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Interviews with
Patricia and Herman van Betten

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

A Nevada Oral History Project of the 1970s

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

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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

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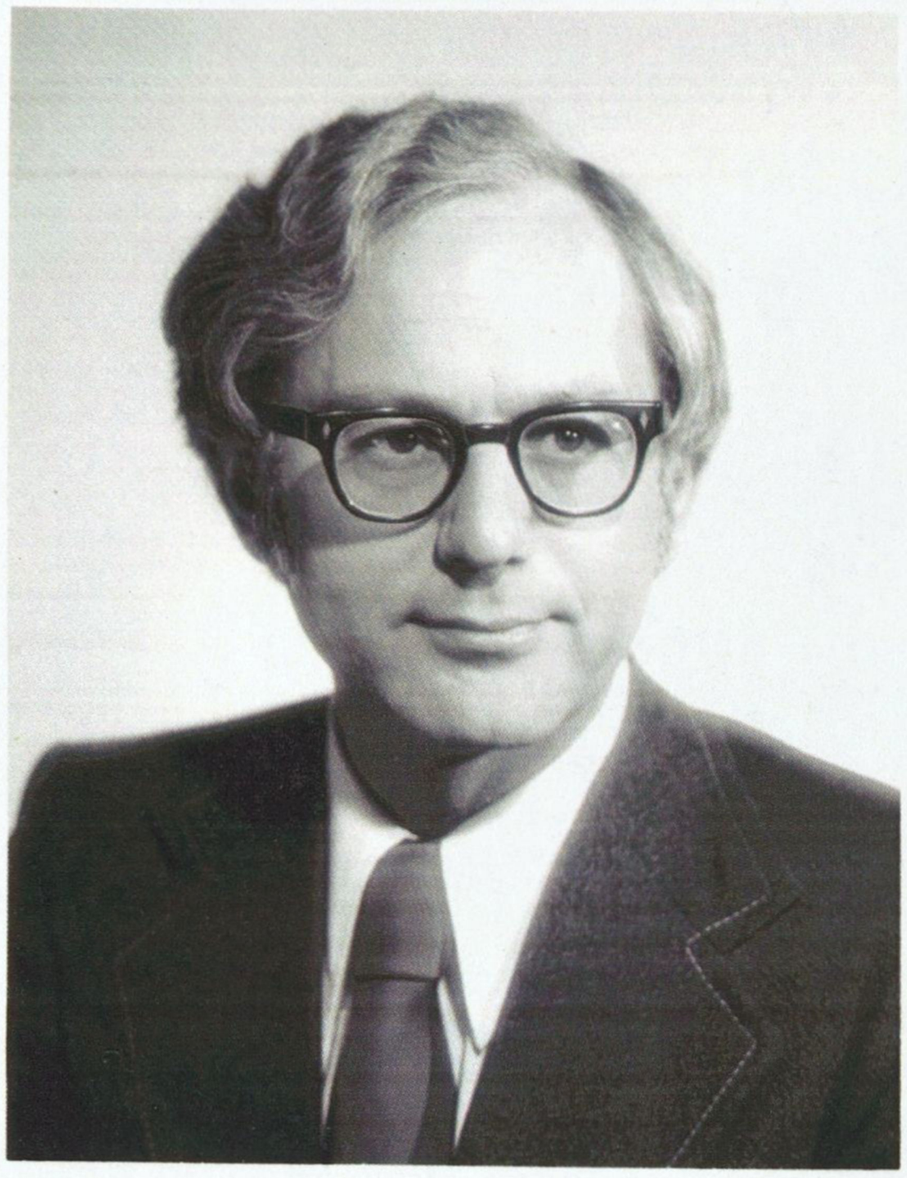

Herman & Pat 1970's

Preface

Patricia and Herman van Betten met in Pittsburg through their volunteer work on the John F. Kennedy Campaign. After their Connecticut wedding and Herman's studies at the University of Texas and the University of Southern California, they and three small children moved to Las Vegas. Their fourth child, a native Las Vegan, was born in 1968. In 1967, Herman acquired a position at the Nevada Southern University, which is now the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Beginning in the 1970's the couple worked diligently to make the Las Vegas community a great place to live. They participated in The League of Women Voters, The Consumer League, the Welfare Rights Movement, and the Community of a Hundred. Patricia served as the President of the Consumer League and Herman was elected to the local school board. They were jointly appointed by the ACLU as Civil Librarians of the Year, 1990-1991.

Currently retired, they engage in civic, environmental, and historical activism in the village of Blue Diamond. Their lives prove the quote by Margaret Mead. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." These interviews with Herman and Pat allow you to grasp the idea of community change that endures for decades and causes you to think of the possibilities of your own volunteer service.

Melanie, Herman, Tom, Patricia, John, Paul

This is Claytee White. I'm with Pat van Betten. It's February 6th, 2007. And I'm in her home in Blue Diamond.

So how are you this morning?

I'm just terrific. Thank you.

And would you spell your last name for the transcriber?

Yes. It's lower case V-A-N, space, upper case B-E-T-T-E-N.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

I want to know about your early life. Tell me when and where you grew up.

I was born and raised in a small town in Connecticut, southeast corner called Norwich, named after Norwich, England. And for a while they did sister-city things when I was little. I was born in a little neighborhood that had mostly people who worked in the factories. My parents built their own home on a little street called Pratt Street, very close to a park. We walked to school. I walked to Greenville Grammar School, K through eight. Our class pretty much stayed the same, not much turnover. The teachers were regulars.

Then I went to the Norwich Free Academy, which was a public school with its own board of trustees. They were people who were quite visionary I realize as I age. One was the person who set aside the land for the park, a beautiful big park with walking trails, a skating pond, a swimming pond. And then in the academy, which was a free school, you had choices. I was in the classical program. Other programs were scientific, general, and commercial. It was just wonderful. Everyone went to that school. It was "the" school.

The population was about 30,000 and it's still about 30,000. It was a lovely place to grow up. We had an empty lot next to the house where we would play ball in the evening. We walked to school. We walked home for lunch up Eighth Street hill, down the Mohegan Park Road and up Pratt Street. And you never thought a thing about it to walk home for lunch and walk back to school. So it was very nice.

What did your parents do for a living?

My dad was a glass blower at the American Thermos Bottle Company, which makes the glass liners for Thermos bottles, if you remember what those are. My mother was at home, but she took

some jobs to save money for college for us.

Neither of my parents finished grade school. I've interviewed my mother. In her history she talks about not being allowed to have any books in the house. Couldn't do homework; had to sit on the steps of the school and do her homework. And so they were determined to have their children go to college.

And it's really lovely because one of my aunts had a washerette. My mother worked there doing people's laundry, going through the dirty clothes, folding the clean clothes, you know. Then she took a job at a little general store down by the school, the elementary school. She met one of the owners of the store through the PTA work at school. They wanted her to come to work at the store. She worked there for I don't know how long. I want to say maybe 40 years. I called her the Carol Burnett of the Leader Store because she retired once from working on the floor where she sold plumbing supplies, then was rehired and kept busy dusting furniture. It was a store that sold everything -- appliances, furniture, plumbing supplies, you name it.

A general store?

It was a general store called the Leader Store. And so she retired and they had a party and they gave her a watch. And then they said, Okay, Mary, what time are you coming to work on Monday? So she stayed. She just became part of that Navick family. It's so beautiful. She never missed a bar mitzvah. She never missed any of their celebrations.

Give me the last name of that family again.

Navick, N-A-V-I-C-K. Of course, we were very active in St. Mary's Church, which was on the same avenue as the Leader Store. It was just really wonderful. It was so wonderful. They just treated her like family.

Your mother's name is Mary. What is your father's name?

My father's name is William. His middle name is Amadeo. He was also referred to as Madeo. Some people that we refer to as American called him Bill.

They were both first-generation American-born with Italian parents. And so my mother would just -- I love to talk about her because she was an environmentalist before there was a term for what people did to save and reuse and recycle. And she wouldn't be able to define the word for you today if she had to. She's 93. But she did it. One of my memories is on trash day, which was

once a week, we had a tiny, little galvanized trashcan. It must have been less than 36 inches high. It was always only half full.

And a family of how many?

Well, I had a brother and sister. So a family of five. You know, if it was a vegetable scrap, it went into the mulch thing. We had a big garden. They grew a lot of their own vegetables. We used to have a man come by. He was always called the ragman. He would have a horse and a buggy. He'd come down the street. And you could go out with a bag of rags and sell it. He would buy the rags. But before we did that we had to cut all the buttons off and put them in a button jar.

She did a lot of canning, a lot of preserving. We would go up to the woods in the spring and summer and pick blueberries and blackberries. Then we would sell them for a quarter a quart. And my neighbor, Mrs. Marks, she would say, "Patty, when you go get the blueberries, will you remember me?" So I would go over with my blueberries, get my quarter for a quart of blueberries.

We'd walk up to the milkman's farm and get dandelions. We had dandelion soup a lot. I remember walking home from school and being so hungry and sitting down. I would say, oh, no, dandelion soup. I'm not hungry.

So all those years your mother worked, how did you have a lunch ready when you got home from school?

Well, she wasn't working I think until I was in high school. And when she did work it was when -- she was a stay-at-home mom when we were little. My dad used to work swing shift. It would be two weeks days, two weeks nights, two weeks evenings. So sometimes we'd have dinner before we went to school in the morning and sometimes we'd have it noon and sometimes we'd have it at four. So it depended on his schedule.

But anyway, the high school counselor -- it was interesting in hindsight now -- the high school counselor asked me did I want to be a nurse or a teacher. And I said, well, I wanted to be a nurse. There was a nurse in our neighborhood and she always looked so nice walking to the hospital. You know, I used to take care of my dolls. So I was looking at Massachusetts General because I had heard about that hospital. My mother had had some surgery there. And my friend's brother said, Have you thought about really going to a college or a university? And so I started

getting information about that. He suggested Catholic U in Washington, D.C., which is where he had been a graduate student.

So I applied and I was accepted. So that's where I went to nursing school, Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. I graduated high school in '54. I graduated college in '58. So I think the tuition our first year was a whopping $6,000 or something like that. But it was quite expensive for us.

I know my dad would come home from the factory because she always would make his lunch. He'd bring his lunchbox. Of course, you never had anyplace to go out to lunch. He would have pepper sandwiches and he would have all this Italian stuff. He would say that they were saving to send us to college. Well, I was the oldest. He would just get criticized so much from people at work. Why are you wasting your money on a girl, sending a girl to college? That's really stupid. I mean things like that. And he would come home. He told my mother. And my mother said, This is what you tell them. You tell them, Are you paying for it? Well, then tell them to keep their GD mouth shut and that's the end of it. So it didn't bother her. She did everything. She did everything you know to do. But it was so natural for us to live that way. You know, it seemed so normal.

But they ended up with three children all completing private schools. It was wonderful. My sister went to Boston College.

Her name?

Her name is Lillian, L-I-L-L-I-A-N.

That's my sister's name as well.

It's a lovely name. And she taught school for many years in Connecticut. She's a biologist, a botanist really. I like to think of her that way. My brother went to St. Thomas College in St. Paul and then went to Georgetown Law School. So my parents can feel very good about the fact that they made it all possible. So now we tell them -- I mean we would tell them and tell my mother now just don't be concerned about any of us because you made it possible for us to be successful. And so it really was wonderful.

I remember after I was married and my husband and I were at a party, I met a woman who was in law school. I swear to God I was stunned. I said I didn't know we could do that. I mean I

was stunned and I was offended that a counselor never said what else you could be. And now that I see where my other classmates who lived on the other side of the town -- you know, the town has a revolutionary core history and there are some old families. I mean they did other things. I'm delighted with nursing. I love it. I think if I had done something else I would have ended up in nursing anyway because I do love it. But not to know that you had other options and I see what that other woman had become...but anyway, that just startled me.

I think that's wonderful. Now, tell me how you met your husband and how the two of you came to Las Vegas.

Well, after I graduated I did visiting nursing in New Haven, Connecticut, which was wonderful. My very favorite as I look back, I think my most wonderful, favorite job. I decided to move to Pittsburgh to do public health there. I was working for the Allegheny Public Health Department. I was sharing an apartment with a gal who worked at the health department while I was looking for a place to live. I learned from my supervisor about a place called the Greystone, which was in downtown Pittsburgh. It was four gray stone buildings that were boarding houses. I think two of them were coed and I think two were just for women or one for women, one for men. I was in the women's. I moved into the women's. I think it was either 125 or $150 a month. And that included breakfast and dinner and room service, linens. And so I lived there. I had a little car and then I had a district out in the boroughs.

So the place was owned by Mrs. Yarrington. And people always say that she had been a Follies' girl. Anyway, she was quite petite and quite elderly, always dressed elegantly with pearls. And the dining room had been, they said, the art gallery of the mansion because the walls were covered with kind of a velvet. The meals were served at dinner by law students I think from Pitt or Duquesne. I can't remember. But anyway, they had to wear white jackets and serve us.

Did you dress for dinner?

This is before women were wearing pants. But we would come in from work, but you'd be in a dress. Public health nurses, we wore the uniform, the dark blue and white, a dress, and big old clumpy shoes because you're comfortable.

Well, I went to dinner one night, one of the first nights, and I needed a place to sit down and there was an empty chair at a table. A political discussion was going on. It didn't appeal to

me. The things they were saying didn't appeal to me. So I introduced myself. And this man next to me said something about being for Kennedy. And I said, well, actually I'm a Stevenson person. I just wasn't interested in this conversation. Well, I married that guy. So we like to say we met during the Kennedy campaign.

But it's a place where professionals lived. The men were mostly at U.S. Steel. My husband was a translator at Alcoa. Of course, I was the public health nurse in the group. But the meals were wonderful and they were always by candlelight. When we became engaged Mrs. Yarrington and the group gave us a party and a set of sterling candleholders like they had on the table there.

Do you still have them?

Yes, I do.

Oh, wonderful.

Yeah, I do. So we met and we began dating. Then my husband decided that he wasn't cut out for that kind of corporate life. He came in wearing a Kennedy button and was challenged and things like that.

But anyway, we were very idealistic. He thought, well, he'd really like to teach. When he had come to America in the mid 50s from Holland, he was drafted. So he served some time in Germany in the U.S. Army and had taken some coursework. So one of the people at Alcoa, another Dutchman, had been to the University of Texas and suggested that. So that's where we went. And he did his undergraduate, bachelor's and master's at UT in Austin.

Then he applied for and received a fellowship -- I forgot what they were called -- Hubert Humphrey. It was his idea and it was a way to reach out, as I remember, to broaden international understanding. So the fellowship was in comparative literature. And so we ended up at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Our first child was born in Texas. I did public health in Texas at the Travis County Health Department. I had wonderful experiences with migrant workers and just really amazing, amazing opportunities. I really liked it. And being a Connecticut girl, who knew that -- well, I discovered in college that I talk different from other people at the time. But our little corner of Connecticut had a very broad accent like people have in Massachusetts. And so I didn't know when I would

say "pak the ca" [park the car] that everybody didn't talk that way. My mother still does, of course. But I've managed to learn correct pronunciation over the years. But once there was a call at the Travis County Health Department for me. And the patient couldn't remember my name, but he said it's that foreign nurse.

So they gave the phone to you.

Yeah, they gave the phone to me. So that was wonderful. And I remember my first contract in Texas I think was for $4400 a year. We were eligible for married student housing for $25 a month.

Contrast Pittsburgh, Austin and Los Angeles. Those were dramatically different places at that time.

Yes, they were. They were. It's hard because I really saw it from what I was doing with public health. And from that point things were pretty much the same. The human needs were the same. The scrambling for resources was the same. Except in L.A., I didn't work in L.A. because now I was at home with the children. But we did manage to organize the mothers at married student housing and get the oleanders removed from the playground because they were poisonous. So there's been a little streak of activism all along the way.

It was funny. After we were married and we honeymooned in Southport, which is the western end of Connecticut, which is quite Republican, we went into this little motel and there was this huge Kennedy poster hanging there that my husband had sent in advance and asked them to post. It turns out the person who ran this motel was the head of the Democratic Party or committee in that little town. So people have a way of finding each other I suppose. But we do have fond memories of that campaign. And we did volunteer in Pittsburgh to get the vote out. I remember being assigned to a place called the McKees Rocks Bottoms. I thought wow. But politics has always played a big part in our life and the importance of being involved, too.

How did he convert you to Kennedy?

Well, that was the choice we ended up with, you know. Actually then, I really did become a big Kennedy supporter. It's just that my first choice was really Adlai Stevenson. I do like Stevenson.

I remember when we were at USC Hubert Humphrey was on campus one time. I wanted to thank him for sponsoring these fellowships because we were now able to benefit. And I

remember, Claytee, I was in line. I had a baby in my arms. I was waiting, waiting. I was rehearsing, rehearsing. And so finally I'm getting close and I see there's Hubert Humphrey, bald and very short. I mean I didn't realize he was that short. And I was so awestruck by the man that when it was my turn I put my hand out and I went eh, eh, eh. [inhaling rapidly] And the person behind me said, Move it, lady. That was the end of my meeting of Hubert Humphrey. So much for wanting to thank him and everything else.

But during that campaign when Hubert Humphrey was a candidate we were living here. I remember we used to make Muriel Humphrey's campaign stew a lot because it was a way to connect with that campaign. It's a wonderful recipe. And she would make it on the campaign trail. And I thought, oh, I've got to do it, too. But when my husband was finishing his doctorate, he needed to be close by for returning and defending it and so on. So there was a teaching position at UNLV and he was hired here.

What did you think about moving to Las Vegas? What had you heard about Las Vegas?

Claytee, we arrived in the afternoon in the summer.

What year is this?

I think it was '67. That's the first time I ever realized a breeze could make you hot. I mean a hot breeze. I never heard of such a thing. You say the breeze and you say, well, I'll go stand outside. And it's like a heat wave hitting you. It was terrible.

He had found a place to rent. We were way the heck down on Shepherd Drive, which was down at the end east on Tropicana, which I think Tropicana was either a two-laner or a dirt road. I don't remember. And I think that salary was about $9,000 and we thought that was oh, wow. So he taught at UNLV and he was in the English department there.

I didn't work until I went back to work in about 1975. But when we had small children at home and I was getting cabin fever, my husband said, "Why don't you find a group or something to go to like League of Women Voters or something like that?"

Well, so I found a meeting of League of Women Voters and I got myself over there. I remember that's the night my life changed. It was at Bonnie Cantor's house. That's C-A-N-T-O-R. And I met these women that were so incredible to me -- Jan McCachrin, Naomi Millisor, Jean Ford, Mimi Katz, Gertrude Katz, and Harriet Trudell, who is now one of my dearest

friends and I love her dearly. But Harriet gives new definition to activism. She was my mentor with all my activities in the Democratic Party. It was so wonderful to see these women who were so knowledgeable on the issues and discussing them and planning. Dorothy Eisenberg. I mean wonderful, wonderful women. I know I've left some out. So you get the idea. I mean it was a collection of really bright women. I was involved with that. And I don't remember the issues now except that was the catalyst for me to get involved in the consumer movement.

Before you talk about the consumer movement -- that's one of my main points -- tell me what the League of Women Voters is and what it's all about.

Well, the League of Women Voters is a collection of bright women -- and by the way, they have some male members -- who become very knowledgeable in a nonpartisan way on issues that are relevant and then publish those findings, share those findings, encourage people to work for reform, encourage people to become knowledgeable on the issues. And I mean really knowledgeable way down to thorough, thorough. It was just an eye-opener for me that there was such a group.

So once they become knowledgeable on an issue, they didn't, then, publish information about that issue?

Yes, they do. And they have presentations. In fact, a group that I am involved with now, the Nevada Health Care Reform Project, was founded by League of Women Voters. I mean it was their concept, their plan. And we are a coalition. And I've been representing nursing on it now for I would say maybe 13 years. We have monthly meetings. Ruth Annette Mills is our chair or president or whatever you call it. I guess you say president. And I've been the vice president. But we have written into our bylaws that the leader will always be from the League of Women Voters because then you have the assurance that you do not have a special interest at the helm, which is so critical. And I think that's what makes the League so valuable is that knowledge.

Well, the League propelled me into the need to do something about the consumer movement. And I can't tell you exactly what the turning point was. I simply can't remember. But it was that. It was being exposed to women in the League. But it was also the Kennedy influence. We were in Texas when Kennedy was assassinated. And that assassination was in Dallas. And Austin was the next stop! My patients had little flags in their windows waiting for Kennedy to

come. I can't remember exactly how I learned of the assassination, but I remember that I drove home immediately to our little apartment. Our neighbor who lived downstairs -- I said Kennedy's been assassinated. And he said they should've killed the speechwriters, too. And so I was stunned. But it was such a turning point.

We didn't have a TV. We drove over to a friend's, a nurse that I worked with. In fact, she's the coauthor of the nursing book with me. They were our longest friends after we were married. I mean the first married couple we met. They had a television. So we threw the baby in the car. We had a crock-pot. We just lived on crock-pot beans and just were glued to a black and white television. And as we were driving from our little apartment over to their house, Oswald was killed. And so we got there and we were just stunned. I mean people were stunned.

So I think that left you with a sense of -- I mean it in the most wonderful sense. People had a belief that they really could make a difference and that you must do something to make a difference especially after this assassination, that you must apply this "ask not what America can do for me, but what I may do for America."

Is that the Kennedy influence?

