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An Interview with Joyce Marshall-Moore

An Oral History Conducted by Emily Powers

Heart to Heart Oral History Project

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

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2009

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All transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the researcher's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases, photographic images accompany the collection and have been included in the bound edition of the interview.

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Preface

Joyce Marshall-Moore came to Las Vegas from Chicago in December of 1953. Only eight years old at the time, she clearly remembers the road trip with her father Royce (known as "Mousie"), her mother Agnes, and her two brothers. They left Chicago, where it was snowing, and arrived in Las Vegas on a cold snowy day!

Joyce attended school at Sunrise Acres ES until eighth grade and then went to Rancho High School, graduating in 1962. She recalls that her father worked for a time at the El Rancho Vegas and that her mother found work at Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital.

Agnes Marshall (nee Rasmussen) took her nurse's training in Buffalo, New York, and then worked at Buffalo General Hospital and Millard Fillmore Hospital. Later she joined the army and was stationed in Memphis, Tennessee, working at Kennedy General Hospital where she met Royce and married him. They moved to Chicago where she found work at Ravenswood Hospital.

After their move to Las Vegas, Agnes was hired at Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital. She became disenchanted with nurse-patient interactions at the county hospital and found employment at Las Vegas Hospital. She worked there until 1976 and then was hired at Las Vegas Convalescent Center. Agnes followed her dreams and traveled during this period as well.

Agnes worked with Doctors Lund, Allen, Woodbury, Sulvane, and Hardy, among others. Joyce recalls that Dr. Hardy, a cousin and look-alike to Oliver Hardy, was one of her mother's favorites. She shares anecdotes and memories of these and other doctors. Joyce remembers many aspects of her mother's life, including the fact that she took care of neighbors as well as her family and patients. She often worked double shifts and the pay was nominal, but she loved her job because of the relationships with her patients. Agnes passed away in 2006 at the ripe old age of 91.

Good afternoon. It is March 25th, 2008. And I'm here in the library with Joyce Marshall-Moore. *[Interview conducted by Emily Powers.]*

How are you doing today?

Great.

Great. Thanks for joining us. Could you start off by telling us where you were born?

I was born in Chicago, Illinois. And we moved to Las Vegas in 1953, almost 1954 because it was Christmas, so that my father could do what he did anyway but legally.

And what was that?

He was in the casino business.

And what did he do in the casino business?

Here in Las Vegas he did everything from dealing to being on the floor. And I'm assuming, although we don't know, that he was dealing in Chicago. We know he worked in a casino in Chicago.

What are your parents' names?

My dad's name was Royce and my mother's name was Agnes Rasmussen, R-a-s-m-u-s-s-e-n. My dad -- no one ever knew him by Royce. They all called him "Mousy" or "The Mouse."

How did he get that nickname?

He was part of a syndicate, part of a group of men that came out here. And they all had those stupid, ridiculous names. And it had to do with something that he did I guess. They called him the mouse.

And so you said you moved here in 1953. Did you have siblings?

I have two brothers. I have one brother who works at the Venetian. He's on the floor. And my other brother, who is six years younger than I am, we don't know where he is. He's here somewhere. I haven't talked to him in a while.

And what are their names?

Royce. My older brother's a junior. And Steven.

And how old were you when you moved to Las Vegas?

I was eight.

Do you remember it very well, the trip out here?

Oh, absolutely. I remember everything about it. I remember the trip as being -- my dad was a maniac on the road. If you had to go to the bathroom, too bad. We were supposed to take our time and see the sights and that pretty much didn't happen. We got here. It was miserable. We left Chicago. It was snowing. My dad said, well, say goodbye to the snow, kids; you'll never see it again. And it was snowing the day we got here. And it was cold and sleety and ugly. My mother thought that she'd been dropped off at the end of the Earth. She was born and raised in Buffalo, then married my dad and went to Chicago. And then we came here to Las Vegas, population 50,000, probably less than that. And it was a desert. She had never seen the desert and she hated it.

That must have been a big change.

It was.

Yes. What were your first impressions of Las Vegas?

Well, you know, we were just kids. I just hated to leave Chicago. I hated to leave my friends and my school. But other than that, it was an adventure.

Where did you go to school in Las Vegas?

When we got here we stayed in the Robby Motor Lodge, which was on Fifth Street, now Las Vegas Boulevard. There wasn't a lot of housing. And so we stayed there for a couple of weeks until we could find a house. I went to Fifth Street School right across the street. It was right there where the federal building is. So I went there. And then when we bought our house, which was out on the southeast side of town right where they were building the Showboat Hotel, I went to Sunrise Acres grade school. And there was no junior high or middle school. I graduated from the eighth grade and then went to Rancho High School in the ninth grade.

My mom went to Rancho. What year did you graduate?

Oh, before her. I graduated in '62.

Not too long before. Yeah, she went to Rancho.

As an aside, we just had our 45th reunion and we all went there to see the school. It just blows you away. It's such an awesome facility. It's a magnet school. They have pilots in medical field. Just in their flight school -- they have 350 kids that they can take -- they have over a thousand applicants every year. So it's pretty amazing.

They're getting good students. That's great.

Yeah, they are.

So to go back to your parents, you said your dad worked in the hotels. Where did he work when he first arrived?

Well, the first job he had was at the El Rancho Vegas. And I remember that when we came out here, we drove a Ford that somebody had purchased back east and they had moved to Los Angeles. And so we drove their car out here. So when we got here we didn't even have a car. And the man came up from Los Angeles and then he drove his car back from Las Vegas to there.

