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AN INTERVIEW WITH SYDNEY WICKLIFFE

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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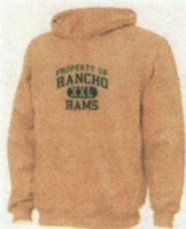
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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

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



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Sydney Wickliffe 2-1-13
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Preface

Sydney Wickliffe, *nee* Botkin, was born in Long Beach, California in 1944. Her parents, Donald and Betty Botkin, moved their young family first to Denver and then to the small town of Ulysses, Kansas before heading for Las Vegas in 1952, when Sydney was eight years old. Since then, she has called Las Vegas her home, graduating from Rancho High School's inaugural senior class in 1962.

Growing up in a growing city, Sydney combined an active youth with long hours working in her father's North Las Vegas pharmacy and, later, would earn her degree in accounting from UNLV. As a CPA, she worked as an auditor for the Gaming Control Board and, in 1987, was promoted to deputy chief. From there, she took on the challenging role of director in Nevada's Department of Business and Industry as a member of Governor Kenny Guinn cabinet.

As she says, even "one of the north-town girls" can go a long way – and in this interview, she shares memories that help us all see what the Las Vegas she remembers was like in the 1950s and 60s and how it helped to shape the person she is today.

This is Claytee White and it is February first of 2013. Today I am sitting here with Sydney.

Sydney, please give me your full name. And how are you today?

I am wonderful today. Thank you, Claytee. My name is Sydney Wickliffe, W-I-C-K-L-I-F-F-E. My maiden name was Botkin, B-O-T-K-I-N. Middle name Anne. My mother used to call me Sydney Anne, usually when she was mad at me.

Thank you [laughing]. So Sydney, could you tell me a little about your childhood?

I was born in Long Beach, California in 1944. We lived there for three years. My little brother was born just six months before we left there. We left there in the early summer of 1947 and moved to Denver for a summer. Daddy was taking some summer school classes to become a pharmacist. And then after that summer we moved to Ulysses, Kansas, because in the state of Kansas he could practice as a pharmacist off of someone else's license in an apprentice manner. We lived there in Ulysses until I was eight; it was October of 1952. And my mother's mother had become very ill. Grandpa had retired. Momma was raised in Bisbee, Arizona, and Grandpa was manager of Phelps Dodge Mercantile for the states of Arizona and New Mexico down there. He had retired and for Granny's health they had moved to California and were going to retire there. Daddy could not get licensed in California because of the way he had obtained his pharmacist's license and the closest we could get was Las Vegas, in Nevada.

Daddy had had quite an eventful young manhood. When he married my mother he was thirty; she was only nineteen. They had only known each other three weeks. It was quite a tempestuous and turbulent, I think, period of time for them. They got married there in Long Beach. He was managing the drugstore and she had come to work in the drugstore. I guess Granny and Grandpa were down there for the summer or something, and so she was working down there the year after she got out of high school.

But he had had a pretty lively life up until that point and had been a truck driver for a part of it and had discovered Las Vegas and he did like to play craps. So they decided they'd move to Las Vegas. So that's when we moved here.

Good. Give me your parents' names.

Daddy's name was Donald Botkin. My mother's maiden name was Stickland, no "R," Elizabeth. She went by Betty. She's still living. She's in a skilled nursing facility about a mile away—in fact, I just came from seeing her a little while ago. She'll be eighty-nine in three weeks. Daddy died in 1968.

Great. So your memories really start almost in Las Vegas. Maybe you remember a little of Kansas?

I remember a lot of Kansas and I even remember Denver. I remember my third birthday. It doesn't have anything to do with Las Vegas and I don't know if you have any interest in that.

Oh, no. Please. Yes, we do.

Well, I remember a couple of things about Denver. One was my third birthday because my birthday is in July. They had bought me a pink tricycle and it was in the trunk of this old car and they got that out and I thought that was okay. But I kept asking, I'm told, where is my happy birthday, where is my happy birthday, which was my birthday cake. So then they got the cake out of the trunk, also.

Another vivid memory, more vivid memory that I have of Denver was this horrid apartment that we lived in. The washing machine was down in the basement and the walls were dirt. I think the floor was dirt, also. My mother, with her five-month-old infant, my brother, and her three-year-old daughter, me, she would carry the laundry baskets with Kip, my brother, in the laundry basket downstairs into the basement in order to do the laundry. I remember the bugs

crawling on the walls. And to this day I am horrified of bugs.

We bought a car. I remember standing there and my mother had these gorgeous red strappy high-heel sandals that she was wearing that she let me play dress up in after I got a little older. But of course, I'm three years old, so I'm pretty close to the ground. So I remember standing there holding her hand while Daddy is negotiating for this 1938 whatever we had, this car that he bought.

I do have one other memory of Denver. She had put a harness on me with like a dog leash on it for when we went downtown. She got a lot of criticism from other parents about having her child treated like a dog and whatnot. But I got ambitious about crossing the street one day and I started to run across the street and she yanked back on me, which probably saved my life. And so she never felt a bit bad about that.

And then of course, the tiny town of Kansas that we moved to, it has 2,000 people in it now and is bustling; it had fewer then. It was the county seat. Very flat, very, very flat. Oh, wind, horrid wind, horrid cold. Kip and I would play in the snow in the wintertime. The street we lived on was not paved. We lived in a little one-story house for a year next door to the pharmacist that Daddy worked for. Then after that we bought a little two-story. Little, it was about eight hundred square feet at most, little two-story Cape Cod-looking house. I'm still very partial to two-story houses as a result. But the street was not paved and there was kind of a gully in front where I think the irrigation took place.

There was a Mexican family who lived across the street from us and he was the local plumber. Every year for Easter he would make rabbit tamales. Of course, my mother being born and raised in Arizona, Mexican food was soul food to her. Man, I ate my share of Mexican food growing up. My friends, when I was in high school, raved about her tacos and enchiladas and everybody was always over at our house eating my mother's tacos and enchiladas.

It was Easter Sunday and Daddy was going across the street to get the tamales, the bucket of tamales from Lee King, the plumber. He told me not to follow him because I had on my new patent leather shoes and my Easter dress and whatnot. Well, I was going to go wherever my daddy was going. Daddy and I were very close. So I followed him across the street. Of course, it was knee deep in mud. We get back to our house. And I can see it still; we're on the back porch, which is about three feet square, concrete slab, and he's there with this table knife scraping the mud off my shoes after he has blistered my butt. I'm standing there, still rubbing, and I'm crying, of course, and he's lecturing me. I have a lot of other memories of Kansas, which probably you don't have a lot of interest in.

But that's okay. I enjoyed that. So you've already told us why your family moved to Las Vegas. So you were how old when you got to Las Vegas?

I was eight.

Eight years of age. And where did you go to elementary school?

Well, when we moved here we moved to Thelma Lane, to a duplex on Thelma Lane.

Which area of the city is that?

Sixteen twenty-four was the street address and it's one block south of Charleston. It's still there. It's a series, a small, short block about as far as from here up to the street of this block, which is two-tenths of a mile, of duplexes.

And this is Charleston near here where we are?

No. This is Charleston on the other side of Maryland Parkway. This would be the sixteen-hundred block. So it's between Bruce and Maryland Parkway.

Okay, good. And where we're sitting now probably didn't even exist.

Oh, it didn't exist. When Jim and I moved into this house in 1982, Jones was not paved between

here and the condo that we lived in.

What are some of your first memories of Las Vegas?

Well, my first memory was we loaded what we could into our car, the four of us, and we drove out here. And our furnishings and toys and so forth were put in a moving van and it took six weeks for the moving van to get here. My first memory—in fact, I was telling my mother this morning when I was seeing her about you coming and talking about this—my brother and I called it a hill. It was so exciting to us because this part of Kansas is as flat as this table top. And there was a hill maybe about this high in front of the duplex that we moved into.

So about three feet high.

Yeah, at most. At most. More like two, probably. And all the time after we get there my brother and I are rolling down this hill. We're just in ecstasy that we had this hill to roll down. Then of course, our furniture didn't arrive and we went to Hollywood Furniture, which was at the corner, the southern Five Points of St. Louis and Las Vegas Boulevard and Main Street, and bought bunk beds. Mom and Daddy slept on the floor and Kip and I slept in these bunk beds. We had big cardboard cartons that we would use for our tables to eat off of.

We went to Mayfair School. I think it's on 15th and it's north of Charleston. We went half days. Well, let me back up. Living in the duplex was very different because we had been in a two-story house. It was a tiny little house, just two little bedrooms up in the pointed part of the house, but we had a huge, huge backyard with strawberries and hollyhocks and tulips in the front. And now we're in a duplex and I can't roller skate because the couple who lived in the other half of the duplex were very elderly and she was ill and she was just really grouchy. And so I couldn't roller skate. I had to go down—after my roller skates got here—out onto the sidewalk or onto the street to roller skate. But I couldn't play and I couldn't be rowdy and noisy like eight-year-old kids

are. And I walked to Mayfair School, which meant I walked up Thelma Lane and jiggled over and then crossed Charleston.

Now, is Kip old enough to go to school, as well?

Kip is in kindergarten; I'm in the third grade. He goes in the morning from eight to noon; I went from eight to four.

Overcrowding at that time?

Uh-huh, yeah. Surprisingly Las Vegas was having a little bit of a boom there in 1952.

So that was after the war. A lot of people had moved here during the forties.

And in conjunction with building the dam, of course. So going to school a half day was very foreign to me. Of course, it hadn't been my idea to move here. I was not happy with it at all, not in the least.

Even with the hill?

No. Even with the hill. Even with the hill. And so I went to school there. Ms. Pipkin was my teacher. I went there for the third grade. There was a house across the street from the school—several houses—and it had a big weeping willow tree. I remember my brother said that there was a girl who lived in that house. I thought the weeping willow—there were no trees in Kansas; it was quite a novelty there in the middle of the plains. It's a huge gas field where we lived in the southwestern corner, and so trees were quite a novelty to me as a result of that. But there was this little girl who lived there in that house with the weeping willow. My brother had a crush on her. So my mother asked him, well, what does she look like? Well, he said, she's got hair and she's got eyes. That's all the story that I recall of that.

He's still teased today probably.

Yeah, he still is. So after Mayfair—and that was only for the third grade—then I went to

Crestwood. And my bike finally arrived. I knew the moving van had arrived because I was walking down the alley coming home from school and Daddy was at home. And Daddy worked long hours and he was never at home in the middle of the day. He had gone to work at Frank Harp's drugstore, which was at Charleston and Main. He would walk over to El Sombrero Cafe for lunch or Momma would drive there and get lunch for him and take it to him because the pharmacist could not leave the store. In fact, that law was in effect until only about fifteen or twenty years ago. In the grocery stores if it had a pharmacy in it, if the pharmacist was not on duty, you had to close the whole store. Well, they changed that, like I say, about twenty years ago with the Nevada Legislature to where the pharmacy could be closed, but the rest of the store—Vons or Smiths or whatever—could stay open.

Thank you. I have never heard that. So you see how important it is to get everyone's story.

Well, that's true. And so anytime the store was open, he had to be there. It was just a small store. And so he could not leave the store.

So at any rate, back to knowing that our furniture had arrived, I'm walking down the alley and there's my daddy. He was wearing a rust-colored corduroy shirt, which I was very partial to, and he squatted down and held out his arms and I went running down the alley screaming daddy, daddy. My mother comes running out of the house yelling at me, don't talk like that; everybody will think your father has abandoned you and has just come back.

[Laughing] I like it.

And my bicycle was leaning up against the side of the building, so I knew that all our belongings had arrived and my dolls and my dollhouse and the other things that were of great importance to me.

So I went to Crestwood for the fourth grade and the fifth grade. We lived in various

apartments there, duplexes there.

In the same area?

There on Thelma Lane. We lived in three or four different ones on one or the other side of Thelma Lane. We moved to a triplex over on Lewis on the other side of Charleston. It's just off Charleston and Bruce. In fact, they had a horrible fire there about a year ago where some children perished. It was an adjacent building or something. Jim and I take long walks on Sunday mornings and we like to walk in the old neighborhoods during the winter, not during the spring where the trees are because that bothers his allergies. But in the winter when it's cold, we go about to various neighborhoods. So we go down Thelma Lane at least once a year and generally over to Lewis and whatnot. So I know that that building is still there. I would walk up Charleston. My mother was telling me this morning that part of Charleston was still dirt road at that point and I would walk up to Mayfair or Crestwood from our house on Lewis.

After we left Lewis we moved back to Thelma Lane to the southern side of the street. I was there when I was nine I remember. We were moving fairly frequently. I think we were moving into maybe a little bigger duplex each time. Then I think we rented a house on Eastern, 1501 Eastern; it's an insurance agency now. It's right by Sweeney and Franklin and I don't remember specifically the other streets that are right there. But Oakey was the next major street to the south and it was the last paved street in Las Vegas.

That was the last paved street?

