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An Interview with Lyle and  
Mary Ann (Timbuck) Rivera

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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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



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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

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### 1995 News Release about Lyle Rivera and UNLV Law School



## Preface

The oral history interview of Lyle and Mary Ann “Timbuck” Rivera begins with the 1915 birth of Frances McNamee, Timbuck’s mother, who had the distinction of being the eleventh baby born in early Las Vegas. Frances’ father and grandfather who were attorneys for the railroad arrived in 1905 and became part of the historical roots of the community. Timbuck’s memories also include landmarks and activities that were integral to the growing town, such as her mother’s involvement in organizing the Junior League.

Lyle Rivera, a relative newcomer, arrived in the 1940s and experienced what he describes as a life of “bouncing around” and being the only child of a single mother, a cocktail waitress at the Golden Nugget. Lyle would grow to distinguish himself within the community as a lawyer and community activist. He modestly mentions his achievements which included involvement with the UNLV Foundation, professional careers in both the Attorney General’s and District Attorney’s offices, a role in the beginning of the Boyd Law School, and being instrumental in hiring Jerry Tarkanian to become the UNLV basketball coach in the 1960s.

The couple share stories of growing up Las Vegas, their community pride and discomfort with more recent imagery. They recall historic issues of racial prejudice and women’s rights in the landscape of Las Vegas history. They also talk about modern Las Vegas and the changes that have occurred.



Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: MARYANN RIVERA

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 5/1/2009 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.

Maryann Rivera May 1-09  
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 5/1/2009  
Signature of Interviewer Date



# Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



## Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: *[Signature]* *LYLE RIVERA*

Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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*[Signature]* 5/1/09  
 Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 5/1/2009  
 Signature of Interviewer Date



**This is Claytee White and I'm with Timbuck and Lyle Rivera. This is May 1st. And we're in their home in Las Vegas.**

**I should start with Timbuck. Could you spell your name, please?**

Timbuck, T-I-M-B-U-C-K. It is a nickname. The real name is Maryann. And the reason I use Timbuck is because I was born here in Las Vegas and when you're born in a place and never leave, you can't get rid of a nickname. I tried.

*Lyle: Especially if it's Timbuck.*

Timbuck: Especially when it's Timbuck.

**Well, how did that name come about? What does it mean?**

I'm a twin. And she was born first. I was born second. Baby one, baby two. Timbuktu.

**Oh, wow.**

I know. Squirrelly.

**No. But Timbuck, I love that.**

Well, Claytee. There you go.

**All right. Since you're already starting, would you tell me a little about growing up in Las Vegas? And tell me about your parents as well.**

Well, I am really an oddity because not only was I born in Las Vegas, but my mother was born in Las Vegas in 1915. And in the old days she had the distinction—and I did see it on a historical calendar. I should have saved it. But whoever thought things like this would be important?—that she was like the eleventh baby born in Las Vegas. It said on the historical calendar on the date that Frances McNamee was born today, the eleventh baby. Her father and grandfather were the attorneys for the railroad. They came in 1905 and stayed. So it's a real proud history, you know, living here. My mother was actually born on Fremont Street where Ronzone's was, which means nothing to someone who wasn't here, but in those days it was a big deal.

And then they moved a few blocks away to Third and like two blocks off Fremont Street on Fourth Street. We would walk from Grandma's and Granddaddy's. My grandfather's law office was right with the El Portal building where the El Portal Theatre was. And we could go upstairs and go in the projection room and watch the movies. It was a great place to grow up. Helldorado was a huge deal. And we used to get to go on the roof of the building. They had like a deck, a



big, huge deck that was the whole size of the building. And Helldorado, everyone we knew got to go upstairs and watch the parade from up there, which was just a real treat. But it was a great place to grow up. You knew everybody and everybody knew you. It was very safe.

My mother was one of the five original founders of the Las Vegas Junior League; she founded (it) the year that my twin and I were born. We were born in 1945 in November and Junior League started in 1946. The joke was that those women would have done anything to get out of the house thinking that they were doing something constructive, especially my mother who had twins. But you grew up with a real sense of community and giving back. And in those days with the hotels as they grew, and then being involved myself very early in community work, it was so much easier to get things from the people who owned the hotels. I mean they were a part of everything. They never said no. It was just a real fun gig.

**Were you a part of the Junior League as well?**

Yes, I was a member of the Junior League. And I'm still a member of the Junior League, certainly as a sustainer.

And my mother was also the founder of the Home of the Good Shepherd, which is one of those things that helped the young girls who got into trouble because I think a friend's kid got into trouble and they figured out a way to help out with the nuns. My mother's sister was a nun. She might have been the first Catholic vocation out of Las Vegas. Certainly as a nun she was. And she stayed in the convent for her whole life. Sisters of the Holy Family, which is the one you hear of old Las Vegas, those were the first nuns that were here. She had a lot of connections with the Catholic Church. And Catholic Church was always a big part of our family. There were like five old Catholic families and the McNamees were one of them. My mother was baptized, married and buried at Saint Joan of Arc's Catholic Church. You know, people don't even know where that is anymore, but it's right downtown.

It was a great place to grow up. I was blocks away from the John S. Park area. I did go to John S. Park for my kindergarten year, which was a real treat. I had Ms. Hancock. Now there's a Hancock Elementary after her. And then Mrs. Dickerson had the class next door that the other kids got to go to. And that's Dickerson's wife, not Harvey Dickerson, but George Dickerson's wife, Dorie Dickerson. And she was pregnant when she was teaching. You know, the things that



you remember.

**They allowed that?**

Yes, they did. In Las Vegas I think they were probably desperate for teachers. But they did allow it. You know, there was just nothing that wasn't good about it.

**Good. As soon as I start Lyle, in a few minutes I want you to talk about the Junior League.**

*Lyle: Let me just add one other thing. It was your grandfather that -- he represented the railroad. But they also laid out a city.*

Timbuck: The law firm.

*Lyle: In other words, they did all the legal work and plotted out all the lots downtown where the railroad is and where downtown was. So they had a big sale and that's how the first lots were sold.*

**Right, that auction. What was the man's name who ran the town for the railroad and the water company?**

I don't know who that is. But my grandfather was Leo A. McNamee and his father was Frank McNamee. And those were the two that were involved in the early days with the railroad. But that's what brought them here and that's why they stayed here. In any of the early history, certainly their names were very prominent. There's no streets, there's no schools, there's no nothing named after them. But the joke is always on us with the family. They had seven children, the McNamees, very, very Catholic. And instead of buying land and doing the things that would make him rich and famous, he sent all seven children to Catholic boarding schools out of town because there were no Catholic schools here in Las Vegas. So they all went away to Catholic high schools. They did their elementary at Las Vegas elementary school, but high school was away.

**Did your family ever talk about McWilliams?**

Uh-huh, sure. Sure, I know that name, absolutely.

**Okay, good.**

*There are McWilliams Streets.*

Uh-huh. There are a lot of those. Exactly.

**Yes. That's true. Because he laid out the streets on the other side of the track.**

Right. Well, he didn't lay out the streets. When they were going to sell off the lots, the town sites,



he was the attorney that --

*But he did all the legal work.*

All the legal work for the railroad because it was a railroad deal.

**Wonderful. So, Lyle, tell me about your childhood and where you grew up.**

*I grew up all over Las Vegas. I came here like in about 1943 or '44. I'm not a hundred percent sure. I was born in Salt Lake. And I bounced (around). My mother worked, single mother. I bounced from North Las Vegas to various schools in Las Vegas. I was only in John S. Park for about a year and a half, two years. And then when John C. Fremont opened up, I went over there. Basically it was very uneventful.*

**An only child?**

*Yes and no. Yes. My mother remarried and I have three half-brothers. But during that period of time I was all by myself.*

**What did your mother do for a living?**

*When she first came here, she was a cocktail waitress at the Golden Nugget.*

She would have good stories.

