

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES DEAN LEAVITT

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV

University Libraries

University of Nevada Las Vegas

©The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2022

Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries
Director: Claytee D. White
Editor: Donna McAleer
Transcriber: Kristin Hicks

The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer. 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 the university 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 Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
Director, Oral History Research Center
University Libraries
University Nevada, Las Vegas

PREFACE

“To me, it was very, very important that I initially play a secondary role, that I listen. What I did, and this was probably—and it sounds almost too simple—but if I was successful on the Board [of Regents], it wasn’t because I was smarter or worked harder, but I had better relationships, and I developed relationships with every member of the board, north, south, male, female, Black, white. It didn’t matter. I just like people.”

James Dean Leavitt was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. His father was a physician and the family’s historian. While Leavitt did not share his father’s love of science, he did inherit his love of history and a strong service ethic. Leavitt, a talented athlete who was a nationally ranked badminton player, broke his ankle and found himself on a different path. After dropping out of high school his senior year, he served a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints in Southern California. His mission completed but his faith altered, he decided to complete his education. He earned an associate degree and later a bachelor’s in speech communication. He went on to study law in three different states, ending up in Eugene, Oregon.

It was challenging to start careers in a college town full of newly minted professionals, but he heard it would be easy for his wife, a special education teacher, and a young lawyer to find employment in Las Vegas. Although wary of the stereotypical image of Las Vegas, Leavitt moved his family to the desert and discovered a true and tight-knit community in Southern Nevada. Admitted to the state bar in 1992, he opened his own criminal defense practice two years later. After ten years in the sometimes dark world of criminal law, Leavitt felt the pull to serve his community in a different, more uplifting way that allowed him to maintain his practice. He was elected to the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents, serving

for two six-year terms. He worked closely with Jim Rogers, philanthropist, attorney, businessman, and media entrepreneur, who became system chancellor. He recognized that Las Vegas needed to have some kind of academic health center. Leavitt, the son of a physician, also saw the need and chaired several committees that would give structure and direction to that vision. Leavitt built relationships over time with fellow regents throughout Nevada, which helped move the concept forward. Leavitt was twice elected unanimously as Chair of the Board of Regents.

Despite Nevada's divisive North-South politics, a major recession, and changes in elected leaders, Leavitt remained focused on the goal of bringing graduate medical education to Las Vegas. Early in the process, it would not have been possible to openly discuss establishing a medical school at UNLV. A pivotal economic impact report helped solidify local community support, however, and behind the scenes officials throughout the state acknowledged the very real need in Southern Nevada. In a relatively short time, NSHE hired a founding medical school dean, recruited an inaugural class, received provisional accreditation, and graduated its first class. James Dean Leavitt, one of the prime movers behind the medical school project, witnessed what was once considered an impossible dream become a reality. After returning to his law practice, he took the time to compile his historical "insider" perspective on the creation of the medical school. His history, based on Board of Regents minutes and his notes, recounts the school's milestones and the efforts of the many people who contributed to what is now known as the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interview with JAMES DEAN LEAVITT
SEPTEMBER 27, 2022 and OCTOBER 4, 2022
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by CLAYTEE D. WHITE

Preface.....iv

Session 1: James Dean Leavitt’s early family background, strong interest and success in sports, religious mission, his written history of the UNLV School of Medicine, law school experience, decision to run for the Nevada System of Higher Education Board Regents.....1–8

Joining the Board of Regents in 2005, building relationships with other regents and Chancellor Jim Rogers, initial vision for an Academic Health Center, creation of the Health Sciences Committee, Rogers’ maneuvering to discuss a UNLV medical school, policy to prohibit UNLV from creating a medical school for 20 years established.....9–16

Other health initiatives in Southern Nevada, statewide listening tour conducted by NSHE health sciences officials, Dr. Mark Doubrava joins the Board of Regents, impact of the 2009 recession, Dan Klaich named NSHE Chancellor, role of the Lincy Institute’s Tripp Umbach economic impact report, need to reduce North-South tensions regarding medical education, a growing number of community members and elected officials rally around a medical school in Southern Nevada as something “magical” starts to happen.....17–27

Session 2: Community support coalesces rapidly as real need and true economic impact more widely recognized, Lincy Institute and UNLV’s Tier One Project advance discussion, regents abolish UNLV medical school 20-year prohibition policy, disparate leaders come together for what is best for the state. Key supporters receive white coats with initial medical school class, Leavitt honored with special memento.....28–37

Donor group takes leading role in school financing and construction instead of state Public Works, key figures in establishing the school (elected officials, NSHE administrators, UNLV presidents, and regents), insider history of UNLV medical school’s evolution, importance of history being written, major milestones including selection of founding dean Barbara Atkinson, provisional accreditation, first graduating class, Leavitt’s judicial election, importance of informed voters, reflections on legacy.....38–47

Appendix: My History of the UNLV School of Medicine.....48–57

Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project
Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: James Dean Leavitt

Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 9/27/2022 along with typed transcripts as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, nor the narrator to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits.

I understand that my interview will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, distributed, placed on the Internet or broadcast in any medium that the Oral History Research Center and UNLV Libraries deem appropriate including future forms of electronic and digital media.

There will be no compensation for any interviews.

James Dean Leavitt 9/27/22
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 9/27/2022
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. It is September 27, 2022. I'm in the Oral History Research Center in Lied Library.

James, please pronounce and spell your full name for me.

James Dean Leavitt. Last name is L-E-A-V-I-T-T. My mother's name was Norma Dean, and I was named after her, not after the famous actor James Dean, but I get asked that question every day. It turned out to be a great name. My father was doing a residency, and the physician's first name was Stephen. That was to be my name. Instead, they went with James, and my younger brother has the name Stephen just because they didn't want me to be confused with the Stephen they were talking about. My grandmother, her favorite brother was named Dean, and my grandmother had a series of children, and there were no boys. Finally, the second daughter came along, which was my mother, and she just wanted that to be a family name. No relation to Norma Jean, but she was Norma Dean, and I'm James Dean, and those are the reasons.

I love it. Tell me a little about your early life, where you grew up, what you did as a young boy. Did you work as a teenager?

I was born in Calgary, Alberta. My father was a physician. They had just returned; he had done a residency at the Mayo Clinic. My dad was an academic, first in his medical class. I was not nearly the student that my father was, but I think I had more fun in college than he did, and he would agree to that although it took him years later to agree to that. I was born in Calgary. We spent my first two and a half years there.

Then my dad did some additional medical training in L.A., specifically at USC. Then after two and a half years, the big decision for him was where to finally put his roots. The older members of the family—I had no say; I was five—they wanted to stay in California. No snow, beaches, perfect weather. But he returned home, and that was to Calgary. He was born in a small

farming community called Glenwood, which is outside of Cardston, which would be near Waterton, a national park, if you've been to Alberta. He was the oldest of five. He sort of felt this responsibility, I guess, to go back home, if you will. That was their decision, not mine.

I stayed there until I was nineteen. I then served a mission for the LDS church.

Tell me what it was like growing up there those nineteen years.

I don't think there was anything unusual about my childhood. I was very interested in sports. That consumed most of my time. It was really my main hobby and maybe a little bit of reading. I was interested in politics. My first real significant memory was watching Watergate. That is what introduced me to politics. That was around 1974, so I was twelve, thirteen at that time. Then it followed with Iran Contra. I had no science aptitude or interest. I always thought I would be a lawyer, but I viewed that as a means to get involved in the political process. I never envisioned practicing law for thirty years like I've done, but I haven't come up with something else. It's not too late, hopefully.

Tell me what today means to you.

Today is September 27. That was the date thirty years ago when I was informed that I was granted admission to the State Bar of Nevada. I wasn't sworn in until about a month later, but that was the date that the phone call happened. Like marriage and birth and your anniversary, it's just a date that's etched in my mind. They say I'm sixty. I'm not sure if that's true or not.

Tell me who your mentors were in Alberta. Who did you look up to other than your parents? But tell me.

It's interesting you asked that. I've never had a mentor. I've never ever, and it's not a criticism. I've never had anybody, if you will, that has sort of taken me under their wing. My dad just led by example. He was not a big talker. He could be very, very funny, and he would love talking

about something like this. He wrote a very extensive family history on both my father's and my mother's sides, and so he had a deep appreciation for genealogy. I kind of picked that up from him, but just a little. This eight-page document, it took way too long. I'm a speaker. My undergrad is public speaking [speech communication]. I taught at UNLV for five years as a professor of speech when I was a young lawyer. That was from '93 to 1998. But my parents just had really...I don't even know if I'd say high expectations. I have an older brother and two older sisters. They all went to college. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't. I just really followed suit. My dad was a very, very busy doctor, as I think every doctor is. He wasn't home very much.

I was an athlete, and I was a nationally ranked athlete. I was a member of what was called the Calgary Glencoe Club about a mile from my home. I was the number-two-ranked singles player in badminton, and number-one-ranked doubles and mixed doubles player when I was nineteen. Right at that time, I broke my ankle. I then had to make the big decision whether to go on a mission for my church or I would have had to move overseas to pursue my badminton interests. The best training and the best countries are in Asia: China, Malaysia, India, [and in Europe, Denmark]. I just didn't see a long-term future. My father thought that things like that were very, very frivolous. Those were things you did after homework, after music, after chores, and then after television.

Tell me about your mission.

One of those life-defining things. When I left on my mission, I was an active practicing, true-believing member of the church. During my mission, I sort of veered towards agnosticism.

That's where I'm at today.

Where did you go?

I went to what was called the California-Arcadia Mission, which basically stretched from Pomona on the, I'm going to call it, east side to basically North Hollywood on the west side. Burbank, Glendale, La Cañada, East L.A., Baldwin Park, La Puente; those were some of the areas I served in. Great thing. Would I do it again? I don't know if I'd do it again. I learned an awful lot. I think about the two years I lost, but gained. You smile about everything because, at least as far as we know, we don't get a chance to go back and do it a second time. I'd do everything differently a second time, not because I have any complaints, but because I did it one way the first time.

Exactly. Where did you go to college?

I went a variety of places. I started at Mount Royal Junior College, which is now Mount Royal University. That was the community college adjacent to the University of Calgary. That's where you went if you were going to do a trade, or if you weren't academically qualified for the University of Calgary, which I was not. I, in fact, dropped out of high school my senior year. I do not have a high school degree, but I do have a law degree and a master's and a baccalaureate. It's part of my history. Again, I was consumed with athletics. Then, of course, right after my mission, I attended what was then called Ricks College. It's now called BYU Idaho. That was the feeder school to Brigham Young University. That's where you went if you couldn't get into Brigham Young University. After earning my associate degree, if you had a 3.0 or higher, you were an automatic transfer to BYU. My GPA was 3.01, so I squeaked in. Had I not gotten in there, then I suppose I would have gone somewhere else.

I then finished there. I was twenty-three. I had served a two-year mission. I kind of went crazy when I got back home because I had no credits, and yet to graduate at twenty-three with my background after serving a two-year mission is somewhat remarkable. I was in a hurry. I

would take 18 credits a semester. I would then take another three or six credits through BYU's correspondence program, and I would just do those on the weekends. I don't know what I was in a hurry for, but I felt like I was behind when I went on my mission because some of my friends had already had a year of college, and then, of course, a lot of my friends didn't do missions because I had very, very few Mormon friends in Calgary. I had gone to a Catholic high school, and so they all thought that Mormons were a little bit strange, and they probably are, but that's how I was raised. That gets you through BYU.

I then applied to law school, which was at the California Western School of Law. I went for about a month and dropped out. I just wasn't sure. That just seemed so serious at the time. I went back a year later, made it a semester, dropped out a second time. I still didn't know what to do. I went back a third time, this time to the University of Idaho. After a year and a half at the University of Idaho, I applied to be a visiting student at the University of Oregon. I was accepted and finished law school there. My degree comes from the University of Idaho.

