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An Interview with Margaret and Frank Price

An Oral History Conducted by Dr. Joanne Goodwin

Las Vegas Women Oral History Project
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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Produced by:

Las Vegas Women Oral History Project
Women's Research Institute of Nevada, UNLV
Dr. Joanne L. Goodwin, Director
Dr. Joanne L. Goodwin, Interviewer
Tamara Marino, Transcription

Preface

This interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of donors to the Women's Research Institute of Nevada. The College of Liberal Arts provides a home for the Women's Research Institute of Nevada, as well as a wide variety of in-kind services. The History Department provided necessary reassignment for the director, as well as graduate assistants for the project. The department, as well as the college and university administration, enabled students and faculty to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank the university for its support that gave an idea the chance to flourish.

The text has 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. In several cases, photographic sources (housed separately) accompany the collection as slides or black and white photographs.

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

Dr. Joanne Goodwin, Project Director
Associate Professor, Department of History
Women's Research Institute of Nevada, Director
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Preface

When farm-girl-turned-waitress, Margaret “Maggie” Price, came to Las Vegas from Ohio in 1950 with her husband, Francis “Frank” Price, she had no idea what was in store for her in the hot desert oasis. Maggie’s career spanned a period of historical transformation in Las Vegas when Downtown was becoming overshadowed by the gaming resorts. Vaudeville and striptease acts were still alive, but the arrival of big-named acts, such as the Rat Pack, Barbara Streisand, and the King himself, Elvis Presley, were just beginning to take the lead. Organized crime was still a prominent part of the culture and brothels still operated somewhat openly. The three decades Maggie and Frank worked in Las Vegas provided them with front-row seats for the birth, transformation, and occasional death of numerous casinos, including the Sahara, the Flamingo, the Sands, the Dunes, the Tropicana, and the International.

Initially going to work as a waitress at the El Rancho Vegas, Maggie spent the next eleven years waiting on visitors, movie stars, and notorious figures at several area establishments, including the Sands from where she retired in 1961. Maggie’s story explains how the transition from privately-owned gaming hotels to corporate-owned gaming resorts impacted daily life for waitresses who worked the standard eight-hours-a-day, six-days-a-week shifts. With formal childcare virtually unheard of and a young Culinary Union with little to offer working moms, husbands and wives staggered their shifts and waitresses worked deals between themselves to cover shifts for each other so the children had care. The silver dollar and casino chips were the main currency of the time and tips were relied on to make-up for the meager hourly rate waitresses were paid.

Through Maggie's voice, the organizational structure of casino coffee shops, cafes, and showrooms comes alive. The roles of waitresses, maitre'ds, captains, bus boys, and cooks are discussed, as well as the way in which employees were recruited and how their jobs changed over time. While the experiences of waitresses, mothers, and friends come alive through Maggie's story, Frank's voice lends insight into the overall business of running individual or family-owned casinos versus corporately-owned gaming resorts. He shares his observations of the business and Clark County political climate, and his knowledge of the prostitution industry, including Four Mile (Formyle).

Maggie and Frank were surrounded by Las Vegas' most notables of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, including Sam Boyd, Morris Lansburgh, Alex Shoofey, Benny Binion and his family, Doc and Judy Bailey, Al Bramlet, and Ralph Lamb. From the small, intimate showroom at El Rancho Vegas to the spectacular, full-scale production venues the corporate-owned resorts offered, they witnessed the transformation of Las Vegas entertainment, too. Their first-hand accounts include stars such as Lili St. Cyr, Sally Rand, Louella Parsons, Red Skelton, and many more.

Whether it was the city's movers-and-shakers, uniforms or unions, famous or not-so-famous entertainers, organized crime, or the "necessary evil" of hotel rooms and buffets, Maggie and Frank share how the transformation took place and the impact it had on those who lived and worked in Las Vegas during "the good old days" when "everybody knew everybody."

An Interview with Margaret and Frank Price
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This is Joanne Goodwin. It's March 5, 1997, and I'm interviewing Margaret Price in her home in Boulder City. Thank you for spending the time this morning to tell your stories about coming to Las Vegas and working here.

Well, as I said, my husband was in the hospital and they told him to go where it was hot and dry and no surgery at the time. So, I asked my boss. I was working at a hotel, Fort Hayes Hotel, [in] Columbus, Ohio, and he said, "Well, if you don't care where you go, I might." We'd never heard of Las Vegas. So, in those days he wrote Murphy out here, at El Rancho Vegas, and Murphy wrote back and says, "Send her. I'll put her to work the day she gets here." Well, Murphy wanted to the day I got there, but I said, "Nope, gotta have an extra day to find some place to live." I had two children. So, one of the waitresses there at the hotel said, "Well, go out to Carver Park," which is no more, of course, in Henderson and, "There's places out there." So we did and for forty-one-dollars-a-month we ended up out there at Carver Park. That's where the Nellis Air Base boys lived and so-forth. 'Cause at that time there was no housing like there is today for Nellis, you know. So then, one morning the earth shook and woke us up. It was like daylight. Well, it looked like twelve o'clock noon, [but] it was way early in the morning. They said they had a bomb [go] off. We didn't know it was going off or anything, you know. Everybody run out and so-forth, you know. In those days there was only one way into Las Vegas. We went on Bond Road, which is Tropicana now. There would be one car go through there every hour, maybe one in every hour.

Why was that? working in Ohio, what city where you working in?

You know, there was no traffic. No traffic in those days.

Was it a paved road?

Yeah, it was a paved road, you know. So we went to town on 95 to the Strip and over to the Strip to our work at El Rancho Vegas. That's how we got there, you know.

And when did you arrive?

1950 in a 1937 Plymouth. A 1937 Plymouth.

You brought your whole family out?

Yeah, I had two kids and us. We was getting low on gas and we had to climb the hill to Boulder City. That was something, you know, from the Dam. Man, going over that Dam in those days, too. So, it was quite an experience. Oh yeah, no air conditioning and it was about a hundred. It was August. I don't know, just a date in August, and oh, it was about a hundred-twenty I think, with no air conditioning in the car. So, you had that and, 'course, in those days it was all water coolers, you know, evaporated. We didn't have air conditioning. Boy, I'd go to work and come home driving in, [nodding off gesture] like that, you know. [Laughing]

Nodding off.

So, then we moved to Twin Lakes, which is Lorenzi Park now, and Frank managed Twin Lakes. Then, it had a little "biggest" pool in the state and a little coffee shop-like there. Motel it was, you know, but it had managers for the hotel until he got his work at the Sahara, when the Sahara was built. It wasn't built yet. It was the Bingo Club. He had these boys from Nellis Air Base come and clean the pool all the time for extra work, you know. [Chuckle] 'Course, I don't know if I should say that or not.

When you were working in Ohio, what city where you working in?

Columbus.

In Columbus, Ohio?

Uh-huh.

And your job had been what?

Waitress.

You were a waitress there, as well, and how long had you been doing that work?

Well, I got my Social Security. How long's it been? Thirty-years, thirty-years I was a waitress.

And in Columbus, you started then when you were a young girl?

Oh yeah, right out of high school, right out of high school.

You went in?

Uh-huh, seventeen.

You were seventeen?

Uh-huh.

And that was the kind of work when you came to Las Vegas you continued?

Uh-huh, and back then, in that day, I had to have my high school diploma before I got that job, the first job I got as a waitress.

In Columbus?

In Columbus. There was an ad in the paper and they said, "Bring your high school diploma," and out of seven girls, three of us got hired and I was one of the three, at Mills Buffet. It was down right at Town and Broad. I mean Broad and High.

Why do you think they had that requirement?

Well, jobs wasn't that fluent, I guess, in those days. That's what they had, right in the ad in the paper, you know. 'Course, I was an old farm girl. I had just come off of the farm, but I had other jobs when I was out on summer vacation.

You mean you grew up on a farm and graduated from high school in a farm area and then moved into the big city?

Well, I had been both places. Yeah, I graduated from a farm place, sixty years ago. We just celebrated [our] sixty class reunion.

Oh, okay.

Uh-huh. I loved the farm, I loved the farm. Milk cows before I went to school and my granddaughters don't hardly see a cow. They, all three, were born here.

You had, certainly, some big impressions of what this area looked like when you first drove in?

Oh, it was nothing. Some of the streets weren't even. Sahara only went to the tracks out there and it was San Francisco. I look at that Sahara now-a-days, you know. We didn't have the under pass yet off of Main Street.

What about just the environment compared to the lush greenness?

Yeah, well, it was more desert. See, we come here and Twin Lakes wasn't built till later, you know, the houses, the development. We never thought it would come out here to Green Valley, never. Took years, and years, and years [and] now look at it.

Did you think you had fallen off the end of the world?

No, not really, but it was different, you know.

Just kind of rolled with it. So, at the El Rancho Vegas you started working there the day after you arrived?

Uh-huh.

Tell me a little bit about how the whole place was set up, what it looked like?

Well, it was gambling, you know, which I wasn't used to as far as that goes, but we could go out. I'll tell you a little story. We waited on a lot of stars. Sophie the Skater, something like that, Sophie Henry [Sonja Henie] and, 'course, I've waited on Howard Hughes and a lot of

them, but anyway, it was free. We had the silver dollars that I thought never would, you know, disappear. So, I was waiting on this Nelsen. He was a dancer. Gene Nelsen was a dancer in the movies and so-forth and he run my, I'll say butt, but in those days I said something else, for breakfast even, and he wrote down twenty-cents tip, you know. So, you had to go out the cashier and get all your tips like that, [and] take that thing in. [Gesture] So coming back, there was a dime machine there and I put those two dimes in that dime machine and hit for twenty-dollars. [Laughing] That was something, you know, yah. yeah. Can you imagine that, yeah! [Laughing] But I didn't stay on breakfast too long. I went on. I went in the coffee shop then because, see, we had an invalid daughter in between here and we lost her, you know, but anyway... Then I waited on the dealers at the Ranch. For one whole year, dealers only, 'til they drove me nuts. [Chuckling] I don't know if you know how men are or not, you know, but you couldn't do one little thing for this one and not the other one or they griped, you know. "Oh, you're giving him more, Maggie." "Course, everybody knows me by "Maggie" because when I started at the Ranch there was a "Peggy," and there was a "Marge," and so-forth. So the hostess, Jerry Williams was her name, she's not with us any more, said, "You look like a Maggie to me so we're gonna call you Maggie." So, everybody out here knows me as Maggie, not Margaret, you know. So that's what I want everybody to [know]. Later on, I went into the showroom and was there about two-and-a-half years and with my partner. Hazel and I worked together, and we still correspond, for two-and-a-half years. Her husband couldn't keep from gambling, so they had to go to California. They went down to Laguna Beach. Of course, he's gone now.

