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AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLIN CHANDLER

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV

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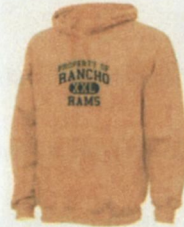
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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project
Rancho High School Class of '62



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Preface

Another member of Rancho High School's first graduating class of 1962, Allin Chandler charted a course that took him from school football to a distinguished career as a teacher, principal, and Executive Director for the Clark County Association of School Administrators. Allin moved to Las Vegas from Texarkana, Texas with his mother in 1958, joining his father who was serving in the Air Force and stationed at Nellis AFB. Starting 9th grade at J.D. Smith Junior High and continuing on to Rancho the following year. Still actively involved in school athletics, Allin quickly discovered his talent and love for maths and science and eventually earned his degree in math and education.

The stories Allin shares in this interview paint a vivid picture of how an intelligent and motivated young man can succeed – and how the class-free world of Las Vegas in the 1950s and 60s offered opportunities that he would never have had in class-conscious world of the South.

This is Claytee White and I am with Mr. Allin Chandler in his home here in Las Vegas.

How are you doing today?

Very good, thanks.

It is February fifth of 2013.

So Allin, first, after you spell your name for me, can you tell me a little about your early life?

Sure. My name is Allin, A-L-L-I-N; Chandler, C-H-A-N-D-L-E-R. As far as my early life, I guess it goes back to when I was born. Originally my mother and father were in California. He was in the service and my mother went to California from Texas to be with him; that's where I was born in Palm Springs, California. We lived there until I was approaching three years old and then my mother moved back to Texas. She and my father were divorced at that time and we moved back to Texas. I lived in Texas until eighth grade. I completed eighth grade in Texas and then we moved to Las Vegas.

Where in Texas?

Texarkana, Texas.

What was that like? What are some of your memories of Texarkana?

Texarkana was a nice place to grow up. It was a small town located on the border between Texas and Arkansas. My mother, her brother, her sister, her mother, her father, all lived in that town, and so I had an opportunity to know lots of my relatives while I was living there. My mom, shortly after moving back to Texarkana, was remarried and she married a fellow from New Jersey, actually. We lived in Texas, Texarkana for the most part. We did leave Texarkana for about two years and moved to Galveston, Texas. He worked in a defense plant down there outside of Houston. So we lived there for just under two years and then moved back to

Texarkana, where I continued to live and go to school until I finished eighth grade.

When I was back there my biggest involvement was in athletics. I played football on the junior high school team. Unlike Nevada in junior high school, each junior high had its own football team and you play in the same league that your high school plays in. So as a seventh grader I actually traveled around that area playing football. In the eighth grade I played on the junior high school team. Seventh grade was a junior high team, too, but it was just for seventh graders. In eighth grade I played on the eighth and ninth grade team. So, I played football back there. We also played in the same towns that the high school team played; that would be Kilgore, Tyler, Paris, Lufkin, etc., Texas; those were the communities in that area.

So I've heard that Texas is just crazy about football.

It is.

What is a Friday night like in Texas in a small town?

Well, if the high school team is playing, virtually all the people in the town go to the game. The stadium there, even though it's old now, at the time was new and it was a concrete stadium that went the entire length from goal to goal. I don't know how many people it would hold. Back then it seemed like it was a very, very large stadium. I've been back to it since and it's not as large as I remembered it being. You go around the community and every store has a copy of the football schedule; they keep track of what the scores are. When the team plays out of town, lots of people go to the games. So it's the biggest thing going in the community.

Great. So why did the family decide to move to Las Vegas?

Well, my stepfather joined the Air Force again. He was stationed originally in Japan. When he finished his tour in Japan, he was stationed in Las Vegas at Nellis Air Force Base. So, for the first time the family decided to move where he was; we had never done that before. And that's

the only time I've ever lived where the Air Force base was. He was stationed in a number of other places that the family just simply didn't go. But in Las Vegas we came out here.

When I got here, I was in the ninth grade and I attended J.D. Smith Junior High School. Following the one year at J.D. Smith, the whole group of students moved to Rancho High School.

So any football at J.D. Smith?

No, they didn't have football at J.D. Smith. And I was brand new in the community. Some of the people that I met later on did go over to Rancho and play football as ninth graders, but I was not aware of that because I was brand new in the community and didn't know that you could do that. So I didn't play.

So tell me again about not knowing about being able to play.

Well, as a ninth grader and we were brand new to the community, I didn't really know any of the kids, and so I was unaware that there was football available to us. And there weren't very many; there were only a couple of people who chose to go over to Rancho High School after school and play football.

Where did the family live? You didn't live on base?