At that time, my wife was a special education teacher. We were in Eugene, a very small, educated town, lots of professionals, very few jobs. The closest job that she could find was about a hundred miles away at an Indian reservation even though she had a master's in special ed. We had heard that overnight you could come to Las Vegas and get a job teaching and get a job practicing law. There was nothing redeeming to me about Las Vegas. In fact, I thought it was about the most un-redeeming place. Gambling, prostitution, drugs, alcohol, desert. There was nothing that seemed very appealing about it, to my young mind, thirty-one years ago.

Thirty-one years later, what do you feel about Las Vegas now?

It's an incredible place. I still don't think it's that beautiful unless it's dark and the lights are on. But I will say, and even today, there is an incredible network of people, of course. I think that's

true of really every community. After I was here about a year or maybe two, maybe three years, I opened up my own practice in '94. When I made that mental switch that I was opening up my own practice, then I felt like I was committed to Las Vegas. I felt like my attitude changed, really. I'm not going to say overnight, but over a relatively short period of time.

Then I spent ten years in private practice, but I was getting very, very restless. I was doing mostly criminal defense. While criminal defense is important, and each person's case is important, and yes, the Constitution is important, but, by and large, I'm representing people who...

Are innocent until proven guilty.

No, they're almost all guilty until I prove them innocent once in a while. It was satisfying financially, but it wasn't fulfilling, and I started looking around at other ways that I could contribute. There are all sorts of things you can do with the bar association. None of those interested me very much. Forty hours, fifty hours a week for me was plenty of being a lawyer. I looked at the Assembly. I looked at the state Senate. The problem with those offices is that every two years you have to go up to Carson City for four months. As a private practitioner, there's no way a judge would let me go for four months. I can continue any case for a week or two, or have a friend fill in for an appearance or two. If you're with a large law firm, then yes, you're okay going. They'll still pay your salary. They think that might even bring them in business. But the board actually was ideal because it was part time.

Tell me about the board.

The Board of Regents. I ran for office in 2004. This part of the story is true, maybe more true than the other parts. In the newspaper, there was an article, a full-page article. I believe it was in the *[Las Vegas] Sun*, but it could have been the *R-J [Las Vegas Review Journal]*. The filing

period for offices in Nevada has historically been a two-week period. Every night you can go onto the computer, and you can see who has filed. If you run, the goal is to usually finish first. I wasn't interested in coming in second and getting name ID and then running four, six years later. I wanted to win because I was ready to serve. Every day more and more people had filed. It came down to right near the end, and there was a full-page article, and it was talking about Jim Bilbray. Jim Bilbray was a former congressman, he was also a former regent, and he was also a former two-time chairman of the board. In this article, he described that he was thinking about filing for the board, that after all his years in different offices, including Congress, he never had more fun than when he was the chairman of the Board of Regents.

My response to that article was, "Oh, shit." I'm thinking, he can raise more money in a weekend than I could in a year. Probably true with all the relationships and connections. I said to my wife that Friday morning. Of course, filing was ending at four or five p.m., whatever it was that particular year. I said, "If he doesn't file, then I'm filing. If he does, I'm not sure what I'm going to do."

He did not file. But when I filed, I was the last person to do so. There were five men and one woman in that race. That one woman, Gloria Sturman, who I defeated in the general election, she is now a sitting district court judge, the office that I'm seeking all these years later. The best thing that ever happened to her was losing to me because years later she ran for a position paying nearly two hundred thousand dollars, and on the board you make about twenty-five hundred a year because you make eighty dollars a meeting.

So, you're not doing it for the money.

Certainly not the Board of Regents.

Tell me what attracted you to the Board of Regents.

It was partly to be able to associate with students, academics, professors, presidents. Every aspect of it seemed interesting, and you didn't have to deal with parents like you would if you ran for the school district. That was a plus and a reason why I would have never considered running to be a Clark County School District trustee. Unfortunately, the schools have been taken over by the unions and the special interests. You can't even discipline someone that's in the Clark County School District. I could not imagine being in that environment. I don't want to do something if I can't make a difference.

You've mentioned music twice now. Tell me about music in your life.

I grew up playing the piano, first grade to sixth grade. I just liked listening to it. I have absolutely no talent. I can't sing. I can play sheet music because I did it for so long. I just enjoy music. I enjoy watching other people perform. But I have no talent, no ear. Frankly, no one in my family did either.

Tell me about the Board of Regents. I think people on the Board of Regents should be interested in higher education and making it better. Am I wrong?

Well, yes, that's a novel concept. I think most do. Most meaning maybe more than 50 percent, not most meaning maybe 80 percent. It's so hard to really ascertain the motives always of your colleagues. When people have run for other offices and then run for the board, then I question that, certainly. When people leave early, I question that. One of the things that I'm most proud of: I never missed a meeting in twelve years. That's with a busy law practice. I never felt like I had permission to miss a meeting. I didn't run and say to the public, "By the way, do you care if I only go to 50 or 75 percent?" It would have just never occurred to me. But people do. People will say they had a last-minute conflict. Well, we know a year in advance when the bloody meetings are. You shouldn't be having a conflict. Once in a while, we have to schedule a special

meeting. Maybe something is going on with COVID, for example. That would be an example. A president immediately leaves. We've got to fill... Yes, those things you've got to clear your schedule. But outside of those, we set the meetings a year in advance.

Starting in 2004, what were some of the issues that you thought were important, pivotal to higher education in Nevada that you were able to deal with? Then we're going to talk about the medical school.

There really weren't. I did not come onto the board with any preconceived ideas. I didn't come on thinking there were problems. I didn't come on thinking this needed to be fixed. I just thought that I was educated, that I was hardworking. Educational issues appealed to me. I recognized that I was going to be the rookie. What was unusual, as you know, was the board's set up. There are thirteen members of the board, and the [six-year] terms are staggered [every two years] like the U.S. Senate. The year that I happened to get elected, for whatever reason, I was the only new person who came onto the board that particular year. That's just one of those quirks of fate. Some others had left for office. To me, it was very, very important that I initially play a secondary role, that I listen. What I did, and this was probably—and it sounds almost too simple—but if I was successful on the board, it wasn't because I was smarter or worked harder, but I had better relationships, and I developed relationships with every member of the board, north, south, male, female, Black, white. It didn't matter. I just like people.

What I would say most about my LDS mission, going back, is I questioned and abandoned my faith for something more significant, for ritual informed towards spirituality. But what I did on the board for about four years, in the morning—I live in Summerlin, about a half an hour to get down to the courthouse, I would call one member of the board on my way to work, and I'd call another on my way back. Well, in one week, if you multiply that, two times five is

ten. I was speaking to almost every member of the board probably three times a month. If that member of the board was interested in football, we talked football. If they were interested in the School of Education, that's what we would talk about. When it came time for me to run to be chairman of the board, no one ran against me, and so that was thirteen-zero, and then they rewarded me with a second term, and that was also thirteen-zero.

Why that is so significant is because when I needed the support of the northern regents for the medical school, they opposed me very quietly, not vocally, and they could have. They could have stopped that. Well, they could have done a lot to stop the project. I don't think I would have let them, but there would have been a lot more resistance. But because I had cultivated those relationships, it made the UNLV Med School easier to accomplish.

Also, what was pivotal is Governor Sandoval. I don't know the whole reason. I think he did it for the right reasons...that Las Vegas needed it. If you put the UNR med school back to Reno, it would flourish more. Folks in Southern Nevada, they never wanted to contribute and donate to a school that was based up north. Those are the cold, hard facts.

But it was those relationships that allowed me to be successful. Now, in the legislature, there was Michael Roberson, who was the majority leader at that time, a Republican; Brian Sandoval, the governor; people who had the opportunity to fund it. Yes, and I give them credit in the medical school history document. But nothing that I did would have mattered but for the people who were controlling the money at the time that also thought it was a good idea.

Tell me about when you first begin to think about a medical school in Las Vegas. How did those thoughts arrive? What were you involved in that made that so important to you?

When I came on the board, January first, '05, Jim Rogers was the interim chancellor at the time. Jim had inserted himself into the search. We were trying to find the permanent chancellor to fill

the vacancy of Jane Nichols, who was the first female chancellor that we had had. Her last year or two, there were a series of controversies. Who is to blame? That's for other historians. It was before my time. But at some point, she stepped down citing health reasons. I don't know if health reasons were exactly accurate. On the other hand, going through what she went through, there wouldn't be anyone that was healthy. So maybe health reasons caused by the Board of Regents, maybe, or the system or other forces. It's rarely one or the other. It's usually a combination of multiple things. But there was quite a bit of dysfunction back then because in '04, while I'm running for the seat, there was all sorts of controversy about Ron Remington, and he is the then president of CCSN [Community College of Southern Nevada]. We later changed the name to the College of Southern Nevada. But Jane Nichols kind of got tied up into that. There was a seven-six vote whether to terminate Ron Remington, and that was a seven-six vote. That's not good to have that kind of board that's that divided. That really split the board. If it wasn't split prior, it was certainly split after that.

Then, of course, the attorney general sued. It went to court. The Board of Regents members were found to have violated the open meeting law. That was a decision by Judge Jackie Glass. I don't know that she was correct in her decision, but it was her decision. Now Jim Rogers was the chancellor; he was no longer interim. The first thing he really did was just end that litigation, if you will. Now, that upset half the board who felt like they had not committed a violation. One of the great things about the board, but one of the worst things is, "The crazy Board of Regents..." Wait a minute, that's not how I voted; that's not how I behaved. But it's The Board. You won't hear so much about the Senate or the Assembly. You get lumped in. You don't get pulled out of that. Partly, because there are thirteen of us.

But Jim Rogers was talking about developing an academic health center. He was really the visionary in many ways, for sure for an academic health center. One of the great things about Jim, and one of the reasons why we got along after we didn't get along was that I certainly supported those efforts. I saw the need. My father was a physician. No one else on the board had a physician father or mother. We were kind of joined at the hip with this loose concept, if you will. Jim had been talking to people for five, ten, maybe twenty years about the lack of having a medical center. There are different definitions, but most people view that to mean at some point a medical school surrounded by all of these other groups and things that would comprise this large medical district. We were not talking about a UNLV medical school in 2005. Jim didn't think that that would work politically. I don't know that anyone thought that it would work politically. It wasn't really even being seriously discussed at that point in time.

What happened is, within two or three months of being on the board—and I talk a little bit about it here, I leave out one part—the chairman of the Board of Regents. When I came on in January '05, the chair was Stavros Anthony, now a candidate for lieutenant governor. I reached out to Stavros and said, “Look, we need to create a health science committee to operate as a check and balance on Jim,” because Jim could be very volatile, very impulsive. It wasn't Jim's nature to be inclusive, at least in the way that maybe you or I would define that word. He might talk to two people, and if he respected those people, Jim was ready to make a decision. It doesn't work that way in higher ed. There is something called shared governance. Jim owned his law firm. He owned Channel 3. Jim and shared governance are not in the same dictionary.

Stavros reached out to Jim and said, “Hey, the new kid on the block, James Dean, wants to...” Well, Jim immediately viewed me as...I don't know if troublemaker was the right word...maybe someone that was going to slow him down. That might be a fair way of describing

it. So June 30, Stavros finishes his two-year term as chair. My then, at the time best friend on the board, Bret Whipple, was a public defender—I was a private attorney. But that whole year I was running for office in '04, I would see Bret every day, and we would spend five minutes talking about the latest Board of Regents' saga because they were on the news a lot. People would ask me, "Why are you running to be on such a crazy board?"

Bret immediately said, "Great idea. Jim does need..." And it wasn't just to put a check and balance. It was to put a structure together where we could get the board to buy in to this developing vision of Jim's. It wasn't really any more complicated. But I knew as a young and somewhat experienced lawyer that you couldn't accomplish this on your own. People die. Different people come into office. Unless you have a successive... You don't get to pick your successor whether it's on the board or whether it's as chancellor. I just knew that we had to have a structure.

Never in '06 would have I imagined that we would be talking about a medical school in such a relatively short period of time, but it kind of limped along. The way that I wrote this history was I simply went to the Board of Regents' minutes, pulled them up on the computer when I would have a spare hour at the office, go through them, write a paragraph, see another client. A week or two later, I'd go back. I had another hour. I just went chronologically, which is the way you do most histories. It was certainly quite linear, the process.

