

An Interview with Senator Joe Neal

Chapter Three:

Quest to Increase Taxes

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

March 6, 2006 Interview

The Boyer Las Vegas Early History Project

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes 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. In several cases, photographic sources (housed separately) accompany the collection as slides or black and white photographs.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

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Chapter 3 Overview

In Chapter 3, Senator Joe Neal continues with details of the years he spent in service to the state of Nevada. He starts with his part in the development of law suits that were behind the consent decree, mentioning lawyers and other individuals who were instrumental in getting laws passed that required hotels and unions to integrate.

Another of Senator Neal's passions was getting the state to increase taxes on the gaming industry. His viewpoint was that the tourists drawn to Las Vegas by gaming needed the services provided by county and city as much as citizens living here. Therefore; the gaming industry should pay their fair share of taxes to provide these services. This began around 1987, when Joe was serving on the Senate Taxation Committee, and he speaks in detail about the reluctance of unions and politicians to get on board with this idea.

Joe recounts his many Senatorial campaigns and attributes his repeated success to his willingness to go door-to-door. Besides being elected to the Nevada Senate several times, Joe also ran for the office of Governor and that of County Commissioner. He recalls the individuals who helped him in his campaigns, and also the people he ran against, naming persons who are familiar to many Nevadans.

Senator Neal was concerned with the decay of the state's infrastructure and crafted a bill that would create a mag-lev high speed transportation system. The idea was that this system would connect the high-density population centers in the North with those in the South, permitting people in the sparsely populated areas to commute to jobs, yet maintain residence in rural towns. He also "adopted" Lincoln County so that voters living there would have a voice in the Senate.

Readers are treated to a detailed overview of the history of the Economic Opportunity Board in Nevada, and Joe recounts the many changes in EOB leadership and the consequences of decisions that were made. He also makes predictions about the outcome of the 2006 gubernatorial race, backing up his predictions with his political knowledge and insight.

Table of Contents

Chapter 3

Further information on Consent Decree; mention of Frank Donbaugh, Stuart P. Herman, Earl White, Charles Keller, Roger Foley, Reed; Howard Cannon sponsoring Bobby Archie through law school; Joe Neal serving on Senate Taxation Committee; attempts to increase taxes paid by gaming industry; resistance from gaming; no support from other politicians; gaming industry supporting candidates; opinions on whether or not legislative body will go for increased gaming taxes.....1-5

Recalling 1976 Senate race against Bob Bailey; accusations of church burnings; brother arrested, then released; borrowing campaign slogan from Shirley Chisholm; running against preacher A.J. Thompson in 1980; support for reelection from Victory Baptist Church; Spurgeon Daniels, Sr., as campaign manager; hiring school children to pass out literature; further details on '84 and '88 elections; unopposed in '92.....6-12

Recollections of Spurgeon Daniels, Colleen Perkins; Uri Clinton and the '96 campaign; position on nuclear waste and the Test Site; last Senate election in 2000; 1979, Chair of Human Resources Committee; racial discrimination in Las Vegas; filing to run for Governor; Jan Jones persuaded to run for Governor, Rose McKinney-James as Lt. Governor; entering county commissioner race against Yvonne Atkinson-Gates.....12-18

Democratic nominee for Governor in 2002; gaming tax increase introduced again in 2003; not supported by Democratic Party; taking issue with Shelley Berkley; pushing for high-speed transportation within the state (maglev train); "adopting" Lincoln County to be its defender; nuclear waste argument continued with Governor Miller; strong opinions on status of tourists; taxing gaming to provide services for tourists.....18-24

Attempts to rescind law that allowed Senators to return to employment after Senate session; anecdote about Ron King; mention of Shed Elliott, Donald Clark; detailed opinion on state of Economic Opportunity Board; opinions and anecdotes regarding the power of the press.....25-29

More details on EOB; mention of Claude Logan, Elaine Walbrack, Contrel, Hoggard, James Tyre, Serial Staples; bringing in MICA to help right things; putting Hannah Brown in charge; replacing Jean Childs; losing Head Start program that came with 12.5 million dollars; opinions on who will be next Governor.....30-34

Preface

Senator Joe Neal shares many memories of his childhood in Mound, Louisiana. He recalls his mother leaving him and his older brother Willie with a woman named Bea so that she could go to Alexander to get a job. He and Willie were ages 2 and 4, respectively, and were frequently left on their own. Willie would leave periodically for hours at a time and come back with food. He eventually took Joe to meet the couple who were supplying the meals, Mary and Gowens Prayder. This couple took the two boys in and over time, the boys began to call them Momma and Daddy.

School for the black children of the plantation was held in Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church. Joe attended classes there through fourth grade, and then was bussed to Thomas Town High and Elementary School. He gives many details of the experiences he had and the teachers who taught him. He also recalls signs and symptoms of the racial prejudice blacks encountered down South in the thirties and forties.

Joe's birth mother came out to Las Vegas and was followed by her oldest son in 1951 or '52. He returned to Louisiana in 1954 to bring Joe out West. Senator Neal recalls the stark dustiness of the landscape and the rental home he shared with his mother and other boarders on D Street. He tried his hand at several menial jobs and then took his brother's suggestion to join the Armed Forces in order to get a college education.

Senator Neal relates the many opportunities that he experienced in the military, including working as an AP, undergoing desert survival training, and working at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico. After 4 years in the Air Force, Joe enrolled at Southern University in January of 1959. He had decided that he wanted to work for blacks in government after learning about Rosa Parks, the bus boycott, and the Little Rock situation.

Joe shares his opinions on government principles, views on Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath, details his running for a seat in the Nevada legislature and serving 32 years there as a state senator. He is proud of having authored and sponsored the state fire law, has strong views on whether to increase the grade point average for University students, and expresses his intention to see that government works **for** the people.



JOSEPH (JOE) M. NEAL JR.

Democrat

Clark County Senatorial

District No. 4

Retired

[Email](#)

Born: July 28, 1935; Mounds, Louisiana.

Educated: Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, B.A., Political Science and History; postgraduate work in law; Institute of Applied Science, Chicago, Illinois, civil identification and criminal investigation.

Married: Widower.

Children: Charisse, Tania, Withania, Dina Amelia, Joseph.

Military: United States Air Force, 1954-58.

Legislative Service: Nevada Senate, 1973-99--three special and 14 regular sessions; Member, Interim Finance Committee, 1985-86; Assistant Majority Floor Leader, 1985; Assistant Minority Floor Leader, 1987; Minority Floor Leader, regular session, 1989; President pro Tempore, 1991; Member, Legislative Commission, 1997-98.

Affiliations: Order of Elks Lodge No. 1508; Clark County Democratic Central Committee; Nevada State Democratic Central Committee; Phi Beta Sigma; Member and past Chairman, Clark County Economic Opportunity Board.

Personal and Professional Achievements: Outstanding Community Service, Local Branch, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1976; A.A.U.F. of the Year, 1977-78; Outstanding Civic Work, First A.M.E. Church, 1978; Nevada Legislature - In Appreciation, CCTA TIP, 1979; Friend of Education Award, NSEA, 1986; Service to Community, Forty-second Western Province Council, Las Vegas Alumni Theta Sigma Chapters, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., 1989; Honorary Member for Continuous Support and Dedication to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee, 1989; Century Club Member for Outstanding Support of Nevada State AFL-CIO C.O.P.E., 1989; Appreciation for Outstanding Services, Loyalty and Support to All Mankind, Affirmative Action Committee, Lower Colorado Region, Bureau of Reclamation, United States Department of the Interior, 1990; Guest Speaker, Lewis F. Cottrell No. 339, 1991; Reverend Jesse Louise Jackson Distinguished Political Award for Service Rendered on Behalf of All the Citizens of Nevada, NAACP, 1991; Elijah Lovejoy Award, Order of Elks Grand Lodge IBPOEW, 1992; Support and Dedication to Working Men and Women, Local Joint Board, Culinary Local No. 226 and Bartenders Local No. 165, 1992; Outstanding Support, Alpha Temple, Paran Lodge 1508, 1992; Liberty Award, National Alliance Against Race and Political Oppression, 1992; Distinguished Service to Libraries, Las Vegas Library District, 1993; Appreciation for Support, Alpha Temple No. 1180, 1994; Outstanding Achievement for the Community in Celebration of African American Month, Clark High School, 1994; Appreciation and Gratitude Award, Friends of Clark County Law Library, 1995; Lifetime Achievement Award for Public Service, Reno-Sparks Branch No. 1112, NAACP; Lifetime Commitment Award, Nevada AFL-CIO; Civil Liberty Award, American Civil Liberties Union-Nevada; past Chairman, Greater Las Vegas Plan.

