

An Interview with Brenda Mason

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries

University of Nevada Las Vegas

2007

©UNLV@ *FIFTY* Oral History Project
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Project Director: Claytee D. White

Coordinator and Interviewer for Math and Sciences: Dr. David Emerson

Project Editor: Gloria Homol

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Andres Moses, Laura Plowman,
Emily Powers, Shirley Emerson, Mary K. Keiser
Lisa Gioia-Acres

Recorded interviews and transcripts composing the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project have been made possible through the generosity of CSUN (grant initiated, presented, and shepherded through the CSUN political process by Andres Moses) and the Libraries Advisory Board. Lied Library provided a wide variety of administrative services and the Special Collections Department, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided advice and archival expertise. The Oral History Research Center enabled students and staff to work together with campus community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives.

The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
Director, Oral History Research Center
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Table of Contents

Family history in Texas; trouble with the KKK; coming to Las Vegas; attending jr. high and sr. high in Vegas; first mention of Wing Fong.....	1-5
Finding out about college prep courses; trying out for the Rhythmettes; class president at Western High School; National Merit Scholarship finalist; scholarship to Chapman College; singing with Kitten and the Upsetters; Spring Sing at Chapman.....	6-12
Traveling a semester with World Campus ship; singing overseas; working at UNLV as community coordinator for Teacher Corps; major in sociology.....	13-18
Meeting the Fongs again; deciding to run for University regent; anecdotes concerning regency campaigns one and two.....	19-27
Issues while regent; starting committee on affirmative action; comments on law school; comments on early leaders at UNLV; results of affirmative action fights.....	28-31
Undergraduate Degree earned Dec. of '74; Master's in '77; 1 year of law school at McGeorge, University of the Pacific; opinions on schooling at McGeorge School of Law; internship with Legal Aide in Sacramento.....	32-34
Return to Las Vegas; internship with city attorney of North Las Vegas; back to law school in San Diego; paralegal for U.S. Attorney's Office, San Diego; memories of career that lasted 26 years.....	34-37
Recollections of regency; memories of National Conventions; opinions on integration today; thoughts on the learning process today as opposed to 40 years ago.....	38-41
Reflecting on attendance at UNLV in the '70s; remembering Black study courses and multicultural activities; recruiting for UNLV; changes in the campus.....	39-45

Preface

Brenda Mason was born in Texas and moved to Las Vegas around 1960. Her extended family had also left Texas and settled here as a result of pressure from the KKK. Some of her early memories of attending integrated schools in Las Vegas include serving on a panel that discussed the impact of integration in the schools.

Brenda has many memories of Vegas in the '60s, including her first glimpse of UNLV, attending Roy Martin Jr. High and Las Vegas High School, and applying for the Rythmettes. Because of zoning changes, she attended Western High School in her senior year, and served as class president.

Ms. Mason became a National Merit Scholarship finalist and applied for Chapman College in Orange County. In the summer, she sang with a group called Kitten and the Upsetters at a club in Vegas. Her group entered a Spring Sing at Chapman College in 1967, and she reconnected with this group at the 40 year reunion.

Brenda traveled with the World Campus ship for a semester, and afterwards became community coordinator with the Teacher Corps Project at UNLV. She also continued taking college courses in sociology at UNLV. In 1974 she made the decision to run for a seat on the Board of Regents.

Brenda served two terms on the Board of Regents and was recognized for her efforts in affirmative action. She also finished her undergraduate and master's degrees and applied to the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, in Sacramento, which she attended for one year. After that year, she transferred to a law school in San Diego, got a job at the U.S. Attorney's office as a paralegal, and retired from that position after 26 years of service.

This is Claytee White, and I am with Brenda Mason. It is December 20th, 2006.

So how are you doing today?

I'm doing just great.

Okay, good. We are doing this interview as part of the UNLV project. So give me a little bit about your background. Where did you grow up?

Well, I was born in Texas, and we were there until I was about 11 years old. It was either 1960 or '61 that we moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. That's a long story, too, about why we-- my extensive family-- moved to Las Vegas. We had to leave Texas.

So how many people are we talking about leaving Texas?

Quite a number. It was over a period of time. Somebody has estimated up to 30. But I don't know if there were that many at that time. We had some problems with the Klan.

So tell me about that.

First of all, I want to tell you that my grandfather was a police sergeant from 1947 until 1969 in Texas. That was an interesting story because during that time there was segregation. He had a police department all by himself for the black community.

What was the name of the town?

That town particularly was Paris, Texas. I think he said that when he started in 1947, another black officer started with him, but I don't know if he stayed very long. So my grandfather became a police sergeant, and he walked the beat. They gave him a little station by himself. He patrolled the entire black community.

My mother moved to Midland, Texas. She and her sisters and brothers, five of them, all moved to Midland, Texas, about 700 miles away. Midland, Texas, is where we had the problem. You hear a lot about Midland in the news now. Then it was just Midland. Now it's Midland-Odessa.

So what happened is my father purchased a home in an all-white community. Actually, there was another black family -- people weren't sure that they were actually black -- that lived in the community. But they didn't know that they were black. We moved in the community, and it was obvious that we were black. The Klan didn't bother us at first, but when some other family members began moving on different streets, they became very angry. When an aunt by

marriage -- actually, she wasn't really my aunt, but we called her my aunt because she was by marriage an aunt in the family -- moved into the community, the Klan decided that that was the last straw. So they organized and went in. As she took her furniture into her apartment, they came in and tossed it on the ground.

My father decided at night -- and I don't really know who all was around -- that she was going to move in. So they organized a group to move her in. Because of that the Klan went in where my father worked. In the first place, the man that sold the home was a person of -- he was white. They ran him out of town, and then they threatened my father's employer. So he had to let him go. He told him why he let him go.

Where did he work?

I don't really know the name of the place. I think he worked at a service station or something. It was the manager or something. But it wasn't a high-level job. So he lost a job, we lost our home, and we had to move.

So first we moved into -- because we had to work, we had to move into a house that wasn't all that nice. It was a couple of blocks from where I had to go to school. So when I went to school -- and it was an all-black school -- in the evening when I got out, I walked past my house so the kids wouldn't see me go in. Then I would run around the alleyway or somewhere and dart in the back so that they wouldn't see where I lived. Everybody knew that we lived in the house in the white community. It was public knowledge.

So anyway-- it wasn't just my family. It was my mother's entire -- her sisters and her brother and all that, everybody who moved over there, they were threatened. It didn't matter if they got private telephone numbers or whatever. It was just a waste of time because they would get called. My uncle -- the Klan burned a cross in his yard and everything.

So everybody had to leave. We left Texas, and my mother took me to live with my grandparents until she got settled. The reason the family moved to Nevada is because my uncle had lived there in 1945 when it was tent city. So they all decided to move, to go west, and we all ended up in Nevada. As time progressed other relatives came and lived there.

So the uncle who had lived here at one time was now back in Texas?

I don't remember at what time he actually moved. He lived in Nevada for a long time, and then he

came back to Texas. He actually bought the best house of all the family. He was actually in a house -- I mean now it wouldn't be considered all that above standard. But it was like a house that a rich person had lived in. So they gave him I think the most trouble.

I was about eight or nine years old, and I used to take in laundry for the neighbors. I mean that was my job.

Here in Nevada or in Texas?

No. In Texas. I used to do the laundry. The people that lived on the side of us were nice. The Klan did not want them to be nice to us, so they threatened them and told them that if they were nice to us, whatever, they would run them out of town. So they had to stop letting me do their laundry and whatever. They paid me for it. It was my first job.

Anyway, when I was about 11, my mother took me to my grandfather, the police officer. They were Switchers, my mother's father. She took me and left to stay with my grandparents. She and my two brothers and my father and a whole group of others moved to Nevada.

How did they get here? What kind of transportation?

By car. There were just so many of them they didn't have enough room. I liked to live with my grandfather -- I guess I was his favorite grandchild, you know. But he also raised my brother, my older brother, who is my half brother.

Anyway, I don't know what the next question is, but...

So how long was it before you came to Nevada?

Actually, at the end of the summer -- I had gone to school. A couple of years prior to that, I had lived with my grandparents and I had gone to school there for a year. I was in the band and I got a lot of music awards and that kind of thing, so it wasn't that bad. It was summertime when they took me back. It was maybe a couple of years forward. It was over the summer because my grandfather loved to go to Nevada. I think that was his first time. They drove me to Nevada. School had already started. I was in junior high school. I was in Roy Martin Junior High School. My cousin who had moved there earlier -- we were the same age -- was already going to that school. That was my uncle's son. My uncle became a police officer in Nevada.

So what is your uncle's name?

His name is Milton Sears. He has since passed away. Two of my cousins became police officers

in Nevada. I aspired to be a police officer. But during that time no women were officers, although I was just a kid then, so...but anyway, when I was going to Roy Martin -- and I can't remember exactly how it came about -- I was asked to be on a committee, some type of human rights committee, to study segregation in Nevada.

Now, this is when you were junior high school?

This is when I was in junior high school. This started then. And they asked me -- I don't know. I was very shy and quiet, but I was very smart. I think that was one reason why they actually asked me. It was some type of community panel. They asked me would I come and state how--it was the first year of integration I think. They wanted to know how it was working in the schools and whatever. So I told them. During that time housing was segregated, even though the schools were integrated. Even Sammy Davis, Jr., had to go in the back door of the hotel.

Now, was this in 1960 and '61 we're talking about?

It was somewhere near that. It was during that period of time. You know, I don't know whether -- I think they had just ended.

So you moved out here in either 1960 or '61; is that correct?

Uh-huh.

So what kind of things did they ask you as a young girl as part of this panel?

I don't remember what they asked me. But I remember telling them that, you know, in the schools it was fine. It gave me different opportunities to meet people or whatever because I had never gone to an integrated school. But I thought it was interesting that at the time -- even though I don't know whether it was actual de facto segregation in the housing or people just hadn't moved or whatever, but I said it was interesting that in the evening when we got out of school, we had to go back to a segregated community, you know, that kind of thing.

