

CT  
247  
W375  
2012

# **AN INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN WATSON**

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

---

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV

University Libraries

University of Nevada Las Vegas

©The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2012

Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries  
Director: Claytee D. White  
Editors: Barbara Tabach, Joyce Moore  
Transcriber: Kristin Hicks  
Interviewers and Project Assistants: Barbara Tabach and Claytee D. White



The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank the university for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes 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. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

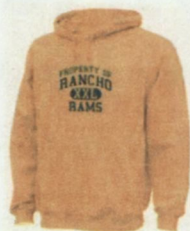
The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

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



ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project  
*Rancho High School Class of '62*



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: Susan Watson

Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 2/20/2013 along with typed transcripts as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, nor the narrator to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits.

I understand that my interview will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, distributed, placed on the Internet or broadcast in any medium that the Oral History Research Center and UNLV Libraries deem appropriate including future forms of electronic and digital media.

There will be no compensation for any interviews.

Susan Watson 2/20/13  
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 2/20/2013  
Signature of Interviewer Date



## Preface

A resident of Southern Nevada from the age of three, Susan Watson shares her memories of growing up and living in Las Vegas. After a year in Boulder City, Susan's father bought an old army barrack and converted it to a home in North Las Vegas; Susan remembers playing in the desert with her siblings and attending elementary and middle school before starting at Rancho High. Watching her mother design costumes for Strip performers and beautiful dresses for her own high school dances no doubt helped Susan develop her own sense of taste and style – something that she would put to good use over many years as an interior designer.

Before that though, Susan shares her memories of what life was like in the Las Vegas of the 1950s and 1960s: cruising Fremont Street; movie nights; after-school work; favorite teachers; lunches on the lawn; and dance club. All combine to paint a vivid picture of a smaller town and a simpler time in the Las Vegas valley.



**This is Claytee White. It is February 20th, 2013. I'm in the Reading Room in Special Collections and I am with Susan.**

**Susan, could you give me your full name and spell your last name for me?**

Susan Jones Watson, W-A-T-S-O-N.

**Thank you so much. Susan, would you start by just telling me about your early life, where you grew up, about your family?**

I actually was born in Syracuse, New York, and my parents moved out here when I was three. It was my brother and myself and my mother was about nine months pregnant. We lived in Boulder City the first year. When we got here there was no places to rent, so there was one house in Boulder City to rent and people were just like lined up for a block. The woman that owned it walked along and she saw my mother with two little kids and out to here pregnant and says, "You get the house."

**Which year was that?**

1947.

**And your father was already here?**

Nope. We drove out together. Then he worked in grocery stores, so he managed a grocery store. I'm not exactly sure what he did there. We lived there a year and then moved into Vegas.

**Where in Las Vegas? Do you remember moving into Las Vegas?**

Uh-huh. I remember the house we lived in on Bonanza Road. There was a grocery store and then down the way a little bit there was a house that we rented. It had a claw foot bathtub, and my brother and I would get in there and water would come up to our neck, which there's no bathtubs like that anymore unless you find an old one. Of course, we were little.

**So what did you and your brother do for fun?**



I can't exactly remember what we did then because we were still little, four and six. We went to school there, not too far from there. I was invited to lunch one day at one of my friend's house, who maybe you'll be interviewing; I don't know. That was probably my longest time friend, Bob Bigelow. I don't even know if he remembers that.

Then we moved from there. My father bought an army barracks and turned it into a house out in North Las Vegas. So we lived out in the desert, no paved streets, nothing. We ran through the desert barefoot, getting stickers in our feet; my dad would have to dig them out. We finally learned to wear shoes. Then you could be outside playing at night. Nobody worried about their kids. We'd play hide-and-seek, red rover, kick the can, all these things at night as we grew up.

We went to J.D. Smith. Actually, we went to—I started to think of the name of those schools. There were two schools, Jefferson and Washington. I can't remember which one we went to first. Then we wound up at J.D. Smith for higher grade schools. Then they turned it into a junior high school, so we were there a year longer. We were first all disappointed because we were supposed to go to Rancho High School. But then we were like the top dogs for two years in a row, so that kind of helped. So we went to high school in sophomore, junior, senior year.