That's the Kennedy influence. That was in his inaugural address. We have his inaugural address. We have a lot of Kennedy memorabilia.

So the consumer movement, there were just a collection of people that were interested in the same thing at the time. It was the most wonderful group of people, all volunteers, never counting the time you put in, never counting the effort. We focused on really -- our goal was to really make a difference for the consumer. And as it turns out I think some of our earliest actions had to do with wedding chapels. That's such a Vegas thing. Jack somebody was on our board. You know, whatever people were interested in on the board that's what we would do.

Muriel Stevens was on the board. She had a television cooking show at the time at Channel 5 and she had a radio show. Charlie Levinson, who's now deceased, was absolutely wonderful. He taught in the hotel school. We called him our milk and meat man. I mean he knew milk and meat. We got into things with the dairy commission, with meat quality, price controls. Geri Renchler and her husband were very interested in the problems of food additives.

It was the most wonderful time. It was a time where Muriel would invite me to go on her

radio show and we would talk about an issue. Joe Delaney, who is now deceased but was really a wonderful local personality, had a radio show. And I remember I think it was either at the Sahara or the Landmark. I think it was KDWN and I think it came from both places at one time. But go in and do a show with Joe. Then Harvey Allen had a radio show and he'd invite you in. You could talk about the issues on the air. It was just wonderful, wonderful.

We did price surveys. We did grocery price surveys. We did Christmas toy surveys. We published the results so people could see where you could buy things. I'll show you later some of the pages with the prices because the prices of things were incredibly low. It was a result of the surveys and the public -- and we had a newsletter. We'd be involved with utility rate increases. Especially the meat and the milk with Charlie was absolutely wonderful.

And then at one time -- well, when O'Callaghan was governor, in his State of the State he took two of our issues and made them priorities for his session. I remember Harriet called me and she said, Aren't you thrilled that O'Callaghan has those two? Because by now I was very active in the Democratic Party thanks to Harriet.

Do you remember the two issues?

Yes, indeed.

She was my mentor. But she told me that. And I said, But, Harriet, we have so many more issues than just two. And she said, Do you realize what it takes to get issues into the State of the State Address? I said no. She said, well, this is wonderful.

They were -- at the time we had a sales tax on food. He made it a priority to remove the sales tax on food because it discriminates against the poor and against people on fixed incomes. So we're talking the 70s now with this Consumers League of Nevada.

And then the second issue was really an important one, equally important I think. That was what we called open pricing for prescription drugs. And at the time you could not -- well, it was prompted by a report that was in Consumer Reports from Consumers Union. And by the way, with the Consumers League startup we had wonderful help from a man in Arizona, Currin Shields. The consumer movement was blossoming at that time in a lot of places. The report from Consumers Union was that people could not get prescription drug price information over the phone. In other words, if you had a prescription and you needed 20 of something, you couldn't get

on the phone and call three different pharmacists and see what it would cost. You had to physically take your prescription in and show the pharmacist and go from place to place. So it was not a consumer-friendly law. That's the State Board of Pharmacy.

So we decided we would do some pricing of prescription drugs and we'd go different places. And it was not easy, but we did it. And we published the results and it was dramatic. The percentage increase from one to another was, oh, I think -- well, more than 300 percent on some of them. Anyway, I'm so delighted that all these newsletters are in Special Collections at UNLV because this is really valuable. Well, there were places that refused to give pricing information. I mean the State Board of Pharmacy was hostile. I remember one pharmacy that was so expensive and they were so critical of Consumers League about it. They were the most expensive and they were close to the Strip. So we published that report. And then O'Callaghan when he was governor made it a priority to have open pricing on prescription drugs.

It was about that same time that Joe Neal proposed a consumer on the State Board of Pharmacy, I believe. And I don't know about the makeup of the State Board of Pharmacy now because I haven't kept up with that.

But at that time we had the Dairy Commission that was -- I mean we were coming in I think like a breath of fresh air for the consumer. And the good old networks that had been operating unchallenged and unquestioned were suddenly becoming very defensive. So those two issues Governor O'Callaghan passed and he changed life economically for people in this state, especially removing the sales tax on food. Can you imagine? And so that was so major.

Now, we also wanted an independent Office of Consumer Affairs, which we did not get. But he did establish a division in the Department of Commerce. And I will say that he was very supportive. And so those were wonderful successes, really wonderful successes.

They are.

And then in about the mid 70s we decided it would be fun to go with the family to Holland. And so I thought, well, I could go back to work and we could save for that because at the time the university faculty salaries were not spectacular. So I did. I wanted to go back to work part-time. At this time my husband was on the school board. He had run for office and was elected to the Clark County School Board.

Before we talk about that, the Consumers League's first item was something about wedding chapels. That's such a local issue. Could you please explain that?

Well, I have all the scrapbooks on it. I don't know if this was -- on our very first newsletter we had somebody testify against the price increase by Southwest Gas and Nevada Power. And we did the Market Basket Survey. But the articles about the wedding chapels were about people being charged for things like the flowers when they thought we were going to get a cheap wedding. It's really kind of fun.

Are these the flowers that they use for everybody's wedding?

Probably. Yeah.

And so Richard Bryan was on our board in the beginning when we started. It was just really wonderful. We were going to have a speaker from Washington who didn't show up. We started I think in '71. One of the first ones after we formed -- I mean we started in August of '71. Then one of the first issues was an article by Chris Crystal, who was a wonderful reporter for The Sun, called "No Bliss for Him," about all the extra charges at the wedding chapel.

But, you know, it was like we were trying to fill this huge vacuum with concerns about everything. It was 24-7. And people would think nothing of phoning me on a Sunday morning or Saturday night with a consumer issue, and I would think nothing of trying to solve it. So when I decided to go back to work --

Before you tell me about your first job, who is doing that for consumers today; what the League did in effect?

No one. The Consumers League after several years just sort of withered away. You know, I always thought if you leave a vacuum -- and we had some wonderful -- I was the first president. And then I can't remember who the interim president was. And then my friend Yvonne McClain was president and just a marvelous woman, hard worker. But I don't know if we tried to do too many things that we burned everybody out. It's possible. I don't know. But there is no longer a Consumers League

What year did it end?

I would have to really research that for you, Claytee. I'm not sure. I would say the last half of the 70s, probably, I think. It certainly I think did not go into the 80s.

That was wonderful. I've never heard of the Consumers League . So this is wonderful history.

And I'm so delighted to have found the newsletters because, of course, I didn't have the foresight to save them like that except some of the clippings. But when I went to the reference librarian -- we always brought our newsletters to every library. And so I thought they might be in the reference library on Flamingo, which was the main library at the time, but they weren't. And she suggested Special Collections, which I hadn't thought of. So I appreciate you finding them because I have some things now to supplement that.

I applied to the school district to share a position with another nurse who is also a dear friend who was returning from maternity leave. My husband was on the school board. So if you were related to anyone on the school board, the whole school board had to approve that application. Well, Kenny Guinn was superintendent. He and my husband are good friends now. I mean they became friends when my husband was on the board.

But you know how they used to ask -- and we know why they did it. On a job application there used to be a place for you to put a photo. You're too young to remember that. You used to have to put a photo on a job application. Well, I knew that wasn't required or even allowed. So I crossed it out, the place where the photo goes. So I used what I had available, which happened to be a red pen. The fact that I crossed it out in red pen spelled trouble. This gal is trouble. So it took awhile. I mean the superintendent had to look at it and then the school board had to approve it. So anyway, I got hired. I did elementary school nursing. But I intended nothing other than to just show that I didn't have to put a photo there. But I probably should have used a blue pen.

What did the red ink mean to them?

Well, I guess -- I don't know. I guess red is --I don't know.

We're not talking about the Cold War?

No. We're talking like I made a statement.

So what was the purpose of the photograph on an employment application?

Oh, I believe that in the past the reason for a photo was to see whether you were black or Caucasian. I mean why else would it be?

Anyway, then I went back to work part-time so that we could make a trip to Holland and

23 years later I retired. I went full time the second half of that first year because I learned a valuable lesson. There's no such thing as part time. There is no such thing. If there's work to be done, you stay and do it. Especially nurses, they're not clock-watchers. So I enjoyed it so much, mostly elementary school nursing, and have watched that evolution. We had I think 22 nurses when I first started and I think they almost have 200.

That's probably not enough.

No, not at all. And so the school district is getting ready to celebrate its 50th anniversary. And I want school health services to be archived in that because we've seen some dramatic changes. In fact as I look back, my colleague Cora Stockman and I in the mid 80s worked with the school district photographer Roland Armstrong who was a wonderful photographer. He's now deceased. We prepared a slide show about school nursing. We had slides and then we had it put onto a filmstrip. So we did that. The staff was still small enough that there's a slide with all the staff on it.

We did it to help other people understand what school nurses do. I mean within our own district that was the intention. And as it turned out, some nurses went to a school nurse convention and took it along and it was very popular because it filled a need for other places as well. So we found out we could sell it for like $25 or something. So we did that. Then we thought this is so great. This is money for the School Nurse Association. Then our supervisor at the time, who was a not a nurse, said you realize that money belongs to the district; you did that on district time. Oh, no, we didn't. But, yes, here it is. Anyway, that was really quite wonderful. We enjoyed that very much. And we could show the versatility of school nursing, which really exists to make it possible for children to learn in the best way possible.

Explain that.

Well, if a child has a vision impairment or a hearing impairment or a physical disability that may interfere with learning, then you want to remove those obstacles. School health has now evolved where the educational plan incorporates the health status. It's all very child-centered and focused on early detection, teaching, support.

I loved making my home visits. I'm very comfortable with home visits because school nursing is an aspect of community health. All my experience prior to this job had been

community health, public health, visiting nursing where you did actual hands-on treatments, procedures. In Pittsburgh with the health department we also did school nursing. And in Texas with the health department we also did school nursing. But in New Haven, Connecticut, the school district had its own nurses like it does here.

And so then as things evolved and my assignments changed, I realized that I was really handicapped not knowing Spanish and I wanted to learn Spanish. So I found an immersion class in Baja, California. My husband drove me down to the school. The school opened at five. Well, he wanted to get back to San Diego before dark. So he dropped me off. I sat on the steps with my suitcase and he drove back. Then the people came and opened the school. It was wonderful. It was an immersion class.

First they did a preliminary assessment to see where you were, to see where to put you. And I was pre-primmer. I think I knew two words. I knew mesa, maybe from living here. It was really wonderful. If you were caught speaking English, you had to put a quarter in the piggy bank. Well, that was the most quiet two weeks of my life I have to tell you. Everybody lived with a different family. I lived with a family. It was $25 a day. I had my room and I had my dinner. And they were supposed to speak Spanish to you. But I didn't know enough Spanish for them to speak Spanish to me, so they practiced their English.

But anyway, I came back with some rudimentary understanding. At least when I had a health history filled out by a parent in Spanish I could pull out things that were not normal. I mean it gave me a little bit of a heads up. But it was wonderful.

There were people from the SWAT team in San Diego in the class. There was a medical student from UC Davis. There was an attorney from Los Angeles and a bunch of teachers from Iowa. In our pre-primer class we had I think three of us, just getting the basics. But it was wonderful.

It was the year of my 58th birthday. I remember that because it was June and that was the time of the big O.J. Simpson chase on the streets of L.A. because that was on the television there after the murder -- murders. The guys from the SWAT team were saying look at this chase going on in L.A. We had gone to this tiny, little place, all of us, to celebrate my birthday and the television was on. So that's the only way I remember that.

As things changed in the district -- it has become so large. But at a point it was a time when you pretty much knew all of the principals, or many of them. You certainly knew everyone in your own staff. So that was really a wonderful time.

When is a home visit required for a school nurse? How do you know?

Well, if a child has a health problem, you want to discuss it with the parent and make a plan on how they can work through to take care of it. It also gives you an assessment of the environment that that child comes from where you're expecting to have some change and it helps you make a realistic plan and to also bond with that family. People are much more comfortable in their own home discussing a situation.

It's for that very reason that when I did visiting nursing in New Haven we used to take the medical students from Yale out on home visits with us because if you have someone coming home from the hospital with a heart condition who's got to limit activity and watch his diet and all the things that you have to do to make his life as comfortable as it can be, it's important for this guy to know he lives on the third floor, that he has to go up those stairs to get there, that the market is two blocks away, that he's on a fixed income, that he lives alone. So it helps people to be realistic and to accept where people are coming from and not to impose what we want them to do but to help them see how they could do what needs to be done in their own setting. I think home visiting is one of the most valuable.

So you did home visits in the 70s as a school nurse here. Is it still done today?

Oh, I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is.

Was it done throughout your 23 years with the district?

Well, as needed. You do it as needed. You certainly don't do it every day. But you do it when you need to or if you're trying to help families get financial assistance, to go help with that. And nurses do this as needed. But sometimes you have to just be the transportation for someone and pick them up and take them someplace for them to get the care. So being flexible and being open, it's all part of it. I mean that's public health nursing. The baseline is -- well, in all nursing the baseline is nonjudgmental. The home visiting is always so important because you know that you need to make some changes in order for this to work. And you make those changes together. You talk about what's going to work. So it increases the success rate for the child.

What was the school district like for school nurses in the 70s because we were in flux? We were getting ready for school integration or a plan of school integration. So what was that like for school nurses?

At that time when we had busing and students were bused in, little, tiny people in the first grade on a very long bus ride would sometimes arrive with wet pants because that's just the realities of what it's like for a small child. And then sixth graders bused to the sixth grade centers. It was a solution that people came up with before I started working, really. I think the intention was to integrate. The burden was really on the black community because they were bused in the lower grades and the others were bused in sixth grade only. That's one of the inequities. And, yet, people said it's because the schools on what was the Westside were inferior. And so the problem was very complex, but the solution was -- I mean that was the solution that they had in place at the time.

Sometimes I would make visits on the Westside because I was trying to meet the needs of those students and if a parent can't come to the school for a conference to meet with you on that. You're so far away. So that was something that I did and enjoyed doing. So it was --

(End Recording 1.)

Claytee, I know we were talking about the school integration, but I don't feel that I'm extremely knowledgeable about that.

But I would like to go back if I may to something with the consumer movement because when I was president of the Consumers League I had a call and an invitation to serve on the National Poison Prevention Packaging Committee, which was then part of what was known as the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA. I had a letter of appointment from Elliott Richardson, who was with Nixon's staff, which I always find kind of funny. But anyway, the thing that was exciting about it for me was they met in Washington, D.C. three times a year. Although I had gone to school there, when I was at school there, I had a very limited allowance. And so I never got to see the city. So I thought, oh, it would be fun to be back in Washington, D.C.

Anyway, I did serve on that for my term. What's important about that time was that's when they were discussing the problems with aspirin and childhood poisonings from aspirin because they were so easily accessible. So the Poison Prevention Packaging was focused on safety

closures for aspirin and then, of course, prescription drugs and other harmful substances. So I worked with some really great people whose names I can't remember and people from the FDA that kind of sat in with our committee.

I was appointed as a consumer when I was called. I said, well, I'm a consumer, yes, but I'm also a nurse. They said but you're not working as a nurse, are you? I said no. That's before I had gone back to work. They said, well, then you're qualified to serve as a consumer. I said, well, that's great. So I did.

And it was during that time that Poison Prevention Packaging passed and it began to appear on aspirin bottles and other things. So it was a really critical time to be on it. That's before the FDA became the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

So you're the person that I'm to blame when I can't open my calcium.

Yes. And I remember so clearly one night I got a call from Harriet Trudell at about 11 p.m. And after she went through a litany of words that we are not going to be able to print, she said, Get over here and open this (pause); I've got a headache. Yeah, I paid dearly for that. But the data on the number of deaths and accidental ingestions was extremely powerful.

Right.

Also during the consumer movement, on one of these times, I visited the Office of Public Citizen, which was Ralph Nader's group. I think his name was Sidney Wolff when we were working on the prescription drug issue. And I think Sidney Wolfe was the medical. I think he's a physician. Anyway, I met with him.

I didn't meet with Ralph Nader at that time, although a funny story. Sometime later Ralph Nader was speaking at UNLV and I went over to hear him and to be there. So it was at the -- where were we? Was it the Student Union? Anyway, the student president came in all dressed up in his suit with several of his board, the students. They were getting ready to introduce Ralph Nader. So I went there. And I introduced myself and I got that up-and-down look that says, "Look, lady, you're not important, don't sit down," you know. So I sat down.

Of course, we had been in touch with that office about everything that we were doing with prescription drugs and everything else. I can't remember, then, if I had introduced myself to him off stage. At any rate, at one point when these guys were acting so important and looking so

important, up on the stage Ralph Nader said something like, You need to be more like this woman Pat van Betten, and he pointed me to me down there. And these well-dressed, pompous, little students just kind of inhaled and said, Huh, her?

So you didn't become speechless in front of Ralph Nader like you did Hubert Humphrey.

No. No. But Hubert Humphrey...

But that was kind of fun because it just is a reminder, you know, to withhold judgment. I've learned a lot along the way. But, yeah. It's like when I was dating my husband and he was translating at Alcoa, sometimes I would come in from a snowy day out in what we called out in the field. Of course, I had these big heavy black-tie shoes on that are good for your feet and comfortable and my long coat and my long dress and my old scarf. I'd be done early, so I would go over to Alcoa and go up and sit in the waiting room and wait for him. And all those secretaries that looked like they stepped out of Vogue would look like, How did she get in here? And then Van would come out and he'd say, Ready to go? It was just kind of fun.

But, yeah, the consumer days -- I'll tell you, though, when I went back to work, I had a life. I had no idea until I stopped doing it 24-7 that I had been so consumed by it. That's one of my biggest problems is I tend to let myself get consumed by things.

Did your husband ever regret telling you to go and join a group?

Ha, ha, I never asked him.

Now, tell me about his work on the school board. Do you remember any of those issues that you're allowed to talk about?

Well, he probably would be the better one to talk about that because if I speak for him -- I know I'm about to do it. But it was an interesting time for him to be on the school board. That was really his only desire was to serve on the school board. He ran for the State Board of Education once. He didn't win. He ran with our friend at the time Jackie Stormson. They were kind of a ticket. Of course, Jackie I had met at the League of Women Voters, also. And so they were really kind of funny. People would refer to them as Batman and Robin.

But when you run for office, you have a forum for bringing up the issues that are important that people to need to discuss. So I think it's important for people to run even if they feel like they have no chance of winning because it expands the horizon of issues for people who maybe have

never thought about something that way.

I have to tell you one of my favorite Harriet stories with the Consumers League of Nevada. We were facing a garbage rate increase and the vote was before the city commission. Now, Kermitt Waters was -- I think he was the city attorney at the time. He was on our board. David Cantor was on our board. Richard Bryan was on our board.

But anyway, they had this garbage rate increase coming up. We were opposing it because we didn't have all the data that we thought people needed to have to support a rate increase. And so by then Harriet had made me an activist with the Democratic Party in which she was the mother activist. So Hank Thornley was on the city commission. We said the vote is coming up for the garbage rate increase. I said, Harriet, I want you to come to the city commission meeting with me for the garbage rate increase. She said, well, I don't have any information about that. I said you don't need any information; I just want you to sit with me in the front row and just keep constant eye contact on Hank Thornley, who was also active in the Democratic Party.

So that's what we did. We went down and made ourselves comfortable in the front row. We testified. Harriet just stayed focused on Hank Thornley. We lost the vote, but we had one vote, Hank Thornley. I mean there are people that just don't cross Harriet. I don't know if you've met Harriet.

No. And tell me about her.

Harriet is my mentor in the Democratic Party. And I think everybody in this community has at least ten favorite Harriet stories. But she is a dear friend, has been a dear friend just about as long as we've lived here -- well, since I went to my first League of Women Voters' meeting, which was probably in '69, probably. She has a very colorful verbal delivery. Some of it's not quotable. When she gets her ire up, she gets high verbal and loud.

In '91, my husband and I were honored by the ACLU as civil libertarians of the year. People gave little talks. And our daughter, Melanie, spoke. She was speaking of Harriet. And she said I remember when Harriet would come to our house and I would say, Mom, your friend with the dirty mouth is here.

She just was my mentor with the Democratic Party and candidates. We've been involved with -- well, during the consumer movement one of our -- she's now deceased, too -- one of our

board members and member Jack Adrian was a candidate for public office. We would walk precincts. We just thought nothing of mobilizing and walking precincts and with a stack of literature for candidates. And we'd always put our favorite candidate's paper on the top. She just is a wonderful person and so genuinely dedicated to justice. I mean really wonderful, just a wonderful person. I just love her dearly. We've done a lot of things together from antiwar protests, antinuclear protests.

There was a very active antiwar movement during the Vietnam War here in Las Vegas and especially based at the university. We were part of members of a group called Committee of a Hundred and people who protested the war and were vocal about it.

Tell me about Committee of a Hundred.

I'm trying to remember who -- Libby Bargeil; Harriet; several of the Franciscans; Louis Vitale for sure, the Franciscan Father; George Katz. We had all the names down the letterhead on the side. All these things were concurrent. There was this real mood of "I can make a difference" and "I'm going to" and "I'm going to be part of this movement to make life different." There was really an idealism that people believed in. I don't feel it now. I feel a sense of despair and I feel a sense of just being overwhelmed.