No. No, we didn't. My dad was an enlisted person. So we lived in a trailer park out on Las Vegas Boulevard North. The first trailer park we lived in was called the Adaven Trailer Park, which was at 2905 Las Vegas Boulevard North, almost exactly where Pecos crosses Las Vegas Boulevard. Sometime after that, the family bought another mobile home and we moved to a place called Rose's Red Top. That's where I lived through high school until I graduated.

So that put you in the area to go to school at Rancho.

At Rancho, yeah.

So in the ninth grade you started meeting some of the people that you would go to Rancho with.

Oh, yes. Yes.

Do you remember some of those early friends, who they were?

Yeah, I do. There were a number of people that were friends of ours there at the school.

Probably my best friend was a fellow by the name of Merton Canady. Merton was one of the smartest guys I'd ever known. He and I both were fairly good at mathematics; he was probably better than I was. But we did a lot of studying together. We were both interested in algebra, which was the math course that we were taking. So he probably was my best friend, but there were a number of other friends. Kent Farnsworth went to school there. Nancy Anderson went to school there. Gordon Smith, Eddie Phillips, a number of people.

Wonderful. In the ninth grade what were some of the entertainment-type things that people here in Las Vegas were doing? Anything surprise you?

I guess the thing that surprised me most—in Texas it's a very different society; there are the haves and the have-nots unless you're an athlete. And fortunately, I played sports. So I was able to be accepted into a group of people that without athletics they probably wouldn't have spent any time with me. Things like country clubs and belonging to it, those were important things back in Texas. Families that had a lot of money, those were the important things. When we moved out here no one seemed to care whether you had money or whether your family had money. You could be friends with anybody. If you lived in the trailer park in North Las Vegas, that was okay.

So how did that make you feel?

Well, it was certainly easy to make friends and I liked that. The fact that I ended up playing

sports here, too, helped me to make friends who were athletically inclined, but it also allowed me to have friends that weren't athletes.

So tell me about the math. What teachers do you remember at Rancho that were good and that would mentor that kind of math ability?

Well, the math that we were talking about originally was at J.D. Smith. There was a fellow named Mr. Smith who was the algebra teacher. But when we went to Rancho, as luck would have it, I ended up having the same math teacher for a good share of all my math. She was excellent, as a matter of fact. Her name was Dr. Virginia Gilbert. I took geometry from her. I took solid geometry; analytical geometry. But I took trigonometry from a fellow by the name of Mr. Deaton, I believe his name was. But she was my favorite and I ended up taking the senior math class with her.

I went away to school after graduating from Rancho. I went to school back in Texas, Texarkana again. They have a junior college back there. The junior college had a football team. So I was going to go back there and play football. Of course, I didn't know any of those people anymore or at least I remembered them, but we hadn't maintained a friendship. So when I got back there, basically they were two weeks into football, and so the team had already been determined. But I did go ahead and work out with them for that year and was going to play in my sophomore year. Then I ended up just about a week before the season started getting injured and ended up not playing even though I had made the team.

But did you finish school back there, anyway?

I went to school there. I ended up one credit short of getting an associate's degree. But that really wasn't my intent anyway. I ended up not taking an English course I believe it was, and so I didn't get my associate's degree. But when I finished back there, I came back to Las Vegas and

started going to school at what was then Nevada Southern. Ultimately I graduated from there, but it was called UNLV when I graduated.

Did you stay in the math/sciences area?

When I was in Texas I was majoring in chemical engineering. My intention was to get my degree in engineering, specifically chemical engineering. When I came back here to go to school, I stayed in the engineering program. However, in order to get a degree back then in engineering you had to go to UNR; you couldn't receive your engineering degree unless you went up there for at least a semester. And because I didn't have any family up there—I didn't have family living in Las Vegas at that time, either, but I had friends and I had a job and the job allowed me to continue going to school. So rather than going up to UNR and finishing my degree in engineering, I decided to stay here, change my major and graduate from UNLV. So I ended up majoring in math, minoring in chemistry, and got my degree in education.

Wow. So did you teach here?

I did.

Oh, wonderful. We'll talk about that later. That's interesting.

Getting back to Rancho, I want to know about Fremont Street, the Blue Onion and what kids did on the weekends; those kinds of things.

Well, in high school I played football and I played baseball. So there were always activities associated with sports. I didn't play basketball, but some of my best friends did play basketball. So I went to all the games. So most of what we did during the school year was associated with sports. Now, we would go to the games and we would always after the games go and eat. I say eat; we'd go have pizza usually.

Where did you have pizza?

I believe it was called the Venetian.

Okay, yes. I've heard that name.

I believe that was the name of it and it was one block up from the Blue Onion. So we would go there and eat. But we'd also go to a place called Blacketts, which was kind of a fast food place.

What was the name of it?

Blacketts.

Would you spell that for me?

