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An Interview with Bruce Woodbury

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee White

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

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

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This project was the brainchild of Deborah Boehm, Ph.D. and Patrick Jackson who taught at UNLV and resided in the John S. Park Neighborhood. As they walked their community, they realized it was a special place that intersected themes of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gentrification. Patrick and Deborah learned that John S. Park had been listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and that original homeowners, local politicians, members of the gay community, Latino immigrants, artists and gallery owners and an enclave of UNLV staff all lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, they decided that the history of this special place had to be preserved, joined with the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and wrote a grant that was funded by the Centennial Committee.

The transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the narrative. These interviews have been catalogued and can be found as non-circulating documents in Special Collections at UNLV's Lied Library.

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Interview with Commissioner Bruce Woodbury

February 25, 2009
Conducted by Claytee White

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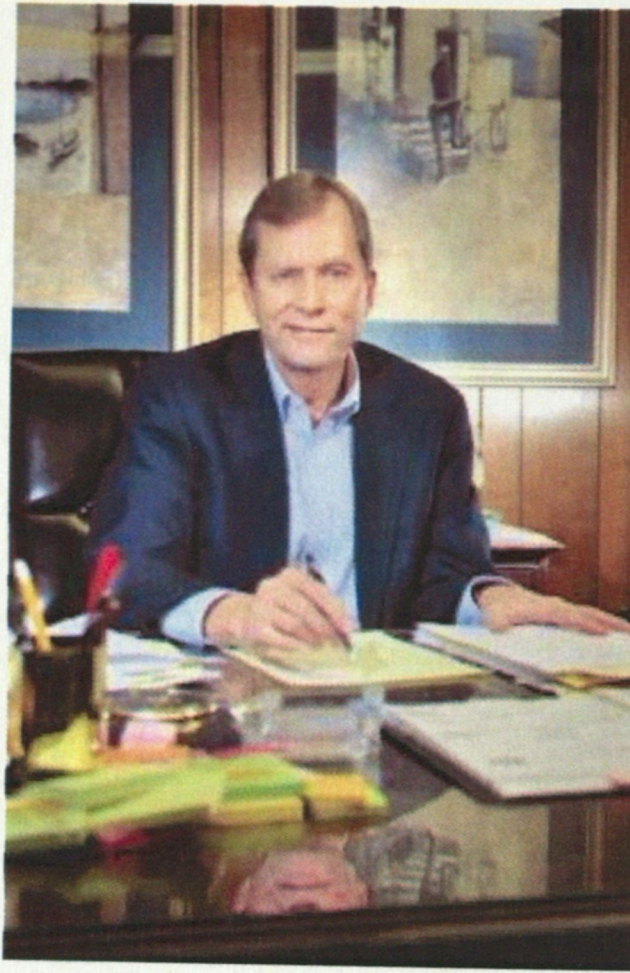
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Preface

When Bruce Woodbury, mayor of Las Vegas, attorney, and historic preservationist, first saw the site of John S. Park, he was struck by its unique character. The Woodbury family lived in two houses on the site, and attended only two schools, John S. Park Elementary and Las Vegas High School. Bruce's family has lived in the area since the 1950s, when they lived on the site of town.

Bruce's family is a testament to the history of the old Las Vegas, even though they are an exciting, vibrant community in many ways. And during this time, history has been rediscovered in the old buildings of the town—unmarked doors and windows, old signs, and old maps. The site was a "hidden world" where the past lived on in a very real way. Bruce's family, like many others, celebrated a new decade of life and discovery. It was at Bruce's job, a small business in the Flamingo area, that he began to learn about the history of the site and the town.

It was at the Flamingo area that Bruce discovered the old red signs and the old buildings. He was struck by the way in which the community leaders had preserved the history of the site. It was a privilege to be able to drive down the street and see the old signs and buildings. Bruce's family, like many others, celebrated a new decade of life and discovery. It was at Bruce's job, a small business in the Flamingo area, that he began to learn about the history of the site and the town.