**Yes.**

*And that's where she married my dad and found my dad. Then when they got married, she quit. That's when I wound up at John C. Fremont.*

**What did she tell you about being a cocktail waitress as far back as that?**

*Nothing other than the fact that it was an enjoyable job because everybody was very friendly and you knew everybody. And it was a real small town. It wasn't like a grind or working for a big corporation.*

**Did she ever tell you about the kinds of tips she earned?**

*Not really, although, you know, you just know that they were pretty good. Everybody in those days did well with tips. Part of it was because there were a lot of silver dollars and no one wanted to carry the silver dollars back. You know, people in California didn't want them. They'd give them to bellmen. And a silver dollar was a silver dollar. Today they still have silver dollars, but that's what you get. Only when 40 or 50 years ago and in most cases no one ever paid taxes on that just like most tip-earners still don't except in Las Vegas.*



**Right. Yes. So tell me who were some of your friends as you were growing up?**

*A guy named Robert Blacker. I didn't have many friends when I was bouncing around a lot because I was never in one school too long. And then Jim Romero, who lived right over there.*

**When you were in that John S. Park area, what kinds of things did you do for fun?**

*You know, we did the basic stuff, played baseball. They had a couple of parks right over there. And that would kind of be the gathering place. So after school you'd just go over there and there was always a game of something going on. And your buddies would all be over there. It was kind of the gathering place. In those days parents didn't drive anywhere. It was fairly close by. And you'd walk over there or ride your bike and ride back.*

Are you talking about Circle Park, now they call it Circle Park on the corner of Maryland Parkway?

*Circle Park.*

Right. The big one. Right.

*There were two parks, Circle Park and then there's the football-shaped big park. And a movie theater was over there.*

The Huntridge, yeah. That was a big deal.

*But you'd walk, again, if you were going to the movie theater. And there were a lot of Saturday matinees. So people would go to the Saturday shows. They'd walk there and then walk home. And you'd have some parties and things like that. But my parents personally were just never, ever involved in it. If there was something going on, I'd walk over there. And it seemed like most of the other kids were in the same boat.*

**You mentioned the Helldorado Parade. I know that you watched the parade, but did either of you ever participate?**

*I don't think I ever did.*

I did not. For sure I did not. But my twin sister and I did participate in the parades they had in Henderson. I can't think of what the name of them was.

*Figures. Basic.*

Well, my dad was -- the only real job he had because he was more of an entrepreneur, businessman -- but he came with the CCC camps after the war and met my mother, who was the



native, and then married her and stayed. And he was hired by Basic Magnesium Incorporated in Henderson. So he was the manager of the whole plant in Henderson. So he was a big name in Henderson and didn't run for office or anything. He was very political, but he never ran for office. But when things were going on in Henderson, we had to make an appearance. And they had the BMI float (that) my twin and I had to ride on it. We were like in eighth grade. And it was just humiliating.

**Why?**

I don't know. Because Henderson had a very -- no one wanted to live in Henderson.

*Henderson was not --*

**It was a working-class community, blue collar at that time.**

It was very working—yeah, very blue collar. And there was nothing. Then they developed the golf course, the Black Mountain Golf Course out there. As young kids we got to take golf lessons out there. So dad, on Saturday he'd drop us off at the golf course and he'd go, I think he had a girlfriend if the truth be known. He went over to see Mary Jo. This is a little more fun history. She's still alive. And it's funny. I mean we have a mutual friend. But he would go to work and we would take lessons at the Black Mountain Golf Course. So we were always involved. I mean we had to go out to Henderson a lot. Then homes were built there that were very nice and they were comparable to the homes in Las Vegas. But before that there was nothing and it was very working class.

And he's looking at me like...

*I'm trying to remember where those homes were.*

On the golf course. That's where Delores Zenoff lived. Does that sound familiar at all? No.

*Yeah, Delores Zenoff. But I guess I've never seen them.*

You never went out there. I mean they were nice. You know, by Las Vegas standards they were very nice.

*But the difference in the parade is --*

Oh, A and Z.

*Because the hotels got behind the parade in Las Vegas. So the hotels really did it up right. I mean they were pretty fabulous for our time.*



Oh, fabulous.

*And then, of course, you go to Henderson where they didn't have a sponsorship. So it was like a high school parade.*

It was.

*So that was really the difference. So it didn't quite have the appeal.*

**And the Helldorado Parade, it was more than one parade at one point, wasn't it?**

Uh-huh.

**You'd have several days of parades.**

Uh-huh. Well, the family that we lived next door to for the first 12 years of our lives was Dr. Hirsch, Dr. John B. Hirsch, died a few years ago. But his daughter Diane is still one of my dearest friends. And she sent me in the mail just the other day CDs of us growing up...from the time we were born. She was born six months before my twin and me. And truly right next door to each other. She was like the triplet; so a lot of her home movies have us in them. Our parents never took home movies. So it was nice for us. Lots and lots on the Helldorado Parade. And I haven't had a chance to look because we just got them. But there could be some wonderful footage for someone like you who never experienced it to see it unless you already have seen footage of the Helldorado Parade.

**No, I have not. But it would probably also be something that we would be interested in at the university.**

I would think so. I don't know how much you could cull out of it. But she's got two or three years of it in the early, early 50s. So it would be kind of fun stuff.

**Yes, it would be.**

*Kind of when it was at its best, really.*

Oh, my god, it was such a big deal.

*But it was more than the parade. It was the whole --*

Yeah. The whole week.

*Everybody dressed up in cowboy gear. They were putting them in jail. I mean everybody was a sport. Everybody went along with it.*

Yeah. And then the carnival.



**Explain the putting them in jail.**

*Well, you had to buy a Helldorado button. But they had a jail downtown, a real jail, and everybody would be in whiskers and cowboy hats and boots and the whole nine yards. But if you didn't have a Helldorado button on, you were going to jail.*

And then you'd have to get bought out.

*Yeah. And then you had to pay or get someone to buy you out.*

And the more prominent you were, the more apt it was that you were going to get—they'd taken the button off you to get you in jail so they'd have to bail you out. And it was fun.

*Sometimes if you just didn't have your cowboy stuff on, you were going to jail.*

And I can remember as a child, a little girl, (it was) such a big deal every year to get our cowgirl outfit for the parades. I mean I'm talking very young.

**So where did you buy all those outfits?**

You know, I'm going to say Rex Bell's.

*And that was one of several. The one across the street that Beckley owned was also kind of a cowboy place. And then they had some that were just real ranchy-type stuff.*

**Now, Rex Bell had a store?**

*Uh-huh. It was "the" western store.*

It was his father. You're thinking of Rex Bell, Jr., the attorney here now. But it was his father, the old famous (actor and politician), yeah.

**Yes. That lived out in the west.**

Yeah. He had a store right downtown on Fremont Street. On the corner, too, wasn't it?

*Huh-uh.*

What was the one on the corner?

*The corner was the drugstore. It changed hands a little bit. There was a drugstore there at one time. But his wasn't on the corner. It was Doc's right next door.*

Doc's, that's what I'm thinking of on corner.

*No, it was not Doc's. Doc's was next to the movie theater. And then Rex Bell's was next to Doc's. Then there was something on the corner.*

*But they also had a big fort. It was like a big stockade. And that was down towards Dula*



Center. *If you get on Las Vegas Boulevard and go --*  
West.

No. *You go north.*

**Continue -- right.**

*Yeah. You go north towards Cashman Field. It was right between Fremont Street and Cashman Field. It was a big open area and they had it really like a fort. They had big logs that were ten feet tall and then they pointed up like this. So it was a real fort. And inside the carnival would come.*

Oh, that was a big deal.

**So was that where the village was?**

*Yeah, Helldorado Village.*

**Okay. I see.**

*Helldorado Village. And then there was the Last Frontier Village. Someone should tell you about the Last Frontier Village.*

*But let's stick with this for a second because this is still Helldorado because this was only active during Helldorado.*

*And once that week was over, they would close it up and it would just be sitting there, sitting there just for that event.*

**Okay, good. Because I was wondering did they take that apart and put it back together every year?**

No. No.

**It just stayed there.**

*Yeah.*

*The rides didn't stay there. They came down.*

*No. They moved out because it was a moving circus.*

Right. Right.

*But that facility stayed there. It showed you how big it was in Las Vegas for them to let it sit and just wrap it up. And the Elks played a big role in Helldorado.*

**Oh, yes. Because the Elks actually started this?**



*Yes. I think so. You know, I couldn't say who started it. But they certainly—w -- when I was involved in terms of just watching it, the Elks were really the motivators and the moving force.*

**So how do you feel about—do you know that Helldorado came back in 2005?**

Uh-huh.

**Have you seen one of the parades?**

No.

*No. It just got sucked up in the size of the town.*

Yeah. That was a shame.

