An Interview with Aubrey Bud Weil

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

Oral History Research Center
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The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

Bud Weil worked as a disc jockey in Mexico after serving in the military during World War II. In 1947, he moved to Las Vegas to work at KLAS but after two days he was job hunting. His search landed him at KENO, a radio station owned by Max and Laura Belle Kelch. His was an interview show that afforded him entree to stars performing in town. The list of his favorite interviews includes Sophie Tucker, Sammy Davis, Jack Benny, The Mills Brother, Rosemary Clooney, Leno Horne, Joey Lewis and many others.

In 1955, he became restless, left the career in broadcasting, and joined Max Kelch as a partner in a new venture for Las Vegas – Musak. This enterprise took him to the doors of every business in town and shortly, he knew everybody. He uses that knowledge in this interview to talk about all aspects of life as the town grew over the years. Today he is a senior statesman of our town, enjoying everything about Las Vegas except the traffic.

Good morning. This is Claytee White. It is December the 9th, 2003. And I'm in the home of Mr. Bud Weil. How are you doing today?

I am fine, Claytee. Thank you.

Good. And could you give me your entire name, please?

Yes. The first name is Aubrey. And then my middle name, which is also legal and the name I go by, is Bud. And the last name is Weil.

Thank you. Now, could you please just tell me about your early life, where you grew up?

Yes. I was born in Los Angeles, California. And I spent my formative years there until the war. And I enlisted in the Army in 1942 and stayed there until - oh, three years and nine months exactly. And then I had always wanted to be a radio announcer. It was kind of a passion of mine.

Before you tell me about that, could you tell me just a bit -- right now we are really interested in some of the veterans. And there are several projects around the country. Can you tell me a little bit about your World War II experience, where you were stationed?

Yes, I can. I took the basic training at Fort MacArthur, which is down in the southern San Diego area. From there, I believe I went to Paso Robles, California. They transferred me up there in that area to a town called Tracy. Tracy was a prisoner-of-war camp for the Japanese generals. They'd bring them there once they had captured them. Then they would interrogate them. I, as a lonely private, had nothing to do with it. I was simply there. Then I got transferred to Florence, Arizona, which was an Italian prisoner-of-war camp. They would capture the Italians and bring them into war camp -- jail actually -- in Florence, Arizona. From there, I got transferred to Fort Lewis, Washington. That's in the Tacoma area. From Fort Lewis to Hawaii, and from Hawaii to a couple of islands, Iwo Jima and some of the South Pacific Islands. Then in September of '45 [1945], directly after the war, I was sent to Japan and spent many months in Japan. I'm sorry I didn't stay there.

Now, why do you say that?

Well, because I like their culture. They have a magnificent culture. They are very clean people. They're very innovative. They're bright. Well, you know that. The television here, we don't even manufacture televisions in this country. Everything is done in Japan. But I liked it and I liked the girls. They were pretty. It was just a nice place, even though Tokyo was completely bombed out. And then after the war -- you want me to take you after the war?

Well, just a few seconds. So you were there during our occupation?

Occupation. Absolutely.

What was that like? How did we handle that?

Well, it's really not how we handled it; it's how they handled it. We got there right after the 11th Airborne, if I recall. They were the first ones. We got there a few weeks afterwards. And all of the Japanese were still in the subservient state, not only a subservient state, but a subservient state of mind. And you could walk into one of their fine department stores, and they'd all get down and bow. And you could take anything you wanted. We didn't. I didn't. You could go into markets, and they'd all bow because they hadn't seen Americans before and they were scared to death we were going to kill them. We were all walking around with rifles and guns and everything. The whole of Japan was like.

That's really interesting. I talked with a person here yesterday who was an American POW in the Korean War. That group of men here in Las Vegas is interested in doing an oral history project. They're going to talk about their experiences in POW camps. Could you just give me some idea of what a POW camp is like, and if you were in my place, some of the questions that you would ask these men?

Well, the Japanese prisoner-of-war camp and the Italian prisoner-of-war camp were actually hotels. They treated them with dignity. They treated them with respect, the Americans. They fed them better than they fed us. They fed them more often than they fed us because they wanted to curry favor with them. They wanted the answers to their questions. They wanted to interrogate the Japanese generals and the Italians as to what

was happening while the Italians were in the war.

I've done hundreds and hundreds of interviews over my radio years. And if I were to interview a prisoner of war, which I've already done a number of times -- Gene Coon, for example, years ago -- I would ask him questions as to how he became a prisoner of war. I would also ask how he was treated; how he was fed; was he brutalized; were you interrogated, which, of course, the answer is affirmative; and if so, how did they try to get the answers from you; and what were your thoughts during the months and/or years that you were there? And I don't want to put words into your mouth, but did you always think of your family? Did you think of any other soldiers? Did you think of trying to escape? Was it possible for anybody to escape? I would just go on in that vein.

Good. I really appreciate that.

You're welcome.

Getting back to after the war period, at that point you returned to Los Angeles?

Yes, I did. I didn't like Los Angeles. It was all right, but I didn't care for it. After the war, it was just -- I loved Hollywood Boulevard all of my life because I was born in the Hollywood area. After the war, Hollywood was decimated. I mean, they ruined it, the soldiers, the sailors. I mean, they just partied and, you know, it was just too much. It had a certain dignity in the early years, in the 20s and the 30s. But that was all gone. So I wanted to get away.

So I went to a radio school to learn how to be an announcer. But prior to becoming an announcer in those days, you had to have an engineering license for radio. They required that. And that's so that if somebody left the radio station, you as a radio engineer could handle all of the equipment. And I took that. I passed that after about 500 times, I think. It seems that way. But in any event, I did pass that. I got a job down in Mexico.

Where?

Right on the border in Mexicali. I had many other jobs in other towns. They're inconsequential as opposed to this one. I worked there out in the desert on the border and learning to speak the language a wee bit. I got married down there.

I don't know if you know Ruthe Deskin. Do you know Ruthe from the *Las Vegas Sun*? She's the assistant manager. Anyway, one day I got a call early in the morning. And the man said, "My name is Dick Goebel." Well, I was completely underwhelmed, didn't know who is he was. So he said, "I own a radio station in Las Vegas, Nevada, called KLAS [which later became KLAS TV Channel 8]." I said, "Yes. And where is Las Vegas?" Well, 1946, '47, the only people that knew about it were those that went to the Flamingo. And he said, "I'd like to hire you." I said, well, okay. "How much are you making?" Well, I inflated my salary I think from $40 to $60 a week. I wasn't getting paid the 40 anyway. But he says, "I can't pay you that much." I said, "Well, then I can't go." "Please don't hang up." And to summarize and make the story a bit shorter, he acquiesced and he paid me what I was asking.

How much did you ask?

I asked $60, and I think he paid me 60. He said, "When can you be here?" I said, "I can leave right now." I didn't tell him I hadn't been paid for two weeks. So I got in my car and I drove up and I went to work for KLAS radio station.

Before you start telling me about that, give me your parents' names and how many brothers and sisters you have.

I don't have any. I have no relatives except my son. My father's name was Max and my mother's name was Ethel, and my brother's name was Mort. And that's it. They're all deceased.

Now, you got married while you were at that previous radio station?

Right.

And your wife's name?

Oh, I've been married since then.

Okay. Good.

I don't have a wife. I'm single at this time. So I moved here. Drove up here and went to work for KLAS.

So now that's 1940 -- '7. **Where did you live?**

I lived in a little shack on Fremont. There was no place to live in town. I lived in a

little shack on East Fremont Street, a horrible neighborhood. When I say shack, that's exactly what it was. I think the whole place was not as large as this living room.

So give me about the dimensions of this living room.

I would say that it was about maximum 250-, 300-square-foot house.

Describe it. Other than that, what kind -- you had electricity, of course. Did you have --

No. We had burning oil. That's right. We had burning oil. We had gas -- no, we didn't. I take that back. We did have electricity, of course. But it was infrequent because as often as the breaks down here of the electric, think of what happened down there. But interestingly enough, there was a man in town named Marc Wilkinson. And he was the premier printer in town. He had a building on Ogden. I think it was about Sixth and Ogden, behind the El Cortez. He was renting a room upstairs, which was the same dimension, 250, 300 square feet. So my wife and I rented that room. It was the only place to rent. And all night long, you could hear the thumping of the presses. And it was impossible to sleep, absolutely impossible. Then we moved to 15th and Fremont where the apartments were. And they still are there, by the way. Then it goes on ad infinitum. Ad nauseam, too.

Tell me about the job at the radio station. What was that like in 1947?

Well, it only lasted two days. I got fired.

Why?

Well, the chief engineer, Ralph Dow, and I didn't get along. And I shoved a gun in his stomach. And he threw up in my hand. And then they fired me. Dick Goebel fired me.

So do you want to tell me what you did, what happened? And why you were carrying a gun?

Well, in Mexico we always carried guns, holster guns. So the first day I was there, he had a soda cowboy-type thing. And I said, yeah, I've got a little gun. "I'd like to see it." So I brought it the next day. "Oh, that's a peashooter." He said, "That's not a gun, and you're not a real man." I said, "Oh, it isn't?" And I shoved it in his stomach. And that's

what happened. So I got fired. But I have a reputation of having been fired from every job I have ever had, I think, hopefully. I seldom left of my own volition.

So where did you go after that?

That's why I mentioned Ruthe Deskin. She was working at KLAS. And she's still very active. She's in her mid 80s. I went to work for KENO, owned by Max Kelch. You know the name?

Yes.

Laura Belle [Kelch] is still alive.

Yes. We're interviewing her at the present time.

She lives at 330 Rancho Circle. I remember they built the house in 1955. Jelindo Tiberti built it for him. He bought the lot from Ryland Taylor in 1955, the judge. I remember the price of the lot was 65. The price of the house was $65,000. He had $130,000 in it, and it's worth a couple million now. It's on acreage with fruit trees and everything. So Max and Laura Belle owned the radio station. I got fired from there two or three times. Laura Belle fired me once. But they rehired me.

Tell me about the kinds of programs that you had.

Well, I had a disc jockey program. But they hired me primarily to do interviews with the stars in town. And in those days -- the recorder you're using now is nice. These were called brush machines. They weighed about 40 pounds, and they were wire instead of tape. And you'd have to carry this big, heavy thing wherever you went. I'd go to the Flamingo, and I'd have to carry it and set it all up. It's not like pushing a button. So I would do those. Then I played them. Then we had an award-winning newscast, which I was a member of. It was called Five Star Edition: Tom McGowan -- I don't know if know him -- Tom McGowan and Kenny O'Connell and Ed Onken, who is the -- well, they're all deceased. My memory reads like an obituary column.

First, tell me a little about the machine that recorded on a wire. What does it look like?

Well, it looks like a reel-to-reel tape machine. When I say this big -- of course, we're on tape -- it is about two feet wide, about a foot deep, and it stood maybe a foot and a

half from the floor, and it was heavy. It was reel-to-reel, but it had only a piece of wire. And you recorded on the wire instead of tape.

Could you erase?

You could erase and you could play back. But sometimes it was dangerous. If you're coming to the end of the wire and you're rewinding, it snaps out. It could take your finger off if you weren't careful.

Tell me some of the people that you interviewed and some of your favorite interviews.

I had close relationships with a lot of them over the years. But I did a number of interviews with Sammy Davis and Lena Horne and Sophie Tucker, Joey Lewis and Markman Lewis and Jack Benny and Jimmy Durante. Oh, my gosh, there's so many of them that I can hardly think of them. They go on and on and on. Everybody, Kaye Starr, Rosemary Clooney, The Mills Brothers, The Platters, The Ink Spots. Bill Kenney was a dear friend of mine from The Ink Spots, the tall guy. He was a wonderful man.

Nat Cole. I begged Nat for years to quit smoking. He would never do it. Nat Cole was the blackest man I ever seen in any life. He was a wonderful human being. I begged him. I said, "Nat, you've got to quit." You know, it killed him. The cigarettes got his throat.

Yes, definitely.

And Mel Tormé and I were friends. We grew up together. I don't know if you know this, but Myrna Williams -- you know who she is? That's Mel's sister. She's one of the county commissioners. That's Mel Tormé's sister. They used to live next door to us in Los Angeles. Mel kept us awake all night playing drums.

What are some of your favorite stories from your interviews?

Oh, Spike Jones, I guess. You've heard of Spike Jones. Spike Jones and I were doing an interview. He says to me after the interview, "I have no way to get back to the Flamingo." I said, "Walk." He said, "Are you kidding?" He says, "Why don't you drive me?" I said, "I'm not a cab driver, Spike." He says, "Well, I came and did this for you." I said, "Comp me at the show tonight, I'll do it." He did. And I drove him back. It was all a

joke, but it was fun.

But there was Harry Richmond. That's way before your time. That's even before my time. But Harry Richmond played here. And he said after the interview, he said, "Bud, I want you to come see my show." He was one of these guys with the top hats, you know, the old 1920s. He says, "And I'm picking up the tab." I said fine. So a lady and I went there, and they hand me a bill. I said, "What's this?" Well, you've got to pay. No, Mr. Richmond is going to. Oh, no. I said, "Well, take it back to him." So they did. He said, "I'm not paying." I said, "Neither am I." So I got hold of the right party, and I walked out. But in those days, you see, everything was comped, everything. We never paid for anything in those days. That's before the days of the corporation.

