

# An Interview with Senator Joe Neal

## *Chapter Two:*

### From Grassroots Politics to the State Senate

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

February 7, 2006 Interview

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The Boyer Las Vegas Early History Project

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Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Director and Editor: Claytee D. White

Assistant Editors: Gloria Homol and Delores Brownlee

Transcribers: Kristin Hicks and Laurie Boetcher

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Nancy Hardy, Joyce Moore,  
Andres Moses, Laura Plowman, Emily Powers, Dr. Dave Schwartz

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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.

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

## Chapter Two Overview

In Chapter Two, Senator Joe Neal focuses on the work that he did in the sixties and seventies. From 1964 to 1966 he describes working at the Titanium Metals Plant in Henderson, first as a janitor and later as an ingot inspector. He was married in '65 and in 1966 was invited to interview with Reynold's Electrical Engineering Company (REECO).

Senator Neal was hired by REECO in February of 1966 to handle any company issues regarding the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He was instrumental in seeing that black men were hired in the trade unions. He became involved politically and was also helping push the Philadelphia Plan, which was created to get black people into training programs with various building trades.

In the early seventies, Joe helped build a case that required hotels in Las Vegas to establish an Affirmative Action Plan. Under this plan, Judge Roger D. Foley ruled that 12 percent of those hired in all job categories must be black. Joe recalls working with the Justice Department, local and state officials, and the NAACP to foster more equitable hiring practices.

Senator Neal goes into detail concerning his chairmanship of the EOB, working with the Civil Rights Commission, and being elected to the Nevada Senate in 1972. During his term in office, Joe worked diligently for the advancement of black people. He recalls often being at odds with other legislators in order to get his point across. He took a stance against capital punishment and introduced a bill in 1973 to restore the civil rights of ex-felons.

In the late seventies, Joe became chairman of the Human Resource Committee, working to make sure that the public had access to all documents regarding laws passed in the Nevada legislature. He became an expert on the rules of the legislature to ensure that innovative bills could find their way through committee to the floor for voting. This became important in 1979 when the Nevada Senate attempted to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, even though it was later blocked by the Assembly.

In Chapter 3, Senator Neal shares his memories of the eighties with readers and continues with anecdotes and details of his involvement in the politics of Nevada.

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## Preface

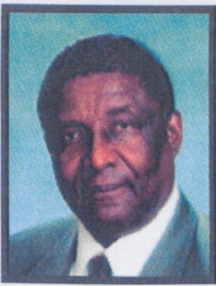
Senator Joe Neal shares many memories of his childhood in Mound, Louisiana. He recalls his mother leaving him and his older brother Willie with a woman named Bea so that she could go to Alexander to get a job. He and Willie were ages 2 and 4, respectively, and were frequently left on their own. Willie 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](#)

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**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.

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**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 I'm with Senator Joe Neal in his home. This is our second interview. It is February 7th, 2006. How are you this morning?**

I'm doing fine.

**Good. We're going to start where we left off the last time. But first, I'm going to go back. You mentioned where you went to work, Reynold's Electrical Engineering. Tell me a little about the company, what you did there, and what a compliance officer does. Just tell me about it.**

Of course, Reynold's Electrical Company we call REECO. It's called Reynold's Electrical Engineering Company, but we referred to it in short, REECO. I went to REECO from Titanium Metals plant in Henderson, Nevada. I was working there as an ingot inspector. I had just gotten out of school. And the only work that I could find -- well, I started out at Titanium Metals of America as a janitor. This was in 1964 when I was working there, and I worked there through 1966.

At Titanium Metals, being familiar with what was going on nationally and working as a janitor, I walked into the personnel office and told the guy that I wanted another job. He told me that he would check on it and within a week, he gave me a job as an ingot inspector. These ingots were titanium, which weighed something like five tons. It comes out in a rolled ball. They used that for heating shields on aircraft. It was a light kind of metal, not like steel. It was a light kind of metal.

I had the job of testing the hardness at the end of the line when they shaved all of the roughness from melting the thing together. I had that job, which required me to use a hoist -- that's h-o-i-s-t -- to lift the ingot up and put it into this big rack. We would shave it off and get a smooth place, and then with a Brunel machine we would test the hardness of it. Depending upon the square, then it called for measuring the circumference of the whole, the indentation I might say, that was made by the Brunel machine. That would dictate to the engineers as to the level of hardness of the ingot. They needed that in order to watch the melting of it and make sure that the compounds which were put together were sufficient to create the strength that they were trying to achieve.

I worked there from '64 until 1966. I got married during that particular time. I got married



in '65. It was in 1966 that Jim Anderson and David Hoggard had been meeting with Reynold's. They wanted someone to come to work for them, and they wanted someone with a college degree that could handle the compliance aspect of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Since I had a degree in political science and at that time had spent one year in a law school and also had my diploma from the Institute of Applied Science from Chicago, Illinois, I was kind of like a natural for that particular job.

So they asked me if I would go over and have an interview with Reynold's. The interview was taken with a guy by the name of J.R. Crockett and Calvin Effroson. J.R. Crockett was the general manager of the company, and Calvin Effroson -- and that's spelled E-f-f-r-o-s-o-n -- was the general counsel. This job would be a key position within the structure of the company in which you reported to the general manager to carry out the work. I went over and talked to them and they gave me an application to fill out. I had never seen an application like the one that they gave me, and I didn't see one after that. The application that they gave me asked me for all kinds of things. But the thing that struck me was they asked me what my religion was. Of course, I wrote down Catholic.

So after that interview, which took place in January of 1966, they hired me in February and I went to work for them. A couple of days after being on the job, they had me off on a plane to New York City to attend a conference with a gentleman by the name of L.B. Goldsberry or Leon Goldsberry. G-o-l-d-s-b-e-r-r-y is the spelling of his name. We went to New York to a conference being held on affirmative action that was being conducted at that time by some people from Cornell University. Of course, that was the first time that I had met Frank Young. He was working for EG&G, and was present at this conference, also.

From there, I came back and went to work essentially enforcing the 1964 Civil Rights Act within the company. That particular job was one everybody was concentrated on because it was at Mercury. At the time that I came to work at the site, they must have had approximately 20,000 people working at Nevada Test Site. About 14,000 of those people came under REECO. Of course, you had the labs that were there. Los Alamos Laboratories, Sandia, they all had scientists that were working at the Test Site. Holmes & Narver was another company that was there and a few other companies that I can't think of right now.

## **So REECO was, what, a contracting --**

REECO was the general contractor at the Nevada Test Site. They first got that contract in 1952. I came onboard in 1966. They held that contract up until 1996. I retired in 1994 from the company.

One of the things that I discovered in working for REECO as a compliance officer is that there was an increased number of minorities, particularly blacks, applying for jobs. During that time, we did not have blacks working in the building trades within Reynold's, meaning electricians, carpenters and things like that. These people had virtually been weeded out of those particular jobs. Even though we had black carpenters within the community and quite a few electricians who had come out of service and who had worked somewhere else, they could not get jobs here.

One of the things that happened during my early days as a compliance officer is that they were building the International Hotel, now called the Hilton Hotel. The International Hotel had scheduled to open. Electricians called that hard money because they were working overtime. So they were getting a lot of money. We had a contract that was signed with the I.B.E.W. 357 Local Union. In the contract it stated that once the company sent in a request for an electrician or wireman, that person had to be delivered within 48 hours. If that was not the case, then the company could hire from any source. That was one of the things that [Kevin] Effrosen, who was also the labor relation and general council of the company, had put into this particular contract.

One day I was up in the office and the general manager, Crocket, called me. And he said, "Joe, I don't know whether or not you're aware of this, but we've got about eight or nine vacancies that we're not able to fill for electricians." Of course, I had a big smile on my face. I knew exactly what that meant. So I went down to personnel and checked it out. We had a backlog of about 14 requests that had not been filled, so I drove to the black community and just contacted electricians that I knew.

I remember one guy who lived right around the corner here from me by the name of C.L. Stramler, who was working at a housing area down on Carey at the time. (There were some houses near Carey and Martin Luther King at that time. The apartments were built later.) C.L. was sitting there working. He had an extra job working for the Coca-Cola Company that was located at the corner of Main and Bonanza. He worked that at night. I remember walking up to him and

saying, "How much you make?" He said, "I make about two bucks an hour for doing this." I said, "You have another job?" He said, "Yeah. My other job pays me about the same thing." I said, "How would you like to have a job that pays you seven dollars?" I think at that time electricians were getting \$7.15 an hour. He looked at me and said, "Yeah. How do I get it?" I said, "Well, I can get you on at the Test Site." And he kind of looked at me in disbelief. I said, "Okay, just give me your telephone number, and we're going to set it up."

