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An Interview with Deanna Stefanelli

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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Preface

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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 (housed separately) accompany the collection as slides or black and white photographs.

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.

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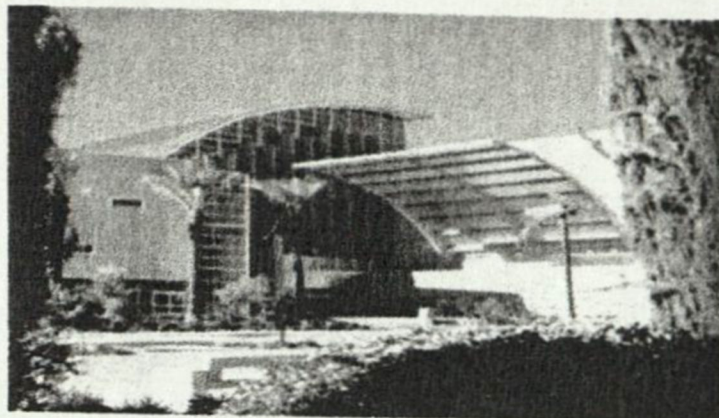
Preface

Deanna Stefanelli and her family moved to Las Vegas when her husband John Stefanelli accepted a position as a professor in Food and Beverage at UNLV. She took a part-time job in the admin office of the university's library in 1981. It was also an ideal time for her to return to college to finish her degree.

Eventually she became fulltime and enjoyed the growth and change of UNLV and the library. Deanna recalls the physical and personnel changes of the library. She describes some of the fun activities that kept them a close work community—from the Friends of the Library to book sales and pancake breakfasts, to a newsletter and learning to make sushi with Myoung-ja Kwon.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project



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Deanna Stefanelli 5/3/10
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 5/3/2010
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. It is May 3rd, 2010. And I'm here in the library at UNLV. I'm with Dee.

Dee, could you please give me your full name and spell your last name?

Yes. It's Deanna, D-E-A-N-N-A. And the last name is S-T-E-F, as in Frank, A-N-E-L-L-I.

Why don't you start by telling me a little bit about your childhood and where you grew up and what that was like?

Well, my mother's from Des Moines, Iowa. Her whole family was there. So I was born in Des Moines. When I was very small, we moved to Joliet, Illinois where my father's family lived. We lived with them for a while. And then they got established in -- they bought a home in Justice, Illinois. And that's where I went to grade school.

I have two brothers. One's a year younger than I am and the other is ten years younger than I am. Yeah. So that was interesting having fun when I was ten years old nurturing my little brother.

Wow. Justice. Tell me what Justice was like? How big?

Not that big. On the outskirts of Chicago, way, way out. We were like maybe an hour away from Chicago. So a very small community, just all houses, a little store, country store that everybody used to go to, and walk to school, that sort of thing.

What did your parents do for a living?

My father worked for General Motors in data processing. He retired from General Motors in data processing. So he worked there for many, many years. I'm not sure exactly how many.

And then my mother has always been -- she's worked as a hostess basically in restaurants. And then after that she went into retail for Marshall Field's, which is now Macy's. Before it turned to Macy's, we went to the downtown one at Christmas. It was wonderful to see the old Marshall Field's because it was such a Chicago establishment. And have lunch there. She was just in her glory. It was fun.

Department store lunches, when I first moved to Los Angeles, they would put butter on the bread. I thought ooh.

Oh. You don't need that, do you?

No. Okay. So tell me about your family relocating. Did they relocate while you were still a

young girl?

Very young.

So tell me about that.

Oh, you mean to Justice or --

When did they come to Las Vegas?

Oh, no. They didn't come to Las Vegas.

Oh, your parents never came. I see.

No, no, no. I got married in 1970 to my husband. Then after that he was working on his Ph.D and we first went to Michigan State. Never saw the sunshine in Michigan State. It was a long winter. It was quite, quite the winter. And then from Michigan State we went to University of Denver. And that's where he finished his Ph.D. Because when we were very first married -- I should back up just a little -- he went to Circle campus, downtown Chicago. So we lived in a little community close to where my parents lived. Our first son was born at that time. And then after that we started the trek to Michigan, Michigan State and then University of Denver where he finished his Ph.D. And then he got the job here at UNLV. That's what brought my husband and I and our son and daughter out here. Our daughter was born in Denver.

So would you tell me about how you met your husband?

Well, I was going to community college. My mother was a hostess at the Flame Restaurant in La Grange, Illinois. She asked me if I'd be interested in doing this coat-check job on the side just to get some extra money. And so I did do that. That's when she introduced me to my future husband, who was a chef in the kitchen [and] who got in trouble for making me Greek lamb chops. And he wasn't supposed to do that for the help.

So now when you have those at home, do you remember?

