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## An Interview with Flo Mlynarczyk

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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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. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director  
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## Preface

Flo Mlynarczyk began life in Fort Morgan, Colorado. Her parents divorced and she moved with her mother first to Loveland and eventually to Los Angeles. Her mother started the first Red Cross in Bell Gardens, oversaw the building of their home, and raised money for various charities.

Flo remembers when the Japanese were rounded up and interred during WWII. She was in grade school and recalls that one day they all just disappeared. Upon graduation from high school in 1943, Flo moved to Kodiak, Alaska, to live with friends. She recalls total blackouts on the streets of Kodiak due to the war, the Short Snorter Club, and her return to California after a bout of pneumonia.

Back in Bell Gardens, Flo worked for a department store, married and divorced in 1945, gave birth to her son Michael in 1946, and ended up in Tonopah, Nevada, with a sister who ran a café there. After a second marriage ended, Flo moved to Las Vegas and began working at Phelps Pump and Equipment as a bookkeeper. By 1962 she was office manager at Propane Sales and Service where she met her third husband, Ed Mlynarczyk.

It was while she was working in propane sales that Flo joined the Breakfast Club, the first of many organizations that she worked with and learned from. She remembers dining and dancing at the top of the Desert Inn Hotel, breakfast at the Silver Slipper, and living in Rancho Circle next to neighbors like the Ronzonis and the Kaltenborns.

After Ed's retirement from the fire department, they bought property on West Charleston and finished the house that had been started there, rented it out, and traveled all over Nevada. Ed then started a business with two of his friends for which Flo kept the books. After a second retirement and more traveling, Ed went to work for the Water District until his final retirement in the mid-eighties.

Flo recalls getting involved with the university library, joining the Mesquite Club and participating in its many civic activities, and working for the Las Vegas Convention Center. She details her association with the Watercolor Society, the Citizens Advisory Committee, and singing with the New Sound Choir. The thousands of hours she spent working with various charitable organizations earned her recognition as Volunteer of the Year, and she was listed in Distinguished Women of Southern Nevada for five years running.

Flo closes her narrative with observations on the Mob's influence in Las Vegas, comments on the changes she has seen since 1953, and mention of other early Las Vegans who contributed to the city's growth. She also mentions her husband's work at the Nevada Test Site and the information that is being gathered on those who worked there in the fifties, sixties, and seventies.

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Address of narrator

Claytee D. White 7/7/2005  
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**This is Claytee White. It's July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005. And I'm in the home of Flo...Flo, I'm going to let you pronounce your name correctly.**

Mlynarczyk. Mlyn like Flynn. Mlynarczyk.

**Okay, great. So how are you today?**

I'm fine.

**This is going to be very gentle. There is nothing to even be concerned about. Is it true that you've given me permission to use this for educational and research purposes?**

Yes.

**I'm just going to start, first, by talking about your early life. And then we're going to come up to today and talk about some of the things that you've done. Where were you born?**

I was born in Fort Morgan, Colorado.

**Oh, really? Do you still have family there?**

Not in Fort Morgan. I have family in Denver and Longmont.

**Now, tell me about Fort Morgan and how many people were in the family and brothers and sisters.**

Let's see. I think there were four of us kids. But while we were in Fort Morgan, my mother and father divorced. So it split up the family. Two kids went with Mother and two went with Dad. And Dad was out on the farm. In fact, I was born in Fort Morgan because Mother was living on the farm, and they had to take her in to Fort Morgan for me to be born.

**How far was the farm from town?**

I don't know. Probably, I don't know, maybe 25 miles, 20 miles, something like that.

**So tell me about the farm. What kind of crops?**

It was dry farming, just dry farming, wheat and corn, a stock feeding corn. But they had to have good snows to have winter wheat. Then they'd plow in the summer and also reap in the summer.

**I grew up on a farm, also, in the South. Peanuts, cotton, corn, tobacco.**

Oh, uh-huh.

**What kind of work did women/girls do on a farm like yours?**

Well, I was so small when I left the farm...I know as a kid, we used to go out and bring the cows in. But poor Mother, she worked herself to death there.

**What kind of work did she do on the farm?**

Well, the home and taking care of four kids. But she'd build a fire outside and put a big copper pot on it, and that's where she did her laundry on a scrub board. Dad's overalls, long johns, all of us kids' clothing. She made all of our clothes. We had a wealthy aunt, Helen Faunches, in Denver, of the Faunches Shoe Company. That was my grandmother's sister.

**Spell Faunches. What was that look for, Flo? I'll find out on the Internet.**

Yeah. Well, I can give it to you later. I have all the family history and everything.

**Okay, good.**

But before Christmas, Aunt Helen would pack up a big box of clothes, and she would send them out to the farm. And Mother would remake coats for us. She would make our underpants and our dresses, and she made Dad's shirts. About all they bought were the long johns and the overalls.

**Now, you were about to tell me how she was related to the family, the aunt.**

Oh, that was my mother's aunt, my mother's mother's sister. And she married Harry Faunches. My grandmother and Helen were Wilsons. And the Wilsons were the leather company, the saddlery company, there in Denver. So the families were kind of tied together.

**Great. So you left the farm really early in your life?**

Yeah.

**So you must have gone with your mother.**

I went with Mother. And we moved from Fort Morgan to Loveland, which is about 50 miles north of Denver, somewhere in there. I lived in Loveland until I was nine -- that was 1934 -- and then we moved to Los Angeles.

**Wow. What a difference.**



Yeah. See, that was when the Depression hit this area. We lost everything. They auctioned the house off.

**Now, this was in Loveland?**

Yeah. They auctioned the house off. My stepdad had already gone to Los Angeles and gotten a job. He worked for Phelps Dodge -- no, John Deere -- for twenty-five dollars a week. I remember that so plain because mother said we can we can only afford to pay \$100 a month rent. No, that wasn't what it was. How is it? No. We could only pay \$25 a month because that was a quarter of the monthly take, yeah. So we moved there. She worked as a waitress, and Dad worked for John Deere. Then while the Depression was still on, we moved out to Bell Gardens [CA], which was nothing but Japanese vegetable gardens. Mother bought a piece of property for -- I believe it was \$20 down and \$20 a month. First, she went to a contractor and had them put a slab down, a concrete slab. And I have no idea how much that cost her. Then she went to Sears, and she bought a tent that would cover that slab. Then on the weekends and when Dad had time, he started building the house around the tent. As we got money, he would buy the lumber, and he'd build the house around the tent.

**Whose idea was this?**

Oh, Mother. She was a very strong woman.

**She sounds smart, too.**

She started the first Red Cross there in Bell Gardens. She could have been president if she had wanted to.

**What kind of education did she have?**

She didn't have very much of an education.

**Can you imagine what she could have done with a little education?**

Yeah. She was 17 when they found out she had tuberculosis. I think they were living either in Little Rock or St. Louis at that time. Her father was in the newspaper business. They sent her to the Prairie of Colorado to heal the tuberculosis. And that's when she met Dad.

**How did they meet?**

You know, I really don't know too much about it. After they divorced, there wasn't too much talk, you know, and so forth. Well, it had to be out on the farm because I think she stayed with another sister of Grandma's out there. And then, of course, Dad's farm was not too far from there.

So anyway, we built the house and then folded the tent and took it out the front door.

**Isn't that great?**

Yeah, yeah.

**So how big was this house?**

I think the tent was 40 by 60. Mother divided it somehow. I don't know how she did, but she did. And then when Grandpa died, her dad, she was sent a thousand dollars. And at that time that was a lot of money. She had more concrete poured and had a kitchen and bathroom built on the concrete, and then tacked the tent under the eaves of the kitchen and bathroom. And we lived that way until the rest of the house was built. It was three bedrooms, one bath, living room, dining room, and kitchen.

