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2007

An Interview with Pamela Sitton

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

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

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

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

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

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

Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

Pamela Sitton's childhood stories follow her construction worker father's journey from one job to the next. She learned to adjust to a family move at a moment notice, to play in the back of a pickup truck and lived in a series of trailer homes. Finally in 1963, they moved to Las Vegas, where her father worked at the Test Site. For Pam, it was a chance to finish her schooling in one town. She attended the original Las Vegas High School and then UNLV, where she earned a degree in English literature.

She recalls the Vegas of the 1960s for her unique perspective—a time of war protests, working a series of part-time jobs from cocktail waitress to post office worker, and her path to marriage in 1973.

A position at UNLV's library had been a dream job that she finally achieved when hired in 1974 as a member of the circulation staff. She held various positions throughout the library and remembers the various library buildings as a student and a professional.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

UNLV Oral History Project @ Fifty



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Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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Pamela T. Sitton 2/27/09
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 2/27/2009
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. And I'm with Pam Sitton.

Pam, would you spell your last name for me?

S, as in Sam, I, T, as in Tom, T, as in Tom, O, N, as in Nancy.

Thank you so much.

This is February 27th, 2009. And we are in Special Collections here in the Lied Library this morning.

So how are you today, Pam?

I'm very well. Thank you for asking.

Good. Can you tell me just a little about your early life, where you grew up and your family?

I was born in southeastern Tennessee in Lenoir City, which is not that far from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It's about 20 minutes from Knoxville, Tennessee. And we lived there until I was four. My parents built a house at the outside of town, which is, of course, no longer at the outskirts of town. And they built a brick house. And then when I was about four we started traveling around. By that time my brother was in the army because he was 12 and a half years older than me. My brother was Roy Tinder. We started moving around. My dad bought a trailer. We left the house. And we were moving from job site to job site. My dad was a construction carpenter at this time. So we were following the jobs.

So then we went to South Carolina where my sister was born. Then we moved to Ohio where I started first grade. I never got to go to kindergarten. My friends all heard me complaining about that. I started first grade when I was five. It rained a lot in Ohio. I remember that clearly because I guess I was used to rain, but for some reason the Ohio rain really stuck me. I went to three second-grades in southern California because we jumped from Ohio to California. And I remember during one of our moves my sister was in the backseat. She was just a baby. And she was in a banana box because, of course, they didn't have those cute little carriers like they have now. So she traveled cross-country in a banana box.

We went to southern California. My dad followed jobs around southern California again with a trailer. My dad bought a truck eventually to pull the trailers with. But originally he pulled the first trailer we had with a Plymouth automobile, a car, which I'm sure was real hard on the car.

But then later he bought a pickup truck and we became pickup truck/trailer people. The first trailer was like 28 feet long and there were four of us in there. And we moved around southern California.

Well, then we eventually moved to Arizona. And I went to a couple of third grades in Flagstaff, Arizona. Then after that we moved to Lukachukai which was near the Four Corners area. It's like a Navajo Reservation.

Okay. Great.

My dad was one of the construction people there to build a school so the Navajo children could stay on the reservation and go to elementary school. So that was a real cool summer. My dad was always afraid we'd get bitten by snakes. We weren't allowed to be anywhere where we couldn't be seen or whatever because he was really nervous about us and rattlesnakes.

My younger sister, of course, and I were the ones at home with my mom and dad since my brother was still in the military. We did see him once in a while as he'd come back and to visit now and again. Then we left at the end of summer because once the school was open the rest of us weren't allowed to go to school there. So all the construction families had to leave because their children were not allowed to go to this school that we had just built. And I guess that's fine because we wouldn't understand Navajo anyway. If they were doing anything bilingual, we would have been really left out. But the school wasn't built for everybody anyway. It was just built for the students that lived on the reservation.

Then we moved to the southern part of Arizona. We moved to the Phoenix area. And I went to a couple more schools. I eventually got into high school. By the time I entered high school I had already been to nine elementary schools. And remember, I didn't get to go to kindergarten. So there was another possibility of another school even in another state if I had gotten to go to kindergarten. Then I went to high school in Phoenix. And then we moved across town and went to another high school in Phoenix. I lost credits when I transferred from Cortez, which was a brand-new school, to West High, which was an older school. I lost credits and wound up going to school a week longer than anybody else in Phoenix because Cortez started at a different date than West High did. So losing credits was bad enough, but I was doing really well at Cortez. And I had a teacher that didn't know how to teach algebra when I changed to West. So

I had been doing well in algebra and now suddenly I wasn't. It turned out the algebra teacher was a substitute because the real teacher was out sick. And he wasn't very good at teaching algebra. I went from a school where Spanish was being taught. He was speaking English and then every once in a while he would say something in Spanish and you had to respond. Well, at West the teacher was Hispanic and it was total immersion. And now I'm in the second semester and we're all behind everybody else because my first semester was a different experience. It's a wonder I ever got out of high school.

That's what I was thinking.

Well, I finished my freshman year successfully because in Phoenix at that time they were doing kindergarten to eighth grade, ninth grade to 12th grade. We were missing this middle school business or junior high or whatever.

Then we moved to Las Vegas. Now, in Las Vegas it's a different experience. This is June of 1963. They were doing high school as sophomore to senior. My mom says you're at the bottom rung of the ladder again. And, of course, I was because now I'm a sophomore and all these other people, you know. So here I am at the bottom rung of the ladder again. I went to Las Vegas High School the original campus. There were only a couple of schools in those days. It turns out my late husband also was a student at Las Vegas High School, but he was 15 years older than me. He was in a totally, of course, different class. And when he was there it was only the one high school. There were so many students they had to sit on windowsills in their classes or sit on the floor because there wasn't enough room in any classroom to accommodate the number of students they had because they had a lot of students when he was in school in the early 50s. So I went to Las Vegas High School. And I did finish. I did matriculate. That was my last school.

But was it exciting moving around as a child? Is that exciting?