So, the Dunes was gonna be built. Okay, our one hostess, what was her name? Not Dorothy, but the other one. Bonnie. Bonnie says, "Let's all go and open the Dunes. Let's a

bunch of us go and open the Dunes.” She said this [to] me and some others and [we] says, “Okay,” but we didn’t know we was gonna have to work with waiters. There, it was a waitress and a waiter and they wanted the waiter in the kitchen. At El Rancho, why, it was girls could work together, you know. A small place and you didn’t have to carry far or heavy, you know. So, we opened the Dunes in 1957, say. It was 56 or 7, I just forget. That was the prettiest place on the Strip and they had beautiful girls and shows, but then they got some dead ones, too. Like Marie Shavea or whatever...

Maurice [Chevalier]

Maurice, yeah, and Wally Cox. Did you ever hear of Wally Cox? Well, he was kind of a comedian and so-forth and they laid bombs and so-forth, but the guys in the casino was taken the money. They were “milkin’ it” as you call it, you know. They were good guys. They knew [how to run the business,] but was milkin’ it. So, they closed, shut it down, you know, but a lot of them went over to the Sands. The Sands come in and tried to save it, say like, but it was, I guess, too far gone. So, they took a lot of the help that wanted to go over to the Sands. I said “Oh, I want a little vacation.” I wanted to go on one. So, one evening my girlfriend and I was out and we ended up over at the Sands. I don’t know who we was going to see. The maitre d’ there knew me and he said, “Oh, Maggie, go home and get you some shoes and come to work,” and I said, “uh,” but he called me at home [Laughing] and, so, I went to work for him. I retired from the Sands in ‘61, but I’ve had Liz Taylor and we had all the good shows. The best hotel for shows on the Strip at that time was the Sands.

I would [have] maybe not retired then, but my daughter got sick and that was it, you know. That was in ‘61. So, that’s been my work along the Strip. Although, when the International opened, why, ‘course Frank will tell you that. He opened that and the maitre d’

said, "Come to work for me and be my assistant maitre d'." Frank says, "You can't pay her enough. [Laughing] [Frank speaks up from the other side of the room: Yeah, I told him he'd suffer.] Yeah, he was the [one] at the Sands and our other at the Sands, he waited for the Caesars to open. A lot of them went to Caesars with Kirk, but he's long gone, too. He passed away. I could've opened the Tropicana because the waiter, Weaver, that I was working with went, too. He said, "I'm gonna open the Tropicana. Don't you want to come?" But see, the waiters opening these places, they figured they make maitre d' or captains. They don't make maitre d' [because] you only have one, but they'd make captains, you know, and I said, "No, not going." It wasn't Buddy Hackett? I'm thinking of, oh yeah, Buddy Hackett. Buddy Hackett

So, both the male waiters and the female waitresses would go up to Captain or was that...

No, just the waiters go to captains, but you don't have that many captains and, 'course, that's all gone now. What was that three people that come? We said, "We won't do no business with

That's not the way... to be a trio of some kind. A trio, Paul... Mary, Paul and...

No. I don't think there is a maitre d' in this town, is there? [Frank: There might be, but we don't know them.] Not in any of the older places. [Frank: You had to be male to make...] See, you had the whole thing, the dinner and everything in those days, you know. You served cocktail, and soup, and salad, and the whole works, you know. You had good people and so-on and you had to have help, but now watch. You go in and get two drinks or something, you know, and that's it. [Frank: Maggie, you only had one female.] Some of them have gone back to...[Frank: Maggie you had one female and that was at El Rancho.] Oh yeah, Dorothy Lasueor. [Frank: And that was the only one.] Yeah, well Bonnie was, too. but where they called? Boy, I

Let's go back to the El Rancho. You worked there how long? yeah, Dorothy Dunham

Five years. Catherine Dunham Company [Frank: She wasn't a singer in those days.]

About five years?

Until I opened the Dunes.

And there was a showroom at the El Rancho?

Oh, yeah.

Tell me a little bit about the shows that played there and if you saw them.

Well, I saw all of them. I mean, working there, you know. Well there's Milton Berle as we said, and Sophie Tucker, and Lili St. Cyr, and Jack E. Leonard, and Julius LaRosa, and who's that dirty comedian went over to the Sahara? I'm not thinking of Rickles. [Frank: Buddy Hackett. It wasn't Buddy Hackett?] I'm thinking of, oh yeah, Buddy Hackett. Buddy Hackett and, as I say, Tony Bennett, and...

It wasn't small?

Oh, I know. What was that three people that come? We said, "We won't do no business with them." [Frank: It'd have to be a trio of some kind.] A trio, Paul...Mary, Paul and...

Peter, Paul, and Mary?

Yeah! Yeah!

No kidding?

Yeah, and I thought, "Oh," but we did good business with them and they surprised us. Peter, Paul, and Mary.

In the early fifties?

Yeah, fifties! This was still [the] fifties. I left in '57. Then we had Eartha Kitt and those dancers. [Frank: She was a dancer in those days.] Eartha Kitt. What where they called? Boy, I never missed them 'cause, boy, they could dance. Dorothy Dunham, yeah, Dorothy Dunham Dancers. [Katherine Dunham Company] [Frank: She wasn't a singer in those days.]

Was that an all-black review?

Yeah, Eartha Kitt and, oh, I can't remember.

Wow. That was a lot of entertainment. So entertainment from those early days was really quite a part of the hotel casino?

Uh-huh. Well, you see in those days there weren't too many hotels out there. There was the Thunderbird, and there was [Frank: El Rancho, Flamingo] Desert Inn, and the Flamingo, [Frank: and the Last Frontier] and the Last Frontier. Four of them-like. [Frank: Five or six]

Before the Sands was here?

And Grace Hayes had the Red Rooster up there about a half a mile and that was the end of the Strip, you know. Peter Lind Hayes, you know him? His mother had it and that's where a lot of the bunch would go after they got off from the shows, you know. [Frank: It was across from the Sands, yeah.] Yeah.

You mean the entertainers would go down to ...

Well, no. Most of the entertainers now were missing something. There was the Silver Slipper. You heard of the Silver Slipper? Well, that's where the entertainers would go because they had the best comedians and shows on at that Silver Slipper. In our day, they had Hank Henry and who all? [Frank: Sparky Kaye.] Sparky Kaye, yeah. [Frank: Real slap-stick comedy.] Yeah, and boy it was good.

Was it sort of vaudeville?

[Frank: Yeah.] Yeah, yeah.

And did they also have a floorshow of dancers?

No. They might've had a girl that would kinda take it off and stuff like that. I'll tell you a place that had a good show downtown was the Mint, the old Mint.

Well I didn't know that...

Sally Rand come there. [Frank: That's the Horseshoe today.] Yeah.

And they would have entertainment showrooms?

YahYeah, almost [a] showroom, not as elaborate or as big, but for downtown they put on a good show.

Like Sally?

Like Sally Rand and who all? We used to go down there. That one good singer, wasn't Howard Keel, but he sang something like Howard Keel and then the Fremont used to have a pretty good show downtown. [Frank: That's where Wayne Newton started out.] Oh yeah, Wayne Newton started. [Frank: He and his brother.]

What about the Nugget?

Well, they never had any shows in my day, just a good place to gamble.

Okay, so it was mostly the Mint?

The Mint and Fremont, those were the ones.

Interesting. You mentioned Lili St. Cyr. What was her act?

Well, she was a kind of a striptease, not clear off, and she started in a bath tub, like taking a bath and so-forth. Then, she got up on a track and went around and threw her pants to the audience. That little pant, you know. I never caught one of them. If I did, I would have given it to my customer, you know. [Laughing] It would have been something, but we had a kid that cared nothing about autographs or any of this. I don't know [if it was] because he was raised up in it or what. So, there's a lot of things I didn't bother about, you know, but she put on that kind of an act and she drew 'em.

From '50 to 1955, while you were at the El Rancho Vegas?

Uh-huh.

So, she is doing a striptease basically?

Yeah.

Some people think that it came with Minsky's at the Dunes.

[Frank: She wasn't no young chicken in those days, either.]

Uh-huh.

No, [Frank: Scarlet Ann wasn't either.] but boy with that fan and she did it so fast that, well, I don't know if I should talk on that or not. [Frank: Might as well. Let's not go there.] Well, we was down there in the front row. We got so many comps and everything because Frank was a buyer at the Sahara, you know, and me a waitress on the Strip. They take care of their own, you know. We don't have to tip nobody, only the waitress and so-forth. [Frank: In those days, you know, everybody knew everybody.] Yeah, everybody. So, Sally [Rand] was down there doing those [fans]. She had beautiful fans and we was down in the front row. We had company from Chicago. We used to have a lot of company from back there, you know, 'cause we were here. Sally, this gal's name was Sally [too], she said, "My God, I never saw that much of my own self," 'cause she was seeing Sally Rand, you know. She said, "I never saw that much of my own self." [Laughing]

How old do you think Sally Rand was when she was working here?

Huh?

How old do you think...

[Frank: Fifty-five or sixty.] Yeah, she wasn't [young], but she was good. [Frank: She was in good shape though.]

What was some of the other entertainment like at the El Rancho Vegas?

