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# An Interview with Judy Smith

An Oral History Conducted by Suzanne Becker

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Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
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University of Nevada Las Vegas



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Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries, Director: Claytee D. White

Project Creators: Patrick Jackson and Dr. Deborah Boehm

Transcriber and Editor: Laurie Boetcher

Editor and Production Manager: Barbara Tabach

Interviewers: Suzanne Becker, Barbara Tabach, Claytee D. White



Recorded interviews, transcripts, bound copies and a website comprising the *Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood Oral History Project* have been made possible through a grant from the City of Las Vegas Centennial Committee. Special Collections in Lied Library, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided a wide variety of administrative services, support and archival expertise. We are so grateful.

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

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

Deborah A. Boehm, Ph.D.  
Fulbright-García Robles Scholar 2009-2010  
Assistant Professor, Anthropology & Women's Studies

Patrick Jackson, Professor  
John S. Park Oral History Project Manager

Claytee D. White, Director  
Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries



## Interview with Judy Smith

November 22, 2008 in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Suzanne Becker

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## Preface

Judy Smith was a teenager when her family relocated from Barstow, CA to Las Vegas in 1958. It was a wide open setting, an ideal location for riding her horse. It was also an era of growth as the city became a gambling destination and the Strip became dotted with early casinos and hotels.

Judy attended Las Vegas High School, worked for the Las Vegas Sun and earned a scholarship to UNR. By 1967, she was married and moving back to Vegas with her young family. They chose the John S. Park Neighborhood as the place to call home. For Judy living in John S. Park is about a “sense of place” and “a sense of timelessness.” She describes the evolution of the neighborhood and the greater Las Vegas community from the pioneers to the contemporary leaders.

In 2006, Judy’s home was gutted by a fire. Her life was saved by an observant neighbor. She could have relocated at the time, but chose not to move from the area that she has called home for over 40 years.



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**Judy, thank you so much for taking the time this afternoon to talk with us. If you could just begin by telling us a little bit [about] where you were born, when you were born, what it was like growing up there, and a bit about your family.**

Well, I was born in Barstow, California, and that's where I was raised. We moved here when I was a teenager, back in January of 1958. But my dad came out to southern Nevada and Las Vegas in the late 1920s, before gaming was legalized.

**Where did he come from?**

He came from Pennsylvania—that's where he was born—by way of Commerce, Oklahoma (which is the burial place of Mickey Mantle). So he came out and was hired by Atlantic Richfield Company. And he met my mom out here, and they began dating, and when he was refereeing the high school basketball tournaments, she would be very embarrassed because he had one of these big, rough voices and she would like to hide under the seat when he was yelling his calls. They were married here in 1931, in Las Vegas.

**What are your parents' names?**

Leonard and Ada Zagortz. His dad, my grandfather, was a stowaway in a freighter from Yugoslavia, which is how they came over to this country. And on my mother's side, there's a lot of Bohemian ancestry on her side, but her roots are in Kansas, where she was born and raised. But they met and married here in Las Vegas and my brother was born here in Las Vegas in 1932 at the old Las Vegas Hospital, and he was delivered by Dr.



Woodbury, who was one of the pioneers here and on the Board of Education. So that's where my brother was born. And they stayed here for some years, but in the very early 1940s my dad was transferred by Atlantic Richfield from Las Vegas down to Barstow, and that's how he ended up there. And he had his own Oldsmobile agency and gas station.

**Where did they live when they were here, do you know?**

I am not sure where they lived. I do know that they were married in that old Methodist church down by Third Street, down by the courthouse, which is still functioning today. So I know that. I know that when they moved to Barstow, they lived on Main Street before they built their own house for \$8,000, which was a lot back then. And they had it done the old-fashioned way, and the guy who built it would walk across the hardwood floors to see if everything was settled and even, and that's the way they did it back then.

But anyway, my dad and his Oldsmobile agency, it flourished for quite a while. And one of the things he had was this old 1901 Oldsmobile, which was the horseless carriage, and it had one little handle for the steering. And so every year when they had the rodeo parade in Barstow, he would get that thing out and ride in it. He was kind of like the Andy Griffith of Mayberry, except at Barstow, and he helped to get the town incorporated in 1948, and he was elected mayor and was mayor for many years, and the fire commissioner. He wore all the different hats.

But he eventually ran into financial difficulties and so he went to work for Southwest Gas. So in January of 1958, they wanted to transfer him back up here, where he became the right-of-way agent for Southwest Gas. And so he traveled all over the Southwest, opening up areas where they could extend their pipelines and business and all.



I remember when we came up here, the house that they were looking at, which is the one that they bought, was just two blocks over on Bracken [Avenue]. And one of the first things I remember is, when we walked in, and walked into the master bedroom, there was a panel [with] little red lights all over it, and it turned out that the previous owner was a gaming executive, and of course they lived in somewhat dangerous times, shall we say, and he wanted those buttons, if he heard a noise in the house he could hit a button and the lights would go on immediately. And I thought, that was strange, coming from Barstow.

But our next-door neighbor was Major Riddle, who was the vice-president of the Dunes [Hotel and Casino], and his wife Norma, who was a showgirl. He was never home but she was there a lot.

**Did you know them well?**

My mom knew them pretty well. Norma was a very down-to-earth gal who had some medical problems. But yeah, they were good people. And right across the street from them were Ted and Monte Brent. They were the original owners of the White Cross Drug down here on Las Vegas Boulevard. So when they would go to Europe in the summer I would go over and clean their swimming pool. Their daughter and I went to high school together, so that was fun.

**So you came here when you were in high school. Had you been to Las Vegas prior to that? Had your family come back and forth?**

Yes. When I was very young, and this is back in the forties, my dad, having lived here before, still had friends and connections, so I remember we would travel up to Las Vegas, and there was one couple that we visited, that lived on the outskirts of town, which is



right to here on Maryland Parkway. They were way, way out. And my brother, who is ten years older than I am, was in the band, and the football team from Barstow would come up and play the football team in Boulder City [Nevada], and so we would come up and go to those football games. Las Vegas was just a very small town and not much going on.

**Can you describe a little bit what it was like at the time that you arrived back here and you were in high school?**

When I came out, Barstow was a very small town, maybe of about twelve, fifteen thousand. And, to me, coming up to Las Vegas in '58, was like coming up to this huge cosmopolitan area. There were 60,000 people in the entire valley back then, which to me was huge. And Sahara Avenue was not called Sahara Avenue; it was called San Francisco [Street]. And then Tropicana [Avenue] was not called Tropicana; it was called Bond Road [Avenue].

