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**AN INTERVIEW WITH PATSY BRINTON, MARGARET
CARNELL, AND SHARON SCHMITT
GRANDDAUGHTERS OF ED VON TOBEL, SR.**

An Oral History Conducted by Lois Goodall

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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

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PREFACE



Three of Ed Von Tobel Sr.'s granddaughters, from left: Margaret Carnell, Patsy Brinton, and Sharon Schmitt in the Brinton home, April 30, 2014

In 1905 a twenty-two-year-old second-generation Swiss American left Los Angeles with a friend for Lincoln County, Nevada. Edward "Ed" Von Tobel (1873–1967) and his friend Jake Beckley had heard about some land that was going up for auction. Together they purchased a parcel on the second day in the new desert town of Las Vegas, where they established Von Tobel's Lumber Company, which served Southern Nevada from 1905 until it closed in 1976. In Las Vegas Von Tobel met and married fellow German-speaker Mary Hameril, and together the couple raised four children in the city: Jake, Katherine Elizabeth, Ed Jr., and George. Many Von Tobel descendants live here still.

Margaret Carnell, granddaughter of Ed Von Tobel and Mary Hameril and the oldest of three daughters of Elizabeth Von Tobel and Kenneth Zahn, was born in Las Vegas in 1939. After attending Arizona State University Margaret married in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1958 Margaret raised two children in Scottsdale, Arizona, before returning to Las Vegas in 1983. Margaret manages the Von Tobel family properties and in her spare time likes to travel.

Patricia "Patsy" Brinton is the second daughter of Elizabeth Von Tobel and Kenneth Zahn. Like her sisters Patsy was raised in Las Vegas, where in 1972 she married real estate broker Robert Brinton. The Brintons raised two daughters and a son. Like her cousin Sharon, Patsy donates considerable volunteer hours through Assistance League of Las Vegas and Junior League of Las Vegas. Patsy enjoys traveling and playing golf and tennis.

Sharon Schmitt, the second of four daughters of Edward Von Tobel Jr. and Evelyne Leonard, was born in Las Vegas in 1940. In 1963 in Las Vegas Sharon married Larry Schmitt, an agent for Allstate Insurance. Besides enjoying traveling and playing tennis, Sharon has long been an active community volunteer through Assistance League of Las Vegas, Junior League of Las Vegas, and Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. Together the Schmitts raised a family of three children, who still live in Las Vegas and are raising the next generation of the Von Tobel family.

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Descendants of Ed Von Tobel, Jr.

April 30, 2014

in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Lois Goodall

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Today is April 30th, 2014, and I'm in the home of Patsy Brinton. I'm here with three ladies who are all descendants of Ed Von Tobel. So we will be talking today about their growing up in Las Vegas. Let's start with Patsy.

Patsy, would you tell us your name and spell your last name for us?

It's Patsy Brinton, B-R-I-N-T-O-N.

Very good. And next we have Sharon.

Sharon Schmitt, and it's S-C-H-M-I-T-T.

And Margaret.

Margaret Carnell, last name is C-A-R-N-E-L-L.

Thank you. Let's go back to the first person in your family that came to Las Vegas.

Margaret, would you like to start out by telling us a bit about the first member of your family to come?

Meaning our grandfather?

Yes.

MARGARET: Okay. Our grandfather was Ed Von Tobel Sr. He came to Las Vegas in 1905 and established Von Tobel Lumber Company, which remained in business for many, many, many years.

Yes. Sharon, tell us how he really came to Las Vegas, about how he first came.

SHARON: He came because he and his buddy were in California and they saw that there was a land auction and the railroad was first coming through. And anybody correct me if I...The railroad was coming through and they were a having big land auction here. It was in May. So they came here. The first day they didn't buy any land because it was pretty expensive. But the second day they both bought land, and that was with—Jake Beckley.

MARGARET: Boy, I don't know. I get them mixed up. One of the Beckleys.

SHARON: I do, too. Jake Beckleys, originally. Then eventually they both came here, the Beckley boys. So he was with them and they bought this land and started a lumberyard. I just want to add, you want to make sure it's Ed Von Tobel Senior because my dad was Ed Von Tobel Junior. So we don't want to get them mixed up later on.

Now, Patsy, it sounds like he was not married at that time.

PATSY: That's correct. But he did meet our grandmother here in Las Vegas because she was here visiting her sister.

Tell us her name.

MARGARET: Mary Hameril was her maiden name.

PATSY: Yes. Thank you.

MARGARET: She was actually from Germany and spoke very little English. Ed spoke German. So somebody introduced them because they both spoke German and that's why they introduced them. They later married.

Very good. So tell me about their children. Patsy, let's start with you. Who was your direct descendent? Who was your mother or father?

My mother was Katherine Elizabeth. She was the second child born to them. The first one was my Uncle Jake and then my mother came along, then Sharon's father, Ed Junior, and then the youngest was George.

I see. Was your mother also a Las Vegan?

Oh, yes. Yes, she certainly was. Actually, she wasn't born here, I guess. Right, Margaret? She was born in L.A.

MARGARET: I don't really know where she was born.