It was, yes. Sahara was not paved. This would have been 1954 or 1955. Sahara was not paved. I was talking to my mother about it this morning when I was telling her that I was meeting with you this afternoon and the memories were coming back to her, as well. She was reminding me that Las Vegas Boulevard was called Fifth Street, which, of course, we all know and I still refer to it as

Fifth Street on occasion. The last hotel to the south at that time was the Flamingo. Well, there was the Flamingo and there was the Thunderbird and there was the Sahara and there was the El Rancho and that was all dirt road. She said when we would go and we'd have the cloud burst that we still have in this climate—and of course, we didn't have flood control until fifteen or twenty years ago—and so the streets. She said you'd drive out to go like to the Flamingo and you'd get stuck because the roads were not paved. But I remember Oakey being the last street that was paved. It was an east-west street, as it is now, but nothing to the south of it was paved. And then there were no buildings. You've seen the maps; you know what the aerial view looks like from that long ago. **Yes, exactly.**

So at any rate, now we're living on Eastern. We were there for, I don't know, about a year or so and Daddy had an opportunity to start his own business, a drugstore, in North Las Vegas with a partner of his who was living in Los Angeles, but it was a partner from Kansas, because he was born and raised in Kansas during the Depression. Daddy had a most interesting history with his parents dying when he was four and six and he had a little brother who was two years younger than he was. They had a grandmother who raised them until Daddy was twelve and then she passed away. So they just kind of lived on their own. So a pretty rough and tumble life. And it's a hard part of the country to live in. It's still a hard part of the country to live in. The climate is very severe. The water is so hard; the last good hair day you have is the last day you wash your hair at home. Everything about it is just harsh.

And so he had a very harsh childhood and, in fact, had been pronounced dead officially three times before he married my mother. One I know of was a car wreck when he was nineteen that took all his upper teeth. Then he lost a kidney. And I don't remember what the other occasion was. But at any rate, he had impressed upon Kip and I, you always have to take care of your

mother, because he didn't know how long he was going to live. He only lived until he was fifty-four. So we're still taking care of my mother.

But at any rate, he had this opportunity to buy a drugstore and partnership with this person he was not related to, but they were always aunt and uncle to me. And so we bought this drugstore on College Avenue, which is now Lake Mead, in North Las Vegas. It's a real rough part of town now. It wasn't a too whoopee part of town at the time we were there.

What did it look like?

It was twenty by eighty feet. It was in a strip center. There was a dry cleaner next to it. There was a grocery store on the west side of it. Then there was a barbershop. And then around the corner of this little strip mall there was a beauty shop. And it was just desert around it. It's at the foot of I think Yale. You drive through Five Points, the northern Five Points, and you continue on down Fifth Street, which will bear to the west, then you'll get to College Avenue and you make a right, and you only go three, four blocks or so. There was Harvard and Yale and Princeton and all those other streets with, oh, these crummy little houses. They're still crummy little houses there.

Did the family move to that part of town?

Well, that led us to moving to Jefferson Street, which is in North Las Vegas. The grade school, Jefferson Street Grade School, is on the corner of Jefferson and College. J.D. Smith was on Tonopah just two blocks or so from Jefferson Street. I don't remember what month it was that we moved there, but when the school year started I was still at Crestwood and I was supposed to go to Sunrise Acres. Sunrise Acres was on 25th Street; 25th Street and Eastern is the same street. And I told Momma I wouldn't go because I had heard that it was too rough a school and all the boys carried knives. Tom went to Sunrise Acres and so I'm sure you got some Sunrise Acres stories from him. And he turned out to be a fine fellow. But I told her I didn't want to go to Sunrise

Acres, and so she enrolled me at J.D. Smith for the sixth grade. So I went to J.D. Smith in the sixth grade.

Of course, if you didn't walk somewhere, you took your bike; I mean that's just the way we lived. Kip and I played in the desert. When we lived on Lewis, there's a triangular section between Charleston and Fremont down there in that section. We were closer to Charleston and we would head over into the desert behind the Purple Sage Motel and we'd play in the desert. I remember we found an old egg carton and we found a milk carton and we found an orange rind, and so we played store. One of us was the storekeeper and the other one was the customer and we played store. Just such simple, simple things to do.

Then when we had the drugstore, with this pharmacy law as long as the store was open, the pharmacist has to be there. The store was open from nine to nine six days a week. And so Daddy was at the store from nine to nine and my mother was the salesclerk at the store, also. And so when school ended I would walk to the store and Kip would go to the store. Now, he went to Tom Williams Elementary School and he went to Jefferson Street Elementary School. I don't remember precisely what grades. But I don't think J.D. Smith started until like fourth grade. So you went to those schools for grades one through three, which is what Mayfair was. And then once you're out of third grade, then you go to fourth, fifth and sixth, and then you go to high school, which was—no—fourth through eighth, and then you go to high school. That's right.

What were the other kids in the area? Were they all white, Mexican-American, or what was the population in the area of the store?

The dry cleaner's next door to us on the left, which would have been to the east—and it was about the same size as ours—a Mexican family owned that. I can't for the life of me remember those boys' names. I should be able to, but I'm having a middle-age lapse here. I'll think of that, too.

But at any rate, they were Mexican boys and the older one was really mean. He was a really mean kid. The story ran that he would take kids out into the desert and make them eat dog turds. That's how mean this kid was. The older one was, I think, a year older than I was and the younger one was between Kip and I.

Kip told this story a couple of years ago when we went to visit him up in Salt Lake for Thanksgiving. They would take pennies. And the railroad tracks still ran down the overpass there. There was an overpass and College went underneath it. And this was a few blocks to the west of the store, only a couple, three blocks to the west of the store. He said they would take pennies up there and they would lay them on the tracks and then the train would come by. Like I say, my brother told me this only two years ago and this was all news to me. Their name was like McNamara or McIntyre or something, this Mexican family. Robert was the older one, I think. And I said, I didn't know you hung around with them because Robert was so mean. He said, well, they never were mean to me. We played with them. And they were never mean to me, either, but I was always a little apprehensive around the older one. And we'd play in the desert.

The grocery store next door was owned by a man named Jones and everyone called him Jonesy, real small man. His children were never at the store. But there was a—we called it "The Pigpen" behind the store where they stored the boxes that the produce would be shipped in or whatever. We would ask if we could have one of the boxes and we'd take it out and make a fort out of it and play in the desert doing that. Well, Jonesy inducted Daddy into the Masons and did all his instruction for him. Momma's father had been a Mason and Daddy became a Mason. He must have been fairly active in it because he reached the 32nd degree stage. And 33rd degree is what you retire at, apparently. So he was a first degree, a second degree, a third degree and then I think from third degree then you go to the 32nd. But at any rate, he had a Masonic funeral. Jonesy was

the one who instructed him and was his mentor in that.

When we left the house on Jefferson Street and we moved to College Park, which was only about a year and a half later, Jonesy lived two streets to the south of us on Webb and Susie and I became great friends. We're still really, really close friends. And Donna and Susie and Sandy, who lived across the street from me, and I, the four of us still have a Christmas celebration and we celebrate our birthdays together every year.

Name the friends again.

That would be Sue; her last name is Watson now. Her maiden name was Jones and she was Jonesy's daughter. Then Donna Martin, whom you've met. She was a Twin Lakes' girl. So I didn't know her until our twentieth reunion when I started meeting Tom and Donna and getting close to them. I knew them in school. In fact, I knew Tom because Tom and I were in classes together, but all I knew of Donna was just as a celebrity, because of her dad.

[Laughing] I know. I know, yes.

Yeah. And so I never knew Donna other than to know who she was and to say hello to her. We may have been in pep club together or something, but I don't recall that. And then Sandy, her name was Harris; that was her maiden name. Her married name was Woodward. There were seven of us who all hung out together, I think.

We moved from Jefferson Street, an old, old house—we called it the Spanish Colonial house that we thought was built during the Spanish Inquisition. The windows slid back into the walls and it had a gorgeous fountain out in front. Actually, if it were kept up, it would really be a very nice house. It had a separated living room; it was in like two parts with a big archway to make like two rooms out of it. Then there was a dining room and then there was a kitchen and the bathroom backed up to that. Well, you'd be in the living room in the evening watching

television—I'll have to tell you about getting a television—and you'd go into the kitchen to get graham crackers or something and the cockroaches would all scatter. It had a septic tank that was sunken. I think we were connected to plumbing; I mean we had an indoor bathroom and everything like that, but I think we were on the city plumbing system by that time. But originally it had been a septic tank and it was adjacent to the driveway and there was a big hole that was like five or six feet square and about five or six feet deep. If you were really brave, you could jump down in it. Or if you were being really mean, you could throw your little brother down there.

Ooh. Sounds like this is experience you're talking about.

[Laughing] Yes. But it had a huge, huge yard and at one point it had rose bushes around the fountain and had been quite a showplace. So we lived there about a year and a half, I think, and then we moved to College Park. And it was a new house, just a cinder block house with a rock roof, swamp cooler. But it was the nicest house we had been in other than our little two-story house in Kansas, of course, which, as I say, was probably smaller.

But at any rate, when we moved to College Park, I was twelve. So this would have been between the seventh and eighth grades, I think. So this would have been like the summer of 1957 that we did that. It might have been '56 that we did that. I'm not really positive. But Sandy lived across the street and three doors up from me. Lynn lived at the corner three houses down. Then Susie lived—we were like three houses from the corner and Susie lived two houses from the corner two streets over. I met Lynn first because Susie was visiting aunts and uncles in upstate New York that summer. Her mother was a seamstress on the Strip for one of the showrooms. Of course, all these people, all these girls had brothers or sisters who were the same age as Kip was. So I had my class and then he had his class. Kip was crazy about Nancy, Sandy's little sister. Unfortunately, she died of kidney failure when she was twenty-one. He went to school with Nancy. He went to

school with Launa, who was Lynn's little sister. He went to school with Barbara, who was Susie's little sister. So we all just kind of hung out and we'd play basketball in the driveway.

Susie would come over to my house and hang around and do what thirteen-year-old girls do and it would be time for her to go home, so I'd walk her home, and then she'd walk me back and then I'd walk her home. This would last until like midnight. This is during the summer and nobody was worried about it. The crime rate was not such that children were not preyed upon in the way they are today. And we would just walk, covering all of our issues and our problems and our boyfriend problems and our parent problems and everything else, what color toenail polish to wear and all the rest of that stuff, just back and forth. We went barefoot all summer. I will always remember that the bottom of Lynn's feet—and she had such flat feet—they were just black.

So were you playing out in the desert with no shoes?

I don't think so. I don't know. I mean my feet were a lot tougher then than they are now. There was desert behind Lynn's house. See, we lived on Reynolds, which runs east and west. She lived on the corner of Reynolds and Statz. She was on the easternmost side of the street. Statz ran along this way and she was right here and there was just desert all behind her house. In the eighth grade—so this would have been September-October of 1957—her dad, who was a highway patrolman, had a big Halloween party and her dad built a big bonfire right behind their house. I remember we roasted marshmallows and hot dogs and did the things that thirteen-year-old kids do and whatnot, which, of course, is when my boyfriend first saw me and fell in love with me. He was my boyfriend in the eighth grade and a little bit of the ninth grade.

So what was his name?

He's dead now. He died just last year, unfortunately. He was a musician. His name was Don Frassa. I stayed in touch with Don off and on through the years until he died. I'm still very

sorrowful at the fact that he's gone because he was very important in my life.

My boyfriend before Don had been Gary Eyre. I finally saw Gary again at this reunion that we had in October. He lived on a pig farm. Owens was—let's see. I lived on Reynolds. And they were alphabetical, so it was pretty easy to keep track of them. There was no Q, but there was Flower and I don't remember what all, and Perliter and there was Reynolds, the street I lived on. Then there was Stanley and then there was Webb, which was the street that Susie lived on, and then there was Owens. So if you went east on Owens about out to Pecos—and I don't remember the cross street, but we found it on the map, Gary and I, when we were at your library in October.

And Gary brought his brother Brad to the reunion, and Brad was in Kip's class. I didn't remember Brad; I mean what use does a thirteen-year-old girl have for a ten-year-old boy, for heaven's sakes? I didn't remember Brad at all. He grew up to be a very sexy man and I danced with him at the reunion. Brad asked if I remembered the time that all of us, meaning Lynn and Launa and Susie and probably her older brother Dickey and Barbara, her sister, and Brad and Gary and me and Kip and maybe Sandy and Nancy—I don't know; Sandy was pretty fastidious and Nancy was kind of the same way—but we were all playing kick the can or something in the street. And Brad turned to me—this is in October, just a couple of months ago—he turned to me and said, “And one of the girls fell down and broke her front tooth. Was that you?” I said no, that was definitely not me because my teeth are one of the things that I've always been really proud of all my life. My poor brother wore braces, but I never had to. I was always the one with the perfect teeth in the family. So no, it was not me. We figured out between us that we thought it was Barbara Jones that had fallen down and broken her tooth. I had forgotten about the episode altogether.

So then Gary said, well, do you remember—and I did have to think on this a little bit and I

talked to Susie about it afterwards—when we got on our bikes and we rode out to their pig farm one day and we all rode the pigs? I said no. I said I don't remember that. So I asked Susie about it and she says, oh, yeah, I remember that. So I guess riding the pig was not eventful enough for me to recall because I don't remember that at all [laughing].

[Laughing] I would have forgotten it, too.

What I did remember was Susie's initiation into Rainbow Girls.

Tell me what Rainbow Girls is.

Rainbow Girls is—there's the Masons and then the women. The Rotaries and the Rotary Aunts. And the women are members of the Eastern Star. The boys are members of DeMolay and the girls are Rainbow Girls. I always wanted to be a Girl Scout and I wanted to be a Rainbow Girl, but we just didn't have the money, and so I just never could.