**But you know it's this month. I think it's the 16th.**

In May, sure. It's always in May. Are they going to do it again?

**Yes.**

And where do they do it downtown, Fremont Street?

**Downtown on Fremont Street. And it's seven o'clock in the evening.**

That makes sense.

*But the hotels never got back into really big.*

**It's not on Fremont Street. It's one of the other streets. Fremont is north and south. It's an east-west street.**

*Yeah. You can't do it because they've got the Experience there.*

**Yes, because of that canopy there.**

Well, that's interesting. One of my other memories that was such a fond memory and it was certainly the very early 50s was the Helldorado Village, no, not the Helldorado Village. It was like the Helldorado Village. It was the Last Frontier Village. It was the Last Frontier Hotel. And then they had a permanent; now it would be kind of like a place where you would take families and kids. I don't know what you'd even call it.

*Actually, it was part of the hotel. And they had a re-creation --*

Of the Old West.

*-- of this little town. I mean not a town, but a road in a town. So you saw what looked like authentic stores on either side.*

With a jail.



*And you had hitching posts. Of course, actually the Golden Nugget and some of the hotels downtown on Fremont had hitching posts.*

**And they were being used.**

Yeah, in the old days. Yeah. Right.

*Yeah, and they were used. And then they had horses out here by the Last Frontier. So you could go ride horses. You could shoot guns. They had beautiful gun shops and shooting galleries. It was very fun. For a kid it was great.*

They had a merry-go-round. We used to go out there on Sundays. It was just a big treat. It was a gathering place, again, for locals, not so much tourists, really.

You have memories of going out there a lot, don't you?

*I have memories of—I used to ride a lot. And, you know, I was a little kid, a real little kid. The horse would take off with me and I held on for dear life. Like most big horses that are riding horses, it was heading right for the barn and I was just holding on. So I remember that pretty clearly.*

**Well, thank you for that because no one had ever told me about the Last Frontier Village.**

Yeah. You talk about early memories and things that were fun to do here because they always say there's nothing to do.

**Yes. And I don't know why people say that.**

*Well, you know, when you're a kid, this is not the greatest place to grow up.*

**Okay. At that time when you were a kid.**

But there's a lot of things (to do).

*Lyle: Uh-huh. But even now, though, there are issues. If you're 21, it's not a great place to be because everything is geared in this town for someone who doesn't live here and for someone who's got excess money to spend or coming to town with the idea of spending some money. So it's a really different feel than it used to be. Growing up here in those days so many of the people that were here were in the gaming business. And the comp was (ok) because they weren't corporations. They were owned by, in most cases, the mob. If anybody's father worked in one of those hotels, almost all these guys could comp the shows and food. It was just the best thing in the world like when you're in high school, when you're not a kid, when you're not like eight, nine, ten,*



11,12, but you're in high school and even if you're not supposed to be drinking and even if you don't drink, if you're 16, 17, 18, these lounge shows, they would have three or four premier, what today would be headliners. And every hotel would have all these. So you could go from place to place and never have to pay. You couldn't get in too much trouble because they knew who you were. You know, you're Joe Blow's son, you're this guy's son, or you're so-and-so's daughter. So it was not really nefarious. You didn't have near the drugs or anything like that that you have today. You know, alcohol would be your biggest sin in most cases. But it was great. It was great.

Timbuck: And we were laughing the other day. I ran across some pictures of girlfriends. So this is the early 60s; it's not that far into the past. I'd say it was 1964 and I'm probably 19 years old. We had come home from college and wanted to go see probably Frank Sinatra or someone and we would get dressed up. That's how serious it was. We'd put our mother's minks on and we would go out. Again, someone's father or his boss owned (the place) and you got to sit in the nicest booth. We had to look like fools, but we didn't know it. We thought we were darling in our mother's best.

But I was thinking another thing that we used to do as kids. My parents owned a motel on Las Vegas Boulevard called the Old West Motel. And it was all motels. That was all there was on Las Vegas Boulevard.

*Lyle: Is it still there?*

Timbuck: You know, I don't know. I'm sure it's not. I am sure. I don't know what's there. But it wasn't too far from Fremont Street, maybe just about four blocks south of Fremont Street, not north, but south. We would walk from where we lived on 1134 South 16th Street all the way up to the Old West because it had a swimming pool. No one had swimming pools in those days. I mean really no one did. I didn't know anyone that did.

*Lyle: The hotels.*

Timbuck: The hotels. But they weren't even hotels in those days. I mean there really wasn't. The El Rancho and the Last Frontier were the first two that we knew of that are downtown. But they didn't have swimming pools either. But we had this Old West. And we were very popular because we could walk up there. We didn't need our parents. We were probably nine or ten. We could swim all day and couldn't get into any trouble at all, and walk back home.



Lyle: *I went to the John C. Fremont pool.*

Timbuck: Well, that was before John C. Fremont. John C. Fremont wasn't even there yet. Are you kidding? Saint Anne's Elementary -- that would have opened in 19 --

*Didn't you have a pool there?*

We had the CYO in the back. And we were in grade school then. So that would have been in the late 50s. And that was one of the early kind of community pool. They ended up covering it over.

*Okay. Which brings me to another point. Where did we go?*

To swim?

*They had a pool right down in Las Vegas. I can't remember the name of it. There was a pool right there by, oh, where Las Vegas Boulevard meets Fremont, only a little further down.*

Further north on Las Vegas?

*A little further north. And those pools in those days weren't like nice concrete pools.*

Oh, you're think of—no, you're thinking of Twin Lakes.

*No, I'm not. That's next on my agenda.*

Twin Lakes was great.

*So there was a pool there. I can't remember the name of it, but it was like an artesian well. And then over here they had a place called Twin Lakes. And that was really kind of the hangout. But you needed to get over there. Geography played a role there.*

**So we're talking about Washington and Rancho, sort of?**

*Kind of, yeah.*

**Now, do you realize that you're renovating that area now?**

*Yeah.*

**Yes. They're going to have a grand opening --**

Lorenzi Park.

**Yes. They're going to have a grand opening sometime in June I believe.**

Wow.

*But that was a hangout way back then.*

And for my mother's generation it was a hangout.

**That's what I was going to ask.**



*Yeah. That and that was kind of a lovers' hangout, too.*

Not for us. Not for our generation.

*Well, when we were kids that was not available to us unless someone took us because it was too far.*

It was far.

**So now, there was a dancing pavilion there.**

Uh-huh. Right.

**Tell me about that. Did your parents go to enjoy that?**

My mother certainly did. I don't know if your mother did. But it was long since gone after -- actually I remember the residue of it, but it was not active.

*I'd go there quite a bit.*

To dance?

*No. Just to swim. No, I didn't ever dance there.*

No. I don't think we were the right generation. But I do remember my mother certainly talked about Lorenzi Park because old man Lorenzi, Mr. Lorenzi lived on the other side of us growing up. You know, and the park was his name. And we would go there a lot to Lorenzi Park because that was one of the -- for us -- I don't know the other place you're talking about.

It was down on Las Vegas. And it was a long time ago. Almost down towards Cashman Field.

Yeah. Huh. Yeah. That was more your neck of the woods, though, when you lived in that area.

*It was because I lived downtown.*

I had a much more privileged early existence than he. And just by -- not with so much money. It's just everybody -- it was a very prominent family and everyone knew you and you were really treated very specially by people because it was such a small town.

**Yes. Do you remember them talking about live entertainment at Lorenzi Park, Twin Lakes?**

I remember it, but I -- no.

*It was there.*

It was certainly there. For sure it was there. It was about the only thing going on for them. I know my mother and my father talked about having gone out there. And they also went to Mount Charleston a lot. That was another place.



**Did they take the children there, take you as a child?**

Oh, yeah, as children we went there a lot. But even before that -- gosh, I wonder if any of the Ranos would remember any of this, if she's got her marbles, Nadeen Rano.

*I tell you what. My parents a lot of times -- we went out to -- not Tule Springs -- well, we went to Tule Springs, too.*

Bonnie Springs?

*No. Down to Moapa.*

**Really?**

*Warm Springs.*

Moapa? Oh, Warm Springs. Yeah. That was a big deal.

**Where is Warm Springs?**

*It's about 40 miles out of Las Vegas. But you drive out there and they had all these palm trees and these natural warm springs.*

And pools.