There was a headline in the morning paper today about this administration wanting to operate by fiat. It said do people know or do people care? And I think people do care. But I think people are so overwhelmed by everything that's happening. And this town growing so quickly, you see the changes. I mean the changes are -- not only the geography and the physical changes, but the changes in attitude. I mean it's not easy to establish a sense of community with like-minded people as easily as you could in the 70s. I miss that. I think it's possible, but it takes a lot more work. People are more spread out. People's lives are more rushed. There isn't a time just to sit and think and to kind of take stock of what needs to be done.

But do you feel that here in Blue Diamond? Do you feel more of a community?

Yes, I do, to answer your question. I feel community and I feel community and I believe it's possible to build an even stronger community. It's a wonderful place to live. And people are supportive and kind. And you know your neighbors. So it's a nice experience. I feel really blessed to be able to be here because we moved here in '99. We retired in '98. So there's

something to do wherever you are. That's the reality.

And I'm going to ask you about history in a little while, but tell me more about what the antiwar movement protests were like in Las Vegas.

I don't remember a whole lot, really. People would go to the federal building. There would be speakers on campus, organizing on campus, a lot of student awareness, student involvement, visible protesting with signs and letter writing.

My husband would say things like I really don't want my name in public because I've got a job and all this. So I was always very careful. So I wrote a letter to the editor against the war and I signed it Herman and Patricia Tringe, which is my maiden name.

So I get a call from Harriet. She says great letter. I said, What are you talking about? She said, How many Herman and Patricias do you know that are against the war? It was just, oh, so funny.

The same with the Test Site. He would say, well, I don't mind if you go, but just don't get arrested; I don't want my name in the paper. Okay. So I would go. And people would trespass. And the dutiful person, I would stand there, you know. And this one time I said, well, I'm going out to the Test Site with the Franciscans. There's a vigil always at Holy Week, ecumenical. People come from all over. It's a wonderful experience. He was reading the paper and he said okay. So okay; so I did.

So it came time to trespass and I did. Of course, the man from the Shoshone nation is there to give you permission to be on their land. And when you trespass you simply go across the symbolic line, which is the cattle guard. And so many of my friends -- Sister Rosemary and Louis Vitale and Marianne Smith -- had trespassed so many times. I finally got to join them. It's a very powerful thing. It's a very powerful thing to be arrested. And they put your hands in these plastic handcuffs. By then, they had built the compounds, one for men and one for women at the Test Site. So you didn't go to Beatty like people did in the beginning. You're in the compound until they call you out. It's that sense of being separated from society, isolated. You're different from the person who arrested you. You are very vulnerable. All of the emotion of that was a very, very powerful experience for me. I mean I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Just being there -- the compound is big -- and just being able to think and realize you are captive now; you can't get out

until they let you out.

So then we were released. I came home and I thought, well, I'm not going to say anything about this. So I didn't. But I did write my daughter and I explained everything to my daughter, all of my emotions and everything. It was Good Friday. It was a very powerful time. She was in L.A. So we drove in to see a play. She's a performing artist. So we always wait to meet the cast after the show. And so the cast came out. And I'm standing with my husband. One of her friends said, So is this the jailbird mother you're talking about? And Van said, What are they talking about? I said, Who knows?

Well, I knew you get something in the mail. So I kept waiting and waiting to get something in the mail from Nye County from the sheriff's office, which I did, finally. Of course, there's a big penalty. But, of course, you have permission. It's Shoshone Nation land. Of course, the fee was limiting. But I told Louis Vitale, I said, Louis, it is one of the proudest moments of my life that I get this statement from the sheriff's office and we are alphabetically close together on the list.

Now, tell me the background of the Test Site just for the tape.

Well, the Test Site was an area where the federal government did, first, aboveground testing and, then, belowground testing. There is a group that -- actually the vigils at the Test Site to oppose nuclear testing were started but Sister Rosemary Lynch, who will be 90 this March. She still goes. She's part of a Monday morning group that I belong to. In fact, they were here yesterday. Sister Rosemary said I would like to celebrate my 90th birthday at the Test Site. So we will do that. She is a marvelous woman and just a wonderful role model.

Has she ever been interviewed?

She may have been for the Test Site project. I hope so because some people have talked with her. She is just a wonderful example of what you can do. She is Franciscan. So, of course, nonviolence is their bottom line and it is their way of life. She teaches by example more than anyone I know. Just a beautiful woman. I learn from her. She has so much wisdom. I say, Rosemary, this cannot be your first time around; you can't get this smart just this one time. But she's absolutely wonderful and just great.

So the vigils at the Test Site have started from that sole voice to something that is now -- I

mean I would say it's international. It's certainly national in all faiths because this is not a one-faith thing. This is a humanity thing. So especially during Holy Week there is a walk to the Test Site. People walk -- I think they go ten miles a day. I've been out there with Rosemary and my mother. We drove out and then walked back to meet the marchers. And then they have a religious service.

People walk all the way from Las Vegas?

Yes. Yes. And they stop. I think they go ten miles a day and camp. I'm not positive. I've never done the walk.

Which year were you arrested?

That I don't remember. But I have my documents somewhere in a safe place. I have a lot of safe places here that I haven't been able to find lately. But I saved that paper because to me that's just a treasure.

I think now that we're facing again testing, which as Rosemary said yesterday, it's blasphemous to call something divine, straight. So there's the mobilization of people again. People who have been involved with that, like Louis Vitale and Sister Rosemary and the Franciscans, have become the core of that action. And she's done wonderful things. She's taught workshops on nonviolence in Europe. She's written about it. She's just very modest, very humble, but a very powerful person. So I'm really blessed with some wonderful friends. Harriet is part of our Monday morning group, too, by the way.

So Harriet is in the same room with Sister Rosemary?

Oh, sure. They've been friends for the longest.

Oh, that's wonderful. Now, tell me how you met Ruby Duncan.

I'm trying to remember how I met Ruby Duncan, but probably at a welfare rights rally or march. We were part of the march on the Strip. But I think I had met Ruby before that. I just was trying to remember that, when it goes back to. I can't remember the beginning. But I know that during that time Ruby started Operation Life on the Westside, which was a clinic. My friend Andra Fjone -- that's F-J-O-N-E, A-N-D-R-A, Andra Fjone -- nurse practitioner, was a nurse there. I know that in something that's been published about the welfare rights movement I'm identified as the nurse at that clinic and that is not correct. Andra Fjone was the nurse at the clinic. I was

called by people in League and people working with welfare rights to serve on the board of directors of Operation Life as a nurse for nursing when they were having financial problems. And so they were reestablishing what they called a so-called blue ribbon board. And they wanted nursing on it. So Rene Diamond, whom I also met in League, suggested my name and called me. And I did serve.

We had to work with Region Nine, people from Region Nine in San Francisco in terms of funding. At that same time there was a clinic called Vegas Verde's Clinic. And my friend Willie Fields was on that board. Willie lived and worked in North Las Vegas. And then as time evolved and the problems continued, the two clinics merged and became Community Health Center of Southern Nevada. I continued to be on the board and so did Willie. And then as time went on with the problems continuing, we had to hire a director for the clinic. We had two choices, but one of the choices was strongly recommended by Region Nine. And I guess we read that as a must.

So we hired this guy named Chuck Silloway, who was supposed to have been a Dominican priest on leave from work in Rome and la, la, la. Well, it turns out not only was he not who he was perceived to be, but he had contributed to the financial problems of the clinic by not -- when IRS notices came for payment, they were stuck in the drawer. And people would call and say they were behind getting their paychecks.

I wasn't the treasurer, but I signed checks with the treasurer. I mean I was the co-signer with Chuck Silloway on things. So when problems began to really fester with the clinic and it was obviously clear the financial problems were massive, I ended up having to get an attorney because I had my name on the check because I was signing checks. So I was identified as one of the financially responsible people. You know, finance has never been my strong card. That's not a big thing with me. But my husband said, oh, this is becoming a mess. It was in all the papers. And we were trying to decide what to do.

I remember once we had an emergency board meeting over at Willie's shoe repair shop in North Las Vegas. The TV media came over to film it. And we were trying to have a little meeting. My son called and said, Mom, was that you I saw on television tonight?

But I mean it was a mess. I remember I had to get an attorney, an IRS specialist attorney.

Meanwhile, Harriet's calling the congressional delegation – Reid [Harry Reid], Bilbray [Jim] and Bryan [Richard] -- saying the Van Bettens are going to lose their house. I remember going to see the attorney. And I'm sitting there and I said I need to know what it would cost because I'm a volunteer and I've been on the board for X many years and these are the problems that we know have happened and I'm concerned about my personal liability and how often we meet and how long we meet and everything. He took me by the hand and he said, You know what? You're a volunteer and that's great, but I'm not a volunteer. I'm $250 an hour.

So another lesson. So we did. Then I just rotated off the board. It was so tragic because the clinic was meeting a need, a tremendous need. It was on West Owens. And the staff were dedicated. I mean the providers were really wonderful. Just a question of -- you know, not everybody has the same motives. I mean I'm 70, but I'm still a Pollyanna on a lot of stuff. I mean I probably should be a lot more cynical, but I'm not. Sometimes that takes its toll on you. But still, in the long run that one person -- you can't take away from all the positive things that were going on with the staff and the care that was being given and the services that were provided. And I haven't kept up with what's happened. I think there is still a clinic. There are health services. But I don't quite know what's going on on the Westside.

When I was doing school nursing I became very involved with efforts to provide health care for children, like a lot of school nurses before me, and those efforts to identify where the needs were and to get people to donate services. I think at one point doctors were getting the funding through WICHE, the Western Interstate [Commission for Higher Education] whatever, who were called on to give services and to provide dental care. You become very resourceful. I think school nurses and public health nurses as a rule are very resourceful people.

I remember one time I had a dentist who had agreed to see a child who was in the first grade. His teeth were so bad. They had so much decay. So I got him to the dentist. I had permission to transport him. I remember the dentist had him in the chair and he opened his mouth. And then he turned to me and he said, Don't you ever bring me a child with this many problems again, in front of the child. And so you try to be there for the child. And the child got some care. Not everybody has an attitude like that, but somehow that's what you remember and it makes you a little bit gun shy the next time around. On the other hand, there were people who would do

wonderful things just on a call. So he's not typical.

I remember Marvin Sedway, who had served in the assembly. He was absolutely wonderful. He's now deceased. But Marvin was an optometrist. He was very active in the antiwar movement. The nice thing about the antiwar movement, Claytee, you made friends that were so genuine and so solid. And you maybe wouldn't see somebody for ten years, 12 years, and then you picked up where you left off. It was just really wonderful. I remember when I was doing school nursing, oh, years after the Vietnam War, and I was really trying to get some glasses for this child who didn't qualify for any of the services. I just called Marvin and Marvin said, Bring him in. You just can't put words to those friendships that you established. It was just the networking that was wonderful, really wonderful.

Tell me about the attitude in Las Vegas to welfare rights overall.

Like what do you mean?

I want to know how people who lived here, how did that see that movement?

I can only speak for us. We saw it as valuable and necessary. And we were not reluctant to be part of it. I remember the Welfare Rights march on the Strip when my friend -- they had a bus. They were arresting people. Of course, dutiful didn't go. I mean I had promised that I wouldn't. But I remember Jimmy Skomall was on the bus and he rolled down the window. He said, Pat, call my roommate and tell him I've been arrested. I said okay. Then I said, wait, I don't know Jimmy's roommate. I don't know who to call. I don't know what to do.

So where were you?

On the street.

Okay. So you were on the sidewalk.

No. We had been part of the march. And then they did an arrest and I didn't go onto the bus.

I see. So people volunteered to be arrested?

I believe so. I believe so.

I see. Do you know any of the attorneys that worked with the welfare rights movement at that time?

I'm not sure. Maybe Tom Lien did. He's deceased. I think that people were taken before -- I think the judge -- Harriet would know this better because she was always front and center on this

stuff. But I think Jim Santini was the judge that had to rule down on a whole bunch of his friends who were standing in front of him. Harriet would be better to address that. I'm sorry.

What was the press like regarding that march on the Strip especially with the presence of Jane Fonda?

That I don't remember. That I don't remember. I do know that as part of our consumer movement we had a woman named Sylvia Leeks. She represented a group called Poor People Pulling Together. We had groups that were members of Consumers League, as well as individuals. And Sylvia I think ended up on the board with the Consumers League. But I don't remember. There were a lot of groups and there were functions on the Westside. But I just don't have a really good, clear recollection of that. I'm sorry.

No problem. Do you know anything else about Poor People Pulling Together?

I don't remember much more about it. I was wondering if I did. I will say that after serving on Poison Prevention I think we got a billboard. We found ways to pay for a billboard, to go back to that for a second, to create awareness. And then we had Governor O'Callaghan sign a proclamation.

And then I hadn't gone back to work, but I organized field trips for the elementary school near my house when you could walk to the grocery store. You could walk to Lucky's across Maryland Parkway and it wasn't busy. I don't know if it was second graders. I took all the second graders at different times on field trips to the grocery store to learn about poison prevention and also to learn about why you wash your foods before you eat them. A produce man, who is now a friend too, was there and would talk to the kids. So there were some really good things happening with creating awareness and working in the community. And you could do it because the size was doable. It would almost be impossible now to stay connected.

What was the influence of the Las Vegas Strip in all of this? Did you even think about it?

Oh, sure we did. After we lived way out on Tropicana, we bought a tiny, little house near Robert Lake Elementary School. It was about a block east of Maryland Parkway. We were so naïve. We had no down payment except my husband's VA. He could get a VA loan. And the Realtor had asked to show things that we could afford, so there weren't a whole lot. And then there was this one house. I think I might have been pregnant and we wanted to be near the hospital. So anyway,

we bought this house that we pretty much looked at dusk dark. We looked through the windows and said, oh, this looks nice, little naïve couple over here. Anyway, we lived there. Then we moved a mile east of that.

But we were close enough to the Strip that we could go down and just -- and it was a time when you could get the really cheap breakfasts. There was a little casino there by the Stardust. I can't remember what it was called. But we would just go down. We would just go out for a few hours and get a babysitter. Then we would have a cheap breakfast. There was a little casino called the Bonanza, which is I think where the first MGM was.

Where Bally's is?

Yes. And it was a tiny, little place. I think whoever it was, maybe it was Steve Wynn, had bought the property, but this little Bonanza just stayed there. I can't remember the name of this entertainer. He is funny. He's kind of a standup and he sings. He's local. We used to go down there and hear him. The consumer movement was on. And then he would say things from the stage about the consumer movement and say hi. It was very cozy. And you could go from place to place and it was very affordable. If you had ten dollars, you could go out and have a good time and have breakfast.

So we're talking about the 70s?

Yeah, we're talking about the 70s. Yeah, before you saw all the big changes. You could go to lounge shows. I don't remember a whole lot, but they were there.

My parents used to visit from Connecticut. My dad used to love to walk from our house down to the Strip. It was a two-mile walk. And he could do it and just kind of explore around and come back. It was just kind of fun, a very, very simple (indiscernible).

But the school was right across the street. It was nice. Then sometime later when I was working I was assigned to that school as part of my assignment, which was fun.

Now, this is also the time when the Strip was changing from being family owned to corporate ownership.

Yeah.

Did that reflect at all in the city in these changing times?

Well, I think it did. I'll tell you a story. When I was at Robert Lake, two of the students that went

to Robert Lake were the children of Frank Rosenthal, who lived at those country club houses up there across from Maryland Parkway. I think he -- I don't know. I don't remember if this was before or after his wife's death. I think it was after his wife's death. We were doing vision and hearing screening at Ruby Thomas School. Richard Davis was the principal. When you're doing screening, your schedule is very tight. You know, you have one class coming and so on and so forth. We told Mr. Davis, We're screening, so unless it's an emergency, please hold the phone calls. So we're screening and over the intercom in the room we were working comes Mr. Davis's voice himself. He said, Mrs. van Betten, you have a phone call. I said, Oh, please take a message, Mr. Davis. He said, Mrs. van Betten, it's Frank Rosenthal. Yes, sir, I'll be right there.

Sure enough, it was Frank Rosenthal. He said he was going through some papers and had come across this audio referral for his daughter, Stephanie, who was a swimmer. People had said she was Olympic quality swimming. Anyway, he was upset that he had found this audio referral that had not been dealt with in his -- I don't know -- maybe his papers. I don't remember. I wanted to assure him that that was simply an indication that more screening needed to be done than what we did. That's before we were checking -- before we had otoscopes. We were just doing the screening and referring the kids who failed. Later we had otoscopes and we could check to see whether there was a wax buildup or something. So I had to assure him that it was simply a screening finding and it did not indicate a serious problem necessarily, but just that it needed further follow-up. But Mr. Davis spoke to me later in private. What did he want? It was so funny. It was so funny.

And I think it was that Christmas that Harriette Babero, who was the 5th grade teacher at [Robert E.] Lake -- we both got big philodendron plants from Frank Rosenthal for Christmas. No, it's not still alive. I wish it had been.

But, you know, you could go for meals. You could go for entertainment. And there was very much of a -- I don't know. It was very comfortable. The ambiance was really nice. And not knowing any of that other stuff -- I mean really I didn't --

Do you think most people were the same way; that they didn't know any of maybe the harsher side of some of these people who were in charge?

Well, we certainly didn't. I mean you'd hear about it, but we weren't living here then. I don't

know. It's quite different now. It's quite polished, really. But it has been enjoyable living here, really. We came at a time when you could make a difference and you believed you could, and so you worked to do it. I think it's always possible to make a difference. It just gets harder. And when the city is so big, it's like trying to make a difference -- I mean L.A. is not a fair comparison. But in a sense --

Yes, I understand.

You can only do your own little corner where before you could do -- and it have easy to get around. Where we lived it was nothing to drive over to the Westside. It was doable. The bus thing was not fair. And I think this is why David Cantor, he really should be talked to because he did not support the busing as an unfair thing, as I understand it. Now if you were to transport from one side of town to the other, it would take half a day.

That's right.

But David was also on our board with Consumers League. In fact, David helped us with our bylaws. We had gone -- I think I told you this story, but it's so funny because my husband and I went to David's office about the bylaws, you know, ready to sign off to bring to the board (indiscernible). And I had questions about some of them, so I was asking questions. And then I maybe sounded like I was challenging him. I don't know what. But anyway, after the discussion went on for quite sometime, he stopped and he said to my husband, Herman, anytime you want a divorce, I do it for free. So time to cool it, Patricia. But I think that's one of the things I learned from Harriet. I'm going to blame her for that.

Other than busing what other civil rights movement did you see here in Las Vegas, what other portions?

What other portions? I don't know that I know any. I can tell you -- it's not related to this, but I can tell you an incident in Texas because we moved to Texas in '61 right after marriage. And I was working at the health department. One thing that happened, and it wasn't until later that it dawned on me because I was new staff, the supervising nurse asked me would I go to a conference on rehabilitation nursing. Of course, we were newly married and it was in another town in Texas. And I said, oh, I'd love to do that, what a nice opportunity. They said, well, two nurses would be going. I would be going and Mrs. McKnight. Now, Mrs. McKnight was a black nurse on our

staff. I said, oh, isn't that great? So Mrs. McKnight and I went and shared a room and went to this conference. It wasn't until years later that I realized why I was invited to go. And I find that so distasteful and so offensive …I was probably asked because others refused to go.

But on the other hand, there was another nurse on our staff. We had two nurses on our staff with the same last name, Simms. Mrs. Simms, who was on our team, was aging, heavyset black public health nurse and the other was a young Caucasian, newly hired. One day someone came and wanted to see Mrs. Simms. And Mrs. Simms, who was on our team, said -- we said, oh, Mrs. Simms, there's somebody here to see you. She said they're not here to see me. And we said yes, they are, yes, they are, they want to see Mrs. Simms; that's you. So we convinced her to go downstairs. She came back up and she said, I told you they did not want to see me.

She became such a dear friend when our child was born. She was so supportive. I wanted her to come to dinner at our house. We lived in married student housing on the other side away from the campus. She was reluctant to come. Finally I convinced her that she had to come. Well, we had this tiny, little apartment. Of course, I was learning to cook. I was going to show off and make Wiener schnitzel.

So Mrs. Simms comes over to dinner. She didn't park in front of our house. She parked down the street. When she left we said, We'll walk you to your car. She said, oh, no, I don't think you should do that; I shouldn't be seen with you. We said, well, of course, you should. So we both walked her to her car.

We had a lovely time and I just loved Mrs. Simms. I was fixing the dinner and I had fixed the veal. We only had this tiny, little kitchen. And so I had the two dishes ready. And then the third dish I had to balance on the little bar in front of the sink in the kitchen. And I had a piece of veal on each one ready and I was doing the eggs to go over it. Well, I bumped it. And this dish went into the dishwater. So I quickly scooped it out and I patted it dry. So I fixed theirs. I brought them in. And I fixed mine, my soapy one. And so Van and Mrs. Simms is just raving about this Wiener schnitzel. Van said, Don't you like it? I said, It's okay. I had soapsuds. But anyway, that was fun.

It wasn't until later that I realized. I mean I think I was so insensitive to what they were going through.

How did she know that they didn't want her when they came and asked for Mrs. Simms?

I don't know who they were. They were Caucasians. And I think they were something to do with her husband's job or something. She knew it and she sensed it. And we made her go down. It's so awful, really. But in Texas, remember this is the married student housing where after Kennedy was assassinated I drive home and the neighbor says that about the speechwriters.

