

CT
247
R38
2007

An Interview with Raymond D. Rawson

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

©The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Director: Claytee D. White

Editors: Barbara Tabach and Gloria Homol

Transcribers: Kristin Hicks and Laurie Boetcher

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Barbara Tabach and Claytee D. White

The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer and the Library Advisory Committee. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank the university for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

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
Director, Oral History Research Center
University Libraries
University Nevada, Las Vegas

Table of Contents

Preface	v
Interview	1 – 16
Index	17
Appendix:	
Linda Rawson obituary	18
Interview with Linda Rawson	19 – 34
Ray Rawson Legislative Biography	35 -36



Preface

Raymond Rawson's life started in the rural Utah community of Sandy in 1940 . His family moved around in what he describes as a scene from John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. By the age of 10, the family settled in Las Vegas, which had a population of around 35,000. He attended Fifth Street Grammar School, Las Vegas High School, was a member of UNLV's first graduating class, and eventually became a dentist.

In this interview, he reflects on his experiences of growing up in Las Vegas, the hardships of difficult economic eras, and his professional accomplishments in the field of dentistry, including actively advocating the creation of UNLV School of Dental Medicine.

Ray also became a community leader. He served in the Nevada State Legislature from 1985 to 2001. He talks about his relationship with long-time legislator Joe Neal. Education and access to healthcare were among the issues that Ray championed and he shares his observations of these issues. In 2009, he was appointed to the Board of Regents, and held the position until 2011.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: Raymond D Rawlson

Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 10/30/2009 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

Raymond D Rawlson 10-30-2009
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 10/30/2009
Signature of Interviewer Date

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: Raymond D Rawlson

Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 10/30/2009 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

Raymond D Rawlson 10-30-2009
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 10/30/2009
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. It is October 30th, 2009. And I'm at the home of Dr. Ray Rawson.

So how are you this morning?

I'm doing just fine. It's a good day.

Wonderful. Could you just start by telling me about your early life, where you were born and a little about your family?

Well, I was born on November 2nd, 1940. I was actually born at home. There was a blizzard and they couldn't get to the hospital. So they had to bring the doctor into our house. I was born in Sandy, Utah. It was a rural community about 12 miles from Salt Lake City. And it was a good place to grow up. It was farm country. We had fields to roam and play in and I used to play around the water and so on.

When I was three years old, my father worked on the atomic bomb plant in Hanford, Washington. He was a carpenter. So we moved to Hanford, Washington. It was a tent city. I mean it was dusty and dry. They had big oak barrels that they filled with ice every day so that people would have cold water. It was like a scene out of *Grapes of Wrath*, really. But it was wartime, and I think everyone was involved in that.

At the completion of that work we moved back to Sandy. I remember the train ride. I was four-and-a-half or five then. The train was loaded with soldiers coming home or going out. I remember several of them gave my mother and me a seat because I was little at that time. And they slept on the floor. They were gentlemen in that day.

Good years. I mean my father milked a cow so that we would have milk for the family. He shared that milk with whoever owned the cow. And I remember bringing in hay in the spring and summer.

When I was ten we moved to Las Vegas. That was an abrupt change. It was a small city then. We were 35,000 people in Las Vegas. But it was the biggest city I had ever been around. I went to Fifth Street Grammar School and then on to Las Vegas High School. I still love the mountains. We lived at the foot of the mountains in that Salt Lake Valley. They just towered above the city. I still get excited anytime I see mountains.

So do you like cold weather?

I don't really like cold weather. We have a cabin at Brian Head and we do ski and snowmobile.

But I think I was cold until we got out of dental school and I could afford a decent coat is the first time that I really started to enjoy the snow.

Any brothers and sisters?

I do have two brothers and two sisters. My older brother and older sister have died. I have an older sister that lives in Salt Lake and a brother that lives in Logandale, Nevada. My father and mother are both dead. They lived well into their 80s and lived good lives. He was a carpenter all of his life and small contractor in Las Vegas. And I worked as a carpenter for a few years going through school.

How did you decide to become a dentist?

Well, I can joke about it a little bit. Part of it was I would be nailing roofs in 120-degree heat in the summer here and decided I better continue school. But I think I had a health teacher as a junior in high school that was the first teacher that really got through to me and I knew that I wanted something in the medical field. So I just went after that.

Have you been to the Fifth Street School since they've renovated it?

I have. It's nice to see that they've kept it alive and that it's involved with the arts and the development downtown. It was a scary place to go. I was in fifth grade when we moved there. It was overcrowded and it was on double sessions. It seems like that's been the history of schools in Nevada. We still have crowded schools.

Yes. Tell me about UNLV as being part of some of those first students there.

Well, I got married right out of high school. And so I couldn't see the way to go away to school. My wife and I both enrolled at UNLV. I worked full time and went to school 12 hours a semester. So it was considered full-time student. It was the only college I knew. There were three buildings on the campus. It was pretty stark. I mean there wasn't really any grass then. We called it Sagebrush Tech. That's not very kind.

Well, some people called it Tumbleweed Tech.

And the classes were small. I think I had 25 or 30 in the biggest class I had. That fundamentally changed my life. Because of the small classes and the closeness to the professors, I just came alive.

Were you still having the fights while you were there, the fights with the north? Any of that

tension still around?

You know, very much so. It was called University of Nevada Southern Regional Division. They didn't want a university down there. The regents would meet once a year, maybe twice a year in Southern Nevada. We'd go to those regent meetings and they were kind of disdainful of us, you know. It was like we can't spend our resources down here. I remember us kind of petitioning the students and holding rallies. It was a slow beginning. At the same time the city was beginning to grow. And I think they couldn't deny the numbers down here.

I was in the first graduating class at UNLV. Before that everybody had to spend at least a semester in Reno. And it was a hardship. I mean you pick up your family or go alone and have to find housing in a strange community. So I took five years to get through college and did that because I couldn't really afford to go to Reno. You know, there were dramatic things. I can't say that you look back at everything and say it was exactly the right thing to do. But I was a student body officer.

You were president of your class, weren't you?

Yes, student body president at UNLV. We really picked the school colors and we picked—we were called Rebels because we were rebelling against northern Nevada. It was thrilling to finally have a graduating class and to know that we were a university. There were 1900 students maybe at the time I graduated. And now there's 19,000. I mean that's just exponential.

And the north-south feelings are still there. We're civilized about it and we try not to punish. I mean clearly the control of the state is down here. But they stick together and they still try very hard to maintain as much control as they can.

Did you continue to feel that when you were in the Nevada senate?

Yes, very much. I mean it didn't matter what party. All the north and rural legislators stuck together in both houses. In Southern Nevada, because we were Republicans and Democrats basically, I think they used that to their advantage to split us. And by the time we figured that out we were either with it or no longer in office. So it's still in place. You know that there's a north-south issue when you're talking with someone from Nevada and they say, well, this isn't a north-south issue. Immediately you should come to attention because it is a north-south issue. And I think it is to them. It isn't to us. I really see a lot of statesmen down here. I think they're

afraid of Southern Nevada and the potential power of Southern Nevada. So in their minds it's a bigger issue than it is in our minds.

