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2007

## An Interview with Marta Sorkin

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

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



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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  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
University of Nevada Las Vegas



# Table of Contents

Details on growing up in Far Rockaway Long Island, NY; background on parents and paternal grandmother; father and mother worked in family butcher shop; after retirement from butcher shop, parents moved to California; father opened dry-cleaning business and mother went to college at Cal State Northridge; parents' political involvement included demonstrating for the survival of Israel.....	1-2
Modeling career in New York after 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage; followed parents to California and worked in sales; took civil service prep course and found job in library; visited Las Vegas with 2 <sup>nd</sup> husband and decided to move here; studied geography and geology at UNLV; involved with Preservation Association of Clark County, Preservation of Mormon Fort, and Jewish Federation of Las Vegas.....	3-4
Memories of live-in maid Bert Rodgers; further comments on modeling career, parents, wine class; anecdote about Louis Farrakhan and mother; decision to avoid the stress of sales work after bout with cancer at age 24; earning BA and MA at UNLV.....	5-8
Working in UNLV library reference with Ida Bowser, 1980; creating display cases for 28 years; background details on developing display case on prostitution; worked in reference for 23 years doing research for students and faculty; request from Dean Marks to build virtual library for dental school; details on building database, interlibrary loan system, and Link Plus; invitation to join Grila, a consortium of libraries that loan back and forth; mention of those trained to handle these systems.....	9-12
Comments on modeling work ethics for students; mention of social activities such as jewelry sales, Mahjong, and cooking; information on children and grandchildren; mention of Edythe Katz (now Yarchever) and working on the board of the Jewish Federation.....	13-14
Recalling library society fundraisers for the library and Mormon Fort; comments on Ralph Roske, history department, whose classes collected interviews; details on interviewing Cora Schwartz; closing comments on working at UNLV and letting students learn at their own pace.....	15-18



## Preface

Marta Sorkin begins by reminiscing about her childhood in Far Rockaway Long Island, New York. She details the life her parents lived, which set an example for Marta and her two siblings. Through hard work, advanced education, and involvement in causes that were important to them, they created the template by which Marta lives her life.

Marta describes her early work history, which included modeling, sales, library work, and working part time in her father's dry-cleaning plant. She and her daughter were living with her parents for a time in California, and they visited Las Vegas on weekends. It was during one of those visits that Marta met her second husband-to-be. They eventually married and decided to settle in Las Vegas.

In Las Vegas, Marta enrolled at UNLV, became involved with the Preservation Association of Clark County, and volunteered at the Jewish Federation of Las Vegas. In addition, she completed her BA and MA degrees at UNLV and started working at the university's library. She details her work there, including creating display cases, working in the reference section, doing research for students and faculty, and compiling interviews.

Marta also describes the fundraisers she spearheaded to help raise money for the various societies she was involved with: non-events, pancake breakfasts, dinners, and dance and band performances. In her closing comments she mentions an interview she did for Ralph Roske's class and expresses her appreciation for the career she's had at UNLV.











**This is Claytee White. It is March second, 2009. And I'm with Marta Sorkin, S-O-R-K-I-N. And we're in the Reading Room of Special Collections.**

**How are you today?**

A little nervous.

**And you have no reason whatsoever to be nervous. But, Marta, I just want to start by talking about your early life. Tell me a little something about growing up and your mother and father, what they did for a living.**

Okay. I grew up in Far Rockaway Long Island, New York. My father was a kosher butcher. He owned his own small business. My mother came into the store and worked with him. And they had employees. And she became a master butcher. Yeah. She would cut up those bones and the roast beefs on that big jimey vawn and put it through that -- it was a great big kind of like what the ax men use to cut trees, only this was standing up. And they had that butcher store for many years. My father was kind of the patron of the family. He helped everybody go into business. He loaned them money on a handshake.

My mother and father had three children. We grew up in a beautiful home, really big beautiful house. It was 14 rooms. We had a live-in housekeeper, a gardener that came twice a week, and a live-in handyman. In the summer we went to camp in upstate New York because that's when my parents made most of their money, when the tourists came out to the island. So we were in the way. And we were sent away to a kosher camp every summer. I was seven, my brother was eight and my sister was five years older than me. And she was actually the only one that liked it there. We did not like it there. But that's where we went. We went to school in Far Rockaway Bayswater.