**So tell me about your mother's job.**

My mother worked on the Strip in wardrobe, and so she would have to repair costumes, help them get dressed, fast changes. At that time you couldn't buy a G-string, so my mother made them G-strings and sold them. We all wished that we had been smart enough to make them and sell them in a big way. Of course, nobody thought of it until we were much older and by then you could buy them in the stores, but at that time you could not.

**So how did your mom know how to do it?**



My mom could make anything. She would make her and her sister's formals in high school. She'd make her suits to go to work. Everything like that. I could give her a picture and she could make it. She was very talented.

**Did she make most of your clothes?**

She made my formals for any dance.

**Oh, that's interesting. Did you learn to sew like that?**

I did learn how to sew, but not quite as good as she could. Yeah, I did sew. I made my own little patterns when I was little out of a newspaper. They had like three seams and a slit in the back for the button, so it wasn't anything fancy.

**I think that's great. So as you came of age and went to high school—what was it tenth grade?**

Tenth grade.

**You went to Rancho.**

Right.

**What kind of a change was that?**

Oh, well, I had live in a neighborhood where several of my friends lived and there was like four or five of us that walked to school every day and walked home together. We are friends to this day, still, so that's really been fun. But we'd walk to school and walk home and run over and visit each other and then we'd walk each other halfway home and run the rest of the way.

**So who were those friends that you've been friends with for all those years?**

Sandy Woodward, Lynn Vance, Sydney Botkin and Donna Giuffre. Well, Sandy was Sandy Harris. That's all their maiden names. And we're still friends. It was Sandy and Woody's fiftieth wedding anniversary that I went to Saturday night. And she was surprised. I called her the next



day and I said were you surprised? She goes totally.

**Oh, that's great.**

Yeah, it was.

**So where did the children plan the surprise?**

One lives in Spanish Oaks and they had it there at their clubhouse, which was a great place to have it, and there was a lot of people there. Yeah, they did a great job.

**Oh, that's wonderful. Okay. You're in high school now. Tell me about the things that high school kids did for fun.**

When we were driving, we just walked everywhere.

**Okay, so driving, where did you drive?**

We'd go to the drive-in. We'd go get a soda. Things like that.

**Where?**

We'd go to work. Where did we get a soda? I don't even think they're there anymore.

**The Blue Onion?**

Oh, yeah, we hung out at the Blue Onion when we drove; I forgot about that. We'd cruise Fremont Street and we'd go down to the Blue Onion and you could get any flavor of coke you wanted, which they don't have those now, not like that.

**How do you feel about Fremont Street when you see it now?**

I like that they blocked it off and I like some of the things that they've done. I think it's become a nice attraction for people to go to.

**Wow, you're the only one who said that. Thank you.**

Really?

Yes.



Oh, that's funny.

**Everybody else hates it.**

Oh, that's funny. I like it because you can just walk across the street; you don't have to worry about cars, anything like that. There's lots of good places to eat down there.

**Yes. And more and more are coming in every day.**

Yes.

**What other places did you eat growing up or where did you go to dance?**

School dances usually. Then the armory had a dance I think like once a month and we'd go down to the armory and dance. They had a band, a live band.

**Where?**

On Eastern and—I'm trying think of the cross street. It was kind of on a corner. There was Sunrise Acres School and it was just down from there, more north of there.

**So no one else said anything about the armory. So this was actually the military putting on the dance?**

No, I don't think so. It was just that they rented it to have the dances there.

**So the townspeople?**

I don't know who rented it; that I didn't know. We'd just go.

**But all the teenagers would go?**

Oh, it would be packed out.

**That's interesting. I met a woman on this past Friday night in Henderson who said that the Henderson kids also used to cruise Fremont Street. Did you guys know that; that people were coming in?**

Yeah. Yeah, we had friends in Henderson.



**Oh, good. Now, did the Henderson students go to the dances at the armory, as well?**

That I don't know; I don't remember that part. One time they had a big dance or something for youth at the convention center and that was fun. That's where I met my husband. I think I was a sophomore.

**Oh, so you met him as soon as you got there?**

At the dance?

