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ORAL INTERVIEW

of

ARLONE SCOTT

Edited by

Elizabeth Nelson Patrick

and

Rita O'Brien

Transcribed for

The Black Experience in Southern Nevada

Donated Tapes Collection, James R. Dickinson Library

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

June, 1978

ABSTRACT

ARLONE SCOTT, 1929- .

Ms. Scott, born in Louisiana, came to Las Vegas via Los Angeles in 1951. She narrates some of her experiences from that time to the present.

Ms. Scott has been an active member of her church and relates early happy experiences in inter-racial relations carried on by various Black and White churches in Las Vegas.

Although a high school graduate, because of discrimination against Blacks, Ms. Scott found her only job opportunities in menial work such as dishwashing and maid work. She relates that through the efforts of the Culinary Union new job opportunities were made available to minorities. She is now a supervisor of maids.

Ms. Scott describes the small business community of the Westside when she first came to Las Vegas. She sees the expansion of business in Las Vegas as a benefit to all citizens.

She makes observations on early housing and street conditions and how weather affected life then.

Ms. Scott's religious training and beliefs have kept her largely divorced from gambling, but she makes some observations about gaming as it related to herself personally. She briefly tells how segregation and discrimination affected entertainment for Blacks and limited them to seeking recreation on the Westside.

Collector: Glen Ette Davis
July 3, 1975

INTRODUCTION

Arlone Scott is a Black woman who came to southern Nevada in 1951. She was born in Delhi, Louisiana, in 1929 and attended schools there, graduating from high school in 1947. For a short while she was a substitute teacher, but in search of a better job she went to Los Angeles in 1948. After three years there she married, and she and her husband then moved to Las Vegas in 1951.

Ms. Scott set about making a place for herself in Las Vegas, and today she is a supervisor of a number of maids in a hotel.

This interview, a class project in Nevada history, was done by Glen Ette Davis at the home of Ms. Scott on July 3, 1975.

Differences in the tape and transcription of the interview occur because the typed version has been edited for easier reading. Repetitions and false starts have been eliminated. In some instances, a word or phrase has been added for clarity or correction and enclosed in brackets. There are omissions in the transcript which occurred when the speaker turned from the microphone, was interrupted, or had a lapse of memory.

Ms. Scott's interview is part of a series of interviews in the Donated Tapes Collection of the James R. Dickinson Library of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The transcription and editing of the interview have been supported in part by a grant to Dickinson Library administered by the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare through the Nevada State Library; Project Director, Harold H. J. Erickson; Assistant Director, Anna Dean Kepper. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.

A copy of the transcript will be available at the West Las Vegas Branch of the Clark County Library District and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York. A bibliography of Black Experience in Southern Nevada will be distributed statewide.

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Elizabeth Nelson Patrick
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1978



Arlone Scott
612 Marcella Avenue
North Las Vegas, Nevada
June 3, 1978

Collector: Mrs. Scott, were you born in southern Nevada?

Scott: No, I was born and raised in Delhi, Louisiana; I lived there from birth to high school. I completed high school there in 1947, and after that I worked there as a substitute teacher. In 19 and 50 I left Louisiana looking for a better job, because at that time doing substitute work I only made just a little, bare amount which amounted to not much.

I left there and went to Los Angeles, California, to visit my aunt. I lived there for about three years and I moved here in November 19 and 51. The way I got to come to Las Vegas was I met a man and we decided to get married. I came here in October; we was married in October, and I've been here since that time.

Collector: How many times have you moved in southern Nevada?

Scott: Oh, I moved about four or five times. When I first came to Las Vegas, there wasn't too many places to live; people were living in little boarded up houses that they had put together with just (garbled) board and plywood and stuff like that. It wasn't too many places to live over here on the Westside, and that was practically the only place where the Blacks lived at that time. That's

the situation--a poor place to live. And I didn't think much of the place because I really wanted to get away from here, but I was stuck here with my husband and we started a family. During that time it wasn't too much environment here. I was just a lot of sand and gravel and the roads were kind of bad; so we just drifted around from place to place and moved around quite a bit.

Collector: Now you moved to the Black side of Las Vegas. Was it divided? Did they have a Black side and a White side--like the Westside--was that in existence when you first moved here?