So it turns out that on our way out here, the man that told my dad to come out had died of a heart attack. So we got here and we didn't know anybody. In the 1950s, it was all about who you knew. If you didn't know somebody, you couldn't get a job. So my dad was just kind of in a pickle. And I remember one day we were walking down Fremont Street and my dad screamed, hey, Itchy, which we came to know as Uncle Itchy. And he just said, hey, Mouse. And they, you know, big hugs. And the next day my dad was at work. So it was just a whole different place and he didn't know where to go and who he was supposed to talk to. But the next day he went to work. So it all worked out.

Well, that's good. And the reason we're talking today for the history in health care project is because of your mother. When she first arrived to Las Vegas, had she already practiced as a nurse in Chicago?

My mother went into nurses training in Buffalo, New York. There were 105 girls in her class when they started. Totally different then. We're talking about the 30s. The nurses actually lived in the hospital. They had like dorm rooms. And they would go to school for eight hours, work for eight hours, and then try to study and sleep. And they did that like six days a week.

And my mother didn't know what to do. Her mother had passed away, and she needed someplace to stay and she needed a career. So she told me that after about the first semester, they called her in the office and told her that she should quit because she didn't have the stomach for it and, you know, she was never going to make it. And my mother said that was the best thing they could have done for her because she said, ah, you know, I'm going to show you.

And so she graduated from school. She worked at the Buffalo General Hospital. And she

worked in the tuberculosis ward. And she worked down there for two years and she never got TB. I got it when I was nine years old, but that's weird. She never got it.

So after she got out of training, she went to work at the Millard Fillmore Hospital there in Buffalo. And she was going with a doctor and they were going to get married. His name was Abe Weinstein. And his parents came to her and said, "If you marry my son -- he is our only child -- we will bury him and he will be dead to us," because they were Jews. And so my mother didn't know what to do. She decided she couldn't do that to these people, so she joined the army. She said I was just walking down the street. And there was a big sign there that said Uncle Sam wants you. And she said I walked in and I joined the army. She always wanted to be in the navy. So she said she didn't know why she joined the army, but she did.

So she went in the army. And she went through training. She went in as a first lieutenant in the women's army in nurse corps. She went through their basic training and then was stationed in Memphis, Tennessee, working at the Kennedy General in Memphis. And that's where she met my father. My father had been injured. He had part of his stomach -- shrapnel in his stomach. And he was on her ward. And she really had no interest in him, but he made up his mind he wasn't letting go.

So they got married. And then she got pregnant right away with me. They were still in the service and at that time you couldn't be pregnant and be in the service. So she got discharged and my dad got discharged shortly after that. They went to Chicago and she worked at the Ravenswood Hospital in Chicago.

My mother always worked. She loved nursing. And so when we came out here, she immediately went to work at the county hospital, Memorial. And she really, really hated it. She wasn't used to the way they did business. And it probably comes from her working in big cities and big hospitals. She didn't understand the politics of what was going on and she didn't like the atmosphere and she didn't like the way they -- she didn't like anything about it, nothing. So she started looking around. And she found the Las Vegas Hospital on --

So she started at Memorial when you got here in '53.

She started at Memorial in '54, actually.

And what do you think specifically were some of the things about the way they did business

that she didn't quite like compared to other places?

She didn't feel the nurses treated the patients very well. My mother's a real personable kind of -- you know, wants to hug you and talk to you one on one -- and there was really no time for that. They were short-staffed. She didn't care for the way the nurses talked to the patients. She didn't care for the nurses, period. She said they were very cold and not friendly.

Do you know how many members were on the staff around that time when she first arrived?

No idea. Whatever it was, she says it wasn't enough.

And I know there were very few doctors, too, to go around for all the patients.

Right.

I wondered, too, because it was a county hospital, if that had anything to do with it.

According to my mother it had a lot to do with the way people were treated. My mother was always for the underdog, you know. You say your glass is half empty or half full. Hers was always half full. And so she was like the champion of the underdog. And for these people not to be treated the way she thought they should be treated, that's one of the things that just --

And she quit there and went to work at the Las Vegas Hospital, which was a privately owned hospital, owned by its doctors, and it was a family and she loved that. People were treated well. The patients got a lot of personal attention. And she had time to give them personal attention. The doctors were friendly. They really relied on their nurses. And she went to work there in 1956 and worked there until 1976 when they closed.

Wow. Twenty years, that's quite a long time. Do you remember her telling you stories about some of the doctors that she worked with?

Oh, yeah.

Tell us more.

I can tell you myself. The doctors that were there that I remember -- Dr. Lund was the pediatrician, not a very good one. I hate to -- I'm sure he was. But, you know, he treated my daughter for mumps for a month and she finally went into a coma because she had diabetes. So he totally missed that. So I have some bitter feelings about him. But, you know, you can talk to other people that think that Dr. Lund walked on water.

There was a nose and throat doctor. Oh, eye, ears, nose and throat. He was all of them,

Dr. Allen. He was a very nice man. He fixed my deviated septum. And I had terrible allergies when we first came here. And he used to irrigate my nose for me and it used to make me feel so much better because my whole face would feel like "bahoom."

But, see, in those days because my mom worked there, it was just a little family. My mother could go to Dr. Allen and say, oh, you know, Joyce is having trouble with her allergies. Oh, bring her in, Ag. And I would just go in.

Then there was Dr. Woodbury. Dr. Woodbury was one of the original owners with Dr. McDaniel and I'm not sure who else. My mother wasn't fond of Woodbury. I hate to -- you know, these are just stories that she told me. He did a lot of entertaining after hours in the hospital. She didn't think that was good. You know, he had the showgirl clientele and they had him.

And then there was Dr. Sulvane. Dr. Sulvane worked I think until he was like 90 years old. He just passed away probably five years ago and practiced forever. The thing I remember about Dr. Sulvane is that he always had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, always. And when you would go in as his patient and sit down, he would come in with his cigarette, always. I went in one time because I needed a physical for camp. And I remember him saying, honey, come in. And he's got his cigarette. How do you feel? I said I feel great. So he took my blood pressure I guess and, you know, looked down my throat. And he said, okay, you're good to go. And he signed my papers.