*It was a very, very popular place for Las Vegas.*

**Really?**

Yeah. It was wonderful. It was near a Mormon development near Moapa.

*The Mormons had a big ranch out there. And this was right across the street from it.*

And they charged you admission to get into it. But then they had all these pools that were natural warm pools. Oh, it was a big deal to go. I mean you had to go with a family because it was quite a drive. But you did. But a lot of families went.

**Oh, wow. Interesting.**

Yeah. That was fun.

**Tell me about after high school what you did. And I want you to get to the Junior League and your involvement with the league.**

Well, I graduated from Bishop Gorman in 1963. I actually worked at Bishop Gorman, then, for 12 years. Then I went to UNLV. It was NSU in those days, Nevada Southern University. Graduated in '67 and married Lyle in 1967. So I was a child. I was 21 years old.

*Eighty-seven.*



Huh?

*Eighty-seven.*

What?

*It's been a long time.*

Yeah. I know. A hundred years. And then he was in law school. So we went to the University of Utah where I taught school and I supported him. Then we came back here and he worked for the district attorney at first. We had our first child in 1971. And 1971 is when I joined Junior League. And I really wanted to join Junior League.

*You couldn't have kept her out.*

You couldn't have kept me out. But it was a big deal because my mother was one of the original founders. In those days it was a wonderful organization. You did good, but you also -- I met Nancy Shepherd there. She was in my provisional class. But it really was the old-timers and it really was people that cared about the community. And certainly there were all the bad things about Las Vegas in those days. There were no blacks. There were no Jews. The town we grew up in was a very segregated Las Vegas. And we had all that. But they still did -- I mean my mother always -- that was her big thing of how they could give back to individuals. When it became Junior League -- it was the Service League then. When it became Junior League, it was more corporate. They did bigger community work. They would take a family, the maid's family. The daughter needed glasses. Couldn't afford them. That daughter got glasses. It was a Service League thing. They did things like that. It was very one-on-one, hands-on. And that's what they liked about it.

By the time I got in it, it wasn't Junior League. I don't even remember when it became -- no. It was Junior League later. It was Service League when I joined it. We always called it Little League. But it really was a social. It was a way to do something constructive and legitimately get out of the house and try and make a difference. And I loved every minute of my ten years, but then I was done. I mean I did my ten years and --

**Give me some examples of some of the projects that you worked on.**

Some of the projects? I was actually the Volunteer of the Year in the field of education. I don't remember the year, but we did early childhood development. There was a program called Merry



Meeker Learning Development and we went into some of the nursery schools and did learning disability testing. It was when they still called it learning disabilities. Our oldest son was diagnosed with minimal learning disabilities, but enough where as a mother and a teacher you wanted to do something about it. And then Lynn Weisner is another Junior League name and her son had similar problems. There was a bunch of us who had kids that, okay, let's do something where we can help this and help ourselves. And that was probably the most active and the most fun that I had in League where I really felt like I made a difference.

**I guess about two weeks ago now you had your grand opening of the Morelli House.**

Uh-huh. I did not go. I did not go.

**It was a wonderful, wonderful event.**

Was it? Shame on me.

**I mean it was amazing.**

They had just conned me into going to the dinner honoring Betsy Roates, whom I adore. And so I had already done that. It was like, okay, enough already. And I'm not getting him out to anything. So I would be going with the girls.

**Then I have to tell you about this evening. As you know Morelli was the big orchestra leader here.**

Uh-huh.

**So they decided that they would join with the Academy of the High School for the Arts right across the street. So they got together some of Morelli's band members, maybe six or seven of them.**

The old guys.

**Yes, the old guys, who played with the band from the high school. It was amazing. It was just wonderful.**

Oh. Oh.

*That's great.*

**Over 600 people showed up.**

*Wow.*

Wow. When was it?



**I can look in my book.**

I mean a month ago or -- the Junior League doesn't bug us enough to do those things. If they had a committee that called and said, okay, a bunch of us are going, come on and go, you'd go.

**Yeah. Because a lot of people showed up for that.**

That's a nice thing.

**It was on April 2nd.**

Oh, April.

**So it was just a wonderful evening. Okay. So just make you jealous about what the Junior League is doing now.**

I am.

**So I really think that the Junior League is still doing all those exciting things today that --**

Oh, they make a huge difference.

**Yes, they do.**

And then the spin-off, of course, was the Assistance League with all the old Junior League members that didn't want to give it up yet. They still had more to contribute. And a lot of our concern was that we're in Junior League at the wrong times. We're in our mid 20s, late 20s, early 30s.

*When you're busy.*

When you've got your kids and you're up to your ass in alligators. And then you're trying to be all things to all people. And when your kids are gone, that's when you really do have the time. So some of these women --

**And now you're a sustainer and you really don't have to do that much.**

No. Now I don't do anything. And I could. But we leave town for four months a year. So I don't do anything.

**Oh, wow. So is that during the summer? I wonder why.**

June to October, yeah.

**Where do you go when you leave town?**

*Idaho.*

Same as Nancy and John Shepherd. We have a home there in Ketchum, Idaho. So it's pretty nice.



And it's nice to get out of here.

**Now, you worked in the DA's Office. Did you work with any of the Browns, Mahlon, that family?**

Huh-uh. But we know them very well.

*I know him. He worked in the U.S. Attorney's Office.*

**Okay. Yes, he did.**

**Tell me about that kind of work. Where did you go to law school?**

*University of Utah.*

**And you took the bar in Utah and here or just here?**

*I took it here. I went to UNR. And then I went to University of Utah ultimately. I actually started UCLA. I didn't like living in Los Angeles. So I dropped out and then went someplace where I could hunt ducks at the same time I could practice law.*

And have his wife support him. It was really a perfect arrangement.

*And with her I really needed a cheap place.*

That's the truth. And we found one, Salt Lake City.

*So then I came back here. I worked in the District Attorney's Office for, oh, a year and a half, two years. And then I moved over to the Attorney General's Office. And I had worked for George Franklin and Roy Wolfter in the DA's Office. And then I worked for Bob List in the Attorney General's Office. I was there till he left. And then I moved on over to the university.*

**Tell me about working at the university. What did you do there?**

*When I went over there, actually it was kind of interesting. When I was doing some work and were involved in a few cases and Howard Hughes was here and this and that -- but Lou Wiener -- I kept running into Lou Wiener. And he would say, you know, I've got some money I'm going to give to the university. And I said I'll call them up because I knew the president of the university and I'll have them get in touch with you. Then I'd see Lou Wiener three months later and he'd say what happened? You know, I've got this money to give to the university and no one calls me.*

*Anyway, a couple --*

**Who was the president at that time?**

*I think at that time it was Don Baepler. So I'm sitting there thinking if the university, you know, if*



*they don't have people to find money and don't have any fundraising, there's a big gap there. So when I left I talked to Don, when I left the Attorney General's Office, and we worked out a situation where I could go over there as a fundraiser and an attorney. So we'd combine both.*

*But at that time he was the chancellor. He went from university president to chancellor. So he was situated in Reno. So when I went over there, in an effort to try and put this together, he had it set up -- because he was chancellor and he represented all the universities, he had it set up where I was fundraising for everybody, which as a model was never going to work. But I guess politically that's how he had to start it out. And he was happy with that.*

*But what happened is the Reno people had a couple of fundraisers already and they wanted no part of my being up there. They were adamant enough to create enough opposition to wind up pushing me back down to Las Vegas and not go up to Reno, which is really a much better model.*

*And I was urging Don to go with foundations for all the campuses. And he was reluctant to do that. And finally an opportunity came up where I was able to get some concession out of him. I was able to explain it to him enough where it was going to be a win-win for everybody including the community colleges where they could start their own because it gave us the ability if you have your own foundation -- we had elected regents. And, quite frankly, the elected regents just weren't necessarily powerful people. They were not the type of people you could raise money through. In some cases they were really difficult to work with. So by having the foundation board, which we could select, we could pick the CEOs and money people, frankly, because I mean we're trying to create a fundraising apparatus. So money people were important.*

**Because they attract.**

*Right. I mean they can give money and they can ask for money and it's just enough IOUs. And we were very fortunate in that I knew most of the people because I had run the Attorney General's Office down here for several years. So they all knew who I was, again partially because small town, partially because higher profile in the Attorney General's Office. And so we were able to get Perry Thomases of the world, the Macks, the Beckers, the Art Hams. So I just put my target on a who's who. Virtually all of them were thrilled to be on it. They wanted to be a part of the university, but they also loved the status of it. But they deserved the status because they had to put*



*in the time and the effort. We ultimately did extremely well with that foundation model. And, of course, now all the schools have had that foundation model for almost 20 years.*

So he founded the foundation at UNLV. He was the first president of the foundation. He was vice president of the university with the foundation.