Give me some more information about what those days were like. What it was like to go out for an evening on the Strip?

There were all these people that tell you that you had to get dressed up and wear suits. That really is not true. That's a hypocritical statement. They opened a place on the Strip called LaRue, which was the same as LaRue on the Sunset Strip. And because people had to dress up and they wouldn't do it, they went broke and closed up and went home. You could dress up, but you didn't have to. People, of course, didn't go in shorts. But they put on a pair slacks and a shirt and they would go. Nobody's going to wear these suits and everything in this hot weather. So that's more of a dream than anything else.

But how did the women dress?

They dressed nicely. But it wasn't gowns and jewelry. They dressed with gowns if they felt like it. And if they wanted to wear a pair of slacks, they'd wear a pair of slacks or a short skirt and a blouse, whatever it is. But when they tell you all this, this simply is not true. There might have been a couple of rooms that wanted it, but nobody required it.

In those days, I spent a great deal of time at the Thunderbird Hotel because it was right across the street from the radio station. That used to be the bank. But before the bank, it was the radio station, KENO. The Thunderbird then, of course, become the Silverbird and the El Rancho there and so forth. So I spent a lot of time. That and the Desert Inn were the most popular hotels. You could go in all of these hotels, and the

dinner and show was five dollars. You shake your head, but five dollars was a lot of money if you're making 40, 50 bucks a week. Average salary, you know, was around $2200 a year. So five dollars was an exorbitant amount of money. As I say, I got comped. So I didn't much care.

When I moved here, there were three hotels. Now, you will hear people tell you that Bugsy [Benjamin] Siegel built Las Vegas. He built the first hotel. Well, number one, he didn't build Las Vegas, and he didn't build the Flamingo Hotel. It was already half built. You knew that. It was built by Billy Wilkerson, the Hollywood reporter. That was the third hotel. The first one, El Rancho. Tommy Hull built that in 1942. And the second one was the Last Frontier. Then the third one was the Flamingo Hotel. The fourth one, in 1948 on Labor Day, was the Thunderbird Hotel. And, of course, the Desert Inn was built in 1950.

Very few hotel failures. The Royal Nevada failed. That was next to the Stardust. A beautiful hotel. Couldn't make it. It failed.

Why do you think it failed?

Same reason every business in the world fails. Bad management.

So the Moulin Rouge?

I'll tell you a story about the Moulin Rouge because I think you'll like this. I worked for Merv Adelson. Do you know Merv Adelson?

I've heard the name.

Merv Adelson, he had three markets here called Market Town. I was doing a disc jockey show -- he was also married to Barbara Walters. He was doing a disc jockey show -- I was -- out at the Market Town at Oakey and St. Louis -- Oakey and Las Vegas Boulevard, which in those days was called Fifth Street. I was sitting there doing my show, and I got a call. My friend said, "The Moulin Rouge just closed. They went belly-up." I said, "Are you sure?" And I knew this guy that called me. So I got on the air and said the Moulin Rouge had closed. It just went belly-up. Somebody called me and threatened me. They said, "If you say that again, you won't get home tonight." It did not -- so forth. So I got hold of a cab driver I knew. I called him. I said, "Look, I can't pay you for it, but

would you find out for me?" He says, "Yeah, I'll radio one of the other cabs." Sure enough, it had closed. I think it was '55 [1955]. That was the end of that. Again, I forget the lady who owned it. What was her name?

Sarann Preddy [owned the Moulin Rouge in the 1990s.].

I'm sorry?

Sarann Preddy.

Yeah, Sarann Preddy All these stories coming out of there, I questioned -- with knowledge I questioned it -- due to the fact that they said that the white people, if you will, would frequent that place and they'd fill it up. That simply isn't true. I was there a couple times. I never found it to be. Now the blacks, of course, until 1960 couldn't come out on the Strip. I used to take Sammy Davis home to that little boarding house. I took Nat King Cole. I took Lena Horne. I drove them home to that boarding house.

Now, did Lena Horne stay at that boarding house?

Absolutely. Absolutely. What's his name didn't, though. He went with a beautiful black girl who killed herself [He is speaking of Dorothy Dandridge].

Are you talking about Josephine Baker --

No. That's way before our time. She played the Club Bingo, which is the Sahara. We just saw her on TV the other day.

They just did her life story.

Yeah, they did. But anyway, she could stay because it was after 1960. But I was in the dining room. And Beldon Katleman owned a hotel, the El Rancho. I was doing an interview with Sam [Sammy Davis Jr.]. We were sitting at the table, and the waiter came up to me. And he says, "Can I talk to you?" I said, "Yeah." And he says, "You can't do the interview here." I said, "Why not?" He says, "He's not allowed in the dining room." I said, "Come on. There's nobody in the dining room. It's two in the afternoon. There's nobody here." And he said no. So Sam said, you know, I understand. I said, "Well, you're leaving. I'm leaving, too." So we left. But those things happened constantly. Finally, in 1960 it was changed.

Maybe you'll do an interview with Aden Fox. Do you know Abe Fox?

No, I don't.

Abe Fox is in the phone book. He owned the delicatessen right next to the Sahara. He was the first -- he was a wonderful -- he's about 87 -- first man who would serve blacks in a restaurant.

What was the name of his restaurant?

Foxy's Delicatessen.

Thank you.

But I have a lot of stories like that. I could go on and on and on.

What was the attitude of Sammy Davis, Nat King Cole, those that you would interview if you talked about race relations with them?

I wouldn't do it because it was a very sensitive subject. It couldn't benefit anybody. You put that on the air, and you're going to have more racism. So even off the microphone, I never asked Sam or would say to Sam, "Gee, it's a shame you have to go back" -- I just never discussed it.

I know -- who was it? Once where they drained the pool here? Remember?

Yes. I've heard that story.

It's true. The black girl went into the pool [He is still trying to think of Dorothy Dandridge's name.].

Was it Lena Horne, or was it the other --

No, it wasn't Lena. It was the other one. Oh, well, anyway, because she was black, they had to drain the pool, and people wouldn't go in. I mean, this was the most racist city this side of the Mississippi. It was horrible.

When we look at an isolated city, do you think it would be any different than if we looked at any other western city? Would Phoenix, Arizona, have been different?

It was different. I went to school in Tucson, and I lived in Phoenix for a while in later years. But no, in the early 50s, Phoenix was not like that at all. They picked this city.

Why?

Because of the entertainment factor and the tourism. People would come here to see Lena Horne, but they didn't want to eat dinner with her in the same room. They'd come

here to see Sammy Davis, but they don't want Sammy Davis sitting out there by the pool with them. That's the way it worked here. Now, where you didn't have this entertainment and gambling, of course, that's a given. But that drew all the people in. It still does, as you know.

But times have changed, thankfully, and the world has changed. But I would never discuss it, never. It was a sore point with everybody, and it could do nobody any good to discuss it.

Getting back to your career being in radio, it seems that most people in radio and a lot of people writing for newspapers are very liberal people in a lot of cases. Could that voice have been used?

Absolutely not. When I was on radio in this town or in any town, if I would say the word "damn" on the radio, I would have been fired. You couldn't say damn. If you would have said "hell," you were immediately fired. And there was nothing sexual, no sexual connotation at all. We would never have even thought of going there. Things like that weren't permitted. Today the liberalism I hear -- I won't repeat it because -- and I've heard every word known to man, and I'm sure you have, too. But there's a guy on the station here, he uses not only sex but every other word he uses, and there's no end to it. And the FCC won't do a thing about it, Federal Communications Commission. They won't do a thing. The only thing I can do is turn off the station --

That's right.

-- because I don't have to hear that. I'm not a prude, but I don't want to hear that. I don't like to hear it in the movies.

Tell me about the KENO radio station, your work there, and how many years were you there.

I worked at KENO from 1947 to 1955, at which time Max Kelch and I went right next door.

(End side 1, tape 1.)

Tell me about Musak.

Well, I'll tell you about Muzak, but let me get back to the eight years there. You

know, I loved it for the first couple, three years. But like anything else in life, it becomes boring. And there isn't any money in radio, or there wasn't then. I don't know today. I haven't any idea, but I'm sure there isn't as opposed to what people make in television. But one day, Max [Kelch] sold out to a group of locals here. One of them was Merle Sage. And he would have sold to me. He wanted to sell to all the employees, but we had to come up with $5,000 each. He sold the station for $87,000. Now it's worth millions, of course. But $5,000, I couldn't even pronounce it. So they sold it. Merle Sage was the general manager. One day I looked around and I said I can't stand it here anymore. So I walked into Merle and said, "I quit." He said, "Well, you can't quit." I said, "I just did." What are you going to do? I said I don't know. I feel confined. I just can't do this anymore. I'm too extroverted. I can't be in this room with all the records and the news. I'm tired of it.

So I quit. I had a hundred bucks in the bank and a two-year-old son and a wife. When I got home, I said, "What the heck did I do? Why did I do that?" And then Max Kelch said, "How would you like to go to work me? I'm starting Muzak in Las Vegas." I'd have gone in a garbage truck by then. So I said sure. So Max and I worked together. I bought my chunk of it, and we became partners in it. We sold out in 1960. You know Murray Hertz? No. Okay. But anyway, we sold in 1960 to Rube [Reuben] Jolley, who was a mover and shaker in town, and to Morrie Zenoff, who had the Henderson newspaper in Henderson. Those are deceased people, too. Those are all the people I'm talking about. So we sold to them. Then they wanted to hire me on as a general manager. So I stayed for a while.

But Muzak was an interesting business, a very, very difficult business because, in my considered opinion, it was so badly programmed. And Muzak, the parent company, got wind of that and they tried to change it, but it didn't do any good. It was just boring. It was dull and it was non-passionate. It was fatuous music and elevator music. And you can't put that in these casinos. And they did and at markets, although we did one heck of a job. We sold of a lot of it. And we sold it, the business, for a good deal of money.

I traveled the streets with a friend of mine, Chuck [Charles] Ruthe. Chuck Ruthe started in real estate here. He became a multimillionaire. He said to me, "Come in real

estate." I said, "I don't want to sell real estate. I don't want to work Saturdays and Sundays." Anyway, we walked the streets trying to sell. He would try to sell real estate. I would try and sell Muzak. We both got lucky.

Has Muzak changed over the years?

Oh, yes. Unless I am wrong, it's either owned by Cox or by Greenspun. And I don't know which. I know Greenspun sold cable to Cox. So he may have -- Muzak is here. Oh, the programming, certainly. You can get any kind of program you want. You can get Hispanic. You can get Rap. You can get any program you want now. But in those days, you couldn't do that. You got what we had and that's it. I knew that it was good music for banks. In those days, they had savings and loans. So I constantly traded on the branches. It was very successful.

When I moved here, there were 16,000 people. There are more people than that in the Bellagio today.

That's right.

Yeah. So, you know, I get frequently asked, did you like it better then than now? And I know you are going to ask me that, right?

So answer that question.

I will answer that question. It's a very simple answer. I'll be 84 in April. If I would have been 84 in April and it was 1947, I would have hated this town. There were no facilities. You had to shop at Sears or Woolworths. I'm not sure whether there was a Penney's. But no place to shop. Most people went to L.A. [Los Angeles] When I was 25, 26, 27, it was great. I loved it. But I wouldn't want to be 25, 26, 27 now. It's too tough a town. It's too cosmopolitan. The traffic is abhorrent, to me anyway. I just wouldn't want it. I wouldn't want to start all over in this town. I wouldn't live here.

Have you driven in Los Angeles recently?

Oh, yes. We were down there a couple months ago. But you see, the comparison -- the analogy is not accurate, Claytee, and the reason being is you're dealing with millions of people. Here, if I want to go anyplace, I can be there in 20 minutes. There, if I want to go anyplace, it takes me an hour and a half. There was no place to shop.

So I wouldn't want to be -- and there were no medical facilities at all. We had the Las Vegas Hospital with Dr. [Stanley] Hardy running it and that's it. I don't know, 20 beds. Merv Adelson and Irwin Molasky built Sunrise [Hospital]. What's his name? [Morris] Moe Dalitz built Sunrise. I was a contractor at that time. We put in the sound system -- or some of it. Then there was a hospital. Now, of course, you know what's here. But in those days, it was just --

Now, you just said you were a contractor. Tell me about that phase.

Well, we were contractors with Muzak. We were licensed contractors, Nevada music contractors. And we put in some of the sound system for them.

When you first moved here, '47 -- as we got into the 60s, we had the Nevada Test Site. [This was in the 1950s]

You did.

And we started testing atomic bombs.

I was there.

Tell me about that and your experiences.

