

An Interview with the Reverend Jesse Scott

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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Preface

Reverend Jesse Scott shares his Louisiana background and his first involvement with the NAACP as vice president of the youth council. He recalls moving to Los Angeles and being urged to get involved in the local NAACP. As chairman of the Labor and Industry Committee, he found that he could make a difference, and gives details of three causes that he monitored.

Rev. Scott's commitment in California, which included presidency of the West Side branch and field officer for the West Coast region, ended in 1970, and he details the reasons he left. He was offered a position in the Las Vegas branch and eventually hired on as executive director. This led to the position of executive director of the Equal Rights Commission for the state of Nevada and then four terms as president of the Las Vegas NAACP. He shares many historical facts, stories, and anecdotes about this time in his career.

In addition to events, Jesse recalls the people who served with him, speakers at the Freedom Fund Banquets, and those who joined in the marches for equality held on the Las Vegas Strip. Today, in addition to his position as pastor of the Second Baptist Church, Reverend Scott supports the current NAACP administration as senior advisor and counselor and attends branch meetings.

This is Claytee White. And I'm with Reverend Jesse Scott. Today is June 29th, 2009. And we're at Second Baptist Church here in Las Vegas.

So how are you today?

I'm doing just fine.

Fantastic.

My name is Jesse D. Scott.

Okay. Jesse D. Scott. It's J-E-S-S-E.

That's right.

D and Scott, S-C-O-T-T. Thank you so much.

Reverend Scott, if someone wanted to investigate the history of the Las Vegas branch of the NAACP starting from the beginning, where would you find those old records?

I don't know.

Did you ever see anything related to the early years when you were a president?

No. Dr. McMillan's widow might have something.

From the early years?

Uh-huh. She might have it. She might. I'm just saying might.

Okay. Thank you. She's probably someone who should be on this list for these interviews.

Thank you.

Yeah. And Mrs. Hoggard, Brenda Davis Hoggard. She might have some coming out from Mr. Hoggard's cards and material. J. David Hoggard Jr.'s widow, she's still alive. Yes. Yeah, his former wife. Brenda knows who she is. She might have something. I'm talking about people that are still living that might have something.

That's good.

Sarann might have a little bit. She doesn't have anything here. Those are two or three people that might have something about the history.

Okay, great. Thanks for those.

So, Reverend Scott, tell us are you're from originally.

From Ethel, Louisiana originally. Born in Ethel, Louisiana.

When did you come to Las Vegas?

I came to Las Vegas in 1970.

So tell me just the names of the cities that you lived in prior to coming to Las Vegas after Elko.

It was Ethel, Louisiana where I was born. And I was raised in McManus, M-c-M-A-N-U-S.

That's also Louisiana?

Louisiana. And I went to school in Clinton, Louisiana where I finished high school. I lived in all of those places. I lived in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the capital, and I lived in New Orleans, Louisiana before I left and came to Los Angeles in 1948.

And then when did you come to Las Vegas?

In 1970.

And that was from -- okay. So at what point did you get introduced to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People?

That was in New Orleans. I was vice president of the youth council in New Orleans in 1946 and '47. I left New Orleans in '48 to go to L.A.

Was it dangerous to be a member of the NAACP in that place at that time?

Not terribly dangerous. It just wasn't acceptable to most of the whites who owned and controlled the government. But we were there. Only thing that wasn't accepted when I was there was blacks being able to register and to vote. They give you a hard time. And they had secret meetings to try to trail people to get them ready because they'd ask you crazy questions to discourage you. I mean the bubbles and a bar of soap and recite the Constitution, which they couldn't do. And so people --

Did the NAACP have a part in getting people ready?

Yes. Yes. Yes. We had attorneys in those days that would volunteer their time and work and encourage people to do things and fight the good fight. So you and Obama are walking on the shoulders of a lot of people that were on the front line.

Oh, yes.

Dogs biting them and hitting them. I never shall forget. I was a doorman of one of the hotels downtown New Orleans one summer. I'd always find a job during the summer and Christmas holidays. And I was working. There was an election and some white guy said, oh, I'm so glad so-and-so won, blah, blah, blah. Did you vote -- oh, by the way, you can't vote. That's a terrible,

shocking thing to say to another citizen of the country; oh, you're black; you can't vote. And so I did not vote. I did not register to vote until I got to L.A. And I was 28 years old when I cast my first vote.

Do you remember who you voted for?

In 19 -- that had to be -- no. It had to be Johnson -- either Truman or Johnson. I can't remember. On the national level it had to be Truman or Johnson.

Truman was before Eisenhower after -- So it was after World War II. So it was after Roosevelt. Probably Truman.

Yeah, probably Truman. And I voted for Pat Brown. He was the governor of California. I didn't vote for Reagan in California or nowhere else.

Okay. Now, tell me about your association with the NAACP in Los Angeles. Were you active there?

Yeah. I was an agent for Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company there at 1999 West Adams Boulevard, Adams and Western. I got acquainted with one person who was also in the insurance business as an insurance representative, and he was active with the NAACP. When he found out I was from Louisiana, he said, Why don't you come on over and get active? I went there late to the party and I didn't go to get no insurance. So I got active. And the president, Ed Warren, God bless his sainted soul -- I guess he's sainted; he's dead -- he made me chairman of the Labor and Industry Committee.

And what did the Labor and Industry Committee do?

Well, look out for employment and labor in the industry for labor.

So now, is that a standing committee?

Standing committee.

With all branches?

Yes. One of the 15 standing committees.

Okay, good.

The first two projects I started working on were so successful I got excited about the fact that I was recognized and I could do something. The first one was the L.A. Times. They have a charity game, a football game, between the Washington Redskins and the L.A. Rams. And it was late in

August. They would have 75 or 80,000 people, big thing. It made a lot of money. Rams had blacks on their team, but the Washington Redskins were lily white. And somebody called me from the Los Angeles Sentinel Voice and said, Why don't you do something; go out to the coliseum and pass out some literature stating why you're there? When I got there and started passing out the literature, as soon as the whites came and found out why I was there, they left and went back. And that was unbelievable. I thought they would tell me to get out of the way and go onto the game. They left and went back. They said, no, we're not going to cross any semblance of a picket line.

Who left?

The whites who came to the game. They came to the game and I'm passing out literature telling them what I was doing. So the Sentinel carried big news about it. And that was my first shocking surprise that they would respect me as a representative of NAACP.

But the game went on?