PATSY: I don't think she was born here.

MARGARET: Probably not.

SHARON: I heard that, too, that she was born in L.A.

PATSY: Yes, our grandmother went to L.A. to have her. I don't know why. She was the only one she did that with, but she did.

MARGARET: Because she was born in the summer.

PATSY: Born in the summer and it was so hot.

Oh, yes. So your mother was the daughter of Ed Von Tobel Senior?

Yes.

Now, Sharon, tell us about your parents.

SHARON: My parents...my dad was the third child. Jake was the first and then Aunt Betty. My dad [Ed Von Tobel Jr.] met my mother—she was originally from Utah. She was the youngest of nine. She came here to visit her brother who had moved here from Utah. She came here and she met my dad. She worked behind a soda fountain and my dad came in there. It was on Fremont Street. She had a very outgoing personality, I think that's what attracted him. Her name was Evelyne Leonard.

Her last name was Leonard?

Leonard, yes. She came from a Mormon family and then she became Catholic for him.

Very good. Now, when you girls were born, where did you live? Let's start with Margaret.

What was your home in Las Vegas?

721 South Fourth Street. It was built as a duplex because then—I guess when they built that I was the only child. Renting out the other side of the duplex gave them enough money, then, to pay off the house. So that's why they did that. And then as their family expanded they just cut

doors through and it became our home. We were in that home until 1958. We were all raised there, all of us girls.

Very good. Sharon?

We lived at 520 South Seventh [Street], right down from [Las] Vegas High [School]. My dad built the house and added on to it. It's funny because we were there until 1958, when we moved across Charleston [Boulevard] to 1475 South Seventh. I was 18 at that time, so then I left [for] school and different things. But my sisters all were raised there. I have three younger sisters.

Tell us about your younger sisters, their names.

Katherine and Susan and Gretchen. We were like four years apart—four and three years apart. So my youngest sister is ten years younger than I am. They all went to [Bishop] Gorman [High School]. I went to Vegas High because we lived half a block from Vegas High. And we went to Saint Joseph's. So we would walk down to Saint Joseph and walk up to Saint Joan of Arc Church. And now it seems like it's really pretty far.

PATSY: I know. I agree.

MARGARET: Oh, yes, we would walk to school in the pouring rain and snow.

In the snow, yes. [Laughing]

SHARON: My mother didn't feel sorry for me because she's from Utah.

MARGARET: Until my sisters started going to Saint Joseph's, then all of a sudden my mother would drive. And I was so furious because I had had to walk.

SHARON: Did you walk to Saint Joseph's from Fourth Street?

MARGARET: Yes—

SHARON: I thought from Seventh—it was on Thirteenth [Street]. So that was quite a ways.

MARGARET: It was!

SHARON: It was easier for you to go to church.

PATSY: Yes, Saint Joan of Arc.

MARGARET: But yes, we walked.

Did you have friends to walk with?

MARGARET: Yes, I did. We just had, as kids do, certain girls and boys that you'd walk by their house and pick them up on their way.

SHARON: You knew everybody in town at that time and families. That's when you played outside and you knew everybody on your block.

Now, Patsy, tell me about where you went to elementary school and then high school.

I also went to Saint Joseph's. Then I went to Las Vegas High School, also, because it was just much closer to our home than at that time Gorman was. As it happened, in 1958, when we moved to Sixth Street, my younger sister was just starting high school. So she went to Gorman because it was, of course, closer at that time.

Patsy, I think I forgot to ask about your other siblings other than Margaret.

Oh, okay. Yes, we have...Margaret's the oldest. I'm the middle child. And then we have a younger sister; her name is Loretta Smith.

Tell us about your home. You told us a little bit; that it was a duplex and that type of thing.

MARGARET: Yes, it was.

Were there a lot of duplexes in your area or was that unusual?

MARGARET: No. That was unusual. They were just all homes on our street. I don't remember any other duplexes. And we played in the street or wherever, roller skated and rode bikes, et cetera. We never went past Charleston because there was nothing there. It was just dirt.

SHARON: Charleston was still dirt.

MARGARET: Yes. So most of our roller skating or bike riding was more north. Then we'd go up to Fifth Street School and you could bike and skate in there forever because of all the concrete and asphalt.

Sharon, did I ask you about your siblings?

Yes, we talked about my siblings. My dad built the house on Seventh Street shortly after I was born. So I think we probably moved in there in 1943 or '42. Then there was the war [World War II] and my dad had to go away. He was in Texas and we went there with him. But we had our house and then we had added on—when we came back he added on a big family room. It was considered big, anyway. But it was a two-bedroom. It's still there. Yours isn't there anymore.

MARGARET: No. They demolished our home for a First National Bank parking lot. So when our folks moved in 1958, the house was demolished.

Did you feel terrible about that or did it affect you at all?

Well, I think that everybody was so thrilled to be moving to the new home that I don't think anybody cared. No, I never lived in the new home because by then I was married and gone. So I think we were just so happy to move.

PATSY: Yes, to a nice newer home.

You mentioned roller skating and bike riding. Are there any other stories of your childhood that you would like to share, activities that you might have done?