I think they secretly feel that given time they'll catch up with us population-wise.

When you were having those school meetings and class meetings, coming up with a mascot and school colors, did you ever think that mascot would lend itself to racism or that people would think about that in later years?

No. In my mind as I think back at that time, there was no sense of that at all. It wasn't a Southern United States kind of mentality. It was a Southern Nevada mentality and we had a large black population then, not so many Hispanic. There were some Hispanics here. There may have been infringed segregation and things like that that as I try to remember back it doesn't really come across to me because of the friends we had and the associations we had. I just don't remember that being a strong issue. The Rebel flag and things like that had nothing to do with the south, really.

And that's really hard to explain today.

It is.

Because I'm on a commission for diversity on campus and those issues have come up and I've tried to explain what the situation was because I've interviewed other students in early UNLV. But it's difficult.

Like at Las Vegas High School there were members of our debate team, minority members. They had status and stature and got important parts and roles. I don't ever remember that competition being there. There were in some -- the town was more segregated then. And it was before busing. So there were areas of segregation. But, no, I think a lot of that was brought out as we went through the late 50s and 60s.

Yesterday I interviewed a Mormon family and they told me about Monday family nights. Tell me about that. I was so impressed with that.

Well, the Mormon Church is a way of life. People are involved so much in the church. And I think there was recognition that families are spread in so many different directions that we needed to take some time that would be absolute for the family. It wouldn't be anything that would interfere because the family is important. That came as a church-wide directive for everyone to practice a family night. It was a wonderful occasion for our family. We had seven children. We

ate together. We did activities together. We went places and did things. So I think it held our family together. It was worthwhile.

What were some of the things that you would do in the house? Did you play games?

We played games, every kind of game from Pick-up Sticks to chess and checkers and Monopoly. Sometimes we'd go to a movie. There were times that we would have a family history discussion. And that's important to us to know our heritage. As a religion we went through quite a bit of prejudice also. My great-great-great grandfather was burned out of six different homes as they were pushed across the country. And part of that is because of their antislavery sentiments in Missouri. They were involved in some of that Underground Railroad, getting people out of Missouri. I think it's important that our kids know those things. We don't have to re-excite people about it. They just need to know that if you don't treat all people the same that's what happens. And that's not good.

Tell me a little about leaving and going to Loma Linda because at that point you were already married; is that correct?

Yeah.

So how did that work with the family?

Oh, it was tough. I was a carpenter then, going to school. My father and I built the house we lived in. It was on Quarry Avenue in Las Vegas. And we saved everything we could to put a well down so that we would have water. There was power there but no city water.

So what part of the city is Quarry?

It's Charleston and -- oh, it's near the mental health area out on West Charleston. We paid \$1200 for a piece of land out there and it was desert all around us. We built the house and we finished college living in the house. Some of my college classmates helped me put the wiring in it. But when it came time to go to dental school, oh, the tuition was 11,000 a year.

And we're talking about which year?

1964. And so we sold the home to get the tuition for the first year of school. My father drove a U-Haul and we put everything we could in the car and the kids and headed to California. We paid \$80 a month for a place in Southern California to live. We didn't have a car that was in good enough shape to get home. So for the four years that we were down there—we tried a couple of

summers. And we could get up to the top of Cajon Pass and it would overheat by the time we hit the desert. So we couldn't really visit family or anything. I mean everybody has poverty years in their lives. But we would have four dollars left over at the end of the month. And if the kids didn't need a prescription, we could all go a movie once a month. But they were good years. We were close as a family. I studied every night and the kids saw me studying. As a result every one of them is educated. It's not like we had to force them. It's just the habit they got into.

And they saw you sitting there every night studying.

Yep. We have four doctors and an attorney and a daughter in early childhood education and one in physical therapy. I was the first member of my family to go to college. It was exciting for them to see me graduate from college and then graduate school.

And then you came back and did more schooling.

And I came here and associated with Dwayne Antz. He was a dentist on East Sahara. And I practiced dentistry for about ten years and had an opportunity to help start the dental hygiene program at the community college.

So I started phasing out of my practice and phasing into the teaching. I practiced part time and taught; then I went full time as a professor and retired there after 25 years of teaching.

And I've heard that you did a lot of research and writing. What was your field of research?

Forensic dentistry and other things. During college I worked in Southwest Radiological Laboratories. We built some of the monitors that monitored the radioactive iodine and the air from the testing at the Nevada Test Site. We used to sit out on our lawn in the morning and watch the atom bombs go off. And you'd see the mushroom cloud coming up. So I was involved in that health physics. And then I did research in anesthesia, local anesthesia and taught anesthesia for 25 years. Fought the fights through the legislature to get local anesthesia for hygienists that they could inject. So I did a fair amount of research for that and published extensively in forensic dentistry, identification and bite marks and mass disasters, those kinds of things.

That's exciting. So if I would come to your dental office and I was afraid of pain, I wouldn't have to worry about that, right?

Absolutely not. You know, I always taught the students – and it's fun to teach students because they give injections to each other.

They're terrified, they're just terrified. And I always said to the class when we finished all the explanations and so on, then I tell them, okay, now we're ready to do this. I promise you that when we come back I'm going to ask you how many of you felt it. Most of you are going to raise your hand that you didn't feel anything and they all scoff at that. We go in and give our first injection and come back. Usually it's 90 percent of the class that says I didn't feel anything. So I taught them an atraumatic, a painless injection, and you can do it painlessly. All of the dental hygienists in this community really have learned at my hand and they give great injections.

I am impressed. Great.

You became a senator in 1984?

Yes.

So how did you decide to go into politics?

Well, we were raising a family. Our kids were in the school district. It was crowded; it was overcrowded. The college was kind of bogged down. There wasn't enough money. They didn't have enough buildings. We had students that couldn't get classes. And I was teaching in the college and could see that the resources just weren't there. I thought I can do something about that. I've got to try. So I ran. Ran against a powerful legislator and worked hard. I walked the neighborhood. There were 65,000 homes that I walked to.

So now, where were you living at that time?

On Meachum Avenue. It's basically Jones and the expressway now, Torrey Pines, in that area. And the district was all the way from California to the Nye County border. So it was the west bench of Las Vegas. And I won by, I don't know, 65 votes or something. It was close. I didn't know until three in the morning that I had actually won. Then it hit me. Okay, now what am I going to do? And that's a scary session to go into the senate. You don't really know as much as you think you do.

What were some of your campaign promises?

It was education. It was economic diversity; that we were too dependent on gaming as a sole industry. And that's why we had budget problems. We still see that today. I think it was mostly those issues, economic development and education. As I got into the senate I was the first dentist that had ever been elected in the Nevada Senate. So they put me on the health committee. I think

Joe Neal was the chairman of the committee that year. He was a great chairman. I mean he knew. He had already been there probably ten years by the time I got there. And I learned a lot of things from him and I think I became a pretty good chairman. We went back and forth depending on who had the majority. I was chair and he was chair.