Preface

When Bruce Woodbury, native Las Vegas, attorney, and former county commissioner, looks back on growing up, he immediately says: *My first memory of a house here in Las Vegas was in the John S. Park area.* The Woodbury family lived in two houses in the neighborhood and attended only two schools, John S. Park Elementary and Las Vegas High School. Bruce's recollections begin in the 1940s, when they lived on the edge of town.

Bruce has what he calls a “nostalgic yearning for the old Las Vegas, even though today it’s an exciting, vibrant community in many ways.” And during this oral history interview, he recalls the safe feeling of the times—unlocked doors and children allowed to roam more freely than today. The Strip was a “separate world” where kids like himself might go to a show occasionally with their parents, celebrate a prom dance or, as he did, get a part-time job. One of Bruce’s jobs included being a busboy at the Flamingo Hotel & Casino where he confesses to learning and observing a lot about life from the full-timers.

He talks about the Helldorado events, lists businesses that existed and names neighborhood friends from his era—many of whom became community leaders and professionals. The twinge of nostalgia is felt when he speaks of driving down the streets of John S. Park area today and passing the houses where he and his three siblings were raised, where he met his wife Rose Stewart Woodbury, and where played basketball in the driveway.

Interview with Commissioner Bruce Woodbury

February 25, 2009 in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Claytee White

Today is February 25th, 2009, and I am with Commissioner Bruce Woodbury. This is Claytee White. We're in his office in the Wells Fargo Building at 3800 Howard Hughes Parkway. So how are you this morning?

Well, I'm great! I appreciate you coming over.

Well, I thank you so much for allowing us to come over. We're going to video this because, for the John S. Park project, eventually we're going to have a website, and we're going to have clips of interviews and various things on the website.

So tell me about growing up in John S. Park. First, tell me about your early life: sisters, brothers, mother, and father.

Well, I was born in Las Vegas in 1944. My father was Howard Woodbury and my mother Elma Lund Woodbury. And they both grew up in Southern Utah. And after my father went to dental school at the University of Southern California, they decided to move to Las Vegas. His older brother Claire Woodbury was a doctor here at the old Las Vegas Hospital. He had established a medical practice. Some of our other family had moved here. And they just decided, this was the place. My father really fell in love with it as he drove through Southern Nevada, back and forth from Utah to Southern California. And so they moved here in 1940.

I'm the second of four children. My older brother Frank was born in 1942, and then I came along in '44. And I have two younger sisters, Cynthia and Pamela, who were a couple of years apart after me, and then another couple of years between them.

My first memory of a house here in Las Vegas was in the John S. Park area. And that's where we stayed throughout all of my childhood, in two houses in that area.

Do you remember the addresses?

Yeah. The first house was 1028 Norman Street [Avenue], which was about a half-a-block west of Maryland Parkway, in Circle Park. We just called it The Park, in those days. And then when I was about six or seven years old, we moved to 1304 South Seventh Street, which is the corner of Seventh [Street] and Franklin [Avenue], which was maybe a couple of blocks from our original house.

Who were some of your playmates, that you remember?

Well, this was a neighborhood in those days that was chock-full of children. There were kids in virtually every household, it seemed like, and so when I was living on Norman Street, over my back fence was a friend, we just knew him—we called him Herky. Bill Ray and his younger brother Bruce Ray. And then up and down Norman Street there was Don Ashworth. He was a little older. Across the street was Billy and Judy Hansen. Bob Atkinson was down the street, and David Kelly.

Some of my best friends in those days were a couple of my law partners who I'm partner with now, Bill [William R.] Urga and Gardner [R.] Jolley. Both grew up in the same neighborhood. We were in the same class.

My wife lived in that neighborhood and we went to kindergarten together—Rose Stewart. David Gubler. The Gublers. There was John, David, Jim, their older brother Richard. Paul Bryan, Dick [Richard] Bryan's younger brother, was a good friend of mine. Frank Davenport. Tommy Marshall. Larry Miller, who is one of my best friends and we

played basketball together throughout our years at John S. Park [Elementary School] and then at Las Vegas High School. And you know I could go on and on. Sig Rogich.

Oh, yes, I really appreciate that. Now do you think your partners here at the law firm would be interested in being a part of this? Because we weren't aware.