I collected about seven people, all men of color, and we took them down to our personnel office and cleared them.

### **Was Earl McDonald one of them?**

No, Earl McDonald was not one of them, but he was in it at the time. Earl McDonald was being used on piecemeal to show that they were not discriminating in a sense. But he was never part of the union as such.

### **Getting back to what you were saying, you were saying you took those men down...**

Yes. I took the men down to personnel, and we cleared them and gave them everything that we needed to give, the physical and everything, and made sure that they were done. We had engineers to come in and talk to them and quiz them about some of their skills. Then Effroson and I loaded them all up and took them down to the union hall, which was located down on Bonanza. The business agent was a fellow by the name of Ralph Leigon. I think you spell it L-e-i-g-o-n, Leigon. You might want to check the spelling on that.

### **This is the electrician's union?**

Yeah, electrician's union. So we walked in. I was the first person to tell them, "We got some people here that want to join the union." He kind of looked at me. He saw Effroson and recognized him. He knew that Effroson was the labor relation guy that always negotiated the contracts.

I just want to back up a moment because when I went to Effroson initially about this, getting these guys into the union, his first comment was, "Joe, if you do that, they're going to strike," meaning that the labor union would strike. Something just told me to say, "Well, striking is your business; equal opportunity is mine. So we're taking them." I had the backing of the general manager to do that.

When we went to Leigon, he sat down and told him, "Well, Ralph, we have tested these individuals and they're qualified. And whether or not you can get them into the union, we're hiring them anyway." That's what he said to them. Of course, Ralph Leigon kind of looked at me. He didn't know how to react.

**So blacks had not been allowed in that union --**

No.

**-- until this time?**

No. No. They weren't allowed then. They were not allowed. So we just took them to the Test Site and put them to work. Of course, that meant then that they did not take them in. So we took a guy by the name of White. Roy Riddle was one of them, and a guy by the name of Baynes, Sam Baynes. Sam Baynes was an unusual guy. He had a master's license in electrical work. He knew the work.

So they still didn't take them in. Now, what I had to do then in order to get the union to move -- we had guys who were qualified that we had taken to the union. We had applications that were outstanding. They refused to put them into the union. So what I did is I got in touch with some of my friends in Washington, D.C. -- one was Frank Donbaugh -- and said, "Okay, can you help me with this?" Frank sent out a couple people. Of course, he said, "Yes, we can help you." We got a suit going against the electricians. Also, we included in that the building trades union, which included the plumbers.

We did bring some guy in the plumbers, a neighbor of mine that lives here, we got him into the union and brought him to work. And he went to work, and they would not let him in. Eventually, they did. But they were a little bit reluctant in permitting blacks to come into the unions. Of course, the plumbers were somewhat thuggish. As Effrosen used to tell me, they were the bad axes. They had some killing that was happening in their union. A guy by the name of Alsize (phonetic) was killed for some reason. We don't know exactly what happened, but he was associated with that particular union.

**Locally?**

Locally, yes. And they were a rough bunch. But due to my training coming out of the Air Force with the skills that I had, I was just not afraid. I wasn't afraid of them. What I did with the

plumbers during that same period -- and we're looking from February of '66 and into the early 70s when all of this is happening. We had a black guy that worked for the Employment Security Department. His name was Art Grant. And Art Grant was kind of like a radio disc jockey, D.J. That's what he did part-time. But he worked for the Employment Security Department. And I told Art, "Look, Art, they give these aptitude battery tests to these guys in the plumbers union. And they use this to create this particular list." Art got me a copy of the test, and we looked at it. They also used that for the apprenticeship, so I used it to train some of the guys and put them into the union.

See, what is actually happening, the unions would have this list, but it was kind of a family thing, and it was most peculiar to the plumbers. They would have this long list, but they keep adding their relatives. So I had a friend of mine who had also gone to work for the Equal Rights Commission. I asked him if he could get me a copy of the list and he did. We watched that list for about a year, maybe two years, and we saw what was happening. Then I filed a complaint with the State Apprenticeship Council, which oversees the apprenticeship programs and the labor unions.

One of the persons that was on the State Apprenticeship Council and was the chairman of it was Lloyd George, who was a justice here, a federal judge. I had to argue the case before the State Apprenticeship Council, and I did a very good job. Of course, Lloyd George asked, "Well, are you a lawyer? Are you practicing law?" I said, "No, I'm not practicing law. I just work for Reynold's Electrical Engineering Company." You know, I gave him all of the necessary court cases because I had access to Effroson's library. So I was able to pull up all those rules and regulations and case law that govern that type of situation.

What we were arguing for was the elimination of the long list and making them create it year by year. So, therefore, you didn't have people to take off from the top. People come in at the bottom. So you might go out there. They had a list with about 150 people on it, and blacks were put at the bottom. And you're looking at five or six years before you could get into the program. So we argued and got the list eliminated. That was the first big thing we did. After that, we began to ride herd on them. Of course, that kind of pissed a lot of the union folks off. They got pretty angry with me because at the same time I was engaged in local politics,

pushing what was called the Philadelphia Plan. The Philadelphia Plan was to get black people into the various building trades through training programs, which were supervised at that time by the Labor Department.

We're into the 70s now with Richard Nixon. A guy by the name of Lawrence from Washington -- I don't think his name was Lawrence Taylor, but his name was Taylor -- worked in the Nixon Administration as the individual to put forth this particular plan. So all within this four-year period into the 70s, these activities occurred, and we were able to get blacks into the building trades as apprentices and also get them in where they had skills in the trade. We did that mostly with the help of the Department of Justice. Frank Donbaugh sent a guy out here by the name of Stu Herman, a Justice Department lawyer. I had done most of the legwork for him. We used the electricians at the Test Site as a means of showing the court that we did have people who had those skills and that we had to open these unions up and force them to take these particular individuals in.

**Why was the union so important?**

The union was important because they had the jobs. They had key jobs up at the Test Site. See, the labor movement in the state in the 60s was very strong. No politician could get elected here without the support of labor, which is not the case right now. Of course, during that particular period, most of the union folks saw me as an anti-labor guy, which I was not. I just wanted to get black folks into their union so they could take advantage of some of those particular jobs.

**Now, were there training programs to train blacks as electricians and plumbers and those kinds of things?**

That's what the apprenticeship program is. That's what we talked about. Yeah.

**Now, Bob Bailey, is that a name that would come in here at this point?**

No. Bob Bailey did not have anything to do with the apprenticeship programs. You see, Bob Bailey served as chairman of the Equal Rights Commission. But Bob Bailey did not do anything in terms of getting people jobs. The hard work was done by people like me who were working for a company. What it did was take the pressure off the company and make them look good in the eyes of their contractor, which was the Atomic Energy Commission. So I was able to do that and a lot of other things and get away with it. Of course, we even went after the hotels, you see.

**Okay. How did that work?**

Well, after we had gotten our jobs straight and began to bring in a number of people and began to move up a number of people within REECO, then, as I said, the concentration was on us and people started applying for jobs. We couldn't take everybody, you see. There was this hotel out here that had a lot of jobs. They were only hiring maids and porters as far as blacks were concerned. So I developed a theory and went in and talked to the managers and told them, "Look, we're not going to be able to take everybody. I'm going to go after the hotels and make them share in some of this burden."

Again, Frank comes in handy. I told him to send us a person to file the case for the Department of Justice and that I would do the legwork, you see. I did the legwork in building up the case for them and got it where he could file it in the court. Eventually, in 1973, Judge Roger D. Foley ruled that the hotel must establish an affirmative action plan in which it will hire 12 percent blacks in all categories. And the 12 percent was based upon the population --

**(End side 1, tape 1.)**

Yeah, that was the consent decree. You have to understand now, that O'Callaghan is now governor. He got elected in 1970 as governor. I was on his butt. So he hired Archie, Bobby Archie, as his Employment Security person to head up the Employment Security. Bobby came in as a young attorney. He had just graduated from Howard University, not Harvard, but Howard. He was now in Employment Security. He had a guy by the name of Tom Beatty, who is now on the Equal Rights Commission.