Scott: Yes, it was. All the Blacks lived on the Westside, on this side of the railroad tracks. In other words, on this side of Bonanza Road. During that time, the Blacks just had little shacks over here that they lived in. It was very hot at that time and they had little water coolers on top to kind of keep them cool. And they had wood heaters in the winter to keep them warm. And we were living in that kind of environment at that time. Like I said, it cost us quite a bit to move about trying to locate a decent place to live.

Collector: What about on the White side of town--could you, do you remember how their houses were? Were they any better...?

Scott: Well, it was (garbled), but at that time there wasn't much to Las Vegas. You know what I mean; it wasn't a big place like it is now. It hadn't grown like it has now, and a lot of Whites was living in the same predicament as we were living in over here. It was just about the same all over. There was a few nice houses on the other side, but not very many.

Collector: What type of jobs did you and your husband have when you first moved here?

Scott: Well, during that time, for the first year I was here, I didn't work. But after that I worked at Desert Drugs on Charleston for a little while, and I washed dishes out at McCarran Field. After that I went into hotel work. The Old Frontier was there at the time and it was made of logs and (garbled). There was just a log cabin building, and it had what they call bungalows; I started work there. That was my very first job and it was a maid's job.

And my husband did construction work. That was very good at that time because they was beginning to try to build Las Vegas and a job was very easy to find. You could walk out and people would ask you if you wanted to work; and if you really wanted to work, you could work. They were trying to build the town and they really needed people to work.

Collector: What changes have you noticed in your job? What differ-

erences are there from then and today?

Scott: Oh, there's quite a bit of difference in the jobs from then and today. At that time Blacks could only get a maid job, dishwasher, or something in the kitchen maybe. There wasn't many hotels here; there was just a few. You could get in as maids, and maybe might be a few in the pantry; but not like they are now. Mostly you'd get maid work; that's what I did, maid work. And it was quite a few years before there was any changes in the job status, because the Blacks was kind of pushed back. You had to take most of the maid jobs; that was all that was offered then.

Collector: Did you notice a great deal of racial tension here? Did they have special places for the Blacks. Were you allowed in the casinos and the hotels like they are now?

Scott: Yes, in the casinos that was downtown during that time, Blacks could enter them only if they worked there. You could work in them, but you couldn't attend there; you couldn't gamble or go in for a meal or anything like that. The only place we had was on Jackson Street. On Jackson Street at that time was quite a few clubs: the Cotton Club, the El Morocco, and the Elks Lodge, and places like that. And that is where most of the social life came for the Blacks--there on Jackson Street. But the

Downtown area--you wasn't allowed into those casinos. What few was down there at that time, I think, was the Horseshoe, the Golden Nugget, and the Golden Gate. On the Strip there was the Flamingo, the Thunderbird, El Rancho Vegas, and the Old Frontier--that was practically all the Strip at that time. There just wasn't much to it. But those places Negroes weren't allowed to go into and gamble and mix among the other people as they are today.

Collector: What do you think caused a lot of Blacks to come to Las Vegas?

Scott: A lot of the Blacks come to Las Vegas because of work. You could easily get a job in '51, '52, '53, and on up. And I think that was what draws most of the people here because they could find a decent job that would support their families pretty good.

Collector: Were they just building the hotels then, or what other projects?

cott: They started to build the Strip up real big. I really watched the Strip grow from just about three or four hotels up to where it is now. I watched the Strip and the Downtown area grow since 19 and 51. They was also beginning then to build nice homes so that gave men quite a bit of construction work to do. And they was also beginning to build better highways, better

roads, and things like that that gave men better jobs. They would build the hotels and that gave women more work to do, because they could go in as maids--Colored maids. And the Whites--they would give them the more higher up jobs at that time.

Collector: What about the dam? Was it in existence or had it been built when you moved here?

Scott: Hoover Dam, I think was practically completed when I-- it was completed when I moved here, but I think they was still working on Davis Dam. I'm not sure, but I think they was still working on Davis Dam.

Collector: What about the Test Site.

Scott: The Test Site, well, they was at that time testing up there. They didn't do too much underground testing. The testing was above ground. I can remember the flashes from the bombs and the shakes and all like that.

Collector: Have you noticed any growth or changes in your career field today?