I had horses while I was growing up, and so we brought my half-Arabian up here, and we boarded him out basically at the intersection of what is now Tropicana and Eastern [Avenue]. There was nothing out there. It was all desert. The ranch that we kept my horse on, his name was Chick Sayles and he was a deputy in Las Vegas. And so I spent many of my weekends back in the late fifties, early sixties, riding in all of that Paradise Valley area, long before Wayne Newton ever got there.

And one of the things that was in existence back then was the Joe W. Brown Racetrack. And it was a regular, bona fide racetrack, right next to where the convention center is now, right on the site where the Las Vegas Hilton [Hotel and Casino] is.

**Where Joe W. Brown Drive is.**



Exactly. So I would ride my horse from Eastern [Avenue] and Tropicana [Avenue] area, over to the racetrack, and I would race him around, and they had all the stables and everything, and they would have like gymkhanas there and I would compete, and that kind of a thing. And then I would go out in the other direction, what is now Sunset Park, and at that time it was an old thoroughbred ranch. And I would ride out there and take some laps around their training track and all. And further out, with some kids I was riding with, we would explore the artesian wells that they used to have, which would be on the site where Wayne Newton's place is now [approximate vicinity: corner of Pecos Road and Sunset Road]. I mean there was nothing out there at that time.

And then driving out, going out on Maryland Parkway, the Flamingo Wash, we had to go down into it. There was not [a way] where you could go across the top. And so whenever there was a big rain and there was flooding, you just couldn't get through. But from Flamingo Road on out, it was all basically dirt roads.

And UNLV was just getting started and they didn't even have the first building up yet. The classes were conducted over at Las Vegas High School. So the first building that went up was the Maude Frazier Hall which I understand they're going to tear down right now.

So I spent a lot of weekends horseback-riding out there.

[Bishop] Gorman High School was where Margaret's [McGhie] kids went to school. That was a small private school that no one really paid any attention to and it was way out in the boonies over here on Maryland Parkway.

So I remember when we first moved up, what was under construction was the Rotunda, which was the original convention center. I don't know if you remember that. It



was a circular building, and from a distance, it looks like a flying saucer. So shortly after I moved here, one of my friends from Barstow wanted to come up and visit me. So we went down and brought her up. And when we came up over the rise where you could oversee the valley, we pointed to that great big saucer disc and I said, That is a flying saucer. [Laughter] And she believed us.

But that is where I learned how to drive. My dad took me up to that parking lot. He sold Oldsmobiles, so we still had our '56 Oldsmobile, and he told me that you had to be a defensive driver and not an offensive driver, and he taught me how to shift gears and everything, and without any warning he told me to go out on the Strip. And that was my baptism of fire in driving in Las Vegas. And I had taxicab drivers going up and over my bumpers and all that.

But back then, I know in the summers, I was a little bit too young to go out on the Strip, but we did go out to the Desert Inn [Hotel and Casino] and they had what they called dancing waters. And the poolside, just as the sun was going down, they would turn the lights on in the pool, and they would play music, and the waters would [dance].

**It's like the precursor to the Bellagio [Hotel and Casino].**

Exactly. And they had these different songs and the waters and everything. But that's what we would do in the summers. And the old Hacienda Hotel [and Casino].

**What was the Strip like when you had just come back here?**

Well, it wasn't really very big. The El Rancho was still up, before it burned down. And we had the Desert Inn, we had the Flamingo [Hotel and Casino], and the Tropicana [Hotel and Casino]. Dunes Hotel, and the Hacienda. It [the Strip] had a quaint feeling.

The Dunes Hotel in the summers would have barbeques by the poolside, and that's where



a lot of people would go out. The Rat Pack came in but mostly I remember the lounge acts: Louis Prima and Keely Smith and all that. A lot of my classmates at Las Vegas High were children of workers on the Strip.

**And did they live down in this area also?**

Yeah. That's about the only place you could [live] because it [Las Vegas] wasn't really that big yet. But Louis Basil was the conductor of the Sahara Hotel [and Casino] orchestra, and I went to high school with his daughter, [entertainer] Toni Basil. I don't know if you've heard of her, but she was in [the film] *Easy Rider*, with Peter Fonda, and she's mostly known for her dancing, and she's been Bette Midler's choreographer for the past thirty years.

**She had a song in the eighties, I think.**

Yeah. Mickey. I remember when she was announced as the cheerleader, it was an election, and she came running out on the gym floor. And back then we had the Las Vegas [High School] Rhythmettes at Las Vegas High School, and I don't know if you've heard of them, but it was a girls' dance team based on the Rockettes, and they were quite famous in their heyday, and it was run by one of our PE [physical education] teachers, Evelyn Stuckey. And they became so famous that they appeared live on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, they traveled to Europe to perform. Very precision [dancers]. Just a wonderful thing. And Evelyn Stuckey and Joyce Shanley, the other PE teacher, just lived over here on Eighth Street. And right around the corner from where I am right now was—now I can't think of his name, but he was one of the first principals of Las Vegas High School.

**Not Dondero?**

No. I went to school with the Donderos.



In 1960, in the summer, the original Clark County School District [CCSD] was based down here where the site of the old Fifth Street School is. OK? You wouldn't know it now. But they have renovated a little section of that. OK, well, right next to it was the old gymnasium and all, and that was their headquarters, and I actually helped. I went to work in the Graphic Arts Department. And they built their new building out on Flamingo [Road], and I helped them move. I helped them move into the building, and that was what? Forty, fifty years ago, whatever.

Harvey Dondero was one of the guys that I worked with out there. He was one of the assistant superintendents. In fact, a lot of these people I actually got to rub shoulders with. And his wife Thalia [Dondero] would show up.

Over at UNLV, when I got out of high school, some of the original professors I had have buildings named after them now. The Hendrix Building, he [Holbert H. Hendrix] was one of my professors, and that kind of a thing.

**It sounds like a really fascinating and interesting place to do your high school years.**

**A lot going on.**

Once we got up here, people that would come to visit actually believed that we had slot machines in the high school corridors. [Laughter] And there are those people who think that nobody lives here in Las Vegas, that they just commute to and from Los Angeles.

**What kinds of things did you do?**

In high school, right down here on the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Charleston [Boulevard] was the old Sills Drive-In. [It was] circular. And we would hang out there. Right catty-corner from Las Vegas High School on Seventh Street was an old burger stand that we would go to. And you've probably heard of the Blue Onion [Drive-In].



