



Sentinel-Voice photo by Dianna Saffold

Ida Gaines, an aide to Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., left, stands with Alice Key, the first African-American to co-host a local television talk show, "Talk of the Town" in 1954, and Bob Bailey, a prominent Republican who co-hosted the show with Key.

Women

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neers in the gaming industry.

Clark became "the first great lady of Las Vegas," by helping transform Las Vegas from a frontier town into a glamorous resort during the 1950s and 1960s. Born Lena Gaglianese, she married Wilbur Clark in 1944. They made Las Vegas their home. Wilbur's investments in Las Vegas included the Monte Carlo and the Player's Club, but it was the Desert Inn, which he opened in 1950, that distinguished itself.

Toni's graciousness and elegance was an essential aspect of the Desert Inn. She entertained royalty and organized fashion shows featuring the top designers of the time for the wives of high rollers.

Preddy worked in the casinos and was the first black woman to obtain a Nevada gaming license.

Preddy came to Las Vegas from Oklahoma in 1942 with her husband and father. The trio came to find work.

She wrote Keno tickets at the Cotton Club on Jackson Street before buying her first club, the Lincoln Bar in Hawthorne, in 1950, and obtaining a gaming license.

Active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Preddy served many presidents and administrations. She was instrumental in establishing the NAACP's Women's Auxiliary. Although she ran for city council, she did not win the election.

She is well known for her efforts to restore the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino. She, along with others, worked to establish it as an historic preservation site.

In the 'back of the house,' several women served Las Vegas and their families by working the casinos and hotels.

Hattie Canty left her hometown of Stephens, Alabama in the middle of the Great Depression. She worked for years in California before moving her family to Las Vegas.

After raising 10 children, Canty began working at the Thunderbird Hotel and Casino. She became active in the Culinary Union and spent time on picket lines and leading committees. In 1987 she was elected to the union executive board. Three years later she was elected president. She was re-elected in 1993, 1996 and 1999.

She remains committed to job training and education as the means to economic independence, particularly for women and minorities.

Rachel Coleman, her husband and young son came to Las Vegas in 1957. She worked at various jobs and cared for her family. She eventually became Executive Housekeeper at the Union Plaza Hotel and Casino. In 1987, she began working for Jackie Gaughan in an administrative position at the Union Plaza.

Her oral history is a study of the social and economic realities of Post-World War II Las Vegas. Her description of life on the Westside depicts the vitality of social and cultural institutions that were created despite segregation.

Lucille Bryant moved to Las Vegas from Tallulah, Louisiana in 1953 to escape the cotton fields. She had picked cotton since her childhood.

She was hired to work as a

housekeeper at the Algiers Hotel. She was grateful for the job, the pay and being able to "work in the shade." She worked other jobs in Las Vegas before finding her favorite- in the uniform room at the Stardust.

Her oral history describes Las Vegas schools, neighborhoods, night life on Jackson Street, and the importance of the Culinary Union to the lives of service workers.

Viola Johnson first lived in a tent she shared with six other family members when she arrived in Las Vegas. She worked at the Hilton; the Sands Hotel as a maid; and the Riviera Hotel, making sandwiches in the pantry. She also raised a family and was active in her church. Her interview also provides glimpses into Las Vegas' past, its service workers and the Culinary Union during the early years of Las Vegas Strip casino development.

Alma Whitney also moved to Las Vegas from Tullulah, Louisiana. She worked for 35 years at the Desert Inn and was promoted to housekeeping supervisor.

Whitney remembers early Las Vegas with little shacks and dirt floors, unpaved streets and tiny trailer parks. She was disappointed that Las Vegas was not more racially liberal. She had to, at times, demand respect. She got it, and the city's hotels and casinos offered jobs and opportunities for advancement.

Essie Jacobs moved to Las Vegas in 1963 and worked at the Tally-Ho when it was a hotel operated by an order of Catholic nuns. She stayed until it changed ownership and became the Aladdin Hotel and Casino and remained there for 23 years.

She became a supervisor and a shop steward for the Culinary Union Local 226. When not at work, her life centered around her family and the Westside.

Jackie Brantley is a native Las Vegas. She refers to the Westside of her childhood as a "village" where neighbors took care of each other. As positions opened, up thanks to civil rights legislation, Brantley worked first as housekeeper, then moved to mid-management, and public relations specialist at the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino. She is now a constituent representative in the Las Vegas office of Governor Kenny Guinn.

Faye Todd moved to Las Vegas in 1974. After raising her children, she went to work as Special Events Coordinator at the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino. Later, she worked as Entertainment Director and Corporate Executive Assistant for the Landmark Hotel and Casino.

Todd's history provides a perspective from executive offices of the gaming industry. It sheds light on the opportunities for African-Americans following the 1971 consent decree and the different strategies used by blacks to access opportunities.



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Claytee White, right, conducted an oral interview with West Las Vegas casino pioneer Sarann Preddy.

Faye Duncan Daniel's first job was as a clerical worker at the Nevada Test Site. From there she went on to a supervisor's position at the Union Plaza Hotel & Casino, where she eventually became assistant hotel manager.

She established the Hotel Manager's Association and the Professional Black Women's Alliance. She left the gaming industry, returned to school and has worked with the displaced Homemaker

Program at the Community College of Southern Nevada and Help Centers of Southern Nevada. Her story illustrates how African-Americans used support and networking to obtain economic goals once racial barriers fell.

Anna Bailey is one of the woman who "danced her way into Vegas." At 13 years old she danced at the Apollo Theater in New York City and began dancing in Broadway

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