Scott: Yes, quite a bit. When I came to Las Vegas, I washed dishes at McCarran and worked (garbled) at Desert Drug. I just usually stocked the shelves and cleaned, kept the stock in place, and priced different things. After that I went into hotel work. At that time the only thing you could do was maid work. They would almost tell you you're just qualified to be a maid. And we were all just maids. But afterwards, for the last eight or

nine years it's been quite a change, because now I hold a job as a supervisor; I've only held that job for seven years. Now we have Blacks that are supervisors. We've got Blacks that are stewards. We have Blacks that are housekeepers. We have Blacks that are holding most all the higher jobs. We have Black dealers. We have Black maitre d's. We have Blacks in all departments now in the hotels. And we can give the culinary Union quite a bit of credit for this, because they fought for it so hard for us. They did achieve this and it has went over pretty good. I can honestly say that Blacks do have a chance at most any type job there is in the hotel field. Not only in the hotel field, but in the labor industry I noticed that they have Black foremen. I believe they now have a Black man that's over the labor union in the person of Mr. [George] Osley. He is president of the labor union now. Those type of jobs just wasn't held by Blacks when I came to Las Vegas.

Collector: You have traveled back and forth from the southern states and Louisiana and back here to the western states . What differences have you noticed between the way that the Blacks are treated there and here ? Were they more easily accepted to come up to these better positions back there or here?

Scott: Well, I would say here. Back there I don't think the Blacks yet have really come up as they should. They are slowly getting there. They are slowly getting there because now they are putting some Blacks in quite a few executive places back there. They have advanced more here than they have back there.

Collector: And they, you feel, have been accepted better.

Scott: Yes, I feel that they are accepted better.

Collector: Let's go back to your life here. Were you active in any church when you first moved here? What about the early churches.

Scott: Yes, when I first came here, I united with a church called the Second Baptist Church under the pastorship of Rev. V.C.L. Coleman. This church was organized before I came here by a minister by the name of Percy Mayfield. He has had quite a time organizing the church, but now he has one of the leading churches. The mother church went bad. I was a member of that church for seventeen years. For the last year and a half I moved my membership because statutes changed.

My husband was affiliated with another church, Grace Emmanuel, and I moved my membership with him. I don't like it as well as I did my home church because I was in that church for better than seventeen years. I really enjoyed working in that church. It was one of the largest churches here.

And there has been quite a change among the churches; back when I first came here, churches didn't unite together too much. Blacks mostly held their services (garbled), but now we're beginning to unite religiously. I am very happy for that because that brings about a better relationship between Blacks and Whites. For instance, we visited First Baptist Church on Charleston and some of the Baptist churches downtown; we went to programs there when I was a member of Second Baptist Church. We used to travel around to White churches quite a bit and they would come over. And sometimes we would take our young group over to those churches to render a program. I can remember when I visited on West Charleston at First Baptist. We took a young adult choir and rendered the program out there. The following Sunday they came over and brought their young and they rendered a program with us at Second Baptist. We just had a wonderful time.

I think it's beginning now that the churches are beginning to unite; it will bring about quite a bit of relationship between people--a better relationship. They can begin to know each other, to know that Blacks are not so bad, that Whites are not so bad, and that united, we can get along and do better things for the community.

Collector: When you first came here, were you active in any type of political activities?

Scott: No, I've never been too active in no type of political group.

Collector: Do you remember any visit from any prominent people who came to this state?

Scott: I remember several visits, but I would rather not go into that because I can't remember the dates and all, and I just wasn't that interested.

Collector: Were there any Black leaders that came?

Scott: Yes, Martin Luther King came here for a visit.

Collector: What about any presidents? You can't remember whether an any ever visited this state?

Scott: I know Ford did. Ford visited here and I think Nixon was here. I'm not sure. I'm not sure about that part of it, but I do know...

Collector: But you can't remember way back when you were first here?

Scott: No. I didn't pay any attention to that type of thing; I was just a registered voter and left it at that.

Collector: Do you remember being in any type of social clubs or special interest groups?

Scott: Yes, I'm a member of the Queen Esther chapter, Order of Eastern Star. We have a quite a bit of activity. We are affiliated with Grand Lodge. We have quite a bit of activity there (garbled).

Collector: Was gambling an important recreation for you or people that you were associated with when you first came here? Was it as exciting as it is now?