This is Claytee White and today is March 6, 2006. Once again, I'm in the home of Joe Neal. How are you this morning?

I'm fine.

Okay. What I'd like to do is --

Is it March 6th or March 7th or March 3rd?

Oh, no. It's got to be -- oh, I can easily look in my --

I'm just kidding you. It's March 6th.

Is that what I said?

Yeah, yeah. It's March 6th.

Okay, great. Before we get started with what we're going to talk about today, the last time you said something about the consent decree. That consent decree made it possible for blacks to get more jobs in the gaming industry.

Yes, yes.

Okay. I want to talk just a tiny bit more about the consent decree because we've gotten several stories about it. One story is that the NAACP was behind it because there was a new lawyer in town who got it going.

No, no. He did not have anything to do with the consent decree. The consent decree was mostly developed by me and my contact with people that I knew in the Department of Justice, particularly a person by the name of Frank Donbaugh, who had a supervisory position and could direct lawyers to go anywhere within the country to handle Civil Rights problems.

Normally, at that particular time, the Department of Justice did not file two suits in one particular area. In this particular case, because of my presence and knowing Frank, we did have two suits filed here, one that dealt with the building trades union to integrate the building trades -- the plumbers, electricians, iron workers, et cetera -- and the other was to file against the hotels. And that decree was developed by the Justice Department, which said, in essence, that the hotel would hire 12 percent blacks in all categories.

I asked them to send someone in to file the suit, and I would do the legwork and help to develop that particular case for them. They sent in -- well, two lawyers actually worked on that case out of Department of Justice. One was Stuart P. Herman, who was there, and another one

was a little guy who had not passed the bar at the time by the name of Lawrence Green. These were both Department of Justice officials, and then, of course, there was Frank Donbaugh who was kind of spearheading this thing...Of course, I could look up his number. He lives in Maryland and he's retired now. He could give you a lot of details about that as to what actually happened.

Well, that is great. I really appreciate that.

This was the time, the 70s, when we began to get some black lawyers into this area of the state. I think Earl White and a couple other people, lawyers that --

Well, who you had initially was Charles Keller, back in the early 60s, admitted to the bar. Then following Charles Keller, you had Earl White and a gentleman by the name of Reed. I forget Reed's first name. But he went on to become a Justice of the Peace during that particular time. In fact, he was one of the first people elected as Justice of the Peace. He had worked for John Foley in the federal court as a clerk. He had made that connection with the Foley family.

Well, the Foley family was very big during those particular times in terms of Civil Rights issues. In fact, Roger Foley, who became a federal judge, was the first white public official who said that the gaming commission had the authority to enforce the Civil Rights laws in the state. In fact, he wrote an AG opinion on that, and you can look that up. I don't know the number of that, but he did do that. That was Roger Foley, for whom Reed worked as a clerk. Well, they were still the premier family in this state in terms of legal things. In fact, they all are very good friends of mine. I'm very good friends with Roger, who I think has since passed, and George, who's still living, and Joe Foley and John. I served with John.

Now, is Reed a black attorney?

Reed was a black attorney, yeah.

Okay. So those three guys were all black: Keller, White and Reed.

Right.

Now, were any of those -- I know Keller is from New York and he was already an attorney. He was already there independent and well-to-do when he came.

Right.

At one time our politicians here would help young men go to law school. If they were back in Washington, D.C. going to law school, they would make sure that they had a job.

And they could go to either one of those law schools, Howard or one of the others back there. Did they ever help any of the young black men go to school like that?

One. That was Bobby Archie. Bobby Archie went to law school, and he was primarily supported by a Mormon guy by the name of Howard Cannon. They would go back and they would work in the capitol as capitol policemen. Bobby was one of those particular persons that actually went back and took advantage of that opportunity at that particular time. I don't know of any other person. Of course, he has since come back. I think in the 70s he came back, and he began to practice law here on his own. Then he ran into some problems.

One of the things that you are known to have fought for throughout your career was an increase -- this is a completely different subject -- was an increase of taxes for the gaming industry.

Yes.

Tell me about the beginning of that fight and what happened through the years with that fight and why you began to champion that.

Well, it actually happened in the mid 80s, about 1987, when I was serving on the Senate Taxation Committee. One person on that committee by the name of Don Mellow was attempting to increase the taxes on gaming. I sat there and I watched that particular process develop. He had a certain percentage that he wanted, and he had to settle for a quarter percent. He was told by the gaming industry at that particular time that they would go with the quarter percent, and then they would look and see how much money they were making, and then they would come back and increase their own taxes. That never happened.

I was sitting there listening to all of these particular conversations by the lobbies of the gaming industry, saying that they would do these things. So we waited. We began to get in dire straights and at the same time saw the mega resorts take off. Here in Clark County, I saw the effects of gaming on the community, especially the increase in tourism. I began to look at the tourists not as a money-making proposition for the people but as temporary residents, meaning, of course, that if they are temporary residents, then they have to have police protection, water, and medical services. They utilize our roads, and take advantage of just about all of those things that a normal resident would have to take advantage of in terms of services within this community.

My position was that if the taxes were not collected from the casinos to pay for those services, then that bill would fall to the residents that were living here and they would have to pay that in terms of increased property taxes or fees on automobiles and insurance and all of that. I saw all of that begin to develop. In fact, from 1987 until about mid '97, we had something like a 200-percent increase in fees and taxes, you see, because the gaming industry was not paying its fair share.

So now, when you proposed this to the public, to the gaming -- who speaks for the gaming industry, by the way?

Well, they had the Nevada Resort Association, and they also had the chamber here locally that was speaking for them. Then you have a side group called the Nevada Taxpayers Association which did not want to get involved in this particular issue, even though I believe that they really understood the problem.

So when you explain it like that -- to me it's crystal clear. When you would explain it like that, did your colleagues in the assembly agree? Did they --

No. No. In fact, when I first started introducing the bill -- and I must have introduced about four or five of them -- I did not get a single person to go on the bill until later, when I had Senator Snyder actually sign on one of the bills with me. Everybody else was literally afraid. This was a result of the gaming industry becoming very strong.

You see, when I first went into the legislature in '72 -- elected in 1972 and my first session was '73 -- in that particular session I observed that the political dominated the economical, which meant that when elected you had the authority to make decisions about your community and about the state. But that shifted in 1960 when List was elected. Then gaming began to flex its muscles in terms of electing individuals. From that particular point on, they began to put a lot of money into political races and became the primary support of many of the candidates.

You could not get a large organization like the Culinary Union to go against gaming. They always supported gaming because they felt that if you tax gaming somehow you were taking money away from them, even though that was not the case. That was not the case in terms of how gaming was being taxed. The gaming industry was being taxed on gaming revenue, you see, particularly the gross amount of the gaming revenue. What we had with the employees, the

dealers in most of the houses -- and it's still the case today -- was not organized. So you were not dealing with the labor organization as such. The labor organization was organized in other areas.

See, there are five areas of gaming. You've got your bar, which is your cocktail waitresses and your bartenders. You've got your food there. That's all connected. You've got the rooms. You've got gaming. Then you've got what you call others. That's your shops and things of that sort.

So retail and the convention and --

Yeah. So they were organized in those particular areas. I had to point out to them and the case that I made, I said, "Look, we're not even talking about those areas. If gaming is slack in those particular areas, if they're slack in the room service or they're slack in the food and beverages, they're not going to send those people over to become dealers. They don't do it that way."

Of course, they knew that their argument did not hold water, but it was just that connection had grown over a period of time so that they felt very close to the gaming operation. And they felt that if they went against them that they would actually destroy the union by not negotiating with them. That's what it all boiled down to because the Culinary Union did not have the strength that you would see of a normal union organization. They were kind of like a house union, which depended upon the boss' acceptance for them to stay in the house, you see.

So are we going to ever have a legislative body or bodies strong enough to go against gaming and increase those taxes?

The question is: Can you? Yes. But will you? I don't think so because as long as the legislator feels that there's something about that title that enhances his prestige, then he knows that he has to go to gaming to get that money in order to maintain that prestige; that he's not going to fight to gain it. You would often hear, "Why bite the hand that feeds you?" And the other statement that you normally hear is, "Why kill the goose that laid the golden egg?"

