't change the structure of it. You have to leave the integrity there. That was pretty much an important part of it, I thought. In Boulder City, this lady named Teddy Fenton, who is really a wonderful woman, their thing was to preserve the history. And the way the buildings look is the history of it. If it's brick, leave it brick. I mean if you want to paint it, paint it, but it's a shame that you painted it. Don't add on stuff to it. If you do something with it, make it look the same as the rest: use the same brick, the same architecture, and leave it the same. Don't change it. But if you look at the corner house on the cul-de-sac, they changed it. And changing the look of the facilities takes away the historical value of the property, I feel. So I don't think that the City is really keeping up

on that part of it. I don't think that the City is trying to do more for the neighborhood, or for the people in the neighborhood, to tell you the truth. It's all political.

**Do you think this neighborhood gained political power because of the way you stuck together?**

No.

**But when you had fights like for the rollercoaster [and] there were some high-rise buildings that tried to come in here, and you fought those, did you see your power increasing as you stood up in front of the City Council?**

Well, yes, if everybody gets together with it, but right now, I think we have to see what's going to happen, and truthfully, I haven't been really active enough in the last four years in the neighborhood, which is kind of a shame. Maybe I should. I completely ruined my political aspects of being an artist. But maybe it's just time for a change again because the politicians here, I mean, they have their own agenda. And it shouldn't be after money, because when you get elected to be a public official, you should be public. You should be doing it for the public good. I don't care how much money you get paid. And I don't think they really do that anymore. At least it doesn't seem like it, especially when you have something coming in where they're doing a Veterans Memorial project, on the spot where it's supposed to be given to the city as a public park. Not a private park where you can lock the gates and open it when you want to. When you can lock out people, vagrants or the neighborhood, when you want to, I think that is definitely like a Nazi society. It's really bad. And when you have a mayor that, as strong a person as he is, lets something like this happen, that is questionable about his integrity.

**This area is so close to downtown. How do you feel about Fremont Street East?**

It's going to happen.

**What kind of businesses would you like to see?**

Right now, gosh, anything for the community. The area has to be renovated. It's going to take a lot of money. They're trying to do things, and I think that they're getting a little bit over [optimistic]. But you know, somebody that's coming in, that's going to be an investor in this type of business, and they're going to put their money in, they're going to get something for putting all this money in. They're either going to get rent, they're going to sell it and make a profit, something's going to happen to them. And the way it is right now, I don't know what incentives the City is giving to make it happen, or to entice somebody to come in and put their money into a project and have it reasonable enough because the economy is so bad right now, and you really don't realize in how many different ways it is. But you know they're still selling condos for like \$230,000.00? For a condo. A condo. And they're really beautiful inside. To me that's a lie. I'm sorry, you know, I mean if it was something that was [bigger, more substantial]. But if you want to attract new growth and new money and stuff like that, have it where people can afford it, have it where people can come in and property either has incentives from the City for tax reasons, or they're trading things off for people, like, I'll give you this piece of property for this, but you have to do this, and there's a basic game plan or visualization of everything that's actually going to happen, that they're achieving. It'd be nice to have it where the public could come down there and maybe they have a new shopping area, maybe they have community centers or community things for people to do there. But like Jillian's [in Neonopolis] went out [of business]. We used to go bowling there [and] watch movies. Now I think [former Las Vegas mayor] Jan Laverty Jones made a ton of money

off the whole project. Seriously, because, you know, here you have facilities that were supposed to be, oh, for the benefit of our community and da, da, da, da, da, da, da, and look where it's at. I think every administration has a different goal, and it's really hard for them when there's money involved, I think, to really think about how good is this for our community. The hardest thing when you get into politics is you have to say thank you to other people, and you're in there to make money too. Obviously most people are. I don't care if you're the President of the United States right now. I mean think about it. If his wife endorses anything, I mean it's just a God-given, oh, my God, they're going to make a ton of money. I mean the lectures he's going to give afterwards. I don't care which president it is. Across the board, everybody, once they get into an office of power, gets attracted.