Scott: Well, according to my statutes and my teaching and bringing up, I never was interested in gambling. But it really was kind of an excitement to stand around and just watch people gamble when I first came here, because I wasn't used to that type of thing. I did get quite an enjoyment out of watching other people gamble, but I never was a gambler myself. If we would have out-of-town guests, we would take them out and we would have a little fun gambling and playing machines and so forth with them; but as for gambling being a part of my social life, no, [it wasn't].

Collector: What changes in the economy have you noticed in Southern Nevada since you first arrived?

Scott: In the economy I noticed quite a bit of changes. When I first came to Las Vegas, there were just a few stores. On the Westside we had a little store that we called the Community Grocery. And then we had a little store that was called Gilbert Brothers Market, and on Main Street there was a store by the name of the Dollar Market. Those stores had to accommodate most all the people over here, because it just wasn't anywhere to shop but those stores. Now you have a great variety of stores; they have stores

all over. There is a big shopping mall, and they have these big stores placed about all over. I noticed Las Vegas is going east now. Most everything was located downtown or around Main Street. Where the Mall is, well, that was just desert--open desert. Now they've built that all up and they have the great shopping mall out there. That has brought about quite a change in the economy and the hotels--well, I've watched all those hotels grow. The New Frontier, an old log cabin building, has really grown and that has made quite a change and has created quite a few jobs for people which have made the economy much better.

In the construction business they have built up quite a bit at Mercury. At Mercury when they had open testing on top of the ground, there wasn't as many men working up there as there is now. But underground tests have men working in tunnels and that has brought about quite a change in the economy. Out at the dam they have quite a few tour guides and stuff like that that have brought about a increase in economy.

In West Las Vegas we used to have to go to get our groceries from Community Grocery, from Gilbert Brothers Market, or from the Dollar Market. It wasn't too many people here but it was enough to be crowded on Friday evenings. People would get paid; it would

be very crowded. It's just so much better because you have a wide variety of stores that we can go to, and it makes the economy much better for the people living here.

Collector: What about any social changes? Do you notice more people of different kinds? Has that changed in the community?

Scott: Yes, quite a difference in social change, too. I mentioned before that the churches united. ~~No~~ Now that's a great social change, because religion brings people close together in more ways than one. You can come together and learn to love and respect one another for what you are--what you really are--not the difference in nationality or your color.

And on jobs the social environment has really changed, because we have maids of all colors, not like it used to be with all Colored maids--all Whites working in the linen rooms and in the uniform rooms and the Coloreds just maids. Now we have Coloreds in the uniform rooms, we have Coloreds in all departments of those hotels. That brings about a better relationship between people, socially and morally. It brings about quite a difference. We have Spanish people who are working all these different types of jobs. Now we have Blacks and

Mexicans and we have White inspectors and Spanish inspectors. That's brought about quite a change and it makes it much better, because a lot of times we get together. On our jobs we have little clubs--like birthday clubs--and we have little birthday parties. If somebody is leaving that has worked with us for some time, we have a little get-together. It just don't be among the Blacks or among the Spanish or among the Whites, but it's all of us mixed together. That makes social life quite different.

Collector: Have you noticed any big change in the kinds of people here? What were the basic nationalities? Was the majority White and a few Blacks. What other nationalities?

Scott: It might have been a few more Whites than Blacks, but it wasn't too Spanish. It wasn't as many Spanish people as it was Black or White. It was more Black and Whites.

Collector: When I first came here, the highest position some of them held was just a plain carpenter's helper, hod carriers, or something like that--trashier, dirty jobs, maid work. As maids you could only clean up, and now we can check that they has been cleaned and make sure that everything is just set up right.

And at that time, men have to take a dirty job. Hod carriers would have to carry the mud on their shoulder up a ladder to a bricklayer or whatever; the bricklayer was White because he made the most money.

Collector: Were there many Black educators? Were there a great deal of Black teachers or were any of them in administrative positions?

Scott: As far as I know, it wasn't any. Along about '51 I think we have two of them in school; but since I had children in school, I think Mr. Fitzgerald was about the first to become a Black principal.

Collector: The schools that your children attended, were they basically White, or were they like the elementary schools, just Black schools with Black principals and teachers?

Scott: They were Black schools. There were a few of them might have had White, but I think most of them had some Blacks. I remember Fitzgerald (garbled) the Westside and I think in most of them the principal was White.

Collector: What environmental changes have you noticed in Las Vegas?

