

**AN INTERVIEW WITH DOMINGO J. CAMBEIRO**

**AN ORAL HISTORY CONDUCTED BY STEFANI EVANS  
AND CLAYTEE D. WHITE**

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The Building Las Vegas Oral History Project

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

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

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

Claytee D. White  
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## PREFACE



“I get up in the morning and I’ve got a fire in my belly. I can’t wait to go to the office because I love architecture. I love to design. I love buildings.

I love everything there is about architecture.”

Born in 1940, Domingo J. Cambeiro grew up in Santiago des las Vegas in Cuba and as a young man emigrated to a very different Las Vegas, this one in Nevada, USA. Even as a boy, Cambeiro was fascinated by architecture and construction. He started a drafting service at 11. Shortly after Castro came to power, Cambeiro applied to legally leave the country. While waiting, he married and earned a degree in architecture. After three years, Cambeiro and his wife were each permitted to leave Cuba with nothing but three changes of clothes.

He spent his first months in the US with relatives in Florida where he worked odd jobs. Cambeiro, his wife, and baby then moved to Las Vegas, Nevada in October 1962. He was offered a job as a draftsman at the first company where he applied, quickly gaining experience, first on tract homes, then moving to county projects and designing elementary schools. He and his brother Auturo Cambeiro. became licensed architects who opened their own firm together.

During his career Domingo Cambeiro designed 110 elementary schools for the Clark County School District, always taking the student perspective in his designs. He found ways to create school buildings noted for coming in on or under budget while being environmentally sound.

In addition to his work for the rapidly growing school district in Las Vegas, he is also noted for his work on such prominent and innovative projects such as the Thomas & Mack Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, various buildings for College of Southern Nevada campuses, and museum and retail space at the Showcase Mall on the Las Vegas Strip, all while raising his family in the Las Vegas Valley.

Cambeiro has left his footprint in the buildings he has designed and the commitment he has demonstrated to the Las Vegas community, serving on several boards, including the Sunrise Hospital Board of Trustees and well as those for the UNLV Foundation and CSN Board of Trustees. He was Director of the Board for the Latin Chamber of Commerce.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

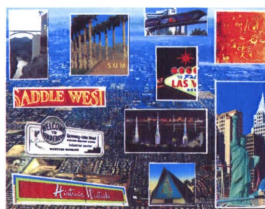
October 18, 2016

Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview conducted by Stefani Evans and Claytee D. White

Childhood in Cuba, early interest in architecture, marriage, City Hall job, changes after revolution, decision to move to U.S., three-year wait to leave, hardships under Castro, schooling for architecture, family background (Spain, Cuba, U.S.), Florida move, nonarchitecture jobs in Key West and Miami. ....	1-10
Father’s Catholic education and background in Spain and eventual move to Cuba, family, entrepreneurship, life under Castro, helping relatives emigrate, 1962 move to Las Vegas, Catholic Welfare assistance, early drafting/architectural jobs, mentors and friends.....	11–21
Extended family arrival, Cambeiro brothers pass architecture licensure exam, create firm, projects for Clark County and Clark County School District, elementary and middle school projects, UNLV’s Thomas & Mack Center, fixed floor vs flexible arena dispute, construction partnerships and innovations.....	22–31
Family adaptation to Las Vegas, residential neighborhoods, Maslow and Durable homes developments, San Francisco Park, family school and professional choices.....	32–36
Design considerations, classroom design from children’s perspective, disability awareness prior to ADA, design prototypes, building materials, vandalism prevention, energy concerns, Stuckey ES, Cavaglia building at Community College of Southern Nevada, Henderson, CSN board, UNLV Foundation Board, CSN Charleston campus library partnership, Central Telephone switching center.....	37–44
Showcase Mall, MGM, developers Unger and Fieldman, Coca-Cola Museum, Coke building bottle design challenges, relationship with Coco-Cola corporate leadership.....	45–53
Semiretirement, West Preparatory Elementary School, community input into school design, portable classroom pros and cons, budget realities, psychological impact.....	54–58

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**Good morning. This is Stefani Evans and Claytee White, and we are here with Mr. Domingo J. Cambeiro.**

**Mr. Cambeiro, I'm going to ask you to pronounce and spell your first and last name for the tape, please.**

My name is Domingo Cambeiro. In the United States It's actually Domingo Cambeiro [pronouncing]. The spelling is D-O-M-I-N-G-O. Cambeiro is C-A-M-B-E-I-R-O.

**Thank you so much. Why don't we begin by you telling us about your early life; what your parents did for a living, who your siblings were, how many siblings, where you grew up and how you ended up coming to Las Vegas?**

Well, it's quite a story. I actually was born in Havana, but we lived in a little town near Havana called Santeria de Las Vegas. It has no relation as to why I ended up in Las Vegas as it were. But the reason is *vegas* is meadows, and the town where I grew up, it was in a valley that they had a lot of cultivation—tobacco and pineapple and sugarcane. In fact, there was an agronomic institute that actually investigated all of the soils and insects that affected the plants. It was quite an institute that helped the economy in the area.

I had a great childhood. I was in the back of my dad's and mom's car driving to Havana, and as we were leaving town, there was one building made out of block. It started coming out of the ground and I was just startled by it. It really impressed me how buildings were coming to be. I was eight years old. I actually looked for books and read about architecture and drafting and everything else. At the age of eleven, as I was going to school, I had my own practice of architecture—a drafting service; I shouldn't say architecture—a drafting service. I was designing and drawing mausoleums for the contractors because in Cuba because of the water table, the dead are buried in mausoleums, like New Orleans.



**Aboveground.**

Aboveground. So that required drawings to submit to the building department and also to build from. So the word got out and single contractors would come and seek my help and I would do the drawings and I was in seventh heaven doing that.

**And in seventh grade.**

Yes, yes. And none of them fell; let's put it that way. So anyway, that's how it all started.

**CLAYTEE: *Which year were you born?***

What year?

*Yes.*

Nineteen forty, December 25th, 1940. That's the reason my middle name is Jesus.

*When I first saw that on a Hispanic person, Latino person in Los Angeles, I could not believe it. I'm from North Carolina. I could not believe it. I didn't know how to say Jesus [pronouncing hāsoos].*

Jesus, right.

*For me it was Jesus; his name was Jesus.*

Actually my name is "of Jesus," de Jesus. But through the years I kind of dropped the D-E. But once I got into Medicare, now it shows because it's in my passport.

Anyway, so I went to school in the town that I grew up. First, my elementary school was a private school called Gothiel [spelling?]. It was a wonderful, wonderful principal and teachers. I was always wanting to read a lot and learn a lot about things, very applied. Consequently, I had always good grades. I always did my homework when I got home. I also went to a middle school that was also a private school called Karowl [spelling?].

Then after that I went to the Institute of Vibora [spelling?] in Havana and became a bachelor in science. Then I proceeded to register in the University of Havana and got my degree in architecture in University of Havana, although all of those, with Castro taking over there's no records.

When the revolution happened, I happened to disagree with the communist regime. In my years in school, I had read a lot about different forms of government and so on and so forth. So I was really familiar with the communist dogma.

Everybody in Cuba, when Castro came down from the mountains, thought that he was— because he was raised in a Catholic university, well, schooling and university, they thought that this was going to be salvation. In fact, every one of his fighters, they had ordered a crucifix from Mexico and, when they all came down from the mountains, they were all wearing their crucifix. So the populous was great.

So I listened to his first speech, which was like maybe five hours and without any written or...Yes. I mean, extremely and very interesting orator, I tell you. But he said something that struck me right away when in the middle of his speech, he said, “I’m a Marxist-Leninist and I will be for the rest of my life.” I said to my family, “He is a communist and he is going to destroy this country.”

I was at the time working in the City Hall in the architectural department. So the following day, which was January 2, I went and applied at the City Hall to leave the country. Immediately once I made that request, I was terminated. That afternoon we had a knock on the door and there was a couple of militia guys. They wanted to know where I slept, basically, because I was the only one that applied. So they went into my bedroom and made a list of

everything that I owned, all of my clothing, all of the furniture in the room. It took three years later...

In the meantime, I got married to my school sweetheart and we made arrangements—I got married in 1961—we made arrangements. Because we got married, then she was able to get the paperwork in and we both were in the same claim to leave the country.

**And what year was it that you were terminated?**

I left in 1962, the fourth of April, 1962. The day before I received a telegram informing me that both me and my wife actually could leave the country to go to United States. So that morning we got a knock on the door and a couple of militia guys came in with a list that someone had prepared three years prior and a flatbed truck, and they proceeded to check each and every item that was on the list. If I had a sock that had holes, I had to leave it there because if I did not have everything that was on that list, I couldn't leave the country; the same thing with my wife's clothing and possessions, really. Of course, they took the furniture, just that one bedroom; they didn't touch anything else because my parents and my grandmother were not asking to leave.

**What about the clothing you were wearing?**

You were allowed to take three pairs of pants, three shirts, one pair of shoes; that's it. No money, no gold. If you were caught hiding gold or money or whatever, you would go to jail, basically.

***How could you leave with no money?***

You couldn't; you had to leave it behind because in the minds of the Castro regime, you were a traitor; and, therefore, if you wanted to leave the country, you would just go bare.

**What about papers?**

No papers, nothing, no belongings, nothing. Three pairs of pants, three shirts and one pair of shoes, the one that you were wearing, period, period. My wife...three skirts, three blouses, one

pair of shoes; that's it. For us luckily—and I know a lot of Cubans that have immigrated or did immigrate, given to Castro, and they didn't have anybody in United States and they had a lot of help from the Catholic Welfare and all that. We were kind of lucky because we did have family that resided in Key West. And prior to my wife and I leaving—by the way, it was my first wife and she passed away—

**I'm so sorry.**

—in 1990. Yes. My second wife is the one that is listed there.

Anyway, I'm going to digress a little bit. My grandfather on my mother's side had a business that was actually taking all of the tobacco leaves that the growers would do in the area, and he would buy them and he'd catalog them. He had people actually working. They didn't do cigars. All they did was catalog the leaves by color and then if a little insect may have taken just a little hole out of it, well, that's an imperfect leaf. So those kinds of things.