Sounds so casual.

It was. Dr. Hardy was a distant relative, a cousin, to Oliver Hardy of the Laurel and Hardy comedy team. And he looked just like him. You know, we thought they were twins, forget cousins. We thought they were twins because they looked exactly alike. Dr. Hardy was one of my mom's favorites.

When they were building the Showboat Hotel -- they were building the bowling alley onto the Showboat Hotel. This was probably '56 or '57. My little brother got out there and was climbing on the lumber and fell and just gashed his leg open. And we did not have a car. My mother, coming from Chicago and Buffalo, never learned to drive and my dad was never around. So my mother called a taxicab, which was really odd for my mom because she was very frugal,

and rushed him down to the hospital. And I remember Dr. Hardy sewed him up. And I went with her. I couldn't watch because, oh, they were sticking needles in him. Then Dr. Hardy said, well, Agnes, how are you getting home? And she said, well, I guess we can take the bus. He said oh, don't do that. I'll drive you home. He had this great big Cadillac and I remember sitting in the back seat. My brother was hanging out the window as we came around the corner and he was screaming at all his friends so they could see him in this Cadillac.

That's a great story.

But Dr. Hardy loved his milk shakes, pretty much lived on them. He also loved to gamble. He was a poker player. And he would go to the Horseshoe or somewhere downtown, wherever it was. And he would be there in the evening and he'd be there most of the night. And he would call my mother. My mother always worked the graveyard shift. That's what she loved. And he would always call her and say, well, what's going on, Ag? And my mother would tell him, well, this is happening, this is happening. Or if there was a problem, she would call him and say, well, this person's heart is racing or whatever the question. And he would say, well, what do you think we should do? Well, go ahead and do it. And she pretty much was the doctor, as were the other nurses. The doctors were very -- probably not so at county. But at the Las Vegas Hospital they were pretty liberal with what they let their nurses do.

I've heard that talking to some of the nurses. They had a lot of responsibilities.

Yeah. And so she loved Dr. Hardy.

The doctor that I went to was Nelson. My mother wanted me to go to him because -- I had my first child when I was 18. He was young and very good-looking. Do you have any idea what that was like? Before I got married my mother sent me to Dr. Nelson for a checkup. I wanted to die. Here is this tall, dark and handsome doctor giving me a pelvic. I mean and I just -- oh, it was the most mortifying day of my entire life. I've never forgotten it, never. Anyway, she wanted me to go to him, though, because he was up on all the newest techniques. And she was all about that. One of her biggest complaints was that she felt the nurses kept up so much better than the doctors as far as what to do.

Maybe they were stuck in their ways with doing certain things.

Right. Even though they went to classes -- well, we've always done it this way; I'm not changing.

Whereas my mother would think that, well, I think you should do it this way. It's just like C-sections when they used to just cut down here. And then when they started doing the little bikini cut, some of the older doctors were hard pressed to go to that because it was a new technique that they weren't familiar with. So they wanted to just -- so that's why I went to Nelson. Dr. Nelson stayed there until -- actually, the last baby he delivered was my daughter Jennifer, who is now 41. She was 41 yesterday. He left, went back to Arkansas, became an ophthalmologist, and did eye surgeries. Then he came back to Las Vegas and lived here. He retired probably ten years ago, and as far as I know, he's still here.

We actually just talked to him recently. I got ahold of him and he just moved to Utah I think.

Oh, did he?

Yeah. So we're going to drive out to Utah and try to get an interview with him. But he was really excited to be a part of the project. So that'll be great.

Well, you be sure to mention Agnes Rasmussen because he will remember her.

Absolutely. Yes.

And he will remember -- he might remember me because of my kids. His wife -- of course, now his ex-wife -- was having her last daughter the same time I had my first daughter. My daughter Dina and his daughter, whose name I can't remember, were friends. And they met each other. We were in the hospital together having our babies. And then later on -- I think Dina was probably married when she and her husband met -- I can't remember her name. Isn't that terrible? Well, it's not really. I mean she was my daughter's friend. But I want to say -- I think Maryanne her name is. When Dina met Maryanne and they got to talking and said, oh, Dr. Nelson, yeah, he delivered me. Oh, that's my dad.

Oh, wow. Small town.

Yeah.

Well, we'll have to let you know what he says.

Yeah, let us know. You can tell him that my mom lived to the ripe old age of 91. She passed away in October of 2006.

Yes, I will be sure to mention that to him.

And she always talked of him in glowing terms. Oh, he was so handsome she'd always say.

I haven't seen any pictures of him yet.

Well, when you see pictures -- I don't know what he looks like now. The kids were in high school I think the last time I saw him. So that's been 25 years ago. But we were skiing up at Brian Head and he was up there. And we were on the same ski lift. And that's the last time I saw him.

Were most of the doctors married at the time?

Yes, they were. I know that Dr. Hardy had sons, two of them that were attorneys. Dr. Allen was kind of an old guy. So I don't really know. Of course, we know Dr. Woodbury. He has quite a legacy. I think they were all married.

And most of the nurses were, as well?

Yeah. Well, not really. I think that the nurses that my mother worked -- Vern Hodson, she was not married. And some of them were. It was probably about 50-50. She didn't work with a lot of people. They had a kitchen downstairs. And they did all the cooking for the patients. And I remember the woman that worked in there. She was something. Every time I would come into the hospital, she'd call up and say, what do you want? What do you want to eat because I'm cooking for you? She would do that to a lot of the return patients. She would remember them and she would send up what they liked to eat.

That's great personal care.