My father retired; before that my sister was married. My brother went away to California. I was married. And it wasn't working out. I had my daughter. When she was ten months old, I moved back with my parents. When my father and mother retired, I moved with them to California to -- where did we live? I guess it was North Hollywood, around there.

When they retired my father had a lot of time on his hands and he was in his 50s. And my mother wanted to go to college. My mother was brilliant. But in those days the girls didn't go to college, just the boys, because their parents were emigrants. And the parents went to school at



night to learn English. But the girls went to work. And the only reason why my mother graduated high school was because she was only five feet. Nobody would hire her. So she graduated high school. Wanted to be a doctor. But, of course, that was not going to happen. When they moved to California, my mother said I'm going to college. She took an entrance exam. They said you're so smart; you're going to go to day school, not night school. She said to my dad, you go get a divorce or a job and get out of the house. I don't need help in the kitchen.

So he went around and he decided he'd open up one of those Norge dry-cleaning operations. After about two years Borg-Warner, who owns Norge, came to him and asked him if he would take over six of their businesses. He says no, I'm actually retired; this is just something to do. He was so smart. He could lift up a can of quarters and tell you how much money was in there. Never got past the sixth grade. He was sent out to the island as an apprentice because he was running around with a gang. My grandmother had moved to this country. She was divorced in Russia and she moved to this country. She had one child and then married Sorkin and had four more. He died of pneumonia. And she had five sons. And she had a pushcart where she went every morning and bought fruit and sold it on the streets in New York. My father was a problem. So she apprenticed him at the age of 13 and sent him to the island to an uncle. So he didn't have much of an education, but he had a good business head.

When they moved to California, my mother zoomed through school at LAVC. Then she went into college at Cal State Northridge. And then she decided she would -- well, she was student teaching and she didn't really care for that. She had a major in German and a minor in Middle English. Then she decided she'd get a Ph.D. And they said you're too old. In those days they didn't want to put the money into her.

So she became active on the campuses for the survival of Israel. And we were a very active political family. My father was a Democrat. My mother was a Republican. And we would parade in front of the Lebanese embassy with Jewish stars on our shoulders -- my mother, my daughter and I. At age 29, I started college, at LAVC. I was always being followed by the FBI. One day I said to them, "Why don't you just sit with me?" when I was in the lunchroom.

Anyway, when we moved to California -- oh, I left a lot out, didn't I? After my divorce I became a model. When I was young I was a dancer. And I was really good and I was offered free



lessons at The Met. I was on my toes after six months. My parents didn't think that was a career for a woman. They were very annoyed that I would be performing and traveling. So they said to me you can take modeling lessons, but dancing is finished. So I went to the Barbizon Modeling School in New York and I took lessons. And when I became divorced I was able to get jobs in the city modeling. And I really, really liked it. I was one of those working models where they just throw the furs on you. And I'd parade back and forth and change my stockings in the middle of the day because my feet were hot. Then I'd take the Long Island Railroad home.

My parents retired and decided to move to California. I, of course, came with them and I lived with them. I got a job with a sales organization. We had 17 salesmen and nine women. And I ran the office. After we cracked the nut, which was about 25 deals, I was able to make \$25 from every deal above that. And I would route the men. After a few years I stopped working and stayed home for two years on the money I had. I found that I could never get out of the house without being on a schedule. I could hardly get my daughter to school on time.

So I took a civil service preparation course and got a job in the valley close to home in a library so that my daughter could walk to see me after school. I had a live-in housekeeper always when Jane was growing up. It was tight because I was working 20 hours. I worked in my dad's dry-cleaning plant on Sundays because I didn't have enough money. Slept on the floor of the living room because I had a housekeeper and my daughter and two beds and one bedroom. After a year I was able to buy a couch. So I stayed there. And as we got older -- Jane and I grew up together -- that was the end of the housekeeper.

And I met Ralph, my second husband. We used to come to Las Vegas all the time. My dad loved to gamble, not heavy gambling, but they just liked it. And my mother and my Janie used to go around town and go up to the rooms early. We would have two rooms connecting so she could keep an eye on Jane. And my dad and I, would bang around and gamble and have a good time. We were shooting craps and I met Ralph. He was the dealer. We were standing on the buffet line at midnight. He came over to me and asked me if I would like to join him and his friends. My mother says go ahead. So I sat down with them and I said what kind of life do you have here? And the boxman said my wife is a teacher. And I realized that there were other things going on here in Las Vegas.