My grandmother was a lecturer in the business; she would actually read to entertain the people that were working. We're talking in the twenties and thirties. Yes, she would actually read all day long, different books and different things, to the people that were in there, like fifty, sixty people.

So his brother—they were from Spain, my grandfather on my mother's side. His brother—their mother, my great-grandmother, passed away when he was born, complications of the childbirth. The dad, my great-grandfather, immigrated to Cuba with both—well, actually, there were three; there was the youngest one and then two others. The younger brother, when he was eighteen years old, he decided to leave for United States on his own and he landed in Key West. I don't know how it ended up, but he and my grandfather, they both established a business where my grandfather in Cuba would get the leaves and then ship them to him and then he would

actually sell them to the tobacco factories in Tampa and some other places in Florida and South Carolina. So they had a business going on that. So every year some of us would either go visit them or they would come over and visit us. So we had sort of a very good relationship among—he had like six different kids in Key West. In fact, one of them was a dentist. He was a mayor of Key West for three terms or something. So anyway, we had a good relationship.

So when we landed in Miami on the fourth of April 4, 1962, my family that was already there came and picked us up because we went to Key West. There was this big house on Whitehead Street about maybe forty feet—no, more than that—probably about a hundred feet to the furthest point of United States where there is a marker. It's right on Whitehead and South, I think is the other street. We were the second house from the corner. It was a huge house, a beautiful white house. There were like four families living there.

One of my grandfather's nephews, married to his niece, had had a business in Key West. He owned a store where they sold washers and dryers and appliances and all kinds of stuff, but he also was a very good businessman. He actually had a business where they had a car wash, and it was just an outdoor car wash, and the unit would actually go back and forth. So when I got there, he said, "Look, if you want to work, go ahead and pay for the equipment and the water, and anything else you keep."

Well, it took about a month and a half or two months to figure out that the equipment was fine. I mean, the equipment was not an expensive thing. But the water was actually piped from Miami. By now they've got a desalination plant and the water is cheaper, but in those days it was very expensive. So I wasn't making a lot of money.

And, unfortunately, my first wife had a chronic—she was born without a strap that holds the intestines to the back wall. There are two straps and [they] hold the whole intestine in the

cavity. So she was born without one. So the intestines would actually move around and would kink. When they would kink she wouldn't be able to process the bile and it would all sit in the stomach. It was kind of a sad thing.

Anyway, she got one of those episodes, which was not new. We knew this from Cuba, too. After a while she would be fine. It was like when it would naturally unkink, then she would be fine; the whole digestive system would work. So anyway, she had that episode and she was throwing up so much that she got dehydrated and we had to put her in the hospital.

Well, the hospital, the DePoo Hospital in Key West was not in the Cuban program. So they had to charge. If we were in Miami, then there was a program; all of the Cubans that emigrated from Cuba would be on a program that could get healthcare. So I had to borrow the money from one of my cousins and pay for the hospital.

Then we decided we couldn't—I wasn't making enough money as it were in the business. While I appreciated that he—it was basically the water was the issue. We decided to go to Miami. So we left for Miami. She was already like eight months pregnant with our first child. One of her distant—let's see—second cousin of her mother, the ex-wife lived in Miami. We just went there and knocked on the door and said, “We need help. We need a place to stay. She's really sick and we can't be in Key West and we need to be here.” She opened the doors and she was wonderful.

I immediately would look in the paper for work. I started trying to get a job in architecture, and I walked miles and miles and knocked on doors and doors, but Miami wasn't as busy then in '62 as it became later. So it was really difficult to find; there wasn't enough business.

So I did read something that they were looking for a porter in the meat department of a Stevens Supermarket in South Miami. Where we lived was in the southwest, Ninth and Nineteenth, in the southwest. So I had one of our friends that had a clunker and he drove me out there and I talked to the manager of the meat department and he hired me. So I had to get up at four and take two buses to go to work at seven o'clock in the morning in South Miami as a porter of the meat department, which was fine. It was interesting how life turns right. He was an immigrant from Hungary, which went through the process of communism and all that. So he took a liking to me. He taught me how to cut meat. I was a full butcher without passing the exam, but anyway.

I'll tell you another incident that happened. I got up a little late and I ran to the corner of Seventeenth and Eighth, which is where I would get the first bus. And as I got to the corner, the bus was leaving, and I was running after it and I couldn't get it. So I hailed a taxi and it took me there. I was there very early. It cost me \$20, and I made \$8 dollars that day minus the Social Security. My take-home pay was a dollar an hour, \$32 a week.

**And it cost you \$20 to get from home to there.**

It cost me \$20 to get there. But I didn't want to not show up and get fired; that was the big thing.

***Wow. So I want to ask you about the three-year period between the day that you decided that you were going to leave Cuba and leaving in 1962. What was that like to live there?***

Terrible. The family had to take a spot waiting for food because the food was rationed to begin with and everybody had a book. Meat, milk and chicken was rationed to older people, and then we would get like maybe a pound of rice or some black bean, like a half a pound of black bean, one quarter of a pound of coffee, or whatever would come to the store. So the family members would stay in line because they would actually disperse it until they ran out of the stock. Then if

you were the next one in line, you've got to wait until the shipment of the next day or two days later. So the family had to take time standing in line to wait for food.

**Did your asking to leave affect your family's standing in any way?**

Yes. Oh, yes, yes, because that really gave them the—and as it were, when Bay of Pigs happened, they did come; my best friend came to get me, one of my best friends, actually, from a social club where we all would talk. He never said anything; nobody knew that he was a pro-Castro individual. So when Bay of Pigs happened, he knew I was against Castro and so he came to my house all dressed in fatigues and a big shotgun—not shotgun, but...What do you call it?

**Rifle.**

Yes. They took me to a jail.

**And this was your best friend.**

Yes. Well, not my best, one of the best.

**A friend.**

Yes. We played basketball together and baseball and all that stuff. So you were exposed to a lot of things that you don't—well, I do know and understand it, but at that time it was kind of interesting.

***So could you work at all during that three-year period?***

No, no, no, you were not allowed to. Well, my grandmother had a lot of properties, which once Castro took over, the renters had to pay the government. We managed. There was a lot of friends that had farms and they would actually come and visit and risk their lives, because if you were caught in the black market, it was a thirty-year sentence. I mean, I'm telling you all of this and people do not comprehend and understand. You talk about when I made the request to leave the



country that obviously got around. So every block, let's say they had a family that was pro-Castro, they would actually stand outside and look at everything that was going on. In fact, my mother came one day with groceries, and they went over there and wanted to see what she had and how did she get them and all of that stuff.

Anyway, so the three years, I was able to go to the university, which, I would say, half of it was instructional and a half of it was brainwashing, but I was able to process that. I'll never forget my first day at the university was in a huge classroom; I mean, huge. This professor, an older emeritus-type professor of materials started his class. They had microphones because the room was so large. But anyway, about halfway—and he started to let the kids know what is all about architecture and the different materials and this and that—all of a sudden, these three militia guys stomped in and took the microphone from his hand, pushed him aside, and started talking about that we really shouldn't worry about buildings and materials or any of that stuff; that we needed to worry about the revolution that was happening, brainwashing type of deal. Thank God that really wasn't...It kind of impressed me wrongly. So I muddled through all of that.

Just before I left I got my degree, but it was not good here, in United States. So I had to wait and work for eight years under the supervision of a registered architect certifying the work I was doing. After eight years I was allowed to take the exam and I passed it all in one time.

***So how long did you work as a porter?***

It was interesting. I actually worked there, I would say...We left in October. The baby, my first daughter was born August twenty-fourth. So I actually worked there maybe a couple of months. I got lucky because in the store there was a stock guy that actually was Cuban and he had a clunker car, but he lived clear across the other side. So he would actually drop me off about

maybe twenty blocks on Eighth Street and he would continue on—I think it was 57th—but drop me off there and then I would walk all the way home. So I didn't have to take a bus back.

***But you had to walk all the way to 17th.***

Yes. Right, right. Exactly. Forty blocks. Every day. But it was great. I was actually twenty-two years old, full of life and much better than now. I don't think I can go two blocks now.

**What happened to your parents? What work did your dad do?**

It's an interesting thing. My dad was studying to be a priest in Spain—he was firstborn—not by his probably desire, but the dad, our grandfather...The first one in the family—they lived in an enclave, not near a river, about fifty miles from Santiago de Compostela and they worked the land. The whole family worked the land, kids, older people, everybody, growing corn to feed the cows, which then they would barter the milk that they would get for goods. They would grow their own food. So the firstborn is actually usually...And it's not like here that if you want to be, then you go into seminary and it's all paid by the Catholic; in Spain, you've got to pay to send someone, which was good for him in a way because he was in his last year of seminary. He had learned to speak not only the—well, fully he knew the Castilian Spanish and he knew the dialect where they were born. All of my family was born in Galicia, which is a mix between Portuguese and Castilian Spanish. Portuguese is very close to Spanish, so I won't count that. But he learned German, French, and English besides that.

So anyway, this fourth year, almost to be ordained, a band of gypsies came through the enclave. And they don't have locks or any of that. My grandfather would pay with gold coins, would pay the seminary for him for the year. So they ransacked the whole place and they found the gold that my grandfather had to pay for him to finish. So they stole it. So my grandfather called him up because in Spain the tradition is the older boy makes the decision with the father

and that's the way to pass on. So he called him up and said, "Look, we're going to sell a piece of our land in order to get the gold for you to finish." I think his prayers were heard. And besides, I think he did the right thing, too. He says, "No, no, that land is what the family needs to survive and all that. I will quit seminary."

So they had an earnest discussion and my father said, "I am; I am going to America." So he bought a ticket, got on a boat and landed in New Orleans. The reason that he went to New Orleans is from the area there they knew of a gentleman that had left years earlier and had a hardware store in New Orleans. So he immediately sought him out and went to work for him. So he saved his money.