**As soon as you got to high school.**

Pretty much so, yeah. But it wasn't at school; it was at that armory thing—no—I mean at the convention center.

**Did he go to Rancho?**

He did. He was two years ahead of me.

**Tell me about the other dances connected to the schools, like those dances you would have at lunchtime.**

Right. The sock hops. Yeah, we'd go there. We had to bring socks because they didn't want us dancing on the gym floor. But those were a lot of fun. We all looked forward to those.

**Was it year-round?**

Pretty much so. It seemed like it was, anyway.

**Tell me about the dances that you would have for junior proms, senior dance, Sadie Hawkins, all of those.**

Oh, right. Those were fun.

**Tell me about the clothes and all of that.**

Okay. So I was trying to think. Sophomore, I guess I probably went with my ex-husband, Jim.

I think that time I wore a yellow chiffon dress and it had little white beads on it. My mom didn't



make it; we bought it someplace and then she had it adjusted to fit me. That was fun. And then when we got older—well, then the next year was junior prom and that's when I gave her a picture of something and she made it. There's only one fabric shop here and it was Kay's Fabric Shop. So we'd go down there. And she had beautiful stuff; it was aqua satin and it was all embroidered with turquoise and different things. So there was enough to put it around the base of the skirt. Then she made a little shawl thing that you just put your arms in and it had that embroidery around the back that wasn't in the picture I gave her. Then she made me one the next year and the top was lavender brocade and she put little rhinestones in the roses. Then the skirt—she cut out some of them and appliqued it around the bottom of the skirt. It was a white chiffon skirt. So she was really clever.

**Oh, that sounds great.**

Yeah, it was.

**She probably could have been a designer.**

She probably could have, yeah.

**So tell me about the dances themselves. How did you go? Did you go with a group? Did you go with one person? What did you do afterwards?**

Usually we met there. We would usually meet up somewhere afterward, maybe have a soda or something or go to dinner. Sometimes we would go to dinner.

**And where did kids go if you were going to something like that?**

A lot of times we liked to go on the Strip.

**Do you remember where?**

No.

**When you did do shopping other than buying fabrics what other store did your family**



**frequent?**

Ronzone's and—oh, shoot it just went right through my mind—Franklin's, I think.

**Fanny's?**

Once in a while, not as much until I got out of high school.

**And what was Franklin's, what kind of clothes?**

Franklin's was an inexpensive dress store and Ronzone's was like in the middle; it had nice things and less expensive things. Then when I was a senior I went to school half a day and worked the other half day at Chic Hecht's. It was a clothing store that we frequented often.

**Tell me about the work.**

I was the salesperson, so I just helped people with their clothes.

**Most of the kid at Rancho worked.**

We did.

**Did you buy your own car?**

Yes. Actually, my brother went in the service and I had his car and when he came home, my mother said, "You will give him five hundred dollars for that car." So I did. Then I bought my own car. Where was I working then? Oh, I went to work for a dentist. So I bought my first car.

**In high school where are some of the classes that you enjoyed, the classes and the teachers?**

The teachers and the classes, let's see. First-year Spanish class, Mr. Valdez, he was one of my favorite teachers. I was trying to think who the math teacher was because I liked him, too. I can't think of his name. I can see his face; his name is not coming. I didn't do good in algebra, but I did good in geometry. Then I didn't take my more math classes.

**So do you remember other things about schools, other stories, other clubs that you joined?**

Right. Let's see. Dance club. What was the other one? We had our little Rancho sweaters that



we wore to that one. We used to sit on the lawn and eat our lunch together every day. When we had lunchtime we'd all come outside and sit on the lawn and eat our lunch. We'd either buy it or bring it. So that was fun.

**You had an open campus. You never left to do other things at lunchtime?**

Not at lunch I don't think we did. No. We'd go after school. We'd go sometimes and get a soda, when we had a car.

**Tell me more about the dance club. What type of dance?**

It was more modern dance.

**Did you do other things like go to other schools as part of that club or anything like that?**

Nope. And I can't remember even if we were in assembly. We might have been, but I just don't remember that.