**Now, tell me about Bell Gardens. What did it look like to you at that time?**

At that time it was just nothing. It was really depressed, really a depressed area. That's the only place you could afford to go then, you know. They had a grade school and eventually a junior high, but they didn't have a high school. I had to go to Montebello to go to high school. It was almost all Japanese gardens. We kids used to get impetigo all the time because of the dirt, I guess the fertilizer they used or whatever. But we were always covered with that purple tincture of whatever it was, you know.

**How did your father get back and forth to work from Bell Gardens?**

A bicycle. Well, it was just not too far. He moved with Phelps Dodge then, and Phelps Dodge was in Bell Gardens.

**Oh, I see. So he left John Deere?**

Yeah, and went to Phelps Dodge. And he worked part-time as a janitor for the school, too. You know, he worked hard. He was a hard worker. But he used to ride a bicycle to work.

**Wow. Now, tell me about your mom. She worked for different families? How did she do that?**

No, no. She stayed home and worked. She would go out and raise money for the Red Cross. She started the Red Cross there and she worked with the schools, but mostly she was just raising us. My brother had come to live with us and by then I had a half sister and a half brother.

**So now, when you left Colorado with your mother, you also came with a sibling, right?**

I came with my half sister and a half brother. She was four and he was two.

**How did your mother get involved in the Red Cross during the Depression? Or was this later, during World War II?**

I think she started it—well, let's see. I don't know whether the war had started or not. But it seems to me like she worked toward it before even then. And I think she got involved with it because the copper company—I was just telling you who he worked for, Dodge—yeah, Dodge would have charity drives and so forth, and she would work with them. And I think that's how she started it.

**Wonderful.**

Then when the war started, I remember climbing up on the fence and looking over the fence at the Japanese gardens at night when the searchlights would be on these planes that looked this big. And they would light bonfires out in the field to try to tell Japanese planes where we were. Oh, yeah. And it was so sad because it was the older folks -- I went to school with the young Japanese kids, and they were wonderful. They were good friends. And it just broke my heart when they were all taken away.

**So did you get to see that process?**

Oh, yeah.

**What was it like? I read about it in history books.**

Yeah. All of a sudden, they weren't there. They didn't show up at school. They were just gone. We didn't know for quite awhile what had happened.

**What happened to their property?**

It just didn't belong to them anymore. I don't know who got it. I really don't. I don't know. I was too young, really, to worry about that part of it. And then by that time, I was in high school. I graduated in '43. When I graduated, most of the young fellows in our class had gone to war. And a big share of them were gone. They were killed.

**That's right.**

So I never went back to a reunion because I just—

**Too painful.**

Too painful, yeah. So many of them were killed.

**So what did you do after high school?**

Mother had a friend who was a teacher, and she was going to go to Kodiak, Alaska. I wanted to go because I had a friend from school that was in the service up there, and he said he could get me a job. So Mother talked to the teacher and she said, "If you will promise me that you will look after her and stay with her, she can go." And the government said that I had to have a job or I couldn't go. I was 18 in August, and we left in August. I went out to Kodiak, and it was quite an experience for an 18-year-old girl. And it was away from the town, but there were 42,000 servicemen out there. And this little town...Flo had a ball.

**Oh, I can imagine. I can imagine.**

Yeah. But the mercantile store that I had a job in, the job didn't work out very well. So I went into waitress work. And I can remember then that you could go into that cafe and have ham and eggs for a dollar. And we used silver dollars then, totally. And had I not been so dumb, I could have had matched sealskins for a bottle of whiskey. The natives there would go out and get you matched sealskins for a bottle of whiskey.

**Oh, but you just didn't know.**

I came back with a pair of mukluks. That was it.

**How long did you stay?**

I think it was in '44 when we had a terrible flu epidemic down here in the lower forty-eights. In '43, that started, the end of '43. And it hit up there later. And everybody was sick. I mean, it was a really bad one. Our restaurant was the only one that was open.

I worked long hours, and then as people started coming back to work, I got sick. They had to put me in the hospital with pneumonia. At that time there was no sulfa drugs or penicillin for civilians. So the pharmacists out on the base would bring in sulfa drugs and penicillin to the doctors in the hospital. And that saved my life. But they told me that I could not stay there, that I would have to get out because the pneumonia wouldn't go away because of being in Kodiak. It was right on the water, you know.

**How cold was it?**

It got pretty cold. Not a terrible lot of snow. It was mostly the wind. They called them the Willow Walls. They'd come over the mountain. Because Kodiak is, you know, like this, in this little hollow basin in here, and that's where the village was. And that wind would come over those mountains, and you could hardly walk against it. Yeah, it got cold.

But the MPs were so good to all of us. They would walk the women home and make sure they were in. You couldn't light a cigarette on the street. Everything was a total blackout.

**Because you could burn the town down.**

No. Total blackout. Total blackout. See, that's when the Japanese were out at Attu and so forth. I made a lot of friends, a lot of wonderful friends.

**Did you find a husband while you were there?**

No. No.

**Well, how many servicemen?**

You only see a few at a time in town. They were very careful. And I did get to meet a couple of airmen. They snuck me aboard a plane one time and took me out over the Aleutian so that I could become a "short snorter."

**What is that?**

You take a dollar bill. And whenever you fly over where there are enemy, you can belong to the Short Snorter Club. And everybody that was with you would write their name on that dollar bill. And I still have a dollar bill somewhere, but I don't know where it is.

**Oh, isn't it that great? What a souvenir.**

Yeah, yeah. But then when I was sick, they told me I had to leave. So they put me on this boat. It was a supply boat, really. And they had mounted a—I think it was a two-inch gun on the back of it or on the bow. I don't know which. And I had gone up on that ship. I can't really call it a ship. It was more of a boat. And then I came back on it. And the storm was terrible on the bay. It was just awful. I was sick all the way home.

**Did you have to travel alone, or was the teacher with you?**

No. She had gotten married and left me. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I was on my own. But I came back in '44. Somehow, Mother had gotten a message. I really don't know too much about it because I was really out of it then. But she had gotten a message that I had died. And when I got back to Seattle, I called her, and I thought she was going to have a heart attack. So I got on the train and went home from there.

**Wow. When you say "they" told you that you had to leave, who is that?**

The doctors. The doctors in the hospital said that I really couldn't heal there because of the moisture and the cold weather and so forth.

**Wow. So going back to Bell Gardens, what was it like? How had it change in that year's time? I mean, that was a time of real change.**

Not too much, really. The town didn't grow until after I moved away from there. The downtown grew some. They added some stores and so forth. But it was a very, very small town. And I have no idea what it's like now. I haven't been there in probably, I would imagine, 60 years. So I have no idea what it's like.

**Did you go back and forth to Los Angeles while the family lived in Bell Gardens?**

I went to Huntington Park. Huntington Park was a beautiful town, absolutely a beautiful town. And I worked for Winemans. It was a department store. Mr. Wineman was always at the store. It was a small department store, and they had the things where you'd put the bill in the suction cup.

**Yes, yes.**

Yeah. And I lived there for quite a few years. I worked and lived there. I got married on the original VE Day, May the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. I was married in the Methodist Church

there in Huntington Park to a sailor. He was from Pepperell, Massachusetts. His family did not approve.

**Why not?**

I don't know. I was 19, and I think he was 19, also. But within three months, I found out I was pregnant. And they tried to get an annulment. So I had to get an attorney and got a divorce instead.

**So he went along with it?**

Yeah. He was a spoiled brat, you know, yeah. So whatever. So anyway, Michael was born then in '46 at the Maywood Bell Hospital, which is no longer there. Then, thank goodness, family helped me take care of him.

**Oh, that's great.**

And I worked. Just before he was ready to go to school, I was still living in Huntington Park, and my sister was taking care of him at that time. My sister and her husband wanted children and she hadn't gotten pregnant. My other sister, then, was in Tonopah [NV], and she had a little restaurant inside of a small—what they called a pastime club. It was just a small club, and she had a little cafe in the back of this small club. She wanted me to come up and work with her, so I said sure. And I told Betty and Ed that I would be going up, and they said fine. So I went up and we worked.