Then he heard about this beautiful island and rich island called Cuba. So he took another boat and ended up...And he would sit me on his lap and tell me things that were very interesting, very deep and very interesting. He would kid me, though, with what he would tell me. He said when he landed at the port in Havana—he heard that Cuba was so rich and then gold was everywhere and all that—he said that on the deck as he landed, he saw this gold coin and he kicked it into the bay and said, "You're already trying to follow me," and all of that. He said, "That was the last time I saw my [inaudible]." He would tell me that. So it was funny.

I remember clearly when he said to me, he said, "The biggest distance between two men is the thickness of a paper dollar." How deep is that? He also told me, he says, "The most important thing in a man's life is his word. If you tell someone you're going to do it, it doesn't matter whether it's written or not, you've got to do it because your word is all you have." He had all kinds.

He was an entrepreneur in Cuba. He was a hard-working individual. He worked six days a week, fourteen hours a day. At first what he did is he actually would buy all kinds of

sundries—plates, glasses, forks, knives and all that—and would go down the main road, the highway. They called it the highway; it was a two-lane road down the island. There were stores on either side because there was a lot of agriculture and a lot of people lived inland and they would come from inland. So he would go and take orders. When he got back to Havana, he would go to a wholesale, buy it at wholesale prices, and sell it at retail. So he started with that. Then he got representation representing a couple of manufacturers of things that were based in Switzerland, one of which is architectural products called Condak [spelling?]. They were pencils, rulers, all of that. He would go in Havana from our town and sell them. He would also buy Christmas cards, the same thing, different businesses. There was Dynamo that was also from Switzerland for bicycles that you would install on the back tire. As the tire was going, you would actually create electricity that would feed a light in the front.

Then he got into—which was interesting—he got into dyes for clothing, and he got kind of a little factory doing that. He invented a machine that would actually take the powder and compress it and wrap it. They were like little squares, but it was clothing dye. In Cuba at that time actually a lot of people would dye their clothes to change the look. Here, you just throw it away and go buy a new color; there, they would dye it. So that was kind of an interesting business.

I think that was probably my first exposure to architecture products and that kind of piqued a little bit of my interest early on, maybe five, six, seven. At eight I remember clearly today looking at that building and wanting to know how all of that was put together.

**As an entrepreneur how did he do under the Castro regime?**

Well, I will tell you a very interesting thing. Shortly after Castro took over—he [father] actually believed [to keep] more of the cash close to home. So he had a lot of cash in the house, very little

in the bank. So anyway, when Castro took over, I think it was about two weeks into it, they said, “We are going to change the currency; the old currency is going to go away; we’re going to print new currency. You must by Friday bring all of your money to the banks.” Well, the first day— then I’ll tell you another one. So, [take] “All of the money to the bank and then you’ll pick up the currency the following Monday.” My dad said, “Hmm, I don’t think that’s going to be the case; I’m only going to bring a hundred thousand pesos.” He had a lot of money. He had a lot of money. In fact, us playing as kids in hide-and-seek, I one time got a tube and inside was all full of hundred-dollar pesos. I put it back quickly because I didn’t want...

Anyway, so sure enough, whatever you brought to the bank, the maximum money you would pick up on the new currency on Monday was ten thousand. If you brought in eight thousand old pesos, you would get eight thousand pesos, but anything over ten thousand you will lose. Oh, yes. Who are you going to complain to?

The second day, notice to the public was if you had any guns, you had to register them at the police station. By then they kind of knew who was in or out. There’s a lot of hunters that have shotguns and all that. You had to register them. The ones that were not to their liking, they would confiscate it and that’s how he controlled the guns. You control people by controlling the guns and controlling food because mentally you are now more worried about how to feed yourself and your family than you are about political issues. So if you control the guns, you have all the guns you can. Then the outrageous, if you were really obviously against him, they would shoot you in front of the wall, very simple. There is a lack of respect for human life. If you don’t think like I do, I’m going to kill you. If you traffic in the black market, thirty years in jail, no ifs and buts. And the judges were people who were not trained; they were their own...Okay, so much for that.

**Did your parents stay after you left?**

Me and my first wife were the first ones out of our family that left Cuba.

**And did anyone follow you?**

Yes, all of them. I'll tell you about that.

Talk about my father, he bought an apartment complex in a town near Havana, a larger city called Martineau [spelling?]. He bought a high-rise meaning it was four stories, apartment complex, and he paid cash for it. Closed the deal on December 23rd, 1958. January first, 1959, in this famous speech, Castro said, "All of the properties are now the state." To the point, you as renters don't pay the oppressing landlord; you pay the state and that becomes your place to live. Then he proceeded to burn all of the records in every City Hall. The records are burnt; they're gone. So there's nothing—

**Oh, as a historian that hurts my heart.**

—there's nothing that you—you have all the paperwork of, but there's nothing to check it against. Somebody else can have similar and say, "Well, I own that property; here is my paperwork." There's no legal way of...So that was...Yes, yes.

So when I got the telegram, I had talked to my mom and dad and my grandma. I told them, I said, "As soon as I got there, I'll claim you." You had to claim relatives and then it goes through the embassy. My mom said, "Yes, of course." My sister was married and had three kids. My brother already had one, brother and wife, and he had already, too, done the paperwork and he was in the waiting line.

**So he was already in the pipeline.**

He had applied, later than me, but he had applied.

So I went and talked to my mom and I said, “I want you to promise me that you’ll come.” She said, “Of course, of course I’ll come.” So I said, “I’m going to talk to Dad.”

So I went and sat down with him and I said, “Dad, I’m leaving for the United States with my wife and I want you to promise me that you will leave when I claim you.” He looked me straight in the eye and he said, “I appreciate it.” He said, “This communist guy has taken everything I work for in our life and they will take this house when my feet go out that front door feet first. When I die they’ll take this house. I’m not leaving.” I said, “Well, I know that maybe you think that way right now. Everyone is leaving.” He says, “I’m done. I don’t want to.” I said, “You don’t have to worry about anything. We are going to make money and you will live...” “No, I’m not leaving.”

So I knew. I was trying to get him to promise me that he would leave, and I know he would, but I knew he wasn't, and he died. I claimed both of them. And I talked to my mom on the phone, and she said, “I’m not leaving if he’s not leaving.” And I said, “Well, think in terms that maybe if you”—and then that weighs on me right now, has weighed on me for years—I said, “Why don’t you leave and he’ll follow? He’ll follow.” And he didn’t. He didn’t. He died in Cuba. He had all of the papers. I put money in, everything. He wouldn’t.

So my mom—actually, I was working at the time in 1965. When I came to Vegas—I decided once the baby was born in August, I told my first wife, I said, “You know what? I can’t find a job in architecture. I’ve walked everywhere.” I said, “We’ve got to do like the pioneers. We’ve got to go west.”

By then my brother had come from Cuba. He stayed with us in a little efficiency apartment. Then he had a friend that had a job in L.A. So he left and went through—the Catholic Welfare will pay for a one-way ticket out of Miami to get the Cubans relocated, one-way ticket

anywhere in the United States, but one way. Once you're there, you're on your own. So he left and went to work in L.A.

So I said to my first wife, I said, "That's what we need to do is we need to go to Los Angeles. My brother has got a job." But her sister was in Vegas. She and her husband and a friend of theirs were in the casino business.

### **In Cuba?**

In Cuba. Actually, the friend was in the casino business. So they followed him to Vegas. He was working at the Sahara Hotel as a porter in the casino. So I said, "Lord knows how long it's going to be before you can see your sister." I said, "We fly to Vegas. You stay with your sister and the baby." Which was a few months, August to October. "I'll take a bus to L.A. And when I get settled and get an apartment and whatnot, I'll come get you."

So that was the plan and we did; we got the Catholic Welfare to give us a one-way ticket. We landed in Las Vegas, 1962. It was on the old—

### **Nineteen sixty-two?**

Nineteen sixty-two, October...I can't even remember the day, but it was in October of 1962. So my first wife started crying because it was desert. She kept crying in the car when they picked us up because she said, "Oh, this is in the middle of a desert." We were so accustomed to being in so much greenery, and Miami is similar to Cuba in that regard, the same flowers and the same palm trees and all that stuff. This was bare land. I tell you, we landed—I'll never forget—National Airline, the original National Airline. They got revived later down the years, but it was originally you go down the steps to a little block building on Las Vegas Boulevard side, go through one door, a little shop there, and then you go out the front and that's it.

**Welcome to Las Vegas.**



Welcome to Las Vegas. It was the Hacienda Hotel, the Tropicana and desert on both sides all the way until the Flamingo, the Sands, the Desert Inn; that was it.

**Describe the hotels.**

That was interesting. My memory of the Hacienda was kind of a little more modern building. The Tropicana was more like single-story, two-story building; the Flamingo was similar. Let's see. The Sands was the same thing, two-stories building basically with a big sign out front, nothing extraordinary, just very early Las Vegas. I didn't care. Actually, at that time when we landed, I was really thinking about L.A. more than anything.

So we got to their duplex. The next morning I got up and typically I always read the paper or the want ads, employment ads. I picked up the paper and they had three requests for architectural draftsmen because at that time in 1962, people did not want to relocate to Las Vegas. It was too hot. The place we were living, there was no air-conditioning. It was evap[orative] coolers. At night in the middle—this is later, after—we would actually take the hose and hose the roof to cool it off for the night. As soon as the sun went down, take the hose and spray water on the roof to cool it because it was evap[orative] coolers and it was pretty hot.

So anyway, I talked to my brother-in-law. He had a little clunker car, again, which is fine as long as it moves. So I said, "Would you mind taking me to this place? I got three. I want to interview on all three." And he said, "Sure."

I'll never forget it was ten o'clock in the morning. I called earlier in the morning, eight o'clock, and I wanted to come over and see them. The name of the drafting service was Cordrey and Brinkley. They were a drafting service. They weren't architects; they were just drafting. They would do drafting for whatever, developers. He said, "Well, I've got meetings. I'll see you at ten o'clock." So I said, "Okay."

So I showed up at 10 a.m. So we interviewed and he said to me, “You want to start working right now?” And I said, “Of course.” He says, “I’ll give you a \$1.50 an hour.” And, man, that was 50 cents more an hour than I was making in Miami; that was a big... So I went downstairs all happy and I said to my brother-in-law, “Come pick me up at 5 p.m. I’m starting to work.” So I did; I started to work there, very, very nice.

