

An Interview with William O’Neill McCurdy, Sr.

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

African American Collaborative
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada, Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

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 *African Americans in Las Vegas: A Collaborative Oral History Project*.

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Preface

Interview with
William O’Neill McCurdy, Sr.
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Claytee D. White

William O’Neill McCurdy Sr. moved to Las Vegas from Forest, Mississippi in 1952. Although he doesn’t remember much about his time in Mississippi because he was so young, he does remember life in what is now known as Historic West Las Vegas (the Westside) vividly. He can describe the locations of the schools, businesses, grocery stores, nightclubs, and multiple churches. He knows what streets people lived on, where they shopped, and who brought letters to Westside residents since mail wasn’t delivered to the neighborhood yet.

McCurdy will never forget the men he respected as he grew up—Bishop Cox, Reverend V.C.L. Coleman, Reverend J.L. Simmons, and Prentiss Walker—pioneer citizens who fought for the civil rights of people in Las Vegas in the Fifties. They made a great impression on him and helped shape his life as one of service for the wellbeing of his community—spiritually, economically, and politically. Following their examples, he pastored several congregations of the Church of God In Christ throughout Nevada, mentored countless individuals, worked tirelessly to help people find employment, and nurtured more than one generation of leaders.

At thirteen, McCurdy started working at local stores and markets and even established his own janitorial service while still in his teens. He participated in and was witness to a thriving area with shops, entertainment, restaurants, car shows, contractors, dry cleaners, business parks, and professional offices. Things changed in 1969 after rioters burned and looted the Westside so McCurdy has long been focused on the revitalization of Historic West Las Vegas, urging people to come together and plan together for the benefit this neighborhood.

His observations helped McCurdy understand at thirteen that participation in politics could improve a community. He started the West Las Vegas Teen Democratic Club West, learning about campaigns and media, first by passing out flyers and painting signs. After graduating from Valley High School, McCurdy worked for the City of Las Vegas in a variety of capacities including park guard and police liaison. He then moved to Northern Nevada, attending Western Nevada Community College in Reno, pastoring in Hawthorne, serving on the Mineral County Economic Development Board, and working at the Nevada State Legislature in Carson City. His seven years in the north afforded him a unique perspective on Nevada’s political realities.

McCurdy returned to Las Vegas, working as a constable and went on to create political consulting businesses, advising candidates for office at the local, state, and national levels to this

day. His service on community boards is legendary and includes the City of Las Vegas' Park Commission, its 2020 Master Planning boards, the City of Las Vegas Community Block Grant Advisory Board, the Citizen's Advisory Board for Regional Transportation, the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority Commission, and the Habitat for Humanity Vegas Heights Infill Housing Board.

Thanks to his long history of mentoring, Nevada has many dynamic and capable leaders ready and willing to continue the work for a revitalized future, including his son, former State Assemblyman and Clark County Commissioner William O'Neill McCurdy II.

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This is January 26, 2022. This is North Las Vegas?

No, it's Las Vegas, Nevada.

This is Las Vegas?

This is Las Vegas, Nevada 89106.

Where does North Las Vegas start?

North Las Vegas starts on the north side of Lake Mead where Nevada Partners is.

But now, if I continue to go over a few blocks this way...I'm pointing north.

Then Carey is the north side, and that's North Las Vegas.

It doesn't start until Carey.

Right.

Mr. McCurdy, could you pronounce and spell your full name for me?

My name is William O'Neill McCurdy [Sr.]. William, W-I-L-L-I-A-M. O' apostrophe Neill, N-E-I-L-L. McCurdy, M-C-C-U-R-D-Y

I want to start by just talking about your early life. You were born in Mississippi.

I was born in Forest, Mississippi in Scott County to James and Lovey McCurdy. My parents came to Las Vegas in 1952 to seek gainful employment in the new horizon in that era of time. So we've been here ever since 1952. When we came here, we stayed in Cadillac Arms, and we lived off McWilliams. Then we moved in 1957 to 1305 Gold Avenue here in West Las Vegas.

Where is Gold Avenue located?

Gold Avenue is the first street south of Owens and J.

Is that Highland Park?

No, that's not Highland Square. That was a two-street tract, Gold and Van Buren Avenue off of J Street.

That is which community, which neighborhood?

That was no particular area. That was sort of like the new area after they built Highland Square. Highland Square is off of Owens and J Street on the north side of Owens, and we lived on the south side of Owens and J.

Describe Cadillac Arms to me.

Cadillac Arms was a duplex community off of D Street north of Owens Avenue behind the old Ray and Ross bus transportation, which before Ray and Ross, it was a tow-free towing yard across the street from Berkley Square.

When were you born?

Nineteen fifty.

You don't remember Mississippi at all.

I don't remember Mississippi. The only way I remember Mississippi is that we went back there every year where we had to go and drink from the colored water faucet, sit upstairs in the movie theater, and couldn't sit on the bottom floor. My grandparents worked at the sawmill in Forest, Mississippi, and my great-grandmother, Carrie Ann, was a schoolmaster in Forest, Mississippi. My great-grandfather was a Methodist preacher who had a funeral home in Memphis and in Forest, Mississippi. Most of my family was in education, and they owned businesses. The Lamb family-owned businesses in Forest, Mississippi, which is eighty miles from Jackson.

Why did your father feel that he didn't have the opportunities there that he wanted?

He heard about the great horizon, the money that could be made in Las Vegas at that particular time with the building of the dam, the hotel industry, all of the big things that were happening out west and didn't realize he was coming to the Mississippi of the West.

Who does your family know that migrated here before you did from your hometown?

We had family members, former assemblyman Woodrow Wilson who was related to us. They had migrated here.

Tell me what it was like. What are some of your first memories of living here over in Cadillac Arms?

It was mostly Afro-American. It wasn't Hispanic. Maybe one or two Hispanic families lived in the whole development in Cadillac Arms. But it was a nice area back in the Fifties, nice duplexes, kind of a quality place. I remember next door in the land, which is now Ray and Ross, we had a motel that we used to call the Pink Palace. They never completed it. We used to go and play in the palace until they boarded it up and deemed it unsafe for the kids to play in as they walked to school at Kit Carson and walked to school at Matt Kelly and just played in that area.

Which school did you attend?

I went to Kit Carson, and I went to Westside School, and I went to Fifth Street School downtown because that year I had a vision problem, and that was the only place they had school for vision-impaired people was at Fifth Street Elementary School downtown. When I went there, I got to get the services that the school district for visually impaired people. I left Madison to go to school there, so I also went to Madison Elementary School, which is now known as Wendell P. Williams.

Which grades were you at the Westside School?

I remember I wasn't there maybe half of a year. I can't remember that year that I was there because I was young.

When were you at Fifth Street School, for how many years?

I was at Fifth Street School from second or third grade to the fifth grade, and then I went to Roy Martin Junior High School.

How did you get back and forth to school when you were at Westside, Madison?

My parents took us to school. Then when I went downtown to Fifth Street, I used to catch the city bus to Fifth Street School.