MARGARET: Well, one thing we did that people think is so unusual is our dad worked at Blue Diamond Mine and they had bunkhouses out there and the men would stay out there during the week. They had chefs out there and everything. But they would get movies, first-run movies for these men in the bunkhouse. So during the summer our dad would show the movies in our

backyard. He had the projector and it was sound and everything. We would have movie night and it was great. It was cool in the summer evenings. The thing is they would get movies for men. So I saw war movies and stuff like that. [Laughing] I don't remember any musicals. We'd always say, "Dad, can't you please get some other movies?" Only crime, shooting and war. But we watched them anyway because it was just such a thrill.

PATSY: Oh, it was, so entertaining. Neighbors would come.

MARGARET: Neighbors would come over, yes.

PATSY: It was a lot of fun, barbecuing.

That does sound fun, Margaret.

MARGARET: It was.

PATSY: It was a lot of fun.

SHARON: Did you go to Von Tobels? You probably didn't. One thing we did that's unusual—I mean, otherwise, we just played baseball and hide-and-seek and all the typical ones. But my dad would go up to Von Tobels [Lumber Company] and do some work and we would run the elevator up and down. We'd get to go up there at night and we would play like we were salespeople and everything.

MARGARET: Oh, sure.

SHARON: And the housewares department. We couldn't do the telephone switchboard or anything like that. But yes, and we'd play—

MARGARET: But we did.

SHARON: I know. I'm sure we probably tried. But we would just have the run of the whole place because it was after hours. So we'd go and just play. And we'd love to—it was a freight elevator. It wasn't an elevator for people. So it had a great big wire thing. And then we'd go

upstairs and I think that's where they stored everything. So we'd hide up there. Oh, it was fun.
It was a lot of fun.

It sounds like fun. Where was the store located?

SHARON: 217 South First [Street].

At that time there was only one store; is that right?

SHARON: Right

And then later there were more stores, weren't there?

SHARON: Was that the original address? It was there for years and years.

MARGARET: For years. I think originally it was somewhere else.

SHARON: When he first came it was—

MARGARET: Yes. It might have been on Main Street, probably on Main Street.

SHARON: Probably, yes.

PATSY: I agree. And that's where they had the fire. Remember there was a fire?

SHARON: Right.

MARGARET: Then they built the store on First Street.

I see.

SHARON: And so that's the one we all remember because it was there for years. It wasn't until—when did they build the one on Maryland Parkway?

MARGARET: I'm going to say it was like 1960 something.

SHARON: See, I was thinking '68. Was it that late or was it—

PATSY: That's too late, Sharon. That's a little too late.

MARGARET: Probably '66, you think?

SHARON: Kathy was three?

MARGARET: When they had the opening.

SHARON: Okay, '66 then. Tammy was—yes, because they were there.

MARGARET: Yes

SHARON: They were little kids, our kids were.

PATSY: Yes.

And I understand that the Von Tobel lumberyard was indoors whereas most lumberyards, the lumber was stored outdoors? Is that correct?

SHARON: The one on Maryland Parkway, yes. But the one on First Street, no; it was outdoors. But it still had—it had like shelves and the lumber was—

PATSY: It was covered.

SHARON: Yes, it was covered. Yes, it was kind of covered, but you went through the outside. But then when they built the one on Maryland Parkway, it was actually very—people from China came over to—

MARGARET: People came from all over to walk the store because it was the first indoor lumberyard.

SHARON: Right, yes. It was more like a Home Depot.

PATSY: Yes, it was.

SHARON: But it had housewares. It had very nice housewares, too.

MARGARET: And appliances.

SHARON: And appliances. Well, Home Depot has appliances, don't they? But they don't have housewares.

PATSY: And at that time they had TVs.

SHARON: Right, yes.

PATSY: Yes, when television came in that was a big deal to go get your television.

Now, where did you shop for clothing and groceries and things like that? What kind of stores were available, Patsy?

MARGARET: When we were kids?

When you were kids.

MARGARET: Well, Ronzone's [Department Store].

PATSY: Yes, on Fremont Street Ronzone's was our nicest store.

SHARON: Right. And Johnson's [clothing store].

Johnson's was a clothing store?

SHARON: And Chic Hecht's [women's clothing store].

PATSY: Yes, yes.

SHARON: And Ronzone's was the clothing store.

MARGARET: Groceries, I would think Safeway.

SHARON: Was there a Safeway by you?

MARGARET: There was a Safeway somewhere that we used to go to.

SHARON: What about Mike's Market?

PATSY: I only remember those little—

MARGARET: Other than Safeway, there was Mike's Market on Las Vegas Boulevard or Fifth Street—it was just a little corner market.

SHARON: Fifth Street and Bonneville [Avenue] or something.

MARGARET: We all went there.

PATSY: It was very small.

MARGARET: Mother would just send us with no money. You just went and got bread or

whatever she needed and then they just kept track. Then apparently she settled up the bill.

They kept letting you get things.

PATSY: They kept letting us do that.

MARGARET: They had meat counters and everything.