Well, I was doing news then as most of us were. They asked me if I would like to go out and watch the explosion, the atomic explosion. Of course. Who wouldn't? So I went out there once. There were many times, but I didn't go again. I wasn't invited. There was a fellow named Bob Constantine, who was a magnificent columnist for one of the eastern papers, *New York Times* or whatever. He was a noted award-winning columnist. And everybody was here from every paper in the United States. He was sitting at the bar at the Thunderbird Hotel. And he never even went out there. He wrote a column that won an award.

How did he do that?

By talking to people. That's how good he was. But I saw the mushroom cloud. Well, you know, then everything became mushroom clouds in this town. They even had a motel downtown.

What do you mean a motel downtown?

Yeah, with a logo, the mushroom cloud, years ago. Everything had to do with that

cloud; identifying Las Vegas.

Yes. Tell me how close you got to it.

I don't know. Wherever they put us lying down, I don't know how far it was, the distance.

So were you in some kind of a foxhole-type --

No. We were just lying down and with dark glasses. And they told us to lie down. I don't know how far it was, really. I can't answer that. I don't know. First place, I'm not a good judge of distance, but I still don't even know how far it was even if I were.

What were some of the stories that you heard around town at that point?

About the atomic bomb? I don't recall hearing any stories. Did you see the bomb? Yeah. Did you like it? Yeah. Was it interesting? Yes. Why are they testing it? I don't know. They haven't confided in me yet. I don't know why they're testing it. But suffice it to say, they are. But there wasn't much controversy about it.

As a newsperson, did you ever report anything on the racetrack, the Joe W. Brown?

Yes, as a matter of fact, I did. Joe W. Brown called me one day. I didn't know who he was. I was with Muzak then. We had an ad in the Yellow Pages. I'm glad you asked me. And he called. He said, "My name is Joe W. Brown." Again, I was underwhelmed because I had never heard of him. I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I'm building a racetrack in Las Vegas." I said, "What kind of a racetrack? Automobile? Horses? Dogs?" He says, "No, at the Las Vegas Country Club."

I lived on the country club for 26 years, by the way. I had a home there until I moved here. I wanted to move here. So that's where it was.

He said, "I need a complete sound system for the thing, and I have the blueprints." I said, "Fine." He said, "Come on over." I did. It was across the street. So I did. He said how much is it going to -- I said, "Look, Mr. Brown, I haven't any idea what it's going to cost. I haven't the vaguest notion until I get back and read it. But I can tell you one thing. I have to have all the money up in front." He said, "Why? Nobody else does." I said, "All due deference, sir, your racetrack is going to fail, and I don't want to be stuck without

being paid." He said, "What do you mean it's going to fail?" I said, "Sir, this is my opinion. People that drive up from Los Angeles -- those are our biggest customers here -- they don't come up here to go to the horse races. They have their own racetracks. They have Bay Meadows. They have Hollywood Park. They have everything. So they come up here for the crap tables and the 21 tables. And the horses, what are you going to do with them in the summer? It's 118 degrees out in the sun. They're going to die. They can't race." He said, "Well, you don't understand." I said, perhaps I don't." He said, "Well, I won't pay you up in front." I said, "I understand why you don't want to." So, of course, I wouldn't do the job. That's the racetrack.

Now, that's the same Joe Brown who owned the Horseshoe Club downtown. He sold it to Binion [Benny]. Before that, it was the El Dorado Club that was owned by Artie Rosen. And I worked there. I was announcing there. If you look in the archives, you'll see Joe W. Brown's Horseshoe Club. Then it was Binion's, I think, in '52.

Now, you said you were announcing there. What --

Yeah, for Artie Rosen. He wanted me to announce bingo games or keno games. So I did that for a few weeks. It was called the El Dorado Club, "the club with the heart in the heart of Las Vegas." That was their slogan.

What did downtown look like?

Downtown was magnificent. Of course, there was nothing on the Strip. Three places. But downtown was wonderful. They had the Monte Carlo Club, which was owned by a chap named Fred Soly.

The Golden Nugget, I played cards a lot in the Golden Nugget. Sawdust floors, wooden floors, done in the 1890s. It was a wonderful place. The food was delicious. The way they got started is a fellow from – Tutor Scherer was one of the owners, and Bobby Griffith was one of the owners. I'm trying to think of the guy who was the head of the vice squad in Los Angeles. I know his name as well as my own [Guy McAfee]. He got indicted down there. He came up here. They built the Golden Nugget. They started it, and they called it the one-million-dollar Golden Nugget because they had 20 people who put in $50,000 apiece. It was called the Million-Dollar Golden Nugget. Well, when they

were digging, they hit caliche and water because they have a basement there. They tried to assess all these people more money because they didn't have enough to do it. Most of them couldn't come up with the assessment. So they lost out. Why can't I think of his name? Anyway, that's how the Nugget got started. It was the place -- it still is downtown, the place.

And, of course, Bob Van Santen had the Nevada Club. A guy named Andy Tompkins worked for him doing the books and so forth. Andy Tompkins is still here. He built the Lady Luck downtown, Andy Tompkins. It's a very successful enterprise. He has subsequently sold it. Millions and millions of dollars he got for it. The Boulder Club was down there, The Westerner, and, of course, the old Sal Sagev. Abe Miller had that. That's actually Las Vegas [spelled backwards]. And the railroad tracks were where The Plaza is today. The trains would stop there, let the people off from L.A [Los Angeles], and they'd come down Fremont Street. We called it the sunny side of the street because the sun would shine on the north side. They'd come down there and gamble.

Then they had men's clothing stores a year or two later. They had Allen & Hansen. They had Ronzoni's. Dick Ronzoni, of course, was the county commissioner. And Mom Ronzoni. They had Woolworths on the corner, which was owned by Senator Chic Hecht. He just sold that. And Chickie is still here, too. Then they had Hecht's. Then they had Hecht's Dresses. His father had one store. He had the other on the south side of the street. You know, he was the United States Senator. He beat what's his name? They named McCarran after him. What's the name? Senator Pat McCarran was a friend of mine, I'm proud to say. I do a perfect impersonation of him. I do.

You have to do it.

I will. He had a secretary called Eva Adams. And Eva would call me from Reno or from Washington or whenever and she says, "Bud, the Senator is going to be in town. He wants to do an interview on your program." I said, "Fine, look forward to seeing him again. How are you?" She said fine and so forth. Well, he would come in. He was a short man, about my size, maybe about five-seven. I'm five-seven and a half. He was the epitome of a senator. A leonine head of white hair, short, dumpy-looking. He'd come in

and say, "Bud, how are you? Senator McCarran here." That's the way he talked. I'd always laugh at that. I'd talk to him. And then he'd tell me all the great things he was doing for Nevada, which he did.

Then I had an interview with Pop Squires. Mom and Pop Squires, they were wonderful people. They lived on either Fremont or Charleston. I forget. They had a home there.

Harley Harmon, of course, was born here. Harley and I were friends for years and years. I interviewed Harley a few times. But we'd do this for years.

And Ruthe Deskin, you've got to get a hold of Ruthe at the *Las Vegas Sun*. I haven't seen her in years. She's a wonderful woman. She works with Barbara Greenspun. Hank [Greenspun] and I were friends. As a matter of fact, I got his booklet here. Just looking at it, *Where I Stand*. If you haven't read it, you should. I worked for Hank for a while during his elections. Hank was the driving force, in my opinion, behind Las Vegas.

Now, why do you say that?

Well, he started the free press. He turned it into the *Las Vegas Sun*. He had more clout. He made Senator McCarran back down, and he sued the senator and he won. He was the most powerful man in the Senate. He went after -- what's that terrible man in the Senate that called everybody a Communist?

McCarthy.

Yeah, the McCarthyism. McCarthy [Joe] was here. Ruthe can tell you. I was there that night, too. It was at Legion Hall. He called Hank some names. Hank got up and called him names. "You come on outside," he said to McCarthy, the senator. He would take on anyone. He was a captain. He smuggled arms to Israel. He was a very devout Jew, not orthodox, devout. And, of course, his legacy is Green Valley.

Tell me about that.

Well, he got the property from Howard Hughes. Don't want to go into it. But anyway, he got it from Howard Hughes. They call it Green Valley because of Greenspun [Hank]. His son, Brian, was an attorney. Brian took it and ran with it. I was with Hank the week before he died; Hank and Barbara. We were at a party. He had cancer and

looked terrible. I knew something was going to happen. But anyway, he was talking about it. You see the American Nevada Corporation, which is a Greenspun enterprise; they own all of Green Valley. They lease everything. And they sold Cox Cable. I think he got a billion dollars or something like that. They're very enterprising people. The *Las Vegas Sun* belongs to them. They co-op with the [*Las Vegas*] *Review Journal*. What do they call that? [Joint Operating Agreement (JOA)]. There's a name for it. I've forgotten over the years. But anyway, yeah, Hank was instrumental in doing a lot of things.

Howard Hughes was the first corporate here. He started the corporations. He started the Hiltons. He started the Marriott. You know, all these things. He was the first one. That's what the town has evolved into today.

You're talking about the corporate era. Tell me about that era before and compare the two.

There is no comparison. The corporate era now does not care about the individual person. They don't care about you. They don't care about me. They don't care about anything except that bottom line. When the, quote, quote, Oscar Goodman Mob, who he says there wasn't one -- he's the only one in the world that says that -- but anyway, when the Mob was running this place, they didn't care how much you made in the restaurant. They didn't care how much you made in the coffee shop. They didn't care how much you made at the gift store. They didn't care how much you made in the show. They wanted to know what you made in gambling. That's all they cared about. But these pea counters here, the bean counters, they want to know how much this one made, how much that entity made, how much that one made. And that's fine. I find no fault with that. But the other one said, "we don't care whether you lose money in the food or not. It doesn't make any difference. We want to see how much you're making in the gaming." And because of that, they treated everybody differently. You could walk in there and they'd treat you -- hello. How are you? Nice to see you in our place. Now you walk in -- are you going to spend money or aren't you?

My main objection to all of Las Vegas -- and you may be interested in hearing this. I have one primary objection. I can go -- and I can prove it to you -- I can go to any casino

in town, doesn't make any difference which one. And I can sit at a nickel machine or a penny machine. I don't have to put any money in it. And a girl will come up and say, "Can I get you a drink?" I can get loaded with drinks at no charge. And then I leave and go to the parking lot and get in my car and drive. And you have thousands of people doing that every single day, and I think it's wrong. I don't want to be killed by a drunk driver. I don't want you to be killed by a drunk driver, and I think it's terrible. And I'm not a teetotaler, but I would never condone something like that. So they said, well, how do you curve it? Well, one way to curve it is charge them a buck for a drink. They won't be drinking as much. That's all. You don't have to charge them 2.50 or 4.50 or $8. Charge them a dollar.

Tell me how you like the idea of the neighborhood casinos now.

Well, I think the neighborhood casinos are fine. I find nothing wrong with them. I know the controversy with Stations [Station Casinos] and the 300-foot tower [Controversy that took place during the initial phases of The Red Rock Casino in the Summerlin area]. I can't comment on it because I don't live there. But from what I have heard, they say it will not block anybody's view of Red Rock. With that being the case, I would have no objection. I haven't heard people really complain, outside of that one incident, that it bothers anybody. Now, you can go to any neighborhood casino. It's absolutely jam packed not with tourists, but with people who live in the neighborhood. They like it. They make millions and millions and millions. I think that's wonderful. I find nothing wrong with it.

Did you ever invest in any --

I've never had enough money to get my shoes shined. What are you talking about? Are you kidding me?

Well, now, you lived at the country club for how many years?

Well, yeah. But those days, I couldn't invest. They wouldn't let you come in. No, no.

Louie Weiner, an attorney here -- you know Louie? Louie and I were friends. We were dear friends for years and years and years. Louie was an attorney. When I moved to

town, I think there were four attorneys in town. Now the book is yea thick. My son is even an attorney. But Louie would take -- and Cliff Jones, who was the Lieutenant Governor here, they would all take their fees, two percent, one percent, and they all have become multimillionaires.

Guy McAfee is the name of the guy for the Golden Nugget. I just thought of it, Guy McAfee. He was the guy from the vice squad in L.A. that got kicked out of there and came up here and started it.

But they all took their fees that way. But you can't buy one percent of a corporation. You can buy their stock if you want. But if you look at all the gaming stocks, none of them are making money.

That's right.

The stocks aren't. But you know what's funny about these gaming establishments? I'm really nonplussed. They say we're not doing too well. They're making so much money, and they don't reinvest it here. They'll go to Mississippi and build a casino. They'll go to New York or Jersey and build a casino, a billion-dollar casino. The MGM and the Boyd Group [Sam Boyd], $2 billion. Why don't they reinvest it here?

Tell me some of the things that they should be doing.

Well, either they should reinvest it here, or, in my opinion, they should raise the taxes here because they're making enough money to build in another state. If they're making enough money to build billion-dollar casinos in other states, they can afford an increase in taxes. And if they increase the taxes on gaming, we would have it easier here. That's the way I feel.

I've heard the name Lou Weiner so many times.

Oh, yeah, he's a wonderful guy.

Tell me about him and about his career here.

