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An Interview with Mary L. McCoy

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

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

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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.

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Preface

The population of Lancaster, New York shrank on Christmas Day 1959. That was the day young Mary McCoy and her eight siblings relocated to Las Vegas. In this interview, Mary recalls highlights of the move to dusty southern Nevada; her family's first plane trip; and what it was like to grow up in a large family.

After graduating from Basic High School, Mary immediately enrolled at Nevada Southern University which was in the midst of growing into UNLV. During the summer of 1967 she worked at the university's library moving books into the expanded facility. Though she altered her studies program from education to English, she continued to work at the library and continued the job after graduation. Mary describes some of the dynamic changes that were occurring to UNLV campus at the time.

In 1975, Mary and her husband Duncan McCoy moved to Bloomington, Indiana, so that Duncan could pursue his graduate studies and take a Book Mobile librarian job. For the next fourteen years the couple followed a variety of opportunities guided by Duncan's career.[He is a retired director of Boulder City, NV, Library.] In 1989, they returned to Las Vegas. Mary had agreed to the move—as long as it was to a city where she could find a college library position.

Mary speaks of her enjoyment of working at the UNLV library until her retirement in 2009. Among her favorite UNLV library memories is a story about a ride in the book lift, as well as how her library roles ranged from acquisitions to Special Collections to documents.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

UNLV Oral History Project @ Fifty



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Name of Narrator: Mary L. McCoy

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Mary L. McCoy 2/26/09
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 2/26/2009
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is February 26th, 2009. We are in Special Collections this morning. And I'm with Mary McCoy. And this is Claytee White.

How are you this morning, Mary?

I'm doing fine. Thank you. How are you?

But you seem to be just a tiny bit nervous. Is that true?

Yes, it is.

Oh, come on, Mary. Well, here's how you can get comfortable. Tell me a little about your early life, where you grew up, what it was like in the neighborhood.

The first part of my growing up was done in Lancaster, New York, which is a very small town outside of Buffalo, New York. It was idyllic. You know, everything was green in the summertime and snowy in the wintertime. And the autumn leaves were gorgeous. And the spring flowers were fragrant and beautiful. Of course, I didn't know any of the unpleasant stuff. It was a beautiful place to grow up and a lovely time.

My memories are all of just going outside and spending the day outside as much as possible. It was a large family. I'm one of nine children. And it was not a big house. We were not rich people. And our entertainment was made by ourselves, among ourselves. We played in and out of neighborhood houses and up and down the paths and in the woods and the fields and the creeks and, you know, spent time stealing out of neighbors' gardens and climbing over the fence into the football field, which was right behind our house, and sneaking into the games.

What did your father and mother do for a living?

My mother was a housewife, a standard 50s kind of situation. They were actually married in '34, which was the worst of the Depression, and started having kids right away. And so frugality was the way we lived and didn't think anything of it.

My father was not an educated man. He did a series of mostly painting-type things. He and one of my uncles had a business as a house painter, paper-hanger team. And that was great three months of the year. But in the wintertime it was slim pickings. And he would repair washers and dryers. And whatever he could find he would do. He came to Southern Nevada -- well, he was here ahead of the family because my mother had to sell the house. But he came out to Nevada to work on the Tropicana -- or not the Tropicana, the Stardust.

How did he get into that kind of construction?

He didn't work as construction. He worked as a painting person. He was on the paint crew. It was one of those somebody-knows-somebody sorts of things. People from Buffalo were starting to move to Southern Nevada. A family friend had gone out there and said they're hiring. And my dad was facing another winter and getting older and needing something that would feed the family. And so he went in September, out to Nevada. You know, he did the house hunting, found a home in Henderson and went to work. He was living with the neighbors in our new home who were from Buffalo. They were the reason why. So we moved into a house next door to some Buffalo people. My dad lived with them initially and worked and saved. And my mom was keeping things going at home and trying to sell the house. By December it was sold and we were packed up and we flew out. It was a pretty amazing day as I recall.

By that time, of course, my older brothers and sisters were not in the home. Let's see. It was my brother David on down. So that's David, Mary, Danny, Martha, Susie and Kathy. There were six of us. Kathy was a baby in arms. She was six months old. Susie was two. And then it was up from there. We had a flight to Chicago where my mother had a cousin living. And so we spent several hours in Chicago at their home. And this was Christmas Day mind you. So then we went back to the airport. I don't remember much about their home. Then we went to the airport. When the people at the airport saw how many of us there were and the ages and everything, they said we can get you on an earlier plane if you don't mind that you don't all sit together. So they put us on an earlier plane and we were here and there throughout the airplane. You know, older kids paired with the youngest kids. Mom had the baby. It was the first time we had ever flown. It was TWA. We got wings for heaven's sake. I was going to be a hostess. You know, it was the most amazing day to that point in my life.

And we got into the airport four hours sooner. My mother had not been able to reach my father at the airport. So we called from McCarran, which at the time was out at the end of the world facing on to the Strip, no city lights of any magnitude at all in that area. She tried to call my father at the home of our neighbor. And the phone rang and rang and rang and rang. We hadn't been scheduled to get in till midnight. So he showed up right before midnight. The phone had not been working. You know, it was Henderson. Herschel Trumbull owned the phone company. It

was not tied to the Las Vegas phone company. The phone went down in those days. So they had not -- you know, he had been at home that whole evening. You know, it never occurred to him to call. People weren't experienced travelers then. You didn't know to call the airport, find out if they were on time or not. You just assumed that they were going to be on time. And most of the time they were.

But because of the kindness of the strangers we were able to get in early. And then we sat and we waited. But we didn't sit, of course. We're kids moving all over the airport. One of my memories is of my younger brother Dan walking around looking at the slot machines. We had never seen slot machines. You know, is this some of the devil? He got fascinated with one cowboy, the full-blown cowboy with the hat and everything. And the cowboy was watching him watching the machine. And finally Danny ended up on the guy's lap playing the slot machine. Now days a parent would panic over such a thing. But in those days nobody even stopped him because he was underage, clearly underage. He was about seven years old at the time.