Then, of course, Jim left. Jim's last day of chancellor was June 30 of 2009. I had been chairman of the Health Sciences Committee, pretty much, with a year gap, that entire time. On July first I became chairman of the board, and Dan Klaich became chancellor.

The project actually started to move quicker then. I don't want to say because Jim left. There was a lot of relief at the Nevada System of Higher Education, in terms of the chancellor's

cabinet. He had his favorites. He had a very, very explosive temper. It was not a pleasant workplace, not all the time, but enough of the time that you just didn't know which Jim you would see that morning. Little things could set him off. I don't talk about it in this history, and I probably won't talk about it today, but we had some significant disputes in 2005-6 ranging into 2007, some of which have been well documented by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, as well as the *Las Vegas Sun*. They are still there. If you google James Dean Leavitt and Jim Rogers, you will see a flood of interesting articles. How ironic that my first line is, "Chancellor Rogers and James Dean Leavitt." Like it or not...

In Jim's vision, he co-opted it from his own experiences with medical care here, from talking to other folks, and I think Jim was the kind of guy—one thing Jim had said to the board was, "I'm only going to do this for five years." No one believed that, but he kept to that. He wasn't sick until he left the board, a couple of years later. But he kept to that. He didn't keep to a lot of things that he said, but he did to that. I think he felt somewhat comfortable, somewhat, with what he accomplished.

Jim and I had a little bit of a complicated relationship. We only sat down three, four times. What we've done today would be about the length that Jim would give me. It would usually be over lunch. Jim wouldn't answer his phone during lunch, but he had so much going on. I don't know if he had lengthy conversations with any of his wives. He might have. He certainly didn't with me.

Walk through events leading up to what became the medical school and give me names of people as you go.

I'm looking right now, February of '05, thinking about this, it was probably my first meeting as an elected member of the board. You're elected in November. You're sworn in that first week of

January. Back then we were meeting six times a year. I subsequently changed that as chair to having four regularly scheduled meetings instead of six. But at that time, we were having six. At that very first meeting, there was an agenda item, and Jim Rogers—and I talk about this in my history—Jim had struck a deal with Bill Raggio, who was the then majority leader, a very, very legendary and powerful figure in Northern Nevada, a majority leader with the state Senate for a number of those years. He was a former district attorney and successful legal practitioner. But Jim—and maybe only Jim could have done this. I tell people, “Before there was Donald Trump, there was Jim Rogers.” Now, I don’t know if Donald Trump knew Jim Rogers, but it wouldn’t surprise me if he did.

What happened is, Jim proposed and basically said, “Look, I’m going to take the medical school from Reno unless you fund UNLV the same way you’ve been funding UNR.” Now, only Jim could say something like that because Jim had, they say, four or five hundred million dollars in the bank. It’s easier to make threats when you have those resources.

And when you have the truth.

And thank you for bringing that up. One of the reasons why so many people loved Jim is that—let’s go with “that was the truth.” The fact that he had to yell, scream, threaten many people would justify that. I wouldn’t have at the time. If you asked me today, I’d say it was a pretty effective strategy in this particular instance. As someone that has a degree in speech communication, civility and respect and restraint, and all of those things are hallmarks. They are core to my being.

Jim was a little different.

And I liked that part of him, of course, when I agreed with him, and I did most of the time, certainly not all the time.

Not a lot of people did all of the time. Ask Carol Harter.

Oh, and we can. We could call her right now, if she would still take my call. Look, in eighteen months, maybe it was twelve, Jim got rid of Carol Harter and John Lilley. John Lilley was the president at UNR. Now, most chancellors wouldn't have survived that; the board would have removed them.

The first thing that Jim wanted in February '05—two things. He cut a deal with Bill Raggio that in exchange for not taking the medical school or moving it to Las Vegas where the population center was, he asked us to agree to a twenty-year policy where UNLV would not develop its own medical school. If you look at my headline here, it is the twenty-year no-UNLV-medical-school policy. Now, Jim meant that at least for the first five minutes that he said it, maybe ten. But flash forward—and I don't know now; I'd have to look at my notes whether it was twelve or thirteen—but we had to bring a vote to the board to rescind the twenty-year policy.

Now, there were rumblings that I heard of, although no one said it to me directly, this would have been a great way to kill the medical school if you're a northern regent and you think that one medical school is sufficient. If you think that this will now put UNLV on par with UNR and possibly exceed them, which we've probably done, but this is what happens when the population center is where it is. This was just another barrier that we had to overcome.

I think that was a thirteen-zero vote. It might have been eleven-two, twelve-one. But part of that was because of the relationships I formed. I think part of it was, those that would have voted no knew that it was going to pass, and I don't think they wanted to be on the record of having opposed it. Because had they opposed it, they probably would have suffered the wrath of Jim, whether it was him contributing to future opponents, whether it was taking out a newspaper ad, whether it was doing an editorial, as he used to do on his television station. He not only

would threaten to do it, he would do it, and he did do it, and he did it repeatedly to many people, one of whom was Don Snyder. Jim, after his breakup with Carol, when Neal Smatresk leaves, Carol Harter is calling me, because I'm the chairman of the board, and she wants to be the interim president. She wants to come back to be interim president, and Jim wanted her because they had kissed and made up. Beverly [Jim's wife] became, as you know, good friends with Carol. One thing with me, even though Jim was aggressive towards me at certain times, there was a point where he got over that, and my last couple of years on the board, he was nothing but a huge supporter of mine, and he became that way certainly with Carol. He was very capable of changing his mind, and I give him credit for that.

Let's get back to the medical school. Tell me what's happening behind the scenes as now the medical school is going to be here in Las Vegas. What is happening?

During this 2006 period, there were other medical initiatives that were going on in the valley. The Nevada Cancer Institute was going on. That was led by Jim and Heather Murren, of course. Also, Governor Kenny Guinn had created what was called the Governor's Commission on Medical Education, Research and Training. I was appointed to that commission because I was the chairman of the Board of Regents Health Science Committee. Don Snyder was on that committee. Don was not directly involved with the board at that time, although he was a UNLV Foundation member. I got to know Don a little bit through those committee meetings. On top of that, you had Harvey Whittemore, one of the best-known, most-respected lawyers-turned-lobbyists in Northern Nevada. They had a daughter who suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome. He developed what I think is now called the Whittemore Chronic Fatigue Center—actually, Whittemore Institute for Neuroimmune Disease [now the Whittemore Peterson Institute,] I think

that was the last title, and that was being developed. There were these different projects that were going on.

Then in 2006, Jim Rogers hired Thom Reilly. This was July of '06. Thom was the former county manager, as you know. He had done quite a bit of work in the community. What's cute about this story is Thom Reilly lasted somewhere between two and three weeks. We still gave him Employee of the Month. He then took a job with Jan Jones over at Harrah's and was given the title of...He was giving out the money.

Development.

Development, sure, let's go with that. They have to have four or five words. They can't just be development officer, so you had two or three titles. He leaves. Then Jim finds someone called Dr. Maurizio Trevisan, and he was hired to be the executive vice chancellor, chief operating officer of the Nevada System of Higher Education Health Sciences System, and he was hired August 16 of 2007. I'm just going to read this because it's simpler. Here is what I wrote in my history.

“Dr. Trevisan was hired by Chancellor Rogers. It was his responsibility to craft and execute the Board of Regents' vision.” The 2007 to 2009 years consisted mostly of a statewide listening tour by Dr. Trevisan as he and Greg Hart of LarsonAllen, which was a medical consulting firm. Basically during that two-year period, they had to figure out what was it Nevada needed, and particularly what did Southern Nevada need?

Now, we were having Health Science Committee meetings, and we were doing some smaller things, if you will. There was also an Andre Agassi event that was part of a Lincy Foundation event. That raised quite a bit of money. I don't know if I could tell you right now if it was \$200,000 or \$2 million. It might have been closer to \$2 million, but a drop in the bucket.

The UNR School of Medicine annual budget, I think, was \$160 million. Don't quote me on that figure, but something like that. Two million is nice, but it's nothing when you're talking about a hundred-plus-million-dollar enterprise. This was when Nevada was entering the recession, and certainly—and I write—“Chancellor Rogers' dream had yet to catch fire with the Board of Regents,” or frankly, the community at large.

Then we're at the point where I'm elected chairman of the board. Mark Doubrava gets elected in 2010. He came on exactly six years after I did. Now, when the original Health Sciences Committee was formed, Jim and I and one other gentleman—I can't recall who that was—we had dinner one night, and we went through a list of prominent people from the community, not prominent from the sense of having money, although some did, prominent people that could assist us. It could be a nurse. It could be a doctor. But a collection of people that cared about expanding healthcare and increasing academic medicine, which we've suffered from for so long, but this is the history of Las Vegas. You could look at it as it's absolutely amazing what we've done. That's how I look at it. Or you could criticize what hasn't happened. I don't do that because these things just take so much effort, work in concert, and an awful lot of serendipity. There is just no other way to look at it. The timing has to be right.

So back in this recessionary period, I'm now the chairman of the board, from '09 to '11, so 2009, July first. Things changed then. They changed because Jim is no longer there. A lot of people, me in particular, wondered, what would happen? How could I fill Jim's shoes? And I couldn't. I didn't have the capital. I didn't have the skill. But I did have some pretty good relationships on the board, far better than Jim ever had. There is no question about that.

But a year later then, Mark Doubrava joins the board. Mark was a well-known ophthalmologist, still is. But when we created the committee in '06, Mark was part of that

advisory group. But what we created was what's called an ad hoc committee. When the Board of Regents starts a new committee, it always has to start as an ad hoc, and an ad hoc by regent policy is only up to twelve months. You can either reinstitute it, or you can disband it and make it a permanent committee, which is what we did. When we did do that—and it arguably was a mistake—what we did is, once it was a permanent standing committee of the board, we then disbanded the advisory group, and I've listed all their members in this document. You don't probably need their names right now, but I can read them to you if you want.

Would you go ahead, please?

I will. May 2006, Bret Whipple, chairman of the board, appointed me as chairman of the ad hoc Health Science Committee, and he appointed Ron Kline, who was a fairly new physician, but very interested in developing an academic medical center. Bret Whipple introduced me to him those first few months because there was a small group of doctors who were talking about doing something, and Jim was perfect because this is what Jim wanted to do. They maybe didn't have the same ideas, but there was this palpable enthusiasm amongst a very, very small group of people. In addition to me being the chair and Dr. Kline being the chairman of the advisory committee, the following members were appointed, and they were appointed by Jim and me. Call it chairman of the board. Call it Jim Rogers. The original regents in that group were Stavros Anthony, Dorothy Gallagher, who is now deceased, Linda Howard, Michael Wixom. The original members of the advisory committee were Assemblyman Morse Arberry; Ms. Bobbette Bond; Steve Cohen; Mark Doubrava, we've mentioned; Mitchell Forman, a doctor of osteopathy; Betsy Fretwell; Tom Gallagher; Betsy Gilbertson; Steven Glyman, a neurologist who has moved out of state; Wayne Hardwick, M.D.; Don Havens; State Senator Joe Heck, who became a congressman; Gerald Higgins, who is now deceased and performed a couple of my

knee surgeries; an icon who is still around, Zaven Khachaturian; James Lenhart; State Senator Bernice Martin Mathews; John MacDonald, who was the dean of the [UNR] medical school; Bill Orrison, who passed away; Clark County Commissioner Rory Reid; Clark County Manager Thom Reilly; another doctor named Richard Seher; Lisa Serwin; and Bill Welch, who is still the head of the Nevada Hospital Association.

But the only NSHE staff support at the time was Dan Klaich and Marcia Turner. This is why you should also speak with Dan Klaich. He would speak with you if you used my name. He is not very fond of NSHE because of the way they treated him when he was sort of unceremoniously kicked to the curb in 2016. But we're personal friends, and we still talk.