**So tell me how this community is connected with First Friday and what that means to the artists in the neighborhood.**

Well, there's a lot of artists in the neighborhood. There's one, two, three four. We got Steven Spann. You got Rich Weinstein over here; he's an artist. You have [Elizabeth] Blau that lives over here; she's an artist. You have me; I'm an artist. There's a photographer down the street; he's another artist. There's quite a few artists just in this block. Quite a few artists in this block.

Marty Walsh lives down the street. She hated my monument when I first put it in. She hates my cobwebs up at the front, but I like Halloween a lot. And I kind of let my front yard go and I need to change it around. I had a friend of mine break my sprinkler system and I had to spend like a boatload of money on a water bill. That was terrible. He finally fixed it, so now I need to put my sprinklers back on and get it back green again.

But she hated my sculpture. You know, she comes up to me and she's like, Steve, you know, I mean I know you did a lot of work on that and I hate your sculpture.

[Laughter] I just don't like it.

I was like, God, thank you. Wow, that's wonderful.

She said, What do you mean, it's wonderful?

I said, You looked at it. You didn't listen to radio, you weren't watching TV, you weren't playing with your computer, you actually took the time out of your day to look at this piece. Thank you. To me, that's really nice.

And she said, Well, I don't like it.

And I go, That's fantastic! You have an opinion! Isn't that great? It takes them off their daily blah, you know. Three months later she's driving by and I'm outside and she goes, Hey, Steven, you know, I have to say something.

I'm like, What?

She goes, I really like your monument. It's grown on me, especially the lights at night on it and everything. It makes you feel like more, you know, this is my neighborhood.

And I was like, Wow! Wow! Thank you! That's great too!

Because you don't care if somebody likes your art or not. You want them to put themselves in a different place. Use your brain. Get into that realm of thinking. There are different activities you're supposed to be doing in life, you know. I like dancing. I like eating. I like socializing with my friends. But also daydreaming, you know. Use your brain. Think about other aspects of your life. I mean you look at an artist's piece: what were they thinking of? I mean, oh my God, what in the heck were they thinking of?

[Laughter] Why would they do something like that, you know? Or, Wow, I really like that, and it hits your soul. Or, Wow, I don't like it, and it hits your soul too. You have opinions. You become a better person and you have more connection with your surroundings and your neighborhood. And I think that's what public art does for people. It has a basic sense of, This is my neighborhood, my community, and it takes you to a whole different place.

With the growth on the East Fremont part, it would be nice if they would do something like that, but they have to give it a sense of [community]. Security. They have to have police. A beat. Do a beat. I had a gallery in the Arts Factory for years. Not one customer would come down there. Not one. No one.

**Because they thought it was too dangerous?**

Oh, we had bums sleeping—excuse me, we had vagrants sleeping inside the building. They would come in and pass out in the building. None of my clientele would come, ever, not even on First Friday, because it's too dangerous. There was muggings. People got beaten. They don't have security. There was no police down there, ever, you know.

**So even now with First Friday?**

First Friday still, to me, needs more security, and not just on First Friday because you're never going to attract a crowd. They need to have police there Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday also, and Saturday and Sunday, and have police officers do a beat. If they want to attract business, they have to make it secure, and they're not making it secure. There's no way people that have money want to come down there to spend money if it's not secure.

I had another gallery at 1218 Main Street, right past that Mexican restaurant that's there, the really nice one, across the street from Dust Gallery. We had it there for six months. Nobody, not one of my clientele would come in there unless it was First Friday. It wasn't safe. We had people doing heroin in the back. We had people doing all kinds of stuff up, and it was not a good atmosphere. I mean there's vagrants that had their makeshift houses in the back of our buildings. You know, people didn't feel secure.

If they want to generate business, the City has to do one thing: make a secure atmosphere, where they feel safe. And it's not safe. It really is not safe at all during the weekdays, I don't think. You have so many people during First Friday, it makes it a little bit more better. But the City has to think about, what are they really doing with our community, and what direction do they really want to have it going to? And security is everything. If they have somebody doing a beat and going through and people see that all the time, and you have the same cop, same police officers doing a beat like they used to do in New York, where the public feels secure about it and could associate, Hey, yeah, there's John, or, There's Mary, or whoever it is.... Actually if the merchants have a better security, better feeling about it, they'll attract people back here. But right now, I don't care what they do with Fremont Street, they could put a boatload of money into it, if they don't boost the security for that, they'll never have any business.