**What were assemblies like?**

Noisy. They were a lot of fun. We all enjoyed going and to basketball games. We went to a lot of basketball games. So that was fun.

**Any crosstown rivalries?**

Vegas High School was. There was probably only three schools; it was Rancho, Vegas and Gorman. Then eventually they started adding. They had to add more because more people were coming here.

**What were the favorite things that you liked about the city back in the fifties, sixties?**

I don't remember much in the fifties since I was about six when the fifties started I guess, six or seven. I was born in 1944. Yeah, that would be right. Then in the sixties—my brother said we went to the movie. I don't even remember going to the movies.

**Really? So you were born in '44. So you don't remember the fifties, like 1954 or '55?**



I remember those some, yeah. I just don't remember us going to the movies, but he said we did.

**And so what did he say about the movies?**

Oh, we liked them. I do remember this; there was always a cartoon, there was world news, but they don't do those two things, and then the movie.

**Do you remember in the mid-fifties when the Moulin Rouge opened?**

Vaguely, yeah, I remember, yeah.

**Do you remember anything about it?**

I don't think I ever was in there. There was some controversy about it that I remember, which is kind silly. I'm glad things have changed. Like Sammy Davis Junior went there and I think some of his friends would go there and perform. It seemed like it, anyway.

**At Rancho High School at one time you had classes where you had and Asian, a black, a white—and I think I have it right—as class officers. So tell me about race relations among all of the groups at Rancho.**

We didn't seem to have any problem. We had friends of every race. I just don't ever remember there being a problem.

**Right. So are you saying that you would go into a class and that everybody would be in the same class and at dances everybody would attend the dances?**

Right. And we all talked to each other. Whoever you made friends with, maybe somebody you sat next to in class you became friends with and things. So we're always happy when all of our friends come to our class reunions and we get to see them. But no, there wasn't any. We didn't have any hard feelings against the black people or the Spanish people. I think we had a few Asian people, too.

**And they had no hard feelings against—**



If they did, we didn't know it.

**So what happened, then, in about 1968, '65, '67 at Rancho?**

I wasn't in school then; I was already out.

**Right. You graduated with the class of '62.**

Sixty-two, right. So I don't know.

**But you continued to live here?**

Uh-huh.

**Did you learn about what was happening at Rancho in those later sixties?**

No.

**You never heard anything about it, wow.**

No. My kids never went there, either.

**So it didn't make the newspaper. So what did you do when you finished school?**

I became a dental assistant.

**And who did you work for?**

Dr. Holt.

**And tell me about the area that you worked in and how Las Vegas was changing.**

It was in North Las Vegas. His office was upstairs. It was kind of a poor area. There were some houses back behind that; it was right on the main street, Las Vegas Boulevard. But behind there was maybe where people lived in older homes had been there probably for a long time. We had friends that had a lot of money and friends that had no money. We didn't even think about those things, which was wonderful. I can't even imagine now that those things would—

**So where did you and your husband live?**

We lived—where did we live? We had an apartment first off Sahara. We lived there a year and



then we bought a house off Eastern.

**So you got married here in Las Vegas?**

Uh-huh. So we lived in that house for a long time. Actually, that's the only house we ever had.

**Oh, really?**

Yeah. We never moved. Then when we got divorced—I don't even know where he lived.

**But did you continue to live in that area?**

Oh, no. I had a condo and it was out off of Nellis. Then I sold that and bought a house on the opposite side of town. It was a two-story house. I lived there for about three or four years, I guess, and then I sold it and bought the house I have now.

**So what area of the city do you live now?**

I live at Durango and Sahara area.

**So when you look at the areas that you've lived in the city as an adult, how do you compare them? What do you like about one over the other or that one I liked better, but this one—compare them for me.**

Well, the first house, that's where our kids lived all their life and they didn't want us to sell it. See, my husband had it for a while. I moved and he had it for a while. And my son stayed with him and my daughter came with me. We lived in an apartment for quite a while. I was trying to think what year I bought the two-story house. She lived with me there. She was out of school then, I think, when we moved out there.

**So what did you like about that area and that house?**

Well, it was a two-story house. I can't say I liked having a two-story house that much.