But what I was going to tell you is that on this panel was Mr. Wing Fong. Wing Fong turned out to be Lilly Fong's later-on-down-the-line husband. She was also a regent.

Anyway, I don't really know how that panel went. But when I went in high school, which I was going to -- I think it was Las Vegas high school, but it might have been Western because I went to Las Vegas and Western High School. Going to Las Vegas High School and going to Western, that's another story. A couple of years later they asked me to be on another panel in high

school, and I reconnected with Mr. Wing Fong. Associating with him is one of the reasons I ended up -- I guess-- on my trip to being on the board of regents. So anyway, I was on that panel. **But tell me about that same experience as a high school student. What did you tell them this time?**

Oh, I wanted to tell you one thing, too. While I was going to Roy Martin, I was in the Roy Martin Junior High School band. We had to travel out to where UNLV--it then was Nevada Southern. I thought it was two buildings, but somebody said it probably was three buildings at that time. Maryland Parkway was a dirt road. We had to travel in the dirt in the bus and sit out in the middle of the desert while they were doing the groundbreaking ceremony for a new building on the campus.

So Roy Martin's band played?

We played out in the middle of the desert at that time. I thought this was the craziest thing I ever did. But anyway, I just wanted to throw that in there.

Well, good, I appreciate that.

Now, what was your question?

When you served on that same panel again as a student when you were in high school, what kind of things did you tell them the second time?

Well, see, the only thing I remember from that is having met Mr. Wing Fong. The first time I really didn't meet him. I mean he came up and asked me a couple of questions. But the second time he talked with me, he wanted me to meet his wife, Lilly Fong. He said she was involved in different things. You know, that's the only really new thing -- I met her. But things had really changed by then.

In what way?

Well, in the first place -- well, Western was a new school. It was a brand-new school at the time. I was trying to remember this. I was the class president, but I don't know if it was during my junior year or my senior year. In my sophomore year I went to Las Vegas High School.

I'm going to tell you about Las Vegas High School. I loved Las Vegas High School, but I wondered why at the graduations -- and I only saw a couple, like when I came into the school and when I was going out of the school. I was a sophomore. I wondered why particularly black

females were all going to beauty school and stuff like this. They're graduating, and everybody was saying -- you know, they asked the white kids where are you going? They were going to college. They asked the black kids, well, where are you going? The answer was beauty school or secretarial and that kind of thing.

All I knew at the time was that I wanted to be a doctor. I overheard white kids talking one time about college prep, and I asked them, well, what is college prep? They said, well, that's where we take advanced courses to go to college. I said, well, how do you get into that? And they said, well, you have to talk to your counselor and ask her. I was in -- what is that? What do they call that? The arts? Whatever they called it.

I went to my counselor and I said, well, you know what? I really would like to go to college, and I understand that there are college prep courses. I said I would like to take them. She said, "I'm sorry, we don't put black kids from the south into college prep classes because we think that those courses would be too hard." I said, well, what do you mean? You know, I'd like to go to college. Well, what am I in? So she told me liberal arts. That's what it was. She said, well, you know, most of the women are secretaries and they go to cosmetology school. I said, no, I want to go to college and I want to take college prep courses. If there are college prep courses, I'm going to take them. She said, well, I don't know. I think they'll be too hard for you. I said, well, I have to decide that. So she says, well, come back in a week and let me think about it.

So every day I went in. I said have you thought about it yet? And she would say to me, no, I haven't made my mind up. So I went in there every day until the end of the week. Finally, she says, well, I'm going to put you in the college prep courses, but you're going to regret it. So she put me in the toughest courses. She put me in chemistry and physics and geometry and, you know, whatever, all the tough courses. I was taking French and advanced English and all this kind of stuff. So I studied to 1 AM, 2 AM, however late my mother would let me stay up. I didn't go anywhere. I just stayed home and I studied and I got A's and B's. I got mostly A's in the courses.

That brings up another thing. There was a group there of girls. In fact, I just saw them on television not too long ago. What were they calling them? The Rockettes -- no. They were called something else. Oh, goodness. Whatever they were called.

The Rythmettes.

Well, anyway, I was in a band, and I just loved that band. We were the last band that played -- I don't remember if we were the last one-- for President Kennedy in November 1963 in the last public appearance that he had made before Dallas. It was at the convention center. I was on the second row of the band. You know, they had the elite of the elitest (sic) on the first row of the band, and I was on the second row of the band. We had to stand at attention. They told us even if he came to shake our hand not to get out of our pose. Gather around if we were close enough to shake his hand. So he came down and he shook the hand of all the ones on the first row. I was right across from him, and that was in November of 1963. My mother said she saw something about that on television. Anyway, he got shot a couple of weeks later, two or three weeks later.

But back to the Rythmettes, it was not my intention nor did I even think about being in the Rythmettes because I had all I could handle. But some black girls came to me and asked me if I would apply for the Rythmettes. I didn't know what -- you know I'm just a little naive, whatever. So I said, well, you know, I really don't have time for that. I had never thought about doing it or whatever. She said, well, your grades are better. The Rythmettes requirements were that you had to have made all A's and B's during your whole time in school, either from the ninth grade up, or in high school I guess it was, whatever. I was the only one who had met that criterion. So anyway, even though I had gone to another junior high, from the ninth grade on up you had to have been an honor student. So every day they bugged me about applying for that. They said, we just want to know if we have a chance.

I go in and apply for that, and I thought it may not be such a bad idea. I might like this, you know, whatever. I kept waiting and kept waiting, and every day the girls would ask me have you heard anything yet? So finally they call me in and said I could not be in the Rythmettes because it was traditionally those girls whose mothers had been in there or whatever and they were honor students. I said, well, I'm an honor student, but they said, well, we got word that you made a C in P.E. in the ninth grade. I didn't even know if that was true because I didn't remember it. It was in the ninth grade before I even got to high school if it was. I still haven't found that C, but that's what they said. They said I had made a C in P.E. in the ninth grade so therefore, I couldn't be a Rhythmette.

As it turned out, from what I understand the NAACP was involved in this. They wanted to

know, which I knew nothing about, why no black girls had ever been in the Rythmettes. I got to be the center of controversy, which I knew -- you know, I didn't even want to be in it. So the next year when Western was built, even though they could have allowed me to go back to Las Vegas High School, they told me I could not come back.

So who told you?

The administration. My mother wouldn't go with me, but I went over there and I just acted like a little lawyer. I was trying to defend myself about going, you know, how good a student I was, how I loved Las Vegas High School, how I was an honor student there and how I loved that band and whatever. They said no. Sometimes they could give exceptions. You're supposed to go to the school in your district. But Western didn't even exist when I started going to school there. They had just opened up. Plus, they didn't even have a senior class at that time. They only had a junior class, but they made me go to Western.

From that day forward, I put my instrument down. I never played again. I never got back in the band. They asked me to play in the band at Western, but I just didn't think they were as good as Las Vegas High School. I wanted to be true to Las Vegas High and that was the end of it until I became an adult. I started playing in a band later on in years. I still have some feeling about that, you know. But anyway, I went ahead --

Did you continue the college preparatory classes at Western?

Yeah, but I kept running into roadblocks. I continued and I did well at Western High School. Like I said, I don't know if it was junior or senior class, but I became the class president. I did very well at Western.

But I had wanted to be a doctor, so I went in and talked to my counselor. I told him I wanted to be a doctor, and he told me to forget it because black women probably would not get accepted to any medical school. So he said choose something else. I said but I want to be a doctor, and he said, well, I don't know what school is going to take you.

So I ended up going by accident, because I thought it was a different school -- I became a National Merit Scholarship finalist. I started hearing from all these schools. You know, I didn't even apply. I just heard from all these schools, and one of them was Chapman. When I was in Las Vegas High School band we had gone up to Orange County. As it turned out, it was Orange

Coast College, and I was thinking maybe that was Chapman. I just got it all mixed and I applied for Chapman. I got my largest scholarship from Chapman. You know, I got some grants and stuff, too. So I went to Chapman.

Chapman at the time was a Lutheran college. It's not Lutheran anymore. It's nondenominational. I like Chapman. But the community was really --

Yeah. That was the Orange County community. So they were very conservative at that time.

They were more than conservative. We had really some problems around there. I flew to L.A. a -- not flew -- I took the bus. My aunt took me down to Chapman. They told her, we want to let you know, if she wants to come here, that's fine. We'd like to have her. But it's going to be -- the community is not -- you know, we've had some problems. They did because we had to go to school -- we went to school during the day, but we had to study at the library at night. As we walked back to the dorms -- well, only once did I encounter some white guys screaming at me out of a car. I was scared to death. But it was really a battle the whole time.

How many black students were on campus?

There were very few. In fact, we just had a homecoming. I think it was like maybe three weeks ago or something like that after all those years.

Oh, really. What was that like? How many of you went back to the homecoming?

Oh, it was quite a few. In fact, I haven't gotten the pictures yet. But I had a little singing group at Chapman. It was Kitten and the Upsetters and I was Kitten.

Kitten, K-i-t-t-e-n? And the Upsetters?

And the Upsetters. That wasn't the first time I ever sung. In fact, I had sung professionally. I had traveled in singing and all this kind of stuff prior to that.

Prior to Chapman College?

Prior to Chapman College.

So when did you have time to do professional singing?

During the summertime I sang at a club. It was called the Tropics at the time. It was behind the Tropicana, at the Flamingo or something like that.

After high school? During high school?

It must have been after high school. But I remember Bob Bailey had a club on the west side during the time when I was going to school singing with a group of girls. So he would have to slip us through the back door. I mean he could legally do that, and we would sing. Actually, I never sang with them at the club. But he had a television program we were supposed to be on. We didn't actually get to be on the program. We were supposed to be in there and couldn't find the place, you know, before the time went up. But we sang around. It was a pretty good group. At that time that group was called -- that was the Upsetters. People call us the second Diana Ross and the Supremes because that was during the time of Diana Ross -- I mean the Supremes, not Diana Ross and the Supremes.