So we started dating. He would drive in to see me in California. Then he said I would like to marry you. And I said I don't know about that. My daughter is 14. I would feel really uncomfortable. Why don't we try it out? So I moved out here. I sent Jane to live with my parents. And they put her in summer camp. Ralph and I gave it a try and it worked. So Jane came out. We lived on Desert Inn in a two-story town house. Then she got mono and she was home-schooled. And then it was time for her to go to school, he would take her and pick her up every day because it fit in on his schedule. He would stop at Denny's or someplace and buy her a chocolate drink on the way home every day. They got along beautifully.

I got involved -- I immediately transferred out here. I was going to Cal State Northridge at the time. I was majoring in geography and minoring in geology. So I decided I would take a summer class in wines because I could use that back home because it was the earth that we were studying. I didn't know too much about wine, but I knew a lot about earth. What I did was memorize the loams and soils that went along with those grapes. I got one of three As in this whole class just by memorizing the soils, it was fun.

Then I decided I would stay here. And I bought out myself from the library in Van Nuys, California. I was full time here at UNLV studying. After studying and studying Ralph looked at my transcripts and he says, you know, if you transfer to history, you could graduate in six months.

Meanwhile I was very involved with the Preservation Association of Clark County and the Preservation of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort. I was on that board. And I was the first tour guide down there. I helped write the brochure with Anna Dean Kepper. And I gave tours on Sunday. And the Daughters of Utah Pioneers were very involved with it at the time. We worked together all the time. It was fun.

I was also a volunteer at the Jewish Federation of Las Vegas. I worked myself up to the women's division chair of campaign fundraising. I was also on the board of the Jewish Federation. I was active there for nine years. Then I started working here at UNLV.

**Okay. So before we start that, why didn't you like the camp as a young child? The camp that you had to go to every summer.**

We were too young to go away.

**Ah, that's what you thought at the time.**



I didn't think anything. I just was too young and unhappy to be sent away like that at seven years old. My sister loved camping. She got along fine with everybody. We didn't like the structure of it and the food, some of the food.

### **Too many rules?**

Just the idea of being with all these strange people when I was used to being -- we had a live-in maid, Bert Rodgers. She was black. She raised us. I missed her and I wanted to be with her. My mother would dry dishes and Bert ran the house. So if my mother was -- when Bert went away for the weekend, my mother would take all the silverware and throw it in the drawer. And Bert said no, we dry it first. Little things like that, yeah.

In those days the black people lived close to us. And Jewish people hired black people. And when Bert got sick with cancer, she moved back to her apartment. She had a grown son. And every Friday my dad -- I was wearing dungarees with suspenders because I was a tall, narrow kid. He would wrap up meat, go next door to -- everyone had their own stores then. He would get some fish and then he'd get eggs and make a bag. Then he'd give me a roll of money that he pinned with a safety pin to my pocket inside my jeans. And I would walk the two blocks from the store to where Bert lived. The black people lived in a square of wooden houses. And I would walk into the neighborhood and people would see me and wave to me or not say anything to me. I would go up the wooden stairs and go into see Bert. She'd be laying on her couch. And I'd give her the money. She'd unpin it. I was seven, eight. And I'd put the bag in the kitchen, we'd talk for a while and I'd leave.

And my father took care of Bert until she died two years later. Yeah. It was very sad. I remember when she first got sick in our house I was upstairs. We had a den upstairs and I was vacuuming when the ambulance came to take her from the house. And I kept that vacuum on because I was so sad.

I didn't like camp for a lot of reasons, like why are they sending us away? Anyway, that was camp.

Here on campus I was the adviser to the Jewish Student Union.

**Tell me about the dancing and the modeling. Why did your parents think dancing was bad, but modeling was okay?**



Dancing I would be traveling. I would be away from home. Skimpy clothes. When I was modeling I was working for furriers in the fur district. I was in my clothes. I was walking back and forth modeling furs and stoles and jackets and hats and things like that. And they felt it was more respectable.

**That sounds so glamorous.**

It was.