Your parents took you to school. They didn't let you walk?

No. They dropped us off. They were very much involved in our process of education, trying to make sure that we didn't get into any hassles or any problems.

What kind of hassles or problems did young people get into if they walked to school?

Well, you know how kids like to be rambunctious. They like to play, pull, punch, fight, play with you fighting and all that kind of stuff. Then you had some bullies back in the day that wanted to take your lunch money and that kind of stuff.

Tell me about church. Where did the family attend church?

We were members of the Concept Room Church of God In Christ located at 1117 North F Street on the corner of F and Madison. We were members of that church ever since the Fifties during Bishop Cox's time.

Tell me about Bishop Cox.

Bishop Cox was the bishop of the State of Nevada; before him, it was Bishop Findlay. As you might be aware, the Church of God In Christ has some thirty-seven churches in Southern Nevada. At that particular time, we had the whole state of Nevada, we had seven churches in

Northern Nevada, as well as the thirty-seven here in Las Vegas. There was a total of forty-five churches in this jurisdiction, which was known then as the Nevada Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction. Since then, the Church of God In Christ created two jurisdictions, one called Northern Nevada First and Nevada First Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the Church of God In Christ, which is the southern part of the state.

Tell me more about Bishop Cox. I've heard that name ever since I've been here.

Bishop Cox was a very outgoing man. Back in that day, Bishop Cox had what they called CTS, Cox Training Union. He also was the first person who used to bring mail to the people in this community back in the days when he arrived. Black people did not go and get the mail. He used to go get it and bring it to the people.

So, there was no mail delivery.

No. Bishop Cox used to bring the mail to the people. You need to do research on that because I was very upset when real people who really contributed to the benefit of Historic West Las Vegas are not in that historical...

We don't know enough about Bishop Cox.

That's why I'm telling you, you need to do the research.

That's what we're doing right now.

The research is that he is the only man that I know that ever had his funeral in the Las Vegas Convention Center.

What are some of the other contributions that he made to the Black community?

He always meant to try to make West Las Vegas have the better quality of life. Elected officials used to come to him for advice and to meet with him and Reverend V.C.L. Coleman, Reverend

J.L. Simmons, and Prentiss Walker. Those are some of the pioneer citizens that fought for the civil rights of people in Las Vegas.

We have some information on Prentiss Walker, but we don't have that kind of information either on Bishop Cox or...

I can tell you. The Church of God In Christ printed its seventieth program. In the seventieth-year program, they did a whole history of the leaders in the Church of God In Christ from that time. You can get that book or buy that book from Melvin Sanders at TCG Graphics at 2301 West Washington.

Give me the name of the business again.

TCG Graphics. And I'll give you their card. He printed the book. You need to get that book because it tells you the story.

That book should be in our collection at UNLV.

Yes, that's what I'm saying. That's why I want to get it there.

Okay, good. Do people have copies of it in their homes?

Majority of the Church of God In Christ members have copies of the book because, like I said, that's why I gave you that calendar because it tells you a lot about the Church of God In Christ. It tells you the leadership. There is a woman who is over all the women of the Church of God In Christ, and you should interview her one time.

What is her name?

Her name is Alicia Freeman. That's all in there.

It's in the calendar?

Yes.

Tell me more about the churches in the community as you were growing up. What other churches did your friends attend?

They attended Second Baptist, Victory Baptist, Pilgrim USA Church at D Street and Owens, or D Street and Harris. They also attended...everybody knows Zion Methodist. They attended Powerhouse Church of God In Christ, which is known as Church of God In Christ number two. They attended a little church, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, which is on Adams Street next to Powerhouse. They attended the Catholic church, which was on H Street, and now it's on Martin Luther King. They attended Vegas View Church of God In Christ, which is on Gladys Street in North Las Vegas next to Jerry's Nugget. Those are churches that a lot of people attended back then and there. As you are well aware, Claytee, West Las Vegas has approximately eighty or ninety churches. Even in this area where we're sitting, known as Vegas Heights, there may be eighty churches right in here in little houses like this that were turned into a church. This particular church that I founded, we actually started in Reno when I lived in Reno, Nevada, and I pastored it to Hawthorne, Nevada in 1976. I've been pastoring the church for the last forty-nine I've been a pastor.

Tell me about the other businesses in the area, commercial businesses.

I remember back in 1963 when I was about thirteen years old, they built the Golden West Shopping Center. When I was a kid, I worked in there, in that shopping center for a guy named Mike. I can't fully recognize people who built that shopping center. That shopping center, at the time, if I remember correctly, had a hundred-year lease on the land. And we had a shopping center known as the Golden West, and in the Golden West, we had dentist, pharmacy, here we had Golden Whistle Cleaners, the Urban Chamber was in that building, which was called the Black Chamber back in that day, and then we had Charles Kellar's office over there. We had a

store called Art Lurie's Supermarket was the first major grocery store that was in this community.

Give me the name of it again.

Art Lurie's Supermarket. I worked there when I was fourteen or fifteen, and Art Lurie became my godfather because he like me so well. His son became the city councilman and became the mayor of Las Vegas. But then Art Lurie's Supermarket was changed to the name of Fox Market Town. Then Fox Market Town was bought out by Pantry Pride.

And all of these were supermarkets?

Right in the same location where the state welfare office is now. That used to be a grocery store. And then that was changed to Smith's Food King.

Pantry Pride became Smith's?

Food King.

The Smith's that we know of today?

Yes.

Why did Smith's leave the community?

Because, I guess, of stealing and pilfering would happen. You want to know, so I'm going to tell you everything. Then next door to the store, we had a liquor store, which was owned by the grocery store, and next door to that we had a place called Sloppy Joe's—what's that guy's name that was a fighter? —Chuck's Gym. There was a Chuck's Gym right there, too. We had a fighter gymnasium in the shopping center. Then we had the Black Orchid, and then John Edmond had a bar and casino over there in the shopping center.

Are we still over in the Golden West side?

I'm keeping you right in the Golden West, which is now called Nucleus Plaza.

Right. What else was in Nucleus Plaza at that time, or Golden West?

I'm telling you...we had a Ben Franklin five-and-dime store. We had a Western Auto five-and-dime store. We had a Pan-Afro American Auditorium, which was run by Bob Bailey.

Which end of it was the Pan-Afro Auditorium?

In the middle. There was a whole big old auditorium there called the Pan-Afro Auditorium.

What kind of entertainment?

Well, it was like a convention center for the Westside. We had new-car shows and everything where the car dealers from all over, they brought them over on the Westside in the parking lot of the shopping center to display their cars.

Do you know which year? Are we still in the Sixties?

Sixties and Seventies.

Why did all of these businesses go out of business?

Because of the riot in 1967 and '68. [Riot occurred in October 1969.]

That one riot caused everything to go out of business?

Burning, looting, and all of that. We burned our own properties.

Why didn't some of them come back?