**So how do the artists around here participate with First Friday?**

Marty Walsh has a gallery in the Arts Factory, so she tries to get different artists from different places to participate with it. She does her own artwork also. I don't know where Steven Spann is at right now.

I go down there and try to say hi to everybody. I'm a part of the Gem Club that's down there. We have a rock and gem club. When I was like ten, twelve years old, I used to teach lapidary work and silversmithing. They're a combination from all the different groups. We had Las Vegas Gem Club, we had the Clark County Gem Club, and we had the Boulder City Gem Club, and now they're all one, which is really kind of nice. And it's a good club, they're great people, and so I'll sometimes set up out there [on First Friday].

I had two galleries there. Business-wise, it doesn't pay. There's nobody that comes during the weekdays. You'll make money one day a month, and that's it, period. I mean nobody comes, you know, so why? It's still not that safe. Now they made the jail art house, I call it, and I don't know if Jack Solomon did that or who did that, or Wes, but now you have this basically jailhouse, a part for public art that's going to be in there. It looks like a jail.

#### **Where is it?**

It's right there off of Hoover [Avenue], I think it is, right next to S2 Gallery, Jack Solomon's facility there. He's got a print place there. They closed the street off and put this thing up. Why would you put steel around something that's public art, to lock it up, unless it's a public jail? [Laughter] Who knows what they want to do now with artists? I'd like to make it like the artists' jail and put all these artists' faces and hands like, you know, Let me out! Or let the people in. Buy my art!

#### **What do you think artists do for a neighborhood, when artists move in?**

What you hope they do, what I thought they'd do, is they would bring a little different type of life into it. Like I taught my kids how to do some lapidary work, and I had some



neighbors call and say that I'm doing business here at home, and what are you doing? They actually called like the enforcement police, whoever it is. Yeah. And so it's like, Well, I'm teaching my kids how to do lapidary work. Aren't I allowed to do it? I have my own hobbies. I mean I run a foundry in Boulder City, you know, which is commercial, and I run an art gallery in Boulder City which is commercial, and I make my money up there. But some of the neighborhoods don't like that. Like this neighborhood sometimes, there's people here that are yuppie that don't like that. I mean maybe if you keep it behind closed doors, it's OK. Some people like it a lot, if you're doing public stuff for them; some people, I guess, don't want to see you do things in here, you know, which is kind of really weird.

**So the neighborhood has changed a lot since you were a young boy living across the street.**

Tremendously.

**What do you like about living in John S. Park now?**

Oh, the major thing I like about it, I'm very centrally located. I can get anywhere I want to, even to Boulder City, in a half-hour. It's easy to find. I grew up here. I love my house [that] I'm in. There's a lot of friends of mine that live in this neighborhood still, that are still around, like Mrs. Porter, believe it or not. I mean after blowing up her trashcan when I was a kid, she still likes me, you know.

**How did you blow up her trashcan?**

Quarter stick of dynamite.

**Oh, oh, that your father had taught you how to use.**

Oh yes, of course. Yeah, and I had to pay restitution for the trashcan and pick up all the trash that I blew up fifty feet in the air. [Laughter] But you know, when I was a kid in this neighborhood, not everybody but, oh God, probably about ten people I knew in this neighborhood, on New Year's Eve, they got outside with their shotguns and blasted away, twelve o'clock midnight. Just down-home people. I mean everybody knew each other and, you know, Your son did this to me. OK. Well, come on over for dinner. It was like, it didn't matter. They were just neighbors. We all make mistakes. We're all humans. You know, I'll bring you pie, Christmas presents, all kinds of stuff, you know.