And my position has been, since I heard that one most often, "If the goose is crapping all over the place, then you have to get some of the gold to help clean up the mess." So that's been my position on that and the answer to some of these people who shared those particular views.

How has that stance affected you? Do you think your treatment by gaming would

have been different in any way?

Oh, yes. If I had played ball with gaming, you know, I could have gotten a lot of campaign money. If you go back and look at the record, when it comes to campaign contributions, I got less than anybody. And from gaming -- see, gaming, I guess they figured me out after my first election. In that second election they actually went after me, and they continued to do that each time I came up.

How would they go after you?

Well, by putting somebody in the race. You know, they started with Bob Bailey in --

In '75?

'76.

Tell me about that race.

Well, they had Bob Bailey. Bob Bailey had some connection with the Aladdin Hotel at that particular time. A guy by the name of Ash Resnick, he's big here. During my first session, I was just giving them hell the normal way I do because I was elected for four years and I didn't feel that I should wait around to try to do anything because I might not be there the next four years. You try to do what you have to do during the time period that you were there.

Bob called me up near the end of that first session and wanted to have a lunch meeting with me, so I met with him out at the Aladdin. He wanted to talk to me about how I was doing and how was it up there at the legislature. I'm sitting there listening, and I'm not as dumb as I look. I'm saying, "Well, this guy's going to run against me." So they did. He got into the race, and he raised a tremendous amount of money. I was told that he had something like \$60,000 in his race. I only had 12.

But he didn't live in this area, did he?

No, no. This district covered the area that he lived in.

I see. Okay.

Yes. He filed. Of course, when I got word of that, it was early enough for me to put my plan into place. I knew that I was not going to be getting any money and that he was probably going to have a lot of money to do a lot of things with. The people that I dealt with in the community to help me -- you know, I know dealing with the poor community. I have got to think

ahead, so I got the people that normally would do things for me to do it kind of early, like help make my signs. I took the signs and stashed them in my garage here until the election came. That's what actually happened. Of course, as it turned out, he did hire some of the people that would work for me to do his stuff, you see, and he had the money to do it.

Of course, that was a funny election. During that particular period, we had some burning of churches here in the district and police trying to get me out at night, calling me up around 2 o'clock in the night saying, "Well, this church is burning out there. Why don't you go see about it?" And things like that. I said, "Yeah, uh-huh." I don't play that game. My training was such that I wasn't going to fall for that particular bait. They had about three or four churches that were burned during that election and they tried to associate me with it. In fact, they had picked up one of my brothers and thrown him in jail.

Why would you burn a church?

I don't know. That's what my mother said. My mother was living at the time. She said, "No, look, hey, my child, I didn't bring him up to burn no churches, now. Don't try to put that on him."

What kind of strategy would that be?

Well, you see, one of the things you have to understand is that I had made inroads -- see, I'm Catholic and I'm operating in a Baptist environment --

Right. Yes.

-- and the Holiness environment. So the Holiness Church, I had made inroads into that particular church in terms of friendship with the bishop, with Mother Porter and all of them there. They were very appreciative of me because I would attend the church and just sit through all of the services. And if I had something to donate, I would donate to the church. They wanted to break that because they saw that as a means of my election, you see.

So when they tried to put that on me, I wouldn't fall for it. Of course, I couldn't say whether or not Bob was a part of it, but it was during that particular election. They finally arrested a guy with the last name of Mason, and he went to jail for that. But they had my brother down in there.

I remember I had befriended an attorney that had come into town. He was black and was

living up north. He had passed the bar here. His name was Alexander White. He got killed here in an accident. So I asked Alexander White -- of course, he had moved down here -- "Look, you go down there and talk to my brother and find out where in the hell he was out that night and what actually happened."

But due to my friendship with some of the policemen down there, because I used to give the policemen hell and some of them really felt that I was doing the right thing -- one of the guys was -- I can't think of his name right now. But he did the lie detector test for the police department. So he got my brother and put him on the machine. He called me up. I don't know whether or not it was illegal for him to do that, but he did. He called me up and said, "Joe, look, your brother wasn't nowhere near that damn thing. He was nowhere near those churches. They should have to turn him loose." And eventually they did.

But it was a funny thing that happened in that particular race. With Bob being a radio and TV personality, they figured that with me being from the South and speaking Southern lingo and him being very glib and proper in his speech, that he could very well out-talk me in terms of this particular race. But what he did not understand was that my mind was of a greater passion that came from the heart. You get me into a crowd of Baptist people and I could preach a sermon for you, you see. And he could not do that.

One of the things that I did in that particular race, knowing that he was going to have the money, is I borrowed this from Shirley Chisholm. Shirley Chisholm was the first black lady to get elected to Congress. She had written a book, Unbought and Unbossed. I took that title and put it across my sign, "Unbought and Unbossed."

I remember driving down Jackson Street in front of the New Town Tavern, now they call it. It was the old Town Tavern at the time. There were a couple of black guys standing on the corner. I was driving slowly. I heard them as I was passing by say, "Who is Joe running against?" Of course, I had this sign up saying "Unbossed" on the top of my car. He said, "Who is Joe running against?" And somebody said, "Bob Bailey." And I could hear it plain as day, he said, "I know that nigger is bought." That's what he said. That's what they said, a quote, "I know that nigger's bought." And I said, "Okay, the sign is speaking about me, but they're interpreting it another way." I said, "Okay, this is a good sign."

Of course, when the election came, Bob went down the tube. The next four years they ran a popular preacher against me, A.J. Thompson, from Victory Baptist Church. A.J. came out with a slogan, "Less talk, more action," which is saying that I was talking too much and wasn't getting any action done. So he was very popular at that time. The church must have had something on the order of 700, 800 people. I'm sitting up one night thinking, well, I've got some friends in this church who have supported me in the last two elections. I don't want to antagonize the Baptist crowd because this is what they were going after. You know, now they discovered that I'm Catholic, so maybe they could do it, but couldn't say it because it would have brought in the religious thing.

That's right.

But, you see, they put up a guy. So I'm looking at this and I'm saying, yes, they're running him because of that. So one night about 2 o'clock in the morning, I'm thinking about how I'm going to deal with this popular preacher in this election. There is nobody, just he and I, you know. And a thought occurred to me, "Joe, put these words on your literature that you pass out to the people: Joe Neal might not have done all that we have wanted him to do, but God knows he tried." So A.J. went down the tubes on that one.

So now, did you have support from Victory Baptist?

Oh, yes, I had the support within the church. See, what a lot of people don't understand about the black community is that the black community wouldn't elect a preacher if there is nobody else of comparable value in their minds to do the service.

(End side 1, tape 1.)

I was saying that Sloan said that money does not affect your election. He said, "If money could affect your election, you would not be here." Up until that point, I did not see it that way. He was giving me some news. The only thing I knew is that I would get out and try to sell my ideas and go amongst the people, find out what their needs and wants were, and try to represent that interest in the legislature. That's what I was doing. When he told me that, I said, "Well, maybe I've got something here; that I don't have to fear these guys with the big bucks anymore as long as I keep doing what I'm doing." And that's what I proceeded to do.

Of course, after 12 years in the legislature, Ruby Duncan decided to run her son, Dave

Phillips. He has now gone to Howard, and he's got his law degree, and he's back. She made the statement that, "Yes, I helped get Joe Neal elected, but now I'm going to run my son." I said, okay, fine. He got quite a bit of money, quite a bit of money. They put up a hell of a fight. They had a lot of people that they could bring into their camp, people that I thought were supporting me and had moved to their side. I looked at this and said, okay, fine, I'll just go ahead and do what I have to do.

I always had one law person that worked with me in all of these elections, and that was Spurgeon Daniels -- Spurgeon Daniels, Sr., because he's got a son with the same name. Spurgeon Daniels and I are both Catholics and we go to the same church. So we've been friends. Of course, Daniels was like my campaign person. He would work with me. When we had problems with adult volunteers we said, "Daniels, we don't have much money." We would get the school kids on the weekend and pay them two bucks an hour or five bucks an hour or whatever. The kids made a lot of money off of us during that time. We had an army of kids. See, one of the things about kids in an election is to have them pass out literature because we didn't have anything to mail out.