I don't think I can overstate the significance of Mark Doubrava coming on the board because now it sort of felt like I wasn't the only one on the board who was pushing what I'll loosely call the health science initiative. It didn't have a name. It certainly didn't have the name UNLV School of Medicine.

Also, because it was a standing committee now, because it was Jim's pet project, if you will, Jim didn't really care about the other committees. Well, I didn't really care that much about the other committees. I cared, but this was important. The other committees—budget, finance—look, they'd been around for fifty years. Academic affairs. Okay, all important stuff, don't get me wrong, but this was new. This was something where you could make a difference. Who wants to just do what their predecessors have done? Someone else can do that job. There seemed to be this appetite, not so much from the board, let me be perfectly clear.

But when Mark came on, Mark is a very, very passive, quiet, dignified, thoughtful, well-spoken physician and regent. He doesn't say very much. When he does, people listen. But some unfairly called him a single-issue regent. I don't know if he would disagree with that. He'd

probably say it was the most important issue. I think that would be a fair thing to say about me. But unlike me, Mark absolutely ran for the board because he saw this opportunity developing where UNLV could one day have a medical school. There is no doubt that that was his motivation.

I wasn't thinking about anything health related initiative-wise when I came on. I think I told you that at the very beginning. I just wanted to make a difference. I wanted to escape from, sort of, the dark side of criminal defense, eight hours a day, very soul-crushing work. You've got an eighteen-year-old kid in jail. You've got the parents and grandparents, all of whom are crying, none of whom have any money, wanting me to solve the problem that someone else committed, their loved family member. It was a lot.

But Mark was 100 percent supportive. But here we are, we are now in the middle of the recession. In my two years as board chairman, there was not a lot of ribbon cutting. Now, we opened some buildings, but they had been funded two, four years earlier, and so there were a few pleasant moments. But we would sit around and discuss while I was chair whether to eliminate Nevada State as a college. The idea was we can cut everybody 10 percent or get rid of Nevada State and not cut anybody. Sort of like, what do you do when you have a sick child? There is only so much food to eat. We had discussions about whether to cut women's studies or philosophy. Now, the right answer is neither. That was the right answer. But things were being cut. The governor cut everybody 20 percent. The governor didn't have any choice. Now, I acted like he did, and I certainly on behalf of the board said, "It's an investment." I'm really talking about the 2009-11 years. There just wasn't funding. We were discussing college closures. We were discussing program closures.

You had just said something about women's studies.

Women's studies versus philosophy. I don't think anyone on the board was in favor of cutting either of those. Philosophy, of course, is the hallmark, really your first department at any institution, two, three, four hundred years back. That was unthinkable. With the political climate, cutting women's studies, probably even more unthinkable. But hey, not that the board pays attention to politics. Sometimes we do.

I'm just going to read this into the record talking about the 2009 to 2011 years, and I do have some of my memory still. But what I write is, "These two years were significant in three respects. First, the State of Nevada entered its worst recession since the Great Depression of 1929. The entire higher education budget of 2009 to '11 was slashed by incoming Governor Sandoval." That's probably a strong word, but I used it.

It was right.

Well, it's colorful. Fair enough. But I'm not criticizing the governor. When the pie is 20 percent smaller, then everybody gets cut—well, some people get cut sometimes more than others. Anyway, there was no new money for higher ed for the development of any health science initiatives. Keep in mind, our little staff, besides Dan Klaich, who was now chancellor, was Marcia Turner, one individual. We are paying her a good salary, but it's just one person.

Then I go on to say, "The board was cutting and eliminating programs and even talking about the closure of campuses and institutions. These were dark times in higher education for faculty, staff, and students." And then, "Second, could I, as chairman of the board, along with Chancellor Klaich, continue the vision and enthusiasm of Chancellor Rogers for the development of an academic medical center?" I ended that statement with a question mark. I was very, very concerned. "During those years, efforts were made to partner with UMC and to create a separate UMC advisory board. John O'Reilly, commissioners Weekly, Sisolak, and Giunchigliani

provided strong support in accomplishing that.” The relationship, of course, between UMC and ultimately the UNLV School of Medicine is critical. It’s under attack today. That’s a subject for another day, but I had a conversation just this Sunday, a lengthy lunch, about some of the existential funding threats that the UNLV School of Medicine still face.

Then I said, “Third, the addition of Dr. Mark Doubrava to the board was instrumental. He had served as an advisory member and was intimately familiar with many of the issues starting a medical school.” I said, “We had a meaningful preexisting relationship.” He and I had worked closely together in leading the effort to start the UNLV school. He was also a graduate of the University of Nevada School of Medicine. He was also a native Las Vegas, and his father was a well-known physician, who just passed away about a year ago.

Then all of a sudden, 2011, Dr. Trevisan. I misspoke. I said it was just Marcia. It was also Dr. Trevisan for that period of time 2006 to 2009.

We didn’t really have any...I don’t want to say any leaders because I probably don’t give as much credit to Dan Klaich in here as I should. Certainly, the Southern Nevada community, many people were suspicious of Dan. He was the northern chancellor. Dan was the student body president at UNR. He has blue blood. You and I have red blood. But I never, ever saw any obvious favoritism ever to UNR, and I worked with him closely, and he is one of two people that I still talk to. In fact, I was having a text conversation with him five minutes before we met today. In fact, this just came from the printer today, and I texted him a copy of this. I’m waiting. He has probably responded while we’ve been sitting here.

Anyway, Trevisan leaves. Dan Klaich promotes Marcia Turner and makes her executive vice chancellor of the health science system. She was now the designated staff person to support

the Health Science Committee that I chaired, that I went back to chairing after I finished my two one-year terms as chairman of the board.

Now here we are 2013, and the Lincy Institute—you're familiar with them—they commissioned—and they get a lot of credit, and I hope I give them the appropriate credit—they commissioned a second consulting firm. The first one was LarsonAllen. I spoke to you briefly about them. They did that listening tour from '07 to '09. They were hired to help Jim craft his vision. What do we need? Jim was willing to listen to experts. He would then make his opinion based upon that information. The Lincy Institute commissioned a group called Tripp Umbach to prepare an economic impact report to show the value of a new four-year medical school in Las Vegas.

Their findings, which were only released in October of '13, were the following: That a full-scale four-year independent medical school in Las Vegas would have a substantial higher economic impact than a regional campus of the University of Nevada School of Medicine. Then it went on to say, "The average economic impact of an additional state-supported medical school shows that having one state-supported medical school equals \$882 million." That's three times the average of a four-year regional campus. Tripp Umbach is now—and I didn't have anything to do with that. This had as much to do with the future success because they had now made—now, whether these studies were—and I'm not suggesting they weren't accurate. Experts paid to be experts. I'll say it that way. But they basically showed that the impact at maturity for a standalone school, UNLV, \$1.2 million [billion. According to key findings in the 2013 report, "Tripp Umbach estimates that a new four-year medical school developed in Las Vegas as a result of a joint venture between UNSOM-UNR and UNLV will have a total annual economic impact

of \$1.2 billion at maturity (2030).”] They may have even underestimated that number, maybe. Most reports overestimate because that’s...

It’s safe.

You want to keep your client happy. You also want to have integrity and be able to stand behind numbers. I’ll have to double check that date. I think that was ’13.

The first real discussion regarding a potential UNLV School of Medicine was in June of 2013. Doubrava was now the chairman of Health Science; I was the vice chairman. “Several regents expressed skepticism about UNLV starting its own medical school citing the cost and how it would impact the existing University of Nevada School of Medicine.” And I write, “Nonetheless, we were actually discussing the issue.” I said, “The spark generated by this discussion ignited a blaze that would soon capture the imagination of Southern Nevada leaders.” Nevada was starting to climb out of the recession, and so here we are in ’13. We now have an economic impact study we can wave around. Everybody in the south, of course, “Why in the hell don’t we have a medical school? We’re the largest metropolitan area without one. It just doesn’t sound right.” Here we are lagging in education, and what a way to help with this two-, three-hundred-year vision.

We are about 2013 right now?

We are now in 2013. I told you about that June 2013 discussion that was led by Regent Doubrava. Then between June ’13 and September ’13, I’m now chairman again of the Health Science Committee. It’s the chairman of the board every year that gets to decide who the committee chairs are. Dr. Doubrava always wanted to be chair of Health Sciences Committee, but that was something that I had staked out, if you will, because I had been there. I created the entity, et cetera.

In 2013, Chairman Page asked if I minded if Doubrava would be chair of Health Sciences. I was grateful to take a step back. I had just been the chairman of the board from '09 to '11. Our committee assignments change July first each year. Now here we have this discussion June of '13. Doubrava is chair. Our next discussion is in Elko in September, three months later. I'm back again as chair of the committee. This is where the next discussion took place. Tom Schwenk, who was the then dean of the University of Nevada School of Medicine, presented his vision statement for public medical education in Nevada. All of this work, these studies, LarsonAllen, Tripp Umbach were really making the economic case, not so much "let's have a school." But by having a school, we can create jobs, revenue, and, of course, hopefully improve health outcomes.

I was now chair. Regent Doubrava was my vice chair. Dean Schwenk stated at this meeting that the ideal governance structure and organizational structure surrounding the University of Nevada School of Medicine [UNSOM] that this enterprise would only be successful if there was a clear resolution of the north-south tensions that had plagued UNSOM really since its creation. He then said, "Whatever vision is chosen will require a public unified commitment in support from the governor, legislature, Board of Regents, critical leaders, and donors. This is just September of '13.

Then discussions at that time involved developing a branch campus at UNLV rather than a full four-year school. All of this was incremental. It never went from zero to sixty. It went from zero to ten, back to five, then up to twenty, then back to fifteen, then thirty, and then it stayed at thirty. Now, when this is going on, I have a private practice. I have kids. This isn't the only thing that I'm thinking about, but it's a large part of what I'm thinking about. Flash forward. I title this next section, "Something magical was happening." I'm just going to read this. At this same

meeting in Elko that Dean Schwenk spoke about, I had drafted the first—regent items are either action items or they're information action items. I drafted an action item regarding public medical expansion in Northern, rural, and Southern Nevada. I deliberately added northern and rural. I really meant southern. There was some strategy to that. Then I state, "This was historic as the regents were not just discussing public medical education expansion but acting on it." Then I said, "Powerful forces were converging all at once. Momentum was building amongst the regents.

The state was climbing out of the recession. UNLV was energized, and Southern Nevada community members and elected officials were rallying around the project. The board was also getting strong support from Chancellor Klaich and from current board chairman Kevin Page, as well as the other regents who were serving on the Health Science Committee." I said, "The relationships I had developed with my colleagues over many years were bearing fruit." I can't really underestimate that, but I don't know how to quantify it.

And probably can't be.

Probably can't be.

But this narrative information, though, supports it.

[End of first session.]

This is Claytee White. It is 10/4/2022. I am with James Dean Leavitt again, second session.

You had talked about something magical was happening. Do you want to continue talking about that magical time?

When I say that, there was finally a sense that maybe this idea that had been percolating on and off for years in Southern Nevada was finally happening. Unusually, the *Review-Journal*, as well as, in particular, the *Las Vegas Sun*, let's be clear, they agreed on something, and that was

certainly public medical education and expansion in Southern Nevada, and certainly in the state as well, but primarily in Las Vegas with this large growing community that frankly didn't have enough academics of any stripe whether it be lawyers, doctors. Some say we've had too many lawyers for a long time. You never hear that we've ever had too many medical professionals. Certainly, the newspapers, they drive public opinion. I think when we were last visiting, you had the Lincy Institute, you had Harvey's Whittemore Peterson Institute up in Northern Nevada, and you certainly had the Lou Ruvo Brain Health Center. Larry honored his father that way, and certainly I feel like I've honored my father this way. My dad didn't go into academic medicine, but he had the chance to. He was first in his class, unlike his son. He spent four years at the Mayo Clinic back in '55 to '59. My sisters were born in the most famous hospital in the world, and that always meant a lot to me. My father went back to Calgary to open up his medical practice, and that's where me and my younger brother were born. But I would have loved to have been able to say I was born in the Mayo Clinic. They say Jesus was born in a stable. I don't know which is more prestigious.