Lou Weiner when I first came here, his father would sit cross-legged in the window on the Fremont Street. He was a tailor sewing, a little tailor. I met his son, Louie, a little guy like me. He was just a fun, warm guy, been married a hundred and three times. He's just a great guy. As a matter of fact, when he died, they had the services here. Jim Rogers

from Channel 3 had to bring his truck out there with a big sign on it saying, "See, you can take it with you, Louie." That was only a few years ago. But Louie was very cordial. He was a good attorney. I don't know of anybody that didn't like him, unless he beat somebody in court. But I've only heard good things about Lou, and I only say good things about him because that's the way I always found him. We were friends for years and years and years, more years than I care to think about. And I'm sorry he's gone. But that's it. He was an owner in darn near every hotel on the Strip at the time. Oh, he had one percent here, two percent of the Thunderbird, one percent of the Flamingo, three percent of the Riviera, two percent of this. That's the way they got their fees in those days. So you can see the metamorphosis in the past 60 years.

Yes. I want to talk about recreation while you were here with a young family, working every day. Did your wife ever work?

Oh, absolutely. Had to eat.

Okay. Now, tell me about family recreation at that time.

There wasn't any. In those days the only recreation we had -- are you talking outside recreation? We'd go to friends' houses. That doesn't happen anymore. And a couple of them are still living. Every Thursday night I would play poker at his house, and then we'd play poker at his. Then he'd play at mine, and I'd play at his. And we'd trade off. But now we play poker in the casinos. But once a week we would go over, and we would visit, and we'd have food and talk. Now they don't. Now they go and they have a buffet, and they sit there and have a drink. So the social life for the average person is not extinct, but it certainly has been diminished by the change in the town itself. Before, there was nothing to do at night except go visit with your friends. Now they go to the neighborhood casinos.

Now, tell me about for children. Your son growing up here, what did he do?

Nothing.

Did you go to places like Mount Charleston?

Oh, yeah, we did. As a matter of fact -- oh, we went every place, Mount Charleston, Red Rock, and every recreational area. One day we were sitting in the car, and

I was driving with my wife sitting next to me and my son in the backseat. We got to the Valley of Fire and looked around. On the way back, he sat in the backseat singing, "There's nothing to do in the Valley of Fire, but sit, sit. Nothing to do." I talked to him on the phone about a week ago. I said, "Dan?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "There's nothing to do in the Valley of Fire." He said, "You remember that?" I said, "Sure, I do."

But we'd go to all the places, Lake Mead. I had a boat out on Lake Mead for a number of years. We'd have recreation at Lake Mead. But now that's changed, too. Now they charge you to get in, which they should have done years ago because the tourists have to pay in California to go on the lake and they never had to pay here. So they'd come up here and use our facilities and leave garbage all over. Make them pay.

Does your son have children?

No. He and his wife, 30 years, they don't have any children.

I was going to ask about the difference in raising a child now and then.

Well, he lives in California.

Tell me about the various early eating establishments before the buffets became so popular.

Oh, absolutely. The Green Shack, that was our favorite. We'd go for chicken there with Jones. She was in a wheelchair. I can't think of her first name. When you walked in, she'd greet you in the wheelchair. When she died, her relatives took over. Of course, it's been closed subsequent to that.

Now, was that an African-American family?

No. No, no, no. They had the greatest chicken. That started during the Boulder Dam, while they were building, which is actually Hoover Dam. It was so designated as Hoover Dam. But when it was being built, it was Boulder Dam in 1932 through 1936. But we'd eat there.

The best place in town to eat above all -- and I could never eat there because they wouldn't comp me and I didn't have the money -- was Luigi's on the Strip. That was a woman, Luigi. They said they had the best food in the world, and I just never went there.

Then they had the Sills Drive-In. When the Blue Angel was built -- Billy built the

Blue Angel. You know where it is on East Fremont?

Was it the Blue Angel or the Blue Onion?

Oh, the Blue Onion. I'm sorry. The Blue Onion Restaurant with the blue onion --

(End side 2, tape 1.)

The Blue Onion was built by a man called Billy Brandt. He and I became friendly while he was building. He said, "Put Muzak in here," which I did. He was the first one to put air-conditioning outside that you could put into your car when you're eating in the car. What he had were vents, and the air-conditioning would come. You'd put it in, roll-up your window, and then sit there and eat with the air-conditioning. That was the Blue Onion. In 1956, he did that.

That's wonderful.

Oh, yeah. It was great. You could sit out in the heat. Didn't make any difference. One thing was wrong. A lot of people would sit there hour after hour, and they wouldn't leave for the new customers because of the air-conditioning. Cars didn't have that. Many of them didn't have air-conditioning. So they loved it.

That is wonderful. Now, tell me about the waitresses.

Waitresses, in those days, were entirely different. Now the waitresses take the attitude – "What are you doing here? We don't want you here." Everybody takes that attitude. You walk into a department store. Don't bother me. It's not my department. The only exception to that is Nordstrom's, of course. But all these others -- it doesn't make any difference where you go. I went into Circuit City the other day, and nobody would wait on me. I said to the guy, "Do you work here?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What do you do?" He says, "I'm a salesman." I said, "Who do you sell?" He says, "People." I said, "Well, then sell me." Because you have to ask them. But nobody wants to work. What they do is they want to go in and go to work for McDonalds, and they want to own ten percent of the stock. They want four months vacation. They want a raise every week. And if they don't get it, they quit. But the people then, they'd appreciate it.

We'd go into the coffee shop at the Thunderbird Hotel, and the waitresses were just magnificent. They made a lot of money for those days because they waited on us and we

tipped them well. The jobs were hard to come by. When you got a job as a waitress, you got yourself a good job in the early days. Now, of course, the Culinary [Culinary Union, Local 226] runs everything. It's all union. Then there wasn't any union.

I remember we used to go to the El Portal Theater downtown, the Fremont Theater downtown. Blacks had to sit on the sides. Whites could sit in the middle. I'm bringing this up for a reason. I'm just thinking of a story. Xavier Cugat, you know who he is?

Yes.

There's a picture hanging of me someplace around here. He was one of the world's greatest caricaturists. He did one of me. He was married to a woman called Abbe Lane, gorgeous, gorgeous. She was a Jewish girl out of New York, but could speak Spanish. They were married. So I was doing an interview with him. And he says to me with his heavy accent while he was drawing while I was in the chair, "We're going to go see a movie tonight at the El Portal. Do you want to go?" He didn't have to work that night. I said, "Yeah." So we went down. The African Queen was playing. We go down. Both sections on the side were darn near loaded with black people. In the middle, about three people. So he said, "Where do we sit?"" I said, "Just sit in the middle." He said, "What if I wanted to sit on the side?" I said, "Sit on the side." He said, "Do you?" I said, "No, I don't want to sit in the side because I can't see from the side. I want to sit in the middle of the screen." This is funny. And she was a gorgeous girl. So anyway, she went in first. I went in second. Then he followed me. And now the three of us are sitting. I got my arm on her arm. You know, I'm hitting on her a little bit. I wasn't married. That's all right. But I was hitting on her a little bit. And he took a look. He said, "Let's trade seats." I said, "Why?" He said, "I can't see from this side." So Xavier and I traded seats.

You know, it's a different world. It's very difficult to describe. I tell you, I was what they called a quasi-celebrity. And you know what that is, of course. But I couldn't walk down Fremont Street. From Main Street to Fifth, which is Las Vegas Boulevard, it would take at least two hours because you knew everybody on the street. You knew everybody in the shops. You'd stop and talk to them. You'd stop and talk to him. You know, there are 20, 25,000 people here. And you knew everybody. That's the way the

town was.

Tell me about your life now.

My life now is idyllic. I do what I want when I want and how I want. I have no restrictions financial, physical, or mental. I really don't have enough to do, but I don't want to work. I don't have any hobbies. I play poker five days a week at the hotels, not for long, three hours a day. My girlfriend and I, we go on little trips together. We spend time together. I go to her place. She'll come to mine. We'll have dinner. I cook or she'll cook. So, you know, that's my life.

Now, my son and his wife just bought a new home up in Northern California. They're moving in January 1st. So in April, my birthday, we're driving up there. It's around 750 miles each way. But we'll drive up, and we'll spend some time with them and take our time and then drive back. There's no reason to get back. It's an empty house. I live alone.

Would you like to do some oral interviewing?

You mean, doing what you're doing?

Yes.

Not really. I'll tell you why. My ego would get in front of me because I tell you this -- I mean this sincerely. I think I know more about Las Vegas from 1947 than anybody I'm going to talk to. And when I talk to them, if they give me the wrong answer, I'm not going to be argumentative because I'm not that type. I'm not going to get mad. I'm simply going to say, I don't want to do this anymore, or I'll do it, but this is what happened. Or if he gets the numbers wrong or if he says I don't know this or I don't know that when I ask, I'll say, "What the hell am I doing here?" So I really don't want to. I don't want to know more than my --

What about interviews of POWs?

POWs, no. I don't want to be involved in anything to do with the military. The only one thing I wanted out the military was me after three and a half years -- more than three and a half years, nearly four. No. Thank you for the -- I consider that a vote of confidence, your asking me, but no.

Okay. Earlier you mentioned Market Town.

Market Town. I did. Let me tell you what happened.

And I want to know about the shopping there, as well.

I'm going to tell you. Merv Adelson, you're familiar with the name, a wonderful man. He and his wife, Pearl, they lived over in the country club. But I've known them for years and years and years. I had to go to Sunrise Hospital once. He was the administrator there. I didn't know he was dying of cancer at that time. But I explained about the heat in the room. So she said, "Well, I'll get an engineer." Merv -- not Merv, his dad, Nat walked in. He said, "What are you doing here, Bud?" I said, "They operated on me. They cut me open here." He says, "Just a minute." He comes back with flowers galore. I said, "Jeez, that's sweet of you." And they changed me to a private room and everything else. Just a wonderful man. He was a grocer in Los Angeles. His son, Merv, always wanted to be in show business. His son, Merv, actually could have been a professional baseball player. And he and his wife Lori -- that's where Lorimar Productions came from - Mark and Lori, out of the son Mark. They and my wife, the four of us would run around together. We always had good times. We became very, very friendly.

I went to work for him at Market Town doing a disc jockey show. I told you in '55 that the -- burned down place -- Moulin Rouge. But anyway, he moved up here. He opened Market Town at Fifth Street and St. Louis -- or Oakey. I think it is, Oakey. It was an enormous success. And the reason for its enormous success was not only the way they treated you and carried everything, but there was a place called Cliff's Fifth Street Market. What Cliff would do -- I hope the son doesn't hear this -- Cliff would close the market for an hour and a half, two hours every day at 6 o'clock to boost the prices up 30 percent on everything. Then reopen it. It's the only market in town. Then when the showgirls got off the show, they'd all come to the market to buy stuff. Then he'd drop the prices during the day. He built that mall at the corner of Maryland Parkway and Sahara with that money. It's called The Mall. It's on the northeast corner. Anyway, that was Cliff Reiner. So there was no place to shop. So he opened it. Then he opened one in North Las Vegas. Then he opened one in Henderson area. Merv always wanted to get out. Merv ran them and he ran

them well. But he wanted to get into show business, which he did. And his kids are still in it. When you see so-and-so Adelson, that's him. Now, that's no relation to the Adelson [Sheldon] of the Venetian. He is Adelson, okay. But that's how Market Town got started. Then they put Builders Emporium right next door where the Odyssey Record Store is. Do you know where that is?

Yes.

That was the Builders Emporium, like Home Depot, a little one there. That went belly-up, though, because they were stealing too much out of there, employees and people alike. But it was fun. Zsa Zsa Gabor used to come in three nights a week into Market Town. I'd dance with her, and we'd dance up and down the aisles. We just had a hell of a time.

And you broadcast from there?

I broadcast from there in a little booth, right. I had a car painted with the broadcast letters and everything at that time. Yeah.

Did you drive a car in the early days?

Yes. I had a 1936 Dodge.

Did you drive that back and forth to Los Angeles?

I tried. One time it just conked out. Then I got back here. And then I made a left turn deliberately in front of a great big Cadillac, figuring if they hit me -- they were going very slow -- I could get some money. Well, I found out if you made a left turn, it was your fault, not theirs. So it didn't work.

Tell me a little more about Howard Hughes and the end of the Mob era and the beginning of the corporate era.

Well, it's rather simplistic at best. Howard Hughes would visit here. I saw him one time with Elizabeth Taylor going into the Apache Hotel. She was only about 16 years old. I don't think he cared. I certainly didn't. But he visited here all the time. He was a ladies man, as you've probably heard. Good-looking guy, really. Tall, slim, you know. And basically, fundamentally, a genius in his own way with aviation. To cut to the chase, he was here on drugs. He was staying at the D.I [Desert Inn]. You know that story, don't

you?

Yes.

When they wanted to kick him out, you know. And Hank Greenspun owned Channel 8, and he sold it to him for a terribly inflated price, which is the proper thing to do. Bob [Robert] Maheu is still here in town. You know Bob? He was the right-hand man for Howard Hughes. Worked for him for years. Never met him. Only talked to him on the phone. Never met him. Never even saw him. So anyway, he came to town, Maheu here. He lived on the Desert Inn Country Club.