Just to show you what fate will do for you, one day she was sitting and having a glass of milk and a taco, and she was listening to truck drivers at the next table. One of them was talking about this friend of his who had a friend that was going to go to court and take a child away from a mother because she was working in Tonopah in a bar, in a gambling joint. So my sister really listened, you know, and kept listening until she realized that it was her older sister trying to take my son away from me without telling me.

I immediately got on a bus, went to California -- to Huntington Park where I had a friend who was a policeman -- and I asked him if he would put on his uniform and go with me. They were living out in Downey at the time. He said he would, so I went up to their door and knocked. My oldest sister answered the door, and I pointed to the policeman standing out by the car. And I said, "I've come for my son." They never did know how I

found out.

**Oh, that is fate, isn't it?**

Yeah. I took him back to Tonopah with me, and he loved it up there.

**Oh, wonderful.**

He was just in preschool.

**How do you heal that kind of—**

You don't.

**Okay. So it was just—**

It did not heal even after she died. It did not heal, no. You don't heal things like that.

**Yeah. That's right. That's sad.**

Yeah, it is. It is.

**Because the two of you could have shared him and loved him together.**

Yeah, yeah.

**So tell me about Tonopah at that time.**

Oh, that was really small. And there was a base up there at that time. I don't think it was the big old secret that it was eventually, you know. But it was a small town, and it was fun because so many of the people played baseball. And you'd go out in the evening, you know, and watch the baseball games and so forth. Flora would work one shift, and I'd work the other one so we could take care of him. He loved it up there. He walked down the street. And as he'd walk by the open doors, guys would throw silver dollars out at him or something. He really enjoyed it.

**Oh, that's wonderful. What was the major industry in Tonopah at that time?**

Well, there was always mining. But I think the base was about all there was left there. They had the old Mispah Hotel. They had quite a few clubs and a couple of motels. One of the Cavanaugh brothers lived there. The other one lived down here. Then the Bradshaw brothers—Francis Bradshaw was manager of one of the first—I think it was called the First National Bank then. I can't remember just what it was. But they were very good friends of mine. Also, the Lambs came from there. I got to know a lot of people.



**So what brought you from there to here?**

My sister decided to leave Tonopah, so of course I did too.

**Now, this was her business? This small business was hers?**

Yeah. She finally left that, and we both went to work for the Tonopah Club. I worked one shift, and she would work another shift. But when she decided to leave, then I left. And Michael and I came down here.

**Oh, good. So the three of you came together?**

No, no. She went back to Colorado.

**So now, what brought you to Las Vegas rather than going back to Colorado?**

Well, I came down here, and I stayed for a while, and I didn't really like it. So I went back home to Bell Gardens and stayed with the folks for a little while. Then I said, no, I'm going back to Las Vegas. And I knew this guy for many, many years. His name was Tom. I had known him for many years. He decided he was going to come up here, too. So we got married. And I was only married to him a short time when I realized he was an alcoholic. You've known a person for years, and you do not know...

**That's right.**

So when he would come home on Monday morning with the taxi bill and no money, I'd pay the taxi and he would go to work. And then he would get his next Friday check, and then he would do the same thing again. So I said that's all. The next Monday morning when he came home, his clothes were out on the front porch. But I didn't get a divorce for years because I didn't want to be tempted until I met my husband, Ed. And I met him in 1962. I worked with him at Phelps Pump and Equipment out in North Las Vegas. I was a bookkeeper.

**Did you ever get any other schooling after high school?**

No. No.

**How did you become a bookkeeper?**

Well, when I lived in Huntington Park, I finally went to work down in L.A. Actually, I was still living at home, and I had a 29 Model A. And they built—the first freeway was the Santa Ana, from there downtown. And I'd get on the Santa Ana in Bell

Gardens with that Model A and drive down to Seventh and Wilshire. And I went to work for an insurance company. What I did is I walked in, and I said that I was a bookkeeper. They said, well they really needed someone. And I said, "Well, the only thing I'd like you to do is to have someone show me your method of doing it." Well, they showed me how to do it. So I did it.

**Well, that is wonderful. That is wonderful.**

Yeah. But that was before I was married.

**It sounds as if you were just as smart as your mom, or you are just as smart as your mom was.**

Well, I don't know about that, but I learned how to—you learn from the school of hard knocks. Yeah.

**So in 1962, you were at Phelps?**

Well, by then, I was office manager at Propane Sales and Service. I worked at that for several years and Michael went to school. We lived very close. It was out there in North Las Vegas. It was before the freeway—

**(End side 1, tape 1.)**

Propane Sales and Service was out on North Main. And Michael went to school at—I think it was called Washington School, right there on College. It's now called Lake Mead, but then it was College Avenue. And it didn't go through. But there was a little school there. And I don't think it's there anymore. But bless his heart, he'd walk to school. Then he'd come to the restaurant where I worked because I worked two jobs. I had to work two jobs to make a living.

**Oh, I see. Now, did he like Las Vegas --**

Oh, he loved it.

**-- as much as Tonopah?**

Oh, yeah. He loved it, yeah.

**He just sounds like he's very flexible, very adaptable.**

Oh, yeah. He's a wonderful young man.

**Wonderful.**

He's not so young anymore, bless his heart.

**When did you start getting involved in civic activities?**

When I was in the propane sales, I joined the Breakfast Club, I think it was called, where we'd go and have breakfast and have a meeting before we went to work. Yeah, the Women's Morning Breakfast Club.

**Now, tell me what that was all about and who was in it.**

You learned about business and how to dress and how to treat people and so forth. It was just a short meeting, probably an hour in the morning. I don't know. And then I went to Toastmistresses group.

**Before you did Toastmasters, where did you guys meet with the Morning Breakfast Club?**

You know, I can't remember. I think we probably met in a restaurant. I don't know. I just don't recall.

**Do you recall any of the members?**

No, no. That was too many years ago.

**Did you hold any office in that club?**

No. I just did this to help me with being in the business. I kept the books. And we had a trailer supply store with the propane sales, and I kept the inventory up and I sold. You know, I was jack-of-all-trades there.

**Yes. So now, tell me about Toastmasters, Toastmistresses.**

I have Toastmasters here, but I'm sure it was Toastmistresses. It was, again, how to speak in front of people and how to do things. And then I went to work with Phelps Pump, and that also helped me in that business, you know. That's where I met Ed [Mlynarczyk], my husband.

**What did you do with Phelps?**

I was a bookkeeper. Yeah, I kept the books.

**And what was Ed doing?**

He was a partner. There were two young fellows that worked for Ed. They really were hard-working young kids, but they had gotten into the drug thing a little bit. And Ed

was working so hard with them to try to straighten them out. One of them just died a couple weeks ago. He went on from there and was a fireman and retired after 30 years with the fire department. And I just went to his celebration of life not too long ago. So we made good friends here. I sort of felt like I helped raise him a little bit, you know, and he just thought the world and all of Ed.

But anyway, Ed and I met there.

**Now, after your other two experiences—**

I still had not gotten a divorce.

**Oh, okay.**

No. I still had not gotten a divorce because I did not want to remarry. But Ed and I had so much fun. Of course, at that time I was younger. We'd go out for dinner at night, and then we'd go up to the top of the DI, the Desert Inn, and dance half the night away, and then go to the Silver Slipper and have breakfast. Then he'd drop me off. I'd go home and shower and change clothes and go to work.

**Oh, weren't those the good old days?**

Oh, boy, yeah. And bless his heart, Michael was always so self-sufficient. I never had any worry with him. He was just a sweetheart. But then after a while, Ed decided that we should get married. So I went to Michael Hines. He was a friend of Ed's. He was an attorney here in town, a wonderful man. He had, over here on Sahara, a big kind of a ranch-like thing. He had a bear. He had ostriches. He had all kind of animals there. In fact, he had a two-story house with a swimming pool, and he put a slide from the second story down to there. And that bear would get up on that slide and slide down in the pool. And he also had a boa constrictor.