Well, that was our hangout, down there. And we would go out, past the railroad tracks and Paradise Valley to the Rocking Horse Ranch, and that was quite the thing to go to back then because it was so far out of town but we would go out there and we would swim and have fun out there. And then on the north side of Las Vegas, going towards Cedar City [Utah], was like a hot springs, and they built it into like a swimming pool and it was surrounded by palm trees and that kind of a thing, and we would go out there and swim. It was just off the Paiute Indian Reservation, I think it was. I can't remember the name of that either, but that's where we would go on weekends. But a typical weekend, we would hang out, especially on Fridays after a football game, at the Blue Onion. But cruising Fremont [Street] was the big thing. And it was only like two or three lanes wide at the time. And I remember one of my girlfriends, K.K. Babbs, had literally an old Model T, with the jump seat in the back, and after a game we would go down and we'd get in the jump seat and, if we'd played Rancho [High School] we would jump out of the cars and all that kind of a thing. But, where the Union Plaza Hotel [and Casino] is, that was the original train station. And it was like a little park area, it was like a circle park, so you would drive down Fremont [Street], and then you'd go around the circle in that park where the train station was and you'd come back out and you'd go back down the opposite direction, and then make our run down to the Blue Onion. But that was our route, typically. So, we had a lot of fun doing that.

**Tough to do that now, I think, now that they've put the roof over it and closed it off [to create the Fremont Street Experience].**

Don't know what they would do for fun.



But I was in the Las Vegas High School Band. I played clarinet. And, like I say, at that time there was only a couple of high schools, so when there were music festivals we would go out of town. I remember going down to Lancaster [California]. I remember, we went down to Disneyland, three years after Disneyland first opened in 1955. We went down in '58. That was a big deal for us. We marched down Main Street and all that. But we had a great band and we always made superior ratings in everything. When I moved here, that was where I made my friends. To me, Las Vegas High School was huge. So I did that. And I worked on the *Desert Breeze* [high school newspaper] and so on and so forth.

**And so you obviously stayed in this area.**

Yeah. When I was in high school, I was really interested in writing. And Bernadine Young was our adviser and she was the person who helped us with the *Desert Breeze*, which was the high school paper, and it had won many awards over the years. So, at the end of my junior year of high school, she helped me get a job at the *Las Vegas Sun*. And so I went down and interviewed with Geri Appleby, who was the society editor, and I showed her some of my work and she hired me as her assistant society editor. So I got to go to weddings, go to fashion shows, and those kinds [of things], which to a sixteen-year-old was a big deal. But I'll never forget, my very first day on the job, I forgot what event was happening but it was a big story and they were putting out an extra edition, which they don't do anymore these days. And Vince Anselmo was in charge of the entire [thing], editors of the society thing was just off in one little corner, and I mean it was absolute chaos, and I didn't know what to do. They were still doing the old-fashioned



typing and everything. But I just remember loving the whole thing. It was just like one great big room and all this stuff was going on. So I had a lot of fun doing that.

I remember at the end of my senior year, I put in for the *Sun* journalism scholarship. I didn't think I had a chance. It was a county-wide competition. So, graduation night they announced my name as the winner. And I was stunned and I was thrilled because it was a full four-year scholarship. So, the next day, on the front page of the *Las Vegas Sun*, there was an overview picture of the entire graduating class, but next to that was a picture of me, announcing me as the *Sun* journalism scholarship winner. So my dad, who was from the old school, had told me, You sit down and you write a thank-you letter, and I said, Why? You know, there's not really much point to it. They give scholarships all the time. And he said, You write the letter. So a few days after I mailed it, I opened up the *Sun* and there was my paper published in Hank Greenspun's "Where I Stand" column, and his comment was that in all the years that they'd been giving the scholarship, this was the first time anyone ever thanked them. So I went from there on up to the University of Nevada, Reno [UNR] and pursued that.

**How long did you stay in Reno?**

I was there basically three years. The end of my sophomore year, I realized that I wasn't really cut out for doing the hard news beats and so I switched into teaching. My dad's sister was an educator, and my brother's wife was an educator, so it kind of runs in the family anyway, so that's what I switched to. I got married at the end of my junior year and came back down to Las Vegas, and I graduated from UNLV, which at that time was called Nevada Southern University, and that's what my diploma says.

**So you came back down to Vegas, and you were married at that time?**



**So what is it that drew you back into this neighborhood?**

Well, when my son was born, this was two years after we were married, the house really was too small. It was only one bedroom and all. And I went back into teaching, but we needed a good babysitter. And so, we were looking at houses in this area because my parents were just two blocks over and they were going to watch my son. This house, we found out from a next-door neighbor of my mom's, was up for rent. And it was owned by Stuart Leslie, who had four children that lived here before they moved out. And they rented it to us, and we signed a lease. And about three or four years later, some things started going wrong and Stuart Leslie decided that he wanted to sell it. We didn't have the money for the down payment, so he helped us with the down payment, and we bought the house for \$16,000 back then.

So I got out of teaching and mainly helped with my husband's business. I worked out of the home here, and my son was in school and my parents are nearby. Then I went back into teaching after we were divorced.

**And where did you teach?**

Well, my first job was at Will Beckley Elementary School, which was out in Paradise Valley, and it was a brand-new school. And I taught there in 1968 and 1969, a couple of years there. Then I dropped out to work full-time for Smith Printers.

But also, during that time, I got involved with horses, again, and got an Arabian, and I kept him out at Don Schroeder's, who had an Arabian ranch. And they had it out, right off of Cheyenne [Avenue] and Rainbow [Boulevard], in that area right now. Well, back then that was nothing but desert. So, I remember driving out there, one time it snowed in Las Vegas. And I was out on Rancho Road [Drive], getting ready to make a



left-hand turn onto Cheyenne. There were no stoplights back then. Couldn't find the road because it was a dirt road. And I had to use the telephone pole lines to go all the way down. There was nothing out there. And I don't know if you've heard the name [Donald] "Doc" Romeo. Well, he had thirteen [eleven] children [see *Las Vegas Sun* obituary, February 16, 2009], and they basically all went to Bishop Gorman High School. The night that we had that meeting, he was out there (because I was on the board of directors) and that was the night his daughter [Terry Romeo] was murdered [1973]. We didn't know it at the time, of course. It was the next day that she was found in the desert. But I'll never forget that. That was really quite a story back then.

So, I used to ride my horses all out in that area, which was all open desert. But I know when we first moved up here back in '58, what is now that big park off of Washington [Avenue] and Rancho [Drive], it starts with an L, I think [Lorenzi Park]. Anyway, it's the site of the old Twin Lakes Stables, if you've ever heard of that. It was like a park, but it had the swimming pools, and it had stables, and I remember we rented horses and went riding in that area. The park now is under renovation. It's right down the street from where the Meadows Mall is. It's a great big park. You were asking what I did in high school and that's another thing that we used to do was go out to Twin Lakes and go horseback riding or swimming. Back I know in the 1920s, it was a popular site for dances, and they had live bands.