So they picked up this decree. All right. They're coming over. I'm sitting in the NAACP committee, and they're going to try to sell it as something that O'Callaghan had done. I sat there and kind of laughed at them because Jim Anderson and Scott were present in a meeting that we had. I was at the meeting. Of course, Stu Herman was talking to them about the decree for the hotels and everything. And they saw me standing there, but they could never figure out why I was there. I think Jim thought I was some type of an agent or something because he always was suspicious of me.

Jim Anderson was what you call the labor and industry chairman in the NAACP at that time. He had come out of California in the early 60s. He had become very active in doing some

work, but not doing the things that would change the structure of race relations within the community. You know, he would get maids and porters and stuff like that and those jobs, but not in the hard areas. He was part of that particular group that got me out at Reynold's, mainly because I had the qualifications and they had contact with them.

**Who should take responsibility for getting that consent decree started and passed?**

I will have to take responsibility for it because I started it and I used my contacts in the Justice Department to do that. Look, we had some fights over that because you have to understand that when we all started with this, the Johnson Administration was in power at that time. Then Richard Nixon got elected. When Richard Nixon got elected, Howard Hughes came to town. Howard Hughes helped Nixon get elected. Howard Hughes' people came in and they came in with a cadre of ex-FBI agents, okay, who also had contacts within the department.

You see, what had happened, I would slip out and go into the hotels. I had set up contacts with people like the shoeshine people, the maids and all of that in just about every hotel on the Strip. That became my source of information as to what was going on. If they hired somebody, I knew about it. If they didn't hire somebody, I knew about it. I would pass that information on to the Department of Justice once we got the decree going to see whether or not they were violating it.

Hughes' people finally picked up on that. They accused me of performing as a Justice Department employee and said I was taking responsibility for the work that the Justice Department was doing. They sent this to Mitchell, who was head of the Justice Department at that particular time. And the word came down, "Joe, you cannot speak for the Department of Justice."

The point is I never had spoken for the Department of Justice. That was a ploy that was used by Hughes to kind of roll back some of the activity that I was doing because they were hiring outside of the decree and they were bringing people in. I could find out about it, and I was passing it onto the Department of Justice.

In 1973, Foley hit them hard with that decree. We had a little bit going back and forth because I thought that he was taking too long. I had to write him a letter. I accused him of delaying the ruling in the case. I put something in there about justice delayed is justice denied, you know. Of course, you have to understand that I became very good friends with the Foley



family during that period. They are one of the few families that I still have a great deal of respect and friendship for, even with some of the other generations that are now coming along. But the boys who came in here like George and all of them, Tom and Joseph and Roger, they were always friends. So they always just laughed and would say, "Joe got on his ass about this one. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to make the ruling?"

He came out with a good ruling that helped the situation. But what happened following that ruling, the Nixon folks then went in, expanded the Equal Rights Act to include other people -- that's when you got the Asians in and the rest of them in -- trying to dissipate the number of blacks that was coming in, you see.

**Right. Yes.**

Also, they did another thing. I always said that if we had not been so successful here, they would not have done this. But they took the Justice Department out from enforcing the laws dealing with private industry and just left the Department of Justice with government entities. What happened then with the Equal Rights Commission that came into place is that they just burdened them down with overloads of cases. Of course, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department was a very active bunch then. In fact, they had some walkouts on some of these cases.

Of course, my friend Donbaugh, who was one of the supervisors, had tried to hold things together. Nixon had him in a situation where he had to go down and represent the government against the interests of the Civil Rights Division. He did that. Of course, that's another story.

**Okay. I have about 18 questions.**

Yes.

**There was an attorney here at this time whose name I can't think of right now who has taken partial responsibility for getting this consent decree started. His name is -- he was the one who was kind of fiery --**

You're talking about Charles Keller?

**Charles Keller. Now, did he have anything to do with the consent decree?**

No, no. Charles Keller didn't have nothing to do with the consent decree. Charles Keller had dealt with the case in 1966 with the integration of schools. I helped Charles Keller on that particular case. That's when you got the sixth grade centers here as a result of that. But Charles Keller did

not have anything to do with the consent decree within the hotels.

**How can I find all the documentation to this part about the consent decree and the Justice Department, all of that?**

You'll find it at the federal court.

**I can find it at the federal court, fantastic.**

Yes, yes.

**Did the NAACP local branch play a role in the consent decree once it was established?**

Well, what actually happened is that they set up a monitoring group in which the NAACP played a part. This group included sublevel people. I went to a couple of those meetings, and then I kind of backed out. Well, hell, they didn't want me here because the upper-level people knew more about me than, say, the people in the community in terms of my involvement with this. They didn't want a Joe Neal to be sitting there, you see, because they knew that they would have to take action. So what they brought in was sublevel folks, and they were supposed to be monitoring this decree.

At the same time, these other pressures came from the national level expanding the area of people that are supposed to be taken care of in this, which brought in Hispanics and all of that. At the time, see, the Hispanics were not being discriminated against in this town. No. Hispanics just went all the way up if they wanted to. They were not being discriminated at the time. In the 1960s and through the 60s and early 70s, they were not being discriminated against. They went where they wanted to. They were considered white. Yes.

I remember getting on [then Governor] O'Callaghan about that. I wrote him a letter about that. If you ever get into his file, there's a letter there which I wrote to him. I accused him of promoting Hispanics over blacks because they were more white than black. He didn't like that.

**Wow. Now, when you first got out of school and got a job at Titanium Metals as a janitor, was that usual for a black person with a four-year degree to --**

Yeah. Yeah, they didn't have anybody that worked in management. I was hired by a guy by the name of Cunningham. Well, he was over that division. He's the one that promoted me to the ingot inspector. In fact, he was Catholic and went to our Lady of Las Vegas Church. Yes, that was the only job that was in upper management at that time. And I was it. You know, they had

nobody else.

Of course, that was a difficult job because you were at the end of the line -- I call it the shipping line -- where everything had been done. You tested the ingot for hardness. After that, it gets loaded on the freight car, and they ship it back East where they turned it into sheet metal.

**How big is this thing? You told me how much it weighs, but how big is it?**

It's something like this, and it's about 14 feet. It's huge. It weighs about five -- you know, by the ton.

**2,000 pounds, wow.**

Yeah, 2,000. Well, it could be more than that. About 5,000 pounds. Yeah, I think the figure was 5,000 pounds. You know, if that sucker falls on you, it's over. So that particular job was being done by a person when I came, but I guess they couldn't get him. I came in just in time when they were trying to move one of the engineers out of that. So I just took over the job. I became so efficient at doing that job that when I left they had to take two people to do it.

It was at the end of the production line, which meant that if you did your work, it speeded up the line in back of you and they got out more ingots. So I would leave that job at 4 o'clock in the afternoon on a Friday, come in at 4:00 p.m. on a Monday. They would have ingots all over the place. By Tuesday evening, I would have caught up. Then I'm sitting there waiting on them to bring the ingots. I filled out each form on the ingots on the spot. It was marked and I measured it and put it in the folder. I took it up at the end of the day and dropped it off to the engineers. They took a look at it and calculated the hardness. Whenever they found a mistake or anything, it would come back to be double-checked. If they couldn't read my writing, they would come back and ask, "What is this?"

**You mentioned two names earlier, Jim Anderson and Dave Hoggard. You said a little about Jim Anderson, but I'd like for you to tell me more about Dave Hoggard.**

Dave Hoggard was a person that I knew before Dave knew me, okay. Dave was a very active person here in the 50s. I think he was a truant officer or something like that. So I knew of him back then. I didn't come to know Dave until 1966 when they brought in the Concentrated Employment Program. They called it CEP. They had CEP and CETA, Concentrated Employment Training Administration or something like that. He became a part of that. I went on the board. I

was working with Ruby Duncan's group in the 60s there.

**You're talking about the Economic Opportunity Board?**

Yeah, EOB. They had a person from the neighborhood council that could go on the board. I represented the neighborhood council, and came to know Hoggard through that. Don Clark was also on the board. We brought in the Concentrated Employment Program as a means of training people in the black community to get jobs in the various industries.