Well, even in Texas we did nursing home inspections as part of the job. Another example, in a nursing home there was a front building and there was a rear building. The front building, not that it was great, it was crummy. But the Caucasian patients were in the front building and in the back building were the black patients, even more crummy than the front building. It was there, you know. It was pretty alien.

I grew up in North Carolina.

Okay. Yeah. So you have sensed it.

And I'm a little older than you think I am.

I don't think so.

Yes, I am. But you didn't see any evidence of that when you came to Las Vegas?

Well, I didn't. But I think, too, we were -- like my husband was at the university and our friends were enlightened people. So we really didn't have that except in our elementary school we had a woman who was black and became principal of our elementary school. I am convinced that this was not acceptable to a lot of parents. And I am also convinced that there was a deliberate, organized, subtle, very subtle effort, successful, to remove that woman from that position. And that would be in the 70s, too. So I think things were rampant. It's just that I wasn't aware of it until I became aware of it. I became aware of it probably through the Democratic Party as the vehicle for at least creating my awareness and what had to be done and the League of Women Voters. It's a sad shadow on the history, but I think the shadow's still there.

So what do you see as the future of this city with the way we've grown? You look at not just so much social, political but the city itself and the way (indiscernible)?

Oh, gosh. I really don't know. But I can tell you this. There are a lot of people totally unaware of the past and they're not building on it. They're not building on their successes and they're not aware of the challenges, almost taking it for granted that things have always been the way they

are, and not involved, not having a stake in what's happening.

So is that why the history committee is so important to you?

The history committee is very important to me because --

Tell me all about it.

Really?

Yes.

Okay. Well, first of all, we started with a community awareness about the adobe remnant in our village when we had Frank Wright and Dorothy come out and do a program about the history. We had a little breakfast meeting. And that probably was the beginning of breakfast meetings. The breakfast meeting was at our house. And this was followed by a presentation by Liz Warren about the adobe and the work that the university did on that. And we were interested in gathering -- we seemed to have the deaths of three old-timers in a row in the village. And a little core of people seemed to form and we talked about the need to gather oral histories, but we felt we weren't smart enough to do that ourselves. And so naturally, we had to find somebody who's smarter. So we heard that the history department at UNLV gathered oral histories. And so we contacted them. We had a graduate student assigned to us and met with this person at least twice, maybe three times at my home.

(End Recording 2.)

As I said we were working with a graduate student in history. And we had identified two people in particular that we needed to have interviewed. One was Albert Matteucci, whose family were original ranchers in Blue Diamond and had lived in the adobe, very rich family history. And we were thrilled to have found him. In our presence she called and made an appointment to interview this man. Fast-forward to me being on an airplane going to Alabama to help my daughter with child number two. I'm reading the R-J obituary column, Albert Matteucci.

So I called Shirley Leavitt, who was one of our wonderful history members. She no longer lives in the village. But when she's in town we rope her into a meeting. I said I think that's our Albert Matteucci that died. I don't know if he was interviewed. Shirley goes to the workplace and gets the graduate student. And she has the newspaper in her hand. She says to the student, Did you ever interview Albert Matteucci? And the student said, No, I got busy and I didn't do it. And

Shirley shook the newspaper in her face and she said, well, he died.

And so we thought, oh, brother. You know what? We better learn to do it ourselves. He has a son, a dentist in town, Thomas Matteucci. I know that the family was very much looking forward to that interview with Albert Matteucci. And it wasn't done. And trying to repair that breach, we had wanted to interview Thomas Matteucci. In fact, we had someone here who was going to do it. So I wrote a letter to him apologizing and that we were going to be doing it ourselves; we care.

Anyway, I ended up going to his office with pictures of the adobe, with a chart of the ranch, anything I could put my hands on, and just kind of made an appointment and sat in the office until he was free and apologized again. I mean we apologized so many times because we lost that and we'll never get it. I wanted to interview him. And he said, well, he didn't have anything to say. But I knew that he didn't have a patient coming. And I asked, well, would he just talk to me. So he finally agreed. He said, well, he would, but he didn't have anything to say. So we started. And we did a 30-minute interview. And it was so nice. It's a treasure. The man is wonderful. He said I didn't think I had anything to say. It was really kind of cute.

Then I learned that he had interviewed his grandmother in the 70s when he was taking a class from Ralph Roske. And you, Claytee White, are the detective who found that tape and had it transcribed. But I will say that we were moaning and groaning and wondering how we were going to learn to do this. We sent our neighbor to a meeting of an oral history conference when it was in Las Vegas. And she came home with a bunch of notes. We were floundering and wondering what to do when I got what I call my gift from God phone call from this voice that said, My name is Claytee White and I understand you'd like some help with oral histories. What? Yes.

And so as you know, we became connected at the hip, you and all of the rest of us on the Blue Diamond History Committee with guidelines on how to do oral interviews. And it gave us the courage to move forward and to do it. And so we have 31 transcribed. We have four more that are done that need to be transcribed. We have worked with the plant manager at the mine when the plant closed to bring down materials from the horizontal caves to be archived. And that's being done. We have other things in storage for when we ever get a place to display things.

One day I got a phone call from a gal in the village. She said that she had something for

me. Were you here that day when she came over with a box of things from the civil defense days? Penicillin, pressure bandages, also known as maxi pads. I mean a variety of things that I have in the garage. We have a civil defense toilet, never used by the way, in storage someplace else that was taken from the mine.

But you know without the university, to be honest with you, we would be still floundering. Without Special Collections, I mean without the university having matured to the point where this is a resource for the community it's just really great because we are moving. We've been very lucky. Our first grant we got from the Southwest Oral History to help pay for transcriptions. As you know the first transcriptions you helped with because you had some grant funds. We have a small grant from Nevada Humanities to pay for transcriptions. And now we've just been funded for a project of history for the schoolchildren. But all these things were made possible because we have begun to gather oral histories. Without the oral histories you don't have the awareness to know that you need to do something else to preserve and work on the history.

The same way with Angie Bogdanovich DeLong, who is absolutely the most wonderful friend who was a child up on the hill at the mine, came with me yesterday to a meeting of the School District Archive Committee because we want the Blue Diamond Elementary School to be included in the archives. And she had photos and drawings and narrative. And all this is possible because of the oral histories. So that's a beginning resource that leads to so many other things.
So we have a very enthusiastic group here. We just love it. We just bumble along. I think we get better every time.

You guys have done such great work. I am just so proud.

We have the best teacher.

Now, for someone listening to this, tell me what the adobe is.

The adobe was the first dwelling in the village. It historically dates to the 1800s, whether mid or after mid. And it was partially intact until the 1960s, which is the tragedy. And so it was a small primitive dwelling. It was lived in by the Matteuccis. It was part of when they ranched and had I would say truck farming, where they would take vegetables to town.

We have interviewed Vickie Richardson, who as a child Vickie Duarte Richardson was a child in the adobe. And we have interviewed her. That is a wonderful interview. We have some

information that we've gotten from archives, old newspaper stories trying to piece it together. But that will be part of what the children learn about on their history project.

Also, the importance of the spring. This place was called Cottonwood Springs. The spring is near the site of the adobe and the water still runs. It's filled with watercress. Even the early interviews talk about harvesting the watercress to eat from the Bogdanovich children when they talk about visiting the village. And the children will learn about that. This is the plan. The importance of water in the desert. How are you next settling and why it makes it possible? And so we have botanists lined up to talk to the children about that.

The project is designed to hopefully bond the community with the schoolchildren as the catalyst for that kind of learning and appreciation of history and then the need to protect the site because if you don't know -- if you look at it you see a mound of dirt and a couple of rocks. You say, well, not much left. But if you know it then you say, well, how can we protect it? And so part of the plan for the grant is that the children would line the perimeter of that adobe with the community members as a way to set it off and protect it.

So the history committee is -- and we keep finding new people to interview, which is so wonderful. For example, Angie and her sister Sophie and her sister Nina and her brother George, those four siblings, the Bogdanoviches that had lived up on the hill are so close. They are wonderful. They have interviewed a woman who is in her 80s who has a little bracelet from the Arden school. That woman wants to come to our next history meeting. They have interviewed people who now live in Utah. George is going to interview someone who's retired and lives in Arizona but also served on the Clark County School Board or the Unification School Board but was also a person in the village and involved with the mine. So everything is so interrelated. It's really my hope that when we have things gathered and we know what's inventoried and we've got the interviews that we know to do that we can find someone to pull that all together for us. I mentioned it to A.D. Hopkins once and he laughed at me. But I'll mention it again. But he is on our list for the school project for the children to talk to the children about why it's important to document. So hopefully.

As newcomers come into the village they need to know that we have something so precious that no one else has, really, to preserve and save it. It was a stop on the old Spanish Trail. We were

part of the centennial mural project. We have a mural on the east wall of the store that traces our history. The artist worked with our history committee and our materials and read some of the oral interviews in order to come up with a design. So I think as we move forward we're also moving out. I mean it's making it possible to do other things like with the school district and with the mine.

Two things. We think the school, which Blue Diamond School District started in 1929, but there is still a Blue Diamond school open and has been continually since that time. So we think that after Good Springs we are the oldest continually operating elementary school in Clark County even though it's not in the same location.

And secondly, the mine, which there was mining before 1923, but that's when Blue Diamond, the corporation -- I think they were called Swan bought it. And we believe that, because it was in continual operation until 2005 when it was prematurely closed by Rhodes, we think that may be the longest continually operating mine in the state. We just don't have the manpower to research that. But if that's the case, that site needs to be protected. I know it's been suggested by some people in the village -- and I think this is a beautiful suggestion -- that that area become a walking museum where you can actually see because that's a rarity. And so if we have that -- I mean why would you want to put houses where you have living histories?

Is that the next project for the history committee?

Oh, I don't know. But first we want to finish really gathering as many as we can of the oral histories. We probably don't know when to stop. Especially now finding the old-timers, more old-timers, and to have the Bogdanovich clan involved with gathering histories has just made it so much more rich, really. It's been wonderful. So we really have a good time and we think we're doing something -- at least we find it valuable.

It is valuable.

But we enjoy it. But I haven't said a thing about nursing, but that's okay.

Now, you talked about school nursing. Do you want to talk about nursing other than that as well?

Well, I just want to say that I've been very active in our Nevada Nurses Association for many years on legislative issues and trying to work most recent years in gathering our history and

working to preserve that because nursing in Nevada has its own richness. You realize that we had our first university nursing school in the mid 1950s when on the East Coast they've been around for about a hundred years.

So Nevada is moving forward, really. We did trace our history when we had our 75th anniversary for NNA, Nevada Nurses Association, and unearthed some wonderful material. So I'm hoping that nursing will carry the ball on gathering its history and doing more. I'm going to talk to some nurses in Reno in May about that. I'm going to talk to the school nurses Thursday about that. It would be important to be archived because I think -- nursing's role is so vital. But nurses mostly go on and just do the work and we don't stop to think about the importance of preserving because nursing is just not that way. And so while we can interview people at this point and while we can gather records, there's a wonderful collection already in the historical museum up north of some materials. We have things in archives here from district three.

So if you realize that in the mid 1950s the local district gave a scholarship to a woman from Boulder City to go to school in Salt Lake City so she could get an RN, I mean we just have a history that's rather unique in itself. So I just want to mention that because I think that's one of the areas that needs to be done (indiscernible) by other people or anyone who's interested. You can always just start somewhere.

I think that's wonderful. Do you have any closing remarks, anything else that you would like to add?

Oh, not at the moment. I thank you so much for interviewing me and giving me this opportunity to reminisce a little bit and just say that -- anyway, I thank you.

Pat, you have a couple other comments that you wanted to make.

Yes. Thank you, Claytee. These are kind of like postscripts. But I wanted to mention that in 1973 the consumer movement had a group headed by Dorothy Ritenour Wright to look at small claims court. And they got a humanities grant to do that. She worked with attorney Tom Lien on creating awareness of the small claims court and how it operates. There were community programs. I believe that they prepared a film. I'm not sure about that. But I believe one of the results of that action was to raise the limit on what people could ask for in small claims court. So it was a very ambitious effort and very well done. And I hope that you have a chance to talk to

Dorothy Wright about that and her activities related to that.

Something else that has relevancy today is that -- I noticed in going through some of the old notes -- in 1973 people in the consumer movement were questioning the usefulness of a monorail and also called for a regional transportation study and something more effective than a monorail. So what goes around comes around, or else it's still here. I don't know.

But I wanted to mention those two things. There's certainly a lot more tied into the consumer movement. Hopefully someone will be curious and want to explore that further. But thanks for letting me add that.

Sure.

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The van Betten family lived above the store in the house shown here on the corner (The red house). The address is Schoolstraat The Hague, Netherlands.

Herman sitting in the square in front of his childhood home (The white house in the corner) in The Hague. 1995

Herman came to the US on the SS Maasdam of the Hollana America Line in November 1956

Nursing School Photo, Pat.

School of Nursing, The Catholic University of America, Washington DC. Class of 1958.

Pat's childhood home 57 Pratt St.
Norwich, Connecticut

Herman dancing with Mrs. Yerrington,
owner of the Greystone, Pittsburgh, Pa. 1960

1961 Wedding in Connecticut

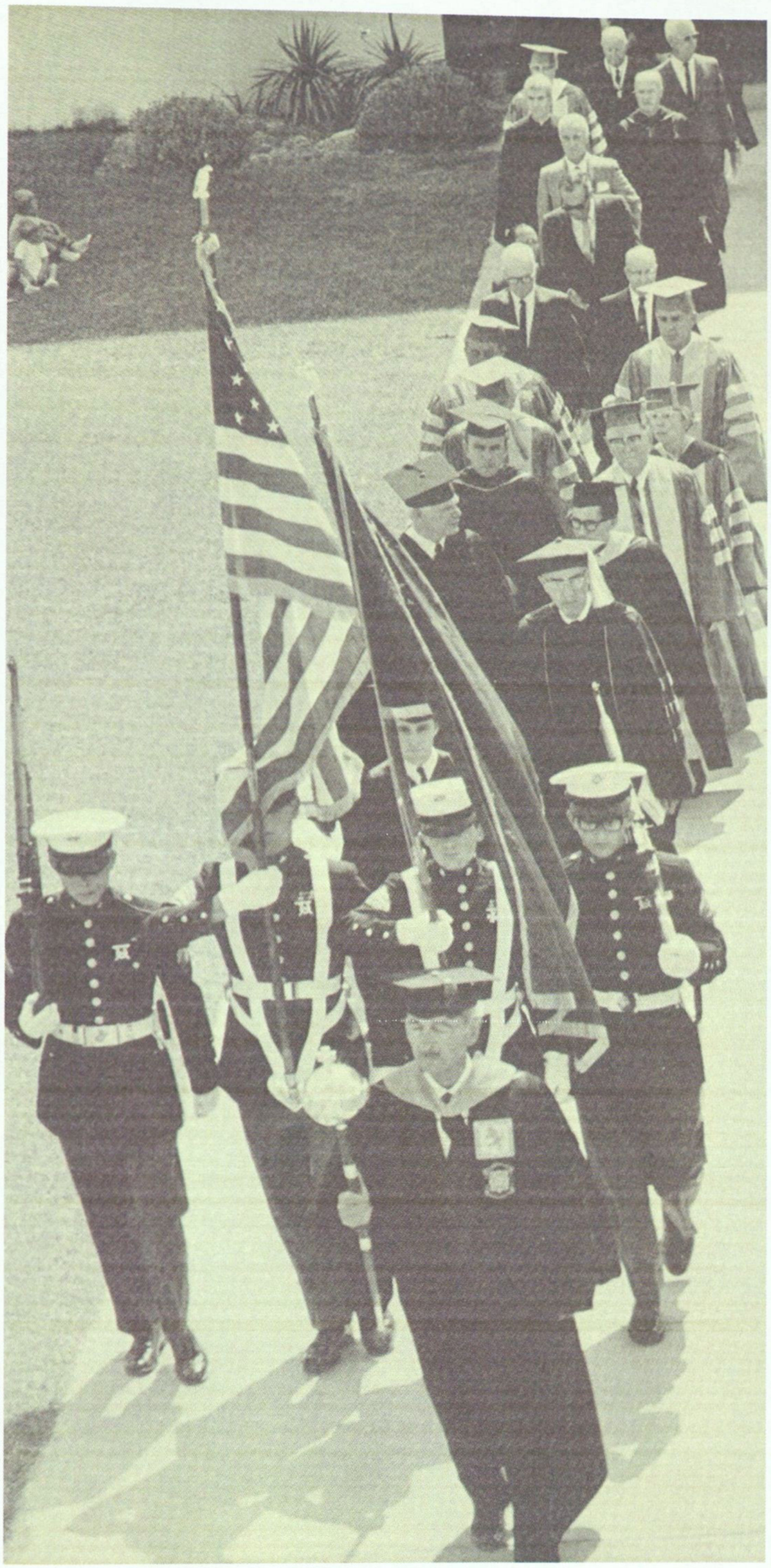
Pat and Herman in front of The Tower,
University of Texas 1962

The multi-purpose lawn chair study corner,
Austin, Texas 1962

Texas 1962

Celebrating the doctoral hood University of Southern California 1966

1968
Melanie, Paul, Herman, Tom, John
Las Vegas



1968 or 1969
Our children are sitting on the grass on UNLV campus watching
graduation procession to see their father.
Graduation ceremony held in the small gymnasium.

Mrs. Patricia Van Betten, Consumer League of Nevada and Mrs. Jane Farrell, R.N., Emergency Room Supervisor, SNMH, look on as Governor Mike O'Callghan signs the proclamation declaring the week of March 17th-28 as Poison Prevention Week.
(Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital)

VAN BETTEN

SCHOOL BOARD

School Board Campaign Photo 1970s.

Dr. H. VAN BETTEN
SCHOOL BOARD

VAN BETTEN has the EXPERIENCE:

- Professor at UNLV for seven years
- Director Freshman Composition at UNLV
- Business experience in New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh
- B.A. with honors, University of Texas
- M.A. and Ph.D. University of Southern California (USC)

VAN BETTEN is CONCERNED:

- President Robert Lake School PTA (1973-1974)
- Member, Nevada Humanities Committee since 1972
- Vice Chairman UNITED WAY at UNLV
- Herman and his wife Pat have four children in elementary school in Clark County

VAN BETTEN has the BACKGROUND:

- Veteran U.S. ARMY, with service in Europe and the Middle East
- Board Member and Chairman of various community organizations
- Member, University Performing Arts Council

VAN BETTEN WANTS TO WORK HARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION YOUR VOTE WILL MAKE THAT POSSIBLE

VOTE VAN BETTEN

Vegas grocery prices change

By Ann Ehrenburg
R-J Staff Writer

The new Consumers League of Nevada has completed a survey of prices at 24 grocery stores in the Las Vegas area and has found a wide price range.

In fact, a consumer could save 26 per cent by purchasing the same 18 items at one store rather than another.

Total cost of the items ranged from $6.70 to $9.05. League members took the survey Oct. 13 and used the lowest price at each store for the items from bacon and bananas to bleach and cleanser.

The League was formed Oct. 7 and spokesmen said the survey was "probably the most complete study of grocery store prices ever made available to the public in Clark County."

House brands were almost always cheaper than nationally-advertised brands, according to the League. Bleach, for example, ranged from 37 cents for a gallon of a house brand, to 71 cents for two famous brands at an independent market.

The League advised consumers to remember "low prices do not necessarily mean top quality products." It urged shoppers to be concerned about the nutritional value of their food dollar as well as saving money.

However, "to get the most food from your grocery dollar, shop comparatively . . the unit price per item," the spokesmen said.

The largest price variation for an individual item was on ground beef — from 33.3 cents to 98 cents a pound in Las Vegas.

This compared with the average hamburger price of 63.7 cents a pound in Los Angeles and 60.1 cents in Seattle, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The low price for bacon in Las Vegas was 53 cents, well below the average price of 72.2 cents in Los Angeles and 84.9 in Seattle. The high price in Las Vegas was 98 cents.

Even the highest price for frankfurters in the Las Vegas survey compared favorably with the average price for hot dogs in West Coast cities.

The low in Las Vegas was 49 cents and the high 79 cents. Average prices estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for September were 78.1 in Los Angeles, 80.9 in San Francisco and 72.8 in Seattle.

Dairy products, on the other hand, may cost more in Las Vegas. The lowest price in the local survey for a half gallon of whole milk was 58 cents. However, the average price was 54.3 cents in Los Angeles and 56.2 cents in San Francisco.

The highest price in Las Vegas was 64 cents a half gallon.

The Consumer League did not average the prices of the items in its survey.

The league plans a second survey this month on toy prices. The results will be released in December, according to Mrs. Pat Van Betten, president.

The group also will work for establishment of a city consumer affairs department to strengthen action against violators of consumer rights in Las Vegas. Also being formed are committees on health care, needs of the aging, environment, insurance and legislative research.

THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20201

JUL 7 1972

Dear Mrs. Van Betten:

I am delighted to invite you to serve on the Poison Prevention Packaging Technical Advisory Committee of the Food and Drug Administration for a term beginning immediately, and ending June 30, 1975, subject to prescribed appointment procedures.

Enclosed is a statement which describes the structure and the functions of the Committee.

I hope you will find it possible to accept this invitation and give us the benefit of your valued counsel. You may indicate your acceptance or declination by signing and returning the enclosed Acknowledgement of Invitation.