**Interesting. Sure, that makes sense, prior to the whole development of the Strip.**

Yeah, exactly.

**You came into this house when, 1966, roughly?**



Well, my family moved back to Las Vegas in 1958, and I lived over there at Bracken [Avenue]. And when we moved into this house, it was in 1967, which was what, forty-one years ago.

**And what was this area like when you moved into that house? What are some of the changes that you've seen?**

One of the changes that you probably wouldn't notice is it has streetlights now. And when we moved in back in 1967, the street was very dark at nighttime and you had no streetlights. In fact Margaret [McGhie] was telling me the story that, on this street, it wasn't built as a housing tract. It was built, individual houses, by George Franklin, Sr. And you've heard of George Franklin, Jr. who was the district attorney of Las Vegas for years, but it was his dad. And I know when Las Vegas celebrated their centennial [in 2005], they did a walking tour of Las Vegas [and] they started on this street, and pointed out the different types of architecture, et cetera, and everything.

Anyway, when the houses were being built, apparently the homeowners were given options of whether they wanted to put a streetlight in or not, and they had to pay for it apparently out of their own pocket, and they opted not to. And they also opted not to put in sidewalks.

The houses basically look unchanged. It's pretty much kept its flavor there. But it's had life cycles. I know, when we first moved in in 1967, across the street from me was one of the old pioneers, Jessie Gibson and her husband [Fred Gibson Sr.]. And he passed away shortly after we moved in, but she was in her nineties when we moved in, and I remember going across the street and literally sitting down on the floor next to the sofa and listening to her tell her stories about their children and how they built all those



extra bedrooms. And their son, Fred Gibson, Jr. is one of the politicians or something, I believe, out in Henderson. Anyway, they eventually both passed away, and their children put the house up for sale, and they sold it overnight to someone who turned it into a rental. And they let it go. And [we] had a very unpleasant few years with drug addicts and motorcycle gangs and things. They really let it go. And then it was purchased by a minister, and then a couple who worked for the City, and they renovated it and got it to where it was really beautiful again, and now the new owners keep it beautiful.

But those are the cycles that I remember: houses that were rentals, and now are back, going full blast. The people that own this house next door to me on the north side, Johnny and Katie Kuselias, he worked at the [Nevada] Test Site, for years and years and years and years and years, and made his money that way. And he raised his two children over there, I remember them, and my son used to play with them and all. And when he passed away, they turned the house into a rental, which is what it is right now. So that's kind of what I'm seeing.

And the makeup of the neighborhood is different now than what it used to be. We have a lot of people from the Arts District or whatever, but we have a mixed bag of attorneys and artists and teachers and blue-collar workers and that kind of a thing.

Anyway, I'm diverting from the story. It didn't have streetlights. Back in the seventies, we were getting a series of cars broken into, including my husband's van, where they would break in and get the credit cards or whatever, all up and down the street. And I remember when I called the police department, they said, Well, did you see who did it?

And I said, No.



And they said, Well, we can't do anything.

I said, But we've got a multiple theft going on here.

So that's when I decided we needed to do something in our neighborhood, so I organized a neighborhood watch. So when you see that sign across the street on their tree, or maybe she took it down.

**No, it's still there.**

That was my doing. So when they came and they talked to us about it, they said the two things that thieves don't like is light, and noise. And they said, if you have a street next to you, like Eighth Street that has streetlights, but your street doesn't, guess which street they're going to go to? Well, you can't have the City just put them in. Apparently at that time, if we wanted streetlights, we had to pay for them ourselves. So, I got up a petition and I went from door to door. I went to every single house on this street, and over on Franklin [Avenue] and Tenth Street, and over here on Park Paseo. I got enough signatures. I got like 90 percent of the property owners to sign on to it, that they would put the streetlights in. And so they took it out of I guess our power bill or tacked it on and we had to pay a hundred dollars once a year for about five or ten years, something like that. But this is why people opposed it. They didn't want to have to pay.

**I didn't realize that individual households had to pay for streetlights.**

Yeah. So we have lights now, that came out of our own pockets.

**That's interesting that that's like an option. Do you know if it's still like that?**

Well, I don't know because now, I mean new streets that are going in obviously have streetlights and everything, and I imagine there probably are some streets still that don't have the lights, I guess. But I don't know how they would go about doing it, but I know



that's what we had to do. I know when I was going from house to house, I would get some stiff lectures from people about how they opted out back when and that's why, because they didn't want to have to pay for it. But the argument that won them over was the burglaries. And they would say, well, we have our porch lights and our back yard lights, but I would always counter that people move. And some people will not turn those lights on and so on and so forth.

We get a lot of transients that come through the area because of the railroad tracks and all, and that has been a problem over the years. In fact, just about three or four weeks ago, I woke up, opened the door, and there was cop cars in front of my house. And I looked at my porch and there's a sleeping bag there, and blankets and everything. And there was a woman handcuffed, and the cop came up to my door and said, Do you know woman? And I had just woke up and I said, No, I've never seen here before. And she'd slept under the bushes across the street and she just came across and came up on my porch. And it was my neighbors who had been watching her and they're the ones who called the police department. And it turns out that this woman is a bit mentally unbalanced, that kind of a thing. But we do see quite a bit of that and it's getting increasingly worse. It's always been an issue because the center of Las Vegas was downtown and the railroad tracks, and so the transients, it was like wagon wheel spokes. You don't see them on the outskirts of town so much.

**And so this has been throughout the history of the neighborhood, a problem?**

Yeah, it's always been there, I would think.

**That's interesting. Just to go back a little bit to what you were talking about a few minutes ago, about the different families and different types of people that have**



**lived here, I'm wondering if you remember, either as a kid or maybe when you came back and you started renting this house, the different types of occupations that people in the area held. It's a very eclectic spot now and I'm just wondering if it's always been eclectic.**

Yeah, I wouldn't say that we had the artists and everything. It was more people in business kind of thing. Catty-corner, I forgot what he did. He was pretty much retired. But railroad engineers, people who worked out at the Test Site, a lot of people worked down on the Strip, in the casinos kind of thing. Educators, teachers, that kind of a thing. A lot of people had connections out on the Strip or whatever. I'm trying to think. The Von Tobels didn't live too far from here. When I was involved with my horses and all, I rode with the Von Tobel daughters, and I used to sew for them. They own a house over here on Fifteenth Street. But the original Von Tobel's department [lumber] store, which no longer exists, when we moved to Las Vegas in 1958, was down here off of Third Street. Then it moved over on site where the Las Vegas Athletic Center is off of Karen [Avenue] and Maryland Parkway. And the old Vegas Village and all that, that used to be the original there. So there were a lot of store owners [living here].