Then I always read the want ads. So Round-Up Real Estate—the Petersens owned Round-Up Real Estate—had an ad for their architectural department. They were big developers at the time in Las Vegas of tract homes, as well as they got their feet wet into casino. I can’t think of what name now, but next to Circus Circus. It’s been—

**Was it Slots-A-Fun or something like that?**

It was like that. But anyway, so I went and interviewed, and they had a large, fairly large—they had like twenty-something people in their department, the architectural department, on Sixth and Charleston; that was their offices. So I started designing custom homes and drafting them—custom homes, I’m sorry—tract homes; three bedroom, two bath; three bedroom, one bath; custom home, single story—tract homes. I keep saying custom, but it’s tract homes.

**So where were some of these tracts built?**

They were close, close to—Thunderbird West, I think it was one that comes to mind that I did a lot of the designs. I don’t know if they’ve already been erased.

I was working there, making \$3 an hour and that was a big increase. They were in need of more people. My brother was working in L.A. for a \$1.60 an hour in a large firm in L.A. by the name of Schirnoff. It was like a Ford assembly line; they did a lot of apartment complexes in L.A., and he was in charge of doing the toilets in each one of these apartments, and he would

actually draw the toilets, and once he did all of the toilets, he would pass the sheet over to somebody else and somebody else would—

**To the cabinet guy.**

Yes, honestly. So anyway, yes, sick stuff.

**So got to be the toilet guy.**

Yes, he was a toilet guy, with a template, by the way, with a template.

I was talking to—Errol Hill was my boss there and we became very good friends. Errol said to me, “Do you know anybody else? I need some people to hire and all that.” I said, “Well, my brother is in L.A., but I don’t think he’ll come to Vegas unless he gets \$5 an hour.” He said, “Do you think he will come for \$5 an hour?” I said, “Well, I can call him and find out.” He was making a \$1.60 an hour.

**But you were only making \$3.**

I was only making three, but I figured if he gets \$5—

**We’re both going to get \$4.**

Yes, yes, exactly, exactly. So anyway, I called him up and I said, “Hey, do you want to come to work in Vegas?” “Uh, I don’t think so.” I said, “Oh, I got a job for you for \$5 an hour.” “Oh, gee, yes, absolutely.” So he came.

The interesting part of that is that his English wasn’t that good. So I had to listen to the instructions—he was talented—but I had to listen to the instructions because he didn’t understand or speak the English language very well and then I would translate it in Spanish and tell him what they told him to do. But after a while he picked up all that stuff.

We worked there until...maybe six months. I’ll never forget that Friday. I had saved enough money and I had gone to the bank and told them that I wanted to buy a car and needed a loan.

Sure enough, they gave me the...I had already seen a Buick LeSabre that was like four or five years old. So I bought the car on Friday, got the loan from the bank and everything set and I got my car. I went to work on Monday. That Wednesday everybody in the department got pink slipped; they closed the department, not that they knew that I bought a car, but everybody. The only one left was Errol Hill.

**So you brought your brother here.**

Right. And we both, yes, got a couple of...Me, too.

**And this is Arturo, right?**

Arturo, yes. So I said to him, I said, "Look, let's look at the phone book and randomly you will pick three, four or five architectural firms; I will pick others; we don't go together because that's going to work against us." So sure enough, we picked. I went to Julius Gabriele, was my first on the list. He had on his list, his first one was McDaniel...McDaniel...very talented architect. He passed away young. He ended up with liver cancer and passed away, and extremely talented architect. So he went on an interview there and got a job. I went on a interview with Gabriele and got a job. I started with Gabriele at \$3.50 an hour. I got a 50-cent raise on top of it.

**There you go.**

I tell you, to this day I am extremely thankful of Julius Gabriele. To me he was a great mentor, an incredible individual, and he proved it to me because shortly—in 1965, I had only been working for him about three years—he was semi-retired. He would come in the office at around 10:30 a.m. and leave like around 1p.m. But I had time with him and he would tell me. He put me in charge of the elementary schools. So that's how I got my experience. Basically I was doing everything on the elementary schools.

Interesting that dovetails into the story of my leaving Cuba, in 1965 I finally got the claim sort of approved of bringing my mother and my sister, three kids and my brother-in-law. My brother had already left. So it was them. My grandmother had already left earlier through...Yes, she had left earlier. They could only come through Mexico. There was five of them. I needed \$12,000 to get them out of Cuba. I did not obviously have that kind of money. So I had no choice. I went to the bank and they said, "That's too much money; I can't." Even though I kind of got to know the bank manager, but it was very obvious. Three dollars and fifty cents and I have a wife and a kid. To pay all this stuff, there wasn't enough money to pay a loan.

So I went to Julius and I said, "I've got a favor to ask you." I said, "I've got to bring my family out of Cuba. I need \$12,000. I wonder if you could loan me the money and I promise you I will pay you every penny of it." So he paused for a minute. He looked at me and said, "Just go over to the secretary and tell him to write you a check." I said, "Wait a minute. We've got to sign some papers." "No, we don't need that." He gave me a check for \$12,000 that day.

**Wow.**

On my word and his great heart. Now, that's the beginning of a journey that was unbelievable. Now I go to the bank because I've got to send this money to Canada.

**Cash.**

Oh, yes. So they can somehow, somewhere, somebody in Canada can take it to the American Embassy in Canada.

**Because we had no relations with Cuba.**

With Cuba. And then the American Embassy would actually, through the Canadian Embassy in Cuba, have the money deposited for Cuba to get the funds to let the people listed leave. It pays for the leaving and the flight to Mexico City.

Now, I go to the bank and I'm talking to the manager who I got to know. She was a wonderful lady. I said, "I've got it; I've got \$12,000." "Oh, my goodness, how?" I said, "It's a long story." It's really a short story. I said, "But I've got the money and I've got to send it to Canada." And she said, "Canada where?" I said, "Well, to the embassy." "Well, I don't know how." She said, "You know what? One of the guys on the floor is from Canada. Let's bring him in."

So we got the gentleman. I can't think of his name; I feel bad about that. Anyway, he came and I told him what we needed to do and all that. He said, "You know what? I have a very good friend of mine in Vancouver, which we can send the money to, and he'll take it to the embassy and do all of that. I'll call him. Let me call him." So he goes to his desk. He calls the guy. He comes back and says, "Yeah, he says he'll do it." So I gave him \$12,000.

***Oh, God.***

**To give to a guy.**

To give to a guy in Canada to go to the embassy. But that was my only choice to get my family out of Cuba.

**And did it work?**

Yes. Listen to this. The guy goes to exchange it. Goes to the embassy. They gave him all of the information on how much money had to be deposited per person, blah, blah, blah. He got all the names and everything I sent him. It went through. He sent me a check for the difference because of the exchange; the Canadian dollar had changed since we calculated it. He sent me small money, which was the difference between it.

Then my family, my mother and my sister and kids and brother-in-law, went to Mexico City and they had to stay there until they got their visas to come to United States. So I had to send them money to pay for their hotel and all of it. So finally we got them here in 1965.

**So that was your sister, your brother-in-law, three kids and your mother.**

Yes, six of them.

**When did you father pass?**

My father passed in 1976.

***Did your mom see him again?***

No. She passed away in '65. She was only here a few months.

***Oh, really?***

Yes. She had a massive stroke and passed away. But that's life.

So fast forward, I was in seventh heaven with Gabriele. In 1970, I pass my—it's not a bar—exam. I became an architect. It was kind of interesting. Julius really wanted to leave Las Vegas. So anyway, when I got my license, I went to talk to him and he was late and all that and he says, "Hey, in fact, I was waiting for it to happen before I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm buying a ranch in Redwood, California, an old house that I'm going to remodel that has kind of a tributary right through the property, a hundred-acre ranch. I'm just going to go fishing and enjoy life and my wife and kids and leave this rat race." He said, "I am glad." He said, "There's nothing here that—you'll do well."

So my brother had passed the exam at the same time. So we went into business for ourselves in 1970. I went to Von Tobel's on First and Bridger; that was Von Tobel's Hardware Store. We bought some pieces of lumber and built our own drafting tables. I took one of my

bedrooms and converted it into kind of a little place to be able to draft; my brother did likewise. We went and started hitting the pavement.

I went and asked for an appointment to see Bud Albright at the Clark County Department of Public Special Projects, quite a gentleman. He had been, I think, a county commissioner at one time. He had spearheaded the convention center. Wonderful individual. So I sat across his desk and I said, "I just got my license, I'm looking for work, and I can promise you I get things done right." And he said, "Well, I don't have anything right now, but I'll keep you in mind and all that."

He was such a great gentleman that when he got a job, he called the number, which was my home. No answer, no answer because I was out. So he sent his assistant to the house to knock on the door because he thought maybe the phone number was wrong. Nobody answered because we were both out. So he left a note, "Mr. Albright wants you to come see him; he's got a job for you."

So when I came home that night, I actually...*Wow, I got a job.* So the next morning I called him up and I went to see. And he did have; he had a small remodel at Angel Peak in Mount Charleston. It was the old radar station from Nellis Air Force Base and they had manned radar. They had Quonset huts there for the Air Force personnel. One room was the chow building and the other was dormitory and I think a multipurpose Quonset building.

**So that was your first...?**

That was our first job, a remodel, converting that to a youth camp because Nellis had already abandoned that. That was during the Cold War they had to protect those radars. By then the Cold War had passed. So the county could use that. I guess it was on county land. So they gave up the buildings and they needed a remodel. So that was our first job.



I'll never forget. It was in the wintertime. So we drove all the way up there. There was no railing or anything and it was a drop. Off the parking lot there was a drop. So I hit the brakes and the thing kept sliding. I couldn't believe it. Then it finally stopped, but there was no railing.

***Is that the first thing you did, put up a railing?***

Yes, yes. I thought, *well, my first and last job...What can you do?* So anyhow, we did that job for him and it was very successful.