**What kind of training?**

Well, they had training for everything. You would train people, and it also had a component where you had job developers. They were people who would go out and develop jobs. One of the things that happened was they brought in these jobs. They had bachelor's and master's degrees. Clark and I went to Carson City to protest the level at which they wanted to start these people out in training or getting these jobs within the community here. We were able to convince the personnel administration that it was not necessary to have these qualifications. Clark did all of the talking. I sat there as backup for him. Strangely enough, we got it changed.

People working in the high schools were to become job developers. With the young you're going to find jobs and see that students get trained for them. Well, of course, they had a training program as to how to act and all of that stuff. That was being run by a guy by the name of Leo Johnson, who eventually went to the Employment Service.

Well, it was kind of funny. It's taking me back a bit. O'Callaghan wanted to take over this program.

**This CEP program?**

Yes, the Concentrated Employment Program. He wanted to bring it under the Employment Service, ES they call it, which was a state agency. Clark and I fought it. One of the things that we were able to do was to convince the Labor Department that this Employment Service had been in operation for 35 years and had not hired at that time a single black person. So why would you give a program to them, you see? So we fought that program, and we took it over.

Now, O'Callaghan gets into the picture. He hires Bobby Archie to become head of the Employment Service. So Bobby now, he's dealing with the people out of San Francisco. They come back after the program again. And I told them we weren't going to give it up. At this time I

had become chairman.

**Of the board? Of the EOB?**

Of the EOB board.

**And Bobby Archie is African-American?**

Bobby Archie was African-American. He's passed on now.

It was kind of funny because O'Callaghan didn't care too much for me at that particular time. I was on his butt every opportunity that I got. .So they had a little old guy by the name of Matthews. He worked for the state. I forget his first name, but he worked as the Economic Opportunity person on the state level. He used to come down and look at our program a lot.

See, now I'm part of the board. And like we said, we're in the 70s now. I got elected in '72, and I was still part of the board when I got elected. I had served two terms. I had been on the board probably about three years into this particular period. O'Callaghan, as I said, had appointed Bobby Archie. They wanted this program and I objected. So they had gotten the word from the Labor Department in San Francisco that now you can have this program. Joe Neal is blocking. He won't give it up.

So he comes in and gets a telegram. Now, I try to call him and tell him that it's okay; you can have the program. We're going to give it up. We're going to sign off on it. This night we're having this board meeting. But they wanted to embarrass me. So he comes in with Bobby Archie. It was kind of funny. We got to talking about the program. And he says, "Well, the Labor Department says we have to give up the program. But your chairman here said that he was not going to give up the program." He pulled out this white sheet of paper and said, "I have a telegram from the Labor Department saying that they want this program turned over at such-and-such a date."

Well, what he forgot -- and it was kind of funny and I laugh at this today -- of course, Archie and I became good friends after that -- what he forgot in an audience of blacks is that a telegram is not white. It's yellow. And somebody from the audience said, "That's not no telegram. A telegram is yellow." So I almost fell out of my chair. Where he thought that he had the audience with him at that particular point, then all of a sudden, boom, things just reversed on him.

**Why did he think a black audience would want the program taken from this black agency?**

Well, it's because they wanted something. O'Callaghan wanted it, really. O'Callaghan wanted it, and he was doing O'Callaghan's work for him.

**I understand.**

Bobby couldn't stay there and he didn't stay there because he was too good of an attorney to utilize his skills just to help O'Callaghan achieve something. I used to get on O'Callaghan's butt about his appointment of blacks. He had blacks appointed, but it was in sublevel jobs. So I said, "Hey, man, why don't you put a black on the Public Service Commission? Put them on the Gaming Commission." You know, that's the problem that I was having with him. Of course, he didn't like that too much. I was putting that pressure on him. And I would write him a letter and spell governor with a little "G" and all of this stuff. He didn't like that too well, so he wanted somebody to put me down, and he thought that Bobby would do this.

Of course, we had a commission here. I don't know whether you'd call it a Civil Rights Commission, but it was part of the city. I think Hoggard was on that and Lubertha Johnson or somebody else was on that commission. But that was just kind of like a show. It did not do anything for anybody. It just talked about racial problems. There was also a commission during that period on which Woodrow Wilson served called the Civil Rights Commission. That's the one that Berry made so famous here, Mary Berry. Yeah, that's the one. That's the same type of commission that she made famous. And they had these subgroups within the various states that reported racial problems. They had a Methodist minister that also worked on that. A couple of times, I would go with Willie up to Reno in the mid 60s to attend one of these sessions.

**Did they have any power?**

No. No, it didn't have any power. It was just advisory. Yeah, it was advisory. And this commission was advisory. So they called me down. I could not understand why I was being invited to come down. Well, Bobby Archie was there. I figured in my mind that coming from the South, we had both been dealing with a lot of this stuff. I said, "Well, they're trying to pit us against one another." We've both gone to black law schools. He went to Howard and I went to Southern. So I'm saying, "No, no, no, this can't be happening. You know, they're trying to pit us against one another."

Of course, I was at my best at that particular meeting. I kind of embarrassed some people because

I'm not one to back down. When you put me in a corner, I come out. I state my case and I state it well.

So one of the guys that was on the commission -- it was an insurance commission, as I recall -- his name was Duetsh. He had an insurance agency here. But he was somewhat liberal. I could not understand, as I indicated, as to why they wanted me there other than to pit me against Archie so somebody would get to talking and say, "Hey, these two guys..."

So they kind of moved Archie up. Archie went into private law practice after staying about a year with O'Callaghan or maybe a little better than a year. Of course, he got into some problems. At that time they had these cameras that came out, and they took pictures of him with some little white girls. He wound up going to prison as a result of that. Of course, that indicates just how much they actually cared for him.

Of course, I was his friend after that and told him so. I went on in '72 and got elected. Of course, the thing about it, coming out of this whole setting with O'Callaghan wanting to get me, he looks up and he sees that I'm running for the senate. There was nobody but me and this Republican called Woodrow Wilson. So he supported the Republican against me. But he lied and said that he didn't give me any money. This is what I think I told you in -- did I tell you about the white girl that went into the bank and got the statements?

**No, not yet. We don't know that story yet.**

Well, I ran for office in '72.

**Now, this is the time that -- is this the first time running for the senate?**

No, no. No. This is the second time running for the senate, and I got elected. This is after we had created --

**That's right. Okay.**

Yeah, had created the office. So I'm running. I'm still chairman of the Economic Opportunity Board, and I'm running from that particular position. Also, I'm still the compliance officer for Reynold's Electrical Engineering Company. But I've gotten into some problems with Reynold's because I guess I moved a little bit too fast for them, too. So as it turned out, Woody and I wind up together. One Democrat, one Republican.

O'Callaghan gave Woody some money, \$1500. But it was in terms of a loan. So he went

down to First National Bank. They signed for a loan for him, and he got the money from them. And then they paid the loan off with the Democrats' money.

So we had -- and I'll never forget this. There was this white girl, and I'm not going to call her name because she's still living. But this woman was brave.

**(End side 2, tape 1.)**

She went into the bank like she was working there, and she said, "Where do you keep the canceled checks?" Somebody said, "Go in the back room." She went in the back room, got the canceled check, copied it, and came out of the bank. We took this check, and we just whipped O'Callaghan to death on that. He couldn't (laughing).

I went on and got elected, now, to the senate. And he's governor. He has to come in and give his State of the State address. It was 1973. He talked about making it a death penalty for killing policemen.

**For the murder of a policeman?**

Yeah, for the murder of a policeman. Someone came to me from the press and asked me what I thought about the statement. I said, "Why have the death penalty for killing a policeman? Why not have it for anybody? Death is death. It's just as primitive for a janitor as it would be for a policeman." So that little thing that O'Callaghan had just went down like it was a lead balloon.

Of course, Paul Price, who was a columnist for the Sun, picked up on that and took my position. Now, you have to understand what this means to O'Callaghan because O'Callaghan is supported by the Greenspun family. So when Paul Price writes and takes my position, it really just disturbed O'Callaghan. So O'Callaghan wanted to get me out.

But I wasn't biting, you see. I didn't have anything in my record. So he could not get anything on me. I was not doing anything. I played a fair game. I spoke on the floor. I talked what I thought I should talk about, and I voted the way I thought I should vote.