Because some of them didn't want to come back. Because they're a capital investment, and some of them just...The only person who tried to rebuild West Las Vegas that I remember is Jan Jones.

And she's much later.

Well, yes, but Jan tried to rebuild West Las Vegas.

Before we get to her, because she doesn't become mayor until...

Nineteen ninety-two. But Ron Lurie and others tried to rebuild West Las Vegas, too. Manny Cortez played a large part in trying to do stuff in West Las Vegas, him and Ron Lurie.

Ron Lurie tried to do what?

He tried to meet with the pastors to rebuild Las Vegas and the business community. Ron Lurie did it. Bill Briare did it. Oran Gragson—the first person I worked for was Oran Gragson. I worked for him the first time when I was sixteen years old. I had a summer job working for the City of Las Vegas. Then I started working at eighteen years old for the City Manager's Office under Art Trulise, who was the city manager under Oran Gragson, who was mayor then.

Give me some of the ideas that they had, some of the things that they wanted to do.

They always wanted to revitalize West Las Vegas to its glory days. I've always been a proponent of let's do it, let's get it on. I've seen prosperity. I remember when the city of Las Vegas had the Las Vegas business park across the street from Nucleus Plaza, and the business park was sold to Magic Johnson.

Oh, that was where Vons was?

Yes. That was where city of Las Vegas' business park back in the day.

That whole area?

That whole area.

Okay, was the business park.

Right. And we had Rowe Inc, which was a military contractor who was refurbishing military equipment over there on that property before Magic Johnson and others bought it.

But Magic just had the grocery store, right?

No. Magic and his group had the whole shopping center. The grocery store was owned by Vons.

Right. I remember.

When Vons had it, the Magic Johnson group brought it into its shopping center because they were the anchor tenant.

Magic Johnson owned what is now Edmond Town Center.

Edmond Town Center, right.

He owned the whole Town Center?

Yes, he owned the whole plot, the first half of the plot.

And that was in the 1990s.

Yes.

Prior to 1990s when Magic owned it, what was—

It was Rowe Inc, incorporated, the City of Las Vegas' business park.

What was there then when it was Rowe Inc., before it became Magic Johnson's?

It was Rowe Inc.

Right. What was located in there?

Rowe Inc. was a government contractor, which repaired crushed vehicles.

This location covered the whole shopping center?

The whole acreage of land.

What is now Edmond Town Center was Rowe Inc completely?

Right. It was the City of Las Vegas Industrial Park, which housed the government project Rowe Inc, which they repaired this stuff, which was a grocery store. After the grocery stores went out, they built a facility in there to repair the vehicles, and part of the land across the street where they tested the vehicles.

Across the street in which direction?

Where the shopping center is.

Golden West?

No, across the street in Edmond Town Center, which is now known as Edmond Town Center.

See, that was a vacant piece of land.

I understand. The vacant piece of land was cut up into pieces so that...?

It was all the city land all the way down to Westside Story. There was a place called Westside Story.

Right there on...J Street is on one side and—

No. Westside Story was closer to H Street. On the corner of H Street, there were two buildings.

One was called Ruben's Supper Club.

And that property is still there.

No, that's Party Shoppers in there now.

Ruben's Supper Club and what else?

Ruben's Supper Club, Westside Story, and whatever name's place that Saran Knight Preddy ran.

People's Choice?

People's Choice. Right next to People's Choice on H Street, right on the same property, it was called Humdinger. It was a restaurant.

People have told me about Humdinger, but they've never told me about Rowe Inc. This is the first time I've heard of Rowe Inc.

Well, you go check and see if I'm right.

Oh, no, no, no. I believe you. I believe it.

I've got a pretty good memory so far.

Tell me about Jackson Avenue, or what everybody calls Jackson Street.

I'm going to tell you a little story. Reverend Sam Roberson was the president of Jackson Street Merchants Association. Dalton Properties and Lou Richardson came in and put storefronts all down Jackson Street with the existing buildings. They came and put new storefronts all down Jackson Street. I remember Jackson Street so well. I remember we had Dot's Cleaners on Jackson Street. We had Jackson Street Hotel. We had two barbeque places on Jackson Street. We had a grocery store on Jackson Street, one of those little markets. Then we had bars. We had the Louisiana Club. We had some of everything on Jackson Street.

But what gets me every time I look at the Fremont Experience, they took the idea of Sam Roberson and the Jackson Street Merchants Association, which that was the plan that they were going to close off from D and Jackson all the way up to H Street and make that a pedestrian mall. Every time I tell people about it...when they saw the program of what those people wanted to do, they told them they couldn't do it, and they beat them to do it, and a few years later, then they decided to close Fremont off and make it a pedestrian mall.

When you were talking about Lou Richardson putting on the new business fronts, which year was that approximately?

Oh, that was probably back in '75 or '80, close to '79 or '80.

That was after the riot.

Yes.

The 1969 riot. [Earlier he described the riot as occurring in '67-'68, but it occurred in 1969.]

Yes.

If all of that could happen on Jackson Street after the riot, why didn't they think about doing something in Nucleus Plaza?

I don't know, sometime, political leaders have got to be leaders, but the problem is everybody worries about being reelected. There are very few leaders concerned about getting something done while they're there. They only have the power as long as they're office. When they're in office, they have no more power. It's just like you sitting here right now. If you don't help effect the change, there's not going to be any change in this community. If I'm not here to affect the community, there's not going to be any revitalization of West Las Vegas. I want this to be revitalized more than anybody. I often tell people, don't tell me you wanted a business in West Las Vegas, and you're not prepared to put your house up, put your money into it to invest in it to make it happen. Bob Snow who came in and got money from the City of Las Vegas. Rose McKinney James helped get money from Andy Tompkins who owned Lady Luck at that particular time. When Ruby Duncan brought her to town, she worked for Ruby first before she went to work for the city. But I'm saying every elected official was not smart enough to get their fellow commissioners or the other people that they had to serve on the board with to get them to buy into redeveloping. I remember Oscar Goodman wanted to redevelop West Las Vegas.

Every time we talk about redeveloping West Las Vegas, you got your idea, I got my idea, she got her idea, but we never do like they do; we never come to a meeting among ourselves and hash out what you want, what you see, how you feel what needs to be done. And then we have a meeting with the powers that be, and they don't help us because they like everybody, and they don't want to go against their friend here, they don't want to go against their friend there. They don't want to go against the other friend, so they don't do nothing.

Now they're having meetings again and planning again right now.

I know.

What do you think is going to happen this time?

Well, Commissioner McCurdy, Councilman Crear, the state legislators, and all the elected officials that represent this area have to come and get on one page.

Are they?

I'm hoping and praying that they are. But some of them have their own ego, and it's all about them and not about us, for whatever reason. But I want it to be about us and not them.

Are you attending the meetings?

I have served on several boards.

I'm talking about right now, the meetings that are happening for the project.

Yes, I go to them, and I make them mad because I'm telling what they need to here now and not what they want to hear. See, I found out when you don't tell people what they want to hear, they exclude you. But I don't care if they say what they want to say, but I'm going to tell them whether they like it or not.