**Why not?**

I don't know. My house now is one floor and I like it better. In the house we lived in before, my



husband and I, was a one-story house, but they built two-story houses all around us, so there was no privacy in your backyard; that's what I don't like about it. So when I moved to this house, there's tons of privacy. I shouldn't put this on tape. I go outside in just the sprinklers naked because nobody can see me.

**Isn't that great? I love it.**

So the houses behind me are down lower, so all I just see is the roofs.

**So you must have a beautiful view.**

Kind of. Well, there's still houses there. The back faces Sunrise Mountain. If I had like a little built-up thing, I could probably see a lot of lights. So we're just working on redoing the backyard.

**How long did you work with the dentist?**

I worked for several years. I was trying to think. Then I went to work for another dentist and I worked for him for a couple of years. But then we adopted our kids. We had put in to adopt; my son we adopted first. So I think I quit working in March. He was born in April, but we didn't get him until the end of April. So I had that little time to get a few things done. I think he was six weeks old, maybe, when we got him. He had a scar on his cheek. They said, oh, he scratched himself. Well, I'm sorry, but a scratch wouldn't make a scar on your cheek. So I think that maybe when he was born they used forceps or something. That's the only thing I could think of because I know darn well a scar is not going to—he still has it to this day and he's forty-five.

Let's see. I was trying to think how old he was. He was about two and a half when we adopted Stacy. So we'd say, oh, we're getting a baby, we're getting a baby. So he went with us to get her. It was so fun. His favorite thing is punching clowns. So they bring the baby in and you have to bring your own clothes. So I'm like taking the clothes off. He goes, no, no, don't



take her clothes off; just get her and let's get out of here. I started laughing. I said, no, we have to put our own clothes on her.

**Get her and get out of here. What was he thinking, I wonder?**

I don't know what he was thinking. I guess he was just afraid they were going to take her back. She looked like a little Indian because she was still red. She was nine days old. Her hair stuck up like this; it was thick black hair. He barely had any hair.

**So did you go back to work?**

No.

**Oh, so you didn't work any longer after that.**

Not until they were probably ten and twelve, something around there. Then I went back to work.

**Then where did you go? What kind of work?**

I went to work at Ethan Allen. I already had like a certificate in design and stuff that I had taken. See, there you had to go in and they gave you a floor plan and you had to put the furniture in, pick everything. Anyway, I got hired. I worked there about three years or so. Then I met a good friend of mine, that became a good friend anyway, Karen. She was just out of design school in California and then she went to work at Whiting's. She talked me into coming over there.

**What is Whiting's?**

Whiting's used to be a design center.

**And tell me what kind of houses have you decorated?**

Anything. I mean from little to big.

**So give me an example of a house that you've decorated that you just loved that you thought you did a fabulous job.**



I did a house, probably the biggest house I did was up in The Ridges. They were really easy to work with; I think I only met with them four times. She said when she told her friends that she only met with me four times they couldn't believe it. She would say to me one day when I was doing the house, she goes, remember I'm a minimalist. And I said, oh, I remember, because I was at where they lived before and I thought there's hardly anything in here. They bought their own artwork because they traveled and they bought a rug in Morocco—Monocco or Morocco.

**Yeah. A lot of people buy them in Morocco.**

Right. The architect said I can't believe you let them put that rug down. And I said why? It's their house. And his whole mentality was you tell people what to do. My whole mentality you worked with them and found out what they liked because they're going to live there, not me. So they were very pleased. They don't even live here anymore; they moved.

Another house I did that was up in the mountains—not up in the mountains, but out west, on the west side and it was in a gated community. She hadn't done any replacement in her house for a long, long time because she was just saving her money up. So they never saw—I don't think they ever really—I don't remember if they saw anything. Yeah, she had to have because I always worked with them. But they never got to see the house until it was totally done and the furniture was in it. They cried.

**Oh, they loved it so much?**

They loved the house and the furniture, yeah.

**Oh, that's great.**

They were just stunned. So that was a really nice feeling.

**That's wonderful. So now, are you still in the design industry?**

A little bit. I'm working with a young couple right now.