**What businesses were here? You mentioned a couple and I'm just wondering.**

Oh, we had like Vegas Village, which was kind of like a chain of grocery stores and drug stores combined. Thrifty Mart grocery stores. Skaggs Drug Stores, which is next door to Thrifty Mart. Those were quite popular back then. The White Cross Drug Store. When we first came up in 1958, down here on the corner of Fifth Street and Fremont [Street] was the White Cross Drug Store, which is not there anymore; the El Portal movie theater downtown; some of the original hotels. Department stores. The original Las Vegas



electrical company was down here on the corner of Fremont [Street] and Las Vegas Boulevard. And the newspapers. The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* was just not too far from Von's. You know, typical stuff. We had the banks. It wasn't Wells Fargo back then. Bank of Nevada. I don't know. Some of the originals there. The Frontier Savings and Loan and those kinds of things. But mostly, it wasn't anything out of the ordinary. It was a typical city, actually. We don't have the Test Site now as we knew it back then. A lot of people worked there.

**It was a huge employer for Las Vegas.**

Yeah. A lot of people worked on the railroad. I'm not sure if Margaret [McGhie] told [you], I think her husband Lynn [Charles Lynn McGhie] worked on the railroad. So we had that.

**So basic working people, just a variety of jobs.**

Yeah, this is a typical working-class neighborhood, I guess you would say.

**That's interesting. What do you think some of the most significant events in the history of the John S. Park Neighborhood have been? Anything stand out as a defining moment that changed or shaped the neighborhood?**

It wouldn't be a single event, but it would be the ageing of the neighborhood. The original owners, as they died off, and who would be moving in, kind of thing. It had kind of a downturn where there were a lot of rentals and there still are rentals on this street, but eventually people began to rediscover downtown, and all, and so we have people moving back into this area now. As I told you earlier, people like the ambiance of the neighborhood. We have the trees, the great big elm trees. It's against the law now to plant them from seed because of the roots and everything. But when people come down this



street for the first time, they see like a street out of the Midwest, kind of thing. People have been attracted to that, and so we have moving back in, you know, we have attorneys and we have the artists. In fact, down at the very end, I don't know if you've interviewed her yet, but Mary Ellen Spann. She's a jazz singer. And her husband Steve. They're at the corner house on the left-hand side. It's the white house. I cannot think of the names of the original owners, but they were there forever and ever, elderly couple. And I think it changed hands a couple of times. She's a singer by way of Dallas, by way of New York, and has three albums out. And then catty-corner from her is Marty [Walsh] and her husband. So Marty and Ellen are very good friends. They're very involved in the arts, kind of thing.

**How has the development of the Arts District impacted this area, do you think?**

I think that it is a very positive thing. In fact, Mary Ellen will tell you, if you talk to her, that originally they were looking at the lofts that were being built downtown, and it just was taking forever, so this house came up and they decided to buy that instead. But it's getting new blood in, you know, creative people and all. You can sit out on the front porch in the summertime especially, and you can hear First Fridays going on, with the music and everything. And that's something that I love, because that is something that the tourists don't know about, and you talk about an eclectic crowd, you see very, very old people on canes walking alongside tattooed, pierced-noses kind of thing, and it's just one of those blends. And that's what people are reminded of in this area. When I was working on the [Barack] Obama campaign, this is the area that we covered. In fact, I campaigned with Mary Ellen and Marty, going door-to-door. If you want to really get to know an area or whatever, door-to-door. You meet all kinds of people.



But there are a lot of Hispanics, a lot more so. I know when we first moved up in 1958, my sister was in first grade, and she went all the way through John S. Park and John C. Fremont and all. And the ethnic makeup of the area has changed where it's practically all Hispanic that are going there now, and a lot of that over on Tenth Street.

**When did that start to shift? Roughly.**

One family at a time, maybe twenty years ago.

**So it's been in progress for [a while].**

Yeah, it's just like one house at a time, one family at a time. But I know that, over here on the other side of Oakey [Boulevard], a lot of those houses are Hispanic-owned now. This area is trending more Hispanic, and you can see that by going down, when you see the billboards in Spanish and the stores and everything like that. You know, I met a lot of really neat families when we were going door-to-door, don't get me wrong, but we have that on our street. We have some Hispanic families. I don't know if we have any African-American. They're in the area, I know that, because I see them going to school. So we're getting the ethnic blend now, that wasn't there when I came here in '58.

But like I say, this particular neighborhood goes up and down in cycles, I think. When the rentals started coming in, you would think that the entire neighborhood would just go down and fall apart, but that's not the case because young blood started coming in. I know on the other side of Margaret [McGhie's house], the owners there when we first moved up here in '58, eventually moved out to Boulder City, but a young attorney and his wife moved in, you know, so young professionals, I guess you could say, are starting to come back in.

**So it's infusing the area with new [blood].**



It's infusing, that's a good word. But like I say, when people are out looking at houses, this is one street [that they look at]. It doesn't happen now because of the economy, but it used to be not so long ago, that real estate agents would come to my door, wanting to know if I would want to sell my house, because the neighborhood was so desirable. People wanted to get into it. And it was hard at the time, because we didn't have that turnover rate. Then as you know, we campaigned to have it turned into a historic [district].

**Yeah, talk about that little bit. How do you feel about that?**

Well, Bob Bellis, we have our own neighborhood organization and he was the president of it, and I'm not sure how he was approached about it but, given the history of the pioneers that got Vegas started, a lot them lived on this street and everything, you know, it evolved. And so it was about a three-year battle, with petitions and all that, and we had to go down to City Council and I was one of the ones who went down, and Margaret [McGhie] also did. But we went before the City Council and testified why we thought it should be turned into [a] historical [district] to maintain the flavor of the neighborhood.

There were a lot of people opposed to it. They thought that they would be limited by what they could do to their houses and all, but really underneath it all was money. A lot of people wanted to eventually sell their house and turn it into a business, you know, and you wouldn't be allowed to do that. In fact, I know one man over on Sixth Street, the reason he fought it was he bought that house with the intention of turning it into a small business eventually, and probably you wouldn't be able to do it. So they were afraid that you couldn't add on, and we would get scare letters in the mail that you wouldn't be allowed to have a driveway anymore because that would be outlawed. Ridiculous things.



