

Henderson Libraries

Henderson Oral History Project

Alice Brumage

Oral History of Alice Brumage

conducted by

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm

October 15, 2013

Interviewer: *Today is October 15th 2013, and we're in the Paseo Verde branch of the Henderson Library in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm, and I'm interviewing Alice Brumage as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of the Henderson Libraries. Thank you so much for joining me, Alice.*

Alice Brumage: You're very welcome.

Interviewer: *To begin with, I'd like to hear a little bit about where you were born and raised and what your parents did for a living.*

Alice Brumage: Okay, I was born in Ellensburg, Washington, in 1931, and my father happened to work for a man on a government canal project by the name of Frank Crowe, and it so happened that shortly after I was born, Frank Crowe was picked to be the project manager of Boulder Dam.

Interviewer: *Oh, wow.*

Alice Brumage: So he moved down to southern Nevada. In June of 1933, they started pouring concrete, and so unlike most of the men who came to work on the dam and took whatever job was available at the moment, my father was transferred down as a cement man, and so when they started pouring the concrete, why he came here then to work for Frank Crowe. And my mother had graduated from Michigan State at Ypsilanti, Michigan, as a teacher. However, she never taught excepting to do substitute teaching in southern—in Boulder City. But then during the War, of course, everybody went to work, and she went to work at the magnesium plant in the lab, and they were trying to develop a way to process the magnesium without using peat moss, because the peat moss had to be imported from England, and so that made it, you know, difficult to do and then lots more expensive. So they were working in the lab to try and somehow find something else that they could use rather than the peat moss.

Interviewer: *How did she get involved in that job?*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] She had taken a chemistry class in college.

Interviewer: *How about that.*

Alice Brumage: And that was all that was necessary at that point in time. And so she did that until the War was over, and I don't know that they were successful in their project, because, you know, it didn't give them enough time to do it. But after the War, then she was employed by the Frontier Girl Scout Council, which was the only, you know, the whole County. And I think that that pay came through the Community Chest. I think that was how they paid her salary, but she then was the executive secretary for the Girl Scouts. And my father then went on—we moved back to Boulder City, and he then went to Las Vegas, and I believe he was the first commercial gun repair shop in Las Vegas.

Interviewer: *How interesting.*

Alice Brumage: And he, if she hadn't been working, we'd probably have been on the street because he was an incredibly good craftsman, did beautiful custom gun stocks and that kind of thing, but he had lots of friends in the County, and he wouldn't charge them. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Oh.*

Alice Brumage: You know, and if a young kid came in, you know, and he needed something done, why my dad wouldn't charge him either. And so he was not a businessman at all. He sold the shop to somebody who kept it going for twenty or thirty years. Not my daddy, because he just, and he left there then after three years and went back to government construction. But that was an interesting time, and as I say, he did beautiful work. But he'd do things, like a fellow came in at four o'clock one afternoon, and he needed a part in his gun. Well, he was going hunting at four o'clock in the morning, and my dad didn't have the part on hand. So he milled the part, he manufactured it.

Interviewer: *Wow.*

Alice Brumage: And he finished it about 2:00 a.m. But because the part would have only cost fifty cents, if he'd had it in stock, that's what he charged the man.

Interviewer: *Oh, good grief.*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] So that's why he didn't make any money in the gun shop.

Interviewer: [laughter] *Well that's interesting that he did that, though.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, it was. That was the kind of a craftsman he was that he could do that.

Interviewer: *When—did your father come to Boulder City in '33 when they started pouring the concrete?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Did he bring your whole family there then?*

Alice Brumage: No, we stayed in Washington until August, because that was when he had the house finished. The first paycheck he got the material for the framing, and he framed the house, and the second paycheck he got enough to put the skin on it, and then he wired my mother that it was ready for occupancy, and it didn't have the finish work done, and it didn't have doors or windows, but we moved into it like that, which was better than a lot of our neighbors who lived in tents with wooden floors and walls.

Interviewer: *And it was okay because it wasn't winter, right?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, exactly, you know, and we got a nice breeze up the canyon. Of course later on, we got a breeze off the lake, but of course it wasn't a lake in '33.

Interviewer: *It wasn't a lake yet.*

Alice Brumage: No.

Interviewer: *[laughter]* That's interesting. And you were, what, two, when you came?

Alice Brumage: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Do you have many memories of that time?*

Alice Brumage: Well, you know, I have a few of the neighborhood as I got a little older, you know. I have one friend that was born there in a tent house. But there weren't very many really young children around.

Interviewer: *How long did you live there?*

Alice Brumage: We lived there nine years. He was an old construction man, but he was very fastidious, and he built an indoor bathroom. We were probably the only ones in that area that had indoor plumbing, and so, when housing became available, and he was certainly, you know, eligible to have government housing, but in Boulder City, they were all built on the hill and looked down at the dry lake. There were no view lots in town, but out where we were, we had a view, and as I say, that nice afternoon breeze and all, and we were very comfortable in that little house, so we just stayed there.

Interviewer: *Did you sell the house when you came to Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, yes. *[laughter]* He sold the house to Mr. Rance, who came and started a plumbing business in town, and we sold it to him for four hundred dollars cash. So when they were—because of course, the land doesn't go with it. The land had a ninety-nine-year lease for a dollar. But as they were doing the deal, you know, I was watching, I was very interested in all of this, and Mr. Rance gave him a check. So when he left, I just pitched a fit. I said, I thought you were going to get four hundred dollars cash. And he said, well this is like cash. No, it's not. I wanted to see money. I wanted to see four hundred dollars in money.

Interviewer: *[laughter]* And see, you were a good business person.

Alice Brumage: *[laughter]* Yeah, yes, probably better than he.

Interviewer: *And so, why did you move to Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Well, because he left the government employ then and came as the gunsmith and training officer for the Guard force. So that was what he did, and that had been his hobby, and so then that was what he did when he went to Vegas.