Upon learning of your acceptance, I shall ask the Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration, to supply you with further information relating to your appointment.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

Elliot L. Richardson
Secretary

Mrs. Herman Van Betten
1663 La Jolla Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada 89009

Enclosures

Nevada Consumers League President

Patricia van Betten of Las Vegas, president of the Consumers League of Nevada, has been appointed as a member of a federal advisory committee by Elliott Richardson, Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Poison Prevention Packaging Technical Advisory Committee, established under the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970, consists of 18 members selected on a nationwide basis, who represent pediatricians, manufacturers of household substances and those who package household substances, scientists, consumers and the Departments of Commerce and Health, Education and Welfare.

The committee advises and consults with the Food and Drug Administration in the establishment of standards for packaging household substances for the purpose of protecting children from injury and illness resulting from handling or ingesting those substances.

Mrs. van Betten attended her first meeting in Washington, D.C. on July 13 and 14, at which time discussion centered on regulations concerning the packaging of aspirin products. As a result of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act, all products containing aspirin packaged after Aug. 15, 1972, must be in safety closure containers with the exception of one product from each manufacturer, which may be marketed in regular packaging for elderly or infirmed adults. This package, however, must be labeled and identified that it is for use only in households without children.

Because there will be aspirin products on hand in regular packaging the consumer will see both types in stores until the previously packaged supplies are exhausted.

Consumers are encouraged to look for and ask for safety packaged aspirin products after the effective date," said Mrs. van Betten.

Similar proposals are pending for household products containing sulphuric acid, paint thinners, etc.

The July meeting was historic in that it was open to and well attended by the public, a result of an executive order by President Nixon of June 1972, which requires that all appointed committees which advise or assist the federal government be accessible to the public.

Mrs. van Betten is a consumer representative on the committee and is the only member from the Southwest U.S. She plans to relate committee actions to consumers and seeks to encourage consumer response to product safety.

Mrs. Van Betten is a graduate of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and has been engaged in Public Health Nursing in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas and California. She is married to Dr. Herman van Betten and is the mother of four children.

Records question

Consumers fighting milk price hike

By Ann Ehrenburg
R-J Staff Writer

Milk prices rose three to five cents this month but a local group is fighting for a price rollback and consumer refunds.

The milk price rise was effective June 1, just 12 days before President Nixon instituted a new price freeze.

The Nevada Dairy Commission approved the hike at a public hearing in May which had little participation from customers.

The commission voted 5-3 to boost prices, with the farmer receiving the largest chunk of the increase. Prices of a quart of milk went up by three cents to a minimum of 34 cents and a half-gallon rose five cents to 67 cents.

The three consumer representatives on the commission voted against price increases but they were outnumbered by five dairy representatives on the commission.

Las Vegas members voting against were Marge Conley and Sam Simpkin. Voting in favor was Glen Coon of Las Vegas, the representative of distributors. The other members are from Mesquite and northern Nevada.

During the hearing, the Consumers League which is based in Las Vegas objected to any price increases until "they assure us the quality is the best and producers' books are examined," said Pat van Betten, league president.

After they lost that round and prices went up, Mrs. van Betten and the league petitioned for a re-hearing on prices. The group argued the producers' books should have been disclosed to justify the price hike.

Instead of calling a re-hearing, the Commission instructed its executive, Clarence Cassady, to meet with the league. This was done last Friday, and Mrs. van Betten, said, "We had a good discussion and he seems willing to explore ideas and solutions."

Cassady said prices could be discussed again in September when the Commission conducts general hearings to cover a number of topics.

to examine producer's profit and loss statements, but Cassady said such disclosures are prohibited by Nevada law.

Mrs. van Betten said her group will try to change that law, even if it cannot accomplish a price rollback and refunds now.

"The league wanted to see the profit and loss statements of the individual dairies. But this is confidential by law. We've got to sit down and decide how far we could go in this line," said Cassady.

He said the profit and loss statements are confidential because "they could be beneficial to another company. This is a competitive business, with five brands of milk."

Cassady said the League expected the Dairy Commission to function like the Public Service Commission which examines all records of utilities before a rate increase.

"But we are not a public service commission. The telephone company is not in competition with anybody; milk producers are, that is the difference," he said about disclosure of financial records.

Cassady pointed out that although profit and loss statements were not disclosed, "there was sufficient evidence in the records and testimony that would warrant an increase" in the price of dairy products.

He said the information came from staff surveys of distributors records and from information supplied by distributors. "The distributors put information into the records from their own records without disclosing what their profits and losses were. But this dealt with the overall problem of rising costs," said Cassady.

Mrs. van Betten also requested the re-hearing because "any increases should be contingent upon improvement of milk quality, and standards of open dating."

She asserted dairy sanitation standards have been weakened in the past year by the State Board of Health and that some standards are not followed in milk handling in Nevada.

The League contends that in May, 1972, the board relaxed rules for special handling of milk from infected cows or cows being treated with antibiotics.

Also dropped were rules requiring health cards for milk handlers, the league believes. This is worrisome "because of an influx of non-nationals in the milk service industries from backgrounds that might bring in health problems," said Mrs. van Betten.

The League is also unhappy that its health bills died in the 1973 Legislature. The bills called for stricter testing methods, weekly inspections of milk products, plant inspections and state standards of open dating.

The commission instituted open dating last year but allowed the producers to stamp the dates as they wished.

As far as the league's belief that milk prices should hinge on sanitation, Cassady pointed out that the Commission function is to stabilize prices.

Only the State Board of Health has the duty to safeguard sanitation, and the two agencies do not have to coordinate their efforts.

Mrs. van Betten said she would challenge this separation of powers "on the basis of the Dairy Commission rules. The rules say 'an adequate supply of healthful milk of proper chemical and physical content, free from contamination, is vital to the public health and welfare'."

She also quoted from Nevada law that the commission may establish terms to insure a supply "of pure, fresh, wholesome fluid milk and fluid cream to consumers at fair and reasonable prices."

She added, "It's possible the new prices are fair and reasonable. But since the producers did not show their books, how do we know that it is."

The league president acknowledged the difficulty of stemming price rises with today's inflationary spiral. But she added, "Somebody has to question prices when clerks can't even keep up with stamping the new prices on products. We know some price increases are going to be necessary, but there should be a valid reason."

"This is a combination of principle and trying to control prices. If people understand why something has to be done, they'll go along with it more cooperatively."

For many Las Vegas consumers, the price rises prompted gripes to store clerks. A number of customers purchasing milk said they hadn't noticed the increases.

"I didn't know, but I'm not surprised said one woman buying a quart of milk. "Food prices are so high, everything seems to be up 2 or 3 cents from last time I went to the store."

A mother of five said, "It is really hard for me with little children. I think a lot of others with kids have noticed it, but there's nothing you can do about it."

To Dr. Herman Van Betten
With best wishes.
Howard W. Cannon
U.S.S. Nev.

LAS VEGAS SUN, May 12, 1977

Van Betten Wins NSSBA Election

Dr. Herman van Betten, a member of the Clark County Board of School Trustees, has been elected president of the Nevada State School Boards Association (NSSBA).

The UNLV English professor said he would like to see more more workshops on fiscal management for school board members.

"School districts often have the largest government budgets in their respective counties. We have a responsibility to the taxpayers to assure the highest quality education for the money that has been appropriated," he said.

NSSBA consists of elected school board members in all 17 Nevada counties. It coordinates legislative efforts, provides workshops and allows exchange of ideas. "It is essential that the people who have been elected to the responsibility of running the school systems in Nevada speak with a strong and unified voice in Carson City and Washington," van Betten said.

He has served on the Clark County School Board since 1974 and is former chairman of the Clark County Regional Planning Council.

DR. HERMAN VAN BETTEN
...Schools President

Van Betten Feels Improvement Still Needed In Education

by Bill Campbell
Yell Staff Reporter
4/Oct/78

Dr. Herman Van Betten, a professor in the UNLV English Department, is currently running for re-election as School Trustee with the Clark County School Board, of which he has been a member since 1974.

Van Betten feels that even though he has prompted new inroads of academic standards, there is room for further improvement. He challenges that there is a need and moral responsibility to the education of students to prepare them for life or higher learning.

As Director of Freshman English with UNLV, he has become increasingly aware of the quality of incoming high school graduates. It prompts him to state, "After 12 years, students should be able to write." Continued efforts as a School Board Trustee affords him the opportunity to improve skills and grammar in the school districts. He would, ideally, like to "create an atmosphere for academic achievement."

Along this line, he has invented an unusual homework contract that binds not just the student and educators--but, more importantly--the parents and guardians.

Dr. Herman Van Betten, outspoken critic of education standards.

The unique contract, which Van Betten tried first on his own four children, who attended Clark County Schools, provides for such innovative ideas as a set time and place for homework (free from distraction); educators and parents monitoring students progress; and finally, all three taking a renewed, unified interest in the student. He points out that its usage has improved the student's progress and enhanced the family unit in most cases. He has received numerous, interested inquiries about this program from all over the United States.

Most administrators agree with Van Betten that "we should tighten-up on high school standards." He indicated that during the '60's, there was growing laxity from parents about their children's academic prowess. It appears that there was more emphasis and interest in a child's personal development. Van Betten ascertained that "This self image of a child became the primary concern." Rote learning was taking a backseat along with academic discipline.

Van Betten is also concerned with the movement on campus for student evaluation of their instructors. He graphically indicates that, if all the students were to evaluate professors during classes, "it would become a popularity contest where lenient would be construed as good." A failing student would not grade his lecturer without bias, in his opinion.

However, he goes on to say, "I am in favor of student evaluation of teachers by majors and seniors about to graduate." He points out that new (Freshman) students, as a rule, cannot make a comparative study of teachers.

Besides his duties in the English Department and on the School Board, Van Betten was recently elected President of Nevada State School Boards Association (NSSBA).

Herman Van Betten

Van Betten Henderson's Community College chief

Longtime Nevada educator Herman Van Betten has been named director of the Clark County Community College's Henderson campus.

Van Betten, director of the community college's communication and arts division since 1982, will assume his new post May 1.

He will manage the extension program of the North Las Vegas campus, serving as a liaison between CCCC and Henderson.

"I plan to market the college to everyone living south of Tropicana (Avenue)," Van Betten said. He said he plans to bolster the Henderson campus' declining enrollment by offering more courses, especially during the day.

Van Betten said he will attempt to sell would-be UNLV students living in the Henderson area on taking basic courses at the community college. Many first and second year courses at the community college level can be transferred to UNLV for credit towards a university degree.

Van Betten was director of the Freshman English Program and an English professor at UNLV from 1967 until coming to the community college. He has been a member of the Clark County School District board of trustees.

Dr. Paul Meacham, President, CCCC
Senator James I. Gibson
Dr. Herman van Betten, Director, Henderson Campus, CCCC

Van Betten to Make School Re-Election Bid

Herman Van Betten, incumbent school trustee and English professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has filed for re-election to the Clark County School Board in district G.

Van Betten served as president of the Nevada State School Boards Association, having been unanimously elected by school trustees across the state. In addition, Van Betten was elected chairman of the Clark County Regional Planning Council, and chairman of the Clark County Citizens Housing Advisory Committee. He also served on several committees of the Legislature and has represented the western states on the Council of Entrance Services of the College Entrance Examination Board.

"I have a vision of our school district becoming the best urban school district in the country," Van Betten said, adding that his many experiences in public education over the past four years would enable him to contribute significantly to that goal. "We have made considerable progress in the past four years, but there is still unfinished business to complete," he said.

Van Betten stated that he would continue his efforts to achieve high, uncompromising standards in education; to provide a challenging curriculum for all students, including the handicapped and the academically talented; to improve the course content of both required and elective courses; to offer the opportunity to take courses for college credit in high school, and to place greater emphasis on the teaching of music.

Van Betten received his B.A. with Honors at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, and his MA and Ph.D. in comparative literature at the University of Southern California (USC). A U.S. Army veteran, he served in Europe and the Middle East.

In addition, Van Betten was an active membr of the Nevada Humanities Committee, chairman of the UNLV United Way campaign, a member of the UNLV Performing Arts Council and vice-president and board member of the Friends of the Southern Nevada Libraries.

Dr. Van Betten and his wife Patricia live at 2953 Panocha Street and have four children who attend Clark County Schools.

HERMAN VAN BETT

Successful growth credited to Dr. Herman Van Betten

by Jeanette Gant
CCC Henderson Campus

Among its many attributes, the city of Henderson can be particularly proud of its local campus of Clark County Community College.

One man who has played a major role in the success and growth of the college is Dr. Herman Van Betten, executive director in charge of the CCCC Henderson Campus.

"He has put Henderson on the map when it comes to higher education," said Dr. Robin Nelson, evening coordinator at the campus.

Since becoming director in 1984, Van Betten's leaderhsip has taken CCCC Henderson Campus to an unparalleled level of academic excellence.

"He has a genuine love for education and people. I believe that is the secret of his success," said a recent graduate of CCCC.

A guided tour of the campus, given by Dr. Van Betten, revealed that he is in contact with every detail of the school. He knows how every piece of equipment came to be where it is and whom to credit for it. Upon entering each room he had heartwarming stories of personal experiences with students and faculty.

Standing in the reading room, he was noticeably moved as he remembered iliterate people finally getting the courage to make that "first call" to the school for help.

"Sometimes they would hang up before we could find out who they were. This would break my heart," he said.

Van Betten was quick to credit everyone but himself for the superior condition of the Henderson campus. But he sounded like a proud father when it came to the success rate of his students.

Beaming with that terrific smile of his, he boasted of how ten-out-of-ten applications had passed the state board of welding and were certified.

He credits this to his real pride and joy, the instructors. Like a scout he roams the professional world with a keen eye, searching out the most exceptional men and women he can find to teach. He says once he sets his fancy on an instructor, he never stops pursuing until he or she consents to join the team at CCCC.

Although Dr. Van Betten is a distinguished scholar, he shys away from shedding too much light on the subject. He is attuned to the fact that many people are actually afraid of school and there is a misconception that it is only for geniuses.

The school's library is arranged to provide a "simple relaxed atmosphere" he pointed out. Because books are not lined up to the ceiling he feels it is less intimidating and students feel more comfortable using the facility.

His sensitivity to people's anxieties about school is a prime reason for the phenomenal growth of the school.

Another misconception Van Betten is attempting to change is the notion that university education is superior to a community college.

"You can't top CCCC for quality. For the first two years of a person's college education, this is the place to be." Again, he praised his prize faculty.

"Clark County Community College is the best buy for the money and people are starting to realize it," said Van Betten. People are realizing it, and it's no small wonder. Van Betten is also a natural publicist.

His goal is to bring the light of education to every able-minded adult in the area between Green Valley and Boulder City.

And if the folks around Green Valley can't make it to either of the two campuses already established, CCCC at Henderson will deliver education to them by setting up classes in one of the public schools in their area.

Plans are also being made for classes in Pittman. There seems to be no end to Van Betten's visions for CCCC.

At first glance Herman Van Betten comes off as a genteel, easy-going man. But from the spotless condition of the Henderson Campus, it is evident that this man is the captain of his ship. And a tight one it is at that.

Always passing the glory on the another, he cites the custodian, Andy, for keeping the school so immaculate.

"Dr. Van Betten has been like an answered prayer to Henderson," said Robert Lewis of Boulder City. "The man has accomplished amazing things for our area. He knows that a college is the best kind of industry a city could hope for."

One might wonder how an international businessman from Europe happened to land in Henderson. The 55 year old Van Betten came to America from Holland because he was fascinated by American politics and the English language.

Among his many political enterprises, he was active in the Jack Kennedy presidential campaign in 1960 and was elected to the local school board. He has also been an English professor at UNLV for fifteen years, thus proving he is a man who accomplishes his goals in a big way.

In the same way, Herman Van Betten's dreams for higher education are coming true through his efforts at CCCC Henderson campus.

Dr. Janice Reid, director of communications and fine arts, summed it up perfectly when she said, "Dr. Van Betten sets a climate that makes it a joy to teach and a joy to learn."

APRIL 28
1991

SPECIAL EDITION

LAS VEGAS
NEVADA

Millions cheer wildly as van Bettens accept honor

Southern Nevadans celebrate Civil Libertarians of the Year

Herman and Patricia van Betten, longtime activists on behalf of civil liberties and humanitarian causes in Southern Nevada, have been named "Civil Libertarians of the Year, 1990-91" by the Southern Nevada Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada.

More than 250 friends, colleagues and admirers of the van Bettens attended a champagne brunch in their honor Sunday, April 28, at the Top-of-the-Riviera Penthouse. It was the eighth annual Civil Libertarian celebration in Nevada and the first held in the southern part of the state.

The keynote speaker was Las Vegas attorney Frank Schreck, who shared memories of the days of social and political activism with the van Bettens, in the late 1960s and the 1970s, and then presided over a round-robin on anecdotes offered by guests who "knew the van Bettens when...."

Pat and Herman have been involved -- not just names on a variety of letterheads, but hands and hearts involved -- with humanitarian causes throughout their 24 years in Nevada. Guests at the Civil Libertarian Brunch represented many of the organizations that have benefitted from these involvements.

The van Betten family includes Paul, a Clark County firefighter (and professional rock-climber); Paul's wife, Pauline, a child development specialist; Tom, a UNLV student majoring in finance; and Melanie, an actress who is presently filming a scene in South Carolina, opposite Don Johnson, and who will return to perform in the Shakespeare Festival this summer in Cedar City. Another son, John, is deceased.

Herman, dean of the Henderson campus of the Community College of Southern Nevada, is chairman of the Commission on Mental Health and Mental Retardation (appointed by Gov. Bob Miller) and chairs the Professional Advisory Board of the Las Vegas Center for Children. He is a board member of the San Diego Center for Children.

He is also on the boards of the Charleston Psychiatric Hospital, Nevada Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, United Way Community Planning Council and

Patricia and Herman van Betten
Civil Libertarians of the Year, 1990-91

the Drug Abuse Council, St. Rose de Lima Hospital, Nevada Alliance for Arts in Education, Nevada Humanities Committee (a founding member), and the Green Valley Arts Advisory Council.

Patricia, a Clark County School District nurse at three elementary schools, is a member of the county and state Democratic Central Committees. She actively supports Nevadans for
Peace, Citizen Alert, The Catholic Worker (she has made a weekly commitment to participate in feeding the homeless), the Nevada Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the National Organization for Women, and Catholics for Choice.

She was the first to receive honors as "Community Service Mother of the Year," which is now awarded annually on Mother's Day, and she was appointed, in the 1970s, by Attorney Gen. Elliot Richardson, to serve on an 18-member national Poison Prevention Committee of the Food and Drug Administration. She was the first president of the Nevada Consumers' League.

Pat was named to Sigma Theta Tau (nurses honor society) in 1981. She served on the Legislative Committee for the Nevada Nurses Association during several legislative sessions, is the congressional district contact for the same organization, and represents school nurses on the state advisory board of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force.

Having been born into an Italian family (the name was Tringa before her grandfather changed it to Tringe for show-biz reasons), Pat is a member of the Las Vegas Italian-American Club. She claims that "Italians bond, they have more fun."

Herman, who was on the faculty of the UNLV English Department before moving to the Community College in 1984, built up an enthusiastic following for his classes in English, literature, Latin, mythology, journalism, drama, German and Dutch.

He was elected to the Clark County School Board, 1975-78; was president of the Nevada State School Boards Association, 1977-78; chair of the Clark County Regional Planning Council, 1975-76, and of the County Housing Advisory Committee, 1976-78; and a member of several legislative commissions on teacher competency testing.

He participated with the Jewish community on a variety of projects, including the Holocaust Exhibit Committee and a Jewish Federation committee addressing the problems of prayer in school and release time for religious services. He plans to translate a book written by a friend of Anne Frank, from Dutch to English; it is entitled "Anne and Jopie: Living with Anne Frank."

HIGHLIGHTS: ACLU in Action

The American Civil Liberties Union is a nationwide, nonpartisan organization dedicated to preserving and defending the principles embodied in the Bill of Rights.

In 1920 we began with a handful of Americans who believed that patriotism included a fierce fidelity to the Bill of Rights.

Today, the defense of liberty requires a fulltime legislative staff in Washington to lobby Congress, expert constitutional lawyers to go into federal and state courts, communications specialists to inform and influence public opinion, and staff and volunteers in every state to guard against violations of civil liberties where it counts most: in our communities.

What is the role of the ACLU?

The American system of government rests on two principles. The first, widely understood and accepted, is that the majority of the people, through elected representatives, governs the country. That is the democratic principle.

(Continued on other side)

HIGHLIGHTS:
ACLU in Action

(Continued from front)

The second, less understood and often abused, is that the power of even a democratic majority must be limited to insure individual rights. That is the libertarian principle.

The concept of limiting the majority is part of the genius of the traditional American system. While the rest of the U.S. Constitution authorizes the government to act, the Bill of Rights sets limits. It describes what the government may NOT do.

Even a democratically elected government is not permitted to take away from the people their inherent rights to freedom of expression, belief and association, to procedural fairness, to equal treatment before the law, to privacy.

To protect these rights, to enforce these limits on government, is the main purpose of the ACLU. Without legal guarantees of individual liberty, even American democracy can revert to acts of tyranny - to a despotism of the majority.

In every era of American history, government officials have tried to expand their authority at the expense of individual rights.

For the first decade after its founding, the ACLU fought violations of civil liberties that sprang from the majority's hostility to things "foreign," both people and ideas.

In its first famous case (1925), the ACLU defended John Scopes for daring to teach evolution in Tennessee, a state that officially favored the biblical view of creation and sought to impose it by law in the schools.