But the old Supremes. So why didn't you decide to pursue the singing career?

Let me tell you. I had made sort of a name for myself in singing and I had a manager and this kind of thing. So my name had gotten around. This was after I had started going to Chapman. I had gone to Chapman I think a year. I believe it was a year I had gone to Chapman. During the summertime, actually that's when we sung at the club. So I started getting calls about singing. So first I got a call from The Drifters -- no. The first call I got was from Tina Turner's manager. They wanted me to be an Ike Cat. I don't know. I said I'm supposed to go back to college in the spring. During that time it was like it was just --

(End Tape 1, Side A.)

The second group that called me I believe was The Drifters. I turned both of them down because I wanted to talk to my mother. You know, the strange thing before I went to college my mother said oh -- you know, she wasn't too big on me going to college. It wasn't because she didn't want me going to college. It's because I guess she was thinking about I can't afford for her to go to college and how is she going to go. Traditionally people just got married. Especially if you were a female in the family, you just didn't go to college. My family didn't have a long history. Some of my long-distance cousins had gone.

But anyway, at this time she was saying to me, you know, I thought you were supposed to go back to college. It was just after the Kennedy era where he stressed the philosophy of doing everything for your community. So I felt like I had a commitment to achieve not just for my personal gain but for the benefit of the community. It was either do what you want to

do (singing), which I thought wasn't going to be a benefit to the community, or go out and be a doctor or whatever it is you're going to be and bring it back. So I was torn.

So, finally, I turned them both down because they only gave me -- they didn't even want to give me as much time as they gave me, which was a day or something like that. They wanted to know right then or in the next couple of hours whether I was going to take it. So I turned them down. I don't know to this day if I -- I try not to think about it, whether or not -- because I was thinking, now, with Tina look what happened. But the thing is, I would have met people in the industry, you know. The Drifters did pretty well, but they got the other lady.

So I went back to school, and that's when I had a group. At the school, which I will never ever forget, they had a talent night, which was called the Spring Sing, which I didn't know anything about it. All I knew is that I wanted to be in this talent thing. But I didn't know the extent of it. It was like a scaled down American Idol kind of thing. 2- or 3,000 people turned out, and they had professional judges and all this kind of stuff. I don't know how professional they were. I had never expected anything like this, but I had this group. During that time, you know, you had to have your own music and stuff like this. We had a vinyl record with the music and then we did the singing. The way they had the sound system set up, you would think it was like a band backstage.

Well, anyway, I entered my group into the Spring Sing, and it was like the buzz on campus. It was like everybody -- I didn't know what to say, you know, to be such a big thing. We would walk in and nobody knew us, I thought. I remember us walking into not the cafeteria but the lounge and everybody going, "Here come the Upsetters." We were talking about this when I went to my first reunion. It was like 30 something years ago. We still carry our pictures around. I still have pictures. So it was that one night.

Chapman was a religious college. I told you it was a Lutheran college. They did a lot of classical music. That's the first experience I had of learning about classical music and everything. I would not sing it. I was in a chorus collegium or something. But I wouldn't sing my own songs. I would write them and I would have other people sing them. I could never sing classical, at least so I thought then and still think. But I liked to listen to it. There were a couple of girls in my group who did sing classical music. They were actually in another -- they were in my group also,

but they actually were in another group that sang the classical music for that night. They were like competing against us, but they wanted us to win.

Well, that particular night everybody was so sure that we had won. The audience -- everybody wanted us to win. They didn't actually vote, but you could tell by the cheers and everything that they thought -- and I'm not just making this up. Everybody thought that we had won. But the girls of my group and the other group with the classical music, that's who won. Somebody asked the judges afterwards, well, how did that group win? We thought the Upsetters won. They said the Upsetters -- the song that they sang was not in the tradition of our school. What we sang was "Stand by Me." That was radical during that time, you know.

The next day -- and actually I have this in the yearbook -- I was talking to this girl from the school paper the next day. The only picture of the Spring Sing for 1967 -- I think it was -- was my picture in the paper. There was never any other print of anybody ever being the winner. To this day it's the only picture. As a matter of fact, I went back there at the end of the '90s. I went on the campus and that picture was on the wall. That's a strange thing because I didn't even graduate from that school. I graduated from UNLV because I transferred there. So when I went back it was a funny thing because I didn't remember that it was in the yearbook. I came across it, and I was telling the dean, "That's me. That's me in this book." One guy standing next to me said, "Yeah, here are four of the Upsetters now." I turned around and they were standing there.

Oh, that's wonderful.

Here it is 35 years or 30-something years later, but everybody knew that we had won. That was the only picture ever published was of me.

Wow. Well, being in Southern California, were there any people in the audience that wanted you to do more with your talent?

They still do. I worked 26 years and retired from the U.S. Attorney's Office. I did some singing here and there and whatever, not a whole lot. But the first time that we actually -- I played with the band. We had a band there, but I wouldn't sing. They asked me to sing the year before I left at the Christmas party. Everybody said, oh, you mean you've known how to sing all this time?

Wow. So why did you leave Chapman and transfer to Las Vegas?

I went on the World Campus. Chapman had a World Campus.

This is the ship that goes around?

The ship. At that time it belonged to Chapman. It doesn't anymore. So I went on the World Campus.

So explain that experience.

Oh, I don't think there is anything like it unless you have done it. I had never been on the waters before. I had never been on a ship. I had never traveled anywhere. This was significant to me because when I was in the seventh grade in Texas, in the school that I told you I used to go to, my history teacher was talking to the class. You were supposed to tell how you had traveled and by what means. So it got to me and I was really embarrassed because I had never been anywhere except -- well, I had been on a bus, the train and a car. But I had never been in an airplane. I had never been anywhere except for Paris, Texas, and Midland, Texas. I had never been anywhere. So I was trying to think what can I say by the time it gets around to me that sounds interesting? Anyway, it came my turn and I just hated it, you know, but I stood up. She said, well, where have you been and by what means? I said, well, I've been to Paris, Texas, which is something the kids just laughed at. She asked by what means, and I said by car, bus and train. So she said you've never been anywhere else? I said, no, I've never been anywhere. I was so embarrassed by that experience that I was saying to myself one of these days I'm going to be a world traveler, and actually, I got to live long enough to be just that.

That's wonderful.

It wasn't just about traveling. It was about learning, what you were taught. In fact, we would forget what day it was because we had to go to school I think it was six days a week. I think we only had one day on the ship when we didn't go to school. It may have been seven, but we had to go from eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the evening every day, so you forget what day it is. But that's when we were at sea. When we were in port, then we had free time, but we had to go on a tour so we could familiarize. When we were getting close to a port, we had to learn about their money and -- you know, there was a lot of communism during that time. We had to learn about different things and whether or not we could actually stay in port or had to be back on the ship at what time depending on where we were. We had some really interesting experiences.

What were some of the ports?

Oh, my goodness. We went all around South America, crossed over, all around the Mediterranean. I went to Athens. I went to Italy. I went to Greece. I went to Paris, France. I went to Belgium. I went to Dakar, Africa. I went to Marrakesh in Africa. In South America, we went to Chile and Rio de Janeiro. We went to -- ooh, I can't even think. We just went all over.

So was this a whole semester or a whole school year?

Well, I was going to go the whole year. But what happens is you go a semester and the ship comes back and docks. We left from Los Angeles. We came back and we docked in New York. You had to either find your way home from New York or you could go another term. Really and truly, I thought I would go the whole year. But I signed up for a semester and said I'll see at the end of the semester because it was expensive at the time. When I got back, I was so exhausted. I was so exhausted, all I wanted to do was just go home.

They had made me like a junior ambassador where we met with some of the officials. During that time I spoke French fluently. I don't anymore. I know very little French now. At the time I was scared to speak it because I thought I wasn't saying things right. You either had to speak it or you had to get out of there. It was so funny because some of the Africans -- we were riding on a bus or a train or something and, you know, as long as you didn't say anything, they would just ride along. But when you started talking English, they get all in your face and look in your mouth and everything like that. In some of the countries they had never seen blacks. In one country this girl went running screaming down the street when she saw me, and I went chasing after her to tell her I was...

I had a lot of good experiences, though. I got to sing overseas and everything.

Now, whom were you singing with at that time?

A couple of girls. One was in "Chivitveccia." It was in South America. A couple of girls had gone off the ship and they had met a guy who was in a band. They were telling him about this girl on the ship that could sing. Actually, he could just speak a few words of -- well, he could speak a few words of English, but he must have known every black song in America in English. When he sang them, he sounded exactly like the person, but he didn't know that he sounded exactly like the person. So anyway, they communicated enough to tell him about me singing. They bargained and

they dragged me out and said, you know, this guy has a band and you can sing. Let's go singing. I said wait a minute. I don't know anything about whatever music that they play. They said, oh, no, he can sing all these songs and everything. So everybody knew "Stand by Me." That was like my standard, but they also knew "The Girl from Ipanema" and stuff like that. They wanted to sing. They weren't even singers, but they wanted to be there on the stage, and they wanted me to front it.

So I met this guy and truly I was amazed at his singing. He brought me up on the stage. I'll never forget - it was Club 13. So anyway, I went up and we got on stage to sing and it was like I don't know how many -- I mean it was a huge place and all these people were in there. Here are me and I think two other girls. We almost didn't get out of there because they thought we were actually like real stars. We just had to work our way out and get out of there.

Then I got to Italy. I had had a leather coat and a cap made in Istanbul. They just make it for you. You know, say I want so-and-so. If they didn't have it, they just go down the street and make it or get it from somewhere. So I got this brown leather coat and a cap and I had these long earrings on and everything. So I ran out into St. Mark's Square, and it was during election time. All these people, you know, are in St. Mark's Square. This one little boy, Italian boy, saw me and I was actually -- I don't know. I usually would not go anywhere by myself. But I was either by myself or walking with someone. I think I was with another girl. But this young boy says, "Chocolato." I knew he was talking to me. I didn't know what "chocolato" was. I didn't know if it was chocolate or whatever, but I could tell he wasn't meaning to be negative or anything like that. So he ran over to me and handed me a pad to sign an autograph. I thought, well, who does he think I am? So I'm writing Brenda Mason and I think he's going to look at this and say who is this?