One thing about me, I don't just have them for friends, I have all of them for friends. I can talk to the White folks. I can talk to them folks. Just like I told the preachers, you can't go demanding politicians to do something. You've got to win them on your side to help you.

I want to get back to all of the work that you've done. After you finished school here, did you go away to college at all?

I went to Western Nevada Community College for a minute, in Reno. I lived in Reno.

When did you move in Reno?

I moved to Reno in 1974 based upon Roy Woofter running for governor of the state of Nevada.

What did that have to do with you?

It had to do with me, he wanted me to know the people in Reno so that it can affect our vision of him running statewide for governor when he was the district attorney of Clark County. I've been

involved in Nevada politics ever since I was thirteen years old. I started the West Las Vegas Teen Democratic Club West.

Tell me about the Teen Democratic Club.

I started the Teen Democratic Club under the supervision of Gloria and Ike Rome, R-O-M-E.

Tell me who they are.

They were involved in Democratic politics back in the day, and Dorothy King. I got involved working with a media company called Pestner Media, Hank Pestner. He handled Walter Baring's campaign. I've been involved working in campaigns ever since that day.

And that person, his last name is Barron?

Walter S. Baring.

What did he run for?

He was a congressman.

He was a U.S. Congressman?

Yes, congressman for Nevada. I worked in Alan Bible's campaign. He was a U.S. Senator. I worked on Howard W. Cannon's campaign. I worked in John Ensign's campaign when the Democrats pissed me off. I worked in Marion Bennett's campaign, Lonnie Chaney's campaign, numerous campaigns.

What kind of work were you doing in these campaigns?

When we were young, we were just passing out material and stuff. But then I developed a media company called Bill McCurdy and Associates in 1992 when Jan Jones ran for mayor. Me and Dan Hart worked together in that campaign. I've consulted on campaigns. I have done a lot of different things in campaigns. I worked at the City of Las Vegas Housing Authority.

What was your first job with the city?

My first job was a park guard.

Working for?

The City of Las Vegas.

Was that Parks and Recreation?

Yes, but I was working out of the city manager's office. They called me the aide to the city manager back in the day.

How old were you then?

I was around nineteen.

That's when you came back from Reno, the college there?

Yes, yes.

You're living back in Las Vegas now. Tell me about that.

No, no, no. That was before I went to Reno.

You moved to Reno in 1974?

Yes. I did this when I was younger before I moved to Reno.

But this was your first job that you actually got paid?

Right. No, the first job I actually got paid was working for Art Lurie's Supermarket as a box boy.

Then I worked for Thrifty Marts, which Jan Jones and her parents owned, as a box boy and a grocery apprentice.

Did Monroe Williams also work at Thrifty Mart?

I don't remember. If he did, he worked there before I did. I know the Lavery family. Like I said, I worked at Thrifty Mart on Bonanza.

What was your next job?

Then I started a janitor service called Bill McCurdy Enterprises, and we did a lot of governmental work. We did the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County for J. David Hoggard, William Petrel, Sylvia Staples, Verla Davis, and James Tyree. Reverend Bennett was chairman of the board at that particular time. I also served on the Economic Opportunity Board Representing Youth in 1965, when they opened up Doolittle. George Lawson was the director of Doolittle, and I was on the Youth Recreation Advisory Commission back then. Like I say, then I served on the EOB, the board representing youth.

What did you do as a part of that board?

Gave input on how best to serve the youth during that particular era, that particular time.

What was the kind of programs that EOB put together for youth?

EOB brought the Concentrated Employment Program together, job readiness programs. They worked with the State of Nevada Employment Security Department where Leon Smith, who is now the bishop of Nevada, he and Carolyn Goodman worked together. I've been knowing Carolyn Goodman since that era, that time. I always try to deal with upward mobility.

The youth program that they put together under EOB, what kind of jobs did they find for Black youth?

They always tried to find jobs for Black youth working within their agencies or other service agencies, tried to give them exposure to governmental entities by coming up with programs back in that day that were funded through the state legislature or different areas where they got funding from to give young people opportunity.

Do you remember any of the young people who worked in some of those jobs or any of the locations that actually hired them?

Yes, and a lot of them have gone on to see the Lord now, like a guy by the name of John White. He started working for the city. He got a job working for the city. Bobby Witt, a lot of different people I know, that started, matter of fact, Lisa Morris, she started working in the program and wound up getting a job for the City of Las Vegas and look what she rose to.

We're talking about Hibbler?

Yes.

Did Lisa start an EOB program?

No. But I'm saying who started as a young person moving up in the ranks of the city. One person who has always stood out who has done more for Black people in line of employment was Dorothy Smith.

Tell me who Dorothy Smith is.

Dorothy Smith used to be the human resource person for the City of Las Vegas during Oran Gragson's time as mayor. She and I used to get everybody that we could, Black, a job with the City of Las Vegas. Her last name is Smith now, but it used to be Dorothy Collins. That's her maiden name.

Is she still alive?

Yes. She lives in Bonanza Village. She and Brenda Williams live down the street from each other. Matter of fact, she is related to Brenda Williams.

Brenda never introduced us, okay. Tell me about your next jobs.

My next jobs...I operated a dry cleaners in Reno, Nevada called [indecipherable] Dry Cleaner's.

When I moved to Reno, I had a janitorial service in Reno.

And you had one here as well?

Yes. I started my janitorial service when I was about eighteen years old. That was with EOB, was the first contract.

Go ahead. After your experiences with EOB, and EOB ended in about the mid Seventies, those programs?

Yes. I think a lot of that, it was resolved, I think, that the war on poverty's name kept changing to different...

The federal.

Yes, the federal programs kept changing names.

Do you remember the riot of 1969?

Yes, I do.

Tell me about that.

I'll never forget I was working for the City of Las Vegas, and like I said, Oran Gragson and I were very close. He came over here during the riot one night, and they told me and Oran Gragson, "Get out of here. Go back across town." I remember—

Who told him?

The rioters, the kids, the rioters at H and Owens. I'll never forget that. Then they set the fire at the gas station that is now called Bell's Market. They looted the whole shopping center, broke windows out. Larry's Sight and Sound was on Owens, also, at that particular time. I remember that, and I remember when—

How did the city respond?

The city came back to me with the community to try to resolve issues or problems that—

During the riot, how did the city respond?

They used necessary force, I guess.

What was that?

Police came in and did their job.

Tell me what that is.

The job is go and retain order.

Did they block off the streets?

Oh yes, they blocked off streets there. I remember they brought tanks so you couldn't go downtown at that station on Bonanza so you couldn't go up under the underpass and go by Snyder's Malt Shop on Bonanza to go downtown.

Did they have tanks anyplace else?

I can't remember, but I know they had armored cars that the police department had. I remember I was police liaison officer, too, that we tried to talk to the kids and talk to the people, try to maintain order.

How long did the riot last?