Joe Neal always told me that he learned all the rules, read the rule book and learned all the rules, and that's what made him successful.

That's what I learned from him. That first session when everybody was just trying to look good and give speeches and so on, I was studying the rule book and watching really how he could get the microphone whether they wanted him to have it or not. I learned those lessons pretty well because I learned from a master. And that is really the ballgame. If you know the rules and follow the rules, then you can always be heard.

Right. What are some of the bills that you participated in, whether you wrote them or not, in the field of education while you were there over that, what, ten-year period, 20-year period, ten sessions?

Twenty years. Oh, gosh, lots of things.

To me the most important issue was probably class size reduction. And that's still controversial today. Conservatives think it was too expensive. Basically we were 50th in the country as far as the kids that go on to college, the kids that graduate from high school. It was appalling. I reasoned that if the kids could leave the third grade being able to read they could probably get through. Most of the dropouts didn't know how to read is why they were dropping out.

So the class size reduction bill lowered the first three grades to 15 to 1. And, yes, it was expensive. Now, as it went along people fought it and they diluted it and they tried to change it. We ended up with 16 to 1 and then two teachers in a class of 32. That didn't accomplish what we needed.

But there's little pockets where you still see that there's small classes and the kids do come out of there learning how to read. So I think we made a difference. The millennial scholarship was a good thing. Governor [Kenny] Guinn was the governor then. We probably wouldn't have gotten it through if he hadn't really championed that. Every bill that goes through has good and

bad about it. But it took us from 50th in the country to 28th at one point as far as kids going into college.

And couldn't we all see that?

Well, you know, I don't know. Can we? I think it changes families. It changes lives. It's the only way you break out of poverty. It's the only way you break out of ignorance. When I graduated from college, there were only 6,000 college students in the whole state. There's 120,000 college students now. And we're in our worst economic times right now. And Nevada State College has a 19 percent increase in enrollment and College of Southern Nevada is five or six percent. People understand that. When times are tough you've got to improve your skills. And that's how you get a job and that's how you make it.

What kinds of things did you champion under health care?

Well, we had an access problem in Nevada. We had Medicaid. And so many people were covered, but they didn't really have access to health care. In dentistry as an example, we reached a point where there were only eight dentists in the state that would see a Medicaid patient. Basically 80 percent of the Medicaid kids never had their teeth filled. Ten years ago, well, 15 years ago, the second leading cause of hospitalization for children in this state was dental infection. People don't know that. They don't understand that. That's why I championed the dental school and pushed for a dental school. And now they see 34,000 people a year that wouldn't have access to dentistry any other way. So it's still not a perfect system, but we've improved the access. So that was always the primary thing to me. It didn't matter if they were covered if there wasn't any place they could go.

And I think we've changed that.

How are we going to change economically us remaining gaming dependent?

Well, gaming fights. They like to be the 300-pound gorilla. I mean they're the major industry and they like it that way. Mining is probably the next major and they like it that way. I remember Steve Wynn talking to all the legislators and saying: you don't need economic diversification. Every time I open a new hotel there's 15,000 new jobs.

Well, that's true. But every time the economy goes south tourism stops and then we are really hurt severely. And so we can promote gaming and tourism. But we need to build other

industry. Now, Northern Nevada understands that. Their gaming isn't as strong in Northern Nevada. And so you see warehousing and light manufacturing and all kinds of things that are developing in Northern Nevada. They've got the picture. They understand. And we need to do the same thing here. Some of that ought to be biotech industry. And gaming's always said, well, you know, we don't need biotech industry in Southern Nevada. Well, yeah, we do. It's a good place for it. It's got a good tax structure for it.

You look at the H1N1 swine flu right now. We're dependent on foreign countries for all of our vaccine. And as it really got to be a pandemic these countries embargoed the vaccine they were creating. They wanted their citizens to be vaccinated.

And you can't blame them.

We're left out in the cold and so we're tens of millions doses short for what we need to adequately cover. We ought to have a vaccine-producing industry right here. Whether it's in Nevada or not, it doesn't matter. But this is a good place for it.

And so I went in on the campaign promise. We did a lot of economic diversification. If you look at it, we're more dependent on gaming today than we were 20 years ago. And it's because gaming's grown also.

And we see that when we look at the housing situation here now. I mean it's bad in a lot of places, but I think we see the numbers greater here than anyplace else.

And because of that we're -- darn. We can stabilize it. I'm convinced that we can stabilize it. Nevada's going to be a wonderful place to live generations. We'll get on top of this.

I agree because I love this place.

What is the role of the floor leader in the senate?

Well, the floor leader really sets the agenda. They're very powerful. I'm not sure if it was originally intended to be that way, but that's what happens. You see the same thing in the national Congress. Harry Reid becomes very important because he is the leader. Joe Neal or Dina Titus or Bill Raggio have been very important because they're the leader. I was assistant majority leader for years. And so I was in that inner circle that made all of the final decisions. It's a good place to be. I mean that's how you get things done. The individual vote rules in the long run. But being able to set the agenda helps you to accomplish that.

At one point you were -- some of your personal achievements -- you were a community hero. Tell me about that.

Linda was too. My wife and I. We were involved in the interfaith community trying to get people to see the positives of every faith. At the same time I was fighting in the senate for diversity, for education, for improvement. And I think people recognized that. We were surprised, but very, very pleased.

I don't think I was familiar with that award.

You were part of the Clark County Anti-Tobacco Task Force. What was that work like?

Well, we've always recognized that tobacco has a serious health consequence and that in Nevada we have a very high percentage of smokers. Gaming has always resisted any attempts to regulate that because it would interfere with their business. And I understand that. But we put a concerted effort to try to create places that were smoke-free, restaurants, grocery stores, family places that you could go without having to breathe the smoke. Always controversial, tough fights every one of them.

There was a lawsuit against—essentially the attorney generals of the states came together and sued the tobacco companies. And there were billions of dollars in awards out of that. Well, that set up a foundation, the American Legacy Foundation. There's still over a billion dollars of endowment fund in the Legacy Foundation. I was appointed by the National Conference of State Legislatures to be on the Legacy Foundation. It promotes these task forces in every state and community to get out the message and to try to fight the effects of tobacco. We know that lung cancer, I mean everybody accepts that today, but breast cancer is also. Tobacco accentuates that and pancreatic cancer and other cancers. So basically it's been a successful effort in educating people. There's still smokers. I don't think we ever wanted the government control to dictate to people you can or can't. But they ought to know what the consequences are.

There's even smoke-free casinos, not many. But they do well. There are people that want to gamble that don't want to breathe that. We know the workers in the casino industry suffer.

And I saw a lawsuit in the newspaper the other day where I think a dealer is suing one of the casinos here because of that.

Yes. And that creates a lot of controversy in the press. But it isn't the most healthy place to work.