PATSY: Yes.

SHARON: They did have. And there was downtown, too. We didn't go to that one.

MARGARET: I didn't, either.

SHARON: What was his name that we went to school with? It was his family that had one just behind Woolworth's.

PATSY: That was on Fifth Street, wasn't it?

SHARON: Yes, it was on Fifth Street behind Woolworth's. There was a Woolworth's and a Cornet's across the street.

What was a Cornet?

SHARON: It's like a Woolworth's.

PATSY: Just like Woolworth's.

What I used to call a dime store.

PATSY: Yes, yes, dime store.

SHARON: That's what they were called, yes.

PATSY: And we'd go and sit at the counter. We thought that was fun.

SHARON: We did go the record store I remember. And there was a bookstore right on Fremont Street and a record store.

MARGARET: Garehime's.

SHARON: And Garehime's Music [Store]. You could go in the room and listen to the 45

records. And the bookstore, I always thought it was a treat; I'd get to go buy a Nancy Drew book. Do you remember doing that?

MARGARET: Yes.

SHARON: And you could go—like I could just walk down there and maybe I'm twelve. I could walk down there myself from my house and there was no problem with that.

PATSY: Yes, I can remember walking downtown. My allowance was twenty-five cents. I can remember that.

MARGARET: Me, too, yes.

And twenty-five cents went a long way, didn't it?

MARGARET: We would walk into the movies.

SHARON: The El Portal Theatre.

MARGARET: But the thing that I find so amazing, nobody ever checked the time when the movie started. You never knew. So you'd just go in and you'd obviously be in the middle, half the time you'd get in the middle, but that was okay, and see the rest of it. Then you'd stay until the next showing and see the first half.

PATSY: And stay, yes. We did that.

That sounds like fun.

MARGARET: Yes, we never checked the time. I don't think they posted them or something.

SHARON: Something interesting, I think, is our grandparents' home that was built right behind Von Tobel's on Second Street and right next to their house was the Guild Theater. Guild? It was something else first.

PATSY: Palace [Theater].

SHARON: Palace, and then it was the Guild. Our grandmother would just walk right in and go

to the movie any time she wanted.

MARGARET: Just go in?

SHARON: Yes, she didn't have to pay. They didn't charge her. There were other homes on that street, but then there was that theater.

PATSY: Yes.

SHARON: I thought that was interesting.

MARGARET: It was peculiar.

Well, thanks, Sharon.

SHARON: That's kind of interesting, I think.

Did any of you girls have horses?

MARGARET: No.

PATSY: I don't think anyone in the family had horses.

I had talked with someone that did have horses at that time and so I thought possibly you did, too.

SHARON: Some friends of mine, the O'Donnells that lived down the street from us on Seventh Street, they moved out on Ashby after Charleston finally went through. I was still like twelve or thirteen, maybe fourteen. So that would be like '54 or something. They had kids my age—Kathleen O'Donnell—and they had horses and so I used to go out there. It just seemed like it was real, real far. And it was just on the other side of Rancho [Drive]. But that was the end. That was the end at that time. I mean there was nothing else past there at that time.

MARGARET: Some family friends, Abe Miller and Helen Miller, they were our parents' age and their dad actually started the Golden Gate [Hotel Casino] downtown. But Abe and his family had horses and they lived on Pinto Lane. You know where that is. It's right in the middle

of town. They had horses.

PATSY: Yes, they did.

MARGARET: And we'd go out there and see the horses. We weren't that enthralled with horses.

PATSY: No. At the time they had a swimming pool, which was very unusual.

MARGARET: That's true.

SHARON: Oh, yes. And the O'Donnells had one.

PATSY: Yes, it looked built in.

So you didn't have a swimming pool, it sounds like.

PATSY: No.

Did you go out of town during the hot part of the year?

PATSY: We went to Mount Charleston a lot.

SHARON: Our family had a cabin up there.

PATSY: We'd stay for a week, or four or five days, anyway. And our dad would drive up during the week.

SHARON: There was the Old Ranch Pool. Was it Old Ranch, was it called?

PATSY: Yes.

A public pool?

SHARON: Yes, a public pool. And then Lorenzi Park, only it was called Twin Lakes Park.

There was a pool there, too. They had a big public pool there. So we used to go swimming there. I can't remember going—. We went to Utah quite a bit, our family.

Because your mother was from there, sure.

SHARON: And we had a lot of relatives there. So we went to Utah.

MARGARET: We went on vacations, obviously in the summer because we were out of school. So we were gone then.

Do you have memories of Helldorado Days?

ALL: Oh, yes.

Patsy, let's start with you. What do you remember about Helldorado?

It was just so much fun. Everybody really looked forward to it. Actually, the floats were magnificent at the time. We thought they were just wonderful. A lot of the floats had showgirls on them, which was very exciting. Yes, Fremont Street was just abuzz with excitement. So it was a big deal for us.

SHARON: And Helldorado Village, yes, that was very fun.

Well, Sharon, tell us about Helldorado Village. I'm not familiar with that.

