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2010

An Interview with Kimberly Harney-Moore

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee White

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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University of Nevada Las Vegas

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This project was the brainchild of Deborah Boehm, Ph.D. and Patrick Jackson who taught at UNLV and resided in the John S. Park Neighborhood. As they walked their community, they realized it was a special place that intersected themes of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gentrification. Patrick and Deborah learned that John S. Park had been listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and that original homeowners, local politicians, members of the gay community, Latino immigrants, artists and gallery owners and an enclave of UNLV staff all lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, they decided that the history of this special place had to be preserved, joined with the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and wrote a grant that was funded by the Centennial Committee.

The transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the narrative. These interviews have been catalogued and can be found as non-circulating documents in Special Collections at UNLV's Lied Library.

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Interview with Kimberly Harney Moore

June 16, 2010 in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Claytee White

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Preface

Kimberly Harney-Moore and her three siblings were raised in the John S. Park Neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s. Their parents, Tim and Kathleen Harney, were educators. A nostalgic feeling for the neighborhood remains; perhaps, rekindled when she had close friends buy a house across the street from her childhood home.

In this interview, Kimberly talks about the inviting character of the area's architecture, mentions a few names of neighbors she babysat for, and fondly recalls her job at Luv-Its Custard shop. There was a time when she would drive through the old neighborhood and be saddened by the lack of upkeep and the changes, but today it is a place being reborn to a new generation.

Note: Tim Harney and Kathleen Harney, Kimberly's parents, are also participants in the Voice of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood oral history project.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood



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Kimberly Harney-Moore 6-16-10
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 6/16/2010
Signature of Interviewer Date

Interview with Kimberly Harney-Moore

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This is Claytee White and I am with Kimberly Harney-Moore, in her home in Henderson [Nevada], and today is June 16th, 2010.

So how are you this morning?

I'm very well.

Great. So Kimberly, I want you to tell me a little about your childhood, some of your early memories, and about your sisters, their names, and what your parents did for a living.

OK. Some of my earliest memories. Well, all I really remember is Las Vegas. We moved here in 1965, so I was three. Probably some of my best memories would be spending time out at Lake Mead [National Recreation Area] [National Recreation Area] with friends [laughing], you know, water sports and activities and things out there. But it was different because the town was smaller, so you could ride your bike everywhere and we played out till all hours of the night, much to our parents' dismay sometimes [laughing]. We were always outside; I remember that a lot.

My youngest sister is Stephanie Harney Gates and she lives in Oceanside [California] now. My sister Ann Chirico lives in Los Angeles [California] and my brother Christopher [Harney] lives in Reno [Nevada]. He's the youngest.

OK. And you're the only one here with your parents.

I'm the only one that remained in this area. [Laughing] I went to school at UNR [University of Nevada, Reno]. So I guess I'm just a product of the State of Nevada.

My parents were educators. My mom [Kathleen Harney] and dad [Tim Harney] met at Valley High School when it was very first opening. They were both in the English Department. I went to Robert E. Lake [Elementary School] back then, and I remember walking to Valley to wait for them to go home for the day. So I remember those high school games and things like that. My mom was always like the adviser. She went on and was a counselor at Western High School, then went into school planning and facilities, and she was working at the education center which is on Flamingo [Road].

The new building?

No, it's been there for a long time. They have multiple buildings now.

Yes, I know which one you're talking about.

It's like Flamingo and Eastern [Avenue].

Not that far from the credit union.

Exactly. Right around the block.

My mom then, as she progressed, was a director. We had an initiative [and] they built 110 schools over a ten-year period, so she was responsible for raising the funds and the awareness for that, and then to oversee the construction projects, which was kind of unusual for a woman back then.

Oh, that's amazing! Oh, I definitely want to interview her.

Yes. [Laughing] She's a wonderful person. I strive to be my mother every day. And then when she finished her career at the [Clark County] School District [CCSD] she was Associate Superintendent of Community Relations—so she was on television quite a bit. [Laughing] She was kind of in the limelight and very involved in the community outreach

and the different issues, whatever they may have been, you know, town hall meetings, things like that.