B-L-A-C-K-E-T-T-S, I believe is how you spell it.

Tell me about that place. No one else has.

There were two of them. One of them was right on Charleston about a block from Maryland Parkway. There was a Community Chevrolet right there on the corner and it was right directly behind that. The other one was on Las Vegas Boulevard South. It was almost to Sahara. So it was just north of Sahara on Las Vegas Boulevard. It was just a hamburger, taco, enchilada place that was inexpensive and a good place to eat.

Could you eat inside? Did it have seating?

You could eat inside, but it was just really a fast food place. It had tables and chairs in there, but it wasn't a place you ever took dates or anything. So that was a place we would go frequently.

We'd go to the movies a lot. If there wasn't a game or something that we were going to, we would go to the movies. There were a number of movie theaters back then. There were two on Fremont. One was the Fremont Theater and the other one was the El Portal. There was another one just off of Fremont called the Guild, which showed a lot of different kinds of movies. It was a very small theater. I remember seeing "Exodus" there. That's the movie I remember seeing there.

Now, did you ever go to the Huntridge, as well?

Yes, we went to the Huntridge, as well. The Huntridge was over on Charleston right at Maryland Parkway.

The same people owned some of these movie theaters?

I understand that they did because some of the girls in our class worked in those theaters and they would sometimes work between different ones. They would work in one and then go to the other one. Although they were typically assigned to one specific one, they had to sometimes fill in someplace else.

Great. Thank you for that.

So we would go to the movies. Back in high school there was a professional baseball team that played at the old Cashman Field before there was a new Cashman Field. They were called the Wranglers I believe. So some of the guys would go to the games. They played pretty much every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night. So we would go and enjoy some baseball games. We just sort of hung out with our friends a lot. So it was good.

So did you go to the proms or to the Sadie Hawkins Dance?

No. I think the only prom that I ever went to was senior prom.

Now, was it the senior prom or the senior dance?

I think it was the senior prom. We got dressed up.

Where was it held?

Oh, it was held at Rancho, at the school.

And afterwards where did the kids go?

Well, Jimmy Keys and myself had dates, we went with—I'm almost reluctant to say who—I think he was with Pat Sturm, but I'm not sure. I was with a girl named Laurel Hatch. We went

to the place called The Flame.

Where is The Flame?

It was just off the Strip, a restaurant off the Strip. It was a steak place, very good, one of the good places to go and eat.

So you didn't actually go into a casino?

We didn't, no.

Did you hear other kids talk about being able to go into the casino and have dinner in a casino at that age?

I imagine some did. We didn't. We chose not to go there. We liked that place to eat and so that's where we went.

Wonderful.

I didn't go to the Sadie Hawkins Dance or any of those. I really wasn't much into dancing. The only dances I'd ever go to—usually we'd go to the dance after the football games where you go to the dance for a while. Sometimes we might have danced a little bit, but most of us didn't dance a lot. We would stay there for a while and then decide what we were going to do and we would leave and go do something else.

Okay, great. At this time—we're talking about early sixties—did girls dance with each other?

Yeah, they did.

We were talking about dances and I was about to say that now, again, it's easy to go into a place where there's dancing and for women to just get up and dance. We don't have to wait anymore to be asked [laughing].

I think if girls waited to be asked, they would have probably been sitting there as long as we

were. I think it wasn't uncommon to have girls dancing with girls.

Okay, great.

I might add one of the other things that we did, too. There were a number of us who played in the same summer league baseball team. The reason I wanted to bring that up is because our sponsor was Gragson Furniture. Shirley Gragson was a member of our class and her dad was the mayor and he owned a furniture store, which was right next to the Huntridge. He sponsored our baseball team. We all had shirts that said "Gragson Furniture." If we needed additional money to buy bats and things, we would go over to their house and get some more money and play.

Anyway, that was another thing; a lot of us played summer league baseball.

So did you work?

I did. Actually, I worked every year. My family really didn't have very much money and my dad was in the military. So initially I had a paper route for the Review-Journal back in the old, old days; that was my first job. From there I got a job working at a gas station and the station was called the Stinker Gas Station.

Where was it located?

It was out on Las Vegas Boulevard North. It was probably about halfway to Nellis out on the left-hand side past Pecos, out in that area. So I worked there. I'd go there after school some and in the summer I'd work long hours at seventy-five cents an hour; that was the pay. I worked hard and they kept me around. I did that for about a year, I guess, and then I went to work for a store called Vegas Village. A number of my friends worked at Vegas Village. They worked in the grocery department. They bagged groceries and some of them actually did work putting stuff on the shelves. But I worked in the snack bar. It was actually a very nice little snack bar in there.