That was the carnival part. So then you would go out there and you'd get to ride on the rides and the Ferris wheel and everything. I marched in the Helldorado Parade. Were you on the Saint Joseph marching team?

PATSY: I can remember marching, also riding on a float, but I can't remember whose float it was. But, yes, marching.

SHARON: So Mrs. Deluca was the leader. Anyway, that was fun.

So when you marched were you with the band or flags?

SHARON: Just a drill team, kind of like a drill team. We had our uniforms and so we marched down Fremont Street.

PATSY: We weren't very good, though.

SHARON: I thought we were good.

MARGARET: I don't recall if I did march in the parade, or whatever.

PATSY: Okay. You were gone from Saint Joseph's.

MARGARET: Probably.

SHARON: By the time they did. Maybe I was in eighth grade? Because even though we're close to the same age—

MARGARET: We're close to the same age, but Sharon's birthday is in January and mine's in November. So I was a grade ahead of Sharon.

SHARON: Because it was like January first was the cutoff.

The [Nevada] Test Site is not far from Las Vegas. Do you have any memories of—

MARGARET: Oh, my, yes!

We'll start with Margaret.

We just did more crazy things. Now they seem crazy.

But you didn't know at the time.

No. They would always alert us in town when they were going to set off a bomb. Our dad [Kenneth Zahn] had a pickup truck and very often he would load us in the back of that truck and then take us and anybody else that wanted to go and we'd drive out really close to the bomb and wait till it went off. It was just unbelievable, the things we did.

And also, they had dummies that they set out there by the bomb site, when they set off the bomb. The dummies were dressed in clothing and everything. Then they brought the dummies in and displayed them around the J. C. Penney store downtown. We all went and looked at the dummies that had been blown up. [Laughing] That was our excitement.

PATSY: Yes, it was. And the radiation exposure to the dummies.

MARGARET: Sure. And we went and looked at the dummies. So I remember that.

PATSY: We sure did. That was funny.

MARGARET: But we did always go watch the bomb.

SHARON: Yes, we always went in the backyard and you could see it from the backyard. And you just watched that and you just—

PATSY: We'd say, "Hooray, hooray, it's A-bomb Day!"

MARGARET: It's A-bomb Day.

PATSY: Because they'd let us out of school to watch it.

SHARON: And even though it was early in the morning? Did they let us out? I don't remember that.

PATSY: Yes, at Saint Joseph's. And I can remember then finally we were supposed to start wearing those phony dark glasses, the plastic.

MARGARET: Oh, because of the flash.

PATSY: Because of the flash.

MARGARET: We didn't know about the radiation. It was just the flash they said would bother us. [Laughing]

That would be very interesting. You went to private schools, so you weren't involved with the desegregation then when it started. But were your children involved in the desegregation that started in the seventies? Let's start out by talking about the children.

Patsy, would you start and tell us about your children? Well, we haven't mentioned your husband's name, either.

It's Robert Brinton. I have a girl who just turned fifty. I'm trying to remember. I have two daughters and one son. Carolyn...I don't remember if they started bussing her.

MARGARET: They bussed some of yours.

PATSY: But they bussed Deanna, who is forty-eight right now. And so it was her sixth grade.

SHARON: Yes, sixth grade centers.

PATSY: I have an opinion about that. It was perfect waste of a year. The kids did not learn anything. I would go over and help out in the classroom once in a while and I was not impressed with anything I ever saw. Anybody else want to add something?

SHARON: We lived real close to Will Beckley [Elementary] School. This is Sharon. My husband's name was Larry. We had three children, Tammy and Steven and Susie. And Tammy and Carolyn are about the same age. Tammy and Steven walked to Will Beckley. And Tammy was—I mean she was going to be affected by it. They were at Will Beckley. And when she went in the fifth grade I moved them to Saint Anne's [Catholic] School because I didn't want them to be bussed. And so I car pooled and everything. But when they had started it, she was in third grade, I think, or fourth grade, maybe. So the black kids came over to Will Beckley School. They bussed them in.

So that's the way it worked. The kids from the neighborhood were taken to North Las Vegas.

SHARON: In sixth grade.

In sixth grade. And then the other kids from North Las Vegas were—

SHARON: The other kids, but not just sixth grade, because she had some—I can't remember what they did with the ones that they bussed out of the Westside because she had some in her class.

All grades. Yes, I think they were.

SHARON: It was all grades, okay. And so she had some. It was difficult at first because the teachers—I remember a black child, a girl, pushed Tammy off the swing. This is in like third or fourth grade. Tammy went and told the monitor, which was a teacher in the playground. She

says, "Oh, I can't do anything." So that was when I decided, well, I was going to send them to Saint Anne's, anyway. I'd already decided, we had, that we wanted them to go to parochial school. So I car pooled. There was some other people in the neighborhood and we car pooled. Noreen Pico, we car pooled with her children and they went to Saint Anne's. But yes, I think it affected everybody.

I think it did.

MARGARET: But we were not raised with prejudice. We really weren't.

SHARON: No.

MARGARET: I had black people around us a lot. We had household help and they were always black, but they were treated as a family member. They lived in what we called the Westside. So they just lived there and that's where they stayed. They were always very nice people and were treated like family members.