The game went on. But the next year they included one black -- and he was very light-skinned -- called Bobby Mitchell. And now today there are very few, if any, whites on the Washington Redskins. They're all black. So that to me was really something that somebody would notice and pay attention to what I was attempting to do. And it had some effect.

Yes. Wonderful.

The second big thing was an automobile agency selling Cadillacs at the corner of Wilshire and Figueroa. The Hilton hotel was right there on the corner and right up the street was Thompson Cadillac. I had read in the paper that they were the largest Cadillac agency in the United States including New York, selling more new cars than any other city in any other state. And this Ed Warren, the president, said he had a friend who was common laborer at Thompson Cadillac. All that a black man could do in 1952 or '53 and '55 was to rub the Cadillac and take the dust off it and go to the airport and pick up the big shots. In 1955 a Cadillac was selling for \$1400. They would give you \$25 for bringing in a customer -- this was called a birddog. You go find the customer and bring them in. And that's all he could do because a black man couldn't sell a car.

So we put a picket line around that Cadillac agency every Wednesday at 12 o'clock. There were about seven or eight of us. And we had one Jewish guy who joined us. So they really didn't

know where we were coming from. And we were there every Wednesday for an hour. And I had written a letter to the agency saying tell us what you're hiring and upgrading policy of black people. And they wouldn't answer the letter. But we went.

So about the third time we got there, Metro Police for L.A. was there. And they did what I call -- what you call it? -- the big shot. They took that big camera and come right to my face and got a really big -- so I guess it's in Metro Police Department in L.A. right now. I guess they did all that to frighten me. I said, well, I wrote a letter and asked them to tell us what they're hiring. He said, no, these people have their own businesses. They don't have to do anything. I said I wrote a letter asking them what their hiring and upgrading policies were and they ignored us. And we know black people are buying a lot of Cadillacs. And, therefore, we think that they should not ignore us.

Oh, less than a month later they hired a guy who was polishing the dust off the cars and going to the airport and picking up the big shots. His name was Eldon French. All that's a part of my autobiography that you may not have read yet. But I'm saying all that's a part of it. I know you helped to write it, but it's right there. Anyway, Eldon French died about two years ago. He turned out to be the leading salesman of Cadillacs in the state of Nevada.

Great. State of California.

State of California. I'm sorry.

Because black people were buying a lot of Cadillacs.

Yeah. Oh, you'd go down Central Avenue on a Sunday evening and see how many are coming down there.

That's right.

And so that was my second thing.

The third one is the Hilton hotel itself. Gloster Kern was the executive director in that day. And Gloster had been with the NAACP for 40 or 50 years. In fact, when he died around 75 or 80 years old, he had been with the NAACP more than that time. And the national office NAACP liked to use the Hilton as their hotel whatever city they're in. Hilton hotel was their preference, one of the first hotels that began to open up for blacks. And so Gloster was staying at the hotel at Wilshire and Figueroa. And management told him, yeah, your branch of the NAACP is picketing

our hotel. They're out here every day picketing the hotel. So Gloster came to the branch office on Central Avenue and said why are you picketing the hotel? Management told me that they don't discriminate against blacks. Why are you picketing? He said it in a way that looked like he was taking sides with the hotel and against me. He'd be quiet and sit down and not be doing anything.

And I said to him in the presence of some of these employees -- oh, by the way, at that time I was glib -- you think I'm glib with my mouth now, you should have seen me in that day. So I'm talking to one of the top officers of the NAACP. I said we wrote a letter asking them what their hiring and upgrading policies were and could we come in and talk to them. And they ignored the letter. Now, you have to decide whether you're going to take their side or my side. I wasn't talking about myself. Lord have mercy. I was always in trouble with the national. It's no wonder they fired me. So anyway, that was really something. They thought that was a terrible -- I was impotent. You didn't talk to black people in those days. But I was always shooting off at my mouth.

Anyway, those are three things I can think of where I'm on somebody's record somewhere in L.A. as joining in and helping with the cause.

Wonderful. So did you ever hold any other positions other than chair of the Labor and Industry Committee?

Yes. Later on I became president of what we called the West Side branch. We had four branches with one on the West Side. We organized that branch and built it up to about maybe a thousand members.

What area was the West Side branch?

Well, the west side of town. I would say generally speaking it would start at -- how can I say it? Anything west of Western would be West Side I would say.

So there was one in that area, one in Hollywood. Where were the others?

One in Watts and one in -- where was the other one? One was on the east side, one in Watts, one on the west side, and I can't think of the other one. There were four of them there.

Probably Hollywood.

Yeah, maybe. And, anyway, I became the president of those four branches. So in 1966 --

So all four?

I became sort of the spokesperson for all of the branches. In 1966 I got my lifetime membership, which was presented to me by Clarence Mitchell. He's the big man in D.C. He was known as the 101st United States Senator. He had so much influence and got so many things through. And so he presented my Life Membership Award. The convention was held in the Hilton there on Figueroa and Wilshire. The owner of Ebony Magazine got the Spingam Medal at that case. And of the four branch presidents in L.A., I was the only one allowed to sit at the head table that night.

Why was that?

Well, two or three of them didn't want to do it and I was eager to do it. So they say you go ahead. They told us can't all four of you -- only one of you can sit and represent the branches.

So tell me what happened in 1970 when you moved to Las Vegas. How did you become involved in the NAACP in Las Vegas?

Well, I told you that the NAACP was in the same building with the insurance company, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, on Central Avenue. We were in one part of the building and they were in the other one. And this friend of mine, Ike Adams, who is from Louisiana, said to me -- we were members of the same church, Second Baptist -- said to me that why don't you come and get active with the NAACP? And I did. So when Ed Warren became president, he assigned me to the Labor and Industry Committee.

So once you had gone to the top and then finally you decided to move to Las Vegas, how did you become involved in Las Vegas?

Well, after the '66 convention -- it must have been '66, '67, '68, I was field officer for two years.

Tell me about that.

I decided to leave the branch and become a field officer. There are 30 branches between San Luis Obispo, which is Santa Barbara, and down the coast to San Diego and the inland to El Centro. So I had 30 branches under my supervision after I left the presidency. And this was my first paying job. I was representing the field office, which was a part of the West Coast region of the NAACP. And I was a national staffer of the NAACP. I held that for a couple of years, maybe longer.

Yeah, a little more than that. Anyway, I got into trouble. I don't know why I'm telling you all this stuff.

Oh, just tell me.

I got in trouble and got fired because I was naughty. I wasn't mouthy at this time, just naughty.

What did you do?