We used to have barbeque chicken and ribs. That was my job; I was the barbeque guy. So I did

the barbequing of the chicken and ribs. I actually did that job my sophomore, junior and senior year and then I came back one year from college and continued to work there. During the school year I worked there just on the weekends on Saturdays and Sundays. If I had a football game, they would let me off at two o'clock in the afternoon so I could go home and get ready for the game. They were very good to me. The managers there were Bill and Muriel Elliott, nice people. He had retired from the Air Force and had gotten that job in retirement. So I worked there up until I went away to school.

Everybody worked. Everybody on this list that we're interviewing for this project, everybody had a job.

Well, I think most of my friends had a job at some point. There were a few of them who didn't. But most of us were just pretty much if we wanted to have any spending money, we had to have a job to have spending money and we did.

I love it. And I love the way that the town treated everyone. What you just talked about, them being very conscious of you being a football player, allowing you to work around that schedule, it seemed to be the case with almost everybody. Why do you think the town was so supportive of the young people?

Well, I think actually it was very supportive for all people in the community; I don't know that it was just tied to young people. I was willing to work the weekends where a lot of people like to have the weekends off. In order to play sports, which they knew how important that was for me, they would allow me to leave early so I could go to the game. I can't answer the question, I guess, in terms of why. But it was a good place to grow up.

I mentioned before in Texas if you were going to be accepted into the group of people, your parents had to be doctors or lawyers or business people or their parents had to belong to the

country club unless you were an athlete. If you were an athlete, you got invited to the dances and so on and the parties and so on because you were involved in athletics. When I came out here, it didn't matter whether you were involved in athletics necessarily or whether your parents were doctors or lawyers.

Interestingly enough, as I went through high school—I can't really tell you who my best friend was; I had lots of best friends. But one of my best friends was a fellow by the name of Lyle Norwood. Lyle Norwood's father was a dentist here in town, Dr. Norwood. His mother was an attorney here in town. Their home was located next door to the mayor's house, the Gragsons. I would leave my house in North Las Vegas, get in my '49 Chevrolet and drive over to their house, and they were very accepting of me being there and having dinner at their house. The Norwoods were very involved in athletics, but they also were involved in hunting and fishing and things of that nature. They had come here from the Midwest.

I remember one of the trips we took. We left here and went somewhere up in Southern Nevada. I can't remember where it was, but it's a place where people go frog gigging. We went up there. And I don't know how many frogs we got their frog legs. We brought them back and we had a big party at the Gragsons' house. They fried the frog legs and the French fries and we just had a big party over their house after having done that. Now, growing up in Texas you didn't want to get into that water because there was always water moccasins and things like that.

So how do you do it? What is it called, frogging?

Frog gigging.

Frog gigging. So explain it to me.

You actually get into the water. Usually you're up to about your chest. And you got this pole with a gig on it. It's got like a three-prong gig on it and a flashlight. And you shine it and you

actually see the eyes of the frogs. Then you go over and you jab them. You cut off their legs and you take them back. I only did that one time with them, but it was fun.

But when you jabbed them, you killed them.

Well, if that didn't kill them, cutting off their legs did.

Oh, my god, ugh. So this three-prong thing has something sharp?

Yeah, it was pointed.

Okay, I see. Whew. All right.

I can't tell you that was necessarily a favorite thing of mine to do. But the Norwoods enjoyed doing that. So they invited me to go with them and I did. I'm glad I did it. I never did it a second time.

But still, it was an experience.

The important thing was that the Norwoods, if they lived in the South they would be in the higher society and probably would not have had much to do with me, except for Lyle played football and I played football. We were friends on the football field, but we were friends outside of it, too.

Thank you for that observation. That tells a lot about this early city.

I think that was the thing that I thought was the most different about living here and living in Texas; nobody cared what your parents did and nobody cared whether your parents had money. They just liked you for who you were. So I liked that about this community.

So what is the biggest change that you've seen over the years, from the time you came—eighth, ninth, tenth grade—until now?

When I was in school this was a very safe community. I felt very safe. We would go to the movies that we talked about. We'd go downtown. There wasn't parking garages at that time.

You found a parking place in the alley or someplace like that and you'd leave your car there. And with one exception nobody messed with it and nobody messed with you going to get in your car after the movie was over.

I remember one time that Lyle Norwood and I, we actually had gone to a dance and we left our letter sweaters in the car. And the dance was down at the National Guard Armory right at the corner of Stewart and Eastern. It's not there now, but there was an armory there. We left our letter sweaters in the car and we came back and they were gone. I don't think we locked the car; I think we just left them there. So we kind of put the word out that somebody had taken our sweaters. Could you turn this off for just a second? [Pause in recording] We were told who had taken them and they were returned.

So tell me about being a principal of a high school in Las Vegas.

I wasn't principal of a high school; I was principal of an elementary school.

Oh. Which one?