I can't remember, maybe three or four days on and off.

Do you remember how it started?

I can't remember exactly how it started, no. That was such a long time ago.

Tell me about your other jobs. The job you just told me about related to your janitorial service working with EOB contracts. What did you do after that?

Let me tell you this. All of the time that I was in private enterprise, I was working for some governmental entity at the same time. Like I said, I was police liaison for Las Vegas Police.

Is that a paid position?

That was a paid position through the city manager's office again. I always had the opportunity to work for the city manager some way or another, and Linda Mason, also. Like I say, when I

worked at city manager's office, I worked at Lions Park and Fantasy Park, which is now the state building, the Grant Sawyer Building.

Fantasy Park—

Fantasy Park was the lower half of Lions Park, which is now where the state building is sitting.

Wasn't Fantasy Park put there by the women of the Junior League?

Yes, I think so. And we had an old train sitting up there. You can't remember that now?

No, I don't remember, but I've been told about it.

I was down there because the city used to have issues with people doing crazy things down there, so they sent me down to kind of be there to see what's going on and report back to the city manager what was happening.

How long were you connected with the city manager's office?

I was connected with the city manager's office for maybe on and off ten to twelve years.

And you did various duties from that office.

Right, right. Then they sent me to Las Vegas Police Department.

Out of the city manager's office?

Right. The city manager's office sent me to Las Vegas Police Department to be police liaison officer because the city manager was responsible for the police. I worked for Pete Witcher, who was chief of police, and John Moran, who was chief of police, and I was assigned to the bus stop at Third and Ogden.

What do you mean assigned to it?

The police department assigned me to be with two policemen that were assigned to the bus stop during that day when Lady Luck Casino was at Third and Ogden. The city parking garage was

across the street. The city busses used to be turned out at Fourth and Fremont, then the Lady Luck.

Right there near the Mob Museum.

No, Third Street and Ogden. That's where the city garage is right now, and Fourth Street.

I can't picture the garage.

Going north on Fourth Street, the city busses used to be on both sides of the street. Las Vegas transit was owned by Tanner Motor Tours, which had a contract with the City of Las Vegas before the Regional Transportation took it over. I was assigned to be at the bus stop because the kids used to come down and loiter down there, so I would talk them into going to school or going home. You had two choices: Go to school or go home. The police didn't want to have any interaction with them, so they had me down there to have the interaction with the kids, and I was very successful doing that for numerous years. That's when I got ready to go to Reno.

You were in Reno for how long?

I was in Reno for seven years. I lived in Reno, and I pastored a church in Hawthorne, Nevada.

Tell me about Hawthorne.

Hawthorne is an ammunition depot. It had roughly five hundred Black people in Hawthorne. It was called Mineral County. My first wife and I lived in Reno, and then we moved to Hawthorne for about two or three years, and my first wife was a teacher's aide, and she used to drive her kids from Luning and Mina back to Hawthorne to teach them, and then take them back to Luning and Mina every day for three years that we lived in Hawthorne.

She transported the kids?

Yes, in the school bus. Our county was only maybe three thousand to five thousand people at the most. While I lived in Reno and Hawthorne, I served on the Mineral County Economic Development Board.

Tell me about that.

I served on the Mineral County Economic Development Board, and I was instrumental in helping bring Bonanza Airline to fly into Hawthorne. That board was set up by the county commissioners in which we had three county commissioners at that particular time that ran Mineral County. I was the only Black pastor living in Hawthorne at that particular time, and we had two Baptist churches and one Holiness church called Trinity Temple Church of God In Christ that I pastored at Hawthorne, and so I was like everybody's pastor. I used to go to Babbitt and visit my memories that I had in Babbitt.

How far away was Babbitt?

Babbitt was right up the highway. I used to go to Schurz to visit one member I had in Schurz at the Indian reservation.

After seven years, why did you decide to come back to Las Vegas?

I decided to come back to Las Vegas because my wife and my family wanted to relocate back home close to their parents and close to my parents.

While I was in Reno, I worked at the Nevada State Legislature as an assembly bill clerk under Paul May who was in charge of Governmental Affairs at that particular time when Marion Bennett and Lonnie Chaney worked at the state legislature. I remember driving from Reno to Carson City all during the winter months during the session. I've had a lot of good opportunities.

Was Joe Neal also a part of that time?

Yes. Also, I ran for public office before.

What did you run for?

I ran for Nevada State Assembly.

Oh, really?

Against Reverend Bennett because they said at that time they wanted to give young people an opportunity, so I tried to take him on, and I lost. Then I used to do Reverend Bennett's campaign signs. I used to paint them right outside the back of my church here. I used to paint everybody's campaign signs outside back here until we got digital, and we started getting them done other places. I ran against Joe Neal, too.

You ran against Joe Neal?

Yes.

Which year did you run against Joe?

I can't remember. I ran as a Republican then because I knew I couldn't beat him as a Democrat. He ran a White lady against me, and I beat this White lady, and he ran against me.

Who was the woman who ran against you?

Betty Otis was her name. I beat her, so I won the primary. I often tell William, "You've done everything I wanted to do."

Yes, that's great. When were you a constable?

I was a constable two terms. I was a constable in, I think, '76 to '80 under Will Deiss. Will Deiss was the constable. Then I became constable in '85 to '90 under Don W. Charleboix.

Tell me what the job of a constable is.

The constable is the officer of the court. We serve executions upon wages. We serve writs. We serve eviction orders. We'll serve from time to time as bailiffs for different courts when their bailiff wasn't available or something else to do, but we are officers of the court. I started out as

deputy constable, and then I became lieutenant in the constable's office, which I was in charge of two or three different sectors. I was in charge of everything from Charleston all the way to Mount Charleston, and then I was in charge of Charleston all the way to Primm. The Las Vegas constables, if we got writs of execution, we would go serve the papers on the casinos or whatever we had as outlying areas, but each area had their own constables. Goodsprings had constables. North Las Vegas had their constables. All of the small communities had their own constables. But the Las Vegas Township was Las Vegas Township, but we served paper all over the valley.

You were on the Citizens Advisory for the Regional Transportation.

Right.

What is that?

I served several years on that advisory board. I remember when Snow was the executive director of the Regional Transportation Commission, and we advised the Regional Transportation on various issues from busses, purchasing busses. When we thought about different entities, I served with Cliff...yes, you know him. He was an architect, but now he owns a business out at the airport. I almost called his name. Anyway, we advised them. I was appointed to represent the City of Las Vegas. I served on the City of Las Vegas' 2020 Board, master planning board, during Mayor Oscar Goodman's term.

What was that board for? Master planning for...

The City of Las Vegas for the next twenty years, ten years, twenty years.

Twenty-twenty, so did it include the Westside?

It included the entire city. Then they changed it back in the latter days to the 100 Plan. We had judges. We had a lot of businesspeople on the master planning board for the City of Las Vegas. I served on the Bus Shelter Board. I was appointed by the mayor to that board, which we decided

where the bus shelters were going to be built, the design of bus shelters after the legislature created that board.