Interviewer: *Okay. When you moved to Henderson, what was it like? How did it compare to Boulder City?*

Alice Brumage: *[laughter]* Well, depending of course on—you know, Boulder City per se had all the grass and the trees and whatnot, of course, they had grown up, and it was quite lush. But

where we were was still desert, and so, you know, it was quite nice to be in a brand new house, and for three of us it was adequate. We had a two bedroom, and of course there were only two bedroom and three bedrooms. There were a couple of large families that came, and they gave them two three-bedroom houses. It was certainly adequate and kind of fun to be in a new house and Momma was doing decorating and this kind of thing, and she visited with a neighbor one time whose floors were really, really shiny, because they were softwood floors. And so Momma asked her what she did, and she had put about six coats of hard wax on them. And so that's what we did. And you just put a coat of hard wax on it, and let it set a bit and then polish it, and then put another one on. And we did that, but after that, oh probably once a month, she would have me wax just in the high traffic areas. And so we didn't strip them very often at all.

Interviewer: *It built up a little bit.*

Alice Brumage: It built up, you know, and they were really quite pretty and easy to take care of, because there were paved streets but there were no sidewalks, and the yards were all closed in, and no sprinklers or anything like that, but they hadn't really figured out desert landscaping yet either. And at one point in time they did come in and they put sand down in all the yards and grass seed. But that was all. And we were supposed to water them and make it grow, but before we had a chance, we had a good big windstorm.

Interviewer: *Oh, no. [laughter]*

Alice Brumage: It just blew it all away. It was gone. [laughter]

Interviewer: *That's sad.*

Alice Brumage: And so there was no more grass. I had some very pretty roses out front. It always amazed me how well roses grew here. I cannot understand why they grow so well here, and they grow in Portland, Oregon. [laughter] The rose capital? It's wet there.

Interviewer: *Yeah, roses are pretty hardy.*

Alice Brumage: They've got to be.

Interviewer: *What was your house like when you first moved here?*

Alice Brumage: As I say, it was brand new and this nice little two-bedroom house. It had a little pantry area off the kitchen, but it had no shelves or anything, so my mother got bricks and boards and put shelves in it. And then around the edge, and then was still room to put the washing machine in in front of them. And so the washing machine went there, and then it came out. And we did—we had had one deep sink and then another one, and of course, that kind of went out of fashion for years and years and now, again, they're making a deep sink. And then a shallower one that has a garbage disposal, and then it didn't have, but it was very convenient.

Interviewer: *Was cooking the same as it is today or did you have a different kind of a stove.*

Alice Brumage: No, we had a regular electric stove and oven. It was, let me see, I think it was apartment size. I'm not positive, but I think it was apartment size.

Interviewer: *Some people remember kerosene stoves.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, but we didn't have—in townsite houses, we had electric stoves and pretty good size refrigerators, not big as they are today, but pretty good size. But I think that those were apartment size stoves. And then there was not a cupboard door in any one of those houses, because that kind of carpentry is more expensive, and so there were no doors, not closets—and this is part of my 'in' in the department store, when I would get the ironing done, then she would let me work out on the floor selling yardage, because I had made the curtains for our kitchen. I knew the measurements. And so I could help the ladies get their yardage for their kitchen cupboards, and then the closets all had curtains on them.

Interviewer: *And you said—when did you do that work at the department store? I'd like you to tell me more about that job.*

Alice Brumage: Okay. Well, I did it, I don't remember if I did it the first summer, but I did after that. I probably did it the first year, and that was when I was eleven, and the clothes would come into the store packed in boxes, and so they had to be ironed before they could be hung out on the floor, and I was a pretty good ironer, and so I ironed the clothes and then she hung them out. And then, like I say, if I got finished with the ironing, why then I could go and work on the floor.

Interviewer: *And this was the department store in downtown Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah. We had a grocery store, a department store, a restaurant, and a bowling alley. And no school. That's an interesting story.

Interviewer: *Well, what did you do for school?*

Alice Brumage: Well, the first of September came, and there was nothing, and the mothers all went down en masse to the administration people, and they had a heart-to-heart, and they started working on the school 24-7, and by the first of October, we had school. We only went half day for the first two years, we'd go four hours, and then that was it. You either got on the 8:00 to 12:00 or you'd get the 12:00 to 4:00. And I was on the morning both 6th and 7th grade. By the time I got to 8th grade, why, they had put up more classrooms, and so we were full day.

Interviewer: *But it sounds like that also gave you a chance to have a part-time job.*

Alice Brumage: Well, this is it. I had the part time job, and then also most of the kids in the neighborhood were on that same schedule, and so we also had house cleaning responsibilities. Everybody had to do their chores. And then you'd be done about three o'clock, and the radio would come on with these fifteen minute segments of programs, and so we'd spend an hour or so, all glued to the radio listening to these shows, and then by about four o'clock, you looked around, and said, "It's time for Mom to come home," and we'd split for home. [laughter] So

that was kind of how we spent our afternoons. But everybody was pretty conscientious about getting their chores done. But it was—my time at the department store, I worked there after school, but then I had a little difficulty with Mrs. Myers, and my Dad got really angry, and he said, “You want a job, I’ll pay you, but you’re not going back there.” She accused me of sweeping sand under the rug. I never heard of such a thing. It never would have occurred to me to do such a ridiculous thing. But she found sand under the rug. Well, of course, I’m sure she found out shortly after I quit helping her that the sand got under the rug, and nobody had to put it there. But anyway, he was irritated about it. [laughter] So from then on, I worked for him, and I got a dollar for doing the family wash, and I got two dollars for doing the ironing. And, again, I thought that was just a kick, because the ironing was fun, I didn’t mind doing that at all. And he paid more money for it; I thought that was just great.