Yes. Because you're a dentist I'm going to ask this next question. My friends and I sometimes talk about tobacco is horrible, but we think the sugar industry is probably even more horrible. And we feel that all of us are addicted to it. Candy, pies, cakes -- we all just love that. What can we do about sugar?

Education is part of it. In dentistry we made a chart up one year that had sugar cubes that represented how much sugar. So if you have an ice cream cone, there's six or eight cubes of sugar. If you have a piece of pie, there's 25 cubes of sugar. Education's part of it—becoming health conscious. And I think our society is becoming more health conscious. Yet, we see that childhood obesity is a national problem. Most of that's sugar and fats. Right now today you see the controversy about sugar cereals. Dentists have known that for a long time. It's not good for your teeth, but it's also bad for you generally to have that much sugar. I think it's an awareness thing. The government can play a role by seeing that labeling is fair and accurate. And then let people make their decisions.

Who were some of your classmates back at UNLV the first time around?

Oh, gosh. Jim Bilbray was a class or two ahead of me. I think Richard Vernon went to UNR. Yes. A lot of my classmates went into biology. They became veterinarians, a couple of doctors and a few park rangers, as you know for a while was a strong program out there, and a few dentists. Neil Glover was a classmate. And some teachers. We had Tom Wright, Dina Titus' husband.

Oh, yes. Dr. Wright.

He was a contemporary. I'm trying to think of others. Las Vegas High School, when we started as freshmen that was the high school. I guess Gorman and Las Vegas High School. And then when we were sophomores they opened Rancho High School. So all the early leadership in Nevada we knew from high school days. Then many of them went away to college, but a few of them stayed and graduated from Nevada.

So tell me about deciding to run for the board of regents. How did that occur? How did you make that decision?

Well, actually the governor called and asked if I would be willing to accept an appointment for

board of regents. Steve Sisolak ran for the county commission and so there was a vacancy. I told him that I would be happy to, I'd be honored. That is really kind of a natural position because I worked education in the senate. I was a college professor and knew the shortcomings, as well as the strengths of the system. And I have to run now. Next year I have to run for office again.

And do you think you'll do that?

Yes.

Great. What are some of the issues that you can discuss that you would like to see on the agendas in the upcoming years?

Well, we need a stable funding base for our education, for all education. I've always felt—you know, I worked hard in K through 12 to improve the level of teaching. I wanted to see master teachers and adequate pay for people that are qualified. We need to develop the research base of our two major universities, but we also need to develop the other skills that are picked up that are not necessarily research based. So there's a place for community colleges and for state colleges and for trade and technical programs. And I think the university system will play the major role in our economic diversification. They can train the workers that we need and that's critical.

At the same time there's some basic infrastructure that we need to build to support the research. There's research money out there if we have the buildings and the people to support it. And so that's the big challenge for us is to really get that off the ground. The medical school performs a wonderful function and needs to be twice as big as it is and it needs to have a heavier presence in Southern Nevada. We need to have a stable base to be able to build university buildings and see that the budget doesn't fluctuate. See, we lost ten percent of our faculty this year because of budget cuts. I mean they're talking 14 and 15 percent cuts. They've absorbed about all they can absorb now. And cuts in another session of the legislature would be devastating to higher education. You can't have a mature community if you're cutting the heart out of your institutions. So that's our challenge. That's what we have to work on.

Of course, I'm very glad to hear you say those kinds of things because you know that we're taking a pay cut as well.

What is your private practice like?

Oh, it's kind of a bright spot in my day. I love practice. In politics you can't accomplish anything

in a day or a week. It takes time. There's no closure to it. When you fight an issue and win it, somebody tries to change it the next year. So you're always fighting the same issue. In dentistry somebody comes in, in pain, and they can leave that day out of pain. And that's just refreshing to me. I love to be able to help alleviate pain and so forth. I do it every day. It's rewarding and it feels good and people are grateful. There's an economy to it. I mean dollars change hands and people avoid things because they can't afford them. That's to me the hard side of practicing any medicine. I think most people that go into medicine really want to serve people. And the economics of it confuses it and makes it harder.

But we should be compensated for what we do.

Yes. We have to be. I mean firemen have to be paid or we wouldn't have firemen. It's very, very expensive to run a dental office, twice as expensive as it is to run a medical practice. I mean the overhead runs 75 percent in most dental offices. So they work hard for the money they make. They have to work every day. You see dentists that are 50, 60 years old and they're working three days a week. Well, you start retiring as you get older. But you see the majority of young dentists are working nights and weekends, days. And they're able to provide a good living for their families, but they have to be there every day to do it.

My practice is a general practice. I was taught at Loma Linda, which is a Seventh Day Adventist university. They teach their dentists to be able to go to Africa or Indonesia and practice without a specialist to back them up. So I learned surgery and root canal therapy and I really learned how to do it without having to have all the backup. And so I do general practice. I love every aspect of it: crown and bridge and fillings and the surgery that's necessary and the root canal work that's necessary.

It's amazing to hear you talk about dentistry in this way because it makes me feel unafraid.

People are heavily invested emotionally in their face and in their head. When you have a broken tooth or a decaying tooth or a hurting tooth, it really goes right to your core. And people are most frightened of that than almost anything. Everybody that comes in is afraid of the dentist. I feel like one of my main jobs is to show them that we can care for them without hurting them. And every single day I get the reward of having people say I didn't know it could be that easy or I didn't believe you, doc. And that's just a pat on the back every day. And not many people have

that kind of job.

Good. When my dean Patty met you and thought you should be interviewed, we of course agreed rapidly because we knew about your political background. Patty would love to see us interview everyone on the board of regents. So I think that's going to be a push probably at the beginning of the new year to talk to each person on the board.

I think that's a good idea. We have the best board of regents we've ever had.

Wonderful. I'm glad to hear you say that.

And I'm not demeaning anybody that served before. We've had a wonderful history of visionary people on the board of regents. We have a board right now that's compatible. They work well together. They're kind to each other. They're respectful of each other. They have different viewpoints, but they disagree in an agreeable way. And I think we're needed at this time because this is a tough time. It's amazing how the state actually -- when you wonder how we're going to get through the next year, there's people there to do it.

Well, I just think that your life, your career shows us how well rounded life can be when it comes to community, the university system, the state system. This is amazing. Have you ever thought of doing anything nationally?

No. I've thought of it. Everybody thinks of it. I've always felt like you can accomplish more for the people in your community locally than you can nationally. What does a congressman do for most of us here? Not very much that affects us directly. They're important. I don't mean to minimize that.

Right. Yes.

But when it comes to teachers' salaries or whether or not you have crossing guards and things like that, it's local politics. That's where you really affect people's lives.

There's a few things I think that have been important in my life. I've worked with the Boy Scouts all my life. And I've affected more lives there than I would if I ever went to congress because there are young men and women that have gone on because of an example and they've learned skills because of that time with them. And it's the same thing in the university. You've got a thousand graduates that are concerned about their patients. They're careful. And that's just a ripple effect that kind of builds out there. I wouldn't have that effect if I created some national

law.