Well, Susie was in Rainbow Girls and she had to have a formal. And for her initiation they made her ride a greased pig in her formal. And so we're talking about riding the pig out at Gary's pig farm and I said, Susie, I don't remember that at all, but I do remember that you had to ride a pig for your initiation into Rainbow Girls. Well, she didn't remember that. I thought how in the world could you forget that, for heaven's sakes? But we called Susie our dizzy blond. She's just a little different in her thinking process.

So this is a prestigious group, the Rainbow Girls?

Yes, very much so.

And you have to ride a pig.

For the initiation, to be initiated into it, like they do a sorority.

So now, is it considered—was it like a debutante event when you said the formals?

I think so, yeah. And that's probably why I never pestered my parents to let me be a member of it

because it would have been just beyond our means.

Your father was a pharmacist. Today we think of a pharmacist as a very lucrative position.

Yes, it is a very well-paying position. But he was a small business owner is what he was. We had our own store.

I had dancing lessons, tap, ballet and acrobatic for about three years after we moved here because there's nothing like that in Kansas. I mean you go to Sunday school and you go to school and you go to church and that was about it. There was nothing other than that. Although my mother belonged to a book club of some kind, although she said it was really just a gossip fest all the time. But after we moved here I was enrolled in tap, ballet and acrobatic, and I did that for the fourth, fifth and sixth grade.

Do you remember which school?

It was not at school.

I know. Do you remember the—

The dance school or who taught it?

Yes.

No, I don't. The last thing I remember about it was that after we had the drugstore the classes I went to—and they were once a week probably after school, probably a Wednesday—at the VFW Hall, which is on Las Vegas Boulevard right across from Cashman Field. We had to pay a dollar for each class. Apparently, there was quite a lot of people who were not interested in coming, so they made you pay it a week in advance. And when I decided in my twelve-year-old mind that it was too expensive for my parents, I had advanced pay for a week and I gave up that week. I quit after having paid the dollar and I just felt dreadful after that because that dollar would have bought beans or whatever.

So we have this store. Somewhere where I was twelve or thirteen—I was ten when Daddy opened the store and we had it for about three years. I could roller skate in front of the store. Finally, we got a sidewalk. Of course, I'm at the store until the store closes, which is probably a little bit of interest to you in the way people lived then. Kip and I, as I started to say half an hour ago, after school we would go to the store. We had a table in the back room. It was a big rectangular table, chipped paint and whatnot, and it was covered with an oil cloth that was thumbtacked on the bottom. That's where the merchandise would come in that we'd check the merchandise in and that would go to the floor.

You and Kip did that?

Yes. Yes, we did that. I waited on customers. I learned to make change. When I was nine years old I could make change, wait on customers, run the register. Pappy—his name was Paul—but Pappy, Daddy's business partner, he worked in the drugstore and my mother worked in the drugstore, in the front part of the drugstore, and then Daddy was the pharmacist and Kip and I were the menial help. Pappy and Momma were there and I don't know at what point Pappy went home. But when business got not too busy he would leave and Momma and Daddy and us kids ran the store. There was a product of some kind; it was about the texture of coffee grounds, I think, but it was usually green, and you scatter it on the floor and then you use a push broom and it scooped up all the lint. It was a lint grabber, sort of a gummy kind of a thing, like finely crumbled eraser, I think. Kip's job was to sweep the store up every night just before it closed. We learned to check in merchandise, figure out the cost code for it, translate it into the code because the old sales tags would have on it the date that it was bought—E, like for May; and then seven for May of '57—so you could tell by looking at a tag when it came in and then the cost code, which was in letters. E and T Drugstore was rose talcum. It has to be ten letters; they have to be all different. So that if it

cost you a dollar, it was R-M-M, rose talcum. Everybody had a different code. Years later after I was married the store I worked for in Henderson it was "pharmocist" with the second A being an O. Ours at the drugstore was "make profit." So we would translate, say, the purchase price, the wholesale price of it into the cost code, then a line, and then the number on the bottom is what you sell it for, a dollar twenty-nine or whatever.

I remember one day Daddy called to me. He said, Sydney Anne, I need for you to go over to E and T and pick up a bottle stretcher for me. I said okay, I'll ride my bike over. He said I talked to Merdell Earl. He says he's waiting for you and he'll have the bottle stretcher ready for you. He and Pappy are standing together. And he had grown up with Pappy. He was probably in the car with him when he lost all his teeth. Pappy was older than Daddy. God, these guys were wild. I said okay, I'll go get my bike. Then finally he busted up and he starts laughing. I said you're laughing at me. I said what are you laughing at? I was so hurt. Well, there's no such thing as a bottle stretcher, for heaven's sakes. Well, I was going to get on my bike and I was going to ride over to E and T Drugstore. And they had the best cherry cokes at E and T Drugstore, which is now the Palomino Club. It has been for years and years and years. But we knew Merdell Earl real well and I remember his obituary in the paper, I don't know, years, years ago.

Anyway, we had the drugstore and that's how we spent our time. We had a hotplate and my mother would make dinner for us there in the drugstore and we would eat our dinner at that same table. We would do our homework at that same table. At nine o'clock when the drugstore closed, we would all get in the car and we would drive home to Jefferson Street and we'd go to bed.

Now, did you have a soda fountain in that drugstore?

No, we did not. We did not. I was really sorry that we did not. There had been a soda fountain in the drugstore in Kansas where I lived. And when I was seven—this is really an aside—when I was

seven I went there after school with one of my little girlfriends and we sat down in those chairs with those marble top tables and those little bitty wire chairs and sat down. The clerk came over and asked what we would have. I said cherry coke. I loved cherry cokes. And the other little girl ordered whatever she ordered and whatnot. And so they brought them and we drank them and then they brought the bill, probably five cents apiece. This is 1950. I just pushed it back to them and I said, "Charge it." Oh, god, did I get my butt blistered for that. Oh, my goodness. So I was raised in retail.

So no, we didn't have one. And I had asked Daddy are we going to have a soda fountain? Well, probably because I said charge it he said, no, we're not going to have one.

Earlier you said something about one of your girlfriends had a mother who was a seamstress.

Yes. Right. Susie's mother.

Susie Watson. Is her mother still alive?

No. Her mother died of Alzheimer's about fifteen years ago I would say. There were four children in that family. Dickey was the oldest and then Susie was only a year behind Dickey and then Barbara was the same age as Kip, which was two and a half years younger than I am, and then Mimi was the baby. Susie's sister Barbara married Steve Waugh, who was the undersheriff for a lot of years. Barbara was real big in the school district. She worked in the school district. I think she may have ended as a principal. They retired and they're in Arizona somewhere now. Mimi's husband, Don, I don't remember what he does. Mimi is about ten years younger than we are, I think. And I cannot recall what she does. I saw her at Susie's house about four summers ago. She's still drop dead gorgeous. But Jonesy died probably twenty-five or so years ago, thereabouts, maybe a little longer.

You also said earlier how you and your mother were discussing this interview today. Is your

mother able to sit for an interview?

I don't know. I was thinking about that.

So think about that.

Yeah, I will think about that. She had a stroke in late December and she's pretty well paralyzed on the left side. Mentally she's mostly there, but she repeats herself a lot now and I'm not sure if you would find it beneficial or just frustrating. I visit her every day and I will continue to ask her. Like I say, I was wondering about that. So if I get anything interesting from her, if I could just call you and pass that on?

I would appreciate it.

I know that she has different memories of Las Vegas than I do. She would have an adult perspective.

Exactly. Tell me what your parents did for—your father worked a lot because of the restrictions. Did they ever get to go out, adult entertainment?

Yeah, they did. In the interest of a full history of Las Vegas, I probably should tell you this story. We hadn't been here very long. He was still at Frank Harp's drugstore. So it was like the first year we were here. We went to pick him up from work that night and it was payday. Momma was driving. We picked him up. Kip and I are in the backseat. She said something to him about his paycheck. He said I lost it. And she says what do you mean you lost it? He had gone to the Golden Nugget and he had gambled away his paycheck. I mean we're living week to week, two weeks to two weeks, whatever it was. My mother still has a very volatile temper. She's quite the character. I don't remember the rest of it; probably blocked it out of my mind.

My parents drank a lot after they moved here. Daddy worked a lot and he drank a lot. He never drank at work, but his days off. Jim has said to me that my brother's memories are much

darker than mine of our childhood. There was always a huge fight every Sunday night because he was off on Sundays and he and Momma would both drink all day. That's where a good amount of the funds went.

Well, we lost the store. I probably should back up a little bit. I've gotten to where I'm about twelve or so and Vegas Village came into being. Being a bigger store, they could buy at lesser prices than we could. Their profit margins could be smaller. They could have loss leaders and whatnot. The landlord raised the rent on the building that our store was in. The combination of the lesser revenues and the greater costs...so we lost the store. I was beginning the seventh grade I think at that point. So Daddy went to work as a pharmacist in town and he did that until he died.

So at any rate, sometime when I was in about the seventh grade or so we lost the store and Daddy went to work elsewhere, for other drugstores in town. By this time I'm becoming fairly consumed with my own life, I think, and I had a really interesting experience in the seventh grade. Again, I'm going to J.D. Smith School; it's still a grade school. And I'm in Mr. Lawford's class; I think his name is Lawford, very good teacher. I would talk to my mother about my homework and whatnot and she told me he was really a smart man. Well, he left teaching and went to work up at the Test Site in about October or so. We're like six weeks into the school year and so now they have no teacher. So they took our class and they split it up. There were six seventh grade classes; now there are five. So they just moved us all into the other classes. For some reason, I think it must have been because they were getting ready to remodel J.D. Smith because they turned it into a junior high school, my class had to move over to Rancho High School. The eighth graders were at Rancho High School in the farthest wing, the southwestern most wing. They were laid out like fingers and there were like four classrooms in each of those wings. They had a vacant room. They may have shifted people, too, in order to do that. But this one wing had the eighth graders in it,

and so they moved us seventh graders into the end of that wing. But we did have to walk from that wing down to the gym for our PE class, which was virtually across campus. It lay diagonally the farthest distance you could possibly walk. Well, there were some rough kids in that seventh grade class. Again, the boys all carried knives and the girls used terms I had never heard of, like virginity. There was a girl there and—I think she was at our 45th reunion—oh, God, she was a tough one and she claimed to have lost her virginity. I mean we're twelve years old. So this is where I learned the facts of life from. And so naturally, I am not paying a lot of attention to what's going on in my parents' life. I am really consumed with learning about the outside world.

It was a pretty scary year. The friends that I had mentioned to you, none of them were in that class. They were still at either Twin Lakes or J.D. Smith. They were not in that class. I do have a close friend who now lives in Denver. She's lived in Denver for forty years or more. But she was in that class. But that was quite a traumatic experience for me.

So then when I reached the eighth grade we're back at J.D. Smith. So at Rancho we've got all the eighth graders. Everybody there is older than us. First of all, there's this really tough seventh grade class that I'm in. Then there's three classes of eighth graders. Of course, they're going to lord it over seventh graders because they're in high school and now they've got somebody they can beat up on. We'd get bullied walking to and from school, verbally. I don't believe we were ever physically assaulted, but we were scared pretty good and reduced to tears. And we walked. And then the eighth grade was back at J.D. Smith. I was in a nice class and I had a boyfriend by this time.

And you're with your friends again?

Yes, I'm back with my friends again. We're the oldest class because now it's sixth, seventh and eighth graders. Well, now we're the eighth graders, so now there's no one older to prey upon us

and it's safe again.

We had PE and we had to wear short sleeve white shirts, camp shirts, and shorts. I guess we could wear shorts in any color that we wanted. Well, I had a purple pair of shorts, lavender. I was in my lavender phase at that time. Every little girl goes through a lavender phase. Mine lasted about six years or so. But at any rate, I wore these purple shorts and this white blouse. I remember my boyfriend Don, he was in a different room than me because we stayed in the same room all the time; you don't change classes yet and you have one teacher. He was in a different room. But he said something about he could always spot me out when I had PE because he said I was in those purple shorts. And I don't remember if he told me this when we were in school or if he told me this thirty years later. But he said you looked just like a turnip. [Laughing] Oh, dear.

So then when we hit the ninth grade, they've turned it into a junior high school. J.D. Smith has now become a junior high school. So now it's seventh, eighth and ninth.

Oh. So you get to stay another year?

So we stay another year. I thought, my god, now they're going to turn it into high school and we're going to be here and we're never going to get out of this place. Then they're going to turn it into a college and we're going to go to college here. And then they're going to turn it into some kind of a workplace and then it's going to be a funeral home. I said we're all going to die in this building.

[Laughing] That's great.

So we were there in the ninth grade. I was a cheerleader in the eighth grade and I was the editor of school paper and something else; I don't remember now. But I was quite the important person in the eighth grade. In the ninth grade we did tryouts for cheerleader in groups. They decided they needed seven cheerleaders instead of six. We always had six before. So they had seven. I tried out with another girl, Twyla Leavitt I'm pretty sure it was, unfortunately who died only after about

ten years into our adulthood. Twyla and I tried out as cheerleaders together. There was a group of five who tried out together. Everybody said they voted for the group of five and me and Twyla. Well, there was one girl who was in the group of five and she was so—I was not particularly athletic. She was a rotten cheerleader. She was just terrible. She was awful. She was just awful. But she got to be a cheerleader because she was part of that group of five. So I didn't get to be a cheerleader in the ninth grade. But I was editor of the school paper again in the ninth grade and I was president of the Spanish Club, because we had languages by then. So I took Spanish in the ninth grade. And something—I don't remember—pep club, drill team.