Yeah, I'm sure they would. And they'd probably give you some great memories, too.

Gardy Jolley has a wonderful memory and he would give you some great things. His father Reuben Jolley was one of the original owners of Channel 8, the first TV station. He was involved in several businesses. And Bill would give you some great insight and perspective as well.

That's wonderful. Tell me about going to school, where you went to school as a young boy.

Well, I went kindergarten through eighth grade at John S. Park, and it was just down the street from both of the houses I lived in. And Miss [Doris] Hancock was my kindergarten teacher. I went all the way through to eighth grade. We were the Panthers. It was our nickname of John S. Park Elementary. You know, even after school the playground and the playing field, we spent an awful lot of time there. It was kind of the center of the universe for us in that whole neighborhood was John S. Park Elementary School.

It seems that there are so many people out of this community that have become very, very successful: businessmen, attorneys, just very successful. What do you attribute that to?

Well, probably just the environment we grew up in. This was the post-war [World War II] era, the baby boomers, I guess our age group was just about a year behind the so-called baby boomers. And it was sort of a success-oriented environment. Our parents

emphasized education, and you just knew—you didn't question it—you just knew you were going to go to college probably and get into a business or a profession. And I think that probably more than anything was just the expectations of us, that that's what people did. You tried to strive and excel and nothing could hold you back, was what we were taught.

What are some of your memories of the early city itself? When you would go outside of John S. Park, what did it look like?

Very small town. It didn't seem that way to us at that time but it was, compared to today, a very small town, and I have a very nostalgic yearning for the old Las Vegas, even though today it's an exciting, vibrant community in many ways. I miss the old Las Vegas, where it seemed like wherever you went, you know, you knew somebody and they knew you. Your parents didn't worry too much about you. I didn't have to report in at all. They didn't have to know where I was all the time. It's quite true that the doors weren't locked that much of the time. Even when I was a very small boy, five, six years old, they would allow me to go down to the Huntridge Theater to movies without them, just with our friends. I can remember, one time I wished they were with me because I got so scared in the movie. It was *The Wizard of Oz* at the Huntridge Theater and that witch, the Wicked Witch of the West, just scared the heck out of me and I ran out of the theater crying. And then so, OK, the next time there was [a movie], they said, well, you really ought to see this movie, it's a good one, so my brother took me. Well, the same thing happened. I got scared and ran out and he just laughed, you know.

So what kind of movies do you watch today?

[Laughing] Well, I like movies. I watch captioned movies because I've had cochlear implants and I have hearing impairment, so I'm grateful for all these modern innovations in that movies are captioned and I can follow them. I like all kinds.

That's wonderful. Could you describe a John S. Park house to me?

Well, I'm not much on architecture so I don't know if I could describe the style, but I guess they were tract houses, for the most part. The first house anyway, these were basically wooden-frame houses on quarter-acre lots. I have to think. Probably quarter-acre lots. You know, in those days you didn't worry about water so much. You had grass all over the front yard and the back yard. Quite a few trees. You know, you went up and down that street and the trees would almost make a canopy over the street. And basically wooden picket fences between the houses, where people really did lean over the fence and talk to their neighbors. Your front yards normally were not separated by fences at all. They just transitioned into one another. It was a very open environment. People would go next door or across the street to borrow some eggs or some milk or something, all the time.

The houses on Norman Street were relatively small. I think we had two or three bedrooms and a couple of small bathrooms and a fairly small living room and maybe a little family room.

When we moved to the corner of Seventh and Franklin it was a larger house. Our family had gotten bigger. This was a custom home. I'm not sure whether my parents had it built or [what]. I think they did because we were the first occupants of it. And it was larger, although in today's scheme it probably wouldn't be considered a huge house. But again, a lot of grass, trees, bushes. My parents cultivated a rose garden. My father was

restaurant. The lounge was not far away from the restaurant. Billy Eckstine was singing in the showroom which was just on the backside of the restaurant. Joe E. Lewis and people like Bobby Darin, you'd see them coming into the restaurant. Bobby Darin and Sandra Dee, his wife, were either really happy with each other or they were fighting and feuding. And some of the celebrities could drink quite a bit and you know you could tell that they were somewhat inebriated. And the waiters and the other busboys were full-timers, you know, I was just going to be there for the summer, and these people, this was their work, and they were, you know, good hardworking people and I learned a lot, but some of them were kind of hard and hardened by the environment and I learned a lot of language that I had never heard before and heard a lot of stories about their lives and I was introduced to a whole different realm of [life]. It was part of growing up.