Of course, O'Callaghan is kind of running again in '74. Now, I'm making headlines all the time. In '73, nothing but headlines. In fact, there are articles being written almost every day about the black senator, Joe Neal, because I was not voting with him. I voted against a lot of folks. I'd pick out an issue that I thought was right, that would advance the cause of society or advance the cause of black people, and I would vote that way irrespective of whoever voted the other way. So



I wind up being called 19 to 1. They had 20 Senators, 19 to 1, that's what it represented.

I remember being challenged by a guy by the name of "Snowy" Monroe from Elko, a newspaper guy. He served a long time. He got up and challenged me. He said, "I can't understand why this Senator Neal just keeps voting against us and our criminal laws. Does he not want to enforce our criminal laws in the state?" Of course, when he got through, I got up and answered. And my answer was to the fact that, of course, I believe in creating a just society. But I don't believe in creating a totalitarian condition to get there. Like, boom, another headline going across the paper with that.

Those are the types of things that I was confronted with in those first days of my election to the senate. I was having a good time. You have to understand it was serious business. I remember getting some of the notes from the Klan men who worked in that area.

I remember one letter that I got from them. I would go on the floor of the senate. I remember saying these words: "I got this particular letter, and I believe it's from a group that might want to do me harm, and I believe that it is the Klan. But I want you to know and for them to know that I'm going to judge them by their reputation," which meant that, hey, if I recognize you as Klan, I'm not going to let you hurt me. I'm going to hurt you first. That's what it meant. People kind of picked up on that, you see, because I had the reputation when I got elected to the senate the first time, which I didn't know, that everybody thought I was a Black Panther.

### **Why?**

Because I had a brother that was a member of the Black Panthers. So they thought I was a member of the Black Panthers, too, because I never did back down off of a policeman and things like that. Never did. And wasn't afraid of policemen. I would go right in their midst and talk to them. I was not afraid of them. They didn't understand that. They thought, well, only a Black Panther would do that. Well, those were skills that I had developed when I came out of service that I figured that, hey, I could handle myself. That's what they thought. If a white guy came and slapped me too hard on the back, he ducked because he thought I was going to hit him back. In those first years, that worked well for me and I used it. I never did tell them anything different.

I remember I was down here, and I ran into Larry Bolden, the late Larry Bolden. We're going to St. James Catholic Church. He called me one day. He got me outside and said, "Joe,

down in the police department, they're saying that you're a member of the Black Panthers." I said, "Ooh." He said, "The only thing I knew, you're a member of the Catholic Church. That's the only thing I know about you." I said, "You're right. But as long as they think that, I don't have a problem with it."

**Now, tell me who Larry Bolden is.**

Larry Bolden was the first deputy chief of police here in Clark County with the sheriff's department and also with the old police department. In fact, he had to fight to get that job.

**And you're talking about a black man?**

A black man, yes. Yeah. Most people I talk about are black with the exception of a few. Stu Herman was Jewish. Frank Donbaugh was white. He was from Miami. He went to the University of Miami Law School. In fact, we're still friends to this day. He has since retired. He's married to a black woman. That's how much effect the Civil Rights thing had upon him. Frank kind of tickled me. He was one of the bravest white boys that I ever met. I never did think that I would like a white person as well as I liked him and mainly because Frank would show up everywhere when he was a young attorney within the Justice Department, in the early 60s. I don't care where I would be, Frank would find me. I remember I was in a little one-room shack in Scotlandville, Louisiana. Knock on the door, open it, there's Frank. He found me. I remember one time I was in law school in the study, Frank showed up. "I got this affidavit I want you to sign." He was that type of guy. I remember up in Tallulah, Louisiana. Frank one night at nine o'clock -- I was over at my cousin's house. Here, Frank knocked on the door. He would get around.

He didn't have any fear for himself, you see. And Frank used to tell me -- and we talk about these things now. We're getting old, up in age. He said, "You know what? I see all these guys writing these things about Civil Rights and all of that. But you were on the front line of a lot of that stuff like I was." I said, "Yeah. But that was your job." You know, I would tell him that was his job to be there. He did his job, and he did his job well. A lot of the things that you see as the Voters' Rights Act was enforced by his division because he became head of the Civil Rights Division. He made damn sure that they did the job until things began to change, we got Richard Nixon, and the new policies began to change. But he still worked and did his job.

It shows that within that independence of that agency, they enforce the law. So they went out and they grabbed onto a case. Then the political people could not come in and say, "Hey, you cannot do this," because then the word leaks out that they are kind of putting the kibosh on these things. So the political people had to be very careful how they dealt with that division because that division, Civil Rights Division, was very active and it was because of people like Frank Donbaugh.

**Where is he now?**

Frank lives in Maryland. If you ever want to talk to him, I think I got his telephone number up there in one of my books. In fact, we just had a visit just last summer. He came out. He was going to Colorado to go rafting down the Colorado River. He and his wife and his daughter stopped here. I went out and visited with them. His wife, who is black, didn't even believe that old Frank was as active in the Civil Rights as that. She thought that when he was telling, he was just lying.

**Oh, wow, that's great.**

**You mentioned a couple of other names. Tell me who Leo Johnson is.**

Leo Johnson was a person who worked for the CEP program under David Hoggard. And when the CEP program moved over to the Employment Service, he went over with them. He served over there until, I think, he retired.

**Did that program change when it went into the Labor Department?**

I don't think that it was as active as it was in terms of finding jobs and all of that. After the Hughes people came to town -- Hughes came and bought the hotels here -- then there was a stall of activity. We gradually went back into a retreat, you see. And we still are somewhat in that -- then we kind of moved up a bit. You had one, maybe two people that might have good jobs within the industry. Then you're getting replaced now by mostly Mexican-Americans in those various jobs now. So you don't have that as far as blacks are concerned.

This is not new for a person of your caliber who likes to study history. We've gone through these retreats before, and we've seen them come and go. Strangely enough, I'm just now reading this guy here, about the "Sundown Towns," James W. Loewen, who has done a study on what they call "Sundown Towns." That's one of the best studies that I've read since Gunnar

Myrdal in the 40s. It takes a different track in terms of looking at race relations in this country. I kind of wonder. Like Cornel West, who wrote the book "Race Matters." This guy here is a little bit deeper than that with documentation and all of that. He talks about "Sundown Towns" as a method of exclusion of blacks.

We are now getting back into that particular trend, you see, where we had that exclusion from the 1890s up through the 30s and then began to change. People seem to kind of move up again. Then you get into the 50s and 60s. Then you're seeing blacks begin to move. But now the brakes are being put on things, and things began to roll back.

We see that in your system out at the university with the new meritocracy that they're trying to put into place out there. A lot of people don't see that as a means of excluding blacks from the system because where we have been able to work and become a part of things, we have made great strides. Things that happened, say, in the early 20s, where you saw the great baseball players and the jockeys and things where we were allowed to participate, we participated well. But there was that exclusion.

But it was not only blacks, even as Loewen would tell you, that was excluded. You see that history even in this state with the Chinese. You find a lot of little towns where you say, "Well, the Chinese lived here." And I was just reading a Nevada Historical Society journal where they were excavating some towns where they had the Chinese. And you ask the question, "Okay, they excavated where the Chinese live. How come they're not living there now? What happened to them?" Well, hell, they ran them out, you see.

**So after the huge gains in the late 60s and early 70s in Las Vegas, just for this city, what do you think happened that by 1985 you could go into a casino and not see any blacks working there?**

Well, that's when the retreat took place.

**Right. So why do you think the retreat happened here, just here?**

Well, you see, the white establishment in society understands how to use groups against one another. And they pit groups against one another and have you argue with the group rather than seeing the person who's pulling the strings. So what actually happened, they began to move the Mexican-Americans in, and they began to push the blacks back out. So in the community now,

you'll find a lot of blacks that get angry about the Mexicans.

I'm saying to myself, "Hey, don't get angry with the Mexicans because, look, they're looking for jobs. You see, they have families to feed just like you have families to feed. You might think that they're taking something from you. But look at who's hiring them. You go there, you see, and then you'll find what's right."

That's what I was about. That's why you will find that most white people do not, especially establishment type, do not care too much about a Joe Neal. Usually -- and I've checked this out on many occasion -- you'll find black folks that come in and say, "Well, I don't know about that Joe Neal." Then you search for answers. Where does he work? Who is he working for? Then you trace it back to the source. And that's where he's getting his information because what he's trying to do is trying to stay at a position where the talk is about a Joe Neal.

