

# **Henderson Libraries**

## **Henderson Oral History Project**

**Agnes Phillips**

**Oral History of Agnes Phillips**

**conducted by**

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**for the**

**Henderson Historical Society**

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**Interviewer:** *Well, we're here today, Agnes, to talk about you and Dr. Lorne and how and why you came to Henderson, Nevada. And it's actually for the Historical Society for Henderson. So, Agnes, can you tell us when you came?*

**Agnes Phillips:** We came in December, 1950, and the reason we came was we had been out for a long trip once before and quite liked the area and decided this was a place we wanted to stay.

**Interviewer:** *And that was what – I think you said December 5, 1950?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, and we had our two and a half month old child, our daughter, with us. We came from New York because Lorne had just finished his studies at that time back there and so he went into practice.

**Interviewer:** *And that was a post-graduate program in general surgery.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, in general surgery.

**Interviewer:** *Okay, and then you're both Canadians originally?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *Coming from Canada –*

**Agnes Phillips:** Right.

**Interviewer:** *– to New York.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Right.

**Interviewer:** *And then the reason why you came to Henderson is you came here on a vacation?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Well, while we were in New York we had to decide where he wanted to practice and make some decisions, so on an Easter Break, we came all the way out on service, the Northern route, to the West Coast, came down to San Francisco area and then came down the California Coast to L.A. and it poured rain all the way and then we came back through Nevada to nothing but sunshine and –

**Interviewer:** *Sunshine and fun. [laughter]*

**Agnes Phillips:** [laughter] Fun! So we thought that well there's the lake on one side and a mountain on the other, so my husband said, "This has got to be the spot," so we did.

**Interviewer:** *And we're glad you did. Now, why Henderson? How did you choose Henderson? And I know that you went to Las Vegas first.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, we had a little mobile home and we had it parked across from what is now and was then Cashman Field. There was a mobile home park there that we knew the people there, so then Lorne practiced a little bit with a – shared an office with another doctor for a bit. And then he met Dr. Myers who had just arrived in town from Minnesota and he and Lorne got together and were both looking for the same thing and about that time the Sun Valley Medical Group were leaving Henderson and moving into Vegas, building their homes in there and were coming out here only on Thursdays. So the clinic was kind of available. So then they rented space from the Rose de Lima Hospital and set up practice there.

**Interviewer:** *And that was February of 1951, I think you said?*

**Agnes Phillips:** '51, yeah.

**Interviewer:** *Good. Okay, and then where did you live when you came into Henderson? I know there was a couple of places that you took up residence.*

**Agnes Phillips:** We had a wonderful choice because Henderson was kind of empty. All the houses at the end of the war were available and so we were on Manganese Street.

**Interviewer:** *And that is the Townsite homes.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, one of the Townsite homes and we had a three bedroom house. We were so glad after living in a trailer for a couple of years.

**Interviewer:** *Right.*

**Agnes Phillips:** So we went there only until the stucco homes were built.

**Interviewer:** *And then how much was rent?*

**Agnes Phillips:** I think thirty dollars a month. So, it was [laughter] very low actually.

**Interviewer:** *And then you were also telling us that if it rained what would go on with the homes.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes. You had to call someone to come and tile the roofs again, and then the power would go off, of course. That was a frequent problem, too. But that gradually was taken care of and we moved out to Church Street after that.

**Interviewer:** *To the stucco homes.*

**Agnes Phillips:** To the stucco homes, and that was right behind the hospital, which was very convenient for Lorne.

**Interviewer:** *And that was on Church Street.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, on Church Street.

**Interviewer:** *There was many of us that came from Church Street.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes. Yeah, our neighbors moved down there too.