But that was probably such fun for your little brother.

Oh, yeah. For all of us. We were just big-eyed with wonder. And tired. Oh, it was such a long day. And so stressful. I mean no kid wants to spend Christmas this way. We had our Christmas like two days before at my sister's house. She had a couple of little kids at that point in time. So we went there for Christmas.

So the other three siblings remained in New York?

Well, my sister Barbara was married with kids. She stayed. My second oldest, my brother Bill was already in California. He's the adventurer in the family. He set out at a young age and headed west and didn't want any more snow. I don't know why he hated snow at that point. I still loved it. And my brother Tom was a senior in high school and they didn't want to tear him away from his senior year. So he went to live with my grandparents who lived in that town.

Did you have to shovel snow or did your brother in California have to shovel the snow?

Oh, everybody. Shoveling snow was fun. I mean we only had to worry about this little strip from the road to the front door, which wasn't that long a distance. And anything else that we wanted to do was if we wanted to get somewhere in the yard we took a shovel with us. But we were living on a dead-end street at the very end of the street. So the snowplow would come and push massive

amounts of snow up at the end of the street. And what a wonderland for a kid. I mean that's where we dug. We dug holes and caves and castles. You know, kids and their imaginations if they're set free, they know how to have a good time. Having grown up that way you kind of wonder, well, how is it that kids can be bored? We were never bored. And we never had any money. And there was never anyplace to go.

Right. And never any iPods and cell phones.

Oh, heavens no. We just had a great time.

Right. So which year was that that you came out?

1959. It was Christmas Day 1959 that we traveled. So if I say I've been here since '59, it's kind of a fudge because it was really only four days of 1959.

I like the information about your family. What was your father able to do at the Stardust? Was he able to get a job?

Oh, yeah. He was hired right on in the paint crew. And he painted while they were building the Aku Aku. He brought home some of the little cups and things. He stayed with the Stardust for a while and then he did a series of paint jobs around town and around the valley.

Oh, that's fantastic.

But we stayed in the same house. My mother still lives in that house next door to the neighbors from Buffalo.

Oh, that's amazing. What continuity.

Now, tell me about going to school in Henderson. Where did you go to school?

I started out in sixth grade. And Henderson the school was split up. The sixth grade stood alone. There was an elementary school, which was kind of up the hill. I don't remember the name of it. And then there was a junior high kind of at the bottom of the hill. But at the midlevel there was just a little two-building L that had the sixth grade. And I don't know technically if we were part of the junior high or if we were part of the elementary school. Fifth grade might have been there, too. But I think it was just sixth grade, possibly fifth.

Because at one point -- I think later on, though -- we had something called the sixth grade centers.

This was way before that.

Way before because this was in the 70s.

And the sixth grade centers was a desegregation thing. But this was just probably logistics. They had these buildings on different levels and placed us up there. We had our own at the tetherball court. Basically I don't think that -- yeah, there was a sixth grade elsewhere. There was one other school in town that had a sixth grade. So I didn't see -- everybody in my high school class wasn't there.

Then I went down to Henderson Junior High School and went through all years there, seventh through ninth grade. And then I went to Basic High School as a senior. And that was in the Burkholder Junior High -- I mean it became Burkholder Junior High later on. But it started life as the brick Basic High School.

It was different, but I found that people were very friendly when I came. I was roasting in the wintertime. I couldn't wear my winter clothes at all. And they're just huddled and freezing. I got that way by the next year. But that first year was a piece of cake. The curriculum was different at my old school from here. They did some testing to find out where I should be. And they were considering putting me in seventh grade, but then they thought because I hadn't yet had some of the topics that were being covered that they put me in the sixth grade, which is where my level was. I mean I was a sixth grader. But I tested better than a lot of people because I came out of a Catholic school. I don't remember the ruler treatment or any mistreatment whatsoever. But things were expected of us and we learned how to do math and --

You performed.

We performed. Yes.

So high school was at Basic. And then what did you do when you finished high school?

I went straight into college at NSU, Nevada Southern University. When we did the orientation it was in the old gym on bleachers. And they told us that we were the first group of people that would not have to do a residency at UNR [University of Nevada Reno]. We were the first group who were going to be able to go through all four years at that school.

What did it look like at that time?

Oh, my goodness, barren. I mean there weren't very many buildings on campus. There was Grant Hall and Frazier Hall. The library was open on the first floor. The construction had mostly

happened -- external construction was through on the top two floors of the round building. But they weren't open yet. So we were just in the ground floor. The gym was there. The geoscience building was there and Wright Hall. And I think . And there was just a -- the student union wasn't much. I mostly remember that it was just the cafeteria part to feed the people in Tonopah Hall of whom there weren't that many. So that was in the fall of '66 that I started there.

By the following summer I was hired as a student worker in the library by Alice Brown to work moving the books into the second and third floor. So I was on the ground floor of the upper two floors.

Oh, that's amazing. What was Alice Brown's position at that time?

Well, she was I think head of circulation and documents. I mean she was doing documents, but she was also coordinating the move. So I'm not aware whether her position was -- circulation was just nothing at the beginning. It was all handled out of the service desk where the reference people were. Once the second and third floor opened then they had the circulation desk upstairs. It was different.

So how did you get back and forth from here to Henderson?

Drove.

You had your own car?

I didn't start to drive until I was 18. And I only started then because my parents were going back to New York and I needed to. There was only my older brother. Was he in the Navy at that point? He went in the Navy about that time. So I don't remember if we -- (telephone rings).

Go ahead.