Could Billy Eckstine eat in the coffee shop where you worked?

He came into the coffee shop, yeah. He was singing in the lounge throughout the evening and into the early hours of the morning, and I really got to appreciate his music and his great voice and became a fan of his. And yeah, he came in. Very nice man.

And no problems with him being able to eat in the coffee shop, at that time.

No. No. You didn't see a lot of African-Americans and I didn't even think about it but there was probably segregation going on. But the entertainers would come in, yes.

Because various entertainers have different stories, so that's very interesting. I really appreciate that.

Going back to John S. Park, some of the questions we have are things like, did you see any kind of relationship or influence with the Strip? But you working

there, that's a very interesting one and I like that story that you just told so I really thank you for that.

Did any of the other young men, friends of yours, work on the Strip, that you remember?

Not until like basically when we graduated from high school, and then some people started to work on the Strip, tried to get jobs as dealers, and others just to work part-time like I did or temporary jobs to get ready to go to college. And some of my friends were doing the same thing that I was doing, but for the most part, as you're growing up, the Strip was kind of a separate world, although our parents would take us to a show now and then. I remember some of the shows. The Harmonicats, these guys who played harmonicas and did a comedy routine. They'd take us to family-oriented shows now and then. It was a real treat if we got to go to a show. You had dinner shows in those days, so you'd have dinner and watch the show.

When you went to the prom, was the Strip one of the things that you did on prom night?

Yes. It seems like for either the prom or the senior ball, we would go out and have dinner maybe at one of the Strip hotels, and go to the dance. And some of the kids would go back and maybe go to a show. But for the most part, we didn't do that too much. I remember that, well, when we were about seventeen, some of us decided we wanted to gamble. And of course it was illegal till you were twenty-one. They weren't really as strict about checking on you in those days. Once in a while, if you were just standing by a casino, waiting for something, you could stick a quarter in a slot machine and pull it and nobody would really catch you. If you won, you'd grab it and, you know, back away real

fast. But on one occasion, we decided we were going to gamble at the table games, and so we rented a room at the Stardust Hotel [and Casino] and we dressed up with suits and ties. And I have to admit, we tried to fortify our courage a little bit with some liquid courage, and some guys even with a cigar, you know. Tried to make ourselves look old. And we went to the tables to play 21. And, you know, not sure at all that they would deal to us, but yeah, no questions asked, you know. And we either won or lost between zero and twenty dollars and that was a huge amount of money to us in those days. It was quite an experience. It was scary, it was exciting, and it was probably stupid, but we did it. And that's the kind of thing you [did]. I think we did that twice.

But as far as your everyday life, the Strip was a separate world. It was just like any other community, growing up. We spent a lot of time playing sports. My front yard at Seventh and Franklin was the field where we would play football or whiffleball, boxing matches. I had a friend, he was always—because he was the matchmaker, Dougal Morrison—he was lining me up for fights with people. I had a pair of boxing gloves, or two pair. And then my driveway was the basketball court. We had a basket there and we had kids there all the time, playing sports. And we were just into the normal things that kids do, and the fact that we had gambling and shows and a so-called entertainment industry, just some of the kids' parents worked there but other than that, it was sort of irrelevant to our lives.

Was that an area that you would consider now, looking back on it, [as having] any special cultural activities? Because now, when we think about John S. Park and those areas, we kind of associate First Friday with those areas. So anything in your day, that you remember?

Well, you know, there were not any special cultural activities built around it, unless you want to call the Helldorado celebration a cultural activity. My father worked his way through dental school playing in a dance band. He was a drummer. So he was part of the Helldorado band, a marching band. And we at John S. Park, on a couple of the occasions we were asked to march in the band. I think we were in third or fourth grade and we had these flutophones. They're like flutes, and we were taught to play them and we marched along in the parade. Music, I never learned, you know, art and penmanship and music, my brain just didn't function in those areas. And I would just pretend that I was playing. My teacher knew, I guess, because I would get C's in Music, Art, and Penmanship. I'd get pretty much A's in everything else. So that was the cultural activities.