Do you see yourself playing a larger role in the dental school, UNLV's dental school?

You know, I love the school. It's important to me. I want to see them successful. I haven't really worked in the school because I created it and I didn't want to create a conflict. As time goes on and it's well established, I'd like to do some things and still support. I'll probably leave anything I have left when I die there to build the school. I'd like to be more involved. And the further I get away from the creation of it maybe the more chance I'll have.

So is there anything else that you'd like to add that I could have overlooked or anything that you thought was influential, significant that I didn't pick up in my research?

Oh, gosh, to go into a person's life in real detail you have to live it over again and there's no time left to do that. I've been involved in disaster response in the community. I think that's important. You know, maybe the critical aspect of Nevada is we're all just people in Nevada and we kind of come forward when we're needed and we work in local government or state government and then we return to the ranks. It's a citizen legislature. It's a citizen regent. So I'm just the neighbor, a citizen. And when I'm through I'll return to the ranks no different than anybody else. I think that's the beauty of Nevada.

Thank you so much.

A

American Legacy Foundation · 11
Antz, Dwayne · 6

B

Bilbray, Jim · 12

C

College of Southern Nevada · 9

F

Fifth Street Grammar School · 1, 2

G

Glover, Neil · 13
Guinn, Governor · 9

L

Las Vegas High School · 1, 4, 13

N

Neal, Joe · 8, 11
Nevada State College · 9

R

Raggio, Bill · 11
Reid, Harry · 11

T

Test Site · 6
Titus, Dina · 11, 13

U

University of Nevada Southern Regional
Division · 3
UNLV · 2, 3, 4, 12, 16

V

Vernon, Richard · 12

W

Wright, Tom · 13
Wynn, Steve · 10



LINDA RAWSON OBITUARY: Published in Las Vegas Review-Journal on February 4, 2010

Mrs. Linda Downey Rawson, of Las Vegas, passed away Feb. 1, 2010, in the early morning. Linda was born Oct. 31, 1940, in Las Vegas, the only daughter of the late Daniel and Josephine Downey. She attended John S. Park and Fifth Street Grammar School and graduated from Las Vegas High School, where she met her future husband, Raymond D. Rawson. Linda and Ray were married after graduation and sealed in the St. George Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Active in the LDS Church, Linda served in many callings and demonstrated significant leadership. She was a primary president during their graduate school years, a Relief Society president and Stake Young Women president while her children were teenagers. She helped to start the "Grad Bash" for graduating high school seniors that provided dusk to dawn activities in a safe environment. Linda loved music and played the piano and organ. She was active in civic organizations as well and served as president of the Republican Women's Club of Las Vegas, and spent years of activity in the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, and the Interfaith Community. Linda and Ray raised seven children, Blaine (Lynn) of Petosky, Mich., Mark (Avey) of Longview, Wash., Pam (Russell) of Las Vegas, David (Kirsten) of Okemos, Mich., Kristi (Dave) Cheval of Las Vegas, Ken (Patrice) of Clarksville, Ill., and Rick (Lisa) of Las Vegas. Linda enjoyed their 22 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. Her brothers include Clayton (Ann Marie) and Bob (Sharon) Downey. The viewing will be 10-11 a.m. Friday, Feb. 5, with services following, both at the LDS Hillpoint chapel, 9011 Hillpoint Road. The dedication of the grave will follow at Palm Memorial Park - Northwest, 6701 N. Jones Blvd. The family has suggested that donations be made to the LDS Humanitarian Fund in place of flowers. They have supported the newborn layettes at University Medical Center (UMC) which Linda started. Donations should be sent to the attention of Rachael Perkins, 1556 S. Bennett Road, Salt Lake City, UT 84104.

The following is a transcription of an interview conducted by Claytee White of Linda Rawson with her husband, Ray. The interview occurred about three months before her passing.

This is Claytee White. It is November 13th, 2009. And I am in the home of Linda Rawson.

So how are you today, Linda?

It's been a good day.

That's wonderful. Now, when I was here the last time, I learned that you grew up in John S. Park.

I did.

So tell me about that. Tell me what it was like. Tell me about your family.

My father died when I was somewhat young and my mom had to work to support us. She worked at an insurance agency. I watched my younger brothers after school to make sure that everything was okay.

So how many brothers did you have?

I have two brothers.

Two brothers. And how much older are you than they?

What am I, three or four years older? Something like that.

And give me their names.

Clayton Lee and William Robert.

Okay. So where did you go to school?

I went to John S. Park. And then I went to Las Vegas High School.

Did you walk to school?

I usually had a ride in the morning, but I walked home.

Now, that was when you were going to high school.

Uh-huh.

Did everybody walk to John S. Park School?

Yes. I think they did.

Who were some of your neighbors?

The Willots were next door. Most of the people in that area didn't have children. Richard Bryan was up at the corner. You know that name.

Yes, I do. Were you close also to Woodbury, the Woodbury family?

I don't believe so.

Okay. Did your family stay there long enough for your brothers to go to the same schools that you went to?

Yes.

So tell me about high school at Las Vegas High School at that time.

Well, it was just school, you know, like when I went to school that's where I went. We had days that we were in one class and days that we were in another class.

Could you specialize in a certain subject at that time?

I'm not sure. You could have a favorite. And mine was the English class. But you still had to do a certain amount of hours in different subjects.

Now, did you ever play a musical instrument?

Piano.

Oh. So now, were you in any organized groups in school with the piano?

I played sometimes, not very often.

So what kind of music did you enjoy best?

Well, I like the old-time musicals.

Good. Did the school put on a lot of plays at the time?

They used to do it. I don't know what they do now.

But when you were there they did?

Uh-huh.

Oh, that's great. So were you born in Las Vegas?

I was. I've lived here all my life except for the years that we were in Loma Linda when Ray was in dental school.

I remember that. Now, tell me where your parents are from.

They were both born here. Robert O. Gibson Middle School is named after my grandfather.

Your parents were born in Las Vegas?

Yes. I'm not positive about my dad, but my mom was a native.

And what is your mom's maiden name?

Gibson. Robert O. Gibson Middle School.

Okay. What kind of work did your mother's family do?

My mom was a secretary for a lot of years. That's how she kind of educated us. And I went to work with each day rather than be home alone because then my brothers were younger and they were in different schools.

Now, do you remember your mother's parents?

My Grandpa and Grandma Gibson?

Yes.

I do.

Tell me about them. What kind of work did they do?

Robert O. Gibson Middle School was named after my grandfather. He ran the -- oh, what do you call it? The LDS church keeps a place where people who need food can come and get it. And my grandfather ran that. It's over by the first ward building. Now, I don't know if they still use it for that, but that's what he did at that point.

That's interesting. Tell me what it was like growing up in a Mormon family.

Well, my father died young, and so I just had my mother and my two younger brothers.

So did your mother have the family night?

We did it quite often. It wasn't every, every time. But most of the time we did.

Do you remember your mother telling you what Las Vegas was like when she was a little girl?

I don't.