In the 1920s, much of the ACLU's work was dedicated to protecting the First Amendment rights of free speech and association, which at that time were being denied to labor organizers. It took legal advocacy by the ACLU to activate First Amendment guarantees -- not only for union leaders but for employers such as Henry Ford, who wanted to distribute anti-union literature to his workers.

In the 1940s, when 110,000 Japanese Americans were sent to concentration camps, the ACLU was the first and one of the few groups to protest. Forty years later, the ACLU was still pursuing justice in this case, vigorously supporting efforts to get Congress to authorize compensatory damages to those whose rights were violated.

In the 1950s, the mass paranoia known as McCarthyism spread across the country. The ACLU's protests were drowned out by the bleating of self-styled "patriots" and the truly patriotic principles of the First Amendment were forgotten. But this experience convinced the ACLU to expand into a national organization, with presence at the state and local levels.

In the 1960s, the ACLU helped civil rights activists when their First Amendment rights were violated, and in their efforts to overturn discriminatory laws. The ACLU also defended the right to dissent for conscientious objectors and anti-Vietnam War demonstrators.

The sixties also saw the ACLU extend Bill of Rights guarantees to groups previously excluded or ignored: children in schools and foster care, soldiers, welfare recipients, homosexuals, prisoners and mental patients.

In the 1970's, more and more groups claimed their rights with the ACLU's help. The ACLU was the first national organization to call for the impeachment of Richard Nixon.

The 1980s saw the ACLU re-fighting familiar battles: securing the rights of women and minorities to freedom of opportunity and choice; establishing the right of foreigners to

Program
Civil Libertarians of the Year, 1990-91

Welcome and Introductions:
Paul Aizley, ACLUN President

Brunch

Master of Ceremonies and Guest Speaker:
Frank Schreck

Presentation of Awards to
Patricia and Herman van Betten

Acceptance Remarks

Thank you for joining us at this happy event!

of political beliefs; protecting the right of dissenters to speak and demonstrate; expanding the right of the people to know what the government is doing in their name; defending against unwarranted searches and intrusions on privacy.

Throughout its history, the ACLU has remained faithful to the principle that any infraction of liberties weakens all liberties; the same government power that can violate one person's rights can violate anybody's rights.

The ACLU, at the national and state level, handles more than 6,000 cases each year. Some go as far as the U.S. Supreme Court, where the ACLU appears more often than any other organization except the U.S. Justice Department.

No other organization has the structure, ability, experience and stamina to protect and expand all individual rights for every person in America.

Again and again, the ACLU is asked, "Why are you defending that person?" The answer is always the same: the ACLU is not defending the person, it is defending the civil liberty that has been violated.

"Republicans should work for adoption of environmental programs, welfare, and revenue-sharing, and most importantly we have to keep Bella Abzug from showing up in Congress in hot-pants."
-Spiro T. Agnew

"A jury consists of 12 persons chosen to decide who has the better lawyer."
- Robert Frost

OTHER YEARS:
Nevadans honored as Civil Libertarians

Attorneys George Rudiak, Chuck Zeh and Bill Thornton; Senators Mary Gojack and Joe Neal; former Governor Grant Sawyer; journalism teacher LaVerne Forest; Martha Gould, director of Washoe County Libraries; Washoe Valley activist and national ACLU council member Maya Miller; the late Assemblyman Marvin Sedway; Rabbis Abe Feinberg and Myra Soifer; Justice Charles Springer; and Dr. Trudy Larson.

"The acme of judicial distinction means the ability to look a lawyer straight in the eyes for two hours and not hear a damned word he says."
- Chief Justice John Marshall

"The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer."
- Henry Kissinger

A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel."
- Robert Frost

"We have enough people who tell it like it is. Now we could use a few who tell it like it can be."
- Robert Orben

"Life's unfairness is not irrevocable; we can help balance the scales for others, if not always for ourselves."
- Hubert Humphrey

"Don't mourn for me...organize!"

- Joe Hill
Folksinger/Wobbly activist/coalminer
Utah, ca 1910

This message compliments of

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Mimi Katz
Terry Knapp
James McPhee
George Rudiak
Mark Solomon
Harriet Trudell
Frank Wright

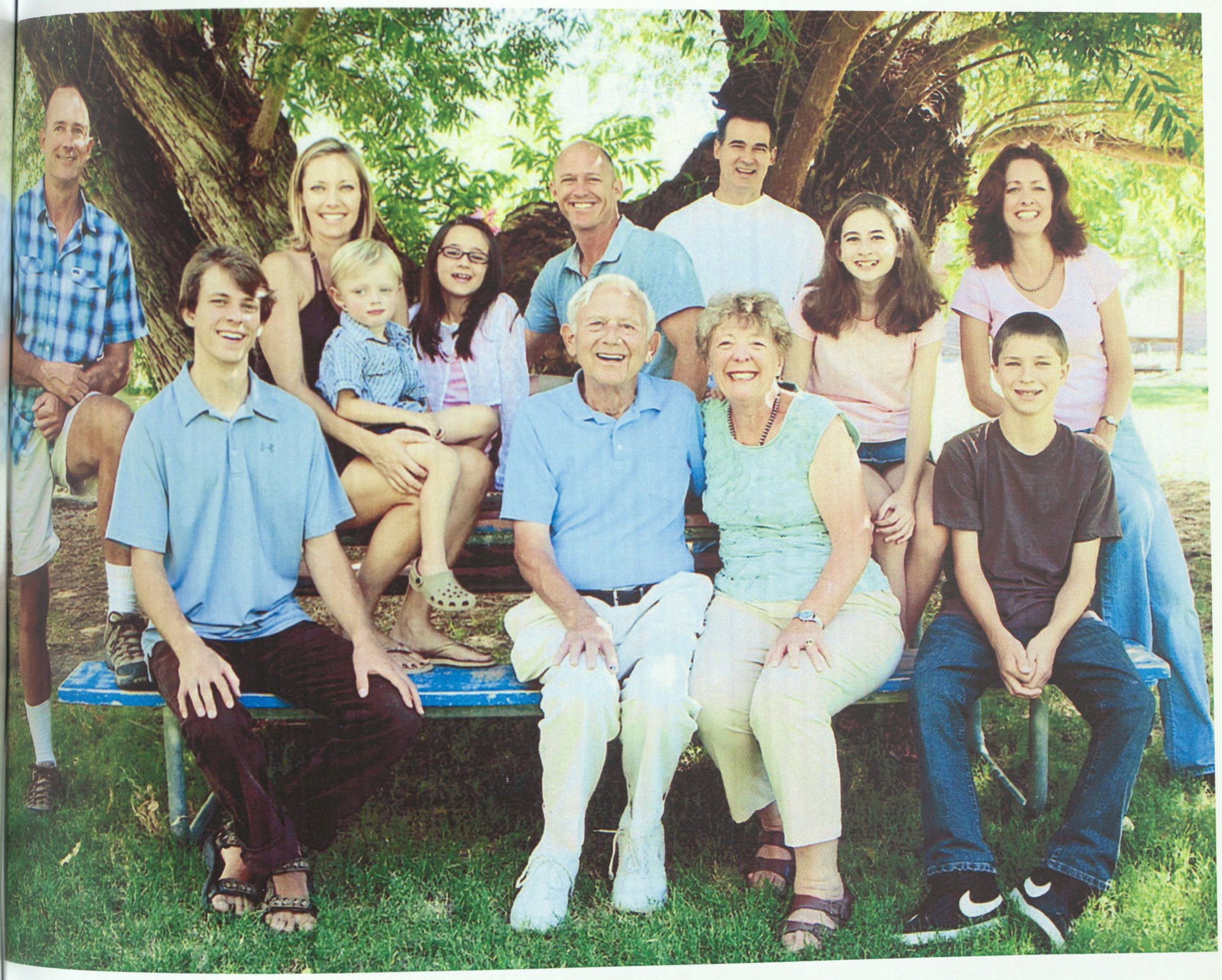
Frank Schreck

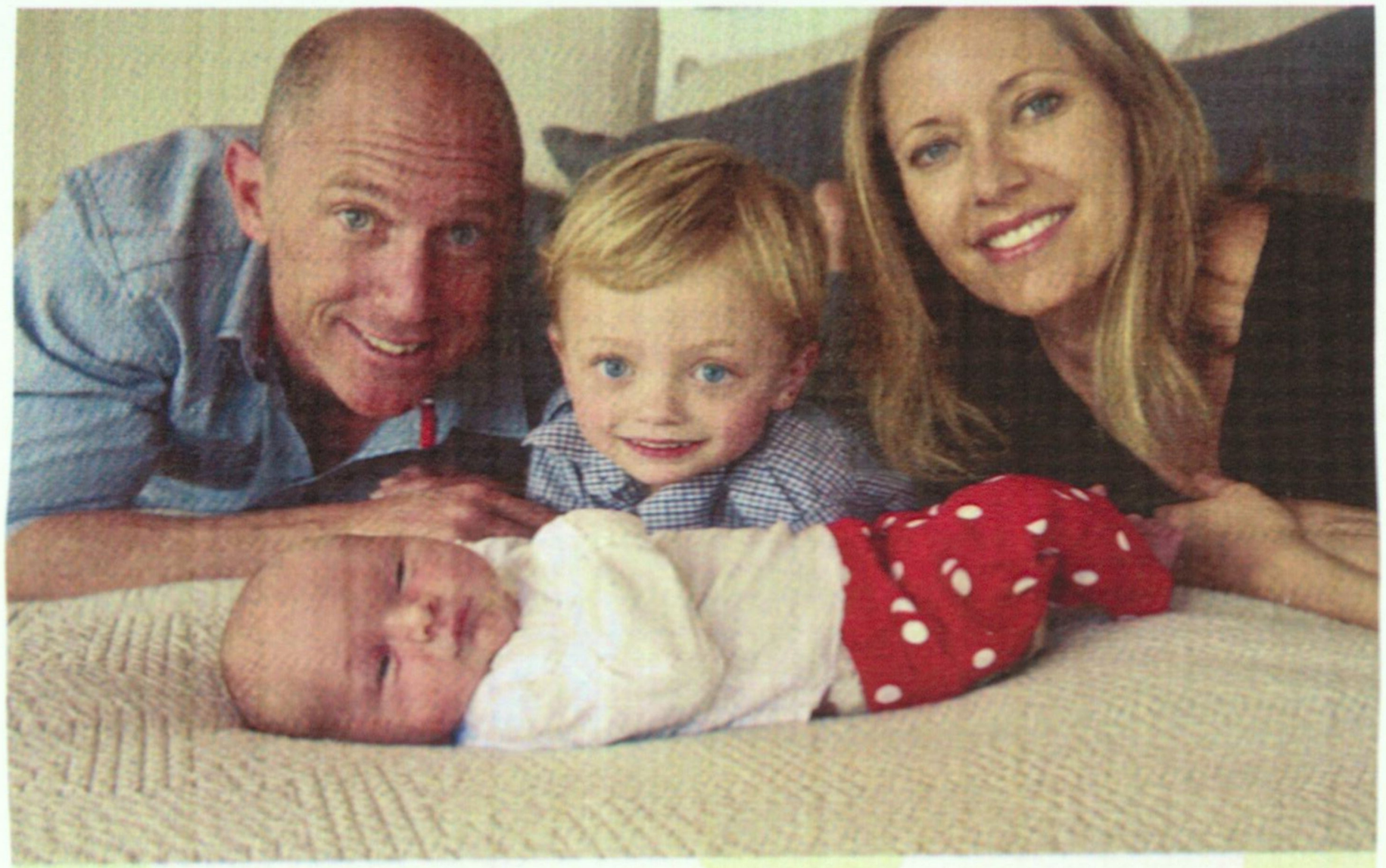
Herman van Betten promises Lucky, their lodger, a knuckle sandwich. Lucky seeks ACLU help in 8th Amendment "cruel and unusual punishment" suit.

Patricia van Betten displays black surgical gloves while demonstrating her new trachea bow. ACLU defends her right to demonstrate

Sept 2, 2011
40 the Anniversary on Alabama 9 days before the
9-11 attack.

The march on Washington for healthcare
9-13-09





wishing you and yours a new year full of happiness, joy, peace and

LOVE

HAPPY 2012!

TOM, RACHEL, RYDER (3), ANNIKA

This is Claytee White, and I'm with Herman van Betten. It is February 20, 2007, and we are in his home in Blue Diamond. So how are you today?

Oh, just wonderful!

Great! Could you give me your full name for our recording, please?

Well, just like you said, it's Herman van Betten.

Thank you so much. Tell me just a little about your early life, where you grew up and what that was like.

I grew up in the Netherlands, where I was born, and in The Hague, the Netherlands. I went to elementary school there run by religious brothers. After elementary school, I went to a boarding school in Oudenbosch, a small town in the south of Holland. Then after I finished... that was six years of Latin, Greek, German, French, English. Pretty tough school. Six days a week, including Saturday mornings. The same in elementary school. We went from 8:00, 8:30 in the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon and Saturday morning. One month out of the year you had one month vacation.

Then after that I worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands for a while, and then I left that and I was a sales representative selling heavy machinery, German and French, in Holland and Belgium. In my job I had to travel to Germany and visit our factories, and occasionally I went to Paris to the Salon d'Automobile which was a big convention of automobile manufacturers and equipment. We used to go and sell machinery there, and fortunately with my education, I was pretty fluent in French and German. That was a lot of fun, and then afterwards, the president of a French company, which we represented, Monsieur Muller, president of

Établissement Muller, we used to go to La Tour d'Argent, which right now is the most expensive restaurant in the *world,* [laughter] It was pretty expensive at the time, too. So that overlooks the Notre Dame. That was a lot of fun. At the time, in the 1950s, they were heavily advertising on radio to get immigrants to New Zealand, Australia, United States, and Canada, and it was *heavy* in the northern countries. So I assume what they really wanted is to have immigrants from Holland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, all good white people, [laughter] Anyway, I had worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in protocol prior to my working in business, and I left there because... what happened is I would be training young people, and these young people would then promptly go to an embassy somewhere, which / wanted to do. Then I found out these young people had titles, you know. Their father was a duke or a baron or something like that, and they had titles themselves. So it was a real *in* for the Dutch nobility going there, and I didn't have a chance to go! And I wanted to travel. I mean, I just *love* traveling and seeing the world. You know, because when you're twenty or twenty-one, waiting for a VISA for three years is an *eternity.* Then there was a commercial [an announcement] that they had a special quota for people who were war victims, so I went to the American consulate. I used to go to the American consulate because they had the library there, and I was pretty much fascinated by American politics. I read all the speeches by [Adlai] Stevenson, and I was just fascinated how that worked. Senator [Estes] Kefauver was holding hearings at the time, and I just *loved* that. So I went down there and said, "You know, our house was bombed. Does that make me a war victim?"

They said, "Oh, definitely."

So about three weeks later, I had a VISA. Then I felt bad that I had lied, and I went down

there and I said, "Well, you know, the *house* was bombed but we didn't live in it! My father owned real estate *that* was bombed."

They said, "No. We have so few people applying. You're welcome to go." So I sold whatever I had, my books and everything, and I had enough money to pay my passage on Holland America line, ten wonderful days. I was the only one that didn't get seasick, [laughter] So in November 1956 I came to the United States, and by the time I arrived, I had sixty bucks still left in my pocket. The next day I had a job. [laughter]

Would you stop there just for a second? Tell me more about your opinions of our educational system since you talked about your initial education with so many more hours in a school day?

That's one reason that later on I ran for the school board. I thought maybe I can do something to improve the level, because, as I will explain later, going to an American university was a breeze for me. I mean, it was so easy! [laughter]

Tell me about that. Tell me about once you arrived, and you got a job right away. Who was that job with?

Yes! I got a job with Hotel Taft, close to Times Square and Seventh Avenue. I did that, and then I was drafted in the United States Army a few months later. What happens is, they need to come up with a number of soldiers, and since I'm a foreigner-"Let's get him!" [laughter]

But now, you're not a citizen yet.

No, not a citizen, and had I known it, I probably would have sued or something, but I thought, "I'll give it a try." It was funny; they give you all those tests then. I had the top scores in several

foreign languages. Thirty was the highest score. Then I was approached to go to officers' candidate school. They said I'm not a citizen, so I couldn't get that. Then military intelligence interviewed me and said, "Oh, we really want you."

I said, "Why would you want me?" because what it said on my high school... it was called St. Aloysius College, because a high school is called college in Holland, right? I mean, a classical high school, and, of course, St. Aloysius, they recognized it as a Jesuit name, and he said, "You have been trained by Jesuits, and Jesuits, you know logic." [laughter] So I served in the army, and I just....

Which languages did you speak?

German, French, and Dutch, and, of course, Latin and Greek they don't care about. So I served and did my time in the army, and I worked in the supply room, because, of course, I couldn't become an officer, being an alien. Then there was bad news in the German press every day: "American soldiers rape German girl," "American soldiers raise havoc in bar," and things like that. "American soldiers break into store." I would translate that and send it through channels and it made them very nervous.

Then I started teaching *soccer* to Americans. Of course, fifty years ago, soccer was totally unknown! The soldiers liked it, and then we played some German teams in Idar-Oberstein, where I was stationed, and Baumholder and other places, and, of course, we lost all the time. So I went to my commander, Major Jenkins, and said, "Why don't you let me go to the German base and the French base and the British base and get some other soldiers, and we'll make it a NATO team," and he thought that was a good idea. So we went to the other bases, and he gave me a staff

car and I could go.... [laughter] I had a ball! We eventually put that NATO team together, and so I had to coach in German, French, and English, [laughter] We had one black soldier from Mississippi. Ron Davis, I think was his name, and the guy was a natural. I mean, an *absolute* natural. Then every time he came on the field, everybody started shouting, "Pele! Pele!" [Edison Arantes do Nasimento, retired Brazilian soccer player; voted as the *Football Player of the Century.]*

So he comes up to me and said, "Herman, what does Pele mean?"

I said, "You've got the best compliment you'll ever get in your life." [laughter]

So one time we decided to invite Kaisierslautern 08, which was the regional champion soccer team in Germany. They came, and I'm sure they sent their second stringers to play these stupid Americans, and we *won,* and it made headlines in the newspapers. I still have the newspaper articles. We beat them three to one.

But this was your NA TO team.

NATO team. We beat them three to one. Then what I did, I translated... every Tuesday I had a press conference. As a G.I., I made a hundred and fifty dollars a month, which is a good bit on money. Of course, you have free living. All you pay is your barber and your laundry and your beer, [laughter] So I had this press conference, and I bought a lunch for all the reporters, which I easily could afford, because [I earned] about six hundred marks. At the time, it was the average salary for a German worker, so that was pretty good.

Six hundred marks would be how much in American money at the time?

Oh, one hundred fifty dollars. Yes. And then we got four marks for the dollar. So I had enough

money, and so I bought a lunch, and we got good publicity. Then I tried to get more support from my commander, and so I dragged them out there a few times. Then I told the press, "Well, you know, people *really* appreciate that Major Jenkins comes there, and they call him "der Fussball Major, the soccer major." From then on, that became his moniker in the press and the guy, of course, was *very* pleased, [laughter] Then General... I forgot his name now. He was the general of U.S. Army Europe, and he called Major Jenkins and said that he had hired the coach of the Wolverampton Wanderers, which, at that time, was the winner of the European soccer championship. And that coach gave us... then for two weeks we got a soccer clinic in Frankfurt. So that was a lot of fun. Then in addition to that, I would invite all the officers from the French base, the German base, and the British base and have a dinner. Get the army to pay for a dinner for everybody, and I would walk around translating and....

Did you ever think about language classes?

Yes, they asked me to teach the soldiers German, so everybody in the base had to come to the theater. I would be standing there, and then I had a colleague, who was a good cartoonist, and he would make cartoons with German phrases. I would teach them basic German, you know, just the normal phrases, "how are you" and "what's your name." They could find their way a little bit and open up to the Germans; create a friendship with the German population. So that worked pretty well. The only thing is, they *really* began to speak German after they met a German girl and after they had a couple of beers. So that was a lot of fun. So I really enjoyed my army time. I learned a lot about P. R. [public relations].

That's what I was about to ask. Did you ever use those skills later on?

Yes, I learned a lot about P. R. Yes! And then those skills helped me later on in politics and public speaking. As a matter of fact, they sent me for two weeks to a public relations course in Bad Kreuznach. Then a buddy of mine, who was in advertising in the United States, and myself, we went to that public relations course, but we were close to Ruedesheim am Rhein, which at the time was the *Mecca* for Germany. It's a very little town on the Rhine River, and it has very narrow streets with bars all over the place that are open twenty-four hours a day, and that's where everybody comes. Boatloads, trainloads full of people, busloads; they go there and drink and sing German songs and dance to the music. So, hey, that was too tempting, but, of course, we had to be in bed by ten o'clock, and then they would have bed check. They would check whether everybody was in bed. So what we did is, take our mattresses and hide them behind lockers, so when the sergeant came around for bed check, he saw only empty frames of bed, but no beds. So we would take off and.... My friend had a car, and we'd go to the Rhine River, take the ferry over, and the next morning at six o'clock, we're waiting for the first ferry and make it back by eight, [laughter] And all these soldiers had been preparing their speeches for the next day, and they would talk about this earth-shaking subject of the history of the thirty-two-step march and things like that. Then my friend would talk about sex and advertising, and we didn't need any preparation for that. I had been a guide to Paris as a young man, so I could talk about my life in Paris without any preparation, and we got the best speeches.