It was exciting and stressful at the same time because sometimes we moved very spontaneously. We did increase the size of our trailers as we went along. You know, we started with 28 feet and we wound up with a 41-foot that my dad was still pulling with a pickup truck. We had different pickup trucks because, they would die being worn out, you know, just driven. He traded the one one time because it didn't get good enough gas mileage. It was a GMC. And I remember my sister and I going out and saying goodbye to the truck because we really liked that truck. And we,

of course, would play in them. We'd get in the bed of the truck and we'd like play house in the back of the pickup truck. So it was a different experience for people who actually have a home where they stay put than it was for us. But it was kind of exciting. We got to meet a lot of different people. But we didn't always know when we were going to move. I remember in third grade saying see you tomorrow to somebody and the next day we moved. And I didn't know we were moving. And I never saw that friend again. So some of it was a little stressful. Some of it was a little exciting. I was very shy and I don't know if it was because of all the moving or I already would have been shy. So, you know, I had to work to overcome shyness when I became a young adult. I really had to work with that. But we sure moved around a lot.

Yes. So now, after Las Vegas High School did you go to college at that time?

I worked for a while because I couldn't afford to go to college. I had some part-time jobs. One of the things that was a handicap for me, and I don't know that it would necessarily happen to people, I graduated when I was 17. And most of my classmates were 18. So a lot of what I was hearing is we can't hire you; you're too young. Well, my birthday is the end of October. So when I started first grade I was actually five. I could have actually been in kindergarten if there had been one.

This kindergarten has really --

Well, because I never learned to color right. That's what I kept being told by all my friends. Oh, in kindergarten you learn how to do that.

Well, if it makes you feel any better, I never went to kindergarten either.

Oh, maybe there wasn't kindergarten in some places.

That's right.

I forgot where we were going with that.

So after high school you worked a couple of jobs.

I worked a couple of jobs. One of my part-time jobs was I was as a cocktail waitress at the Air Force Academy Officers' Club one summer. That was fun. I went to see my brother. He was stationed at the Air Force Academy. So I spent the summer with him and his family. In my whole life that was the most time we had been together because he was always off in the military. He had gone from the Army to the Air Force. And he stayed as a career Air Force person then.

So where is the Air Force Academy?

Colorado Springs, Colorado. So I worked for the summer as a cocktail waitress. I came back to continue school. I had gotten accepted at UNLV. Before I started cocktail waitressing and UNLV, I actually worked for the post office for a couple of years. I made pretty good money.

Yes. I'm surprised you stopped to go to school.

Well, some of the people there had some behaviors I didn't want to adopt, some attitudes I didn't want to have. And I thought if I stay here, I might become like that. Plus I wanted to go to college.

But that was very wise. Most people just see the money.

Well, one of my thoughts too was about the money because of how busy it is with the post office during the Christmas breaks or, you know, November to January, I knew I couldn't go to school and work in the post office because I would then only be able to go like in the summertime or in the spring semester. I wouldn't be able to do fall semester because I would have that problem every November to December because I would work 12 hours a day three or four weeks in a row. I mean I think my record was 24 days with no day off.

Is that legal?

Well, maybe it wasn't then. I mean maybe it isn't now.

What about a job on the Strip? Did you ever think about that?

The only casino I ever worked in was Circus Circus.

Tell me about it.

I was in the gift shop working part time as I was working my way through school selling jewelry and other things in the gift shop. I worked in the Circus Circus gift shop. And the Slots-A-Fun was also owned by Circus Circus. It was out in front of Circus Circus. So sometimes I'd get sent over there. And I actually liked the little smocks we wore -- they looked like little clown smocks -- because then you could put all your stuff in your pockets. You know, you didn't have to try to figure out how you were going to carry your keys and stuff. It was an interesting experience. The way I got laid off was an interesting experience.

Tell me about it.

Well, the boss had a friend who had a daughter who needed a job. So he gave her mine. And all the women I worked with were really angry because I did good work and they liked the way I

worked. They liked the fact that I showed up and I did work. When we were reorganizing things, I was able to help them reorganize in a way that was meaningful. So they were really mad at the boss for doing that.

He gave your job away.

He gave my job away.

How did he explain that to you?

He didn't. My name just wasn't on the list when I went in to check the schedule to see what hours I was supposed to work because you didn't have continuous hours. You didn't have a set schedule. You'd go in once a week on a certain day and you'd see what your schedule was for that week. And I wasn't on it. And he didn't want to talk to me. That's when I found out I got laid off.

Wow. So now, when you started UNLV, which was the name of the school at that time?

Nevada Southern University.

Okay. What was it like at Nevada Southern?

Well, it was a much smaller, of course, environment. I do have to say I graduated from Las Vegas High School in 1966. I did not start here until 1969 because, of course, I was making money to come to school on. So in 1969 it was Nevada Southern University. The tennis court was out behind Grant Hall. The library was the JDL -- well, James Dickinson Library. And it was the three stories. By the time I started school all three stories of the round building were completed. I think when Kathy Rothermel was going as a student they were still working on the other floors. But when I got here, thank you, they were all complete.

Okay, good.

I would bring my Jeep and park at the sidewalk and walk right in the front door. I could park very close. The education building had not been built yet. Humanities had not been built yet. Yes. There was a lot of dirt around, a lot of dust, not necessarily blowing, but, you know, just dirt. And rabbits, there were a lot of rabbits on campus. So it was nice just being able to park and walk right into the library.

So now, did you get a part-time job in the library right away?

They wouldn't hire me.

Did you apply?

I interviewed as a student looking for a student job so I could work part time. I thought it would be easier if I were working on campus because then I could just study when I needed to, walk back and forth between studying and wherever I'm working on campus. But the library wouldn't hire me.

The other reason I wanted to work in the library is because I thought I wanted to be a librarian. And I thought, you know, if I try it out and find out if I like it before I go that far because you don't want to get a master's degree in something and find out you hate it or you're already halfway through it and now you feel committed to finish. And, of course, you had to go out of state for a master's degree in library science in those days. There were only certain accredited schools.

But nobody would hire me to be a student in the library. So I never worked in the library as a student employee.

Did you work on campus at all?

No. The library was the only campus job I tried for because it was the only one I wanted. And they wouldn't hire me. So I continued my working with Circus Circus. Meanwhile the post office wanted me back. So I did try that for a while, but I couldn't keep up. I told them this is my concern. And they said, well, please try it; please try it. The supervisor I had when I was working there. I went in there one day to the counter to do postal business and he saw me. And that's when he begged me to come back.

Wow. So where was the post office located?