Howard Hughes, you know, the story, he wanted to watch the movie. He bought the hotel. He bought The Landmark. What he did was something nobody else would ever do. He paid all employees back wages after it went belly-up. That was quite a generous thing to do. Most people don't know that, but it's true. That's exactly what happened. He bought all the land around here, where Summerlin is, over near the airport, everything. And people say, "Oh, did I screw that idiot. I paid a thousand dollars an acre, and he paid me 10,000 an acre." Of course, now it's worth 300,000 an acre. But he bought all of the stuff. Then he got his friends, the Mormons. And he hired all Mormons because he could trust them, he felt. They took over. They did Summerlin, Lunas. They did Summerlin. If you go down Sunset, all the Howard Hughes Parkway, everything. You go in Paradise, Howard Hughes Parkway are where all the restaurants are over there, restaurant row, so to speak. So he bought the Last Frontier. He bought the little place next to it, The Village. He bought all this stuff. He had all the money. He had to spend it. He got it from TWA. And he if he didn't spend it, it would go for taxes after 550 million, I think. And in those days -- even today -- but in those days, it was a lot of money.

So that's what happened. He got in. And once he got in, he brought, quote, quote, respect to Las Vegas because here is a corporate entity. Now, I don't know if you whether you know it. But his medical endowment -- foundation is the largest in the world. Worth 5, $6 billion.

I saw it on 60 Minutes.

Oh, you did?

Yes.

Okay. Well, I didn't. But I knew that from reading. People don't know that about him, what a philanthropist he really was. They think he was just a dumb druggie. They should be so dumb. It's a shame that he died in such an ignominious way. It really is because he was quite a man. He made all his money, as you know, from the drill bit from his father. And like Merv Adelson, he wanted to be in show business. So he bought RKO and got a hold of -- what's her name?

I don't know.

And made the picture *The Outlaw*. Was that Raquel Welch, I think? Yeah, *The Outlaw*. You didn't know what I meant by my just sticking -- [Jane Russell is the correct person.]

It's a hick town. Those were the terms we used.

When you think about Las Vegas now, especially living here, does it still have that small town feel to you?

It's still a hick town. No, it doesn't feel like a small town. It feels like a town that doesn't want to grow up. They do things right; they do things wrong. But every town does that. When I say hick town, there was a guy named Hoot Gibson, long before your time, the cowboy. He lived here. We called him The Hooter. And he was bent over because he had arthritis in the spine. He couldn't work anymore. Big white cowboy hat. One day he said to me, "Hi, Bud. How are you?" I said, "Hi, Hooter." He said, "Are you still living in this hick town, huh?" I said, "Yeah." And ever since then, I've used the term hick town. It's a cosmopolitan town, but it doesn't have what San Francisco has or other towns, Chicago. I mean, it will never be the show business capital of the world. New York is. And Bill Willard, who used to write for the *Las Vegas Sun*, said that, too. He said it's not a show business town. But they like to use that phrase.

So you don't think this is the entertainment capital?

No, absolutely not. You can't get entertainment like you get in New York, the Broadway plays and all this stuff constantly and nightclubs. No. But, you know, it's up there amongst the top five, I'm sure. I don't go to any of the shows ever. Number one, I

won't pay the price. Number two, I won't stand in line. And number three, I don't want to fight all the traffic. Now people complain in Las Vegas. They said, "God, they have got the worst drivers in the world here." I say, "Yeah, but they come from every town in the United States."

That's true.

And that's where they learn to drive. Then they come here, and they put it into motion. But, no, I think of it as a small town with a lot of traffic.

When you think of government in Las Vegas --

Which I hate to do. Go head.

-- which is stronger, the city or the county? Where is the power?

Well, I'll explain it to you. Well, the power is always the county. A county commissioner has more clout and more power than the governor, far more. If anybody wants to debate that with me, I'd be happy to do that. Now, the city council -- first of all, what they did is they divided it into two separate entities. Now, people don't know this. Perhaps you do; perhaps you don't. When they say that the Stratosphere is on the Strip, right?

Yes.

It's not. The Strip starts at Sahara. And do you know where it stops?

No.

Russell.

Oh, okay.

And anything south of Russell is not the Strip. Anything north of Sahara is not the Strip. Okay. That is the unincorporated area of Las Vegas. That is where the bread and butter come from. However, Mesquite used to be an unincorporated area run by the county commissioners. They now have their own mayor and their own city council.

The city council here, what they're trying to do now -- maybe you know this; maybe not -- they're trying to make -- well, let's go to North Las Vegas. North Las Vegas' city council is trying to make all North Las Vegas an HOA -- are you familiar with the term? Homeowners association -- and pay fees. Not just a place like this, the whole town.

They said we can't control it otherwise. So they're trying to get that on.

The city council here to me is a joke. The county commission is a bigger joke. You've seen the fraud and deceit, everything that's happened. And yet some of these people are still on. I think it's a crime that Woodbury [Bruce L.] has been on there 22 years. Nobody runs against him because you can't win. So nobody will run against him. I think people like -- I don't want to mention their names. But some of those commissioners on there now have had problems out at the airport. And you know who I'm speaking of. Some of them had problems with jewelry stores. They shouldn't be on the commission. I don't believe that. If there's a shred of doubt and that doubt has been proved, then they should be off. And they're not. They go year after year, four years in a row. And it's the most powerful job.

Each county commissioner appoints his own planning commissioner. Therefore, they control everything, everything. But the favorite of all -- they have two favorites. They can get all the money they want. It's the airport and the Las Vegas Convention Authority with Manny Cortez. They can get all the money they want. They are the favorites of the commission.

I don't like the way the commission is run. This Wendell Williams thing, I think he should have been fired long before this. I think they should take his name off the school. I think Segerbloom should have been fired and not given the job at $125,000 a year at the jail. The Neighborhood Services, I defy anybody to tell me what they do. That was set up by the city to give their friends a job. There's no question of it. That's my opinion. If anybody wants to debate me, that'll be fine.

Well, tell me what you think about the mayor.

I think the mayor [Oscar Goodman] is a complete idiot. And that's for publication. First of all, the mayor drinks too much. It's my understanding he can't drive. I don't think he's permitted to drive. That's what I have heard. He always says he's being driven by somebody else. So maybe it's true; maybe it's not. I think the mayor's ideas are fatuous. They border on duplicity. I think, as I indicated, he's a complete idiot.

Anybody who wants to legalize prostitution in Clark County has to be an idiot. We

had legalized prostitution here. We had Roxy's down here, okay? The sheriff, Glen Jones, was intimately involved with it and finally got kicked out of office. Legalized prostitution brings the Mob because there's a lot of money. It brings drugs. It brings gangs. It brings problems. It brings drunks. It brings everything bad, plus the connotation. Now, I know we have legalized prostitution if you want to look at the escort services. But that's not a house. Those houses are not homes. I think it's the worst thing. And he says I'm not advocating. He says I just want to get a feel of the public. I heard him on KXNT advocating it. And if they want to play that tape, let them play it back. He believes they should have it here. I'm absolutely, unalterably opposed to it.

Some people say, well, it will stop rape. Well, rape is not -- it's a crime of -- it's not a sexual crime.

That's right. It's violence.

It's a crime of passion. It's anger.

Yeah. It's violence.

It's a crime of violence, yes. And it's a crime against women. You know, they're misogynists, these guys.

Right. Well, thank you for that.

You're welcome.

How do you think other people in the country see us as a city?

They see us two ways. I play poker five days a week. I talk to people three hours at the poker table from every stripe and from every place in the world. "I'm from England." "I'm from Ireland." And I talked to them, and I get their feeling on it. There are two ways they look at us. Sometimes the same person looks at us twice. They look at us as a fun time. They have a fun time. Then they tack that name on, as you know, Sin City, which I'm opposed to. So they think it's a town of sin, which it is, and a town of fun, which it is. Some people think it's sin and fun. That's the way they look at us.

Now, years ago, the people would come up here, and they'd have fun, and they'd enjoy themselves, and it's great. But now sin is prevalent. I detest being on the Strip with the people handing out pornography. And that's what they do. Now, the county

commissioners say they can't do anything. Well, I worked for the county in enforcement of zoning laws. And the zoning laws said they can't be there. And the commissioners will say, yeah, well, that's true. They're not allowed to be there. But the First Amendment rights. Well, my feeling is take it to court. Get them the hell out of there. They don't belong there and do something about it. Like with these bicyclists [At one time a business began that carried people short distances on the Strip in a small cart attached to a bicycle; similar to a rickshaw.] and this, get them out of there. Once somebody gets killed and sues the county, they'll get them out of there. So they say we're trying. You don't try. You do it.

Other than traffic, what do you see as the major change in Las Vegas?

Attitude.

Explain that.

Absolutely. I already explained it to you.

Like the waitresses?

They don't care whether you're there or not because if you don't buy our cup of coffee for $2.50, the next guy will. Years ago, that wasn't true. All right. Everything is attitude. I think people are treated badly in Las Vegas. I don't care whether they're African-Americans or whether they're green. They're treated badly in Las Vegas, and I think it should be improved. And I'm not anti union. But as long as the unions protect these people, especially the Culinary, you can't fire them. They can do anything they want. And I think that's wrong. That's the major complaint. People say, "Jeez, they treat you lousy. The cab drivers are nasty to you, and the cab drivers cheat you."

I came from the airport about four years ago with my wife. We were coming from someplace. I told him where I lived. I said, "Do you know where that is?" He says, "Oh, yeah, I know where it is." I said okay. And my wife said, "Tell him the easiest way." I said, "No. I want to see what happens." He circumvented the best way to -- I said, "Where are you going?" He [said], "Oh, this is the best way to get you there, sir." I said, "But I've been living there for years." Then he said, "Oh, yeah, well, ah, uh," you know. So when I got out, I said, "I'm not going to pay you." He said, "What?" I said, "You charged me $17.

From there to my house is $10. I've made it 30 times, and it's $10. So I'm giving you $10 and no tip. And if you want to complain, you go ahead and do it." And we just got out and walked in the house.

Wow.

I think so many people are out for the dollar. The town is growing so rapidly. I heard -- I don't know that this is true -- that the homes that start at a quarter of a million and up appreciate $5,000 a month.

I don't know if it's that much or not, but they are appreciating rapidly.

They are appreciating rapidly. And people come in here from California where they sold their home for $800,000, and they'll buy three homes and rent two of them out. Therefore, we have 35 percent of the people in Anthem are renting. You know, so it's changed, the complexion of the town. I don't want to live near renters because they don't take care of their property. They say what the heck. It's not mine. What do I care?

Earlier you talked about how great it was downtown.

Loved it. Wonderful.

Tell me what you think about it now where the Fremont Street Experience and --

I think it's garbage. I think it's a waste of money. I think the mayor's an idiot for -- Jan Jones was the biggest idiot. But for putting all that -- it means nothing because the casinos aren't doing any better than they were before. The Horseshoe still owes two and a half million dollars to the downtown association. They can't pay the fees. They don't have any money. They're not doing any business. Two and a half million. This Neonopolis is a joke. It's an absolute waste of money. The parking garage that they screwed Pappas out of, I mean we -- when I say we, I live in the county. I wouldn't live in this city. I wouldn't be under their jurisdiction. The county is bad enough. But I certainly wouldn't be under the jurisdiction of the city. And the mayor keeps saying it's great downtown. The downtown is a garbage can, and it will always be a garbage can. That's my opinion. You think I'm forward enough?

Tell me how you really feel.

Yeah. I knew you were going to say that.

What do you see as the future of Las Vegas?

I don't think it's going to change. First of all, back to downtown for a moment, if I were in charge of downtown, I would build condominiums. Now, condominiums are not townhouses. On all the empty lots that the mayor traded and got screwed on, I would put multistoried -- like Turnberry [Towers], only low income. I'd have condominiums because then you'd have people downtown. It would be like a neighborhood casino, all of Fremont Street, once you had the people there. And they would thrive. And you could put markets down there. You'd have Neonopolis, and you would have everything downtown. Then you would have a suburb. Downtown would be the suburb. That's what I would do. You bring the people to the mountain. If the mountain's not coming, that's the way you have to do it.

Do you ever go to county commission meetings or --

Absolutely not. I would not dignify them with my presence. I have absolutely no respect for any of them. I think Rory Reid, they made a deal to --

(End side 1, tape 2.)

I think the future of Las Vegas is the same as it is today. I don't think it has a future. In other words, it will remain constant. You may have more people. You may have more houses. But it will just be Las Vegas as it's been for the past 25, 30 years. The resorts will get bigger if they build any more. You build them, people will come. They'll fill them.

Now, Steve Wynn's project, people say, oh -- they'll fill it. You know that. It takes good operators. It takes Steve Wynns. Well, he's not a good operator, in my opinion. Otherwise, he wouldn't have lost all his properties to Kerkorian [Kirk], who is a good operator. But Kerkorian is 86 years old. He's not going to be around that long. But it takes good operators. The employees love Steve Wynn. They do. He's a wonderful employer. But he doesn't listen to his employees, such as his accountants, who told him don't spend all that money on Shadow Creek. Don't buy all these paintings. You can't afford it. He does it anyway. He went belly-up. That's what happens. He's a good man

and he's innovative. He brought newness to Las Vegas in '89 when he changed the image with the Mirage. Kids don't belong here. They belong at home. I mean, little, little kids in wheelers and strollers and that sort of thing.