Oh, that's great! [laughter]

So I had a wonderful time. I really, really appreciated my military experience.

How long did you serve in the military?

Two years. They even sent me to Lebanon, which was also interesting, [laughter] They were fighting in Lebanon between the Christians and the Muslims at the time, and the city was divided.

And we're talking about nineteen fifty...?

Nineteen fifty-eight. There were problems at *that* time in Lebanon. We were down there, and we camped near the airport in a camp. I became translator, because at that time, Lebanon was really a French-speaking country, and I really admired the Lebanese, who claimed they had the best businessmen in the world, because the minute the Americans arrived, a bar would appear where when Yesterday it was Cafe de l'Orient, and the next day it was called Joe's Bar and Grill!

[laughter]

That's amazing.

I had to deal a lot with the Lebanese business people, because we had to buy supplies from the local economy. As a matter of fact, one time I was invited on a yacht of one of these businessmen, and I said, "You guys are so rich here! Where do you get all the money?!"

And they said, "Foreign aid!" [laughter]

Oh, my! Would a historian studying Lebanon, see a continuity in the attitudes?

Even today you have the same battle. It's between the Christians that now have a tenuous hold on the government and then the Muslims, who want to overthrow it. So that goes on and will probably go on for a few more centuries. The Middle East, I don't think they'll ever solve all the problems down there, but it once was a wonderful country. Then, as I said, they're good businessmen. Then when we would go into town on our days off, and the minute you arrived

downtown, you can buy everything cheap and all these young kids would be standing there, "You want a nice girl eighteen years old, ten pound Lebanese? Nice girl fifteen years old, fifteen pound Lebanese?"

And, "No, thank you."

Kid looks at me and said, "You want a nice boy, eight pound Lebanese?"

Oh, my!

I mean, they love to do business. Then they sold gold rings that were made of aluminum, and G.I.'s would buy them for twenty dollars, [laughter] It was an interesting time.

Oh, ***I would say. So bring me back to the United States. After that military experience did you are still living in New York?***

No! When I came back, I moved to Philadelphia, because I liked Philadelphia. Then right away I took the test to become a citizen. As a matter of fact, I had taken history courses while I was in the Army. I took a bunch of university courses with Emory University. I really liked American history, so I could tell this guy who examined me more than he probably knew about American history, [laughter] Anyway, so I passed that exam [and] became a United States citizen. By that time I decided I liked it here, so I worked for a little bit down there. Then I saw an ad in the paper, and Alcoa Aluminum needed somebody-the headquarters were in Pittsburgh-who would be able to translate French, German, Dutch, and Latin, and I thought.... Of course, at the time I didn't read the Wall Street Journal. Somebody gave me an old copy. So I sent a telegram to Alcoa-at that time you still sent telegrams, right?-and said, "Hold on with hiring, because my application is on its way." So I sent in my application and I got the job.

It was made for you.

Yes! So I did that for a year, and in the meantime I worked in the Kennedy campaign. That's how I met Patricia [his wife]. She also worked in the Kennedy campaign. So every day during lunch I went to the Kennedy headquarters. Then one day Jack Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy (Robert) were there, and I talked with Jack Kennedy. Then Bobby had to give a talk at the Sheraton, which is right next to the Alcoa building. So he walked with me. He put his arm around me, and it was just a highlight! So I come into the Alcoa building, which was thirty stories of beautiful aluminum-clad building, and I still had my Kennedy button on. I took the elevator to my floor, and went back to my office. My secretary said, "Mr. Van Betten, Mr. Hunt wants to see you." Now, Mr. Hunt was the senior vice president. His grandfather invented aluminum. I'd never met the guy, so I went upstairs. In the meantime, I had taken my "Kennedy for President" button off, and he said, "Sit down, Mr. Van Betten."

I said, "All right."

He said, "You have been observed wearing a Kennedy button. We at Alcoa are Republican."

In other words, if you want to keep your job, you better.... Then I went back to my office. Two top executives came to me with clippings from the Wall Street Journal telling me how Democrats had just tried to destroy America and things like that. Then I realized I'm not going to work for a company that makes you think their way. I want to do my own thinking. So by that time Patricia and I became good friends. I asked to marry her, and I said, "But I can't live here." So we both decided to go to the university and get a degree.

So you quit your job and you got a bride at the same time?

Yes, I quit the job, and then we got married and went to the University of Texas, because I looked at all the universities. It was the cheapest university I could find, because I really didn't know much about residency requirements. But for out-of-state residents, it was two hundred dollars a *semester. Oh,* you could enroll in all the courses you could take, [laughter]

It means that you could have gone through as fast as you* wanted *to.

Yes. Plus there were old barracks, so, at the time, you could rent an apartment in it for twenty-five dollars a month. Pat started working as a public health nurse in Austin, so one time I took twenty-seven credits in one semester. They allowed me [to do that] because I had straight A's, and I took a number of credits by examination. Then I kept getting A's in English, and, of course, English is a foreign language to me! But then I looked at what the other students were writing and said, "Oh, I'm pretty damn good!" [laughter] You know, to me, they were all professors, but they were just teaching assistants. I asked questions about language structures, and they didn't know what I was talking about. So everybody just didn't want me to ask any questions. So at the end of my first year, I was invited to become what was called a junior fellow. You would get totally free education and honors courses. So the dean asked me to make an appointment, and I went for that appointment, and he said, "Oh, you can't be a junior fellow, because you're a senior next year." [laughter] So I finished it in two years, and then I got a fellowship that was called the National Defense Education Act Fellowship. It was instituted by Hubert Humphrey. That was his bill, because they found after World War II that most Americans know very little or nothing about foreign countries. They don't speak the languages. They don't know anything, because

during World War II, there were only four Americans-not Japanese Americans, but Americans-who knew Japanese or knew anything about Japan, and there were not many people who knew *German,* or *knew* much about Germany. And, of course, it's the same fact now; before that war started, how many people knew anything about the Middle East?!

And we still don't.

So they offered the scholarship in comparative literature, which is literature from all over the world. So I studied Arab literature. I studied French, German, Chinese, Japanese, literature from all over the world. So they thought that in that way people can learn a little bit about other countries and other cultures and have a little bit of appreciation. Well, at the time, Patricia, in Texas, made four thousand dollars a year as a registered nurse. They offered me five thousand dollars a year tax free and paid my tuition! So we rented a lovely home near the university, and I finished the Ph.D. in comparative literature and....

You did a master's-Ph.D. combination?

Yes. First I got the master's, and then I got the Ph.D. You had to pass the master's in high, which I did with honors, and....

After the master's... what was that phrase you used?

On high, which is with honors. You had to pass the master's with honors in order to be able to continue, then the Ph.D., and then I finished. I was ABD and started teaching at the university.

At that time it was called Nevada Southern University.

So tell me about getting that position. How did you even find out about the position at Nevada Southern?

You look in the MLA [Modern Language Association Journal]. They have the vacancy list, and at *that* time there were vacancies all over the place. I was offered a job at San Diego State, for instance, and they didn't quite know what to *do.* Comparative literature was a new field, and they said, "Could you just teach the traditional English courses?"

Well, I said, "That's the thing I'm *least* interested in. I'm interested...."

"Well, we do have a world literature course."

But then they came down here, which was a real small school, Nevada Southern University. ***What did it look like?***

The Wright building, which has since been destroyed [and rebuilt maintaining the same name], that's where my office was, and the graduation ceremonies were in the little gym, which is now a museum, [laughter] Grant Hall was there, and there was one floor of the round library, which is now the three-floor law school. You just drove from Maryland Parkway through the dirt to the John Wright building. It was a small school. You knew everybody. Anyway, the reason I accepted the job... because I said, "I'd like to teach mythology," which is....

"We don't have a course like that, but *sure,* you can."

I said, "I'd like to teach classics in translation," you know, Latin and Greek in translation.

"Sure, we can create a course like that."

I said, "Do you need somebody to teach German?"

"Yes, we're a little short. You can teach a German course."

I said, "Do you have Latin courses?"

"No, we *don't,* but you're welcome to teach Latin."

So I found a real welcome reception, and so I took the job for $7,200 a year, [laughter]

This was the English department?

That was in the English department.

Who else was in the English department at that time?

There's somebody who had been there before me who's still there, Felicia Campbell.

Wonderful!

And Charles Adams. I don't know what he still teaches, but he still comes to the university

regularly. I think those are the only two people still left from that period.

Which year was it that you...?

I came to UNLV in the fall of 1967, and taught three courses each semester. The great thing at

the time is the semester lasted till January.

So from September....

Through January. So the advantage if you teach a course in the history of the novel, I could

assign *War and Peace* or, you know... and they would read it over the *holidays* and....

That's wonderful.

Then they came up with the idea of having January courses, and I think it was an idea to raise

more money or something like that. As a matter of fact, they wanted us to teach for free in

January, and eventually, they paid for that.

So now, what do you mean a January course?

The semester would end before Christmas, and then in January you would have a one-month

course, three credits in one month.

So similar to our summer classes.

Yes. It's like summer classes.

Oh, so they had a winter semester!

Yes.

How long did that last?

I don't know. Just for a few years, because they wanted to do it for free, so that didn't last very long. It was an interesting time. You know, gradually it changed, and then we had *Latin* that was *really* interesting, because at the time it was a five-credit course, and if you taught it for a *year,* it would be ten credits. So we would meet five days a week I think for two hours. The first time I had eighteen people in the Latin class. Then we were in the humanities building, and we had one of these rooms that had the big oval table. Every Friday I would have a dumbbell class that is for people who hadn't figured it out, because Monday there would be a test. So Friday we would go over everything for the whole week, all the grammatical problems, all the translations, and everybody always showed up for the dumbbell class, [laughter] So by the end of the year you got to know the students very well. I had made a beautiful eight-page final examination with passages from Cicero and things like that and difficult grammatical problems. Of course. At the time, you had to type it on wax. You know, that was before the Xerox machines.

Type it on wax?

Yes! You had a sheet, and that was covered with wax. You would type on it and make little holes in the wax. Then you take the sheets and....

Was it ***mimeograph, mimeo something?***

Yes. A Gestetner was the name of the machine. So for an eight-page exam you would take that sheet [and] put it on a cylinder. Then you get a big tube of ink, and you would go over and put that ink in there. Your hands would get all black, and then by hand you had to run copies. So I had worked *hard* making that beautiful final exam. At that time, you had the separate time for the finals. Saturday morning from eight to eleven, I think, was the final exam. So I come in on Saturday morning with all my beautiful exams that I worked so hard to put together, I walk into that classroom, and the table was covered with white sheets. Everybody wore togas made out of sheets and little laurel headbands. In the back they have Carmina Burana in Latin playing on a record player. They had big dishes of homemade bread, big bottles of Gallo wine, and dishes with grapes. I walk into the classroom. I look at all my beautiful exams, threw them in the trash, and we had a party, [laughter]

Isn't that wonderful.

Because by that time I knew where everybody was anyway. And these are all the students that want to go into medicine and law and graduate work in languages, so these were *very* motivated students and that was just beautiful. Sometimes I still meet lawyers or doctors that say, *"Hey,* you know...." [laughter]

Oh, that is beautiful! I met someone at one time who told me that if you have a foundation in Latin, everything else is much easier: vocabulary, writing, everything. Why did we take that out of our curriculum?

I don't know. I have been teaching it regularly over the years, and even when I went to the

community college, I still taught Latin, and that attracted the most interesting students! And I even had students with doctorates! At the college I had one student who had a D.D.S., a law degree, a Ph.D. in philosophy, and an M.D., and he sat in my *class* and really enjoyed it. [laughter] It was just great work.

Anyway, back to NSU, Nevada Southern University. So I really enjoyed my period there. I never was a great researcher. I love to teach. And in spite of the fact that I was not a great researcher, they made me associate professor, and I got letters. I still have them from faculty that said when the people come to my class, they really know mythology! [laughter] I used to have like three hundred, four hundred people in the class for mythology. It was a *very* popular class. It was like four o'clock in the afternoon, four to seven, and you had to speak by a mic [microphone], A lot of teachers would take it, and they would go and use it the next day in their classes, because the kids *love* mythology in the school. So that was a *very* popular course.

Right. Because we think of that as fantasy.

Yes, it's just.... And I still meet a lot of people that say, "Oh, I was in your mythology class." [laughter]

Wow! This is so interesting. Tell me about early life outside of the university for a young bride and groom like yourself. What did you do for entertainment? All of that.

If you wanted to go out in the 1960s, there was not much else but the Strip. I mean, we didn't have much money, so by the time you paid the babysitter-it was, I think, two dollars an hour at the time or something like that- so we would have twenty, twenty-five dollars to spend. You could get a dinner, sometimes a *show* for ten dollars. They had a special for locals. Then if you

went on a Saturday night at eleven o'clock, you would go to the Silver Slipper [Hotel Casino], which isn't there anymore, and you park right in front on a Saturday night, [laughter]

Where was the Silver Slipper located?

The Silver Slipper was located across from the Desert Inn [Hotel Casino], which is now the Wynn [Hotel Casino]. As a matter of fact, the Desert Inn, you know the Howard Hughes story that he and his entourage stayed on the top floor and didn't want to move so eventually he bought the hotel and Silver Slipper. [In Las Vegas, Hughes bought the Desert Inn, Sands, Landmark, Castaways, Silver Slipper and Frontier.] So you went to the Silver Slipper. They had the 39-cent breakfast that included coffee. So you could go around there, and there were people from the legislature, people from the school district, people from the university, people from the county, you know, elected officials. Saturday night, that's where you met everybody. It's a lot of fun for your 39 cents.

Did they have dancing?

No. No, it was just breakfast. After you'd been out, you went there for the 39-cent breakfast. You know, we had four kids in no time at all, so we didn't go out all that much. So that was in the 1960s....

Tell me about clubs or groups that you and Patricia joined.

Patricia was a member of the League of Women Voters. She was active in politics. Then she started as part of that the Consumers League of Nevada, so she was.... I helped her a lot in that, and we were ***very,*** very successful. We also started something called Citizens for Responsible Government, and there is a group like that now, which is a Mormon-oriented group. But what we

used to do is we used to bundle all the brochures of liberal assemblymen, because everybody was Democratic at the time. [US Senator] Richard Bryan, people like that. We would go door to door and give five brochures at every house, and we had the list. As a matter of fact, we had a little office at one time. Anyway, a lot of people got involved in it, we organized the precinct, and we got a *lot* of people elected that way. The Democratic Party at the time, because most people were Democrat, was split between the liberals and the conservatives, and the Democratic state conventions were the *hottest* thing in town, because *repeatedly,* we would have to have a division of the house, you know, everybody on the left, everybody on the right, and we would battle all the time. O'Callaghan was governor, and it was a very interesting time. Then gradually, all the conservatives became Republicans and....

Would you go to Carson City to lobby for bills?

Yes, we did. Patricia was there a *lot.* As a matter of fact, Patricia was involved in the Consumers League of Nevada and was responsible for the Department of Consumer Affairs, and that was her bill! She worked on that bill and got it passed, and worked hard for it. And O'Callaghan, Mike was governor. In fact, O'Callaghan was a good governor. He did a lot of good things, but not everything, because early in O'Callaghan administration, he had a head of human resources whose name was [George] Miller and they threw two thousand women off the welfare roles without any reason whatsoever. So we used to protest on the Strip.

Were you a part of that march with Ruby Duncan?

Yes! Yes, we would march on the Strip with *thousands* of people, and then park right in the middle and stop all the traffic.

Was there more than one march?

There were several. So one time Patricia was sitting down in the middle of the Strip in front of the Stardust [Hotel Casino], and the police came, and they were ready to arrest her! I said, "Get the hell out of here! We have four kids at home and a babysitter." [laughter] It was interesting, and then some of the people would be arrested. Then we'd go to municipal court or to justice court. Jim Santini, who at the time was a Democrat, later became a Republican. Of course, we all knew Jim Santini. Jim Santini knew all the people, and then a whole bunch of our friends would come in, including Father Louie Vitali. Then Jim would look up, and he knew everybody, [laughter] Then one way or another, somebody came with bail money, and everybody got out.

So did you know any of the front-line people in that welfare rights movement?

Yes, Pat knows them all. Pat has a better memory than I have. She remembers all the names. As a matter of fact, we were at a Democratic dinner not so long ago, and there were still some of the people that we used to march with way back then, [laughter]

That's interesting. How did the community* see *the Welfare Rights... ? How did middle-class people view the movement?

Well, the thing is, you know, like the letters to the editor, Ruby Duncan-god, she's a darling with her high-pitched voice [laughter]-she would be just amazing. Somebody in town had the name Duncan and had a *big* Cadillac that had 'Duncan' on it, so *everybody* would write letters to the editor about the welfare queen. And, of course, she didn't have a Cadillac! She drove an old jalopy. But that kind of thing, there was a *lot* of reaction against the welfare, but there were a lot of good people. As a matter of fact, I remember working with Mahlon Brown Jr. Later on he was

U.S. Attorney. He was head of Legal Services. And we went down there. It would be because the court wanted *separate* paperwork for *each* of these thousands of welfare women, so we would sit there and type-we still used typewriters at the time-up all these documents to go to court. We used to sit there twenty-four hours a day and type those documents. So eventually they all got off, and then most of them were reinstated, because that was not right to throw them off the welfare rolls. That was sort of a dark spot in O'Callaghan's reign, but he did good things. He did a lot of good things, O'Callaghan. So that fixes the 1970s.

Did you run for public office at one point?

Yes.

Tell me about that time.

David Canter was on the school board and then ran for the county commission and won. During that time, we had a party at my home and for some reason or other; David Canter was there, so David said, "Why don't you run for the school board? I'm not going to run."

I said, "OK," that maybe I can do something to improve the quality of education, because there's all this *feel*-good kind of thing going on, and they come to the university, and half of them need remedial English, can't write a sentence. So I ran for the school board and won pretty handily.

Do you remember which year?

Nineteen seventy-four. So Kenny Guinn was superintendent, Helen Cannon was president of the board, and Connie Larson, Glenn Taylor, who was very conservative, but we were good friends, were on the board. Anyway, it was an interesting board, and it was an interesting time.

Integration had taken place just before that.

Tell me how that played out. When we say integration took place, what do you mean exactly?

Well, desegregation. That was the sixth-grade centers. That was a solution to the problem to make the schools on the Westside sixth-grade centers, so everybody would be bussed for the sixth grade down there, and then the black students would go all over town [for all the other years].

So explain that to me. They were bussed where?

They were bussed to a *variety* of schools. So if you lived on the Westside and you're in kindergarten through fifth grade, you were bussed all over town. Now, the *advantage* of that, when I was on the school board, is that the people in charge of all the bussing and everything, they had dot maps, and the dot maps showed that a lot of black families were moving into white neighborhoods. They realized they're paying so much for a home on the Westside, but they can pay about the same for a home near the school where the kid is. So a lot of people moved into other neighborhoods away from the Westside to be close to their school. So it had sort of a desirous effect, because at the *same* time, there were the civil rights acts going on in congress that told realtors, "You can't do that!" As I remember when I lived in Pittsburgh, I lived in a Jewish neighborhood, and I rented a room in a Jewish neighborhood, which was then... "blockbusting," I think it was called. Yes. And then they had *huge* signs in every front yard "For Sale." So they wanted *all* the Jews *out* of there and then turn it completely black, the whole neighborhood. So the realtors made a fortune. Of course, later on there were laws you couldn't do it anymore. You've got the equal rights laws and things like that. So that was a great time at the

same time that many of those black families could move all over town.

So here in Las Vegas that's what happened?

Yes, Las Vegas. So that happened a lot. So that was a good component of it. Of course, there was still a little bit of the Title IX thing. For instance, somebody would come to the school board and got honored by the school board because they have this drill team that wins all kind of national competitions and I had seen that drill team, and it was all *white.* So I asked this lady-you know, everybody is praising her-"How many black kids do you have a year?"

Very quiet. "Well, none." "Black kids don't have rhythm?" [laughter] So you get a *lot* of that at the time.... Then, for instance, the director of athletics for the whole school district would come and say how great all the teams are doing, and I would say, "I mean, I really care more about their *intellectual* abilities than their sports abilities, but what are the chances for women to do the sports?"

And they're very quiet. ..."Well, we have the soccer bunnies."

What's going on?! It's not that long ago in the 1970s! You know, Title IX was just coming out! So I embarrassed a lot of people. But the *biggest* deal was-and I still have all the articles on it-was the battle about release time for religious education. The LDS Church [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints] wanted release time for religious instruction, because what has happened over the years is that a lot of LDS administrators knew where the schools were going to be built, and the LDS Church would buy a lot nearby and have a religious center nearby. So the idea was that students could sign up for religious instruction at nine or ten or eleven or twelve and then they'd be bussed or walk or whatever to the LDS center as part of the school day.