**Ooh. Was all this in his house?**

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Oh, my.**

But he got my divorce for me. He was a real sweet man. He was bucked off of a horse and died. I don't know. The good people seem to go. I don't know why, but they do. But anyway, Michael Hines was a well-known attorney here in town.

Then after I got my divorce, in December of 1962, Ed and I were married. Ann and Dick Ronzoni stood up for us. They were neighbors of Ed's there in Rancho Circle.

**Go ahead. Tell me about Ed.**

He had three children. He was a widower. His wife passed away with cancer. He had two teenagers—two girls—and a boy. I think he was 15 at that time, maybe. I don't know. They lived in Rancho Circle. He had built the house for his first wife. And I made a big mistake to move into the house because the kids resented it. It was bad. The first seven years were not fun. My son was the instigator of all the problems. You know, he was the outsider. It was tough on him. But all he had wanted all his life was a father and brothers and sisters. So he took a lot. Anyway, it all worked out. The oldest girl was in the first four-year graduation out of UNLV.

**Oh, good.**

And Tonya, she's my stepdaughter, and she still lives here in town. She's a dental hygienist for the veterans. She went to Pocatello, Idaho, for school. Then Greg finally went to Eugene for schooling. And things settled down after all the kids were gone. My son had left home by then.

**Did Michael go to school?**

He graduated out of—there on Decatur – Western [High School]. And the first summer, the highway department hired him. He was a draftsman. And he worked for the highway department for quite a while. Then the gas company hired him away from there, and he moved up the ladder in the gas company. And then the telephone company hired him from the gas company, and he went up to management with the telephone company. And he was in line for management, and they chose a woman over him, and he left. He retired early.

He took that money from his retirement and so forth and bought Wicks and Sticks in the Meadows Mall. It was a candle shop. Then in a year or two, he bought The Kitchen Sink, which was a little kitchen gift shop. Eventually, he went to six stores. Then when 9/11 hit, the business got really bad. And the rents are so high in the malls, you know. So he consolidated the six into three. So he still has the three stores; one in the Meadows, one

out at the Galleria, and my granddaughter runs the card store out at Silverado Ranch and Maryland Parkway, in the Smith's shopping center there. Michael has three children. The oldest grandson manages the Meadows' store. They call it Everything But the Kitchen Sink. And then my daughter-in-law runs the store out at the Galleria. However, she oversees all of them.

**Oh, that's great.**

And they have managers, too. And then my granddaughter has the card store.

**Oh, this is wonderful. What a family business.**

Yeah. Then the middle grandson used to run the one at the Galleria, but he decided that he wanted to get into a different business. So he went to whatever classes he had to do to be—not an estimator. What do they call it when they go in and they review a home that's getting ready to sell?

**Appraiser.**

Appraiser, yeah.

**Well, what a good business to be in right now.**

Yeah. So he is now doing appraisals. He's just doing fine. The kids are just doing fine. All three own homes and they're all working hard. I couldn't love my daughter-in-law more if she was my own.

**Good.**

Yeah. And they live just three minutes from me here. So I'm just really happy to have them here.

**Oh, that's good, yes, to be in the same neighborhood.**

Yeah. And then Tonya, my stepdaughter, lives in Henderson and works for the VA. Then the stepson is a dentist up in Santa Rosa, California.

**And that's supposed to be a very pretty area.**

It's a beautiful area, but it's so expensive. Oh, it's just unbelievable.

**You know, California, almost all of it...San Diego is supposed to be the most expensive.**

Oh, yeah. Well, Santa Maria and Santa Barbara and all in there, I think, are the

most.

**That's true.**

Yeah, Napa Valley and all of that is very expensive, very expensive, yeah.

**I want to get back to some of your civic activities. But first, the Ronzonis, tell me about them.**

They were next door neighbors in Rancho Circle. And the oldest daughter Carol, the one that is now deceased, worked for them in the store in downtown. She was in lingerie. And Marie -- and I can't remember Marie's last name—worked in the store at the same time, and she wound up being a manager with Dillard's. She moved up because when Ronzoni's moved out to the Boulevard Mall—yeah, when he left downtown and moved out to the Boulevard Mall, then he was only out there a few years when Diamonds bought it from him.

**I've never heard of Diamonds.**

And then Dillard's bought it from Diamonds. But Mom Ronzoni was one of the most wonderful people you'd ever want to meet. Yeah, she was a sweetheart. Of course, Special Collections has everything on her. She was just a very special person. Every time one of our kids got married, Mom Ronzoni would give them a pair of down pillows.

**Oh, great. That's great.**

**Tell me about Rancho Circle. What was that like, and how did it fit into the city?**

It was "the" place. It was "the" place. I think there was something like 40-something acres there. Everybody owned an acre. Bob Kaltenborn started it. And, of course, the university has all of his history, too. We lived between Ronzonis and Kaltenborns. It was a wonderful area. It was wonderful.

**Now, Rancho Circle is the area that's near Charleston and—**

No. Yeah, Alta.

**Okay, yes.**

Between Alta and the expressway, the freeway, 95. It's just an opening just down from Alta. In fact, some of the houses back up to Alta, yeah.

But it was a wonderful area. The only thing that we had a problem with is that we were in Phelps Pump and Equipment at that time, and Rancho Circle had its own well. And, of course, Ed took care of the well. Then when anybody would have any trouble, they'd call Ed in the middle of the night, "There's air in my line," you know. Finally, in 1970, we decided enough was enough. We just had to get out of there.

**So you left Rancho Circle at that time?**

We left, yeah.

**And is that when you came to this area?**

No. That's when we had bought five-and-a-half acres on West Charleston. The blacktop stopped at upland when we bought those five-and-a-half acres out there. Then finally, they built the Hush Puppy. So they blacktopped the road out. And anybody that was here in the town at that time would remember. In the middle of the five-and-a-half acres, we put a fence around an acre in the center, and Ed planted a hundred trees in there. So everybody knew that big clump of trees out there. If you were flying in or out of the city, you could see that clump of trees.

**Now, what was the reason for doing that?**

Just to get out of town, to get away, yeah. And we wanted out of Rancho Circle. He just wasn't getting any rest. He couldn't retire. So he retired in 1970. And we moved out there on that property.

**So did you build your own house?**

There was a partial house started, and we finished it. Then we weren't ready to move out there, so we rented the front house. Then we built what wound up being a guesthouse. We started with storage, but it wound up being a guesthouse. And in '70, we bought a travel trailer, got rid of everything in the house in Rancho Circle, and moved into that trailer and traveled all over Nevada and just everywhere. Then when we came back, the renters were still in the front house, so we moved into the guesthouse. And we stayed there until Ed decided he wanted to go back to work.

So he went to work. He was a partner with two other guys that he had worked with at Phelps Pump. So they started Drilling and Pumps over on Spring Mountain Road. Of



course, I kept the books, but I never got paid. I cleaned the bathrooms. I made the coffee. The other two wives never showed up at the shop.

**So maybe that was better.**

Yeah, it probably was. But anyway, he then decided to retire again. We did some traveling. Then he went to work for the Water District, which was the—

**Isn't it great to be able to retire and then un-retire like that?**

Yeah, yeah. And he really enjoyed his job at the Water District. He was a construction inspector.

**How long was he there? How old was he when he went there?**

Oh, boy. I think he went to work for them in 1974. And in '75, he fell somehow in a ditch and hurt his back, and he had to have back surgery. So he was out of work for quite a while then. But then he went back to work with them. He stayed with them, and he retired out of there—oh, I'd have to look it up, but I can't recall—in the 80s. And he finally had to have hip replacement and I don't know what all. His health started going down. In 1988 when we moved here, he had had his hip surgery, and I had to do the whole move. I found the house and did the whole move, yeah.