So my parents were going back to visit family. They had not been back since we moved out. As the number of children decreased in the home and as things got more settled and work was steady for my father, they were able to afford to drive back to New York. But because there was only my older brother who had a license -- and he entered the Navy right around that time. I don't think he was in at that point, but he might have been. Anyway, I needed to learn to drive in a hurry. So my soon-to-be sister-in-law took me out and about and I learned how to drive. Of course, it was easy enough to find lots of open road and no traffic. I still can't parallel park to this day. But they didn't worry so much about that back then. And I drove my brother David's car back and forth

initially. So he must have been in the Navy at that point.

And then that car was an old Mercury. It burned up literally. I was driving along on Boulder Highway and I'm thinking why is it getting so warm in here? Then I'm thinking is that smoke? And I pulled over to the side of the road. And that's what it was. The insulation had caught fire.

And no cell phone. What did you do?

Hitchhiked. I was on my way to school. And I got a ride to campus. And I found somebody from Henderson who took me home. You know, I rode back and forth with different people, classmates from high school who lived out there and were going to UNLV. My father met somebody who had a car for sale. And I bought this huge boat of a car, a station wagon. I guess my father thought I would be safe with all that metal around me. You know how fathers think.

Yes. Tell me more about the library that job that you had. And did many students work at the time?

I don't remember how many students. You know, there was a hiring blitz kind of right then to get the move going. And then some of them didn't stay beyond the summer. I did and transferred into acquisitions where I worked under Steve Powell, who was head of acquisitions at the time. And Jeanmarie LaBatt was a classified employee. And I think she was the only -- yeah, she was the only classified in acquisitions. So it was Steve and Jeanmarie and me and Kathy Rothermel I think. Except she might have gone into cataloging. I think she went into the cataloging department. Or maybe not. Maybe she was acquisitions. I know that we got in trouble for talking. So we were physically close wherever we were.

So who was in charge of the entire library at the time?

Hal Erickson. He was in charge. Billie Mae Polson was head of cataloging. She would sit there with a cigarette dangling out of her mouth hanging by her -- you know how they are, hanging from the lip. She was different than she is now. Well, obviously. But I mean she had much harsher makeup. And she wore a lot of perfume to cover the cigarette smoke. And she smoked at her desk.

And it was okay to smoke in the library at your desk.

At your desk. People did it. People smoked at their desk.

How times have changed.

How times have changed. Yes.

So this was the first president. So you were here under --

I think it was Roman Zorn.

Zorn was president at that time. Okay.

No. It might have been Moyer followed by Zorn. It might have been Moyer.

Good. That's what I was thinking, too.

Yeah. I think there was a change early on. And I didn't pay much attention to administration. Even then they were removed from a lot of what went on. And I never really was a joiner. I didn't get into clubs and things like that. I had my job. I had classes. I dated and drove back and forth to Henderson and, you know, took care of the kids and helped at home when I was home, although probably not as much as I should have.

Oh, no. Going to school and working, that's a big responsibility.

All of these years that you've been employed in the library, do you always see the administration of the university as removed?

Except during Dr. Maxson years. During Maxson's years he got out and walked the campus. He went into the student union and ate meals. He would go to the dining commons and just sit with people. He was a lot more visible than any of the others that I'm aware of. Some of them were probably visible enough, but because of my routine I didn't see them about. Maxson was the one that everybody knew you could go up and talk to him if you had anything to say.

Did you ever do that?

No, never did. I was very shy.

Oh, come on, Mary.

I still am, Claytee.

Tell me about what that job turned into. Now, did that job turn into a full-time job?

Eventually it did. I went to work in '67 [1967], summer of '67. In the fall of '67 the move was over. We were all in. And I was asked, you know, where I'd like to work. Would I like to stay and where would I like to work? And I wanted to work in the back office because I had had enough of moving books and I did not want to shelf any more. I had shelved as a high school

page. That was enough. You don't need to do that for a year.

What was your major?

At the time it was education. When I was an education major, basically you got your university requirements and your school requirements out of the way and you were -- I was basically a junior before I got before any kind of a camera. And I knew when I got in front of that camera that I couldn't do this. I could not stand in front of a classroom of kids. I just couldn't. And I switched to English because I loved English. I had no idea what I would do with it. But I was working. You know, I didn't really -- I was young. I didn't really foresee a problem with the path of my life or anything.

I worked in acquisitions as a student doing receiving-type things, filing, just basically whatever, and searching lists of things. We had so few books then. Steve Powell had lists of books that were in the catalog at different universities. And we would go through those books and see what we could acquire. That was our first approach to buying books for the library.

You were going to acquire them from other universities?

No, no, no. Just what other universities considered important. There are lists out there that give you a basic collection. And we made sure that we had the basic collections and then built from there. And, of course, Mr. Erickson was courting gifts of books wherever he could get them. He never turned anything down. Anything he acquired went into the collection. Even if it was a book that was clearly outdated, he would say, but this would be good for someone studying the history of this area.

So how did he go about that, getting those books donated?

Oh, he was out and about in the community. He had ties and he would just visit with people. He knew people who knew people. You have to remember what a small town it was. And someone who was interesting and personable had friends. And some of those friends would be people with books to give away. So it was interesting.

Did you take other jobs, though, before you became full time here?

Not really. I mean at one point I had an apartment with a friend. And she had a part-time job with a psychologist whose theory had to do with people learning to read -- first they have to learn to crawl because that teaches them left-right movement and coordination. And if people don't learn

to crawl at the appropriate age, they have trouble with reading. So in his practice he was teaching people who had skipped the crawling stage how to crawl. So I was teaching people how to crawl for a while there. It wasn't real exciting work. I had a little office job in a company that I don't even remember what they did, you know, a little office job. I was bored to death. It was just me in the office. I was looking around. What do I do now?

When did you move from Henderson into the city?