Yeah. It was only a 40-bed hospital. So the one thing that I remember that Mother told me is because it was a private hospital people would come in the middle of the night. And the doors were locked. And they would ring the bell. And Mother said sometimes I'd go down there and there would be a woman in labor. And I'd say whose patient are you? And she would give a name. Maybe she'd say Dr. Nelson or Dr. Hardy. And she'd say what is your name? And my mother would go and look up the paperwork. If there was no paperwork for this person, she would not open the door because they were not allowed to do that because people didn't have insurance then and they didn't have a doctor. And so once you had let them in the hospital, you were liable to take care of them. So they kept the doors locked. And my mother said one night this woman came and she threw herself on the floor and she was bearing down and screaming. And my mother said I'm sorry; you're going to have to go to county. And the husband -- and

Mother said she was really afraid because she thought there was a possibility that the woman was really going to give birth there on the porch. She turned around and started to walk away. And when she turned to go to the counter, the woman got up and she and her husband left. They walked away.

So she was okay.

Yeah. And they did that a lot because there was no way to really collect. When you think about the fact there were no computers -- and I know. I worked at the credit bureau. When I was in high school, I put out something called The Credit Bulletin once a week. It came out on Friday. And it would give all the pertinent information about who bought or sold a house and who had their power turned on and who bought a car, who had a baby, who died, that kind of stuff. And they didn't print births in the paper a lot during those days. Sometimes they did. So I knew how long it took to find out if somebody hadn't paid their bill or was behind on their house payment or they had a house foreclosed on. Sometimes it was months and months. So it just wasn't like today.

Were medical costs as expensive back in the day? Do you know if it was as hard for people to pay?

Well, I can tell you that when I had my oldest daughter Dina, I went in the hospital in the afternoon. I was there for three days. And my total cost for the nursery and her was \$263. Of course, that's 1963. My mother has her bill. I still have the bill from when my mother was born in Buffalo, New York, at Saint Mary's Maternity Hospital. Her mother was there for ten days and the total bill was \$28. 1915. So quite a difference.

So in retrospect, let me think. It was \$263. My house payment was 105. So, yeah, I think that they've gotten exorbitant even if you figure that out like what I paid for my house payment now. Of course, they ship you in and out in one day. In those days you were there three days for a regular delivery, five days for a C-section. And now it's overnight if they can get away with it.

Do you know what most of the patients came to that hospital for, what the most common cases were?

Basically a little bit of everything. They had an operating room. They did do surgery. My mother tells a great story about Dr. Woodbury. He did an appendectomy on this woman and he left a

sponge in her. And she was in agonizing pain for months. She finally came back and he opened her up. And, of course, he found the sponge and took it out. You know, he told her she had some little infection, but he cleared it all up and she was going to be great. And she loved him till the day she died.

They had a ward. I don't think they did. But in the men's they had a seven-bed ward. Private rooms were not common. Four-bed wards were the norm. When I had my kids, I was always in a four-bed ward where the rooms faced each other. There was a delivery room -- I mean there was a labor room. And hopefully -- I remember when I had my second daughter somebody else was in labor with me. And they had to put her in a regular room because they only had one labor room. I don't know what the difference was, really, except that it was right next to the nursery. They had isolates. If they had real serious problems, they would send them to county or sometimes to California. They would send them to Los Angeles.

Do you know for what reasons they might not be able to handle something at a Vegas hospital?

You know, I don't know. There were babies born with like spina bifida and things like that. I can remember one baby being born with spina bifida. And they really -- you know, in the earlier days when Mother first started nursing, they would take a baby that was born like that and they would make them comfortable and put them in an isolate and they wouldn't feed them because there was no way for them to survive. They were going to die and it was going to be painful and it was going to be a drain on the parents. Nothing they would do today. But in the 30s, especially during the Depression, that's exactly what they did. They just didn't feed them.

Wow. Did your mother specialize in any field as a nurse here?

At the Las Vegas Hospital she was the charge nurse. So she did the scheduling. She did all the meds, all the medications. They didn't lock them up, which now, of course -- and after the Las Vegas Hospital closed in 1976, she went to work at the Vegas Valley Convalescent Hospital, which is over there next to Sunrise. And when people would have surgeries, they would send them there to finish convalescing so it would be less expensive. And I know by the time my mother got there, they were certainly locking up meds.

And I'll tell you a great story that my mother told me. She didn't know she was telling me

a story, okay. We were sitting there. My mother lived with me from 1971 when my father died until we had to put her in assisted living. Because my daughter came down with diabetes when she was six and my mother being an RN -- Gina was very, very sick as a child. And so I was lucky to have her. One night -- this is in the 90s now because I was going to school here -- I was sitting here watching the news. And it's a picture of -- first of all, it's Lois Tarkanian, who is running for school board or whatever it is. My mother says, oh, I know her. She was in our hospital a couple weeks ago. And I didn't think anything of it. I said oh. And so then here comes the sports. And my mother says and there's her husband. He was in our hospital, too, at the same time. And I said really, what happened? Were they in an accident? And she said, oh, no. She said he was at one end of the hospital and she was at the other. And we were supposed to tell him that she was having a deviated septum fixed, but she really had a facelift. And we were supposed to tell her that he had stomach problems, but he actually had a penile implant.

Really?

Is that the best story?

Wow. That is amazing.

I laughed so hard I couldn't stand it. And my mother, she doesn't have a clue what goes on, you know. So I came to school the next day. And I remember going into Dr. Davenport -- no. I went into somebody else. Who did I talk to? Oh, a professor that's no longer here. As a matter of fact, he was working as an assistant provost. And I went up and told him the story. I said I have to tell you this story. I can't stand it. This is what my mother told me last night. And so the next morning I come into school. I was a graduate assistant when this went on. So it was probably '95, '96. I came in about 7:30 in the morning because I think I was TA-ing for Dr. Fry. And he's in the office with Dr. Davenport. And I walked in there and Dr. Davenport says, oh, well, here's Joyce. She'll tell you all about it. It already had fled the -- they say women are gossips. Paul Burns, Dr. Burns was the professor I told. And this was at five o'clock at night. He had to call people at home and tell them this story. But my mother was so cute because she just had no idea what she was telling me. He had a penile implant.