Oh well, you know, we had the lounge act then. We had Billy Daniels. Remember Billy Daniels, the black singer? Well, he wasn't real black, you know, and 'course at the Sands we had Louis Armstrong. You remember him, Louis Armstrong? Who else was in the lounge? 'Course, I never went back to the lounge show in that day. We weren't allowed back if we wasn't entertaining somebody or something. I know we went to the Sahara and saw Bacharach, the piano player, you know, and who was over...I guess it was Milton Berle, with this big broad over [at] El Rancho. We had a couple with us and we went over to the Rancho and, I'm telling you, that was a great show that he put on.

'Course, you say everybody knew everybody. So, I knew all the dealers and stuff 'cause [as] I said, at one time that was all I did. So, he was dealing Black Jack, Greeny was, you know, this guy. So, I just put a dollar down on there and he never even looked at my cards and handed me a five-dollar chip. [Laughing] That's how they did in those days. You weren't gonna get fired, you know.

Now, I thought...

You couldn't do it today, believe me, but I worked them, just for fun. I've been on the stick at the Crap table, you know, just you don't have to pay off or anything. I just raked the dice in with the stick.

Now, what casino?

At El Rancho Vegas in those days.

Wasn't there some kind of ban on women dealers?

No. I was more or less just doing it for fun. We had this one guy come down. He was from Reno or some place, and a he took the whole craps table. Nobody could play, but him when he was playing, you know. He was really a good tipper, too, but dope or something finally got

him. Nick the Greek was around in my day. You've heard of him, you know. He was a big gambler, man, he was a... [Frank: High roller gambler.]

So, you would do a little bit of work at the dice table?

[Frank: No, no, no, no.] No, the craps table. There was men dealers, there's no doubt about that.

The craps table? You had a woman and, if they were good at it, they would let them deal.] You

With the stick, you know, where they make you bet the front-line or the back-line or the numbers. That steps a lot of fun.

Let me ask you this thing about women dealers even though that wasn't your area at all.

Maybe you're aware of some of the buzz that was going on about it. There was a time when women did deal cards?

Uh-huh, yeah, yeah. B]

Especially downtown? at El Rancho. Murphy. Vagil Murphy, was from the Neil House back

Yeah. in Columbus, and a Beldon Kallenman, [who] owned the El Rancho Vegas, Beldon and his

And then, there was this ban and then, they started dealing again. What do you remember about that whole [thing] or did you know anyone of the dealers? There was a ban. I'm trying to remember, late '40s or early '50s [1958] that said that women cannot be dealers [downtown] because they were competing for the jobs with male dealers. her

Oh. I bother her. She's here under the boss," which didn't mean a thing really, but they was

And so it went through the [City] Commission and they said... at them] you know. Yeah,

No. I didn't even know any. I know in the earlier days they could talk to you and you could have a little fun, you know, but now-a-days you can't, you know. They have to be, you know...

[Frank: That ban must not have lasted long, though.] well, say five years and most of them were

Is that right? they start drifting apart-like, you know, and I don't know. Bonnie was one of

[Frank: I don't even remember it. It wasn't that strict or bad. I don't know. How did you heard about it.]

Newspaper.

[Frank: Newspaper. It's no big deal, now. There was men dealers, there's no doubt about that, but occasionally you had a woman and, if they were good at it, they would let them deal.] You know the eye-in-the-sky?

Right. That stops a lot of fun.

We had a fella that come out from Columbus. [Whisper] Eye-in-the-sky. It was at the Sahara or at the El Rancho, I forget. [Frank: Sahara] Sahara.

[End Tape 1 Side A]

[Begin Tape 1 Side B]

There was family there at El Rancho. Murphy, Virgil Murphy, was from the Neil House back there in Columbus, and a Beldon Katleman, [who] owned the El Rancho Vegas, Beldon and his mother and dad, but Beldon worked. He was the boss there and, of course, he dated a lot of the stars, different ones. So, gosh, I can't think of some of them now, but it was, you know, everybody was just great, you know. One little thing, when I come in there, they knew that I was there under the boss-like, you know. So, the different ones would say, "Don't bother her. Don't bother her. She's here under the boss," which didn't mean a thing really, but they was afraid that, you know, [that I'd] say, "I did this or I did that," [about them] you know. Yeah, isn't that funny? Yeah, "She's there under the boss."

How long would people stay at their jobs? Would there be a real quick turn over?

Not in the Fifties. No, uhn-uh. We stayed there 'til, well, say five years and most of them were not like me, but they start drifting apart-like, you know, and I don't know. Bonnie was one of

our hostesses and real good. She just said, "Well, let's go open the Dunes," for a change, you know, and the Rancho is getting, you know. [Frank: You didn't have turn over until the corporations came.] Yeah, no.

Oh, that's interesting.

And, we had the same bunch at the Dunes, practically, until they went under, you know.

What kind of benefits would you get in addition to your wage?

What kind of benefits?

Health, retirement?

[Frank: Nothing.] Oh, no, that union was piss-poor in my day.

What union was it that you were a part of?

The union we got.

Culinary?

Yeah.

So you were a union member?

Oh, yeah, had to be.

You had to be to work here?

Uh-huh. Of course, Frank was a Teamster. That's not, you know, that's better.

Okay.

But in our day, in my day, the union didn't mean nothing. We used to go downtown to a little old wooden building. The steps was wood up into it even. We had a boss and you know what they done to our first culinary guy, don't you?

Who was that?

[Frank - Brownwood] Brownwood. [Al Bramlet]

[Al Bramlet]?

You know what they did to him?

Tell me.

Well, [Laughing] they buried him in the desert and his hand come up. He thought he was a God. Nobody could go to him, you know. He sent [them to] everybody else and, you know, they met him at the plane, took him in a van, buried him in the desert and not deep enough. His hand come up and there he was. His daughter, I think, is still around here. I think somebody interviewed her not to long ago.

Really?

Oh, I don't know.

In the newspaper? Is her last name [Bramlet] or is it a married name now?

[Frank: Married name. I don't know.] It was a married name, but you could find her under [Bramlet] I think, you know. Yeah.

So [Bramlet] was running the union where you were working then?

Oh, yeah.

And he was killed while you were still working?

Uh-huh.

But he wasn't very effective, you said, in terms of getting benefits for union workers for the culinary?

No benefits, even. Take in a withdrawal slip. You don't get that insurance to bury you. What is it? Two-hundred-and-some and you're paying in it all these years. I had eleven years, see, and you don't even get that little bit when you...I was only making [around] a dollar. I was

making a dollar-fifty-seven-an-hour, a dollar-fifty-seven-an-hour. You worked for your tips, see.

And the tips got to be pretty much undeclared at that time, right?

Well, the tips was pretty good, especially when the dollar was still in.

Oh, the silver dollar?

Yeah, and we could use [them] in my day. You [could] use a chip any place you wanted. You could use it in a grocery store, drug store, any place.

I'll be darned.

Your chips, five-dollar chips or whatever. I know I was working with Jack, at the Dunes, and this guy dropped one. Jack seen it and he put his foot over it. Then he helped the guy look for it. "I don't see it," [he says.] The guy walked out. [Laughing] He picked his foot up and there was the chip. You know, those nice little things. [Laughing]

A lot of the dealers have talked about tips and how it has totally changed now in the way that they operate with tips. I'm not sure if waitresses would be the same, though, because it's still so independent.

No. Only on banquets you would split your tips. Banquet work you would, but not individual. [Frank: You talking about money and taxes? Is that what you were referring to?] No.

With dealers.

[Frank: Oh, well waitresses, too.] We had to keep account.

Well what the stories a lot of dealers have told me is that there was a lot of loose money in Las Vegas and tips.

[Frank: Sure there was.]

This is later, though. This is not the fifties, this is the seventies.

[Frank: Well, I was going to say it had to be a lot later, yeah.]

Because the tips they would bring home would just be wonderful, like a hundred dollars.

[Frank: Internal Revenue didn't start bearing down on us until about 1970, like you say. Then they had to keep track of them.] We had to keep track of ours at the Sands. [Frank: We did it before then because you never knew when they were gonna pick you up for an audit.] No.

Right. When you said that you went to the Dunes and people were skimming in the casino, how familiar were other workers about that happening or would you sort of read about it in the newspaper the next day?

[Frank: You kept your mouth shut.] You didn't know it until it was [Stomped on the ground gesture] ugh, and that's more-or-less, you know, what happened, but who knows. Nobody could prove it, you know. They would, more-or-less, blame it on the shows. They didn't have the right management for shows and stuff. They had beautiful girls. They had the best girls, showgirls and stuff. They had this bunch of Jap women and they come out. They had body-suits on, I think, but you could see everything-like, you know. When they come out, 'course they come out and would have to stand in the hallways before they went on in those days, but you look around in that thing and there wasn't a waiter in the room. They were out there looking at them gals where they got on stage.

Do you remember the name of any of those shows?

[Laughing] No, no. [Frank: They were reviews.] Just reviews.

Oh. Was it Casino de Paris? Was that at the Dunes or was that later? That might have been later.

That might have been. [Frank: I think that was at the Trop.] Yeah, the Trop had a lot of good shows, too, like that.

The Follies.

And so did the Stardust, you know. They had that *Lido* for years, you know, years and years.

My girlfriend that worked at El Rancho Vegas, her neighbor next door was the seamstress there at the *Lido*.

So, the shows during the time which you worked there, which was a short time you said, lasted how long? You went in '55 and you were gone in?

You mean at...

[The] Dunes?

Dunes. They were only open nine months, till they closed. So, that's all we were there was nine months.

And how long were they closed?

They weren't closed an awful long time. [Frank: About three or four months.] Somebody else come in. They didn't have enough to do at the Sands. [Frank: No. The Sands tried to take it over and then somebody bought it, boys out of Kansas City bought it.]

Bought the Dunes?

[Frank: Yeah.]

So how would you compare the kind of worker-management relations between the El Rancho and the Dunes?