So tell me what Las Vegas was like. You were in John S. Park. What did you do for fun?

Well, my mom was a single mom. And so we didn't do a lot for fun. When I finished my day of school, I was responsible for watching my brothers. And so that would have meant staying right at home or just close by.

But did you play games with the other kids in the neighborhood sometimes?

Once in a while, but not too many.

Now, what about movies?

Yeah. The Huntridge was there and we saw quite a few movies.

What did the Huntridge look like at that time because now you know that it looks really bad?

Yeah.

What did it look like at that time?

Well, at that time we could get into the movie for like a quarter or something. And I don't think they even have it open anymore. I'm not aware of it being open.

Do you remember any of the premiers where they would have some of the movie stars come to that location?

Not really.

You grew up knowing Richard Bryan. Do you remember what he was like as a little boy?

Well, he was a couple years older than I was. So I was impressed. But we have always been good friends. We grew up on the same block. You know, there wasn't anything out of the ordinary. It was just life.

Did you guys have a lot of pets in the neighborhood, dogs?

No.

Not a lot? Okay.

How long did you live in John S. Park after high school?

After high school Ray and I went away to college.

So you got married when?

After we finished high school.

So where did you go to school?

I went to John S. Park.

And after that where did you go to college?

We went up to --

Did you go to UNR?

No. We went to UNLV. Then we moved around getting Ray's education.

Now, were you able to finish your degree?

I didn't, no.

What were you going to major in?

I wasn't really planning on majoring in anything.

So now, were you one of the people who went to school to get married?

No.

Okay. If you could have -- what were your interests at the time? So if you could --

Well, I've always been a fan of reading. I almost always have a book open somewhere.

And are you still like that today?

I am.

So what kinds of things are you reading today?

Oh, it just depends. I've been reading a church history book. I read some novels, different things like that.

I do the same thing. I jump back and forth.

Yeah.

What kinds of books were you reading as a young wife? What kind of reading did you do at that time?

As a young wife I had a lot of kids and I didn't do a lot of reading. Oh, I read just novels.

RAY: Linda's actually very well read. And I don't know if you'd prefer that I not speak.

She might. She's always read profusely. And so she'll read a book every couple of days. And it's everything from history to music to --

Novels.

-- composers, to novels, to whatever. She loved geography and travel. And so whenever we would plan a trip, she would always look at the area and understand the area well before we went. So we spent some time in Europe and I always felt like I had a tour guide with me.

Oh, that's great. So, Linda, from your memory right now what was one of the favorite places you visited?

Oh, I loved France. I had a chance to go to Israel. And that was very, very interesting. But Ray couldn't go with me. So you go with people that you know by name but you don't really know.

Right.

RAY: When I was in legislative session, we had friends who had someone that had to step out of the trip. And so they called and would I feel comfortable having her go. Well, it was a good time for her because I was away from home anyway. I probably saw her happier over that trip than anything she ever did. It was historical. It was religious. It was just a meaningful trip to her.

That's great. Getting back to John S. Park, did you know a lot of people growing up who were businesspeople living in John S. Park?

Well, my mom was a widow. So she supported us, myself and my two younger brothers. And so we didn't have a lot of time to do things like that. I watched my brothers, baby-sat them quite often while my mom worked.

RAY: If you think about the kids that you went to school with, you know, Buchanan --
Bucky Buchanan.

RAY: -- Bucky Buchanan, the Bryans --
Yeah. Richard Bryan.

RAY: -- if you think about all the kids who were in the Rhythmettes or the pep club with you, it was kind of a list of successful people in Vegas.

That's true.

Now, you mentioned the Rhythmettes.

Yes. Las Vegas High School Rhythmettes.

So were you ever --

I wasn't one.

But tell me how that group was looked upon.

They were very much admired.

Did you ever see them perform?

Uh-huh.

What did people like so much about that group?

I think they liked them because they usually were like halftime at a ballgame. And so it was a nice break from the game to watch the Rhythmettes. I've been curious. I've often thought maybe we should call Las Vegas High School and see if they still have the Rhythmettes.

You know, I doubt if they have the Rhythmettes.

I doubt it too.

But we have some information about the Rhythmettes up at Special Collections. Do you remember the time at school when the Rhythmettes were traveling around the country?

Vaguely, not in any great detail.

Who were some of your best friends?

Well, I was pretty good friends with Richard Bryan. He was up at the corner at the top of our street

and I was midway down.

Who were some of the girls that you --

Let's see. Joan Semen.

RAY: Bailey.

Bailey. What's her first name?

RAY: I think Lorraine.

Lorraine Bailey. Yeah.

What kinds of things did you do together? Did you play with makeup? What kinds of things did you do together?

Not really. My mom was a widow and I babysat my two younger brothers a lot. And so there wasn't a lot of time for playing around.

So no sleepovers?

Occasionally I would go to a friend's house to sleep over, but didn't do a lot of that.

Do you remember the street that you grew up on?

On Francis, Francis Avenue.

Can you describe your house to me?

It was a two-bedroom house. It had a gate at the back of the house where the backyard started. We didn't raise anything to speak of, well, mostly because my mom was a widow.

But two bedrooms. How many baths?

Just the one.

One bath. So you had a living room. What was the kitchen like?

It was just a typical old-fashion kitchen.

With tile?

Uh-huh.

The reason I'm asking is because you know some of the houses changed little.

Yeah.

And this area as you probably know is on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Oh, is it now?

Uh-huh. And a lot of the houses maintain that same look and character today. What kind of

front yard did you have?

It was a front lawn that went back to the gate to the backyard and then the driveway. And then there was a little bit of a place for grass along the side. In the backyard we had some fruit trees and things like that.

RAY: A couple of big fruit trees in front.

Yes.

RAY: Huge cottonwood trees in the back. They were big lots compared to today.

Yes.

Because today people are moving in and they're putting pools in those backyards.

They are.

RAY: It was 1940s. It was built just at the end of the war. And so they were simple houses with very little eave, kind of like leveled down. But they were spacious yards compared to today.

That's right. What kinds of fruit trees? Do you remember?

Yeah. We had figs. Kind of the seasonal fruits.

Did you use them?

Uh-huh. We didn't do any canning to speak of, but we ate them.

Okay, good. That was my next question if you did any canning. I grew up in North Carolina, so we did a lot of canning.

Well, my mom having been left alone to take care of us, there wasn't a lot of time for her to do some of those things.

Oh, yeah, because she was going to work every day.

Uh-huh.

I know that the Mormon Church was really influential in that community.

Yes.

What other churches do you remember?

As a young adult I served on the interfaith committee. And so I had an opportunity to get acquainted with quite a few of the different interfaith groups.

So do you remember any of those groups?

I remember some of them, but it's been many, many years.

Yes.

RAY: Remember Gorman High was close to John S. Park.

Yes. It was close to where we were.

RAY: And there was St. Francis De Sales was down there.

Yes, it was.

RAY: There was a Baptist church between there and Las Vegas High.

Linda was a dancer. Through the church they had Saturday night dances.