The best thing that I could have done in my life after getting out of service was to go to Southern University and study political science in a period of time when we had great turmoil in the country. I had access to professors who didn't care about what they said, but they wanted to speak truth to power. They would tell you things that you didn't know and that you were able to see.

I can recall two people in my life that influenced me greatly in school. One was a woman. Her name was Jewel Prestich. She was my teacher, and also an adviser of mine. Another one was a fellow by the name of Adolph Reed. Adolph Reed got shipped out of Southern in the early 60s because he was considered, quote, radical. But Adolph Reed could introduce you to a line of thinking. And it made you think. Jewel Prestich was of the same family.

I remember Jewel Prestich had us come to a book review once. The book was written by James Baldwin, "The Fire Next Time." I listened to that book review. She used to do this a lot to us. You have to go to those book reviews on campus. But this particular book attracted me because James Baldwin had a passage in that book that I recall to this day that said that white people as a group have no intrinsic value that black people should need or want. The only thing that whites have as a group that blacks should need or want is power. You know, that kind of stuck with me along with something else I had heard in the Baccalaureate sermon at our high school.

We used to have the Baccalaureate sermon where the preacher would come in and preach to us. This Baptist minister came in. And I'm sitting there in shoes where I had tacked up the soles. And he took as his text, "The deep calls unto the deep and the shallow will not answer." He used that as a metaphor to get us to think and study and move forward.

Some years later -- and, of course, we didn't read Shakespeare in our high school. But we got Shakespeare when I went to college. And Shakespeare said some of the same things in Julius Caesar when Augustus's Army and Anthony's Army was closing in on him. And he says there comes the tide in the affairs of men when taken at crest would lead to great fortune omitted in all of the days of our lives was left wondering in the shallows. *\*[Editor's note: paraphrased - see exact quote at end of interview]* I thought about that, and I connected this to the Biblical scripture which was found somewhere in Psalms. I can't remember the exact chapter and verse that the preacher had mentioned.

Well, these things became kind of a guiding force for me throughout my life. It made me want to seek an understanding. That's why when I said I went to Southern that was the best thing that happened to me. I was able to then put things in perspective as to where I had come from and the places that I had been and why I was there. You see, it made me understand slavery.

This did not come from my Momma Mary, as we mentioned earlier. But it came from an old lady who lived across the field from us when I was just about four years old, four or five. Her name was Annie. And Annie used to talk to me about slavery. That's when she used to tell me about how they had the big guys that used to be studs for the ladies, slave women that produced children.

It's strange enough -- and I didn't remember this -- that Annie had a girl that visited her. And she came from Vicksburg. Of course, we were only nine miles from Vicksburg. We used to call the girl Beah, okay. I didn't realize until many, many years later, until about five years later, the girl turned out to be Beah Richards, the actress. I'm sitting here one day, and they're doing the history on Beah, and they show me her younger picture. And I said, "I'll be damned. That's her." I was about four or five, and she used to come over. Beah must have been around about 10 or 11 at the time.

But when I saw that -- and then to kind of reflect back on -- we called her Ms. Annie -- I

never did know Ms. Annie's full name. We just called her Ms. Annie. And I never knew exactly what happened to her. She just disappeared from the house that she was at. I don't know whether she died or what because I can't recall -- or if she went and lived over in Vicksburg.

But she used to tell these stories to us because at the time -- Ms. Annie must have been in her -- and I'm talking about like -- I was born in '35. So this had to be around about '39, you know, going into '40 when that was happening. She was telling a story. She must have been in her 80s then, you see, which would have put her, you know, right there in that period of slavery and understanding a lot of history that was transferred to her from her parents and her relatives.

Of course, in reading some history about Beah Richards after then -- Beah Richards was a tough old girl. You know, she went to California. She stayed in California and became an actress there. My wife and I went over to see her. And it never did occur to me who she was. We went to see her when she did a story, one of Baldwin's plays, about the woman preacher. I forget the name of the story. But this was back in the early 60s when we went over to see her. But I always had this attraction to her, and I never did understand why until after she had passed. Then they were doing the story on her on the television, and I was watching her. And I saw those young pictures of her, and it hit me as to why that I had that attraction to her.

**Do you remember any of the stories that Annie used to tell you?**

She would always preach to us about -- to me really because I was the only one that was sitting around listening to her -- about education. As I grew up and got to around about 12, I remember going -- 12 or 13, going out in the woods, chopping wood, and bringing it back for her. And she would give me money for it. I think it must have been something like two bucks a load or something like that. I used to do that for her. All of a sudden, she just disappeared. I never knew exactly what happened to her.

But she would tell us all of these -- tell me all of these stories about slavery and what it was like and how hard it was. She always -- I think it was mostly impressing upon you that, look, you never want this to happen to you, you see. That was the impression that I carried from her. Of course, I can recall after I went into service and I came back to visit Momma Mary. This was like in '56. I'll never forget that she was washing on the washing board, number two tub, and I was talking --

**(End side 1, tape 2.)**

So I was telling Mary, You know, I would never come back here." And she just stopped and said, "I understand. I'm too old to live there, but you've got your life. You go ahead. You take care of your life there." That was kind of cutting me loose to move on from that particular point on. Of course, I came back after I got out of the service when I would come to Southern. I used to come up and visit her, momma, and stay with her during the periods that I was out of school until I graduated. Then I came back here. But she let me know that, hey, you know, you have to get on out there and do what you have to do.

**I want to ask just a couple things about the legislature before we end today. When you first started in '73, do you remember any of the early issues that you dealt with?**

Yeah.

**Okay, good. Could you tell me about some of the early ones in the early 70s?**

Well, the issues that I dealt with in the early 70s, first of all, were issues on capital punishment. I took a position against capital punishment and will always take a position against capital punishment. Up until I retired, I never did support capital punishment. I was always opposed to it.

The other issue that I dealt with was to restore rights to ex-felons. That was one of the first bills that I actually passed in the legislature. That was in 1973. That bill was something else. I introduced a bill. It came to me through a guy that I met. His name was Butler. And Butler was from Tallulah. He had come here and he had become a felon. He was shining shoes, and I was getting my shoes shined one day. And he said to me, "What needs to be done is to get these ex-felons some rights. We can't get a job. We can't do nothing." So I said, "Well, okay."

So when I got elected, the first thing I introduced was this bill in '73 to restore the rights of a felon. Well, as it turned out, we had reapportionment in the legislature. One of the guys who had served prior to me, a guy by the name of James Slattery, came to me and looked at the bill. He told me, "That bill that you've got is a good bill. Can I help you with it?" I said, "Yeah, of course." Ex-senator, white. Why not? See what he can do. He took the bill, ran with it, got it out of the senate.

He follow it down to the assembly, came back. And it had a ten-year requirement. If you



served ten years and you had no offense greater than a traffic ticket, you can get your rights restored. Beautiful. Joe Neal got his first bill passed in the first session. Having an impact on somebody's life.

Come back. And I'm down in our personnel section. And somebody says, "Have you seen this article in the paper about you? It's about you and this bill that you passed." I said, "Who is it by?" They said, "It's by Paul Price." So I picked up the paper. Paul Price slam-blasted me. The only bill that Joe Neal passed in the 1993 legislature was a bill to help a --

**'73?**

'73 legislature was a bill to help a whoremonger in Northern Nevada. And I'm saying, "Wait a minute. What's this?" You see, I didn't know that James Slattery was working for Joe Conforte. So the bill that he passed helped Joe Conforte, okay. But I did know that everybody in the legislature voted for the bill with the exception of Raggio. Raggio and Joe Conforte were at odds with one another. He didn't vote for the bill. I'm saying to myself, okay, maybe he just didn't like it. You know, he's a district attorney. That was my take on it because he was a former district attorney. He served 20 years as a district attorney before he got elected to the state senate.

So I looked at the bill and I read the article. Then I had to write a rebuttal. And the rebuttal, you can find it somewhere in the Sun now. I wrote a rebuttal to that and said, in essence, that once a law is passed, I'm not responsible for anyone who takes advantage of it. That's the way I left it, like that. Greenspun loved those types of rebuttals, you know. He would always put things in the paper. When I wrote a rebuttal against something, he would always put it in that section of the paper that it was dealing with. If it was his column, he would do that.