Oh, it was a lot different. You knew just who you were working with, like the cooks and people like that. You didn't know the big-shots at all. One or two we did and they were hoods, but who was that big guy that was there? [Frank: Sid Wyman.] Yeah, Sid Wyman, but it was altogether different. See, the El Rancho Vegas was a small place and the Dunes was started

when they started to get big. [A] big place, even had a big balcony at the Dunes. We had to go up steps and...

For the showroom?

Yeah, big balcony.

So, you're working in the showroom as a waitress at this point?

Oh, yeah.

At the Dunes?

Uh-huh. Yeah, I had Alan Ladd on his twenty-fifth anniversary and they had a money tree, twenty-five-dollars on his money tree and so-fourth. My good waiter, Jack, he was a Frenchman and then there was two captains [who] thought they had to help, you know. So Jack says, "Well, if they help I'm walking out." So, he walked out. One [captain] would have been plenty, you know, but I still got the twenty-five-dollars from the tree, you know. Things like that happen, too, you know. Other than that, you didn't know the casino part in anything 'cause you weren't allowed out in there anyway, you know.

What do you mean?

Well, after work you have to go out, you know, you're not allowed in the casinos, you know, where you work.

You had to leave your casino?

Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

To go play?

Yeah. You weren't allowed to come back in the casino. 'Course they had their own girls for that, you know.

What do you mean?

[Laughing]

You mean girls to decorate the casino?

Yeah, but it was all the help, it wasn't just waitresses or waiters, it was all the help, you know.

You didn't go out. They had the girls that was showgirls for that, you know.

Would come into the casino?

At El Rancho you could go. It was different, you know.

What was the difference? I mean if one was....

It's different policies, you know. We weren't allowed back in the Sands, either.

Okay.

Nope.

So when you got off shift, if you wanted to go do something, you'd go somewhere else?

Yeah, you'd go someplace else.

Okay.

Well, there was a lot of places. I think it's a pretty good policy, you know.

What does it do that is beneficial for the casino?

Well, it's less...[Frank: Less commotion.] Yeah. [Frank: Less visiting.]

Oh okay, more business.

[Frank: Yeah.]

Okay, I see.

[Frank: That was the only reason.] Well, you wasn't allowed back in then.

Now if you're working in the showrooms as a waitress, this is late night work?

Uh-huh.

So what was your schedule like?

Well, one day you go and set up and the next day your partner sets up, so it's either five o'clock [or] six o'clock, till two in the morning.

And your children were still young at that time?

Yeah, yeah.

Did you have family? What kind of provisions or were you two on a swing shift here?

Yeah. [Frank: We were on a swing shift.]

Oh, I see. Okay.

We wrote notes and our boy was so good to help with the sister that was an invalid.

Now, you mentioned a couple times that Jack Entratter wanted to bring you to the Sands.

Yeah, from El Rancho Vegas.

Tell me how that took place? How did he know of you?

Well, they came down there in their overalls and work clothes 'cause they were building the Sands and I'd wait on them, you know, in the coffee shop there. They just said, "Maggie, when we open, you gotta come to the Sands [you're a] good waitress." I was a good waitress, you know. I spoke out, though. I said, "Nuh-uh." There's one in every hotel. [Frank: One a-hole in every hotel.] [Laughing] That's just what I told them. You know these guys, big shots.

[Frank: Complain less.] Yeah, so I didn't go.

Because you had pegged someone at the Sands as being that kind of a character?

[Laughing] [Frank: You had one in every place, though.] Yeah, well, you do, you know.

At least one.

Yeah. So I didn't go, but then, as I said, I was back there with my girlfriend one time, seeing a show or something, like Bobby Vinton or Paul Anka, you know. So, that's why I went then to

the Sands and then, of course, I knew a few of the kids that went from the Dunes over to the Sands and they were still there, see.

So, some of your friends and co-workers had gone and that made a difference somehow?

Yeah.

Now, how would you describe the Sands relative to these other properties that you've worked at?

Well, I liked the Sands. It was good. It was, of course, run by, you know, the Mafia. [Frank: Out of New York.] It was just good. I know one day, one of the captains says, "You see the party on your front table there, ring-side," you know, "Yeah, he's a hit man!" [Frank: Murder Incorporated.] [He] had his mother out. Real nice party [and] tips [were] good. I waited on Donald O'Connor and Eddie Fisher. Of course, Liz Taylor was married at the Sands with Eddie Fisher. I didn't work it. My partner worked it. They split when that went on, you know.

[Frank: That's when you had the Rat Pack there.] And, you know old Louella Parsons? I used to wait on her and I'd have to take her drink up in the powder room. She drank vodka straight.

You remember old Louella Parsons?

Was it pretty much a very high-tone, high-rolling kind of crowd?

At the Sands?

Uh-huh.

They got all of them elite.

The Flamingo had been around for a while, but you never worked there, and the DI was the other major property, the Desert Inn, at the time. Was the Sands in competition with them for guests, the Sands?

Oh, no. I don't think the Sands had much competition. It was a class house. The Copacabana. These guys come out of the Copacabana from New York, you know.

So they knew how to run a show?

So everybody, I mean [the] Sahara bunch come down to the Sands, all these other bunches come down to the Sands, you know, [to] see the shows. We had the best shows, you know. Nat King Cole, never missed him and all, you know.

And Entrattar was in charge of the entire operation or the showroom?

Entertainment.

The entertainment. So, there was another manager for the casino, but you didn't work there?

Yeah, well I knew Carl Cohen. He was one of the managers. He come from El Rancho Vegas. Carl Cohen.

You had worked with him before then?

Uh-huh. Yeah, he was a sweet heart and, 'course, a lot of the guys come from El Rancho Vegas to the Dunes in the gambling part in the casino, but as I say, we were never allowed out in those places, you know. So, [I] didn't know much. One time, I was working at the Sands and they wanted me to be a cocktail waitress. [Frank: Laughing] I said, "Oh, I'll try it." That was the Royal Nevada and, so, I went and got a outfit. Thirty-five-dollars and that was something in those days. Costs seventy-five-dollars now probably, or more you know. Oh Lord! See, I'd served drinks with food. In the showroom, you served your drinks. Lord, I lasted two days. I said, "I can't do that," and I said, "Them girls!" You're supposed to have a hundred-dollar bank, you know, and they come with nothing. "Can I buy this? Can I buy that," and then, if you're not sleeping with the bartender, he don't give you good drinks. So I said, "no," and the

bar manager said, "Oh, I hate to lose you, Maggie, but I know how it is with you. You don't want none of that," and so, of course, I went back to the Sands. I mean, at the Sands, see, you got your service bar and nobody can bother you. You have to make those drinks and that's it, you know.

Now at the Sands, where were you waitressing, in the showroom?

Yeah. In the showroom.

And that would be the Copa Room?

Uh-huh, and boy, they cut that down years after I left. They made it about half the size. We had Red Skelton, you know, and they wanted these guys only to take up so much time. They weren't supposed to go over, you know, 'cause they wanted [guests] in the casino and, 'course, there's only one way out of your showrooms and that's out to the casino. 'Course, [it had] gotten to where he'd always say, "Don't go out that door. That's cemented," and he says, "If I don't get out of here, I am going clear to Lake Mead. They'll drop me out and I'll go clear to Lake Mead." He was good, old Red Skelton. We'd be so crowded sometimes, but they'd have the fire chief out, but they would okay it. My girlfriend and I knew how we'd get out if there was a fire.

How many would it seat before they cut it in half?

I wouldn't know, would you, Frank? [Frank: I would say 250.] And then they would have them standing back there, you know, because we'd have Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, and Joey Bishop, and then that English man. Who was he, relation to the Kennedy's? Peter Lawford. [Frank: Peter Lawford. That was part of the Rat Pack.]

Let's take a break for a second. [recording stopped, then started again].

They got the five days after I retired.

Regardless of where you worked, you were always on what kind of an hour schedule, day schedule?

[Frank: Five to two or six to two.] Eight hours, eight hours always.

And that was always six days a week?

Uh-huh.

If this was more flexible than the corporate structure is now, how did you ever get time off? What if your kids were sick or if you had to go out of town?

Well, you could get time off. Somebody would work for you, you know. We had a girl at the Sands and she'd work several days a week for anybody, you know, and you didn't have to pay her back. A lot of times, if I wanted off my day and somebody worked my day, then I had to work their day, you know. That's how we traded, but we worked, boy.

You never had to involve the managers, then? You just kind of took care of it yourself?

Oh, we'd ask our captain. We'd ask our captain, you know.

[Frank: The union wasn't that strong in those days.] No. Although, I used to tell them Mexicans they didn't pay their dues and then they wouldn't talk English. I said, "Talk English or go on back to Mexico." I said, "You're making money here," you know, twice as much as what would be in Mexico, you know.

So, they had Mexican wait staff, waiters and waitresses?

Oh, no, nu-huh. Not too many. No, these were bus boys.

And were they also in the kitchen or cleaning?

Not too much in the kitchen. [Frank: Maids and cleaning.] Yeah, maids, made beds and stuff like that in the hotel.

Mexicans and they didn't have green cards or they weren't citizens.

Well, not all of them, but most of them. [Frank: We didn't have a green card in those days.]

Oh. So they would work and then they'd go back and then they would work and then they'd go back?

Yeah.

What about blacks? Were there black maids at that time in your properties?

Were there? I never knew many [or] seen many of the maids. There weren't too many black maids at the Sands or the Dunes. We had a high yella, Carl. He was an awful good porter in the Sands at the kitchen and he later became a captain and maitre d' even, you know, over the years. See, we had an awful good Chinese kitchen there in the Sands. I was waiting to pick-up a order and [one of the waiters] pulled out of there and one of them big dishes dropped and hit me right in the thing here. [Gesture] So, it was bleeding pretty good. So Carl, he says, "I'll take her to emergency," and that was UMC. That was just a small hospital in those days. One floor is all. So, he took me and somebody says, "Well, while you are gone, pick-up some ice," at the old ice house, you know. They didn't even deliver. Well, we run out [of ice] and we had the Rat Pack then and we run out. So, they cleaned that little place out [Gesture to wound] and I had a little chip of dish in it and they put a couple stitches in it and said, "Come back in a couple days and I'll take them out." Then we went to the ice house and picked up ice and then back to work, you know. [Laughing] I didn't even take off work and I took my own stiches out. They were black, you know, black like horse hair. I took them out myself.