And then my dad, he did more moving around. He was at Rancho [High School] first, and he had some very prominent students way back then [laughing]. Sandy Miller; Governor [Bob] Miller's wife, was one of his students, and [former Nevada Attorney General] Frankie Sue Del Pappa. He was right out of college from Minnesota when they moved here. He became an assistant principal at K.O. [Knudson Middle School] and then a principal at [Robert O.] Gibson [Middle School], and actually in between there was at the ed center in research and development. When he finished his career, he was Associate Superintendent of Personnel, and then Certificated Personnel. So they have a school named after them. [Kathleen and Tim Harney Middle School]

That's what I was getting ready to ask you about. As I was packing my things the other day in his office, after the interview was over, he mentioned that there was a school named, I guess for both of them?

For both of them.

Tell me about the school, where it's located, and how he got nominated for that.

Well actually, it started out with my mom being nominated and as it went through the process, they added my father's name. She was always more in the limelight, I think.

[Laughing] It was a committee, and what they did when they were naming all the schools that were being built was they wanted to name them after people who had been prominent in education, for the middle schools, so that's how that happened, and we went to the board meeting and it was all wonderful to have some of their past students come and give presentations and support them—people that, gosh, they'd known for thirty,

forty years. And the school is beautiful. It's up on Sunrise Mountain, kind of near the new Las Vegas High School, my old alma mater. It's really beautiful. It's right off Hollywood [Boulevard].

Yes, I know exactly where that is.

So they're very proud. They're there for different events and awards ceremonies and things like that. When they go there, they're like movie stars to the kids. It's really wonderful. It's great to see that tribute to them, too, for all they did.

So how did the family feel about that, you and your sisters and your brother?

Oh, we were very proud. We were all there for the dedication. They wrote a fight song. [Laughing] It was really a lot of fun. There were probably in the gym there, when we went, this was, what, 2002 I think the school was dedicated, and there were hundreds of people, maybe seven, eight hundred, nine hundred people. So it was really wonderful to see that.

That's great. That's wonderful.

Now at one time your family lived, when you were younger, in John S. Park [Neighborhood]. What are some of your memories about that? Tell me about that neighborhood and what you liked about it.

What I liked about it was, when we moved from across town, the houses all had character. None of the houses looked alike and they were more kind of in the Ranch style, more of that type of look, what people think about when they think of old Las Vegas. My sister and brother both went to John S. Park [Elementary School]. I was in middle school, so I went to [John C.] Fremont [Middle School], and then I went to Las Vegas High School, and then we all graduated from Las Vegas High School.

I loved that neighborhood. It was so much fun. The house across the street, the Smiths lived there and they had an in-ground trampoline, so we spent a lot of time on the trampoline across the street. And the fast-forward, about ten years ago, one of my best friends and her husband bought that house: Kim and Tim Bavington. Kim now is a full-time mother of twins, Lilly and Jet, but she's actually teaching art camps right now during the summertime. So she's an artist and did a lot of graphic design. Then Tim Bavington is an amazing modern artist. He has like a painting hanging at Spago [Restaurant in Las Vegas], imagine, and in the Museum of Modern Art [MOMA], so he's quite well known. They're a wonderful, wonderful couple. So it's funny, when I visit them, I get to visit our house directly across the street.

[Laughing] So describe your old house to me.

It was a one-story, on the corner—well, a gazebo in the back—and we had the most amazing pool in the backyard. It was huge. We'd never had a pool before. With a diving board. The diving board made it a very popular destination for the teenaged boys in the neighborhood because you could jump quite high. You could also jump off the roof. I don't know if we ever told my parents that. [Laughing] I didn't do it. I watched.

It was not a real big house, but it had a very big like living-room area, a family-gathering area. My brother had his own room and then my sisters and I shared a room.