**Why did you decide to move more into the city?**

Well, we weren't. We moved out here. We were the only ones that lived on this street.

**Oh, that's right.**

The Lakes wasn't really here.

**Wow. Isn't that something?**

Citicorp was here. The Collins brothers had started The Lakes here. And there were a lot of homes, you know, being built, but we were not in the city. Oh, no. No. It was way out again.

**This is still way out of town.**

Yeah, uh-huh. Because we didn't even have a grocery store. The closest grocery store was down on Rainbow. It wasn't until 1990, I think, that Albertson's opened up over here on the northeast corner of Sahara and Fort Apache.

**So now, the major cross streets for someone listening to this is Fort Apache and what would you say?**

Between Desert Inn and Sahara. That's The Lakes, between Desert Inn and Sahara and Durango and probably—I don't know. Some of it goes clear up to Hualapai.

**This is a beautiful area.**

Yeah, it really is.

**And you have your own zip code, don't you? I mean, it's completely different. This is really The Lakes, not Las Vegas, but The Lakes.**

No. It's Las Vegas. It's called The Lakes, but it's Las Vegas, yeah. It's 117, 89117. It's, I think, clear over to Charleston, yeah.

**How did you get involved with the university?**

A dear friend, Blanche Zucker, was a librarian, and she was a friend of Hal Erickson. And Hal Erickson was just one of the sweetest persons that ever lived. I just adored him. He and Blanche got to talking one day, and he was acting—he was not a dean, but he was—I don't know what his title was. But he was running the library, the old Dickerson Library. And he and Blanche decided that they had to have a friends group. So they invited me to lunch one day and dumped it in my lap. So I started in, deciding yes, that I would do this. And about that time then, Mary Dale Deacon came into the picture. I got a steering committee together, and she helped me with the bylaws. Then Iona Gifford, who was in the Mesquite Club with me, was a parliamentarian. And she helped me with the bylaws. We just got it going. I couldn't have done it without Mary Dale.

**So what did you call it at first?**

I think it was just called the Friends Group. And then we decided we had to have a different name because there were too many friends of the library. So we made it the University Library Society.

**So what kind of things did you do? What was it actually put in place to do?**

To raise money to work for the library. We raised a lot of money on small things.

**What are some of the things that you did to raise money?**

Well, we always had a phantom party. Every year we had a phantom party. We'd

send out invitations to don't come to the phantom party. And if you don't come to dinner, you send so much. And if you don't want to come to cocktails, you send so much. We raised a lot of money with that. We had a lot of different ways.

**Well, that sounds great. Why don't we do that again? Doesn't that sound great?**

Well, we no longer have the Friends Group because this other group took over, and they don't do those piddling little things anymore. They do the big stuff, see. And I still think that the library is losing out by not having a Friends Group. So I don't know. I think we had 50-something-thousand dollars left, and we put it in an endowment when we dissolved. It broke my heart when we dissolved.

**Wow. That was a lot of money.**

Yeah, yeah.

**So what were some of the other ideas that you used to raise money?**

Oh, I can't remember. Just all kinds of things. We'd have parties.

**I guess you sold books?**

Oh, yeah, we had book sales. And we had parties at the university where chefs would come in from the hotels. We just did all kinds of things.

**How long were you active?**

I started it in—was it '86? I think I started working out there in '86, if I'm not mistaken, and worked until the new library was open. I'm trying to think. I dislike the man, so I have a terrible time remembering his name, the guy that was dean that moved to San Diego, was it?

**He was kind of unusual?**

He was an out-and-out liar. I'm sorry. And this can go on the record. He came to me and said that they needed to have a survey of the library, to have architects come in and decide what would be the best way to use the space they had, especially in the round building. And he said if your organization will raise the money—and I think he asked for \$10,000 -- he said I promise you that this will happen and that will happen and we'll really do big things. Well, it was found out that he hired a couple of his friends from New York

to come out. The \$10,000 was spent and I'm not sure we got anything out of it. I never forgave the man after that. I could not work with him. And he's the one that got rid of Tarkanian [Jerry].

**Okay. So you're not talking about the dean of libraries?**

No, no.

**You're talking about the provost.**

No. I'm talking about Carol Harter's job. What do they call it, the president?

**President.**

Is she the president?

**Yeah, she's president.**

Okay. Well, he was president. He walked around with a coat hung over his shoulder and always wanted to be on the news. I probably shouldn't say all this stuff, but that's the way I feel.

**And I think he went on to Long Beach or someplace.**

Yeah, somewhere. I can't even remember his name because I disliked him so much.

But anyway, I worked for many, many years and worked hard. Worked hard. I didn't do it alone. A lot of people worked with me -- a lot of people. It was fun, and at the time my husband was very supportive. He really was. He was very proud of the work I was doing out there.

**Oh, that's great. So you were still doing this up until the new library was completed?**

Oh, yeah.

**So that means that you knew Myoung-ja Lee Kwon?**

Oh, yeah. She was the sweetest. Yeah. I always called her "My Young." Yeah, she's a sweetheart. Yeah, I worked with her for years. In fact, she was interim dean until Mary Dale came in. And she set up all the new computer stuff, too. She worked herself to death in there. Yeah. Then she put on the old hardhat and went out and worked with the new library.

**That's right. So you mentioned several times that you were also a member of the Mesquite Club.**

Yes. I joined the Mesquite Club in 1975. That's another thing that Blanche got me into.

**Is Blanche still around?**

Oh, yeah. They had a group called the Rose Guard Committee. They were building a rose garden out in Lorenzi Park on a peninsula, a point, that went out. They were raising money to build this rose garden. Peggy Kaltenborn, who was a next door neighbor there in Rancho Circle, got me started in it. So I went out and helped them work in the rose garden before I was a member. Then I was made a member in '75. Then shortly after that, they made me the liaison from the Mesquite Club to the rose garden, and I held that job until—I can't remember when it was. I worked for many years, I think like 20-something years.

**Tell me what that role was as liaison.**

I worked with the city because we finally turned the rose garden over to the city. We dedicated it when Bill Briare was mayor. We dedicated it to him. And I believe that Special Collections has all of our books and so forth on it. But I oversaw the garden at all times. A lot of times it was daily work, sometimes weekly. And then I finally gave it up after just years.

**How big was the rose garden?**

We started out with, I think, 400 bushes. Then when the DAR roses behind the City Hall started dying because of the exhaust from the cars, they asked if they could move their rose garden out with us, and we allowed that. So they brought the monument out there and put new roses in. And I think there must be 7- or 800 roses in there now. Yeah, it's a big rose garden. But it's still called the Mesquite Club Rose Garden.

**And it's at Lorenzi Park?**

Lorenzi Park, uh-huh. You know where the Sammy Davis Junior Theater is?

**Yes.**

Well, it's just right down the hill from that out there on the lake. Oh, it's beautiful.

**The next time I go, because I go over to do research every once in a while, I'll have to pay more attention to that area.**

Yeah. And when you go in the museum, you can look out over the lake, and the rose garden is right there.

**I've seen it a hundred times.**

And I know I've got in here someplace where I stayed with the rose garden. Until 1997. I turned it over then to somebody else.

**Wow. So how did you become such a horticulturist?**

I didn't.

**(End side 2, tape 1.)**

**So we were talking about roses. So that was your mom's favorite?**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**So give me some of the other activities of the Mesquite Club and what it was all about and what it meant to you.**

The Mesquite Club started in 1911. They were the first women's club. They finally decided that the city needed some trees. So they bought elm trees, the Dutch elm trees, and planted them down Fremont Street and would carry water by the bucket to these trees. They started the first library here in town. They've just done so much work. It's hard to say. All these little blue markers in the middle of the street that show the firemen where the fireplugs are, that was Mesquite. Mesquite Club also helped the Crime Stoppers get started, only it wasn't called Crime Stoppers then. I can't remember what it was called. But it's just really a wonderful organization. The sad part is that we're all getting old. And the young people don't have time to do this.