Well, a guy by the name of H. Carl Hudson -- Dr. Hudson was both a dentist and a lawyer. He's from Louisiana and he was a mulatto that was almost white. He was on the national board of NAACP, and whatever he said on the West Coast, the NAACP would do it. So we went to the (Selimar). You know the Selimar?

Of course.

Oh, that's such a beautiful meeting place just south of San Francisco. And they had this meeting. And whatever Dr. Hudson said, you did it because he had the only bank in town. And whatever he said, the national office would say it in the NAACP. Now, you're in the regional office -- not regional office. It's a branch office. The regional office is San Francisco, West Coast Region I, NAACP. And I was under them. Some political thing had come up because Dr. Hudson was in the middle of everything that was political. Anybody was afraid to say no to him because you wanted a loan. He had the only bank in town, only black bank in town. Something political happened and he knew I could help him to get rid of that person. And I refused to do it. I tell you I was poor, but I was knuckleheaded the same way as today. And I said to Dr. Hudson no. And he brought a witness with him and I told him no. He was a big man. He was head of all the agency of Golden State Mutual out of Detroit. And I told him no and the president -- you know, I wrote in my book that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

That's right.

And I told him that Shakespeare said it's more blessed -- no. Sometime you have to stoop to conquer. It's one of Shakespeare's -- I didn't know nothing about all that at the time. Anyway, Dr. Hudson told them that the best thing they could do is to get rid of the field office. So they closed the field office. They closed it. There was a guy in this city by the name of Charles Keller, who was a real hell-raiser and he was president of the NAACP. And he said if they don't want you, I'll be glad to have you. So he offered me the job.

So Charles Keller was president here in 1970.

Charles Keller was the president of the Las Vegas branch of NAACP in 1970. And he said come to Las Vegas; I'll get you a job. So he said it in the NAACP convention. I didn't put in an

application, didn't come to Vegas.

And in February the hotels had given this branch \$75,000 to refer people to the union and to serve as sort of a recruiting agency because they could feel the federal government is coming down on them. They had few or no black people in the high-toke areas. And the toke areas are gaming tables and serving food and doing other things where people give you money called tokes. So there had been an investigation by the Equal Rights Commission which found out that blacks systematically had been excluded from that. And so they gave them \$75,000 to recruit people and bring them in so that they could get their numbers up.

Was this the time of the Consent Decree?

Yeah, this is the Consent Decree. And my job was to go out and invite people to come in, go through the union and refer them until they reached a certain point and then they drop off that category.

Anyway, Charles offered me the job. And I didn't come. In the month of February he wanted to talk to some people in the Howard Hughes' organization through the Sands hotel. And he had a meeting with some of the top figures of Hughes' organization. Once upon a time Howard Hughes owned five hotels on the Strip. And he divested and bought some. And so he invited me to come just to be a witness for him to talk to these people. That was in February.

And I came. And it was a blustery day. The visibility was a half-mile. Tumbleweeds were going and sand everywhere. And I said to myself ain't no way in the world I want to go to that place. I went back to L.A.

And come July I couldn't find a job. I didn't want to leave L.A. because I always thought L.A. was paradise. You should have seen it in 1948. Huh, so beautiful. No fences, no doors. Everything was open and people just went everywhere. So beautiful, everything. But anyway, I wanted a job. I didn't want to leave L.A. And Dr. Hudson wanted me to get out of L.A. because he was the king, the real king and I was the want-to-be king. And the town was too small for two people with as much ego as we had. So Dr. Hudson won. I had to leave.

So anyway, by July -- he said the job is here. And he talked to me as if the job was automatic because he's the president and he said it. When I got here I found out that the executive committee had three people that they interviewed the same night they interviewed me. One was a

guy who had just got out of the service at Nellis. He didn't even have a membership. Another guy who lived here for a long time, but he and attorney Keller couldn't make it together in no kind of way. But a lot of people on the executive committee knew him. They knew nothing about me. They had to take Charles Keller's word.

And so it took them three hours arguing and debating as to -- and the other guy was Leonard Mason. I don't know if you heard of Leonard Mason. Leonard Mason was considered -- oh, he was a brain, but he tore up things. He walked in a meeting and no matter what they had to discuss, give him five minutes and when he finished talking everybody was in disarray. That's this guy. Real brainy, but he was way out. Terribly destructive. And so they knew Leonard. They didn't know Scott. He's bad, but we only want him. But Charles and one other person in the three hours' time talked them into hiring me. And that's how I got out here. It's a long story.

What was the job called?

Executive director of the Las Vegas branch NAACP.

Oh, you were the executive director.

Yeah. I stayed there about a year and a half. And then I didn't do all the things that Attorney Keller wanted me to do. I don't know why I'm telling you all of this. That was (indiscernible) because Attorney Keller wanted to use some of the money to take his girlfriend to the convention. I objected, and when I objected he said to me in front of the staff, Who in the hell do you think you are? It's not your money. Yackety, yackety, yack. And so a few months later he got his group and said let's get rid of him. So they fired me. And then that's when Governor O'Callaghan hired me as executive director of the Equal Rights Commission.

So once you were fired by Keller, it was probably about the year, what, 1972 by that time?

Oh, I got to guess. Either two- or four-year expansion between the time I got here and went through the executive position and -- getting the executive position for the branch and getting the executive position with the Equal Rights Commission.

So how many years did you say?

Well, it's only between two- and four-year spans I got the two positions. I can't recall the exact dates.

That's no problem. How long do you think Keller was president?

Oh, I guess he had been president about two years after I got here. And he stayed president -- two years before I got here and two years after. I guess he was president about four years.

So from about 1970 to 1974 you think?

No. Go back two years before, about '68 to '72. I'm guessing.

So approximately. What we'd like to do is try to reconstruct the history of the Las Vegas branch of the NAACP. So that was Charles Keller. Do you remember who became president after Keller?

Why don't you go back before Keller?

Oh, you remember some of those?

Yeah.

Oh. Tell me some of those.

Before Keller it was -- oh, boy. You got some names here? Before Keller it was Don Clark.

Donald Clark was before.

Immediately before. And before Donald Clark it was Bennett.

That's wonderful. So who was after Keller?

After Keller it was Eleanor Walker. In fact, she was a part of the thing to get rid of me because she was telling Keller what I was doing. And even he brought me here and he came to the meeting. And my wife told me, said they're going to fire you tonight. And they did. I had gotten in an argument with Reverend Bennett about Reverend Dunn. Have you heard about Albert Dunn?

No.