Bud Albright and I became very good friends. He used to tell me that he went to the bottom of the barrel to get the architect that he needed for that job. He was kidding me all the time. I have fond memories of him. I've been blessed in my life because I've met a lot of people that were very kind and wanted to help.

So move forward from that. Because of the background and experience that I had in elementary schools, one of my calls was to the school district. Since Julius had already retired and so on, they entrusted me to do some schools and we went from there.

**So what were some of your first schools?**

I have done a hundred and ten elementary schools, not counting the ones that I did with Julius. I used to remember all by name. Let's see. What was the first elementary school? I should know that. I really should know.

**You can add that when you get the draft.**

Yes, I will because I do have a job list. So I'll look it up.

**Could you also send us a copy of that job list? That would be...**

It's handwritten.

**That is great.**

***We know what your handwriting looks like.***

**You're an architect; we can read your writing.**

Okay. I don't know about that list. But anyway, yes, I will definitely do it. We will look it up.

**Thank you.**

So anyway, we started to do some work for the elementary schools. We got some jobs from the county and the state.

**What was the largest project you ever did?**

The largest one is probably the original Thomas & Mack.

**Tell us about that. When was that?**

That was in 1980... '81, '82? Wildcat Morris was an attorney that was very involved with the university. He was instrumental in getting a rebate from the federal government on the slot machine tax, which that was used to fund the Thomas & Mack. Let's see. It was \$13 million dollars at that time. There were interviews proposed by the university on several local firms—I mean, several firms; they were not just necessarily local because none of the local firms at the time were big enough to handle that project and everybody knew that. Some of them thought perhaps that they could, but we knew that we needed to have somebody.

We made a partnership with Warnecke out of Los Angeles. We created a partnership, a ten-year partnership. It was called W2C and that's on the plaque at Thomas & Mack. W2C was a partnership, and the "W" was Warnecke and the two Cambeiros; the "2C" was the two Cambeiros. So we went through the whole interview and we ended up getting the project. So that's how we got the Thomas & Mack. So we finally opened the doors in 1983.

**Do you still have the drawings for that?**

I should. There's an unbelievable amount of rolls in my office that I've got to go through and see what...I know that ( ? ) and hopefully the state may have, or the university. No, obviously the university doesn't have it.

***So are you ready to donate all those rolls?***

I will give you everything I have.

***Fantastic.***

Because I tell you, I don't know what I would do with them. There are certain things, like my son Steven—you wanted to know about my siblings and I'll get back to—well, you already know about my sister. I'm the youngest one of the three. My brother was the oldest. We're four years apart; Art was eight years older than me, and my sister, Amelia, was four years older than me. They both passed away. So I'm the last one.

I lost the train of thought.

**Your son. You said something about your son.**

Oh, yes. My son Steven wants me to give him the Thomas & Mack model. He wants to keep that and make it into a coffee table.

***And we don't want items, anyway. We want the papers.***

Paper, right, right. So he's got claim to that.

**And that will make an awesome coffee table.**

Yes, with glass all over it.

**Yes. Oh, yes.**

That was a very interesting project. It was fun. It was a lot of fun doing the Thomas & Mack, working on that, doing design and all that. There were several things that happened during the Thomas & Mack that a lot of people don't know. Wildcat Morris was an avid, avid UNLV fan

and did a lot for the school, but he also wanted the Thomas & Mack to be just a basketball arena, nothing else. So we had discussions early on with the university and Wildcat, always at every meeting, about the size of the floor. We talked about the possibilities of hockey and all of that other stuff, all of the different venues that may be coming to the Thomas & Mack. At one of the meetings I remember clearly, we discussed the retractable seating in order to get the floor bigger and do hockey. Wildcat opposed that wholeheartedly. He wanted the concrete steps going all the way down to the basketball floor because he wanted it to be just a basketball arena. He was set on that and he fought, fought and fought.

Then finally the drawings went out and Perini was the builder and the first pour happened. And the powers to be at the university came to be and said, "We're not going to do that." So they jackhammered that portion and the retractable seating happened. It was the best thing for Thomas & Mack, obviously, because otherwise it would have been a white elephant. You can't afford to have a building that size even though it was very cheap at the time. Thirteen million is not...But the monies that that has produced and is still holding...

It's a very interesting structure. As a partnership we actually reviewed and sought a lot of different consultants. There was an outfit out of Seattle that had done a lot of work in New York and came highly represented, all the work that they had done, and we were very impressed with them, and we hired them to do the structure. We were very, very, very glad that we did because they were such an innovative firm. They came up with the structural system of a cable system, cable trusses, not that it wasn't done before. It was that in this arena they told us that that's what they wanted to do, a cable truss, which is actually in tension, cables as the bottom cord, very light. We had visited the Madison Square Garden and it's all structural steel and very heavy. This



Thomas & Mack construction, July 26, 1982. PH-00388\_4782\_001.JPG, UNLV Libraries Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

was actually very light and very good. There are actually big machines that actually put the cables in tension and that's what keeps it. It's a two-way cable truss.

**Oh, wow. Is that the first building like that here?**

Yes, in Las Vegas. I don't think they're replicated. You've got to have a really large arena in order to use it. I'm sure there are, but I haven't heard of anybody else using it. In fact, the trusses, the upper part were actually walked in place by two cranes in sync. The contractor basically, Perini, built ramps that got big cranes to build the trusses on site and then pick them up and then walk them in place and then drop them and then the cable and tighten.

**Any photographs of that? That just sounds...**

I don't know. You know what? I've got a good friend of mine still at Perini. I'm going to find out if they have that in their archives because that was really a very interesting methodology of how to build that.



Thomas & Mack Construction, Sept. 23, 1983. PH-00388\_5125\_001.JPG, UNLV Libraries Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**We'd love to talk to somebody at Perini.**

Tony Cosentino.

***So did your wife ever fall in love with Las Vegas?***

What's that? I'm sorry.

***Your wife hated Las Vegas so much that she was crying.***

Yes.

***Did she ever fall in love with this city?***

Hmm...

*I guess not.*

No.

**Did she learn to tolerate it?**

She would learn how to tolerate it, yes. After a while she was fine. Actually it was okay then.

But, no, at first she was so distraught. “Where have you brought me? Where have you brought me?” I’ll never forget she would say that.

**So where did you live after that first duplex?**

The duplex was on Paradise Road between San Francisco Avenue, which is Sahara, and St. Louis on the east side. Those duplexes have survived, some of them, as business, but they were residential duplexes there. Then we bought a repossessed house from Nellis Air Force. Some of the personnel would actually get a federal—what is it, HUD?—a HUD loan. So the people who had it I guess left or they got relocated, whatever it was, it was a repossessed house by HUD. All I had to do was put a hundred dollars down and take over payments, a hundred and thirty-seven dollars a month, three bedroom, two bath.

**Where was that?**

That was in Francisco Park on El Segundo Avenue. Francisco Park is a development by Mike Maslow on the east side of Maryland Parkway and...I want to say Karen.

**Oh, so it’s in that area that...in the Maryland Parkway corridor area.**

In the Maryland—yes. It’s east, between that and. The other street to the south is—God, I haven’t been by there in a long time.

***So It’s near Charleston.***

No, It’s further. It’s south of Maryland Parkway. One block south of Maryland Parkway, yes. That’s how it starts. East of Maryland Parkway.

*Okay, east of Maryland Parkway, yes.*

**South of Karen.**

South of Karen.

**So over by—okay.**

Right behind the medical building and north of the Sunrise Hospital, all the way down to Eastern, practically. That was all done by Mike Maslow.

**Mike Maslow?**

Yes. That was a developer back in the sixties.

**M-A-Z-L-O?**

M-A-S-L-O-W, Maslow, Mike.

**So you lived there for how long?**

I lived there, wow, at least twenty years.

*Did you ever design your own place?*

Design my own place? I live in it now.

**So after that you...**

No. After that I bought a house. I got divorced and my wife passed away. I got remarried. With my second wife we lived in Spring Valley off of Rainbow. We bought a house there. Then we sold it—actually, we rented it and bought a house in Villa Bonita Estates, which is by Spring Valley and Desert Inn.

**Is that Durable Developers?**

Yes, Durable, correct. Lived there for quite a while. Then I designed and built our home in The Fountains in Henderson. It's a fairly modern house. It's twenty years old already. I built it in—no, actually twenty-two years old. I finished it in '94. It still holds its modern look. My wife hates



it because she's more for ranch style and she's lived with it. I've got black granite on the floors and it's hard to clean in Vegas because of the dust. I hear it every day for twenty years.

**But she knew what she was getting into; she married an architect.**

Oh, yes, yes, yes.

*Wow. This is some story.*

**So what was Francisco Park like when you first moved there?**

It was a very close neighborhood, friends across the street and next door. There was a family next door [on El Segundo] that we became very, very, very good friends with, the Karres [Doris and Leroy] Karres. She was Lebanese and he was Greek. They had two kids, a boy and a girl. Very friendly people and very helpful. We constantly...She would be cooking and bringing Lebanese food, and my first wife would cook Cuban food and give it to them. Oh, what's the name of that school at the end of the street [Robert E. Lake Elementary School]. There's a school there and the kids would go play in the playground every day. It was very nice, very easy.

**Is that where your kids went to school?**

No. We took them to St. Viator's for Catholic education mainly although I wouldn't have had any problems with taking them to the public school. But we both wanted them in Catholic upbringing.

**Your dad was almost a priest, so.**

Yes, yes, yes. With my first wife we had two kids. The oldest is Maria and the second one was a boy, Dominic. We lost one in between. So anyway, they both are fluent in Spanish.

She [Maria] went to USC and graduated. There was an interesting part on that. She was at Gorman, of course. She was getting ready to apply the last year, the senior year. I sat down with her and I said, "Well, what school? What do you want to be? When are you going to apply?"

She said, “Well, I don’t know, Dad. I’ll probably go to interior decorating school.” I said, “Why not architecture?” “Oh, I couldn’t do architecture.” I said, “Well, what makes you think that you’re going to do interior?” “Well, it would probably be a little easier.” And I said, “Now, wait a minute. I’m reading something here. What really is going on? If I tell you, ‘Okay, forget about everything and tell me what you really want to be?’” She said, “You wouldn’t get mad?” And I said, “Of course not.” She said, “Well, I would want to be an accountant.” And I said, “Well, that’s what you’re going to be.” She said, “Oh, really, you wouldn’t mind?” I said, “No, I wouldn’t mind.” “I thought you wanted me to be an architect.”