So the next bill that I had to deal with -- the Supreme Court had ruled capital punishment illegal under *Furman v Georgia*. The legislature was looking for some means to reinstate the death penalty.

**In Nevada?**

In Nevada, yes. And I came in on that. I remember testifying against that. I was at my best on that. That was the first time that my legalism showed, in that discussion. And I guess it made people a little bit nervous about me because I talked about capital punishment in terms of the legal ramifications, you know, the Constitution and all of that stuff.

**Give me some of your arguments against it.**

My argument was that capital punishment was not a deterrent and that it was used by district attorneys and the community to either get them elected or to make them look strong on crime. And they were actually putting people to death. One of the major arguments is that once you put a person to death and happen to find out that person is innocent, you cannot bring him back. And mistakes are made. Those were the type of arguments.

Of course, I did a lot of other things. But I kept that one up. That argument kept going and going and going year after year until the churches started getting involved. I had to get on the Catholic Church because I came out for a woman's right to choose. Then they got on me. Then I said, "Okay, if you're so concerned about this, why are you not concerned about the death penalty?" You see, then all of a sudden, they said, "Okay, you've got a good argument." Then they began to move into it. So by the time I left -- even about two terms before I left, the church actually got actively involved in trying to eliminate the death penalty.

**Were there any bills at the beginning regarding education? I know that's another thing that you have a strong stance on. Was there anything with the medical school up in Reno?**

Yes.

**What was that all about because it goes on for about 42 pages?**

Well, let's see. When it first started with the medical school -- this is something else that started in my first term. Okay. We had a two-year medical school at that particular time. Then we went to four years after that. I supported all of that. But in the two-year medical school -- this is one of Joe Neal's harebrained ideas, you know. We wanted black students to go tuition free. Of course, this went over like a lead balloon.

But one of the Foley boys, John Foley -- and John Foley, I'll never forget, argued for the inclusion of that. We were on the education committee together. It was just the two of us. So we brought the bill out to the floor, and we argued for that, to pass that. Poor John. I said, "John, look, we're not going anywhere on this one. They ain't going to buy this one." But John argued for it. And he was right. He was right because we did not have any blacks in the medical school at that particular time.

**Do you think money is the reason?**

Money was the reason. We just thought maybe that, hell, since it was a state institution -- you know, you pay your taxes. So why not let somebody go tuition-free to get that base going? It's all a means of trying to create a medical community to meet the service of the people here at that particular time.

Of course, there were many other issues involved in education as we moved through the 70s. I think in the late 70s, I became the chairman of the Human Resources Committee. That's where all the education bills went through. You see what actually happened there, I would not permit bills that would restrict education or teaching in any way. I didn't go for the free-enterprise stuff that, now, you have to teach free enterprise. No, no, no, no. You weren't going to send that through the committees I was on.

**How much power does a chairman of a committee have?**

You have a tremendous amount of power. I tried to exercise that power just like the rest of the chairmen there. I had some bills pulled out of my committee because of that, too, you know. They go to the floor and they get a vote. They would put it out. Of course, that made me become an expert on the rules, how to deal with a lot of that stuff. I was very supportive of education.

What I would do once I became chairman of the Human Resource Committee, I would call in the principals or the superintendents of the various school districts and say, "Tell me what you want. Tell me what you need, sir. We can't just sit here and start passing legislation. We want to know what you want, what you need." And they would come in, and they would like that. Now it doesn't happen that way. We sit up there and say, okay, boom, we pass this. You come up and testify for it. You know, somebody gets some harebrained ideas. But I would let the ideas come up from them and try to put into statute what they wanted. I was a stickler for that.

Like for instance, I passed the bill to make sure that all of the laws that we pass went to the public libraries. Yes. All the laws that we pass get sent to the public libraries. You've got it out there in your library. [*Interviewer works at UNLV Library.*]

**Oh, yeah, we have it in ours, definitely.**

Yes. You don't have to pay for that. That's automatic. They have to mail it out to all of the public libraries. I remember the county library down here called me down and gave me an award for that because they had to pay for all of that stuff. I said, "No. The state makes these laws, and they say

that the public should know them. So why not put them in the places where the public can get to them?"

**You became an expert -- I've heard you talk about this several times throughout the community -- you became an expert on the rules of the legislature.**

Oh, yes.

**Tell me about that and why that was so important.**

Well, you see, being a minority, the only thing you had to fight with was the rules. When I first went into the legislature, the requirements, in order to introduce a bill, were you would have to get somebody else to second that. Okay? Nobody was going to second a bill that I was going to be introducing. So my first attack was upon that. And Reid can verify this because he was lieutenant governor at that session.

**Our Senator Reid?**

Uh-huh. I went in and looked at that situation. I went to Reid, and I went to the majority leader. It was B. Mahlon Brown. I told Reid first. "Why have an unnecessary rule to introduce a bill requiring a second? What if you used a good measure and you just need it? You have to put it out there so people can see it, and they might want it, but you can't get it out there if you can't get a second for it." And he said, "Well, you're right." They talked to Bryan. He got elected at the same time, too. Senator Bryan, Richard Bryan. Then we went to B. Mahlon Brown. He said okay. So we changed the rule. Good.

**But, I mean, the rule didn't have to go through the system to be changed?**

Yes, it had to go through the system and you had to change the rule, you see. But you just put an amendment to the rule and just change it.

So they changed it, and that opened the door for me. You see, that opened the door for me to get measures out there that I could argue about, that I could present ideas that I knew weren't going to work, but good ideas, but you could get before the public and express those things. And when they found out what was happening, it was too late. Then I would introduce measures, go before committees and talk about them, and the press would pick up on them. Okay? And then these guys would go home and, they'd get asked about it. People were asking, "What are you doing about this bill?"

**Now, for somebody listening to this or reading this later on, a complete novice to the process, tell me about what a senator does. Tell me how it works. Tell me what's done in committees, how important the committees are. Just tell me all of it.**

Well, you get an idea, and then you submit that idea to a bill drafter to put it into the form of proposed statute or amendment to a statute. Then he brings that out in terms of that particular bill's draft for introduction. You have to introduce all of your bills on the floor by the secretary. You give it to the secretary. She would assign a bill number, SB1 or SB2, SB40, whatever number, in sequence for that particular session. Then you would have to move that that bill be referred to committee. That's where the second would come in. And that would prevent you from getting your bills in. So once we eliminated that -- an individual gets up and moves that that bill be referred to the committee that's actually dealing with that. For educational bills, it goes to Human Resources. For criminal type legislation, it goes to the Judiciary Committee. For bills that were dealing with local government, it would go to the Government Committee. That's the way it worked.

**Taxes go to the finance?**

Taxes go to the Tax Committee. And finance, things like that, would go to the Finance Committee. The committee then would set a hearing. You would bring it in. People come in and testify for or against the bill. Then if it gets a do-pass or the bill could be killed, or it could come out two ways with a do-pass but no recommendation.

**Now, did you get the people to back your bill in committees?**

People weren't backing my bills in committees during the day. That's how come we had to get the rule changed. My bills wouldn't get out of committee, you see, because when you talk about things like conjugal visits in prison, that bill wouldn't get out of committee.

**So people backing your bills were other senators?**

No. It would usually be somebody who would pick up on it. Somebody from the public would come in and talk for it, but not necessarily the other Senators. You'd probably get one senator, but not enough to get the bill out of committee.

**People from the public can come in at that point?**

Yes, people can come in and testify.

**So a person from the community -- so these people just have to follow everything?**

Right.

**To know when it's going to a committee?**

Right.

**To know when to go to Carson City?**

Right.

**I see.**

They publish all the bills and the committee schedule in their journal. And that journal is published each day. That journal then goes out that same day to the various libraries now. That's why it's important for the people to hear about a lot of that stuff.

**Okay. So the journal goes out, as well as the bill, once it's -- okay. That's a great idea.**

**And then what would happen at that point?**

Well, once you get the bill and the bill has a hearing, it will either get a do-pass or you kill the bill in committee or you just don't bring it up, period.

**So if it gets a pass?**

It comes back to the floor where it can be amended by any senator. If not, then it gets voted upon or killed or it goes to the other house. It's a bi-cameral legislature.