So it was just the school system that didn't work out very well.

PATSY: Yes.

MARGARET: No, it just didn't.

SHARON: I didn't want mine sitting on bus, either. Like Patsy said, it's kind of a waste. I didn't want them sitting on a bus to go over to the Westside.

PATSY: Clear across town, yes.

SHARON: But like she said, we weren't raised prejudiced because we had Everleen, a black lady that worked for my mother for fifty years and she was like a second mother to us. We went to birthday parties for her kids and things like that. So it wasn't like we were prejudiced against them. But it was just I didn't want my kids bussed.

Now, Margaret, tell us about your family.

MARGARET: I have two kids, but I lived in Scottsdale, Arizona, once I got married. I went away to college and got married. So I was gone for at least twenty-five years. I moved back here in 1983. So yes, I didn't experience anything like that.

Patsy, what did you do after high school?

After high school I went to ASU [Arizona State University] in Tempe, Arizona. I did not graduate, though. I came back here the middle of my junior year and worked at EG&G [Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier, Inc., a national defense contractor] in their library. It was very tedious and very, very boring. And then eventually married. I've never really lived anywhere else my entire life except for going—

SHARON: Just the few years in college.

PATSY: Just the years in college.

Sharon, how about you?

I went to Gonzaga [University]. I didn't last as long as you did, Patsy. I went one semester. I went to Gonzaga, like I said, and it was too cold. So I came back home and I worked at the [Las Vegas] Chamber of Commerce for a while, and I liked that. Then I became an airline stewardess for United Airlines and did that for like a year and a half.

So you saw the world? Did you get to travel overseas?

No. It was just in the United States then. United only went in the U.S.—and Hawaii at that time. But I got to go Back East. I really liked that. That was a lot of fun. And then I came back home and got married.

Very good. Now, your children, did they stay in Las Vegas to go to college or did they all go away? Let's start with—oh, you were already away, Margaret.

I was gone. I was in Arizona. So everything is in Arizona, right, yes.

Sharon?

Mine all went to college. Tammy went to University of San Diego and then she came back here. She lives here and she has one son, Justin. Steven went to UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] and he lives here. I'm very fortunate. He's married and has two children, Andrew and Ellie. And Susie, my youngest, she went up to San Francisco—Marymount—no, it's not Marymount. Saint Mary? Is it Mount—it's just Saint Mary's [College], just Saint Mary's, outside of San Francisco. She went there, but then she came back and married her high school sweetheart and she has one little boy, Jake. So they all live here, which I'm very fortunate now.

Wonderful. Very good. Patsy?

Well, my two girls, they both ended up at UNR [University of Nevada, Reno] and then one of them stayed in Reno area. She's in Sparks, Nevada, and she has one little girl. Then my oldest girl, she and her husband ended up moving from the Reno area up to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. So they're still up there and they have one daughter. My son, Rob, went to Boulder, Colorado, to college and then after college he went in the military. He was in the Marines [U.S. Marine Corps] for four years. Then he came back here and ended up marrying a local girl from Las Vegas. Fortunately, I'm glad they do live here and they have three small, little girls.

Oh, that sounds wonderful. The first time I met you, Patsy, was at a UNLV alumni party that you and Robert gave.

Oh, that's true.

I understand that he was president of the UNLV Alumni Association at that time.

Yes, yes. He thought he would just do it one year, but they talked him into two years. So he really enjoyed it. He still kind of is in touch with a few of the people he knew from those days.

But he helped to get it started, I think.

Yes, yes, he worked real hard for that and he's very proud. They've got that beautiful alumni building.

Yes, that is beautiful.

Let's talk about some of your volunteer activities in Las Vegas. Let's start out with you, Sharon.

I volunteer for Junior League [Junior League of Las Vegas]. I've belonged to Junior League for quite a while and I'm a sustainer now, but I still work on their Christmas project, which is called the Bear Project. I'm in Assistance League [Assistance League of Las Vegas] and I'm also like a sustainer in that. But I still work in [Operation] School Bell and go over there [Assistance League of Las Vegas] and do that. Then I play tennis. But those are my biggest volunteer things.

I remember you were very active in School Bell. Would you tell us a little bit about what School Bell is?

Right. School Bell, this year we dressed like seven thousand children. The school actually brings the children to School Bell and we give them two outfits—pants and T-shirts and a jacket and shoes and socks—and a book. And they can come there—this is for at-risk children. And they come there and we dress them. This year we dressed like seven thousand.

That is a wonderful project.

It's really a neat—you worked on that, too, didn't you, Lois?

Yes, I did mostly Kids on the Block [puppet shows].

SHARON: That's right.

Now, Patsy, she said, "they came here." Where did she mean by where do they go for School Bell?

SHARON: To the Assistance League building [on West Charleston Boulevard].

PATSY: Oh. I'm sorry. [Laughing]

SHARON: I'm sorry. The bus brings them to the Assistance League building and we have—it's like a store inside. So they get to choose what they want to wear.

I think that's important for school-age children.