**So you haven't been cultivating younger members?**

We've been trying, but the younger women are probably working in family businesses. They have children. They don't have the time to do this. And we used to be 300 members all the time, and now we're below 200. The membership is getting older. I just really am frightened that we're going to lose this club.

**Are you still as active as you have always been?**

Oh, no, because I used to hold offices. I never went up the chairs or anything, but I always held offices and always was on the board and worked very hard. I worked three years at what we called the Kitchen Dough Raisers to raise 50-something-thousand dollars to put a new kitchen in. It took three years to raise that. So, I mean, I worked hard for the Mesquite Club, too.

**Does the Mesquite Club have its own building?**

Oh, yeah. The neighbors didn't want us to rent anymore. So they went to the city and fixed it so that we can't rent anymore. So consequently, now we have to raise the money to keep the building, which takes the money away from the community.

**And the neighbors understood the Mesquite Club and what they were doing?**

Oh, yeah. But the neighborhood is beginning to go down a little.

**So where is your club located?**

At Sixth and St. Louis. You know where Marie Callender's [Restaurant] is? Right behind there on St. Louis. And all this time, I also worked for 28 years with the Las Vegas Convention Center.

**Tell me about that.**

Just part-time work, you know, working the conventions.

**Explain that work.**

Registration and cashier, whatever. It was fun. It was a bunch of great gals. When we first started, I think they paid us two dollars an hour or something like that. No benefits, of course.

**So how did that increase over time?**

I don't know. I think I finally was making five something when I quit. But after 28 years...I think I got a pin at 25.

**Oh, wonderful. That sounds like fun work because you have some down time between shifts.**

Well, my daughter-in-law's mother booked the conventions or was the head of the girls. So I could pick and choose the conventions I worked.

**And in advance.**

And I always got the Pizza Hut Classic that the UNLV basketball was involved with. And that's when we were at the Convention Center in the rotunda. But I always worked the Pizza Hut Classic.

**And why did you like that one so much?**

Well, because it was a wonderful bunch of people from Pizza Hut and I always got the same gifts that the players got. I was the only one that ever worked it. And it was just fun. I just really had a ball. And we always got to sit on the floor. Ed and I always got to sit on the floor for their basketball games.

**Okay, great. Now, there's another organization that you belonged to, and you haven't talked about this at all. But you are a part of the Watercolor—**

The Nevada Watercolor Society, yeah.

**Tell me about that, and tell me about your talent and how you developed this talent.**

Well, I always painted with just cheap little watercolors.

**So when did you start?**

In junior high for class projects and so forth, you know.

**And when did you discover that yours looked different from the rest of the kids in the class?**

When one of my teachers sent one of my paintings to the Los Angeles County Fair and it won a prize. And I don't remember what it was, whether it was honorable mention or what. But when it won a prize, when I decided, okay, I can paint. But I never did take any instructions until 1986. Yeah, '86 when I started. A really good artist, Mary Jo Harding -- she is now deceased—was a member of the Mesquite Club, and she started having classes on Wednesday mornings. And when she finally moved to Texas, then Mary Shaw took over the Wednesday classes. And we're still doing that.

**You still take classes?**

Oh, yeah. And then when Mary is out of town, I teach.

**So can you teach anyone how to paint?**

Oh, sure. Anybody can learn how. Whether they're good or not, that's up to them.



But anybody can learn the techniques.

**I see.**

It's a wonderful thing to do because when you're painting, you can't think of anything else. Just can't think of anything else. And I take all kinds of workshops. The Watercolor Society brings in topnotch watercolorists from all over the United States. And we have anywhere from three- to five- to seven-day workshops. And I always take those. I go to Zion [National Park] every year on a workshop with Carl Purcell. I went to Scotland with him two years ago on an art trip.

**Now, when you go on an art trip, are you painting your way through wherever?**

Oh, you bet. Oh, yeah.

**Oh, that sounds exciting.**

Yeah. When we went to Scotland, we stayed in Pitlochry. And then we'd take day trips out to different places and paint.

**Did you paint while you were in Alaska?**

No. I wasn't painting then. Yeah, I didn't paint for years.

**When you came to the Las Vegas area, when did you begin to paint?**

In '86. Then I joined the Watercolor Society. I also joined the National Watercolor Society as an associate member. That way I get all their newsletters, and I'm invited to their shows and things like that. Now I'm a signature member of the Nevada Watercolor Society.

**So one of the founders?**

No, no. It just means that you have to be accepted into three shows before you are considered a signature member.

**Oh, I see. Tell me how that works. How do you get chosen to be a part of a show?**

They have judges that will judge into the show, and then they have judges—and it may be the same and it may not be the same—that will judge for prizes. You have to be judged into a show. And you have to be judged into three to become a signature. I think

they've changed it this year, but I'm not sure.

**Now, are you familiar with First Friday, an activity that the city has started?**

Yes. Downtown. Yeah.

**Okay. And there's now an art district?**

Yeah. And it was funny. I'm going into DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] now. They're reading my papers now in Washington. I went to a DAR meeting two weeks ago. One of the gals that was there has an antique shop down there, and she has offered the DAR artists room in her shop to show on the First Fridays. Yeah, so we're going to try and make some money that way.

**Good. Well, that's great.**

So that'll be interesting, yeah.

In 1984 I was selected to serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee for the City of Las Vegas on the general planning of the update of the Community Planning and Development Department. And I served three years on that.

**Give me some of the things that you did.**

I worked with a group of people out of Los Angeles that was trying to help us with redoing the planning for the Advisory Committee. We worked for three years under Bill Briare and just got a lot of wonderful ideas, but the city never followed through on half of them. I doubt if they did any good at all.

**Some of the ideas that are being put into place now --**

Were not--no.

**-- you can't see any reflections?**

No, no. In fact, I have all the papers that I had kept during that and I'm going to give them to Special Collections.

**Great. That's wonderful.**

Yeah, I kept all the papers from that. Bill Briare is a very special person, and I'm just sorry we lost his wife. He would still be mayor, I believe, because he was wonderful.

But then I founded the [University] Library Society in 1985. It was dissolved after we opened the new library.

Then in 1982 I designed with a copyright a piece of jewelry for the Mesquite Club's tree pendant and pins. That was that little—I showed you—that tree, that mesquite tree. That is a pin. I designed it. And Bill Cox, who was alive at that time and had Van Buren & Cox Jewelers, helped us develop it.

**So what kind of stones?**

It's either gold or silver. You could get either gold or silver and three different sizes of pins. It's a beautiful little piece of material.

**Oh, that's great.**

Then there are my watercolor classes and traveling...I joined the New Sound Choir in 1987, which was with Mesquite Club. And I'm still in the choir. We sing quite often for the retired officers' wives out at Nellis Air Force Base at Christmastime. And we've sung at care facilities and so forth.

**What kind of singing?**

The music that we like. Probably the 40s and show tunes and Christmas stuff and so forth.

**Oh, good. Okay.**

I have worked with or for the National Tuberculosis Association, because my granddaughter has TB. I've also worked with the Salvation Army, Opportunity Village, Cancer Society, Senior Citizens Center, Clark County Community College, Channel 10, blood services, and several of the different library groups.

**How have you had this much time?**

Well, I just did it during the day when my husband was working. A lot of it, I only donated time and materials. Then some of it, I donated money and so forth. Then in 1986/'87, I received a great honor I think. The governor at that time named me to the Governor's Honor Roll of Excellence and was named Volunteer of the Year for the years '84 to '86 and again in '88 to '89. I had thousands of hours of volunteer work. Then I was selected for the Distinguished Women of Southern Nevada for five years. I was in their book for five years. And I finally said that's enough. Each one of the kids gets a book, and that's it. I write poetry. I was given—

**Oh, now, I didn't know about the poetry.**

Yeah. I was given the Golden Poet Award in 1989 in Washington, D.C. and again in 19 --

**Wait a minute. We're talking about national poetry?**

Um-h'm.