We always shared a room.

Houses today seem to concentrate on the family area, watching TV, but the whole family area, the kitchen and everything, but at that point [in time], well, it did the same thing, but the bedrooms were smaller.

Bedrooms were much smaller. My parents' bedroom was a pretty good size and they had a sliding-glass door out to the backyard, so it appeared bigger. But the house was more compartmentalized than here. You had a distinctive kitchen which was separate from, you know, kitchen eating area and then a separate dining room, family room, living room.

It was a lot of fun. Our next-door neighbors were Jack and Phyllis Binion. I used to babysit for Mark and Susan Greenspun Fine. Now their kids are, gosh, in their thirties. They were around the corner. Judge [Michael A.] Cherry and his wife Rachel, I babysat for them. They were right around the corner. So there were a lot of people who had become kind of movers and shakers in the city who were just our neighbors. Sam Boyd lived down the street. And then Evelyn Stuckey, who was the Las Vegas High School Rhythmette director for years and years and years, was right down the way.

So it was fun. We had cheerleading practice at the Mormon church that was around the corner. My friend Linley Tanner, they had tennis courts and sometimes we'd play over there. Everybody was always out and about when we were younger, really. My sister's good friend, Lisa Minden (Minden's Jewelers), lived across the street over a house. The Stewarts were a couple of houses down. They had a lot of kids, so we all [played together]. We always were out and about. One of my best friends, Tyra Feuling Jones now, was a couple of doors down. It was a great time.

And then we could walk. We could walk to different places. There was Odyssey Records. It was a couple of blocks down. And then Luv-Its Frozen Custard, which is like one of the must-do things that I read about in Las Vegas these days.

That's right, yes. So tell me more about Luv-Its.

Luv-Its. Oh gosh, I don't know when they started, but I know when I went to work there I was fourteen, scooping ice cream and making Great Western Sundaes. Dorothy Woods and her husband [Richard] owned Luv-Its, and then her daughter Karen [Woods] worked there, so we worked with them. And then my sisters actually both worked there, I think Stephanie the longest; she was there seven years. She was like in management by that time. It's just a little, tiny place. Dorothy was meticulous about everything being just perfectly clean and everything had to be perfect and the product was always perfect.

So now did they actually make, I call it custard. Is it custard?

Custard. It's frozen custard.

Yes. Now did they actually make it there at that location?

Yes.

How was it made? I mean I don't expect you to give me the recipe, but how was that done?

You know, it probably was Anderson Dairy, I'm not positive, but they mixed up the mix according to their recipe. So we would have that, and then they had these [mixtures] that came in kind of a bag. And then the machines were big. I mean now they have things that are probably much more compact, but they were like the size of a refrigerator each, and you would put the custard and the mixtures above, and it was all like top-grade, premium product, and it would go through the machine, which would freeze it and it would come out, and then we would stir it and then mix in the different toppings and things like that.

So it was a very hand [made], very labor-intensive process, which we did because we were the scoopers. [Laughing] But everything was made from scratch, everything, and

the sandwiches and things like that there, too. But it was a lot of fun because you'd see a lot of people, and it's still open today actually.

I had my first custard since we've been doing this project. Mary Hausch introduced me to Luv-Its.

Oh yes. But it was a lot of fun, and it was walking distance from the house. A lot of good times there. We had a lot of fun.

So that family owned the business, and that family still owns it today?

They still own it today. Dorothy and her husband have both passed away, and Karen, gosh, I'm sure she has retired because when I've gone there I haven't seen her, but her grandson [Greg Tiedemann] runs it, so they did keep it in the family. Gosh, how long it's been: thirty-five years, maybe more. Yeah. It's definitely a must-do if you're in that part of the city.

Do you go into the neighborhood? Yes, you do, because you have a girlfriend in the neighborhood. Tell me the difference now, compared to when you lived in the community. How has it changed?