Why make a trip across town.

So, that's how things was. Lord, now you'd have to wait at emergency, and wait, and wait, and all that shit.

Of the three properties you worked at, which did you like the best?

Oh, I don't know. They are so different. I like El Rancho Vegas, because I come here to work and they give me the work, but I like the Sands. I did.

What about it did you like?

Well, the help, the people I worked with. Had a good crew and nobody bothered anybody. Oh, we had that one captain; he thought he was in under the boss. Cali was the boss then. Nobody bothered me so, you know.

And did it have that same sort of family feel you said the El Rancho Vegas had?

Well, not as much, but a little bit. No, El Rancho was more of the family style. [Frank: El Rancho Vegas had a single owner, Beldon Katleman, and these other places all had many owners. That's the difference.] El Rancho was so small. It was just a small little place, you know. The casino stuff was. See, their cottages was out, you know, houses out around it. These big hotels, you have to all go through the lobbies and everything. They're just too big. When they built that MGM, the first one, what was it, the MGM Grand, it was too big, way too big. I used to gather all those ashtrays from all them places, but I don't anymore and I don't even have them. They had the lion, you know, on the first ashtrays when I would go, but I don't even go on and see the new places. I haven't been to New York New York, or Treasure Island, or MGM. They're just too big.

When you said the El Rancho Vegas was just really small in the casino, how many tables, how many game areas were there?

Oh, there wasn't too many. A couple Craps tables and... [Frank: A few Twenty-One tables and a few slot machines.] Yeah, there just wasn't...

A couple slot machines?

[Frank: A few slot machines.] Oh, a few slot machines, yeah.

And then what was it like at the casino?

Oh, well, they had plenty. They had branched all out. You know the old airport here that we had back then, it only had two nickel machines and you'd go out there. 'Course, Bonanza was the only [airline]. [Frank: That's Hughes Terminal now.] They had the franchise, you know, and you had to take that plane wherever you were going to connect. Of course, it's Southwest now.

The other thing you mentioned when you were working as the waitress at El Rancho Vegas, because it was so small, you didn't have to carry heavy trays very far.

Uh-huh.

So, you would pick them up in the kitchen and it was a shorter distance?

Oh, yeah. Our kitchen was right here and the showroom was right there. [Gesture]

And what about at the Dunes or the Sands?

Well, it was a lot further, especially if you had to go upstairs [because] you had to go around.

The Dunes showroom was mammoth, big, big. Have you been in the International? It's Hilton now. See, he opened it. Have you been in the Hilton? You know how big that show...

[End Tape 1 Side B]

[Begin Tape 2 Side A]

You mentioned earlier when you had come to work at the El Rancho Vegas that you had waited on Howard Hughes. He used to come to Vegas, apparently, for recreation before he began to own a lot of it.

Own it, uh-huh.

Do you have any particular recollections of serving him or how [he was] as a customer?

Well, he had a lot of henchmen, you know, people with him. [Frank: Hangers-on.] Yeah, but he was great. [Frank: He dressed like a bum.] Yeah, and he'd get up on stage. You see, at El Rancho Vegas where the showroom was, they danced after the show was over. The band played. That's really what Tony Bennett and his brother had, the band, you know. They played and there would be Howard Hughes, up there dancing with his broads. Who was that gal that come with Beldon all the time? [Frank: Gloria DeHaven.] Oh yeah, Gloria DeHaven. He'd be up there dancing with her, Gloria DeHaven, but as they say, he dressed like a bum, you know.

Then, when he returned to start buying properties, you were pretty much out of the business at that point, right?

Yeah. I never waited on him in any of the other places. It was just El Rancho Vegas.

In '61, when you left the business, where you still living in Las Vegas at that time?

Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah, we lived there thirty years.

Was this always in the Twin Lakes area where you had started?

Yeah. We owned a court with a couple out of Chicago at Vegas Drive and [Frank: Rancho.] El Rancho. Yeah, El Rancho used to be the Widows Highway. What'd they call it years ago?

[Frank: That's what it was called, the Widows Highway. It was a two-lane road going out to the Test Site with more accidents and deaths.] Yeah, deaths all the time. I knew Ralph Lamb.

You've heard of Ralph Lamb? I knew him well. We waited on him and Bell [Rex Bell, Jr.].

They were detectives on the Strip at that time, you know. Ralph was in a police car. One time,

I seen an accident-like, or seen part of it, and he stopped and said, "What'd you see, Maggie?" I said, "Nothing." [Laughing] Oh, he was a great guy that Ralph Lamb, Sherriff. Course, there

was a lot of Lambs, you know, a lot of them.

Well, how would you describe the relationship between the police and the hotel owners

during that time?

Well, they were good. [Frank: They got along great.] Yeah, and their security guards dressed a lot different. We had one and he was Beldon's right-hand man. We called him "Tex." He wore an old straw hat, and jeans, and a belt. He walked me to the car one day and I said, "Tex, have you ever had that gun out of your belt?" He said, "Heavens no. I've never shot anybody." [Laughing] There in the parking lot in the Sands one time, we had a lot of theft in the cars. They stole my tire out of the trunk and I didn't miss it for a long time, you know. Happened to look in there and oh my God! They were taking them right off of your car. You'd come out and two front tires would be gone and the batteries would be gone and, yet, you had a guard [on] that road [go] around there about every hour, but they knew that, you know. You can't keep track of everything, but the town on that little piece of road was a lot different. You didn't have any trouble going home or anything-like. Gosh, now it's every place. Terrible, you know. Not safe anyplace. Just like that fella that come in that beauty shop. I was in a beauty shop one time when they threw a stink bomb in there, but we got out. Somebody threw a towel or two over it and that was it, but man.

Tell me what it was like to raise children, in particular your son who you raised all the way through, in a town [where it] was fairly widely acknowledged organized crime was?

It was great! We had no trouble and he went to Twin Lakes when it was built and then he went to Rancho. Of course, that's all colored, practically, now. He graduated and all that, in '61 out there, but it was great. That's where he wanted to go, you know.

So, to people who don't live in Las Vegas or certainly weren't here during that time, it's difficult for people to understand why it was so great and I'm wondering, can you just explain how it was that, somehow, having the mob be connected with all of these different

properties or various families involved with the properties...

[Frank: inaudible] Huh? What?

You want to come closer?

[Frank: To people coming from back East, gambling was strange to them.] Oh, yeah, his boss come out. [Frank: I had a boss from Mills Buffett [that] Maggie and I worked for back in Columbus. He came out and he expected to be in the back room. In those days, I was a manager of the restaurant and I had to know where all the whore houses were and where all the gambling houses were in Columbus. They were all back rooms, you know, and that's what he thought he was gonna see when he came out here.] He was a millionaire! [Frank: Yeah, and here's a man that was very successful and that's how much knowledge you had of gaming in the state of Nevada. So, he got his eyes opened.]

So, it was very out in the open, not only gambling, but prostitution?

[Frank: No, prostitution wasn't.] No. Well, we had it here at Four Mile. It was legal. We had it here at Four Mile. That's up the highway here, you know. [Frank: There was a sheriff called Jones and he controlled the prostitutes and it was four miles out of the center of town on Boulder Highway.] More or less it was for the boys at the Base. [Frank: And they had the prostitutes. Everybody knew about it and they were controlled. They had their own doctor, their own medical staff takin' care of them. Some of them even had kids and they had their place to stay. He got in trouble someway with somebody running for office and, finally, they had to close it down. He got kicked out of office, too, but it was open in those days in that area. 'Course you had prostitutes, you know, from the hotels all through the years if you knew who to contact. That was the only open one in Las Vegas. Otherwise it was all somewhere else.] It was good. I mean, it was better than... [Frank: Oh, sure it was. These guys would go out and

get drunk and, instead of beating their wife up, they'd go out to Four Mile.] Or up to the ranch up Beatty Way. Our boys, bus boys and stuff, would go up there. One night, one come back and hit a cow and killed him.

What was up in Beatty?

Oh, a whore house, [Laughing] a ranch. We took a trip to Reno, my girlfriend and I, and they mention it if you're taking that trip on the bus. They say, "Well, do we want to stop here, fellas?" It's a chicken ranch, you know. You can see it back [there] now, [but] you couldn't see this place from any place. You had to go back. It was a lot of trees and everything around it. You couldn't see it. You had to know where it was. You know that park out there? You know what I'm thinking of out off of Warm Springs? Sunset, no...

Sunset Park?

No. Day Dream Ranch. You couldn't find that place in my day.

What's Day Dream Ranch?

Well, it was a ranch with swimming and drinking and stuff.

And stuff like prostitution?

Well, not prostitution. I just go out there and... [Frank: People would go relax. Instead of going on the Strip, they went to Day Dream Ranch.] A bunch of us gals from... [Frank: They had horseback riding and they had a swimming pool and a bar and a place to drink.] Day Dream Ranch and you couldn't even find that place unless you knew where it was.

I have invited Frank Price to join the interview here and, of course, Frank and Maggie and their family came out together in 1950. What was the work that you did when you originally came?

Frank: Originally [I] came [and] worked at Twin Lakes as manager. I managed the pool and the

snack bar and helped manage the motel. In the pool area, we had cabanas which we sold or rented out to these big shots. They'd come out there and sun, and swim, and relax. Once, a couple of guys that came out there was bouncer[s] at this Four Mile whore house. They said "You need a better job. You gotta come out and manage the whore house," [Laughing] and I said, "No way!" [Laughing] No way I was gonna do that. So, that's the way that started.