The kids would actually become our mail persons. So we would give the kids this information and turn them loose in the area. The kids just walked. They didn't have to stop and talk to anybody. Yeah. So that way we would flood the community with material. We would not concentrate on Democrat or Republican or anything. We'd just go from house to house, concentrating on houses in a general area and covering the district that way. A lot of those kids would do the job for us.

When Election Day came, we would take the money that we had and pay the maximum to an individual to work on the polls for us. At that time if I had enough money to hire 20 or 30 people at a hundred dollars a day, I would pay them a hundred dollars a day. I would not try to save the money for myself or for anybody else. That's the way we invoked the loyalty in those people that actually worked the polls. Sometimes we would just pay one guy to just walk around and see what was happening and report anything that he saw that was unusual, you see.

So what do you mean by "work the polls"?

When I say "work the polls," that means during the election day you would be handing out material to people coming into the polls and also seeing what the other people are doing and

seeing what they're handing out and how they're talking to people and all that stuff. Also, we had people to go inside to take a look and see if you've got anybody that actually would be working the polls. In fact, we did catch a few people and had to get them relieved from the polls.

So what does that mean?

Well, because they were working for some of the other candidates.

Oh, I see.

Of course, one example of that is following the election with Phillips. I think that was in '84 through '88. Or was it one of those elections I did not have an opponent? I had a free run. Of course, we have '72. We ran again in '84.

So '76 was Bob Bailey.

Yeah, '76, yeah.

Do you think '80 was Thompson, or was that a free year?

No, no. That was not a free year. That was not a free year. In '80 -- because we would run and we would take -- it was '72.

In '72 did you run unopposed?

No, no. We ran against Woodrow Wilson in '72. Then '76. Four years later would be '80 that I ran again. And the next time would be in '84. Next would be in '88. It was in '92 that I ran unopposed.

Oh, okay. So who was '88?

I think they put out Billy McKirdy.

So now, that's a name that I don't recognize. Tell me about Billy McKirdy.

Billy McKirdy is kind of a little preacher around here. He's with the Holiness Church. He gets involved in a lot of activities. He called himself a campaign person then. He got in the race. And also in that race, I think, was Gene Collins. Gene Collins turned out to be a Republican at that time. I think he had been elected to the Assembly, and he decided to run against me as a Republican. Of course, I just told them in my campaign literature that I would never switch.

I like that.

Of course, in '92 we had dealt with the pension. I think I was unopposed in that particular race.

Now, when you're unopposed, what is your campaign like?

Nobody files against you, so you just file and you are automatically on the ballot in the general election with nobody else.

So do you do any campaigning in your community?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I campaign. You still go around and talk to people and you meet people. But you are not under any pressure because the people then know, hey, he's unopposed.

Did you campaign in the churches? Did you go to the churches and give speeches while you were campaigning?

We hardly went to churches to give speeches unless they set up a time period for that or you would go to church and you would be introduced. What we would do is make sure that the people who came to church had literature put on their cars. If they had the window open, we'd slide it into the car and let it drop on the seat. But we didn't go to church and ask preachers to introduce us. I never would allow myself to do that. I would go to church, and I would sit there, and people would introduce me. Now, if they ask you to come up and say something, then yes.

Okay, good. Tell me about Spurgeon Daniels, Sr.

Spurgeon is an old friend of mine and has been. We're still friends.

Is he from Louisiana?

Yes, he's from Louisiana. He's from New Orleans. Yeah, he's from New Orleans. He's one of the best friends. Next to my older brother, he is a brother to me. He's been with me in most all of my ventures with the exception of the first election. He was there, but he was not active as a person in my campaign. Then he got involved in the second election.

Of course, there was another person, a woman who worked in the first two elections. Her name was Colleen Perkins, and she worked with me. She was my connection to the Holiness Church because she was a Holiness person. She has since passed. Well, see, I knew how to do polling, and she would do the polling for me.

So explain that to me.

Well, she would go door to door. I would tell her, "Okay, go hit this street, skip the next street, and ask people about what you think about Senator Neal." She would come back, and we would calculate in terms of the area, the precincts that we were dealing. I said, "Hey, there ain't

no way in the world that Woody or Bob Bailey is going to be able to win this."

So who was your opponent in 1996?

That would have been -- let's see. '96 and we're going into 2000, right? Okay. I'm trying to think who we had in '96.

We can easily find that.

Yeah, you have to go back and look that up because I think in 2000 we had Uri Clinton to run.

So your last election was 2004? No.

No, no. Well, Uri Clinton would have been in '96.

'96, okay.

Yeah, he would have been in '96 because he was back in town then. I knew him ever since he was a baby. He called me up one day and asked me to go to lunch with him. He told me, "Well, Senator, I would never run against you." I said, "Okay, fine. Look, I don't have too much time to stay up there. I'll probably run for another election. You can stay here and get your law practice all together, and you'll probably be ready by then."

But the offer from gaming was too appealing to him. In fact, we got word that the gamblers told him, "If you can take Joe Neal out, you don't have to work another day in your life." So he called me up and said, "I decided to run." I said, "Why now?" He said, "Well, I decided to run." I said, "Oh, okay. Fine. Come on out there." He did the thing about nuclear waste. He messed around there and used one of the articles from the Las Vegas Sun without their approval with a picture and all of that, and they sued him.

Somehow people felt that I was vulnerable on the issue of nuclear waste. What I had always argued was that when you take the Nevada Test Site and the amount of testing that we have done up there -- there were not going to be any hotels built up there -- it seems to be a logical place to store nuclear waste. But to come right out and campaign for it, I never did do that. I would always put my remarks into the *Review Journal* so I could go back over the years and see exactly what I said. They tried to tie that to me because my position was there was no problem with the Test Site, but there was a problem with the transportation of nuclear waste, bringing the casts across the country with the infrastructure of the bridges and all of that stuff that you had to

take into account. That was my position, even though I had worked for Atomic Energy and that's what they are looking at. I had a Q clearance since I was in the Air Force in '56. You know, Q clearance did associate you with Atomic Energy.

I did not personally have any fears against radiation. I was always of the mind-set that if you had a fear, you sought ways to overcome those fears. It was my position that you could do the same thing with nuclear waste. Rather than accepting the fact that radiation was dangerous, look at it in terms of how can you curtail that danger, you see. That's where I was coming from on that particular issue. But in my mind, they tried to plant the idea that I was looking to bring nuclear waste to the Test Site.

I said, "My position is let's look at it and see how they can control it. The political argument is that you have approximately 38 states within these United States that produce that waste. When you compare those states and the number of Congressmen that they have with the number of Congressmen that we have in our state, there ain't no way in hell you're going to be able to keep the waste out of here. If they decide to vote against you and put it here, they're going to put it at the Test Site."

Of course, they didn't like me coming at them in such a logical way politically, so they said, "Well, you're for it." I wasn't for it. I was dealing with the reality of the situation.

Right. So then your last election was 2000?

My last election was 2000.

And were you opposed by anyone in 2000?

Yeah, but I don't remember the name of the person.

Okay. So that was the last one?

Yeah.

So we can get that easily.

Now, I want to go back, and I want you to explain what happened during your first term, those first four years, when you ticked off the gaming industry so much that they started running someone against you right away?

Well, you see, they could read you in terms of what your philosophy was. If you had a streak of independence about you, then they knew they were not going to be able to control you. I

was not in the gaming setting. My job was with Reynolds Electrical Engineering Company. They knew that they could not put any hooks on me; that I was a straight-talker. I would get up and tell them just what was on my mind. There was no bowing and scraping on my part.

And so it had nothing to do with taxes in the beginning?

Yeah.

It was just your whole --

Yeah, it was just my whole attitude of being there, an "uppity nigger" as they might say.

Okay, good. That's what I wanted to get clear.

I want to talk about some of your chairmanships. What was your first chairmanship?

My chairmanship was with the Human Resources Committee.

Do you remember when that was?

That was in 1979.

Wow. So the second term and you're already a chair?

Yeah.

Do you remember any of the bills that passed at that time?

Well, we mostly had educational bills during that particular period. That was the committee that handled all of the education, welfare issues, and things of that sort. I can't remember exactly what the bills were, but they have it on file within the legislature.

When there was an article -- this is a pretty recent article -- you were quoted -- and this is a completely different subject -- they interviewed Eugene Miehring over at the University and Michael Green at the community college, and they were talking about whether or not Las Vegas really deserved the name "Mississippi of the West." In the same article they asked you a few questions. But I want to ask you: Do you think that Las Vegas ever deserved the name "Mississippi of the West?"