Oh, Albert Dunn was notorious. He's the one who threw himself under the big tractor when they wouldn't hire any black people. Albert Dunn was way out, way out. He and Bennett fought all the time.

And I had gotten -- I don't think I have this in my autobiography either. I got a call, as the executive director of the NAACP Las Vegas branch, that the principal at a certain school was sending the black kids home and counseling the white kids when they got into fights. And so the ladies called me up and asked me would I go to the school to represent them. And I'm saying to myself if I go representing the NAACP and I haven't gotten clearance from the executive

committee, what I could do? Why not take somebody else with me from the community?

And so I took Albert Dunn. I didn't know the relationship between him and Reverend Bennett. Reverend Bennett was on that executive committee at that time. So I took Albert Dunn. And Reverend Bennett heard about it. He called me up and wanted to know and I mouthed off to him. So when I mouthed off to him, he talked to Keller. And they were ready at the next meeting to let me go. So anyway, that's what happened there.

So how did you get back into the NAACP's good graces to become president one day?

It's because I had shown them what I could do with Equal Rights Commission and they knew my record at that time.

So after Bennett did you become president?

Well, yeah, after Bennett. So you had Bennett. And you had Clark.

So you have Charles Keller, Donald Clark, Bennett.

No. Bennett had to be before Keller. So you had Bennett, Keller, Clark and then me.

Oh, you were after Clark.

Yeah. And then -- no. In between I got to get Keller in there. I got it all wrong, haven't I? So it had to be Bennett, Clark, Keller, Archie -- you don't have him in here. Archie, Archie -- Attorney Archie. No, he died.

Oh, that list is for people that I'm going to try to interview. But after Keller was Archie?

Yeah.

So then Eleanor Walker was before Bennett?

No. Eleanor Walker was after Keller and before Gaines.

What about Archie?

Archie came after Keller. And so she had to come after Archie.

So I have Keller, Archie, Walker, Gaines. Now, where are you?

I should be next.

After Gaines?

Uh-huh.

So then there were several years as you were working for the Civil Rights Commission that Archie, Walker and Gaines were president. And then by that time -- were you still active in

the NAACP while you were on the Civil Rights Commission, working there?

No. Archie -- really I'm confusing you. Archie came after Keller.

That's what I have.

All right. So I was away for four or five years with the Equal Rights Commission. And I was a stranger to the city. But after I finished the Equal Rights Commission, everybody knew me. I was in the press almost every day fighting these folks.

So you became president. What were some of the issues? Do you remember the year that you were elected to be president?

If I was there eight years, it had to be '81 because I left in '89.

You were president for eight years?

Four two-year terms. I'm the longest president other than Gaines -- I mean Reverend Bennett was elected three different times. I don't think he stayed but a short time. But nobody stayed eight years.

Four two-year terms, my goodness. That's fantastic. So the entire 1980s.

Yeah.

So tell me some of the issues that were handled during that time.

Well, the police department, Metro Police Department and a guy named John Moran. And it was really tough. You had at that time about 16 people who were sergeants and one was a deputy sheriff. His name was Larry Bolden. The police station is named for him. He was the one that when the Metro -- I got here in 1970 and this had happened in 1969 that Metro had decided that they wanted to have four satellite offices. In addition to the downtown headquarters they had four satellite offices. And they had four white guys to take the test. You had to be a lieutenant to aspire to be a captain. You had to be a captain to be over a station. And four white guys took the test. And Larry Bolden said he'd take it. So that made five. So you got four slots and five people taking the test. And all five of them passed it. So now they decided that this black man, we can eliminate him. So they all got together and said that -- he was very nervous. He went in and out of the area where they were taking the test always wanting to sharpen his pencil and he was sweating all the time, sweating.

So in 1970 I got here. In the fall of -- sometime in '71, Larry Bolden went before the Civil

Service Commission. They voted in his favor that he wasn't cheating. And we don't have an appellate court in Nevada. You go from the district court to the Supreme Court. The district court ruled against him and his lawyer appealed it to the state supreme court. And guess who his lawyer was? Harry Reid. And he and Harry Reid were in high school together. And Harry Reid knew Larry Bolden had a scholarship. He didn't have to cheat on the test. And that's how I met Harry Reid and we've been friends ever since, real close friends.

Anyway, Larry -- it took them seven or eight years and they finally settled the thing by making him deputy superintendent. He's the highest-ranking officer until a guy named Blue who is deputy now. And Larry, this got to him. He ended up with sugar diabetes -- fine-looking guy, athletic guy. He ends up with diabetes. And his wife said he and a couple of these guys -- they'd come to his house and have breakfast and cocktails on Sunday morning when they were not working. And he named his only son's middle name for one of those cops. And they all got up and testified in court that they thought -- they didn't see him, but they thought he was cheating. They had handwriting experts come from L.A. They must have spent a hundred thousand dollars on this case. Handwriting experts came from L.A. and other places looking at his writing to see whether he looked like he might have been cheating on the test. Oh, it was really, really something.

But in 1970 it was impossible to get a white man to be your attorney on a civil rights case. And Harry Reid took his case. That's why I've been with him all the time and fought for him through the years.

So the Supreme Court finally ruled in his favor and they paid him about 40-something-thousand dollars, which was nothing for anybody at that time that lost his health. His wife said he'd wake up in the middle of the night and want to get his gun and go and start shooting. So Larry, that thing killed him. It was really something. They named a station for him, but that wasn't enough.

So how did the NAACP play a part in that?

Well, they were backing me up with the NAACP, whatever cases. We had two guys that sat on the panel, Judge Williams and Judge Mitchell. Both are judges now. But I was able to influence them to do pro bono work by sitting on the panel as the complaints came in. And they reviewed

them and told us which ones were meritorious and which were not so that once we went before the establishment the case had good grounds. We had two or three lawyers do it. Two of the three are now district judges that would help us with the cases. And so when we'd go before the city council or ever before an employer, we had good grounds for the case. We had a good record of putting people back to work, getting them housing and jobs. We had employment, education, public accommodation; three major categories that we did.

Now, do you remember any specific thing that you did on the Larry Bolden case, anything specific that the NAACP actually did?

No. Other than appear in the meetings.

So you appeared on his behalf.

See, I learned a long time ago that in a city like Las Vegas, Nevada black people have a bonanza in the palm of their hands and they don't know what to do with it. Don't have to kill nobody. Don't have to burn no buildings. Don't have to do like they did in Watts and burn up your own city. Just appear.