**How did you feel about that?**

I loved it. I loved it. I remember one time walking across the street. We wore these black straight dresses, our own clothes, heels, very high heels. And I was walking across and I saw Harry Belafonte. And he looked at me and he winked. I said, oh, my god, I know who that is. I saw him singing in a country club, Ben Masik's Town & Country Club near the Cross Bay Bridge. And I remember seeing him in that club. I loved to dance. And I thought, my god, he is really very handsome. Yeah, he was.

**How old were your parents when they decided to move to California?**

In their 50s.

**Oh, so they were young.**

Yeah, they were young. They had a lot of money. They had made a lot of money. And they had given a lot away.

**It sounds like it.**

In fact, when my parents passed there was hardly any money left.

**Because they had given away so much?**

Yeah. They said make your own. Help people. What are you going to do for humanity? Help people. And that was always the motto in the house. Don't gossip. Do the right thing.

**And they lived it.**

They lived it.

**Oh, that is so wonderful.**

Yeah.

**Was your mom able to work in the career that she prepared for going to school?**

For a while. She was placed in a very rough neighborhood. She really didn't like it. And she



stopped. But she was active in organizations in the synagogue on the campus of the Valley College. They were active there. And she dragged my father along to take classes with her and write his papers. He did not have good handwriting because he didn't have a good education, but he had a brilliant business mind. He would just figure things out. He went from being a butcher to a dry cleaner, amazing. He was really, really something and the nicest person, crazy about their grandchildren. They would take Jane and my sister's three sons every summer. And they each had their own golf club and they each had their own cue stick. He would take them to shoot pool. He taught them how to shoot pool. And they went to the park and they would know immediately where to go to get all the free games to play. And they kept them busy all summer. Very nice people.

**That is wonderful.**

They were better grandparents than they were parents. We all said that.

**But I just love the way you grew up. I really think that you are so blessed.**

I think so. We were very close. We had a big family. We celebrated all the Jewish holidays, and they were so long. My grandpa went on and on. All of us kids would be lying on the floor starving to death until he got done so we could eat. And I remember the big pots in the kitchen, my grandma and her daughters cooking all the ritual dishes.

**Did you learn to prepare them?**

Oh, yeah. I keep a kosher home. And my daughter keeps a kosher home.

**Oh, that is fantastic.**

And my granddaughter is very into it, too. Right now my grandson is going through he wants all the seafood and the shellfish, which are things we don't eat. But I anticipate him getting over that.

**Yeah, he will.**

**When you took the wine class you said something about home. It sounded as if you had planned to move back to New York at one point.**

No. I was referring to California.

**I see.**

But I loved the wine class. We bought three glasses for the different types of wine. By 8:15, I was drunk. Never could drink. But it was really interesting. I loved the class. And then when I



was here on campus, I joined the wine club. I'd go to wine lunches with people that I know here. It's enjoyable. It's very nice.

**And the last question before getting to UNLV, tell me a little more about the FBI thing and did they join you for lunch?**

Oh, that was funny. No. They stopped following. That's what happened because I was very active about Israel and the survival of Israel. And I would go to all of the conversations that were going on. Louis Farrakhan was on campus. My mother debated him. I'm telling you she was really on. And he had these very tall men standing on the sides. And she says why are you looking at me? She was five feet. They stayed away from her. She was a firecracker.

**Oh, that is amazing. And do you find yourself more like your father or your mother?**

I think a combination of both. I remember the ethics of my father and the fieriness of my mother.

**And the business sense of your father with your jewelry business.**

I have that because when I ran this sales organization and was able to make so much money to stay home for two years. I always had a business head and a way of talking to people. And when I came to work for civil service I thought, my god, this is so easy.

**Yes. Why did you decide to do that and not become an entrepreneur?**

Because I got cancer and I wanted to have a safe job with no stress and to raise my daughter. I got cancer the first time when Jane was six. I was about 24. And I didn't want to die. I didn't want anyone else to raise her. Then I had cancer two more times, breast cancer. So I try to have a very even demeanor. I don't want the stress of a personal business. My jewelry business, I don't care. It's fun. That's entirely fun. I own all my stock and I don't owe any bills on it and it's fun. I don't let it bother me whether I have a good sale or I don't. I've had that business for 16 years.