Oh, yes.

Oh, that's great. That is great.

So how much schooling did you acquire?

I worked on my community college education back in Chicago. When I moved here it was raising a family. And then I started working part-time. When I came to UNLV as a part-time worker in the admin office of the library, that's when I went back to school. So I finished my undergraduate

degree while I was going part-time and working in the library.

Wonderful. So when you were in admin part-time, whom did you work for?

Dotty Edelman. She was my mentor. She taught me everything.

Tell me about her.

Oh, my gosh. She's a super person, great personality and super humorous. Oh, my gosh, she was a wisecracker and makes jokes -- she was just so easy to work for. Yeah, it was great.

And what was her position?

She was a secretary to -- I don't believe he was the dean. I'm not sure what his title was, but he was the head of the library. And that was Hal Erickson. And the three of us were down in this little bitty office in that round building where the law school is now on the first floor. That's where I started. Yeah. And then Dotty was involved when the new building was being built, you know, the other portion that was connected to the round building.

That rectangular --

The rectangular building, yeah. So we moved over to that admin office. And that was luxury compared to that little hole we were in. And then I saw so many deans come and go and interim deans.

So Hal Erickson was the first. And then after Hal -- oh, I went over the list on the way over here. Now I probably won't remember. Let's see. Hal Erickson. And then who came in next? We had Jack Dettre. He was the interim head of the library. And then after Jack Dettre I believe was Mary Dale Deacon. And then after Mary Dale I believe that was Matt Simon. And then after Matt Simon came --

Myoung-ja?

No. Myoung-ja wasn't the head of the library. She was assistant. Dr. Marks. I believe it was Dr. Marks that came before Iannuzzi.

Was Myoung-ja ever interim dean?

Oh, interim dean? She may have been if there was a gap of time. You're right. I'll bet she was.

Okay, good. But you were always in the admin office.

I was. Yeah, for many, many, years.

So tell me about your evolution moving out of admin into -- what was your next job?

CML. Love it. Oh, my gosh it was so amazing to go over there. And Steve Fitt was the head at that time. And then after Steve -- Steve hired -- well, they hired Jen Fabbi. And she worked for Steve for a while. But then after Steve moved on, Jen took over the CML. Let's see. And then now, as you know, Amy.

I didn't know that Steve Fitt was ever over there.

Oh, yes. Yes.

And tell me what CML stands for.

Curriculum Materials Library.

Okay. And where are you located here on campus?

In the Carlson Education Building on the first floor. There used to be a preschool back there. Oh, those were the days. You would hear screaming and laughter and crying and little kids going by on -- you know, the handicap kids, they had their little walkers. It was so adorable. Oh, my gosh, we were always just loving watching those kids.

What happened to the preschool?

The preschool built its own compound on the UNLV campus. It's on the parking lot that's adjacent to the parking garage. It's towards the Strip. It's got a fence around it, says "Kids." They have their own little area over there now. It's absolutely beautiful. Lots of buildings and playground. My granddaughter went there.

Oh, that's great. So did you like it as a school? A good school?

Yes, it was good. It was very good.

Okay, great. Tell me about your husband's job here on this campus. Where was he hired, into which department?

Oh, he's in the Hotel College of -- what's it called?

And he was the chair at one time of Food and Beverage. But now he's no longer that, which is good. So he's back to just being a professor again.

Does he still cook at home?

Oh, yeah. He's the mainstay cook. Oh, absolutely. Sometimes he needs encouragement, you know, some ideas. But, oh yeah. And our daughter is so happy when she gets an invite to come over and have dinner.

Oh, I love it. That is great.

Yes. Yes. He's the chef at home.

How did you find out about your first job here in administration? How did you find out about it?

I believe my husband mentioned it because I had worked at Alpha Beta and I wasn't that happy at Alpha Beta. Do you remember? They were like a drugstore on one side and a grocery store on the other side? Does that ring any bells, Alpha Beta? No.

When you first said Alpha Beta, I thought grocery store.

It had grocery and then it had a big like an Osco -- not an Osco -- like a Walgreen's or something on the other side. So I had worked there for a while and I was not thrilled. And so I think my husband -- because I believe taking a typing class at the community college to prep because you had to pass the typing test to even be eligible to do secretarial back in the day.

Did you have to do shorthand back in the day?

No. No, thank heavens.

Any interesting stories about the early library? Most people who were in that round building early on, they remember all their coworkers and how everything was set up. Can you describe what that building was like and how it was to work in that building?

Well, it was kind of neat. It was an unusual building. And especially we all loved the sparkly stars on the third floor in the ceiling. That was unique. Being that I worked there part-time, I don't remember getting out and about in the library like I did when we were in the other building, in the rectangular building. I did my morning work and then -- I'm sure people came down and saw me, but I wasn't out and about. You know, every now and then I would go, but I wasn't really that close to a lot of people at that time. In the rectangular building, I became more of a receptionist and had more dealings with people in the library. So I have more vivid memories of that.