When I'd make a trip to Carson City, they'd ask me what do you want? They wanted to get rid of me because there were few or no blacks in Carson City. Get you out of there. I'd walk in with my briefcase and Attorney Archie would say Equal Rights Commission don't want to have no part -- and they didn't have no power or authority. But I learned that there are two kinds of authority. One is actual and the other one is implied. And they are much more implied authority. And I'd walk in with my suit and my briefcase as if I had -- and they would hire people. Run, quick, going to let you go.

I was at Caesars Palace one night in my Mach IV Continental car. And this white lady came out and parked my car. And when I got out to give her a tip, she said I can't take a toke from you. Why? You helped me get my job. So all we did was write a letter to the people that were complaining. And before we could get the complaint through they had already hired them. So that's why I call it implied power. And she said you helped me to get my job. And all I did was write a letter asking them will you meet with us and talk about the case.

So between '81 and '89 those are the kinds of things that the NAACP was doing. Do you remember any case that stands out in your mind?

Dr. Esther Langston's case stands out in my mind.

Good. Tell me about that case.

Well, she had been in the sociology department.

At?

And they would not give her tenure.

At?

At UNLV. They wouldn't give her tenure because you've got to do two major things to get tenured, as I understand it. One is to publish something. And the other one is to have your peer group in your department give you complimentary statements as to how they think you are. At least that's what it was at that time. And what they did with her -- what happened in her case, which was one of my prime cases, is that many times people refused to document and keep files and records. And she had it all; who came after her, what kind of academic attainment they had, how long they were there and whether they had any problems and what departments they were holding. She had it all. When they found out what she had, then they gave her tenure.

And so that gave me a lesson to tell people to document: document dates, times and places because the hearings officer of the (indiscernible) impress act like you know what you're talking about if you have it all together. And that's what I tell people all the time; the date, the time you had the conference with the supervisor, what they said, who was present and whether you followed up, whether it was negative and how you responded, who was present and the whole bit. **So in Esther Langston's case, did you have to write a letter or did you just appear in the room?**

I had one of my persons under me handling the case. And as I recall all they did is to appear before the committee, whoever was citing it, and began to share with them some other documents. We never give them all. There's some of the documentation they had. And I think they went ahead and gave her tenure.

Great. So tell me, who were some of the people who served with you during those eight years.

Oh, golly.

You know, some of your vice presidents or executive board people.

Pastor Parks. He wrote a paper -- I don't know if you've seen it -- "The Other Side of Las Vegas." I went to breakfast with Frank last Friday and I gave him a copy. He has it. Pastor Parks was my first vice president. And he was the pastor of Grace Immanuel Baptist Church. And Reverend Parks has been dead now about five or six years. But he wrote a little thing even before I wrote my autobiography, "The Other Side of Las Vegas." And he got some of the stuff. You ought to look at the copy we have.

Good.

Casandra. You know Casandra Watkins? Casandra was on the executive committee when I was there. And she's there also now. A little bitty lady, looks very insignificant, but has a lot of guts and a lot of confidence.

She's still here in the city?

Yes. And she is my caretaker. She and her husband clean my house and cook my food and look after me once a week. She's my caretaker.

Do you think that she would agree to an interview, having been around that long? I would love it if you would ask her for me.

Anybody else that you remember being active along with you those years?

Ms. Washington, David Washington's wife. She was on the Board of Education two years ago and she lost in the last election. Marcia Washington. Sarann. Oh, Colonel Lee. I mention him in my autobiography. Thomas Lee. He was there all the time. His wife was too, but she passed on since then. In fact, he was chairman of Black Dollar Days, which is a significant. We'd take two-dollar bills. What's the name of the woman? What's her name? Some British woman that they named a coin for.

Susan B. Anthony.

Well, I can't think of the name. But we'd take the two-dollar bills. And we'd ask everybody to -- we would go to the Federal Reserve Bank and ask them to supply a certain amount of coins in exchange for the dollars we'd give. And we'd pay all our bills during that period with the two-dollar bills and with those coins. And they would ask why. And there was a conversation because this is our way to demonstrate the actual and the potential buying power of black people. And it had effect. That's a part of -- go back and read. You've got a copy of my autobiography.

All in the backside of my autobiography, all this stuff talking about the two-dollar bills. And Colonel Lee was here and did a fantastic job and made a real economic impact. In fact, he wrote a letter. I got that in the section of my autobiography that I call the archives. And he wrote a letter how he met me when he got here from Santa Barbara. And I introduced him to the NAACP and here at the Second Baptist. He's still a member at Second Baptist. I can't think of anybody else. **But the good thing is that you thought of that Black Dollar Days campaign. That was really good.**

So the biggest fundraiser of the year is usually the Freedom Fund Banquet. Do you remember any of the Freedom Fund Banquets of your tenure, of that long tenure? Any one stand out? Could you tell me about that one or those that stand out?

The one that stands out most prominently is -- boy, my mind is gone. We'll come back to that. **So we'll come back to the Freedom Fund.**

As a branch president how did you interact with the regional and the national offices? Did you have to file reports?

Yeah.

So how was that done? What is that process?

Well, most of the process deals with membership and money, most of it unless we had some other -- you had to tell them how much money you raised and give a certain percentage of it and tell them how many delegates you had to the convention. And the national program, you had to make sure that the kids would compete on the local and regional level and then go to the national, compete on the national level. That's a fantastic program. It's a shame that the NAACP on a national scale don't have a national department just to publicize that program because it gets into art and the sciences. See, you got kids that have gone to Yale and Princeton out of that program.

Oh, I know.

One movie star. And I can't think of his name. West. He's not a star. He's in the music world. Kanye West, he's a star, isn't it? Anyway, but all of them went through. And there's a lady that went through that program, fantastic program.

Yes. I agree.

So is it a monthly submission that you do to the regional office, to the national office,

or is it just once a year when it's time for the national? How is it done?

Those reports are made monthly in terms of the money and the membership. And the regional office at various times would send down directives as to what the national board had done and what they wanted you to do. When I was on the national staff, I had to write regular reports as to what cities I visited, how many miles I traveled, who was there, what the membership level was and how many -- and go and attempt to revise branch. Anything below 25 or 50 members, I can't remember, other than that they become inactive. And whether you activated the membership and how many did you sign up, all those kinds of reports. They're interested mostly in the money. If you gave a banquet, how many people you had is what percentage you sent.

So what percentage of, let's say, the Freedom Fund Banquet if you raised \$75,000?

Sixty percent goes to national. They get about 35 or 40 percent on the membership. They're really bad. It's been that way for a long time. And you can't do nothing about it because that national board ain't making no changes.