The city, yes. The very small city. I lived at home for my freshman year. In my sophomore year my brother was married. And he was in the Navy at that point. And he was going overseas. So I moved into Las Vegas into a rental that my sister-in-law and their first baby had, a very small place. It was off Saint Louis. I remember I drove on Saint Louis and it was not too far from Gorman [High School]. You know, you could walk to Saint Anne's Church there. It was nice. But then when my brother came home, then I moved back home for a little while. And then I was in and out of apartments with friends. If there was a gap, then I'd go back home for a little while. But I moved out for good probably around 20 or 21.

What kind of influence did the Strip have on your life at the time, going to school, all of that?

Very little. I mean in those early days I was too young to do anything. I remember my high school graduation. A group of us got together and went on the Strip and went from property to property. And it wasn't a very long Strip at that time and, of course, no resorts the way they are today with activities. It was just gambling. We'd go into the casino and go through. And we'd go to the bathroom and check out the decor. Then we'd move onto the next place because there's nothing to hold a person that couldn't gamble.

What about shows?

My first show -- I'm not a show-goer. My first show was on a date that we went to see -- if I were a rich man. You know, the one I mean.

Fiddler on the Roof.

Fiddler on the Roof. Yes. It was wonderful. I was hooked on theater. But we didn't do a lot of that. I mean the Strip was expensive. My senior prom we went out to dinner on the Strip. My father worked out there. We went out to the Stardust early on to see the Stardust and what they were doing. We would drive up and down the Strip because it was growing. The Stardust was

interesting. The Flamingo and the Tropicana were glamorous. I didn't know the Rat Pack. I mean that was pretty much before my awareness period.

What I remember as a kid was going out and playing in the slag heaps from the plants. You know, they would just go out and dump who knows what. I'll probably drop dead of some horrible disease much earlier than I otherwise would have.

Oh, I like this. So getting back to the university, tell me about some of those early people who came in. Someplace along here we must get Marta and --

Not that early. When I first came the people that I remember were Mr. Erickson, Goodie Murphy, bless her heart. Everybody loved Goodie. She was such a character.

Was she the one with the Jaguar?

She had the Jaguar, which she loved and hated.

What a name, Goodie.

Oh, she had been on radio. I don't know what all she did. You know, every now and then Mr. Curley will say something else about Goodie's background. But by the time I knew her she was what you would call a full-figured girl. She wore flip-flops all the time. She just had a strut. I mean you knew that she obviously once had a body. Blousy comes to mind. Her hair was kind of gray and kind of unkempt. I mean there was nothing cheap about her, although she didn't look refined. But she didn't look inexpensive either. She just was full of advice to the wide-eyed freshmen kids and just had a body sense of humor.

Anyway, so that's Hal and Goodie. Billie Mae. There was a cataloger named Sarina Way. She was Chinese. I didn't know her very well. Gladys Diehl was there. Mrs. Gonzalez. I'm sure she had a first name, but I don't know what it was. She was always Mrs. Gonzalez. Jan Green was in there somewhere. She had been married and divorced. Steve Powell. Elmer Curley, Mr. Curley. Bob and Sue Anderl. They were all there. I don't think they were there for summer, but I think they were in place by fall. Martha Chrysler was in circulation at some point, but not right off the bat. Alice Brown. May Workman. May Workman was there in periodicals.

You had quite a staff, though, for a small library?

Well, it was three floors at that point. And it was growing. The university was growing. Buildings were going up. And then we all felt poor. I can remember that Billie Mae would give

her staff pencils as Christmas presents so they could have pencils at work. And we reused and recycled everything. I mean we were bursting at the seams. And I don't know what the budget picture was. But I would guess that they were short on supply budget in order to be longer on maybe staff and books. It was a small group and it was a friendly group. It had that camaraderie that comes with a new organization and everybody part of something exciting and beginning.

What kind of social events did you have? Did you have birthday celebrations or anything?

Well, I don't remember that we had a lot of celebrations initially. But we got to the point where we had a staff room. And we would have potlucks. Potlucks was the big thing. And we had some cooks. Oh, my goodness, Ida would cook. By that time Ida came along after I first came there. She was there early, though. Ida and Doris Day.

Doris Day?

Doris Day. Remember Doris Day or have you ever heard of Doris Day?

No.

She and Ida came as part of -- I think it was CETA. They were part of that CETA program. And they were both hired on after their funding ran out in that direction. And Doris was in circulation I believe. And Ida was in the reference circulation area. And Ida made the most heavenly pecan pie. And Doris' carrot cake was to die for. And there was Emma Anderson. She was a student. She was another African-American. She was a student. And she worked upstairs because I can remember one time some friends put me on the dumbwaiter. There's a dumbwaiter that would carry the books upstairs. And they put me on there. I was quite a bit smaller. They put me on there. And Emma was the one that was supposed to let me out at the top and she just kept me waiting. I was getting a little nervous there. But she made gumbo. She would make the most wonderful gumbo. That was my first exposure to southern African-American cooking. And, oh, my goodness, what an intro it was. Oh, I loved it.

Tell me about the campus buildings. Any of those early buildings that had any kind of impression or you thought were just absolutely beautiful or anything?

Well, the library It was so modern and so stunning. You know, there was supposed to be a water feature. I don't think when I was there it was actually going.

Are we talking about the round building?

The round building.

Where was the water feature to be?

Well, outside. I remember there was like the curved tiled area outside. And I think that was meant -- but people didn't say what things were. I was just young and afraid to talk and ask questions. Now I'd say what's that? But then I would have thought, huh, I wonder what that was? It looks like it might have held water. Isn't that a drain there? But they had graphics on the back wall and it looked like fish or sperm or something. They were just all organic-looking. It was quite the showplace. It won awards in its day. Yeah. I mean architectural awards always seem to go to the less functional but more interesting buildings. And round buildings, rectangular books, rectangular shells, it was difficult. It was maybe not the best choice. But the starry night sky on the dome of the third floor, that was really special. The lights were all working at that time. Changing those bulbs was such an ordeal that they would let a lot of them go out. But it was kind of twinkly. They were so far up there. The light wasn't great, but it looked stunning. So we were okay with that.