Interviewer: *That was a lot of money back then.*

Alice Brumage: It was a lot of money. And then, on top of that, he paid me five dollars a week, and I could either do all of the shopping, all of the cooking, all of the clean-up from the meals, or when I’d get tired of that, then I could switch with my mother and do all of the housekeeping. But that was then, you know, putting that paste wax on the floors, and it was doing windows and everything.

Interviewer: *Did you have brothers and sisters?*

Alice Brumage: I had none.

Interviewer: *It was all on you. [laughter]*

Alice Brumage: Yep, it was all on me. [laughter]

Interviewer: *How about that.*

Alice Brumage: Which I suppose is what made me a little bit on the independent side, as I got older.

Interviewer: *I’m sure, wow. You told me earlier that you didn’t remember specific neighbors you had, but what were your neighbors like in your first neighborhood in Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, they were all extremely friendly. It was a very cohesive community in that everybody was from somewhere else, and so, you know, we were kind of—everybody came in and didn’t have a large network of family and friends, because they were all from somewhere else, they’d left their homes, and so, you know, we just bonded right there. And I baby sat a lot, and one family in particular was—they had two little boys that were just down the street a little ways, I think two houses down. I think the people next door didn’t have kids, but then, on the other side, that was a girl about, just a year or so older than I was, and she had the same kind of housekeeping chores I did, excepting she didn’t get paid very well for them, and she had a bunch of older brothers, and oh my goodness, they’d leave that house in such a mess, and that

poor girl would have to clean up. She had a tough time getting it done before the radio shows came on. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Yeah, I bet. Do you recall the foundation of the LDS Church in Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Well, it was just kind of the same as all the other churches. Everybody had a time slot in the gymnasium, and so it was—everybody had about an hour and that was it. And the LDS people stayed there quite a long time. The Catholic people had their building done, I think, first. And I don't remember any others being finished before we left, and so I think probably most of the rest of them came along after the War, because there just wasn't a whole lot of extra building that went on. Everything was directed toward the War effort.

Interviewer: *How big was your congregation in those days?*

Alice Brumage: Not very big. I don't, you know, I had come from Boulder City, where—oh, they must have had a couple of hundred people in the main meeting. I think probably at Basic that if we had twenty-five or thirty people in that congregation to begin with, that was a lot.

Interviewer: *Is that because there were fewer people in Henderson than in Boulder City when the Dam was being built?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah. And they hadn't gotten well established, and so I think all of that made it more difficult. But lots of them had come from Utah, because one of the six companies—construction companies—was Utah Construction, and so they had been here to do the Dam. And so they were pretty well established in Boulder City. But, like I say, by the time we got to Henderson, you know, out of a thousand houses, why, you know, that was not—nobody had any very big congregations. So it was just kind of the way it was.

Interviewer: *Were the people in Henderson different from the people in Boulder City, that you remember?*

Alice Brumage: Well, in that they were, of course by the time I really remember Boulder City people, they were fairly well established. And, whereas the Henderson people were still very much in flux, in and out, and this kind of thing, come to do this job and then they were still being recruited to go into the service and this kind of thing, so it seemed like there were lots more moving in and out than there were by the time we had gotten out of Boulder City.

Interviewer: *Now you mentioned that the schools hadn't been started in Henderson right away, but what was your experience in schools in Boulder City? What kind of schools?*

Alice Brumage: Well, we had, you know, in Boulder City, we had a brick building that was very solid, and of course we didn't have high school there until—the first graduating class was 1942, and up until that time, the Boulder City kids were bussed to Las Vegas. But they didn't ever take the Henderson kids to Vegas for high school; they just went ahead and built enough classrooms. But I don't think they had hardly anything in the way of extras, you know, as far as there weren't sports, there weren't labs to do chemistry and physics and those kinds of things. And

Boulder City didn't have them. Let's see, when did they build those high school labs? I think about 1939, before they built those, and that would be about right. In '41, '42. Yeah, so it was—that was—'39 was when the high school kids then got started, because there were no facilities in the main building. But they built the gymnasium and built then the labs for the science and also the home economics, and they had business machines and that kind of thing over there too. But Henderson didn't have anything like that for a while.

Interviewer: *And you said that your family moved back to Boulder after the end of the War.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah. The rumor was that they were going to take all the houses away that were in Townsite proper. And so, you know, folks bought another house in Boulder City, and we went back there. But then when they sold the plant to the various companies—Titanium and Stauffer Chemical, a paint company and M&M chocolates, and I don't know who else was in there—but when they did sell the plant, why then those people wanted the housing left, and so they left it. So we would not have had to go, but it was comfortable to go back to.

Interviewer: *Right. How old were you when you went back to Boulder?*

Alice Brumage: I was fourteen.

Interviewer: *Okay. So were you bussed to high school in Vegas?*

Alice Brumage: No.

Interviewer: *You had the high school then.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, we had the high school in Boulder City.

Interviewer: *You said '39.*

Alice Brumage: Well, '39, yes, was when they started the high school building in Boulder City. So when I went back, you know, in '45—

Interviewer: *It was built.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, it was well established by then. Oh yeah, we had a basketball team that would take Las Vegas frequently. Never had enough people on the football team to really make it. But the basketball team was pretty good.

Interviewer: *So the population of Boulder must have fallen quite a bit from the Dam building days.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, it did, it did, but there were enough—you know, after—it fell away a lot right in about '36 when they got the main part done, and it was functioning. They had six—I think they had six generators going by then, in the main part. And so it was interesting because an awful lot of the families then went on to other dams. They went to Grand Coulee, they went to Friant, they went to Shasta, they went to Bullhead—just a lot of those western dams were

also going, and so they just followed right along. You'd meet new kids and say, "What dam does your daddy work on"? [laughter] Because we just figured everybody's daddy worked on a dam somewhere. And so that was probably—the biggest exodus was about probably between '36 and '38. And then the rest that stayed, because my dad, you know, worked like I say until '42. And he did the, there's a big concrete building that they did with a relief map in it, of the whole Colorado River project, that starts up in Green River, Wyoming, and comes on down. And so that building was to house that and be part of the, and it still is. Now during the War they made it the MPs and the service people were in there, but then after the War, why they set it up again. And then there's a shade over the sidewalk on top of the Dam where the tourists used to stand in line to go down in the elevator. And that was another one that my Dad worked on. And so there were a lot of things. But it did, those were the two projects that showed. Otherwise, he worked a lot with the installation of generators and this kind of thing. They'd have several really long days when they were putting in generators.