Our street really hasn't changed so much, other than now there are speed bumps, and there's a speed limit in that area. [Laughing] We didn't have speed bumps when we were there. Probably the area is having a kind of a renaissance, I think, because another good friend of mine purchased a house just, well, a couple of minutes from Kim, down on Bonita [Avenue]. So there's a lot of kind of thirty-and-forty-year-olds coming back to the neighborhood because they sit on more land, you're not right up against the next house, you can't touch the house next to you So I think that appeals to a lot of people. And again, many of those one-story Ranch-style homes, people like that. It's charming.

Some of the perimeter, it had its rough times, but they've done more to renovate it. I've noticed when I go through the neighborhood, they have like a divider on Saint Louis [Avenue] now with trees and shrubs and things like that, so it looks good again.

We would go to the big pool at Fremont [Street], right there, there's like a pool and park. It was part of what the school would use, but it was also open during the summertime.

But it looks the same. I remember everything being bigger, as a child. I think that's normal. But there were just some really interesting homes, and the architecture. I think anyone who enjoys art and architecture appreciates the look there. And everything is so mature now, the shrubs and the trees and everything. It's beautiful.

It was interesting to see our old house go through different color changes throughout the years. [Laughing] I liked the original.

Did they take some of the trees out, or do you still have all of the trees in the neighborhood?

I know on ours, they've replaced the palm trees. They must have gotten really big and the ones in the back, some of them are still really large. But I did notice that there has been some thinning out further down the street as you go. We were like at Oakey [Boulevard] or Griffith [Avenue] and Sixth Street, and then as you go towards Charleston [Boulevard], some of those trees are big. They belong in Yellowstone [National Park]. They were big.

Do you remember any specific celebrations or events that helped to bring the community together while you were there?

There were a lot of Mormons in our neighborhood that were very good friends and they always had, at least for our age group when we were in junior high and high school, dances and things like that, that were at the church. So it was a fun place that you could go and your parents didn't mind because they knew you were safe. So that sort of thing.

When I was in middle school and high school, a lot of things revolved around the activities that I was doing: cheerleading or tennis or that sort of thing. But I do remember a lot of dances that we went to. And then there was the skating rink. My sister Stephanie was an avid skater. That was in the Commercial Center, right in that area. Vegas Village was there. That was kind of like the place to go for shopping and entertainment. And then, where else did we spend a lot of time? At the Huntridge Theater, just down the way.

The Huntridge Theater was still showing movies at that time.

Oh yeah. And we could ride our bikes down there from where we were.

And you didn't have to worry about your bikes.

No. No, you didn't have to worry about your bike. I guess later on we started locking them up, but no, you didn't. [Laughing]

What about your friends now, the artists back in that neighborhood? First Fridays had started. How do they feel about that neighborhood that is trying to become more of an artsy area of the city? How do they see it?

They're very excited about that. They're also great participants in those events. They're busy now with two-year-old twins, but Tim has an art studio that's not far away, kind of near the new Cleveland Clinic [Lou] Ruvo Center for Brain Health. His studio is down that way so it's real close. They're actually the ones that introduced me to First Fridays, so it's nice to see that resurgence and the interest in that area again.

Have you seen the area of downtown that's called Fremont Street East, near the El Cortez [Hotel and Casino], where they're now putting in more restaurants and coffee shops and all of that? Have you walked through that area recently?

I have not. I haven't been down there. I'll have to put that on my bucket list to do that. But I've been reading about it and some of the new places that are going in down there and the different things that they've done, the lofts, too, the Holsum Lofts. I think there's a new restaurant down there.

How do you see that as affecting the John S. Park Neighborhood and surrounding?

I think that'll be very good for it, giving it more places that are comfortable and safe for people to go to, meeting spots. You've got the courthouse and things that aren't too far, so that's going to be very positive. Kim and Tim love living in the neighborhood. They love being central in the city. I miss that, you know, where you can just jump on whether it's [U.S.] 95 or [Interstate] 15 and get to anywhere, whereas now we're more far south. It's still nice. We'll go there sometimes and walk through the neighborhood and it's fun to see the changes and to walk around and name all the different people who lived in the places.