How did you decide where the bus shelters were going to go?

We had a map of proposals and the necessity of the ridership where the bus stops were going to be in the area, and then we looked at it, and then we decided this is where they're going to be. It had to be the majority of the board okaying it for it actually to come to fruition.

Tell me about Habitat for Humanity, the board of directors.

I've been a member of the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity for maybe fifteen years now or longer. We did a lot of building houses in West Las Vegas.

Where?

Vegas Heights. I can show you a lot of Habitat homes right on this street. Most every street over here has some Habitat-infill housing that they got the land from the City of Las Vegas because at that particular time housing was an issue, and housing is still an issue. Then we built houses in North Las Vegas. We're in Henderson now, and we're building a lot of houses in the Pittman area of Henderson. I help oversee the budget. I oversee the fundraising effort. I oversee the management of the two thrift stores we have, one on Sahara and one on Flamingo.

I'm the park commissioner for the City of Las Vegas.

Tell me what the park commissioner does.

I used to represent the mayor as the mayor's representative of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, and then a lot of years, the mayor asked would I serve for a councilperson, which it was Lawrence Weekly. Then I was his park commissioner, and then I became Barlow's park commissioner, and then I became Cedric's park commissioner.

A park commissioner is a paid job?

No, that's advisory board. Each park, there are two park commissioners per mayor and six councilmen.

There are only two—

No, there's two per ward.

As a park commissioner, what do you do?

We go to a monthly meeting, and we advise the City of Las Vegas on the city golf courses, naming of public parks with the consent of the councilperson, work with the councilperson on his designated representative to advise him on the necessary things. We tour the parks, look at the condition of the parks, and give feedback and give suggestions on how the park should be maintained. We interact with park participants, or people who use the park. Advise on increase of park usage fees.

Tell me about the parks on the Westside; there were two, Jimmy Gay and Ethel Pearson.

Why were those closed for so long with no solutions?

They were open and then they were closed because the homeless took over the parks and for safety reasons. It was just like Huntridge Park in Ward 3 when it was closed down for safety reasons. There are several parks, we try to come up with solutions to keep the parks open by naming the park's *children's parks*. That park on H and Monroe is a children's park. That means you cannot be in that park without children. To try to eliminate the problems, they just came in and took over the park, and by law, you cannot just prohibit them from coming to public parks.

The biggest problem I'm having in my mind is marijuana use in parks, how people come out there and smoke marijuana in public parks, which is illegal, which is against the law because marijuana use can only be consumed at your place of residence. It cannot be consumed in public

housing or housing that gets public assistance because there is no federal law. If there was a federal law, then you could consume it in federal property.

I'm a community person, and I'm at a meeting, and I've never heard of a park being closed in Summerlin, but my park in the Westside is closed down at times.

That's not so.

Tell me why it's not so.

That's not so. It seems to be to me, and that really always bothered me. I know some of it, there's a little truth to it. I remember when the City of Las Vegas used to use us for demographics to get federal money, and then the money didn't go in West Las Vegas; it was spread out to other wards. Certain people got mad at me because I figured it all out, and I used to bring it to their attention. I'm not going to sit on a board and be a yes person because I'm about community. But they have closed down parks. The City of Henderson has closed down two affluent parks right now because of vandalism.

Why was Jimmy Gay closed for so long?

I've told you it was closed because homeless people took it over.

And we can't do anything about that?

No, we can't because every time we went and did something about them, the Civil Liberties Union would attack the City of Las Vegas because we're prohibiting them using their civil rights by using public parks.

And we have that same problem all over the city?

You have that same problem at Huntridge Park, too.

Yes, Circle Park, yes. And we have it all over the city?

Pat Baker Park in Ward 1 was closed down and reopened before. When it happens over here, it's magnified because we see it. But you want the honest to God's truth? They didn't use—when I say they, the citizens in the community—did not use that park much, and that's the reason why the homeless came and took it over, and they said they don't come because the homeless are there, so you're in a no-win situation.

You've got to remember, when that park was first taken over as a park, that was State of Nevada right-of-way. That was where the exit for the freeway was supposed to be. At one particular time, there was going to be an exit on that freeway, both sides that come up Owens. That never came to fruition. During Ricki Barlow's time as councilman, it was supposed to be going all the way from Losee Road and Lake Mead all the way up to KCEP to get on the freeway, was going to be called an egress route. Well, that never came to fruition, either. What happens, now the state gave the land to the city. That's why the city had that particular motion on the item to consolidate it, so they could do something with the park.

Are you in agreement with what they're getting ready to do with the park now?

What are they getting ready to do with the park?

Make it into a hydroponic garden. That's part of it.

Can I say something? I asked the councilman. That was never discussed with me as being his park commissioner. I never knew about it until somebody came and brought it to my attention as a park commissioner. I asked him, "Why you didn't tell me about it?" He and Scott told me some cockamamie stuff. "We can't tell you everything because some things are just confidential." But I said, "I think it would be fair if I knew what was going on so I could give you my support and not come to you with support after the fact." I think the parks should be reprogrammed. I think the parks should be put back in the public use. But I am kind of confused on we've got so many

gardens that are going in now. We've got one up on C and Monroe. Then you have this one.

Where are the people going to come from?

Some food will be used in the Westside—

No, that isn't what I'm saying. Where are the people going to come from to participate in the planting and participate in the...

They will be hired by the city.

Good. It was good, bringing economic employment into the community. I can live with that.

What is the Block Grant Advisory Board?

I served on that board before, too. The Block Grant Advisory Board is to hear from requestors of nonprofits to bring programming to benefit the public and benefit the community. We grade them with a score on who gets funding of dollars that are available, and we recommend it to city council for approval. The city council and the city manager have the authority to make final decision. We're only a recommending board.

Block grants are still available?

I think they just got through doing their assessments. I think it started October or sometime last year, and I think they'll award it now in February. You've got to remember now, the City of Las Vegas also applied for grant money.

The same block grant money? How much money are we talking about in the Block Grant Fund?

It depends on how much the federal government sent back to each city and county for block grant purposes.

And we're talking about millions of dollars?

Millions of dollars. But sometimes the city takes block grant money to do projects in Vegas Heights, road improvements, anything as long as money is being used to benefit. They got mad when they took block money to buy that church.

New Jerusalem was purchased with block grant money.

Right, because it was for public use. I'll give you an example. They're going to build a public building on that property.

It's going to be housing?

According to the councilman. Is that what he wants?

That's what I've heard is going to go where New Jerusalem was.

I heard the same thing. I support one thing, building and rebuilding West Las Vegas. I want that to happen as well as a heart attack is going to happen if you don't do the necessary things. They put the infrastructure in with the new lighting, the streets. They're going to go down H Street and do the same thing. We don't need to be fighting economic development. We need to be encouraging economic development.

Who is fighting it now?