It was on Keno Lane behind Circus Circus. And that was the new building. It was brand-new. But when it was first open they didn't put any phone lines in. So we couldn't have any phones. And they had to come in and restructure the building to put in phones. I worked parcel post part of the time. And during the Christmas season we'd have to go unload what came off of the trains. Well, and during the summertime we were over there what came off of the trains and sorting it because a lot of the mail came in by train. Well, in the summertime over there, there was no air conditioner in that warehouse. So we had these huge fans. And then your supervisors or floor managers would come around periodically and say did you take your salt pill and are you drinking enough water? And they had these fasteners on various posts with salt tablets in them. And you

were supposed to take so many salt tablets a day because there was no air conditioner. There were only these big fans. And you're unloading stuff that came off trains.

I also spent some time when I was working for the post office working parcel post, which were the packages. At other times I worked in the supply room or I worked in the registration area where you had to sign. People had to sign for the -- I forget what you call that area.

Certified mail.

Where certified mail and registered mail come through. I worked in the cage. And it was really a cage. I mean, you really were caged in. You couldn't come in and out unless the supervisor came and let you out, yes, because it was a very secure area. So for your lunch the supervisor had to come in and relieve you so you could go to lunch.

Wow. Now, why was it so secure, because of the value of the packages?

Uh-huh. Because there were things that had to be signed for or considered valuable by whoever was mailing. We, of course, didn't know. They care.

How heavy were some of the packages? There is a weight limit that you have to be able to pick up; is that right?

Well, when I worked in parcel post you had to be able to lift 80 pounds. I think the packages could be up to 40 or 45. But as worker bees we had to be able to lift 80 pounds off the floor and we had to prove we could do it.

Could you do that?

I weighed 120 pounds and I could do it. You got stronger. My mother used to call me her little stevedore because one day we were sitting on the sofa at home -- and this is when I worked full time at the post office. I was working parcel post. Mom and I were teasing about something and she jabbed me in the leg with her finger. And she yelled because she said I almost broke her finger because my legs were so muscular. And when we moved into that particular house -- I was out at my parents. We moved from the trailer into an apartment. Now we're moving into the house. I was carrying in a box of encyclopedias. And I just tapped the door. I swear to you. And it was partially ajar. It wasn't open far enough. I just barely tapped it with my leg. Knocked the doorknob right through the wall. And that's when houses had actual plaster. It wasn't the wall board stuff. So my dad said I wasn't allowed to touch any more doors with my knees. I'm afraid

my interview is going a little out of sequence.

This is exactly the way it should go. Believe me this is how it was meant to go.

When I worked at the post office, as I said you had to be able to lift the 80 pounds. And you were throwing things. Packages were coming off the rack or off the box. You know, boxes were coming off a conveyor belt. And you would move them off the conveyor belt and sort them by whenever carrier was going to be delivering them. And sometimes like when the checks came, those little boxes of checks, and we have all these bags lined up for each carrier. And you would be throwing into each bag who was supposed to get what. So it wasn't just moving stuff around. You had to know who was getting what and you had to learn all these addresses.

Yes, because you didn't have ZIP codes.

Well, we did, but they were like 23. And then eventually we got to like 89109, which was my specialty. 89109 was all of Paradise Valley. So we did get up to ZIP codes. But you still had to learn what addresses went within your ZIP code and which carrier had each of those addresses.

Oh, that's amazing to me.

To be able to learn that was interesting. My mom and I made a little rack for me with little boxes in it. And we printed off all the addresses. Of course, in those days you didn't have a Xerox machine you could easily get to. And I was sitting at home practicing putting these addresses into each of the little cubicles so I would know and get it learned so I could be effective at my job and not get fired.

Oh, that is great though that your mom put that much interest. That was wonderful.

She did. She did. She was very proud of me for working at the post office.

Well, the post office when I grew up was a good government job.

And I'm sure it still is. You can work very steady. There were many times when I worked lots and lots of overtime because of what was going on. And I remember one time they sent me to the downtown branch that's now going to be something else. And I was on overtime -- I was on graveyard -- because I had already worked my shift. And a woman and I were sent down there. She was my parcel post partner, too. We were sent down there to work to pitch mail because they didn't have anybody to put it in the post office boxes because somebody called in sick or whatever. So our job then -- and we were on overtime for this -- was to put the mail in those little post office

boxes so people would get their mail.

Isn't that something? Have you seen the building since they've started renovating it?

No, I haven't.

The outside is just gorgeous because remember how the green used to be around the windows?

Uh-huh.

Well, they have that original green back around the windows again. It is just stunning.

I will have to sometime go see that because I have happy memories of that building. It was a nice building.

Yes. It's a beautiful building.

So when did you finish in -- what is it? -- Nevada Southern?

Well, while I was at Nevada Southern two things happened. They restructured the way they numbered the classes. As you know when you start in the catalog you can finish your degree program under that catalog if you can keep track of your catalog. They renumbered everything. They renumbered the way all the classes were. That's when we became the 102s, the 101s, the 409s. All these kinds of things they're doing now, that's when that started. And also they renamed the university. It went from being Nevada Southern University, NSU, to being University of Nevada Las Vegas. So we had two major changes during my time I was here.

I finished my schooling in August of 1973. I was an English literature major. So I got my BA. Then I, of course, started looking for another job because I had worked my way through school.

But before we leave UNLV, do you remember the president who was here at that time, '73?

I don't remember who it was. I would remember if I saw his picture or looked him up.

And I don't have my list right now.

When they were building the humanities building I remember when one of the I-beams fell off the top and crushed a car. The wind blew. And they were building and they had all these I-beams.

Yeah. There was a lot of construction going on.

Oh, that's scary.

It was. I was glad not to be down there when all that was happening. When they were building

the education building, some of the -- I probably shouldn't say this. But some of the carpenters would whistle at people.

Construction workers used to do that.

Yes, they did. Well, one day I heard one of them whistle. And, of course, I wasn't paying any attention until they yelled look at the one in the blue sweater and I realized that was me.

Was that a compliment or insult?

That was a compliment. I had quite the figure in those days.

Isn't that wonderful?

So I took it the way he intended it. I didn't take it the way I would have taken it now. Now I'd just be shocked if anybody even thought that way. But it was kind of funny because, of course, they were building and we were working. And we were still able to drive up at that point and park by the library. And, of course, it was a dirt parking lot.