Tell me more about Helldorado as you grew older.

Well, Helldorado was the big event for the community in those days. We'd have almost a week-long celebration and you'd have four different parades. And we loved to go to Fremont Street and watch the parades. There was an Old-Timers' Parade and then there was—I don't remember what they were all called but the final one was the Beauty Pageant Parade where you would choose Miss Helldorado. And they'd have all these big floats that the hotels and others would put together. I'm sure it doesn't rival the Tournament of Roses and those kind of parades but we thought it was really big-time. And a lot of marching bands from all over. And there would be the Whiskerino contest where the men would grow beards and they'd be judged as to who has the best beard. There would be a carnival. That was the best part of Helldorado for we kids. There'd be the Helldorado Carnival, down in the area where Cashman Field is now. And, you know, all the carnival rides and the midway concessions.

So now was that part of the village, the carnival?

Yeah, yeah, the Helldorado Village was part of the carnival.

OK, good. Oh, that's wonderful.

What kind of businesses do you remember from the John S. Park area?

Were there any at that time?

There were a lot of businesses around Charleston Boulevard and Maryland Parkway, probably the closest businesses to the John S. Park area, and then over on Las Vegas Boulevard from, let's say, Charleston to the south. You know, where we lived was almost the edge of town in those days. There wasn't a lot to the south. We had a lot of vacant lots where we'd put baseball fields in to play, and then somebody would build there and we'd have to move it to another lot. So there was growth going on and we had to move around.

But down around Charleston Boulevard and Maryland Parkway, there was the Huntridge Theater, and there was the Huntridge Drugstore, where there was a soda fountain where you'd go and sit down and you could order food and drinks, where we'd go all the time and get a milkshake or a Coke or a hamburger. And those are the ones that mainly we kids used, would patronize, the movies and the places for food and treats. And then over on Las Vegas Boulevard it was kind of the same thing. I remember there was a donut store we used to go to a lot.

And of course a lot of it was centered down around Fremont Street, Las Vegas Boulevard from Charleston down to Fremont Street and then Fremont Street for three or four blocks. Several other movie theaters downtown on Fremont Street, and clothing stores. Ronzone's and Trader Bill's. The Palace Theater, the Fremont Theater, the El

Portal Theater. El Portal Luggage. And then there were some casinos down there, of course, as well. That was the center of town in those days, Fremont Street.

That's right. How do you compare the Fremont Street of that day, and how do you like it, compared to today, with the canopy?

Well, I guess I liked it better in those days just because that's where the families would go so much, to shop or for entertainment, and there were grocery stores around there as well. We had grocery stores in the John S. Park area, too. I should've mentioned that there was a Safeway [supermarket] and there was Cliff's [Fifth Street] Market up on Las Vegas Boulevard. There were food markets down around Fremont Street and Las Vegas Boulevard. In those days we didn't call it Las Vegas Boulevard; it was Fifth Street. And so that's just where you went to shop and to do things and where you'd run into everybody. Today it's more of a tourist center. Locals still go there to some extent but just not nearly as much as in those days.

Tell me about high school.

Well, I went to Las Vegas High School, freshman through graduation. So I went to two schools, John S. Park Elementary and Las Vegas High School. They just started the junior highs when we were about sixth or seventh grade and they divided the area. Some of the John S. Park kids would go to John C. Fremont Junior High [School], like my wife did and Bill Urga did. And then those of us living to the north of whatever the boundary line was would go to John S. Park, through the eighth grade, and then we became freshmen at Las Vegas High School, while the others were seventh through ninth grade at John C. Fremont Junior High. And then by the sophomore year, we were all back together at Las Vegas High School. And the only high schools in the area were Las

Vegas High, Rancho High [School]. and then Bishop Gorman [High School], a Catholic school, until you went out to Henderson, there was Basic High School and Boulder City High School. But it wasn't till our senior year that we got another high school; Western High School came along.