Interviewer: *Why did he decide not to continue working on dams?*

Alice Brumage: Well, he had a little go around with an MP one day. [laughter] You know, those fellows, they kind of thought they owned that whole Dam; it was theirs. And they took a great deal of pride in their workmanship and dedication to that project. And so he didn't take too kindly to somebody telling him what to do and where to go. And so he changed careers for a while.

Interviewer: *Getting back to Henderson a little bit, I wanted to ask you about the kinds of things you did for recreation and entertainment, and what kinds of social groups there were, and any clubs you joined.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, well, of course, I joined the Girl Scouts, because I had been part of that for a long time. But it was interesting, and I was talking today at the pool with somebody about the recreation activities, and I do not know who sponsored those. I don't know if BMI hired a recreation person, you know, to set these up, because there were dances, there were community dances, and there were community craft projects that we would go to, learn how to tool leather and bind it, and this kind of thing, and there were kind of like summer school activities. And I really don't know, you know, who sponsored those. I'm sure that there was not a, quote, recreation department. And so I don't know just whether the various churches, you know, sponsored those kinds of things, or just where that came from.

Interviewer: *But it sounds like you had lots of opportunities for recreation.*

Alice Brumage: We did have. We did have. And plus the fact that we all went to the Lake. Now you talk to people about going to the Lake and you'd think it was some far-off, remote thing. Everybody knows where it is and nobody goes there. But we went every day, all summer.

Interviewer: *How did you get there?*

Alice Brumage: My mother would drive us. We had, now we had the gas rationing, but living in Henderson, we had a B card. And that was a little bit extra. People with an A card, oh goodness, they hardly got to go anywhere. Boulder City people for the most part had A cards. And the same, in the city of Las Vegas. But because we were kind of remote, you know, why they gave us a B. And so that added a little extra. And then so they could kind of save some coupons here and there and get a trip to L. A. [Los Angeles] once in a while. But there weren't too many, you know, maybe once a year. But we could pretty much go to Vegas, you know, when lots of people would go every week. But they didn't do anything else if they—

Interviewer: *Right, that was their one trip.*

Alice Brumage: That was their one trip, yeah.

Interviewer: *What did you do in Vegas?*

Alice Brumage: Shopped for groceries and clothes, that was about it. We'd go to the Sears store, well, no the Sears store wasn't there. We went to Ronzoni's and Penney's. Penney's was on Fremont Street. And there was a movie theater then, but then we had a movie theater in Henderson too. And the movies, there were four movies a week. Let's see, the same one Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and then Friday, Saturday and Sunday were different. So it changed; you got five different movies a week.

Interviewer: *That's pretty good.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, it was OK. And interestingly enough, in Henderson, the movie theater opened up at 11:00 in the morning, so that the fellows who worked swing shift could go to the movies before they went on shift.

Interviewer: *That's great.*

Alice Brumage: Because otherwise it was—and they went from 11:00 in the morning until the last—last show was at nine o'clock. So then it was out about 11:00. So they ran a twelve-hour schedule anyway.

Interviewer: *Did your parents just send you to the movies?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah.

Interviewer: *I guess it was pretty safe living in Henderson back in those days.*

Alice Brumage: Absolutely. The only crime I know of was that sometime or another my dad had left his wallet on the table by the front door, and somebody came in the front door and whisked it off, and was gone. I mean, that was, they didn't go through the house or anything. So I don't know if they'd seen it through the window or something like that. But that was the major crime that I knew of.

Interviewer: *Yeah, people just didn't lock their doors back then.*

Alice Brumage: Never thought of it. You'd just lock the door to keep the wind from blowing it open if you were going to be gone. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Less dust in the house, right?*

Alice Brumage: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: *What memorable events do you recall from those early days during the War? Did you have seasonal events?*

Alice Brumage: Well, I was talking to the girls about the Halloween thing that we did, because in Boulder City we had some trick or treat thing, but we also went out the night before Halloween, and we just said "handout" and got our candy. There was no, you know, if you don't give the right thing, why we're going to soap your windows or whatever, none of that. We just said "handout" and got our candy. And then usually Halloween were parties and things. But here in Henderson, there was more trick or treat stuff. Well, you know, my friends and I were like 11, 12 years old. And so two of my friends had gone to dance classes in the summer. Again, I have no idea who sponsored all those activities, but they had gone into the dance class.

Interviewer: *About what year was that?*

Alice Brumage: Would have been '43, '44. And so anyway we decided that we were a little old for trick or treat. So we would go and knock on the door and say, "We'll do a trick for a treat." And so these girls, I had a little accordion thing that I played, and so, I played 'In a Little Spanish Town,' and they did their dance. And then we'd say, "Now we want our treat." [laughter]

Interviewer: *That's cute.*

Alice Brumage: So anyway, we had fun with that.

Interviewer: *That's really funny. Do you remember, did they have Industrial Days back then or was that later on?*

Alice Brumage: No, that was later on.

Interviewer: *How did you get health care back in those days?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, Rose de Lima Hospital. I had my appendix out there when I was eleven, in 1942, and they commemorate their beginnings sometime after that. And I think, no, I know where I was, and I was right here in Rose de Lima. So that was where it came from. I don't know that there were individual doctors' offices in town, I don't think there were.