So do you remember any special national convention during your presidency? Any memorable ones?

I thought the L.A. convention in '66 was out of sight.

But during your presidency?

Oh, during my presidency of Las Vegas branch.

Any national conventions?

Yeah. I can't remember when we went to Denver, whether or not I was president of this branch or L.A. I might have been in L.A. Oh, president of this branch -- I can't remember any one particular thing.

Where was the local branch located when you were president?

Well, we had two places. We were in Nucleus Plaza until the Rodney King riot and they burned the building down.

That wasn't until '92. So were you in the Nucleus Plaza the whole time, all those years?

Are you sure?

Yeah. 1992 was Rodney King.

I have to back it up then. I have to back it up. Bring my years forward a little bit because I was in

the Nucleus Plaza.

You were president when --

I was president then.

During the Rodney King?

Uh-huh. So I've got to bring up the years. Maybe it was later in the 80s than I thought.

Okay, good. So Nucleus Plaza. Now, did you lose all the records when that office burned down?

Somebody broke in and got the computer. Somebody broke in the building and got the computer. That's all. All those files with all of my memorabilia, everything. I didn't have my life membership plaque with me. I had that at home. But a whole lot of stuff that I had been through, all the stuff that we did with Hollywood. Charles Bowlan was president of the Screen Actors Association and we'd have regular meetings out there with Ed Warren. He was a knucklehead. And he fought for everything through the Los Angeles branch. This was before I got to be president of the West Side branch. And we'd argue about having blacks before the camera and off the camera. There was no such thing as blacks doing -- you got blacks now who anchor around the country and around the world. Only blacks were in the background. We didn't have the camera and we weren't in front of the camera. We argued for it. All of that happened since then.

So after the office moved from Nucleus Plaza where it was burned down --

Then we went to Martin Luther King, 1100 Martin Luther King, not where the barbershop is but the next section. The barbershop is 1000. And the next section --

So near Bonanza and Martin Luther King? Near Bonanza?

It's on Martin Luther King.

Between Bonanza and --

Owens.

Okay, good. When you were president did you have any active non-blacks?

No.

Okay. So everybody was black.

Well, before I came during Charles Keller's administration and during Don Clark's administration, there were some whites. The last whites were members during Keller's administration.

Do you remember who became president after you?

Yes. Eleanor Walker.

Walker was after you?

Uh-huh.

Now, are you still active in the NAACP today?

I'll always be active. I have a life membership. And I'm serving on the executive committee. I refuse to take an office. I consider myself as a senior counselor and advisor.

How many people are on the executive committee these days?

We must have about 12 or 15.

Oh, wonderful.

Frank got things going now. You haven't been to one of the meetings? You've got to come to the meeting at 12:30 on the third Saturday of each month at 12:30 at the library. And he got a lot of people working. See, the thrust and the energy of the NAACP comes from having a lot of people come and volunteer. And, see, what makes it so terrible is that 50 years ago everybody -- the smartest thing you could do was to say you were on the executive committee. It was a status thing. But today people have jobs and obligations and families, and the Urban League pays people to do what we do for free. But Frank got a lot of people. He's very charismatic and got a lot of people working for him. Every Saturday he recognizes all the new people and gets memberships right there and encourages them to bring somebody else to the meeting.

Oh, yeah. I've joined the branch. I'm a life member. But I've joined the branch as well.

Yeah, he got things going for him.

Are there any other NAACP local, here in Las Vegas, memories that you'd like to share?

Yeah. We marched on the Strip two times.

Tell me about those. In the 80s?

Yeah. We marched on the Strip two times. The first time we went I was very reluctant to go because Jesse Jackson had been here and he had a march downtown. And the city council had a special ordinance changing it and saying you couldn't do it. It went to court. And the court ruled that he had the right to march. This is where they have all the lights downtown. What you call that?

Fremont Street.

Fremont. Fremont was open at that time. And they said that -- the court ruled that he could. And when we decided to march --

Okay. When did Jesse Jackson lead a march here?

It must have been -- I don't know the exact year. But it must have been -- if I was president during the middle years of the 90s, he must have been -- yeah, the 80s, middle 80s. He must have had his march sometime in the early 80s.

Why was he marching?

Oh, something that happened. Jesse's also marching with the Culinary Union.

Oh, okay.

He was always with the Culinary.

Oh, he was with the Culinary. That has nothing to do with NAACP.

So I had Senator Neal -- he was still in the legislature -- to go with me to Metro and make out some papers. And Senator Neal let them know that Las Vegas Boulevard is a state highway and didn't need any permit. But I wrote them a letter telling them that I expect them to be there because if anything happened, if anybody got hurt, I was going to blame them for it. So they came and gave us --

So when were you marching and why?

Oh, just generally about segregation and discrimination based on the complaints we had. We had racial complaints.

Still, in the 1980s?

Yeah, had racial complaints about hiring and upgrading and firing. At Caesars Palace we had one guy who had been there for eight or ten years. He was on the front end of the hotel handling the luggage. And wherever you bring the luggage in or take it out, then the people in the bellman's position get the tips. And they wouldn't hire him as the top bell person. That's one of the cases we had.

So one march on the Strip had to do with employment.

I think both of them. Both of them. I can't remember the specifics, but both were just to show a force and let everybody know that we resented that discrimination was still present and that we

resented the way we were being treated generally.

So these marches were in the 1980s. And they were after the one that Ruby Duncan had led in the 1970s.

Yeah.

Okay. About how large were the marches, do you remember?

Oh, that first one we must have had 75 or 80 people. And I think the second one wasn't quite as large. But we had police escorts on both of them.

Oh, the one that -- oh, this is -- oh, golly, my mind is gone. I can't think of the name of the guy that was killed. He was at Holiday Inn before Harrah's bought it. It was Holiday Inn, the same building. Harrah's bought it and now it's called Harrah's. He was a box man. He sat up in the middle chair and could see who was stealing or keep people from stealing. His girlfriend was a Spanish lady that was a lady of the evening. And she was out on the streets. So he left his job and went home to sleep. She was on the streets and they caught her and said, now, we think you have a black pimp. Where do you live? Take the key and open the door. She opened the door and went in and he was asleep. And three of them -- one caught one leg and one caught the other one and the other one put the chokehold on him. And they killed him. Don't ask me what his name. My mind is gone right now. I'd have to have all my papers before I could name his name. But anyway, we rallied the city.