I bet she saw all kinds of things working there.

She did. When she was working at the convalescent center, she took care of Senator Wadsworth,

who was the senator here in the state of Nevada. He was very old and suffered from dementia and senility. And ever time the nurses would walk in the room, he would throw back the covers. And you couldn't keep clothes on him. He would take all his clothes off. And he was this little, tiny, skinny man. And he'd say come here, I want to take you. And his family would be so embarrassed. And the other nurses -- he was grouchy and they didn't want to take care of him. My mother just loved him. And she would go in there and he would say come here, I want to take you right now, right here, right now. And my mother would go over and give him a little hug and say I just have to finish doing something and I'll be right back. And he'd say okay. She just had a way of communicating.

She told a great story when she was still in Memphis. There was a huge man. He was a big, burly guy who was injured. He had head injuries and was very violent, so they had him in a straightjacket. He broke away from the people that were trying to take him down for an X-ray or wherever they were taking him and ran out the front door of the hospital. And my mother was coming to work and she saw him. She said that's the only time she had really ever truly been afraid. But she said she really trusted that he would recognize her. And she went over to him and said, now, we have to go back. Now, you know you have to go back. She said if you come back with me, I'm going to fix you the biggest bowl of ice cream. He loved to eat and he was always hungry. And they would never feed him. And she said I'm going to give you ice cream and cookies. He had on his straightjacket which he lifted up and put over my mother. And she said I remember that; that he could have just crushed me. I could have been dead. But she said he just stood there for a minute. And she said he came back with me. And she had the hardest time getting those cookies and ice cream, but she finally got it because she told him she'd give it to him.

It was always her contention in the hospitals that they just needed to treat the patients better. And in reference to the nurses, they're short-handed. They work 12-hour shifts. They're tired. It's difficult. It is really, really difficult. It's not like when my mom worked. She worked 11 at night till 7 in the morning and she had two days off. They don't get that luxury anymore.

I was going to ask how it was for your mom raising three children in addition to being a workingwoman. Was that challenging for her?

You know, my mother always trusted us, not always successfully. However, she only hit me one

time and I really deserved it. I got whacked across the face with a wet dishrag. If we disappointed her, she would cry. It was just grueling. It was heart-wrenching. And my dad would come after us with a belt. We were happy about that because that was easier than disappointing my mother. And so basically I think we were all pretty good kids. We didn't get in a lot of trouble because we didn't want to disappoint her. Like the kids having sex in high school, now it's a given, 14, 15. When I was in school it was a pretty dicey thing and not a lot of girls did it. But it would have never occurred to me because if I would have ever gotten pregnant, it would have killed my mom. Killed her. So I was really, really careful to not -- because she trusted us, it was a lot easier on everybody.

And I was the oldest. Actually, my older brother, because he's the older of two, he's a year younger than I am. By the time I got to high school, my mother worked a lot of double shifts. She would go into work at three in the afternoon and work until seven in the morning. By this time my dad was an alcoholic and was no longer there. So it fell to her and she wanted to make sure that we would have what we needed. She worked long hours so I learned to cook. My brothers and I were pretty self-sufficient. It wasn't like today where we had all of the temptations. The town was smaller. It was just a different environment.

My mom used to take care of the neighborhood on top of everything else. The man next door to us had three children and he was by himself. He had a daughter and then two little boys. The daughter was the oldest. And the little boy was in diapers in a crib and he would leave him there when he went to work with a bottle and Cheerios or something. He was about a year old I guess. So my mother would go over there during the day. You know, she'd come home from work in the morning and he'd already be gone, so she would go over and check on the baby and change his diaper. And the little girl used to come over to the house and say would you please iron this shirt for my daddy so he can go to work. We didn't even have spray bottles then. You had sprinklers, the Coke bottle with the sprinkle top. And you sprinkled your clothes and you rolled them up real tight and put them in the refrigerator. And then when you took them out, they would just be damp and you could iron them. Half the time he would bring over a shirt that was mildewed because he had left it in the refrigerator too long or something. So Mother was always dealing with that.

And then we had another family that lived a couple of streets from us. And she was by herself. She was a single mom and she had two kids. So one of the little boys was in my brother's class one day and he passed out in class. And my brother was so upset by that and so affected by it. And he kept telling my mom you have to make sure he's okay because, you know, she was a nurse. Make sure he's okay. So my mother went over there and found out that they just didn't have any money. They just didn't have any food. She could pay her rent or they could eat. So my mother formed a little neighborhood food bank kind of thing where she went to all the neighbors and said -- my mother couldn't cook, either, by the way. So she took Friday -- because every Friday we had tuna casserole. I mean that wasn't very good tuna casserole. But she could not cook at all. So she went across street and she'd say, okay, these people over here need dinner. When you're cooking Tuesday night, make an extra plate. And then she went all over the neighborhood and told these people this is your night. And I'm telling you if they didn't come up with it, you didn't want to deal with her because she really got feisty. And so for like a year we fed those people every night. They had to eat the tuna casserole on Friday. But other than that -- **I'm sure they still appreciated it, though.**

Yeah. Yeah.

I was going to ask, too, if she came across any other unusual cases as a nurse that you remember her telling you stories about or other eccentric patients, perhaps that she dealt with over the years?