Who became some of your library friends over the years?

Kathy War and Mary McCoy and Kathy Rothermel, all of the old guard. I could go on and on. Cathy Morales-Jackson started about the same time as I did. Let's see. Kay Tuma. And Maria White. You know, I was very tight with girls in the circulation area. And that's where Kathy War

started, as you know since you interviewed her. She had spent some time down there. Yeah.

And it was like a family back then. Myoung-ja Kwon made it like a family. It was like everybody, you know, really got along well and really enjoyed doing -- we would put together, you've probably heard, these little newsletters with favorite recipes. Kay Tuma was the "Garden Goddess" or some kind of -- she had some kind of funny name. And she would do a little article for it. Those types of things.

And then people would have parties at their houses. Myoung-ja would have parties at her house. She taught us one time to make sushi. Anybody who wanted to make sushi, she invited them over and we all learned how to make sushi at her house. I mean it was a fun time. I mean it was very fun. It was very fun.

That sounds great.

Yeah, it was very nice. Myoung-ja was the glue for that as far as having that family atmosphere.

Do you ever see her now?

You know, I hear that she's in and out of town. That she's retired and doing some consulting. I haven't seen her in a couple of years. It's been awhile. I know Tessie gets to see her because she's over in this building. And I guess when she comes to visit, she bumps into her.

How does it feel being separate from the main library now that we have this huge building and you're in the education building, which is a whole other department?

It is.

How does that feel?

It feels good to me because it fits me and my personality right now because as a grandmother I love bringing the books home for the girls. They're both excellent readers. They brag about how well -- like Abby, who's in first grade, reads at eighth grade level. I know. She said that. I don't know if that's true or not, but they seem to be good at testing them and keeping track of what their reading level is. But anyway, I love the fact that I'm there, as well as the people that I work with are wonderful.

And it's been interesting because that's evolved, too, from Jen and Sidney and Kate Hahn, now to Amy and Patrick and now Ernesto. And it's always been another tight little group of people that really enjoy working with each other. So that makes all the difference in the world, all

the difference.

And you have enough space?

We do, once the preschool moved out. We have our teacher prep room right now, which is that big room with lots of die cuts and stuff. And then when our offices to the back whereas when Jen was there and Sidney was there, our offices used to be right in the CML, which was not good for our patrons because sometimes we had a little bit too much fun and we could get a little too loud.

Give me an idea how you help teachers here in Las Vegas at your location.

I personally don't. Amy's more of an outreach person. She always does story time every year when they have that in the schools. She's always out there doing multiple -- last year somehow they got the mistaken message that -- I don't know what the deal was. But she had like 50 schools to go to. All the sudden she had all these requests coming in on E-mail. And she did it. She didn't deny anybody. She just took them a chunk at a time and kept moving during the reading weeks that they had. So she does that.

And when Patrick was here -- Patrick used to be a teacher. So Patrick and Amy were an excellent team. And so when he was first here, they did a couple of programs where they brought people in, you know, students from the outside and classes and taught them origami. They had themes. I don't remember exactly what the themes were. But they had a couple of things like that. And Christy Keeler, who was a professor there in the College of Ed was really a big connection to the schoolteachers. She was good at working with them to bring in people from the community, from the schools.

Great. So tell me what your job is today.

Let's see. I consider myself the anchor.

They're losing their anchor.

They're losing their anchor. That's why I was so upset when I heard, that there wouldn't be a replacement. I think it's pretty much out now that Debbie's going to be moving over. Debbie McCracken will be replacing me. She will be taking my position. So that makes me feel so much better because Amy was looking at maybe hiring me back part-time in the fall. And I was thinking do I want to do that or don't I want to do that? But I felt I didn't want to abandon them either. Both Amy and Ernesto have just got approved. They're both going to get their master's in

library science online. So they're going to be so busy. So they need somebody who is the anchor because they have meetings that they go to.

And my position is just I fill-in. I'm a do-it-all kind of person. Keep all the supplies up. Take care of the front desk. They also spend time at the front desk, but I like to be out there on the front desk. And just special requests that people have, you know, try to accommodate. And then I do the electronic reserves for the College of Education. So the professors bring me their things at the beginning of every semester and do the stats and everything that goes with that. Let's see. What else do I do? It's basically just keeping things -- you know, if something's out of order, get the right people to take care of it or call in facilities if something is not right.

So you're the office manager, you take care of desk --

Basically.

-- you do everything.