So tell me about that. What kind of dancing?

Well, for the Saturday night dances it was usually couple-type dancing, boy and girl. And they were held at one of the churches centrally located. Like the parent would drop us off and come back and get us when it was time to go home.

RAY: And she performed at Las Vegas High School at some of the games. At halftime she and John Hayes did a special dance. It was funny, light. It was kind of a dancing with the stars. It was neat.

Wow. Oh, that is amazing. So you told me about the Rhythmettes at halftime, but you didn't tell me about you.

Oh, I wasn't a Rhythmette. I tried out, but I didn't make it.

RAY: But you were in the pep club.

I was in the pep club.

As a dancer when you watch Dancing with the Stars now, do you think about your dancing?

Do you know I really didn't dance very much at all. We did dance festivals in those stages. And they were really fun. And you put a lot of time in those because you have to learn the dance steps and get acquainted with a partner and all of that.

How were the partners chosen?

Just however they were there.

So when you say you had to put in a lot of time, how were the festivals arranged? Was it all Nevada?

Well, usually they were like Southern Nevada. We did a lot of things like that at Las Vegas High School on the lawn, you know, not the gym, but out on the lawn where the football players played. That was a lot of that. That's about all that I did.

What was your favorite kind of dancing?

I love waltzing.

And that's beautiful. So what kinds of things did you enjoy playing on the piano?

Oh, at that time I didn't enjoy it very much.

But later on did you enjoy it more?

You know, I don't play very often anymore. There's not a need like there used to be. And so I don't get a chance to really touch it like I used to.

RAY: She played at church a long time for the choir. And there were community things, weddings. I've seen her play at all kinds of things, funerals.

Yeah. I seldom ever play anymore. I don't ever get asked.

Have your children learned piano lessons?

Not really.

RAY: We have grandkids that play.

Yeah, we've got grandkids that play.

Okay, good. Are you happy about that that they're playing?

Uh-huh. Some of them are away. Some are in Michigan. Some are in Washington.

So you have children now who live in Michigan?

Uh-huh.

And another child in the state of Washington?

Mark and Amy are in Washington.

RAY: And one on the way.

Yeah, that's right.

So any children here in Las Vegas?

Yeah. Rick is here and Pam and Christy.

So you had six children.

We have seven.

Seven. Okay.

Now, I want to get back to John S. Park just for a second. Do you remember any community festivals or block club meetings or anything right there in the community?

I don't. But then I was a kid a lot of that time.

Right. Do you remember the Helldorado parades?

I do.

Did John S. Park's children apart from the school, did you participate in the parades at all?

Not really.

So what did Helldorado mean to you?

Oh, at that time you went out and had fun.

So describe it to me, someone who's never seen a real Helldorado parade. I've seen the ones in the last three or four years. So tell me what I missed.

Well, it's fun because at that point Las Vegas wasn't very big and you knew a lot of the people that were in the parade. You could wave and say hi, whatever. But I don't know if they even do Helldorado anymore.

RAY: You know the floats. It was like a Rose Bowl at one time. There were huge floats. The hotels all supported them. And the bands all played. And the kids walked for it seemed like miles in the parade, huge crowds.

Yeah, like from Main Street down to Seventh or so.

People have told me that there were three days and there was a parade every day.

That's right.

So people actually came out every day to see the parades?

RAY: Yes. And every night they had carnivals and fairs on Fremont or at the Cashman Field.

Or at the old Vegas Village.

RAY: And so it was a good party. It was a good time.

Did you dress up?

Not any more than what I've got on.

Well, didn't you have to wear cowboy or cowgirl clothes?

Well, it wasn't a have-to. It was you-can-if-you-want.

RAY: Yes, but they'd put you in the jail if you didn't.

Yes. It just sounds like a lot of fun to me when people talk about the Helldorado parades.

Yeah. It's a shame they don't do those anymore.

Well, believe it or not when we had the Centennial celebration in 2005 they brought it back.

Oh, did they?

So last year I went down to see the parade. It's done in the evening at around six or seven o'clock on a Saturday evening. And it goes from Charleston to city hall. I think it's on Fourth Street and that's it. So nothing like it was.

Yeah. There were a few years they didn't have the parade.

Yes. When was the last time you went to the John S. Park community just riding through it?

Oh, has it been very long ago?

RAY: Maybe several years.

Yes. We haven't been over there for a while.

RAY: We drove around the school earlier this year I think.

Yeah.

Did you talk about any of the changes in the community?

Well, of course, when I was growing up I didn't recognize those. But after we were grown up and started our family we were more aware of what was going on.

RAY: It's actually amazing to me how much it was the same.

Have you talked to anybody about the process of that community becoming a part of the National Registry of Historic Places?

I haven't, but that's a great idea.

Because it really preserves the community. A lot of people were afraid of it. But now they're very, very happy.

Well, it's great publicity for the city.

Yes. Was there any relationship at all between that community and the gaming community?

Not really, wouldn't you say?

Did you know people who worked in gaming?

Probably. Some of the parents of my friends probably did.

RAY: Do you remember we used to have an assembly at Vegas High School on Fridays? When it was the main high school, we would have Strip stars that would come in and perform. And so we saw Sammy Davis, Jr., Eartha Kitt and lots and lots of stars.

So how did that work? How did they get them over there?

RAY: You know, I don't know who made the contacts. I think Harvey Stanford or Walter Long were the principals then. And they must have made contacts. Barney Rawlings used to emcee a lot of those. And so we had a unique high school. It was like a Hollywood high school with the higher in caliber performance than most schools have ever seen. As we got more high schools, then they didn't do that anymore.

Yes.

RAY: So we had some of the gaming families, their children went to school with us. Entratter, Jack Entratter had a daughter I think that was there. We had several that became famous themselves that went on to careers. And we went to school with all of them.

I appreciate that. I don't know if anyone has told us about the stars going over to Las Vegas High School. So that's really interesting.

They would oftentimes have like a Friday assembly. And there would be a star or two there that would sing for them or tell jokes or whatever that star did.

What a gift, what a gift.

If you don't remember the neighborhood that much, how has that downtown area -- and we can talk about that whole downtown area -- how has that changed for you over the years?

Well, my mom was left a widow and raised the three children. And she had to work. And so I always kind of felt bad that we were in school and she was having to work and all of that. But there wasn't a choice either way.

She was probably having fun, too.

Well, I don't know if she was having fun or not.

RAY: Well, remember you did your shopping downtown on Fremont Street.

Yes, we did.

So what kinds of stores? Do you remember the stores on Fremont Street where you shopped?

Well, there was a Sears and a Penney's. And then further up the street was where the gaming was.

RAY: There was a Woolworth's downtown.

Yes, there was.

RAY: And Allen and Hanson and Hecht's were some of the women's stores.

Yeah. I don't even know if they're there now anymore.

No.

RAY: The El Portal was the theater. And you went to the theater regularly on weekends.

Yes, we did.

RAY: And you walked down there from your home and back. It was a different community.