[Maggie: Well, you worked at El Rancho Vegas, but you weren't in the union yet, so they took you off the job.] The boys at the El Rancho Vegas said, "Come on and work in the warehouse with the food and the miscellaneous stuff." I worked that one day and the union came and bounced me out of it. [Laughing] [Maggie: So, he joined the union and told them he wanted a Sahara job.] So, I joined the union. [Maggie: See, before that was the Sahara it was, what, the Bingo Club?] Yeah, it was Bingo Club. It was 1951. [Maggie: So he got the Sahara.] At any rate, I went there as a warehousemen, got to be food buyer, and then purchasing agent.

[Maggie: At the Sahara.] At the Sahara for thirteen, fourteen years. [Maggie: Eighteen.] Was it eighteen? [Maggie: Eighteen.] When Kerkorian came into the picture, he bought the Flamingo and we took twenty-six department heads from out of Sahara over to the Flamingo.

When was that? *his hotel? Wasn't it run by a bunch of Nans?*

19...well, man, I got it marked down... '67. We managed the Flamingo. We were there [until] December '68. We trained a crew to stay at the Flamingo and a crew to go over to the *Floll and* International, which we opened, and from the International we, my assistant and I, we had a cottage on the Flamingo grounds and worked on it one whole year. Free dibs on everything we wanted in the hotel. Then I went nuts. [Laughing] Anyhow, it was a little after that that we opened the International. About six months later, I retired.

Oh, really, after Kerkorian had taken over? *sixties?*

Yeah. [Maggie: Oh yeah. Kerkorian pulled these guys out of the Sahara.] Yeah, twenty-six department heads.

Now who was running the Sahara at that time?

Del Webb Corporation.

Del Webb had bought the Sahara, but it was Hughes, but under that Corporation?

Well, no, no, no.

Oh!

This was Del Webb.

Okay.

Del Webb. [Maggie: No "Hughes" in that.] I forget when Harry [Feinberg] left. Anyhow, the boys at the Sahara were a group out of Spokane and some of them came from the coast and, let's see, Montana, and there was a group of them [from] Kansas. [The] group of them, together, built and ran the Sahara hotel. When Prell decided that he was going to take over the Aladdin, which, what the hell was it called? Anyway, it didn't have any gaming when they first built it.

That was the Nun's hotel? Wasn't it run by a bunch of Nuns?

No, no, no, no. I forget what it was called. It didn't have any gaming. It didn't last. They thought they were going to get the cream-of-the-crop clientele and it didn't work. So, Prell and a few of his cohorts who, he was a head-honcho at the Sahara, went and took over the Aladdin and rebuilt it and made a casino and gaming hotel out of it. That's when Del Webb took over the operation of the Sahara. When Prell moved out and some of the old crew moved out, Del Webb put his people in there.

When would you place that, late fifties, early sixties?

Well, let's see, had to [be] in the early sixties. Yeah, that's when the corporations came in.

With Del Webb?

Yes. That's when it started. From there it went to hell. [Laughing] No, I'm kidding. [Maggie: Yeah, but at the Flamingo, the mafia was still there when we went over.] Yeah, oh boy. The guy, Lansburgh was representing the mafia out of Miami.

Lansky?

Lansky was one of them. No, Lansburgh [Morris Lansburgh] was the guy's name. He was the manager and running the Flamingo. When we went in [and] took it over, why they thought they were going to be free, wide, and handsome yet, you know. See, my assistant and I had an office in one of the cottages back there and I saw a van pull up the back of...you heard of a Bugsy Siegel's apartment? Well that building was storage down below [for] all the linens, and china, and souvenirs, and everything. Well anyhow, they pulled this big van up there and I happened to look out the window. "What the hell is this?" So, I called security, "Park that security car in front of that semi!" [Maggie: There's a big semi.] Here, they were going to take all the linens and everything out that said "Flamingo" 'cause the syndicate owned the Flamingo motel down in Florida. Everything that had "Flamingo" on it, ashtrays, napkins, and placemats, they were starting to load it and we stopped it. My boss was in Europe. Kerkorian, I don't know where the hell he was. I couldn't get a hold of him. So, I just told security, "Nobody moves." Later, I get a hold of [Alex James] Shoofey, my boss, and it was some hot language going on between Lansburgh and Shoofey and all the rest of them for a while.

[Maggie: You flew all over here.] Oh, yeah. [Maggie: To get people to work at the International.] Oh, yeah. When we opened the International, we flew all over the country tasting food, trying to hire chefs, and part of the time on Kerkorian's private plane, part of it

commercial airline. We were in New York this one time and we had four meals in one day and a half. So, you know that we were taking a lot of... [Maggie: 'Course, he had the credit card of Shoofey.] I had Shoofey's credit card and they wanted to go to Miami, Europe, or any place.

[Laughing]

So, it was Kerkorian taking over the Flamingo when you moved to the Flamingo and they had just, apparently, bought out this group that was going to take the goods for their Flamingo hotel in Miami?

Motel, yeah.

Motel, okay. Were the owners of a number of these properties involved? Like this one would have been involved in Miami and Las Vegas, as well? Was there a circuit, was there a kind of network of hotels?

Well, you've got to understand that when the corporations came in, before the corporations came in, most of the hotels were run by racketeers from some place in the country and they didn't get moved out until the corporations started buying these places. Yeah know, one of the big ones was Stardust because you had a guy named Cornero [Anthony Cornero Stralla] that was building the Stardust. He was gambling at the DI and had a heart attack and died right there, at the craps table. So at any rate, when the corporations came in, the syndicates gradually moved out because government was after them. Anyhow, that's when you had Bobby Kennedy and all these guys, you know, trying to get the goods out of somebody and they gradually moved out, but I liked it better under the syndicate.

Why?

Why? You knew where you stood. You had one guy you answered to and that was it.

Corporations, you had a whole bunch of them. I only had one guy to answer to. [Maggie: And

in those days, gambling took care of everything.] Oh, yeah. [Maggie: Now-a-days, you have to make your profit or make so much, you know.] Yeah, with the corporations, every department had to make money. [Maggie: Yeah, every department.] In the early days, all they cared about was the casino, nothing about the rooms or food. It was a necessary evil for them to operate that casino. That's the way they felt.

The corporations?

No, no, no, the individual, the Syndicate, the hoods in the early days. When the corporations came in, every department had to make money. I don't care what department it was, bar, food, room, beverage.

When you said it was a necessary evil, wasn't there a...

I shouldn't say it that way. Maybe, "They didn't care about making money on anything, but the casino," [is what I should have said.]

Okay. So the casino managers...

King!

Would you work with the casino manager [or would you] work with the restaurant or hotel?

I worked with all of them.

Okay, because food was part of the...

Originally in the food, I worked with just the chef and the food buyer, but when I took over purchasing, I worked with every department, yeah.

Okay.

[Maggie: Yeah, because you had to order everything.] Yeah.

This might sound like a really odd question to you, but just humor me for a minute.

Okay.

Had you had experience in Ohio working with people who were involved in the syndicate or organized crime?

No, but I knew some of them.

So when you came here, was it ever frightening?

No, it's just a job. I don't know what you mean by "frightening." You're taking the Eastern view point again, just like that boss of mine. He was surprised to see open gaming, but it's something you accepted. I mean, it was a place, a way of living, that's all.

It's not so much the gambling as it is the violence associated...

No, no, no, no, no. I see what you're getting at. You didn't have any violence in the early days. It was an open city. Anything that went on was outside of the city. They might bury him in the desert, but it was away from the city. [Laughing]

Apparently, it wasn't people working for them. See, when I said, "would you be afraid," it was because suppose somebody looked at you sideways and they...

No, no, no, no, no. You're thinking of what you've seen in pictures and so-forth.

Right, exactly.

No, no.

How did it work?

Well, you weren't afraid. I mean, you just worked, you know. That's all.

If you did your job, you could. When you say you knew where you stood...

You had one person to answer to and, [with] corporations, you got half a dozen. [Maggie: And each department has to make their quota on stuff anymore.] This came about [when] I was in Mexico on a vacation and they couldn't understand why they weren't making food cost. Well,

the maitre d' didn't know anything about food cost. He didn't have to. [Maggie: Nobody did. You didn't have to.] The chef didn't worry about it because all he wanted to do was get his production out, food out, and make everybody happy. Well, I got called back and I started working on percentages. The food department was first, liquor department was next, and then all housekeeping stuff. They had to present what they wanted and they had to prove they needed it, but mainly the food cost had to be the certain percent so they showed a little profit, didn't have to be a lot. So, we go to every department. The butcher department, they would have to show me how many cuts of meat they got out of a line for steaks and what they did for beef stew and chicken had to be certain size and portion, lobsters buy a certain way.

None of that had been in existence before?

No, no, no.

Because it was irrelevant to the real money making operation?

That's right, yeah. That's why the corporations pay men. They wanted to know why their food cost was so high. It was around seventy percent and we got it down to thirty two. [Maggie: Every hotel in them days had dinner, you know, before the shows.] In the early days, your business fell all apart in December. Oh, from around the seventh to after Christmas, you didn't do anything. So, we had all kinds of birthday parties. You seen this thing where they get the money in the cage, you know, flying around and they try to grab the money? We started it at the Sahara. That was part of the birthday celebrations and we would have free buffets. [Maggie: Airline. You used to...] Oh, the airline parties from all over the world.

What's an airline party?

Well, the different airlines would come in on a convention and we would wine and dine them. [Maggie: They'd give free hors d'oeuvres. I liked going to them] Like the birthday parties, we'd

have a buffet table as long as this mobile home, for free. [Maggie: You know they used to give such good things for souvenirs and stuff for the high rollers and things, you know, but that's all faded out now.] First few years for New Year's, the women, they got beaded purses with twenty-five-dollars and so on. [Maggie: Yeah, they'd gamble that money, but they had the purse.] Well, we got the money back. [Maggie: I still got a purse. I'll show you. 'Course my granddaughters got most of my stuff.]

Did you ever know Wilbur Clark?

No. He was in the background when we came in the picture. He was only a figure head, you know. The syndicate took over. He started building the DI and went broke and a syndicate, the Purple Gang out of Cleveland, came in and took over the operation and finished it. So, he was a figure head from then on. He was a promotion man, publicity man, that's what he was.