Where were most of your classes held?

Well, eventually some of them were in the Humanities building. The building that's behind us now, behind the cop building, the Howard building, there's that other little building back there. Oh, I forgot the name of that one.

Down here on Harmon?

On Harmon. It was built to be an academic building and it wound up being -- so all the English classes were in that building at that time.

So the film department, the next one is public safety and then the next one is --

The next one.

Okay, good.

I had a bunch of classes in there after they got that building built. And it was going to be the humanities kind of classes. And then eventually it wound up being kind of a business building once they got humanities building finished. I had some classes in the Moyer Student Union building. I damaged my ankle playing tennis for PE. And a couple of my classes were in the Moyer Student Union building. There was no elevator unless you went down -- you had to go way down the hall to get to the elevator because a lot of the buildings didn't have elevators in those days. ADA handicap accessibility wasn't really as it is now. And you had to go clear down

the hall to get to the elevator. Well, I went down the hall to get to the elevator and somebody it turns out up in the ballroom had turned it off because they were having classes and they didn't want to be disturbed. So I hobbled my way up the stairs in there to find out what was going on and I told them I didn't appreciate it because here I was in a cast. And I couldn't get up to my class because, you know, it was a lot of work to get up there.

Well, you weren't shy anymore, were you?

I was overcoming that.

Okay, yes, rapidly.

During the time I was in college it was also, of course, all this Vietnam War protests bomb scares.

Now, were there any protests on campus? Tell me about those.

Well, I remember being upset one day because, of course, I was working full time and going to school full time at this particular window. And one of the reasons my grades weren't very good I suppose is because of working too much and going to school too much. But I wanted to get through school. I wanted to get my diploma. And sometimes the students would boycott the classes. There would be bomb scares. They would be sitting on the stairs -- and there was no elevator, remember -- sitting on the stairs to keep people from going to classes. And this one particular day they had covered the stairs. Well, of course, I didn't know the teacher also had decided that he was going to boycott. He wasn't going to show up. I was trying to get to class. And in these days books were like \$52 for a whole semester and not like now, but that was still outrageous. And I was trying to get up the stairs and people were sitting on the stairs. And one girl had her hands down because there wasn't somebody to sit beside her I guess to finish boycotting the stairs. And I'm trying to come up the stairs and they're not letting me. And I finally said please move your hand. And she said she didn't want to move her hand. And I offered to step on it. I said I'm going up. If your hand is still there -- and I still only weighed 120 pounds. But I wouldn't want to be stepped on by a 120-pound person. So she did move her hand. And I did finish -- everybody else moved their hands, too, because they saw I was coming through and I meant business. I wasn't mean about it. But I was willing to do whatever it took to get to the top of the stairs. And they never said anything about trying to throw me backwards down the stairs or anything. So I mean that could have been a whole different -- yes. So anyway, I got up there and

the teacher never showed up.

But, you know, I didn't realize that there were so many protests on campus.

There were some. Yes. They weren't violent. I mean there were some bomb scares. And those often happened throughout the time there were going to be finals.

Yes, of course.

So you didn't really know what -- you suspected it wasn't really about the war. It was really about I didn't do my homework. I didn't study for my final. Not me, but, you know, the perpetrators. Yeah, it was a whole different, smaller environment than it is now.

Do you remember any of those early professors by name?

I had Jerry Crawford. I had both the Unruess, Darlene and John. I had Claude Warren, who was notorious for not showing up for class. I probably shouldn't say this. He's still living. Please edit this carefully. He was notorious for not showing up for class because it was a three o'clock in the afternoon class. So I came back to campus for this class. It was an anthropology class. He didn't post any sign. Nobody came up to post a sign. We would have to wait the 15 minutes or 20 minutes because, you know, there's that 15-minute or 20-minute rule.

That's right. That grace period.

That grace period. And he often did not show up. I forget who some of my other -- if I looked through the book, I could tell you some more names. I had a lot of the people that are still here now.

That's good.

Or have been recently leaving.

That's interesting.

McCullough I had too.

So now, you finished in 1973.

Yes. In English lit.

What had you planned to do with an English lit? Now, did you take education classes also?

No.

So what had you planned to do with English lit?

I wanted to go to library school.

Oh, that's right. But you never got a chance to work in the library.

I never got a chance to work in a library. And I couldn't at that time afford to go to library school. Then I turned right around and got married right away. I graduated in August. Got married in October. And I thought, well, I'll see if I can get a job in a library. See, I'm still trying to get into the library because I thought I don't want to go to graduate school and find out I hate it if I don't like the work. I can still do other things because I do know how to write a good sentence and I can read and understand what I read. And you can apply those to many different areas. So I did try to get into the library at Clark County Public Library and at UNLV library.

I eventually after a year of persisting -- every job that came open and I was qualified for and I got called for an interview, I did apply. And I did wind up working in circulation at UNLV. And I think the turning point was when I said can I work weekends? My husband was off on Thursday and Friday. I was hoping for a job where we could be off the same days.

Oh, that was great. So what did your husband do?

He was working for the Department of Wildlife. He was one of the people that built the guzzlers out, those water hole devices out in the desert for the wildlife. They were called guzzlers. And they would go out and they would dig holes and line the holes to hold water. Any rainwater that came would be trapped in there. And it wouldn't evaporate as quickly because they also had a top over them. So the wildlife could get to that water. So he was one of those people. He did things like fixing the fishing nets. When they go out and catch fish, they could study them. He wasn't a biologist. He had a high school diploma. Eventually he wound up working for the fish hatchery after it was built at Lake Mead. And he was the assistant hatchery manager out at the fish hatchery when he retired. He got injured at work and had to take a medical disability eventually. And that was like 1979 by that time that all happened.

Wow. But you all had only been married for, what, about six years when he got hurt?

Uh-huh. Or maybe -- yeah, about six years. He fell off one of the water treatment plants and landed on a steel I-beam. And he said, well, the good thing was if he would have missed that, he would have hit the ground from 30 feet up. But it did destroy one of the muscles in his legs. And the work at the fish hatchery was very physical. They also drove trucks delivering the fish they grew. They'd raise these fish and then they'd deliver them to various places. And I remember one

time when they were taking some to -- I guess it was Nebraska, somewhere in Nebraska. And I asked him, well, how do you get there? He said, well, you go to Denver and turn right. And I thought that's your typical westerner description of how to get somewhere. Now, of course, when he and his partner were hauling fish, there would be two guys because you couldn't stop when you're hauling fish. They're live fish. They need that water to stay aerated. So from point A to point B you just keep changing drivers until you get there because you can't stop for eight hours. The fish will die.