What kind of sports did you have that you needed cheerleaders?

Basketball. I don't remember football, but I remember basketball. Don was on the basketball team and I was a cheerleader; I remember that. There was football, I'm pretty sure, in junior high school, but I'm not positive. Gordon or somebody could tell you more about it.

So did you start working?

Yes, I did.

Other than the drugstore.

I had worked in the drugstore. Then I worked during the summers; I always worked and it was always in a drugstore. Then my senior year I did like so many others did—I know Donna did—we were part of what was called the DECA program, which was distributive education something-something; I don't remember now what it was. But we went to school in the morning and then we'd work in the afternoon. So I worked at this time it was White Cross Drug on the Strip, which is where Daddy was working at this time. He may have been managing it by that point. So I worked there in the afternoon, during Christmas holidays, always during the summers. After about age fifteen or sixteen, I guess, I was always working.

So do you have to share the money with the family or was it your money?

My whole ninety-five cents an hour that I made was mine. I put it in a savings account. I have no idea what your age is and I have no idea where you went to school. But we had Bank Day at school. This started at Crestwood. I think it was Wednesday. They had a sign; it was about the size of a twenty-five mile an hour speed limit sign; it was cardboard that they would hang up on the blackboard Tuesday, "Tomorrow is Bank Day." Then they would flip it over on Wednesday, "Today is Bank Day." That meant that you brought your money, which was always for me a silver dollar, and you deposited it in a savings account. The school had arrangements with Bank of Nevada—I mean there was Bank of Nevada and there was maybe Bank of Las Vegas, I'm not sure, but that's all there was in town. We had individual savings accounts in our own name. So then when it got to be Christmas and you wanted to buy presents for your parents, now you had money. It was instilling economics and savings and whatnot in children. So I always had this savings account. So my money always went in there because that was being saved for college because my parents had raised me—you will go to college, you will go to school, you will have a profession, you will have a degree. Because my mother did not and she was a salesclerk and she couldn't go be a nurse or anything like that. So I had to have a vocation of some kind. So yeah, I was always working.

So tell me what it was like when you reached Rancho. You already had experience—

Knowing my way around the buildings, I did. In the ninth grade we changed classes at J.D. Smith. So I became familiar with it from that standpoint. That was a very adult move for me to change classes.

One of the notes that I made that I wanted to mention to you were the teachers that we had. I had a teacher in the ninth grade who taught the history class. His name was Mr. Stanford. We all

had crushes on him; he was gorgeous. He had black hair. He had an interest in Greek mythology. So we learned a great deal of Greek mythology in that class. In fact, Tom Martin loaned me a book a few weeks ago about the First Peloponnesian War or something. I haven't read it yet; it's upstairs waiting. He had tried to read it, but he couldn't get through the names and keep the characters straight. I had the same experience with *War and Peace*; I couldn't keep the names straight, so I couldn't keep the characters straight, so I couldn't keep the action straight. I tried and tried and tried and finally set it aside. I have yet to read the book. But I told Tom, I said, because of this history class that I had in the ninth grade, I said, I can look at those and those names just flow—Thucydides, Hippocrates. All those names I understand the pronunciation. It's just real easy for me. He had such an interest in that period and he instilled the excitement of learning about another period in people.

I had a great algebra teacher that year also, Mr. Smith I think his name was. I can see him, but I'm not positive of his name. But he was really, really good in algebra and he instilled in me a real interest in algebra, coupled probably with my own skills and interests, as well. Then when I went to Rancho I had geometry and I had a very old man for a teacher. God, he has to have been in his eighties. He was stooped. He seated us alphabetically by our last name, so I was in the very back row. So I couldn't hear him and he mumbled. We had a really smart girl in class and after a few weeks he figured out she should teach the class instead of him, and so he had her up there teaching the class.

Could you hear her at least?

I could hear her, but I still couldn't make a lot of sense out of what was going on. She's another fourteen-year-old like me. So my grounding in geometry is very poor. So when I got to college and I had to take trig, I floundered and I skated out of there with a D finally. Just glad to be out of

there because I just never could grasp it. Then I had algebra two when I was a junior at Rancho and that made a lot more sense to me because I had a good grounding in algebra.

But changing classes in the ninth grade was helpful to me when I went to Rancho, but a much larger group. Rancho, we had a graduating class of four hundred and sixty-five or something. We started as sophomores, so there was more of us then. So you're looking at a school with fifteen hundred, eighteen hundred students. This is huge coming from our little junior high school, for heaven's sake.

And this is 1962.

This was 1959 that I would have started my sophomore year. It's always real easy to remember because in 1958 I got out of the eighth grade. In 1959 I got out of the ninth grade. That was easy to remember.

But talking about teachers reminds me further back in my history, my personal history. When I was in the fourth grade at Crestwood we had a class, probably part of the music class, but they taught us the "Virginia Reel." It may have been in conjunction with physical education for children, too. We got to go on television and do it on local television. You probably heard this from others, but I do need to talk to you about the television and whatnot here.

Well, when we moved here we were eating off the cardboard boxes on Thelma Lane in 1952. All we had was a radio. Well, my mother was a stay at home mother other than when she worked in the drugstore, and so she had the radio on all the time. So we'd listen to Stella Dallas and all those other radio programs and whatnot. Then the Christmas I was nine—we were still on Thelma Lane, but we were in a different apartment—they told us about Santa Claus because they had bought a television set and it was going to be delivered Christmas Eve and we had been told it was going to be from Santa. But then if the furniture guys brought it and they brought it on

Christmas Eve that meant they had to tell us about Santa Claus. I was so mad because my little brother was only six years old and he was way too young to have that disillusion. I was so angry at them. For years I was mad at them about that.

We had Channel 8; that was the only TV station. There would be the test patterns and it would go off at night and they'd play that one with the Air Force guy soaring up into the skies and I have touched the face of God; they always ended with that. Then we got Channel 3 and then we got Channel 13. So I mean, my god, we had three TV channels.

And my grandparents lived in Southern California and Daddy's brother and his wife lived in Southern California. So we would go down there to see them. That was the point of us moving to Las Vegas was to be close to my grandmother.

That's right. Because there's the Long Beach connection.

Right. So we go to Long Beach every chance we get, for Thanksgiving or Momma would drive us kids down there for a little bit in the summer; that kind of thing. So we're coming and going to and from Long Beach.

You probably will find this of interest and I don't know if you've heard of this from anybody else. But Las Vegas is really like an island when you think about it. We would only get fresh produce like once a week. We didn't get the produce that we're blessed with now. We certainly didn't get strawberries in January from South America or anything like that. And the fruit and the vegetables that we got here, even when I was a teenager, was nothing compared to the produce that they had in Southern California.

Aunt Reney, who was my father's brother's wife, she was quite the cook and we would go there and you'd have fried chicken and mashed potatoes, but then you'd have sliced tomatoes and then you'd have two or three other vegetable dishes and the fruit, oh, my god, the fruit. It was just

blissful. I remember eating a pound and a half of cherries.

Oh, yes, I understand.

Sounds like your own personal experience. I think I was eleven when we were down there that summer and I ate a pound and a half of cherries. It was the day before we came home. She didn't object to my having eaten them; it wasn't like she was saving them for a recipe or anything. But they were just—I loved cherries. I still love cherries. They were just so novel.

And it didn't make you sick?

Yeah. I had ferocious diarrhea from it, unfortunately.

But anyway, this learning the “Virginia Reel” in school, they taught us about the historical roots of the Virginia Reel and it being based in the old English country dance of Sir Roger de Coverley and whatnot like that. I find that interesting now when we're watching Scrooge as a Christmas Carol or something and Mr. Fezziwig speaks about we're dancing Sir Roger or whatever. I'm thinking I know about that; I know the connections in that line.

But when we first moved here and we had only the radio, Kip and I were outside playing and we were real disappointed there was no snow because, man, we were used to snow. We had a lot of fun playing in the snow. We had no snow to play in. But anyway, we're outside playing and whatnot and my mother—come inside, hurry, hurry, come inside, come inside. So we go running inside. We had each written a letter to Santa and they read it on the air. This is Las Vegas. They read the local kids' letters to Santa on the air. But we missed it because we were playing outside and we got in just at the very tail end and didn't hear it, as to how good we've been and what we wanted and all the rest of that stuff. But I thought you would find it interesting that in 1952 in Las Vegas on the radio channels that they had here in Las Vegas in December they would have the kids' letters to Santa read.

I love it.

I went on TV and danced the "Virginia Reel" with the rest of my fourth grade class. There was at some point Kip and I were on the Bostick Wester Show. He was an old cowboy. This was after television. I think I'm like nine because we had the television by then, I'm pretty sure. He had an afternoon program after school and it was for kids and he'd have local kids on. I'm sure Donna talked to you about Cinderella.

Yes.

It was a similar sort of thing except he was a cowboy. I don't know if we talked to the guy, if we danced. I don't know what in the world we did. I don't remember it now. I remember being kind of puzzled over the whole thing. I was always an analytical kid. What's the point of this? What am I doing here? And he gave us peanut butter and banana sandwiches, which I thought were very foreign.

How did you get invited to the television show?

No idea. No idea. I don't recall. I'll ask my mother. Maybe she'll remember. In which case I'll call you up and I'll tell you. So anyway, that was the local TV programing. One of the things was like Donna talked about the Cinderella program.

I made a note on this and it kind of reminded me. My house was on Reynolds and then there's Stanley and then there's Webb where Susie's house is and then there's Owens. Okay. On Owens behind Susie's house, a door or two up from her, there was a local stripper who lived there. I think her name was Candy Barr. But she lived there. I'm positive the woman lived the same kind of life that the rest of us lived except that she was a stripper. So all of us, we're about thirteen, maybe we're fourteen, might have been we're fifteen, but we're no older than that, I think we're like fourteen. There's about three or four of us one night. This has got to be during the summer when

you're not taken up with homework all the time because I always did homework. We decided we're going to go over to her house. So we go to her house and we screw up our courage and we knock on the door. It's probably eight or nine o'clock at night, I suppose. It must have been her housekeeper opened the door for us. I don't know; it may have been her daughter; it may have been a relative of some kind. Who knows? A neighbor woman looking after her children. Who knows? A woman opened the door and we asked for her. I'm sorry, Ms. Barr is not here at the moment; she's at work. Oh, well, would you please tell her that we greatly admire her and we want to grow up to be just like her. And then we giggled horribly and went scurrying off just terrified. What a mean thing to do. I hope that woman never told her about that. Surely we can't be the only little nasty girls who did something like that.

Did you know what a stripper was?

Well, I must have been fourteen or fifteen; this is after my life in the seventh grade at Rancho High School, so I probably did by this point.

Another thing that we did during those College Park years was we did something that—this was probably Susie's idea—let's go bug hunting. What in the world is bug hunting? Well, you do that after dark, also. There was not a lot of stuff for kids to do in Las Vegas.

Obviously not.

So what we did was after dark we went around the neighborhood and we stole flowers off their bushes. I don't know how we cut them because we didn't have scissors.

And why did you call it bug hunting?

I have no idea. I probably asked somebody and it had probably come from another part of the country and that's what they called it there. Well, Susie had to go potty. We're not near anybody's house that we know, so you can't go knock on the door and say, Sandy, excuse me, can I use your

bathroom? So we formed a circle around her and she squatted down in the gutter and she peed in the gutter.

She won't hear this, right?

She'll probably remember and she'll laugh about it if she remembers it at all.

Oh, I loved Bank Day; that was a great story. I love that.

Oh, good. Good.

So any other jobs as you went through Rancho or did you continue to work in drugstores?

Just in drugstores; that's all I did.

So at Rancho what were some of your extracurricular activities? Did you continue to be a cheerleader?

No. I was in the pep club. By the time you get to Rancho and you've got a population of eighteen hundred...I was never an acrobat or anything. I was always too long and awkward, whatever. I was in the pep club. I was in the Spanish club, I'm sure. I never thought I was coordinated enough to be in the dance club, but I always wanted to be. I always wanted to be and, oh, I envied those girls. But I studied and the primary emphasis was always on studying and doing my homework and getting good grades so that I could go to college so that I could have a career.

Great. Did you know at this point, as you are eighth, ninth, tenth grade, what that career would be or what you wanted it to be?

I was going to be a teacher. As a result of that, the teachers all looked very favorably on me because I wanted to be a teacher just like them. So whenever they needed to single somebody out for something responsible—and I was a very responsible kid—I was generally the one that was picked for something. I thought I would like history. I didn't particularly care for English, but I was really, really good at it. In fact, my senior year—oh, you'll find this interesting—my senior

year I was selected to be part of what they call the Selected Senior Program, which meant that instead of taking high school English in our senior year we could take our college English. And so there were about eight of us, I think. Kent Farnsworth, who was our student body president, was part of it. None of my girlfriends were because they were not as studious as I was. There were like eight of us. We went out to Nevada Southern University. We started with Monday, Wednesday and Friday for an hour, a three-credit course; or do you want to do it for an hour and a half only two times a week? And I remember speaking up and saying that seems much more economical timewise, gaswise, everything else; so let's do it an hour and a half. So we had two classes every week for an hour and a half. That's how I took my two semesters of English. So I had those when I graduated from high school.