The newspaper, the Lincy Institute, the Tripp Umbach report, and Rob Lang certainly played a pivotal role in pushing all of this. Rob Lang passed away, of course, but he was instrumental. But you've got to credit Brian Greenspun. Brian Greenspun was the force that brought Brookings Mountain West, and, of course, a very respected academic enterprise back in D.C. Rob Lang was a prominent academic.

Tie him to the Lincy.

Yes. Certainly, Rob had become an expert at what we could do to grow UNLV and Southern Nevada, and he felt strongly that a medical school would produce—forget the academic impact—but an economic impact. Certainly, communities love anything that has economic

impact. No surprise that this was something that the *R-J* and the *Sun* agreed upon. Once you had that momentum building...And then you had a Northern Nevada governor, and I have to give Brian Sandoval a lot of credit because he got behind the project early. At the end of the day, all good ideas die at the legislature unless leadership wants to support them. You can't rely on just philanthropy because these are a couple-hundred-million-dollar enterprises every single year.

But what's interesting, the University of Nevada School of Medicine—a lot of people don't know this—but its budget back when I was on the board was \$160 million. We, the taxpayers, were only paying \$30 million out of that \$160. It was producing \$130 million. That was a story that frankly has rarely been told. Insiders perhaps know that. Medical schools, unlike law schools, can produce economic impact. Law schools produce academic impact, but I'm not aware of any economic impact that comes.

When you have all those things converging...Let's not forget there were historically, some would say, dark forces up north. I don't know if that's the right word, but I'll use it because it's a colorful word. Look, people are resistant to change, and thirty, forty years ago, and it's going on to this day, the power dynamics in Nevada have shifted from the north to the south.

Do you think it has shifted?

How much? I can't say. But certainly, it's shifted. I don't think there is any question about that. I think it continues because Southern Nevada is growing faster than Northern Nevada. I like to say there is enough room to have a significant presence both by UNR, as well as UNLV, on the academic side, and I don't want to minimize obviously the community colleges and the state colleges for what they do, but the universities are the ones that produce the research and hopefully contribute to the public good.

Talk about our next president of UNLV. Neal comes along at this time.

Neal comes along, but Neal had been here a few years because he was the provost with David Ashley.

He was the provost first?

Neal was the provost. I'm 100 percent clear about that. In fact, I can tell you an interesting story. This would have been January of 2009. I had a conversation with Neal Smatresk at the airport. We had just returned from a board meeting up in Reno. Again, for the record, January 2009. Neal was concerned about where the UNLV presidency was going. David Ashley was under attack at that time, not from me, but certainly from several members of the board, strictly related not just to his job performance but arguable, some thought inappropriate, interference by his wife in university affairs. That was something that we had not seen, certainly at least before, in the Nevada System of Higher Education, but you hear about it elsewhere.

I can remember telling Neal to be patient, to wait, that I expected to be the chairman of the board July first that year, which I became. Three days later, I called for a personnel session. David Ashley, after a long, lengthy, painful hearing, was unanimously removed from his presidency and placed back into his tenure-track position at the College of Engineering. We hired him when he was president as someone with tenure track, and then it wasn't long after that that Chancellor Klaich and I recommended to the board that Neal Smatresk be appointed as President. Again, that was now July of 2009.

What was interesting about that is Neal was a supporter of this concept, fledgling, what I'll call, school of medicine concept. Behind the scenes, he was working on that because he was working on what we were now calling the Tier One Project, putting UNLV into that distinguished category. The medical school was a piece of that, yet the reality was you couldn't be very public about it because we had—when I say “we,” the Board of Regents—in 2005, had

just decided to support Jim Rogers' twenty-year policy where there would be no medical school at UNLV. That was a strategic decision that Jim had made basically to secure more funding for UNLV when there was a belief that UNR was getting funded at a higher level than UNLV was.

I was never able to determine the truth of that belief the entire time I was on the board. There are so many different numbers you can look at. What college are we looking at within the university? Are we looking at it from a per-pupil standpoint? It's a very complicated question to do the math because you have institutions that have emerged at different times, and then you've got different colleges within the institutions, and they're all competing often for federal dollars.

Speak about that policy prohibiting the creation.

This was my first meeting in 2005. Jim Rogers certainly had a belief that UNLV needed to be funded more. One of the things that Jim was very good at was—I don't know if I want to use the word threatening, but maybe that's the word I'll use.

I think it fits.

Anyone that knows Jim probably wouldn't be upset by that. I don't think his family members would be upset. I say that with a smile because as dictatorial as Jim's instincts were, the great thing, at least at it related to higher ed, his heart was clearly in the right place. Now, as a private citizen, as the owner of Channel 3, those are different issues. But how can you not love some guy that's pushing more funding? And he wasn't just pushing for more funding for UNLV. He was pushing for more funding for every single institution.

For education.

Jim cared about all eight institutions, that's clear. I think I failed to mention this last time. When we organized the Health Science Committee to give structure to Jim's vision, there was a lot of resentment from members of the board because they felt like this was Jim's singular passion.

Maybe it needed to be. For example, we spoke earlier about some folks with CSN [College of Southern Nevada] who felt like there was...The community colleges have always felt that the universities...UNLV has always felt that UNR...There's competition. What we've done historically on the board, and whether that changes in the future, but the budgets basically get submitted by the institutions to the Chancellor's Office. The chancellor then, like having eight unruly children, tries to get them to agree to what ultimately gets presented to the board, and the board generally supports that. The other option, which I hope we don't see, is where the institutions come in and make their own case to the regents. That's a very, very difficult situation then because that just introduces a whole other level of politics and divisiveness, potentially. The chancellor has such a hard job because he's trying to advocate for everybody, but not everyone believes the chancellor is advocating for their institution to the degree that they hope.

Is there anything else that you want to add about that 2005 policy?

Just that like any other policy, it can be changed. No board can bind a future board, no legislature. But the important thing is, there were folks on the board, I think, that wanted to hang their hat on that policy as a reason not to support the UNLV School of Medicine, because we had to rescind that policy. But I firmly believe that the relationships that I had cultivated with my northern colleagues, I think that quelled any vocal opposition to the project, not private but vocal, public.

You talk about a statewide steering committee was put together.

This was really an idea by Chancellor Klaich. I'm looking now, and here we have the members: Dan Klaich, of course, chancellor; Marc Johnson, president of UNR; Kevin Carman, executive vice president and provost of UNR; Tom Schwenk, dean of University of Nevada School of Medicine; Don Snyder, UNLV president; John White, provost of UNLV; Barbara Atkinson,

planning dean at UNLV; and then the two outsiders that were brought in were Phil Satre, who certainly had a statewide reputation [in the hospitality industry]; and then Michael Yackira, CEO Nevada Power]. Strategically, Dan did not put me and Mark Doubrava on that committee. We pushed back a little bit on that. Again, our job is to create policy on the board. It's the job of the professionals to implement that.

How did you feel about that?

We kept a close watch. We were a little bit concerned because, like everything else, there is always a balance between openness and transparency. Now, any big decisions, of course, have to be approved by the board. Fortunately, certainly speaking for myself, I had both trust and respect of Dan. I knew that he was supportive. Dan, I don't way to say received criticism, but a lot of people in the south and even the newspapers in the south weren't convinced that he was necessarily a supporter of the UNLV School of Medicine. Those are not the facts. This is a guy that I worked with every single day basically the entire twelve years I was on the board. He had been hired in late '04, and I started early January of '05. We connected partly because we were both lawyers and so we spoke the same language. But I always found him to be someone just fully committed to this grand higher education enterprise. I think he truly loved what he was doing. I never, ever saw him give any preference to any institution. Now, he bled UNR. He was the student body president. He was born in Northern Nevada. He was clearly a Wolf Pack for life. That being said, I think when he put on his hat...He told me a story once, and it was right after I was elected. We had lunch and introduced ourselves. He said two things, and I'm only going to mention one of them. He said that the greatest compliment that he was given when he left the board is no one viewed him as a northern or a southern regent. That was always my goal, to be viewed that way. Whether I was is for others to decide.

Lastly, the steering committee, their job was to work out intricate details that weren't necessarily appropriate for me and Mark Doubrava. We were the policy guys. We were the members of the board. I had a very, very busy law practice. Mark had a very, very busy medical practice. We wouldn't have had the time to fully participate, although we would have made the time had we been asked.

It's such a tough balance. The history of the board, this whole issue of oversight, policy management versus micromanaging, it's such a fine line. We get criticized, sometimes justifiably so, but I think other times we have to be involved, especially when others aren't doing their job, and sometimes that's the case. But that tension, I think it's necessary. It's never going to go away, and it shouldn't be something that's resented or criticized. I think it should be more understood that these are just checks and balances in a functioning democracy that we're all trying to improve upon as we continue this American experiment.

I'd like for you to talk about Don Snyder, his significance, and talk about him as a person.

As a person, he is one of my favorite people. The people that I love and respect are those that are busy in the private sector, but somehow find time to work in the public sector, and certainly that would describe Don's life whether it's the Smith Center for the Performing Arts. Right around this time, of course, two, three years earlier, Governor Guinn had created the Medical Education, Research and Training Commission. This was part of, again, identifying unmet healthcare needs in Nevada. Don was charged with leading that effort. I was a member of that group appointed by the governor basically to be the regents' representative. Don certainly had a pretty deep knowledge of the unmet needs in Southern Nevada.

As president, he came in. He was interim because Neal Smatresk accepted the presidency at the University of North Texas. Don was there for a short time period, but Don is the one with

Provost White who made the decision—I can remember it like yesterday. They called me and told me that they had identified Barbara Atkinson as the leading candidate [for planning dean]. They asked what I thought. I did a rudimentary Google search, which was certainly all that I could do. I was very supportive of that decision to hire Barbara.

I've said this before. My history that I've written and that I've spoken about really takes us to 2014. I served on the board until 2016, but we've identified 2014, and I can remember it like it was yesterday. Barbara Atkinson says that I received the first phone call. I don't have any reason to doubt that statement. That's when she received news that we had received preliminary accreditation, and that was certainly a day to be celebrated.

After that news, I decided that it was appropriate that we have a function to celebrate that success. It's interesting, I had an idea that I presented to President Jessup, and I thought it would be really, really cool if he could—again, this was just a suggestion on my part—the suggestion was, let's create a special one-time signature leather jacket that we could give whether it was to members of the board, whether it was to members of the different committees that we had assembled.

What happened is, we had that ceremony, and at the ceremony many of us regents—the Community Advisory Board, I believe that was the name at the time, but I could be wrong on that because the name changed—several of us were presented with your traditional doctor white coats, but at that ceremony I was presented by Len Jessup with this jacket. No surprise that I've included that. There is only one of these that exists.

When you say, “One of these...”

One of these special jackets. This was given to me as a gift by President Jessup for my efforts in assisting with the creation. That's one of two things that I personally own that mean a lot to me.

The other is my father's gold medal that he received when he finished first in his medical class. What I was disappointed with is that he only presented me with one, and Mark Doubrava should have gotten one, and I think others should have. I have no doubt that that was probably an expensive gift.

Describe the jacket.

The jacket just has a symbol. I'm not even sure, frankly, if the current school—in fact, I had recently looked at their website. I don't know that this logo exists anywhere else. I don't think it does. I need to probably do my own research.

Because it's now the Kirk Kerkorian.

It's the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine, of course. That's fairly recent, and certainly that's not displayed on this jacket. There are different versions of the image with the snake, and a lot of times it's not done correctly. This is done correctly. I wish I could give you more details about that in terms of where the snake is and how it's wrapped around. There are correct ways of doing it and incorrect ways. But any event, it was a memento, a generous gift. I just think a lot of others should have been given one.

I've never worn it, but I was recently told, in fact, I believe on October 12 or 13 next week, the donor group with the School of Medicine is actually having a reception of the grand opening of the UNLV Medical School Building. Then in November, UNLV Medical School is having its own. The target audience for those two are different. I'm waiting to find out. What happened a few years ago, UNLV allowed this outside group to take over the construction of the building, and that was, in essence, the donor group. It's got an official title. I just can't tell you exactly what that is right now.