Oh, yeah. Celeste Delow was here. Celeste Delow was here. She was in Special Collections at the time. What was that English woman's name? It will come to me eventually. Red-head. Georgia Lewis. And I think she was what became curriculum materials collection. I don't think she was the children's book area. And she and Celeste were good friends. I think Celeste must have retired or something because I don't remember her there for very long. But she was still there when I started up.

We're going to get back to Special Collections in a few minutes. Do you remember any special activities from the student body when it came to our mascot and how we got the mascot that we have and our colors and any of that?

Well, that was all pretty much decided before I got here. Beaugard. The whole thing was the rebellion of the South against the North. That was not a problem for anybody. I mean it wasn't racial. Reno and UNLV have always had an intense rivalry. And what more intense rivalry has this country seen than the South against the North. So we took on the role of the South.

Do you remember any of those issues that you had at the time with Reno?

Well, I mean they were so much bigger. They were established. And we were just the

afterthought. We were just something that, you know, was kind of not really a university. We were the Southern Regional Division. And then we were NSU [Nevada Southern University] by the time I actually started here. There was to rivalry except in our minds because they so far outstripped us in every category. But we were the upstarts.

So tell me about the feeling on the campus, the pride. What was the feeling like among that early student body?

Well, you know, that was 1966 when I was a freshman. Traditional universities have freshman orientation and hazing and that kind of thing. And we were supposed to be wear beanies. And most of us didn't wear beanies. It was at that point in time where the traditional was falling away and the less traditional was rearing its head. There was a big bonfire I remember for freshman orientation. It was probably out there in the general area where the gym is now, the athletic building. It was on Harmon. That was just a dirt rode I think. It might not have been dirt, but it wasn't very impressive. Eastern, my goodness, Eastern was dirt for a good part of its life.

And Maryland Parkway was dirt for a while.

Yeah. Not when I was here. It was fully paved by the time I got here. It didn't go very far out there. So, you know, there was attempt to make it like an eastern college campus or an established college campus. But even then I mean it started life as a commuter campus. People didn't have time. People had other places they had to be, other things they had to be doing. A lot of them had jobs and they were grateful for the chance to get a college education, but they weren't really able to be part of the life of the campus in any meaningful way. And that included me. I mean I had my job, which people came and went and I knew a lot of people over the years. But I've just never been one to really get into organizations. My personal life and my work life have kind of filled my time.

Tell me about any early sporting teaming on campus at all?

Well, the basketball team was pretty much it. I mean there may have been other teams, but they were more in the realm of intramural. Even football wasn't going. There was flag football. I don't think there was any tennis because we didn't have any tennis courts. It was basketball from day one.

That was the biggie.

Yeah, from day one. They played in the gym and then they played down at the old convention center in the rotunda. And students had good seats. We had the best seats in the house. We were on the 50-yard line. We were right there on the floor. Students could do that. And then they got moved behind the baskets and it became less attractive.

So do you remember the days of -- well, you remember the days of Maxson. So you have to remember the days of [Jerry] Tarkanian.

Uh-huh. Yeah.

Were those exciting days on campus?

Well, I was absent from 1975. And I didn't return to campus until '89. So those were kind of the glory years for Maxson and for Tarkanian.

First tell me the early years, getting back to where you were working and going to school.

Did we start having cultural activities, plays and things like that on campus at that time?

Oh, yeah. They had plays right away. They had a theater in Grant Hall I believe it was what they used. There was an art department and there were student pieces around. There were concerts that came in. I went to see Glenn Yarbrough one time. It was more folk-oriented in those earlier years.

You had been impressed with Fiddler on the Roof on the Strip. What about any plays on campus? Anything that impressed you?

Well, they were all pretty -- no. Nothing really stayed with me this long. It was fun. It was something that we did and concerts and all of that. But I don't remember anything striking.

Tell me how you met your husband. You sounded as if you did dating here on campus. You enjoyed that part of your life. How did you meet your husband?

Well, in the library there was -- it must have been 1970 or so. There was a student worker, Claire Quinte, Q-U-I-N-T-E. And there was a librarian named Bob Balonte. They had gotten together. But anyway, Claire worked in acquisitions or in cataloging. Tech Services was just kind of together. And Claire and I became friends. She had gone to Western High School. And she had a brother, a younger brother who was four years younger. And Kathy Howgan at the time -- Kathy Howgan and I and Claire were going to go hiking up at Red Rock. And that was before Red Rock was developed. That was when kids went up to Red Rock and it was pretty wild. And Claire's

brother would not allow this to be. He was going to go with us. We were not going to go up there alone. And Duncan, my husband, was in the Navy at the time. He had gone straight into the Navy from high school. So he and Claire had been friends at Western High School. He called because he was at home on leave. And he talked to Claire. And he was friends with Roger. And Roger said, you know, you need to come with us because these girls can't go up there alone. So the five of us piled in somebody's car and we went up to Red Rock. Of course, my husband had been in Vietnam. And he was due to go back to Vietnam even though he was due to get out in just about five months. He was really unhappy about that. So he and Roger stayed down at the picnic tables and the girls ended up hiking alone anyway. But Duncan had a guitar and Roger had a guitar. And, you know, like I said people made their own entertainment. That's how I met Duncan. He went off to the navy. We didn't keep in touch or anything like that. But when he got out he looked Claire up again. There was a group of us that were friends. We were part of a group and eventually paired off.

Oh, that's great. That's exciting. I love it.

We're still together. It's 37 [years]. We were married in December of '71. That's how many years ago that was.

Wow. That's a lot.