**So are you a little modest?**

Yeah. He's not telling you -- it was a big deal.

*I don't know. To me it's --*

It was his job. But it was a big deal.

*It was taking care of business.*

It was a big deal for the university.

**Yes, it is. And it's still a big deal for the university.**

Right. It was a much bigger deal when he was there, believe me, because they did a much better job than what's going on now just because of the leadership. But he also then, when you first started out, when you went to the university, the legal arm of the university.

*Yeah.*

He was the lawyer for the university. And then part time you kind of whittled your way into this job I remember as it was evolving. But then you moved over full time.

*Well, it was two slots. It was two financial slots for one salary. And ultimately, yeah, I moved away from -- I actually worked with the legal department at the university, again out of Reno, and did the fundraising. But it worked well because I knew the community. Of course, the way those things (work) -- those require outside people. You know, if you're going to be provost of the university, you need to know the internal workings of a university, but your provost necessarily is not going to help you on the outside.*

*But we got real fortunate because we had this board. And then we got a new president, Bob Maxson. This Bob Maxson was just one of a kind. I mean I'm not saying anything negative about any of the other presidents, but they were much more academic. And this Bob Maxson was -- I've never seen the leadership ability like he had with anybody else.*

Or since.

*And I've been around a lot of people, a lot of presidents, university presidents. You know, I was in*



*the AG's Office, Attorney General, and DA and all the political figures. This guy was one in a million. And, of course, he left after a certain number of years. But he did so much. And the university became an integral player in the town. You know, he took it out of the ivory tower. He would speak any chance he got. He was up day and night. His wife was real active, very involved. The city people really started to realize how important a university was. So they supported it even more. It certainly made my job a lot better. And, also, in combination was really successful.*

*And I left. He left. And they went back into an ivory tower. So I mean it's hard to get anyone now that can tell you who the president is. The last guy there that I saw that had any identity and had the oar in the water for the university to the point that people recognized it was the law school dean, Dean (Richard J.) Morgan. And just as I was leaving that was the last thing I was doing was setting up the law school.*

**That was my next question. How do you feel about UNLV having a law school? What did that mean for the school?**

*Well, it meant a lot, but we had to sell it. I mean there were a lot of people that didn't want a law school. And Reno really did not want it to be down here.*

**Of course not.**

*And putting a law school together without having the state support was very difficult. But, again, some of our donors -- Bill Boyd, I mean just a sweetheart of a guy and has just been a great supporter and another one of those guys that grew up here, had his roots here and was local and happened to have the reins of a corporation. But it wasn't like a corporate existence. He's a local guy who grew up here and his dad was a big influence here. So that got it started with a little money.*

*Reno had tried to start a law school. They had put a few of the pieces together, but it all fell apart. They couldn't do it. So I got some help from them from one or two people up there who helped us and slowly but surely we were selling it. It was going to happen.*

*I tell the story to a lot of people because I think it's interesting and I think it's also true. You see it a lot. We had interviewed like five potential deans. And we were going to renovate the library, existing library because a new library was being built, which, again, had come about*



*partially because of a major donations, the Lied Foundation. So we brought these potential deans in. And we had been given a little grade school across the street. And I mean for fourth graders and fifth graders.*

**That's right. Yes.**

*So the three dean candidates from the east—we had three from the east and two from the west. And when we got to the point of pointblank asking them ask can you do this next year, the three guys from the east said no. They said I can't give my professors a little room without a window. They can't use that john; the commode is too far down.*

**Right. It was for little kids.**

*Yeah. And I mean all these things that were really superficial, not substantive, just kind of ego-oriented things. The two guys from the west said, you know, it's not going to be what we want, but as long as they can see the new law school being constructed right across the street, he says, yeah, we'll get through it and we'll do it. So this Morgan though, was a superstar. And I give him really -- we got really lucky to get a guy like him to be the first dean. And once he got a hold of it, it was successful.*

**Yes.**

*Now, I can't really tell you who the new dean is. I can't really tell you too much about the new president. But a university really needs some outside people that have some identity that can sell the university.*

**How did the local people feel about the mob?**

*Well, the local people in our era?*

**Yes.**

*My dad probably worked (for)-- he was not a mobster at all, at all. But if you worked in a casino, you worked for the mob in many ways in many cases. You didn't necessarily deal with them as mob. You dealt with them as an employee. But it's like all the musicians in those days, if you worked in the hotel, you were working for the mob. And Timbuck will have her own experience with it. Mine has been the mob when they came here it was an open city. You didn't have any one mob or one family running it. And some of this stuff I know more in detail because after the Attorney General's Office you could obviously put it together. But the mob didn't want any bad*



publicity. They came here to cheat on their income taxes. You know, they were going to skim. That's what they were here for.

**Yes.**

Lyle: So it was kind of an unwritten rule that the mob would not tolerate any lawlessness. They didn't want any bad publicity. Because it was an open town, Chicago was in here and Omaha was in here and Kansas City was in here. And New York as spy families, they were in here, you know, Miami, basically all the mob groups. I mean they left each other alone. And so there was no killing. There was virtually no crime. In those days there was virtually no crime. I mean we'd walk up and down these streets at night with no fear.

Timbuck: And everywhere.

Lyle: Yeah. And they were also contributors to the town. So the reality was without the mob there was no city. And the mob itself, they were not bullies at all. They were just the opposite. They kept their noses clean and they were participants. They were contributors. And what they were doing we never saw it. Now, the feds obviously saw it, or apparently saw it ultimately. So they had maybe a gripe with them. But most of what happened with the feds were in federal court. You know, in most cases we never really saw the mob as the mob.

Timbuck: Well, let me ask you this because this is interesting. My father, who had a real big personality -- people liked him -- got himself a piece, points, of the El Cortez with Jackie Gaughan. I don't know how he did that. He came from no money. But he just managed. I'm not sure exactly how he did it. He was never mob. There was never any hint of any connection like that. But he was a part owner of the El Cortez and then when the Showboat opened part owner of the Showboat. Now, certainly Jackie Gaughan, I guess he was mob. But my father never worked in the hotel. He was just a part owner of the hotel.

Lyle: Well, Jackie Gaughan, we don't know. It's kind of rumored that from Omaha --

Timbuk: Yeah, Omaha.

Lyle: But you're never really sure. But you know all these guys that were in gaming before they got here were in some illegal activity.

**Right. And here it's legal.**

Right. And that's kind of how we looked at it. Well, they were maybe mobsters in Illinois or



*Cleveland, but --*

But there were degrees of mobsters here. You know, there were the Moe Dalitzes and the Bugsy Siegels and those or the Benny Binions that had reputations for some bad things. Now, Moe Dalitz turns out to be one of the biggest contributors to the town long term and stuck around the longest. I don't think anyone would say that about Benny where he was certainly bigger than life. *They didn't have bad reputations, though, I don't think in Las Vegas.*

**That's right.**

No, they did not here.

*The reputation might have been here, but their activity wasn't here.*

No. Their activity was not here and it wasn't a big deal. But you still -- I guess because my father -- his parents always worked in the casinos. I was never that into the casino, the casino business. Service League had no casino people in it. It was a social step lower. It didn't matter they had all the money. It didn't matter they could buy and sell everybody else. It just was. They had come here from someplace else and they --

**So Toni Clark could have never been in the Junior League?**

You know, I know Toni Clark well. Whether she would have wanted to be would have been a question. She certainly had her own very full life. No. She was a cocktail waitress I think. You know, cocktail waitress weren't in Service League in those days. Certainly now that's the good news; anyone who wants to be in it and wants to contribute contributes. But there was a lot of -- Las Vegas was nothing but a two-bit town, but they had their own little social status.

*Want-to-be's.*

Want-to-be's. Want-to-be's and people that then had come from someplace else from a Junior League, a real Junior League and wanted to get involved here. And that's how we ended up being a Junior League instead of a Service League to try to give it the respectability that it felt.