**So did you ever do it on your own independently of—**

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I only worked at Whiting's for about three years. Then there was another girl that worked there and I said let's do our own thing. So we did. That's what we did; we did our own thing. I can't remember how long we worked together and then we worked separate.

**So how did you go about getting your first clients?**

When we worked for ourselves? I was working with somebody already and I told them I would refer them to somebody else at Whiting's and they said, no, we want to keep working with you. And same way with her, she had somebody. So by referrals basically. So it was a lot of fun.

**Oh, that's wonderful. And you felt completely comfortable working for yourself?**

Oh, very. I had a friend that says why are you doing this?

**Oh, I think the freedom is wonderful.**

I know. I said why wouldn't I? She said you don't even have a husband. And I said what difference does a husband make? I said I can do this on my own. I said if not, the worst thing that's going to happen to me is I have to go to work for somebody. And that's how I looked at it.

**Oh, I love it. So how many years did you work on your own?**

Oh, for years. I still am.

**Wow. I love it.**

And I'm doing a little repping of rugs, a rug company, and an artwork line and I have a furniture line. When the economy crashed there was no work for a while. It's starting to pick up now.

**Good. I'm very glad.**

Yeah. Me too.

**It's just like the real estate market. It all goes hand in hand.**

Exactly. It does.



**Do you ever do any of those model homes?**

I've done condos for people. I had one guy that built apartments and I'd do the recreation room and the apartment model. Then another fellow I did same thing, recreation room and the—and he was really on a shoestring, but I did it anyway.

**How has the World Market Center downtown influenced your business?**

As a designer? Not much.

**Really?**

Huh-uh, because it's closed. The only time it's open is at market, like twice a year.

**Oh, see, I thought they were changing all that.**

The first two floors of A and C are open. But most people think they're too expensive when they go in there. And I can buy things cheaper by myself usually. But the rug company I rep is on the third floor in B. And I have permission to take people in there whenever I want, so that's really helped my business with the rugs. So I just tell them to meet me in A and we go up to the third floor and walk over to B and security comes and unlocks it.

**Wonderful.**

Yeah. So I like doing that. It's fun.

**So did that influence the furniture market here at all in Las Vegas?**

You mean as far as the stores go?

**As far as the stores and people coming in to Las Vegas for those big furniture shows.**

Yeah, I think it brought in business because they all have to have a hotel room and they all have to eat. But I know Market a lot of times feeds us. Actually, I don't even think I ever went out there. One night we did; the first night we did go out there and eat something, but it was so freezing cold. Syria is the rug company I work for. They serve breakfast, lunch and happy hour.



So we just ate there because it was delicious and it wasn't cold. Then they had a big party one night. We didn't really stay for the party. We stayed a little bit. And we have to go to High Point twice a year.

**Ah, so you still go to North Carolina?**

Uh-huh. I never went before when I did design.

**So I thought Las Vegas was going to take that business from High Point.**

Huh-uh. I don't think it did. Right. But we get a lot of people and a lot of people from other countries come—Mexico, Spain, different places. So that's interesting always to me. I like meeting new people, especially from other countries. You can talk about some of their traditions.

**Do you get to travel to some of those countries?**

Oh, I have, yeah, with friends. Last June we went—my cousin was here in the spring and she says let's go to Paris. I said okay. And my sister—we said we'll take Mimi. Mimi said good. And then my uncle was ninety-one and he parachuted in Normandy on D-Day, so we asked him to go. And my grandson—he's fourteen now; he was thirteen this summer—he's wanted to go to Paris since he was six years old and saw it in a hologram. I says you guys care if Jay-jay goes? And they go no. So there was the five of us.

**Oh, isn't that great?**

It was awesome.

**And how many generations are we talking, three, four? Three at least.**

Yeah, three generations.

**What a way to see it.**

Yeah, he loved it. He said it was his best summer ever. We were in Normandy in an abbey and



he took all these pictures. And it was a very cool place. I said you must like this place. He said this would make the best video game. He's been trying to make a video game with no knowledge of how to do it. So they're going to see if they can get him in a magnet school.

**So what is his vision for a video game? What do you mean?**

You know how kids play all those video games?