SHARON: Yes. They're amazed when they come in because it's all new clothing and they let them see it's all new clothing. And they'll just say, "Oh, I get to shop here? How much does this cost?" Well, it doesn't cost them anything.

PATSY: Because I think Assistance League built that beautiful building. It's very impressive.

It's very impressive. And how is the money raised for buying these clothes for the children?

PATSY: Well, they have their thrift shop that is very profitable, very impressive numbers. It's used clothing. Everyone is very helpful in bringing all their used housewares and clothing there. And the members are wonderful volunteering all the hours they do.

It's an all-volunteer project, isn't it?

Yes, it is.

SHARON: And they get donations from the hotels or casinos. They get some pretty big donations. When they built the facility, I remember. I thought it was the first year I came in. And they got Don Reynolds—do you remember this, Lois? Donald Reynolds Foundation donated, I think, a million dollars for our facility. But we had to raise another million.

A matching amount.

SHARON: Yes, a matching amount, which was very difficult. I really admired those women that did that at that time. But it's a nice, beautiful facility, beautiful facility.

It is. It's located on Charleston close to Torrey Pines [Drive]. So it's a good location for it to attract a lot of business, I think.

SHARON: Yes. And it's easy to get to. We have a meeting room and the thrift shop is right there. It's all right in that one facility, which is very nice.

When I first joined we had things scattered around town. We'd have the thrift shop one place, School Bell another place, and the meetings a third place. So it was wonderful when they built the building.

SHARON: It is, yes.

I know, Margaret, that you are still working part-time.

Yes, yes.

So you probably haven't had a lot of time for volunteering.

No, I never really volunteered. I would just go to the parties. [Laughing] I did the fun stuff. No, I was normally in the office during the week.

Tell us about your business. You say you were in the office. Where are you working?

The Von Tobel family, even though they sold their businesses years and years ago, retained the real estate. So the businesses were gone; the real estate remained. And so the family has invested in other real estate, also. So that's what I do is manage the real estate and collect rent.

Very good.

PATSY: We're very fortunate to have Margaret to manage all this.

SHARON: Right, we are, yes, to manage, because she helped my father [Ed Jr.] and Jake and George.

MARGARET: I was in the office with them for like fifteen years. So that was nice. Although because I was a female, I really didn't speak for about ten years because they're German and they

didn't think females knew anything.

Now, I didn't ask how your grandfather learned German. He was born in America, wasn't he?

MARGARET: He was, but German heritage. I guess he learned at home. And they always spoke German.

SHARON: They originally—the family itself was from Switzerland and they spoke German. They had a lumberyard in Illinois. And that's why he started...he knew lumber and hardware. So when they came out to the West then he knew that. But his family still spoke German.

Very good. Do any of you speak German or French or Spanish?

MARGARET: Well, we're learning Spanish just so we can talk to people around here.

[Laughing]

SHARON: My father told me that—I asked why they didn't learn to speak German because Jake and my dad, Ed [Jr.] , and Patsy's mother didn't speak any German. Well, maybe a lit bit. But my dad said because it was the time of the war [World War I] and you couldn't—they just couldn't speak German. My dad said you didn't even say “frankfurter.” You didn't say anything German at that time.

Oh, I hadn't thought about that.

SHARON: So they didn't even speak it in their house. I mean, they heard our grandparents speak it a little bit, but they didn't want them to learn it. So I think it was because of the war [World War I] that they didn't and then we didn't. Maybe we would have known a little bit. But that's what happened.

Now, I'm going to ask each of you what you have noticed most about the change from now to when you were child, about how Las Vegas is now. Who would like to go first?

Margaret.

What I notice most is the traffic. The growth has been nice in that there are so many lovely places to go. The entertainment is wonderful. But I can't say I enjoy the traffic and the freeways and all that. That's the biggest negative, I think, and I don't know how they can keep up with it. They try, but it is a problem. What about you, Sharon?

SHARON: I think I've noticed because so many people moved in it's not as friendly. I miss the camaraderie and the friendships. You kind of stay in your own little community. But I miss—I don't think people are as friendly as they used to be, or caring. And I think that we have that separation of the [Las Vegas] Strip and the rest of the people that live just their normal lives. People say, "How do you live in Las Vegas?" Well, it's just like any other city, big city. But I miss that. And I really thought growing up and knowing everybody in town and having those good friendships was very important.

PATSY: Yes. I think the phenomenal growth keeps you, perhaps—it's kind of a deterrent from visiting your friends that live in Henderson because you think, oh, that's so far. And it is and it can be a thirty-minute drive. So you hesitate about driving across town, especially at certain times of day. So growth is wonderful, but it eliminates some things that you maybe, perhaps, would like to do.

Now, you live in an area, Patsy, where it was just desert at the time that you were growing up. I guess you all lived in an area west of where you used to live.

PATSY: Yes, very true.

Did you ever go to Red Rock [Canyon] to hike or anything like that?

PATSY: Very rarely, Lois.

MARGARET: I still haven't been there.

SHARON: Oh, you haven't? You've gone to Spring Mountain Ranch, though, and saw the plays there.