Did it ever deserve that name? Yes. Yes. Yes. In the early days, Las Vegas was no different than Mississippi. You didn't have the public accommodations here. You couldn't go into restaurants. You had certain sections within the theaters that you could go to. Of course, that changed after the movement in the South began. But up until that particular period, yes.

Good. Thank you.

We've been talking about your run for the assembly. I want to talk about --
Senate.

In the Senate, yes. At one point you decided to run against Jan Jones.

No, I didn't run against Jan Jones. I was running for the governorship. Jan Jones happened to be a candidate in the race.

You were running for the governorship.

Yes.

Tell me about that race and why you decided to get involved.

Well, that was a break after Miller had served his term. That was a time in which I felt that I should try a statewide race and see if I could get some of my issues out there. Frankly, I would have been surprised if I had been elected. But it's me pushing that envelope again and making sure that I was not contained in that particular box that people wanted me in.

As it turned out, the first polling that was done compared me to Kenny Guinn because he was running on the other side. I guess what happened was the thought that gaming was selecting its own candidate to run for the governorship. They called Kenny. At that time he doesn't know anyone. But I said to myself, "I'm not anointed, but I've got 300 bucks, so I can go down and file." So when I filed, the polling showed that I was almost equal to Kenny Guinn. I guess that scared the hell out of the gamblers because if they saw me getting into the general election at that particular time, that first race, they were going to have a problem because I'm talking about the taxes, all of this is behind me, and the people are concentrating on this.

So they went and pulled Jan out of her sickbed to file. This woman was being treated with radiation for cancer. Yes, they got her out of her sickbed to file just for the purpose of taking me out and keeping me from running. It became a white woman thing against a black candidate who was running.

The other part of that particular race which I believe the gamblers instituted -- and I don't think that she would acknowledge this, but I believe this to be the case -- was to put Rose McKinney-James in the race as Lieutenant Governor. Just in case Joe Neal got by Jan Jones, then you're going to have two blacks in the general. So that was their thinking that I figured out that

was the case. They were looking ahead, you know.

So I went and talked to Rose McKinney-James, and I actually told her. Of course, I was a friend of hers. I said, "Look, they're just putting you in this race, girl, to do me damage, to keep me out from winning this thing. They think that I might win this thing, and they're not taking any chances. If I make it to the general and beat Jan Jones, then they want to have you there to counter that so that they would not elect two blacks to the top office of the state."

It worked in reverse in terms of the primary because people concentrated on Rose McKinney and thought that she would have a better chance to get elected, and then Jones took me out. But in the general election, they dumped both of them. They dumped both of them. Of course, they had to come to me and ask me if I would support them. And I told Jan, "Yeah, I don't have no problem giving you support."

Now, if I'm correct, both Rose McKinney-James and Jan Jones now work in the gaming industry?

Exactly. Exactly. Got good jobs, too. Got good jobs. Now, if you want me to say that was a payoff, I think so. I believe that to be the case.

I did not ask that question.

Yeah, yeah. Okay, then. But I believe that to be the case. I believe that was a payoff.

There was another election -- and I have my reasons for thinking the reason that you did this election. As you were retiring, you decided to run for county commissioner.

Yeah.

Why did you decide to do that?

Two things. You see, when you come out of a pressure situation and you've got higher powerful people behind you, if you get defeated, then the pressure is off. Yes, it takes off that pressure. But in this particular case, the other point was that Gates had kind of lost her way here. And I figured just by filing that she would have to come back and campaign and let the people know that, hey, I'm up there and I'm going to have to do something because people are watching me. And it scared the living hell out of her that I would file because I didn't even campaign. I didn't even campaign and wound up getting 1800 votes in her district where she got 4,000 something. You see, if I had put out any money in that particular race, she probably would have

been gone because the Mormon community was opposed to her. A lot of them were in her district.

So I didn't campaign because, you see, it had not been my thing to run against other black officials, elected officials. But in her particular case, she had been out there mouthing off about gaming and I had seen her in some settings where she tended to be a little bit critical of me and what I was doing in terms of the taxes. So when I sat down and filed against her and I made one private TV show, maybe a couple of them, it just scared the hell out of her. She worked overtime to try to win. And she's been doing a good job, now. But she had gotten into that mode that, look, I'm here and I can't be beat. I said, "We've spent time creating these positions and we are creating them for a purpose and you're not fulfilling that purpose. Here you are. Then "Big Daddy" will come after you."

Well, now, if I, a novice, thought that was one of your reasons for doing it, do you think other people thought the same thing?

No, no, no. Other people saw it differently. Well, they saw it in the way of why would you run in a race --

(End side 2, tape 1.)

So people asked me, "Why would you run in a race when you have a chance of losing?" Why would I do that since I had, in their minds, had such great success coming out of the Legislature? I didn't see it as a success. You might term that in terms of longevity. But there were a lot of things that I wanted to do that I could not do in the legislature. So I didn't see it that way.

Of course, I was criticized, yeah. And, of course, Yvonne had some people out there that she was giving some rewards to. Being a county commissioner, you're able to do that. But you could run into those folks and you knew that they were not going to support you. But, see, it was not my intention to try to unseat her. My intention was to scare the hell out of her and make her know that, hey, you're black, baby, and you might think that you can now go out and shake hands and lead Steve Wynn around. But once you lose that position or leave that position, you're just going to be just another nigger. That's what we had to get over to her, you see, and that was the point of running.

You just said that, when you look at your career, there are still some things that you wanted to do. What are some of those things? I know about increasing gaming taxes. But what are some of those other things that you wanted to do?

Well, we did increase the gaming taxes. Yeah, we did increase the gaming taxes before I left.

Was it increased to the point that you wanted it?

No, no. Not to the point that I wanted to, but not to the point that they initially came in with, either. Of course, we held their feet to the fire on --

Well, tell me about that. Tell me about increasing the taxes.

Well, see, what actually happened is I ran two times for the governorship. And each time I was talking about increasing the taxes. I ran in 2002. Then 2003 was my last session, and that's when I introduced the gaming taxes. You see, I was the Democratic nominee in 2002.

That's correct, yes.

Yeah, that kind of slipped under the wire when everybody was saying I wasn't going to run against Kenny Guinn. So I stepped in. Of course, Kenny Guinn and I are very good friends.

And the Democratic Party didn't act right during that campaign.

They didn't support me.

Right. How did that make you feel, and what did you think about that politically?

Well, I think they missed a grand opportunity because I think they lost a lot in terms of influence, you see, because people began to look at the party differently. But for me, I did not expect them to support me, okay. You have to understand that initially, I had to fight with the Democratic Party when we were trying to get the districts over here and they sued to keep the black district from happening. The Democratic Party did that. So I was not under the illusion that these guys were going to support me if I became the nominee.

They were going to find some reason. And what reason that they did find was the fact that I was supporting Boggs-McDonald against Shelley Berkley. Boggs-McDonald happened to be a Republican, and they wanted to attach their hat to that, where they had Miller who supported Kenny Guinn. Gibson had supported List. Going back, there was a whole list of candidates that supported Republicans. But black candidates, getting up there, they've got to find some excuse

other than the race thing. Couldn't do the race thing because that will backfire on you now. So they had to find some other reason like Boggs-McDonald who was running against Berkley.

I supported Boggs-McDonald against Berkley because Berkley was not doing anything for this community. She was mostly out there for Israel. You know anything that came up for Israel, she was there. But, hey, look, we are here. You are our representative. But, yet, she was representing Israel. So she left the Small Business Committee to get onto the Foreign Nation Committee to help Israel. So when I saw that...

A lot of people don't know we had a situation with her back in Washington, D.C., where they wanted to close the public hospital. We went over and talked to her about getting on the bandwagon to try to keep that from happening, and she wouldn't do it. They wound up closing the public hospital in Washington, D.C. But now they have to bring it back. This is a thing that the Republicans were doing. But she would not fight that battle.

Other things that we had against her was she came here wanting to bring one of the Congressmen to talk about things that were happening in the Middle East. And I'm saying, "What about Katrina? That's the problem that we got."

So that's the problem I had with Berkley. I still have those issues with Berkley on that. I would not vote for her. Now, she comes up and she talks a good game. But when it comes to our representation, if you're not Jewish, you're not going to get too much from her. And you can quote me on that.