Oh, amazing.

Yes. And one time when they were going up to northern Nevada to drop off fish, they blew a tire and it was the inside dual. And he explained to me the joys of trying to change the tires on this big truck that's full of water and full of fish and keeping those fish alive and not letting them getting too hot and finding every place in town that had ice. In the smaller towns it's often the bars that have the ice if you ever need to know that.

Oh, thank you.

Because sometimes they don't have a little store where you can buy ice. Maybe they do now. But in those days often you wound up going to the bar to buy ice. And they were buying ice to keep the fish cool enough [until] they could get them up there and put them in the lake or the pond or wherever they were dumping them off.

Who knew?

Okay. So tell me about circulation.

In circulation we used to use McBee checkout cards because I was there during the old days where anybody that checked out a book would bring the book up to the counter with a card that they had to completely fill out. They had to put in the call number, the author, the title, their personal information at the bottom of the card, you know, their name, address, phone number, and mark off if they were a student, staff, faculty, and they had to show you their library card. These cards were filed. And we, of course, would stamp it with the date that it was due back in. We would file these in call number order so that when the books came back you would go through there and pull out the call number and put it with the book to check the book back in, to receive the book back in.

Now, overdues were a whole other matter because we had a needle. We called it a needler

doing this. It was a long needle. You would take a stack of these cards, put the needle through the hole that was appropriate to the week you were working on, and shake to see if anything fell out as overdue. Now, that wasn't the bad part. The bad part was trying to read some of these handwritings of people because we were supposed to check for legibility as we were checking things out to people. But sometimes people get in a hurry and didn't notice it wasn't going to be legible in two weeks or three weeks or four weeks. And then, of course, we would search the shelves before we would send out overdue notices.

And everything was manual in those days. I was here before CLSI. We later installed CLSI and did the same program that the public library was doing.

So this is work intensive?

This is work intensive. It's very manual, very time consuming. The lighting on the third floor of the library was awful because of the dome.

Oh, that's right. The domes with the little lights.

The domes with the little lights. When the guys came in to replace the lighting, they had these long stick things that they would have to use. And, of course, you didn't want to be under any of this while they were doing it because you were afraid something would fall and hit you on the head. They'd have to use like a suction device to take the bulb out and then the suction device to put the other bulb in and release the little suction thing so the bulb would stay up there. And you could put your hand out and you'd have like nine shadows off your hand at the service desk. So the lighting from the standpoint of reading and working was just awful.

Do you wear contacts?

No. I had cataract surgery. Both my lenses in both my eyes have been implanted with new lenses.

So you have new eyes.

I have new eyes. I'm a little young for that. But the work I've been doing may have led to that over the long haul.

That's right.

So who did you work with when you first started? First, who hired you?

Well, my first faculty supervisor was Ben Labu.

I don't remember that name. I don't remember ever even hearing it.

He didn't stay very long. He moved to Colorado.

Labu?

Labu. I don't remember how to spell the Labu part. It was three letters I think. I think it ends in a U.

New Orleans-type name.

Yes. And French-type name. My classified supervisor was Dolores Santa Cruz. So it was Ben Labu, Dolores Santa Cruz, Blanche Newmark, John Bunn, and me.

And that was circulation?

That was circulation. John Bunn was the stack supervisor. Dolores was the staff supervisor. I was the reserve room person. I became the reserve clerk and I had a little budget.

What was the reserve room?

Well, we put things on reserve for the faculty. And I had a budget of \$500 so that if a faculty member asked us for something we didn't own I could order it for that semester. And then it would go into the circulation collection. So that was the circulation crew. There were a lot of people coming and going during the short time I was in circulation. I worked circulation a couple of years before I transferred.

So you started there in about '74?

September 23rd, 1974 I started in circulation. When CLSI came along then, what we were having people do was still fill out the cards when they checked out the books. But now we would take the card down to the card catalog on the first floor the next morning. And we would look it up to get all the information and we would fill out little sheets so we could type the stuff into the computer to get the CLSI part up and running. So we did it as people checked out the books. So we were getting the ones people were actually using and then trying to catch up the other books that people weren't using. So it was pretty intensive. Every day we would go down to the card catalog with those and then bring them back up. And then we were taking turns typing the information into the CLSI system.

Okay. Which was the first computer --

For circulation. Often the tech services people and cataloging had other electronic things they were doing. But circulation's first one was CLSI.

Who was the dean of the library at the time in '73?

Hal Erickson. Hal Erickson loved to under-fill positions. So a lot of people didn't get paid what they should have gotten paid. And I was one of the ones. I was under-filling a position and didn't know it.

Under-filling?

Yes. Like if you're a library assistant three and they hire you in to be a library assistant two, you're being paid a two salary and doing three's work. I was a library assistant two position. I was under-filling it as a library assistant one. So the first year -- and that's like a ten percent pay difference, you know. It turns out he was always trying to do salary savings. And I wondered did he ever give his back? And I actually asked that a few times. But I don't think he ever gave any of his money back. He got paid for what he got paid. But there were other people he paid less than what their position required.

So one day I was working at the circulation desk. And the secretary -- her name was Sue something -- came up with paperwork and asked me to sign it. I had to sign it immediately. And I said, well, what is it? —knowing not to sign anything immediately. And she said, well, you know, oh, you're getting a pay raise. I said I am? Well, it turns out somebody -- and I've never found out who -- charged the library with this thing they were doing. And the library was taken to task by the department of like human resources that they had to fix this. Well, what they wanted me to do was sign it right now. But I said, well, my anniversary is [coming up] and I'll sign it right after that happens.

Oh, how were you smart enough to think that?

I had been hearing things about sneakiness that was going on, not that I ever expected it to apply to me. I didn't know I was under-filling. But I did get the part about when you hit your anniversary you get that little step increase. If I had signed that, I wouldn't have gotten that step increase because they were going to jump me up to where I should I have been, but I would have lost that five percent. So I said I'll sign that after I get this step increase. So I got the step increase. Then they came back when I was willing to sign it. So then I signed it. So then I got up to where I was supposed to be, which means I had a 15 percent jump in pay.