**Interviewer:** *And how many bedrooms was that in the stucco homes on Church Street?*

**Agnes Phillips:** We had a three bedroom.

**Interviewer:** *Three -bedroom? I think – were most of them three bedroom, two bedroom?*

**Agnes Phillips:** I think most of them were three-bedroom.

**Interviewer:** *I think most of them were three.*

**Agnes Phillips:** I guess there were some two- bedroom. I'm not sure about that.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah. Can you tell us a few of the residents that actually were living in Henderson at the same time for that same period?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Well we had – our neighbors were Dick Barter on Manganese; they were our next door neighbors. They moved and they were our next door neighbors on Church Street. [clock chimes] And George Mayer and Muriel; and they were next door to them. Then the Monahans were there and the McBeaths from the drugstore, and the La Portas were down the street, and I think Dr. Nelson, the dentist, was across, kind of kitty-corner across from us. And I can't remember –

**Interviewer:** *And we had Dr. Coogan.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Oh, Dr. Coogan was down first to La Portas, yeah.

**Interviewer:** *Right.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yeah, that's right.

**Interviewer:** *And then, Agnes, how many children did you have, and then how many children were born here in Henderson?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Well, we had our little girl in Montreal, Canada.

**Interviewer:** *And that's Lorna.*

**Agnes Phillips:** That's Lorna, and Keith and Roy were both born at Rose de Lima. Dr. Reiners was our doctor.

**Interviewer:** *And then from the stucco homes on Church Street, then you decided to build a home. Is that when you came to Fairway, up here on Black Mountain Golf Course?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, 530 Fairway Road. Yeah, the McDonalds were the only other resident up here when we started to build.

**Interviewer:** *And probably approximately what year was that?*

**Agnes Phillips:** 1962.

**Interviewer:** *1962. You have quite a few years here, Agnes. [laughter]*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yeah, we were only eight years on Church Street and we moved – actually we moved temporarily while the house was being built. We thought we'd take a while to sell Church Street.

**Interviewer:** *And then who bought your home on Church Street?*

**Agnes Phillips:** On Church Street? I don't know the name of the people, but they were taking care of or managing the El Dorado.

**Interviewer:** *Good.*

**Agnes Phillips:** And we moved for a couple of years over onto Frontier Boulevard while the house was being built.

**Interviewer:** *Good. And then I'd like to ask you, too, a few general challenges that existed at that time.*

*The doctors were expected to make house calls. [laughter]*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, Lorne did still make some house calls, but gradually he explained to them it was really more convenient – he couldn't do too much at the home anyway – it was more convenient if we could meet at the hospital and take care of them from there. But the Sheahans lived up the street from us.

**Interviewer:** *And what Sheahans was that?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Bill Sheahan.

**Interviewer:** *Bill and Mary Jo.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Bill and Mary Jo.

**Interviewer:** *They've been here for many years too.*

**Agnes Phillips:** They were up the street, and I think it was her father that was ill. And she reminded me not too long ago that she called and wanted Lorne to come see him. And he did. She said that was the best thing. [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *Oh.*

**Agnes Phillips:** But that was kind of about the last of the house calls. There was a lot of controversy. Some said, well, I want my doctor to come to the house and he did but gradually it was more convenient the other way.

**Interviewer:** *That's beautiful. And then can you tell us a little bit about the local diagnostic facility, the biopsies, and the frozen specimens?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Oh, yes, there wasn't anyone here that could take care of – so they had to send the frozen specimens to either L.A. or Phoenix.

**Interviewer:** *And then there was no burn unit in the Valley?*

**Agnes Phillips:** No burn unit. Lorne had a body estimate that would take skin –

**Interviewer:** *Dermatome?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Dermatome. It would take layers of skin to, you know, skin graft to – that was one thing that helped a bit.

**Interviewer:** *And then the first anesthesiologist came to town several years after that?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Oh yes, quite a few years after that. It was always up to the – well there were anesthetists but not an anesthesiologist.

**Interviewer:** *And then who was George, Dr. George Madsen? I know you had mentioned him.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, he was the first eye specialist that came to town.

**Interviewer:** *Oh. Okay. That's great. So you're going to show us a little bit of the clinic activity increased, and quite rapidly.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, it really did. They finally had to build a unit across the street from the hospital.

**Interviewer:** *And then I'm just going to read this. It says, "The population increased from five thousand in 1950 to twelve hundred in 1955." And then Dr. Miller, he was who here?*

**Agnes Phillips:** He joined the clinic not too long after Dr. Lund.

**Interviewer:** *And that was 1953.*

**Agnes Phillips:** I believe so.

**Interviewer:** *Okay. And the doctor, Karl Hazeltine?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, he joined also, not too long after that.