Interviewer: *Did doctors come to your house?*

Alice Brumage: They could have if she needed them. We didn't happen to need them. You know, as I said, the hospital was there, and there were doctors connected to the hospital.

Interviewer: *I bet you were glad there was a hospital when you had appendicitis. [laughter]*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] Well, yes, that worked out quite effectively.

Interviewer: *Did they have a hospital in Boulder City or not?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, yes, they had a good size hospital during construction days, and then later on, they closed it. And for a little while there was none, and then they brought it back to the old building even, and then they built a new building later on.

Interviewer: *I guess they had to because of the work site.*

Alice Brumage: Oh, the construction thing, yeah.

Interviewer: *And there were plenty of injuries.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, yes, exactly. It was pretty much geared to the immediate care, you know, for injuries and so forth.

Interviewer: *How did the War affect the community? You said that you personally were not affected by the gas rationing very much, because you had a B card. Were there other kinds of rationing that affected your family?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, well sure, that was when I did the shopping and the cooking and so forth, why, I had to, you know, plan the meals around the rationing tickets that I had, and I would have to see how many tickets I had for, particularly meat. And then I always say, because my mother was a farm girl, so we always ate real butter. Well, that took meat points. Meat tickets, you had to use for the butter. And I've said to people, my mother used her meat tickets for butter. And then we would, because canned meats were not rationed. So we had Spam and tuna and salmon and the neighbors had sardines for their dog, I didn't. Big animals were kind of a real problem, you know, when there was rationing. And then coffee was rationed, and sugar was rationed, and the LDS ladies would trade their coffee tickets to the other women for sugar, because they were always doing canning. And the farmers from southern Utah would come down with a pickup truck and drive through town, and you'd just hail them down and buy fruit by the case and then my mother told me how to can. And so I canned two or three loads of peaches and apricots and apples, through the summer. And so we needed that sugar to do the canning.

Interviewer: *That is really interesting; I've never heard anybody talk about that before.*

Alice Brumage: Oh? Yeah, no, that was. But like I say, you planned your meals around that, and as I say, we used a lot of canned meat, because we didn't have to use points for that, and then we had points left for the butter.

Interviewer: *Did you ever have to stand in line at the store for foods or were there, I guess—*

Alice Brumage: There weren't lines for the most part.

Interviewer: *There weren't shortages of goods?*

Alice Brumage: Not too much. No, because of—

Interviewer: *That's lucky.*

Alice Brumage: —we had the rationing, and my dad commented a lot on how much better rationing was than the allotment thing that they used during World War I—apparently was—caused more lines and this kind of thing, and they would have, if you wanted five pounds of flour, white wheat flour, then you had to take so many pounds of oats and so much rye flour, and these different greens that the ladies weren't used to working with. And he was living in boarding houses at that time, and said that the bread just turned out terrible. Any kind of multi-grain bread he called *War bread*. [laughter] And he would have none of it, he wanted that nice white Wonder Bread or whatever.

Interviewer: *Oh, that's interesting.*

Alice Brumage: But World War II, when they did the rationing, why it really did make a difference, because we didn't have the shortages and that kind of thing that they had had in other situations.

Interviewer: *That's good. Did you all collect scrap metal for the War?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah. Everybody hung onto scrap metal for the War, and we were very careful with clothing and this kind of thing, and it was sent then to the other places, you know, even before the War was over, why, they were supplying civilian populations in other parts of the world, and so we were collecting that kind of thing, and of course, collected newspapers and a lot of those other things that they do now.

Interviewer: *For recycling.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, the recycling thing. We didn't have, of course, the plastics and some of the stuff that—they were actually—the plastics were developed during World War II. We didn't have—they weren't really common. If you took your lunch to school, you had it wrapped in a piece of waxed paper, which was quite an interesting, and oh, to this day, I just hate carrying a sandwich for three or four hours before I get to eat it, because it's dry. I don't care what you do with it, it's dry. Reminds me of the ones way back then, of course, my dad was, as I say, he was kind of fastidious, and he was very careful about what he carried in his lunch bucket to the Dam. And it was cheese with mustard on it, no mayonnaise, and then just butter and jelly on a sandwich, and not necessarily peanut butter, but just jelly, and that was about the only sandwiches that he would take, and he just, no meat, nothing like that, because it just didn't keep well enough.

Interviewer: *It could spoil.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, if they were working down in the tunnel, it was fine, but they never knew how long they were going to be there, until they'd be up on top, and then it was way too hot to be carrying a meat sandwich.

Interviewer: *Was it as hot back then as it is now, do you think?*

Alice Brumage: For the most part, it was hotter.

Interviewer: *Oh, really.*

Alice Brumage: And particularly, down in the Dam. That's in a hole. And they don't get much circulation, not much breeze down there, and so they dealt with much higher temperatures.

Interviewer: *Wow, that's tough work.*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] Yeah. The thing is though that, you know, I hate to sound like the old fuddy-duddy, says, you know, oh, you know, the old days were so much better. But the thing about the air conditioning—and we never had any until we got to Henderson; that's the first time we'd ever had a cooler—people would build their own coolers with packing boxes, and then there was a packing material called Excelsior that was shredded wood. And they would line the packing boxes with this Excelsior and then put chicken wire in there to hold it up. Then they put a hose on the top of it and that would moisten it, and then a fan in the middle, and that was your swamp cooler.

Interviewer: *That works.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, it worked. The only problem was that they had a really high incidence of pneumonia, because that Excelsior would grow nosocomial bacteria like crazy. And so they really did have high incidences of pneumonia in the summer time, because, you know, they should have taken the excelsior out and set it in the sun.

Interviewer: *Yeah, or replaced it.*

Alice Brumage: Dried it out, yeah, and or replaced it, because it just—

Interviewer: *But they didn't know what was going on.*

Alice Brumage: No, they didn't realize that's what was doing it.