Do you remember anything special -- and we're going to get back to Duncan again later on. Do you remember anything special about the development of Special Collections?

Well, I don't remember anything special before I went there. I was a student worker. And then in my junior year as I said I realized I couldn't be a classroom teacher. About that time I had kind of assessed the possibilities. And I thought I love English, I'm good at English, but I'm never going to make a living as an English major. What can I do? And I liked working in the library I liked the people. I liked the come and go of students. The things that I still like about it were true then. And so I talked to Steve [Powell] and I said, you know, I'd really like to work here. And he said, well, let me see what I can do.

Now, after a while in acquisitions Steve quit his job and he decided that he was going to travel the world. So he went off and he went to Africa and Europe. I don't know where all he went. England. And then he came back. And he talked to Hal Erickson. And Hal hired him in to

be head of Special Collections. So Steve got me in as a temporary employee in Special Collections. And I was like a half-time staff in one spot and a half-time staff -- half in acquisitions and half in Special. Yeah, I think I was half and a half. I don't think I was ever full-time Special.

So I was there when Steve was starting to build his gaming bibliography. It had never been done before. There had never been a published bibliography of gambling books. So I know that he used to bring things to me and I was supposed to sit there basically at the desk and be a receptionist sort of person. And he would bring me things and ask me to look through these books and see if there was a mention of gambling and how much mention of gambling. People would come in and I would try to help them. And I've always had a curious nature about collections. I remember being fascinated with the menus and with the plat maps, which we still have. It's part museum and part library back there. And it always has been. But it was a lot smaller, a lot more manageable. It had like the old telephone directories, you know, things like that that we still have to this day.

Where was the first Special Collections located?

I don't know where it was when it was just the first floor. But on the second floor of the round building they had their offices -- do you remember where government documents was?

Yes.

That was Special Collections and the workroom. The reference librarians had their offices. And I guess that faced east. Generally speaking it was east and south. And Special Collections had a chunk of that. There was a front room and then there was the stacks room in the back.

That's interesting. That's very interesting.

So go ahead and tell me about as time went on you were thinking about a full-time job. So when Steve Powell came back, is that when your job became full time?

Well, I was in acquisitions as a student worker. They put me I think on soft money for a while. That's why I was split in two places. I think that they got full-time money for me in acquisitions. And I left special. And I think Anna Dean must have come in -- no. Pat Harris? Pat Harris was somewhere else. Anna Dean followed me. But I don't really remember her very well. So I don't think that we had much overlap.

Did you ever think about going to become a librarian and get a degree in library science?

I did. I was encouraged at different points to do that. I sort of didn't want to do that kind of thing. I don't really feel like I would be a good manager. Libraries seem to have -- I don't think management is their strong suit. And I didn't really want to be bad at something. I would rather be good at something.

Did you think, though, that -- when I look around today at librarians, management never comes to mind. So is this new?

Well, it wouldn't.

Okay. Get me to lose my job here just because you're leaving.

Well, I mean that's -- there are other things that they do. But they do so many meetings and committees. And they always have. And to me that's just talk, talk, talk. I want to be doing something. There is that. But there's also the fact that there was no library school anywhere geographically near. I went from college to getting married to working. Then my husband went off to graduate school in Indiana. And they had a library school. That's where my husband got his library degree. But we couldn't afford for that. Plus, we kind of didn't really want to be in a big city. We preferred smaller communities where we could actually be part of the community. Duncan also is somebody who temperamentally wants to be in charge. He's an alpha male sort of librarian. So I didn't think that I would be able to find work in a small community as a professional librarian where my husband was the director.

So it worked out. I had my child. I stayed home for three years with our baby and gave her a good start in life before I went back to work. I was able to work in libraries anytime I wanted to. I've got a good resume and good work ethic and good recommendations. So I've never failed to have a job when I wanted one.

What happened between 1975 and 1989?

A lot.

Yes. But I mean you stopped working here.

I left UNLV because we went to Bloomington, Indiana.

So you went to Indiana with him.

I went with him. Oh, yes.

So before you get there I want to know what you -- you got your degree here. What was

graduation like in those days?

I didn't go. I didn't go. Actually when I shifted gears to an English major and I knew I couldn't make a living as an English major, but I liked library work, I worked full time and I started taking one class at a time. So graduation was not until like May of '75 at which point we were already moving to Indiana.

So 1975 is when you moved to Indiana. How long were you in Indiana?

We were there for I think for a full year for his program. And then we were in Kokomo, Indiana until I think -- let's see -- '79. So we were in Indiana for three years, four years.

So he worked as a librarian after library school?

Before he even got his degree he was hired to be the Book Mobile librarian at Howard County at Kokomo, Indiana.

I remember the Book Mobile.

Yeah. And then he and the director built that from a Book Mobile only to a Book Mobile branch setup. And he became the extension services librarian. And then we went to Hays, Kansas. Our daughter was six months old when we moved there. She was almost three when we left. He was the director of the library there. That's one place where I failed to get a library job. My daughter was little and I went for an interview at the personnel office. And he said you have a young daughter; you should be at home with your daughter. Blatant, just didn't say anything about we don't have anything at this time or we'll call if something comes up. You should be home with your daughter.

Is that what you did?

Sort of. I started taking some classes at the college there. I put her in day care for the length of a class period. I felt like it was good for her. She was getting some socialization and I was getting away from her.

You wanted to know what kind of town Hays was. There's two things I can tell you. My husband didn't find this out. But the board chairman called one of his references when he was applying for the director job and said is he black? With the name McCoy.

That's right.

His boss didn't tell him that question had been asked until much later.

The second thing that happened was I was taking classes, again one at a time, thinking I might get an accounting degree. I was in an economics class. And the topic of debtor nations came up. We were talking about the debt here and debt there. And I said, you know, what would happen if the United States ever became a debtor nation, which of course we're hugely a debtor nation now. The classroom burst into laughter. The United States, a debtor nation, this will never happen.