But I think the neighborhood I'm in now is a lot like that, where people talk and there's community and we have street parties where we block off the street and that kind of thing, and there were things like that when we were growing up. Everybody knew everybody and would watch out for you. I remember one night, oh my gosh, I did not invite them but some teenaged boys that I knew were like throwing rocks at my window. I'm sound asleep. I don't know if my dad still believes that I didn't invite them over. And then Mr. Binion was out front, like immediately: Boys, what are you doing out here? So

people watched out. So it was like the neighborhood watch before there was a neighborhood watch.

I feel so warm and cozy when I hear that.

You knew your neighbors. You knew what they did. You hung out at their homes and you didn't have to worry. We didn't lock our doors. It wasn't until we were much older that we started locking the doors, but we never locked our doors. My parents were both from the Midwest. They didn't have fences where they lived. You have to lock your doors, but I think you need to do that in every neighborhood now. That's the one thing that like, that I find the same today as an adult that I had as a child, where you just had that community involvement, where everybody knows you and they watch out for you.

Tell me about any of the parks that you remember in the area.

There was Circle Park on Maryland Parkway. We would sometimes meet there because it was right by the Huntridge Theater. And then, they call it Baker Park. That would've been where Fremont [Middle School] was, and that's where the pool was, and there was the fields and things like that. The other parks that we went to are a little bit further away. But I remember Circle Park. It's gone through some transitions.

Yes, unfortunately. And the community though wants it reopened.

Oh, that would be wonderful. I'd be part of that. [Laughing] Something to be done.

Definitely.

Did you participate in Helldorado parades?

We did do some floats for Helldorado. I'd forgotten about that. Yes, we did. Did that with the high school. Helldorado was a lot of fun. Gosh, that was a long time ago.

But that was more of a school-related activity.

Right. Right.

OK, good. You've talked about some of the influential people in the city. Were there any connections of that community and the Strip? What kind of entertainment did the parents engage in?

When we were young, when our parents went out, they dressed to go out, when they'd go to dinner and a show, and they were educators so they weren't doing it all the time, but those were fancy nights. My dad would be in a suit, my mom would be in a long dress, and they would go out to dinner shows. There were a lot of lounge shows and things, too. They took advantage of that as much as they could. Yeah, it was definitely different, not like now when you go in and people are in cutoff jeans and flip-flops to watch a show. Everyone there was dressed. It was very glamorous. I remember watching my mom get ready, thinking, oh, I want to be like that someday. I want to wear all that sparkle.

[Laughing] And now do you get a chance to wear it to go out?

Not as frequently. [Laughing] Not as frequently. But I take the opportunity when I can. I remember like [Bob Stupak's] Vegas World was real close, and the Stupaks lived in the neighborhood but I didn't know them. Their kids were much younger than me. I mean the Sahara [Hotel and Casino] was right down the street [and] the [Las Vegas] Hilton [Hotel and Casino]. There were a lot of opportunities. I remember the Alpine Village [Inn]. We used to go to the Alpine Village, which was a little German restaurant across from the Hilton. It's a parking lot now but it was there forever, and that was like the dress-up place that we would go, a fancy place. You could go downstairs to the Rathskeller, where you could throw peanuts on the floor and they had music playing and things like that, or

upstairs where they served the more formal, fancy dinner. That was a special night when we would get to go there.

I remember going to some shows. I have a few autographs from like Nancy Sinatra and Connie Stevens and Elvis [Presley]. We had a hound dog. We were big Elvis fans even as kids. Still are.

Yeah, it was different. It was fancier. It was more glamorous entertainment.

Living in the neighborhood with people like the Binions and the Boyds, did they ever give you passes to go to things in their hotels, or did you have any juice because of that relationship?