Interviewer: *Well, I guess—why wouldn't you have that same problem with straw, and I wonder why they didn't use straw except maybe it wasn't available.*

Alice Brumage: It wasn't available, and I'm sure you would have had the same problems.

Interviewer: *Yeah, probably.*

Alice Brumage: I would think almost any natural material would grow bacteria just beautifully.

Interviewer: *And I guess, these days, people change out their pads every year when they start up, if they still have swamp coolers.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, oh yeah. I have a brand new one. I love it.

Interviewer: *It still works.*

Alice Brumage: Oh, you bet it does. My electric bill is about a quarter of what most of my friends are.

Interviewer: *Oh, that's good that it still works.*

Alice Brumage: Oh, yeah, works just fine.

Interviewer: *So tell me a little bit—so you finished out your high school in Boulder City, and then you went to college. So tell me a little bit about your college and your career.*

Alice Brumage: Well, I went to, I started at Compton Junior College in southern California, and then married, and my husband had been in the National Guard, and so he almost immediately, this was 1950, and so he almost immediately went off to the Korean conflict. And, so, I went into then the Orange County Hospital School of Nursing. And I was there until he got out of service, and then I quit school and started having children. Well, actually, I only had the one. And then, just about that time that they were licensing practical nurses, LPNs, and if you had had a year of training you could challenge the exam. So I called my Director and asked her if she thought I was eligible to take that exam, and she said, “No”—I hadn’t had—you had to have some experience in obstetrics and communicable disease,” and I hadn’t had either of those yet. So she said, “I think I can get your time back for you though if you want to come back into the program.” And I said, “I haven’t got a car.” She said, “Well, let me talk to—see if somebody’s wanting to do a scholarship.” So the Assistance League came up with two hundred dollars, and I found a vehicle that would get me back and forth to school.

Interviewer: *That's really great.*

Alice Brumage: And so I went back to school, and I’d been in six months, and then I get pregnant. So, but I stayed in that time until I finished the semester at the end of January. That child was born the 8th of March and the first of June I went to my psychiatric affiliation, because that was in a different hospital. And then I was right back in the routine. So I had started in ’51 and graduated in ’57. But that was with an RN. And then I just kept going to school. My mother had a degree and my dad was just really gung ho on ladies having degrees, and so I just—

Interviewer: *That's really wonderful.*

Alice Brumage: Whenever I had a car and a babysitter, I took a class. And if anybody had told me it was going to take nine years to finish, I probably wouldn’t have started. But I didn’t even think about that, I just kept taking the class, and by 1966, I had a Bachelor’s Degree. And that was from L.A. State. And you know, a lot of my friends, we kind of got along the same way, only I had one, and they didn’t. So it was really good, and it opened a lot of doors for me, and I ended up then doing public health nursing, because that was my focus for my degree. And I did that for Orange County and then my husband by then was working as a police officer. Well, no, he worked two small police departments, and then he went with Orange County as a Deputy

Marshall. And so we had both put in our twenty years, and we were over fifty, and we could retire. So we did. [laughter] And not very much over fifty, but it was really fun, because we had four children grown and out of the house by then, and it wasn't enough, you know, to live very palatially, but we could pick and choose what jobs we wanted to do and when we wanted to do them. So we did mostly part time and that kind of thing. And then later on I owned a private school to teach certified home health aides for California, because in California, a certified nurse aide cannot work in the field by herself, without extra training. And so I had a school that provided that training. And I also could take girls off the street and make home health aides out of them and just totally pass up the nurse aide thing. And they had to have 120 hours, and I provided that. And it was very successful, it paid for itself from day one.

Interviewer: *That's really great.*

Alice Brumage: And so—and it was—I started that with six students, and the last class I had had fifteen in it. And then I sold it twice.

Interviewer: *How did you sell it twice?*

Alice Brumage: I sold the curriculum to the home health agency in Amador County and then sold the equipment and the curriculum and everything to someone in, let's see, Amador, Calaveras, what's the next county down? Anyway, she was in the town of Sonora, so there was a county between the two. And so, I sold, then as I say, all the equipment, everything to this—

Interviewer: *See, you were a good businesswoman.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah [laughter], yeah, I guess so. And I had—actually I had had enough students by then that I was having to hire this girl to help me, because we had to supervise them in the field, and there weren't enough days in the week for me to supervise, because I would only take three people at a time into a home, so that the patient wasn't just inundated with a whole mess of people in there. I assigned one to cooking, one to housekeeping, and one to personal care, and then we'd switch them around. And so, it was a busy day in the field, and they had two field days a week. They got a whole lot more training than the girls around here get, I couldn't believe. But at any rate, I had that then for about five years. When we came down here, then, I thought maybe we would do it again, but I would have had to start at the Legislature, and get them to upgrade, and I just didn't want to mess with it.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's a lot more work than just to start to start a business.*

Alice Brumage: Exactly, exactly. You know, the school would have been no problem, but oh my goodness, yes, wading through that.

Interviewer: *Yeah, it's a little different here. So you came back to Henderson—*

Alice Brumage: In '94.

Interviewer: *Okay. And what, how has Henderson changed since? [laughter]*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] They have sidewalks.

Interviewer: *Were you surprised when you came back?*

Alice Brumage: Well, we had kind of kept track of it, you know, we would come back and boat on the Lake and this kind of thing. In fact, our family did Memorial Day here for, oh, a number of years, when our children were, you know, were having their children, and this kind of thing, why we would get together in Henderson.

Interviewer: *A little family reunion.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, and go to the Lake.

Interviewer: *That's fun.*

Alice Brumage: And so we did that for quite a while. And so, you know, we kind of kept track of it over the years and had friends still here. So certainly did see it growing and then, well, the annexing was going on, I think, just about the time we came back, when they got the Green Valley area and on out toward the freeway. At any rate, yeah, it's changed considerably.