Yes.

When you went to the movies on a Saturday afternoon, did you have to take your brothers with you?

Take my brothers?

Did you?

Not necessarily.

So you could go there with your girlfriends?

Uh-huh.

RAY: And later her boyfriend.

And I've been with him for 50 years.

How long has it been?

Fifty.

Fifty years. Oh, wow, that's wonderful.

RAY: But there were some old homes down on Fremont Street. I can remember as we went to the theater we'd walk past the old homes and they had a porch where people could sit out on the porch and be right on Fremont Street. Later all of those --

They've been torn down.

And businesses replaced them. Sometimes we read about how people were forced out of that area because businesses were taking over.

Yeah.

What did you most like about growing up in John S. Park?

We had some good friends. We had a nice group of kids. And we did that all the way through John S. Park and into high school.

RAY: That was the edge of town then. And there were springs, artesian springs out there. Linda used to go out and catch crawdads in the ponds. That was right in that area.

What did you do with them?

Put them back. It wasn't anything I wanted.

Okay. Were there any things like that that you could -- people told me that they would go hunting.

There were some people that you would see that were carrying guns and must have been hunting. Of course, my father died young. And so it was just my mom and my brothers and I. So we didn't do things like that.

Right. What did your brothers do when they grew up?

Clayton is Eddie Lee Homes. And Bob is --

RAY: He was with the city in their swimming pool program. He's retired now.

Oh, great.

RAY: I used to dove hunt just out from there, and quail.

So looking back now what does that neighborhood mean to you?

You know, it's been quite a while since we've even been through it. I don't know if the same people are there. No? And usually when I do something I go with Ray. So we don't go down there to speak of anymore. There's not much there for us.

Right. When you think about it, growing up there, going to movies on Saturdays, how do you see that time in your life?

It was a wonderful time. For kids growing up it was a safe situation where we were. The neighbors knew the neighbors' children. So you could always go somewhere if you needed something. My mom had to work. And she worked from like nine to five. And I could always go next door to the Willots' house if I had a problem and she would do what she needed to do to help me with it. And then, of course, I have two younger brothers that were there, too. So between the three of us we got things done that needed to be done.

That's good. So they're good memories about John S. Park?

Oh, yeah.

That's wonderful.

We go by it every once in a while, drive out that way and visit. Of course, at the time it was close enough to walk.

That's right. And now you live all the way out here. Did you ever think?

This is wonderful. These are the kinds of memory that is we want. We just want to know what the houses were like, what kids did in the neighborhood, what the school situation was like. And that was a very, very good piece of information about the stars at the school. Yeah. They came, oh, probably two times a month we would have one of the stars come in for an assembly. And it was done out of generosity. There were no ties or anything. They were just there because it was Las Vegas.

Now, are you aware that Las Vegas High School has been repainted and refurbished and everything?

I've heard that.

RAY: They had a 50th reunion. At graduation this year they had the 50th class walk through. So they actually had a gold gown for us. And we went through and sat on the stands as all of their kids graduated.

Oh, that's great.

RAY: It was nice that they remembered.

That's right. So I really appreciate those memories. This is really great. But you know that area around Las Vegas High School has changed quite a bit?

Oh, yes.

Yes. The businesses. I guess probably on some of those streets there were probably houses that have now become businesses.

Yes. I'm sure that's true.

Well, this is wonderful. I really appreciate this.

Well, I'm glad you could come by.

I'm glad too. I'm glad that we can add you to the project. So thank you so much.

You're welcome.

Legislative Biography -- 71st (2001) Session



RAYMOND (RAY) D. RAWSON

Republican
Clark County Senatorial
District No. 6
Dentist/College Professor

Born: 1940; Sandy, Utah.

Educated: University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), B.S.; Loma Linda University Dental School, D.D.S.; UNLV, M.A. in Physical Anthropology; Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Certificate.

Married: Linda Downey Rawson.

Children: Blaine, Mark, Pamela, David, Kristi, Kenneth, Richard.

Hobbies/Special Interests: Photography, woodworking, water sports, winter sports, hiking/climbing.

Legislative Service: Nevada Senate, 1985-2001--one special and nine regular sessions; Senate Assistant Majority Floor Leader, 1987-89, 1993-2001; Senate Assistant Minority Floor Leader, 1991; Alternate, Legislative Commission, 1985-86; Interim Finance Committee, 1987-2000; State Issues Committee, Assembly on the Legislature (AOL), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 1985-86; Vice Chairman, Health Committee, State-Federal Assembly, Science, Technology and Resource Planning Committee, AOL, NCSL; Health and Education Committee, Western Legislative Conference, Council of State Governments (CSG); Executive Committee, Education Commission of the States; Steering Committee, Reforming States Group, CSG; Chairman, Children, Families and Health Committee, Assembly of State Legislatures, NCSL; Nominating Committee, NCSL, 1996; Member, Reforming States Group, Milbank Memorial Fund.

Affiliations: American Board of Forensic Odontology; American Board of Oral Medicine; American Dental Association; Federation Dentaire International; Nevada State Dental Association; Clark County Dental Association; American Academy of Forensic Sciences; Parent Teachers Association; American Society of Forensic Odontology; American Legislative Exchange Council; Armed Forces Institute of Pathology; American Association of Dental Schools; Organization of Teachers of Oral Diagnosis; Fellow of International College of Dentists and the Pierre Fauchard Academy.

Personal and Professional Achievements: Public Health Award, Nevada Public Health Association; Community Hero, National Conference of Christians and Jews; President, American Board of Forensic Odontology; Chairman, Odontology Section, American Academy of Forensic Sciences; Chairman, Scientific Program, Odontology Section, American Academy of Forensic Sciences; Adjunct Associate Professor of Oral Diagnosis, Oral Medicine, and Forensic Dentistry, Northwestern University School of Dentistry, Chicago, Illinois; Full Adjunct Professor, Department of Biology, UNLV; Adjunct Professor, Departments of Pathology and Family Medicine, University of Nevada School of Medicine; Visiting Faculty, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology; Editorial Review Board, Journal of the American Dental Association; Editorial Board, International Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology; Recipient, Silver Beaver Award, Boy Scouts of America (BSA); Faculty Award of Merit, Clark County Community College; District Award of Merit, BSA; Award of Noteworthy Promise in Research, Loma Linda University; Distinguished Service Award, Pierre Fauchard Academy; Legislator of the Year, Nevada Association of Social Workers; Dentist of the Year, 1997; Clark County School District, Crystal Apple Award for Exemplary Civic Leadership, 1999; Leadership Recognition Award, American Association of Dental Schools, 1999; Meritorious Service Award, School-Community Partnership Program, Clark County, 2000; Certificate of Achievement, Clark County Anti-Tobacco Task Force, 2000; Community Access to Child Health (CATCH) Award, American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000; 2000 GEM (Generous Endowments-Good Efforts Matter) Award, Outstanding Leadership in Drafting Children's Diabetes Program, Nevada Diabetes Assoc. for Children, 2000.