I was always the youngest kid in the class. I started kindergarten when I was still four years old, about four months from being five years old. And so in high school I was still the youngest kid, kind of insecure, I think, and pretty shy. But I was pretty involved in sports. They put me on the varsity basketball team when I was a freshman. I became a letterman. I played a lot of basketball through high school.

So all of that basketball in the front yard paid off.

Yeah. It did. And we won the state championship one year. I was all-conference and all that sort of thing. Played a little baseball in high school, as well.

My wife and I started dating when we were sixteen. She was named as one of the junior prom queen candidates, and they had to know who their dates were going to be, to put it in the program, a few weeks before. And so the class president asked each of them, Who are you going to the prom with?

And the ones who didn't have a date yet said, Well, I don't know.

And he said, Well, who do you want to go with?

And she said, Well, I guess, Bruce. Or Woody. They called me Woody in those days, just about everybody.

And so he came to me and said, You're taking Rose Stewart to the junior prom.

[Laughing] Were you flattered?

[Laughing] I said, Yeah, I am, OK, I guess [I will]. I hadn't really thought about it, you know, I was pretty shy around girls, even though I was interested in girls, like every boy. But I didn't get up the nerve to ask her. We were in an English class together, and she kept expecting, I guess, that I was going to ask her. So one day she got up and she was tired of waiting for me and so she just walked out. That day I said, Rose, wait. Will you go to the junior prom with me? Yes, OK. So that's how we started dating. I asked her out because she asked somebody to ask me to ask her out. It didn't take too long before, you know, a couple of dates, I fell in love with her, and then I was pursuing her. And she's still putting up with me.

Oh, that's great. Oh, that's wonderful. So tell me about college. Did she go to college as well?

Yes. I went to the University of Utah, for my undergraduate degree. Started out in pre-med, actually pre-dental. Transitioned into pre-med.

Wow, following in your father's footsteps.

Yeah. My father was an oral surgeon and three uncles and my grandfather were physicians. So that's all I thought that there was, you know. I didn't really know what else to do. But I hated it. I did not like the chemistry labs and the biology and all that, and I quickly decided that because, for the same reasons I was not good at art and penmanship, you know, I don't have the [skills], the mechanical side of my brain doesn't work, anything practical like that. So, anyway, I switched and majored in political science and decided, well, you know, maybe I'll go to law school, and ended up going to law school at Stanford University.

Rose went her first year at Brigham Young University, then she went for about a half-a-year at Idaho State [University]. Went home because we decided to get married. She was going to go and work and earn some money. And so in the summer of 1964 we got married and then we both went to college at the University of Utah after that, and worked summers. And by then my parents were both deceased and there was a little bit of a trust fund that had been depleted quite a bit because of the economy, but it helped me through college. And she finished up at San Jose State [University] but got her degree through the University of Utah. She was at San Jose State while I was going to law school, and she worked at home, making draperies, which she learned from her mother. We had our first child in the first year of law school.

Wow. That's exciting. So what influenced you to try law? Did you know lawyers here in the city?

Yeah, I knew a couple of lawyers. But frankly I just couldn't think of anything else I wanted to do. I mean I'll be honest with you. I thought, well, there's always law school. You can do a lot of things, maybe, with a law degree. I was, again, very shy. I had a lot of friends and was pretty popular but, when it came to public speaking or anything like that, that terrified me.

So did you ever picture yourself on the County Commission? I mean how did that happen?

The last thing I could've featured myself doing was being a lawyer and a politician. But I always had an interest in politics. You know, from the time I was a little boy I remember sitting by our big radio, before we had TV, listening to the political conventions in 1952 when I was like six years old. Maybe seven years old, going on eight. Yeah. And being

fascinated by what I was hearing, both the Democratic and Republican conventions. And so, from that time on I was fascinated and interested in politics. I thought maybe I'd like to be in politics but then again there was this fear of public speaking. But when I became a lawyer, I just made myself do it, you know, go to court and just prepared and prepared until I [could do it]. And then after I did it a few times I said, hey, I can do this. I'm pretty good at it. I still was kind of nervous. Little by little I overcame it.