**That is wonderful.**

**So you went through the civil service test to get the job here. Who hired you?**

To get the job in California.

**Oh, okay. So when you came to Las Vegas --**

I was working here. I had graduated and I had gotten my master's here. I got my AA at LAVC (Los Angeles Valley College). And then I got my BA and my MA here at UNLV. It just seemed comfortable to come back and work in a library. And we were in the round building then. That's



all we had. And reference was on the first floor.

**So which year was that?**

1980.

**Reference was on the first floor.**

Yeah. That's when I graduated. And we did everything. We answered questions. I worked with Ida Bowser. And she worked every Saturday for five years. And I worked every Sunday for five years because she wanted to go to church. She was very active. I didn't care what days I worked. And we would work 14 days straight. That's the way it worked out. Well, we didn't know we weren't allowed to do that. And we would work late, 11:00 p.m., and then be back the next day at 8:00 a.m.. We didn't know we weren't supposed to do that either.

**Did they pay you overtime for all of that?**

No. No, we didn't get overtime until later on. And that was like a dollar-80 an hour, something like that. But we were constantly on. Our desks were at the -- like the reference desk. We were there. So for nine hours a day we were backup for the librarians that were there. And we took courses from Curley. And if there was something out there that we liked like hotel administration, we would take the 400 classes. Whatever was going on at that time at the reference desk, we were allowed to take classes. He would let us go. And we would just audit them just so we'd know what the kids were doing so we could stay with it.

And I started doing the display cases around '82. I've been doing them for about 28 years. We had just a few display cases then. They've always been fun for me. I get my ideas from the questions at the desk or from Chase's calendar of events or from questions somebody will give me or something in the newspapers or something I see on TV. And I'll put a display in. I'll put it together in an hour. And it goes in. If things change, it goes out. And I don't think I've ever had a case in for more than two months except once I did [one on] prostitution. I spoke with the president of the Brothel Association in Reno, and I had so much information. I really didn't have time to paraphrase. So I just took paragraphs and footnoted where everything came from. I tell you the kids would stand in front of those cases and stand there and write for their papers or photograph the case. And the dean at the time said leave this in, just leave this in because we're getting so much interest in it. So I did. And that was fun.



**LIFE**



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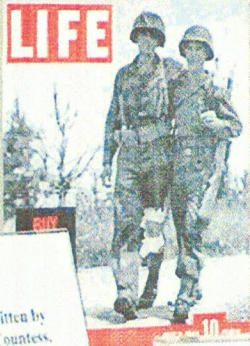


**THE BOMBERS**  
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**LIFE**



**LIFE**



Poetry written by  
Jerome Countess,  
an American soldier,  
serving in  
North Africa, Sicily  
and Italy during  
World War II



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I called the brothels. Nobody answered the phone early in the day. And they really weren't outgoing. They didn't really want to talk. I can understand that. And I spoke with the health department about the things that went on there and the doctors that visited. I didn't get to see a brothel until just a few years ago. I went out with a friend of mine who is at the Bellagio. And we just made a day of it. We went to the winery. We went to the brothels. Very interesting. In fact, I have photographs of me interviewing the girls.

**That is fantastic. So what did you do with those interviews?**

I just spoke with them. But I have the photographs if you want them.

**So you did research before the sociology department did some research later on.**

Oh, yeah.

**You were early.**

I was just interested in it, why women would get involved in something like this. And mostly I hear from them that they feel safe.

**I don't understand.**

Neither do I. But they feel safe there in the brothel.

**Oh, in that setting. Okay.**

In the setting. And they have a contract they're on for six weeks and off. They can go home to their families. Interesting, yeah.

**I had no idea.**

Neither did I. They don't live there all the time. Anyway, that's that.

**Oh, that's great. So your first job here was reference.**

Yeah. I worked in reference for 23 years, research for students and faculty. And we had the card catalog. Then we had to learn how to use computers. About five or six years ago when we decided to open the dental school, we didn't want to build another library. So the dean, Dean Marks, came over and he said to me we're going to build a virtual library for the dental school and I want you to move into inter-library loan. We call it document delivery, but everyone knows it's interlibrary loan. And he says I want you to build a database. So we're going to get the database of the National Library of Medicine. You're going to check it against our holdings and build a database so we can borrow from a consortium of people involved with that. We got 8,500 records



in there that I built. And every year I get an update from Michaelyn of what we still have and what we don't have. And I update it. And I keep it a clean database.