MARGARET: Oh, yes, yes, but not Red Rock itself. We weren't very athletic; let's put it that way. [Laughing] We weren't hikers.

Oh, you weren't hikers.

SHARON: Lois was a hiker.

PATSY: Yes.

Bill Fierro was a professor of geology at the time that we moved here and he was such a fascinating lecturer and I took a Continuing Ed class that he just made everything sound so interesting that you wanted to go see it. And so that got me started hiking.

PATSY: Actually I learned some things from Lois because you did have that hiking group.

I did, yes.

PATSY: One place in particular, Lois, was down nearby Lake Mead.

SHARON: The Railroad Pass area because our friend Judy went, didn't she?

PATSY: Yes, Judy. There is that city that was underwater, a community, very small [Ed. note: The town of St. Thomas was submerged by Lake Mead].

Yes, up toward Bunkerville and Mesquite. It was up that way. Close to Valley of Fire National Park.

PATSY: Yes. So I learned some things from Lois, actually. I said, "I didn't know that was out there."

Well, see, that was a city that had been flooded when they made Lake Mead. Then when the water [level] went down so many feet [in the drought], then [the town] started showing and you could see the remnants of an old school and stores and things like that.

PATSY: Very interesting.

So it was very, very interesting.

SHARON: Do they have a class like that anymore?

I don't know. But Bill's class was so interesting that I would tell people about it and then they said, "Well, I don't want to go by myself." So I took the class three times with people. Each time I learned more because there is so much to learn about the geology and the fossils and things like that. I'm sorry you girls missed out on all that. [Laughing]

PATSY: Really. Yes, see.

Okay, back to the list. Did you have any mentors or friends that were inspirational to you or your family? Because I know that you know—or you knew practically everybody in Las Vegas. So can you think of any person that you want to comment on that you thought were influential in the community?

SHARON: That might take some thought, Lois. I think I might have to think about that.

Well, so often when I ask men that I've interviewed, it pertains to their business. And since you are not as involved with the business community that's probably why. Can you think of anything you'd like to add before we turn off the microphone? Anything about any of your family or about things you enjoyed doing?

MARGARET: Oh, I can't think of anything right now.

SHARON: I was trying to think of a mentor or something. I think we looked up to our parents at that time and there might be some teachers and stuff. But I think I thought that my dad [Ed Jr.] was really pretty special, very smart. But I can't—we had a great childhood, I think, here growing up. I think we had a really good childhood.

And then another thing I was going to say going back a little bit about going to Red

Rock, it's strange—and I notice this in most people—when you're born and raised someplace, then you're not as curious about going. We'd go to other places. But like people say, “When's the last time you went to the dam?” Well, I did go because I took Judy and her granddaughter to see the new bridge, too, and the dam. But I bet I hadn't been to the dam since it overflowed. We used to take our kids there. But then you don't do things like that as much. I read that Margo Bartlett's column and I think, why don't I do some of those things?

MARGARET: That's true.

SHARON: You and I ought to do that, just get a group together and go drive and do some of those things because I think it's a shame when people ask me about certain places and I think, oh, I'm embarrassed.

MARGARET: We did go to Death Valley.

SHARON: Yes, oh, we went to Death Valley.

MARGARET: A lot we'd go out there.

PATSY: Yes, Death Valley.

SHARON: We did go to Death Valley quite often. They used to have activities there, too. When Larry and I got married at that Catholic church, they had retreats there. So Larry and I went there. In January they'd have a retreat over the weekend. That was nice. So we used to do that. That was something a little different.

PATSY: Yes, Death Valley we went to.

How about Grand Canyon?

PATSY: Well, we've been there.

SHARON: On my honeymoon we went because we were driving back to Tampa, Florida, because Larry was going to be in the Army for eighteen months. So we stopped there at the

Grand Canyon. And I go to Utah. I have a place in Utah that I go to.

Now, you mentioned Larry. What business was Larry in?

He sold Allstate Insurance; for thirty-five years he did that.

Now, was he originally from Las Vegas?

He came here when he was four and lived with his grandmother and his aunt. He held two jobs from age twelve. He held two jobs and he bought into the office equipment business, First Office Equipment. Bill First was the owner's name. [Larry] bought into that and delivered for that and worked at the [Las Vegas] *Review-Journal* at night. He was a very hard worker.

And how about your husband, Patsy?

Well, his parents moved here from Utah; Robert was in the fourth grade at the time. His father was in construction and the town was growing so much they figured this would be a good place to raise Robert. And eventually, Mr. Brinton, my father-in-law, and Robert's mother, of course, opened their own construction business. They kept it small, but they had a very nice living for many, many years. But then he sold that. He sold his business when [our son] Robbie was just a baby. So it was 1972 because that's one of the times that the town really was in a recession and there was no building going on or anything. So he got out of that and became a real estate broker. So he liked that. You don't have to work quite as hard at that as he did when he was in the construction business.

Well, I want to thank all three of you for giving us the female input on the Von Tobel family and your lives today.

PATSY: Well, thank you.

SHARON: Thank you, Lois.

[End of recorded interview]

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