**Interviewer:** *Joined a few years later. And then you've said here in the late fifties, the doctors built in Henderson a clinic located across the street from the hospital. As you were saying, it was complete with a laboratory, an x-ray, and business offices, and pharmacies.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, laboratory and yeah, they had –



**Interviewer:** *And then can you talk a little bit about the first pharmacy and who that was. You mentioned him; he was on Church Street with you.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Oh, McBeath? Yes. Yeah, they were on Church Street with us and Henderson Drug Store was a very busy little spot.

**Interviewer:** *Right, I think it was the meeting place, a great meeting place of mine.*

**Agnes Phillips:** And I think if I remember right, Joe McBeath was in charge of the drug store down at the new clinic as well, for a time.

**Interviewer:** *Right, and then who is Jack Yeager?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yeager?

**Interviewer:** *Yeager?*

**Agnes Phillips:** I don't know who that is.

**Interviewer:** *Okay, I thought maybe you may know. Eventually there were, what, seven doctors practicing.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *So we had Dr. Swaghammer.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, he came; he was the first OB/GYN with the group.

**Interviewer:** *And that was in 1961?*

**Agnes Phillips:** '54, I think.

**Interviewer:** *'54?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yeah, '54 when he came. I'm not sure about that.

**Interviewer:** *Okay. And then we had Dr. Conley, a GP.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, he lived in Boulder City, but he came over every day and joined the group. He stayed a short time and then I think he moved to California afterwards and studied.

**Interviewer:** *Oh. And then we had Dr. Potter, James Potter.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, Dr. Potter was with them.

**Interviewer:** *And Dr. Walter Tabor.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, he was the surgeon and worked with Lorne and they were very busy. They worked – they helped – they were on the Medical Directors for the plants, too, so they were down there.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, and then we have – the business managers were – was it Perry?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, Mr. Perry was the business manager and he was at the clinic.

**Interviewer:** *And Muriel.*

**Agnes Phillips:** And Muriel was in charge of the insurance.

**Interviewer:** *Now was that the Muriel Mayer that lived on Church Street next to George and Angie Monahan?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, same gal.

**Interviewer:** *See, it's all connected back to Church Street, [laughter] the street before St. Rose de Lima.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Right.

**Interviewer:** *And then when did Dr. Lorne go on a sabbatical? I think you were talking that – did he go for a few months?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, they had a plan at the clinic where after being with the group for a period of time they could take six months off and then three months had to be in study or contributing to some worthwhile –

**Interviewer:** *And then your sabbatical was where for six months?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Well, Lorne ended up going to Okinawa.

**Interviewer:** *And he taught there.*

**Agnes Phillips:** He taught. He taught the doctors surgery. Actually they graduated in Japan and they didn't – they had all the theory, but they never had a hands-on experience. The professors there wouldn't allow them to do that. So when they went out to practice they didn't have the confidence.

They had the theory. So this program was a post-graduate program for those doctors to learn how to do surgery, have the confidence to do it. So Lorne stood on the other side of the table and taught them and that was the program.

**Interviewer:** *And that's wonderful. And so after that, then you came back?*

**Agnes Phillips:** We were there for six months with a – at that time it was called – he was working out of the Public Health and Welfare. It was all Army at that time, and after that six months was over, he came back and decided shortly after that to leave the clinic and do more of that teaching. So then we went back for a whole year. He went for a whole year and a week. We were there as a family for over a year.

**Interviewer:** *That's great. And then Dr. William Kemp did what here?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Oh, he was our anesthesiologist and he was very good and all the surgeons would want Dr. Kemp at the head of the table always because he was so reliable.

**Interviewer:** *And then we talked a little bit about Dr., if I'm pronouncing it right, Brenner and Dr. Petkin?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, they came –

**Interviewer:** *They were part of the group?*

**Agnes Phillips:** They came after we left, so I didn't know them too well but I knew that they did join the clinic after we left – after Lorne left, I should say.