All of these things that you couldn't do, which was not true. The only thing is that, if you wanted to build on or something, it would go through the historic thing [Historic Preservation Commission].

**But that's for the front part of the house, correct?**

I believe so. Yeah. And I'm not sure about the other parts of it. I don't know about colors of houses or anything of that kind of a thing. Primarily they said everything would basically stay the same and it's not going to be like you're going to have to make all of these changes, or you wouldn't be able to do this and that. It's actually pretty loose. But they did want the flavor of the neighborhood maintained. And the values of the homes went up, obviously, because of that.

**So that was, I guess, a good thing for the neighborhood.**

Yeah. But it was interesting. I've got it on tape, when we testified down at the [City Council], there were some people who were very, very old, who lived here most of their lives, that were opposed to it. They didn't want anyone coming in and telling them what to do and all that. As you know, if you live in a [homeowners'] association or whatever, you have to follow all the rules and everything, and they didn't want that, and they assured us that that was not going to happen. But it was interesting. That [the historic designation] increased the value [of the homes] and all. [But] like I say, with the downturn in the economy, everything has changed.

But for the most part, I think, what has impacted me the most over the years in this neighborhood is the impression that people get when they first come down this street. I used to be in theater, I used to be an actress of sorts back in the eighties especially, and I would have parties here. And I went to a sixtieth birthday party of a friend of mine a few



weeks ago, [and] came across a couple who had met here at my house, all those years ago, twenty years ago. But he remembered the house. He remembered the street. He remembered the neighborhood and what a neat house he thought it was, the ambiance of it and all. That's something that you don't hear very much. It's like a hidden treasure. And that's what I argued when I went down [to the City Council], as a lot of us did, that this street to us is like a hidden treasure. It's not typical of Las Vegas, what you see that's going up now. It has a very special feel to it. And it's delightful during the holidays.

You were asking about a special memory of it and all. I believe it was back in the seventies, that we had an especially bad snowstorm. And I was substituting, right down here at John S. Park [Elementary School] at the time. And that classroom, the original, they have replaced it with new buildings now, but [the original building] had the Charlie Brown classroom, with the great big ceiling-to-floor windows. And I remember looking out the window and looking down at my street, and it was like Currier and Ives. It was just beautiful. But the snow got so bad that they eventually had to cancel school the next day because the buses couldn't get through, and I remember the [Clark County] School District [CCSD] arguing how to make up that snow day because we had no snow days in Las Vegas, how to make up that one lousy day. I mean all neighborhoods are magical when it snows and everything, but especially with all of these old trees and everything, it was just beautiful. So I have pictures somewhere in my album of the snowmen and everything that were out here.

**I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the politics of the neighborhood, or what the political climate is here, because it sounds like you've been involved in a lot of different neighborhood efforts over the years, and especially, given we've just come**



**out of fairly political times and you were doing some work. What have been the politics of this neighborhood, or what has this area been like?**

Well, like I say, the makeup of the neighborhood is changing a bit, but there are a number of Mormons that live on this street, and they tend to be Republican. And I know, especially back in the 2000 election, with [George W.] Bush and [Al] Gore and all, that's the first time I really noticed political signs going up. I didn't see too many Democratic signs going up. So I guess it's a blend, from my take on it, of both Republicans and Democrats. It's not one way or the other. But I know, years ago, I used to work on Election Day. I would be one of the people [voting officers], when you came, I would make sure you signed in [to vote] and all. My dad was an old-time politician from Barstow. So we voted here at John S. Park, and we voted in this little like a lunchroom kind of thing (the building isn't there anymore). And after each election, be it a city election or a presidential election, my dad would walk from his house over on Bracken [Avenue], which is two blocks over, I would walk from this house, and we would meet. And they posted the returns on the wall, and we would see how our precinct voted. But you see a lot of old familiar faces when you vote here, when you go. People vote either at John S. Park or at Fremont, not so much anymore because of the early voting. But it used to be, you know, that's where [people met and voted].

**You mentioned that there's a mix of people and there's a large Mormon population here, which I guess evidences the church. But I'm wondering, like when you first got here in the late fifties and you were in high school, has the political climate or the political makeup of the neighborhood shifted at all, or has it always been a mixed sort of place?**



Well, nothing really stands out as being solid one way or solid [the other]. There's always been a mix. When we first moved here in the late fifties, the Democrats were primarily in control. We had a Democratic governor, Grant Sawyer [1959-1967], and, oh gosh, Senator Alan Bible [Democrat, U.S. Senator, 1954-1974]. I'm trying to think of the mayor. I believe he was a Democrat. He stuttered a lot. Oh, what was his name? [Maybe C.D. Baker, Mayor of Las Vegas, 1951-1959] [The neighborhood was] primarily Democratic. And, as you know, when Jan [Lavery] Jones [Mayor of Las Vegas, 1991-1999] ran, she was a Democrat. And then I remember, because my dad was involved in politics, it was like the Kennedys: when we would sit at the dinner table, we would talk politics and everything. It was primarily a blue state. But we didn't have those terms back then. Over the years, I would say, perhaps the neighborhood turned more Republican. I'm not sure. But Nevada eventually turned [into] what they call a red state until this past election and all. This is one of those swing states, and Nevada typically has been kind of independent. You can never say like it's Indiana and it's a red state through and through, or it's California and it's blue through and through. We got Paul Laxalt in as governor [1967-1971] and then senator [1974-1986].

One little side story. Mike O'Callaghan [was] a beloved Democrat [and] a [United States] Marine Corps veteran. In the early 1970s, when I had my horse, we would have Arabian horse shows, which at that time were held in what they called Horsemen's Park, right behind the Stardust Hotel [and Casino]. It was an actual arena. It's now located out behind Flamingo [Road] and Boulder Highway. Anyway, I remember being out there, showing my horse, and it was election time for governor. And Mike O'Callaghan, I never really heard the name before, but he was running for Governor of Nevada. He came out



on crutches with just one leg, and in the middle of that dirt arena, you know, made his speech. Well, my sister became very fascinated with him and she campaigned for him. And he went on to become Governor of Nevada [1971-1979], and a beloved governor at that. And when my dad passed away back in 1974, Mike O'Callaghan, who was governor at the time, sent a sympathy card.

But we kind of fell off the Democratic line. But after he [Mike O'Callaghan] left office, I think Paul Laxalt [Robert List, 1979-1983] became governor and [he] was a Republican. It's been flip-flopping. You can't really peg it one way or the other.