**Yes. Oh, yes. But I mean he has a vision for one having to do with Europe?**

With that abbey that he was in.

**Oh, I see.**

Yeah. That's what inspired him. So I'm hoping that he can get in to one of the magnet schools because they can teach him how to do some of that.

**Exactly.**

Because I said you make a video game that sells—when he was born they just put him in the incubator with no blanket. He was by himself. He weighed I think a little over eight pounds. He's lying there like this, looking at the ceiling, looking at the ceiling.

**Why was he in an incubator at eight pounds?**

Well, he was just in one of those beds.

**Oh, I see what you're saying.**

I think they might have had a little light on him because they didn't have him wrapped up. She wound up having a C-section and she was so mad. And I was holding him and I go you're mad, aren't you? She said, well, they could have let me try longer. And I go, no, they couldn't. I said he was getting distressed. And I pull his hat off. Look at his head; it's cone-shaped. So that's probably why. They didn't have him with the other babies for some reason. Every time I'd run up there to look at him, he'd be looking around at everything. When he was little and he'd come



spend the night, I think he'd be asleep and I'd kiss his head and he's wide awake and I says what are you doing? My imagination is just going and going and going. So he still has one.

**That's great. I think a lot of kids are like that, but it's usually curbed by the adults before it's developed. But it doesn't sound like it.**

No. Exactly.

**It sounds like his is still running wild. So that is wonderful.**

I know it, yeah. Yep. And they've never been put down for thinking things and that makes a huge difference. So they didn't think anything of having these ideas. Like his little brother is nine and Daddy restores old cars. He had the undercarriage out and Cameron was under there taking parts off when he was eight years old. And he'll go to a car show with Daddy and love to go. So it will be interesting to see if he sticks to this little car thing that he seems to be into or how he'll change.

**Or if he'll be putting airplanes together soon or whatever.**

Yeah, right. Exactly. It will be fun to watch.

**That's wonderful. So are there any other memories of high school and of early Las Vegas that you would like to share?**

Oh, right. Early Las Vegas was the Strip. The Silver Slipper had a big slipper out there. All those cool things on Fremont Street was the cowboy, howdy partner. All those things are gone. Now they've brought a few back like on Fremont Street down a little farther they have the silver slipper.

**Have you been to the Neon Museum?**

No, I haven't been. I've been by it. I've seen some of it, but I haven't been through it. Those things are really fun. When we were little we got to go to one show and I can't remember who it



was, but it was singing and dancing and stuff. This I remember because my brother repeated it several times. Our younger sister Barbara that was three years younger than me said, "I can see their underpants; that's not nice."

And we have another sister. She's nine years, nine months to the day younger than me. So I always tease her because people used to ask—when people would see me that she went to school with, they would say, "Are you Mimi's sister?" when they come trick or treating at my house. I go yes. Then people would ask us if we were twins. So one day somebody said who is older? And I go, oh, she is. She goes, Sue. I said I've been waiting all these years for someone to ask that question. Anyway, she looks younger now. So I had lots of good siblings.

**Yes. A lot of fun?**

Yeah, we did have a lot of fun.

**So anything else about the Strip or downtown that you remember? No one ever says anything about the El Cortez. Was that a popular hotel?**

It was down at the other end of Fremont Street, so I don't think quite as popular as the ones that were farther up. The Golden Nugget had a lot of good—it still does have a lot of good restaurants. So when we got older sometimes we'd go out and go downtown to eat and things. We'd go to the movies. Some of my friends worked in the movie theater.

Oh, when we started having—it must have been class reunions because my friend Sandy—I don't know if you're going to interview Sandy or not—her husband worked downtown in accounting. Then he eventually wound up being the vice president of the Desert Inn. So after a class reunion we'd go to a show. Like we went to see Elvis Presley. One time we saw—what's his name?—Neil Diamond. We saw Neil Diamond and Elvis Presley the same night.

**Did you ever see Liberace?**



Once. Actually, I think it was at his museum there. Then I was at a wedding reception in his old house that they turned into a thing like that.