Did he think you were Diana Ross or somebody?

I don't know. I have no idea who he thought I was. But people saw him getting the autograph, and all of a sudden everybody came charging toward me. There was one girl who was on the ship, who just happened to be passing by, and she was with two Italian guys because none of us spoke Italian. They came over and rescued me from that group of people and got me out of there. So the guys that rescued me said, "You must be somebody famous." No. How did he say it? You must

be a model or a singer or something like that, and I said, "Yeah, I'm a singer." But I still didn't know who they thought I was, you know. I called my mother and it was like three o'clock in the morning over here. I said, "Guess what? I'm signing autographs."

That's great. Oh, wow. Those are great experiences.

So what brought you back to Las Vegas to live and to go to school here rather than finish at Chapman?

Well, what I don't want to say is actually I was in love, you know, that kind of thing. But that wasn't the main --

I've made lots of decisions because of the wrong man. So go ahead.

I had a nice boyfriend, who was African, who went off to UCLA. I had been overseas and come back. When I left, everything was all -- you know it was pretty nice on the campus. But when I came back, there were a lot of problems because there were a new set of students and they were trying to start a black student union on campus. I just learned when I went to the reunion from this professor who had been there since 1954 -- and he had to tell the history of Chapman. And he talked about some of the things that I finally learned. He was saying that on the campus when a group of black students would get together they thought it was a riot because it wasn't that long after the Watts Riot. He said that the community did not want that school there in the first place. They just didn't want the school.

But it turned out to be a really nice -- they did take over the neighborhood, though. It was like a ritzy area. So now they've just spread out. They've got a law school, a film school and this and that. It was right in a small community. It was like a small campus.

I just heard some of the gossip and stuff. I wasn't actually involved in it. They were telling me that there were a lot of things going on campus. I don't know what was going on during that time, but there was a lot of militant stuff.

Right. It was probably becoming the Black Power Movement at that point.

Yeah. In fact, it was. That was when Blacks wore the naturals. They weren't used to that on campus, you know, the big Afros. There was just a lot of stuff going on at the school. It just wasn't the same school that I had left before I went overseas. I had changed as a person also, having gone overseas.

So I left and I came back and I actually – there was a lot of stuff happening with me and my life before I actually enrolled. I didn't just come back and enroll at UNLV. I actually got a job at UNLV as the community coordinator with the Teacher Corps Project. I wasn't the first chosen, but they did end up choosing me. So then Dr. Troutman and I met. He wasn't a doctor then. We were coworkers at the time. He later on became my supervisor. At the time it was Dr. Hendrix. They said why don't you take some courses at UNLV? I didn't know. I figured I can't afford to go to school, whatever. So they said, well, if you work here you can enroll for less or credits or whatever. They talked me into just taking one course. So I took one course, and I kept taking one course. At 15 units, you had to make a decision on whether or not you wanted to continue or whatever. So I thought okay, I'll go ahead.

So what was your major at this point?

At that point it was sociology.

And what was your major at Chapman?

When I went to Chapman, I was convinced that I wasn't going to be a doctor because of my counselor. It kept ringing in my ears about the counselor. I had taken a sociology course in high school and I liked it, but I didn't even really understand what it meant to be a sociologist. As it turned out there were several black students and we were all mostly going to enroll in sociology. There was one girl who was braver than all of us. She majored in biology and she's a doctor today. We still admire her because most of us -- it was like a couple took political science. It wasn't that many. It was just a handful of us when we first started.

So which year did you start back when you made that decision to come back to school after those 15 units?

At UNLV?

Uh-huh. What year was that?

To start back or when I started taking the units? I think that was in '71. In the meantime, in '74 I became a university regent.

This is where we can stop. So after coming back to school here, did you get your degree and go to work outside of the campus at some point?

That was at some point after I became a regent.

So you became a regent as a student?

As a student and as an employee. But I had to give up my job, which is another story.

So this is a good stopping point and we can start --

That's a whole new life, a whole new era.

So we can start talking about that era when we get together. Thank you for this. This is wonderful.

(End Tape 1, Side B.)

December 22nd. We're in the reading room at UNLV. This is Claytee White, and again this morning, I'm with Brenda Mason.

So how are you this morning, Brenda?

Oh, I'm doing fine.

Wonderful. So how did you find your mother and friends here in Las Vegas?

They're all doing well.

Great. So now, we had stopped just as you were returning -- I think you were getting ready to attend school here. Tell me about your school days here at UNLV. Let's start there.

Well, actually, I had been employed by the university. My supervisor talked me into taking one class at a time because I had thought that I would never get back into school. So I did, and eventually I had taken 15 units. And they had said that, well, you can keep taking units, but you can only carry 15 into a program if you want to enroll. So, finally, I was convinced to enroll to finish my degree. I had majored in sociology and psychology. I did want to get a dual degree, but I ended up getting a degree in sociology.

In the meantime, I was a community coordinator for Teacher Corps at the University of Nevada. One evening I attended what I think it was a forum. I can't really remember exactly what it was. But I ran into Lilly Fong. I told you that I had met Wing and Lilly in my earlier years. She talked with me, and was excited to see me. Actually, in a different story she had met my mother during that time and they had some contact during those years. But Lilly informed me -- I think that was the first year she was running for regent or was thinking about it. She told me that there would be a forum in the future with all the regents who were running for elections. Since she knew that I was a community coordinator, she wanted me to come and ask questions in

regards to the minority community and what they were doing in terms of enrolling students at the university.

So I told her I would come. It was in the evening. I really didn't know what the regents did. I didn't know anything about them, but I told her I would come. In the meantime, I did a little bit of research as to who they were and what have you. That evening I came to the forum not knowing what to expect. There were quite a few people there. The regents got up and gave their little presentations. I asked questions about what were they doing to get minorities and we talked about the test and whatever.

There was a break, and Flora Dungan came up to me and said, "I was really interested in your questions." She asked, "What do you want to do in your future?" We were talking, and I said you know, I really think I want to go to law school. I think I want to be a lawyer. Flora said, "Well, that's interesting. You know what? I have to go." She was going to have some surgery. So she said, "I have to be in the hospital for a while, but when I come back, I'm going to talk with you and work with you and see about helping you when you finish school to go to law school."

There was another person running for regent at the time. She had been a regent I think one term. It was Nedra Joyce. Nedra came over and we talked. She said, you know, you really should ask a lot more questions in regards to minorities and getting minority students in the university because it wasn't that mixed at the time.

One more regent that I remember was there, who didn't talk to me during the break, was James "Bucky" Buchanan. Well, anyway, the break was over and we went back. We call him "Bucky" Buchanan I learned later. He got up on the stage and he was talking about what he would do if he was elected again or became a regent. He said, "I will make sure there will never be any Angela Davis uprising on this campus."

Well, at the time I had heard of Angela Davis in the news and I thought she was a professor or something at the university in San Francisco. I wasn't sure. I just knew she was black and I thought she was a professor. I didn't know what her actions were, what she was doing or what she was involved in.

So I had no idea what he was saying. I thought he was saying -- and we talked about this later and it was in the paper later and whatever. I kept thinking does he mean that there would be

no black woman on this campus ever to become a regent or whatever? So my ears perked up. I thought, well, I don't know about that. Maybe I should think about looking into running. But I didn't really think I would ever be in any type of politics or whatever.

So anyway, that evening it ended. Flora went off to the hospital and she died before she got out. Nedra Joyce died from a medical overdose. So those two people were gone.

Do you remember which year that was approximately?

Probably around '73 or so. I'm not sure. '72, '73.

So now, those two women were gone.

Yes, and I was still community coordinator. During the first program for the Teacher Corps I had my office on campus. I think that was the first term. The second term I was off campus, in fact in North Las Vegas. This old school had been converted for offices. I was a liaison between the university, the Clark County School District and the Teacher Corps students. Actually, these were students who already had a degree in some field other than teaching and they were obtaining their master's in teaching. The program was being paid for by the government. But in order for their education to be paid for, they had to spend so many hours in the community doing community work. It was my job to sort of get them involved in community work and get those community people involved in the schools that didn't have as much as some of the other schools. It just so happened that most of these schools were in North Las Vegas and West Las Vegas at the time.

You were talking about what the teacher coordinator does.

Then I was off campus. I had a different supervisor then. I had someone from the Clark County School District who was supervising me off campus rather than having somebody from the university.

So did you have two bosses?

Sort of, yeah. I was employed by the university, but when I was off campus, one of my supervisors was actually from the school district.

And all of this was through a federal --

Grant. It's called Teacher Art. During that time you had the Peace Corps, the Teacher Corps and the Job Corps and those kinds of programs.

Actually, I worked hard at my job and everything. I don't know whether I misinterpreted

what my supervisor was saying at the time. One day he just looked at me. I was sitting at my desk and I was reading over something and he said, "Why don't you get up and just do something?" Not just get up and do something. He meant with my life out in the world, you know, that kind of thing. I can't remember if we had talked about something. He said, "Why don't you just do something?"

I thought I was doing something, you know. So I thought I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to find out about the board of regents. I went to the voter registration office and I got a booklet on what the different offices and what the different representatives did and what the board of regents was about and everything. I read the whole thing, which I found out that none of the regents had done prior to that. So I read everything about it. At the time there were only nine elected. Even though they were state officials, they were elected in large districts. They were huge districts, and you had to be elected from the district in which you lived. I lived in District A, and District A had a large Mormon population and a large Catholic population. Ten percent were black. Only ten percent of that population was actually black.

So where did you live?

I lived in North Las Vegas. I mean at the time there was a real North Las Vegas. Now North Las Vegas covers what used to be Las Vegas and whatever.

It goes all the way out to Alliente now.