There's a little bit of correspondence I do. You know, it's just "whatever needs to be done" kind of thing. It's kind of a floating -- yeah. And then there's things that I keep track of on a regular basis. But it's just basically a fill-in kind of thing.

Tell me who the typical client, patron who comes over to CML, what is that person like?

It's mostly the students. A majority of the ones that we see or we get to know by name because we see them frequently --

Great.

-- are in the College of Education and they're working on their programs or they're in a cohort group. So when they're in that cohort group, they're in there every day for weeks at a time. So we get to see them a lot.

And what's interesting to me is that our focus seems to have changed. Now it seems like the engineering students have discovered us. We see people in nursing garb and you see them on the computer studying the body. You can tell they're nursing or doctor or whatever. They're doing some kind of medical studies.

So it seems like instead of just College of Ed, now we're getting a nice variety -- computer students, business students -- because they've learned that we have a lot of computers in the back. We don't consider ourselves a computer lab, but we have a whole classroom that when it's not

being used by a professor or we're not doing an orientation there, Amy or Ernesto or Paula, they can use all those computers. That's what brings people in is the computers. And they can do their research. They do their ref works. You know, they get instruction on that. It's a variety of students now whereas in the past it seemed to me mostly just the curriculum of the College of Education.

Right.

And then every now and then we'll get teachers in. We have quite a few teacher borrowers. I don't think we have as many as we used to, but we still do. You know, people graduate and then they'll come back or they'll tell their friends about it. Their friends love learning about the CML. And once in a while, not a whole lot lately, we get parents that are home schooling. So they discover our curriculum materials library. So it's very good for them.

And then people come in from other schools like Sierra Nevada. Have you heard of them? They have programs for people from other occupations to become schoolteachers, you know, going into a new trade. So they're in the program. They pay quite -- my impression is it's very expensive. But we have an agreement with them, with Sierra Nevada. There used to be a couple of other ones, but I don't think we have an agreement with them these days with them. But they come in and use our library as well.

And then once in a while you see the parents or the grandparents looking for books to take home because we have student membership -- what am I trying to say? Not membership. They can get a card. So students can get a card, the general public can come in and get a card, or teachers can get a card. Teachers we treat like students. So they get nice privileges as far as they can check out more books than a public borrower, which only can check out ten at a time.

So now, most of your materials are geared for what grade levels?

It goes from kindergarten through high school because we have textbooks and we have juvenile fiction that would be the older group. It's really geared to the lower group though, because we have big books and we have our kit room that is geared to small children, you know, learning how to tell time, how to count. It's got all kinds of kits and devices. And we have a huge selection of hand puppets.

Amy and I went shopping a couple of weeks ago and she found the most awesome -- you

would love it -- a peacock, a peacock hand puppet. Oh, my gosh. The girls loved it. Abby is eight and Stella is five. And they just loved it. And then I found -- yeah, she found the peacock; I found the dog. It's like a little fluffy dog that you can barely see his eyes with this huge tail. So I took those two home for the girls to play with and they had a great time.

So now, when teachers check out materials to use in their classroom can they check out things like that?

Absolutely. Everything in the library circulates for three weeks. And then they can renew it one time. So actually they can have it for six weeks without too much effort. And the only thing that doesn't is our periodicals and our reference department. Yeah, that doesn't. But we've got DVDs and videos. Not a lot of people use videos anymore. We're kind of rolling that into more DVDs. And we've got like computer programs, learning math or --

If I wanted to learn a foreign language?

We have a few of those, yes. We have those in the locked cabinets, but you can look the list up on the computer. So those are available to them as well.

There is that huge room that is a workroom. You named it a few minutes ago.

That's the teacher prep room.

If I were a teacher, what resources would be available to me in that prep room?

We have a huge collection of die cuts. So if you're doing a bulletin board as a teacher, we've got letters. We've got all kinds of other unusual like animals or all kinds of -- we've got two notebooks full of examples of all of our die cuts. And then we've got -- Amy has the wide format printer. So if they have something that they've created, a poster on the computer, she can print it out on the wide format poster. And then we have what's called a pouch board where you slide it in and it puts it on that foam core. So they can purchase that. And then it's like mounted. It's like professionally done at a very, very simple price.

What else is in there? We have a laminator, currently not working, but we've ordered another one. The teachers love that as well because they come in with all these little pieces that they want to preserve that are used in a game or something and they want them to hold up. Laminating that helps. Or they have posters that they want to laminate before they hang up. So they love all of those things.

And then we sell poster board. We sell construction paper. Sometimes they think of us as the Target store. They come in and ask for everything. We have most things -- colored pens, colored pencils, scissors, glue. We have all that stuff for them to use.

And then I have the space that I can really put my bulletin board together right there.