**So where are your books?**

And then again in 1991 in New York City. And I'm published in "The Great Poems of Our Time" by the National Library of Poetry.

**Oh, good. I'm glad I have that on tape so I know where to find it.**

In fact, I think I have one of "The Great Poems of Our Time" here in the house somewhere. Then I have some of my art that has been bought locally, state, and national. And I have some pieces in four different countries where people have moved, you know, in the service and so forth and have taken paintings with them.

**So what inspires you to paint?**

Mostly, I paint florals. As you can tell, just mostly florals. But whatever I look at that affects me. You know, trying. I'm a member of the National League of American Pen Women.

**Tell me what that is.**

It's art, literature, and—what do they call it when someone works for a theater? You know, they either direct or write or whatever. But it's different forms of artistic stuff. And it's a national thing. I'm a charter member of the Museum of Women in Arts in Washington, D.C.

**Now, how did that happen?**

When they started this, they wanted to promote the women artists of America and the world. So we all pitched in and gave them enough money to get a building and start working with it. So I'm a charter member of that.

Like I say, they're reading my papers now in Washington for the DAR. I have a feeling that I'll probably get in.

**I think so, too.**

Yeah. Then I've received all kinds of art awards. In 1997, the University Library Society sponsored an exhibit of 43 of my watercolor paintings, and the show was held at the library.

**Okay. At Dickerson?**

Yeah. They had a sample of my works on the Internet, but have since taken it off. I've had one-artist shows in Clark County libraries and private homes for the last ten years.

**Which show have you been the proudest of?**

Oh, I think probably the university show. And then also, Mary Shaw and I had a two-man show at the Clark County libraries that ran from December of '99 through February of 2000. And we had paintings at the library over on Cheyenne and Buffalo, that library out there. It ran for a month or better. And they liked it so well, they moved it over to the Charleston Library, and it ran again.

**Oh, that's wonderful.**

So that was a really good show.

**Now, what does that kind of exposure do for your career or for an artist's career?**

You do some selling, not a whole lot, but you do some selling. But the reason that I do it in the libraries is because then school kids that can't afford art and don't know anything about it can enjoy art. They can't go to shows, particularly, to see them. And it exposes these kinds of people. And even the homeless get to go in and see art that they enjoy. It covers so many more people. And it's worth it to me if I don't sell anything. I don't care if I sell my paintings. I really don't. I just want people to enjoy it. And the people that enjoy it the most are the ones that go into the libraries because they can go no place else to see it. And it's wonderful to read their comments in the guest books.

**I bet it is. Are you familiar with Vicki Richardson?**

Oh, you bet. Now, which one? There are two of them.

**Tell me about what you know about each of them.**

The black Vicki Richardson, I do not know very well. I know of her, and I know she's a great artist. But the other Vicki Richardson is a fantastic artist. She is wonderful.

In fact, she and Mary Jo Harding are the ones that got me started in '86 at Mesquite Club.

**Oh, I see.**

Yeah, they taught together.

**Isn't this a small world?**

Yeah.

**I helped the city of Blue Diamond get started collecting their oral histories, and they introduced me to Vicki Richardson. Well, I interviewed Vicki Richardson. And she said, "Well, have you interviewed Vicki Richardson?" So then I interviewed the other Vicki Richardson.**

Yeah. She lives up in Oregon now. But she comes down every once in a while.

**She was down for a Christmas celebration at one point there in Blue Diamond. And that's how I met her.**

Yeah. She's a sweetheart.

**This is exciting. Now, do you do any small things, boxes of greeting cards or anything like that?**

Yeah. In fact, when you leave, I'll give you a package of my cards that I have that I sell. I sell them at Mesquite Club and two dollars from every sale goes to the Mesquite Club.

**Oh, this is wonderful. This is absolutely wonderful.**

So I think I've just about covered everything. I'm so anxious to hear if I got into—oh, and I'm also in the Who's Who of American Women. I don't know. I don't know how I got into some of these things. They just happened.

**When you look back at this list or when you're even thinking about compiling a list like that, what do you think? What do you feel?**

A lot of it was accidental. A lot of it, I was just invited to be a part of it and only because, evidently, they saw my name over and over again. You know, big deal. The things that I'm most proud of are, of course, the Governor's Honor Roll of Excellence and being the Volunteer of the Year several times because those I worked hard for. And the Library Society, I worked hard for. Mesquite Club, I've worked hard for. The rest of it, it

all just comes along with it, you know.

**What kind of changes have you seen in this city? And what was the first year that you moved here? Which year was that?**

'53 is when I started living here full-time.

**So you've been here well over 50 years.**

Oh, yeah.

**1953 to today, what do you see as some of the changes in this city? You can talk about politics. You can talk about the art world.**

Well, I really wasn't into the art world then. I was too busy being a single parent. But I can tell you this, that during the time when the Mob ran the hotels, the people of Las Vegas were treated like royalty.

**Explain that.**

We had no crime in this town. We were always given show tickets or whatever, and you could go out into the lounges and see wonderful shows for the price of a drink. It was a wonderful place to live. And I'm sorry to say that it had to be because the Mob owned it, but that was the way it was. They didn't allow any other problems here in town. Then when we started being just numbers, when the corporations started buying, then they no longer gave us comps. They no longer cared whether we came in or not. And that really changed the city.

Ed and I used to drive down on Fremont Street and sit on the street in the car and visit with people as they would come by. And we knew half of the people that would walk by because we'd always go into the Golden Nugget and have dinner. And I'd sit down with maybe a ten-dollar bill and play dollar blackjack and make enough for us to have dinner. If I lost the ten, we didn't do anything. And if I won, then we had dinner.

**Now, were you the gambler in the family?**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. But that was all I ever gambled. I was never a gambler other than that. We just did it just to see if we could pay for the dinner. My Golden Nugget card has four numbers on it. That was a membership card. I have a card from the Thunderbird. I have a card from the Showboat. All these things, they were for the local people. And it

was a wonderful town.

When Ed got here, there were 11,000 people here. And I think there were probably maybe 20,000 by the time I got here. But that's still a small town. When I came here, you could buy Strip property for a hundred dollars a front foot.

**And we just heard something about millions the other day.**

Yeah. Of course, now you couldn't afford the taxes.

**That's true.**

Yeah. But it was a wonderful town. It was friendly. We really didn't have the crime. When I first got here, West Las Vegas was a black community. And any black entertainers that came to the Strip had to stay over on the Westside, which was really a shame.

**What did the average person here think about that?**

You know what? I guess it was my age at the time. I accepted it as fact. I didn't like it, but I accepted it as fact because there was nothing I could do about it, I felt. Ed was in business, and he went into a restaurant one time, and I can't remember where it was. I'm not sure. He told me. And he was sitting at the counter and Nat King Cole came and sat down beside him. And the waitress talked to Ed and refused to talk to Nat King Cole, and Ed got up and left. And I thought, you know, there's something wrong. There's something wrong here. I judge each person by the way they treat me.

**Wouldn't it be a beautiful world if we could all live like that?**

Yeah, but there is always somebody on both sides that takes advantage.

**That's right.**

I have a feeling that Jesse Jackson has done more harm to the black people than he's done good. I think you've got to have people that love people to be in charge.

**Well, see, I don't consider him in charge. As a black person, I don't consider him --**

Really?

**-- as somebody that I look up to.**

Oh, good. That's good.



**I understand that he speaks out on certain issues and things like that, but I consider myself an American.**

That's right. Well, and there's so many white ones that do the same thing, let me tell you. But like I say, there's always got to be some bad apples in the barrel to spoil it for everybody else. It's just sad. But that's part of the growing up, I guess. I don't know.