And they were taught by college professors?

Yes, they were the regular college classes. We were just part of a college class; there were others as well, not just the eight of us.

But the eight that you knew, did you feel intimidated? Did anyone feel intimidated in that environment rather than at your regular high school, do you remember?

I don't remember that; I don't remember being uncomfortable about it at all. Maybe there was only six or seven of us. We'd all pile into one car. And Kent, our student body president, was just a marvel because he knew everybody's phone number. We had Dudley and we had Midway and Henderson had Frontier. But all you needed to remember was what part of town they lived in; if they were Dudley or Midway, which was North Las Vegas, and then those two digits you could pretty well figure out. If you could just remember the other five digits—

Right. So Dudley would be D-U?

Uh-huh, D-U, and Midway was M-I. And ours was two four five oh three. But he never had to

write down anybody's phone number; he just had it memorized. You'd say, well, let's call Gary and see—okay, his number is. Or let's call so-and-so. And he just knew everybody's. He's a dentist now in Carmel. He was at the reunion, also. He looks exactly the same except it's got a little bit more here. But other than that he looks exactly the same. Gary at the pig farm went on to become a chiropractor and he's in Santa Rosa, which is nearby.

But anyway, we'd all pile into Kent's new Volkswagen. There was like eight of us. And so we were—oh, yes. Anything south of Sahara, like Maryland Parkway, was not paved. This is 1961 and 1962. The Strip, Fifth Street is paved. But as far out as Maryland Parkway, that was not paved. And great big dips when you'd get near Flamingo, great huge hills that we would go through to get there.

Oh, that's great. That's a wonderful memory. Thank you.

I thought you would like that. And we'd take turns driving and I would take my parents '55 Chevy is what I would drive when it was my turn.

Which was more comfortable than the Volkswagen, I'm sure.

Yes, it was. We still crammed all seven of us into it, but you could do it. I'm pretty sure there must have been seven of us because there would be three in the front and then there would be four or five in the back. God knows how we got into that (Volkswagen/indiscernible).

It's like getting in a phone booth.

Well, yeah.

Do you remember the dances? You wanted to dance anyway, so you should remember these.

What about the proms? And afterwards? People told me that students at this time could go on the Strip afterwards. And I want to know about the Sadie Hawkins Dances.

[Laughing] Okay. I started sewing seriously when I was thirteen. I had been sewing—my mother

would cut my jeans off and I'd make a little doll dress, just a little shift out of it before that time and I used my mother's sewing machine. Sadie Hawkins Day, this would have been our senior year, so it would have been like October, around Halloween. I decided that I was going to go as Daisy Mae. So I made this cute pointed skirt, and I've always had good legs. So I had this cute pointed skirt and I had this little off-the-shoulder ruffled peasant blouse. The skirt was polka dot and then I had a big wide sash on it. I invited Vern (I've forgotten his last name) to go with me.

Did you have to run him down?

Yeah, I did. We did. And I'm sure they've told you about that; you had to chase after them. And I generally had a steady boyfriend. I was one of those people that was in stuff for the long term, so I would have the same boyfriend for a year or year and a half or something like that. They were always older than me, so then they'd graduate and they'd go in the Navy, so there I had to find a new boyfriend.

So I had nobody I was particularly interested in, and so I decided Vern, he's not a heartthrob; there's not going to be a lot of competition for him; he's nobody's boyfriend. So I'll ask Vern. So I chased him down; I don't remember that part of it. You had something—what was it?—like a scrap of fabric and you had pin one on him and one on yourself to match or something. When you chased them down, you pinned them. Yeah, I had forgotten that we had to chase them down. I'm glad you reminded me of that, Claytee. That's a funny part of it. So I chased him down. So I guess I was driving. Yeah, by my senior year I was driving. And I picked him up, which I don't recall. The dance was in the little theater, which is there on the campus of the school. And then the cafeteria is just outside of it and they had big bales of hay. They had really done it up in a hokey hoedown sort of a manner. I ran into Vernon at the fifty-year reunion in October; it's the dinner dance portion of it. I've gotten up and I've gone to the ladies room and he's standing there

talking to Kent, he and his wife talking to Kent.

Vernon went on to invent the self-service gas pump, I think. The guy is rolling in dough. He's rolling in dough.

So he's standing there talking to Kent. I go past, just kind of go to the ladies room. When I come back Kent reaches up, he grabs my arm and he pulls me over into the conversation. And Vern says to me I don't remember you at all in school. Tell me about yourself. Or did we have classes together or something like that. Finally being a kind adult I said, well, it was a big school and we didn't all have classes together, so I'm not too surprised that you don't remember me.

What I did remember and did not say was that he had such severe hay fever we spent the entire dance sitting out in the cafeteria; we couldn't go on the hay ride afterward. It was the most miserable date I ever had in my whole life.

[Laughing] Okay. But did you mention that you remember with him at Sadie Hawkins?

No. He had spaced my existence entirely. Now, did you talk to Cheryl Leonard by any chance?

Not yet.

You're going to?

Going to. I think she's one of the ones who's out of town right now.

Okay. Well, Cheryl will tell you a story because she's told us this at our reunion meetings. She had a boyfriend that she went with for a year. He took her to the senior prom. She was trying to find him for the reunion and she called him up. And he said, no, Cheryl, I don't remember you at all. You'll have a good time interviewing Cheryl. And I thought, man, if anybody said that to me I would have decked him. After you date the guy for a year?

I made a note of that one. Thank you.

We'll talk about the dances and whatnot in a minute, but you reminded me of something. I'm sure

everybody has mentioned to you that the only places to shop in Las Vegas—we all went to Fremont Street. We went to Sears and we went to Penney's. We went to Ronzone's if we were really rich. And for one of my prom dresses—I thought I was going to go to two proms, but the one boyfriend didn't ask me—I bought a dress at the Lanz Dress Shop, which was in one of the hotels. It could only have been in the Sands, the Flamingo, the Tropicana. I don't think the Tropicana was open yet.

Anyway, the girls would wear those big orange juice can rollers in our hair during the day, during Saturday when you go downtown. You put a scarf over it and tie it because everybody's going out that night. So anyway, we'd go shopping and we'd be at Sears or Penney's or whatever. And the Penney's store was a two-story store and it had an elevator and it had an elevator operator, if you can imagine that.

Well, I don't remember the girl's name; she was the elevator operator. She was a year ahead of me in school. She was somebody I knew and I knew her name. I knew her to say hello to her. Probably in pep club together. She was the elevator operator. Her boyfriend and she—and I don't remember his name—had just broken up a couple months before. He had asked me out and I had either gone out with him the night before or I was going out with him that night.

My mother and I—and I talked to my mother about this morning; I asked her if she remembered this—we got on the elevator. And this girl slams the elevator door and she jerks the handle over and we take off. We get to the second floor and she slams us onto the second floor like this [demonstrating]. She was so upset. I think that's the only date I had with the guy, just a guy.

At least your mom was with you and she didn't hit you.

No. But, man, she was slamming that elevator around; she was highly irate. She was really, really irate.

So what was your dress like from Lanz Dress Shop?

Oh, god, it was gorgeous.

So was it different from everybody else's?

Yes, it was. It was. By this time I'm a sophomore. It was the end of the year; it was May. I had gone to work. I was working at a drugstore in Henderson on Sundays because by this time Daddy is not working at White Cross anymore. Now he's gone to work for a man in Henderson who has two drugstores. One of them is on the Boulder Highway; it's the Walgreens store. And they lose their clerk, whatever, that worked on Sunday. And Daddy said my daughter—I was fifteen—knows how to wait on customers, how to make change, how to bag merchandise, how to check in merchandise; she knows everything this other adult knows; she knows everything she needs to know and she will come to work with me on Sundays. She's only fifteen. But okay, so they agreed, so they put me on the payroll.

So Daddy and I on Sunday morning we would leave the house, whatever hours the store was open. I think it was open limited hours on Sunday; I think it was like nine to seven or something. Daddy and I would drive from our house in North Las Vegas out to Henderson and I would work that day out at the store with him, which is how I met my first husband, by the way, when I was fifteen. And I've forgotten your question. Oh, the dress. The dress, of course.

Okay. This is how I met my first husband. He was a box boy at the grocery store, which adjoined the drugstore. I saw the back of him. He, of course, was a senior. I always liked older men. He was a senior and his friend had come over looking at merchandise. His friend was off work. And so his friend came over and started chatting me up. So I visit with him.

So the next Sunday I go out they both come over and I'm chatting with them, I think. I don't remember. No. I was standing in the pharmacy at the back of the store. You see, they

always put pharmacies in the back of the drugstore because that is the one thing you absolutely positively have to go to the drugstore for and you have to walk through all the rest of the merchandise. I learned that when I was nine years old. That's why the pharmacy is in the back of the store.

I'm standing in the pharmacy. I'm looking out the length of the drugstore and here is this boy. He's got no shirt on. He's got on just his Levis. And he's picking out a Mother's Day card for his mother. He's got freckles across his shoulder. I was gone. I was lost. My heart was gone.

He went to Basic, of course, because he lived in Henderson. So he invited me to the senior prom. In fact, he came over to invite me to the senior prom. I guess I had gone out with him; I do not remember. He came to my house and I was up at Moapa with a group of kids. We had gone after school to go up to the swimming hole up there. There were two pools up there and one was cemented in and the other was not; it was just like a dirt pool and there were little pollywogs floating around and palm trees. Something to do and very different for us in Las Vegas, a swimming pool. There was Dula Center and we'd had the Fun Center in North Las Vegas. We'll have to come back to that; when we had the drugstore there was the Fun Center. So anyway, I'm up at Moapa with a group of kids and we're swimming and then we come home after dark.

So Lyle, he comes to my house and he rings the doorbell and he asks if I'm home. And my mother said, no, she's gone to Moapa with some kids. Oh, he said, okay, I'll wait for her. And he sits down on the milk box in front of the house. She was terrified of him. He was not a wild guy at all. I was married to him for fourteen years and he's a lovely man and we still stay in touch.

What frightened her?

He was just different. He smoked for one thing. His mother didn't know that he smoked. But he was just—I don't know. There was just something about him. He was wiry and he had this wicked

sense of humor, this real highly intelligent sense of humor, use of words to where you'd say something to him and his response to it would be just wickedly funny. I don't mean wicked as in obscene or anything like that; it was just a different way of looking at things. She was just always really apprehensive of him. Of course, he was three years older than I was, so he was not the run-of-the-mill guy. I'm only a sophomore. It was probably my first experience with an older man. So I think that was probably a good part of it; he was just not one of the usual gang that I hung around with.

So he sits down on the milk box. I'll wait for her, then. She says I don't think she'll be back until after ten o'clock or so. He goes oh. So he jumps up. All right, then, he says, I'll call her tomorrow. And so he called the next day and he invited me to the senior prom. I was also dating a boy, also a senior, at Rancho.

But the prom is on different nights, right?

Yeah. Oh, yeah, they're on different nights. His dad was in the Air Force. For the longest time I thought he was Robert Redford because he was a drop dead replica of Robert Redford. He was just gorgeous except he had red hair.

But anyway, I thought he was going to invite me. I mean I had been dating him fairly seriously and I thought he was going to invite me to the senior prom. But it turned out we didn't go to the senior prom; he didn't go to his senior prom and he didn't invite me. I think we ended up going to a movie that night or something. It just would have been too expensive most likely.

But Lyle invited me to their senior prom. So I think I've got two senior proms I'm going to go to. I guess that's why we sprung for a dress at Lanz instead of a dress from Sears. Oh, it was a gorgeous, gorgeous dress and I wish today I had it. It was white silk organza and it was strapless. It had a fitted bodice and then it had a full skirt, which would have been probably about here, about

mid-calf I would say. Then it had a flat bow, a double bow that had a rhinestone pin in the center of it, kind of this shape, sort of an open horseshoe or wishbone and then this flat bow right here. My mother and I went to Penney's and we went to Sears and I bought two pair of shoes. I bought this gorgeous ivory color. I bought an ivory pearlized pair of pumps that had little two-inch heels because George was only five nine and I was about five seven by that time. Lyle was six feet tall. So I bought a pair of four-inch lavender—still in my lavender stage—lavender pearlized pumps and they had little seed pearls on the toes and whatnot. I died my gloves lavender to match. He bought me an orchid and it had lavender ribbons on it. I'm pretty sure it was an orchid.

He had a steady girlfriend at Basic and they had gone together forever. They had had a fight and he came to invite me to the prom during the period of time they had broken up. Then they get back together and she asked him—her name was Barbara; I hated her for years even though I ended up marrying him—she asked him—oh, she said something about the color dress she was going to wear to the prom. And he said what does that matter to me? She said, well, you'll have to know what the color of my dress is in order to get flowers to match and whatnot. And he said I'm not taking you to the senior prom. It was the senior ball. It was the junior prom and the senior ball; there was quite a difference in them at that time. Of course, she was horrified; what do you mean you're not taking me to the senior ball? He said I asked somebody else. She was really upset at that point; well, how could you do that? And he said, well, when we were broken up, he said, I asked somebody else. And he said I've asked her and I'm committed to it and I am not going to back out of it; it's not the right thing to do. So I'm taking her to the senior ball. Of course, I knew nothing about this, nothing about this.