Oh, absolutely because we have Carol Harter's old conference table that I saw on the E-mail one day that it was being offered to the first person that called. And I got in there and we got it. It was a chore getting it over, but they did get it over for us, thank heavens. And then we have Carol Harter's blue chair. I was Johnny-on-the-spot.

Yes.

That's by our viewing room, kind of angled. And people enjoy sitting in that. I mean it looks a little stiff, but it's a cozy-looking chair.

Oh, that's great.

And soon -- well, before the budget crunch. I don't know how soon. We've cleared an area in a corner. It's under the windows and over by our periodicals on the left side if you're facing the windows where Amy had picked out some chairs and a sofa to make this cozy little reading area.

The students love it-- everybody's got their laptops now that we're wireless. It's wonderful. So they come in with their laptops. We have beanbags over there right now. So they sit in the beanbags with their wireless and do their work. And they just love it. Or they take a nap. You know, pull up an extra one, put their feet up. So that's okay as long as they don't snore.

Okay, good.

Yes, yes.

Dee, you are so young looking.

Thank you.

I cannot believe you're retirement age.

Oh. Well, I am. Thank you, Claytee.

You're welcome. It's amazing.

Thank you very much.

I love that talk about CML because I've learned more about CML than I knew before. So this is great.

Oh, my goodness. Well, you should have come for our -- what did we call it? -- our little hunt that we had not too long ago, our scavenger hunt.

The next time you do it, I'm going to pay attention.

Okay. I'll tell Amy to do it again.

That's right.

So we can get you over there.

How was it for you when you moved Dickinson -- this is the library that had the round building and the rectangular building.

Oh, Dickinson. Yes, yes.

How did you feel when you moved from there and now you're moving to another location?

What was that like? Well, number one, did you ever work in the Lied Library building?

No. No, I didn't make that.

Okay, good.

No, I didn't.

So how was that move for you --

Oh, from that little place to the big?

Yes.

It was a lot of work. It was a lot of work. But once we got settled, it was wonderful. It just felt so fantastic. And then Tessie got hired in. And we had our own on-premise accountant, which was great. And Tessie and I've been friends -- you were asking about friends. Tessie and I have been friends because I was there when she first got hired.

And John Fox, he always had to come over and help me with computers. I was never that good with computers at the beginning. But that was so much better than that carbon paperback in the day. Oh, my gosh.

Oh, yes. Now, the CML location that we have now, how long has that been on campus?

Oh, that's a good question. I know the building has been there since '71 [1971]. And Barbara Hanford was way back when and she was the head of the CML. You know, I'm not sure what year she would have started there. But it was after she retired that Steve took over I believe. I think he was the first one in after Barbara Hanford. Yeah. Yeah.

Being here on campus did you ever take advantage of getting involved with any organizations on campus or being active in anything here on campus?

Let me think. Not as far as groups go. I would take advantage of continuing ed.

Tell me about some of those classes.

My girlfriend and I, Munn; she's since passed way of cancer -- she got me interested in the Indian culture and learning about the chakras and all of that stuff, the fire and the water and ice. So we took a class doing that. She used to push me forward into these classes. And we learned so much and had such a great time.

And then I did start my master's degree in social work. Then Dotty retired and they offered me a full-time job in the library. So I had to choose. And I wasn't that thrilled once I got into social work. I love the idea of social work, but the people that I would come in contact with when I was in the social work program I knew it wasn't for me. So when that offer came up, I just took it. I was happy with that. And it was good timing to go into full-time.

Do you remember which year you became full-time?

Oh, I really don't. I know I started in '81, but I really don't.

Okay. How do you see the library's significance on campus? And I consider CML part of all of this. How do you see us as being a significant part of a college campus?

Well, I liked what -- I can't think of his name -- one of the professors said in one of his speeches; that the library was the heart of the campus. Dr. Unrue is the one that said that when Myoung-ja was around. To me that describes it all. I mean I just stopped by downstairs before I came up here to give something to someone. And the place is alive. There's so many students studying, tables full of them. It's so true. It is the heart. And now that there's a coffee place there, that's just a welcoming attribute to the library. Yeah. I think it's a heart of the campus. I really do.

And it's great to see when the students appreciate the library like that and come in and use the computers and spend time and hang out in little locations. Yeah, it's a great place to have worked.

That's good. Tell me how you feel about the growth of the library over the years of being here, that evolution.

It has been an evolution from small to larger to the biggest ever. Yeah. It's been fun being a part

of all that.

Good. What do you see as your most memorable contribution to UNLV, to the library?

Ooh, Claytee that's a good one.