Well, I was principal of several. But the first one I was principal of was Jo Mackey Sixth Grade Center. I was there for two years. The first year I was there as an administrative assistant and the next year I was there as the acting principal.

So what is an administrative assistant?

It's like an assistant principal, but they don't put you on the administrative salary schedule; you're still on the teacher salary schedule.

Okay. Jo Mackey was one of the sixth grade centers. Explain to me what a sixth grade center is.

Well, many years ago, in an attempt to integrate the Clark County School District, there were some plans that were put together and one of them was the sixth grade center plan. And

essentially what the sixth grade center plan did was that it allowed the black youngsters from the community in the kindergarten and in the sixth grade to stay at their home school, which was the school in their neighborhood. Every other year—first, second, third, fourth, fifth and then every year after sixth grade—those same youngsters ended up being bussed to another school outside of their community. But what it did was for one year, sixth grade, the kids who came from the predominately white area of town were bussed into the predominately black area of town. People thought that was fair. It obviously wasn't fair. But that was an attempt to integrate the black community and the white community.

I'd have to tell you that I thought that even though it was unfair to the black community—and, of course, the white community was the one who complained most bitterly about it—but the truth is I thought academically it made sense, not the sixth grade center per se, not the location, but what made sense was that kids were coming out of elementary school where they were assigned to one teacher and the teacher taught everything and into junior high school they went to six different teachers and they did it overnight. They left an elementary school one year and the next year they were in a junior high school or a middle school. In the sixth grade center that kid spent half of the day with one teacher who taught basically the reading, writing, spelling, so on, and then half of the day they went to what were called the specialists. They went to a math teacher, a science teacher, a PE teacher, and then they would have like round-robins where it might include social studies and some other subjects. So the kids really had an opportunity to spend half of the day with one teacher where they felt pretty comfortable and then the other half day they had the ability to go to specialists, which gave them the chance to move from class to class.

So were the monies put into schools here equally distributed, other than the sixth grade

centers, first through fifth, seven through twelve?

Well, it's not equal because the amount of money for textbooks, for example, high school textbooks cost more money than—

No, I don't mean that. I mean equal for an elementary school on the Westside and an elementary school—

Somewhere else.

—out by the airport? Uh-huh.

Well, my first involvement with elementary schools was when I went to the sixth grade center. So that was a completely different concept than had been there previously. I guess I don't know for sure. I would hope they were, but probably they were not. I don't know. But I do know that when I got to the sixth grade center that was a different attempt and then the sixth grade centers ended up being changed from an elementary school— [pause in recording]

You were talking about the sixth grade centers.

You had asked me what schools I worked in and I told you I worked at the sixth grade center, Jo Mackey. And from Jo Mackey—because I was acting principal there; there was a principal that had taken a leave. And so when she came back, they moved me to another elementary school called Rex Bell. Now, these were the first elementary schools I had ever worked in. So I worked at Rex Bell for half a year—not even a half year and then they assigned me to be the principal at Mountain View Elementary School.

Where is Rex Bell located?

Rex Bell is down off Sahara, kind of behind the Station Casino there.

Oh, yes, okay.

It's behind there and those apartments. So I worked at Rex Bell for the rest of that year. Then I

went to Mountain View. At Mountain View I was there for about nine years as principal there. Then I opened the James McMillan Elementary School and I was there for about two years. And then I retired.

Wonderful.

But you asked the question about whether the schools were equal. I can't tell you prior to the sixth grade centers whether they were or whether they weren't because never having worked in any—that's not quite accurate. I worked at Booker Elementary School. It's what's called Booker now; it was called Highland Elementary at that time. I worked at Highland Elementary for one year, but I was a teacher aide at the time; that was before I started teaching or before I went into school administration. And that was the only elementary I had ever worked in. Quite honestly, there were a lot of people at that school that were very, very good people. I don't know if you remember a fellow by the name of Jim Pughsley?

Yes.

Jim Pughsley was a fifth grade teacher there. He and I became very good friends. He eventually became my boss when I was a principal in the elementary division. And when he went to Monroe, Louisiana, he invited me to come down and be a deputy superintendent to work with him down there. So he and I were very good friends. We still exchange Christmas cards. He's in South Carolina now. So there were a number of people that worked at the sixth grade center who were really, really good people.

Oh, yeah. The sixth grade centers were supposed to have been excellent.

Yeah. And the only elementary school that I had worked in prior to going to the sixth grade center was the Highland Elementary. A fellow by a name of Earl Bruner was the principal at the school. Jim Pughsley became an assistant principal during the year I was there. Gosh, I'm trying

to remember some of the other people. Sorry. Theron Goynes and Mabel Huggard were two, but I can't remember the others.

No problem. Thank you for that look at the school system.