**Who do you think some of the most important people in the history of this neighborhood have been, in the John S. Park area or even the general area down here?**

Well, the Gibsons, for sure, across the street. And the Kusiliases next door, they were with the [Nevada] Test Site. And some of the earlier names. They were here before I was. They lived in these houses. Margaret McGhie. She probably wouldn't think that she's important, but people are astounded when I say, she bought that house as a vacant lot [ca. 1945]. And she's still there. You don't see that in Las Vegas anymore. So I would say probably the Fred Gibsons were the most important name that I can recall. Margaret could probably tell you more of the names better than I could. I'm not very good at names anyway. [Laughing]

**How would you describe your relationship with your neighbors? I mean, again, through your history, perhaps when you were a kid, with your family here, and [then] now.**



When we first moved here in 1967, we obviously didn't know anyone. My impression was, other than immediately across the street and next door, I didn't really know too many people. I think they still had the Welcome Wagon back then. Welcome Wagon is when you first move to a city, [and] they come over and they bring you a gift basket and, you know, give you coupons from the different local stores and things around town, and all of that, and made you feel welcome to the neighborhood and welcome to the city, you know, the banks and the doctors and all that kind of a thing.

I think it was once I started going door-to-door, back in the seventies, before the streetlights, that I got to know people. There's something that changes when you've been inside of people's houses. I was born and raised in Barstow [and] I remember growing up as a Brownie and a Girl Scout and I was inside every house selling the cookies and everything, and you don't have that here so much. Back then, of course, you didn't have to lock your doors like you do so much now.

I have a wonderful network of neighbors all up and down the street. This house, two years ago, I lost in a fire, and it was devastating. It was a Memorial [Day] weekend and I was asleep in the back bedroom and this was at four a.m. in the morning and two wires inside the wall inexplicably came in contact with each other, and sent a spark out through the plug outlet. I don't use that room except for my computer, so I had nothing plugged in. But the spark struck the brass rail of the daybed, and it was a double-tiered [daybed]. Well, it got fully engaged and I apparently was succumbing to smoke inhalation. My neighbor across the street, Phyllis right across from Margaret, was up late apparently having trouble balancing her checking account or whatever. She saw flames coming out the window, and she didn't see me. So she knew something was wrong and



she called 911 immediately, ran over here with her boyfriend, got my garden hose, got him spraying the water in, and she started banging on my bedroom window. And she's the one that woke me up. Otherwise [I would have died]. And so I ran down the hallway and I saw that room in flames, and when you're dead asleep and you see it, you can't fathom it. Anyway, as you see, I have cats and it killed seven of my cats, but I was badly burned trying to save them. So the ambulance came and took me away. My next-door neighbors, Mike and Jan Britain, they just moved a few months ago out to Henderson, but they had lived next door there, they came over. They brought their hose and tried to put it out. People all up and down the street were giving me checks for money. I moved into my mom's house while this was being rebuilt. But they brought me food and cards and I mean the outpouring [of help] was just overwhelming. So, you know, in times of crisis, people come together and all. If anything, it brought us closer together. There's some really wonderful people. I mean one saved my life. As the house was being rebuilt, I had to go back to teaching. But Mike was always out in the yard, and he always kept an eye on the place, and so when someone would come over, he would want to know who it [01:10:00] was. He had permission to take them through if I gave them permission and all that. But he basically oversaw the reconstruction of my house. So they're really great people.

### **So, good neighbors.**

Yeah. And then like I just met Mary Ellen Spann at the caucus back in, what was it, January that we had it? And she was an Obama person, too, and I got her history. And then you see people who are walking their dogs that you've known. I don't know, it's just like an old-time neighborhood from *Ozzie and Harriet* [1950s family television show],



who knows? It's not perfect by any means. It has its problems and all that, but there's a lot of good people that live here. Stable people.

**What would you say your favorite thing about living in the neighborhood is?**

For me personally, it's a sense of place. And that's hard to understand. If you've ever been involved in archaeology or whatever, you know, but there's no place like the old neighborhood. When we moved here, my son was in diapers. He's in his forties now, living in Dallas, Texas. But, you know, we brought him in in diapers and raised him in this house. And so, it's a sense of grounding for me, it's a sense of my roots, because pretty much the majority of my life has been lived in this house, from my early twenties, and I'm sixty-five now.

So, a sense of place. As many friends as I have and you go out and visit, I mean there's such a thing as a house being familiar to you but there's just something about driving down this street that seems familiar. I suppose because I was born back in the forties, and my neighborhood where I was originally born had the trees and everything. I don't know. But, to me it has a sense of timelessness to it.

One thing that we don't have to encounter here is construction, and seeing things being torn down and put up. The streets have been resurfaced, of course, and the school has been rebuilt obviously. But when they rebuilt this house after the fire, because I lost everything, everything that you see in here, except for the pictures, they saved the pictures, but it's all new. It looks beaten up because of the cats.

But I guess just the sense of timelessness that, forty years ago or now, it still looks essentially the same. Maryland Parkway, when we first came up here, was a beautiful two-lane street, and right down the center, where you see that little narrow strip now, was



a great big wide strip with these beautiful huge elm trees. Just overhang. But in the interest of progress, you know, they took everything down and widened the streets and everything. But that hasn't happened here. They haven't torn houses down, or you don't see gang-bangers in here. I mean they're around, obviously, as they are everywhere in the valley, but [we] haven't been overtaken [by them] and that kind of a thing. You still see young children here. When we moved in in 1967, there were no children for my son to play with except for the Liebs down the street. He was a maitre'd at the old Las Vegas Hilton. and their son Herman still lives there. He's got the old Corvettes on his driveway. I think it's a yellow house and it's got a little white arbor. Yeah, Herman Lieb and my son grew up together. And that was the only kid, so I took my son down to Griffith Methodist Church, to their day school, so he could have children to play with and interact before he ever went to kindergarten. So, yeah, Herman was born and raised on this street, and he's still there. He would be a good person to talk to.

**I appreciate you sharing your stories and all of your recollections with me. It's great to hear all this.**

I hope it helps. Like I say, this [oral history project] reminds of what Steven Spielberg was doing with the Holocaust, and doing his oral history. As a teacher, I taught eighth-grade English and one of our literature pieces was *The Diary of Anne Frank*, in play format. But we always would bring out Holocaust survivors, that live here in Las Vegas.

**Is there a large population?**

Oh, yeah, especially out in Summerlin. Yes, [people] that were in the [Nazi concentration] camps and all that. And they would tell their stories to our kids and they [the kids] were just spellbound. But one of the things that we showed them was some of



the videotapes of Steven Spielberg doing the oral history, while they [the Holocaust survivors] are with us.