I said, “No. Listen, honey, I get up in the morning and I’ve got a fire in my belly. I can’t wait to go to the office because I love architecture. I love to design. I love buildings. I love everything there is about architecture. There’s nothing worse than getting up in the morning, looking in the mirror, and saying, ‘Ugh, I’ve got to go to work today.’ You want to be what you love to be and it’s not work, okay?” And she said, “Well, if you don’t mind then, I know what school I want to go.” I said, “Which one?” “USC.” “Oh. Okay.” So I said, “Okay, let’s do this. I’m going to take you three or four different—including USC—campuses and we’ll take a look at those, okay?” “Okay, fine.”

So I took her to Santa Barbara, San Diego, Pepperdine—

**So, so far I’m seeing ocean views in all of these.**

—UCLA and finally went to USC and she was elated. She said, “That’s where I want to be.

That’s where I want to go.”

***What was it about USC that she liked?***

It was one of the top...

***Oh, so it was the reputation.***

Reputation in accounting. Yes, she got hired by Deloitte before she even finished. They said, “The problem is the job that we have is in Las Vegas.” She said, “Really? Okay. Well, I’ll go to Las Vegas.”

Another great story, it’s not about me, but I’ll tell you about that because it was interesting. I believe in loyalty. So she was working for Deloitte for years and then one of her clients, a big client was Howard Hughes Properties. She would handle all the Howard Hughes properties. So she came to me one night and she says, “I need to talk to you, Dad.” I go, “Okay, what’s going on?” She says, “Well, I got an offer from Howard Hughes to go to work for them.” And I said, “You are not going to do that. How dare you? That was your client. I will not approve of you...” She said, “Dad, they encourage it. They want...” Which is very smart. I learned a lot on that particular one. Very smart. Deloitte Haskins and Sells, which was the original one, and then it eventually became Deloitte and Touche and whatever, but they would encourage their employees, if they were asked to go to work for their client, to go there. Guess what? It’s because that individual is going to move up and then he’s going to get into already a position that they have a say; let’s use Deloitte.

**Oh, absolutely.**

How smart is that? I was typical Latin upbringing; you must be loyal; no, you don’t leave your employer and go to work for the client; that’s not right.

**So she went to work for Howard Hughes.**

Oh, yes, she went to work. Then she wanted to have a family. So she kind of didn’t go to work anymore. I said, “All you know now is how to cook and raise kids.”

**I bet she can balance a checkbook, though.**

Yes, balance a checkbook.

*That's wonderful. That's amazing.*

Well, okay, let move on to...What else?

*I want to ask about the elementary schools that you designed. When you were designing schools, did you think about the students? How did you put that together?*

I'm glad you asked that. I remember getting on my knees and trying to be the size of a kindergartner. What do they see when it comes to the environment that they're going to be exposed in? I gave a lot of thought of that.

Another interesting thing that made a mark in my life as a professional was when we were designing the Thomas & Mack—and that was in the eighties—one of the architects that was in the team was paraplegic, a wonderful, talented individual. I never forgot the fact that he told me, “Let's make sure that this building is accessible because there's a lot of buildings I want to get in and I can't.”

**And that was early on.**

Right. I tell you that made a tremendous impression. In all of the buildings I designed, even though ADA was not in effect at that time, I was very conscious of accessibility throughout the building because of my great experience and exposure to that wonderful individual.

So back to the schools, I tried to—my mother was a third-grade teacher for thirty-one years. She taught grandkids of people that she'd taught in school. She was a wonderful individual. She loved kids. I was always exposed to...She would bring them home sometimes and do artwork with them.

Anyway, I really tried to make the place fun for the kids. They are very sensitive to colors. Psychologically there are certain colors early in the mind of kids that do have an effect.

There are soothing colors, light green and light blue, soft colors. I believe that they have an impact in their learning.

Access...Even though we had parents complain about it, we always had the small, little boy commodes in the kindergarten rooms. I'll never forget one time the school district called me to a meeting, and they had parents that were complaining because their kids didn't want to go at home in the commode because they wanted the little one. So it was a movement there for a while to try to eliminate the little boy [toilet] and go to a standard commode, but that didn't last very long.

Let's see. What else I can tell you about that? I was able to work with the district in '62. I designed seven different prototypes.

**So can you describe some of those prototypes?**

Yes. There were phases. When I was working with Julius Gabriele, it was an open campus, meaning the classrooms had exterior doors with a metal canopy as a walkway and that's how you went from a classroom to another. We started developing, when I got into designing the schools for the district on my own, the actual reverse, of trying to get the school enclosed in the center. Even though they were canopies, they were open-air, and try to get air-conditioning into those spaces, and the multipurpose room came about and that evolved. Those were very standard-type long-run schools.

I was involved in designing Fitzgerald Elementary School as one of the prototypes. The concept there that I had was the pods. It was flexibility for expansion; if they needed more classrooms, they could add a pod and be able to tie to a corridor and be able to continue on. If you needed more restrooms, build it as part of the expansion, restroom for boy and girl. So that was very successful. Unfortunately, they only built one because it was supposed to be at the last

end of one of the bonds and in the next bond they were supposed to continue. Things change in the district from time to time. So that was only one-of-a-kind, but it was very, very successful. It was made out of block basically, not tilt-up like we used to use. In the early prototypes we used tilt-up concrete. The Fitzgerald Elementary School, we used block and rounded corners with the block. It was a very soft-looking school. I wish they had built more of those, but that's fine.

There was a period in the district that they had a lot of vandalism. So we were commissioned to take all the windows out of the exterior on that new prototype. That's the birth of the schools that had no windows to the street. We created an open courtyard to at least have corridors and borrow light at the very top of the classroom in order to borrow light from the courtyard.

*That's sad.*

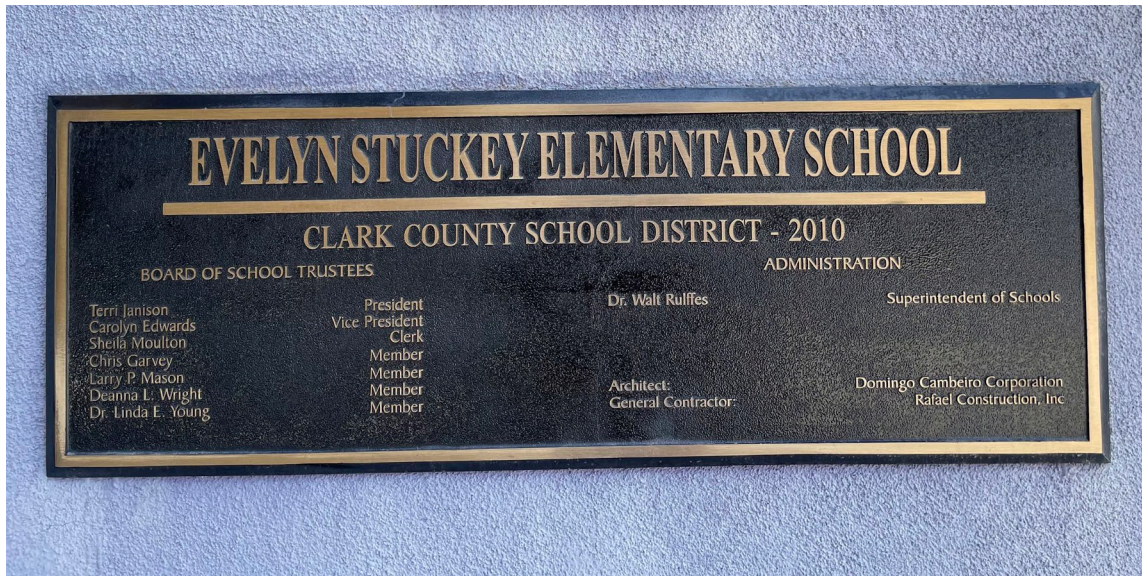
Then from there we kind of evolved to where we introduced now windows in the classrooms and that sort of thing. The last one I designed is Stuckey Elementary School. That was a competition for energy conservation and first cost. There were four different architects that were commissioned to do a prototype. Ours came in first in energy and first cost. I attribute it to...I really thought a lot about that school. One of the things in the energy that we fought always against is tilt-up concrete or block. It's hard to insulate. I mean, you insulate it, but you insulate it on the inside and there's limitations. So I thought on this prototype, the Stuckey, to have a structural system that would self-support and then the exterior wall would be an insulated cavity. Because of durability I went to a soap block on the face to a certain height.

If you have EIFS [Exterior Insillation Finish Systems] way down to the ground that is a very soft material and the kids would actually beat it up with balls and objects. So I put the durable material on the bottom; yet, it's like...And that actually made it; that's why they were so efficient is because it was properly insulated and the cost versus tilt-up or block, either one.



Evelyn Stuckey Elementary School, designed by Domingo Cambeiro Corporation, 2010. This is the last of the 110 schools designed by D. Cambeiro. Image courtesy of Donna McAleer, taken 28 March 2023. Used with permission.

Interesting talking about that...And that's so much fun for an architect to be able to do things like that, be creative in that regard.



Plaque in the entryway of Evelyn Stuckey Elementary School, the last of 110 elementary schools designed by Domingo Cambeiro. Image courtesy of Donna McAleer, taken 28 March 2023. Used with permission.

The Caviglia Building for the community college in the Henderson campus, I got commissioned to do the Caviglia Computer Building. I'm in the process of designing it. A typical building for the community college is a block building and it has been for years, and they're happy with it and they know how to maintain them and all of that. I got wind of the fact that at the time that the construction in the Strip was really at this peak, there were not enough masons to go around to fulfill that. Any projects that were not on the Strip, they had a premium. But masons...if we get it, fine; if we don't, don't worry, I've got enough work. And so if you design a building in block, you are stuck to that number because every one of the masons was bidding about the same. It may have been a one-percent difference, but they all were in that...typical supply and demand and we all know that.