And when I was at the reference desk we found that -- we had a little card catalog of the theses that we had here at UNLV. And the kids would go over. They wanted to see what a thesis looks like from history or something else and what does the faculty person want. When we cataloged the thesis at the time we never put in the adviser. So we started a little card catalog. And I decided to keep it up. Then we put it online. Eva Stowers helped me. So we've got it on the shared drive. There are over 4,000 theses on the shared drive. And I keep a paper record on the two R & I disks. I update it twice a year. I get the information -- I used to get it from here. But that connection fell apart. Now I get it from cataloging. So we've got that thesis database and we've got the duck line database of the journals that we own that National Library of Medicine owns. And we build up a bank of money of things we loan out so that when we want to borrow something, if we can put it through there, we do because we have to do the best we can to supply the articles and books that we don't own. And we do that through interlibrary loan. Now we have Link Plus, but it only works through California. It's a small consortium. It's a faster service because they drive back and forth every day.

**What do you mean drive back and forth?**

The driver goes back and forth every day or every two days. I think it's every day.

**To California?**

Yeah. And brings the books back. We have a three-day turn around with Link Plus. The problem is that they can't get a lot of books. So we're still processing a ton of books in our department and a ton of articles, many, many articles. Our turnaround is incredible. We start processing in the morning and we process all day. It's Bill Frederick and me. We process. And then the minute it comes in on the queue, we send it out through the web to our student or faculty person. They can either have it that way or they can come in and get it or we'll mail it to them or they can pick it up in the music library or in the CML or architecture. We'll send it over there. But we're constantly busy with interlibrary loan. Even though we have so many things online, with the dental school those kids can't come over here. A lot of them haven't had instruction on how to use our articles online. So we immediately send it directly to them. We just drag it over on the screen and put it



into their ILLiad web account. So they can put a request in for an article and have it an hour later. We are that fast. That's why we've been invited to join Grilla because our turn around is so fast.

**Now, what is Grilla?**

Grilla is a consortium of libraries that loan back and forth. It used to be just Amigo and a couple of others. But now we've got Grilla. They invited us to join because we have such a fast turn around.

**Wow. So whom have you trained to do all of this?**

Well, Bill will continue with that. And Susan -- why can't I remember her name? Handau or something like that. She is excellent. She's doing it and so is Jason, who's now the head of circ. He's excellent.

**Good. That is wonderful.**

Yeah. So it's going to continue working beautifully. It's going to be fine.

**Oh, wonderful. And that's good information about our dental school. I had no idea that we had set up the virtual library like that.**

Yeah. And Eva is the connection with them. I don't know who's going to continue with the book on the desk for the thesis. It's heavily used. Maybe it'll be Eva because we've worked together with it. I'll speak with Wendy about it.

**Now, when they decided to move you from the little area that was there by the shipping you lost a lot of space. How do you continue to do all --**

Actually, the square [footage] is the same.

**Oh, is it really?**

We just lost the comfort of having shelves and having desks and having counter area to work. We lost all that. We were told to go over there and get comfortable, build something with what we have and then later on we will do something for you. They built us one shelf. And we went around and we got some bookcases and we got some tables on wheels and we put together the areas and the desktops so that it would flow very nicely. Now, last week they brought over one of those shelves from our old area and installed it for us. So the students and us, we don't have to bend down underneath to get the Jiffy bags to package things. It's much more comfortable. But we've got everything that we had over there. It's good.



**Okay, good. Which position here in the library have you enjoyed most?**

I have enjoyed everything I've done here. I have always loved working in libraries. My people, the Jewish people, have a tremendous respect for learning. And the ethic of helping is so engrained in me that it's just second nature. I can't imagine not being able to help somebody. It could be my lunch hour. It could be after I'm supposed to go home. I would not leave somebody and say I'm on my break or I'm having lunch. I would never do that.

**How do you teach that ethic to the students that you work with?**

They learn by watching us and by us telling them because we're training them to go into the real world.

**Right.**

And we tell them this is not going to happen out in the real world. You've got to produce. You've got to finish your job. Say when you're done and what you're up to so we can continue with somebody else. They're all cross-trained. And they're excellent. We don't have one student that I wouldn't recommend anywhere else.