But in any event, the agreement that was reached between the Board of Regents and the outside group is that the building will revert back to the School of Medicine five years from the opening. Even though the medical school will be housed there, and classes will commence in January, much of that building, at least from a financial standpoint, will be managed by the donor group until that time period. I don't say there is necessarily conflict between the two groups, but they don't necessarily 100 percent agree on every decision that gets made. For example, this first event is being managed completely by the donor group; the second event by the School of Medicine. I'd like to see all this go through the School of Medicine, but there were politics involved when the decision was made a few years ago to take the building away from the Board of Regents and then, in essence, Public Works, who manages these projects. Basically, they farmed the construction out to the private sector, and there were some advantages to doing it that way. There was a belief that the board wouldn't properly manage the construction and the monies, but that's just a complete fallacy. The board has never, ever been involved in the management or construction of any building on any campus, but there was a belief that that was the case. Sometimes belief trumps reality.

You talked about the governor. You talked about the dean. What about Len Jessup?

Len gets hired in December of '14, if I have that correct, and then we're going into the legislative session two months later, in February of 2015. Len did everything he could to catch up to speed, if you will. Certainly all the institutional people were still here. Barbara Atkinson was here. The Board of Regents were here. I was here. At that time, Kevin Page was the chairman of the board. Rick Trachok was vice chairman. He had a personal relationship with the governor, and they had been longtime friends. Len did what he was supposed to do, which was go to the legislature and

say this was important. But to say that Len was responsible for the UNLV School of Medicine, that would just be a silly statement.

No one has made that argument, I'm sure.

It's interesting because I think I mentioned when I was last here that I had breakfast a couple months back now with Dean Kahn, and he kind of chuckled and said that about thirty people had taken credit for the School of Medicine to one degree or another. There are probably three hundred that should take credit at some level.

But he very much appreciated my history and emphasis. If Mark Doubrava wrote this document and had eight pages, it would read differently. You look at how many books have been written about Lincoln or any other historical figure, President Obama. I followed the minutes. It's not disputed that I created the committee and that I gave a structure, and that was obviously important. I get asked sometimes, "Would there be a UNLV School of Medicine but for my efforts?" I don't know the answer to that question. I like to think there would have been. Maybe it would have taken two more years, maybe a decade. There was a short window there, and there often is. Again, we were coming out of the recession at this time, and we had a governor. Mike Roberson and I talk a little bit about him. He was the Republican majority leader at that time in the Senate, and those folks have just unbelievable power, and they can find money when they need to, and there's never enough money. As worthy as this project was, there was certainly quiet opposition to it because anytime you decide to give \$25 million to start the school, what you're really saying is, well, it's going to be hundreds of millions over the next several decades. These things don't go away once you create them, and they're not supposed to. But it's still a significant amount of money. Whether it was best spent on this project versus any other, that's for the gods to decide, I suppose.

I don't know if I've said quite enough about Don. Again, I think what's so interesting and kind of what motivated me to finally finish this is a couple of months back was Don and I were meeting about my campaign for judge. My regent days are long gone. They are a footnote in history. Now a few people are going to learn more about it as this building opens up. But it really struck me when he said—and I can't remember exactly. I asked him how much of this did he know, and his answer was not very much. I can't remember if he said 10 percent or 20 or 30, but he didn't know very much. No reason that he would have.

I shared this, and I think this is a cute story. The charter class graduated in May of 2021. I get a phone call a few days after the event asking where I was. I said, "No one invited me." I can't overestimate how disappointed I was. That being said, there was no one to blame.

Because people didn't know the history.

Yes. We had a new dean. We had a new president. But this is why it's so important. My love of history came from my father. My father wrote a history, and the book is about this thick—I'll show it to you sometime—of the Leavitt history, but he did the same thing for my mother. My mother's maiden name was Bullock. He took the time and effort to write a comprehensive—that book is about this thick—about the Bullock history. I talked about two of my prized possessions. I should have included those books. If you don't tell it, it's as if it never happened.

That's correct.

I sort of felt like I had a duty not just to myself but to my two sons. I needed to finish this document. I waited six years, and I think I made it very, very clear in 2016 when I left the board. I asked Dean Atkinson, "Can we put this on the UNLV website?" She said to me, "I'll have my marketing people get back to you."

But you asked about the UNLV website, not—

I'm talking about the UNLV School of Medicine, I'm sorry, specifically, yes. I wasn't asking that it be reprinted in full, but that the information be used. They could be the ones to write it. Their story would be somewhat different, and you're probably not going to have eight pages, but they could have had their own two or three and had this as a link.

Was this before her illness? Probably.

She had two or three different setbacks, if you will. I don't blame Dean Atkinson. I want to be clear. But her final words to me were, "I'll have my marketing people get back to you." Again, she was ill. I felt like it should have been taken a little bit more seriously. But understand, this was 2016. The charter class didn't even start until 2017. This was not, nor should it have been, a high priority. The priority was getting the school up and running, getting the charter class accepted, hiring professors, et cetera. Here we are six years later, and now is the time to be telling the story. Sometimes I'm not as humble as I should be, and I'm not as patient as I should be, but sometimes that comes with age. I turned sixty not too long ago. It was last December, but I'm still sixty, and I may stick with sixty for the next ten or twenty years. Maybe that will just be my line.

That's great.

Now we have the building opening up, so it's a great time. I've spoken to Dean Kahn about how important this was to me, and I think he gets that. We've had some recent communications. They'll figure out a way to reflect this history with my efforts and Mark Doubrava's. It's an exciting time for the school.

I think so, too. Looking at these names that you've listed for the legislative leadership and the community engagement board, your last page there, who among those should be interviewed?

I think Michael Roberson should be. Again, there is so much difference between the majority leader and the minority leader. My understanding is that he worked well with Aaron Ford, who is now our attorney general. I think Michael Roberson would have some insight that I'm not privy to. I think he would be the main one. In a perfect world, sure, all of them, but I think he stands out to me.

The medical school is going to do an oral history project at some point, so that's why I'm asking.

Sure. Really, what I think might be appropriate, and it's not my job to tell Paul Harasim—I've not even spoken to him yet. I would like to introduce myself soon to him. I plan on doing it. I think it might be a good idea for Marc to send this document to every single one of these people and ask them, are there any gaps to be filled in? I'm not adverse at all to editing this document. Again, I called it my history because it is my history. There are so many who were involved that I probably haven't listed. There is just no question about that. How significant of a role, when I look at the engagement board members, what have I listed here, thirty, forty people in this document? They all would have played varying roles. They were secondary roles, but you would expect them to be. Secondary in the sense that they came after what we had done at the beginning. But I don't want to say any less significant, per se.

I'm looking at my document right now under "milestones," the last page. I write that the school received its preliminary accreditation on October 18, 2016. I think that was '14, and I have to double check that. That could be an error, but I'm not positive that it is. I know that I have previously...I list on the front page that the school was established in '14.

Barbara Atkinson was appointed planning dean May 2014. Does that make sense that this should be 2014 or 2016, the preliminary accreditation? It couldn't have been 2014.

Maybe I've got this wrong, but I'm looking at the jacket, and I list the creation of the school as '14. I need to double check that. I'll do that and get back to you.

Page 7, I think that's probably correct.

What do I say?

“The UNLV School of Medicine was officially established August 22, 2014.” It could not have been accredited immediately. It was later on that it received its accreditation.

I may have it right.

Yes, I think you do.

I hope I do. I don't want to reprint these, but if I have to. I only had two or three people proofread this document. I had Marcia do it. I had Dan Klaich do it, and Kevin Page. I'm talking six years ago. I don't think they would have reviewed it necessarily. I asked them to take a close look. There is nothing I can think of in here that's not accurate. But I hope it gets sent out to a lot of people because if there are inaccuracies, then let's fix them. There always are with history, almost always. Look, we're telling the story, and I guess that's what I'm most proud about. I like to think that I properly credit folks. If there are two people here that I probably don't talk about enough, it would probably be Dan Klaich and Marcia Turner, who was his point person. She was ultimately the executive vice chancellor of health sciences before we discontinued that at a system level. But they were doing their jobs. This is what we were paying them a reasonable amount of money to do.

You are only sixty, but when you think about your overall legacy, later on, when you're ninety-five, how will this play in that legacy?

I hope there is something big that I'm about to do soon. We'll see. Certainly, I'm in the middle—I shouldn't say the middle. I'm at the very end of running. This race has been so unusual because

it really didn't start until July 23 because this is a special election to fill the seat that was held by Cristina Silva. She was appointed to the federal bench. A decision was made to have a special election, and so there was no primary. I'm still reaching out as we speak to fund raise. I spend most of my day doing that. That's what I signed on to do for the next thirty-five days. So many people, "I didn't know you were running." The race just started; that's why. My opponent has the very same challenge. Even less people know she's running because I've been around a minute. But voters make decisions, and they're not usually as informed as I feel like they should be, but it is what it is.

It's difficult sometimes to be informed about judges.

There is no doubt.

I have to do lots of research.

And thankfully you do, but not many do. It is what it is. I have long believed that when it's time to vote, for example, if it's for president, you go to the ballot box or the booth, I guess now, and the first question is, how many branches of government are there? If you can't say three, then X; you go to the next race. I honestly think for every race, you should have to answer four or five questions that show that you're qualified to vote in that particular race. I don't want to disenfranchise voters.

I think that would.

It would to a degree, but I think uninformed voters should be disenfranchised. That's just my opinion. I think people have the responsibility to either educate themselves or maybe the candidates can have something, a paragraph each, maybe, right there. But it is what it is. I understand the other arguments, but I'd rather have my fate decided by those informed.

Someone who is knowledgeable.

That's all.

Getting back to your legacy, how is this going to rank?

At this point in my life, it's significant because who gets to help build a school of medicine? It doesn't get much bigger than that. My dad wasn't one to give praise. My dad thought that if you praise someone, then they would start to underperform. My grandmother, his mother (paternal) was one of the first schoolteachers in Alberta; and yet, she was married to a third-grade farmer, dropped out in the third grade. Here she is living in a man's world yet was the intellect in the family, someone with huge dreams but yet never escaped this poor farming family. My mother came from an affluent farming family. But my father, the whole town was poor, but they were on the poor side of the poor. I know that drove my father, for sure, because he lived in poverty, and he didn't want any part of that. I know in talking to other family members, his brother, a couple of years younger who is still alive, I learned a lot of things at my father's funeral, and sometimes this is why you go.

Oh, yes, they're important.

My uncle, who was my dad's only brother...When my dad was about five, because of the weather and some other conditions, he was actually raised by his grandparents for about a two-year period because they lived right next door to the school, and where my dad lived was about four or five miles, and they couldn't get him to school. That had to have been incredibly traumatic to be pulled out of your nuclear family at that age. He was the oldest of five. I don't know what impact that had on him. He saw medicine as a way to break out of poverty. Back then that was the most noble profession, but it was also arguably the most affluent profession. The money side of it, I think, was very important to him, not for the sake of money but—

Money is okay.

No, no. But it was because what it meant, that he could provide and that his children wouldn't have to look at the world the way he did. You go to school, you're five, six, seven years old, and we were in an affluent neighborhood. My dad was a poor medical student when my older brother was born, and so his experiences were very different than mine. He is eight years older. But I can remember in first or second grade being so proud to say that my dad was a doctor. I wasn't saying that to offend my classmates, but that meant a lot to me. When my dad was in first grade, his dad was a poor farmer. He was able to provide that. Everyone wants their parents to be successful and wants to view them that way whether they are or not, and fortunately mine were, but that's not the case with so many in today's society.

This is big at sixty. It probably means more to me now that I finally published this than when I left the board. I was tired when I left the board. Twelve years is a long time. I've had a series of health challenges that I almost never talk about. I have multiple sclerosis, and my walking to get here from where I parked today was a chore. I've recently started using a cane, but I won't let anybody else see me with that. Maybe after the election. Because I know how people view you when people have canes, when people are in wheelchairs.