I remember when the only time that you could get across from one side of Las Vegas to the other was to go under the Charleston underpass that was just wide enough for two cars to pass. And if it rained, you didn't cut across. And the only other one was over on what was called DC4 Road, which is now Spring Mountain Road.

**Oh, it was called DC4?**

DC4 Road. Tropicana was called Bond Road.

**Yes, I've seen that.**

Sahara was called San Francisco. Yeah, all these different streets. When I worked out there at the propane place, I had a friend who was in the service out at Nellis. And he loved to go deer hunting, but his wife wouldn't let him bring the deer meat home. So he'd bring the deer to me, and I'd take it out to DC4 Road where there was a processing plant. And they also had freezer lockers. And it would seem like we'd have to go halfway to California to get meat when we wanted it.

**Oh, and they actually stored your meat for you?**

They stored it in meat lockers. They processed it for you. They could make hamburgers out of it and steaks and sausage and things. Then you'd store it there.

**And you like that meat?**

Oh, yeah. Well, listen, Michael and I lived on it for many years because you just didn't have the money then.

**Now, when you moved here, it was a time that the Nevada Test Site started testing. Tell me about that period.**

Oh, when we knew there was going to be one set off, we would all run out in the morning to see it. Dumb people. The government just kept us in such—we were mushrooms. We were kept in the dark all the time. Ed had several different kinds of

cancer, and I really think that the Test Site—because he drilled a lot of holes out there. And I really think that his cancers were caused from that. And one of these days – there is a professor out at the university that's gathering that information.

**That's right.**

And I need to talk to him [her] someday.

**It's Mary Palevsky.**

Oh, is that who it is? I thought it was a man. Okay. I don't know how much I can give her, how much information and everything, because he worked at the Test Site before I married him. But I know he drilled a lot of wells out there and was out there during tests from time to time. And I just know, you know, that it had to have something to do with it.

**Because now we know, of course, how dangerous that was. Do you ever remember any kind of demonstrations against that back at that time?**

No. No. Everybody was gullible. Everybody was gullible. It wasn't until much later that that started happening. And I don't know how the men that worked out there kept the secrets they kept because they didn't even tell their wives anything. I don't know how they were threatened and why they didn't talk. I just don't know.

**That's going to be an interesting book one day.**

Yeah, it sure will be. Yep.

**Well, you know, I really appreciate all of this information.**

I'm not sure that I have what you need.

**You've already given it to me.**

But Ann Ronzoni—

**(End side 1, tape 2.)**

**How old is she now?**

She's 91 or 92. And she's in a care facility out on Horizon Drive and just west of Eastern. I go see her as often as I can. But she's married now to Larry Lavoe. He was an artist. He lives with Ann's niece. But Ann is still around and I go see her as often as I can.

**Is she able to remember the past?**

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, you should talk to her. You should talk to her.

**Yes. Do you think she would allow an interview?**

Oh, I think so. I'll talk to her about it.

**Oh, great. And I'll give you an additional card.**

And also somebody else that really you should talk to is Hal and Tina Smith out in Henderson.

**Now, tell me who they are.**

He is an ex-legislator from here, a retired one. And she helped set up the Las Vegas museum, the one out on the highway and everything. They were dear friends of the Ronzonis, the Bowels, Stan McNair and all those people and the Richardsons. Jenny Richardson is another one. I doubt if she'd go for it. But Jenny and Jack Richardson lived on the Circle. And their son Billy Richardson—Bill Richardson, excuse me—he's still Billy to me—when they sold the Mandalay Bay, he got \$20 million out of that. He was a partner in that. A young kid, you know. And I think he's still in one of the hotels at Stateline, too. And Jenny and Jack started the one out by the dam, the one that burned. Remember? Jack and Jenny owned that, and then the sons took that over. Then Billy moved to some of the bigger hotels. Our kids went to school with them. They were just kids together.

**Just regular people.**

Yeah, yeah.

**But Ann Ronzoni...that would be great to talk about that store that everybody is so—**

Yeah. And Mom Ronzoni was one of the sweetest persons that ever lived. Dick's oldest sister was born in Nome, Alaska. Mom's husband was a gold digger, you know. They went all over. She followed him all over, and that's how they got to Tonopah and Manhattan and in there. Dick was born in Manhattan. And Mom Ronzoni, in order to feed the family, would wash the miners' socks and underclothes. And then she'd mend the socks. And when she couldn't mend them anymore, then she'd make a trip to San Francisco and buy every pair of socks she could find. Didn't care about the sizes. She just bought all she could and brought them back. And that's how she started her business. She

started selling socks.

**What a way to start a business.**

And Ann could tell you all about this.

**Oh, that would be amazing. Yes, I would love to have an introduction. And I would go right out there just immediately.**

Yeah. I'll ask her. In fact, I'm due to go out and see her, and I just haven't done it. It's just so far out there. But other than that, we were next door neighbors to them. And they were wonderful neighbors, wonderful neighbors, yeah.

**That's great.**

Ann raised her two nieces and a nephew, and she had two adopted children. Phillip is here in town and her adopted daughter lives in Sacramento, I believe. But they're wonderful people. We loved them dearly.

**What a great place to live.**

Yeah. Well, I don't know how much more I can tell you.

**Well, I appreciate this. I expected to be here for about an hour, and I've been here over an hour and a half.**

Yeah. You can have these copies.

**Well, I appreciate that so much.**

Also, I can remember one thing that you should know about. When Ed was taking care of the water wells around, Mr. and Mrs. Terrible [Herbst] lived in a little frame house just before you drove into McCarran Airport off of—is it Paradise?

**Yes.**

Yeah. And you pulled in, and they had this little house. Ed would go out with Mr. Terrible [Herbst] and would work on the pump, and I would sit in the house with Mrs. Terrible. And she'd say, "Would you like to have a little glass of wine?" I'd say yes. So she'd bring this gallon jug out like this, and it would full of cut nectarines with red wine over it, you know. Oh. And every time I see a nectarine, I think of Mrs. Terrible and that wonderful red wine that she used to serve.

**Wow. How did they get the name Terrible? Where was that from?**

I don't know. Yeah, I don't know.

Also, in the early 50s, there was a guy named Ray Harris, a gray-haired man. He was partial owner in Cinder Block. When Warm Springs had the spring out there, he was in partnership out there. And I think they had some kind of baths out there. And he was a wonderful man. I just loved him. And we always said that if I ever died, I wanted to come back as one of Ray Harris's dogs because he took such wonderful care of his dogs.

Oh, dear. And I can't remember the name of the guy—Nick—he was a gypsy. And he wound up being chief of police out in North Las Vegas. And I cannot think of his name. He was another wonderful character. There were a lot of them out there in North Las Vegas at that time.

**Now, how did you get to know so many people in North Las Vegas?**

Well, that's where we lived. Michael went to grade school and junior high. He went to J.D. Smith out there.

**Have you driven into North Las Vegas recently? Have you heard about the redevelopments on Anthem?**

No. Oh, that's out north. Yes. Yeah, they say it's just beautiful.

**It's going to be another Summerlin.**

Yeah, that's right.

**Another planned community.**

I just wish they could upgrade. Now, the duplexes—you know where Rancho is, just off of 25<sup>th</sup> street there, there's a whole bunch of duplexes in there. I moved into those when they were brand-new. And we paid 87.50 a month for a two-bedroom, one-bath apartment. They were so nice. They were duplexes, and they backed up to each other. And I'm still friendly with some of the people that I met when we lived there.

**Isn't that great?**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Flo, I just appreciate all of this information.**

Well, I just hope it gives you some of what you need. And I'm sure we've left out a lot of people that I could talk about, but I just...

**But this is great.**

Good.

**This is wonderful. So I thank you so much.**

**(End of side 2, tape 2.)**

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