Yeah. So anyway, I went down to the voter registration. At the time I was a student at the university and I was employed by the university. But I went down. I found out about the regents, and I decided that I was going to file to run in the election. I had no idea what you were supposed to do to be elected. I was just me. I didn't really know that many people and they didn't really know me. So I thought, well, where do you start doing this? I just found out different things at different times. This was my first election. I ran twice.

My first election I read everything. When I heard there was going to be some elected official somewhere I'd just go to it or whatever. I would finagle my way into getting up on the stage. I didn't really know what to say. You know what? I told them my name and I said I'm going to tell you what I do and I'm going to tell you why I think I'm qualified and I'm going to tell you what a regent is -- who they are and what they do. So I'd just start talking and tell them. Once

I told them about who I was, it was easy for me to tell them how I thought I was qualified to do what regents did even though I had no experience in doing it.

Well, apparently people started listening to me. I was kind of nervous. Nobody had filed for that position but me and it was a new position. So it was open. When my name started getting around, a couple of other people who were experienced politicians and very wealthy decided to apply. People said, well, how do you feel running against -- and I won't name the people.

Well, we can go back and find out.

Yeah. The North Las Vegas newspaper did a lot of stuff. How do you feel about running against these people? I said you know what? I'm not running against them. They're running against me because I was the first person to file.

I had been overseas so I had bought some little trinkets, jewelry and stuff overseas. The North Las Vegas Forum -- I think it was the Democratic Club, but I'm not sure -- was having an auction. They were having the candidates come over and speak and auction things. Somebody would auction off something they gave. Well, when I went I didn't bring anything. I just went. And I had this beautiful ring I had gotten in Turkey. It wasn't expensive, but I liked it because it was different.

The female candidate came over in the middle of an auction while I was getting ready to go up -- in the first place, she had to introduce me -- no. There was somebody from the North Las Vegas Democratic Club I believe it was. I think that's who was sponsoring it. I don't want to say it was them if it wasn't. But I think that's who it was. But anyway, this lady got up and she introduced me. She completely forgot my name. She said, "Oh, whoever this is, she's running for board of regents." She didn't give my name because the other lady was part of that group.

What it did was stimulate me. I got up and I said, look, since my name was mispronounced and you don't understand who I am, my name is...and I said my name and I rhymed it with something, which I wanted to do. Everyone remembered that. They didn't intend for that to happen.

During the auction the candidate came over, pulled my ring off my finger while I was standing up there and started auctioning it off. She did that because she wanted them to see me get angry or whatever. I was determined not to in front of all those people in the election. I

decided I would go along with the whole thing and since the ring wasn't that expensive, I would just let it go even though I liked it, which nobody expected me to do.

I really teased around with the auction. The first thing I did when they said how much will this ring go for was duck behind the podium or whatever. Then I came up. People thought that was kind of funny and they kind of laughed. But an older lady actually paid a lot of money for it.

Did you tell them where it was from?

Later I told her that I had gotten it from Istanbul in Turkey. Oh, she told everybody about her ring from Istanbul. It went over just the opposite of what they thought that it would.

Anyway, eventually a young man came to me who was experienced in campaigns. He asked me if he could be my manager. Really, I had no money. I had nothing. The only thing I thought about, which I did, was to get nonunion material, which you just don't do. I didn't know about it. I just got things printed. I had my picture taken and had it printed. You're supposed to do it all by union in elections, but nobody said anything because they just figured that I was --

Green. So did you have campaign signs around the city and everything?

No. Let me tell you. At first, no. I had none of that. I could not afford it. So I thought the best thing one could do in an election, as I remember from a little girl, is go door to door. So I started going door to door by myself. Eventually, people who knew me like the school kids I worked with -- I had five schools I worked in -- were going home and telling their parents.

I remember one group. This Indian boy -- they lived on a reservation -- went home and told his mother, "Vote for Brenda Mason." At that time I did have a son. He was only three or four, but he was telling his school class. He was wearing my hat and everything. His teacher said he was telling everybody -- she said they were talking about elections and she said, "Now, tell your parents don't forget to vote." He said, "And vote for my mother." But anyway, he went home and told his father. His father came and sought me out and asked me how they could help in the campaign. So they actually walked around spreading material.

I actually went from door to door. I met with a lot of resistance because the area in which I lived, you know, people didn't know how to react with me coming to their door and asking them -- and I went to parking lots and put in a card. One day I almost got in trouble, though,

because one guy says, "Don't put that stuff on my car." I had put it on his car, and he came out of the store and said, "Don't put that material on the car." I said, "Oh, I'll take it back. I don't want my material on that dirty car anyway." It was a truck. Then I thought I shouldn't do that. The news said -- and I still have the newspaper articles and all that. The article said, "Brenda Mason has a very powerful machine backing her up." There was nobody but myself and my manager.

But I actually won my first election. On Election Day, I was at home by myself and it was at night. I was in bed with rollers in my hair, and it was about 11 o'clock at night on the news. They didn't want everybody saying what about that regent race? That was really something. They kept saying, well, it's too early to tell. You know, it was after everybody had gone to bed I'm sure. It was about 11:30 or 11:00 that night. They said it looks like Brenda Mason is ahead in the election. My mother calls me up and she says, "Go down to the TV station," because everybody was down there. So I get up and I get dressed and I run down to the station and everything. I just couldn't believe it. They didn't want to say that I had actually won. But I got up and thanked everybody before the end of the news. I went home, and I was totally by myself.

The next day was my birthday. My mother tried to give me a birthday dinner, but nobody showed up. My relatives didn't come even though they always did. It was like everybody wanted to just leave it normal, just like whatever. I just went home from there and found out what I was supposed to do and where I was supposed to go.

The university had a real problem with it. They didn't know what to do because there were no rules about working at the university and being a student at the university and being on the board of regents at the time. It wasn't so much that I was the first minority on that board, the first black person and I think the first minority and the first non-rich person that was actually elected. You know, it was like things are brewing. At that time -- and it's so funny because I sued afterwards. Years later I met these people and they've gotten a different perspective. The attorney for the university was Procter Hug. Do you know who he is?

No. What is his last name?

Hug, H-u-g. He ended up later on being the Chief Justice of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The next step from there would have been the U.S. Supreme Court. Actually, he was a nice guy,

but at the time all they wanted -- you probably really should talk to him about this because he was going to tell me everything and then he didn't get a chance to do it and that was just maybe a couple years ago. The university thought I was an okay person. I did my job well or whatever, but they just didn't want me on the board of regents. They just didn't want it to happen, so they had me investigated. Actually, they don't know that I know this, but they had a person follow me one time and I discovered it. They investigated me. They couldn't find any dirt.

So they sent Procter to me to say, hey, look, if you want to keep your job -- and he said there are no rules. There's nothing to say that you can't be one because this has never happened, but you have to give up the regents. I said you know what? I worked extremely hard to get elected. That really was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. It took a long time to do it. I said I have been elected as a regent, and I'm going to be a regent. I'll just give up my job. I'll get another job, but I'm going to be on the board.

So they didn't talk me out of it. He said, well, you know, are you sure you want to do that? I said, yeah, I'm sure I want to do that. He said, well, it's going to be a difficult thing. I said I'm going to do it, and I stuck to my guns.

He later had a chance -- he didn't just come out and apologize. He wrote me a letter and I have that letter saying you know what? You were really a good regent. After they got to know me and everything, then I'm in history classified as a good regent. But during the time that I was struggling through, that just wasn't going to happen as far as they were concerned.

So anyway, I had to give up my job. The governor for the state of Nevada assisted me in getting another job because they said they could not have a regent who was a non-working regent on the board. So I got appointed to a position.

Do you think that happened since things didn't seem to be so fair?

It's the first time it had ever happened. So I think all of that was -- nobody really knew what the rules were. All they knew is what they knew and they wanted to keep it that way. They thought that maybe I was going to be an embarrassment. I did my job well. That was one thing. That was one level. But being on the board of regents -- the regents had the second highest budget in the state of Nevada under the governor's budget. Their budget was the second highest in control of money under the governor's budget at that time. I think it may still be the same. I don't know.

But at that time they had the most money. Those people were very wealthy and very seasoned politicians and whatever. In retrospect, it was different.

We met in Las Vegas and Reno. We would switch back and forth. When the media came out, I remember one segment where they talked about each regent, you know, the new regents and everything. They profiled each regent, and I was sitting right there, but they made sure that I was not ever in the camera view. That was it. They never said anything.

And no one said anything?

Nobody knew about it until you saw the news. I got elected twice. The second time I got 76 percent of the vote or something like that. I got a high score in the vote and it was not all that controversial, but I remember in Reno they did the same thing. I happened to be in a hotel room after the meeting looking at the news. I said, oh, they're talking about the regents. They talked about each one, told what they did, where they were from and everything and they shut it off when they got to me. They didn't even show me. I knew that's where I would be, and that was it.

So how did those things make you feel, those things that were happening?

I don't know. I mean I was upset about it. I was really upset. It had happened to me before I became a regent when I was in the National Honor Society. When I got to UNLV, I was nominated Who's Who among American university and college students. They had a ceremony. It was about the honor students and the dean's list and all this kind of thing. They talked about it on the six o'clock news. They talked about the students and showed the students getting their awards and everything, and they didn't say anything about me.

My mother called and she said, well, wait a minute. I had brothers who worked for the television stations. They knew what was happening at the stations, but they didn't know that anybody was out filming me or anything like that. So she called. She said, "They showed all the students and everything. My daughter actually got one of those awards and they didn't say anything about her." He said, oh, you know, we ran out of time. She said, "I wanted to see her on that station." So they talked about it on the 11 o'clock news and then they showed me receiving the award. But who was watching? I wasn't even watching the news at that hour.

So tell me more about your family. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Well, one brother I never even got to know and I never even thought he was a brother because it

was with a prior marriage of my father. But I had three brothers. I was the only girl.

So tell me about the family's reaction during this time, especially during that first campaign?