Oh my God! This one lady over on Eighth Street, she made the best popcorn balls you ever had in your life. And after like my fifth time over there with a different mask [on Halloween], same jacket, she's like, OK, you know, this is your sixth or seventh time. Every year I went there at least four or five times. She says, What are you doing over here? I go, You got the best popcorn balls ever in my life, you know. Your popcorn balls are great! She says, Oh here, take two. [Laughter] So everybody knew each other. She knew me. Everybody knew me. So it was more community.

The neighborhood block parties were great. They were the best thing that ever happened here. They should have more of them here. And every neighborhood, too. And, you know, maybe have a thing where they get together and talk about stuff. Like security is a big issue. Paco had his car stolen I don't know how many times. He's had break-ins. I mean I had two portable generators stolen from my front yard. I've had my car, which I don't always lock, broken into many times. It has changed, but I think security and police officers coming through is a big, big thing. And public awareness too. If you see a car that's strange, I mean I'll go outside and I'll knock on somebody's window: if they're

parked in front of my house, why? Or I see somebody doing a drug deal around the corner, you know, I'll call 311 and say hey, you know, and I'd go up there and turn my lights on in my car and stand behind them. I mean this is my neighborhood. I've got friends of mine. The neighbors over here have two kids. Other neighbors who are friends of mine, they have two kids. The neighbor over here has like seven kids. It's our neighborhood and if we don't stand up to it and do our part to it.... If I see somebody walking around, I call and say, Hey, I've got a stranger walking around. I'll go up and say, Who are you? I mean it's your neighborhood. I don't care who's in our neighborhood, it's still our neighborhood, and you talk to people and say hi, you know, that they're aware that you're aware of them. And your neighbors too.

So, the block parties were great. I think there should be more.

**Good. You know, the last question you've really already answered but I'll ask anyway. So what does this neighborhood mean to you now?**

Home. Definitely home. I mean I'm a true native Nevadan and I was born here and it's still my home, so I really love this neighborhood and I think it can grow into what it should be, its potential. I mean you have the people here. It's just communications. You have a lot of communication [problems]. People are busy. The economy is really bad. Times are bad right now for people. And it's hard for people to say something that they're afraid that maybe something's going to happen to them, cost them more money, less time with their family. And more people are working more hours too, which is really hard on them.

**When you were growing up here, there were a lot of Mormons in the neighborhood.**

**How do you describe the different populations now? What do you see here in the neighborhood?**

Oh, it's mixed. It's definitely mixed. You have people that aren't as wealthy as they used to be, like me. [Laughing] You have people that still have a lot of money. You have people that are doctors, attorneys. We have young families that move here, which is nice. I like that a lot. I wish that the community fathers would open up things more to the community. Like I say, it would be nice if Circle Park was opened. That was really nice, with the water features and stuff. All the kids here loved that. I like the arts a lot, but I like the public, and the public is what makes the whole community. So it's a really good community. It's really cool, and I should do more in the community.

**I think you should bring the block parties back.**

When we had the dedication for Mary Dutton Park, I had 250 people at my house. It was rocking. It was great.

**That in itself shows how you draw people.**

It was great. We had a really good party. I don't know. The community has things that go on here that get people kind of like segregated, let's call it. You have the political part. There's a lot of people that live here that work for the City, so it makes it kind of hard for them. You have realtors that live here too, which makes it kind of hard also. You have a lot of different ethnic groups, which is nice now because it's not just one type: white. Now you have a mixture of colors and races and religion, which makes it really colorful. That's nice. But to get everybody together as a whole, that's the difficult part, I think. Bellis did a pretty good job when he was here.

**You should give him a call.**

I saw him like a week ago and he was busy with his house and stuff like that. And I can see how things go, you know. He's got his own life and I understand that completely. My life has changed a lot in the last seven years.

**I don't think he plans to give up the presidency [of the neighborhood association]. I think he still wants to be president.**

I wish he would be. But he has to spend time on it too, and I think all of the neighborhood has to spend time on it because you sow what you reap.

**Thank you so much, Steve. This is wonderful.**

You're welcome. Thank you very much for interviewing me. I'm glad to be part of it.

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