So we double dated with Gary Erisman, who was a classmate of his, and a girl whose name I do not recall, but she had a big beehive that night. And I hated hair spray and I hated ratted hair.

My hair was always longer than this, but it was always about this color. It was always about this long, not too different from the way it looks today, although today it's kind of an aberration.

But at any rate, he picked me up. Somehow or another, six o'clock sticks in my mind. I don't remember if we went to eat first or not. Then we went to the ball. I mean I could hardly go to the ladies room because all the girls are giving me the evil eye and they were vitally interested in everything about me, absolutely everything—what I'm wearing, where my moles are, if I can dance, how close I dance to him. And Lyle was a dancer. Oh, man, we could make tracks around the ballroom. He was a very good dancer and we danced many, many, many miles. So finally I go into the bathroom and I'm half scared I'm going to get mugged in there. I don't know how I made it out of there.

But at any rate, after we leave the dance—and I don't remember if we stayed for the whole thing or whatever. I know we ate at some point in the night. Then we go to the Riviera and we see a show. I still have the picture. They took eight-by-ten pictures at that point. I still have a picture of the two of us. I'm sitting on the right and he's sitting on the left and he's sitting there with a cigarette like this. That's how I ended up with the picture because his mother didn't know that he smoked. I look fifteen years old, my chin ducked down. The Sid Caesar Show. On the back of the picture I wrote his last name to make sure that I remembered it when I got old to keep this picture. Like I said, I've got this picture now in the house somewhere.

So at any rate, we go to the Riviera. Then there was a curfew. So then we went to the Hacienda.

A curfew?

It would have been a Saturday night and if you're under eighteen years old you're not allowed to be on the streets between like eleven o'clock and six in the morning. And so we get out of the Riviera

and it's curfew. Well, Lyle was eighteen. Yeah, he was eighteen. Gary would have been eighteen. This girl, I don't remember even her name. I don't think she was a senior, but I don't remember. But at any rate, I'm fifteen and if they get picked up with a fifteen-year-old girl, these two eighteen-year-old boys, they would have been dead meat.

So we go to the Hacienda to a lounge in the Hacienda and we dance. And we dance and we dance and we dance. We dance all night until it's like six o'clock in the morning. Then we go to Uncle John's Pancake House because now it's after curfew.

Yes. You're fine.

And we eat pancakes. We eat breakfast. So then we finish breakfast and we go to my house. He says change your clothes; we're going to go out on the lake. So I go in and I tell my mother I need to get my bathing suit and we're going to go out on the lake. His dad has a boat and we're going out on the lake. So I get my bathing suit.

And your mom said it's okay, a fifteen-year-old?

She did. And I've been out—

All night, okay.

Yeah. Even though she's scared to death. She probably said okay because she was scared to tell him no, you can't take my daughter. So it's like eight o'clock in the morning or whatever. So I get my bathing suit and I probably got a pair of shorts or a cover-up or something like that; I don't know. We go out to the lake. And it's not a big boat. I mean his dad worked on the railroad; he's a railroad engineer. And they had five kids and they were farmers. So it's a boat to go fishing. But it's got a motor in it and it's big enough to go water skiing. And so the four of us get the boat and we go out on the lake to go water skiing. I had never in my life water skied and I doubt that I ever will now. I mean we kids, we went to the lake all the time as kids and everybody went water

skiing if you had access to a boat. But because of growing up in Long Beach, my mother and I walked to the beach every day. We were only seven blocks from the ocean. I love the ocean. And I think I probably got hit by a wave during those first three years and I'm not big on water sports. I can swim, but very awkwardly, very badly, and I get real nervous when I get in a swimming pool.

So we went out in the boat and I refuse to water ski. I said, no, I don't water ski. No, I'm not going to water ski. No, I don't want you to teach me to water ski. I will be the spotter. If you teach me how to drive the boat, I'll drive the boat. I couldn't even drive a car. But I'll drive the boat if you want, if you guys are really brave. So they water skied and I was always the spotter. I don't remember driving the boat at all that day.

But this girl was on the water skis and she hit a ripple or a wave or something like that and she went down. And I mean this beehive hairdo was the ugliest damn thing you have ever seen in your life after that. It was not very attractive during the dance, because I never thought much of beehives. But it looked exactly like a beehive. And I'll tell you after she got in the water, oh, my god.

So we were out there until about four o'clock in the afternoon and then he takes me home. This was a Sunday because the dance must have been on a Saturday night. So it's about four o'clock, six o'clock in the evening, whatever it was. He takes me home, kisses me goodbye at the door, maybe; I don't know, maybe just shook my hand. It would have still been daylight and this is May, end of May. And I go inside horribly sunburned. My mother rubs ten oh six all over me. I fall into bed and I woke up like seventeen hours later with the most gorgeous suntan you can imagine. And then I never heard from him again.

Yeah, because he's back with his girlfriend now.

Yes, exactly, which I didn't know. And that's why everybody is scoping me out at the dance is

because Lyle's here and he's not with Barbara.

So you never knew any of the story?

I never knew any of it.

So how did you learn the story?

Then during the summer he goes off and joins the Marine Corps—or at the end of the summer he joins the Marine Corps. So I start up with this other boy who graduated and went off to college that summer. So I begin my junior year and I'm going with the Robert Redford little guy, wearing his letter sweater and stuff like that, which kept me from doing any real dating. He's in Cedar City; he's away at college.

So at any rate, sometime like a year later I get this letter from Lyle. And he's in the Marine Corps now and just wanted to say hello and dah, dah, dah. His overseas duty was in Hawaii. He was an air traffic controller. So he was in that for four years and he got a break. This was after I had graduated. We exchanged letters a couple of times when I was a junior. I probably wrote back and said I'm going with George and that probably ended it. So at any rate, we picked up at some point after I had graduated. And then we got engaged a year later and then we got married a year after that.

But anyway, that's the dress, this white silk organza dress.

Did you get married in it?

No, I didn't. I should have. I made my wedding dress; it was white velvet, because I didn't want my parents to have to spring for the expense of it. We did buy the veil, but I didn't want them to have to spring for the expense of a wedding dress.

That's wonderful. Let's see if there's anything else I want to know about Rancho.

That's really it about Rancho.

Tell me what it was like living in a city—and you've already probably answered this in lots of ways—where the mob is running the city? What did that mean to families like yours, just a regular family where you're father's working all the time? What did it mean to you?

Nothing. I knew nothing of it. I was completely oblivious to any of that. Daddy had the lost paycheck the one time. So there was gambling and there was a lot of times when we were little where they would drive us down and they would park the car—we had a 1950 Chevy—they would park the car on First or Second Street or whatever, and then Momma and Daddy would go into the El Cortez or the Golden Nugget or whatever and they'd gamble. My mother would play slot machines and Daddy would play craps. We kids were in the car.

And you were okay? You didn't get out of the car and roam around?

No. We stayed there in the car. I remember a security guard found us at some point and said what are you kids doing? Well, we're waiting for our parents. If we would get out of the car, we'd lean up against the wall there on Fremont Street. Where are you parents? They're inside. Well, I think they were chastised by a security guard at some point for leaving children unattended out here.

But another thing, we'd go down to the Silver Slipper a lot. There was a man down there who ran the spotlight in the parking lot and he had a dog. It was a white dog and he had a black eye, spot. I don't remember the dog's name. But Kip and I would sit there and we'd visit with the guy and his dog while he ran the spotlight while Momma and Daddy were in the Silver Slipper gambling.

And the spotlight was for security?

No. It was to draw attention to the hotel. They were huge illuminated spotlights—

The kind we still see every once in a while now.

Yeah, you do see them on occasion. And there was the Last Frontier Village that we would go to

and we'd play there a lot. They had a merry-go-round. You had to pay for the merry-go-round, so we weren't on it a lot. But they had the old buildings, the old jail and the saloon and the whatever, all those old buildings and whatnot and we'd play in those a lot.

Kip and I were—and we still are—extremely close. When we were growing up, there was just the two of us, and so we'd play boys' games for a while and then we'd play girls' games for a while.

And he played girls' games with you?

Well, I was bigger than him. He had to or I'd beat him up. They bought us boxing gloves. I guess I was about the fifth grade or so. They bought us boxing gloves one year for Christmas. But we had a rule; you couldn't hit in the face, because Kip had braces.

And you had perfect teeth.

And I had perfect teeth. But our last physical fight that we had was in College Park and I guess I was about fifteen and he was about twelve. He's six five now. So he had gotten some meat on him. He was a real skinny kid and then he went through a pudgy phase and then he was starting to string out and he was starting to get some growth on him by the time he was about twelve and he was probably bigger than me at that time. We had a fight about something and we started in the front yard. Of course, we attracted the attention of all the neighbors, all the kids. Everybody's around there, standing around egging us on and whatnot. We ended up we fought so hard we fought our way into the backyard. He bloodied my nose and I blackened his eye. We formed a truce some way or another. I don't remember what we fought about, how we were going to spend the afternoon . . .

But you were serious with each other.

Yeah, this was a serious fight. But we'd do girls' stuff; he'd play dolls with me and dollhouse and

tea party. But I made him eat my mud pies that I made. Or we'd play doctor and patient; you have to lay down and I'd cover him up with a blanket. I made him drink hot salt water. I must have been a horrid kid. And then we'd play cars and we'd wrestle and we'd play boys' stuff. And I played football with boys.

Oh, god, you're going to love this. Your audience may not particularly care for this. But I was always playing football with the boys. I still love football. Not touch football; this is knock down, tackle play football.

So you're watching the Super Bowl on Sunday?

Absolutely, absolutely. So I'm in the fourth grade. I showed Jim this house right here on Sweeney Street, that's where Bill Hartshorne lived. He was my heartthrob when I was in the fourth grade and he moved to Moab, Utah, and we used to play football right there in that very front yard.

Okay. The last time I played football, except maybe with my brother and his sons—I can still throw a spiral, by the way—was in the eighth grade and we're at our house in College Park. I'm the center for some reason; I don't know. There's boys and they're as big as me or more. But for some reason—and I think I know the reason for this—they made me the center. Jimmy Keys was the quarterback. I think Jimmy Keys did this on purpose. I bend over with the football and Jimmy Keys comes like this [demonstrating] to grab the football. I was horrified; I had never been touched like that.

And I had on a one-piece jumpsuit sort of a thing; it was shorts. It was in the summer. And it had snaps across the crotch. Well, I'm tall and my torso is a little longer than most. And when I bent over, the middle snap un-popped. And here he is like this [demonstrating]. And I said I've got to go in the house. So I go in the house and I change out of this romper and I put on shorts and a camp shirt, my turnip outfit most likely because my boyfriend Don was one of them that was

playing. At the end of that afternoon I said I think maybe I better not be playing football with the boys anymore.

Good idea. So tell me about Fun Town.

Fun Center. Yes, okay. As I said and as you've picked up from all your other interviews, not only with our classmates, but other people you've talked to, there was not a lot of stuff for young people to do in Las Vegas. You walked or your rode your bike. You were absolutely safe. I remember walking up Charleston to Mayfair School in the third grade. I remember what I was wearing and getting whistled at. They were behind me and I thought I got whistled at. I thought I'm not in Kansas anymore. But you were still perfectly safe and nobody gave any thought whatever to your not being safe.

You could go swimming at Dula Center. You could go out to Twin Lakes and there was a swimming pool, a big swimming pool out there. But it cost money to get in these pools. If you didn't ride your bike, your parents had to drive you. Well, Twin Lakes was too far away and my parents would have to drive me. And my mother was at the drugstore working; she couldn't be driving me around to places.

And so there was Fun Center, which was right next to the underpass from where the railroad train ran where College Avenue went under the railroad track. You went kind of up a hill. It was a community center kind of a place, not a big building; it was one-story. They would have events for teenagers, preteens and whatnot like that. So about the time that I'm eleven or 12 or whatever, starting to realize that boys are different from girls—other than they don't want to play dolls; they want to play cars. That I had already figured out; that I knew. I had a brother; I knew all about that stuff. They would have dances and we would go to dances up there. They were like once a week, once every two weeks, once a month, something like that. They'd play records and

you'd dance. I do remember this is where I first learned the term bop, where you do the bop and bebop. So this would have been like '55. They probably played Bill Haley and the Comets and stuff like that. I remember Susie being at one of those dances. I didn't know her very well at the time as I recall. I don't remember if it's when we lived in College Park or if we were still on Jefferson Street when we first started going to the Fun Center. Probably it was earlier, probably when we lived on Jefferson Street because it was so close to the drugstore for one thing. But it would have waited until I had reached the stage of being interested in going to a dance; coming out of the desert and taking a shower and putting on clean shoes and socks, a dress, that kind of thing.

It's not there any longer because I've driven through there and now that it's Lake Mead it's divided in such a way that you can drive behind it. But Lake Mead is really busy; it's a forty-five-mile-an-hour speed limit street now.

And so my mother used to have appointments with a hearing doctor. After Daddy died she went to work and after ten years or so she ended up marrying Daddy's brother, who was also widowed; he had lost his wife. He had another wife in there. He had moved from California and moved back to Kansas. So she married him and she lived in Kansas. They had one year in which they were very, very happy and then he had prostate cancer. And when he was operated on for prostate cancer, he had a stroke and he was mostly paralyzed. So for the next three years of their marriage until he died she took care of him. She stayed there in Kansas after he died. So this would have been like '82 that he died. She stayed there. Jim and I would go visit her and she would come out here periodically. I always wanted her to come out here and she wouldn't.