Interviewer: *One thing that we didn't talk about too much that I wanted to ask you about is, some of the other neighborhoods in Henderson when you were growing up. When you first moved to Henderson, what neighborhood did you live in? Did you live in Victory Village?*

Alice Brumage: We lived in Townsite.

Interviewer: *In Townsite, okay.*

Alice Brumage: Basic Townsite: we were at 14 Water Street. But then there was Victory Village, you know, across the way, that were duplexes, and then the fourplexes were down in Carver Park. But of course, we weren't allowed to go to Carver Park. The black children came up to school, we all went to school together and were friends and stuff, but it wasn't—my birthday came up and I was having a party and passed out invitations and also to the black kid that was in my class, and my mother said, "Yes, give him an invitation, but," she said, "I don't think he'll come." And I was kind of surprised, but he didn't come. And it was just kind of that the families just didn't intermingle, even though there was no segregation as such. But I never went into Carver Park, and they didn't come out to shop with us or anything like that; they just came out for school and went back.

Interviewer: *I guess they must have gone to Las Vegas if they needed to do shopping.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah. I think so, because, you know, on the Westside, why, there was a fair sized population of Negro people, and so they—

Interviewer: *Do you remember any overt signs of segregation in the stores and the community?*

Alice Brumage: No, no, I do not, I don't remember, you know, separate bathrooms and separate drinking fountains and this kind of thing, if there were any, I never saw them. But you know, Nevada has always been, you know, had been an integrated state from the beginning.

Interviewer: *And everybody played together at school.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, this is it, we played together and stuff, and so we didn't notice, you know, that there was any differentiation in color.

Interviewer: *About how many children were there from the Carver Park neighborhood in your school?*

Alice Brumage: I have no idea. There was just one black kid in my classroom, you know, there were enough on the playground and stuff that you didn't notice them, you know, as being anything different.

Interviewer: *How big was your class, by the way?*

Alice Brumage: Twenty-five or thirty.

Interviewer: *That's a lot of people! In one classroom?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, they were not small classes.

Interviewer: *See, now classrooms are like that and we think that's too much. [laughter]*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] Well that's pretty much what they were.

Interviewer: *I guess you all were well-behaved and did all your work.*

Alice Brumage: Well, you know, we pretty much were. I mean, you know, there was this back talk that kids do to teachers nowadays, that, I mean, it would not even have occurred to us. You just don't talk back to adults. That's all, you know, they have the last word, and you may go home and tattle on them, but you don't, you don't just look at them bold faced and talk back to them or anything of that sort.

Interviewer: *And the parents were supportive of the school and the teachers?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, absolutely. If you got in trouble in school, you knew good and well when you got home, it was going to be worse. [laughter]

Interviewer: *[laughter] Do you remember any hijinks from those days?*

Alice Brumage: Not much, I was, I was pretty straightforward. I was not interested in, maybe because, you know, all of the attention would have been on me. And somebody made a—oh, the little boy that's an only child was really quiet, and his mother says, "Johnny, what are you into?" He says, "How can I be into anything, with you, and God and Santa Claus all watching?"

Interviewer: *[laughter] That's cute.*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] That's just about how it was, you know. You didn't get away with much. I guess once in a while I would open the door to the gun cabinet. Because the men who lived in the housing for the single men dormitories, that worked on the Dam, couldn't keep their guns there. But my dad and mother had been charter members of the Boulder Rifle and Pistol Club. And so, a lot of those fellows were part of the Club, but they couldn't keep their guns in their rooms, so they kept them at our house in a closet. And of course, I was absolutely forbidden to get in the closet, and I never did, but I know once in a while I would open the door and show the kids all the guns in there, and shut it again.

Interviewer: *Oh, wow. So it wasn't locked.*

Alice Brumage: No, it wasn't locked. There were no trigger locks on them or anything.

Interviewer: *Did your father teach you about the guns?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, absolutely, I knew how, I probably knew how to disarm every gun in that cabinet. Because that's what you do, when you raise children around them, you teach them to take care of them. And it's always loaded, and then you learned how to open it up, and if it's not [loaded], fine, and if it is, you unload it, and that's it.

Interviewer: *Did you ever do any hunting?*

Alice Brumage: No, we mostly did target shooting. Now, my dad would go out to Red Rocks and hunt, and then he would also, he would hunt birds, ducks, and quail, and dove down in the swamplands below Frenchman Mountain. It's part of the Recreation Department Area now. I don't know what they call it right offhand. But yeah, they would hunt birds down in there. And sometimes on down the River toward Searchlight, they would hunt down there, and then they could hunt in Charleston when they got a tag, because the fish and game people were very careful about doing counts out there, and when the deer population got too big, why then, they'd issue so many tags, and the fellows could go in there and hunt. And it cut that population down to where the vegetation would take care of what they had.

Interviewer: *Did they ever have problems with pollution back in those days, when they went out and hunted, because the plants were dumping chemicals?*

Alice Brumage: No, nobody ever thought about it. If they were contaminated, we didn't know it. And yeah, the biggest contamination thing, and we never even thought about that, was that every now and then the Basic Magnesium plant would have a leak for the chlorine. I don't know what they used that chlorine gas for, but oh, my goodness, every now and then it would get loose, and your eyes would water, you know, and you're coughing and choking, and what not, but didn't think a whole lot about it. The wind would come along and blow it away in a day or two and that was it.

Interviewer: *So you didn't have to shelter in place?*

Alice Brumage: No, no.

Interviewer: *Nobody got scared?*

Alice Brumage: No, we didn't have sense enough to be scared.

Interviewer: *That's interesting. Was it smoggy at all from the plants?*

Alice Brumage: No, excepting that now and then it would get, the air would get kind of heavy, and it would all hang down in Pittman. I mean, you could look out and see, you know, this dark cloud hanging in Pittman.