It doesn't have to be anything spectacular. I mean it can be --

No? Well, what I really, really enjoyed that's evolved and changed now, but when it first started, the Friends of the Library. I was the secretary at that time. I believe Flo Mlynarczyk was the very first president. And we just got on so famously and they were just wonderful women, the original corps. Shirley Hurt I am still friends with and is back in town. She's been to China and to a couple of other places working with the Peace Corps. And she ended up in China teaching English for quite a few years. So she was part of the original group. And we still have lunch together from time to time.

But that I really -- that and -- when I was a secretary at that time that was part of my duties was working with them and helping them with the paperwork and the publicity. It was so much fun. And also the authors' reception was started by them, was started by them.

So just for the tape tell me a little about Friends of the Library, what that group is.

They were the first like helping group, people from the community that came in. And Mary Dale was the head of it. Then they put on like the very first book sale, which was on the first floor of the old building. Oh, my gosh, it was the middle of summer. Everybody was so hot putting that together. And I've seen photographs of that very first book sale. Oh, it was something else. But such a good time. Everybody had such a good time together. But they did all kinds of projects or they would have guest speakers. They did quite a few things. Yeah.

Did the library at one time put on a breakfast or breakfasts at one time? Do you remember anything like that?

Oh, the pancake breakfast?

Yes. What was that about?

That was with Matt Simon. He was quite an entertainer, let me tell you. Yes, that was his brainchild. And, yes, there was at least one, two, maybe three pancake breakfasts where the politicians came and helped serve breakfast. Oh, yeah, he was good at pulling in people. Yeah. It was a fundraiser. Now, I don't know if that was part of the library society group or not. It might

have been. Might have been. I remember we had aprons printed out.

Okay. Because that makes sense that it would all be sort of rolled into one.

Yeah. In fact, have you interviewed Mary Dale because -- oh, my gosh. What a wealth of information she could give you. Yeah.

Good. I should do that.

Yes.

So do you want to tell me who your favorite dean is?

Oh. You know what? I really, really admire Patty Iannuzzi, really admire. After seeing everyone come through here, I have such an admiration for her. I really do.

Wow. Oh, that's great.

Yeah. But I won't say who my favorite is.

Okay. Is there anybody else you want to say anything good about, any other deans?

Any other deans?

Because you talked about Matt Simon. You talked about Patty.

That's true. Yes. Dr. Dettre was a unique, very leveling personality when he did his interim. And he was from the College of Education. He was a professor from the College of Education. And his wife also taught on campus. But super nice man, wonderful personality. I can't think of any stories about him, though. But he was great to get to know as well.

Okay, good. You've been here a long time. What about the university or the library would you change if you could?

The university or the library?

Yes.

The only thing that I can think of is I wish we weren't in such dire straits.

Yeah. That's the sad part.

It's very sad. But it's very heartening to see the Brookings Institute and the Lindsey Institute. I am so fascinated by their guest speakers. I want to know more about them because when they talk about rebuilding this whole community, it just sounds heavenly to me because when we first came here I thought we had landed on a planet, Claytee. I was like, Are you kidding me?

Now, you're coming from Chicago.

No. Colorado. Green trees, gorgeous scenery. And I had never been to the desert.

So you could not see the beauty of the desert before that?

No. No. When we first got here -- and then I'm looking for a JCPenney. I go to the mall, there's no JCPenney. You have to go downtown to this itty bitty JCPenney. I go, Really?

You were a little snob when you first came.

Ooh. Well, after being in Denver, yes.

So tell me what about Las Vegas have you fallen in love with, though, over the years?

It just has so much to offer. The entertainment is phenomenal. There's such a variety here. It just blows my mind. And over the years it's gotten better and better and better. Let's see. What else? We've always loved the weather. The summers, a little bit on the hot side. My husband loves that because he has allergies.

Oh, yes.

Yes. The summers are kind of tough. But the rest of the year, gorgeous, gorgeous.

And back in the day when we first moved here, it had a small-town community feeling because we were over where the Stratosphere is off of Saint Louis. We were on Sweeney before you got to Charleston. Charleston, Eastern, in that neighborhood there. That's where we first bought a house.

Now, that's not John S. Park, is it?

Yes. That's close to John S. Park. Absolutely, yes.

So what was the community like at that time?

Very small-town feeling. My husband in the summertime would take the kids to a summer camp that they just loved. He would be at home writing his books. He would drop them in the morning, go home and write his books, then go pick them up at lunch, take them to one of the coffee shops downtown. And the kids loved that, getting to pick whenever they wanted. And then they would go back to their camp. So that was the summertime. And it was free. Can you believe free?

They had competitions. We would go to -- they had chariot races. I mean so creative, so creative.

And then my daughter was in the Rainbow Company, took classes there. Yes, she was in one play. She was the mouse in Cinderella.

And the Rainbow Company was located?

That's still located downtown. What street is that on? It's right across from Cashman Field.

So Main Street?

I don't think it's -- see, I want to say -- it's Las Vegas Boulevard I'm sure.