You're quoted.

I'm quoted, huh? Okay.

One of the other committees that you served on was a committee on transportation.

Yes.

I want to hear just some stories about serving on that committee, but I'm interested to hear about the monorail in Las Vegas.

Actually, I did not serve on the committee, but I introduced a bill to create a monorail, which went to the Transportation Committee, yes.

So tell me about that. Why did you think that was a good idea? How do you feel about the monorail now?

Well, you might have referred to it as the monorail, but we were talking about a maglev train, high-speed transportation.

No. You're right. I'm wrong. Tell me about that.

Yes. Well, that was one of the things that I talked about that I wished I could have done, you see, because we do not have too many politicians who are visionaries. That was one of those visionary things that I saw in terms of helping the state. We have two large centers in this state. We have Reno, Washoe County, and we have Las Vegas, Clark County. Those are the two major centers of your population within the state. In the middle your state is decaying. It's losing population. The communities are getting old. The infrastructure is becoming dilapidated.

I wanted some means by which we could connect these urban centers to the middle parts of the state and still allow people who had jobs to be able to come down and get these jobs if necessary but could stay out in Lincoln County or White Pine and those places. That was the idea of the high-speed maglev train. We needed that. But what this state was focusing on is getting the maglev to bring in more tourists from Anaheim, California, into Stateline, Nevada. My position was and still is today that we needed something within state, intrastate, not interstate. That was the idea that I came up with.

We had some hearings about that. That came in terms of a resolution to study. I would much rather have had a bill to force it to happen, but I could only get a resolution for the study. We got 62 people to sign onto that. After I left the legislature, it just dropped and nothing has happened because the concentration of the legislators there today is the urban centers rather than, say, the rural communities.

I'll tell you what I did when I was there in the legislature. When I saw the small communities, the rural communities, losing their representatives because of the large population shift to the urban areas like Reno and Las Vegas, I adopted a county. I adopted Lincoln County.

What does that mean?

That means that I became their representative. Whatever they wanted in the legislature, I would try to work to get it for them. I became their defender and all of that.

The other part of that story that I can tell you is that when Miller was governor and they were fighting over nuclear waste, because you've got the mayor of Caliente who supported nuclear

waste and the county commissioners supported nuclear waste up there, they passed a resolution and sent it to Congress saying -- it was kind of like a contingency thing -- that if nuclear waste comes -- they used a suppositional language -- that if nuclear waste comes, here is what we would like to happen. Miller thought that was ridiculous and he got his attorney general, Frankie Sue Del Papa, to sue them.

So when the suit hit the papers, I went to the floor and made an argument against the lawsuit based on those officials' First Amendment right to petition their government. When I got through and out -- and I blistered old Miller something terrible on that -- cartoons began to appear in the papers (indiscernible). He kind of ducked out of the issue, and he left poor Frankie Sue there holding the bag on that thing.

But that was one of the issues that Miller and I -- Miller and I don't get along today because of that. We're just not friends, you see, because I guess I was not the black person that he was accustomed to dealing with. One instance I can recall on the floor of the Senate when he was Lieutenant Governor -- and I think it was the first session that the Democrats had lost the majority and we were now in the minority -- and I don't recall what the hot issue was about, but I was talking about this particular issue. I recall Raggio got up and tried to get a point of order to rule me out of order. Well, nobody told Miller that when you try to rule old Joe Neal out of order on the floor of the Senate, you better come with a reason why. If you don't, you're going to be embarrassed.

So he got up and followed what Raggio was saying and tried to rule me out of order. And I told him, "Show it to me in the book." He said, "You're out of order." I said, "Show it to me in the book." He yelled, "You're out of order." I said, "Show it to me in the book." You know, we're screaming at one another. So he brought the gavel down and went into a recess. He came back because I just got on him.

Of course, the late Jim Gibson, whose assistant I was, came back after a minute -- Jim had a way of really just digging people in kind of a soft way. He came back and Miller came. We went back into session. They called us back into session. Gibson got up -- this is the Gibson who was running for governor, his father -- he got up and he said, "Mr. President" -- talking to Miller -- "I'm going to be gone for two days, and I ask leave of the senate. But while I'm gone, Senator

Neal is going to be in charge." And you could see old Miller's blood just rush out of his face, you know, because he's saying, look, I'm going to have to deal with him. Now, see, Jim didn't have to say that. He just could have told his secretary. But he just got up on the floor and he said that.

I guess Miller didn't know that you know that 1100-page book, either.

No, no, no. He tested me and he got embarrassed. He got embarrassed. He got really embarrassed. In fact, the fellows who followed him, like Cashell, told some people -- see Cashell was lieutenant governor. And he said, "The only thing I'm afraid about in this job is Joe Neal when he's on that floor."

Wow. Now, a couple of times today you've used the term "tourists" when we were talking about different things. Now, we're in the gaming industry, the entertainment industry, and our livelihood is provided by the tourists. But how do you feel about them?

Well, when you say that our livelihood is controlled by the tourists, my comment to you is that it should not be that way.

Okay. I agree.

You see, tourism is like a sports game where the winning depends upon the ability of someone else. It is better to have your own producers within your own borders to produce that livelihood that you hold dear rather than, say, depending upon someone else.

Tourism, as I indicated to you earlier, is not a win-win situation for the population of this particular state. It's a win-win for the gamers if they are not taxed sufficiently. It only becomes a win-win situation for the residents when you get the money to tax them to pay for the tourists when they come here. Look, in this particular county, you have an average of about 35 million people that come here each year, okay. That's added to your population, and that's on a base population of about 1,600,000 people. Now, just think about the service needs that go to those tourists that are provided by that base of 1,600,000.

Something is wrong with that particular picture, you see. Unless you correct that, you're going to continue to have the problems that you have with your infrastructure, your hospitals, policemen, and all of that being paid.

Now, they just had a big discussion not too long ago about the increase of police salaries. But nobody on the county commission, even though they seem to be in opposition, asked the

question: Who's going to be policing whom? Is it that base population, or is it the tourists? If it's the tourists, then gaming, let's get some more money from you to do this. But they're not asking for that.

Do you think they are thinking about it?

Yes, they know about it. Just about every politician out there that has any sense would know about that. They have seen the same studies that I have seen that gaming is not paying its fair share for growth. It is the engine that brings in the growth, but it's not paying for the growth. You see, if you tax those suckers sufficiently, then you shouldn't have any needs that are not met.

What is sufficient?

Sufficient, in terms of a gross gaming tax, should be no less than 12 percent of the gross. No less than. And that's more than that 6.75 percent that they now pay.

They're only paying about half.

They're only paying about half. Take England for instance. England has dealt with gaming for over 200 years. But the gaming in England is limited to a point. See, in England you pay about 50 percent of the gross. And you take the state of Illinois. In the state of Illinois, I think last week as I saw it, gaming pays something like about 33 percent on the first 250 million. Then after that, it goes up to 75 percent.

Since some of the same companies are here --

Operates there, yes. And so that tells us that these guys can actually pay more. The system is set up in such a way that if you don't make the money, you don't pay it. It's not like the poor guy out there who has property taxes. It comes each year whether or not you've got the money or not. You have to pay those property taxes. In their particular case, if they don't make the money on the gross, they don't have to pay it.

But then again, listen to this, what they don't tell you about, they write it off against their federal income taxes, you see. That's why I get hot with the labor unions when they don't see that. They write it off, write their taxes off, against their federal income taxes.

Then you ask: Why do these legislators not see this? Yes, they see it. They just don't want to antagonize. They have become too beholden to the title. You see, I got elected one term at a time, and that's the only thing that was given to me to be served, one term at a time. That's the

way I saw it. Since I have started from '72, I was elected one term at a time.

When someone goes to the assembly and they have a full-time job -- I know people who work at UNLV and people who work at other places -- how does that work that you can get off -- I know it's only every other year -- but you have to be in --

There's a state law on the books that permits them to; that tells the corporation that they have to give you your job back or an equivalent one, okay. Now, in my first session -- no -- my second term, the pressure was on me. They came up and they tried to change that. The law was originally introduced by a state senator here that was elected from North Las Vegas back in the 60s, a guy by the name of Al Alimon. And Al Alimon was an employee at the Test Site. He got the bill introduced. It said that they had to give him his job back or an equivalent one.