You have different factions because they want the money to do the project, and some people that want to do a project do not have the ability or the foresight to do the projects. What we don't understand, it was Oscar Goodman who brought the concept in to build businesses on the bottom level, and on the top level you built high-rises.

Housing.

Right. That's Philadelphia. That's back east design. A lot of people don't understand that. "Why are we building these high-rises?" That's the way. We're not smart enough to see that—

So now, who does not want those kinds of buildings?

You ought to hear some of these people. I can see why; sometimes they don't discuss the whole plan. Let's take Symphony Park, which is really the Westside. They just don't see it no more because they call it Symphony Park.

Well, because it's on the other side of Bonanza.

No, no, but that isn't where the Westside started. The Westside started on the other side of Bonanza. Yes, it did, I know. You know Black folks used to live down there in downtown?

Yes. They kicked them out.

Okay, I'm giving you real stuff I know. If you look at all those little places that are high-rises now with stores up front, that's why they want that to go all down the Westside.

Exactly. My question is, who are you hearing from, what organizations, what groups, from meeting people every day, who is anti-shops on the first level and housing rising up?

Go to churches in Southern Nevada sometimes.

Oh, okay. Are they ministers or members?

Different people bring it up. I don't think they're really against it. I think they want some of the money to do the projects, but we don't have that many Blacks that have general contractor's licenses. We didn't have that many Blacks that are subcontractors. I tell them every day, "Go get on the city's bidding list. Go do this. Go do that." Then they get mad at me because I tell them the right thing to do. But that's the right thing to do.

You feel that that's where the complaints that you are hearing are coming from?

Yes, different groups like that.

Tell me about the Ministers Alliance.

There you go again. That's why I'm telling you the Ministers Alliance and every Black group needs to get together, Claytee, and let's have our fight out in this room right now. But when we go meet with the powers that be, let's all be on one accord.

Let's call the meeting.

That's what Bill McDonald and I are going to try to do now.

Who is Bill McDonald?

He calls himself a bishop. He used to be in the Church of God In Christ, but he got mad and left the Church of God In Christ and became a bishop of his own thing.

Is Bill McDonald somebody that the people in the community would rally behind and come to a meeting if he calls it?

I'm telling you right now that's why you need to go to a Churches of Southern Nevada Breakfast. They had it this morning. Just go there—

Who is invited to the Churches of Southern Nevada Breakfast?

Anybody. They can put you on the list. I'll send you a thing, and you can go call Leonard Farmore. I see his name and number and let him put you on the list.

I don't want to be on a list. I just want to know—

I want you to be on the list to go. They'll tell you when the meetings are. They had a breakfast today. They have all the politicians there. They're trying to be the powerbase. They are trying to select the power in this community. But every time they do, I get a call. "Do you know...?"

Who are the ministers in that room at breakfast this morning?

There's some of everybody was there this morning.

All denominations?

All denominations. But see, he's trying to be over them, but half of them are fighting with him because they don't want to be up under him. They just go and do breakfast for—

For the food.

And socialization and see the politicians. He got all the politicians to come.

Who are the politicians that showed up today?

They had Tom Roberts for sheriff. McMahill for sheriff. Some assembly candidates, Laura Perkins.

These were people running for office who were there today.

Right, right, all ones running for office.

Horsford's people were there. Jackie Rosen—not Jackie, but...

Catherine Cortez?

Yes, Catherine was there, and that's who had the meeting down there. I'm just telling you that's what's going on. Until this community comes together—

How can we make it happen?

Number one, half of them get mad at me because—a lot of folks listen to me because what I say makes sense. Don't you think what I said to you so far today makes sense?

Of course.

Does it sound like I know what I'm talking about?

Of course.

That's what they don't like about me.

Right now, they're talking about revitalizing the Westside. Who is the person who can call the meeting of all the community groups, and they will come? Who is that person?

I want you to answer me that question.

I'm asking you.

Now I want **you** to answer that question.

Oh, you want me to answer the question?

Yes. Who do you think could bring us together? Who is the strongest Black politician right now in this community?

I wasn't thinking politician. I was thinking—

No. No, no, no. What you've got to understand, they are the ones who we elect to be our representative. Let me finish so you know where I'm coming from. Back in the day, when Yvonne Atkinson Gates was a county commissioner—there's only one county commissioner who has done a lot over here.

Who is that?

You tell me.

Commissioner who has done a lot over here over the years.

Yes.

You're probably going to say Atkinson Gates.

Yvonne Atkinson is the only one that did anything over here.

Okay, because I can't think of anybody else.

Nobody else. Lawrence added on to what Yvonne did. He made the center bigger, the Martin Luther King Center bigger. He did a few improvements to the Pearson Center. But you know what I call doing something? When you go round up government subsidies in this community, that's when you're doing something. Let me finish. Maybe I talk too much. Go ahead.

No, no, no. If we are talking about the politician who can do it, we both know who that is.

Do you think everybody would rally behind that politician that we're both thinking?

Can I tell you something? Have you ever been to his community meetings?

No.

See, that's what you need to do. You need to get on his list.

Okay, because I don't know when his meetings are.

That's why I say that's what you're doing wrong as a journalist for history in your position at the university. You need to be on Chandra's list.

Go ahead, but I don't get paid that much money.

No, that isn't what I'm saying, whether you get that much money. Girl, you can write books and make tons of money.

I go to the community meetings that I'm invited to. I didn't realize that there were meetings that I was not on a list of.

Right. But let me finish telling you what I'm trying to say. Everybody tells me that I should write a book. My wife told me, "You should write a book." I know pretty much everything, and I don't go around bragging. A lot of people know I know, Black, White or whatever. If you go do McCurdy and McCurdy Media Group right now, you'll pull up the CNE report for politicians, and you'll see how many politicians use my company, hundreds. What I'm saying to you, they don't hire you unless you know what you're doing. That's why I'm trying to get the preachers together and the pastors together. You all know what you're talking about, but you're not doing it right. Even the chamber, Peter Guzman gives more to his community than his people. Ken don't give anything for us. It can't be about you. It has to be about us. See what I'm saying? Peter is about them and whatever they can do to him, right?

I've seen Peter Guzman in operation. I know—

I told him, “Look, Peter.” “Mr. McCurdy, you know I love you, Mr. McCurdy.” Because he knows I tell him to face, him and Fernando Romero, Hispanics In Politics. They told me to my face, “We love you. We love your son. But we can’t endorse your son because we’ve got a Hispanic working.” But we don’t have sense enough to do that. We’re trying to please everybody. They’re going to the bank, and we can’t. That’s what makes me upset. It makes me upset, and I don’t care about William McCurdy because I can say the same thing I’m saying to you. We need somebody that’s going to benefit us.

I understand.

Do you know the project that the commissioner is getting ready to do? Did he tell you?

No. Which one is it?

Do you know where Nevada Partners is? All that land next to Nevada Partners? That’s in escrow.

And what is going to happen?

The county is going to build an amphitheater over there, not only an amphitheater, but they’re going to build some office buildings all across the front. It’s going to be a business incubator, and it’s going to be five stories high, affordable housing.