Oh my! [Whispered as Maggie shows her the purse.]

Prostitution, you didn't have any "prostitution" in the hotels, you had "prostitutes." The bell man normally knew how to contact them for the high rollers or the people that wanted them, but it was a quiet thing. It wasn't open. You probably heard in the last few months that they picked up some bell hops in Vegas for getting prostitutes for people and they prosecuted them. As far as Four Mile, that was a legal whore house because the Sheriff at that time, Jones, probably got paid-off by them, but still, in the early days if the guys got drunk and wanted to raise hell or something, instead of picking on their wives, they'd go out to the whore houses. [Maggie: And the Nellis boys.] Yeah, and the Nellis boys. [Maggie: It wasn't that big in them days.] Yeah, we only had about thirty-thousand people in Vegas at the time. [Maggie: It was twenty five.] Twenty-five when we got here, yeah. [Maggie: Twenty-five-thousand.] It wasn't till later that Jones got in trouble with somebody running for office that they put a lot of pressure on him and

they had to close Four Mile and put him out of office, but it was quite a while, though, that the thing was off and running and you couldn't hardly see it because you had a lot of trees in front of it. It was a barracks building is what they had in the back of these trees. It wasn't until later years that they cut these trees down so you could even see where the building was.

What do you think happened to that prostitution ring or business? I mean, did it just move somewhere else?

Oh, sure. It went to Beatty, Pahrump, and Mesquite, all the outlying districts around. [Maggie: The houses did, but we still have prostitution.] Oh, yeah. As I told Joan, sure there's prostitution here, [Maggie: They're ranches now and they make...] but its legal in the state of Nevada, but it's not legal. I'll put it that way. It's not legal in town, but in the whore houses themselves it is, yes, and they're controlled and they have their own physician. They're checked daily or weekly and, when they get the time of the month, they get time off and don't have to worry about it. Some of them got kids and it's like a ...

[End Tape 2 Side A]

[Begin Tape 2 Side B]

So, she would work her shift, change her clothes and...

[Maggie: And she had her black nightie. She showed us her black nightie one time.]

[Laughing]

Oh really? So somehow, the management allowed her to mingle?

[Maggie: No, the bell hop.] No, no, no, no, not the management, no. [Maggie: Oh, no. She did this on her own, on her own.] You gotta know, the management knew who to contact, but they had a hands-off policy on it. They had to or they'd be put out of business. They'd take their license away.

What? Run that by me again.

Okay. Management knew who they had to get a hold of to contact a prostitute if they had a high roller or somebody [and] they needed a prostitute for them, but they couldn't do it directly themselves because they would lose their business license. That's still that way today. The only one that's gonna get nailed is the head bell hops and valet. [Maggie: Bell hops, they get them and they can't get you, [just] the bell hops, you know.]

You might have said this earlier, but I think the tape wasn't running. You were talking about being familiar with gaming from your Ohio days, but it was different. It was set up different?

Alright, the gaming in the Ohio days was in back rooms. I was a manger of a big restaurant and I had to know where the whore houses were and the gambling houses because you get these salesmen coming in and they want a little entertainment. It's not going to a movie or something like that. So, we would have to know where in the hell to send them, that's all. [Maggie: And we've been to a few.] Oh, yeah. We had a cook, a broiler chef at the restaurant. He was a Spaniard. [Maggie: True Spaniard.] My latter days of working there was from five in the night [to] two in the morning and, on his days off, he was liable to go out and get drunk and he was very lucky when he was drunk. He'd have money in every pocket he'd had and he come and [say,] "Come on. I gotta go back." So, I'd have to take him back to where all he'd been gambling before at four or five in the morning [and] get him home. [Maggie: Give his wife some money] Yeah, had to make sure his wife had some money because he didn't know what the hell he had, but that's the difference between there and here. I didn't expect it to be in a back room when I came out here. No, because I already knew that it was an open gaming society. [Maggie: The way younger days, they were called speakeasies.] Oh, well yeah.

Oh, yeah, beautiful floats, just like you see over in California now [at the] Rose Parade. Yeah, they went all out. [Maggie: Yeah, we had to wear the Western outfit.]

That reminds me, Maggie, of a question I wanted to ask you about your waitress costumes.

When you were at the El Rancho Vegas, was there a western theme to your costume at all?

[Maggie: No, no, because they had them done for us. We didn't have to do them. We just had regular [uniforms]. Just a regular outfit. A little apron, probably, and sometimes a head band.

They sent them out.]

And was it different at the Dunes?

No, you had a uniform every time. [Maggie: Yeah, they wore uniforms at the Dunes.]

[What was] the difference between a cocktail waitress and a food waitress?

Oh, they're skimpy. That's the difference. A cocktail waitress is skimpy. [Maggie: That outfit, that was thirty-five-dollars for me, it come from Magnin's.] I. Magnin, yeah.

And that was at the Sands?

No, Royal Nevada. It's a convention hall [next] to the Stardust. It's right next door. [Maggie:

They're all one.] That's all they had, was a lounge there and so-forth.

And then at the Sands you wore your regular [uniform]?

[Maggie: Regular uniform, yeah.]

So it's the same, regardless, just the cocktail waitresses that changed over time?

[Maggie: Yeah, they changed.] Yeah, they made them fancy and skimpy and a flashy. I'll put

it that way. [Maggie: But we had them done, thank goodness, because for no more than we

made an hour, I'd a hated to [buy them]. I wore the same head band for years without ever

changing it 'cause you just pinned it on, you know, for years. I still got my little round tray that

I carried, you know, for cocktails.] When we opened the International, we opened with Presley?

Yeah, it was Presley.

You opened with Presley?

Yeah. He was the easiest one to ever take care of, of all of them. The worst one was Streisand. She was a pain in the ass. [Maggie: Yeah, Barbara Streisand. You have to do things for her, you know.] The Colonel, manager for Presley, we'd send Kirk's [Kirk Kerkorian] private plane down with steaks, and roasts, and poultry, and lobster tail, you name it. We sent everything down to him to Palm Springs, but he was a nice guy to deal with, though. He wasn't hard to deal with, though.

What made the difference, I mean, what kinds of things would Streisand do that Presley wouldn't?

You couldn't do anything to please her. She had that kid about that time and they rented a house in the Desert Inn Golf Course for her and she came in on Sunday. You got to remember, in the early days, you didn't have all these places to buy things. I don't care what it was, you usually had to buy it out of California or Chicago or someplace else. So, she came in on a Sunday and she insisted on a playpen and a baby bed, and it had to have the safety padding around it and all that. [I] had to get one guy out of bed, Phil Salvage. Fortunately, I knew the guy or I'd never been able to get it. You couldn't buy it. You didn't have these department stores and everything like you got today and she wants special food. My son and I went out one day and bought all this food and took it in and stocked that kitchen for her. Every time she turned around, she wanted something. [Maggie: The Beatles come to the Sahara, the Beatles.] Oh, yeah. [Laughing] We had a whole floor for them. We had security on it and the girls still got in, in the closets and stuff. Anyhow, they got in there some way. [Laughing] Of course, when Presley came to the International, he had a whole floor and nobody could get up there.

Security was tight. [Maggie: Did you ever see Presley? Oh, I loved him.] He was a great Max entertainer. [Maggie: I saw him at the Frontier and I saw him at the International, every time.]

We opened the International with a dinner that nobody had ever served and that was a sixteen ounce lobster tail for everybody. [Maggie: Boy, that's a lot of lobster.]

It really does sound like the good old days.

Frank: Oh, it was then. [Maggie: I know.] Yeah. [Maggie: But one time, at the Sands, we had Peter Lind Hayes and he done a thing just like Presley and his Blue Suede Shoes and I laughed.

I watched that every time and I laughed and laughed 'cause that guitar of his, he just blew it up to pieces.] Just about blew apart. [Laughing] [Maggie: He was doing Presley.]

You remind me though, when you mentioned Hayes and the Grace Hayes Club, that during the fifties, now, as these big huge casinos are being built, there are still some small clubs.

Her place was called the Red Rooster and it was right across from where the Sands is today.

[Maggie: But it's no more.] No. [Maggie: No, it went by the way side.]

And the Bingo Club?

Bingo is where the Sahara is. Prell and some of his cronies out of Montana, and Oregon, and California. Sam Boyd was one of them. You've heard of Sam Boyd? They operated the Bingo Club and that's just what it says. It had Bingo, and it had slot machines, and gaming, and it had a little stage that they'd entertain. Stan Erwin was one of the first entertainers and then he was in charge of promotion and entertainment after we opened the Sahara hotel, but he was appearing at the Bingo Club at the time. [Maggie: And you know, when they would build these places, like the Showboat, everybody said, "Oh, it will never make it. It will never go," you know, and things like Sam's Town, "Never make it." Now look what all they got. We knew

Max Baer. You know Max Baer, the fighter?] Old prize fighter. [Maggie: Prize fighter, Max Baer. His son was in Beverly Hillbillies. You ever see Beverly Hillbillies?] Jethro? That's his son. [Maggie: Jethro, well that was his son. Max Baer used to come up here with his sparring partner, Buck Weaver, a big Indian.] During my purchasing days, I got a bright idea that I wanted to try to sell meat and I knew the guys that sold meat to the hotel. So, I went down and checked the plant and I went and sold meat for about three months. Well, Buck Weaver was a sparring partner for Baer in the early days. So, he came up here one day, Baer did, and we went out to the Showboat. They had a whole lane blocked off with these stanchions, you know. "Oh man, to hell with that," he gets up and moves that stanchion and we parked that Cadillac convertible right there. [Laughing] [Maggie: There was somebody at the show he wanted to see, but I can't remember who it was.] I don't remember who. [Laughing] He was character. [Maggie: They used to have pretty good little shows like Spike Jones. Spike Jones and his wife used to always sing Green Eyes. Boy, she could sing.] The one night we went to the Desert Inn, there was a guy, a purchasing agent there, called Joe Bock. He was king. Nobody could get to him unless you went to God himself. So, Max went in the casino, "Where the hell is this Joe Bock," and he caused enough commotion and Joe Bock came out of his cage, I tell you, but we never sold any meat, anyhow. [Laughing] Max brought him out of his cage, though, I'll tell you. [Laughing] [Maggie: Colorful, those were the colorful days.]