So when I came back, I guess I was raising so much hell or something in my second session up that they sent some people even from REECO, people I was working for, to try to get that changed. Now, you have to understand, I'm like that 19-to-1 in the Senate. That damn bill was introduced in the Senate, and it passed 19 to 1. But they forgot one thing. There were some white boys in the Assembly who were similarly situated as I was. So I just went down and talked to them and said, "Hey, look, this bill is coming down here, and this is what it does." That bill came to the vote for four votes. So, finally, it was defeated. A gentleman who came up to try to lobby that bill, I saw him in the hall and I told him, "Don't you ever bring your damn ass up here again to try to do this thing to me." That's what happened to it. It got defeated. That bill is still on the books today. It's still on the books today.

Wow.

But they tried to move it when I was there. See, we had gotten a new manager at the company. It wasn't the same guy that was there when I first came to work for Reynolds. They got this new guy. This guy didn't care too much about me on the job. When I got elected, he thought the other guy was going to get elected. I remember his name was Ron King. He was the general manager. I had a friend that was working for the government, Department of Energy. Of course, now, we are the general contractor for the Department of Energy. So that was the relationship of Reynolds and the DOE at that particular time. The guy's name is Shed Elliott, the late Shed Elliott. He's since passed. He called me up when I first got elected. I guess it must have been

about three weeks after I had been elected. He said, "Has old Ron King been down to congratulate you yet?" I said, "No." He said, "Really? You being the first black elected to the state Senate and from this company and representing them, and he hasn't come down and congratulated you?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, tell you what. Give me three weeks. I'm going to have him running down to your office."

And sure enough, within those three weeks, this guy comes running down. "Joe, I've just been so busy. I didn't think about coming down here to congratulate you. Here are some tickets I'd like to give you to take some of your friends out to the show and all this stuff." I said, "Lord." And I'm standing here and I'm about to laugh because, see, I helped to bring Shed in here.

We had a guy who was the manager of the Department of Energy at the time, a guy by the name of Miller, not related to the governor. He had called me up when I first had gone to work for Reynolds. And I had been there for about, oh, pretty close to about nine months, maybe a year. He call me and said, "Look, Joe, I'm trying to get this black fellow in here who's retiring from the military who has some skills with the Atomic Energy that we need in terms of the safety. I want you to try to get him and keep him here for me." I said, "Oh, yes." I met with old Shed when he came in.

Of course, I didn't have to keep Shed here. You know, he came in, and we went all over every place and visited Nellis [**Air Force Base*] and looked at the community and talked to real estate folks. I took him to a basketball game. At that time the Rebels had a pretty good team. So we had this relationship going back from that particular period.

So he had this guy to come down to see me. I called him up and he said, "Did he come to see you?" I said, "Yeah, he came to see me." But this guy interpreted that to me, then, that I was going after him. So he left and went to Idaho.

Now, I'm still there. We're going through managers and all, but I'm still there. So one day -- I'll never forget this -- a friend of mine by the name of Donald Clark, who is still living here now -- Donald Clark and this guy were friends, this manager. And Donald Clark was doing some work for the Atomic Energy people. He went all over, wherever they had contractors and sites and things. So he had gone up to Idaho and met this guy. Clark came back and said, "Joe, old Ron King asked me whether or not you would bother him if he decided to come back here to be

manager." I told him, "Don, if that son of a bitch thinks that, tell him, yes, you're damn right I'll bother him if he comes back."

So tell me about Donald Clark.

Donald Clark and I have been very good friends for years.

(End side 1, tape 2.)

So Don Clark and I have been friends for many, many years in this community. He's been a big supporter of mine. We argue a lot about things, but it's always a friendly argument. In fact, we just talked the other night for about two hours on the phone up until about 12:30 at night. Don and I had the same type of commitment for the community, utilizing our skills to try to do things for other people. When they first brought the Concentrated Employment Program into the area and they had these big requirements, master's degrees for job developers and all that stuff, Don and I looked at that thing and we said, "How can we get it changed?" And somebody said, "Well, you have to go to the State Personnel Commission to change it." We paid our way up there and sat before the commission. Don talked. So I kind of like back-stopped him and whispered in his ear when he forgot something. We got a guy to change the requirement so that people who had a high school education could become job developers. That program went on to become a great success, such a great success that the ES, Employment Security, wanted to take it over.

That's right.

We had fought initially to prevent Employment Security from taking over the Concentrated Employment Program. We delved into their history, and at that particular time, they had a 35-year history of not doing anything for the community. So we made that particular argument and got the contract to be put under the Economic Opportunity Board.

What do you think about what's happening to the Economic Opportunity Board right now?

Well, what has actually happened to the Economic Opportunity Board is that it has lost people on the board who were willing to fight for poor people. You don't have that anymore. You've got Weekly. You've got Horsford. You've got Bill Robinson. You've got the person who represents Atkinson-Gates. But these people are not fighting for poor people. They let the press just write things without trying to counter what the hell is going on. They think that the EOB is an

agency that is just there as a receptacle of federal funds. But EOB is much more than that. EOB is an organization that is fulfilling the general welfare needs of a community which the government is supposed to be doing, okay.

So when you look at our Constitution, the state Constitution of Nevada, Article 1, Section 2 says that the purpose of government is for the security, protection and benefit of people. In our federal Constitution, you see it in the preamble to the Constitution, as to the purpose of government, which is to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, and promote the general welfare. But when you go into the Constitution, Article 1, Section 8, it puts the general welfare equal to the defense. And what that agency does is fulfill that particular need in prescription of both Constitutions, state and federal.

But nobody argues for that. They let those libertarians over at the R-J come in and this boy Pratt from the Las Vegas Sun write things about the organization without countering it.

You see, the EOB's problem is that it attempts to juggle some 40 grants to meet this general welfare need. If it didn't do that, it would not meet any needs at all because nobody else is fulfilling this. And if you read the article in the paper here a few days ago when Yvonne said that she was trying to get \$250,000 to try to outlay some of the debt costs and she was being criticized by the R-J, somebody on that board should have taken that up because what she was saying, willing or unwilling, was, "Look, we have an obligation to fulfill this need. This is not just a receptacle here to receive money." But it's something that we are not doing. And if we can't allow them to do it or stop them from doing it, then you don't have anybody within this area here to take up those needs or to meet those needs of the poor.

So would you serve on that board again?

I would gladly serve on that board if I could, but they don't make allowances for non-legislators. I served on there in a legislative capacity because, see, I came out of EOB. I was with the Economic Opportunity Board when I was elected to the state Senate. That was in 1972. I fought for that agency during the whole period that I was in the legislature. When they got into trouble, talking about misplacing the funds, I had to tell folks what that was. Nobody absconded with any money. They just used the funds to do other things because the person didn't understand that this was a juggling operation. You know, when you're tossing the balls and one falls out, then

you've got problems.

So why hasn't somebody said that?

Because I think people are fearful. They don't want to be criticized by the press. I don't mind being criticized by the press when I think I'm doing something right, you see. But they don't want to take on the press. But, see, I would take on the press.

And the press can be powerful.

Oh, yes, the press can be powerful. But, see, the press has to listen to you. They have to listen to you.

And they know that I used to run this old boy Pratt crazy. When he would call me and wanted to write some stories about it, I said, "Man, look, what are you going to write that for? You don't even understand the program. You're just trying to make some points with your" -- you know, I just got on his case. I gave him a hard time. But I would call the people together, and we would have a general press conference so he would not be the only one getting the story. I just blocked that out and called people down. And, see, I got the R-J off our tail when I was there and just left him hanging out there. So he couldn't do nothing, you know. But, see, now the R-J would kick back in, and they would start talking. But you can't stop them from talking unless you come back at them.

But we have people on that board -- it sounds as if we do -- who are pretty politically savvy.

Well, you have one person that actually knows about the agency up there and that's the chairman. That's Claude Logan. Everybody else is there --

They're figureheads?

Yeah, well, they're just sitting there on the board, and they don't want to engage in the fight. You've got people on the board -- well, you see, Bennett should know about the board. He doesn't say anything. He could say something because his life is made now. You've got the political leaders there. You've got Weekly. You've got Robinson. You've got Horsford. You got the person that represents Yvonne and works for the county. You've got Bennett. You've got Hannah Brown.