Getting back to Fremont Street, you talked about what you used to do when you were young. What is it like now when you see Fremont Street after spending time down there as a young man?

Quite honestly, I'm disappointed. People really brag about Fremont Street and all the activities that go on down there. I find it depressing, actually. I've been down there twice. We went down there during our reunion and we walked down the street and left. A few months before that I had some relatives come in town and they wanted to go down there, so we did. Being down there and seeing the activities that were going on down there and I guess the caliber of the people that were down there, I didn't feel real comfortable down there.

When I was in high school, going down Fremont Street was great. In fact, I'm sure they've told you, but Fremont Street, we used to drive our cars up and down Fremont. At the end of Fremont Street where the Union Plaza Hotel is now, there was a Union train station there. There was a circle there and you could go up Fremont Street, you could go around the circle at the train station and then start going back down Fremont Street. And you'd usually go down as far as the Blue Onion. You would drive through the Blue Onion. It would go through kind of the restaurant and then there was almost like an alleyway and you came out on Charleston. So you would go up Charleston and there was the Tip-Top at the corner of Charleston and Fifth Street.

Right. Like a hamburger place.

Uh-huh. So we'd go up there and circle around and go back down to the Blue Onion.

I think everybody enjoyed that.

Yeah. It was really great. You could see everybody. If you went down there enough times, you'd see all your friends. They were always up there.

Just to make you feel a little bit better about downtown, when you cross Las Vegas Boulevard now and go to Fremont Street East, they're beginning to improve it.

I understand they are and I know they're doing a lot of building.

Nice restaurants. So I think later on you might be a little pleased.

But you're still not going to be able to drive up and down and see your friends and so on.

No. I think that's gone forever, unfortunately.

What was it like to live in a place that was associated with mob activity? Did that affect you any way whatsoever?

I suppose if there was any effect was that they helped to make it safer. I don't think there were a lot of the criminal elements who had the courage to do things that were criminal, knowing that they might be doing them to somebody that was involved in the mob. So I personally never had any contact with anyone like that. So I'd have to say that looking back now to then I think that probably having a mob element associated with Las Vegas probably helped to make it a safer place for the ordinary people.

When your parents would go out for entertainment at that time, did they have favorite hotel/casinos where they went?

Well, my mom was the only one that ever went to the casinos and she liked to play bingo. And her favorite place to go play bingo was the Showboat. She enjoyed the Showboat. I remember she won a hundred dollars down there one time and she was so happy. Occasionally they would go down on Fremont Street and walk up and down. Back in the old days it was just like a

two-lane road out in front. And if you were walking on the sidewalk, it was really cool during the summertime because the air-conditioning was coming out of the casinos and there were just a whole series of smaller casinos along there and they all had their doors open. So the temperature was probably twenty degrees cooler right out there on Fremont Street.

Like going to Mount Charleston.

It was.

That's great. Did your mother ever work outside the home?

She did. She worked at the Bank of Las Vegas. I guess her title was bookkeeper. She wasn't trained as a bookkeeper, but that's what she did at the bank.

So do you think some of those math skills came from your mother?

Could have. She always wanted me to do well in school. Interestingly enough, going back to when I was a kid, I started school in Arkansas because the family lived in Arkansas. We moved to Texarkana, Texas. Texarkana, Arkansas allowed you to start school I guess when you were five, and when you moved to Texarkana, Texas you couldn't start until you were six. So they made me lay out of school for half a year. So rather than letting me get lazy, my mom kept me going to school at night; I mean she would act like a teacher and work with my numbers and my alphabet and my reading and my colors. All the things I was doing in school in Arkansas she continued to do them.

I love it. Now, did you have brothers and sisters?

I did. My brother and I are only three years apart. So he and I grew up together. When we were in about—must have been about the tenth grade I guess, we adopted a little girl. My mother and dad adopted a little girl. Then the next year my mom had a baby. So there were four of us when I graduated from high school. My two sisters were like two years old, three years old, and I was

eighteen and my brother was fifteen.

Wow, what a gap.

And we lived in a 35-foot, two-bedroom mobile home.

But 35-foot, that's a big one.

That wasn't very big. It wasn't very big.

Well, for six people. Okay. So did your brother and sisters also have professional careers?

Yeah. I have a brother who moved back to Las Vegas when I was going to school here. He actually worked for the school district for a while as a teacher aide, just like I had done, and he decided he wanted to be a police officer. So he went to work for Metro and he retired with 30 years as a police officer. He spent the last ten or so years as a homicide detective, and prior to that he was working undercover for a number of years as a detective undercover. He also was a patrolman, motor officer, he used to ride the motorcycles in the middle of winter. I don't know how he did it.

And then my sister, she went to school in Indiana and she ended up getting a degree, which allowed her to clean teeth. So she became a dental hygienist.