Well, my mother used to help me. I know once I wanted to have a campaign party and my house wasn't big enough to have people inside. So we decorated the backyard and made sure we invited all the neighbors, which was another story, too, because that was in the early days. It didn't seem too early. I mean the '70s didn't seem too early and North Las Vegas didn't seem too early. But I had moved into this neighborhood where they were white and here I was -- some of them had said hello and whatever and welcome to the neighborhood and some of them it was like -- but anyway, I went around and invited my neighbors. Some of them came. I don't think any of my actual neighbors came, but some of the candidates came. It turned out to be pretty good. She helped me with that.

My brothers -- I didn't know it, but I understand they went out and passed out some of my campaign materials and whatever.

But the second campaign was better. It was more organized. We had labor, materials and signs. Of course, they were sticking the signs in the wrong places.

What do you mean the wrong place?

The rules were not along the roadways and stuff like that, and somebody was going and pulling up all my signs.

(End Tape 2, Side A.)

Tell me a little about some of the issues you remember. I know that you don't remember in order or anything like that. But if you can remember some of the things that were important to you as a regent...

Well, one of the main things -- first, I have to tell you I don't know if it was important to me, but I became known as the regent of the affirmative action. Affirmative action at that time had nothing to do with minority students coming to the university. How it all started and affected how I got involved in it is because I was trying to start a committee to have minorities come into the university. That was my issue. But that's not what happened. What happened is that -- I don't even know. There may have been like a couple of black professors here. But the issue was women at that time. Most of the women professors thought that they weren't getting tenure or

they weren't getting the positions like chairmanships or whatever. They kind of gathered around me and wanted me to represent them and use affirmative action in getting them into these positions. It's strange because that's really how it happened. I've tried to people it wasn't about minority students at the time, but somehow it branched out into that.

Somebody had told me you know what? You ought to get like a committee together like community people and university people and talk about the best way to do this. So I did. I got a certificate about Brenda Mason, you know, active in affirmative action. When I actually resigned and left the regents, they sent me a certificate and an honor thing. They lost the original and the frame. They shipped it to me and I never received it. But I got a copy of the certificate. It was about being effective in affirmative action.

We finally got a committee of seasoned people. We met like every other month or whatever -- I think it was like once a month -- to talk about issues. But during that time, the regents could not get involved directly with the university officials. They could only come and listen to the regents. They could invite you to listen to something or whatever. But you could not -- the officials of the university have their own authority to act as long as there's no violation of the rules. The officials select the people that they want. The regents kind of approve whether there is tenure or whether some of those higher officials like the presidents and whatever are hired. You see what I mean? It's like a separate thing.

So they would give me reports on what was going on. They had an Upward Bound program. But then the Upward Bound program -- I understand they're back -- got put out of business for a while because they didn't do something right, do the right proposal or whatever. I actively sought reports. I remember one time -- perhaps I shouldn't have done it -- I asked for some reports in regards to the numbers of the students who were at the university and it was broken down male, female -- whatever. What they gave me was not what I requested and I was at a board meeting. So I just took that and I just kind of tossed it. I said, "That is not what I've asked. This is not the information." Because everybody was trying to, you know...

The first thing that happened to me when I got on the board was they said, look, we just wanted to let you know the regents -- not that we were yes for it, we just kind of go along with what the officials say because we don't want to embarrass anybody in public. So we just sort of

agree with what they're giving us. I would go home and read the material and if it was something that I didn't -- a report or something that I had questions about or whatever, I asked the questions, you know. And this frightened a lot of people. In fact, I had people tell me you know what? You kind of frighten us because nobody asked the question. They just kind of nod their heads or say yes or aye or vote it or whatever. You're the only one that asks all these questions.

But as it turned out -- like I said, in retrospect I got more respect for that than just sitting up there and saying aye. I'm not going to be on the board and everything that comes past me I'm just going to agree to because I don't agree to everything. So I questioned. If I didn't want to vote on it, I didn't. I abstained from voting.

Who was the chancellor at the time?

Oh, I can't think of his name. I went two terms, too. The first chancellor left and we ended up getting another one.

Was it Baepler?

Baepler -- oh, you said chancellor -- I'm thinking that he was the president. But we had a different chancellor. See, we had a chancellor other than --

Right. Baepler served both as chancellor and president of UNLV.

Well, it must have been the second term he might have been chancellor. But he was the president of the university when I first started.

Was it Humphrey?

Humphrey was the chancellor the first part and Don Baepler was the president. There were issues there, too, because a lot of things -- they said, well, you're a student here. So you might feel differently about giving tenure to somebody than a person who didn't go to school there. But I was never vindictive. There were some things going on. There were some real hot issues that needed discussing there. But I didn't want to bring it before the board with my personal feelings as a student. So I had to separate, even though a lot of times I let issues go past that I really should have brought up in regards to the board. Don Baepler was very protective of the university and his professors who may not have but should have gotten tenure. I didn't feel that I was the right person to bring it forth.

As it turned out, Lilly Fong spent a lot of time on the campus and heard different things

and knew different things and actually would bring -- and without us having to discuss it. Everybody thought that we were sort of together when we weren't, on a lot of the issues.

What were the results of your affirmative action fights? Did you see more women being employed and being promoted?

Yeah. As a matter of fact, I think that pretty soon there was no more of the Rebel this and that. There was no more talk about that. There was no more in the paper. It was more about students and the fees and the buildings that would be built and the law school. That was one of the main things. They were trying to get a law school here on campus. It was supposed to have been in Reno. Reno was supposed to have been the campus that had the most status and got the best schools and whatever. Then when they were satisfied, UNLV --

So while you were a regent, was it decided during your terms that when we get a law school in Nevada it would be at UNLV?

No. Actually, it was supposed to have been in Reno. But what was happening there -- and I found this out having gone actually to law school in Sacramento. I didn't stay there at that law school. I didn't graduate from that law school. But I went there. Before I did, I found out that the lawyers from that law school in California were going to the Nevada Legislature and urging them to not have a law school in Nevada, which was supposed to have been in Reno, because they were getting Nevada students at the law school. There was one major law school down there in California, in general. They said that they could provide the better education for those law school students. A lot of them were buying homes across the Nevada border or whatever. I said I have never heard of that. The attorneys in one state were coming over and urging the legislators in another state not to put a law school on their campuses. But that's what was happening.

So can you name the law school in California that was doing that?

I don't know. I won't say it was the school. I would say some of the attorneys from California. That was McGeorge School of Law, the University of the Pacific.

Which one?

University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. I actually went there for a year.

So when did you finish school here at UNLV?

Let me see. I think I finished my undergraduate degree in December of '74. Then I went into a

master's program, which I finished in '77.

And you were on the board of regents all of that time?

No. When I started at UNLV, I had already obtained some of my education because I went to Chapman College. But, yeah, most of the time. I got elected -- yes, because I remember during the graduation I was with the regents when I got my undergrad degree. It was at the convention center. Everybody stood because that was my first time that I had been elected as regent and was graduating. I think it was that year because I graduated December of '74.

That must have been an exciting time.

I'm telling you it just -- I don't know if excitement is the word. But it was unbelievable. It was like I was kind of going through --

So what did your boss say, that boss that said, "Do something"?

Oh, it was kind of funny. When I got back, he said, "Well, I told you to do something, but I didn't tell you to go do that." He laughed afterwards. He said, "But you really did something." There was no looking back after that.

Do you still keep in touch with any people who were on the board of regents with you?

I did when I first -- well, see, I went to law school twice. I went to McGeorge and I kept my seat on the board.

McGeorge?

McGeorge School of Law. That's University of the Pacific.

Now, where is it located?

Sacramento. When I went to law school -- I went there a year -- I stayed on the board. I was coming back and forth to the board meetings because I was still a regent. Then I left there and I did an internship with the North Las Vegas City Attorney for a year. The North Las Vegas City Attorney kept saying go back to law school. He said I gave you an internship for a year, but I want you to go back to law school. Well, I didn't go back to McGeorge. I couldn't go back to McGeorge. So I went to San Diego.

Do you want to tell me why you couldn't go back to McGeorge?

McGeorge at the time -- and it was a totally different school then from what I understand.

McGeorge was one of the toughest schools -- actually, when I applied for law school, I applied for

Howard University in Washington. I got accepted and everything. Howard Cannon -- I had written to him and told him I was coming to Washington, that I had gotten accepted at Howard and needed a job. He arranged for me to interview at the Library of Congress for a job. I ended up not going to Washington because I figured it was -- which I don't want to look back on and say it was a mistake or whatever.

At that time the attorneys on the board said, well, go to McGeorge. There were also some people saying don't go to McGeorge. You make mistakes when you go to McGeorge because McGeorge doesn't care if anybody graduates and they were that tough. As a matter of fact, a lot of people who did go on to be outstanding people got kicked out of McGeorge.

Well, that happened to me. I went to McGeorge as a day student. It was beyond what I could tell you. They take like 300 and something students on. There was one professor who later told me that he was in a class where they took that number of students, but before graduation I think there were 30 people left or something like that. The dean in the middle of the last class walked in the door and said, "We have 30 students here and graduation is next week and we only bought 28 robes." He said, "And the other people will not graduate." When graduation came there were 20 something people who graduated. That's the way they were.

My experience at McGeorge when I went there was the hardest thing. It sounded like they were speaking a foreign language. But to be admitted to the day program, you were supposed to be like the cream of the crop. So I studied. I used to go home and turn the hot shower on and sit in the tub with my clothes on just to feel the steam in my face. It was unbelievable. I had never experienced anything as hard as that because they made it hard.

But I got through the whole year and then I got an internship at the Legal Aid Society during the summer. I found out later that McGeorge not only graded on a curve during the year, but at the end if they thought there were too many people, they'd do another curve. That's what had happened. They called me on the phone and said, "I'm sorry to tell you but you can't advance to the second year at McGeorge." Everybody I knew got the same call. We got the same thing. They said go out and do something else. I said, well, you know, I'm in an internship with the Legal Aid Society. They said, "Well, do you want to tell them or do you want us to call them because we're cutting off your grant?" So I called my supervisor at Legal Aid and said I can't

come back because they won't let me come back to school. Well, everybody in the field knew about that. He said, "I don't care what they say. We'll pay you and you can finish your internship."