Right. Because it's near the library.

Yes. It's almost right next to Lied Discovery and the library, yes. Yes. What was I going to tell you? Oh. That's another thing that's sad is that this is the last year for that Rainbow Company. I heard that that is closing.

I heard that.

It's just so sad, the changes. But hopefully it will come back. Hopefully it will come back.

Yes. Tell me about downtown. What do you think about what Mayor Goodman has tried to do downtown? He's trying to bring back the coffee shops and all of that. He's trying to bring back small businesses, little bars, like Bourbon Street in some areas. Have you walked down there recently?

Oh, my gosh, yes. Yes. My husband loves the matzo ball soup at Binion's.

Okay. Good, good.

We took the granddaughters and they loved the soup. We had a great time.

I like that.

We don't go down there frequently. Back in the day we used to spend a lot more time down there. But what he has done is phenomenal. And the new Smith Center opening up, oh, my gosh. Just all the new buildings. His personality, it's a little abrasive at times.

Just a little rough around the edges.

There you go. There you go. Yeah. But what he's accomplished is pretty amazing, very amazing.

I have a sister here from California visiting for a few days. And I took her to see that new building, the Ruvo Center.

The Ruvo Center, yes.

Have you been down to see that?

I have seen that. I think most people are very negative on that architecture and feel it is such -- oh, what's the word? I mean it's for mentally ill people or schizophrenic.

It's for brain research.

Brain research, right. And it just doesn't seem right that there's a building that you wonder if it's right or if it's falling down or not. Even people in reality have a hard time looking at that building. So, yeah, I have mixed feelings about that building. How do you feel about that building?

Well, for the first time I got out of my car. And you can walk through the outsides of it. So you can walk into the atrium part. It's unusual.

Is it? Okay.

And now, I haven't formed my opinion yet. We saw it from all angles we could find yesterday. I just want to continue to look at it. It's just amazing.

Do you remember who's the famous architect that --

Frank Gehry.

Gehry. I remember hearing a story on it and PR how he had -- Larry Ruvo had to really twist his arm to do it. And sometimes I wonder if it was his weird sense of humor.

It was a little angry?

A little angry under the surface. Yes. It makes me wonder. Let's just leave it at that.

Okay, good. Well, I love your talk about the city and how you've enjoyed it here and all of that.

Are you going to retire here? Would you continue to live in Las Vegas?

Our daughter lives right up the hill from us in Henderson. So there's no way that we would move. And I don't see her moving. And our son is four hours away in Valencia, California. He's so close. So I doubt it. I really doubt it. I mean my husband would love to move up with Mary and Duncan McCoy in Boulder City. He's always admired Boulder City.

But that's so close.

Yes, it is. Boulder City's always been attractive to him. But I don't think that's going to happen. He's too cheap. He won't be moving.

Okay. Tell me about your plans for retirement. What do you plan to do? You're still so young and vibrant.

Claytee, this is kind of unexpected for me. I mean I knew that they may offer this again, but it was like I can't leave the CML.

What is your wildest dream for retirement?

As everyone, I want to travel more. I guess I would call it my hobby. I love going to national parks. And a few years ago my dad and his wife, Bernita, we've been to Yosemite. We were kind of on a roll. We went to South Dakota and saw -- what's that called, the monuments with all the presidents?

Mount Rushmore.

Thank you. And then we went to Yellowstone. And Yellowstone blew our minds away. Oh, my gosh. So I've got a plan to take all the grandkids there at the appropriate age because I know a lot of them will not like the smell of those little bubbling pots. But just to do more travel.

In fact, already in June -- this had come up before I decided to retire -- Gina's taking the girls to Washington, D.C. to visit her friends and she invited me to go with. So we're going to take the girls. My granddaughter Stella -- the teacher at her preschool had this photograph. They were talking about the President and some kind of paper clipping. And Stella asked if she could take that paper clipping because she was going to Washington, D.C. this summer and she would have him autograph it. Yes. So we have high expectations of our Washington, D.C. experience.

And then in December of this coming year -- of this year; I'm sorry -- it's going to be our -- 30th? Yeah, 30th anniversary.

It's usually the man who forgets, okay?

I know. It's like what year is this? We're doing a family Disney cruise. My son and family is coming and so is Gina and the girls. And we're all going to go down to the Florida one. We've done the California and go to Mexico. Now we're going to do the Florida go to Mexico. We get to do that Disney island, which is really what got the whole family excited because that island that Disney has.

Oh, I think that's wonderful.

Yeah. We went on the previous Disney cruise and we just had the best time. Our son decided not to come on that one and then he regretted it. My husband just still praises that cruise. He just had the best time. The only thing he didn't like was the snail-paced Internet service that was on his computer. He was so upset.