But, you see, they tried to select people based on their credentials to run the agency. But

sometimes the person with the credentials is not the best person to run the agency because the agency is based upon building its management structure from the inside up. They didn't understand that, you see. I got on Davis' butt when she brought in Marcia Walker from Ohio to take over the program. I said, "Look, that's not the way this program has operated." And from the time that this program was created by Elaine Walbrack, who was a Swedish woman, white lady, she had Contrel, who was a white guy who was out with the county housing, worked in county housing for a long time, she had him. When she left, he came in. Contrel brought in Hoggard. And when Contrel left, Hoggard moved up. When Hoggard moved up, Hoggard brought in Tyre. So when James Tyre retired after so many years with the agency, Tyre also had brought in Serial Staples. That's when it stopped. That's when he got into problems. They brought in a woman from Ohio to put her on top there. And then Serial Staples said, "Okay, the hell with it, I'm leaving, I'm gone, I'm retiring."

So we didn't have that continuity? We didn't have that history?

You didn't have that continuity. So you brought in people who did not understand how to juggle the programs. And then you had the financial manager over there, a fellow by the name of Keith, who was there all through Hoggard and all of them, Tyre, who understood what the hell was going on, who knew how to take money from this program and put it here and then put it back, you see.

But when Marcia Walker came in, she looked at the advance that the state had given her, about \$2 million, and she said, "We've got \$2 million in the general fund." Well, the \$2 million in the general fund was for childcare. And you use that to pay your debt. The only thing, she was getting new offices and new desks and increased her salary and everybody else's. I said, "What the hell? Do we have the money to do this?" She said, "Yes, we have the money." I said, "We have the money?" She said, "Yes, we've got the money." I said, "Oh?" She said, "Yeah." Then all of a sudden, we found ourselves \$2 million in the hole.

I see. Okay.

Then she tried to bring in her old top manager, who was nobody that had a history of the program. Nobody had a history of the program. So nobody had any inkling what to do. I was spending so much damn time up there, you know, I thought I should get paid trying to put out

fires. So I told Claude, "Claude, one of the things that you and I are going to have to do, we're going to have to come in and here and try to learn this program from top to bottom and find out what the hell is going on to get a hand on what's going on."

Who is Claude?

Claude is now the chairman of the board up there. But he had a kidney transplant, so he's been having a difficult time on the board. But he's very knowledgeable.

Now, I come in when they get into problems. So what we tried to do and what I tried to do was to try to encourage them -- and they bought it -- to accept the state's proposal to bring in this group from Ohio -- not Ohio, but Iowa, "Our Way" they call it -- and MICA group they call it. Don't ask me what those acronyms stand for. I don't recall. But they call them the MICA group. So what I did was to get them to bring this group in to give us some time to try to get things straightened out since the state said that this is a good group. At the time that was the only one we had problems with because of the advance that the state had given us in terms of childcare. So we brought them in.

I told Claude, "Claude, we've got to keep them here until we can get our hand on this and bring in some new people or bring somebody in that actually knows this particular agency." They said, "Well, we've got to get somebody to put in charge here." So they put Hannah Brown in charge. And I thought that was a bad mistake because Hannah Brown did not have the skills to actually deal with that type of program.

So eventually, they wind up replacing the MICA group with Jean Childs. Jean Childs came in as a consultant. She was there and I had convinced Marcia to hire Jean as a consultant to look at some of the problems that we were having with the Head Start program. Jean had spent 25 years in Head Start, and she had been a consultant throughout the country. She was very well respected. She knew that program in and out. And I said to Claude and them, you know, "You get Jean there, bring her in, and I think she would make you a good person because she has the history of this particular program." Jean came in and she began to discover certain things and began to get the correction. And she was moving towards putting that program on sound footing.

Then Horsford, Hannah Brown, and the guy from the county who was on the Personnel Committee wanted to bring in a new person. So that is this person they've got now who has a

doctor's degree in psychology. They hired him strictly based on his credentials, not on whether or not he could handle this particular program. When I heard that, that they were going to replace Jean, my first comment was they would lose Head Start. And that's what happened. I said, "The only person that could ward off any national attack on Head Start would be Jean because she understood it and she knew exactly what needed to be done and she could do it in a quick second. But they are moving here and whatever knowledge they have now regarding that program, it's going to leave with Jean." And that's what happened. The guy came in there. When he didn't know anything, the people came down on him and said, "Okay, we're taking Head Start from you."

Head Start was the life of the organization -- is the life of the organization. Without the 12-and-a-half million dollars that they received from Head Start, EOB cannot operate sufficiently in this community because we had to juggle the other grants in order to stay and we used Head Start as a means of doing that.

But, see, the argument here was that the students or the children in Head Start were not getting the proper healthcare. Now, that sounds bad when you say that. But the real picture is that the program was so overwhelmed with students and with children that they couldn't keep up. Not only that, they could not have doctors that would treat those kids. But nobody comes out and argues that particular point. They just sit there and let the press go after them and say, "Well, they're not giving these kids healthcare." Well, any mother would hear that and say, "No, I'm not going to take my child over there because they're not getting the healthcare that they need." But nobody would tackle that. That's why I said they lost their voice to defend the organization on the board.

So the last thing I read was that they are now going to sell the radio station to try to --

And that's a bad mistake.

-- to try to bring in some funds.

Yeah, that's a bad mistake. You see, when we developed EOB over here, we went after the radio station, and we did that as an arm of EOB in order to reach the poor. That arm has served us well because it gets out information all over the county as to what the EOB is doing.

One of the things that the gamblers wanted when I was on the board of EOB -- they were

scared to death that I was going to use that argument to fight them on the gaming taxes. They knew that my association with EOB -- in fact, they even sent in some people who tried to get me off of the board knowing that my time is limited because I was on there as an elected representative anyway. They sent in this little old guy Chester Richardson.

You've probably read his name in the papers. He came on. He was working for the Excalibur or that Mandalay Bay Group in security. Somebody came to me once and told me, "You know, this guy is taking advantage of his position here. He's looking up a lot of people on the computers, looking at their records and all of that stuff." So I asked him one day, "Man, are you doing that?" He said, "Yes." Like I said, word got back to his office and he came and said, well, his wife had told somebody that.

Wow. I'm going to end in just a few minutes. Next week I want to go back with some research again to talk about some specific bills from the 80s and the early 90s.

Okay.

And the last question today is: Who do you think is going to be our next governor?

Well, I believe that it's going to be between three people. Either Gibbons or Gibson or Titus. If Titus wins, it's going to be Gibbons. If Titus wins the primary, Democratic Primary, I believe it's going to be Gibbons. If Gibson wins the Democratic Primary, I think it's going to be Gibson. That's the way I see it right now. Now, Titus is going to spend a lot of money. But, see, Titus has -- or any woman that's running up North would have a difficult time.

Why more than the South?

Well, because you've got prostitution up north.

Oh.

And they don't see women as public officials up there like they do in the south. It's a little bit different down here. So Titus has to overcome that.

But if Titus could look at that as a business, just a business --

If she could look at it as a business?

-- and just word it that way and not look at it from a woman's point of view --

Well, I don't know how she looks at it. But, you see, the culture there is when you've got a county with prostitution in it, it is difficult for a woman to be elected to the top state job. Now, for

instance, Lorraine Hunt is lieutenant governor. She ran statewide twice and got elected. But look how she's running for the top job. She's running behind Beers, you see. It's that culture up there that you have to overcome. Now, if Titus is able to break that ceiling, it would be tremendous for the state to have that done because she would open up that field for a lot of women.

Don't we have more women voters up there than men voters?

Yeah. But I don't know how that's going to turn out. I know she's spending a lot of time up there. But what she's done in the polls, I understand that boy Gibson is closing in on her. Yeah, as I said, if Dina can break that ceiling, it would be a tremendous thing for the state for her to be the first woman elected Governor. But she's got a lot of naysayers on the other side there that don't think that's going to come to pass. I've heard quite a few of them talking. She's doing the right thing, I think, by working at small communities up there. If she continues to do that and gets out and starts knocking on some doors, she might be able to overcome that.

I don't think that Gibson or Gibbons, either one, would go to that particular length because they have a lot of money in their covers for the elections and they can buy air time and newspaper print to get their name out there. Titus can overcome that by getting out there and walking. And that was done once in this state. A guy that came in here and they didn't think that he could win. He went out and started knocking on doors, and before they knew anything, he upset the applecart.

Well, we're going to stop for today.

(End side 2, tape 2.)