Back in the Seventies and the Eighties, it was more frequent that you could get comps. Not so much like today. I know it's a lot more difficult. You have to spend a lot of money in order to get that. But my family weren't really ones to ask. If something were offered, then that would be different. But you did have different opportunities. A good friend of ours, Pat, worked at the Riviera [Hotel and Casino], and so we'd see *Splash* and the different things that would come there. And then, some of the other ones. There were a lot over the years. Yeah, it was much more frequent, or even kind of spur-of-the-moment: Hey, would you like to do this? At that time though, a lot of the shows, you had to be twenty-one to go to, so probably my parents more often would be able to take advantage of those opportunities back then.

Do you remember your prom?

My junior prom, my senior prom, yes.

Did you go on the Strip as part of that?

We did! I remember that probably the most, because that was the first time I ever went to the Bacchanal Room at Caesars Palace [Hotel and Casino], so that was pretty fancy, and my friend Beth, her dad worked there, so that's how we got to be there at seventeen. That was a lot of fun. And then we would usually go to the dance and then go to shows. I know they do things even more glamorously today with limos and things like that. But we always went to a show generally after, so you'd go out to dinner, and then to whatever the shows might be. And usually the dances were at a hotel, most of the time. Different from now. I think they might have them at the schools versus we would go to places, whether it was the Sahara, or the Riviera or the Hilton. It was a lot of fun. It was our time to get dressed up and be sparkly.

Oh, that's great. You told me about the changes in the neighborhood. Your father also told me a few of the reasons that you decided to move out of the neighborhood. He told me about the incident of the woman [Alice] on your driveway. Do you remember that? He thought she was dead.

Oh my gosh.

You don't remember that?

I don't. I remember being told about it. I'm sure it happened while I was away at college. I'm going to have to ask him more about that. Wow! There were some times. We had a couple of break-ins, too. I think that's one of the disadvantages, maybe, of being on a corner. And plus, as I said, for the longest time we never locked our doors, so it was kind of ironic for someone to break the sliding-glass door when the front door was open.

[Laughing] It didn't make a lot of sense.

They didn't expect it.

Exactly. Didn't expect it. And you started to see kind of the outskirts. Again, our street stayed pretty nice. A lot of those people had been there for a long time. But when you would go out a few blocks, you'd see yards that weren't taken care of or vehicles parked in the front yard, that kind of thing. That's probably why homeowners' associations came into effect so strongly. But yeah, I'll definitely have to ask him about the woman. We're a little close to Naked City down there.

The John S. Park area is one of the most diverse areas in the city. We now have an art community, a lot of artists in the community, we have immigrants coming from all over the world, [and] a very large gay population. UNLV has a presence in that community that is unreal—professors, just lots of them. In addition to it being on the National Register of Historic Places, it's one of the most diverse areas in the city. So that's the reason we decided to do the oral history project.

Are there any other closing remarks you'd like to make about John S. Park or about your life since John S. Park?

I like going back to the neighborhood now, in the last ten years, and it probably was when Kim and Tim went back to it that I revisited it. For a long time I didn't, or I would be sad when I would drive through, just kind of watching things not being taken care of or shingles falling off houses, that sort of thing. So, it's been in the last ten years, it's been fun to go back there. Just also to be inside the Smiths' house, which is now the Bavingtons' house, and remember how many Girl Scout cookies I sold them and different things like that. But they're all real good memories, real good memories of the community, and it's nice to see that resurgence. And I think it was always kind of a diverse area. I really do. I remember my mom's hairdresser and his partner lived just off

Sixth Street, like one block over. And then there was another couple that lived down the street that were designers. So from that standpoint, I think that there still was some diversity back then. They were probably more discreet than now. And I know Kim and Tim have a couple of friends that are artists that have moved back into the area. And again, it goes back to just, they didn't want a cookie-cutter house.

That's right. And for some reason, artists can begin to rejuvenate a neighborhood. I don't know how that happens, but they do.

And you can tell. I'm very glad that it has happened. Very glad.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome. Thank you.

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