Wow. That's great.

He couldn't have robbed me of the ten percent now because he was under scrutiny. But he was still trying to pull one by getting me to sign something before I would have gotten that five percent step increase.

Amazing.

Oh, yeah. And he did even worse than that to one of the librarians. Her name was Susan Jarvis. Remember Susan Jarvis?

Yes.

When she was married to Bob Anderl, in those days she was Susan Anderl.

Oh, I didn't know that.

When they were hired together -- they were both hired at the same time to work in the library -- he underpaid her because he figured the man could make the money. Therefore, Bob got more money. She got less because she was the woman. So she was really robbed badly. And she did so much for the library and so much for Special Collections. But there were some things that were going on even in those days that weren't appropriate, the way people were being treated. And it wasn't well known and it wasn't documented some of the stuff I'm sure.

What were some of the social activities in the early library that you enjoyed? Smaller library, but how did you guys interact with each other?

We did potlucks now and again. In the summertime one year we had a salad -- we called it the salad splash. And everybody brought different kinds of salad. We had a nicer sized staff room. So we could all actually be in there at one time. It didn't have many facilities, but there was room for us. And that was also a room that could be used for meetings like when we had the all-staff association. Well, actually it was classified staff had their own grouping where they would meet together and talk about work issues. Or we'd bring in a speaker. And then we'd have the occasional potlucks or other kinds of parties, birthday parties and stuff.

Now, but the classified staff of the library would get together?

Uh-huh.

And have speakers come in?

Occasionally. We occasionally had a speaker. It was classified association is what it was.

Do you still have that?

On a slightly different level.

It's where you guys get together, what, once a quarter or once a year?

It's not as often as it used to be. And I'm not sure what -- you know, right now I haven't heard anything. It goes in and out. I mean every once in a while it will get real active for a while and then it kind of slows down and then it gets active. But we all knew each other really well in those days because we saw each other more often. The staff entrance was through what was then acquisitions. So to come in the back room you come through acquisitions and through cataloging and to your department. So by the end of any period of time the people in acquisitions and cataloging saw everybody. So they kind of knew who everybody was. And that was kind of neat, too.

Oh, that's interesting.

I never asked you about your impression of Las Vegas when you first came here. So I'm going to skip back to that. When your family first got here in '63, you had been to a lot of different places.

I sure had.

What was Las Vegas like for you? And if you compare it to some of the other places, how would you compare it?

It was a lot drier and browner than some places we had lived. And, of course, it was hot. But since we came up from Phoenix, it wasn't as big a shock for me that way as it would have been. A lot of things were sprawled out all over. I mean riding the bus to school, because, of course, I lived far enough away to ride the bus, it was amazing how long I'd be on the bus before we finished picking up all the kids to go to school. Of course, the school is downtown. And there's places now where I drive by and it's really compact condensed housing. And in those days there was one house. We'd go out there to pick up and there'd be one house out there. And then you'd go another mile or two before there was another house. Everything was spread really far apart. And I remember Lamb Boulevard was way out in the middle of nowhere. The other side of town there were certain places where there weren't any grocery stores. There was a house here and there, but there wasn't, of course, the infrastructure. It was people who wanted to live out there and they did and there were horse properties and all these kinds of things. And it wasn't as far out

as now, of course. But it was really neat. And I remember because we lived on Sahara Avenue, East Sahara, in a trailer because now we're up to a 45-foot trailer -- that is still a trailer. And it got hauled up from Phoenix and parked.

And bringing it over the dam my dad didn't drive it this time. My dad had been working at the Test Site. So when we moved up here dad had lost his job in Phoenix and was looking for a job. And the Test Site was the next one he found. So he was driving to the Test Site, spending the week and driving home every weekend to Phoenix because he wanted to be with his family. So eventually we moved up the trailer and now we're in this trailer. We had actually been in a house in Phoenix for a while.

We lived in a trailer now on Sahara Avenue right behind the DMV. The DMV was on the south side of Sahara in those days. Now it's on the north side of Sahara because they built a new building and moved to the other side of Sahara.

Is this at Sahara and Eastern or something?

It's closer to McLeod. It's between Eastern and Boulder Highway.

Oh, good. So I know which one you're talking about. Okay.

So we would ride the bus. It would take forever to get anywhere. And the same thing coming home, of course, because it took a long time. Everything was far apart and there weren't that many schools either. It was hot. It was dry. But we were used to that because we'd been in Phoenix. My dad always found the church the first thing anywhere we moved. So our church was First Southern Baptist Church on St. Louis. I call that "Church Row." And to this day I still call it "Church Row" because, you know, there's a Catholic church over there. I think there's a synagogue over there. There's a Baptist church. There's a Lutheran church. So a long time ago -- oh, an Episcopalian church. A couple of them are kind of on Maryland Parkway more. But they're still adjacent to St. Louis. So that was like where all the churches were. And we'd go to church every Sunday and everything.

Did your father continue to live out at the Nevada Test Site once you moved here?

No.

He would drive back and forth every day?

He would just drive back and forth. And my job in high school was to take the 1958 DeSoto every

other day to the gasoline station and fill it up.

Oh, because he had to drive it that far.

He drove every day. He worked at Jackass Flats part of the time. They were building things. I don't know what carpenters built. I don't know if they were building something to blow it up, you know, or building things that people actually lived in and worked in.

Probably all of that.

They did have an open house one day when I was working at the post office. But I didn't really enjoy it very much because I was working graveyard and I was so tired that by the time we got out there -- but my dad put that in every day and then swing a hammer all those hours, a 16-ounce hammer.

Wow. So now, did he take other men with him to help pay for the gas?

No. But after a while they started running a bus. So he would park the car at a certain place. It was a paid fee. You still had to pay to ride the bus. But at least you weren't driving. And we had a cat that used to walk him to the bus stop. She would walk him all the way down to the bus stop and then turn around and go home.

Oh, that's great.

Yeah, he liked that. He liked that about that cat. It was kind of funny. But he did work at the Test Site for a few years. And when we lived in Tennessee he worked at Oak Ridge. So he worked for Bechtel on those two sites.