**Oh, that is fabulous.**

They're really good.

**So what do you plan to do now?**

I don't know. About five years ago I moved up to Sun City Anthem because the interest rates went so down that I was able to buy something affordable. And I have a beautiful little home.

**I know. I've seen it. I've been to one of your jewelry parties.**

Oh, yes. I love that little house.

**Oh, yes. I do too.**

And I've got the clubhouse, which I don't use. But I play Mahjong every Wednesday night and I'll join that club. And there are other things there I should probably be doing, like swimming. There are a lot of things I should be doing. If I get a dog that I'm thinking of buying, I'll be out walking twice a day.

**That's right.**

And I can go down to visit my family more often. My grandchildren are in college.

**Your grandchildren are in college.**



Yes.

**So your daughter lives where?**

My daughter lives in Calabasas. She's the director of curriculum for Ventura County. She has her Ph.D.

**Where is Santa Barbara? Is that Ventura County?**

Yeah. Right around there.

**Okay. So I know.**

And my son-in-law has a commercial real estate company. My granddaughter is at UC Santa Barbara. She's in communications. She's a wonderful dancer. She was on a competition team and she danced with a team in high school. And she was president of her class in middle school and high school. She's very outgoing. My grandson is like a 4.4 grade average. They both went to Calabasas High School. He's at USC now. He wants to go into international law, maybe politics. He's been accepted at Duke, which has an international program. He's been accepted at Georgetown. He's been accepted at about six law schools. We don't know yet where he'll go. He's very handsome. He's a beautiful boy. I have the best grandchildren in the world. I just found out he will be going to NYU Law School.

**Are you a better grandmother than a mother?**

No.

**Okay. You were a good mother as well.**

I was a great mother. My daughter is my best friend.

**Oh, that's wonderful.**

But, yeah, I'm a really good grandma. And I never go against my son-in-law or my daughter. What they say goes. And when the kids come to me, I'm in charge.

**How often are they able to get to Las Vegas to visit here?**

Well, before they were in school we would see a lot of each other. Now when my grandson joined a fraternity the first time when he first entered USC, he called me and says, Grandma, we have to go up to Las Vegas and we have chores to do. I didn't ask him what it was or where he was going. He says could we come over? Would you cook for us? I said yeah. He's in Phi Kappa Phi -- no. That's my honor sorority. He's in AEPi, which is a Jewish fraternity. So he says would you make



matzah ball soup? I said yeah. And split pea soup? Yeah. And then I hear something in the background. And he says could you make brisket and Kasha Varnishkes? I said yeah. When are you coming? Tomorrow. How many? Sixteen.

**And, of course, you had it all prepared.**

I went to three markets. I cooked till 12 at night. I was exhausted. We had the best time. I had wall-to-wall boys. And then I had to wake them up and send them -- they only slept for three hours because they had to be back at the fraternity. It was a riot. So I became an honorary member.

**Oh, that is great. I love it.**

But when I was here, I was active in the federation. I was the adviser for the Jewish Student Union here, which has been taken over by Hillel.

**And tell me what that is.**

Hillel is an international organization for youth.

**Did you know Edythe Katz when you were in the Jewish Federation?**

Oh, yeah. Sure. Yeah.

**So you now how active she is here.**

Oh, yeah. I know her very well. We were on the board together.

**Okay. I've interviewed her and --**

Her husband?

**Yes. What is the last name now? I can't remember her new last name.**

Yarchever.

**Yarchever, yes. So I've interviewed the two of them.**

I was very active on that board. We raised a lot of money. You know, the foundation wants every college to have their own board.

**Yes.**

So Dr. Marks asked me to put together a board for him because he knew I had contacts in the community. I asked him how many he wanted. He said, oh, around 15. So two days later I brought him the list of the board. And I had one of the Molasky kids. I asked him do you want an attorney? Do you want an accountant? What do you want? He says no, I just want a board. So I



got everybody into the board with a base of a thousand-dollar gift. And they all agreed to that. And he says, well, you don't even have to ask for anything; the foundation does that. I said, well, with boards they have to know that they're responsible for something. And a thousand dollars is a minimum for a board member. And then you can negotiate up from there. So about half of the board that's there now I brought in.