So I finished that, and then I came back to Nevada during the summer. I had gone through the whole year. They were on the quarter system, so I had gone three quarters. They don't tell you anything. They let you think that you're doing okay, and then at the end when you've completed all that...

So I kept applying for a job. It seems to me like my uncle was a police officer in North Las Vegas. I don't know whether he had told me to go to North Las Vegas and put in an application or whatever, but anyway, I met the city attorney, George Franklin. I think he knew who I was because he had seen me around. I talked with him and he said, "I'm going to hire you, but you have to go through the North Las Vegas City Council. They have to appoint you for this internship." He said, "Don't you say anything. Let me do all the talking." He was doing all this talking, and they said, "Well, what does she do? What is her background?" I said, "May I answer this?" Anyway, I said what I had to say because I thought at that point, well, I'm not going to be humiliated. They either want me or not. So anyway, they gave me the job. I've been forever grateful. He has since passed away.

What kind of job was that?

I was a legal researcher with the city attorney. I wrote briefs. I talked to witnesses and victims and that kind of thing, which gave me the background for later on. When I went back to law school in San Diego, I just walked in the U.S. Attorney's Office. The school I went to told me, when they called me on the phone or when I put in an application, "We'll help you get a job." But they didn't. Then one day they called me, after I had already applied for the federal government. I had just gotten a thing back that said, you know, we don't have any positions or whatever. So they called me one day and said there's a position at the U.S. Attorney's Office. I thought I've already been turned down for the paralegal position, so I had forgotten about it. It was maybe Wednesday. They called me and the job was supposed to close on Friday. So I didn't go.

I thought about it that weekend. I thought, oh my god, I didn't go. I was going to school and I had a kid and the whole thing. I went in on Monday. I walked into the lobby and I found

out where it was. I had my resume. There was a window and a girl sitting at the window. I gave her my resume. I said, "Look, I am here to apply for that job. It closed on Friday. I'm leaving my resume, and if they're interested, tell them to give me a call."

Well, about a week or so later, I get this call and it's the U.S. Attorney's Office. I can't believe it. They asked me to come in for an interview. So I go in for an interview and this guy thoroughly interviewed me. Because of the experience I had had at the city attorney's office, I was exactly what they were looking for. But they didn't just hire me just then. They told me, well, we want you to come back and do another interview. So I came back and I did all the interviews and I got the job.

In my criminal law class my professor also had a caseload and was an attorney working on criminal defense trials. He was a criminal defense lawyer. He one day asked me, "What is your background?" I told him my background was sociology. He said, "I want you to be a sociologist on a murder trial." I said, "I don't know anything about being a sociologist on a murder trial." He said, "No, I think you can help me. I watched you in class and everything. I have a really difficult murder trial. It's up in Vista and I just don't think we're going to get a fair jury on this trial." It involved a marine. He just went on a rampage and went in a pawnshop to look for something and decided to rob it. The guy pulled out a gun and this marine got the gun away and shot and killed the storeowner. He ran outside and some people were just passing by and said, hey, listen let's go in and rob the place. But anyway, he got caught.

So I decided that -- because I really wasn't working at the time or whatever. So I took the --

But you were in law school?

I was in law school. In fact, it was my first year of law school.

And this is in San Diego?

This is San Diego. To tell you how I got in law school there, I wrote a letter to the law school and I said, look, I went to McGeorge and I had gone through all this and I didn't make it to the next year and I went through the whole year. I'm interested in going to law school. I put in an application and said consider it. I've had a whole year of experience and now I know what to do. I told them I was working as an intern at the city attorney's office.

Well, then one day -- and it was really funny. It was during the summer. I got a call from the law school. They said, "Well, why haven't we heard from you?" I said, "What are you talking about?" They said, "You've been admitted to law school. We want to interview you." And I thought an interview after you've already been admitted? They said, "Can you come down to San Diego?" We worked ten-hour days and we had Mondays off, so I told them I would fly down that Monday.

Not only that, it was the wrong law school. It wasn't the law school that I thought I applied to. That was like a few blocks away. But I decided I would go, so I just threw my stuff together. My internship was over and I just zipped...I didn't know anything about San Diego. I took my furniture on a truck and had to actually find a place and I only had four days with the rental truck. They didn't have a job waiting like they told me they would, but I got the job at the U.S. Attorney's Office. 26 years later I retired.

Wow. So you got this job as you were entering law school the first year in San Diego?

When I actually got the job I had to be cleared and all this kind of stuff. So it was maybe seven or eight months after I actually had started law school. It was in August of '79 I think. Was it '79 or '78?

But the end of the 70s...

It was '79. I actually started work at the U.S. Attorney's Office April 10th of '80.

Now, finish telling me about the trial where they asked you to be a sociologist.

We went in and what he wanted me to do was to help pick a jury. So anyway, he said he liked what I was doing. I really didn't know anything about picking a jury. I had never even been to the courthouse in a trial because with the City Attorney's Office I would write the briefs for the trial, but I had never actually gone in with him for one. He said that I gave him some insight.

But what happened is I got the job. When they found out I was doing jury work and picking juries for this criminal trial lawyer, they were inspired to want me to come to the U.S. Attorney's Office, which is a prosecuting attorney. It's not defense. But the funniest thing about it is that after I started working with the U.S. Attorney's Office, they said you know you can't -- well, actually the lawyer wrote a brief for the Ninth Circuit saying that he wanted the trial moved and he didn't think it was going to be a fair trial. He wanted it moved to San Diego and he won. He had

actually won. But that's when I got the job with the U.S. Attorney's Office. He wanted me to help with the jury in San Diego because then I wouldn't have to drive all the way to Vista or whatever. By this time I was employed by the U.S. Attorney's office. So I asked them and they said, "No. That's a conflict. You can't go and help a defense attorney on a murder trial while you're working for the U.S. Attorney's Office." But they had me to help with jury trials.

One day my professor walked in to the U.S. Attorney's Office and who was out there but me. It was so funny. He said, "Do you work here?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "What do you do?" He was so surprised to find out that I had actually gotten that job. That was one of the things that I did at that time. As a matter of fact, it wasn't supposed to have been part of my job. It wasn't even what I was hired for. There got to be so many trials...it was funny because the federal defender, the guy who was interested in selecting jurors and everything, said, "Well, can you go out to dinner with me sometime and tell me how you do this?" It became of great interest with me being there. They started telling the judge, well, the U.S. Attorney has this extra person. It was something.

So finally I said look -- all the attorneys were calling me because I was the only paralegal at the U.S. Attorney's Office at the time. I had to do just everything. Now they have I can't tell you how many. I did civil stuff, criminal and whatever, and my job just got to be overwhelming. They later made me the victim witness coordinator. I had to handle all that. So it was just expanding. Freedom of Information, just whatever. It just went beyond.

But it sounds like you've had a very, very interesting career in the U.S. Attorney's Office.

I did. I learned a lot of stuff. I had an interesting career. But I also had some interesting experiences --

Oh, I can imagine.

-- that I wouldn't call interesting.

Getting back to the board of regents, are there any stories that you'd like to share that you remember, those memorable ones from that service here in Nevada?

I'm sure I do. I'm going to probably think of that one particular story when I leave that I wish I had said something about. But as a regent -- you know, at that time there weren't a lot of black national elected officials. When I first became a regent they would have the Black National

Convention or something like that. I told them how it would be significant for me to go because they would have talks about education. Barbara Jordan was on the education committee, so I got to go to those conventions -- at least a couple of them. I actually got to meet Barbara Jordan. Like I said, I have some of the pictures, which are now all fading out, like Jesse Jackson and -- what was his name?

Maynard Jackson.

And Maynard Jackson and the one that became secretary of -- Ron Brown and all of those people. I got to be on a forum with Barbara Jordan. We talked about education. It was really because -- as a regent it was just like you were one of those national figures.

Because you really represented the entire state of Nevada.

Right. Not only that, but I also have a couple of tapes. I got interviewed on television about the regents and the insight of blacks in the university or whatever. I don't know what it's like now because it seems like to me we're going a little bit backwards now. But in terms of then it seemed like there were more and more minorities actually coming into the university.

(End Tape 2, Side B.)

One thing I found out in going to the national conventions -- well, one thing that was good about it is they used to send me statistics. It was every kind of statistic like the number of women and they would breakdown into -- at that time -- I don't know whether they're still doing this -- the National Black Caucus would send statistics and it was the number of women, the number of black women, the number of men, you know, whatever. So you could actually look at the statistics of the universities or whatever. The one thing that they were more interested in at that time was black universities. They were also more interested in people who became regents and who were involved in -- I don't know what that group of universities is called -- in the black universities rather than a regent in a white university who happens to be black. They felt that we just didn't have the same data material or the interest as those who were affiliated with black universities. That's what I wanted to say about that.

But what I meant when I was talking about the ways things are now -- and really I don't know whether it's just me or whether I just have had a variety view of society or whatever. It seems as though we're going back into segregation. I don't know if it's just me thinking that

because I thought nobody seems to be quite interested in that or addressing that problem. You know, every once in a while somebody should say something in that regard. It seems as though we're separating again. Separate has never been equal and it is not now. The universities that were, quote, black, are now being -- and I don't even know if they will know they're being like -- what's the word I wanted to use? They no longer are traditionally black universities.

They're being integrated.

They're being integrated. Just for example, my mother lives in a neighborhood that was traditionally a black neighborhood. I was kind of opposed to that because I always like to see a variety of people. But now house by house by house -- and I don't know if this is called being integrated because eventually the blacks are either leaving or being moved out or whatever and the community, the whole community is certainly changing. So you're wondering like, well, where is everybody going?

With the university you know that -- at one time there were statistically more blacks going to the universities than any other group -- not in numbers, but statistically.

With the number of blacks, they had a higher percentage...