Scott: Back in 19 and 51 when I first came to Las Vegas, most all you got was sand storms and wind, wind and sandstorms; now, I notice we get quite a bit of rain. In 1951 when I came here, it wasn't much here but this desert. Stores

and hotels and things, of course, were located around Main Street. On outwards--now known as the Strip--the rest of the places where all these shopping malls and things are now was desert and sand. We would get high winds which would blow and that sand would just roll. Now instead, of that, we get just a little more rain. The people have built homes and churches, and that has cut down quite a bit of the dust and sand that was here. That made quite a bit of changes. By watering, that made humidity changes, and we have more humidity here now than we used to have. It used to be just mostly dry heat.

Our homes are much better, because at first some people lived in tents. They had little houses that they had put up with just beaver board and ply board and little coolers, but now they have nice homes that they've built. That's made a quite a bit of change in the environment.

We also have quite a bit of changes in the streets, and we have street lights. At that time we didn't have street lights, any curbs, any gutters, or anything like that, but now we have them and that makes quite a bit of change. And the highways are much better than they used to be. Most of the streets was just trails, little roads with the gravel and sand on them. Now, they're paved and

and the curbs and gutters put in. And since then we also have in the state the freeway which goes through. That has brought about quite a bit of change in the environment.

Collector: Do you remember any natural event over the years that you've lived in Las Vegas? Like floods or fires or snow storms or earthquakes?

Scott: Down here in the valley we used to didn't get snow too much. It would be just a few flurries that would blow down from the mountains and they would hit the ground and just melt. But I think it was in 19 and 58 I was going home for Christmas and we caught the train; it was snowing then, but I can't tell you exactly how long that snow lasted. I think the biggest snow we had was in 19 and 74. That lasted for a couple of days and the kids played and built snowmen and things like that. I think that was about the biggest snow storm. But the rain has changed considerable, because when I first came here, you didn't hardly see a spot of cloud. And you didn't see insects either, because it was so dry. You didn't see butterflies, flies, and stuff like that. You didn't see that here. But now, since we've got so much water from people watering their lawns and from the growth of the city, we now have butterflies, flies, bees,

and all this kind of stuff. We just didn't use to see that here. And that makes a difference. The weather has changed considerably where rain is concerned, because we just didn't get too much rain. When we did, it would just dry right in. We didn't have drainage systems--we don't have them now. But, it was so dry here that when it would come a shower or rain, it would just dry right up. The earth would soak it right in, but now we get quite a bit of rain that keeps the ground kind of damp. That'd make us have these floods that we have now. They are bad.

Collector: What about fires? Were there any forest fires or major fires that you remember in the city?

Scott: Well, I remember one or two. We had El Rancho Vegas that burned down. When it burned down, they never did re-build it. The casino and all just burned completely up. I can remember that part. And we had a few minor fires on Mount Charleston that didn't amount to too much; they were soon extinguished. So we haven't had too many major fires here.

Collector: What about floods? Was the situation sort of the way it is now or..?

Scott: The floods we've had have been over the last few years because just like I said, back in '51, '52, and '53, it was just sand here. It was real dry, so whenever it

would rain, it would just dry right up. Now people have planted grass and the watering and all keeps it damp and we don't have the drainage system; we just lately have just started having these floods. I think it is very bad, because they should have planned better when they put the streets in. The city, I think, is really to blame for it because we didn't fix ways for the water to keep going. Instead of keep going, it just stands and that makes it very bad. It's not just some part of the town; it's practically all over.

X Collector: Was the city every affected by earthquakes?

Scott: The only thing I know about earthquakes would be the one that was in California. We've had several in California that really shook Nevada. I can remember one time I was at work and it was an earthquake in Los Angeles, I was standing in the locker room and I thought the walls was moving. I said, "No, it couldn't be," and I walked in the hallway and the chandeliers were just swinging. A few hours later we learned that there had been a earthquake in California. We have been shook by several earthquakes in California, but not here. Now the only effect we've had was worrying about trembles or shakes here would be from the offset of the bombs out at the Test Site. Now we've had quite a bit of trembling from that causing buildings to shake. I know one time

they put bombs off, dishes fell, even some people standing.

But those went off only once.

Collector: They were basically from the bombs. But not any earthquakes here?

Scott: No, not in those days.

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