Well, I got wind of that and we had started in designing the building in block. JMA had another project going somewhere and they were actually designing their building in block. So anyway, I went ahead and made a change and changed it to tilt-up panels. And I thought, *well, I*



*can't just leave it tilt-up because It's going to look like warehousing and the community college ain't going to buy it.* So I created plantons on the face of the building from the tilt-up panel with studs and EFIS and created a colorful and different texture. So I presented it and they liked it and we built it and it came in under budget.

**Because you didn't need to use masons.**

Because I didn't have to use masonry, yes, block. At the time JMA bid their job and it was way over budget and they had to cancel. They couldn't build it. It was over the budget.

***Since you talked about CSN, talk about serving on the CSN board.***

That was wonderful. That was wonderful. By the way, I also served on the UNLV...not the regents. There's another...

**The foundation?**

The foundation.

**You served on the foundation?**

For a while I served on that. The CSN board was wonderful because the main purpose for the community college was to make it easy for people in our community to go to school and be a steppingstone to get other degrees at the university should they want to proceed further or get some degrees in many different professions that they can go to work. The success of a community is educating their people.

I remember doing the library building on the Charleston campus. And they asked me why on the north wall—the north wall is all glass in the library. And I purposefully did a ladder with the aluminum. I told them my thoughts on that. It was a very subdued message that education is the ladder to success. So instead of a normal vertical aluminum storefront or glazing, I did it in a

ladder flashing. I told the librarian that so in case kids would ask, they could tell them what. But It's kind of different.

**That library was a partnership, was it not, between the Clark County Library District and the community college? It's the one right there on Charleston.**

The original one.

**Oh, the original library.**

The original library, yes. This one is just strictly—

**This was, is a campus library.**

Yes, for the community college. That was a wonderful building, too. It's a beautiful space there, the library.

**So where is that library located?**

It's on campus, on Charleston. It's west of the—

**The Clark County Library.**

—the Clark County Library. I don't know if the Clark County Library is still—It's still there?

***Yes, It's still there.***

Yes, this was strictly a campus library. They were developing a mall and it was part of the early stages. That was one of the first buildings in the mall.

I have had so many great experiences with buildings and to me they're all—they ask me, what is your favorite one? They all are. In fact, I was interviewed one time and they asked me that question and I said, "All of them, I look at them as my kids." I said, "I love them all the same."

In fact, I remember doing an unmanned station for Centel [Central Telephone Company] in a developed housing project they needed a Centel [central switching office] is now I guess CenturyLink. They have all of these things coming into that station.

**Oh, all the power grids coming in.**

Well, they're fiber. It's all fiber coming into it and it's a transfer station, but it's unmanned. It was strictly for the equipment and the electrical support, batteries, because it can't be without power, and also allow for a generator to be brought in outside and connected because the batteries only have a certain life in terms of time. I think they only had like a four-hour limit on that. And if power was going to be out for than four hours, they would bring a gas generator. They roll it in. Then we had openings in the side of the wall, covered, but they could open and then put the wires in and connect to the panels. I had so much fun with that building and it was maybe a thousand square feet. It fit well in the community so that they thought it was actually another house.

**Oh, really?**

Yes, yes.

**Oh, my goodness.**

You try to blend in. I'll tell you another great story about the Showcase Mall.

**Showcase Mall?**

That's on Las Vegas Boulevard and almost Tropicana, on the east side of the street, Showcase Mall. The Coke bottle?

**Oh, yes, yes, yes. Everybody knows the Coke bottle.**

*Yes, yes.*

The Coke bottle. I'll tell you about that. I had two good friends, one particularly good friend. There was an island shopping center on that corner—or not on that corner—on a piece of property there, a small property along Las Vegas Boulevard. Right behind it was this hotel, the Marina.

Oh, yes.



Alexander Plyushchev, "Picture of the Las Vegas Strip [Showcase Mall] in Las Vegas Nevada as seen on 16 March 2010," Wikimedia Commons ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Las\\_Vegas\\_Strip\\_by\\_Alexander\\_Plyushchev\\_-\\_IMG\\_0030.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Las_Vegas_Strip_by_Alexander_Plyushchev_-_IMG_0030.jpg); accessed 12 April 2023), citing Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

The Marina Hotel on there. Then there was a Chevron service station next to an alley—it was kind of an outlet, I think, for the Marina—a Chevron station and some other properties. There was a little motel.

So he came over. They called me and then came over and they said, “We just bought this little inline center on the Strip.” At the time it was the highest per-square-foot basis that they had paid for this piece of land. In the meantime, the MGM had already bought the Marina and they were already in design and planning to build the MGM, the green MGM.

**The big one.**

Yes, the big one, not the old one. So he came over and said, “What do you think you can do with this property?” I said, “Well, let me work on it. I’ll figure something.”

I came up with bringing the building to the sidewalk, have two stories of retail, two stories of parking above it, and a nightclub on the upper side, five stories. Then in order to get to the parking, I had two circular access in the backside. You go in and then you park on the second and third—

**Like at the airport.**

—fourth and fifth—let’s see—third and fourth and then you could come in on one ramp and then go out the other ramp.

**Like spiral ramps, like at the airport?**

Spiral ramps, like at the airport, right. So I sketched this. I sketched it out on just a think paper as I’m talking to them. So I came back and presented this just very schematic, very schematic.

They wanted to flip the property is what they wanted. So they set up a meeting with MGM. I didn’t go to that meeting, but he told me they were all the bigwigs out of MGM that were there and everything else. So they're presenting this to them and said, “And we’re going to build this,”

and blah, blah, blah. They're all going, "Uh-huh, uh-huh, sure." And they said, "Mr. Unger, don't call us; we'll call you."

So now they came back and they were like, "What are we going to do?" In the meantime, one of them—Fieldman [Barry] was pretty sharp—he actually researched the whole area and he found out that the Chevron had a first right of refusal to the guy that was leasing the property. MGM had the property with the owner of the property in escrow. He found out that there was a first right of refusal. So he buys the first right of refusal from the tenant and buys that property from under MGM. Now they're paying attention.

They come back and said, "What can we do now with this piece of property?" So I did some sketches on two-story buildings, but the parking was an issue. So I said, "You know what? We need something where we can build a parking garage." So we opened a map and we're looking at that area. There was a motel, which was probably no more than about maybe ninety feet at the most that went back by about two hundred feet, and then they had a five-acre piece of property attached to that, empty land. It looks like a sliver and then it went back and it was five acres. So I said, "If you guys can get that piece of property, we can do something; we can put the parking there; that is your property. They've got to walk, but..."

They get in the car and they drive to the motel. As they're pulling up in the motel, the owner and operator of the motel is hanging a—this is literally—hanging a sign on the front window, "For sale."

***Oh, my God.***

They walked in and said, "You're selling?" "Yes, yes, I just actually made the sign and I want to sell. I want out of here." Blah, blah, blah. And they buy the property. Now they've got that.

They've got the Chevron station. They've got that easement and they've got their property alongside and then a sliver of land to the corner that was owned by MGM.

**So the MGM...**

The MGM had only a little piece here on the corner. This is Tropicana and Las Vegas Boulevard. This, this. But it opened all up behind there. That's all the exposure they had to Las Vegas Boulevard.

I then designed a bigger...I mean, it was still not quite because we couldn't go through the...I was thinking about building over it and everything else.

So they meet with them, but now they have...Yes.

**Now they've got their attention.**

They got their attention. They want it. They worked out a deal because MGM wanted an outlet out to the Strip, which was one of the main outlets. So they had that and they said, "Okay, I'll tell you what." And MGM had a little easement between the corner and their property; they had a little twenty-foot easement there. So they said, "Okay, we'll take this twenty-foot easement. We'll sell you what you need here on property." So at the end of their property. "We'll sell you that so you can have that full access for a mall. We need access from a parking garage that we're going to build to our hotel." And they said, "Fine." They got a deal where they support one big column and the delivery to the Showcase Mall is in MGM property. They've got an easement. All of their deliveries and all of their stuff that comes in the back, It's on MGM property and that footprint. We got it done. We got it done.

***Who thought of that front with the Coke bottle and all of that on the front of that building?***

Oh, okay. Now they have all of the deal and they wanted to develop this shopping center, like an old L.A., downtown L.A. Art Deco look. I always believed that I'm a facilitator. My likings

aren't modern, but I will do whatever the client or the area calls for. I'm more a facilitator. I'm going to give you my recommendations, but I'll do what you as a client—it's your project—what you want to do and I'll do the best I can do for it.

This was one project, when they first started talking to me about it, I listened to both of them for an hour and a half and then they had pictures of L.A., buildings that they had gone and seen and all of that type of stuff. Finally when they were done, I said, "I normally don't do this, but I'm going to tell you I don't think it's the right architecture for the project."

"What?"

I said, "No, I'm going to tell you what I think I want to do there. You've seen the MGM. Look, it may not be what you like." I said, "But I think that is the right look for this project. It would be a little different because we're a shopping center. But I'm going to make it look like it's all part of one big development. MGM is going to love it because their people are going to think that that is all MGM when it isn't, and you're going to love it because the people walking by are thinking that they're going into MGM." So they both laughed and said, "You know what? Okay. You convinced me." And that's how we did it.

Originally I wanted this big—and it is still—the big lobby entry, multistory.

**And It's very beautiful.**

Yes. What we wanted to do is...At the time the Treasure Island was a big thing with the show, free show up front.

**Family friendly.**

And then kind of lead people into the casino. Since then they took that out. So we wanted to do a spacecraft, a flying saucer encrusted in the lobby wall and that would be a show in itself. In fact, we got people from Imagineering out of Los Angeles. They used to work in Imagineering in



Disney doing all of their Disney and they had a firm that was doing all kinds of stuff. So we hired them to create this flying saucer and the show.

**Do you remember the names of people that you worked with?**

Oh...

*So what was the show going to be?*

The show was going to be...It was a fairly large flying saucer that had crashed into the wall of the lobby. And then all of a sudden, lights would start and some sound and movement. Monitors would come on. It would be aliens saying that they just landed in Las Vegas and they're going to the Showcase Mall to shop.