Fantastic.

That’s what I’m telling you. He wants to do it in his first year, first term. He doesn’t just talk. He is a person of action.

I think that’s wonderful, and he’s got a good person working with him.

I told both of them, “Y’all have got to stay a team, but you’ve got to remember who you work for.” See, sometimes we don’t want to remember who we work for. I’m sick and tired of people referring to Lawrence Weekly as commissioner. He’s not a commissioner. He’s a former

commissioner. Only Black folks do that. Larry Brown isn't going around here trying to be no former commissioner. I told Lawrence when I called him on the phone, "Let me tell you something. If you want to be in politics, you go run for mayor of North Las Vegas."

Is he referring to himself that way?

Yes, well, even when people call him commissioner, he doesn't try to correct it. He should correct that. "Ma'am, I'm former commissioner of the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority." Commissioner William McCurdy II is the commissioner, not William McCurdy. I am the former commissioner. You know I was commissioner, too, of the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority?

Yes. That's the next question I'm going to ask you about.

I worked for the Las Vegas Housing Authority. Jan Jones sent me to the Housing Authority to work over there to make sure that she doesn't have any issues or problems because of the simple fact the houses have always brought down every mayor. She and Frank Hawkins sat on the board of the Las Vegas Housing Authority. When Ricki Barlow became the city councilman, he appointed me to sit on the board—or the city council appointed me. He recommended me. I sat on the board for two years.

Is this when Chad Williams ran it?

No, before. When the other guy—I didn't want Chad. I didn't want Dorie to hire Chad. I knew he was bad news. They've got a new good executive director now who knows housing.

Wonderful. Who is the new executive director?

I don't know. I think his name is Jordan, but you ought to call and find out. He's a Black guy out of Chicago. William is very impressed with him. William wanted to do some apartments and name them after Joe Neal over on Housing Authority property. William is about economic

development. He wants to work with Cedric since he has to work with his city council people because they're the city, and he's the county. He has money; they don't. That's why they've got to work together. Weekly and Barlow should have worked together, but they never did. They fought each other all the time.

Is there any way to build that housing so that it is not low-income housing, so that it is mixed use?

That's what project this is going to be. This is going to be affordable housing.

What does *affordable housing* mean to you, that word?

Affordable housing means where I can purchase, where it can be economically feasible for me to purchase it. I have the same rights as other potential buyers where I can get monies, build a nice product for a lower price.

Is it possible to build that housing so whether or not you're earning \$50,000 a year or \$250,000 a year that if I wanted to live in that community, I could live in that housing?

You could because they're building several projects like that right now. Right up on Lake Mead and Simmons, they're building a project where it's going to be a nice community where it's going to have a lot of different services there, too, but they're going to be affordable. Some of the projects down here that William is going to do is going to be affordable housing.

I think we are almost out of time. Are there any other comments, memories, history that you'd like to add?

There are two books that I know of that the writers have put me in their books. Roosevelt Toston's book, I'm in that book. Louis Overstreet's book, *Footprints*, I think it's called, I'm in his book, and my brother.

Who is your brother?

Greg McCurdy, see I'm Chase's uncle. I the opportunity of working for Sheriff Ralph Lamb, and I had the opportunity to work for Sheriff John Moran. I've had an opportunity to be involved in mostly every political campaign from President Barack Obama to President Joe Biden, the Clintons. I just had a well-rounded life. Congressman Horsford, I knew him before he was born; I knew his mom when she was carrying him. I just want to see, Claytee, before I die West Las Vegas rebuilt.

I agree with you.

I'm very happy that Commissioner McCurdy wanted to see that and wanted to be part of that during his term in office. He said if he can just affect the change of life for the people, that's a fulfillment of a mission. I want to see the leaders of this community come together and discuss all the things they want individually and put them all in one package so that when they go and have their meeting with them, they've got one agenda, but it might be twelve different agendas in that one agenda.

I remember when I worked for the White people, they have two meetings, a meeting at four o'clock in the morning when they're going to be there, and then they have another meeting at eight o'clock in the morning. That's what I want us to learn to get.

When you say leaders—

Community activists.

You're talking about not just political leaders. You are talking about...

Whoever assumes themselves to be a leader.

Right now, if you had to name the community leaders in this greater Westside, who is that?

These are leaders in their own right. You've got to remember, you're a leader because there is somebody listening to you. I'm a leader. Somebody is listening to me. I'm saying those that can

affect change, those people who people are listening to. I can name you numerous people. You understand what I'm trying to say?

What I'm trying to get at, how do we get those people in the room?

They'll come into the room because they invited me, "Oh, we need you there."

Who?

Bill McDonald and Roxanne and all of them. Roxanne, if anybody knows, I know what I'm talking about. I mean, when you handle nineteen races, and I'll win eighteen races, my track record is pretty good. Every Black mayor candidate has been wanting me to do their campaigns, and I told them all, "I cannot do anybody's campaign for mayor in North Las Vegas."

Why?

Because my son has to work with whoever wins that race. Me and my son agreed that he will not get involved, and I will not go consult for any campaign for mayor of North Las Vegas.

Whatever you do, you emphasize that for me. On a contract, if you rent signs from me, I write on your contract, "I am not handling or consulting any North Las Vegas campaign."

What about for the mayor of Las Vegas?

I am not doing Cedric. I have done Cedric's city council race, the two of them. I'm for Cedric. I support Cedric. I tell everybody, "Right now, I'm for Cedric, but I don't know who is going to be in that race." You get what I'm saying? I know there's a Black lady, but I don't know who else is going to be in that race. You don't know if Carolyn's son, Oscar Junior, or Ross is really going to run or not. They might wake up one morning and say, "Oh, I'm excited to run for mayor."

You know what I'm saying? Then he might not make it where he thinks he might go because right now everybody is supporting him. You see what I'm saying?

Would that matter to you?

Who supports who for mayor? Can I tell you this? I've got to see what you're going to do for me, what you're going to do for my community. I don't work for politicians for money. I turn down money. All money isn't good money. If I've got to sell you out, I not going to do the campaign. You hear me? That's why people listen to what I say about politics right now. I have told someone, "I don't want your money." I could have been a millionaire, but I've turned down big money. I am not a house nigger, and I can tell consultants, "I not your boy, not your house nigger. You understand what I'm saying? And I don't care what you think about me, I not your house nigger." Some people get mad, and my son says, "Dad, you can't tell people..." I said, "I not scared of them. The only thing I tell them all is they better not mess with you."

I have to go now because you know who I have to go and meet?

Who?

Your son.

And I'm not saying it because he's my son, Claytee, but William is going to do a good job.

I think so, too.

All he has to do is keep his head on the way it is. Keep doing what he's doing. He can't let these distractors distract him.

Yes, he can't do that.

Because they will distract him. Like I told him and I tell Cedric every time I see him, "Cedric, you and William need to work together." But Cedric

Thank you so much for this interview. This was wonderful.

[End of recorded interview