Then finally in 2004, she telephoned me and said it was time to move; that she couldn't live by herself anymore. She had fallen in the bathroom yet again. She was hurt. She wouldn't go to the doctor. Well, they ended up putting her in the hospital when she finally consented. She had a

home healthcare person who came a couple times a week. She had a couple of broken ribs. She had broken her sternum. She was hurt. She was really hurt. Put her in the hospital. Then she broke her other hip after she got out of hospital. Finally in June of that year—she'd been in the hospital from January through June—I went and got her and moved her into a skilled nursing facility here. So in the eight and a half years she's been here—eye doctor, dentist, ear doctor, whatever like that. The ear doctor is over in North Las Vegas in North Las Vegas Hospital. And so that takes us back into the old hood.

Yes, yes.

So when she was in better shape, I would drive her around and show her our house and the Safeway store we went to and all that kind of thing. So I had a chance several times to come home by way of Lake Mead and you can see the back of the drugstore. I don't think the building is even inhabited now. But the Fun Center is no longer there.

All right. What were race relations like when you got to Rancho?

There were not a lot of black kids.

What about Asians and Mexican-Americans, as well?

There were a lot of Mexican kids. There were no Asians, no Asians at all. The black kids lived on Westside and I don't think I had any black kids in any of my classes until I went to Rancho because grade schools, junior high schools, they were all regional; there was no sixth grade mixing of people or anything.

Not until later.

Much later, much later that they did that. And so there were Mexican kids. And my mother, of course, in southern Arizona had grown up with a lot of Mexican kids and there were a lot of Mexican people in Kansas where we lived that came up from Texas.

Oh, that's right. For the work.

Yeah. There was a fair amount of Mexican kids. You never thought anything of it; you never thought anything of the fact that they were darker than you or that they ate different—they didn't eat different food from what I ate, that's for sure. They were just kids. But there were no real black kids until we got to high school and there was not a lot of black kids. Now, Western—Jim is younger than I am; Jim is four years younger than I am. He went to Western.

So when did you start liking younger men? [Laughing]

He may have been my first. No. I think it was the bridge person between my divorce. It was always older men until I hit thirty-four and then it was younger men.

But he went to Western. Well, Western opened our senior year. So there was talk, especially amongst Donna and people that lived over in Twin Lakes, do we go to Western or do we stay at Rancho with the people we've gone to school with all this time? So now there's black kids that you're associating with. And I never looked down on them; I just realized they were just different and that made them sort of exotic. There were black girls in pep club with me, in Spanish club. Lots of Mexican kids in Spanish class, I suppose; I mean I never noticed. But no Asians; there never were any Asian kids. Now, there was a black kid. Oh, god, let me see if I can remember his name. His first name was James. McMillan. His dad was a doctor.

Dentist.

Dentist, okay. And he, the student James, was said to be the child of a black father, the dentist, and a white woman. And that was a pretty foreign idea to me. He was very handsome, very handsome. But I would never have expected him to have any interest in me and I would never have looked upon him as a potential boyfriend because they just live in different worlds. We all go to school together, but we just inhabit different worlds.

Bessie Malone, I remember, a black girl, she was in several of my classes, I think, a real sweet woman. She went on to be really close friends with Ruby Duncan and to do a lot of social work like Ruby Duncan does, who has just passed away or her daughter just passed away?

Her daughter just passed away.

I have reached the stage where I read obituaries every morning and I saw that her daughter had just passed away. But Bessie does a lot of community work and she's always done helping, social work. Bessie was in my PE class when I was a sophomore. This would have been my first mixed PE class I guess it would have been. They built a swimming pool at J.D. Smith in conjunction with its becoming a junior high school, so that meant we changed clothes. But I mean now that you have a swimming pool, I mean you change everything; you don't just take your dress off or put on a pair of shorts and a camp shirt like we did before in the eighth grade. They had swimming the first semester and the last semester. Well, I had the first semester, which lasted until pretty well into October, and I had it first thing in the morning. And the first thing they did was they hosed you down before you got in the pool. They turned the hose on you. We kids take a bath at night. Oh, god, it was horrid. And the fact that it was a swimming class, I was even more apprehensive. I hated it. Oh, god, I absolutely hated it. But at any rate, now I'm a sophomore and I go to Rancho and they don't have a swimming pool, thank God.

But Bessie Malone was in my PE class. And I thought, well, my skin is white and her skin is black and my nipples are darker; I wonder if hers are white? And so because she's in my PE class, I discovered that was not the case [laughing].

[Laughing] Oh, my goodness.

I mean that's the ignorance that we grew up with at the time.

Because you just didn't know.

I just didn't know. I mean I had associated with a lot of Mexican kids. Never saw them undressed. Never thought anything about it. But I didn't have experience with Asian people until, oh, god, I don't know, when I went to Hawaii the first time with my first husband was probably the first serious time I saw that there were people who look really different.

So what did you think when years after you graduated, maybe six years after you graduated you started hearing about riots at Rancho High School?

I don't remember. When Kip was there—he graduated three years after I did—that's when the riots apparently had started. He graduated in '65 because I remember him telling me about it. The only thing that I really remember about it is him telling me that the football team, which half of them are black, half of them are white, would take anybody on and they'd be able to beat up anybody. They were in real disagreement with the riots that were going on. He said the football team just wants to take them all on and just be done with the whole thing.

So did he ever know what sparked it, what sparked that first one?

I don't know. I don't know. I've never asked him. I've never asked him about that. I'll have to do that. If I find interesting information—or you're going to have to find somebody from that time period.

That's right. And my last question—you talked about Fremont Street, going shopping down there. Have you been down there recently?

Oh, absolutely.

How do you like it?

Oh, I don't know.

The truth.

Yeah. Let's see. Let's see.

It is different.

Yeah, it is very different. Better in some ways, worse in some ways, and that's probably what everybody has said. I miss the small town atmosphere of Las Vegas. I glory in the "cosmopolitan-ness" of Las Vegas; that it has world-class hotels, world-class chefs, world-class shopping. I feel this swell of pride when they tell us that the Mountain West Conference that the Rebels are in is the second toughest in the nation. I mean I don't live in hokey little—you live where? Where?

I remember going to California in the summers when I was a kid. I remember a conversation I had when I was maybe ten with some kids in the neighborhood. We're at my uncle and aunt's house and I was telling them about Las Vegas and about how hot it gets in the summer, because it doesn't get hot in Long Beach or Lakewood, not hot like here, and telling them about going out on the Strip. And they said, oh, do people really do that? I said do what? They said do they strip?

Las Vegas was a small town. And as I became an adult, in the first ten, twenty years of my adulthood, Las Vegas was a very small town especially within a profession. I still see parts of Las Vegas as being a small town in some of the people who run it. But I look in the Sunday paper; I look at that lady Dorothy what's her name's column where she has all the photos. I read through and I don't know any of those names. None of those are movers and shakers in my world anymore. Actually, I should say I'm out of the movers and shakers world for sure.

But as far as Fremont Street is concerned, it's kind of fun that it's so notorious; that it's known all over the world and that Las Vegas is a place that gets written up in USA Today about the most desired vacation spot for President's Day weekend or something like that.

My son was here in August, the end of August. He goes dove hunting down in Yuma with

his friends from California, and so he comes by here and he spends a couple of days with us and then he goes down and goes dove hunting. So it's the end of August every year he's here.

We spent most of last year working on the reunion. And Cheryl and I—I had suggested for a casual Friday function I said let's try and do something on Fremont Street because we used to cruise Fremont. And our fiftieth reunion is kind of a landmark of a year and it ought to be something different from the other reunions that we've had. So I said let's see if we can put together something or other on Fremont Street. So Cheryl and I started doing research and we'd go down there and we'd walk up and down Fremont Street and we'd go to lunch at different places and we'd talk to people about their public rooms. We tried to get a thing going with Fremont Street Experience to have our Friday night thing out on Fremont Street and the Four Queens were going to cater it and whatnot, but the cost just got to where we just thought it was too much to ask people to pay. So anyway, we start this. This was in January of last year we started this. And so we get nailed down that we're going to—it's the Irish pub that's on the corner of Fifth.

Hennessey's.

Yes. Thank you. Hennessey's. So that's where we're going.

So my son, Ron, comes. He's flown to L.A., rented a car, he's driven up to Las Vegas he gets here Friday at four o'clock or something. We sit around BS-ing in the family room and whatnot. I always like to think of places to take him. He's Daddy all over; he loves to play craps. He had come and gone from Las Vegas a lot when he was in his twenties. He lived in Anaheim and would come to Las Vegas and whatnot. So he's got a pretty good familiarity with it and he's actually thrilled that I live here and now he's got an excuse to come visit and go to Las Vegas. Coming to a conference he doesn't stay with us; he'll stay at the hotel where the conference is.

So I said, okay, I've got a couple of ideas for dinner. Rather than cooking at home, I said, I

thought one night we could go to just like a neighborhood restaurant. There's one that Jim and I had been to and we really like it and we'd like to go there one night. And then I thought we'd go to a splashier Las Vegas sort of a place. So which do you want to do tonight and which do you want to do tomorrow night? Well, we selected the neighborhood restaurant for the first night.

So the second night we go to Oscar's. We had done whatever during the day. He'd probably gone and done some gambling and whatnot. So, I don't know, it's probably getting on eight or eight thirty by the time we figure we'll be going to dinner and whatnot. Okay. And so I telephone and I reserved a table and I said is there any way you could get us a table that's out overlooking Fremont? Well, we can't make any promises; we'll just seat you where we'll seat you and blah, blah, blah. All right, we'll take it; it'll be fine. And Sandy and Susie and Donna and I had gone to Oscar's for our Christmas celebration the year before and we enjoyed being able to look down and see all of Fremont Street. We talked about the fact that us north town girls ended up doing okay after all.

And so we get cleaned up and we drive and I tell Jim where you go for the valet and whatnot because he's driving and whatnot. We go in and we go up the escalators. Have you been to Oscar's?

Yes.

So you know how you get in there and then you go to the hostess desk. Ron's looking around and he's admiring all the gorgeous women and whatnot like that. I told her reservations under Wickliffe and whatnot. She starts walking us around to the table and finally she seats us at a table and we are smack dab overlooking the whole of Fremont Street, just right down from here. They've got the dancers with the three bands going and whatnot. They've got the scantily clad dancers that are about from here to the streetlamp from where we're sitting and you can see the

backside of them dancing around. Of course, Ron and Jim were just really enjoying this.

So we drink too much. We had this glorious meal. Ron ordered like a seventy-dollar bottle of wine. One of the hostesses, well, the broads with the feather boa, she sees me sitting there with these two guys sitting across from me. And she plunks down next to me. Obviously, we're missing a woman at this table. So she sits there and proceeds to tell us about her five children that she's putting through college right now. I mean she looks like she's about thirty-two and drop dead gorgeous with a strapless gown and this feather boa and the eyelashes out to here.

Only Las Vegas.

Oh, yeah. Made the night fun. So we get done after about three hours of this and I said, well, let me show you where we're going to have our function because Paul, of course, was our senior class president. Ron's dad was in our class. So we start walking down Fremont Street. I mean the bands are going. Jim still talks about—Pocahontas, is that what he called her? She was one of the dancers. She had on an Indian headdress. All we saw was the back of her. But all you could see was the Indian headdress. It came down damn near to the ground. Then she had on just a thong. Yeah. I mean this is nothing.

That's right. This is Las Vegas.

We all grew up here. Jim grew up here, too. So we walk past her and we walk past the dancers that are up here on the stand and everything like that. We get down and I'm showing them Hennessey's. I've got on a dress. I remember I've got on a dress. We're out in front of it in what would be about the middle of the street. There's these two guys. And I don't remember; they were young guys and I think they had no shirts on and they had a glass in each hand or something; I don't know. And then there's this older guy who's probably close to fifty or so. And there's starting to be this confrontation between these guys. We get about to the chest-bumping stage and I start

walking somewhere. Ron, my son, reaches out and he grabs the back of my dress and he pulls me back. He said you don't want to be that close to that. He was a firefighter in California. As I say, he's a property manager now and he rehabs houses and whatnot like that. He is also a volunteer fireman in Tennessee, this small town outside of Nashville, and he's also a deputy sheriff. And so he probably carries a gun on him. He probably had a gun on him at that time; I don't know. But he's a law enforcement type person and he can see something coming. So he grabs me and he says I don't think you want to be in the middle of that. And so we stand there. Pretty soon here comes a couple, three bike patrols. Here comes two police cars pulled right up on the sidewalk. They get the two guys with no shirts on. They're spread eagled across the police car. And we're just kind of standing there taking it all in. He looks at me and says and this is where you're going to have—I said, yeah, it's a real tame place. It's a real tame place. It's really nice. You want to go in? I'll show you.

[Laughing] That's great. That's wonderful.

So you're asking about the mob. I didn't know there was such a thing as the mob. I had my son. I went to school. I got married. It took me fourteen years to get my degree. I got a degree in accounting. I went into public accounting because I knew all about bookkeeping.