That's correct. But I wish I had known because you could have had a parking space right in front of this building.

My heart doctor would tell you that he's glad where I parked. Just a month ago, I got diagnosed with a left bundle branch block. I was in the UMC Hospital for a few days after having an abnormal EKG. My follow-up with my cardiologist is Tuesday. That's a week from today. That is something that I can add onto my multiple sclerosis and other health issues. But I'm not in any significant pain. It's just something that you try and smile about.

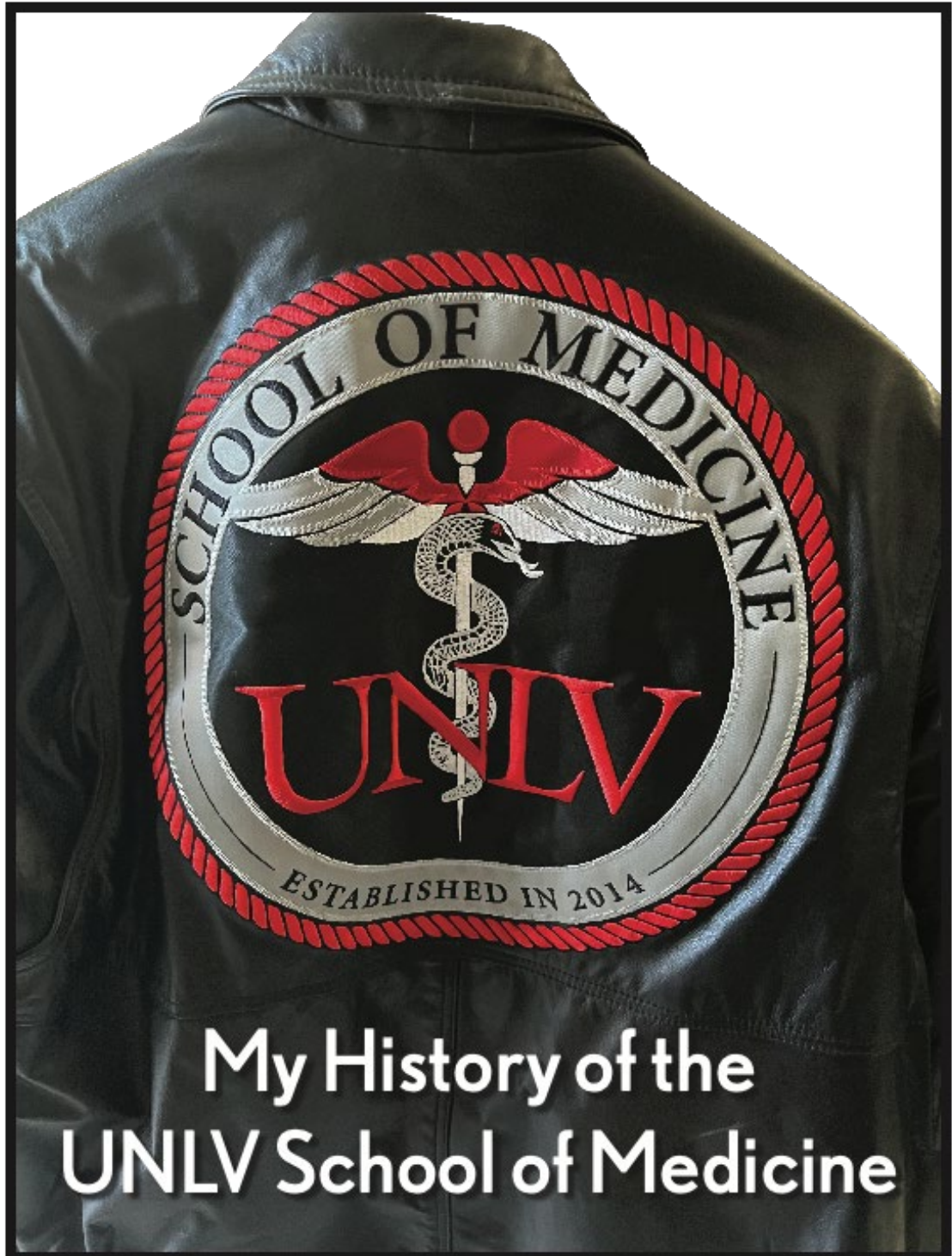
Thank you so much. This is amazing.

It's been a lot of fun.

[End of recorded interview]

APPENDIX

Throughout James Dean Leavitt's interview, he referred to and quoted from a document he created six years after he finished his second term on the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents, titled "My History of the UNLV School of Medicine." Leavitt has based this history on the official Board of Regents minutes during his tenure and his personal recollections. The document recounts the milestones and efforts of the many people who contributed to the creation of the UNLV School of Medicine, which is now known as the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV. See pages 49–57



My History of the UNLV School of Medicine

**MY EFFORTS TO HELP CREATE THE UNLV
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
THE EARLY BEGINNINGS
2004 - 2005**

CHANCELLOR JAMES E. ROGERS AND REGENT JAMES DEAN LEAVITT

I was elected to the Nevada Board of Regents in November 2004 and took office in January 2005. Jim Rogers was the interim Chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education, (NSHE). I quickly discovered that Jim was passionate about developing an academic health science center in Las Vegas to help meet the unmet health care needs in southern Nevada. In late 2005, after discussions with Chancellor Rogers and board chairman, Bret Whipple, I suggested the creation of an ad hoc Health Sciences Center Committee (HSCC) and an Advisory Committee (AC) to create a structure that would allow Jim's vision to blossom. However, it was critical that the Board also buy into the vision.

THE TWENTY YEAR NO UNLV MEDICAL SCHOOL POLICY

In February 2005, the Nevada Board of Regents (BOR) approved Chancellor Roger's recommendation for a policy that limited professional degree programs in the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) to a single school of medicine, dentistry, and law for 20 years. In essence, this policy meant that the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) was prohibited from planning or developing their own medical school for the next 20 years. This proposed policy reflected the Chancellor's commitment to a deal he was rumored to have made with highly influential majority leader, State Senator Bill Raggio. Rumor has it that in exchange for the Senator's efforts to secure more funding from the legislature for southern Nevada institutions and the health sciences initiative, the Chancellor would not attempt to relocate the existing University of Nevada School of Medicine (UNSON), from Reno to Las Vegas.

CREATION OF THE AD HOC HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER COMMITTEE

In May 2006, Chairman Whipple appointed myself as Chairman of the ad hoc HSCC and appointed Ron Kline, MD., as Chairman of the Advisory Committee. Dr. Kline was an out-spoken community advocate that shared our passion.

The original members of the ad hoc HSCC, besides myself, were Regents: Stavros S. Anthony, Dorothy S. Gallagher, Linda C. Howard, and Michael B. Wixom. The original members of the Advisory Committee were: Assemblyman Morse Arberry, Jr., Ms. Bobbette Bond, Mr. Steve Cohen, Mark Doubrava, MD., Mitchell Forman, DO., Ms. Betsy Fretwell, Mr. Thomas E. Gallagher, Ms. Betsy Gilbertson, Steven Glyman, MD., Wayne Hardwick, MD., Don Havins, MD., JD., State Senator Joe Heck, D.O., Gerald Higgins, MD., Ikram Khan, MD., Zaven S. Khachaturian, PhD, James Lenhart, MD, State Senator Bernice Martin-Matthews, John McDonald, MD., William W. Orrison, Jr., MD., Clark County Commissioner Rory Reid, Clark County Manager, Thom Reilly, PhD., Richard Seher, MD., Ms.

Lisa Serwin, and Mr. Bill Welch. At this time, the only NSHE staff support was Executive Vice Chancellor and General Counsel Daniel J. Klaich, and Ms. Marcia Turner.

On October 10, 2007, the ad hoc HSCC and AC was disbanded and restructured when the Board of Regents voted to make this a permanent standing committee of the Board and also changed the name to the Health Sciences System Committee (HSSC). I remained as chairman of this committee.

OTHER RELATED MEDICAL INITIATIVES

In addition to the creation of the HSSC, there were several other initiatives underway to improve medical care throughout Nevada. The Nevada Cancer Institute, led by Jim and Heather Murren, was founded in 2002 and opened its doors in 2005. It was designated as the official cancer institute by the State of Nevada, from 2003–2013. In 2006, Governor Kenny Guinn created the Governor's Commission on Medical Education, Research, and Training, which was chaired by community leader Mr. Donald D. Snyder. I was appointed by the Governor to serve on this committee. There was also an Interim Legislative Committee on Healthcare, which was studying related issues. The Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, led by Larry and Camille Ruvo, was in the planning stages, with construction beginning in 2007, and the center opening in 2010. At this time, visionary Mayor Oscar B. Goodman and the Las Vegas City Council set aside eight acres in Symphony Park for the development of an academic medical center. In northern Nevada, the Whittemore Chronic Fatigue Center (now called the Whittemore Peterson Institute for Neuro-immune Disease) was being developed and led by Harvey and Annette Whittemore, who would later partner with the UNSOM.

THOM REILLY AND DR. MAURICIO TREVISAN 2006 - 2009

In July 2006, Thom Reilly, PhD., was hired as Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer of the NSHE Health Sciences System (HSS). After less than two months, Dr. Reilly resigned, and Dr. Mauricio Trevisan was hired on August 16, 2007.

Dr. Trevisan was hired by Chancellor Rogers, and it was his responsibility to craft and execute the BOR's vision. The 2007 to 2009 years consisted mostly of a statewide listening tour by Dr. Trevisan as he and Greg Hart of Larson Allen consulted on how to best accomplish the Chancellor's and Regent's vision. Fundraising efforts had limited success outside of the Andre Agassi event and the generous matching gift from the Lincy Foundation. Nevada was entering the recession, and Chancellor Rogers' dream had yet to catch fire with the Board of Regents or the community at large.

CHAIRMAN JAMES DEAN LEAVITT AND REGENT MARK DOUBRAVA, M.D. 2009 - 2011

I was elected by my colleagues as Chairman of the Board of Regents on July 1, 2009, and Regent Mark Doubrava MD., was elected to the Board of Regents in 2010. Chancellor Rogers last day

as Chancellor was June 30, 2009, with Daniel J. Klaich replacing him. I appointed Regent Dorothy Gallagher to chair the HSSC during these two years. Having a northern Regent in charge helped maintain the support I would need from the full board in the near future.

These two years were significant in three respects. First, the State of Nevada entered its worst recession since the Great Depression of 1929. The entire higher education budget of 2009-2011 was slashed by incoming Governor Sandoval. There was no new money for higher education and for the development of any health science initiatives. The Board was cutting and eliminating programs and even discussing the possible closure of campuses and institutions. These were dark times in higher education for faculty, staff, and students.

Second, could I as Chairman of the Board along with Chancellor Klaich, continue the vision and enthusiasm of Chancellor Rogers for the development of an academic medical center and health science system? Considerable efforts were made these two years to partner with University Medical Center (UMC) and to create a separate UMC Hospital Advisory Board (HAB). John F. O'Reilly, Commissioners Weekly, Sisolak, and Giunchigliani all provided strong support in accomplishing this critical goal.

Third, the addition of noted Ophthalmologist Dr. Doubrava to the Board was instrumental. Dr. Doubrava had served as an original advisory committee member of the ad hoc HSCC that I chaired in 2006, and was intimately familiar with many of the issues involved in starting a medical school. We had a meaningful pre-existing relationship, and he and I worked closely together in leading the effort to establish the UNLV School of Medicine. He was a graduate of the University of Nevada School of Medicine (UNSOM), he was a native Las Vegas, his father was a well-known physician in the community, and Dr. Doubrava was deeply involved in the Las Vegas medical community.

THE DEPARTURE OF DR. TREVISAN 2011 - 2013

With the departure of Dr. Trevisan, Chancellor Klaich recommended the creation of a Health Sciences System (HSS) Council, moving the NSHE from a managing to a coordinating role. Was this philosophical decision the beginning of the end of the HSS, or a natural evolution of the HSS initiative/experiment? Marcia Turner, PhD., was promoted to Executive Vice-Chancellor of the Health Sciences System and would assume many of his responsibilities, but direct control was shifted from the system to the UNR and UNLV campuses. Ms. Turner was the designated staff support to the HSSC and was responsible for implementing the Regents directions and priorities. She reported directly to Chancellor Klaich and worked closely with me and the HSSC.