But I think Las Vegas will remain constant. It has for the past, you know, 15 years or 20 years. Because there's nothing else. Land will go up in value. Young people, if they're smart, will buy land, hold on to it, and make some money. Old people like me won't invest in anything. Now, if you would have asked me in '47, I would never have imagined this. I wouldn't have imagined this. If you would have asked me in '60, I wouldn't have imagined it. I have no imagination. But in retrospect, I can tell you I think it will be the same. That doesn't make me right, but that's my opinion. I don't see any changes. Bigger houses. Smaller lots. Less water.

The water situation, I don't want to get into that either because there's something wrong here with that water. Allowing these hotels to do it and then telling me I can't wash my car, I don't like that at all. And they say, well, it lures the people in. Well, I can tell you that the Desert Inn, the Riviera, the Flamingo, the Thunderbird, it lured people in, and they didn't have a drop of water in front. You don't need water to lure people in. But now they do it, and then they're going to let them.

I have a philosophy in my own life. It applies to everything in my life. If I cannot do anything about it, I don't even think about it because it doesn't make any difference. I'm not going to clutter my life with things I can do nothing about. That's why I would never go to a commission meeting. I can't change anything. You've got seven of them. You've got to change all seven. You say, well, if you change one. That one can't change the six if the other six have separate agendas. You know how they work. They say, well, look, you vote for this on this one, and next time I'll vote for you on that one. And this guy says, well, then, but I want you to vote -- well, I'll vote for that if you'll vote for this. And that's the way they all work. They're all the same.

That's politics.

It's all politics.

This is really the end of the questions that I have for you. But are there any

other stories that you want to share with the future historians?

I beg your pardon?

Are there any other stories that you'd like to share?

Oh, I'm sure there are hundreds of them, but I don't have any one in particular. There's so many of them that I just can't think. I'm thinking of the early years and how tourists reacted to the town. They just loved it here. The word "Sin City" never even occurred to them. I mean, there was no such thing. They say let's go to Vegas for the weekend, and they'd come, and they'd have a good time. They'd lose their money, but they're supposed to. There's nothing wrong with that. Then they'd go home. Sure, we manufactured compulsive gamblers, but that's not our fault. That's the individual's fault. If he can't control his own urges and desires, then that's his fault. Don't blame it on the town.

But I think we're going to have -- you're talking about the future -- an enormous amount of competition with California. The Indian gaming is already hurting them. They just opened another one in Palm Springs. They're going to hurt them, not to the point where anybody will close, but they'll take the percentages down. It's going to happen.

You forgot to ask me about the new tram.

Oh, yes, the monorail.

Funny you should ask. They're going to charge two and a half dollars apiece. That's what they said. Well, of course, from there it will go up. Will it be full? I don't know. A lot of people, like me, I would never take it. I want my own car. I want to be in control of my life. Cab drivers are going to hurt. There's going to be an uprising of some sort because they're going to cut into those cabs. They expect to do -- what -- 10, 15,000 people a day. Well, those are people that may have taken cabs.

Because you'll be able to take it from the airport.

You can't. It doesn't go to the airport.

Oh, it's not going to go to the airport eventually?

Not yet. No. It only goes from Sahara -- what is it? The MGM or the Riviera or something like that. For getting to the airport -- people who want to get around town, you know, I want to go from the Flamingo to the Sahara Hotel. Well, they can get in the tram

for two and a half bucks and go.

That's right.

They won't take the cab for $13 and the tip. So I think it may work. I don't care because I can't do anything about it. But as long as they don't tax me and we're not paying for it, so far, I don't care what they do. I hope they make it because they've got a billion dollars in it, and they want to ultimately extend it to California. But if they get enough Indian gaming in there, it won't do them a hell of a lot of good. So it's a very, very delicate, slippery slope to tread, I'll tell you.

And I wouldn't want to be in charge of anything in Las Vegas. I mean, when it comes to building or prognosticating, you know, it's a crapshoot. The whole town is a crapshoot. It's on more solid ground than it was before, but, then again, it's not.

Once a month, there is a group of media people who get together for lunch. Do you ever attend those?

Well, we used to have in town here The Press Club. And the only people that could go, back in the 40s and 50s, were people that were intimately associated with the electronic press or the paper press. That's all. Then they opened it up to guys who shine shoes over here. Then the whole thing fell apart. But we used to go there once a week to The Press Club at the Thunderbird. No, I don't go to the medium. I don't join any clubs because I don't want to have to be at any certain place at any certain time. I want my time -- I want to be in control of everything I do. And I lose control if I have to be at the Kiwanis or the Rotary at 10 o'clock on the Thursday morning. I don't want it. I don't need it. They don't need me.

But that's about all. It's a good town. It's been good to me. But conversely, I've been good to it. They can't take all the credit. I've enjoyed all my years here. But if I were a young man, I would never live here. I would never live here under any conditions. But the politics are no different here than they are anyplace else. My son just moved because of the politics after 12 years. Politics are the same wherever you go.

Right. So where would you live if you were a young man now?

If I were a young man, I'd make every effort to live in Central California where

there is no traffic. You know, up near San Luis Obispo area, but out into the hills or near the beach area.

What about Japan?

No, because I'd have to start all over. See, I had an option of staying there or coming back to The States. I should have stayed there. I wished I would have.

Did you ever visit after that?

Oh, yes, I did. I went once. Yes, I did. And it's not the same. Nothing is ever the same. But I'm not the same, either. My thought processes are different. I'm different. But I'm very content and very fortunate.

I go to the gym five days a week. I was talking to a guy from the gym this morning, early this morning. We were talking about it. I said, "What did you do? Where did you work?" He said, "I worked for the steel mills for 30 years." I said, "Gee. Well, you get your pension." He said, "Yeah. It's not very much, though. U.S. Steel bought that company, and they dropped our pension a certain percentage. Now the government is going to take it over. I hope the government takes it because we'll be protected." I said, "Have you got enough to live on?" He said, "Yeah, I got enough to live on and go out to dinner maybe twice a month." He's a man 70 years old. I said, "Well, that's good." He said, "What's good about it?" I said, "Well, it's better than having $400 a month coming in from Social Security. You get your Social Security with it." And he said, "Yeah." But I'm very fortunate. I can go out for dinner every night if I want to. I don't want to. So I'm lucky in that regard.

And you have a beautiful place. I just love this.

Oh, thank you. You want to see it?

Yes, I do.

I'll show it to you.

Thank you so much for the interview.

Oh, it's my pleasure. Thank you for coming over.

(End side 2, tape 2.)

This is Claytee White. And I'm with Mr. Bud Weil, again. Today is

December 23rd. How are you this morning?

I'm well. Thank you, KC.

Well, good.

KD, rather. It's really KT, isn't it?

It's really Claytee.

Oh, you took the L out.

Well, clay, C-l-a-y-t-e-e

Oh, I thought it was C-a-y.

Oh, no.

Oh, Claytee.

Yes.

Oh, I'm sorry. Nothing worse than mispronunciation of somebody's name. But I got it now.

Good. You wanted to relate some stories that you had remembered from the last time. But before you start, I had one thing to add. We couldn't remember the name of Dorothy Dandridge.

Dorothy Dandridge, who played at the Club Bingo. She committed suicide of an overdose. She was married to a guy that lives here. Oh, I can't think of his name. He was a restaurateur, but he's gone, too. Yeah, Dorothy Dandridge. We couldn't think of it.

Now, is she the one who jumped into the pool, and they drained it?

No, she was not the one who jumped into the pool. The black woman or girl who drove into the pool -- and because blacks were an anathema to the populous. They drained the pool, saying nobody else will go in that pool, here in town. I really forget that story, Claytee. I really do. I don't know who it is. If somebody would mention the name, perhaps I could recall. But I don't know. [According to most sources, it was Dorothy Dandridge.]

And the other question before I let you give us some good stories --

Oh, yeah.

-- do you remember the TV show that Bob Bailey and Alice Key had together

here in --

Sure. I knew Bob Bailey very, very well. We did a lot of shows together. He's still alive, you know, Bob. He's about 78 now. I think he's suffering from some sort of a malady, isn't it? [Parkinson's] Yeah. I haven't seen him in maybe 25, 30 years. But yeah, I recall, not vividly, but I do recall. And then I'd have him on my disc jockey program quite often. And he was a very, very prominent figure here. A very good-looking man in his day. But, you know, you get to be 78, and we don't look the same. I remember when I was 78. It was a long time ago, but I remember it.

Now, you remembered some stories. So I'm going to let you share those.

Well, one thing I was thinking just recently, see that phone book there?

Yes.

There are 1500 pages in that phone book. And there must be multitudinous lawyers in there. When I first moved here, the phone book was the size of the Reader's Digest, the entire phone book, yellow, white, the whole thing. And I think there were four lawyers in town. One of them, I got a book he gave me. Bill Ryman was one of the attorneys here. I don't remember whether Louie Weiner -- we talked about Louie, of course -- whether he was here yet. I don't know. I'd like to go down to the phone company and look in the phone book and find my name and address because I forget where I was living when I first got here, except it was some dump on Fremont Street. But that was a long time ago.

I have made just a list of names here. Oh, by the way, I wanted to show you the picture of Dr. Kenny Guinn, Bill -- remember Bilbray? You didn't know him. A congressman. That's Bilbray. That's Dr. Guinn and my deceased wife and myself.

And may we copy this picture?

Oh, sure, if you wish. He had black hair then, Dr. Guinn. Now it's white.

That's what politics will do for you.

Yeah. And Bilbray, of course, was defeated in Congress. I don't know. I think it might have been Ensign. Or if he were a Democrat, it would be Shelley Berkley who took -- what's on the back there? I didn't look.

It's just your name.

Is there any date or anything?

No.

There should be.

1980.

Oh, 1980.

Chamber of Commerce dance, 1980.

Gee, 24 years ago. I was just a kid. Speaking of those days, I recall that Tropicana Avenue used to be called Bond Street -- Bond Avenue. It was never Tropicana until the Tropicana was built in '57 [1957]. It was always Bond Street. And there was a place called the Bond Club on the corner of what now is Paradise and Tropicana. Then there is still the Bond-Aire bar, which is a little east of the Strip on Tropicana.

And then Sahara Avenue. It was never Sahara. It was San Francisco Street. You know, you say, where are you going? Well, you go down to San Francisco Street and you go here or you go west. Of course, you could go west four blocks. It was all desert. But when the Sahara built, then it became Sahara Avenue.

Here's a cute one for you. Of course, there was no Flamingo Road because it was just desert out there. But when the road was built, they actually called it Flamingo Road. And it was taken after the picture with Joan Crawford. *Flamingo Road* was the name of the picture she had made. I know you didn't know, but you're not supposed to know. You're too young.

But this is one I'll wager that not more than four people in the county -- and there's 1,600,000 people in Clark County, with the population expected to exceed 2 million in the year 2010 -- know what Convention Center Drive was called. Now, don't even roll your eyes because you haven't gotten a prayer.

Right.

And when I tell you the name, you'll know why they changed it. It was called Fulcher. And don't ask me where they got the name. Although speaking of that, you know where the street Oquendo is?

No.

Oquendo is out near Hacienda, out in that direction, and it runs east and west. Oquendo Road. Oquendo, as I think about it now -- I don't even have it here -- Oquendo was named after a friend of mine, Rudy Oquendo from the Philippines. He was the bartender at the Thunderbird Hotel.

Now, how did he get a street named after him?

Don't ask me. I don't know. I wondered how my friend Gus Guthrie, who used to be a disc jockey here, got a street named after him. I wonder. How did this ever happen? You can't even spell his name. And if you go out toward the airport on Paradise, you'll see Gus Guthrie Road. How? I don't know, Claytee, but he did. I asked him once. He said, "I'm not going to tell you."

But anyway, I talked about the telephone book. Let me tell you about the telephone. Up until -- oh, I guess it was in the early 50s [1950s], if you wanted to use the telephone here, you picked up the receiver and jiggled until you got an operator. And I would jiggle when I was on the radio station and get an operator. By the time you got the operator, you could have got in your car and driven to where you were going. That's a fact. And then all the prefixes started with Dudley. Now, ask me where they got Dudley, and I can't answer that, either. But that was the prefix for everybody was Dudley.

And the metamorphosis that has taken place since then, how they've morphed the telephone company is unbelievable. When we had Muzak, we only had telephone lines to transfer the music to the receiver. So Bill Skates, a friend of mine, was the one that we built with back in the early 50s. I said to him one time, "Bill, I want to put music in the little airport out at McCarran field that's down there, the little Hughes place there." But we couldn't get a telephone line out there. We couldn't get it that far.

What?