I can tell you this. I don't even know if I can tell you without crying because it's still very real to me. But when I was -- I think I was in about the eighth grade, maybe ninth. This woman that was in our church had twins, Dean and David. And today they'd probably be fine. But Dean died first. And he had some kind of neurological problems. Of course, they took him to the doctor. They tested. They said there's nothing we can do for him. And he died. About a year later David started getting sick. Well, my mom's desk where she sat at night was kitty-corner from this critical care room. So she could see the bed. And David was in such pain and he was dying and just miserable. And you could hear him. Mother said you could hear him breathe because he was so labored, like just labored breathing. And she said one night she looked in there. She was working on her papers and all of a sudden she didn't hear him. She almost went to get up but

started to look instead. She said she looked in the room and David had a big smile on his face -- I still can't talk about it -- and he put his arms up in the air and died.

Now, my mom was never a religious person until that day. I still feel so bad for those kids. They've been gone for 30, 40 years. Forty years. But I used to baby-sit them. I baby-sat them from the time they were born. And then to just watch them die -- nobody could do anything for them -- it was just so sad. And they both died right there at the Las Vegas Hospital. Dr. Hardy was their doctor. And there was just nothing you could do. And Dr. Lund -- of course that could have been part of the problem. But they just didn't have the equipment and the knowledge 40 years ago that they do today. So they both passed away. But my mother said she just -- and it was years before my mother told me that story. We were both very close to the parents. We were very close to the kids. But I know even though I always went to church, my mother never did. She went and got baptized. So that was cool.

It sounds like that would be a life-changing experience.

Yeah. To sit there and watch him. He had a big smile on his face and put his hands up and died.

It's always amazing when visiting hospitals to see how resilient the children are. That's one thing I've always noticed going to Sunrise.

Oh, I know. I have a friend that worked with Candlelighters. For a couple of years I helped out. He would rent the King 8 Motel. He would get one whole wing of it. On Halloween all the Candlelight kids could go. All the rooms were decorated and they could all go trick or treating. And then about seven o'clock at night -- oh, it was probably earlier than that -- maybe six, the bus would pull up and here would come all the kids from the hospital that were in the hospital.

Oh, that's a wonderful idea.

Yeah. Talk about a tough night. And I'll tell you one other story. I think I may have mentioned this before. This is probably a pretty risqué story, but it's the truth. There was a woman that came into the hospital that had two children. She had one. Then a couple years later or the next year she had another one. One was stillborn. The other one was badly deformed; another thing they couldn't detect, you know. So she came in and was having her third child. At the same time she was in labor, there was a showgirl who was also in labor having her baby and she was giving it up for adoption. And the adoptive parents were actually there. Of course, in those days you didn't

get to go in and watch and that kind of stuff. They were downstairs in the waiting room. And the woman and her husband that had been trying so desperately to have a baby -- she went in and delivered a badly deformed child. And it was not viable. And the doctor took the showgirl and literally, because she was not ready to deliver, literally pulled that baby out of her with forceps and walked out and told this guy, you know, you have a little girl. And he went down and told the adoptive parents that he was very sorry, but the baby had not survived. Couldn't do that today.

And how I know about that -- I mean this happened when I was pretty young. I don't know how old I was. But we were in the Boulevard Mall right after it opened. And we were walking down the Boulevard Mall and this woman came running up to my mother. Oh, it's so good to see you. How are you? This is my daughter. So she introduced -- they talked and chatted. And she said, oh, she's beautiful. She said we don't know where she got that red hair. Well, we don't know either.

But we went in the Boulevard Mall -- I can remember to this day. My kids were little. I don't even know if I had had Jennifer yet. But they had a cafeteria. I've forgotten what it's called, but it was right there. It was a cafeteria. And we went in and my mother was sitting down there. And she was just like shaking. And I said, Mom, are you okay? Do you need to eat something? And she said no, but I have to tell you this story about that woman. You know, the doctor made a choice and did it because he could. You couldn't do that today.

No. You'd never hear of something like that happening today.

Huh-uh. And it never occurred to him that -- you know, to say anything to my mother like to tell her to shut up or be quiet or don't ever say anything. He never even talked about it. He never mentioned it. He just did it and that was that.

Well, and the medical and legal world seem so distant at that time. Now it's one and the same.

That's right.

But you don't really hear old stories about malpractice suits or things like that. And now that's all you hear about. So to know that things like that happened --

Yeah. Malpractice. Did anybody ever go after a doctor? I don't know.

It would be interesting to see if there was any case of that.

I don't know. Everybody was happy but the adoptive parents because they didn't get a baby in that situation. But the showgirl wasn't going to take it anyway, or dancer, whoever she was.

Did that happen very often with the showgirls do you know?

Did they get pregnant? Yes. But we had a doctor here that did abortions. They were illegal. But if you wanted one, you knew where to go.

Was it in a hospital?

He would do it in your home, actually. And you were blindfolded. I know because my girlfriend had an abortion from him. And he would come into your house. There would be somebody that would come there before him and get you all ready and give you a shot that sedated you and blindfold you. You never saw his face. You never saw him. But you knew if you went into him and said I'm pregnant and I don't know what to do, I need to have an a abortion, he would tell you I'm sorry, but abortions are illegal in this state, we don't do those, and then two days later somebody would knock on your door and say, you know, I hear you need an abortion and I'd be glad to help you out in that regard.

Wow. That's amazing.

I had a girlfriend that did that. She had five children, five. Her husband was a truck driver and he was on the road all the time. And she was home with five kids. And they were Catholics. And he would have never heard of it. And she just came to me and said I'll die if I have another child. Her kids were like barely a year apart. She said I can't; I'll have to kill myself, and of course I grapple with that today. But I felt sorry for her. So I gave her the money to do it. I loaned her the money. And so she's the one that told me the whole story. She said it was really, really scary. It's like you don't even know what's going to happen.

It seems like a complicated procedure, too, to be done in a home. But I guess they found a way.

I'm trying to think of what his name was. I have it on many of my tapes. I used to ask all the showgirls when I interviewed them if that was a problem. The majority -- all of them -- the majority of them would talk about it. But all of them that used those services wouldn't say so on tape even at this point in time. Well, turn off the tape and we'll talk about it. So I'd turn off the tape.