On the Strip, before the whole thing got taken over, there were some other independent kinds of small clubs. Do you remember Val Sneeds? That was one of them.

[Maggie: Who?] Nuh-uh.

You don't remember Val Sneeds. It might have been gone by the 1950s and I'm trying to remember, would it have been Club 21?

You might have had a lot of little ones, but they didn't last very long. The only one, as I said, [was] the Red Rooster. Grace Hayes' place was the only one of any significance. [Maggie: Yeah, and the Silver Slipper.] And the Silver Slipper after we got here. [Maggie: And the Silver Slipper was just a small place.] Yeah, well it had gambling and it had a small showroom and, in those days, it was like a village where the Silver Slipper was. It had all kinds of little shops down through there. [Maggie: Oh, yeah, in the front.] Candy shops and a Western trinkets and all that kind of stuff down there. [Maggie: Like a boardwalk.] [They] gradually eliminated all that and they started enlarging and so-forth.

When you look back upon your career here in Las Vegas, how do you see it? All in all, how would you describe those years?

Those years? Good years, until I got into the International and got all these bids and got the place started. Maggie said I was going off my rocker. [Laughing] Anyhow, I retired and was gonna build a trailer park and I gave it up and, let's see, give me that thing. [Gesture to Maggie] I sold light bulbs for a while. [Maggie: He retired at sixty-two and he's seventy-nine.] Some guys owned a produce company and they wanted me to come and set up like these 7-11's and Circle K's because, you know, they have so much produce and they hadn't done it. So, I set up the procedures for them to go into these places, set them up, and go back every once in a while and change the produce, put out fresh stuff and so-forth. Harry Feinberg knew a guy that was in the light bulb business out of New York, called Westron Corporation. So, for a few months I sold light bulbs. I learned a lot. [Laughing] I thought I knew something when I was buying, but I learned a lot with that. [Maggie: Like a lot of these places need light bulbs.] I decided to retire and Magleby [Calvin Magleby] was a lawyer. At the Hacienda, the gal that owned it died [Judy Bayley] and Joan Rashbrook took over the operation. She was a

beneficiary and Magleby was a lawyer for them. Well, they needed somebody to go in and take over the purchasing when they took over the operation. So, what the hell. I didn't last long there. [Maggie: Two years.] No, no, no, not the Hacienda. About a year. [Maggie: Oh, yeah, well then...] So, I said, "To hell with it, I'm gonna retire again." That's when Benny Binion called me to the Horseshoe. He says, "I need somebody down here bad." So, I went down and I talked to Benny. Jack was away skiing some place. I says, "Ok, one agreement. I know how this family operates. You're never going to get me in the middle, 'cause the minute you do, I'm gone," 'cause each one had something to do with the operation. Mrs. Binion had the hotel and furnishings... [Maggie: And she counted the money!] Well, the money went right up to the God damn apartment and never saw anything—from the cash boxes right up to the apartment, and they counted it themselves. So, Jack had the casino operation. Benny would float between the ranch and the casino and all the grandkids and everything had a little something to do. So, I trained one grandkid be a buyer and Benny got mad at him and sent him down to the El Cortez to learn to be [a] 21 dealer. The youngest one, he put down stairs in the slot repair operation. That's when meat was getting short and I made a deal with a meat company I knew, and he said, "Well, let's go look at it." Well, Nigg Devine, [Irving "Niggy" Devine] the owner of it, worked with Levinson [Ed Levinson] who opened the Fremont. Years ago, it was [the meat packing plant] down at Kentucky where they operated a gambling house. So, Benny says, "You drive." Okay, well, I'll drive. Here comes Benny with a sawed off shot gun and he says, "I don't go any place without this." [Laughing] [Maggie: But you never did go up to the big ranch.] No, I never went to the ranch. I sent stuff up there and car loads of it.

Where was it?

Montana. He's got one of the biggest ranches in the state, thousands of acres and he'd get mad

at his grandsons and send them up there [to] make them behave better. [Laughing]

One of our students in the history department's family worked at Binions. The parents did and a couple of her brothers and sisters, but she didn't. She said that there was this basement that was like a vault and it was their bank.

Oh, no. We had the basement down stairs. It was all the food production when I was still there. They had one big walk-in refrigerator and that's probably what they thought was a vault.

[Maggie: Yeah, yeah. Well they probably stashed money in there.] I don't say that they didn't stash stuff in there in the early days, but it was usually storage when I was there and that was January '73 to January '75. [Maggie: Their both gone now, though, the old folks.] Yeah.

[Maggie: What was the name of those people?]

Loucks. L-O-U-C-K-S.

Don't ring a bell. [Maggie: L-o-u-c-k, no.] No. We had a parking garage back there in the back part of it.

Binions sort of stood apart from some of these other conglomerates, right?

Well, that's a family-owned operation, nobody else. It's only in the family. You see, Benny couldn't be on the license. They put him in jail for income tax evasion. You'll read that in this thing. [Gesture] When he got out, he was there four or five years or something like that, he had Levinson from the Fremont kind of overlook the operation. Jack was running it, but he was a real young man then. He was only in his twenties and then, when he came back out, why of course, Benny tried for years to pay off people and everything else, trying to get his license back and never did, but he was the power behind the stone. There was no question about that.

Not at all. [Maggie: Ms. Becky, the one that you interviewed, she's a feuding with Jack, her brother. Wonder why?] Yeah, well Becky married a guy, how can I say this...he never

amounted to much.

I'm just gonna turn this off.

Oh no, it's alright. Anything I can say, Becky can't say it's not right. Anyhow, she married this guy and he wanted Benny to set him up in one of these gambling places right along Fremont there on the corner, and Benny didn't think much of him. So, I'm sure that the reason that she's in bad straights with Jack right now is because of her husband. He wants to be a big shot and aint never been able to. Now, that's my opinion.

It sounds like Benny wanted the kids and grandkids to earn it.

Yes, he did.

To learn it and earn it.

Yes, he did. He didn't want to hand stuff over to them. He was free with them, but they had to do something for it and, if he didn't think they were doing enough, he sent them to the ranch. When they didn't want to study anything, he sent them to his friend, Jackie Gaughan, [John D. "Jackie" Gaughan, Jr.] at the Cortez to learn to be Twenty-One dealers. Not in his own place because a he didn't want any favoritism showed to them. The only one that knew about the casino business is Teddy, the one that's in trouble with the drugs.

You mean Teddy knew more about the business than Jack did?

Oh, sure. Jack knows the operation, but he didn't know the casino business like Ted did. Ted was actually working in the casino. [Maggie: And we knew the son-in-law.] Well, yeah.

[Maggie: Real well. The kid, the grandkid, the one you trained. He used to work out here at Railroad Pass. We knew him.] Uh-huh, yeah. Good, good man, but couldn't leave the booze alone. [Maggie: He was an alcoholic and it killed him and it killed Benny's daughter.] No, drugs killed Barbara. [Maggie: Oh, yeah, drugs killed Barbara.]

Mrs. Binion...

Teddy Binion, yeah.

Teddy?

That's her name, Teddy Jane, yeah. [Maggie: She's been gone and you'll read in there they never slept together.] But we don't either. [Laughing] [Maggie: But this was in the later years.] She smoked like a fiend, even when I knew them and Benny couldn't stand the smoke. So, he'd sleep in the other room on the couch or someplace else.

She was very much a partner in their operations?

Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Not visibly in the casino part of it, but when it came to the food, and the rooms, and the count, yes. As I said, that money went right up to the apartment.

So, she was like the bookkeeper?

She wasn't a bookkeeper. They did the count. [Laughing] No. They had their own book keeper. [Maggie: I guess it was a good place to work, though.] It was a good place to work. [Maggie: A friend of mine, she's passed away, and we lived the same block together. She worked there for twenty-years, I think.] Oh, yeah.

Can you think of any other casino operation that is as large as Binion's that was within one family?

That scope? No.

Like the Bayleys, Judy Bayley?

Well, now, that's the Hacienda.

But it was just the two of them, right? They didn't have children?

Doc Bayley and her owned the Hacienda and, for a long time, they had a little casino, a eating place, in Searchlight. He'd fly little planes into Searchlight to this casino. Doc Bayley,

[Maggie: It was good. It was a nice little type of place.] ...when he passed away, why that went by the way-side. Then, when Judy passed away, Joan Rashbrook was the executer of her estate, along with this lawyer, Magleby. He's a judge now and that's how I got into it. A son-in-law of Magleby's told him to contact me to take over the purchasing while they got their things straightened out and that's when the guy at the Sahara, well a consortium of four different guys, bought the Hacienda.

From the Sahara?

Lowden was one of them. A dentist, I forget his name, was another one. You had the guy out of San Diego that got caught representing the syndicate in the Stardust later, and another guy. Anyhow, that's where Lowden got his start. He only played in the band and he set this deal up and he got a percentage of the Hacienda and that's how he got started going up the ladder.

The land of opportunity.

Yeah, it was.

Did you know Judy Bayley at all?

No, no.

Okay. Was she very private a person?

[Maggie: No, I don't think so.] No. She did lots of charities and everything. She was open.

We have a beautiful theatre on campus with her name.

Oh, yeah.

The executer of her estate, where they business partners?

I don't know how Joan Rashbrook came in to it. She's from England originally and I didn't have much to do with her, actually.

With the lawyer?

The only time I came in contact with Joan, she wanted to send a wheelchair to her mother in England and I had to buy a good one and see that it got shipped. That was it. When this consortium came in, why that's when I left. I was only there about six months or so.

Okay. Well I'd love to close this interview and I'd like to thank you very much.

Frank: You're more than welcome.

This is the end of the interview.

[End Tape 2 Side B]

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