And then after that we had Rodney King riot and they burned my building. And they wanted to get rid of -- and the police officer was seen in the burned out building going through the file cabinets seeing what he could get. And that's what he was looking for to see what we had on him. But this boy had gotten killed. And then the Rodney King thing came after that.

So it was really close to --

Close to it.

So you think that's why the building was burned, the NAACP building?

Yeah. Yeah.

So the NAACP building was burned as part of the Rodney King riot?

I believe it. I believe it. I believe it. Benjamin Hooks, he gave me an endorsement in the front part of my autobiography. And he's the man, Benjamin Hooks. I consider Benjamin Hooks the

most effective executive director after Roy Wilkins. He's from Memphis, Tennessee. You know Ben, don't you? Yeah. Lawyer. Church.

Preacher.

Preacher. Still pastor of the church. His health is bad. And he was under Johnson and was in charge of communication. That's how blacks got radio and TV stations during his administration, Ben Hooks.

Who was in charge of radio stations?

In charge of Department of Communications, United States Government. And they come under --

I see what you're saying.

And he helped blacks to get positions at radio and TV stations that they hadn't had before.

Benjamin Hooks, he's my man.

Now, was that his son? Was that his son in that position or was that Benjamin Hooks?

No. You got this confused now with Powell. Powell's son had the same position that Ben Hooks had at one time.

So Ben Hooks had that position when? After he was executive director or prior?

Well, let me see now. Prior.

Because he was executive director in the 1980s.

Yeah. Prior. Before.

Okay, great.

He's my man.

So now, the only thing that we skipped was Freedom Fund Banquets.

He was my speaker at the Freedom Fund Banquet at the Sands hotel. And he was good. He was always good.

Now, was Jimmy Gay still active in the NAACP when you were president?

Uh-huh, but not as active.

Was he the Freedom Fund chair?

Jimmy had two jobs all the time.

Oh, yeah.

He was an embalmer for Palms and also working on the Strip. He would work side on the Strip.

He had this big beautiful home in Bonanza. And he always loved his wife and wanted her to have the best. And he's always helping his children. And he worked two jobs. He used to work like a dog.

Yeah. Was he active during your administration?

No. He was too busy working. Jimmy would leave the funeral home and go to the Strip.

So do you remember who the chair of some of those banquets was?

Yeah. Fergie Davis. Senator Neal's field officer now. What's her name? Names disappeared from me. What's her name? She's still Senator Reid's field officer.

Oh, Senator Reid. Ida Gaines.

Ida Gaines. And Howard. She was on the board of regents.

Linda Howard.

Linda Howard. Those three were my -- and the fourth one was -- she's a big Delta. Had a business near the airport. She worked at UNLV for a short while. What's her name? She was the fourth one. I had four. I can remember four.

Who helped plan your Freedom Fund banquets?

Yeah, chaired this Freedom Fund Banquet.

Wonderful. So if you have no other memories to share --

You know, I don't believe you're getting all this information from Frank Hawkins.

Who would I --

Come in and drain my brain. Why did I sit down for a whole hour and 15 minutes and talk to nobody but you? My time is worth something.

Because you really appreciate what Frank Hawkins is doing for the NAACP.

I'm so sorry I couldn't remember everything.

No. This is wonderful. See, we're going to interview enough people that we will be able to piece together this history. So that's why we have such a list there. And now if I can get Casandra's information, she probably has a lot of memories as well. So I really appreciate this. Thank you so much.

Celebrating The Life & Legacy
of
Reverend Jesse D. Scott



"Servant of God, Well Done"

Friday, May 21 & Saturday, May 22, 2010

Second Baptist Church

Las Vegas, Nevada

Rev. D. Edward Chaney, Pastor



Servant of God

Well Done

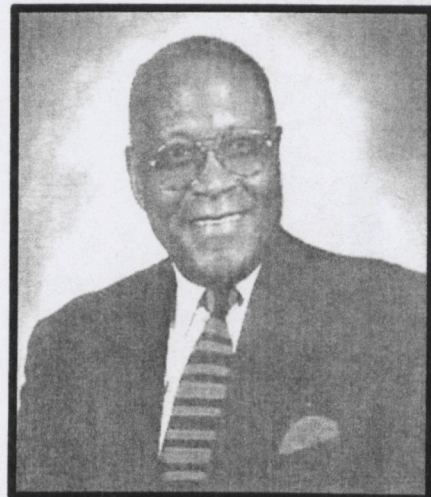
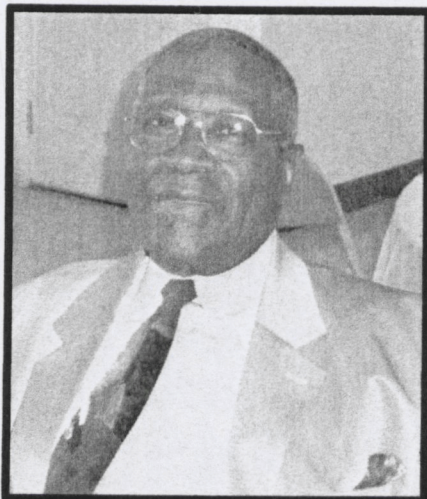
*Servant of God, well done;
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy.*

*The voice at midnight came;
He started up to hear;
A mortal arrow pierced his frame;
He fell, but felt no fear.*

*The pains of death are passed;
Labor and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.*

*Soldier of Christ, well done;
Praise be thy new employ;
And, while eternal ages run,
Rest in the Savior's joy.*

James Montgomery
1825





Memorial Service

Friday, May 21, 2010 ~ 5:00 p.m.

*Standing Guard
International Association of Black Fire Fighters*

Presiding ~ Pastor D. Edward Chaney

Prayer ~ Minister Michael Staley

Greetings ~ Dr. Beverly Mathis

Selection ~ Second Baptist Praise Ensemble

Tributes ~ Clergy

Dance Celebration ~ SBC Men of Valor

Tributes, Resolutions & Proclamations

*Musical Selection / Slide Presentation
Jesse D. Scott Elementary School*

Acknowledgments ~ The Family

A Parting View



Reflections of a Glorious Life

Jesse Donald Scott was born in the very small town of Ethel, Louisiana on March 3, 1920. He refers to his parents, Dan and Betsy Scott, with great affection and respect in his recently published autobiography: Pioneer for Social Justice: An Autobiography.

As a young man, Reverend Scott's parents were share croppers. They sold vegetables throughout the surrounding communities and settlements. The sale of those vegetables literally meant survival for his family. As a child in the 1920's and 30's, young Jesse lived an extremely humble life. Jim Crow laws were in full affect. Treacherous acts of violence were perpetrated against black residents in Ethel and throughout the south. It was indeed a difficult time for the Scott family, as well as hundreds of thousands of other black families during this era.