Oh, isn't that something.

So I kind of kept my mouth shut. I talked to the professor one other time one on one. We got to talking about Planned Parenthood because abortion was a huge issue in this community. There was one doctor who would provide abortions. And he was driven to suicide. And my professor and I were talking about Planned Parenthood. And he said they're evil. I said no. They provide reproductive services. They do a lot of things. I said if you don't know a gynecologist you go to Planned Parenthood and find out where you can go. They're evil. They're horrible. I mean that was the attitude. We didn't last long in Hays, Kansas.

I'm surprised you weren't run out. Wow. So where did you go after Hays, Kansas? This is exciting.

I have to say in the same breath I found some of my lifelong friends in Hays, Kansas. People got together. Again, it was a community without a lot going on. So people got together. I joined up with some women who were beginning a baby-sitting coop. We had parties. We had potlucks. We had picnics. We got together. We went for hikes together. And I still travel with these people from Hays, Kansas.

So those are the people that you go with to Canada?

Yes. We went to Canada this time. We've been to different places with them.

Oh, that's fantastic. That's fascinating. Oh, that's great.

So after Hays, three years in Hays, four years in Indiana?

I hope this ends up. Anyway, in 1981 -- my daughter was born in '78 and that's kind of how I remember -- we were in Indiana total from spring of '75 until my daughter was six months old. So that would have been '79, early in '79. We went from there -- she was born in Kokomo. We moved to Hays when she was six months. We moved to Colorado just before she turned three

because she turned three in Colorado. We had a birthday party for her in Hays among the people she knew. And then we moved to Colorado. And we were in Colorado until she was in kindergarten.

And Duncan was Garfield County library director. It was a step up for him. It was a county system as opposed to a single library. It had a better budget. And it was facing a building project. And this is boom times in Colorado. Shale oil was the future. And Garfield County was just -- you couldn't buy any property in Garfield County. Duncan went into the post office and asked the postmaster what's vacant? And he said my brother's got a place. So we rented this huge drafty house that had belonged to the mine manager. That was a coalmining area. There was still a seam of coal burning in the mountain across the Colorado River from our house. So that was a really fun time, too.

And, of course, there was this building project. Duncan got to build four libraries with plans for a fifth while he was there in just a short time. The funding was already in place. He didn't have to deal with the funding. He had to deal with the architects and the planning commission and the county commissioners and his board. And this board was very -- have you ever been to Colorado?

Yes.

A lot of big egos in Colorado. They're "Rocky Mountain High" in Colorado. And he had a lawyer on his board. This is the kind of guy his board chairman was. They had this massive project. Because of change orders from the board, you know, things that they approved that they wanted to change, this project, four libraries, came in \$6,000 over budget. He was going to break the contract. He was going to sue.

No.

Yes. Duncan came home and said I've got to get out of here. He said sooner or later it will be my turn. He said Jim is crazy. Harriett's crazy. He said some of these people are just ranchers and they're in over their heads. Some of them are really not what I want to work with. They're not honorable people. So he started looking. Before the fifth library came on line he started looking. And he found the job in Albany County as the Albany County librarian up in Laramie, Wyoming. So we were in Wyoming for about five years.

Wow. This is amazing.

Well, I told Duncan I'll go anywhere you want to go as long as there's a college so that I have a hope of getting a library job. And in Hays I didn't work. I worked part time for a property manager. But I knew I wasn't cut out for private industry because he would have a rental property that needed a refrigerator. He'd go out and buy a refrigerator. And he'd turn around and sell it to the property owner and put it in the rental. And I'd think he charged him more than he paid for it. And I said, Mary, this is called making a profit and it's legal and it's even moral. So I figured I'm just really not cut out for that kind of work.

Oh, that's funny.

But then in Colorado I worked -- Colorado had a system of regional libraries. The regional library service system they called it. It was part of the Department of Education. And the state was broken up into library regions. And these regions didn't directly service the public. They serviced the libraries. And each of them had different things that they sort of specialized in. In New Castle the Three Rivers Regional Library System was housed. And I was able to get a job with them. And they specialized in doing inner-library loan. That's where I first used OCLC and I first used a computer. Well, I shouldn't say that because at UNLV -- it was UNLV by the time I left -- they put me through a keypunch class. And we had keypunch cards. And we came up with budget numbers. And we did a union catalog for the serials. We were cutting edge. We were cutting edge.

What does OCLC stand for?

At the time it was -- oh, my goodness -- Ohio Consortium of Libraries, something or other. And it became online. It's what they call a cataloging utility. It's like a union catalog. Everybody who's a member has their holdings online. And we would use that to find where a book was housed. And we would facilitate the moving of books from one place to another in the regions.

So Duncan was the library director of the Garfield County Library, which was centered in New Castle. I worked at Three Rivers centered in New Castle. We lived in New Castle, which was not the county seat. But that's where the building was when Duncan came in. It was a compromise between Glenwood Springs and Rifle, which were competing communities on the Colorado River. So I got to live right by the river. I got to hike in the Rocky Mountains. It was

just gorgeous. We would go up and cut firewood in the aspen stands.

So is this why you chose Boulder City when you moved back, because of the kind of life you had lived in those small areas?

Yeah. Yeah, because even then when we moved back in '89 Henderson was growing too much. We didn't want to be in the hustle and bustle of the city. We prefer a small community where you get to know people and activities are centered (indiscernible). It's nice to have Las Vegas over the hill and Henderson over the hill. I certainly avail myself of what's here. But I'm going to be happy settling into a quiet retirement in rural Nevada.

So what was UNLV like when you got back?

It was so much bigger. So much bigger. Of course, I had visited over the years. I wasn't unprepared for it. It wasn't the place I remembered for sure. We were still in the round building. But at that point they had completed the additions.