My other sister, she was working at Texas Instruments. She really liked working with animals and Texas Instruments had lots of animals kind of wandering around the facility and she was helping to take care of the animals there. She's had some health problems, so she's not working anywhere right now although she does little jobs, I guess.

But two of you ended up spending your life in Las Vegas.

My brother and I. He's still here and so am I. And my other sister is in Indiana and the other one is still in Texas.

So did your brother go to Rancho, as well?

No. When I finished high school, the whole family moved back to Texas. And I went back to Texas and went to school for those two years and he went back to Texas and went to high school. So he went to high school, graduated from high school, and after graduation he went to college back there where I went to school for one semester, and then he came back to Las Vegas.

Did he play football?

He did play football. He was much better than I was. He was quite a good athlete in Texas. But he never played in college.

Interesting. Thank you. We're going to end by just talking about the city and how it has changed and those kinds of things. Some of these you have already answered.

You did ask me about my being a high school principal and I told you I've never been a high school principal; that all my principalships had been at the sixth grade center and the elementary schools. But I also spent half of my career in the secondary schools. I taught math. I didn't teach chemistry even though I had a degree in chemistry. I taught math, taught science. I was the dean of students for seven years at Woodbury Junior High School. I did work at Sunset High School. I taught math at Sunset High School. So I spent about half my career in secondary schools and about half my career in the elementary schools. Once I retired in 1990 from the school district, I was a principal at McMillan. I retired and I had also been actively involved in the association work, the School Administration Association. So the person we had hired to be the executive director was retiring. So they asked me if I was interested in doing that. So I applied and they selected me. So I spent twelve years as the executive director of the School Administrators association and then I spent the next ten years just working part-time helping the fellow that I hired to take my place. So I basically negotiated the contracts, the labor contracts. I negotiated the health insurance benefits for them. I did the bill analysis and some lobbying at the

legislature.

Oh, you were a lobbyist, also.

I did lobbying work. I was the executive director, so that was my full-time job. But on occasion I would have to go up and testify, so that's lobbying even though back then they didn't make you get a lobbying—what do you call it? I didn't have to register as a lobbyist. However, a few years after that they ended up if you were going to go testify, you had to register. By then we had actually hired somebody.

We're going to finish by talking about the city. What do you see as the future of Las Vegas when you think of education, politics and gaming?

Well, I think education gets a bum rap. I guess I would use an old saying I used to have. We're not as bad as they say we are; we're not as good as we want to be. I think that the people I know in education are very hard working, very dedicated, and they receive a lot of criticism. And I'm not talking about just administrators; I'm talking about the teachers, the support staff. I started working for the school district in 1964 and I worked for the school district or with the school district for 49 years. So I've seen it go through lots of changes through the years. I can't tell you what it's like in a classroom now. I can't even tell you what it's like being an administrator in a school today because I haven't done that for a number of years. But I do know that the people that are in those positions are working hard and they're not intentionally doing anything that's not in the best interest of kids.

I'm hoping politically that the legislators and the governors will do more than provide lip service to trying to improve the education system. I don't think they're going to be able to improve the system by tearing it down. I think that they really need to get in there—you can say what you want to about whether money helps in education. But the reality is I just read an article

this morning talking about some of these turnaround schools and the thing that they talk about in these turnaround schools is that, with the exception of the three that they identified today, they all are receiving a significant amount of additional money to provide programs for kids and all of those schools are doing better. So you can't say that money doesn't make a difference. Some people would like to say that it's not about money, but the truth is it is about money. For example, I can't tell you specifically about raises, but I don't believe any of the state employees or the school district employees have received a raise; they've received actually a cut over the last four years. They've had to take days off without pay. People say, well, they're still making the same amount of money as they were before. For the days that they work. But for the days that they don't work they don't get paid. So they did take a cut. I find that very troubling.

When people look at the state of Nevada, we have one of the smallest public workforces in the country; and yet, we are doing what I would say is an outstanding job. And that's state employees, county employees, city employees. And yet, everybody wants to be critics. I find that troubling. I read some of those comments that people make about public employees and there are some people who have absolutely nothing good to say about public employees. I don't understand that.