And then the opportunity [arose]. I wouldn't have ever thought of running for the County Commission, but my predecessor on the commission, Bob [Robert] Broadbent, was reelected in 1980 and then he immediately resigned to take a position with the new Reagan administration in Washington [D.C.], so there was a vacancy. And, shortly after he resigned, the governor has to make an appointment to fill the vacancy. A couple of people came up to me and said, hey, I understand you're in the running for the County Commission appointment. I said, no, no, I'm not. And then somebody else did that a couple of days later and I said, well, what's going on here? And so I found out that some of my friends who were close to the governor—in that day it was Governor Robert List—some of my friends, Joe Brown and Sig Rogich and Mike Sloane and some others, had given the governor my name as someone who would do a good job and lived in that district. And I was a Republican and he had to, by law, appoint a Republican because that's what Mr. Broadbent was. And so I found that out. I've always been a very competitive person, sports and everything, and school, and I decided, all right, I'm going to go for it. So we kind of mounted a little mini-campaign. There was another gentleman, a city councilman from Henderson who was in the running. Anyway, long story short, the governor chose me.

And then after I was in office for a few months, trying to maintain a law practice and the County Commission and I decided, I can't do this. This is overwhelming. I can't keep up with it and my family. I pretty much decided I wasn't going to run for it in 1982 when I had to run to stay in office. But there was some wise counsel and experience in the office. I decided I can't walk away from this. I would not feel good the rest of my life if I don't meet this challenge, even though the political pundits were saying I probably wasn't going to be elected.

I went for it and I won in 1982, and then I had to run again in '84 because '82 was just to fill out the balance of the term I'd been appointed [to], so the first four-year term was '84 and those two first elections were tough, hard-fought, contested elections and I was fortunate enough to win them both, and I've been elected numerous times since then when I didn't really have any real strong opposition after that.

So were you in private practice when this happened?

Yeah, I was in private practice with Jim Rogers who is now the chancellor of the university system. He was my law partner. Earl Monsey, and over the years there were several other partners in that firm. When I got on the County Commission, my interests started moving towards politics and Jim's interests started moving towards television stations, and we went our separate ways in 1984, remained good friends, and had a good relationship. But in 1984 I left that firm and joined this firm, with my old boyhood friends, Gardner Jolley and Bill Urga and at that time another partner, Roger [A.] Wirth. And so they knew, going in, that I was in politics and that I would only be able to work about half my time on the law firm. And they were really good over the years in allowing me and encouraging me to do my public service.

It was a very hectic time on the commission, all of those twenty-eight years. To keep up with it, I had to take work home a lot. When my kids were doing their homework, I was doing mine. I look back at it and I think, how did I do that for so many years, try to juggle all these responsibilities? But I'm grateful that I had that opportunity and it somehow worked out.

And we're grateful. Politically, what was John S. Park like, growing up? Do you remember any special leanings?

Yeah, everybody was a Democrat in those days, except my parents. [Laughing] That's a bit of an exaggeration but it's pretty close because Nevada, and especially Southern Nevada, was very Democrat, from the Roosevelt days on. Now that doesn't mean they were liberal. Most of them were pretty conservative. But the tradition was, you were a Democrat, and if you wanted to vote in a primary election you'd better register Democrat because that's where the only action was. I had an uncle who was a state assemblyman. He became, I think, Speaker of the Assembly, Jack Higgins, and he was a Democrat but he was very conservative. And that's how it was with a lot of people. My parents and their families, they just grew up in a Republican area in Southern Utah and that was just their tradition, so they decided, well, we're going to stay Republican. And little by little, that kind of became a little more balanced, except that Nevada still has remained majority Democrat.

But in those days it was just the tradition that everybody was a Democrat. I remember having a lot of debates with my friend Paul Bryan, Dick Bryan's younger brother, and he was a Democrat and his father was in politics as a Democrat. And I was Republican, so we would debate the presidential elections. We didn't know what we were

talking about or what the Republicans stood for or what the Democrats stood for but we just debated it anyway, and had a good time.