A FLICKERING LIGHT - THE LINCY INSTITUTE

In May 2013, The Lincy Institute commissioned Tripp Umbach, a medical consulting firm to prepare an economic impact report to show the value of a new, four-year allopathic medical school in Las Vegas. Key findings, released and presented at UNLV in October 2013, were. "That a full-scale

four-year independent medical school in Las Vegas would have a substantially higher economic impact than a regional campus of the UNSOM. The average annual economic impact of an additional state-supported medical school in the U.S., shows that having more than one publically supported medical school equals \$882 million. This is more than three times the average of a four-year regional campus of an established medical school (\$245 million). Tripp Umbach, estimated that a new four-year medical school developed in Las Vegas as a result of a joint venture between UNSOM and a new school developed in Las Vegas between UNSOM and UNLV would have a total annual economic impact of \$1.2 billion at maturity (2030)."

An economic case was now being made for a new medical school at UNLV. Robert E. Lang, PhD., was the Executive Director of the Lincy Institute and a nationally recognized authority on urban growth, economic development, and population dynamics. His leadership and expertise was instrumental in helping make a compelling argument for a UNLV School of Medicine to a skeptical legislature and public.

June 2011

Dr. Geddes was the new Chairman of the Board, and I was once again appointed to be the Chairman of the HSSC. There was always tension because the NSHE already had a medical school at UNR with a substantial presence in Las Vegas. How would the BOR's react to a new UNLV School of Medicine and what would that mean to the future of the UNR School of Medicine? Could they co-exist in southern Nevada or would they leave and never return?

REGENT MARK DOUBRAVA, M.D.

June 2013

The first informational discussion regarding a potential UNLV School of Medicine was in June 2013. Dr. Doubrava was now Chair of the Health Sciences Committee, and I was his Vice-Chair. Several Regents expressed skepticism about UNLV starting its own medical school, citing the cost and how it would impact the UNSOM. Nonetheless, we were actually discussing the issue. The spark generated by this discussion ignited a blaze that would soon capture the imagination of Southern Nevada leaders. Nevada was starting to climb out of the recession.

ELKO, NEVADA

September 2013

The next discussion surrounding these issues was in Elko, Nevada where Dean Tom Schwenk of the UNSOM presented his vision statement for Public Medical Education in Nevada. I was now Chair again of the HSSC, and Regent Doubrava was my Vice-Chairman. Dean Schwenk opined that the ideal governance structure and organizational structure would only be successful if there was a clear resolution of the north-south tensions surrounding the UNSOM that had plagued the school and significantly detracted from its success since its creation. He added that whatever vision is chosen will require a unified commitment and support from the governor, the state legislature, the Board of

Regents, and local political leaders and donors. Discussions at this time involved the development of a branch campus at UNLV, rather than a full four year independent school of their own.

SOMETHING MAGICAL WAS HAPPENING

At this same meeting in Elko, I drafted the first action item regarding public medical expansion (PME) in northern, rural, and southern Nevada. This was historic, as the Regents were not just discussing PME expansion but acting on it. Powerful forces were converging all at once. Momentum was building amongst the Regents, the state was climbing out of the recession, UNLV was energized, and southern Nevada community members and elected officials were rallying around this project. The Board was also getting strong support from Chancellor Klaich and from current Board Chairman Kevin J. Page, as well as the other Regents who were serving on the HSSC. The relationships I had developed with my colleagues over many years were bearing fruit.

CHAIRMAN PAGE, CHANCELLOR KLAICH LVRJ

The meeting with the Las Vegas Review (LVRJ) editorial board was a pivotal moment. Chairman Page, Vice-Chairman Trachok, and Chancellor Klaich made a compelling case for the establishment and creation of an independent UNLV medical school. Once the LVRJ was on board they helped build community support, excitement, and momentum for the project.

In November 2013, the UNSOM and UNLV entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provided a framework for the expansion and enhancement of PME in Nevada. Specific highlights from the MOU included directions from the Board of Regents to develop detailed plans for a full-scale, four-year allopathic medical school campus in Las Vegas, along with the continued development of a full-scale four-year campus in Reno under the continuing accreditation of the UNSOM. This historic document cemented and outlined the BOR's commitment to creating an independent public medical school at UNLV.

PRESIDENT NEAL J. SMATRESK - UNLV PRESIDENT

President Smatresk was a huge supporter of the development of the UNLV School of Medicine. Even though UNLV was prohibited from developing the school as a result of the 2005 policy prohibition, he and his cabinet were focused on developing the Top Tier Initiative and the most important part of the initiative was the development of an Academic Health Center. The center would include a fully accredited medical school that is integrated with the other health science units.

RECISSION OF THE TWENTY YEAR NO UNLV SCHOOL OF MEDICINE POLICY

In December 2013, the BOR's rescinded the 2005 policy prohibiting the creation of a UNLV School of Medicine. This was the last procedural barrier that existed to the development of the school. The BOR's could now precede full bore and we would do just that. Normally, academic programs are driven by the university and normally go through the rigorous and cumbersome academic affairs

process. This initiative was unique because of the 2005 ban. This was a Regent driven project which specifically directed UNLV to create their own medical school. Of course, UNLV was a willing and eager partner.

CHANCELLOR KLAICH AND THE STATEWIDE STEERING COMMITTEE

A Statewide Steering Committee was created in January 2014 to serve as the Coordinating Council for the statewide business plan for expanding (PME) at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Committee was created to serve as a collaborative vehicle for data collection, market analysis, analysis of best practices, and strategic directions.

The 2014 Steering Committee consisted of the following committee members: Dan Klaich, Chancellor, Marc Johnson, President of UNR, Kevin Carman, Executive Vice President and Provost of UNR, Thomas Schwenk, Dean and Vice President for Health Affairs at UNSOM, Donald D. Snyder, President of UNLV, John White, Executive Vice President and Provost of UNLV, Barbara Atkinson, Planning Dean at UNLV, Phil Satre, statewide business leader, and Michael Yackira, statewide business leader.

The role of the Statewide Steering Committee was to provide a decision-making framework that was efficient to govern the statewide business planning process for expanding public medical education in a collaborative manner. The Steering Committee made necessary recommendations to the Board of Regents on matters of planning, structure, curriculum, and budget.

The Steering Committee was ably led by Chancellor Klaich and brought all the key players to the table at the same time.

UNLV MEDICAL SCHOOL

The Case Statement for PME was presented to the Board of Regents on May 15, 2014. Specific highlights from the Case Statement included the dire need for public medical education expansion, as well as graduate medical education, physician recruitment, and retention efforts. This document was endorsed by the full Board of Regents and was successfully used in our subsequent legislative efforts to secure the necessary funding for this ambitious project.

DONALD D. SNYDER – NEW PRESIDENT OF UNLV February 2014

Donald D. Snyder was the new President of UNLV. This change in Presidents was particularly fortuitous to the BOR's as President Snyder was the former Chairman of the Governor's Medical, Education, Research and Training Commission. His medical background, his relationships throughout the state, and knowledge of the community would prove invaluable. Significantly, President Snyder and Provost John White hired Barbara Atkinson to be the Planning Dean of the proposed UNLV School of Medicine. After completing his interim presidency, Mr. Snyder worked closely with new

UNLV President, Len D. Jessup, in successfully lobbying the legislature to fund the UNLV School of Medicine.

DEAN BARBARA ATKINSON

May 2014

Dr. Atkinson was appointed planning Dean of the UNLV School of Medicine in May 2014. During this time, she worked tirelessly to create an innovative vision and education program for the school, generated strong regional and legislative support, hired a core team of academic faculty and staff, and assembled a Community Advisory Board (now called the Community Engagement Board) to align regional needs with the school's mission. Before arriving at UNLV, Dr. Atkinson was the emeritus vice-chancellor and a professor at the University of Kansas School of Medicine. Her significant efforts were directly responsible for the success of this project.

FOUNDING OF THE UNLV SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

August 22, 2014

The UNLV School of Medicine was officially established on August 22, 2014, when the Board of Regents approved funding for the medical school's start-up costs. The budget was submitted to Governor Brian Sandoval and the Nevada Legislature where it was subsequently approved. On June 11, 2015, Governor Sandoval signed Senate Bill 514 into law at UNLV.

UNLV PRESIDENT LEN D. JESSUP

January 2015

President Jessup was appointed by the BOR's in January 2015 as the 11th President of UNLV. One month later, he would be lobbying the legislature to fully fund the UNLV School of Medicine. He worked closely with former President Snyder, Chair Page, Vice-Chair Trachok, and Chancellor Klaich.

GOVERNOR SANDOVAL

2015

NSHE legislative efforts were led by Board Chairman Kevin J. Page, Vice-Chairman Rick Trachok, Chancellor Dan Klaich, UNLV President Len D. Jessup, and Dean Barbara Atkinson. A critical meeting occurred with Chair Page, Vice-Chair Trachok, Chancellor Klaich, and Governor Sandoval. This meeting resulted in the Governor including funding for the UNLV School of Medicine in his upcoming budget.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

Legislative leaders who led the effort to secure approval and funding included Senate Majority Leader Michael Roberson, Senate Minority Leader Aaron D. Ford, Speaker John Hambrick, Assembly Majority Leader D. Paul Andersen and Assistant Assembly Minority Leader Ira Hansen. The efforts by these leaders resulted in developing the approval and mechanism for funding the school. The UNLV School of Medicine exists because of their dedication to this legacy project.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BOARD

The Community Engagement Board provided guidance and direction to the UNLV School of Medicine. They played a vital role in the development of the school and many travelled to Carson City and met with the Governor and legislative leadership to make the case for the funding and creation of the UNLV Medical School. Chair of the Committee was Ikram Khan, MD., Vice-Chair K. Warren Volker MD., Tony Alamo, MD., Amir Bacchus, MD., Bobbette Bond, Joan Brookhyser, MD., Michael Brown, Jeffrey Cummings, MD., Mark Doubrava, MD., Michael Edwards, MD., William Evans, MD., Mark Fine, Yolanda Flores, MD., Renee Franklin, Doug Geinzer, Constantine George, MD., Mayor Carolyn Goodman, Shelley Gitomer, Mayor Andy Hafen, Harry Haggerty, Brian Iriye, MD., Florence Jameson, MD., Gard Jameson, Peggy W. Kearns, Ramu Komanduri, MD., Andy Kuniyuki, Bruce Layne, Mayor John Lee, Brian Lauzon, Gary Marrone, MD., J.D., Dianne Mazzu, MD., Robert McBeath, MD., Jerrie Merritt, Bennett Mitchell, MD., Julie Murray, Abraham Jim Nagy, MD., Rachakonda Prabhu, MD., Ray Rawson, DDS., Rajesh Shrotriya, MD., Kathy Silver, Don Snyder, Nick Spirtos, MD., Lois Tarkanian, PhD., Javier Trujillo and Jim Zeiter.

MILESTONES

The UNLV School of Medicine received its Preliminary Accreditation on October 18, 2016 and began accepting applications for its Charter Class which began their studies in August 2017. The Charter Class will graduate its first students in 2021.

A VISION REALIZED, A DREAM FULFILLED

In 2005, no one would have imagined that my initial decision to ask board chair Bret Whipple to create a health science committee and his decision to appoint me as chairman of that committee would lead to the eventual creation of the UNLV School of Medicine. As a five time chairman of the health science committee, the opportunity to lead the effort in establishing the School was the highlight of my service on the board. It was a privilege and honor to be involved from the beginning, middle, and end of this legacy project. The incredible support my colleagues and I received from UNLV administration and the medical community made this vision possible. As a lawyer and the son of a doctor, it was a privilege to pay tribute to my dear father in this way. The story of the UNLV school of Medicine has only just begun, one can only imagine its future.