So I guess I'm rambling a little bit, but I would say to you that I'm hopeful that people will quit being so critical. I guess I'm almost hopeful that the R-J will go out of business. They're one of the biggest critics. They believe that they're experts. If you read the stories, and in some of the areas where I happen to have a significant amount of knowledge, they're dishonest; they don't tell the truth; the stories don't tell the truth. Now, I can't say everybody that works there is dishonest, but I can tell you that the stories when they start talking about the public employees retirement system, they don't tell the whole story. They make it sound like that

the employees don't contribute anything to their retirement. Fifty percent of their retirement is paid for by the employees; fifty percent is paid by the boss. When there has to be an increase in the contribution rate, half of that increase comes from the employee and half it comes from the employer. But that never gets in those stories. All they say is that the taxpayers are paying for it. I guess I would just like to see the politicians and the newspapers and television stations, they need to do a better job of getting the facts that they report because right now they're reporting the facts as somebody wants them to report them and it really does a disservice to the public employees who are hard workers and deserve to have a decent retirement and they deserve to have a decent salary and they deserve to have a raise. And I understand that the whole country is hurting right now; I understand that. But they can't fix the problems in the country by continuing to take away from the public employees and that's what they're doing.

Thank you.

You wanted to know about the politics and the education system and?

Gaming.

Gaming. Well, it appears to me that gaming for the most part is doing pretty well. With the one exception I think they've seen an increase for every quarter for a number of years now. It looks to me like the income coming in is quite good. In the old days hotels made money, but they mostly made money from the gaming. Now they make money from gaming, they make money from the food service and they make money from the entertainment. Everything has to make a profit since they had corporations take over the hotels. In the old days it was okay if food services lost money, it was okay if they didn't make any money off the entertainment, but they made enough money off the gaming. Well, I think they're still making money from gaming and they're making it from all those other areas.

So I guess I'd like to see some of these corporations become a little more user friendly to the community. It's troubling when I see people who have a stake in some of the big hotels here wanting to put a bigger stake in hotels someplace else. Steve Wynn, I believe, is wanting to open a place outside of Boston. He's opened a place in Macau. Sheldon Adelson has opened a place in Macau. Those people that live in Macau or in the surrounding areas used to come here; now they don't. So I think some of the people who owe Las Vegas a lot, they're not helping Las Vegas now when they could; all they're helping is themselves to make more money by going elsewhere where there appears to be money to be made even if it takes some away from here. So from the gaming, it seems to me that it would be good if some of those people involved in gaming would go back to the old days where they were interested in maintaining Las Vegas and not so interested in making a big profit for themselves.

I thank you. Last question.

Sure.

If you wrote a book about your life, what would you name it?

That would be hard to—I'm not sure. I never have thought about that. I guess I'd want something to identify the fact that I came from essentially nothing. I came from a place where my parents made virtually no money and lived in the trailers in North Las Vegas to the point that I've been able to make a difference in Southern Nevada, Clark County School District, basically make a difference because I went to school, worked hard and I guess I always felt like I treated people right and people treated me right.

Wonderful. Thank you so much.

Sure.

[End of recorded interview]

- Adaven Trailer Park, 4
- Air Force: step-father, 3
- Bill and Muriel Elliott, 12
- Blue Onion, 20
- Businesses: Bank of Las Vegas, 22; Gragson Furniture, 11; Review Journal Newspaper, 11; Review-Journal newspaper, 26; Stinker Gas Station, 11; Vegas Village, 12
- Casinos: Showboat, 21
- Dr. Norwood, 13
- Earl Bruner, 19
- Eddie Phillips, 4
- Football, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 24
- Freemont, 7
- Fremont, 20, 21, 22
- Frog gigging, 13, 14
- Gordon Smith, 4
- Hang-outs: Blacketts, 8; Blue Onion, 7, 8; Tip-Top, 20; Venetian, 7
- Jim Pughsley, 19
- Jimmy Keys, 9
- Kent Farnsworth, 4
- Laurel Hatch, 10
- Lyle Norwood, 13, 15
- Mabel Huggard, 19
- Merton Canady, 4
- Nancy Anderson, 4
- National Guard: Armory, 15
- Nellis AFB, 3, 11
- Pat Sturm, 10
- Resturants: The Flame, 10
- Rose's Red Top, 4
- School Administration Association, 24
- School integration, 16-17
- Schools: Booker Elementary, 19; Highland Elementary, 19; J.D. Smith, 3, 5; James McMillan Elementary, 18; Jo Mackey Sixth Grade Center, 16, 18; Mountain View Elementary, 18; Nevada Southern. *See* Schools: University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Rancho High School, 3, 4, 5, 6; Rex Bell Elementary, 18; Sunset High, 24; University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 6, 7; University of Nevada, Reno, 7; Woodbury Junior High, 24
- Sheldon Adelson, 28
- Shirley Gragson, 11
- Social acceptance, 5
- Steve Wynn, 28
- Teachers: Dr. Virginia Gilbert, 5; Mr. Deaton, 6; Mr. Smith, 5
- Texas, 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 22, 24; Galveston, 2; Texarkana, 1, 2, 6, 22
- The Mob, 21
- Theaters: El Portal, 8; Fremont Theater, 8; Guild, 8; Huntridge, 9, 11

Theron Goynes, 19

Wranglers Baseball, 9