The harsh reality of racism and poverty laid the foundation for what would become Reverend Scott's life's work: overcoming negative race relations and enlightening himself and those around him with knowledge, foresight and a deep seeded conviction for doing what is right and just.

Reverend Scott graduated from Southern University with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1941. Upon graduation he set out to make his mark in the world. A motivated Jesse decided to serve in the United States Army. Shortly thereafter, young Jesse heard a speech delivered by the late great Thurgood Marshall. Upon hearing Marshall's words, young Jesse was now truly inspired to do something about the racial injustices in our country. He became involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Los Angeles as an organizer and later as a field director. His work with this organization helped him to score many victories towards racial equality and justice.

In the early 1980's, Reverend Scott made his way to Las Vegas, Nevada. He became the director of the Las Vegas Chapter of the NAACP. Reverend Scott went on to become President of the NAACP Tri-State Conference (Idaho, Utah & Nevada). To this day, Reverend Scott's work continues to enlighten the community at large. He was one of our local leaders in the pursuit of social justice for all.

In terms of his religious affiliations, Reverend Scott served as an Associate Pastor at Second Baptist Church, and former Pastor of Second Christian Church, both of Las Vegas, Nevada. He was a graduate of the Second Baptist School of Evangelism. Reverend Scott served on various committees and was a member of several associations which served to promote quality of life for the people of West Las Vegas, as well as the Southern Nevada community, at large.

Reverend Scott has received many awards and accolades for his community and civic involvement and his tenacious work towards achieving social justice. He received the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Fund Award and the Distinguished Nevadan Award (UNLV, 1992). In the historical west Las Vegas community, where Reverend Scott resided, he was honored with a street named after him. The street is called *Jesse D. Scott Lane*.



When recently asked, what was the highlight of his career, his response: “...*Becoming the namesake of a local elementary school.*” In 2007, a Clark County School District elementary school was named in his honor—Jesse D. Scott Elementary School.

Reverend Scott was a man of character and a man of God. Historian Thomas Carlyle wrote, “*History of the world is but the biography of great men.*” Jesse, although not perfect, was indeed a great man...a man who made a difference and a hero in the eyes of many. Reverend Scott believed if you have a goal or dream, pursue it. If there is a cause you truly believe in, then you take a stand and fight for it! That’s not to say one should doggedly chase greed or gluttony, but do your best to achieve those things that are important to you: service to God, to our families and to our fellow man. Great men struggle through daunting obstacles to reach their goal. The road to wealth of character is paved with goals. The Reverend Jesse D. Scott traveled this road.

Reverend Scott married the love of his life; Laceryne Scott who preceded him in death. He leaves behind to celebrate his home going, four sons; Tyrone Blake, Jarvis Blake, David Yancy (Dee), all residing in the Las Vegas area and Donald Yancy (Alicia) of Dallas, Texas. He also leaves twenty grandchildren and five great grandchildren. One sister; 94 year old Hattie Elie of Baton Rouge, LA and a sister-in-law Phyllis Scott of Torrance, CA. He also leaves two very special cousins, Wesley Sholes (Jackie) of Rancho Palos Verdes, CA and Mildred Forrest of Las Vegas, NV and two nieces, Gail George of New Orleans, LA and Gladys Thomas of Rhode Island. Reverend Scott will be loved and remembered by his extended family which includes nieces, nephews, cousins, his Second Baptist Church Family, the students and staff of Jesse D. Scott Elementary School, the students and staff of Kermit Roosevelt Booker, Sr. Empowerment Elementary School a host of other loving relatives and dear friends and a special friend who took Rev. Scott into her home before his passing, Helen Toland of Las Vegas, NV.

We will always remember Reverend Scott with abundant love and great respect in our hearts. Although saddened by our loss, we cherish the time the good Lord allowed us to share with him. Today, we honor the accomplishments and contributions of the Reverend Jesse D. Scott; a great American.





Home Going Celebration

Saturday, May 22, 2010 ~ 11:00 a.m.

Processional ~ Family and Clergy

Old Testament ~ Rev. Thaddeus W. Camp

New Testament ~ Rev. Jesses Osborne

Prayer ~ Rev. Henry K. Smith, III

"Lift Every Voice" ~ Congregation

Remarks

A Minister.....Rev. Sam Roberson – Community Baptist Church, Henderson, Nevada

A Friend.....Lt. Colonel Thomas Edward Leigh, Henderson, Nevada

A FriendSenator Joe Neal – Las Vegas, Nevada

A Neighbor.....Sis. Cleotha Collins – North Las Vegas, Nevada

"Amazing Grace" ~ Second Baptist Church Voices

Resolutions ~ Dr. Beverly Mathis, Church Clerk

Remarks

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley

Remarks

Senator Harry Reid (Ida Gaines & Darrel Thompson)

Family Reflections

"How Great Thou Art" ~ Second Baptist Church Voices

The Eulogy ~ Rev. Charles McCall

Solo

First Lady Avis O'Bryant Chaney



Recessional

"I'm Going Home" ~ Second Baptist Church Voices

Interment

Palms Cemetery

1325 North Main Street ~ Las Vegas, Nevada 89101

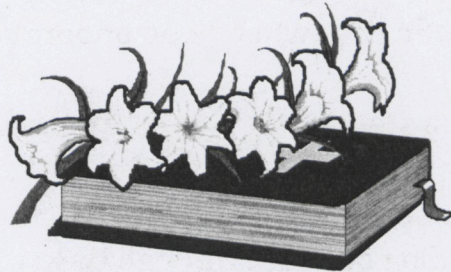


Active Pall Bearers

*Second Baptist Church Deacons
Noble Williams ~ Gilbert Mullen*

Honorary Pall Bearers

Second Baptist Church Associate Ministers



Acknowledgments

*The flowers you sent today,
The cards you mailed along the way,
The prayers you said which played a big part,
In easing the pain that was in our hearts,
The service you stopped by to render,
The gift you brought with thoughts so tender,
All of these things helped us to find that strength to bear,
The loss of Rev. Scott, whom we loved so dear.
It was to us great comfort indeed,
To see you in our time of need.
So from our hearts which you tried to mend,
We thank you sincerely, again and again
For being such wonderful and loving friends.*

~ The Family ~

Repast & Fellowship

*The family will have the repast and fellowship
in the V.C.L. Coleman Fellowship Hall
immediately following the interment.*