*But it had a strong -- not your Service League. But the city had a strong Jewish population.*

**That's true.**

Uh-huh. Very influential.

*And a lot of them were involved with gaming and not all of them. I mean Jerry Mack was a banker. But, you know, how do you separate the bankers who give the mobsters the money to*



*build the casinos? I mean Valley Bank was the funder of so many of these casinos.*

The old days they said Las Vegas was owned by the Jews, popular by the Catholics and run by the Mormons.

*Well, there's certainly an iota of truth to that.*

**Yes. What kind of influence did you see Howard Hughes having on the city?**

Whew, huge. Huge.

*Strange, but it was big because -- well, first of all, this whole area he bought long before --*

**That's right because we're in Summerlin.**

*-- long before he showed up here. And really he brought in corporate ownership. That was the advent of corporate ownership. And you weren't in those days allowed to own but a couple of casinos. They had a limit on it. And you also had to show up at the hearings. But he never showed up at a single hearing and got some special dispensation.*

**Were you in the AG's Office then when he was supposed to have been in front of gaming?**

**How did you bend those rules?**

Yeah. Remember?

*You know, I don't think I was there the whole time he was doing this. But what happened was some of the hotels he bought were in distress like the Landmark.*

And Castaways.

*Uh-huh. So they were in trouble. Here's a guy that came in to rescue them. Some of them allegedly had mob ownership. So there was a way to get the mob out because eventually the town started to get a little more publicity with the mob and the Teamster Union got in trouble and Las Vegas' name started popping up all over the country. And as the town got larger that started to become more of a stigma than it did when it was small, kind of a cowboy town. And so it was legitimate ownership. And he had like -- I can't remember -- if he had six or seven, but a lot of hotels.*

**Yes. I think it was five or six.**

*He never had to show up for one of them. Then the stories about his situation started coming out. Then the spotlight starts hitting, well, who owns these hotels, you know, because you had that Mormon entourage that kind of moved around with him and for him? And was he really making*



*the decisions or were they?*

If you'd like to speak to someone who has an unbelievable memory and her father came here as head of security for Howard Hughes -- so she would have come in the early 60s. If I'm 63, she's 58 or something like that. So she's a little younger than I.

*She'd be good.*

But she has an unbelievable memory. Her mother is still alive. The father is dead. But her name is Lynn Buchanan. It was Lynn Hooper Buchanan. She's the ex-wife of Bucky Buchanan that used to be a regent at UNLV. But she has an unbelievable memory. And she would love to --

*She knows that area.*

She knows that Howard Hughes history.

**Okay, good. While we're talking about this -- this is one of the last questions I usually ask. So how do you see Oscar Goodman now? Do you see him as the kind of mayor that this city needs?**

*Just speaking for myself, no, I never have. Oscar is just -- he's a fine guy, but he's really -- he just loves publicity. You know, he likes the shock value and he achieves it. But, unfortunately, it usually results in the city being ridiculed. I mean I just don't think he is really putting the city first and in that image.*

**So what about the development downtown? Are you aware of, you know, like the Fremont Street East and what's happening to the old railroad yard now?**

*Uh-huh.*

**Do you think those are good things for downtown?**

*I think some development has to be done down there. And I think like that big furniture mart and stuff like that -- I don't know about the mechanics of it of should this have been built there versus a casino or should it have been something that had greater employment opportunities? That type of thing I'm not sure about. I'm not sure how much thought has gone into it. But I'm assuming, you know, it's been vetted.*

*I am a lot more concerned about the other side, the old Las Vegas, the old Fremont and the fact that they haven't done any bulldozing down there and kind of rebuilt some of that. Instead they're just letting it become, you know, a first-class slum I think.*



**Well, now, are you aware that Fremont Street East right there on the other side of Las Vegas Boulevard that they are doing some things there?**

By the old El Cortez.

*I see it up to the El Cortez.*

I haven't seen it.

*But then from there on and then back going the other way, north and south, I'm still a little uncomfortable moving around through there.*

**Well, I can understand that. Yes.**

*And even like moving the city hall over in like the new area, it's nice, but it seems like they're kind of escaping.*

**Running away.**

*Yeah. Yeah, really. Yet, it sounds like they need some buildings because -- I mean they've been there a long time. But it sounds like every one of them has had a real problem. I mean the new jail, you know, the overrides and all this stuff.*

*But you take your pitch.*

Oscar?

**Yes.**

You know, his ego is just so big. I'm on tape and I could care less. Whether his intentions are honorable, it doesn't matter. Certainly in his heart he really believes he's doing the right thing. I do think that. But he can't get out of his own way because the most important thing for Oscar is to have his name in the paper and he doesn't care at what expense. And he certainly has not helped us in a lot of ways.

The guy running against him the first time should have won. It was Mark Fine and he had been married to a Greenspun early on. But he's a fabulous guy, lots of energy, lots of integrity. I hate the word class, but a lot classier than Oscar. I mean he's not going to be selling himself out for whatever the whiskey is that he got the donation for the school. You know, he's not doing that. Mark wouldn't do that. But that's neither here nor there because he didn't get that. He didn't win. And Oscar's got a huge personality.

Carolyn and I were -- well, Lyle and Oscar were actually -- because the guys would have



been the coaches for our kids, not T-ball -- was it T-ball or --

*T-ball.*

T-ball team for our sons. One of Oscar's sons was the same age. But Lyle and Oscar couldn't get there on time ever. So Carolyn and I were always the ones that had to start the games. And I can't even throw a ball. It's pitiful, but they would get there eventually and we'd have them all organized and ready to go. It was cute. Oscar has four adopted kids and a heck of a dad. He never missed a game. He never missed a practice.

*And they've been great attributes to the community.*

I mean they both have given a hundred percent. But is he the best guy? Eh, probably not.

But one thing I did want to say. My mother's contribution certainly has been Junior League or more Service League and the Home of the Good Shepherd. Also, my dad was the first president of Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation, which became the Nevada Development Authority, which was trying to get other -- is it NDA that it was?

*Uh-huh.*

Trying to get other industries into Las Vegas other than gaming. And they started that -- gosh, that would have been 35 years ago at least. I don't know how many. He's been dead 27 years. So it's a long time ago they realized -- the group of people. They bought the land for Nevada Southern University -- Nevada Southern in those days -- so it wouldn't be --

*Who did?*

That whole group that my dad put together. Remember mom and dad was part of that group that put it together.

*But that's not --*

No. But they saw -- I'm mixing my apples and oranges. You're right.

*They were actually two different groups.*

Yeah. But I mean he was very involved in seeing the bigger of Las Vegas, which we are still -- now we're in a big mess because they could never get other industry here, not through lack of trying.

*Well, but they also have a slogan, "What happens here stays here." That's not the slogan of a city that wants to show, you know, corporate responsibility and maturity and coming of age. That's*



*one that is digging back to what we were 40 years ago.*

Or your nickname "Sin City." I mean what do you expect?

**Do you think that's continued by the locals? I mean, do we do that or does the national --**

The advertising company.

*Well, that advertising that we've spent millions and millions of dollars on is being done by --*

**Yes. The most visible advertising probably in the world.**

*Yep. I mean it's become a big joke and the people use it as a line, you know, in late night TV. And that's one we paid for because --*

We didn't have that growing up. I mean I was never embarrassed being from Las Vegas. I was very proud to say I was from Las Vegas. And I remember going to Europe after college and everybody knew Las Vegas. I mean you think you're from a little town, but you're known all over the world. And now you really are.

**Yes. Well, one of the things about UNLV and one of the reasons -- I'm from a tiny town in North Carolina. And when I go home if anyone asks me where I work, I say UNLV and they say Runnin' Rebels.**

Yes.

**So what has sports done for UNLV for this town?**

*You know, that was the university. I mean it isn't anymore. But it was. And even before Jerry Tarkanian got there, it was a big deal for the town. I mean there's a point where a little town moves from Friday night high school football over to Saturday college athletics. But the bottom line nationally is I think Jerry Tarkanian and the basketball team, his basketball team really put UNLV on the map. And one of the biggest eye-openers for most people was I didn't even know they had a university, you know. And that literally was a big deal and to the point that -- if it's been mentioned to me once, it's been mentioned to me 50, 60, 70 times -- "I didn't know people really lived there."*

*And, you know, you're sitting there with a million population and they're saying that. Then it's a million and a half and they're saying that. But I think the glue that really held the city together was that basketball because people were proud of it and they knew it represented more than gaming and it had a following. As the town got larger you got your downtown people, who*



were running regular jobs that you would find in any city, and then you had the gambling groups. And there's 24-hour operations. So they got three shifts. You've got a lot of people that work in those casinos. And only at that time of year would they run into each other and they'd see their friends. It just became a big deal. You wouldn't have a wedding, you wouldn't have an event until you looked at the basketball schedule because nobody would show up. I mean it just wouldn't happen.