Then

the Catholic Church said, "Oh, we like that, too. We have Catholic churches everywhere." So I went against it. I first met with the Jewish Federation, and I still have the minutes of the meetings. Then I met with all the black ministers on the Westside, who were *violently* opposed to it. Then I went with the Lutheran ministers and with the Methodist ministers and I had meetings all the time with everybody. It was *wonderful,* because the rabbis would come. Rabbis are *great* speakers, and they would talk there! Then the black ministers would come, and they are great speakers! [laughter] It would go on *night* after night, and when we had school board meetings; these were heated discussions. Then the headlines-and I still have the headlines paper-"Religious Furor Rages On." [laughter] Then I found out that Kenny Guinn had sent three administrators to Arizona to some district where they *had* the thing already, and I raised holy hell! I said, "Kenny, you can't use taxpayer money to favor one religion!" Then there was Berkley Bunker, who was an ex-United States senator-Bunker of the Bunker family here in town. He was a columnist for the *Valley Times.* I still have the column. He had a whole column attacking me, and he said, "He should know better. He should listen to his bishop, because the Catholic bishop is also in favor of it. How does he dare to go against his bishop?!" which indicates what they think about what a politician should *do,* is listen to his church, right, and that was just.... Anyway, it was a wonderful battle, and finally, they came down and said... you know, because they didn't want to continue this daily battle at the school board, and that was the end of it. So, thank God, it was.... It was a bad idea to begin with.

How did that impact your political career?

Well, that next time when I ran for office, I had an influential Mormon doctor running against

me, who spent a fortune, and I lost by a few hundred votes.

So you were on the school board for about four years

Four years.

Were you able to do anything or propose any bills to upgrade the level of education in any way?

It was difficult to do, and then finally, I found out, because what happens is, if you are articulate, the press likes to quote you, and that doesn't sit well with your fellow board members. So it was difficult to get things done. *Then* I figured out I just talk to Kenny and Kenny proposes it. They *love* Kenny, [laughter] And Kenny proposed it. So I worked with Kenny, and I went around and I found women candidates for principals. I traveled all around the district. I found black candidates for principal. It really changed the whole outlook of... the whole paradigm of male coaches becoming principals and administrators. That whole paradigm changed, and now it was *women* and minorities that got a chance. Kenny did that, and because of his charisma he could get away with it. As a matter of fact, I was asked to talk to be the keynote speaker at a convention of school administrators one time, and my topic was the advantages of Affirmative Action, [laughter]

Tell me about that.

And I said, "Be honest about what happened in the past." A nice job opened. Oh, my cousin, my friend, [do] you have any recommendations? It was just a little m-group. He said, "The result is very often you get people that their only connection to this job was who they know."

I said, "Now we are *forced* to look at qualifications, have them do test, in-box, out-box

test, have them write something. See whether they can actually *write,* which a lot of people can't." So it really has made it much easier. There's less strife, because now you have to meet certain criteria. Well, there were five blacks and three women in the audience who liked my speech, [laughter]

Do you think Affirmative Action is still necessary in America today?

Definitely. Definitely, and it will be for quite some time, because even though racism is not rampant like it was, it's still there. And not only racism but also sexism. As I talked to one principal after I had pushed for these women principals, Kenny and I, I met with a woman principal, and she said, "You know, if I didn't have to do it for *other* women, I would quit tomorrow and be back to teaching. You give a reprimand to a male teacher and then you walk out of the hallway, and he just carefully pats you on the back and then as if saying, 'You're nothing but a broad.'" [laughter] She said, "It's *very* demeaning, and what do you do after you just have lectured him? You know, you just be quiet and don't make the situation worse." The sexism and the racism are still there. It used to be we would meet in the back. That was before the open-meeting law. If Kenny suggested a woman or a black, the first thing that was said was "Is she qualified?" But when it was a male coach, there was no problem with qualifications! [laughter] So, hey, I did my thing. At one time, Dick Bryan, who was then governor, talked to me, at the political party. He said, "Herman, you have to be careful. You are too much in the news. You're making too many enemies." Maybe they had hoped that I would run for the senate or something like that. I said, "You know, I have to do what's right!" I just found another headline. I think it's this one here. [He picks up a piece of paper] I mean, I used to say things like that, "High School

Diploma a Hoax!" and made the headline in the *Las Vegas Sun.* That doesn't make you popular because the fact was people graduated from high school and could not read, and it still is the case! Even today there are students that get the scholarships to come to UNLV or the college, and because they have a B+ average, half of them still need remedial writing and remedial math. So I didn't make myself too popular among all the people.

Now, I see that you have a stack of papers with you today. Is there anything in there in particular that you want to talk about?

I have mentioned many of the things. Like there's one file dealing... all the paper clippings of the religious action situation. That kind of thing.

What do you plan to do with all of that paperwork, all of the clippings that you have?

If you want some of them, I have some doubles. I can make copies if the library would have any need for them.

Yes.

Politics was *really* interesting in the 1960s and 1970s. The bad guys were really bad, and the good guys were saints. I ran the McGovern campaign headquarters, [laughter] [George McGovern ran for president in 1968 and again in 1972.]

Some of the heavy influences in Las Vegas are the casinos. How do you see that influence today when it comes to education?

I think the problem in Las Vegas is like my son told me. One time when he was in high school, I told him to study hard. He said, "Dad, I know kids in my class that make more money than you do parking cars, and you're the most educated people I've ever met!" [laughter] And that's the

problem in this town, is that when you can make eighty thousand a year parking cars, or being a cocktail waitress or being a dealer make more than a professor, where's the value of education? But if you want to attract *more* than just *gaming* to this town, you better have an educated populace.

And now some of the gaming corporations are saying that the workforce is not educated enough.

Yes.

Part II of Interview Session:

The future is... I do believe in vocational education, and being an academic, when I wound up as dean of CCCC [Clark County Community College became Community College of Southern Nevada (CCSN) and is currently the College of Southern Nevada (CSN)]. I had two jobs at the same time. I was dean of the Henderson campus of the community college, and I was dean of business and industry, which is seventeen departments, all the vocational departments, ranging from business and accounting to air conditioning, auto mechanics, you know, all these jobs, which was a new area to me, and I wound up with an enormous *respect,* because what happened is those kids that finish automotive school after two years start making fifty grand! If they are good at diesel or transmission, they make a hundred grand! Then my poor English students will have to make twenty-eight thousand! Plus, it's quite complicated, I mean, to be a good air conditioning technician. You make forty bucks an hour there. Robotics, just name it; all these departments demand a lot of intelligence, too! And we *need* those people.

How did you get from UNLVto the community college?

I was at UNLV for fifteen, sixteen years, I think. Then I was asked by people at the community college to apply for a new position, because they had two national searches and couldn't find anyone, and that was the dean, like dean for arts and letters. I mean, I was impressed by the college, because my students who came from community college were better than other students, because the classes are smaller, and so I said, "Yes!" Then at the time, Judith Eaton was quite a fascinating lady. Judith Eaton was the president of community college and she was quite a visionary woman. I had met her socially, and I was quite impressed by her and said, *"Yes,* it would be fun to try that." So I applied and got the job. At the time, Jean Ford was a state senator, and at the same time that I had applied for *that* position, she called me, and I had lunch with her. She said she was not going to *run* again, and I said, "Now then, we have to find somebody that is aligned philosophically with you."

And she said, "Yes, we have met with a number of people, and we have already decided." I said, "OK, I'll do everything to help him or her." She said, "Well, you're the one!" [laughter] I hadn't filed yet, but the word got around very quickly that I was going to run.

For the state assembly?

No, the state senate. Her seat. She was in my district. At the same time, there was an assemblyman, Nicholas Horn, and he was going to run for that seat. So I went around a little bit, and people have already pledged money to my campaign. Nick Horn happened to be an assistant to Judith Eaton, and Judith Eaton couldn't stand him! [laughter] Wanted to get rid of him. So

when I met with Judith Eaton, she said, "I don't know what to do, whether to just have you run for the senate.... so I would get rid of him." Anyway, then the guy who is now editor of the RJ [Review Journal newspaper], who was a reporter then, called me and said, "I'm going to write a story tomorrow that Judith Eaton is offering you a nice secure or nice job with a lot of money so you won't run against Nick Horn."

I said, "You better do your homework. First of all, I'm making the same money in that new job if I take it as I do at UNLV... because basically, it would be a twelve-month job, so there would be more retirement." But I didn't care about the money. I just wanted a nice change. I said, "You better find out more about the relationship between Judith Eaton and Nicholas Horn before you write that story." [laughter] Then I decided not to run, because getting a new job and running at the same time would not be fair to the college. So I took the job, and at the time-now they have hundreds of administrators-there was one vice-president and three deans. That was it instead of assistant deans and everything; I had four secretaries, who did the work of deans! [laughter] They were good! They were fantastic, these secretaries! They did the scheduling. They did everything that now.... You know, ever since... what's his name, that president, who almost destroyed the college, came and gave everybody titles and hired *all* kind of administrators, we worked a low-budget operation. I worked seven days a week, because we had evening classes and everything like that, and I really enjoyed it. We had a great time. There were no chairmen of any of the departments. I was chair of seventeen departments and personally had to do the evaluation of everybody. I mean, they got their money's worth! And I made thirty-two thousand dollars in 1982. But I really enjoyed it! It was really a challenge; a seven-day-a-week challenge.

So tell me more about the position at the community college. How did that play out? What do you see as the growth of the community college?

I think the community college is a *very* valuable service to the community.

And now they want to change its name. The students want to....

They want to change its name. I don't agree with it, but if they feel it's necessary, it's okay with me. I think it's quite an *honor* to be in a community college, because the education is good. I mean, we have people with degrees from the Sorbonne. We have people with degrees from Berkeley. There are just people there that want to teach! And even then, a number of them... I mean, there's one professor who has a Ph.D. from Brown, who writes one book after the *other,* and they still publish, some of them, but most of them *really* want to do the teaching. And they're good at it, and they love it. When I was dean at the college, I used to go talk to counselors and just say, "You know, most of your counselors... you want to get your kids to Harvard or Yale or Berkeley or UCLA, and then if they're really not successful, you're willing to hand them to UNLV. Have them go the first two years to the college. Half price, excellent teachers. In any major university you are taught by part-time teachers, you know, graduate students, that many of them don't know beans themselves. I used to *teach* graduate students, and I was correcting their English, and they were teaching the freshmen English courses! At the college everybody has at *least* a master's, if not a doctorate in the field, and they're dedicated to teaching. They don't have any other responsibilities. So I think the community college is one of the *greatest* assets. I think we owe it to President Truman. Then after two years' successful college, go to the university!"

What I found when I was teaching courses at UNLV to people coming from the college, they

were superb students, actually a little older, so you're competing in a higher level arena. I mean, when I taught at the college, you had students just out of high school, but one-third of the class was people in their thirties and forties that were *competing* and kept everybody in line! *"Hey,* I mean, don't fool around. We had studied. I've worked at McDonald's for five years. I want an education!"

A few minutes ago you named some women leaders, Jean Ford. I heard a comment the other day that women make the best leaders.

Ahhh! [laughter] Yes, I.... I won't make a generalization, because I've seen some very *bad* women leaders. So I wouldn't make a general statement. I mean, there was one philosophy professor at UNLV who eventually became president. She was an absolute disaster, but had a great ego and a self-promoter. But I have found in general that when I look at the school district, former coaches just don't have the insight and the dedication that many women who have *not* been coaches have. So, on the national level, I think, because what's the problem with all these guys, these neo-cons, I mean, *war* for them is just something that makes you famous. Now, women don't have that *need* to beat the hell out of somebody. I mean, that's not in a woman's nature, so I think they'll find more ways for diplomacy than men normally would. Maybe there's more of a feminine side to my nature, but I don't count myself one of the guys who feel like I have to beat up somebody to show their manhood. So women *usually* don't have that. There are exceptions, of course.

When you first moved to Las Vegas, it was nineteen sixty-seven. Was this city different?

Yes. Yes, definitely. I mean, that's, as I mentioned, before the welfare, but that was part of the civil rights movement, the desegregation of the schools, the starting of EOB, which is really

interesting.

And EOB is...?

The Economic Opportunity Board that started that was part of Johnson's war on poverty, which.... No matter what people say about the war on poverty, it did a lot of good things. It put a *lot* of people that would never have a chance into positions of leadership. I had a president, Paul Meacham, at the college, who was black, thanks to Affirmative Action, because what had happened, in Reno they had a *very* qualified black vice-president candidate, and they hired a white guy *anyway,* so there was pressure to hire somebody black. It turned out that Paul Meacham was one of the best presidents we ever had. I mean, he was *so beloved* by everybody. He would stand in the hallway in the morning, and all the faculty, students, everybody could talk with him. As a matter of fact, when somebody got married and they had the big dinner in a restaurant at the college, they didn't invite the new president; they invited Paul Meacham to this. When Paul walked in, he got a standing ovation, [laughter] And that is the kind of man he was.

Usually when we talk about the Civil Rights Movement and integration, not only do we talk about school desegregation but we talk about public housing. Did either of those areas also play out here in Las Vegas?

Oh, definitely. Yes, because that was at the same time in the late 1960s and the early 1970s that there were new laws dealing with realtors not discriminating, and, of course, it still went *on,* but not as openly. The NAACP would send people around, and there would be articles in the paper. The *Sun,* in particular, as a newspaper had been very active in following up on those stories. So that was in the news a lot in the 1960s and the early 1970s, and of course, you got school

desegregation. In 1971,1 think, is when that took place, and Kenny Guinn played a great part. That was a *very* difficult situation. Of course, the suit was filed by the League of Women Voters. Jean Ford was really a leader in that battle. It was a wonderful time, [laughter] With everything happening in the South, and at the time, of course [Las Vegas was protesting as well].

How did this city compare? The Civil Rights Movement, how did this compare with what you saw in other places, in Texas and then here?

Well, they were a little bit ahead, but they still called Nevada "The Mississippi of the West," and it was Governor Grant Sawyer who was the first one to tackle desegregation. But you've heard the stories [about] how they would empty the pool after a black entertainer had somehow dipped in the pool, that kind of thing, and how they had to go to the Westside to the Moulin Rouge [and other small boarding houses] to spend the time and couldn't spend it on the Strip. That Sammy Davis... they gave him a cup of coffee and they threw the cup in the trash when he was done. I mean, these stories were well-known, and it was Governor Sawyer who really changed that. I think it's better now.

Did you also know of Mayor Gragson?

Oh, yes! I knew him well. Mayor Gragson was a good man. As a matter of fact, we bought this table, that table, and that painting all from Mayor Gragson when he still owned his store. I bought it from him personally. Mayor Gragson was down-to-earth, and you could always meet him. You could invite him to a party, and he'd show up. He was just a good man. You know, he stuttered. Then Twin Lakes School was going to be named Gragson School, and Twin Lakes is an old name so the people protested. So Kenny Guinn and the board said, "Well, you're good friends

with Mayor Gragson. You tell him."

So I called him and said, "Mayor Gragson, I don't have good news. You know, the people *really* like the Twin Lakes School, and they like the name. Would it bother you to a great extent if the next school, a *brand* new school, opens up and we name that after you?"

He said, "Sure. No problem." He was a good man, Mayor Gragson. I saw his picture recently. I didn't read the article. He is now head of....

General Manager of one of the locations of Arizona Charlie's?

Yes.

And he talks about the same public relations atmosphere and how important that is in running a business.

Yes, it is. It is. You know, I don't think there was that much corruption until later when they achieved all that power. Pat told me, "Go to the county commission!" And that was way back in the 1960s or early 1970s. Said, "We should go to the county commission, and they want to double the garbage rate. We should go protest."

"Sailor" Ryan was chairman of the commission. I don't know how good he was, but he was very powerful at the time. So I go to the county commission, and so the item of the garbage rate increase was on there, and I said, "Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak on that issue of the garbage rate increases."

He said, "No, you can't."

That was the way it was done! Nobody showed up. I was the only one there, [laughter]

They didn't let you speak.

"No, you can't." Then fortunately, Bob Broadbent was also on the county commission. I said, "I'd like to hear what he has to say." And Bob Broadbent was a decent guy. I later served with him on the 208 committee that was to build the advanced ways for the treatment plant, and on the Regional Planning Council with him, of which I was chair in 1975. That's another interesting thing. Yes, Regional Planning Council. We had one!

Good. I'm going to ask you about that in a few minutes. So what happened with the...?

And the 208 committee. Yes. And Broadbent was really interested in the environment. I said, "Bob, how come you're so interested in the environment?"

He said, "Yes, my son majors in environmental engineering at Reno."

I said, "That's wonderful!" [laughter]

Anyway, I was elected chair of the Regional Planning Council, and we had a staff that was federally funded. As a matter of fact, the present assistant county manager, Rick [probably Rich Holmes].... I'm seventy-five. I forget names. But he's still assistant county manager. He was part of the staff. And the top planner Brian Lam was his name, and they had a staff. The Regional Planning Council consisted of one representative from all the governmental bodies. I was on the

school board, and I represented the school board _____ all the tax, you know, the cities and all that kind of thing. This staff came up with four major plans. Now this is 1975. It was still possible to do it, and they came up with four major plans. For instance, one plan was to zone all the washes as recreational. So if there ever was a flood, you'd lose a few slides and a few swings, but that would be it. So nobody could build in all those washes. This was one plan. Another plan was to have satellite towns with single two-lane highways to them with routes for busses or trains

so people would be forced to take mass transportation to the center city. Plans like that. Well, there was *enormous* opposition to all of that, of course, because the minute they found out this was presented to the Regional Planning Council, they all voted against it. I was the only one voting for it. [laughter] They'd heard from all the lobbyists and the real estate people that had bought these washes for a hundred dollars an acre and would now sell it for half a million an acre. So nothing came out of that, everything was turned down.

So what came out of the commission?

The commission voted everything down. These were good planners, you know, long-range planners when it still could be done! So finally, I went on my own cost to San Francisco. I talked to the federal government and told them, you know, to the people in region nine, "Why waste your money. They're not interested!" And they cut it out! That was the end of the Regional Planning Council.

Wow! That's interesting. After being so active politically, educationally, all of that county area..

.[distorted sound]

[distorted sound] ... they find more water, they either have to do like Tucson, no more lawns at *all,* just red dirt. Not even sprinklers-because I don't think.... You see, the Alps are losing as much snow as the Rocky Mountains, and let that go for another ten years and they'll be sucking up *mud* from the bottom of Lake Mead. In Blue Diamond we have no problem, [laughter] We'll be the only ones that have water.

So what do you think would happen to the population of Blue Diamond?

Well, I mean, it can't grow much, because there are only a few lots left. So we'd be the only one

who'd survive, but there's great faith in Mulroy, who is a former student of mine, who is brilliant administrator of the Water District. She has a master's in German, Pat Mulroy. I was on her master's exam committee in German and I was *listening* to her. I said, "My *god,* she's smarter than me!" She is absolutely brilliant, and that's my only hope, that she can get us out of this mess!

Tell us for the tape who she is right now.

Pat Mulroy is head of the water authority and of the Las Vegas Valley Water District. She has been at it for fifteen years. She's probably the most powerful woman in Nevada. I mean, she is just absolutely brilliant. If she had stayed and gotten a Ph.D. in German, she would be a worldwide-known scholar in German, but she decided to go into government service. She is absolutely fantastic, and so she'll probably find a way, and that's my only hope, [laughter]

One of the things that we've talked about recently-and we'll go on to another subject-Las Vegas would like water to come from some of the counties north of Clark County.

Yes, from Elko area and it's....

White Pine.

White Pine County.

Is that feasible?

I don't know enough about it, but if she thinks it's feasible, it can be done! She does her homework. And it's the only *way,* because Lake Mead is just not going to give it, unless you get a new distribution plan, because if you go *down* the river, if you go to Arizona where the Colorado River runs through; the Colorado River is at the regular level, and Lake Havasu is at the regular level, because those people have rights on the water. Now, if we can get some of *their* rights so

we don't have to let so much water flow over the dam, then maybe there is a solution. I don't know.

My last question for today. Looking from the casino point of view, is it the county commission or city council of Las Vegas where is the power base lies now?

It's generally said that the Clark County Commission is the most powerful *body* in the state. The developers used to sort of *own* the county commission, and I think we have a few new members now that are more independent that really are not ready to make a bundle out of their job. So I hope those two new members we have right now and Chris Giunchigliani and Susan Brager and Bruce Woodbury - those are three very good people, and I guess some of the others are, too. So maybe we have people that are *really* public servants on the commission now.

And we have Lawrence Weekly.

Yes... that will not be tempted to corruption. And, of course, the casino industry... they are the biggest taxpayers in the state, and to some extent, they have a right to give their input, [laughter]

One last question, even though I said that one was supposed to be the last. We have a mayor who wants to develop downtown. What do you think of the idea of an arena with a national basketball team here in Las Vegas?

I'm always violently opposed to using tax money to *help* very wealthy corporations, which *all* those teams are. They're corporations, and if they want it, let people pay for it. Double the price of the tickets or whatever. I'm *totally* opposed to that kind of thing. Moreover, I don't know the kind of people.... You know, if you read the letters to the editor in today's paper after the NBA event here in town, it doesn't attract the most desirable kind of people that we'd like to have, so

let's go and have conventions for dealers in surplus Army or something like that, people that spend a lot of money, [laughter]

That reminds me; I tried to get the professors of the Modern Language Association one time here. So I went to the convention authority and said, "Hey, three thousand professors come here. Yes. Would you be interested?"

"Hmm, not really. They would have to pay full price for all of the rooms."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Look at these professors. One, they have no money. Two, they go to all the meetings, and then they go to bed! Bring me the Army surplus dealers. They don't go to any meeting, and they spend all night gambling."

That is great. This has been wonderful. Any other comment that you'd like to make?

No. This is just fine.

Wonderful. Well, thank you so much!

It was just a pleasure.

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