They could get a telephone, but not for the music because they were being used all the time. Everybody wanted it. Yeah, I know, but the telephone situation was terrible. It really was horrible. Well, you couldn't have it today with this many people. But don't forget, there were between 16 and 20,000 people in those days. More people now in the Bellagio Hotel having brunch today than that.

And I didn't tell you this. You've heard of Scotty's Castle? No?

Here in Las Vegas?

No. It's right out of Beatty [in Death Valley]. It's a national historic museum piece now. A guy named Scotty [known as Death Valley Scotty, born Walter Scott] -- I forget his last name -- back in the early 40s or late 30s, he was the biggest scam artist the world has ever known. He ran into a guy in the middle of the desert one day that was a desert rat named Johnson, Albert Johnson, who was the head of a large insurance company in the East. Mr. Johnson came out to the desert because of his health and he had lung problems. So he ran into Scotty, which was a plus-minus situation. Scotty conned him into putting money up to build Scotty's Castle, which is out there now. Any book you see on Las Vegas, you'll see Scotty's Castle out near Beatty [Death Valley]. They built the castle. It's a little castle. It really is with little bedrooms and so forth. And Johnson became beholden to Scotty, and they built the castle.

Well, what I was really getting at is one day Scotty came into the studio and I interviewed Scotty. He was a gruff, semi-literate, old miner. He was old then. I don't know the story too well, but you can research it if you ever want to read it for fun. He got Johnson to put up money to have a race between railroad cars going to the East. And he raced going there. It's quite a long story, and I'm not that familiar with it any longer. But Scotty was a very interesting character. He's been dead lo these many years.

What was the castle used for?

Living quarters.

For Scotty?

Oh, for Scotty, absolutely. And they have little turrets that come out for guns in case the Indians would come. You know, one of those things. You'll want to take a ride out there.

Good. I will have to.

I think it costs -- what was it -- ten bucks to get your car in.

Ten bucks. Yeah, ten dollars. It's very interesting, too.

And then about three dollars to go into the castle. And you'll see how he lived.

You go straight out 93 or 95, all the way north until you come to the town of Beatty. Then there will be a sign "Scotty's Castle." Or you can go down to Baker and go to Scotty. Either way.

Now, since we have another voice on the tape, I'll introduce the other person in the room. Could you give us your name, please?

Lillian Potter.

So Lillian is listening in this morning. But we just heard her voice, so I wanted to identify her.

Well, thank you. She's going to laugh when I do this. You're going to laugh, too. I was working at KENO back in the early 50s. The program director was named Buck Newsome. Not the Buck Newsome of baseball that everybody knows about. And Buck was a rather cherubic young man. At Christmastime he would do a Christmas program and do Santa Claus with Santa Claus' little helper Tinker. One day I think he left for another station or something happened and he was gone. So Max Kelch -- you know the Kelches; I think you're going to talk to Laura Belle. He said to me, "Could you do that?" I said sure. And what I did -- I'm going to do it for you now, my impression. Every Christmas I would -- not every Christmas, about three or four Christmases, I'd play Santa Claus. And I would also play Tinker. Dual talents, you know. And I would ask the children to send letters to Santa Claus, and they would. And I'd read a letter. I'd take the letter, and I'd go, "Ho, ho, ho. Well, now, I have a letter here from Lillian Potter. Ho. Oh, you want a skirt?"

"Ah, Santa Claus, this is Tinker, and I don't think you ought to knit her the skirt." We'd do things like that. I did that for years. You'd be amazed the letters that we would get, 50, 75 letters. Of course, now you'd get thousands. Then I would just ad-lib. "Santa Claus, this is Tinker. I don't want to be here today. I'm sick." Because my voice would give out or something.

Anyway, did I tell you about the Pioneer Club?

No.

Oh. And I have documentation. All of this stuff, my son has. I called him and

asked him to send it. He said, "Dad, I can't." He's moving after living 12 years in the house. He's got everything packed, and he has to be in the new house January 4th. So everything's been shipped. So I couldn't get it. But I think I mentioned downtown.

Yes.

I did mention that. And the Pioneer Club. And I told you I did the voice. Did I tell you that?

Yes.

Okay. Then I don't want to repeat that. But I didn't know whether I had or not. I told you about Lee Marvin? Paul Christiansen?

Yes. [Unfortunately, he did not speak of these people.]

Okay. As a matter of fact, she and I went into Tiffany's in The Boulevard the other day, the jewelry store. And Carl Christiansen, who is Paul's nephew, now owns that store.

Let me tell you about Joe Louis. I don't mean to speak in a pejorative manner. But I have to demean him just a bit. And I hope you understand why. I think you will understand why. Joe Louis, whom everybody adored, everybody loved the man, he was the greeter at Caesars in the wheelchair, you know. But he was fundamentally brain-dead at that time. But Joe Louis was, as you know if you've read any of the books I have, completely illiterate. He never went to school. He was illiterate. And if you hear him talk even now today on TV…

So one day he came to town -- and I have a picture of Joe and me with our arms around each other -- I'm to do an interview with Joe Louis. He was sitting down in the studio, and I was sitting opposite him. There was an engineer up here monitoring the sound. And we're live on the air. But before we went on the air, I said, "Now, Joe, I want to tell you something. My name is Bud." He says, "Okay." Then I said, "And I'm going to say to you, Joe, so good to see you, I haven't seen you since the last time we were in Detroit together." He said, well you -- I said, "Well, I never met you. I know that. But I want to say that to build a rapport." He said, "Okay, Bert." I said, "No, no. It's not Bert. It's Bud."

You know this story.

No.

No.

Oh. I said, "It's not Bert. It's Bud." He said, "Yeah, yeah." So I said, "Let's rehearse this again." I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here with my friend Joe Louis whom I haven't seen in about three years since the last time we were in Detroit." I said, "Good to see you again, Joe." He says, "You too, Bert." I said, "This isn't going to work." Now, I didn't know he couldn't read. So I put a big sign up here that said "Bud." I said, "Now, Joe, it's Bud." He says, "Okay, Bud, fine."

Make a long story short -- well, it's too late to make it short now -- but we were in the studio, and I had this big sign, and I'm pointing. And he goes like this. I said, Joe, since Detroit. "Yeah, I remember, Bert." He couldn't read and he couldn't remember.

At what point in his life was this?

Huh?

At what point in his life was that interview?

This was in 1954. But by that time, you know, he'd been hit in the head so many times like Muhammad Ali and all, and he just couldn't function. He was just a warm, affectionate guy. Even to this today, people love Joe Louis. He was the greatest fighter that ever lived. Of course, that's subjective.

But anyway, I'll tell you about another celebrity. This one is still alive. Frankie Lane is 90 years old now. Frank used to sleep on the floor of my office because he didn't have anyplace to sleep for three days and no money. He was working at Billy Berg's in Los Angeles. He finally got a job singing. He started his career in his mid 40s, and he always resented that. And he'd always say to me -- you know, it's a darn shame -- "Why couldn't I get started like these other people when they are in their 20s like Sinatra or people like that?" I said, "Frank, you ought to be glad you're successful at all." Well, he came up here. And he was making $5,000 a week, which in 1953 and even today --

Today.

-- was a considerable sum of money. Now, Frankie Lane by anybody's estimation or imagination or both has to be one of the most penurious people who ever graced the face

of the Earth. He never spent money. Money was not to be spent. So one day Steve Pekin -- this guy was the great grandson of the founder of Pekin, Illinois. Steve and I were in the race book at the El Rancho Vegas in the early 50s. And we'd hang out together quite often. And Sammy Davis was working then and he'd come by. And we'd talk to Sam and so forth. Then they wouldn't let Sam stay there. So he had to get out. I told you that story.

Well, anyway, Steve says to me, "I'm hungry." I said, "So am I." It was about noon, one o'clock, whatever it was. We called the cocktail waitress over. He said, "What are you going to have?" I said, "I'm going to have a chicken sandwich on white bread, but the bread's got to be fresh." And he said, "I'll have the same thing." So she takes the order.

While she's gone, here comes Frank. His real name is Lubecio. He comes and says, "How you guys doing?" Fine, Frank. You know, we'd seen him every day. I'd known him for years before that. I said, "Fine, Frank." Frank says, "What are you doing?" I said, "We just ordered lunch." Then Frank, "What did you order? What are you having? I'm going to have something, too." We respond, "Chicken sandwiches." He said, "Chicken sandwiches?"

When he sees the cocktail waitress, he says, "I want to order some lunch." And she asked, "Do you want what they had?" Frank says, "No. And change their order." I said, "What do you mean change my order?" He says, "Have chicken salad. It's cheaper and just as good." I said, "I don't want chicken salad. If I wanted chicken salad" -- and Steve said, "We don't want chicken salad."

But I have stories that are -- I don't want to go into because he's still alive. Even though he's had a number of strokes, I still -- but that one I thought was quite funny.

You've heard the name "Lefty" [Frank] Rosenthal?

Yes.

You know who he is?

Yes.

You know about the car bomb?

Yes. Some. I saw the movie.

Oh, well, the movie is hypocritical. My office was right next to -- it wasn't next to

it -- half a block from Marie Callenders [Restaurant]. And that's where this happened. I got a call about whenever it was, 12 at night, 11. And the tapes of Muzak had busted. So I had to go over there. And I just lived across the street in the country club. So I went over there, and I heard this enormous explosion. "Lefty" Rosenthal was blown out of his Cadillac. And he survived, of course. The car, you would never believe what it looked like, that anybody could survive. It was a skeleton of a car. There was hardly anything left. They took it over to the Clark County lot, and we looked at that car. The photographers -- nobody could believe that anybody could survive. But he survived. That was quite an experience. Everybody -- not everybody -- an editorial everybody, but people certainly knew who did it and why they did it. If you care to believe the movie *Casino*, that's something. There's an element of truth to the movie. There isn't any question of that.

So who really did it?

Well, I don't know that the movie said it. Well, because Oscar Goodman is still alive, I'd rather not go into that either.

Okay.

The mayor that I think is an idiot. I told you that.

I remember.

I repeat myself. Well, you know, he just came up with another idea to take $130,000 and put an art center downtown. Now, the people that go downtown -- I'm talking about the recluses -- what are you going to do with an art center downtown? I mean, give me a break.

But he's also planning to put housing downtown, all levels of housing, from low income to the highest end.

Well, he'll be out of office by the time he'd get through with that idea. In my opinion, there is only one way to save downtown.

What is that?

Put up multiple condominiums, 30, 40 stories high, like Turnberry [Towers], only in lower levels because if you have people there, then you have an audience.

Well, I think that's exactly what he's planning to do.

Well, he stole my idea. He's never had a decent idea of his own. He'd have to steal mine. He's a public figure. I'm allowed to criticize him without worrying about a lawsuit. Any public figure is open to criticism. I was going to tell you something that was analogous to that. I talked myself out of it, about these high-rises. I can't think of it now.

Anyway, I have another little thing yet for you. Herb McDonald was a dear friend of mine for 40, 50 years. Herb passed away a few years ago. One day he called me. He was one of the mucky mucks at the Sahara. He called me and he said, "Bud, come on over. I want you to do an interview with Eddy Arnold." Well, I don't care for western music, and I never played it on my program. I had never heard of Eddy Arnold. Of course, he never heard of me, either. So I said, "Who's Eddy Arnold?" He said, "He's the largest selling vocalist on RCA Records." I said, "Oh give me a break, Herb," because I never heard of him. He said, "Well, it's western music." Now I know why.

So I went over there, and I got a hold of him. I said, "Where is Eddy Arnold?" It was windy. He said, "He's out looking at some property across the street." I said, "Well, I don't want to go out there in the wind." He said, "Well, he's right out here." So I went out there, and he introduced me to Eddy Arnold. Eddy Arnold is still alive, too. I don't care. It's the truth. But anyway, we're standing there. The wind is blowing. And it blew his toupee all the way out here. He didn't have a hair on his head. So I started laughing, and he got some kind of hot. Herb didn't laugh because Herb, you know, had more finesse than I. And I guess maybe I didn't care. But anyway, I did the interview, and it wasn't a very good interview because he didn't want to do it, but Herb wanted it.

About 25 years later, Herb was working someplace. I don't know. He says, "We're having a reunion at the Sahara for their 25th anniversary." It was around 1980 or so. "Come on, Bud, up in the penthouse." I said, "All right." So I went up there. I, of course, had nothing to do with radio in those days. But I went up there. There's Eddy Arnold with the toupee. He found it. Herb said, "Have you met Eddy Arnold?" I said, "Yeah. Eddy, do you remember that day about 25 years ago when we were standing out in front and your toupee blew off?" He just turned and walked right away. He wouldn't say a word. Well, I was very young. What do I know?

I've got to get back to Frankie Lane during this discourse here. One day we had a disc jockey contest. Laura Belle [Kelch] can confirm this. Let me see. There was KRAM, a radio station that no longer exists. KTNE, which [does not exist]. There was a KLAS and, you know. There were about eight disc jockeys. With all the modesty I can bring up, I won the contest.

Now, what were you being judged on?

The best disc jockey.

So voice and --

The best disc jockey. Well, just period. The overall best disc jockey in Las Vegas. And I won a trophy, which was yea high, which was about a foot and a half high.