...of that population going into universities and getting college educations than any other group. I don't think that's true today. That's not true today because -- and maybe I'm just being harsh, but I equate what's happening in the black community in the United States to what's going in Africa as though -- especially the black male, it seems like to me, they're disappearing, so to speak. That kind of thing.

But back to education, at one time -- you know, when you look at some of the students that came out of Howard -- I wish I had gone on to Howard or whatever. Plus, I went to black schools until I was about 11 years old. We really had to learn -- I mean we learned things. After I left it was not the same kind of learning.

For example, take music. When I was in the band, I remember one time my band director gave me some very difficult music. He said, "You take this home and you practice it." That's all he told me. He just gave me this very difficult music. I hadn't been in music that long or whatever. So I took it home and, luckily, I played it and I played it until I learned that music. I mean I just -- I could read it or whatever. The next day when I got back there, or maybe a couple

of days later, he said, "Did you learn that piece of music that I told you to learn?" I said, "Well, I played through it. I don't know if I learned it." He says, "Come over here. Where is the music?" So I gave him the music. He took it away. He said, "Now play it." I said, "Wait a minute. You took the sheet away. I didn't memorize it. I just played it." He said, "You play that music." He got this long strap because he'd give you so many licks if you didn't do it, and he said, "Now play that music." I stood there. I played that music -- and I did not miss a note -- until I got to the end. He said, "Okay, fine. You did a good job. You can go now."

What I'm trying to say is it's like a different breed now. They are not people -- I mean they want to be concerned. But now if you stare at a child too hard, you can't say anything that would disrupt them or whatever. You can't even look at them in a certain way. You can't really make them do anything. So it's a different learning process than what it was when I was growing up. I'm sure it was different before then, so education is not the same thing.

The grading system is not the same thing. When I got a 3.0 or whatever it is -- and I think an A was a 3.0. Now you can get a 5.0 and that kind of thing. I don't know what the grading system --

Depending on the school. But still here it's still a four-point.

And I remember before it was a four-point. There wasn't a four-point. So when you look at the grades, you don't know what you're comparing them against. When you talk about education prior to now, you really don't know what you're talking about because the educational system is entirely different and the way we learn is different.

That's right. Oh, yes. Completely.

I guess I'm saying all that to say that education with our system we cannot afford, number one, to be segregated because money-wise, it's never going to be equal. Secondly, I can see another whole new group emerging into the United States who are taking those slots that people are just suddenly ignoring, especially in education and scholarships and whatever. It's going to be a fight for who can get whatever they can get in the United States. I can see that other than -- you know what? When you say African-American, I have some issue with that.

Oh, yeah. I use black.

Okay. The reason why I have issue with that is because do you know a white African could be an

African-American?

Of course. That's why I use black.

Statistically when they're saying African-Americans have achieved this, they're not necessarily talking about black Americans. When African-Americans come into the United States and it's put on a piece of paper, you don't know who it is that you're talking about. You don't even know if you're talking about blacks because they have a better educational system in some of the countries, depending on where it is in Africa. The majority of them speak -- unless they speak French --

If England was the one that took over that country, then they speak fluent English.

Then they speak fluent English or fluent French or something. What I'm saying is when they're talking about African-Americans they're not necessarily talking about American blacks as far as achievement. What I'm saying is that the pot is getting smaller in terms of education or whatever. When they say African-Americans have made a certain amount of achievement in the United States, they're not necessarily talking about black Americans in the United States. So we don't know what it is statistically what people are actually achieving if they are achieving anything, how many jobs they have or when they're talking about employment, you know, like they said overall employment has risen.

We're in a war. We probably have fewer jobs than we ever had in the United States of America. If we don't have fewer jobs, we probably have fewer Americans working on these jobs. Do you know that now Latin-Americans outnumber any other group in the United States? I'm not certain whether they outnumber whites in the United States, but they are the largest minority in the United States. So when they come, they're eager to get an education. They're not going to stay in underclass forever. Like the president said -- and I'm getting off the road -- he said I understand we need this group of people to come in and take over those jobs that Americans won't do. How long do you think that any group is going to come into the United States and do the jobs that nobody wants to do? What they want to do is come in and do the job that nobody wants to do so they can work themselves up into a better job.

Human nature.

Yeah. Anyway, we can go to the next question.

When you were a student here and working on campus, what was the atmosphere like?

You're working. You're a regent and you're going to school. How were you accepted in the classroom? And what about your friends on campus?

Well, overall I think -- when I started going to UNLV -- when I started back to school, I went to night school. When I first started school, I was actually a day student. But when I came to UNLV, I think I did all my classes at night.

Most of the time everything was okay. I mean I didn't really have any real close friends. But a lot of times I received a lot of hostility especially from guys and particularly from some of the instructors. For example, whatever I said it was like somebody had something to say back. I could say, oh, it's a good day, and they would say, well, what do you know about it? Because they thought -- and I've sort of had this problem all my life.

I remember even in high school like one girl says, "Oh, I don't like you." I said, "Can you tell me why you don't like me? You know I have heard people say that, but I don't understand. So tell me why you don't." She said, "Because you think you're better than me." Well, is it because you think that I think I'm better than you or is that what you think? Well, I don't know. Well, okay. If you think I think I'm better than you, then tell me what can I do about it? Well, nothing. You can't do anything. Well, if I can't do anything, I'm just going to be just who I am now. I remember saying that to this girl and this girl really kind of hated my guts. But then as she thought about it...I said, "Why don't you tell me what I can do to make you feel differently?" So this one particular girl said, "There's nothing you can do to make me like you." I said, "Okay, then you just don't like me." Years later I saw her and it was like she was seeing an old friend. I still remembered that conversation. She said, oh, how are you doing? And I saw you this or whatever. That kind of thing. And I thought about it. I don't know whether or not it's me that's giving off this vibe or people are just ready to tackle me. I had a lot of that.

As a matter of fact, in one of my classes -- it was so strange because I heard from this guy about a couple years ago, maybe a year and a half ago. He was the chief of police here on campus. We took a class together. It was one of the black something or other.

Black studies.

Yeah. It was one of the black study courses. I forgot what it was called. In this class they tried to do multi-cultural things. I remember one time everybody had to bring food and stuff, so I brought

pig's feet and black-eyed peas or something. Nobody ate any. Anyway, we each had to do a project. The guy was white, and we decided to pretend that we were married. We would go and look for an apartment because there were a lot of issues about people not being able to get to rent apartments in Las Vegas. So we went out. Not only that, I think one of my brothers -- his girlfriend was white. So we all went together. I don't know whether it was my brother and the girlfriend who went in to try to see if they could rent an apartment or this guy and me would follow up and try to rent. But whatever happened they always thought that he was with the girlfriend. But when they find out --

That the white man was with the white woman.

Yes, but when they didn't think that and they thought that he was with me, all of a sudden an apartment was never available. They couldn't rent to us and everything. It was funny. He said, "This is really quite an experience for me because I'm the chief of the police and the captain. I've heard about it, but I never really thought that this was an issue in Las Vegas." So I said, "You know what? I live with that every day."

Well, about a year and a half ago I get this call at the U.S. Attorney's Office. And he said, "Guess who this is?" And I said, "Well, who?" He said, "This is your ex-husband."

That's wonderful. That's great.

I'm thinking who in the world is this? When I said who is this, he said, "You know I was the chief of police at UNLV. Remember that experiment that we did?" He was married then. He sounded older and everything. What happened is my picture was in one of the magazines. So he said, "I saw your picture." I said, "How did you get in touch with me?" He said, "I tracked you down. I'm good at that." He found out. All he had to do was call the U.S. Attorney's Office. We talked about that experiment. He remembered it. I said, "How in the world did you remember that?" I didn't even really remember that. He said, "Remember when we went out?" All of his life he thought about that.

I think that's good for people in that kind of work to know those kinds of things.

You have been back and forth to Las Vegas over the years, living in San Diego, but your mother was still here. Tell me about this campus and how it has changed.

Oh, you just would not believe. I just couldn't believe it. I make it a point -- I never started

renting a car before the last few years that I was coming because I just never felt comfortable doing that. So I never got to see the university. After I started doing that, I always made sure I took Tropicana and came by the university. I just cannot believe that this is the same school. I mean you just have no idea how much this university has grown.

For a long time I was a recruiter for the university. I would go out and students would ask me different things about the university. Representatives from the school recruitment office would go to San Diego. At first they had a lot of students in San Diego wanting to apply to the school. So what happened -- how I got involved is that they didn't have a representative at the time to come to San Diego to talk to some of the students. So they contacted -- I don't know. I guess I had kept in touch with the university or something. But anyway, they contacted me and asked me if I would go to the college recruitment. Once you start doing that, then they're forever contacting you. Each time they came and started talking about the university, I would be learning more than the student did. I thought, oh, my god; maybe I've been gone from there too long. And then when I heard about the law school -- the reason why I'm in California is because there was no law school. It has changed tremendously.

And our law school now is about ten years old.

Oh, my god, that's amazing. But the university has grown tremendously. I try to continue to be an alumni -- I don't know -- alumnus, alumni or involved in the alumni of the university and try to keep in touch, so much so I think they got tired of me calling the alumni office. But I try to participate, not as much as I probably should because I'm involved in the law school over there. But it has tremendously changed.

Actually, I'm glad to see it grow because I feel like every time it grows that represents me regardless of when I graduated. Every time this university grows or does something outstanding, I feel like I'm a representative.

That's right. I feel the same way. Yes.

Well, this has been wonderful talking to you. Are there any other memories that you would like to share?

No, not at this time. I'm sure that I have. Maybe eventually I'll have an opportunity to maybe not do this particular thing again but to talk about the university. The memories are all fading now. I

still have many little scrapbooks with all my little memories, and I put them on pages that are acid free, you know.

Yes. And you need some acid-free folders.

But now I don't want to go through and take all that stuff out. I certainly have a lot of memories, and I'm sure I didn't answer all your questions.

Yes, you did, and you did it wonderfully.

I am very appreciative.

You did it wonderfully, and I really appreciate this. So thank you so much.

Thank you.

(End Tape 3, Side A.)