**It sounds as if you worked closely with Dr. Marks.**

Only when he needed me. I was not invited to go up to the admin office to be involved with fundraising.

**Okay. I see.**

But when he needed something he would come to me sub-rosa and I would get whatever he needed for him.

**Lee told me that you did something for if library that probably was one of the best things that she could remember. And that was the pancake breakfast.**

Oh, that was fun.

**That's what she thought. She said that you just did that so well and had so much fun. Tell me about that.**

Well, we were a library society at the time, not a library board. And we were very active. We had dinners at people's houses. And we thought [about] anything we could do to raise money. We had a non-event. You are invited not to attend. For ten dollars you cannot dance the night away. You know, things like that. And we brought in a lot of money. And all we did was make up the invitation.

Well, we decided to have a pancake breakfast. I refused to pay for anything. So I had the aprons donated. And I had the Lions Club come over and set up the burners. They brought everything and they made pancakes. I had the president of the school and faculty and people who were the anchors on TV. I had them come out and serve and talk to people. And we had balloons. It was a very nice fundraiser. The community came. We did it right out in the parking lot facing Maryland Parkway. It was fun. And when I was the director of the Las Vegas Mormon Fort, I did events out there too. And I had clog dancers and I had local bands perform. And Ralph Roske from the history department, he was the master of ceremonies. The night before this big event










Library Society Event

From Left to right: Hal Erickson, Marta Sorkin, and Bill Wright





 Marta Sorkin  
Vice-President  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SOCIETY



where we had 750 people come -- this is before that place was built down there next to the fort.

**Oh, I can't see it right now. Museum?**

No. That's across the street, where the Elks Lodge was. You know what I'm talking about. But I can't remember the name. I called up my dad the night before. I said you've got to come up here because I'm going to be serving hot dogs and things with it and I have nobody reliable to serve. So they drove up the night before, my mother and father. I have photographs of them. My father cooked the hot dogs and my mother put it in the buns. Everybody could put their own things on top. And we served these. I think we charged -- or maybe we didn't charge. I don't remember that part. But that kept on going. I have a picture of my dad clapping his hands and the band playing and the clog dancers clogging. I had a guy shoes horses. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers were there. They were quilting. It was very nice.

**That is wonderful.**

It was a nice community event.

**Why did you hesitate to be interviewed? You have such an exciting, wonderful, warm life.**

Really?

**Oh, this is amazing.**

And I have a wonderful family that I adore. And they love me.

**Oh, I know. Yes. And it comes through so vividly.**

They give me a lot of happiness.

**Wow. And you mentioned Ralph Roske. The reason that we have the number of interviews that we house now is because Ralph Roske's classes collected interviews for years.**

Me too. I was in his class. I did Cora Schwartz, which was a riot.

**Well, I'm going to have to find that interview.**

She didn't want to talk about anything. Cora Schwartz lived in Goodsprings. Her house was on different levels. They kept on adding up to it. Her husband was a miner. She had two daughters. And one of them was a teacher. The other one -- I'm not sure which one -- was engaged. And the guy fell in love with the sister.

**Oh, how sad.**

And the other one never married. And this guy that's working on my braces is their grandson.



**Oh, my goodness. You stayed in touch.**

Nope. But I know the story.

**Oh, I see.**

Interesting. A small town. Small town. And Cora had a black stove—you know those old stoves that you put wood into?

**Oh, yes.**

She had a black stove and she made an apple pie. It had no sugar. But I ate it. I sat there and I ate it. She made me coffee. And she did not want to talk about anything, very closed mouth. And it was freezing out there. There was no heat in her house. And it's like 40 miles to get out to Goodsprings. Interesting people.

**Oh, yes. And so are you.**

Thank you.

**And, Marta, I appreciate this so very much.**

I wouldn't have done it if you didn't hound me.

**Any closing comments that you'd like to make either about family or UNLV or anything?**

**The future? Any closing comments?**

Closing comments. This school has been very good to me. I've loved working here. I think we do good things out here. I'm glad they raised the grade point average. We have a community college that can take care of the other students.

**I agree.**

I don't believe that kids should be forced to do more than they can, because they're not going to accomplish anything in life. I think they should be at their level and move up from there and be able to compete at their level and learn and then move up.

**I thank you so much.**

You're very welcome.