I had graduated from being on the floor of the drugstore to running the back end of the drugstore, being a bookkeeper, selling IV fluids and nasal cannula and hospital supplies, a separate business from the drugstore. I started out wanting to be a teacher and then I decided I wanted to be an accountant. When I was about 27, 28, 30, I guess, I figured out yeah, that's what I need to do. Clyde Turner was our accountant at the drugstore I was working at. I don't know; you may know Clyde's name. It was Turner and Turner; and then it was Turner, Armstrong and company; and then it was Kafory, Armstrong, & Turner. Clyde left and he became Steve Wynn's chief honcho

until he picked up Bobby Baldwin. So Clyde ran a lot of hotels and whatnot. Well, Clyde and I were pretty close because I was the bookkeeper and Clyde was our accountant. So I knew Clyde. Then when I was with the State Board of Accountancy, I knew his brother Dave real well because Dave was on the state board with me during most of those six years I was on the State Board of Accountancy.

I'm trying to get my thoughts somewhat in order. I'm in public accounting, which is where I meet Jim. Then divorced my first husband. I get out of public accounting. I knew I didn't want to go to work for a small accounting firm because they just did bookkeeping and that's why I had gotten a degree was to get out of doing that. There were not very many big accounting firms in Las Vegas. In fact, I had interviewed with what at the time was Haskins and Sells. It went on to become Deloitte and Touche. I graduated from college when I was just shy of thirty-three. I had a couple of interviews with them and John Miner took me to lunch after the second one and he said we're not going to hire you because you're too old.

So anyway, there was a very limited opportunity with large public accounting firms and it was the end of tax season. So they don't even want you for temporary help. And I hated taxes. I still hate taxes. A guy who had worked at the same firm I was at had left the firm and gone to work for the Gaming Control Board and he was running the audit division. So I knew him because we would socialize. So I decided, okay, they're doing auditing over there, which is what interests me, and so I will go over there and I will interview for the Gaming Control Board. I thought it's only one industry. And in public accounting you audit all kinds. And I knew a whole lot about retail and I taught a lot of people a whole lot about retail when I was in public accounting, but I didn't know anything about service industries. I didn't know anything about a whole lot of industries. I thought it's gaming; it's only one industry. Three years, five years, let's see what happens.

Well, I ended up being in it over twenty years and that's when I had my experiences with the mob, so to speak. I mean it was '79, June of '79 when I went to work at the Control Board. If I can give you a quick story?

Please.

This was when the Tropicana was sold to Ramada. It would about 1980, sometime in 1980. I was a senior agent by then because of my public accounting experience and I was running the audit at the Tropicana. So I had like six people working for me running the audit at the Tropicana because when it changes hand you have to establish the accountability of all the assets, all the liabilities, the revenue streams, all the rest of that stuff. You have to have a cutoff point.

I'm in the cage with Mary Pat, who was an older woman. She had been a schoolteacher and she was close to sixty, I think. We were transferring the markers. Now, markers are accounts receivable. When you're at a table and you're playing and you run out of money, you take out a marker, which is to borrow money from the hotel. There's people who owe millions of dollars to the hotels in markers. They're really interesting from an accounting standpoint because when you pay your taxes to the State of Nevada on your income, on your revenues, you don't do it on an accrual basis like you do in most businesses. If you go to Sears and you buy a washing machine and you put it on credit, that's revenue to them and they pay tax on it immediately. Markers are on a cash basis and they don't pay tax on the markers until they're collected.

And so the markers are a forty-million-dollar asset of the Tropicana; they were not being bought by the Ramada. So the Tropicana was keeping those and then they were going to collect on them and they would pay tax on them after the fact. So the Ramada was buying the physical property, they were buying the goodwill, they were buying all kinds of things, but they were not buying the markers.

And so the markers had to be taken off the premises. So I was going to go with the markers. And so they're inventoried; down to the last cent, forty-five million and whatever number of dollars these things are worth. It's late in the afternoon; I don't remember what time. It would have been midnight probably, which is not a change-of-shift time, but midnight probably would have been the effective time of the sale.

So Mary Pat's there in the cage. And a cage is like a bank; it's not a revenue center. They make money in the pit. They make money in slots. They make money in keno, but the cage is like the bank; that's only the exchange place. So Mary Pat is there and she's got the cage nailed down really good about all the assets in the cage.

We get all the markers together and I leave with the guy with the markers and into a panel truck. They're being taken—it was only across the street to the old Tropicana Country Club where the offices of the Tropicana would now be. This would now be the administrative place. So we get them over there. I make sure they're safe; nobody leaves with them. We get them over there and we get them established and run another tally on them and make sure that everything that left got here and the rest of that stuff.

And so I go back and it's like seven, eight o'clock at night by now. Mary Pat is still in the cage. I said, Mary Pat, what are you doing still in the cage? I said you were supposed to be out of here a couple of hours ago. She looked at me and she said, Sydney, you leave here with forty-five million dollars' worth of markers and a man who looks like Sydney Greenstreet and you think I'm going to leave and not make sure you get back safely? [Laughing]

Wow. I love it. I love it. Oh, wow.

So I had a lot of exposure in that. The early days of gaming were very, very colorful. When the FBI cracked down and the Boyds bought up the Stardust and all the rest of that stuff, we were on

the premises for every soft count, which is counting the proceeds, the foldable money from the pit, and we were on the premises for the hard count every day, which is the money out of the slot machines, at all of those places. So I was in the count room at the Fremont or at the Stardust or at the Bingo Palace or wherever. I got propositioned and I got all kinds of things.

Oh. This ought to be my last story. I have another story.

Before you start that story, what does a physical marker look like?

It looks like a countercheck. A lot of times they would look like a legal-size check from a bank and it would have the hotel's name on it and whatnot like that. They're not enforceable debts outside of Nevada. But they are controlled, obviously.

A soft count...this was at the Lady Luck. That was how we would open an audit, a surprise observation of a soft count. You go in. They're about thirty minutes into it and you go in—stop, hands on the table, everybody. Okay, finish the box you're working on. There are drop boxes on the table. Then let's count all the money that we've got right here and let's compare it to what you've recorded on the stiff sheet and let's make sure that everything has gone on to the stiff sheet like it's supposed to and it's not one for you and one for me; that kind of a deal. Then they proceed with the count and you make sure they're following the procedures that they have established with the board—they have the right number of people, they're from the right departments, they've got the keys in the right way, they're doing at the time they say they are, they're not doing it half an hour early or anything like that. Of course, this all takes place at like three or four in the morning when it's quiet.

So I'm just doing a routine soft count observation. I'm in there with Ezzie. It's always two people because they'll accuse you of taking it. You always have to have two people. You never carry a purse and there's always two of you. So it's me and Ezzie. We go in.

You'd love the story about Ezzie. Ezzie was a big black guy and he was the roommate of Walter Payton in college and he was his blocker, for Walter Payton. So Walter would call him at work; Ezzie, how you doing? He was his best man. I never got to talk to Walter Payton, unfortunately. But Ezzie was so gentlemanly.

So Ezzie and I go in and we observe the soft count. Then they get to the end of that shift and then they take a break. They transfer all the money to the cage. Now everything is clean; all the boxes are locked up. We're going to take a break. Everybody gets a pit stop. You get to drink something, gobble a sandwich if you want. And then we start in again on the next shift's boxes.

There was a woman who did the soft count and I no longer remember her name. She was a black woman, really big, really big black woman. She had been there for years and years and years. So we get to the end of that shift. Ezzie leaves; he follows the money out the the cage. I'm in there. The doors are open. Everybody's kind of taking a breather and whatnot. This lady, she reaches in like this [demonstrating] to pull up her bra strap. I mean she was amply built, very amply built. She said, "I never like to do that when there's a gentleman in the room." Oh, Mary Pat was with us; me and Ezzie and Mary Pat. Then Mary Pat and I kind of exchanged looks. Then this lady says, "Of course, you're not allowed any movements like that in a soft count." And this lady says something about that. Of course, it's highly suspicious. You're being photographed all the time; you're under surveillance all the time. She says and, of course, you can't make a movement like that in a soft count room, as well as the fact that there was a gentleman in the room with us.

So we go on and we finish up our work duties and we leave. Mary Pat and I are walking across the parking lot or something and she looked at me and she says, you know, when—whatever this lady's name was; Sylvia—when Sylvia said that, she said, it was all I could do to keep from

busting out because, I'll tell you, she is so amply built she could have put the whole soft count in there and I wouldn't have known the difference.

[Laughing] I love it. Oh, that is great. What wonderful information.

Well, I think that may be a little bit of interest in your—

Not just a little. You've taken the time to think about this. I really appreciate it because you told us, me, some of the same stories I've heard from other people.

Of course.

But your perspective—no—your perspective is completely different on every subject.

Yeah, it would be. Every individual's perspective would be different.

But you also added great factual information.

Well, I'm an accountant.

Yes. What a marker is, just little things that they are so Las Vegas. But most of us don't know. I've heard that term a thousand times. I had no idea what it looked like.

Oh, okay.

So I really, really appreciate this.

Well, I'm glad you did, Claytee. It's been fun to sit and think back on stuff. I'm sure I'll think of things that, oh, she might have been interested in this.

But the thing is in a couple of weeks—our transcriber will pick these up in a week, week and a half. She's going to transcribe it, give us a good draft, and I'm going to mail you the draft.

Oh, how wonderful.

You will read through it. Take your time. You will see that, oh, I should have told this story.

It's up to you, but you may write that story out on a sheet of paper and let us put it in an appendix.

Oh, okay.

And I want your stories. So please know that I'm very serious when I ask you to write a story. Don't try to insert it on the edges; just go ahead and take another sheet of paper and just write a story that you'd like to tell that goes on page 18 or something. I really appreciate that.

Oh, okay. That's certainly going to be something I can manage.

Great. I thank you so much.

Well, thank you. It's been fun. You reach an age where, like I say, you read the obituaries every day. But you think back on some of the things that have happened in your life. And I meant to mention this to you when we were talking about the fiftieth reunion and Jim and I were standing there talking to Paul and Stephanie. We were telling some friends about that a week or two later and what Jim said was those stories about the soldiers who get together after the First World War. They get together fifty years later, he said, and they just run together and they just hug. He said that's what it's like. You think back on the richness of your life and the experiences that you've had and you think, man, it leaps along and it goes by before you know it. My god, it's Friday again; how can it be Friday again? But during that time there's all kinds of things happening. So it has been a lot of fun for me to recount.

Great. I really appreciate it.

[End of recorded interview]

Written addendum provided by Sydney Wickliffe, 28 Mar2013

In thinking back on our conversation about what we did here in Las Vegas as we grew up, I remember that my brother and I went to Bible School at least one summer. This would have been

around 1955 thru 1957 or so, at the Baptist Church on College Avenue, (now Lake Mead Blvd.) near Bruce. I don't know if it's still there. I don't remember if it was every week day during the summer, a few days a week, or what, but we weren't working in the drug store or playing in the desert all the time!

I was also a member of "All City Chorus" at about the same time. Again, I don't recall much detail, but the name implies more than just our school. I sang first soprano (my voice lowered after I had my tonsils out at age 15); we wore peach cotton blouses and rust colored skirts. I was very partial to those colors, and they were so different from the colors I usually wore to school or to play in. Probably chosen because they were no-one's school colors. We sang at several public venues; the one I remember most vividly was at the Green Shack, where Fremont and Charleston came together at the Boulder Highway. I do remember that I was always so pleased to be able to tell my mother that I couldn't drink milk for dinner on those nights because it interfered with your singing! This is why I can (somewhat) recall the second and third verses of many Christmas carols and the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Speaking of the Green Shack, that is where we got to go for dinner on New Year's Eve, very late, after completing the inventory of the drugstore. They served steak, chicken in a basket, and fried shrimp in a basket. The shrimp was very exotic to me and I always ordered that.

When we first moved here, early 50's, we would go out to the D-4-C Ranch for dinner occasionally. It was a dude ranch somewhere off the Strip, maybe in Paradise Valley – very outskirts of town and definitely in the desert! A play on words, as guests usually stayed for six weeks. No one I have ever talked to can remember it.

And we would go to the Motor Vu Drive-in movie – I remember seeing "Shane" there. It was about where the Stardust or the Fashion Show Mall is now. Drive south on the strip, make a right

and park facing west.

Momma and Daddy belonged to the Knife and Fork Club in the late 50's/early 60's, a dinner group that met at public restaurants once a month or so. They would dress up, she would paint clear nail polish on her nails just before leaving the house. Kip and I were old enough by this time to stay by ourselves while they were out, probably spent the evening doing homework and eating stuff we shouldn't have. Momma didn't feel well one night, so I took her place – I was probably in my Senior year, so 17. I had one black (cotton) dress, with a straight skirt, very grown-up. I put on some make-up, put my hair up and made myself look as adult as I could. Well, that night the dinner was in one of the hotels, and when dinner was over Daddy wanted to hit the craps table. He didn't want to lose everything, so he gave me most of his money and instructed me to give it to him if he needed it (no longer playing on winnings), or to withhold it if I thought it more prudent (hah! Like that was going to happen!). It wasn't a particularly successful night for him, and after a fime he turned to me and said, "Baby, give me some more money." (He called me Baby sometimes, and I distinctly remember it on that night.) I probably did give it to him. I don't remember, but I definitely remember that the other people at the craps table did not believe me to be his daughter! Certainly wouldn't have happed in I had grown up anywhere by here!

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