*I love it.*

The front was actually an air curtain. It would carry on into the lobby and all that.

*Oh, that would have been great.*

So that's how it was going to be and we spent a lot of time into that design.

In the meantime, down in the basement, so to speak, we were putting a food court. These two friends of mine, the developers, [Bob] Unger and Fieldman had struck a deal with Pepsi who does a lot of these—Pepsi-Cola has a lot of these food courts and they have Pizza Hut and all of their standard fast food. So they were working with that.

Well, a very interesting thing happened is that MGM had signed up with Coca-Cola. It's an ongoing forever fight with Pepsi. Coca-Cola got wind that Pepsi was in the front and it has the majority of exposure to the Strip. So they sought these two guys and called them up and they met and they made a deal they couldn't refuse and that's how the bottle got started. The show, the flying saucer got dumped and the bottle got...because actually there are two elevators in the bottle; it was the elevators to the Coca-Cola Museum on the West Coast. The first two floors

were a shop, their retail shop, and then the upper floors were all the museum and all of the different...I don't know if you've gone to the one in Atlanta.

**Well, I've been to the one here and it was wonderful.**

Oh, the one here when it was here. It was beautiful and wonderful. But interesting, one of the presidents of the Coca-Cola when he took over, he only wanted the one in Atlanta and he closed this one and left the retail, but closed this one, because he didn't want it here.

**The one here was wonderful.**

It was wonderful. It was a great experience for the tourism and all that. But he wanted to retain...I guess being a president of Coca-Cola, you have to have been in the company for a long, long time. That was the flagship for Coca-Cola was the one in Atlanta and he wanted to preserve that and X out. One of the exhibits was a million dollars. One of the exhibits of all—

**I believe it. They had tasting of Coca-Cola products from all over the world.**

Yes, yes.

**Some of them to our palate were horrible.**

Yes. Like the one in India has curry in it.

**Yes. And there was one with lychee and all kinds of flavors.**

Different flavors. They tried to...so that people will drink it.

Anyway, so we got this outfit that is a structural engineer, but they're a structural engineer that all they do is structures that are different. They're not the standard post and beam.

**Are they here in Las Vegas?**

No. They were out of Seattle.

**And they did the elevators?**

They did the elevators, all of that. Now, this is the funny story. So we're meeting with the Coca-Cola people and they want to have the bottle and they want that to be a replica of a six-ounce Coke bottle.

***Right. That little traditional.***

That little one, yes. So I told them, I said, "Yes, we can do that; however, in order to do it exactly, I need some drawings." "Uh, those are patent drawings."

**We can't give you those.**

"We can't give you those." I said, "Well, then all I will do is I'll do my best in measuring the bottle and try to replicate that." So they go away and in their mind there's no way they're going to give the patent drawings—or a copy of the patent drawings, obviously—to anybody.

So they go away and about a week and a half later I get a call. And they said, "Are you in town next week?" "Oh, yes, yes. We're coming down with our attorney and we've got some stuff that we've got to...Unger and Fieldman now about it and we're coming down."

So they bring...It was a book this thick of legal documents that I had to sign. They agreed to give me the copy. But when I read all of the legal documents—

**And we know you really read it.**

***Yes, right.***

Oh, I read it, believe me. I had to be in complete control of those drawings and only me could see those drawings, only me. I was the only one that would...I had to have it in control at all times. The liabilities that were attached if that was actually exposed to anybody or shown to anybody, it was horrible. I was dying. I was dying because you never know.

***Really?***

Well, we did and I went ahead and kind of figured out the shape and the structural engineers took it from there. And they were satisfied. Now, we are presenting drawings to them again of the bottle and all of that. They looked at it and they said, “Oh, that’s an empty bottle.” Oh, yeah? “Where is the cap?” So I designed...On the sidewalk of the plaza there, there is a cap of a Coca-Cola bottle.

***Oh, because it has been opened.***

Because it had been opened.

**Oh, that’s wonderful.**

Isn’t it? I mean, they’re the ones that said, “That’s an open bottle; where is the cap?”

**And it needed a cap.**

It needs the cap. Now, they are coming to the office, and I had my secretary have all kinds of stuff on the conference back table; I mean, all kinds of stuff, food and drinks and all of that. So all of them are there. I don’t know. There were like twenty people in that conference room. One of them was an architect, an old nice fellow I had been dealing with throughout this process. We became very friendly. He was an architect for Coca-Cola. He was an in-house architect. So they all left and he stayed behind a little bit. He said, “I want to tell you something.” I said, “Really? What?” He said, “Next time don’t have any drinks that are not Coca-Cola or they won’t come back again. They will not fly an airline that serves Pepsi. They will not...” I said, “Oh, you’re kidding?” I had something like, I don’t know, one of the sodas that were there—I didn’t have any Pepsi, thank God.

***Thank God, yes, because they would have probably fired you.***

Yes, right. But it was like the lemon-lime that Pepsi makes, we had some bottles of that in there and he noticed it. They didn’t say anything. So I said, “Okay, for sure.”

*Isn't that something?*

Yes. That's a true story.

**Something to remember if you ever deal with Coca-Cola.**

Coca-Cola, nothing but Coca-Cola. So they actually struck a deal and Pepsi got bumped out. So they went across the street to the Monte Carlo.

**So they did okay.**

They did okay, yes.

*What a town we live in.*

Yes, it's unbelievable, all the stories.

*Yes. This is great. This is amazing.*

**This is. And so now you're semi-retired.**

Yes.

**You're working on a school.**

One school, the West Prep, West Preparatory Elementary School, its hall, on Lake Mead and Martin Luther King, near Martin Luther King.

*So that's the major intersection.*

Well, it's west of Martin Luther King right on Lake Mead. It's a piece of property that the school district acquired next to the West Preparatory. It's a campus that has from kindergarten all the way to high school. So all of the elementary schools were in portables. So the school district did find the funds left over from the '98 bond issue and there were three projects that were awarded; one was that, the other one was in Boulder City, and one in Sandy Valley. They used the savings that were created from the bond in paying some of the bonds early and so on that they had leftover money that they used in building a new elementary school. There's some share, like it

has no multipurpose because the middle school—it was originally done as a middle school, but it ended up being some high school kids, middle school. So they were going to share the multipurpose room or the gym and the cafeteria.

**That's quite a bit of savings.**

Yes, quite a bit of savings.

**So It's mainly just classrooms and restrooms and...**

Yes, more classrooms. It's fifty-two thousand square feet and under construction right now, looking good. It will be done in September of 2017. So we're really excited about that.

***So what kind of community input did they have?***

They did. Interesting, it's a cross section from a lot of Mexicans and also the rest of the community there, both. It was interesting to me, when we had community meetings—and we had two of those—the majority of the attendance was Mexican. It was kind of interesting. I speak both languages, not quite as much the English, but I speak fluent Spanish. They had a teacher that is a Spanish teacher and he started to be the interpreter. I told him, “Hey, I can do both,” which I did. So I spoke to them both in English and in Spanish. So it was fun. They had a lot of questions. Mainly all of them, the whole community that was attending there, they all didn't believe it was going to be done. They thought it was all—

**Talk.**

—talk and that it was all smoke and mirrors. Their main concern, “When are they going to start? When are they going to...?” And until that first shovel went in the ground, they still didn't...I talked to the principal many times. And I said, “Do they believe?” “No, they don't believe it. They keep saying that it's not going to happen.”

**Well, they must be thrilled.**

Oh, they're elated. We went to the groundbreaking and it was well attended by, again, all cross sections, Afro Americans and there were some Caucasians and Mexicans, and they were pretty much evenly across the board there. They were all so happy. It was great. It was a good feeling. It was a good feeling.

It's hard even though there is a need and sometimes that's a necessary evil, but there is something about portables that...I think just as a kid, particularly if there is a building—and usually that's what happens is that there is a building and then there are portables—psychologically I think walking up those metal steps and walking into a room, which is no different—really, once you're inside, It's no different—but just getting to it, psychologically it affects the kids, no question in my mind.

An interesting thing, the school district at one point in time, when they didn't have the monies available or it was past the 2008 Depression and they didn't know whether—well, they actually pulled not going to get a bond issue. They commissioned me to design a full portable school to be able to satisfy the needs.

### **The growth.**

It's small growth, but they need the seats. So I put together a design, a full elementary school with portables. Now, that would have been a little different, I think, for the kids because—

### **They would have all been equal.**

Yes, everywhere.

### **I changed schools in the middle of third grade and when—**

Traumatic.

**No, it really wasn't. But I remember the principal walking me to my classroom and it was a portable. We're walking down this corridor, but we kept on walking after the corridor**

**ended and went to the portable. I remember thinking, *Oh, I don't get to go to the real school.* And I never thought about it until you mentioned that.**

That's right.

**So I didn't get to go to the real school.**

Psychologically that's the feeling. Even though you may go for PE or you may go to eat—

**Playground, everything.**

No. But your classroom is your base. That's your base. That's right. We can continue this if you want.

*I think that this is amazing.*

I think this has been wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

**[Colloquy not transcribed]**

**Great. Thank you. Perhaps when we meet next time we can talk a little bit about the Cuban community here.**

Sure.

*Oh, we're going to bring the tape recorder? I was just going to bring an archivist.*

**I want to bring an archivist and a tape recorder. You can work with the archivist, but I'm going to ask about the Cuban community.**

*Good. That's wonderful.*

**Thank you so much.**

Well, thank you for your time and interest. I really don't think I deserve all of this attention.

*Oh, yes, you do.*

No, not at all. It's just being here a long time. That's all.

*Yes. And your memories are so good, clear, and powerful.*



**A very good storyteller.**

Oh, I don't know about that.

*Yes, you are.*

**Oh, you are.**

My wife says I tend to go off the subject quite a bit.

*And we like that.*

**We all do, but that's what makes it more interesting. We can ask our question, but we don't realize that that's going to spark a memory in you that's going to take you to another place that is much more interesting than architecture.**

*That's right. That's it exactly. [Laughing]*

**And then it comes back to the question.**

**[End of recorded interview]**