Clivekin was his name. Dr. Clivekin was the abortion king here. And he's also the one that was one of the very first ones to start doing silicone implants. That was a big thing. And you know where they were putting it in their face to fill their faces out or to cover up their wrinkles, kind of like they do with Botox today? Except what happens is that over a period of years, the silicone separated and really screwed them up, the breasts and faces.

Do you know when he started doing that?

Oh, goodness. That was back in the 60s probably.

Do you know how prostitution was handled in the hospitals? If a prostitute came in with a problem, or what --

You know, they were pretty well -- STDs weren't a big thing. I mean they were out there. Gonorrhea was the big thing. But they weren't usually from girls that would come in to, say, the Las Vegas Hospital. And if they did, the doctors would take care of it. Rarely did they make it up to where you had to be checked into a room. I mean it was there, certainly, and people would contract things. But girls were pretty careful in those days about being checked. And, of course, we didn't have any prostitution here in this county. So it all came from the other counties. If you were just a working girl on the street, of course you're probably going to get stuff. And most of those girls went to county.

I was going to say maybe the county hospital dealt more with that.

The doctors at Las Vegas Hospital, just like Dr. Woodbury, dealt with more of the upscale girls, you know, the showgirls and dancers on the Strip. I'm sure some were working girls, but high-class working girls, not the ones working down on Fremont.

Right. I was going to ask really quickly, too, what kind of living your mother made as a nurse, if her salary was adequate to raise a family?

Well, her salary was pretty pitiful. And I wish I can remember exactly when this was. But I can remember at one time she was making \$3.50 an hour. And I think that was in -- that was pretty early on. I think it was probably in the early 60s that she made \$3.50 an hour as a nurse. So her double shifts came in handy.

My mom loved to travel and it was her dream to travel. And she wanted to save every penny she could make. When I was -- I think I had already graduated from high school. I think I

was married. It was probably about '63 or '64, she came to me with an ad she cut out of the paper. And it was 16 countries in 14 days, \$500. And she said, Joyce, do you think I should do this? And I said do it, Mother, do it. You've always wanted to travel. You've always wanted to do this. Go do it. It was kind of like this is Tuesday, it must be Belgium. It was a whirlwind tour. It was a Las Vegas tour company that was handled by somebody who lived here locally. And she went and that was it. She never stopped. Never put her feet down.

Did she go by herself on the trip?

When she went this first time, she met a lot of people. And so she got a whole buddy group that they would go with. In 1987 for my birthday, she took me to Yugoslavia, which is no longer there. So it's pretty cool that I went. And I got to walk the wall around to Broadneck. And I always said I don't want to do that, mom. There's enough to see here; I don't need it. But as my mother said people that say that have never been because once you go, you can't compare. It's apples and oranges. And so she traveled. Every year we went somewhere, every year. The last trip that she took was to Israel. We went to Greece, Israel and Turkey. And that I think was in 1997, maybe. And then she just got too forgetful. She got dementia and she couldn't remember. And I took her little places. I'd take her to the Grand Canyon. And I take her out on day trips or we'd drive down to California and stuff like that. But for a big trip, she couldn't do that anymore.

It sounds like she was a very adventurous woman.

Oh, yeah. She took off as a young girl. After she graduated from nursing school, she took off by herself to Cuba. These two interns that she worked with were driving to Miami. So she said, well, I want to go; let me just pitch in for gas and I'll go with you. So they drove. They never stayed at a hotel or anything. They took turns driving -- of course not my mother because she never drove, but the two men -- until they got to Miami. And my mother just bought a boat ticket and went to Cuba because she had never seen Cuba. And I have pictures of her. And she met this diplomat who, you know, wanted to whisk her away and keep her there, but she decided she'd come back. But, yeah, she was always adventuresome, always ready to go. She could be ready to go to Europe in 30 minutes.

Well, it's great she got to travel because it sounds like she worked very hard over the years.

She did. She worked too hard. But she loved it. And that's the difference. Now, to say all those

double shifts that she worked -- if you didn't love your job, you couldn't do it. You'd get bitter. But it was her second home. And she loved the doctors she worked with and she loved the hospital. It was great. And then, of course, when she went to the Vegas Valley Convalescent Center, she was charge nurse on the night shift. And she had friends there and they would get together have lunch once in a while. But she didn't have any more double shifts.

She worked until she was 79 years old and would not have quit, did not want to quit, broke her heart to quit, but she couldn't remember the meds. And she knew that she would make a mistake and she didn't want that to be her legacy. And being the charge nurse, she was in charge. It was her job to give the medications. And if you can't remember who got what -- and the girls would always tell her, the other nurses, oh, don't worry, Ag, we'll take care of it; we'll do it for you; it'll be all right. But my mother finally said she couldn't do it anymore.

Well, that's quite a long time to work especially in that stressful profession.

Yeah. She would have worked forever. Everybody used to say to me when I was little, oh, are you going to be a nurse like your mother? No.

Did you ever think about it?

Never. Never. My mother -- we always used to wear T-shirts as kids. And she'd pull our T-shirt up so it would be here and hanging back because they always wore those white hats. And I lost my mother's hat. I'm so sad about that. But you'd have on this like nurse's hat. And everybody would say, oh, little nurse Rasmussen. I'd say, oh, no. Never happening.

Well, you saw a lot, too.

I couldn't imagine. I think you just have to have a heart for it. And the people that I know that have gone into nursing because they think it's a good profession, which it is -- it's steady money. You know they always need you. It's just very, very hard on you. And if you don't really love it, you're never going to be able to hang in there.

Right. What do you see as the biggest changes over the years in the nursing profession or the medical field in general I guess?