How did your father die?

Cancer. He had colon cancer. He was 77 when he died. So it makes me wonder if it had anything to do with his work at both those two sites.

Of course. Because at that time at Nevada Test Site sometimes they would have a badge that checked the radiation. But they still didn't let you know that it was dangerous.

Yeah. I remember they used to put people out there to watch them and explode something over them to see what would happen.

That's right. They put soldiers out there.

That's scary, scary times.

Yes, it is.

So getting back to the library, you were in circulation for a while. And then you went where?

Well, they made a new job in the serials department on the second floor of the library. And it was a brand-new position. It was a supervisory position to supervise classified and students and the processing and the public floor. And it was an LA-3 job. So I went from, you know, under filling a one to being a two to now I've gone up to the three, library assistant three. And I was supervising May Workman, Joan Rozzi, Ed Sabatini and Delores Day. Delores Day was the person that was in charge of watching the desk. She was the public side of us. And she had the service desk. Periodicals were on that floor. We also had the microfilm, the newspapers, the machines to use the microfilm, the newspapers. We had the non-book and the processing for periodicals and serials. And that was all under me. And then my supervisor was Dorothy Winter, who was the serials librarian. There was Sue Hanley, who became Sue Kendall. She was one of the librarians there. Oh, Ed Sabatini was also one of the classified people. And we had David Moore, who was the non-book librarian.

So now, do we still have classified people supervising?

Not like we used to. And I'm not sure we really do anymore. I mean we've kind of gotten away from that. The difference between the classified supervisor and a professional or a librarian supervisor is a classified supervisor is expected to be able to do any sequence under them, their own job plus anybody that's absent. So if the lady that works the desk is absent, I'm expected to be able to do her job. If the person doing binding, the periodicals binding person -- so we were checking in, claiming and binding. And if any of those were sick, I was supposed to substitute for them. Librarians don't do that. If somebody's sick or on vacation, it just doesn't get done unless somebody else classified can step in. So there were a lot more classified supervisors in those days and supervising large tracks of land as it were.

How do you make rank now if you don't have those responsibilities anymore?

It has to be the technical things you do, which is just a different level of technical.

So how long were you in serials?

Well, off and on I've kind of been in serials. I was in serials until we were making the new building. And then we took the stuff that was on the second floor and put it on third floor and first

floor to clear the second floor because we had to make the bridge to the new building that was being built. So all the stuff was pulled off the second floor completely and went to first or third. And then we went to first. So I was now working like in the cataloging area. It was before my desk was now -- you know, while all this was going on. It was tricky the way they did I had. And Chester Davis, who replaced Ben Labu -- had all the books that were on the third floor and raised them so there were like two shelves on the bottom all the way around. And the periodicals were run on two or three shelves all the way around the third floor. And, of course, then I don't remember where are the microfilm went and where the non-book stuff went. But everything had to come off of that floor. Special Collections was on second floor, too, in those days.

And they had to move?

I think they had to move. I don't really have a strong memory of them. I was also back up for anybody that was sick out of Special and they needed somebody to watch the desk for a while. I occasionally worked in Special as a substitute at the desk.

So the walkway was just to connect the two buildings because now we have the big rectangular building coming online.

Yes. So this went on for a couple of years then. And when we moved into the new building, one day I was thinking I don't really remember the move. I was on maternity leave. So I didn't have to move anything because I was out while all that was going on.

You would have been great at that. Did you still have the strong legs?

Not by then I didn't.

Okay, good.

I wasn't as strong. I can't lift 80 pounds anymore.

After Hal Erickson who became dean of the library?

I remember Mary Dale coming in, but I don't remember who was in between, if somebody was in between.

So it was probably Mary Dale.

There was Hal Erickson between somebody and somebody. Jack Dettre was temporary for a while somewhere along the sequence. And, of course, Meyoung-ja Kwon for a while. Simon for awhile.

That was after Mary Dale. Then Meyoung-ja Kwon. Then Matt. And then Meyoung-ja again?

Well, yeah, probably. And then Marks. Then Patty Iannuzzi. Yeah. We had a couple of interims. Yeah, Kwon was interim and Jack Dettre. Now, he was really good. His philosophy was if it ain't broke, don't fix it. He expected everybody to know their jobs and be able to do it. And for the most part that was working. People had a lot more informal lines of communication in the old days. So if you had something you needed help with in your job and somebody else's job affected your job, you could go like negotiate it with them. Now, maybe other people didn't know we were doing that, but we did. We'd go to each other and say, you know, if we did this, this would help me. What can I do to help you? And it would flat line a whole bunch of those things that kind of get in your way sometimes.

Oh, that's great. Now, you evidently really liked working in libraries.

Yeah.

Why didn't you ever go back to library school?

I was a library school reject. Once I finally got to apply, they didn't want me. They said my grades weren't high enough. Well, of course, they weren't. I worked full time. At least two of the years I was in school I was working full time and going to school full time. And then I got to where I could work part time and go to school full time. But still you're working a lot. And I probably would have never gotten straight As anyway because I'm not the smartest knife in the drawer. I think I use what resources I have. But I'm not Einstein either. And I know that. But the library school I applied to said they wouldn't take me, but that if I wanted to take -- and they told me how many graduate-level credits -- and then reapply, they would look at that and see if I had done good enough. And I thought, you know what, I would have been almost through a degree by the time I got that done. Why would I want to then take all these classes to reapply for something where they don't clearly want me?

But what was frustrating about that was meanwhile I was taking classes whenever we had a little class. And sometimes one of the faculty members here would have a class. And it was a library school kind of class. It was when we first started doing those distance ed kinds of things. Well, these people were being accepted for library school, some of them. And some of them had

no business being accepted. And I thought I see what they're after now. They're only after what you can show them on paper. They're not really looking at personalities. They're not really looking at how well you can do these other things viably in the workplace. And I thought that's going to affect not only but how our jobs are and how our careers are -- not even careers. That's not really the word I want. But for librarianship as a whole. And that's when I gave up trying to apply for library school because I thought I can see I'm clearly not going to get in. But I'm still as close as I could have done because I'm still in a library.

My mom said she was disappointed because none of us followed her. She wanted us to follow her and be a teacher. And nobody did.

Your mom was a schoolteacher?

She was a schoolteacher.