And I was really involved in that because I kind of found Jerry Tarkanian for Las Vegas. When we were trying to replace one coach, a friend of mine had told me about Jerry Tarkanian, who was at Riverside in California. And so I pumped his name, but the job went to a guy named John Bear. He lasted two years, got in all kinds of trouble. And by then I had been back home a little longer and I was able to -- well, and Jerry Tarkanian had left Long Beach. We didn't hire him -- no. He left Riverside and went to Long Beach. And there he had these fabulous teams with nobodies. I mean they weren't highly sought-after athletes.

But in those days, you know, most people did not play blacks. And they had never put five blacks on the court. It was like you could put three, you could put two. Jerry would put five blacks. It didn't matter what. He and Haskins in Texas, El Paso. So he was beating everybody. So now people kind of had an idea who he was.

We got him to come here. And he was just the most fabulous coach you ever saw in your life. He was here three years and he was already in the Final Four. In fact, Glen Gondrezick that died was on that team. And Jerry really carried this place. And then we had the big blowout with Jerry and Maxson, which is another story. But it was lose-lose because the whole town was so proud of the basketball and so proud of the university.

And the fundraising, going back to that, it made it so much easier. I mean it was like night and day. And people wanted to come here. I mean friends of ours, they said, oh, I want to give you more. I mean what you've done to this community is...

And Jerry was a good guy and Maxson was a good guy. And they were both the best at what they did of anybody I've seen. So somehow we were successful in shooting a hole in the boat with us in it. Lost the best of both worlds. And we've never been able to replace either one of those positions since.



*But the answer your question, it played a huge role. And I think it plays a huge role for every university.*

**Yes. I think it does too.**

*Yes, I really do. I mean the president of the University of Chicago, who made this decision, said his biggest mistake was not staying in the Big Ten when they created that conference. University of Chicago was a part of that and he opted out. And he said it was the biggest mistake he ever made as president. And the University of Chicago is a fabulous university. But he still says I never should have done that.*

**Wow. So what has it meant to your family?**

*You know, we were so involved in the university during those days it was really a big deal because we had the best seats in the house. I mean you bought them, but you got to pick them. And my dad -- it was real interesting seeing someone like him from his generation get so involved. I mean he didn't get excited about anything. He was really not that much fun. He was prominent but not fun. But, boy, that university -- he wanted to go to every game and he loved it. Oh, that whole group, the whole town rallied around it. It was very special.*

**That's great.**

*In fact, the Jazz, they were not doing well in Utah, the professional basketball team.*

**Right. Yes.**

*So they reserved some dates. And the Jazz were going to play half their events here. And it just flopped like a rag. They were paying big money to see the Runnin' Rebels. And then the Jazz were here. Well, look at these crowds and everything in this big arena. They played about four games and that ended it. These guys were tied up because it was Las Vegas and it was these kids. And it wasn't just the fabulous team that won the NCAA. The Gondrezick team was great and it was fun and it was exciting and they played like nobody ever played. It was Jerry Tarkanian.*

**Great.**

*It was a real community. That's what you saw. You know, we've lost that in today's Las Vegas. It's just such a big city now.*

*But that's when we lost it. That specific point in time is when we lost it.*

*Yes. It's Las Vegas now with all the advantages of a big town but all the disadvantages too. And*



that's what we didn't have growing up. We had to go out of town to shop. You really did. But I think with my Helldorado stuff I probably got it in L.A. because you'd go to L.A. to shop. But not for cowboy stuff.

*You didn't have traffic. Didn't have the crime.*

No. We had no traffic. We had no nothing. I mean if you did something wrong, your parents knew about it before you got home because someone would have seen you and they knew who you were and you were in trouble.

*We used to hangout, at least the kids at Las Vegas High School and Gorman kids I think -- I'm not sure. But Rancho kind of hung out at one end of town -- not of town, but down at the Blue Onion, which is the end of Fremont, and Sill's and Tip Top -- it was changed to Tip Top. You know, it was like a 1960s thing.*

Oh, very much. Fifties.

*But around the drive-in. And Mike O'Callahan, who became a governor, was a schoolteacher and then a governor. But in that interim period he was also a juvenile officer. So he'd be driving into Tip Top and he'd see you in the car and it's past curfew. And he'd say get your ass out of here, Rivera, and get home, he says, or I'm going to pick you up and throw you right in your mom's front room or something. But he knew you all by name. And you couldn't con him. But he wasn't mean. He'd just tell you -- he'd look you in the eye and get your ass out of here. And those were different days.*

**So what do you see as the future of Las Vegas?**

Ooh, boy. Not a time to ask now, is it? It's real scary.

*You know, yeah, I think it's -- I don't think the future is what you've seen in the past. I think the whole country has lost so much money -- and it's not money that's been put on a table or somebody's got it all. You know, I've got the money. There is no -- and it's gone. It's just disappeared. It was blue sky. You paid a million dollars for a house that's now worth 200,000. 800,000 just disappeared and it's never coming back. So because we haven't really diversified, how many people -- I mean gaming is a discretionary event. Entertainment is important, but at what price? And Las Vegas doesn't have the monopoly on gaming anymore. They don't have another industry.*



Don't have water.

*Water is a major issue. I mean a major issue. And I think -- I don't think it'll ever be quite the same. They're going to have to reduce everything back to lower prices. I think you're going to experience a lot of bankruptcy. And then I think they're really going of to get creative. And I don't know what they do.*

Well, like Tony Marnell with the M. I mean that was his big pitch is he's not going to charge the exorbitant prices. And guess what? I've been out to the M.

**So have I. I am so impressed.**

Yeah, me too. And I'm so happy not to -- I would never go on the Strip. I mean you just don't do it. But it's so nice if you're going to go out there to know you're not getting scalped.

**And the food is delicious.**

Yeah. And it's a nice atmosphere.

**Yes. Beautiful place.**

*You know, that's another point is we used to go on the Strip.*

Uh-huh. Oh, yeah.

*Now you try your best to avoid it.*

Avoid it. Yeah, we did go on the Strip. As young adults, well, before we were 21 and then after 21 when the happenings were going on, it was always fun. It was never a big deal. But that's when someone you knew could comp you and it was not a big deal.

You know what would be interesting for you also I think because I was at Bishop Gorman from -- my sister was there when it first opened and we were right there and have the history of Gorman. Certainly you've done the early days of Las Vegas High School I'm sure. But someone needs to get in -- Rancho High School was a world unto its own with what was going on in Las Vegas. And they would have a football game once a year. It was homecoming. It was Rancho and Vegas. I mean the whole town went to this thing. You couldn't get into the game. It was a big deal. But Rancho was just a whole other world being in the north and much more lower middle-class kids. But one of our old governor's Bob Miller's ex-wife Sandy Seerils was her maiden name. I don't know if she's ever spoken to you. But she's a Rancho High School success story. And she might be interesting -- she would have been probably class of '65 or something.



So it would be more interesting to go back further than that, but I don't know anyone. I mean we did not mix, absolutely did not mix. It was another world.

**That's interesting.**

And there was a lot of rivalry with Vegas and Rancho. I mean it was animosity.

*But Rancho would hang out at the Blue Onion.*

They had the Blue Onion. But if you guys wanted to cruise the Blue Onion --

*It wasn't violent.*

No, not violent.

*But you didn't know anybody there.*

Yeah. It was their own little fiefdom.

*And everybody kind of stayed in their own area.*

They had their own friends.

*I couldn't tell you what Gorman did.*

No. We could go either way. We had friends on both.

*No. But I couldn't tell you --*

Because we were cute and the guys liked us. So we kind of --

*I couldn't tell you where you were.*

Yeah. Well, it's because you're so old.

*I mean I really couldn't. Gorman was just kind of like sitting there. And it wasn't very large. So you didn't have a big population.*

No. We were very small, 400. Not even 400, really, starting out.