Well, you know, everything is on such a grander scale now. And it could be just from my memories of my mother. There were not -- they now have people cleaning the rooms and they have aides and they have all these different categories of nurses. In the old days you just saw the

nurse. Then they had the LPNs and then the aides. But where my mother worked in that small environment, it wasn't that way. It was much more personable. I think you got better care, more specialized care. And that certainly is not the fault of the nurses. It's the fault of the greed of the hospitals and the doctors. Well, we're looking at it right now. My husband just had to have his test to make sure he hasn't been infected.

Oh, no.

But it's greed. What is it but greed? You wonder at what point do people stop caring about the patient and just looking at the bottom line? How much can we get out this guy? How many surgeries can we do? And I don't think it was that way. Surgery was always the last option. They did everything before they did surgery. And now I think they do surgery -- of course, my mother will tell you they do far too many C-sections. She always felt that because she said they never did C-sections. She said we always got that baby out. I mean there were times when there were severe complications and you had to do that or a woman was in labor for two days and just didn't dilate. Well, then you did. But if the woman's blood pressure got too high -- I mean the least little thing, C-section. And she was always adamantly against that. She thought if you just leave these women alone, they'll have this baby.

There does seem to be a growing role with insurance companies and the legal fields interjecting.

And they were much more careful in those days because people didn't have insurance. You didn't want to give them four-dollar apiece Tylenols because there was no insurance. And chances were you weren't going to get paid for it, anyway. But now it's all about the insurance companies. It's about billing, making money.

And Las Vegas has grown so much that that has really changed.

Now there are so many hospitals. Then there was the Las Vegas Hospital and there was county. And that was it. Wow.

I know. It's hard to keep them all straight now.

They just built another new one. It opened up out in the northwest I think somewhere.

I just went to Saint Rose almost out by Lake Mead. My cousin gave birth yesterday. And I can't believe how far out it is. I didn't even know that was over there. And I know that's

been there maybe for a while.

We went to Mount Charleston the other day and missed the turn because it's in town.

It's in the middle of the city now.

We used to drive out of town and then you'd drive forever and you'd be looking for that turn. I looked at my husband and said I think you just missed the turn.

There's a neighborhood like right across the street. I know.

And when you go to Boulder City -- the last time I was out there, which was a couple years ago now, so it's probably -- well, the housing market is kind of down. But it was less than a mile from the last housing track to the Mountain Pass, less than a mile. We used to leave town and you'd drive forever. It was like a day trip to go to Boulder City. Mary, who works here, lives there. She just comes to work from Boulder City. My commute is worse from Summerlin.

Oh, yeah. I live right there, too.

Yeah. I know where you -- and we live further out. I live out off Hualapai and Sahara, between Hualapai and the 215.

I know exactly where that is. Yeah, I can't believe it. It used to be all desert right there.

I know it. Well, they only built the first development in Summerlin in like 1996. Hello. Well, when we bought our house, it was the desert. There weren't even any models. There was a trailer sitting there. My husband and I made a wrong turn because we were looking for these model homes and I said, oh, let's go ask them at that trailer. So we went in and said is this going to be a housing tract? And she said, oh, yeah. She said come on in and let me show you the plans. She said phases one, two, and three are sold out. And I'm like sold out?

There is nothing here.

This is a desert. So we got in on phase four, seriously.

Good thing because it was developed before --

Yeah. I said how could you sell things? Well, they had built I guess these similar houses out in Highland Hills. And when they were sold out, they said, well, we're going to be building another tract like this in Summerlin. Since people didn't get in over there, I guess they built phases one, two, and three.

I can't believe it. This city has spilled over.

Yeah. It has. It's incredible.

I really appreciate you sitting down and talking to me about your mom. She sounds like a remarkable woman.

She was quite the lady.

And left quite an imprint on the Las Vegas medical community.

Yeah. She loved it. She loved her doctors and loved her job and loved all her patients. People would come and see her 20 years later.

Oh, just a caveat. My mother had a stroke. It wasn't real serious, but her dementia had really set in. And they checked her out of the hospital and they sent her to Vegas Valley Convalescent Center after she had worked there from '76 to '90 something. Sixteen or 17 years she had worked there. So I went in one day and I looked at her and it was pathetic. She had scooted down in her bed. They had brought her food, but she couldn't eat. Nobody fed her. They were picking trays up and my mother had not touched it. So I was just mad. And I went up to the desk and I said who's been here for 17 years? And they all looked at each other. They said nobody, but there's Clara and somebody else in the break room. They've been here for 17 years. So I said where's the break room? And I went in and opened up the door. And I said who are the two people, the two nurses that have been here for 17 years? And they both raised their hands. And I said, well, do you remember Agnes Rasmussen? Oh, yes, Agnes. We remember Agnes. And I said, well, she's in room 236. So I would appreciate it if you'd take care of her. Oh, no problem.

Every time I went they had her sitting up. She had on clean gowns. People fed her. So the medical profession is just like everything else; it's who you know. I mean if I hadn't known anybody literally -- my sister-in-law called me is the reason we went down there. She said you have to get your mom out of here. You have to get her out of here now because they're not taking care of her. But as soon as they found out who she was, they took care of her.

I mean even when you first moved to Las Vegas, it was who you knew.

That's it.

And that's still what it is today.

It is. And it's everywhere. People say it's in the casino business. No. I said that to one of my

professors one time. I said, oh, that's not a problem; I've got some juice. Juice? Juice doesn't work here. I said, oh, yeah, it does. Oh, yes, it does. Juice works everywhere.

Yes. Exactly. Well, it's sad that it took that to get the care she needed.

Well, she was just there for two weeks. But the first couple of days were just terrible. And then from then on, every day I went in she was -- and even the woman next to my mother says, wow, who do you know?

Everybody.

Yeah. That's right.

Well, thank you again.

Okay. It's been fun.

Yes. Thanks.