The big rectangular building.

The big rectangular building. What was it, four or five -- four stories I think. Five stories? Four stories. I think it was four.

Special Collections was on the third floor?

Fourth. They were on the top floor.

Oh, fourth floor then. Okay.

And Tech Services was up there as well. We got back and I started working in October of '89. And that summer they had completed the Xeric Garden between the Barrick Museum and Wright Hall.

Yes. Yes.

That was the first dry landscape on campus unless you count those very early days when there was no landscape. Then it was all desert. Boy, those were dirty days. The wind would blow dirt around. You know, with all the construction on the campus the cover, the desert pavement was gone and it was just dirt. And they'd walk us around, you know, those first days of orientation. And I can remember the upper-class women would walk around and their hair never moved. And the wind was howling. And I said a can of hairspray a day.

Oh, wow.

Anyway, I drifted.

Yes. But that's great. So October of 1989 you came back.

Uh-huh.

And you came back to a full-time job then?

Uh-huh.

How old was your daughter at the time? She was born in, what, '78?

She was born in '78. And now this is '89. She turned 11 the day I started work. And I had a raging head cold. And Paulette Nelson looked at me. She said why didn't you stay home? I said because this is my first day of work. I don't have any sick leave. Oh, I guess that's right.

So it was Paulette and Peter (Michel) and myself. And Ken Shott hired me.

Peter?

Peter Gratton. So we were Peter, Paulette and Mary.

So which department were you hired into?

Into government documents, which I had never worked in before. It was new territory for me. But, you know, I buckled down and I learned it and became very good at it. I was there for seven years I think. I left in '96. I enjoyed the whole experience.

Ken left along the way and was replaced by Maggie Pahramovich, who was wonderful. Ken's strength was his reference. He could find anything.

Maggie was organized. Oh, I've never known anyone to be so organized. She is now a dean at the University of Wyoming where I was a cataloger for a time by the way. But she's moved up the ladder. She was unflappable. She was patient. I mean she is my ideal librarian. She had it all. She was good at the work of the department. She was organized. She had a memory like an elephant. She knew people.

She used to go and talk to the Review-Journal about the future of the Internet because the Internet was so new that the R-J didn't know anything about it. So she's the one that went there and talked to them about what was possible, what was likely coming and all that. So, yeah, she was great.

And then there was Amy, Amy Quinn. She started out as Amy Piscatelli and got married. She was somebody in the documents world who managed the list serve. At the time list serves

were the way things went. There weren't websites so much as there were list serves. And she managed the government documents list serve. So she knew everybody. She knew lots of people in the documents world.

It was an interesting time. And I left to go back to acquisitions. And I worked there for ten years.

And then back to Special.

And then back to Special.

Of all the jobs that you've had at UNLV which one did you like best?

All of them. All of them. I really loved working in documents. You know, I became good at it. I have a quirky kind of memory. I don't remember everything. I don't have a photographic memory. But if I look at something and somebody comes along later and says what have you got, I can say, oh, I've got this book. I did that with you one time. Remember? I plucked that index to the Historical Society publications.

Yes.

And that was early on. But if I see it sometimes, not always, I can go back to it. And that came in real handy. And my behind-the-scenes job in documents was checking them in. And I can't just check in because you have to look at them. So I remember the first day. I had been there not so very long. And Ken was looking for something. He was looking for a list of nations and their memberships, what international organizations do they belong to. And he was looking and he couldn't think of anything. And he talked to Peter. Maybe it was Sidney by that time. Paulette had moved back to cataloging. Sidney Watson was in there. Nobody could think of anything. So Ken turned to me and said, Mary, can you think of anything? I said yes, I can. And I was able to go to the state department publication and show him a list. And I showed him where the annual compilation of this document was where we had it. I can't even remember the names of some of these publications. But if you sat me down in that office as it was configured I could still walk over to it. And that was a fun job. I really liked that job.

And acquisitions -- in acquisitions I really got into the business of being in a library a lot more than in any other job. I was in touch with Korea. I was in touch with Turkey. I was in touch with Europe. I was buying books from all corners of the world. And I would have to find

out where to go to get these things.

Wow. That sounds exciting.

It was oddly enough. I mean it's a desk job. But still you're out and about. And I had to know about the university budget and I had to know about the laws that govern record keeping. And I just had to know a lot of different stuff that I had never had to really know before. And I really felt like I was part of something big there, you know. I got the credit card. And I was off to the races with that.

That's great. Who was library dean at the time that you got back in '89?

That was Mary Dale, Mary Dale Deacon.

So you were under Mary Dale this time. And then who after Mary Dale?

Matt Simon.

And then Myuong-ja.

Well, Myuong-ja was interim after Mary Dale. And then Matt came in. And then Myuong-ja was interim again. And then it was Ken Marks. And then Patty. So if you add in Hal Erickson, I've had a bunch of different deans.

That's right. When you think back now, as you're getting ready to leave the library --

And I didn't mention I really did love working in Special Collections, too.

Oh, I know you do.

I'm having a great time.

That's great. As you get ready to walk away from all of this, what are some of the -- just give me maybe two of the great memories.

Oh, my gosh. You're talking about my whole life practically. Only two. And they have to be great.

Just a couple of memories, things that you'll never forget or a person that you'll never forget here at UNLV.

I don't know that I'll ever forget very many people here. Like I said it's been my whole life. That ride in the book lift is a highlight.

Was it as good as the ride on the Flight Line, though?

No. It was a lot more enclosed. I only did that once. And they thought I was crazy. But, you

know, I weighed less than a lemon. And I made sure I wasn't likely to plunge to the bottom.

That's great.

There's so many I can't. I really can't. It's too many. Little flashes of images here and there. I just can't do it.

Mary, this has been wonderful. I thank you so much.

You are so very welcome. May history think of me fondly.

That's right.