**Right. That's wonderful.**

**You mentioned two other names that I want you to talk about. Tell me about B. Mahlon Brown.**

B. Mahlon Brown was the majority leader from the time that I got there until, I think, in the mid 80s. He must have retired in the mid 80s. He had been there for a long time. In fact, he was originally from Louisiana, a white guy. He came here at a very early age because he graduated from Las Vegas High School. He was very kind. He was a very kind guy. When we had one senator from Clark County, he was it. He was the one senator before reapportionment. And then with the reapportionment, he was one of the five senators that got elected.

I think at one time, they must have created just one district for a period of time just for him to run in because I remember in my other run for the senate in 1968, I ran against him. I remember Leola Armstrong, who was the secretary of the senate for about 22 years, she told me,

"You're going to get thumped." That's what she said.

**And she was right.**

Yeah, yeah, she was right.

**Tell me about Leola.**

Leola was a person that I loved dearly. They called her a white liberal, a white lady. She was married to a fellow by the name of Brian Armstrong, who was a writer for the Las Vegas Sun newspaper. She worked for O'Callaghan and them in the government. In the meantime when she was not there, she had some other job. I think she went to work at one time for O'Callaghan. But during the session, she became the secretary for the senate.

When I was first elected to the senate, she was one of the persons that called me into the office and said, "Look, I want to tell you something." She went in the drawer, and she pulled out a book called the Mason Manual. She says, "Look, you take this. I want you to read it because you're going to need it. You study this book. That will help you negotiate a lot of these things that you're going to have in the senate." She's the one that put me onto the rules.

Now, in order to understand the rules of the senate in the Mason Manual what you have is in terms of making law. You have the federal Constitution. You have the federal statutes. You have federal regulations. Then you get the state constitution, state statutes and regulations. Then you have what you call the senate standing rules. And then you have the Mason Manual. The Mason Manual covers everything that the senate standing rules do not cover. Okay? So when you want to get into the technical stuff, you use the Mason Manual. The Mason Manual is a book about 1100 pages long. By the time I left the legislature, I knew all 1100 pages.

Because of her giving me that book, I studied it. From that, I knew the value of the rules. So when I went into the legislature, I knew to look for rules that were going to hamper my progress and try to get those changed. And that's what I did, and that's why the first rule change was to get rid of that second, you see. So we did that.

Of course, the most famous rule would be in 1979 when we had the Equal Rights Commission. I mean the Equal Rights Amendment, not the commission. The Equal Rights Amendment came before the legislature. Now, the Equal Rights Amendment had started in '73. Nobody knew how I was going to vote on that. I got up and gave a passionate speech in favor of

the Equal Rights Amendment. Then they tried to get it. It died in the Senate. It came back in 1975 and was introduced again. It died in the Senate. It came back in 1977. It died. In '79, I believe that's the year, they finally started it off in the Senate.

Now, we've got the 20 people. We've got a new lieutenant governor. His name is Robert E. Rose, Bob Rose, who's now justice of the Supreme Court. So the Assembly said, "We're tired of pushing this. Let the Senate do it." So it came to the Senate. I was sitting in '76. Let's see now. No. It was '77 when this happened because it was O'Callaghan's last term. He was in his last term.

So in '76, I read an article in the paper. A guy by the name of Blakemore, who lived in Tonopah, made a statement to the fact that if the Senate ties at a tie vote, it would never pass the Senate. I said, "What is old Rick talking about here?" And my thought, since I'm reading the rules, I knew that he or somebody was going to abstain to keep the tie from occurring. So I said, "Let me kind of research this thing." So I went into the standing rules of the Senate. There was a rule that was based on the Constitution of the state that says that once in vote -- it was called Rule 30, and it had been on the books, a part of the legislature, since 1864. And it said, in essence, that once in vote by three senators, everyone within the bar of the Senate has to vote yea or nay. That was the rule. I had done a lot of research on it. It was put there to prevent people from sitting there and not voting on critical issues or saying they abstain.

**(End side 2, tape 2.)**

So Rule 30 says that once in vote by three senators, everyone within the bar of the Senate has to vote yea or nay. They had set the passage of the vote on the Equal Rights Commission -- not the passage of it, but the discussion of it to vote on it for seven o'clock in the evening as a special order of business. CBS News and everybody else was there because we were one of the crucial states to deal with this. So I led off the debate. I must have talked about 20 minutes.

But prior to that, Rose was in his office. He was there just reading the book. I saw him pacing the floor when I walked in. He was lieutenant governor. I walked in and showed him the rule. A glow came over his face and he said to me, "If you invoke it, I will enforce it."

Now, at that time we didn't have many Republicans. They had three Republicans. One of them had decided that they were going to go with our side, one had not. One of the Republicans



was a guy by the name of Cliff Young. He left the Senate and went on to the Supreme Court and then he retired. So I went down to Cliff Young. He was one of my mentors. This guy could get up and talk about a rabbit for 30 minutes and make it sound good. He was a Harvard law school graduate. I learned a lot from him.

I showed Cliff this rule. Cliff read it and he laughed and said, "But, Joe, how are you going to get them in here?" I showed him the rule which said you can call the House to session and have the cops go out and arrest everybody and bring them in. Cliff started laughing. We had a guy named "Diamond Tooth" Miller who was sergeant of arms, a real elderly gray-haired guy. And Cliff said, "I would certainly like to see old "Diamond Tooth" Miller go out in the crowd and arrest some of these guys and bring them back. But he laughed.

Now, one person I did not talk to about this and that was Raggio. But I knew Raggio watched me. You see, he watched me a lot ever since I introduced that bill about the ex-felon's rights. He always watched me.

### **The whoremonger.**

Yeah. So I spoke about 20 or 25 minutes on the passage of this bill, and I had cleared it with two other senators, the two newer senators. One of them was a senator by the name of Huntsted, and the other one was named Wilbert Fest. I showed them what I was going to do, that I was going to invoke this measure. At the end of the speech, I invoked Rule 30. Immediately these two guys stood up, one after another, and supported it.

Raggio picked up his book then, and he looked at it, and he started laughing to himself. I said, okay, I got him now. So Raggio knows he's going along for the ride now because he's thinking if I (indiscernible). I didn't know that he was going to vote for the bill because he hadn't expressed himself on it. But he sat down and he laughed at that.

So it went on for about two hours after that. People had speeches and counter-speeches. At the end of the speech, Rose says, "I want the senate to know that Rule 30 has been invoked. And each one in the Senate here has to vote yea or nay. The secretary will open the roll." Roll opened. Ten, yes; eight, no; two abstaining, Richard Blakemore and a guy by the name of Gene Echols. Rose then repeated, "I want to warn the senator that rule 30 has been invoked. We have ten yes, eight no, and two not voting. I would now place the no votes, the abstentions, the two

abstentions in the no column, and I declare the House evenly divided." And he pushed the eleventh vote.

Keith Ashworth, the late Keith Ashworth, was sitting beside me. He was the guy that liked to tinker with the voting machine. When something went wrong with the voting machine, he always went down to try to fix it. That's the type of guy he was. He's sitting up there looking at the voting machine. He saw that eleventh vote come up. He says, "Damn, that machine has gone haywire again." I said, "No, brother. The Equal Rights Amendment just passed the Senate." And a hush came over. It looked like it was about two or three minutes. Then all of a sudden, the gallery just broke out and started screaming and hollering.

Jim Gibson, who was pushing this, went down and sat his head in his hands. I didn't even understand what -- I learned later that he had made a promise to his church -- he was Mormon -- that was Equal Rights Commission would not pass. Lamb, he's very gracious about it. I left the building. I got out and went on over to the legislature. Lamb came over and says to me, "You did it to us, you rascal you." That's the way he was. But they went on two days in the Assembly, and they got the votes to kill it, even though it had already passed two times. It had to go back since we started it in the Senate. It had to go back to the Assembly, and they killed it. They would not pass it. Of course, that was the famous rule thing that everybody talks about.

**But that shows how important it is to know the rules, to study that book.**

Yes. But not only that -- I'm going to tell you, when you come back, some other rules we did...

**Good. I want to finish the 70s, and then we're going to go into the 80s. I have to look up some things about the 80s.**

Oh, okay.

**But thank you so much. This is wonderful.**

All right.

**(End side 1, tape 3.)**

*\*[“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.”]* Quote from Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare, paraphrased by Senator Neal on page 23 of this text.

End of Chapter two.