**So this is great.**

One other thing I wanted to clarify, though, when I said the owners were mobs, not all the owners were mob.

**Of course not.**

Some were. But there were some people who owned casinos and parts of casinos, but usually they owned smaller casinos. The difficult thing was trying to find money to fund a casino. Until the big corporations came in -- that's why you see these big monstrosities now. They've gotten so large. But now they can't fund them.



**So what do you think will happen with the Echelon Place and City Center once we are past this crisis that we are in? Do you think that those big places are going to make it?**

*I think a lot of them are going to have to go into bankruptcy because somehow they're going to have to take the blue sky out of there because if they paid -- for that house we're just talking about, if they paid the million dollars and now they have to rent it to pay for it, you can't rent it to cover a million dollars. So I think everything across the board is going to have to get re-priced -- houses, hotels, everything.*

It will be interesting.

*And the re-pricing is going to have to be lower. The only way anyone's going to loan the money is when they show them they can pencil out X number a rooms. And when they can't get \$300 or \$500 anymore, they're going to have to compete. They're going to have to maybe do it for a hundred dollars. Well, that performer wouldn't work for a hundred dollars that they've got now. So that means they've got to resell it.*

But that's the good news I think that for that period of time, that seven, eight years, whatever it was when prices were going up, up, up, I mean it took all the teachers, firemen out of the housing market. That was one of the advantages of moving here is that you could have a home. We were looking at like with our kids, gosh, are they ever going to be able to afford a house here? It would be like San Francisco or L.A. where they're just out of it. And it would have been such a shame. Now they're coming right back down and --

**They can buy houses.**

Yeah. I can find it in any bad situation. I think that's a good --

*But the water issue is still there.*

**Yes, it is.**

Yeah. That's not going away.

**Yes. It will always be there.**

But, you know, let me tell you one other thing that I think is interesting about the mob owning the casino. But we have and still do have a lot of friends whose dads came here from different cities where gaming was legal -- no. Gaming was illegal and they got thrown out and they came here and they were all -- I mean we always thought that they worked for the mob. And they were sent



here and they had to go where they were sent. They worked in the jobs they were sent. Some of them were skimming we thought. Some weren't. But it was like it was all okay. These were our friends. We didn't care what their dads did. It was just no big deal.

But I'll tell you Service League had something called Junior Service League. And we were the teenage daughters of the mothers who founded it, you know, into the early 60s. And there were no casino people in Junior Service League either. It was definitely steppingstone status. *Want-to-be's trying to create status.*

Well, want-to-be's. It didn't matter what it is. Yeah, they did.

**Yes. It was that class structure.**

Uh-huh. You had your Vegas girls, your Hillary Goldwaters.

*But it was interesting also the race relations early and later. I can't remember whether it was Dorothy Dandridge. She jumped in one of the pools and they drained it. And the guy that I think changed all that was Frank Sinatra; if I'm not mistaken it was.*

**A lot of the credit has been given to him.**

*Yeah, because of Sammy Davis, Jr.*

**But, you know, I think that was one of the reasons that we found that integration took place. But I think behind the scenes I think you'll find lots of other people agitating at the same time.**

Oh, certainly.

**But, yes, vocally and --**

*Local people?*

**Yes. Oh, yes. There was NAACP that started in 1926.**

And I remember Bob Bailey and all those guys.

**But Bailey didn't come until 1955.**

50s, that's what I remember.

*But, you know, (blacks) had to go out the back door.*

**That's correct.**

*And the Moulin Rouge was over here.*

**1955, yes.**



*And then that brain happened and it happened unofficially. It wasn't like a law was passed or anything.*

**Do you remember in 1960 when the Strip was integrated?**

Absolutely.

*Uh-huh.*

**What do you remember hearing about that?**

Well, they were turbulent times, you know, being a little bit afraid. I remember when they were going to have to first black dealers. That was a huge deal. And it was like some people were saying, oh, my god, it's the worst thing. And other people were saying, well, finally, what are you talking about? So it just depended on who you were talking to.

*You didn't have women dealers either.*

No. Not for a long time after that. Or certainly then --

**You stopped the women from dealing here.**

Yes.

Las Vegas was prejudiced in every way.

*You could go to Reno, though, and you couldn't find a 21 game that didn't have a woman on it.*

**Yes. I actually talked to women who dealt here, had to quit and they went to Reno to work for a while.**

*Right. So it kind of gives you some idea of the mentality.*

Yeah. It was just ridiculous.

*It was actually southern Democrat mentality.*

It was. They were southern Democrats.

It was a pleasure.

**This was wonderful.**

Yeah. You brought up memories that had been long since gone.

...The Helldorado -- I'm going to look at them. I'll -- what do you call it? -- I'll preview them. And if there's anything good for you, then I will get back with you on it.

**Great.**

If someone had the capability of taking -- she gave me four disks -- of splicing them and getting



Helldorado out of them, I know what disks they're in and that. So someone at the university can do that I'm sure.

**Probably, yes. That would be interesting.**

Yeah. It will give you a flavor.

*I had big full pictures of the Helldorado Parade and floats and all that, but I gave them to somebody at the university. So I don't know where they wound up.*

**Not the library, but somebody?**

*You know, I don't remember.*

I bet you that's where they ended up.

*Somebody had a project and I just gave it to them. I can't remember who specifically.*

It might have been a term paper.

No. You know, they're always doing this sort of thing. But university's come a lot more of age.

**Oh, yes. In lots of way.**

*Yes and they keep track of it.*

**It's awesome what kind of photographs we have. We do have a great photograph collection.**

*Now, let me ask you what are you going to do with this?...*



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## Rivera to Direct UNLV Law School and Gaming Institute Fund Raising

08/17/1995 Release

Lyle Rivera, vice president for development and university relations at UNLV since 1984, will head the university's planning and development efforts for a proposed law school and will coordinate fund raising for the UNLV International Gaming Institute, President Carol C. Harter announced Thursday (Aug. 17).

Rivera's new title will be vice president and assistant to the president for special projects when he assumes his new duties on Sept. 1, Harter said. An attorney and long-time UNLV development officer, he was responsible for creating the UNLV Foundation, the university's prime fund-raising entity, in 1981.

"This is a great opportunity for the university to make use of Lyle's skills and experience in the areas of law, gaming, and development," Harter said. "He has already been instrumental, as former executive director of the UNLV Foundation, in attracting financial support for the International Gaming Institute. I am confident his abilities will benefit the institute, which is a unique resource for the gaming industry in Nevada and, indeed, the nation and the world.

"Regarding the proposed law school at UNLV, I have recently discussed with Chancellor Richard Jarvis the need for careful planning and study. The 1995 Legislature appropriated \$500,000 to support the planning process. The Chancellor and I agree that what the university needs at this time is a high-level officer with both fund-raising and legal experience to guide the process. The obvious choice is Lyle, who will work closely with me and Chancellor Jarvis on this important project."

Maddy Graves, chair of the University and Community College System of Nevada Board of Regents, said, "A better person could not have been chosen for this job. It was through Lyle's efforts and dedication some 15 years ago that the UNLV Foundation was formed, and it has become one of the most successful foundations in the country. It was also through his guidance that both the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl and the Thomas and Mack Center have operated in the black."

Rivera has been involved in higher education since 1979, when he became chief development officer for UNLV and assistant general counsel for the university system. Before his appointment as vice president for development and university relations, he served as interim executive vice president.

He is the former founding president of the International Association of Gaming Attorneys and is a member of the Nevada State Bar, the American Bar Association, and that organization's committee on gaming.

From 1987 until earlier this year, Rivera served as executive director of the UNLV Foundation and led its successful effort to raise millions of dollars in support of university programs during that period.

Las Vegas businesswoman and university benefactor Claudine Williams, a long-time member and former chair of the UNLV Foundation Board of Trustees, called Rivera "a great motivating force in the organization and operation the UNLV Foundation."



"Lyle was instrumental in getting the Foundation started," Williams said. "He has certainly proven himself extremely capable."

For the immediate future, President Harter will work directly with the foundation and alumni boards of trustees through their executive directors.

Rivera served as the state's chief deputy attorney general for the Southern Nevada area from 1971 to 1979. He was a member of the legal staff of the Clark County district attorney's office from 1969 to 1971.

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