Interviewer: *Poor Pittman.*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] Yeah, that was it, they always had the dirty end of the stick, I guess.

Interviewer: *What was Pittman like? Do you have any memories of Pittman?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, it was a gas station.

Interviewer: *That's it?*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, I think there was a bar there, but that was it. Oh, there was—that was in Pittman, I think—the guy in the gas station had a lion in a cage in the gas station.

Interviewer: *How about that.*

Alice Brumage: And some little kid got her hand or something in there, and she got clawed up pretty bad.

Interviewer: *Oh, she's lucky she didn't lose her hand.*

Alice Brumage: Well, I know, you know. And I think he reached out and scratched her face or something, too, it was quite a to-do, you know. But so much of that kind of thing, I mean, it's like, "Well, the lion was in a cage. What were you doing over there messing with the lion?" You know, they didn't—they—some people were, you know, upset because he had a lion out there—but for the most part, the attitude was you didn't have any business in there. It's a lion, it's liable to get you.

Interviewer: [laughter] *It's liable to get you.*

Alice Brumage: You know, so keep your distance. Use your head.

Interviewer: *Yeah, people always do crazy things. They keep—they still do.*

Alice Brumage: Well, yeah, you know, but now they end up arresting the guy who has the lion, you know, instead of the fact that, you know, that the public has got some responsibility there.

Interviewer: *But he had that lion to show off to the public to get business, didn't he?*

Alice Brumage: I expect, yeah, yeah, but still, you know.

Interviewer: *Do you remember the lion's name?*

Alice Brumage: No, I don't know that it had a name. It was just a lion in a cage. But, you know, it's like the discipline thing in the school, you know, you just, you did not cross the line. And the line was very clear. And so they didn't have the problems, you know, we would never, we would never have thought of doing the stuff that they do now. And then again, you know, we were restricted by those attitudes. You look at old pictures of the skating star called Sonja Henie, and she was an Olympic champion and all of this kind of thing, you know, and she would do this thing on one foot, her arms out, and then, you know, twirl, and we thought that was marvelous. Well, now, you know, because people are willing to push the limit, you know, they do such phenomenal things.

Interviewer: *Unbelievable.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, these kids on the bicycles are just like, oh my goodness sake. I mean, it never occurred to us. You had to keep both wheels on the ground. And to do all these other things is just amazing. And I'm sure that that restraint that we had probably kept us from doing those kinds of things. And so, you know, in some ways, it's what has advanced us. And yet, in other ways, you know, it also gives you a society, then, that's just a little bit more independent. So it, you have to look at it, you know, from both sides. And then deal with it, because it's there.

Interviewer: *Yeah, things change. What do you enjoy most about having lived in Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Oh, I think the fact that I have seen it, you know, develop through the years. And I just think that has been, you know, a real blessing in my life, a real privilege to be able to have seen, you know, a town come from. Because I remember, you know, not from being told, but in my own mind, driving from Boulder City to Vegas, and this was just desert, just plain old desert, like driving from here to Kingman, that's desert, that's it. And then, you know, it was a little town, and then it got to be a big town. And it's only, you know, the people in my generation kind of, that have been able to see that. And the rest, you know, the rest come along in their own time and have seen other things. But I think it's been a real privilege to have grown up at this time in here, and actually have grown up in two brand new towns. And then I went to Europe last year and visited people who lived in a house that was built in 1500. I said, you know, we're at opposite ends of that spectrum.

Interviewer: *That's really good construction.*

Alice Brumage: Yes, yes, there you have it. But it was interesting how they have put indoor plumbing into those buildings that were not designed for indoor plumbing. They've had to be very creative.

Interviewer: *Oh, yeah, it's interesting. What else would you like to share about your experience in Henderson?*

Alice Brumage: Well, I don't know. I guess, you know, just the cohesiveness that we had, you know, in the early days and how people did have to bond together because they didn't bring family and friends with them. And it's been just great to see, then, how it has progressed, and I think one of the things that pleases me the most about living in Henderson is the Recreation Department. I think it is absolutely one of the most phenomenal. My mother and her friends used to talk about having a park at the end of every alley in Boulder City. And of course she was into this recreation kind of thing when she was in Scouting and all. And so it made us pretty much aware, but Henderson has just done an over-the-top job, and as I say, it just pleases me to be able to talk about it and this kind of thing. And the house that I live in now, you can walk to the tennis courts, you can walk to the Black Mountain Rec Center, which has workout rooms, and a kiddie pool in the summer. And then there's picnicking there, there's picnicking at Callahan, where the tennis courts are, and then you just walk on down, and it's—the municipal golf course is right there. So it's just, you know, amazing, and how many fantastic things there are to do right in that little neighborhood. So I just—I think it's really great.

Interviewer: *Well, that's neat. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us that I haven't asked you today?*

Alice Brumage: [laughter] I can't think of anything right offhand. As I say, there were all these community activities, and I don't know where they came from, who sponsored those kinds of things. We did an awful lot of stuff in the school gymnasium, and there would be dances there, and there would parties there, and just, you know, as I say—plus all of the churches met in there at different times of the day. So, and again, you know, everybody was pretty cooperative because they knew that somebody else was coming behind them, so pick up your stuff, and just tended to be considerate.

Interviewer: *Yeah, everybody worked together.*

Alice Brumage: Yeah, pretty much did.

Interviewer: *It's a really special community.*

Alice Brumage: I think so. I really think so.

Interviewer: *Well, thank you so much for joining us, Alice. It's been a great time talking to you and hearing all your stories.*

Alice Brumage: Well, thank you for asking, because as you see, I don't have any difficulty in spouting off about things.

Interviewer: *And you're still working.*

Alice Brumage: Yes, I go to work at noon.

Interviewer: *You're keeping busy these days, so thank you for fitting us in here. We really appreciate it.*

Alice Brumage: You're very welcome.