Do you still have it?

No. My ex-wife threw it out. She got mad at me. But anyway, she threw the wrong figurine out. It should have been her. Suffice it to say, it's gone, okay? And it was a beautiful trophy. But with the trophy, Rex Bell, who was the lieutenant governor and had a place downtown on Fremont Street called Rex Bell's Western Store -- now, Rex Bell, Jr., his son, lives in my old house on Shadow Lane. I felt badly about that. I bought it for 22,000. He sold half the acre off and is asking 600,000. But, you know, these things -- he remodeled it.

But anyway, Rex and I were good friends. Rex was trying to build the Desert Spa Hotel on the Strip, the lieutenant governor. So we became friends, and I did a little advertising on the radio for him. His brother Hod, Hod Bell ran the store. He said, "Whoever wins the disc jockey contest, I will outfit in a complete outfit, western regalia." Well, I said I don't want to dress -- I don't like western clothes. Can you see me, 131 pounds, with a cowboy hat and boots and all this stuff?

So anyway, after I won the contest -- there were also other prizes. Oh, the Flamingo Hotel wanted to put it behind their bar so people could see it because all of the interviews were at the Flamingo Hotel, all of their stars. So they wanted to put it there. So I went down to Rex and Hod was there. He says, "What do you want, Bud? Which kind of shirt?" I don't like heavy clothing, but they had a heavy shirt and cowboy boots that

hurt my back and cowboy pants with the front pockets where I couldn't get my hands in them and a cowboy hat. And I looked at myself in the mirror --

That's the picture I want.

Yeah. I never did have a picture. I was ashamed. But anyway --

(End side 1, tape 3.)

But this beautiful gold and silver belt buckle with the belt, which I subsequently sent to my father who lived in Amsterdam Holland at the time. As a matter of fact, he died there. That was where he was born. He was in poverty. And I figured, well, he could sell it. So I gave it to him.

But the award -- I'm trying to think of the word -- trophy. The trophy was at the Flamingo. So one day, Frankie Lane was playing at the Flamingo. And I already told you that story. I don't want to go into that. But I'll tell you when the tape is off. But anyway, we were sitting, having a drink that I had paid for, for obvious reasons. And Frank looks up there. He said, "What's that trophy?" He asked the bartender. He said, "That's his." I said, "That's mine, Frank. I won it." He says, "I don't want it there. Take it down." I said, "No, leave it there." He says, "No, no, I want you to take it home. Don't leave it here. Why should you leave it there?" I said because -- I can't think of her name, the booking agent. She was married to "Mousy" Powell, William Powell's wife -- I mean, that was her sister that lives in Palm Springs. It doesn't make any difference. But anyway, I said, "She wants me to leave it here." He said, "Well, I'll talk to her. Take it down." I said, "What am I going to do with it at home?" I'd rather...anyway, he was insistent. So I took it and took it home where my ex-wife threw it out after an argument or something.

But that was just another one of the many stories in the naked city. Those are the vignettes that I wanted to tell you about. There aren't any others that I can think of at this particular moment.

I really appreciate those. One of the things that we like about oral history is that it adds another dimension to history.

Absolutely.

That's what these stories will do. So I really appreciate them.

I wish I had some pictures for you. But as I say, they're not available.

But you are going to give us --

Oh, yeah. I told you earlier, Claytee, that neither I nor my wife were picture takers. Lily and I would go places. We'd never take the camera. We don't take pictures of anything.

Now, earlier you said something about the Desert Spa. What happened to that?

Well, it never got off the ground. They couldn't get the backers for the Desert Spa, Rex Bell. And Jack Rosen was another one. And both of those have passed away, both those guys. Jack Rosen came out of Gardena, California, in the Normandy Club. And he had some money. So he got a hold of Rex, and they were going to do it, and it never got started.

Because you were in entertainment, do you remember The Cove or The Carver House?

Oh, The Carver House?

Uh-huh. Or The Cove?

No, I really don't. I recall the name of The Carver House. That was in the black neighborhood, wasn't it?

That's correct. Jackson and D.

Yeah, D and Jackson Street. Sure. I didn't know it because I was never there. But that's why I said it was in the black neighborhood. I remember The Carver House. It was named after that guy, Carver, too, from years and years ago.

Now, is that George Washington Carver?

No, no. It was a local Carver, Nevada Carver, I believe.

Okay. I see.

No, it wasn't George Washington Carver.

Okay. So those are the questions that I had, the follow-up questions that I had.

Do you have any of the history of Las Vegas, books on it?

Oh, yes.

You have many of them, huh?

Oh, yes.

Because I've got a number of them here. You're welcome to borrow them. But, for example, which one here. Sam Boyd Group, the Nevadan. Do you have the story of Sam Boyd Group?

I'm not sure. Right. The stadium. The stadium and the casino?

Well, there's also Sam's Town. That's Sam Boyd Group. Let me see. This one. "Nevada's Bicentennial."" This is really interesting. It tells where the first church and the days of Fallon, everything about Nevada.

I think I'd like to borrow this one.

Well, you're more than welcome to. I think that'll cover about everything. I've got more of Nevada's. Here, I have this one, "Las Vegas, a Desert Paradise."

We have that one in Special Collections. But I'm not sure --

See, I'm sure you have.

But I'm not sure we have the bicentennial book.

And this one, "Through the Generations." This is a pictorial review. It's all the pictures.

Now, here's the Pioneer Club you and I were talking about. Here he is waving his arm. Howdy, partner.

This is the famous cowboy.

Yeah.

Okay, good.

That's all pictorial. So you may want to look at it. I don't know.

Well, I do want this one.

Okay. I'll let you read that one.

I'm going to turn the tape off. And I thank you so much.

Pleasure. More than welcome. Let me unplug that. I'm going to hold you hostage on the book. You know that.

Mel Tormé, I don't know whether I told you. I may have told that his sister is the county commissioner, Myrna Williams.

Yes.

And Mel and I grew up on the same street. We were neighbors. Mel was about five or six years younger than I. But he would keep the entire neighborhood awake in Los Angeles -- that's where we were neighbors -- with his drums. He was a magnificent drummer. He started out as a drummer. He came from New York. And he became, of course, a magnificent singer. But Mel would work here. And whenever he worked here, we'd get together and talk and reminisce and so forth. Then all of a sudden -- I don't know what happened -- but they didn't book him any longer. I'm only guessing. I asked him, and he says he didn't want to work here. Maybe that's true. I don't know. But suffice it so say that he had -- his music was so far out and so different than anything. I have dozens of his recordings here, and it's so different and so magnificent. It was up in the Gershwin level. And I don't think people appreciated it. I think that's the difference.

Right. So maybe this wasn't the audience.

I don't think they could appreciate his talent. He gives credit to Ella Fitzgerald -- and this I have on record -- as being the greatest singer -- female singer who ever lived. And I don't think there's any question of it; that Ella Fitzgerald was absolutely without peers. She had that recording out, as you know, which I have here, "Lady Be Good." And she did scat singing. And he had never done scat singing until he heard that. And he was the only scat singer in the business, the only one. To this day, nobody can do it. If you listen to him scat singing carefully -- I mean, you think it's easy the way Ella Fitz does it, you know.

Yes.

It's not. It's a very, very difficult thing to do. And his voice followed the patterns. And then he played piano. Piano and the piccolo and the trumpet and guitar. Everything. It was just a magnificent talent. And I didn't get to see him anymore. I miss him. I miss him now. I miss his talent. He had a stroke, as you know, and he passed away a few years ago. But his sister is still going on the commission today. Yeah, I'm glad you brought that

up.

There are so many things that I can't think of now, but something triggers it or I'll see something on TV. It's like that Rat Pack thing. I went to the Rat Pack -- actually, it was called The Summit originally. Shirley MacClain called it The Summit. Oh, you heard about that? And it was changed to the Rat Pack. And I saw the show maybe three, four times. Then I couldn't get in anymore. I didn't have any more juice. And I mean, to get in, you needed juice.

Sinatra [Frank] had his down years where he couldn't draw flies. But when he was at the peak, this town was packed with every gambler in the world. They'd fly in here like flies. They loved to have Sinatra here. They were magnificent days.

I'll tell you another thing I'm thinking about now is Helldorado.

Good.

Helldorado was started by the Elks. You knew that, too. You're getting too tough to deal with here.

I like to hear various versions of that.

I know you do. It was started by the Elks Club. Laura Belle can tell you -- Laura Belle moved here in 19, I think, 39, she and Max Kelch.

There is the mayor [Oscar Goodman] of there, the bobble-head mayor. See it up there? Have you ever seen his bobble head? Oh, let me show it to you. He is a bobble-headed mayor. Can you hear him? Listen. Hear it. That's before he dyed his hair brown. It's dyed now. Yeah, you can see his pictures.

Well, so why does he have a baseball bat?

Well, he probably wants to beat your brains out for calling him an idiot. I don't know.

They gave it out at the game.

They gave it out at the game, yeah.

He is just showing me a picture of the AA's statute of the mayor as a bobble head.

Well, it's called bobble-head statute. His head, you know, shakes.

Yes. So...

There he is, the mayor in a striped suit. You can just sit it down there. That's all right. I'll put it back some other time. I have to dust it anyway.

I'll take it out of your view.

Oh, thank you. Yeah, he's not my favorite character. But where was I? Oh, I was talking about the Rat Pack?

Yes.

And how it brought everybody into this town. This town was absolutely jam-packed and, you couldn't get rooms. You couldn't get anything. Of course, when Sinatra got into that confrontation with Carl Cohen -- you know that story, I guess.

Well, you can tell us that story.

Well, Sinatra had been losing money, and he wanted to get more money out of the cage. And the guy in the cage said, "I'm sorry. Your credit is exhausted. I can't give you any more." Well, Sinatra was known for his temper, as you well know. Everybody knows. And he went up to Carl Cohen, the casino manager. And Carl Cohen was a big man. He made some anti-Semitic remark, which I "sha'nt" repeat -- to Carl Cohen, who is Jewish. Carl Cohen hauled off and knocked him flat on his butt and knocked his teeth out. He had to get false teeth. That made quite a story in town.

By the way, have you ever heard of a girl named Dawn Wells, an actress? Have you?

No.

Dawn Wells was on a show here with Buddy Ebsen. I forgot what it was. Anyway, she was rather prominent. She still is, I guess. Her father, "Big Joe" Wells was a friend of mine. And he decided, after the Thunderbird was sold, to buy the Thunderbird. He had a place in there called -- and I don't know that he bought it. But I know it was called Big Joe's Oyster Bar. It was a magnificent place. It was named after Joe Wells, who owned Wells Cargo. That's still here, as you know. But Joe Wells isn't. And he was a monstrous man. And he called me in one day. I was with Muzak at the time. And he says, "Bud, I want to put a new sound system in the lounge." They had great acts in the

lounge. All right. So he put the sound in it. And he said, "And you can eat any time you want in my oyster bar at no charge. Just tell them I had said it's okay, and they'll know." Boy, did I use that. I mean, they had lobster and they had shrimp and they had crab. It was a wonderful place.

Things like that don't exist anymore because now they're all corporate. And the corporations don't care about the bottom line, per se. They want to see the bottom line of the restaurant, of the gift shop. And the woman who ran the gift shop at the Thunderbird Hotel, Katie Jenkins, was married to the former welterweight champion Lou Jenkins. And she was Rex Bell, Senior's girlfriend. Katie Jenkins. A wonderful woman. I think she's still alive, and she was very close to Rex Junior. They were very good friends. She and I were friends for years and years and years. Just a little woman, about five-foot tall. She had the gift shop. She knew everybody from Jake Lansky and Meyer Lansky to the movie stars. She knew them all. And she was a wonderful person.

And one day she called me. And she said, "Bud?" I said, "Yeah, Katie." She said, "You said you needed a lawnmower." I said, "I do." I was living out where Rex lives now. And she says, "Rex is selling his electric lawnmower." I said, "Electric? Never heard of an electric lawnmower." It's got a cord. I said, "Yeah. But what about the damn grass?" She says, "What do I know?" So I got a hold of Rex. He said, "No chance of being electrocuted." I said, "Then why are you getting rid of it?" He said, "Because I'm not mowing grass anymore."

So I got that lawnmower. And what you had to do, you started here, and you mowed the grass as the cord went out. When the cord went out, then you'd have to move the cord to the other side. But it was good. There was no sound. You could listen to the radio, anything.

Those weren't a big hit, were they?

No, they weren't too big a hit. No.

When do you see Laura Belle?

I think most of that interview has already been done. I'm not doing it.

Someone else is.

Oh, that's a shame. Yeah, because she lives out there at 330 Rancho Circle. I told you they bought that house for -- Jelindo Tiberti built the house. They bought the lot from Judge Ryman. Boy, that was in the early 1950s. Now that house is worth a couple mil, easy. So that's all I have for you at the time.

Well, thank you so much.

Well, you're more than welcome. I'll get to see you again when you return the book. And there isn't any hurry for it, by the way. Thank you, darling.

(End side 2, tape 3.)

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