So moving around to all those places, did she teach?

Well, in those days you could teach on a two-year degree when she first got her degree. And her dad made her quit after two years because he said, well, that's enough to teach on. My mom was born and reared in southeastern Tennessee. The school she first taught school in was a one-room schoolhouse. It was nine miles out of town. So she had to live there because it was so far. And her dad would come get her every weekend and bring her home. So she went home for the weekend.

Did she live with a family in the area?

Uh-huh. I have a picture of mom and her one of room schoolhouse and all those little kids. And, of course, you had to do things about the fireplace and the wood stoves and all that kind of stuff way out back. But, yeah.

Oh, my goodness.

All those many moons we had been moving she had been working on getting her degree. And she was one credit short. And she was one class -- was it one credit, one class? One class I guess. Because we kept moving and she kept trying and working on classes. She was going to school part time for years everywhere we lived that had a school. We were in places where there were no places, you know. And she was that close. And the school district said, well, we wouldn't higher you anyway because now you're too old. She never finished. It broke her heart. Meanwhile they

wouldn't hire her, but she substituted for 30-plus years for the Clark County School District.

But they wouldn't hire her for a full-time position?

They wouldn't hire her full time. So she didn't get the benefits. She didn't get the health insurance. She didn't get the retirement. So she started working a second job and putting the money into Social Security because she had no retirement. For years she worked two jobs. She was substituting in the daytime and working through a baby-sitting agency at night until she had enough built up so she could have her Social Security. And she got retired by a car accident. There were a lot of unfair things that happened to my mom in life if I look back on it and think about it. So I try not to think about it.

Yeah. Right.

But she was retired by a drunk driver who ran a red light. And she was 77 years old. She was ten days shy of being 78. And she was still working two jobs.

Wow. So tell me about some of the other campus buildings. What was one of the ones that impressed you most as it was going up?

As it was going up. I guess Humanities just because of how tall it was. Seven stories was a big deal in those days.

That's right. And it's still pretty tall for this campus now.

It is. It's probably the tallest one, isn't it?

Yeah.

That was probably the one that impressed me the most just because of the height issue.

How did you feel about moving into this library? You saw the other library go from that round building and the rectangle and then to this. How did this impress you?

Well, one of the things I was hoping we wouldn't do is repeat any of the mistakes that had been built. When you take a building and just attach it to another building, there's things that don't work as well work-flow wise and people getting around wise and all that. And I was hoping we wouldn't repeat some of those. So we were asked things and we gave them whatever opinions we could. But we still have two buildings in one because in the old days you had to go across a bridge to get to the other part of the building. Well, if you want to go to admin, you have to walk all the way around the floor to get there.

That's true.

So that is a very similar kind of thing as walking so far to get to another place.

But this is a huge building.

It is really big. And it's very nice looking. And it has many fine qualities.

Yes, it does. I agree with all of that.

Let me see if there's anything else about the library. After working in circulation, then serials -- you said serials was off and on.

Well, when we came into the new building of JDL-2, I was moved up away from the collection. The collection was separate. And it was the microfilm and the periodicals and the newspapers. And the processing was put -- well, the serials were upstairs on fourth floor. The periodicals' check-in was on third floor with collection. And Chester Davis was in charge of that area. And that's when Cathy Jackson came along. And Dolores Santa Cruz is now down there. I forget who else is down there. And I'm up there with the Serials. Well, this whole thing wasn't working well down here. So I was transferred back down to handle the floor and the claiming and the check-in and the public side of the periodicals again. So I wound up being transferred back down. But I wound up with places on two floors and then actually three floors because the old periodicals were now on compact shelving on the round building. The more current periodicals are on the third floor of the new building, and the microfilm. And the processing periodicals check-in and newspaper check-in and microfilm check-in down here. And serials I'm checking in upstairs. So it's been a lot of jockeying for position trying to get things to work well.

Did it work better, though, once we moved to Lied?

It worked better once we got things back together where the people that knew how to do the stuff were in charge of the stuff. And I hate to say this. I should have told you I have an appointment this morning.

That's okay. What time?

I didn't know I was going to keep talking.

How much time do we have left?

About five minutes would be good. But if we need to do another one.

Well, we can wrap it up here. When you talk about the library to your friends, what are

some of the stories that you tell? What's the major story that you tell about the library?

I don't actually tell as many stories as you would think about the library. I tell some about the people.

And you probably can't repeat those on tape.

It probably wouldn't be appropriate.

I think people are very proud to be working for UNLV. We're very proud of our building. When you tell people you work at UNLV, they're impressed. When you tell them you work at the library, oh, I love to read books. They're happy for you, too, but they would love to read books.

Yes. The last thing, tell me about basketball and what basketball has meant?

Nothing. I don't do sports at all on any level. One time years ago Dolores Day and Dorothy Winter -- that's when we were in the JDL when it was only the one building -- were talking about sports. And I'm standing there and waiting because I have a question and I want to talk. But I'm waiting for the conversation to end. And finally Dolores looks at me and says you don't know what sport we're talking about, do you? I said no. She says it's basketball. Because I never kept up with any of the sports or anything.

So the name Tarkanian doesn't mean anything to you, does it?

Well, his son used to come and use the library. And when he lost his notebook, I called and told him that it was at the service desk waiting for him when he came back. Danny Tarkanian. He was a big player in those days.

Well, this has been wonderful. I appreciate it so much.

It stirs up a lot of memories that I haven't even thought about in a really long time. I remember when they widened Sahara Avenue when we lived on East Sahara in that trailer. When they decided to widen Sahara Avenue, they didn't know that had been a garbage dump in the old days. So when they were plowing up all that dirt to make Sahara Avenue, that had been a garbage dump in the old days because it was so far out of town.

The first house my husband and I bought was on 17th and Carson. And I gave Special Collections a picture when that was the outskirts of town from that lot looking out. That was the outskirts of town.

So 17th, that's going towards Boulder Highway. Okay.

Yes. Way downtown.

Oh, that's great. So what area of the city do you live now?

Now I live near Wyoming and Lamb, which used to also be out on the outback.

That's right.

I live between Charleston and Sahara just off Lamb.

This is wonderful.

Thank you for inviting me to talk. I know I have a lot more to say.

Oh, yes, you do. This was great. Thank you so much.

Thank you for having me.