Who knows what's going to happen in Las Vegas down the road? To me, what is interesting and important about the kind of work that you are doing is, Las Vegas has so many misconceptions about it. You probably have heard many times that there are two Las Vegases: the one that the public knows, and then the city where real people live, which is just like any other city.

**And I think what's so interesting, too, is it seems like there are two Las Vegases in the sense that, at some point there was a defining moment when the Las Vegas that a lot of people describe, like when you were in high school, and I think what's so interesting about the John S. Park Neighborhood is some of that is still captured here. But, you know, anybody moving, I think, into Las Vegas in maybe the past decade or two would never, without doing any kind of research, know the sense of history that downtown used to hold.**

Well, people that you've probably talked to, you've probably heard this many times before, but, for me living here, even before we lived here and just coming up and visiting, to me, the shift in Las Vegas as a whole came when Howard Hughes came.

**And several people have mentioned that and I think that's a really defining moment that's worth noting.**

Well, you know, like Benny Binion's Horseshoe Club, I used to barrel-race with his daughter, Becky Binion [Behnen]. I used to march in the Helldorado parades downtown and also ride my horse. At Cashman Field, before it became this baseball thing [home to the Las Vegas Stars, later the 51s, AAA baseball team], it was just a dirt field. They



would haul in dirt and we would have our Helldorado rodeos down there. I used to compete in the barrel-racing there or whatever. But Benny Binion pioneered the Horseshoe Club, and this is before Steve Wynn ever came to town. I mean those pioneers in downtown Las Vegas. And then, when Howard Hughes came and started buying the properties and all, [he] changed it to more like a corporate thing. I know my sister, for example, taught at Bishop Gorman High School for about eleven years, back in the seventies and the eighties. She taught kids [whose parents] were in the Mafia, Tony [Anthony] Spilotro's kids and all that. But well-behaved kids. Not that the Mafia was good, but there was just a different feel, a different sense. It had a small-town feel to it. As a teacher, even now it has a small-town feel to it because, well, I just retired, but there's hardly any meetings that you can go to, teachers' meetings, that you don't see someone that you didn't know way back when or whatever.

**I think what's so interesting about Las Vegas is, it's huge and it's now reached, what, two million, and it's really spread out, but in a sense there's still a lot of small-town [feel]. I mean, people say this, that it's a small community. People know each other. It's like a small world kind of thing. I think that's very interesting about this place.**

The old [Bob Taylor's] Ranch House, have you heard of that restaurant? It still exists and it's out off of Rancho Road [Drive] and Ann Road, way out in the boonies back then. It is a converted old [home] and it's a steakhouse. But the grounds, I mean the old trees and everything, it's been there for about fifty, sixty years. I haven't been out there in a few years, and now I assume it's surrounded by houses and everything, but that's where



people used to go, that the tourists didn't know about, that you can still capture what it was like back then.

Down here, when we first moved in, in the sixties, in North Las Vegas, right down off of Civic Center [Drive], I cannot remember [the name] but it was a drive-in restaurant, which don't exist anyplace anymore hardly. But they sold the old-time hamburgers and coleslaw with shredded cheese on top, and they had the menu from the forties. They had been around since the forties. Those kinds of things.

I guess it's more like talking in the past but, like I say, going back to it, it just seemed to shift, [there was] a subtle shift when Howard Hughes came in. I mean, multi-billion-dollar structures and everything out there, and new people coming in all the time, but then you had this neighborhood.

**And we still have Luv-It [Frozen Custard Inc.].**

My sister lives in North Carolina now. When she gets off the plane, she says, Let's go to Luv-It. And people look at me like I'm crazy. What? You go where? Yeah, anyone that will listen, I send there.

**It's the first place I take my mom every time she comes to visit.**

That's where the cops hang out, a lot, you know?

**They're smart.**

Yeah. You have to stand up. You can't go in. And in the summertime there's a long line but people wait, and it's worth it. Yeah, Luv-It for sure, and right across the street, White Cross Drugs, because they still have the sit-down counter.

**I've had many late-night dinners in there, too.**



In the old days, I know when we first moved here, I remember walking in and seeing Lena Horne.

**I guess it's like what we would call a fountain. I mean, has that restaurant changed at all?**

You know, I haven't been in there in a few years. But it's basically the same. And actually right down here, they used to call it Huntridge Drugs but it's Walgreen's Drugs, right here on the corner of Maryland Parkway and Charleston [Boulevard], that's got a sit-down counter.

**It is the Huntridge Pharmacy still, isn't it?**

Yeah. Right across the street from the Huntridge Theater, which I hope and pray they don't tear down. I went to many movies there in my high school years. It's a beautiful theater. As were the Red Rock [11] Theaters. Do you remember those? Right off of the intersection of Decatur [Boulevard] and Charleston [Boulevard]. There's a shopping center now. It was pioneering back then, in the late sixties, early seventies, it was a series of about five different screens inside one building. But you walked through and they had like old-time popcorn machines and old-time, old arcades, and water fountains, and all in brick. I mean like nothing we'd ever seen. They finally tore it down about five years ago. Now they have the mega-plexes. But that kind of pioneered it in.

**Well, I mean Las Vegas has just an amazingly interesting history.**

It does. I wish my dad were here to tell you his stories. You've probably heard about the Green Shack. The restaurant. Right at the intersection of Charleston [Boulevard] and Boulder Highway and Fremont [Street] down there. Their sign is still standing, I believe. They were famous for their chicken. And I remember about maybe ten, fifteen years ago,



before they tore it down, I took my mom out there. And she walked in and they had all these pictures of old Las Vegas. And she was drawn to this one, and it was back in the 1930s, downtown Las Vegas. And it had the Hotel Apache. And she said, That's where your daddy and I used to hang out. That's where we used to date. So I went down later on, after we had dinner, and she wasn't around, and I bought a copy of the lithograph, and I had it framed and I gave it to her, so she could look at it.

But so many stories. She was here when they were building Hoover Dam. She and dad were here. And she went out to see [President] Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt dedicate the dam. He was standing at the end of the train. And there is that photograph, the famous photograph of him dedicating the dam. She was in that crowd but she was just far enough back that she wasn't in the picture.

**That's an amazing thing to see, though. I mean that also is such a significant part of our history here.**

If you go to downtown Boulder City, that's kind of what [early] Las Vegas looks like.

**I like Boulder City a lot, actually. It's a nice little city.**

**Well, thank you so much for taking the time to share these stories.**

You're welcome.

**I definitely appreciate it. Is there anything, I guess, that maybe we haven't talked about or covered that you feel is significant to knowing?**

Probably there is, and I will remember it after you leave.

**Absolutely. And thank you.**



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