**Interviewer:** *Now can you tell us a little bit, we'll kind of go forward a little bit, the Shell Station that was down at the end of Water Street. Can you tell us a little bit of that history.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Let's see. I think originally –

**Interviewer:** *On the corner of Water Street.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes. I think the Shell Station – I think Steve, what was his name, Stevens?

**Interviewer:** *Mr. Stevens maybe?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Stevens, he was a realtor.

**Interviewer:** *And Mr. Gould?*

**Agnes Phillips:** And Mr. Gould who owns the property, I think, next or close by, anyway, and Lorne, the three of them had invested in this with the Shell Station. So then, while we were away, the Shell Station – well I think Mr. Gould wanted to be bought out so Lorne bought him out and then after a while, Mr. Stevens wanted to be out too, so Lorne ended up with an investment in this Shell Station. Well, then, Shell Station decided to close up. They didn't want to run the station any longer. So we ended up with the property on the corner.

**Interviewer:** *And that was back in '78, '79?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, about that time. So they moved the station down the street and into the alley where we used it as a storage room, and they took the tanks – they had to take the tanks out of the ground and make sure the soil was okay. And then, of course, we built the motel on top of that, on that corner.

**Interviewer:** *And that was the Best Western Motel.*

**Agnes Phillips:** That was the Best Western Motel.

**Interviewer:** *And so what else was right in that little corner?*

**Agnes Phillips:** One section was the bank on the very corner and the rest was Laundromat, as I remember.

**Interviewer:** *And how many rooms did the motel have, Best Western?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Just fifty-two.

**Interviewer:** *Fifty-two, and did it have a swimming pool?*

**Agnes Phillips:** It had a swimming pool and the Laundromat did the linens for the motel.

**Interviewer:** *And Roy worked there? He ran it for you?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Roy worked that – we thought he might like to run it but –

**Interviewer:** *Your son?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes. And he did. He did a lot of – he just loved working on those machines.

**Interviewer:** *I bet. And so in 1989, that is when you built Lake Mead Business at 129 Lake Mead Boulevard.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, 129 Lake Mead. Yeah, in the meantime we had sold the motel.

**Interviewer:** *Do you remember who you sold it to?*

**Agnes Phillips:** We sold it to a Best Western – well, it was a group of people that – it was a Best Western out near Nellis Air Base, and I don't remember the name of the man but he got a group together and this group bought it from us. So then we still had this station up in the back in the alley and we had to get that moved and clear the area. There was a property on either side of where Lorne's mother and dad lived, and by this time they had passed away. And so those houses were moved and we built the Lake Mead Business Center.

**Interviewer:** *Now Lorne's parents, is that Wilber and Mimi?*

**Agnes Phillips:** Wilber and Mimie Phillips.

**Interviewer:** *Mimie. Then what happened after that? So you opened up the business on Lake Mead and your son is running and managing that. [clock chimes]*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, he is there actually, and later on he is building a – actually it's as many square feet again as what was there, and he is still running it.

**Interviewer:** *And he's still running it today.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yeah, right. I try to help where I can.

**Interviewer:** *Agnes, I know you're right there. [laughter] You're very much involved.*

**Agnes Phillips:** I enjoy it. I really enjoy doing the books and I'd never thought that was something I'd want to do.

**Interviewer:** *Right.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Because nursing was my big thing.

**Interviewer:** *Well, I'm going to switch it just a little bit because I know you belong to the Mesquite Club. So can you tell me when you joined the Mesquite Club, and is it only in Las Vegas originally? Is it in Henderson?*

**Agnes Phillips:** It's only Vegas, and the Mesquite Club was started, I think, back in 1922, or if not, maybe 1919. I'm not too sure. I think it was '22 and there was just, you know, there was a little one street situation in Vegas at that time. But I joined in '73 after we left Henderson and Lorne was teaching. And we moved into Vegas in 1970, so in '73 I joined the Mesquite Club.

**Interviewer:** *And then you've been a member of the Henderson Museum, Clark County Museum.*

**Agnes Phillips:** Yes, I joined it after we moved back out here twenty years later, and I'm enjoying them.

**Interviewer:** *Beautiful. Well, Agnes, we really thank you and appreciate your documentary here in Henderson for the Historical Society.*

**Agnes Phillips:** You're very welcome.