So that's kind of the way politics was in those days. And I can remember the County Commission and the City Council races. I think the City Council was always nonpartisan. The County Commission was always partisan. But even then in those days there was always controversy. That's always been a hotbed of controversy because, you know, you walk out your door and you face the issues that local government handles. And that's remained all the way through my tenure as well.

In those days, the feeling was, well, these guys get involved in these local government offices, in part to make money. It was just sort of understood they were going to come out of it better off financially than they went in, either through things under the table or through opportunities they were given. And that was just sort of understood. And little by little the perceptions, you know, as we know, some of that continued but it wasn't tolerated, and it's not tolerated today. It was kind of in those days.

Of the adults in the neighborhood, who were some of the most influential ones, as a young boy growing up?

I remember visiting a lot of different homes, where the parents of my friends were really good people. I remember going to the Gublers' home, and Mrs. Gubler always called me Brucie, even when I was a teenager, I think, or an adult, called me Brucie, and she was so kind and I just felt like I was something special with her. And you know, all the parents were that way with the friends of their kids. At Gardy Jolley's house, his parents were that way. Friendly and nice and ask about you. And Bill's family as well, my other partner, Bill Urga. The Morrisons were good friends with my parents. Bob and Pat

Morrison. He was a dentist, my father was an oral surgeon, so they became friends and I spent a lot of time in their house, because my parents would go there, too, or they'd come to our house. They were so friendly and so nice and interested in me, made me feel like I was [special], you know, they'd always praise me and encourage me. A lot of my [friends], Larry Miller's parents and the Davenports. I could go on and on. I can't think of any that weren't nice.

So it sounds like it was the kindness that did a lot, that stands out.

Yeah, kindness and friendliness and interest in you, where the kids just, you know, we felt like we were loved and cared for and protected. And that's one reason our parents didn't worry when we would go someplace because they just had that feeling that the parents of the other kids would watch over you, too.

That's great. Today, when you drive back through the neighborhood, what kind of memories do you [have]? What comes back?

Well, I do that every now and then. I'll drive through the old neighborhood. When I'm going downtown and have just a few extra minutes, I want to drive through the old neighborhood, and I just think of all the different times, the endless hours spent playing in that neighborhood. It wasn't all, you know, sweetness and light. There were, you know, tough times, too. I remember, you know, getting in fights and getting in some trouble at school for things that wouldn't be considered all that big a deal these days. But [when] I drive by John S. Park [Elementary School], I think of the teachers, I think of the sports we played and the kids, wonder what they're all doing now. I drive down Norman Street and think of what seems like hundreds of kids, though I suppose it was just several dozen, were always outside doing things. I drive by my house at Seventh and Franklin

and on the way there I drive by the church that my parents kind of built. It was right next to the John S. Park. And we'd walk to everything. And I think of all the endless hours we played sports in my front yard. And I think of my parents who of course I lost at an early age. I'm tempted, and one of these days I'm going to do it, I'm going to go up to the doors of both of those houses and knock on it and say, I'm sorry to bother you but I just wanted to see who was living here. This is where I grew up. Would you mind if I came in for a minute?

I think that would be wonderful. My last question. In a neighborhood like that, with all of that closeness, that neighborhood became the first neighborhood in Las Vegas on the National Register of Historic Places. You're probably aware of that. What does that mean to you?

It makes me feel very good, because I think there is a lot of Las Vegas history there, a lot of the pioneers in this town. You know, our history doesn't go back as far as many communities, so, you know, starting with the twenties but even more so the thirties and forties and into the fifties is when this town really became a community. And that's an area where it all kind of started. That's not the only area. There are other neighborhoods in town where there's a lot of history as well: some of the old neighborhoods, you know, around the Fifth Street [Grammar] School and the West Las Vegas [Westside] area and a little farther beyond John S. Park, farther to the east, the Crestwood area, and Sunrise Acres.

But a lot of the pioneers and a lot of the business and professional people, a lot of the political people, did live in that John S. Park area. And a lot of today's leaders or

those of the recent past grew up there. And I think we're all pretty grateful that we had that experience and I'm really glad to see that it's being recognized historically.

I thank you so much for this interview.

Oh, thank you. It's been a pleasure to think back on these things.

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