**So having a girlfriend with a husband who was vice president of the DI, did you get all kinds of comps?**

We probably did. Yeah, we probably did get some. They got to do a lot of fun things because the president, of course, would do all the overseas trips to hotel, but he would send them to different places in the United States to check out hotels and they'd go to the airport in a limousine and fly down there and a limousine would pick them up. It was very cool. That's who the wedding anniversary was for, so that was cool. I didn't even know all those things. Woody told me one day. Yeah, Woody, that's her husband.

**Wonderful. Anything else you'd like to add before we end?**

Well, we all stayed friends.

**That's amazing.**

I know it. There's four of us that on our birthday we treat the birthday girl and the other three pay. There's four of us that do that, which is Sydney, Donna, Sandy and I. Then I have another friend that moved back to town, but I haven't seen her quite as much. We talk once in a while. Then Sherry, who I met in eighth grade, she was new to our school. We were sitting there on the grass eating and she was walking by. I said, excuse me, would you like to sit and eat with us? And she said yeah. That's how we got acquainted. Now she lives in Monterey. So we still talk. In fact, she was here a few weeks ago, so we got to visit. It was fun.

**And I like it that you're still having the reunions.**

Yes, we are. It's so fun. We had so much fun at the last one that was here. It was really fun. It is fun because you get kind of caught up. We always make a little book. They're working on the



book now.

**So I think this is wonderful. These are the people who are included in this segment of the oral history. I've written all over it because as I call people I write things on it. Is there anyone there that will bring back any memories that you'd like to share a story about?**

Well, I've known Gordon for years because his dad had a barbershop and he was right next to where my dad worked. Then Donna and Tom and I see often, especially Donna. But it's really fun to see them. Most people here I've seen. We've seen them and we visit and everything because we plan the reunions I'd see everybody on here. I don't remember if Kim Pickering was at a reunion planning meeting, but I know who she is and she's fun. Linda was, of course. Jim was. Ruth was. Everybody else on here. I'm not sure if Connie was there or not, but she comes all the time. So we all remember each other from school. When we have the reunions we usually know everybody, but this year I don't think we were quite as sure who everybody was.

**So do you have to wear name tags at the reunions?**

We do. We do.

**Yes. I need those name tags because people will come up to you and say guess who I am? I have no idea.**

Exactly. Exactly. I mean most of us have changed.

**That's right.**

Of course, we have no wrinkles.

**Of course not.**

No extra pounds. Nothing.

**Yes. Well, Susan, thank you so much. This is wonderful.**

It's fun reminiscing.



**Yes. That's what this is all about. So, perfect.**

**[End of recorded interview]**

Stella 1

Business 200, Health 3, Child Abuse 10,  
Foster's 1, My Father's Day 2, Barbara 1,  
2, Writing 15, 16

David Chaffin 4

Family Brother 1, Children 14, Home 4, Life  
Vegas 1, Mother 2, Parents 1, Sister 2

Henry 10, MacArthur 4, Personal History 4

Real Estate 16, San Francisco 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

Paul Vance 4

Sandy Woodward 4

Shannon German High 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,  
17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,  
30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,  
43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56,  
57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70,  
71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84,  
85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98,  
99, 100

Service Dog 4

Thomas R. Mc. Fisher 3

Travel 20

Westwood Center 17



Bob Bigelow, 2

Boulder City, 1

Businesses: Chic Hecht's, 8; Ethan Allen, 15;  
Franklin's, 8; Kay's Fabric Shop, 7; Ronzone's,  
8; Whiting's, 15, 16

Donna Giuffre, 4

Family: brother, 1; children, 14; home, N. Las  
Vegas, 2; mother, 2; parents, 1; sister, 21

Hang-outs: Blue Onion, 4; Fremont Street, 4

Interior design, 16, *See* Ethan Allen; Whiting's

Lynn Vance, 4

Sandy Woodward, 4

Schools: Bishop Gorman High, 10; J.D. Smith, 2;  
Jefferson, 2; Las Vegas High, 10; Rancho High,  
2, 10; Sunrise Acres, 5; Washington, 2

Sydney Botkin, 4

Teachers: Mr. Valdez, 9

Travel, 19

World Market Center, 17