Oh, my goodness.

But everything else was peachy keen. He just loved it. So he was right in tune with us when Gina

suggested we should do that again.

Oh, I love it. So when do you think he'll retire?

He says it's going to be another three or four years. But they have a new dean coming in at the Hotel College. Did you see the E-mail?

Yes, I did.

Don Snyder.

Yes, I saw that.

And he sounds wonderful. He raised a lot of the money for the Smith Center evidently. He got the community to participate. Yes. So they're very lucky to have him. It sounds like the president and vice president snagged him and he said yes; that he would do it as an interim. And they don't know if it's going to be a year, two years. They're not sure. They did do a search. My husband was on that committee to do a search. They considered it a failed search. But anyway, it sounds like this might ignite some new life in the Hotel College.

Oh. So you don't know how long he might stay.

So I don't know. I don't know how long he will stay.

Oh, that's great.

I know as long as he feels good he wants to keep teaching.

Oh, that's wonderful.

And he enjoys teaching. He does Internet classes over the computer.

So he can do a lot of classes in his pajamas.

He usually gets dressed. But, yes, he's very comfortable at home. Yes.

I think that's great.

It's a lot of work. It's a lot of hard work.

I bet it is.

He says a lot of professors don't even want to think about it because it is so much work, so much work. And then when there's problems with the computer, oh, my gosh. Yeah, you walk delicately when he's having issues. But, yeah, he enjoys those classes. In fact, he was just doing that, but now he's gotten back into -- they call them hybrid classes where they meet and do online.

Oh, that's good.

In fact, Mary McCoy's daughter took one of my husband's classes online.

Oh, that's great. This has been so interesting.

Claytee, this has been so easy.

See, I told you. Didn't I tell you?

You did. I didn't have to worry.

And then I have one last question.

Uh-oh. That's probably going to be the doozy, huh?

One last question. What is your favorite book?

My favorite book? I have to think about that because Amy said they're going to play the book in the library for me and I have to find a favorite book.

That's right. And that's why we need to know.

Yes. That's going to be hard because I've read or listened to so many books. Eve Bunting was one of the guest authors that Jen had come out. They get grants when Jen was head of the library.

What a magnificent person she was. These authors -- we've had quite a few over the years that I've been there. They're just so down to earth and just share how they started out, how their manuscripts were rejected and they hid in the bathroom from their kids and just pouted for hours. They're just so nice, like your next-door neighbor kind of person. And all of her books just warm my heart. She just has the neatest picture books. Oh, my gosh. Love her books. I think you would too. You should get over there and read some.

I have to.

So I can tell you a person that I really admire. But as far as a favorite book, I'd have to really give that some thought. In fact, Amy's expecting me to come up with a winner.

That's right. I really appreciate this so much.

Claytee, I appreciate your skills. You've made it so much fun.

Okay, great.

You were right. You said you would. And I didn't know I had so many memories. It's like, What? You're so good.

Well, and what you told me about CML -- there's no one else that can give me that kind of information. That's wonderful.

Well, thank you. Thank you. Someday you have to do Jen as well.

Oh, yes. Definitely.

She remodeled that whole CML once the preschool moved out. That was under her direction. The hardest part I think was taking all the books out. She and Kate Hahn came up with a formula of lining them up on the floor in the teacher prep room in order so that when they went back in they weren't a mess. They still had to do shelf reading.

But still.

But still it was quite an undertaking. Jen's a phenomenal person.

That's great. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Claytee.

Binion's, 18
Brookings Institute, 16

CML, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 19, 22
College of Education, 8, 9, 16

Dale Deacon, Mary, 3, 15
Dettre, Jack, 3
downtown, 1, 2, 16, 17, 18
Dr. Dettre, 16
Dr. Marks, 3
Dr. Unrue, 14

Edelman, Dotty, 3
education building, 6
Erickson, Hal, 3

Fabbi, Jen, 4
Fitt, Steve, 4
Fox, John, 13
Friends of the Library, 14, 15

Hanford, Barbara, 13
Harter, Carol, 11
Hurt, Shirley, 14

Iannuzzi, Patty, 15
Illinois, 1, 2

Iowa, 1

Kwon, Myoung-ja, 3, 6, 14

Lindsey Institute, 16

Mayor Goodman, 18
McCoy, Mary, 6, 21
McCracken, Debbie, 8
Michigan, 2
Michigan State, 2
Mlynarczyk, Flo, 14
Morales-Jackson, Cathy, 6

national parks, 19

Rainbow Company, 17, 18
Rothermel, Kathy, 6

Sierra Nevada, 9
Simon, Matt, 3, 15, 16
Tuma, Kay, 6

University of Denver, 2

War, Kathy, 6
White, Maria, 6